

Workers power

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Capitalism isn't working!

BRITISH SOCIETY is in decay. We face mounting poverty, inequality and injustice. Every week another string of closures is announced. A panic has swept the country as youth crime is reportedly out of control.

Everywhere people are despairing at the inability of the government, or the opposition, to produce solutions. Everywhere people are asking the question: why is our society going backwards instead of forwards?

The continuing rise in unemployment, with no real prospect of improvement, is at the core of this growing despair. Over 4 million are on the dole. A recent Gallup poll revealed that 49% of those surveyed would emigrate from Britain if they had the choice, a higher proportion than ever before and more than in any other country except Albania!

John Major's answer to this

crisis is to launch an ever harsher assault on the living standards of the working class. The mass of the population face attacks on pay, working conditions and access to education, health and social services. The Tories are even thinking of bringing in VAT on food. This will hit the unemployed hardest, reducing the already pitiful value of a giro.

But none of this is a coherent strategy for Britain's bosses. It will not produce a turn-around in the long term decline in the economy, and neither will it defuse mounting anger. On the contrary, the combination of a deep lack of confidence in the government and the scale of the sacrifices they are demanding of people will lead to repeated explosions of popular anger.

Major wants to blame ordinary working class people for

this crisis. It is all our fault, the papers chorus, for not bringing up our kids properly, for a breakdown of community values. He tells us we must "understand less and condemn more". In doing so, he shows that he recognises the danger to the Tories in the present climate of anger and despair. Because the more that people *understand* the real reason for the decay of our cities and the desperation of our youth, then the more they will *condemn* the profit system—capitalism—that lies behind it.

The only cure for the horrible sickness afflicting British society is to get rid of this system. And only the working class has the real interest and potential power to do it.

A hint of that power was evident on the streets of London during the massive demonstrations in October against pit closures. Since then the

bureaucrats of the TUC and Labour Party have frittered away much of that potential, and let the Tories temporarily off the hook.

But failure to channel the anger and hostility into an anti-Tory fight carries the danger of it souring into despair.

The desperate need for affordable housing, the crumbling state of many schools and the woeful inadequacy of Britain's whole infrastructure all highlight the criminal waste of human potential in a country with more than four million jobless. The first step towards reversing the tidal surge in unemployment is to fight tooth and nail to defend existing jobs through indefinite strikes and occupations.

In almost every case such action will mean organising to defy the do-nothing union leaders and the Tories' anti-union laws as well. The present wave of strikes and

struggles must become a nationwide challenge to the Tories and their attacks on working class people.

Taking on the Tories and their laws in such a fight will bring workers into direct conflict with the state. But to shrink from such a confrontation will only see society disintegrate further under the rule of the bosses.

To reverse the increasing alienation that millions feel from society, a different kind of society has to be built. Capitalism is rooted in that alienation, breeding violence, oppression, and a lack of solidarity in society. John Smith's obsession with the individual and ambition reveals his complete identification with the heart of the very system that grinds down the workers he claims to represent.

The system stands condemned in all its irrationality

and wastefulness. The millions in enforced idleness on the dole could be building homes for the homeless, hospitals for the sick, and schools for our children.

Factories that are being laid waste by the slump could be producing steel, food and vehicles for the needy in the Third World.

The only reason that this does not happen is the system of private ownership, in which production takes place for profit or not at all.

The only real answer is a new society, based on workers planning the production of the things we need.

That is socialism, a word used less these days by Labour than by the Tories. The workers movement must recover its meaning and fight for socialism, the only answer to the misery of unemployment, poverty and despair. ■

HOW TO FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT - PAGE 7

NUS National Union of Surrender?

THE TORIES want to scrap the National Union of Students (NUS) in its present form. NUS has responded by pressing the self-destruct button. The cowardly student union bureaucrats hope the organisation will survive as a charity for the provision of welfare advice, cheap beer and food. Their document on the government's proposals, "A Charter for Student Unions", should be renamed "A Charter for bowing and scraping".

The government is targeting NUS

BY ANTONY ADLER

and local student unions by introducing voluntary membership and outlawing "political" campaigns. The Tories see NUS as the last bastion of the closed shop. They are aiming to stop students fighting political campaigns and resisting further cuts and restructuring in education.

What has the NUS leadership said?

They want a "conscience clause" allowing individuals to opt out of

NUS, giving in to voluntary membership. The NUS bureaucrats want local union leaderships elected by secret ballot and restricted general meetings, so curtailing direct democracy and open discussion and debate.

They suggest reporting to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee on the proper use of funds. This is an invitation for the Tories to poke their noses into our organisations. To check any "left wing" excesses by local unions the NUS would provide the right of

recourse to an ombudsman in cases of "maladministration". The leadership proposes charitable status for NUS, further restricting the ability of the union and its affiliates to conduct political campaigns.

They want to limit "the issues on which it is legitimate for student unions or NUS to work"; worse still, "a broad definition will be those issues which affect students as students."

So will racism no longer affect black students? Will access to abortion and contraception no longer be the concern of women students? The meaning of this statement is all too clear at a time when the students' union at Greenwich University faces prosecution for anti-racist campaigning. But how society is run affects everybody in society, including students! We must fight for our right to engage in political struggles.

Further attacks come in the government's latest white paper which proposes student contributions to tuition fees. This follows years of erosion in the real value of the student grant, chronic poverty for working class students and pathetic facilities in many colleges.

Cuts in state funding have also meant attacks on campus staff. Examples like the University of London domestics receiving a month's notice of compulsory redundancy are commonplace.

Emergency general meetings on every campus must discuss the implications of the Tory proposals, the NUS leadership's response and prepare for action. Activists must start agitating for a national demonstration against the Tory proposals, linked to a campaign for a wave of occupations. Given the scale of attacks on campus workers, including what is effectively a pay cut for many Nalogo members, there is a real chance to develop a fighting unity with college trade unions. Activists need to pursue this with or without the backing of local sabbaticals and executives.

The upcoming NUS national conference must be transformed from an impotent talking shop into a congress for action against the White Paper, in defiance of the majority on the executive. Left Unity has called a conference on 10 March in London. Under the slogan "Save our Union" it is pledged to mobilising opposition to the Tory attacks and the strategy of NUS president, Lorna Fitzsimmons.

While this conference is a step in the right direction, Workers Power students will continue to fight for the creation of a democratic, rank and file activists organisation. This would not seek to replace the NUS but to turn it into a democratic union of struggle. It must be a rank and file organisation that mobilises students not only to defend their union but also against the other plans of the Tories. But if voluntary membership and derecognition become realities, we will need to use such an organisation to regroup militants and local unions and rebuild a national union from below.

There is still time to beat the Tories. If students are to join a fight for their union then they will need to be convinced that it is an organisation worth defending. They will need to believe it is an organisation that defends their interests. They will need to see that it fights for a better society. That it unites with the miners to keep the pits open. That it fights against racism and fascism. That it joins with the education workers to stop every redundancy. That it fights the college authorities for more books in the libraries, cheaper rents in the halls of residence and free creche facilities. If students are convinced of this then they will take the militant action that can force the Tories into another U-turn. ■

TEACHERS

No to pay freeze!

BY A LONDON NUT MEMBER

THE LAUGHABLE pay award of 0.55% imposed on teachers by the government means a real pay cut, one which comes after years of settlements that have eroded the value of our wages. The award is almost 16% below the claim submitted by the NUT in September.

The award also introduces performance related pay, establishing an 18-point pay scale, with three of the points for teachers who have demonstrated their classroom "excellence". Appraisal schemes will be used to decide which teachers are to be rewarded. Linking pay to appraisal increases the control over teachers exerted by school managements, Local Education Authorities and the Department for Education.

Quite simply those teachers who do what they are told will be financially rewarded; those who do not will be penalised. This aspect of the pay award acquires particular significance when teachers are resisting government policy, like now in the campaign against the Tories' compulsory testing or SATS. The pay scheme aims to undermine such resistance.

The response by the NUT leadership has been characteristically feeble. A circular issued by General Secretary Doug McAvoy condemns the award, describing it as an "insult to all", and promising that the union will "... oppose this award, this approach and will continue to campaign for proper levels of pay, applied fairly and without discrimination".

What is missing from the circular is any mention of the kind of action needed to achieve this. Recent rumours suggest that in terms of action the national executive is considering several options, including a day or half-day of national strike action or—absurdly—a Saturday demonstration.

None of these will meet the needs of teachers. What is needed is an all out strike to smash the 0.55% and a complete boycott of appraisal.

The NUT leadership is presiding over a membership that is increasingly angry both at the scale of attacks and the inability of the union to defend them. This pay award is seen by many as the last straw. The issue affects all teachers and cannot be resolved by isolated local action. This presents militants with the best opportunity since the mid-1980s to argue for national strike action over pay and the government's attack as a whole.

The left in the NUT must not limit its activity to mere calls on the executive to sanction action. Militants must also be prepared to build for action from below, by organising and leading unofficial strikes against the pay award and seeking to spread them as widely as possible.

NUT militants should at the same time seek to build links at rank and file level with other public sector workers under attack, whether from the Tories' real pay cut or from local councils implementing cuts. The aim must be to build for an all out public sector strike to smash all of the imposed pay settlements and stop the axing of jobs and services. ■



The kind of demo NUS leaders hope they'll never see again

THE LEADERS of Natfhe had a shock when they arrived for a national Sectoral Conference on the last Saturday in February.

The union headquarters was surrounded by over 200 Further Education teachers representing branches throughout the country.

The angry and militant lobby was demanding immediate national strike action against the most serious attack on contracts and conditions of work since the union was founded.

Further Education colleges are being taken out of Local Authority control on 1 April and turned into independent "corporations". Colleges will have to compete with one another for funds.

This goes alongside Tory plans for a massive expansion of the FE sector, part of their new-found commitment to "training", and of course their desire to further massage the dole figures by herding the unemployed onto courses.

Attack

They plan to increase student numbers by a third in the next two to three years, but without an equivalent increase in funds.

This can only be done by a sustained attack on the quality of education for the students and on the pay and conditions of the staff.

The College Employers' Forum (CEF) has issued a new model contract which it wants college managements to introduce for people employed after 1 April. CEF Chief Executive Roger Ward then hopes to impose the contract on other staff.

The contract typifies "new management techniques".

Not only does it massively increase workloads and slash holidays, but it puts all control over the job into the management's hands. Stringent secrecy clauses mirror those used to intimidate staff in the NHS. Staff could have to move sites and even areas at the whim of management. The watchword is "flexibility".

At present college teachers have to work a minimum of 30 hours on the premises, but in reality they work much longer hours doing marking

College lecturers fight back

BY SUE THOMAS

Birmingham Natfhe

and preparation. The new contract would raise minimum hours at college to 37, cut holidays by half, give the right to managers to demand Saturday and Sunday working, and leave the determination of the amount of class teaching time to individual managers.

In the face of this threat the response of Natfhe has been pitifully inadequate.

The national union has not even circulated the new contract, arguing that "it should not do the employers' job for them".

So they are leaving members ignorant of the scale of the attack!

Leadership of the resistance has passed to rank and file activists, starting with the Birmingham Liaison Committee (BLC) which organises members across eight local branches.

In early February, the governors of East Birmingham College voted to introduce the new contract from 1 April.

The BLC called on all its branches to discuss a proposal for action, and within a fortnight had organised a cross-city ballot for escalating strike action and sanctions, which won a resounding majority.

The first day's strike on 25 February was solid across all the eight colleges, despite unprecedented management intimidation.

Action

The BLC has sent out copies of the contract to as many branches as possible, calling on others to join their action. It also supported the lobby of the union, originally called

by the Socialist Lecturers Alliance.

The results of the Sector Conference show that the fight will have to be led by rank and file activists.

The National Executive Committee (NEC) persuaded the Conference to vote for a plan that will not deliver any strike action until 1 April.

Delaying action until then will be disastrous, since some local managements are already trying to impose the new contracts.

Organise

The CEF have threatened the union with the full force of the anti-union laws.

Natfhe head office, while being prepared to give the green light to local action over contracts at the moment, has made clear that they will buckle in the face of an injunction and will not call any action that might be unlawful.

Already there are signs that a militant response can win.

At Accrington and Rossendale College, plans for appointing two new staff members on new contracts had to be abandoned in the face of a strike threat.

Branches represented at the lobby of the union HQ agreed to call action wherever possible on 9th and 10th of March alongside Birmingham, and agreed to turn a Socialist Lecturers Alliance meeting on Saturday 13 March in Birmingham into an ad-hoc Action Committee.

The battle is on both to force our leaders to fight and to win the membership to all out action in the face of the leadership's footdragging.

We must use the current struggle both to throw back the employers and to build a powerful rank and file organisation that can turn Natfhe into a union that fights. ■

EDITORIAL

The real criminals

BRITAIN IS gripped by a deep malaise. Job losses, the decay of our cities, the slashing of our services, all these are giving rise to mounting anger and frustration.

In this desperate situation, the killing of two year old James Bulger struck an anguished chord. To millions across the country this seemed to symbolise everything that is going wrong in Britain, a society tearing itself apart.

But the Tory press, the government spokesmen, the TV and radio commentators are using this shocking event to whip up a wave of hysteria. We are being told that we face a spiritual crisis. Britain's decline and deepening social problems are, we are told, the fault of ordinary people. It is our lack of values, our lack of discipline, our lack of social responsibility that is supposed to be to blame.

This is the most disgusting hypocrisy. The killing of James Bulger was a freak incident, not part of a pattern of growing immorality. There have been only ten such murders over the past decade: one a year. Facts like this aren't allowed to interfere with the propaganda machine of our rulers which is churning out the message: teenagers are on the rampage, youth crime is an epidemic, parents are to blame.

We are in the midst of a moral panic. The Tories and their rich backers in finance and industry operate the most sickening double standards. While they foam at the mouth over murders and violent crime, far more people are killed every year through accidents at work, in construction, in the factories, down the mines and on youth slave labour schemes.

We don't see the bosses launching a press campaign about that, blaming falling morals or the lack of a strict upbringing. They hush it up because they are to blame, through falling safety at work, through speed up, through "flexibilisation", and through cuts in hospital beds, healthcare and the ambulance service.

In short, the panic over teenage crime is being used to deflect attention away from the bosses' crimes, and to blame their victims—working class people—for the mess this country is in.

The Tories are pushing for more repressive measures to "solve" the problem. Sir Frederick Lawton, former judge and member of Oswald Mosley's Fascists in the 1930s, has called on the government to bring back the birch. John Major calls on us not to understand the causes of this situation, but to "condemn" it. Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke is pushing for new measures to lock up children as young as ten!

To its deep shame, the Labour Party, which rests on the support of working people and our organisations, has joined this growing reactionary chorus.

Tony Blair is Labour's Shadow Home Secretary. He has lived his pampered life in luxury and privilege. He went to a top public school. He probably shudders with revulsion when he thinks of life outside the tranquil quads of his exclusive Oxford college and smart barrister's chambers. He has the nerve to blame rising crime on our lack of moral values, while he calls for quicker, harsher sentences and locking up youth offenders.

Worse still David Blunkett, formerly leader of the so-called "Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire", has called for the government to bring in compulsory community service for the unemployed, a form of conscripted labour in return for the dole. This will simply provide the bosses with a cheap labour force, undermine union rates of pay and leave young people still struggling to get by on pitiful social security benefits.

Labour is showing just how far it has gone in copying Tory policies and abandoning any mention of even reformist socialism. It is trying to outdo the Tories in right-wing rhetoric.

But when Blair says there is "something sick at the heart of our society" he has hit on a terrible truth. But it is not working people who are to blame for the real sickness of over four million unemployed chasing a handful of low-paid jobs, of whole communities devastated by closures and sackings, of racism setting workers against each other, of a million young people without jobs, of housing estates crumbling away without facilities, of a society without a vision, without any sense that our children will

be growing up in a world better than the one we have been forced to endure.

The young are among the most desperate in our society, without a decent education or access to culture or leisure, without jobs or much prospect of getting one. They are deprived of any connection to the working class movement and its traditions of solidarity and human dignity. They are deliberately criminalised by the police who raid their parties, harass them on the streets and bust them for drugs.

Alienation, the lack of any stake in society, is what drives youth into joyriding or self-destructive drug use, not some disembodied and inexplicable "evil impulse", not parental neglect, not any of the things that Major and Blair use as excuses for the miserable failure of their system.

More police and prisons are not the answer. These are simply capitalism's methods of repressing and containing us. Working class people are perfectly capable of policing our own communities against genuinely anti-social crime, against rape, abuse and murder, against the racial attacks and domestic violence that the police have always ignored anyway.

But we need to fight against the real causes of our society's decline, against mass unemployment, against bad housing, against the destruction of our services and communities.

The "shared values" that Blair appeals to will never exist while society is torn apart by class division, by a system where a tiny minority live in luxury, control the political parties, police, courts and media, while the rest of us struggle to get by in ever worsening conditions. Only when that minority have been overthrown, when the workers set out to build a society based on equality and shared wealth, will the alienation and dehumanisation of class society come to end. ■

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workers power

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.

Birmingham

Where is Europe going?
Tuesday 16 March 7.30
See seller for venue

Cardiff

Fighting Unemployment: a Communist Strategy
Monday 15 March

What is ultra-leftism?

Wednesday 24 March
See seller for time and venue

London

Is Labour worth supporting in Lambeth?
Wednesday 3 March 7.30pm
Lambeth Unemployed and TU resource centre
Thomton Street SW9

Malcolm X: a challenge to Marxism?

Wednesday 17 March 7.30
Room E199 East Building
London School of Economics
Houghton Street WC2

How can the unemployed organise?

Wednesday 24 March 7.30
Lambeth Unemployed and TU resource centre
Thomton Street SW9

Manchester

Malcolm X and black liberation
Wednesday 10 March 7.30
Students' Union, Manchester Metropolitan University, Oxford Road.

Sheffield

Cuba under siege
Tuesday 16 March 7.30pm
See seller for venue

DEBATE

THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT TODAY

With Mark Harrison
of Workers Power

Susil Gupta of ANALYSIS

Wednesday 10 March

7.30pm Room A 220 Old Building,
LSE, Houghton Street, London
WC2

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FUND DRIVE

The Tories are toying with a number of fund raising ideas for their class: taxing food for the unemployed, scrapping pensions and mortgage relief, cutting back on jobs and facilities for working people across the board.

To build the fightback Workers Power also needs money. But we've got no rich millionaires backing our fight against exploitation: we have to rely on the goodwill of our readers and supporters to keep our paper and our organisation going. That's why we urgently need support for our Fighting Fund. We need £3000 by the end of this month.

Thanks to readers and supporters in Birmingham who pulled out the stops to raise a grand total of £204 this month. Thanks also go to readers in Middlesborough, a council worker in east London, and readers in Surrey and Chesterfield for their donations.

All our supporters need to move their fundraising activities into top gear this month to help meet the target. Get fundraising for Workers Power!

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PUBLIC SECTOR

Strike Together

AROUND 100,000 local government workers are to be sacked in the next two years. One in five London hospital beds are to close. The rail is to be privatised with the loss of thousands of jobs leading to falling safety standards. Adult education and youth services are being severely cut. Local community schemes and projects are being closed down.

There are countless examples in local government of savage redundancies and cuts. But Nalگو and other unions are not organising national resistance. They have relied on local deals to minimise job losses, leaving workers to fight battles one by one.

In Sheffield the Labour council is trying to "save" jobs by forcing the workforce to take a pay cut of 3.25%! The workers cannot even be guaranteed the national figure of a miserly 1.5% pay rise this year.

Manchester City Council has declared war on the unions to impose compulsory competitive tendering. It is totally restructuring the Housing Department through trying to take on and defeat a traditionally militant and well organised section of workers.

Attacks similar to these are happening up and down the country. The leadership has played a treacherous role. They are determined that action does not get out of their control, like the Newham strike, and is settled as soon as possible whether or not it means a defeat for the workers.

In response to the Islington, Camden and Newham strikes, which reportedly cost Nalگو £9.5 million, strike pay is to be restricted. Paying active union members money in times of hardship may affect these bureaucrats' bloated salaries.

In response to these attacks many on the left have been arguing for one day strikes. But this is not the answer. Sectional one day strikes, or even the 24 hour General Strike being argued for by Militant, will not secure the defeat of all these attacks, let alone the Tories' overall plans for the public sector.



The bosses can choose to sit out a one day strike, a two or three day strike, or even a series of rolling strikes. Management and the Tories know this. So do hundreds of thousands of workers. That is why one day actions can only be useful if they are linked to building for indefinite action, part of a strategy that can guarantee victory.

This strategy needs to take as its starting point an understanding of the political attack being launched by the Tories on the public sector.

They want to cut spending on local government and education to lower the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement. The Tories and their class cannot allow money that could be filling their coffers to be used to provide services for working class people. They want to break the power of unions in the public sector, from the firefighters to the hospital workers. To defeat this will take determined, co-ordinated and militant action from us. That is why we need an indefinite public sector strike, linking up all the present sectional and local fights.

We must demand that the national leaderships act, but we must not

count on it. In every area we should build public sector action committees. These can draw in delegates from the schools, rail, mines, hospitals, from every stewards' committee, union branch, tenants' and community organisations. These organisations must fight to launch strikes and occupations of every workplace or service facing cuts or closures. Links should be built with struggles in the private sector like Timex and Yarrows.

As the experience of Cardiff shows (see right) one section can mobilise others and point the way forward. If we hold back in fear of isolation, we may end up repeating the events of last October, where the rest of the movement was waiting for the miners to act while the miners were waiting for the rest of the movement. Some have spoken of "keeping our powder dry" until everyone else is ready to fight at the same time. That's not the way things happen in the real world. The real danger is that without rank and file organisation and an all out public sector strike, our leaders will surrender without firing a single shot. ■

Cardiff shows the way

BY PAULINE ATIENZA

Natfhe South Glamorgan Adult and Community Education Branch (in a personal capacity)

ers Support Group produced leaflets which were distributed at local factories.

Natfhe branch members were invited to speak at other union meetings in local community centres. This generated more support, with groups of local youth and pensioners arranging a coach from at least one of the Cardiff estates. Despite legal threats, Nalگو workers in Cardiff city hall won strike action on the day.

Over a period of about three weeks, various groups of workers supported the lobby over closure of hospitals and other services. Mid-Glamorgan councillors gave their employees a nod and a wink to take a long lunch hour and attend the lobby. At the eleventh hour the Wales TUC conceded there was "a bit of a bandwagon" and that they had better put themselves at the front of it!

Councillors were constantly lobbied by many union members and several arguments were had on the alternatives open to the Labour council. A Workers Power supporter persistently tackled them on the question of standing up to the Tories, withholding the interest payable to the banks and implementing a deficit budget to meet the needs of the working class voters they claim to represent.

The Labour councillors tried to use the opportunity to appear left and put themselves at the head of the campaign. They hoped to deflect workers' anger away from themselves and onto the Welsh Office. But the cheers for the Workers Power speaker on the platform left none of them in any doubt that everyone there held the council equally responsible for the destruction of services.

The Wales TUC wanted nothing to do with it at first. But the consistent work of militants building from below made it impossible for the stuffed shirts of the Wales TUC to boycott their own "Jobs Action Day" any longer. Workers in Cardiff and across South Wales showed them that if they will not take the lead then we will do it ourselves! ■

It was Cardiff's largest demonstration for years! On 18 February between 4,000 and 5,000 people gathered outside the Welsh Office. Trade union banners mingled with banners made by youth from sheets 'borrowed' from their beds—desperately hoping that mum wouldn't recognise them on TV! Workers and the unemployed stood shoulder to shoulder.

Their demand was clear: that the unelected Tories of the Welsh Office and the local Labour councils should scrap their plans to cut jobs and services. The loudest cheers were for the two speakers on the platform who demanded that the councillors stand up to the Tories: an NUM speaker and a speaker from Workers Power. As Tyrone O'Sullivan of Tower Colliery NUM said:

"We are wildebeests; in there [the Welsh Office] are the lions. When they come out we usually turn and run. Now the wildebeests must take on the lions and trample them into the ground!"

This marvellous lobby was initiated by one small union branch.

South Glamorgan County Council was aiming for large scale redundancies. Adult education classes, youth clubs and community education would all be severely affected. Following a lobby of the council in January in which councillors agreed to sign a petition calling on the Welsh office to reverse all Public Sector cuts, Natfhe held a large meeting with the NUT which agreed to respond to the TUC's Jobs Action Day by lobbying the Welsh Office against all cuts. At the same time the council was intending to slash art services, an outward bound centre and music services. Over 300 workers were to lose their jobs with a further 206 to go in the near future. It was crucial that all unions worked together to fend off this attack on jobs and on the basic right of working class people to culture, self-improvement and leisure.

Despite numerous approaches to the Wales TUC they refused to build the lobby. They were too busy blowing up balloons symbolising the number of unemployed in Wales! Natfhe set about contacting other branches, wrote to every trades council and TUC affiliated union based in Wales and any activist willing to push their bureaucrats into action. The Cardiff Min-

Busworkers vote for strike action

CRUNCH TIME has come for 12,000 London busworkers. Management is trying to impose wage cuts and an extended working week. But the mood is there for a militant fight back.

On 19 February workers in eight of the ten companies voted by a two-to-one margin for strike action. Only CentreWest recorded a majority against any form of action. But unless T&G militants move swiftly to seize control of the dispute and launch an indefinite strike across the fleet there is a very real danger of a devastating defeat.

By the evening of 2 March, T&G officials had still not named the date for even a one day stoppage. Meanwhile, management at several garages has continued to wage psychological warfare against workers now fearful of summary sackings. The T&G should have responded by pulling the buses off



the road to hold mass meetings when management started to bypass the established channels of communication.

Instead, after workers received individual letters demanding they waive their right to take any action against the new contract or else lose their meagre compensation pay-

ments, the union bureaucrats hesitated and then advised members to sign on the bosses' dotted line.

Every move of officials like district officer, Ken Fuller, and regional secretary, Ollie Jackson, hinges on legal advice. But as one Leaside garage rep told *Workers Power*,

"... there's no help for us in law,

only in ourselves. The union wasted two years and thousands in the courts over the attack on Norbiton workers, only to get a ruling in management's favour."

As one conductor at Tottenham garage told us,

"There's already a feeling that management have won yet again, even though we voted pretty solidly for a strike."

At London General a full-time official has gone for much larger transitional payments of £4,900 to £7,000 as opposed to the £2-3,000 on offer elsewhere. This could undercut unity across the fleet.

As we go to press, garage reps are finally due to meet. At the very least they should set the date for the start of an indefinite strike until the Tories retreat from their

plans for deregulation and privatisation and the unit bosses scrap the new contracts.

Whatever the outcome of the meeting, rank and file militants urgently need to organise across all companies. The question of unofficial action may soon be posed. The need to defy the anti-union laws to win is already clear. Every effort must be made to win solidarity action from other transport workers in LUL and BR, who are themselves faced with large scale job losses and dramatically worsening conditions.

The grim alternative will be still more wage cutting, the axing of jobs and years of struggle to rebuild basic trade union organisation on the buses. Busworkers must act now, before it's too late! ■

The bosses' offensive...

THREE THINGS characterise the industrial situation today:

- there is a very serious offensive against the working class;
- isolated sections of workers are waging determined resistance;
- the trade union leaders are reining in mass anger to prevent it turning into mass strike action.

The bosses' offensive is not just about slashing jobs. It is about restructuring industries in preparation for an economic upturn. If firms are to benefit from any recovery, no matter how shallow, the bosses have to cut wages and boost productivity even more.

That is what is happening right across industry. In the last four months of 1992 the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) announced that one third of all pay settlements included a pay freeze, double the figure for the previous four months. The issue of pay, and related attacks on tea breaks, relief time, shift and overtime premiums, is at stake in disputes at Yarrows shipyard, Peugeot Talbot, NEI Parsons and a host of other plants.

Tied to these attacks is a strategy of either union busting (Timex) or turning unions into management poodles (Hoover). Less dramatically, but as important, managers are undermining the role of unions within the bargaining process. Attacks on pay and jobs in the public sector are part of this offensive.

Workers are keenly aware of the destructive effects that this new offensive is having on their lives. It is producing a very militant response in some sections. Timex in Dundee is a good example.

The workers originally agreed to the bosses' proposals for lay offs but wanted to control the rota to ensure fairness. The bosses insisted that they would decide who should be laid off (every shop steward in the plant) and that wages would be cut anyway.

When the workers struck the bosses sacked every shop floor worker and started bussing in scabs. They got a court order limiting pickets. Timex strikers responded by building mass pickets, for which the convener and deputy convener now both face jail or fines. But the strike remains solid to date.

Timex is not alone. At Yarrows in Glasgow workers defied the recommendation of union officials to accept a pay and tea break cut, and voted nearly unanimously for strike action. Other, smaller, disputes over pay, jobs and conditions are breaking out across the country.

It was a mood of growing resistance like this that exploded last October with the announcement of the pit closure programme. Workers were angry because they knew that the Tory butchery was part of the offensive that bosses were launching in factories and offices across the country.

The anger is still there. But disputes are being deliberately isolated from each other. Just as the trade union leaders worked through the autumn and early winter to prevent mass action over the pit closures, so they want to prevent disputes like Timex from becoming linked with other strikes.

The TUC's 18 February day of action—lobbies, marches, petitions, jazz bands, balloons, but no strikes—was a classic example of what they want. It achieved nothing. This approach is disastrous. It will not save a single job or win a single pay rise. It demobilises and demoralises workers. It paves the way for future attacks.

The task of challenging these bureaucrats is now vital if we are to stop the bosses' offensive. ➤



Timex workers on the march

... and how to fight it!

“**I** SAY it's about time we had a step back to the seventies. At least we'd have a bit more control, more money, and our dignity wouldn't be completely smashed.”

This was one Peugeot Talbot worker's response to attacks on breaks and pay. It sums up the frustration many militants feel faced with the failure of the union officials to wage a serious fight.

The strength of rank and file workplace organisation in the 1970s was much greater than today. That strength delivered far more to workers than the TUC strategy of new realism. It limited the ability of union officials to sell out our struggles, although it never completely removed it.

But the rank and file trade union militancy of the 1970s was itself limited. It had no political answer to the demobilisation of the working class that the Labour government carried through on behalf of the bosses. It did not generate a political answer capable of stopping the terrible defeats of the 1980s. It left the bureaucrats in charge of the unions.

Our task is to rebuild rank and file organisation, to organise a fight against the bosses' offensive, to overthrow the treacherous union bureaucrats. To succeed in this task we must learn the lessons of the 1970s, not simply wish for their return.

The central contradiction in the unions is between rank and file workers and the bureaucrats. Yarrows is a case in point. John Carty, the AEEU bureaucrat in charge, was against a strike from the start. When the management were forced to increase their pay offer, Carty called on the strikers to go back to work. They voted overwhelmingly to stay out. Carty takes up the story:

“We conveyed our opinions to the workforce and they turned us over. Yarrows is adamant that it can't give more. We are hopeful that we will be able to resolve the problem, but can't see how at this stage.”

Carty can't see beyond the negoti-

ating table. He favours a deal that will cut workers' pay and tea breaks. But his tea breaks and fat salary are safe. He does not have the same interest as the workforce. He does have an interest in ending the strike, because it is draining union resources, threatening his relationship with management and his role as a “responsible” negotiator.

In other words, workers and bureaucrats are motivated by different interests. The bureaucracy is an obstacle to rank and file workers' ability to defend their most basic interests.

The Timex workers, for example, need mass solidarity to ensure the success of their picket line. They need solidarity strike action if their convener and deputy convener are punished under the anti-union laws. But the bureaucrats are only interested in getting the dispute over so that union resources will be safe from the sequestrators. When the miners needed a general strike to defend their jobs and hurl the Tories into chaos, the union leaders stepped in with a respectable, law abiding campaign that has left a threat hanging over every job.

Rank and file workers need to be organised against the bureaucrats. But in the 1970s the rank and file organisations that did exist either placed their faith in alternative “left” bureaucrats (who betrayed them) or ignored the bureaucracy altogether in the hope that it wouldn't interfere.

This was a failure of politics, a failure of limiting the scope of the rank and file organisations to trade union, reformist, politics. Trade unions are vital organisations of working class self defence. But they bargain with capitalism over what it can afford. In the period of crisis we live in it can afford less and less. Trade union logic takes workers down with capitalism.

Revolutionary politics challenges the logic of capitalism, it seeks to focus workers' struggles not merely against individual bosses but against their entire system. To succeed we cannot ignore the question of leadership. We have to bring rank and

file militants together, build networks which can provide solidarity, can defeat the machinations of the bureaucrats and transform the unions themselves. This means rendering them democratic, it means making leaders recallable, paying them the same wage as the workers they represent, electing leaders who truly represent the rank and file's interests. But simply bringing militants together is no guarantee of defeating the bureaucrats. That is why rank and file organisation must serve a purpose beyond just union democracy. It must aim to build revolutionary, class struggle unions, fighting for a programme that begins with the defence of basic working class interests but directs that into a challenge to capitalism.

The need for such a revolutionary perspective is clear from the tragedy at Leyland Daf. Faced with the Anglo-Dutch firm's bankruptcy, workers were left scrapping with each other over which plant should be saved, or selling off their rights in return for an insecure future at a firm that could be closed at the whim of its new bosses.

Meanwhile workers who have given their lives to making profits for Leyland Daf are thrown onto the dole or turned into low paid automats. Yet, as we explain elsewhere (see page 7) there are other alternatives to unemployment, alternatives that defend jobs, that benefit all workers, that make sense for the good of society as a whole. But they are anti-capitalist alternatives. They go beyond what the bosses can afford and are based on what workers need.

Unless a rank and file movement is built on an anti-capitalist as well as an anti-bureaucratic basis, then it will suffer the same fate as the movements of the 1970s. It will go down to defeat and dispersal.

If politics are the key to building a rank and file movement in the 1990s, then why don't we just go straight for building a party? This is the argument of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Militant. They claim to be able to organise workers directly, so

they see no need for a rank and file movement.

We do need a revolutionary political party. A rank and file movement is not an alternative to a party. But why set the need for a party against the need for a rank and file movement? A real party, even if it were a lot bigger than the SWP, would be faced with the problem of organising militants who are prepared to struggle, but who are not yet convinced of the need for revolution. We do not just ignore such workers until they are ready to join the party. We must unite with them in struggle now, for common goals.

Workers at Yarrows who hate John Carty may well be reformists themselves. But they may also be prepared to join with other militants in the AEEU to get rid of the Cartys of this world, to organise a practical link-up with Timex workers, reinforcing each other's picket lines, with stopping the re-entry of the EETPU into the TUC on the basis of scab unionism, with fighting to make their union more democratic.

There are countless points of unity between revolutionaries and rank and file militants, even reformist ones, on such issues. An organised rank and file movement is an effective and practical way of cementing such unity. A rank and file movement would be a vital arena within which the party could fight for leadership, demonstrating the practical value of its politics. It would be the best way to win workers to the programme of the party and to the party itself.

The same argument holds good for every union. A revolutionary party worth its salt would be bending every effort in the current period to building a rank and file movement, and fighting for it to adopt revolutionary policies. That is the sort of party we desperately need today. That type of party cannot just be proclaimed from thin air: it has to be built by fusing revolutionary politics with a sizeable fraction of the most militant workers. That is the party that Workers Power is trying to build. Join us in the fight to make it a reality. ■

Strike to save the pits!

AFTER A Select Committee, protracted court wrangles, leaks about government plans and months of a "Coal not Dole" campaign, Heseltine is poised to publish his White Paper on the coal industry.

It is an open secret that this will announce a new closure programme. The Select Committee report was a gift to the Tories, courtesy of Labour MPs led by Richard Caborn. It got them off the hook and it justified closing some of the threatened 31 pits.

Of course Caborn and his fellow class traitors wanted to keep half of these pits open. Heseltine responded by claiming only 12 would survive. British Coal has weighed in arguing that the eight million extra tonnes of production proposed by the Select Committee would only keep five or six of the pits open.

Future

In this sickening numbers game the livelihoods of miners and the future of entire communities are being thrown around like gambling

chips by politicians and coal bosses. The NUM are absolutely right to demand that not one pit should close.

It is also vital that the fight to defend jobs is linked now to the fight against the privatisation of the mines. The government is set on linking the two issues. And in preparation for privatisation it is consulting J T Boyd, a US mining consultancy firm, to help it determine which of the threatened pits should stay open and join the others in a privatised industry.

Safety

J T Boyd is in favour of extending a practice called the "deep cut procedure". This involves cutting deeper into the face without as many roof supports as are currently used in the mines. The results of this are horrifying. In the USA the United Mine Workers has recorded that 50% of roof falls occur in mines that use this method. Yet these

mines account for only 18% of all mines in the USA.

These same pits also account for 63% of "ignitions" caused by methane gas. The Health and Safety Commission here has agreed to suspend judgement on this procedure until after the White Paper.

Teams

The message is clear. Pits kept open in preparation for privatisation will face worsening conditions and appalling safety standards. It is a message that miners in threatened pits need to start hammering home to miners in pits or areas that are unsure about the need to take strike action.

The need for such action is desperately urgent. A campaign to get it must be launched by rank and file miners now.

Every morning miners at Houghton Main pit in Yorkshire, one of the ten most threatened pits, have to go into work and sign on and are then sent home. These miners should not be left to their fate. The NUM should be organising teams of such miners to speak to other miners and railworkers, building support for a strike to defend every pit and every job. Women Against Pit Closures has sent delegations to workplaces. This is useful but it should be aimed at building for a national miners' strike, solidarity action from other workers and the occupation of all pits threatened with closure.

The rail and coal unions plan a series of one-day strikes and a rolling programme of industrial ac-

tion. Precious time has been lost and no definite dates for joint action have been fixed. Joint rail and coal rank and file action committees should be built to ensure that there are no further postponements of the action.

But rank and file miners need to organise for much more than the one day action currently being proposed by the NUM leadership. Many militants argue that a day of action is necessary to get the ball rolling, to build on the campaign that has been conducted over the last few months.

If a day of action was clearly built for as a launch pad for all out indefinite action then there would be some justification for such an approach. But that isn't what is being proposed by anybody in the leadership of the NUM, NACODS or the rail unions. They are posing isolated one day actions as an alternative to an all out strike. Such a strategy will not keep pits open, stop privatisation or save jobs on the rail.

Rhetoric

The government can sit out single days of action because one day strikes won't hurt them. Production won't be badly damaged. Coal stocks will remain high. There will be no threat of power cuts. And it will be difficult to build solidarity action in the rest of the working class if action is sporadic and limited.

Scargill has declared that Major's government is the most reactionary one ever. If this is a serious

assessment rather than just a piece of platform rhetoric then Scargill should add that such a government will have to be defeated by determined class action, by an all out strike, by occupations of the threatened pits. He should point to the ability of working class action to achieve victories.

Ballots

A mass picket at Betws, South Wales, prevented management moving equipment out of the threatened pit. Occupations could consolidate this victory by tying up expensive mining equipment at every threatened pit. Miners could rally whole sections of the working class, angry at unemployment and attacks on pay and services, into action alongside them if they take a lead and launch an all out strike.

Many within the NUM have been in favour of delaying the ballot, fearing that a lost ballot will mean the end of the struggle. With the White Paper about to be published, with almost five months of a campaign to win support behind us, that argument no longer holds any water. Any more delay will mean lost pits rather than lost ballots. It will mean that Major and his job cutting gang will be able to wriggle out of the coal crisis. Sacked miners will live with the consequences of this.

- Not one pit must close!
- No more delays!
- Occupy the threatened pits!
- For a national miners' strike!

INTERVIEW

Fighting privatisation

Workers Power interviewed Phil White, chair of Tower NUM lodge, South Wales, about British Coal's plan to privatise the colliery and the action needed to stop them. The interview also covered the 5 March ballot for strike action.

Phil: British Coal's intention is to try to privatise the surface of the colliery first, by the end of March, then they would like to privatise the rest of the colliery, up to the point of production. That would leave only 93 men employed by British Coal (BC) compared with 900 at the moment. If this goes ahead the men's standard of living will be dramatically reduced, surface private contractors would mean the men would no longer be entitled to bonuses, concession-

ary fuel, subsidised transport and rest days. Holidays would have to be re-negotiated. In reality all that we have fought for over the years would have gone out the window. Tower has made £12 million profit this year and an expected £17 million profit next year, so BC are getting even more greedy, saving on wages to make an even bigger profit. We find this totally unacceptable as a lodge.

WP: How will the privatisation actually take place?

Phil: One company will take over the surface, then maybe two or three companies underground, outside the point of production—the coalface. For example, one company may take over FSVs (Free Steering Vehicles), another craftsmen and yet another belt cleaning.

We would then have to negotiate with five or six employers, making it very difficult for us as a union. Rest assured that if they get away with what they want, the face worker will not be long after.

The management want to get the biggest earning union members on

their own, at the point of production, with good bonuses. It's like British Steel in the early 1980s.

WP: What has been the lodge's response so far?

Phil: We immediately objected to the manager's plan. We told him we would fight the privatisation of Tower wholeheartedly. We don't want to be left out on a limb, the only pit in Wales and the only pit in Britain being privatised. We are not going to be the test pit for the privatisation programme!

WP: What's the national policy of the union on privatisation and contractors?

Phil: Resolutions have gone to conference opposing further contracting out of services in the industry. We have sent resolutions stating we are prepared to take action against further contractors coming into the pit. We are calling on conference to take strike action against further contracting out.

WP: Isn't that too late?

Phil: National Conference is in July but I can inform you that after the 5 March ballot for a national day of strike action we then may have to take a separate ballot at Tower on contracting out. But what we really want and need is a national policy.

WP: Have any links been made with any other pits threatened with privatisation?

Phil: No links have been made yet. The national union is gathering information from all the coalfields about what's happening. But we do know that Ellington colliery in the North East have recently taken a day's strike action against private contractors coming into their pit. We don't want guerilla tactics against the contractors, it only isolates us. What we need is a national policy and we at our lodge will push for that.

WP: You say you want a national policy, but would Tower be prepared to take strike action alone?

Phil: There's nothing worse than isolation. But if we feel the mood of the

pit is strong enough and that we have to lead the way then we'll do it.

WP: How will the 5 March ballot go at Tower?

Phil: We are confident of a resounding vote in favour at Tower. The pressure we have applied so far has already made the manager retreat and hold meetings with the workforce. On 5 March, we are not directly affected by closure but we are indirectly affected by privatisation, although eventually we will be affected by closures. We are saying to the men that 5 March is a vote against privatisation at Tower.

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Scargill and Aslef leader Fullick

Fighting unemployment: the communist strategy

BY G R MCCOLL

EACH DAY adds to the toll of human misery. At the end of February the chemicals giant, ICI, announced the loss of 12,000 jobs worldwide while British Gas axed 2,500 workers. In manufacturing a staggering 200,000 jobs disappeared in 1992.

No sector of the economy has been immune. The recently booming insurance and banking industry has shed 100,000 jobs in the past two years. Local councils eliminated more than 18,000 posts in the first two months of this year alone.

The Unemployment Unit counts the jobless by the definition used in 1982, prior to many of the 30 or more Tory attempts to fiddle the figures. Its estimates over 4.1 million out of paid work in January. Even the government's fake statistics concede that there are now more than three million jobless. Of these more than a third are branded "chronically" or long term unemployed, out of a job for more than a year.

Bare statistics can never reveal the terrible damage done to the health and spirit of individuals, families and communities. Mass unemployment has returned with a vengeance not only to Britain but virtually all the advanced countries. The grim reality of the dole means evictions, home repossessions and grinding poverty.

It spurs the growth of crime on the streets. Relationships collapse under the strain of trying to make ends meet on miserly hand-outs from the DSS. Individuals succumb to despair and self-destructive abuse of alcohol and drugs. Unemployment stokes a climate of growing domestic violence. Desperate youth search for scapegoats, spurring an increase in vicious racial attacks.

Unemployment is a sure sign of a society that is going backwards, of a system that squanders the lifeblood of progress—human labour—while all around us the conditions of life decline as our roads, transport, schools, hospitals, mines and factories fall into disrepair or disappear altogether.

Yet we are told by the bosses' media that this virulent social sickness is simply a fact of life in the 1990s. In Norman Lamont's infamous words unemployment "... is a price well worth paying" to curb inflation. In a distant echo of Norman Tebbit's "On Yer Bike" speech, John Major recently suggested that a Tory-voting, sacked middle manager should look for work in France!

The Tories have used mass unemployment as a weapon to undermine the bargaining power of the unions. But mass unemployment is not just a result of Tory economic policies. It is the result of a system that cannot produce for need, only for profit.

This is why we face the sickening sight of 500,000 building workers on the dole while thousands huddle for warmth by doorways and grates on the streets of London. Leyland DAF face the continuing threat of massive job losses while the peasants and workers of sub-Saharan Africa desperately need vehicles these workers could readily produce.

Cause

The root cause of mass unemployment is not new technology or the supposed irresponsibility of today's youth, but the savage irrationality of the capitalist system itself.

Even liberal commentators like the *Guardian's* Melanie Phillips now blame the victims to "instil some moral values" among youth. Labour MP David Blunkett not only got in before Major in suggesting a "work for your dole" workfare scheme but has even called for the reintroduction of national community service. But in 1993 not even Her Majesty's armed forces can soak up the reserve army of labour!

The phrase "full employment" has vanished from the vocabulary of the

Labour Party. For John Smith unemployment is a cruel reality that happens to someone else. For all his occasional skirmishes in parliament, Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown offers no hope to the jobless other than the most timid forms of state intervention.

With its Alternative Economic Strategy gathering dust on library shelves the Labour left echoes the most reactionary Tories with support for "beggar thy neighbour" import controls. But the multinational bosses who run companies like Hoover have proved keen to exploit the fear of unemployment and the spinelessness of trade union bureaucrats.

By pitting French workers in Dijon against their Scottish brothers and sisters, Hoover bosses sought and won wage cuts and a worsening of terms and conditions. Yet the experience of giveback bargaining, especially in the US car industry, shows that concessions do not guarantee jobs.

Alternative

There is an alternative to jobs slaughter and the erosion of living standards: it is the path of militant class struggle to preserve existing jobs and extend the right to work for all.

In Britain low basic pay and chronic skill shortages still compel widespread overtime working. Official statistics suggest that the average working week in manufacturing stood at more than 43 hours in 1992, one of the longest in the EC.

Trade unionists must revive the long standing call for a 35 hour week without any loss of pay or intensification of work. This is what we mean by a **sliding scale of hours** in today's Britain. It is also a far cry from the cynical "settle for 37" with strings attached campaign run by engineers' leader Bill Jordan in 1989/90.

The introduction of new technology should be used to lighten the workload, not to chuck workers on the dole. If new techniques and machinery were used in the interests of the majority rather than a minority of profiteers then labour saving devices would mean cutting the hours, not the jobs. **Job sharing with no loss of pay** could abolish unemployment overnight.

But then the bosses sing their favourite refrain: "Where is the money going to come from?". Workers should reply in chorus: "From you!" Despite the miserable conditions in which working class people are forced to live, Britain is one of the richest countries in the world.

In the autumn of 1992 the banks squandered billions in a matter of weeks in a vain attempt to prop up sterling. The battered NHS will soon axe tens of thousands of ancillary and nursing jobs, yet finds money to pay the bloated salaries of a swelling layer of top management. A handful of multi-millionaire parasites live in undreamt of luxury.

The bosses repeatedly hide behind business secrets and doctored accounts to plead poverty, declare redundancies and shut workplaces. Profit hungry corporations claim insolvency or hardship to wring concessions from their workers or as a pretext for shifting production to greenfield sites in Britain or semi-colonial countries.

This is why the labour movement



This system breeds unemployment

must fight for the bosses to **open the books**. Workers must demand free access to company accounts and all business records. We will see for ourselves what our exploiters can and can't afford.

But capitalist firms do, of course, go bust. This has led some militants to reject the demand for opening the books. "The bosses will show us the books to prove the need for sackings, speed up and pay cuts" they claim. The Socialist Workers Party echoes this argument.

This objection to the call to open the books makes sense only from the standpoint of trade union politics, from the perspective of accepting the rules of collective bargaining against a capitalist employer as laid down by the capitalist system. Communists go beyond these rules.

We fight not just for more crumbs from the loaf, but for the whole bakery. In cases of genuine bankruptcy of capitalist firms we have an answer. **Workers must fight for the nationalisation** of such companies with no compensation to the previous exploiters and under democratic workers' control. We demand that the capital-

ists, through their state, be forced to pay for the bankruptcy of their system.

The jobless must be brought back into the labour force, through a **massive programme of public works**. Such projects must not be 1930s style cheap labour schemes but offer full union rates of pay and training under workers' control. The need for a crash programme of housing repair and construction is painfully clear in the inner cities and on the post-war outer city estates.

Repair

Britain's infrastructure, crumbling from years of systematic under-investment, urgently needs repair and modernisation. The state-funded completion of rail electrification and a massive expansion of public transport facilities would dramatically improve the quality of life for millions, while lifting tens of thousands out of the humiliating isolation of the dole.

How to pay for all this? By **taxing the rich, not the poor**. The Tories' plans to introduce VAT on food are a disgrace: already the dole is barely

enough to cover the cost of food. The Tories, echoed by Labour, say that taxes on the rich will damage the economy, removing the incentive to invest. But investment is already drying up. If the capitalists refuse to invest, if they sit on their money or shut down existing businesses, we should take the money from them. How? By nationalising all firms declaring job losses and by nationalising the banks, insurance companies and City finance houses.

For those out of work now the unions and the jobless themselves must fight for state benefits equal to the average industrial wage of £250 a week. Such benefits must extend to women removed from the labour force while caring for children or ill family members. The battle for full benefits must be part of the broader struggle for the socialised provision of such care.

Fight

Right now we need a relentless fight to defend every job. Alongside arguments against the lure of voluntary redundancy agreements and the acceptance of pay cuts must go the clear call for **indefinite strikes**, linked wherever possible to workplace **occupations**.

The labour movement has failed the jobless many times over the last twenty years. Those now unemployed need to play an integral part in combatting the immediate scourge of unemployment and its root cause in capitalism. To date regional TUCs and some Labour controlled local authorities have funded local unemployed centres. More often than not, however, these have offered tea and sympathy, benefits advice and little else.

But even worthy exceptions on Merseyside, in Tyneside and Chester, a generation of young jobless leaves significant sections of working class youth completely cut off from the traditions, solidarity and aims of the workers' movement. But politics abhors a vacuum. If our class does not organise the desperate and down-trodden youth, then many will be left open to the racist and nationalist appeals of fascist outfits like the BNP, while others fall into apathy, crime and self destruction.

The existing trade unions must offer the jobless full rights of participation at reduced subs. But that is not all. The unemployed must demand subsidies from the unions to build their own movement, the best guarantee against further atomisation and alienation. In this way our class, employed and unemployed, can build genuine unity in the fight against the obscenity of mass unemployment. In this way our class can be won to a programme which links the fight against job losses in the here and now to a struggle against the rotten profit system.

This is the struggle for socialism: a democratically planned economy which puts the whole of society to work to meet public need, not private greed. ■

“IT'S SOCIAL dumping and it's shameful”. That was the response of one Hoover worker on a picket line outside the Dijon factory in France when he was asked to comment on the decision of Hoover to close his plant and move production and jobs to Scotland.

But 650 jobs in Dijon were not the only casualties. Hoover bosses negotiated separately over some months with union bureaucrats in Scotland and France to see who could bargain away more of their workers' pay and conditions. Jimmy Airlie of the AEEU won.

In return for the 400 new jobs exported from Dijon to Cambuslang the existing workforce conceded limited-period contracts for the new workers, restrictions on all their rights to strike, a freeze on this year's pay, flexible working time and practices and even the installation of spy video cameras on the shop floor!

Britain is becoming known by workers in the EC as the “Hong Kong of Europe”, providing a cheap workforce, a pliant union movement and weak or non-existent pro-worker legislation. Is this true?

One recent contributor to an ongoing debate in the *Morning Star* said that the Hoover case proved that “mobile capital hunts cheap labour like water seeking cracks in a rock.” This is only partly true. Capital moves in and out of countries for a number of reasons, of which low labour costs is one.

It is true that British workers' wages are low by EC standards. But low wages often go hand in hand with low productivity, which is a deterrent for multinational capital. Britain is also notorious in the EC for its relatively low skills and poor educational and training standards. That is why Ford decided to move its Research and Development work from this country to Germany, despite the higher wage costs in Germany.

Moreover, when it comes to closing down plant Britain is cheaper than elsewhere because redundancy entitlement is lower. A French electronics group shut its TV plant in Gosport last year with 3,000 job losses, mainly because they only had to fork out £7,000 per job as opposed to £47,000 in Spain.

The main attraction to potential investors in the UK is fierce anti-union laws together with low non-wage costs. In the front of Hoover bosses' minds was the fact that non-wage costs amount to 10% in Scotland compared to 45% in Dijon. In other words, in Britain the state pays for health care and much else out of general taxation; the burden on the employers is small. In Germany and France the employers have to contribute directly in a way that far exceeds the UK employers' National Insurance contributions.

Competition

Responding to the Hoover affair the Scottish TUC General Secretary said: “The Hoover case just reveals the danger of not having proper harmonisation of social conditions through the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty.”

This is the Chapter that Britain, alone, opted out of. Would it protect workers if Britain signed up for it? The Social Chapter only lays down minimal ground rules for the multinationals to abide by. It ensures that cut-throat competition does not force them to accept measures that would, in the long run, prove dysfunctional to them all.

The Chapter was not made a binding part of the Maastricht Treaty and must be issued by the Commission in the form of specific directives on each member country. Since then, of the 47 provisions, only the most trivial have been approved and with most (on youth protection, sub-contracting, layoff procedures, etc.), there has been no attempt to impose them.

Matters concerning immigration,

social protection, workers' representation, and laws on dismissal all need unanimity. Majority voting only applies to matters of health and safety provision. Meanwhile, those issues most sensitive to the bosses throughout the EC—wages, union rights, the right to strike and lockouts—all remain outside the terms of the Treaty altogether.

So the idea that by accepting the Social Chapter the problems facing British workers will be solved at a stroke is well wide of the mark.

The present opposition to the Maastricht Treaty within the labour movement is based on economic nationalism. This leads to the sickening spectacle of Tony Benn sharing anti-Maastricht platforms with Thatcherites.

Many who oppose the Treaty rightly point to the implications for public spending if the so-called “convergence criteria” are adopted. These aim to squeeze the governments' budget deficits in order to stabilise currencies.

Yet the same opponents are silent about the workers who have benefited from the arrival of funds and the creation of jobs on this basis. They are silent about the economic implications if the Treaty is rejected and Britain becomes part of a second tier in Europe suffering from less access to EC markets and less inward investment (above all from Japan and the USA).

For this reason the working class as a whole cannot take a position for or against Maastricht. Opposition to the Treaty is opposition to one form of capitalist development and support for another. Each of these forms of development have anti-working class implications which must be resisted. But it would be disastrous for the working class in any European country to line up behind one section of the

The working class as a whole cannot take a position for or against Maastricht. Opposition to the Treaty is opposition to one form of capitalist development and support for another

bourgeoisie or another, to espouse protectionism or other nationalist measures.

Every argument that says “set up controls here and get out of the open Europe” is an argument to export unemployment to fellow workers abroad. This would fatally undermine the independence of the workers, and destroy the chances of effective international solidarity between sections of workers under attack by the same capitalists.

Practical international solidarity is what is needed if jobs, conditions and wages are to be protected; this is especially true for British workers. It has a greater part of its domestic



Vacuuming up “little bits of dirt”: unions, strikes, social security. Workers need to stand against chauvinism as well as against the bosses.

Later this month Tory Party whips will be working overtime to defeat an amendment to the Maastricht Treaty. If passed, the amendment threatens the Tories' whole political platform. **Keith Harvey** explains why Europe's main leaders signed Maastricht, why not among the Euro-fanatics, and why British workers should refuse to line up for

Workers must across Euro

manufacturing base owned by foreign companies than any other EC country apart from Spain. Effective action here against these bosses will often require solidarity from workers employed by the same bosses in another country.

This need for international solidarity also applies to British workers employed by British multinationals. These companies employ a massive percentage of their workforce outside Britain. Action taken here, for example against Unilever plants, is far more likely to need the active support of fellow Unilever employees abroad than is the case for other nationalities.

Organisation

Unfortunately, compared to the links between the capitalists, international trade union links are appalling. Although the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) claims to represent some 47 million workers in 22 European countries (95% of all unionised workers in these countries), it is not a fighting organisation of the working class but a bureaucratic machine for lobbying the European Commission.

In Europe it has seen its role simply as representing the working class in the corridors of Brussels and Strasbourg. Armed with Articles 2, 117 and 118 of the Treaty of Rome, the ETUC has called on the bosses “to improve employment opportunities for workers and to contribute to the raising of their standard of living” and to improve working conditions and social security systems.

Meanwhile, in practice the union bureaucracies negotiate desperately with bosses, outbidding each other in the concessions they are prepared to offer. Hoover shows the effects of this in lowered living standards and working conditions in Scotland, and in creating unemployment in France.

The decision of the British TUC to open an office in Brussels should not cause undue excitement amongst genuine internationalists. The TUC will work in much the same way as ETUC. And given its lousy record of defending workers in Britain there is no reason to expect it to change its tune just be-



cause it has an office on the other side of the North Sea.

Neither the Social Charter, nor the incarnation of elements of it in the Social Chapter, are programmes for a workers' Europe. The ETUC is not a fighting organisation that can draw up or fight for such a programme. *Workers desperately need cross border rank and file trade union organisations.* In the 1960s and 1970s various car plants were able to establish shop stewards' level organisation across national boundaries, such as the Ford Combine.

In an increasingly pan-European industrial and service sector, such links and rank and file organisations need to be built. They must collect information, pierce the veil of business secrecy, and disrupt the plans of the bosses to play one plant off against another.

Immediate demands should be fought for: a sliding scale of wages, a legally enforced minimum wage and system of universal benefits. An urgent campaign, organised by the trade unions, is needed to fight growing unemployment.

By the year 2000, if we do not stop it, unemployment levels in Europe will be over six times higher than in the 1960s. Workers can start by fighting for a reduction of the working week to a legally enforced 35 hours without loss of pay throughout the EC. In each plant and combine we need to fight to impose a veto over hiring and firing and hours worked. The threat of job losses must be met with the demand to divide the work out amongst all those on the companies' books.

The mass of new jobs being created in Europe are on short-term contracts, part-time and poorly organised. The fight for 100% trade unionism therefore goes alongside the fight to show that unions can secure permanent

contracts and full-time status.

This is the programme of action that British workers in Europe need. Being dragged behind one set of bosses or another, whether for or against Maastricht, fogs the minds of workers and postpones recognition of the need for a real fight. In Britain we call on Labour to abstain on the Treaty. More importantly, workers must actively build organisations and links from below. We fight for the kind of demands that will really take the working class forward, and attack all the existing reactionary legislation and constitutions of the EC states.

- For the levelling up of all social benefits to the highest level to be found in Europe
- For working class action to stop attacks on social benefits
- Down with anti-trade union laws
- For rank and file links in all industries
- For the free movement of all workers within, and out of Europe
- For the right to political asylum. Down with all immigration controls
- Down with the TREVI and Schengen police agreements
- No to a European police force, no to a European army
- Down with the unelected European Commission and Council of Ministers
- For the election of a sovereign European Constituent Assembly for all those countries in the EC or who seek to join it, convened and protected by the fighting organisations of the working class
- No to a bosses' Europe. Only workers' revolution and workers' council states can unify Europe on a progressive basis
- For the United Socialist States of Europe—a federation of revolutionary workers' states open to all peoples who wish to join

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FOR THE sake of Europe the Tory Party got rid of Margaret Thatcher. For the sake of Europe the government threatened to by-pass parliament altogether to get the Maastricht Treaty ratified. This is real Eurofanaticism, or so it would seem.

Yet the Tory leadership that went to such extremes is made up of the self-same politicians who have done all in their power to retard the process of European integration. They have tried to water down the terms of the Maastricht Treaty, and opt out of part of it (the Social Chapter). They are most hostile to any European union after Maastricht.

The government's apparently contradictory position is the outcome of a complex inner conflict between sections of the British capitalist class, which has been refracted and distorted through the mass base of the Tory Party, its members, supporters and paymasters. This conflict is an expression of a deeper duality within British capitalism.

Britain has been a declining imperialist power for much of this century. Its long descent has been uninterrupted by boom and recession alike. Up until the end of the Second World War the decline was slow, offset by benefits from Britain's colonial possessions.

After the war the decline accelerated, yet only thirty years ago British capitalism produced more industrial goods than West Germany, France and Italy put together. Today, each of them in turn produces more than Britain. It is over the last three decades that we have seen the most dramatic drop in the UK's weight within the European and—by extension—the world economy.

Interests

In the first decade after the Second World War Britain's ruling class made a serious mistake in assessing what their best interests were. They decided to stand aside from the early process of European co-operation and preferred to dream of a return to imperial grandeur. While this would have

British bosses' Euro dilemma

had to be under US supervision it would nevertheless have been based on Britain's own global economic interests, especially its preferential access to raw materials and trade with its former Empire (the Commonwealth).

This myopic decision did not stop Britain's decline, but it did place it outside the mainstream of European integration. This began in the early 1950s and was cemented by the Treaty of Rome in 1958 (when six countries founded the European Economic Community—EEC). For fifteen years Britain stayed outside.

Meanwhile British capitalism's manufacturing base continued to suffer pressure from two directions. First, its preferential markets encouraged stagnatory tendencies and lack of innovation in industry because Britain was not facing the spur of competition. Its major imperialist rivals moved into higher technology sectors and grabbed more of the European and world markets for these goods.

The second source of pressure was that Britain's low and medium technology industries faced stiffer competition from the newly industrialising semi-colonies in Asia and South America. British domestic manufacturing was being eroded from both sides at once. Its troubles would have been compounded by enforced barriers to trade inside the growing EEC market. This produced a shift towards Europe in the ranks of the British ruling class.

The Heath Tory government managed to join the EEC in 1973, but the delay ensured that Britain failed to influence the construction of European institutions. On joining it was forced to pay a very high cost for its procrastination, in the form of large Common Agricultural Policy contributions.

The great irony for the British ruling class was that when Edward Heath took Britain into Europe in 1973 the Tory Party was a party of Europe. But Heath's Tory Party was too weak and consensus-based to confront and defeat the British working class, a class that had scored many victories in the 1960s and 1970s. Thatcher ousted Heath and took on the trade unions. But in getting the Tory Party it needed to defeat the working class, the bosses lost their party of Europe.

Thatcher was prepared to accept the Single Market and Europe as a free trade zone but no more. She wanted all the neo-liberal, de-regulatory aspects of 1992, such as free trade and the removal of customs barriers, but none of its re-regulatory aspects such as the imposition of institutions and rules on the individual member states. Her populist and reactionary nationalism reflected perfectly the provincial narrow minded pigheadedness of her petit-bourgeois Tory mass base. Tebbit speaks for this layer today.

Populism

This populism led to an unbalanced policy on Europe. By 1990 the "give us our money back" attacks on Brussels—just acceptable ten years earlier—had become a liability to Britain's bosses. Britain was losing its ability to shape European policy and was ceding influence to the Franco-German bloc in the EC. This approach was so dysfunctional that it was a major factor in the Tory Party carrying out a palace coup against its leader.

The importance of being part of the EC as a trading bloc is easily seen in the economic figures. Today, the UK

exports over 50% of its goods and about £60bn of goods and services each year to its EC partners. That percentage increases each year—by 9% in 1991 alone. Spain is Britain's fastest growing market, while Germany is Britain's single biggest market in the world. Last year France became the second and the US slipped to the third place.

In recent years the UK has also been at the forefront of cross-border merger activity within the EC; since the mid-1980s some 60% of all intra-EC acquisitions have been carried out by UK firms. They have taken more advantage than most of the greater freedom of movement for capital within the present phase of European integration.

But the investment flows have not been one way traffic. In the last eight years there has been substantial foreign investment in Britain. Over 30% of all Japanese EC investment has been in the UK.

On present trends, by 1995 some 40% of manufacturing industry in Britain will be foreign owned—mainly by the USA and Japan. Much of this is of recent origin and has only arisen in the expectation of enlarging and integrating the European market. This investment would dry up or go into reverse if Britain were to be in a second tier of EC states, outside the Franco-German core.

From the point of view of the capitalists it is economic madness for the UK to be outside the EC mainstream.

Yet the Tories are far from Euro-enthusiasts. Under Major, British ruling class policy towards Europe is to go as far as monetary union and then to delegate the barest of powers to supra-national institutions. That is what Major means by the principle of subsidiarity. In this way Britain wants to impede European political union and slow the tempo of all developments in that direction. To understand why we have to look at the other side of British capitalism—its imperialist interests.

Investment

British imperialism is second only to the US in the size of its global economic assets. While its trade is firmly locked into Europe, the same cannot be said for the pattern of its investments and the dividends it earns from them. British companies' stock of foreign investment is one-third of total corporate assets, a uniquely large proportion compared to the USA (3%), Japan (2%) and Germany (7%). The weight of overseas earnings on investments as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product far outstrips any EC country or Japan.

Nor is this a declining factor. Precisely at the time the Single European Act came into effect, British finance capital's penetration of the US domestic market was deepening. Since 1987 over 40% of all foreign investments in the USA were from UK companies (36% of this in manufacturing, especially chemicals and oil). Throughout the 1980s UK investments in the US expanded at twice the rate of any other EC country. As a result in 1990 Britain possesses one-third of all direct foreign investment in the USA (\$120bn). The impact of US domestic economic fortunes has a disproportionate effect upon the fate of the UK economy.

In short, Britain—and especially key sectors of its multinational capital—has a rational interest in retarding the development of a world economy in which integration within regions such as Europe takes place alongside a growth of protectionism between regional blocs. If this happens British imperialism would stand to lose quite badly. If Europe after 1992 succeeds in becoming Fortress Europe, Britain could both lose out to German and French industrial might within the EC and find its overseas investments severely affected by international trade wars. ■

The meaning of Maastricht

THE EC is the biggest trading bloc in the world market. In association with the seven European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries the EC embraces 40% of global business. It accounts for the largest share of world imports and exports.

But beneath this impressive surface the EC is structurally weaker than its two rival regional economic blocs, the USA and Japan. Its growth rates were less than the global average throughout the 1980s. Its share of world trade in manufactured goods fell from 45% to 36% between 1973 and 1985.

From the late 1970s the USA and Japan grew increasingly competitive at Europe's expense. The Reagan years saw massive deregulation and lowering of the costs of inter-state trade inside the USA.

Proliferation

For whole sectors of European industry—power generation, railways, telecommunications, defence—there was little or no intra-EC trade and competition. This gave rise to a proliferation of firms, but none of them were allowed to grow to a scale that enabled them to compete in the global market against US and Japanese Multinational Corporations (MNCs). The EC's competitive position was deteriorating all the time.

This led to pressure from European MNCs for the removal of all barriers to intra-EC trade. They hoped that this would promote com-

petition and the concentration and centralisation of capital behind the relatively protected environment of EC barriers. But in the early 1980s non-tariff barriers, like differential taxation and differing technical specifications for products, remained a major obstacle to such concentration and centralisation.

Between 1983 and 1987 a group of key MNCs lobbied the EC Commission under the banner of the "Round Table of European Industrialists". They had internalised the fact that on their own, and in competition with each other, they were falling further and further behind their US and Japanese rivals. They pushed for and got Commission backing for a programme of joint research. These MNCs were the prime movers in the push for the Single Market Act.

The EC Commission's Single European Act (SEA) of 1986 set out about 300 measures of mutual standards recognition, selected harmonisation of standards and the elimination of border controls, to be fully implemented by 1 January 1993. Various studies in the mid 1980s calculated that supply side benefits of the Single European Act would lead to short-term gains of around \$250bn to EC firms.

Consensus

The consensus achieved within the European bourgeoisie for these measures revived the power of the Commission as a supra-national executive body, innovating and mediating

between the national interests. It quickly won the argument that the ambitious project and timetable of the single market demanded an end to the Luxembourg Compromise (national veto) and the instigation of qualified majority decision-making for most measures. The national capitalist classes were willing to cede sovereignty to an unelected pan-European bureaucracy—voluntary, if limited, political expropriation.

Consolidation

The problem is that the SEA has not prevented Europe from falling further behind. Much of the feverish activity in capital concentration and centralisation in the last five to seven years has been a belated attempt to "catch-up" with the US and Japan in many industrial sectors: cars, computers, aviation and defence. Meanwhile, Japanese and US MNCs have been consolidating themselves in Europe and forging ahead into new generations of technology products and processes.

More steps were necessary. Plans for further economic and monetary union were incorporated in the Delors Report of 1989 and formed the basis of the Maastricht Treaty discussions in 1991.

The Treaty, finally signed on 7 February 1992, set a timetable for the creation of a single currency for the single market. The European bosses set themselves a common series of economic criteria—so called "convergence" criteria—which would lay

a stable basis for the single currency (EMU).

Without this the single market would become a sloped playing field, operating to the advantage of more efficient German imperialism. The major imperialist powers committed themselves to a medium term strategy (to 1996) of low inflation, low borrowing and low public spending in order to facilitate "convergence" with the standards of German imperialism.

Without converging the economic performances of the EC countries a single currency is impossible. But such a currency is essential since the present system of managed exchange rates (ERM) is open to speculation and manipulation. The recent series of devaluations and blows to ERM have served to highlight the cost of the failure of this transitional system to go forward. It could crash backwards, undermining the single market and deepening the crisis of European capitalism.

Catalyst

Germany and France have drawn this lesson and will act as a catalyst to push forward the European Monetary Union measures of Maastricht. Only prolonged stagnation or slump would lead to EC states resorting to unilateral national measures to rescue themselves in a manner completely incompatible with the objectives set out in the Maastricht Treaty. ■

CUBAN ELECTIONS Stalinist farce

THEY DID not need a swingometer in Havana on 24 February. There were no surprise results and nobody lost their seat in the elections to the National Assembly. Fidel Castro was returned with 99% of the vote in his constituency of Santiago de Cuba—which he has visited twice in 30 years.

But then there was only one candidate for his seat as for the rest of the 589 Assembly places. Trusted Communist Party members or favoured popular and pliant athletes and artists were the only people allowed on the ballot form.

According to European observers around 20% of the electorate voted blank or spoiled their ballot (*El Pais* 26/2/93). Another 11% only voted for some candidates and rejected Castro's plea to vote for the whole list. Thus some form of dissatisfaction with the present situation was evident, even if it can find no coherent or organised expression in Cuba at present.

Such dissatisfaction is hardly surprising. Cuba's economy is falling apart rapidly. National income is down by around 50% from the 1989 level. Up to 80% of the country's industry is idle due to lack of fuel and supplies. Due to the collapse of the USSR and its direct aid, Cuba has only one quarter of the foreign exchange available for imports it had three years ago.

The impact on the lives of the

BY PAULINE GOLDING

Cuban people is drastic. The Cuban average wage can only buy four eggs a week, a small loaf a day and one chicken a month. The diet consists mainly of rice and beans. Castro has said conditions will worsen this year.

For the first time since the 1959 revolution the elections to the National Assembly were direct, all citizens able to vote for the served-up candidates. Previously only deputies in the municipal assemblies were accorded this privilege. Castro had previously described the democratic system as perfect, so why did it suddenly need improvement?

The need to secure a popular mandate for the present harsh measures is one reason. Another, more compelling one, was the insistence of European imperialist powers that Cuba can expect no end to the blockade, no further pressure put on the US to reverse its hostile policies, unless steps were made towards a normal bourgeois parliamentary system.

Elections

Direct elections were a step in this direction but don't meet the imperialists' demand for a multi-party system. In such an election the imperialist-backed one million strong Cuban bourgeoisie in the USA, with billions of US dollars at

its disposal, would hope to get a majority. They would seek to unseat Castro and open up a clearer path to the super-exploitation of the Cuban people by the multinationals.

Fearing such an outcome supporters of the Castro regime say in reply that elections do not matter since there are more important things than "democracy", such as having a good diet and a free, universal education and health system. This was always a bureaucrats' argument, as if there was a contradiction between working class democracy and welfare provision.

The Cuban Stalinists have always refused to allow their well-educated workers to directly control their planned economy and exercise political power themselves through factory and district organisations. Instead they exercise a strict political dictatorship over the masses. They used Soviet aid to build up a 200,000 strong privileged bureaucracy in the party, the economy and the military.

Since the downfall of the USSR and the collapse of aid, Castro has been trying to put a distance between the eastern bloc regimes and his. He argues that the Cuban rulers made mistakes in the 1970s by copying the USSR, by joining Comecon. On this basis a bureaucracy grew up.

The "rectification" campaign



Castro seeks popular backing without losing his grip on power

which started in 1984 has put this right, claim the Cuban Stalinists. Some 70% of the old trade union leaders were replaced, there was a purge in other layers. "Youth" were pushed forward to replace the old ranks. In the new Assembly only 16% of the deputies sat in the previous assembly and only 22% are over 50 years of age.

Through this process Castro has hoped to prove that his regime is deepening democracy and reforming itself.

But it won't wash. A purged Stalinist bureaucracy is still a Stalinist bureaucracy, whether the faces are old or young. The leadership who run the country and the economy are unaccountable to and uncontrolled by the mass of the people who work. A bureaucracy is destroyed when workers take political power into their hands and formulate policies that determine their daily lives.

Castro might like to blame the pressures of the Kremlin for past errors but if this were true then why continue the system now that Cuba is free of its obligations towards the Kremlin? If the Cuban people are so class conscious and educated, why not let them run the country and formulate a plan to rescue it from its impasse? Are not six million workers better able to come up with results than 200,000 bureaucrats?

Castro will not give power up because it means an end to this privileged layer's very existence. But Cuban workers need power if they are to avert catastrophe. This same bureaucracy is opening up the economy bit by bit to the impe-

rialist multinationals. Joint ventures are spreading and allowing foreign capital to exploit the labour of the Cuban workers without restriction. And the profits made do not stay in Cuba.

Without political power held directly in the hands of the workers in the factories and the sugar cane farms, Cuba will be edged towards the market by the present leadership, but in such a form that it will breed resentment and unfulfilled expectations. It is then that the argument of Washington and the Cuban bourgeois exiles—that the benefits will come if only the Cuban people get rid of Castro, take up bourgeois democracy and restore capitalism—will get more and more sympathy. If this happens then the social gains of the Cuban masses will not survive for long. They will fall victim to the demands of the profit-hungry multinationals.

Strike

The Cuban workers have to make a pre-emptive strike against this development. They must form their own councils, factory committees and militias and take political power away from the Castro regime.

Castro has indicated that he will not stand at the next elections in five years. But the Cuban masses need to shed any remaining illusions in Castroism before then. They need to ensure that the next elections are to their own workers' and peasants' councils—organs of struggle and political revolution against the present regime and its chosen path for Cuba. ■

ing attack on workers' living standards is hardly coincidental. Italian capitalism, after a decade of robust growth, has slumped back into the EC's second division.

The ruling class as a whole can no longer foot the bill for class peace, lining the pockets of individual capitalists and politicians or filling the coffers of the political parties. Italy's staggering budget deficit makes even Norman Lamont's shortfall seem modest.

While the working class could exploit the bosses' disarray, there are also deeply reactionary forces waiting in the wings. In the north the Lombard League and similar regional formations have scored major gains at the polls with their virulent populism which combines anti-corruption rhetoric with racism and chauvinism towards southerners. The underdeveloped south has produced a mirror image in the RETA party. Immigrant workers have faced a sharp escalation in racist violence while the overtly fascist MSI has returned to street level terror tactics.

Italian revolutionaries must confront the crucial task of fighting to generalise strike action on an indefinite national basis in the teeth of fierce opposition from CGIL general secretary, Bruno Trentin. The factory and workplace committees, which sprang up again in the autumn, must be sustained and linked together across cities.

There is a clear need to combat the ideological appeal of the far right and their scapegoating of African and Arab workers and those from other regions. In many parts of the country a workers' united front to physically face down the fascist threat is a matter of urgency, while the labour movement must be won to opposition to all immigration controls and to the defence of the immigrants under attack.

The season of scandals will not go on indefinitely. Socialist militants should seize the opportunities it offers in the weeks ahead to forge a new party of the working class committed to the revolutionary overthrow of an increasingly decrepit and parasitic capitalism. ■

ITALY

A CAPITALIST state which regularly arrests top corporate bosses? A country where seven leading politicians from across the spectrum have committed suicide for fear of indictment? This is Italy in 1993.

Socialist Party premier, Giuliano Amato, survived the latest crisis through a desperate reshuffling of his coalition cabinet on 21 February. But the combination of a renewed strike wave and the threat of more revelations of corruption in high places leaves Amato's government hanging by a thread.

The crisis gripping Rome originated in Milan with the start of a mammoth probe into corruption last spring. It has uncovered an intricate and pervasive web of corruption dating from the 1970s and covering the whole of Italy.

Allegations of bribery and extortion have tainted every major parliamentary party. The scandals have already brought the downfall of former prime minister and Socialist Party boss, Bettino Craxi. On 25 February the leader of the Republican Party, Giorgio La Malfa, stepped down after learning that the Milan investigation had reached his doorstep.

The scope of enquiries has ranged from illicit party political fund raising to "comission" in exchange for public sector construction contracts and mysteriously bloated payments from the state's coffers to failed capitalists in the chemicals industry. Among those facing trial are top executives of Fiat, the head of the state railway network and Paul Gascoigne's employer at Lazio football club, Sergio Cragnetti.

There are signs, however, that investigators may soon have to curb their zeal. Antonio Di Pietro, Milan's top investigative magistrate, hinted at the need to contain the probe before it further undermines the stability of Italian capitalism itself. He declared:

"There is a daily risk of something happening with serious impact on the economic system."

The stench of corruption



Italy's "Socialist" prime minister Amato

The precarious position of Amato's administration has turned the run on the lira into a stampede. In much of Italy the construction and general contracting industries have ground to a halt not only because of a worsening recession but because the industry's bosses are now fearful of bribery charges.

Despite widespread cynicism in Italian society about the country's politicians, the past month's revelations have roused considerable anger.

Working class protests against steeply rising unemployment have grown with the publicity surrounding the scandals. There has been a revival of the mass movement which first erupted in September against the previous administration's sweep-

ing austerity programme. Then 100,000 and more took to the streets in several Italian cities, often in defiance of the Stalinist-dominated CGIL, the largest of the three main union confederations.

In February six regions witnessed day long general strikes. The renewed working class opposition to the partial dismantling of the Italian welfare state has the chance to exploit the open divisions in the country's ruling class. At the very least workers should fight to regain the *scala mobile*, the inflation-proofed sliding scale of wages, recently signed away by the CGIL bureaucracy.

That the full scale of state big business corruption should emerge at about the same time as a sweep-

CRUMBLING MASONRY, twisted metal and shattered glass crunch underfoot as we walk among the ruins of a once prosperous Muslim village in north eastern Bosnia. This is Omerbegovaca, on the southern outskirts of the city of Brcko. The frontline held by Bosnian government troops is three hundred metres away, running parallel to what used to be Omerbegovaca's high street.

On 15 February 1993, the day before our visit, an estimated three thousand artillery and mortar rounds, reportedly including poisoned grenades, rained on this village from Serbian lines. As a result the scene around us is one of utter desolation and virtually complete destruction. There is hardly a house left standing, and several 155mm Howitzer shells lie unexploded in the rubble.

The local mosque has come in for particular attention by the Serbian gunners—the minaret reduced to a pile of smashed concrete. The building itself and the surrounding cemetery appear to have been hit several times during the previous day's bombardment.

Rubble

The Bosnian Army officer who has been guiding us round this stretch of the frontline stops briefly to remove some rubble from a grave and collects himself in prayer. "My father's grave", he explains. "This used to be my village". The occasional gunshot rings out in the eerie silence, reminding us to hurry along when walking between houses.

The city of Brcko and its surrounding area are of strategic importance because of the supply route between Serbia proper and the capital of the self-styled Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Banja Luka, which runs through this region. Until the Croatian withdrawal from Bosanski Brod in September last year, regular Croatian troops (HV) had been fighting alongside the Bosnian Army to cut this Serbian lifeline, without success.

Since that time, however, counter-offensives by the 108th (Brcko) Brigade of the Bosnian army have succeeded in retaking substantial portions of this territory, so that they now control 80% of Brcko municipality—practically the whole province with the exception of Brcko itself. But apart from such considerations, the fighters in the 108th Brigade have other, more personal reasons to be fighting. Almost all of them are local people who are engaged in a literal struggle for survival, when Brcko was occupied by the Serbs in early May last year an estimated five to seven thousand Muslim civilians were slaughtered in one of the worst instances of "ethnic cleansing" that this war has thus far spawned.

Divided

Since then, over 90% of casualties in the Bosnian Army fighting along this frontline have been Muslims. Virtually everyone in the 108th Brigade has lost at least one family member and several friends.

According to the Vance-Owen cantonisation plan, Brcko, whose pre-war population was 46% Muslim (and its municipality 70% Muslim) are to be divided between the Croatian Odzak province in the west and the Serbian Bijeljina province in the east. Those Muslims who survive the war will be expected to either live under Croatian or Serbian control, or to move south into the Bosnian government controlled region around Tuzla.

In early January this year, the command of the 108th Brigade circulated a statement in which they condemned the UN-EC plan and made it clear that should President Alija Izetbegovic bow to western pressure and accept the plan, the 108th Brigade would cease to recognise the Sarajevo government. They pledged to continue to fight,

BOSNIA

"This used to be my village..."

The war in Bosnia continues to claim thousands of lives through the combined effects of the fighting, hunger and disease. Jack Duretz recently visited the frontline in north east Bosnia. His graphic account concludes with a call for a negotiated solution and support for the Bosnian government. Clare Heath then argues that such a programme is not the answer for Bosnian workers.

unilaterally if necessary, to prevent the plan's implementation.

In the Omerbegovaca command post, located in one of the few houses that survived yesterday's shelling, the unit commander is in no mood to compromise. When asked about the communiqué, he restates the 108th Brigade's determination to liberate Brcko, with or without government support. Safit Bahor, commander of the unit holding nearby Dizdarsa, where some of the worst fighting on this front has taken place, reiterates

the point.

"Every man under my command has been wounded at least once since the beginning of the fighting. Some of them return to the frontline before their wounds have properly healed. We will see this thing through, whatever it takes."

Outside, several rounds of heavy machine gun fire, followed by a mortar explosion, grimly underline Bahor's words.

As always when talking to local people, we are asked about the UN

arms embargo. "Why does the west prevent us from defending ourselves?" We shrug in embarrassment. We know that the embargo has absolutely no effect on the Serbian fighting capability, since the massive firepower of the Yugoslav Federal Army and Air Force is supplemented by the productive capability of at least two working munitions factories within Serbia itself.

On this part of the front, we're told, the Serbs have at their disposal around 12 tanks, three Howitzer bat-

teries, a dozen or so mortar batteries, heavy machine guns and standard issue small arms. The heaviest weapon available to the defenders of Omerbegovaca, on the other hand, is an old British Browning machine gun mounted on the back of a lorry which has been pointedly nicknamed "Margaret Thatcher".

Despite the disparity in the armaments at its disposal, the 108th Brigade has not only held its ground, but has actually rolled the Serbian frontline to within a few hundred metres of the supply route itself.

It seems clear from our visit that half-baked humanitarian relief plans and dubious proposals which consolidate Serbian and Croatian territorial gains are not the answer. The legitimate, secular and multi-ethnic government of Bosnia Herzegovina, reduced by Western oversimplification of this complex war to the status of "warring party" at the negotiating table, needs to be given the opportunity to regain control of its own territory in the face of overwhelming Serbian and periodic Croatian aggression.

Senseless

There is no calibre to intervene: fighters of the calibre found in the 108th Brigade abound in the Bosnian army. They do not need our soldiers, or expertise, but they do need guns. If the international community is serious about preventing the continued genocide of the Muslim population of Bosnia Herzegovina, this senseless arms embargo must be lifted at once.

Moreover, any peace plan which pushes thousands of people out of their homes is doomed to failure and can only be implemented forcibly. A peaceful solution negotiated by the Bosnia Herzegovina government from a position of military parity, on the other hand, stands a much better chance of survival, not least because it would bring all military units in line with the Bosnian President's authority. Crucially, because support for the Milosevic regime at home is likely to crumble once the Serbian forces start to lose ground in a costly war against a well matched opponent.

Ultimately, the removal of Milosevic and his entourage could signal the beginning of a period of peace, won by the people of former Yugoslavia, not imposed from the outside. ■



Bosnian workers and peasants forced into refugee camps

A revolutionary answer

JACK'S REPORT of the conflict brings home the horror of a war in which the future survival of Bosnian communities is threatened by the aggression of both Serb and Croatian forces seeking to dominate the region. As reportage it can help raise awareness in the British labour movement of the realities of the Balkan conflict. But we believe Jack's conclusions are wrong.

We agree that the priority at the moment is to defend the Bosnian Muslims, and for that they need arms. We also agree that the imperialist plans for humanitarian relief are no answer, and that the Vance-Owen "peace plan" is a concession to the expansionist plans of Serbia and Croatia. But where we differ from Jack's argument is over support for the Izetbegovic government and the prospects for achieving peace.

Character

Jack refers to the "legitimate, secular and multi-ethnic government of Bosnia Herzegovina", and argues that the "international community" should end the arms embargo. What he ignores is the character of that government.

When Izetbegovic became president his plans were indeed for a "multi-ethnic" state, one in which the Serbian majority areas within Bosnia Herzegovina were forcibly

retained. The referendum that supported the independence of Bosnia and led to its recognition by the west was boycotted by the Serbs as they recognised it as a denial of their own rights to self-determination.

That is why at the start of the war we correctly argued that the objectives were reactionary on all sides and that workers and peasants should not give support to any side. Bosnians should have fought for the defeat of the Izetbegovic government. But we also recognised the need to defend areas from "ethnic cleansing" and national oppression through the creation of multi-ethnic militias, and for the right of all communities to defend themselves from forcible relocation.

A decisive change occurred during the war when the imperialists shifted their support and the Croats and Serbs reached a tactical agreement to try and consolidate their gains, effectively dividing up the territory of Bosnia Herzegovina between themselves with the eradication of any meaningful state for the Bosnian Muslims. At that point the character of the war changed to one of legitimate defence against the reactionary war of annihilation against the Muslims of Bosnia.

But unlike Jack, that does not mean that we support the legitimacy of the Bosnian presidency. Whilst temporarily forced to fight

alongside Izetbegovic, revolutionaries would not support his continued rule.

A distinction has to be drawn between legitimate defence of the Bosnian Muslims and advocating a Bosnia Herzegovinan state which oppresses other ethnic groups. Izetbegovic has demonstrated that he aspires to such a state, and nobody should be in any doubt that the Bosnian forces have also carried out atrocities against Serbian villages and communities.

Compromise

Izetbegovic is also prepared to compromise on the future of workers and peasants in Bosnia to achieve some kind of recognised state. The Bosnian commanders interviewed by Jack indicated that they were not willing to compromise on their villages and land, and they are right. But their president and their government will do exactly that.

But the question of achieving peace in the Balkans is not just about defending this or that side in the war. Jack suggests that "a peaceful solution negotiated by the Bosnia Herzegovina government from a position of military parity... stands a much better chance of survival", because it would unify the Bosnian military units and would lay the basis for the defeat of

Milosevic in Serbia.

But a negotiated settlement which established an Izetbegovic government would not be a solution: he seeks to establish a capitalist state, a state subordinated to imperialism where the workers and peasants would face not only continued national oppression, but intense exploitation.

The aim of imperialism's intervention, including Bill Clinton's "humanitarian" air drops of food, is to stabilise the region so that capitalism can be restored and exploitation re-established. That is not the peace that workers need.

We should fight now for aid to the Bosnians, particularly military aid, but we need give no support to Izetbegovic and his government. At the same time socialists need to argue for militias based on multi-ethnic workers' and peasants' councils that would not only defend areas from military attack, but could create the basis for establishing an alternative to the Izetbegovic government.

Jack argues that the Bosnian fighters do not need our soldiers or expertise, only guns. If by "our" he means "our government" or their troops then we wholeheartedly agree. But what socialists have to offer those fighters is a programme for a revolutionary answer to the war which would not only defend them from Serb and Croat aggression, but from exploitation and oppression at the hands of their "own" government.

We encourage further correspondence and debate on these vital questions. ■

Malcolm X

IN *MALCOLM X* Spike Lee and his team have created a compelling film drama. It is released in Britain this month. Every reader should go to see it. It is a welcome opportunity to see a US film about a militant black activist made by a black film maker.

At its best the film exposes the pervasive racism in the USA and conveys the horror as well as the daily humiliation confronted by Afro-Americans. Its use of the infamous video footage of Rodney King being battered by white cops in Los Angeles in 1991 is a sharp reminder that the racism Malcolm fought against has not gone away.

In one of the film's most powerful moments we see Malcolm as a fearless leader giving direction to a spontaneous protest march on a New York police station and later to a march on a hospital demand-

Margaret McNair reviews
Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*

ing adequate medical care for a Muslim brother battered by the cops.

Acting with superb discipline brothers from Malcolm's Temple provide a security shield to the mass of angry but inexperienced demonstrators. Unfortunately this is one of the few glimpses in the film of Malcolm as a political leader in the Harlem community.

Lee is not primarily concerned with Malcolm's politics and their legacy. He concentrates on portraying Malcolm as a mythical figure, magically transformed from a busted, coke-fuelled hood into a spellbinding orator and devout convert to Islam. Lee and his co-writer, Arnold Perl, seem bent on depict-

ing Malcolm as a peculiar version of the American archetype of the "self-made man".

Malcolm himself warned of the dangers of misrepresenting the struggles of past revolutionaries in film. Referring to John Brown, the white anti-slavery campaigner in the USA prior to the civil war, he said:

"They're trying to make it look like he was a nut, a fanatic. They made a movie on it. I saw the movie on the screen one night. Why, I would be afraid to get near John Brown if I go by what other white folks say about him."

Revere

Spike Lee's treatment of Malcolm risks having an opposite, but equally wrong effect—of encouraging people to revere Malcolm rather than learn from him.

Malcolm X, originally Malcolm Little, was a petty crook won over to the black nationalism of Elijah Muhammed's Nation of Islam while he was in prison. On his release in 1952 Malcolm became a key activist. By the end of the 1950s his powers of oratory and organisation had transformed him into one of the Nation's most famous leaders and an international symbol of revolutionary black nationalism.

The mass struggle for civil rights in the early 1960s and the Muslims' practical abstention from that struggle eventually led to a split between Malcolm and Elijah Muhammed. Malcolm went on to found the Muslim Mosque Inc. and then the Organisation of Afro-American Unity prior to being murdered by black Muslim assassins in early 1965.

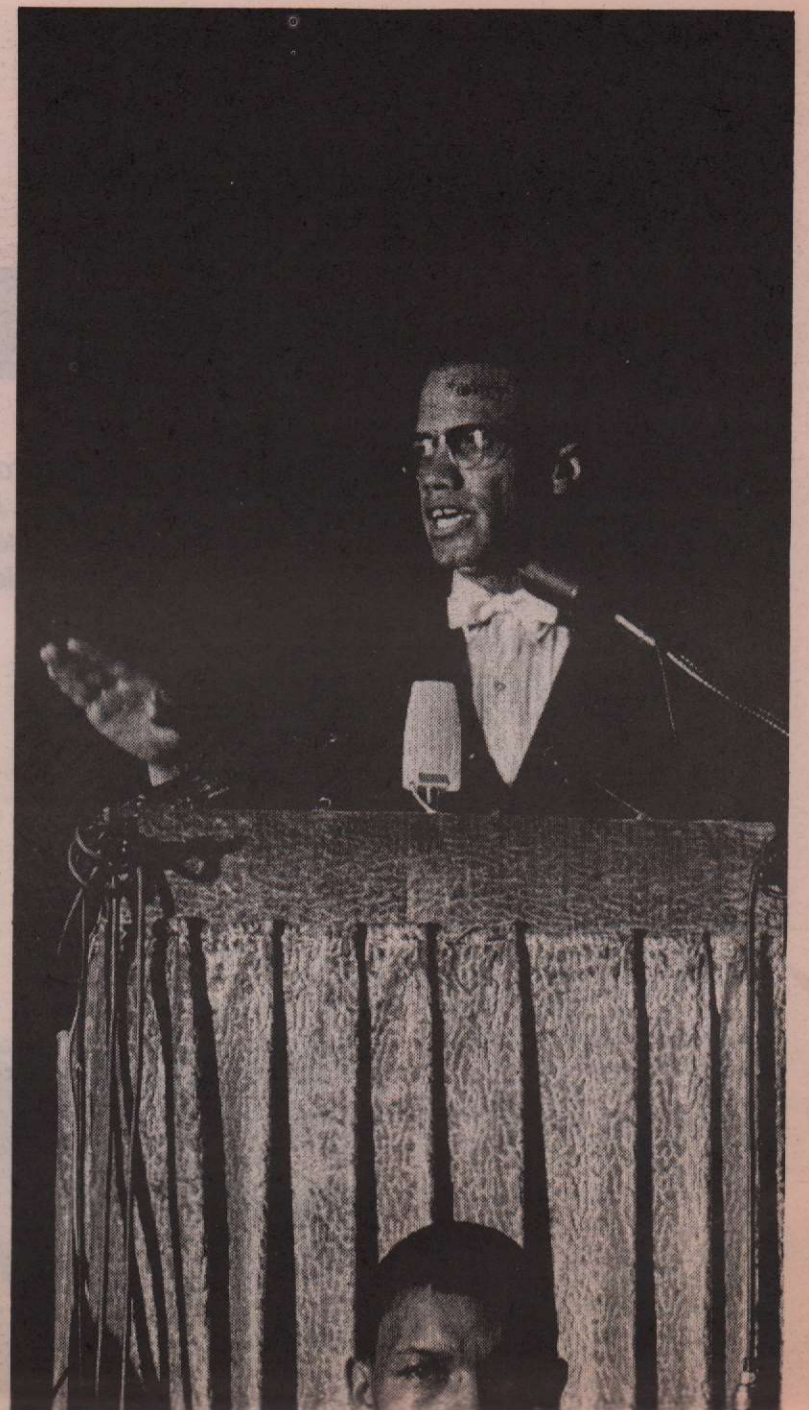
Break

Despite the claims of various socialists that Malcolm, towards the end of his life, became a Marxist, he never transcended revolutionary black nationalism, mixed up with a brand of utopian socialism. But the partial break that he made with black nationalism and his revolutionary commitment to black self-defence, "by any means necessary" were important points of departure for the black struggle.

Malcolm was in the process of breaking from both the religious and nationalist separatism of the Nation of Islam and the reformist strategy of the Martin Luther King-led civil rights movement. The task facing those fighting for black liberation after his death was to complete the break and make the transition to revolutionary Marxism.

It would be a piece of cultural thuggery to demand that Spike Lee's film should have been a political tract explaining this unfinished evolution. But Lee's weakness is that in failing to grasp the political dynamics of Malcolm's evolution he can only offer us a spiritual interpretation of it.

We see nothing of Malcolm's involvement, albeit limited, with organised labour in New York. In 1962



(while still a loyal member of the Nation) Malcolm lent his support to a strike by hospital ancillary workers struggling to gain recognition of their fledgling union in New York. He actually appeared at a rally after the jailing of one of the union's key organisers.

We hear nothing of Malcolm's increasingly open anti-capitalist statements. In its account of his pilgrimage the film focuses almost entirely on the spiritual dimension of the journey to Mecca and all but ignores the development of a world view which solidified with the period's ongoing anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles.

A crucial weakness is the superficial treatment of the social context of the 1960s, in particular the mass civil rights movement which rocked the political superstructure of the Jim Crow South.

Relationship

Here the film begs important questions: what was Malcolm's perception of the Martin Luther King-led de-segregation campaigns? After his decisive organisational and partial ideological break with the nation of Islam, what relationship did he seek with other black and multi-racial organisations? Instead there are shots of Malcolm clearly enraged but silent before fleeting, televised images of police brutality. Lee's version of the events of

Malcolm's final year strongly hints at collaboration between leading members of the Nation of Islam and the FBI/CIA in his assassination on 14 February 1965. There is no doubt that Malcolm and his family endured systematic state harassment in the last two years of his life and there is a good chance that the state was implicated in his murder.

Oppression

But the film rightly avoids turning itself into a JFK-style conspiracy thriller in favour of explaining why the US State Apparatus so feared the Minister from the Nation's New York Temple no. 7. He preached a militant message of resistance.

For all its flaws the Malcolm who emerges from the film is not a sanitised Martin Luther King-like national hero to be hypocritically embraced by the US ruling class. The film burns with justified rage against the oppression of Afro-Americans today.

A number of fine acting performances sustain constant interest in the film. Towering amongst these is Denzil Washington as Malcolm. His performance captures diverse aspects of Malcolm's character from the trapped, self-destructive youth to smouldering religious convert and finally the principled, self-sacrificing fighter for black liberation.

Malcolm X never claimed to be a political theoretician. He was neither given nor did he develop the tools to fully analyse racial oppression and its relationship to class exploitation in the US. Even so his unflinching hostility to the established order—in word and deed—make him a worthy source of inspiration to a new generation of Afro-American, Latino and white working class youth who hate oppression. ■

Romper Stomper

ROMPER STOMPER is a film about a gang of Nazi skins in Melbourne, Australia. The gang get their kicks, literally, by attacking Vietnamese immigrants.

The film topped the box office charts in Australia, won nine awards, and has generally been judged a vivid but flawed anti-racist film.

Its writer and director, Geoffrey Wright, has set out to make a film that shocks through its uncompromising depiction of violence. According to Wright the film's message is that "as soon as they allow themselves to be driven by the childish simpleness of race hatred, [the youth] are set upon a road to eventual ruin".

The film uses the eye view of the fascist youth themselves to put over this message, including hand held video footage of realistically staged fights. With such films there is always a danger that they will become perverse attractions for the fascists themselves, or that impressionable youth will fail to see the anti-fascist message behind the vivid and realistic depiction of youth culture.

That is why anti-fascists need to take the opportunity of *Romper Stomper's* release to conduct anti-fascist propaganda at the cinemas where it's on show. Anti-fascists must organise to disperse and physically crush any fascists who try to use the film as an organising point.

The Anti-Nazi League (ANL), dominated by the Socialist Workers Party, has called for people to boycott the film. This response is stupid, bordering on criminal. When the film opened at London's Prince Charles Cinema on 26 February filmgoers were greeted by an ANL picket chanting: "Romper Stomper: Nazi Film, Get the Nazis Out!"

An ANL leaflet explained: "We in the ANL are concerned that this film will give confidence to the Nazis. It does not condemn violence and could be seen to glorify it".

The leaflet compared *Romper Stomper* to the 1933 pro-Hitler film *Triumph of the Will*. If *Romper Stomper* really was a "Nazi film" then anti-fascists would not just be mounting a campaign to boycott it. They would be mounting an organised campaign of dis-

Colin Lloyd reviews
Romper Stomper

ruption to stop its distribution and showing.

But *Romper Stomper* is not a "Nazi film". It may not be a brilliant film, it may take chances, but do all films about fascism have to be like Brechtian agitprop?

If you don't trust working class youth to be able to see what every unbiased reviewer has seen, that the film maker hates fascism, then of course you will base the anti-fascist fight on shielding the eyes of working class youth from the atrocities fascism commits.

As for the film failing to condemn violence—hold on a minute! Anti-fascists condemn racist violence. But because we don't rely on either the police or the board of film censors to crush fascism we have to support and advocate anti-fascist violence. And the lives of working class youth are punctuated by violence—in the home, the school, the pub, the football ground.

The ANL's whole attitude says to working class youth: "We your socialist elders and betters would prefer that you did not see films about real life because you can't be trusted not to draw reactionary conclusions from them". And they peddle a liberal "anti-violence" message. Working class youth will rightly scorn such a patronising and pacifist approach.

Of course there are problems with this film: Australia might have only one cinema full of fascists but Britain has a growing and dangerous bunch. This means that fascists may try to use the film to organise. Anti-fascists who take the opportunity to make serious propaganda to film queues will need to organise disciplined stewarding against possible fascist attack. The pacifist ANL, of course, rejects these methods, irresponsibly leaving its supporters undefended.

In response serious anti-fascists have to organise regular surveillance and propaganda around this film, and where necessary act to physically prevent fascists organising around it. And it means ignoring the ANL's pathetic boycott campaign, and going to see the film. ■

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LESBIANS AND GAYS IN IRELAND

Prejudice and harassment

THE MUCH delayed decriminalisation of homosexuality is once again up for consideration by the Irish government. The Coalition partners have said they will honour the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruling which rejected Ireland's anti-gay laws. So did the Coalition government before!

It is now almost five years since the case was heard in Europe. This "victory" came as a result of eleven years of appeals and counter-appeals. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the High Court and then the Supreme Court both rejected the claim that the anti-homosexual laws were a violation of human and constitutional rights.

In 1983 a Supreme Court judge defended the Victorian laws which allow for life imprisonment for the crime of "buggery", citing "Christian ethics". He upheld the notion that the Irish Constitution, which opens "In the name of the Most Holy Trinity...", is essentially Christian. Since Christianity has always strongly disapproved of homosexuality, laws making gay sexuality illegal were therefore entirely in keeping with the Constitution.

Perception

If reforming legislation eventually comes before the Dáil, it will be due in no small measure to the Labour Party's electoral surge and the general perception that this was fuelled, in part, by support for a socially liberal agenda. Nevertheless, any government that attempts such a reform will inevitably meet with resistance from the Catholic lobby. It is this very fear that is the cause of all foot-dragging to date.

"Discrimination on the basis of homosexual tendencies is not unjust", a recent Vatican report declared. The report was aimed at Catholic bishops as a guide-line in the areas of child adoption, and the employment of teachers and sports instructors. In Southern Ireland, where the Catholic Church is deeply entrenched in all the state services, such statements do not fall on stony ground.

Irish law does not recognise lesbian relationships—from a legal point of view they do not exist. This is because when the laws were originally drawn up, women were not thought to have any sexuality at all, let alone one independent of men. But legal non-recognition of lesbians does not mean less repression. In Britain the law can and has been used to penalise lesbians by denying them custody of their own children on the grounds that they might suffer from being in an "abnormal" environment.

Sexual activity between men is illegal in Ireland. This prohibition is based on the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act and the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act. There was no liberalisation of the law during this century, unlike in Britain. There the 1967 Sexual Offences Act replaced these Victorian laws. This Act allows for sexual relations, in private, between consenting males who are over 21 years of age.

Whilst it was a gain in that it meant a partial decriminalisation of homosexuality, it was also a tool for the state to continue to harass gay men. Police in Britain use the legislation to prosecute gays meeting in lavatories, parks and clubs; they use it to prosecute youths under twenty-one and gay men involved in acts where more than two are present. For gay men, even holding hands in public is illegal!

Challenge

The 1967 Act was extended to the Six Counties after Jeff Dudgeon won a court case against the British government in 1982. In this instance, at least, Paisley's reactionary "Save Ulster from Sodomy" campaign failed. It was also through an individual challenge to the law that the Southern state's criminalisation of homosexuality was raised by Senator David Norris who took a court case to Europe in 1988. As a gay man himself, Norris first captured popular attention as a liberal and something of a media star.

The gay movement here has never had a major public profile, except through some well-known individuals. Insofar as it exists, the movement consists of networks and support organisations. Although these are necessary they are no substitute for

campaigns with a clear political focus. According to a leading gay spokesperson, Kieran Rose, the movement relies on "the politics of camp, frivolity and irony to get our message across".

Clearly, this strategy has failed. Because there have been no convictions for homosexuality in many years, the gay community has been lulled into a false sense of security. Paradoxically, the severity of the penalty laid down by Victorian law made the state authorities less likely to make use of it.

Consequences

This, and the fact that some gays prefer to emigrate rather than face the consequences of coming out in Ireland, has undermined the building of a militant fighting movement. Yet the formal lack of convictions in Ireland masks the sinister reality underlying it.

The 1983 reactionary court verdict on the Philip Flynn killing in Fairview Park is a case in point. Fairview Park was traditionally used by gay men as a meeting place and a cruising area. In 1982, a gang of thugs carried out a series of systematic beatings in the park, choosing gays or men they thought were gay as victims. The police stood aside until Philip Flynn was killed.

In court, the charge of murder was changed to a lesser one of manslaughter. The gang were given suspended sentences and released. In summing up the judge remarked:

"This could never be regarded as murder".

This judgment, combined with the leniency of the sentence, gave a green light to "queer bashing". Shortly afterwards, a member of the gang received a six month jail sentence for stealing a car!

A similar judgment was passed in Belfast last year when a judge accepted a manslaughter plea for the killing of a "queer" on the grounds of diminished responsibility. Police regularly turn a blind eye to occurrences of "queer bashing". They themselves frequently harass gay men. In the early 1980s they were presented with an unprecedented opportunity for harassment of gays, an opportunity they did not miss.

In the South in 1982 Charles Self, a gay man, was murdered, triggering off an intensive police investigation. It soon became clear that solving the murder was secondary to the compilation of a file on gays. Gardaí turned up in force at gay pubs and cruising areas, hauling unsuspecting gays into police stations to answer questions. Refusal led to threats that squad cars would turn up at homes or workplaces.

The investigation led to almost 1,500 gay men being questioned, finger-printed

and photographed. Many of the questions had nothing to do with Charles Self's murder but with the private lives of those being questioned.

They were asked for names and addresses of their gay friends, who they slept with and even what they did in bed! Fear of police intimidation grew: gays left jobs and homes because of the harassment. The end result was an extensive dossier on Dublin's gay community compiled by the police. Charles Self's murder was never solved.

In the North, prejudice and harassment against gays surfaced around the Kinvara home child-care case. When the Health Board's politically motivated cover-up against charges of child abuse failed, scapegoats had to be found. So management fired all lesbian and gay workers. "Positive vetting" was introduced, with police given the future role of providing reports on all job applicants.

Sexual oppression has been a feature of all class societies. The imposition of monogamy on women accompanied, and was integrally linked with, the rise of private property and classes. Under capitalism general sexual oppression still exists, especially for women and youth. Capitalism has also given rise to the systematic oppression of lesbians and gay men.

Institution

For capitalism, the family is an institution where workers are replenished, rested, clothed and reproduced, where future generations of workers are born and reared. Whilst such work is vital to the continued supply of labour to capitalism, it does not yield profit. So it falls to the woman to

complete the endless round of unpaid toil in the home.

The centrality of the family for capitalism means any group that undermines the "normal" heterosexual, monogamous family is a threat to society. Lesbians and gays pose such a threat because they testify to the fact that non-reproductive sex is a pleasurable pursuit in its own right. Homosexuality is denied and excoriated as a form of human sexual expression because it challenges the child-rearing nuclear family ideal.

Counterparts

Through the manipulation of education, the media and the legal system, the Irish bourgeoisie promotes the idea that homosexuality is "unnatural". Like their counterparts elsewhere, they lay the blame for Aids on gays—as something "they brought on themselves".

In this they are aided and abetted by clergy, North and South. Vatican statements such as "we should not be surprised when irrational and violent reactions increase" towards homosexuals when "they attempt to secure civil legislation", provide ammunition for "queer bashers" and fuel the homophobia that is already endemic.

Coming out in Ireland takes enormous courage. Men and women who are openly homosexual are legally oppressed, less likely to get work, may be isolated and abused at work, and are more likely to lose their jobs, their homes and their children.

Consequently they are frequently forced to deny their sexuality, suffering the psychological damage such denial and suppression produces. So while the govern-

ment may well produce legislation on homosexuality, the likelihood is that they will legislate against all expressions of homosexuality outside private relations between men over twenty-one.

Militants must demand a full decriminalisation, free from the restrictions contained in the 1967 British Act, a law which has in fact led to an increase in convictions and legal harassment of lesbians and gays in Britain. The state should have no rights to interfere in people's sexuality where consenting individuals are concerned. Abolition of the age of consent is necessary to deprive the police and the courts of another weapon to harass and abuse young lesbians and gay men. It is now urgent to bring together all who are committed to fight against sexual oppression around the demand to scrap all anti-gay laws unconditionally.

A campaign should be built in the trade unions, the student unions and in the women's movement with gay and lesbian caucuses as an integral part of it. Repeal of anti-homosexual laws must be top of the agenda. ■



Vatican wants lesbians and gays to stay in the closet.

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Opportunism and the unions

IN THE Middle Ages there existed a species of quack scientists called alchemists. Their claim to fame was the ability to turn base metal into gold.

Not one of them actually achieved this feat. But their bogus claim bewitched their gullible followers and enhanced their reputation as scientists.

Modern left wing politics is plagued by a new form of alchemy called centrism. Centrists claim to be revolutionaries, a claim that is as hollow as the scientific pretensions of the medieval alchemists. In practice centrists always end up tailing reformists, radical nationalists, or any other political movement that they believe can serve as a substitute for a real, revolutionary party.

Worse, the centrists always claim that by adapting to this or that political movement the base metal of reformism or nationalism can be transformed into revolutionary gold.

Amongst the most consistent practitioners of centrist alchemy on a world scale is the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI). This international grouping has existed in one form or another since the Fourth International collapsed into centrism in 1951 and then split into fragments in 1953.

The principal leader of this tendency, Ernest Mandel, has made a career out of political alchemy. He long ago abandoned the fight for independent revolutionary parties, a revolutionary International and a Trotskyist programme. Instead, the USFI advocates the entry of its sections into Labour, Stalinist, nationalist or bigger centrist parties, uncritical alliances with lefts in the trade unions, and the strengthening of left wing currents inside movements of the oppressed as the way to revolution.

Friendly

These are not simply clever ways to enable USFI sections to grow. They are always premised on the idea that such parties or movements can become revolutionary with a little friendly help from the "Trotskyists".

From Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito in the early 1950s through to Nicaragua's Sandinistas and Britain's Tony Benn in the 1980s, the USFI has uncritically hailed such movements or leaders as the focal points for regrouping the left, as the vehicles that can drive us towards the revolution. The only condition is that revolutionaries must refuse to criticise them, must blend in with them and above all must hold back from fighting *in practice* for an independent revolutionary programme.

In Britain today the supporters of the USFI are grouped around the paper *Socialist Outlook*. The evolution of the supporters of this paper (in various guises) over the last decade or so illustrates the bankruptcy of centrism. In place of fighting for a revolutionary party they have built a bewildering variety of left Labourite alliances and shackled up with a variety of left reformists.

Tony Benn was treated as a British version of Fidel Castro by these people during his deputy leadership campaign in the early 1980s. His speeches were lovingly reprinted by the British USFI supporters, his limitations and betrayals (especially when he caved in to the demands of the Labour right in 1982) were glossed over without criticism. For a time the slick and slippery reformist, Ken Livingstone, received similar treatment.

In the shape of *Labour Briefing*, the Socialist Campaign Group, the Labour Party Socialists and the Socialist Movement, the British USFI supporters presented us with an array of alliances, each of which was heralded as the breakthrough in regrouping the class struggle left, as the way forward for the British working class.



As late as July 1992 *Outlook* was telling us that, after Labour's humiliating fourth election defeat, what British workers needed was a vigorous Socialist Movement, rather than a revolutionary party. They announced:

"*Socialist Outlook* has argued for a long time that what is needed is a fighting left co-ordination which stretches across the labour movement, the mass campaigns and the movements of the oppressed... As a first step towards building fighting left unity *Socialist Outlook* has given strong support to the Socialist Movement."

The Socialist Movement grew from Benn's "Chesterfield Conferences" in the late 1980s. It brought together a disparate shower of Labour lefts and middle class radicals. At its last annual general meeting it attracted a miserable 60 paid up members. They condemned the transformation of the movement's paper, *Socialist*, into the rag *Red, Green and Radical*, but also decided to relinquish editorial control over any new paper.

In its short history the Socialist Movement has not achieved a single practical step that has taken the class struggle forward. Its recent sponsorship of the Miners' Support Conference (January), was a typical example. With *Outlook* supporters heavily involved in controlling the conference, serious debate was stifled and the NUM's effective veto on building industrial action amongst rank and file workers, independently of the bureaucracy, was accepted.

As *Outlook* noted:

"It had the full support of the NUM, and adopted a statement from the union which called for a one day stayaway in defence of the threatened jobs and the mining industry."

The report should have added, but didn't, that this statement reneged on Scargill's call for the stayaway on 19 January, leaving those like the Newcastle public sector workers who had agreed to strike, in the lurch. It also should have added that no day for this stayaway was named, and we are still waiting to be told when it is supposed to be. But it didn't.

The Socialist Movement is a talking shop. It is not a united front for action. Worse, it provides cover for the left bureaucracy in the unions, tailing their strategy and excusing their retreats.

The Socialist Movement is a talking shop. It is not a united front for action. Worse, it provides cover for the left bureaucracy in the unions, tailing their strategy and excusing their retreats.

Yet *Outlook*, by their own admission, have given "strong support" to this whole project. Their support was premised on the notion that it was the sort of organisation workers needed to take their struggles forward. This is the worst form of opportunism because it deceives militant workers as to the real nature of the left reformists and bureaucrats and blocks their ability to organise independently.

In the trade union struggle, *Outlook*'s opportunism takes the form of calling for a "class struggle left wing". This is counterposed to our call for a rank and file movement. The counterposition is not simply terminological. The difference is rooted in *Outlook*'s capitulation to left bureaucrats like Arthur Scargill. It is rooted in the idea that all the way through the unions, from the base up to the bureaucracy, there is a left/right division. The task for revolutionaries, according to *Outlook*, is to organise the left.

But the real division, as the entire history of left trade union leaders from Arthur Cook to Arthur Scargill shows, is between the rank and file of the working class and the trade union bureaucracy as a whole.

The left leaders are capable of many good things, including leading serious struggles. Revolutionaries must know how to unite in action with such leaders. We work by the maxim, "With the leaders where possible, against them where necessary".

But their politics, their left trade union militancy, is incapable of consistently defending working class interests. Ultimately it ties the lefts to the right, it binds them to the traitors, it forces them to concede to the pressure of the right. The material reason for this is that the union leaders constitute a caste with high salaries, unaccountable to or recallable by the membership, with interests different from, and opposed to, the interests of the workers they represent.

Today's struggle against pit closures is living proof of this. Scargill, the left leader of the 1984/85 strike, has helped in the TUC's demobilisation of the struggle. He has called days of action, only to call them off under pressure from his bureaucratic peers in the TUC. He has delayed industrial action in defence of jobs in favour of a left version of the TUC's passive protest campaign. He has drawn back from all out action in favour of one day protest strikes so as to keep pace with snails like Jimmy Knapp.

None of this should come as a surprise to revolutionaries. It is elementary Marxism to recognise the limits of left trade union leaders and

single serious criticism of Scargill in *Outlook* or any of its sister publications during the coal crisis episode.

We are told by Dave Osler:

"If Scargill had gone straight ahead [with a strike ballot in October], the result would have been a "no vote", as even revolutionary militants admitted at the time... Sensing the popular mood, Scargill took the correct tactical decision to hold back until the outcome of the political pressure was apparent." (*International Viewpoint*, 9 1992 November)

But what of Scargill's decision to delay a ballot until March? What about his strategy of limiting that to a ballot on one day actions? Amazingly, *Outlook* does not utter a word against this strategy. It criticises the NUM's "refusal to project any form of industrial action to stop pit closures" (*Outlook* 5 December 1992) but implies this is because of the right wing. The editorial carries a picture of Scargill over the caption, "Don't leave Arthur to fight alone." They go on to single him out for praise for calling for stayaways and hail the decision to ballot for a one day action on 5 March:

"Now the NUM has finally declared itself in favour of strike action, the fight for a yes vote is vital."

The fight for a yes vote is vital, but unless it is linked to a fight for an all out strike then pits will close. The fight for an all out strike in the NUM means a fight against Arthur Scargill's strategy. *Outlook* ducks that fight. It tails his strategy. He has said one day at a time, so *Outlook* echoes it. Worse it paints Scargill as a lone hero. Reporting on the TUC's ill fated day of recovery on 9 December, 1992, *Outlook* says:

"The absolute high spot of December 9 was NUM leader Arthur Scargill's repetition of earlier calls for the TUC to organise a national day of action" (*Socialist Outlook* December 1992/January 1993).

Not serious

There was no high spot on 9 December, and Scargill's call was not serious. He showed that when he called off action on 19 January and again, after calling on Cardiff workers to strike on the TUC's 18 February day of action, (also hailed by *Socialist Outlook*), left them to strike alone by refusing to endorse strike action on that day by the NUM.

Scargill refuses to challenge the bureaucracy. He refuses to issue the call for rank and file workers to organise action independently of Jimmy Knapp, Derrick Fullick, Bill Morris and the rest of the TUC traitors. *Outlook*'s quest for the class struggle left wing obliges them to excuse these deficiencies, these retreats. Their strategy is based on keeping on the right side of Scargill.

Such a strategy, of adaptation to the left bureaucracy and to left reformists, informs every aspect of *Outlook*'s politics, just as it is the hallmark of the USFI's centrism. Serious revolutionaries amongst *Outlook*'s supporters or inside the USFI need to make a decisive break with this entire method.

We know that many supporters of *Outlook* are dissatisfied with this centrist method. But they must avoid devoting all their energy to a fight to reform their organisation, to a seemingly endless process of internal factional and tendency struggles, to alignments and realignments that never see the light of day. The working class movement urgently needs revolutionary politics.

All those who support such ideas need to be fighting for them openly in the class struggle today, in the unions, at rank and file conferences, on the picket lines and estates. That means breaking with the USFI and *Outlook*, and turning to the revolutionary politics of Workers Power and our international tendency, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. ■

Rail: Building for action

Dear comrades,

In the February edition of your paper (WP 164) you carried informative and, for the most part, measured articles on the current situation facing both miners and railworkers. Clearly, organised cross-union activity that can help unite workers in these industries and build rank and file confidence is long overdue.

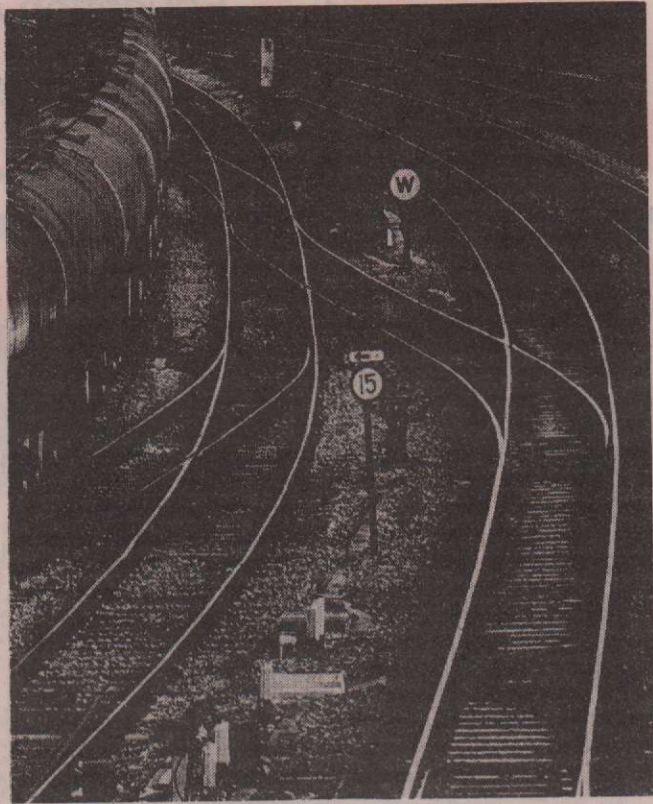
I think you were right to say that the leaderships of NACODS/NUM/ ASLEF/ RMT/TSSA have been guilty of dangerous and deliberate stalling tactics in waiting until March 5 before a "synchronised industrial action ballot" among the respective union memberships was finally agreed to.

Obviously nobody can know how much damage could have been inflicted on Major's increasingly desperate government had a concerted campaign for occupations and strikes in the mining and rail industries been called and seriously built for

4 months ago, as it should have been.

With all this borne in mind

surely it is now clear to all militants in the rail unions that the biggest possible "yes"



vote must be built for on March 5 coupled with arguments warning against the inadequacies of a 24-hour stoppage followed by an unspecified form of "rolling industrial action" (as the wording on the ballot papers is certain to say).

Your article on British Rail correctly emphasises this along with the need to organise meetings with NUM members in the run-up to the ballot. It is therefore somewhat confusing to find in a later article in the same publication ("No Compromises on Closures") that your advice to miners is to immediately bring forward the March 5 ballot and appeal to railworkers to do the same. Why the contradiction—especially when the ballot is less than 4 weeks off (at the time of writing)? And what is your call designed to achieve?

The only reason I can think of for this is to counter any attempts by the respective union executive committees to call the ballot off. If this is the case surely you should be more specific.

In solidarity,
A Midlands RMT member

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!

Dear Comrades,

Congratulations to Workers Power for its paper. British comrades should know that in the Andes there are readers of your paper and that it contributes to the training of revolutionary cadres here. We also want to thank you for your coverage of the situation in our country.

But we wish to raise some questions about the article on Bosnia-Herzegovina published in the December issue of the paper. It says:

"We call for the defeat of Croat and Serb forces at the hands of the Bosnian Muslims and their allies."

Now, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other Islamic states are sending weapons, soldiers or money to Bosnia. Also the UN, USA and the EC are considered allies of the Bosnians. Yet the LRCI has always argued for the expulsion of imperialism from the region. Could you clarify what you mean?

Later the article says:

Arming Bosnia

"Now we fight for the establishment of military control of all and any areas within Bosnia-Herzegovina by Muslim forces."

But in Bosnia there were huge tracts of land in which the Muslims were a minority. If the LRCI is saying that like the Serb and Croat leaders, the Muslim leaders are reactionary, nationalist, pro-capitalist and in favour of ethnic cleansing, why should we favour Bosnian Muslims capturing areas that were overwhelmingly Serb or Croat inside Bosnia?

Finally, it states:

"We favour unconditional military aid to the Bosnian Muslims to carry this out."

Yet the imperialist could say that they not only want to give money and weapons to the Muslims but also military advisers and troops to support

the Bosnians. The LRCI position has been that world imperialism is always the main enemy and that we have to expel them from the Balkans.

Surely, we could never ask for the imperialists to arm one reactionary movement (even if it is fighting oppression) against a Stalinist regime within a degenerated workers' state? Any clarification on these points would be welcome.

With Trotskyist Greetings,
Juan Ponce
Peru, January 1993

We Reply:

When we say that we support the Bosnians "and their allies" we were speaking only of the small progressive forces within the other ethnic communities, i.e. those in ex-Yugoslavia, that oppose Serbian and Croatian oppression of the

fortunately the same cannot be said of Paul Henderson. Read the second paragraph of his letter again.

His denial that Trotsky responded to the victory of fascism in Germany by stressing the need for a united front against fascism is breathtakingly ignorant, as anyone with access to Trotsky's writings on Spain and France in the 1930s could confirm.

This was not his only response, but then for Trotsky the united front was not an alternative to the fight for revolutionary leadership but a crucial element of it. We made that point absolutely clear in our last issue.

Henderson maintains the quality of his critique when he comes to the question of Britain. For us, unlike Henderson, the fight for revolutionary leadership must involve a militant campaign for the steps that need to be taken by workers now if the reformists are to be stopped from derailing the struggle. If Henderson thinks a revolutionary leadership can be built without fighting around "immediate issues", then it is he, not us, who is opposing the reformists by words alone.

Muslims.

As you point out, we are against political interference in the region by imperialism or the Islamic capitalist states and we are for the expulsion of imperialist military forces from the Balkans. If the Bosnians were to become military allies of imperialism against Serbia we would be obliged to change our position and urge defence of Serbia from attack.

Your point about the capturing of Serbian and Croat majority areas of Bosnia by Muslim forces is well taken. The LRCI will never support any "ethnic cleansing" by any side in the conflict, nor would we support an annexationist policy by the Muslim leaders in Bosnia. We could only support the Bosnian Muslims in the fight to establish control over their traditional areas from which they have been expelled and not when they seek to take over traditional Serb and Croat areas inside Bosnia.

On the question of aid to the Bosnians our position is clear. As winter deepens the need for food and fuel mounts. These are necessary merely for survival against the harsh weather, and the Bosnian Muslims have a right to secure them from wherever they can. In the same way, to survive the attacks from their oppressors, the Bosnian Muslims have the right to secure arms from wherever they can. Without arms they will have no chance of resisting their own annihilation, let alone forcing the Serb and Croat oppressors out of their areas.

Of course, it is inevitable that the Islamic states such as Iran and even foreign imperialist powers will supply arms with the aim of gaining political influence and furthering their reactionary designs on the Balkans. For that reason progressive Bosnians must fight for complete political independence. They must resist any attempt by Islamic or Western states to claim control over the conduct of the Bosnian resistance and its goals.

We appreciate your comments about the paper's role in training Marxist cadres in a difficult period of repression inside Peru, and we hope this answer clears up any confusions caused by the article.

Missing the point?

Dear Workers Power,

Your articles in the previous two editions of *Workers Power* on Germany have been interesting, but I feel they omit any comment on the main lessons for Trotsky of what you term "the German tragedy". Somewhat remarkable for a paper claiming to be "Trotskyist" as I am sure you will agree!

Was Trotsky's reaction to events in Germany in the late 1930s to build united fronts of workers against the fascists? The answer is no. In fact, his response was to declare a decisive break from Stalinism and the remains of the "Communist International" and to build the Fourth International.

It appears from your article that you find immediate tactical questions of the struggle of greater importance than the strategic responsibilities put forward by Trotsky. These were of course for building the international revolutionary leadership in opposition to Stalinism and reformism.

Your omission is of importance today, as it underlies

your stance in relation to reformism. In Britain, for example, you consistently place the struggle for immediate issues of tactics in front of a real opposition of, and opposition to (in terms of building an alternative, although of course you oppose them in words), the role of the Labour and trade union leaders in the maintenance of capitalism.

Yours in solidarity,
Paul Henderson
WRP (Workers Press)
Leicester

We Reply:

We have dealt with Trotsky's fight for the Fourth International in the past and we shall do so again in the future. But the first of our articles on Germany dealt with the period up to Hitler's assumption of power in January 1933. The second was a polemic directed against distortions of Trotsky's method in the present day fight against fascism.

We do not counterpose immediate tactics to the need for revolutionary leadership. Un-

Workers power

INSIDE

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- ★ Education under attack
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SOUTH AFRICA

Stop the sell out!

A NEW sell out of South Africa's black majority is underway. Every alert black worker suspected as much when the chief negotiator of the South African Democratic Party praised the "extraordinary maturity" of the African National Congress (ANC) leadership.

Sure enough Colin Eglin's praise for "the most sophisticated liberation movement there has been" followed a secret deal struck between the ANC and De Klerk's National Party in January.

The ANC has given up the right to govern alone on behalf of the black majority, however many votes it gets. It has agreed to share power with the Nationalists right up to the end of the century. It has agreed to a federal system of government which will curtail the power of a democratically elected central government.

Who would have thought that the white minority would have salvaged so much of its power and privileges from the revolutionary upheavals that rocked its rule in the mid-1980s?

The outlines of this gross betrayal were sketched in the *African Communist*, the journal of the South African Communist Party (SACP). Veteran Stalinist Joe Slovo prepared the way with his proposals for joint rule with the white minority and for "regional dispensations", taking power away from the national parliament. He also argued for promises of "security" for the racist white civil service, police and army.

Slovo's proposals are for a strictly managed transition to limited democracy, based on guarantees that the power of the army and police will not be touched. Their murderous

years of apartheid rule will go unpunished. Capitalist property will remain sacrosanct.

The apartheid generals will retire to their wealthy farms with fat pensions while the black workers and liberation fighters will be left struggling to support their families amidst the mass unemployment and grinding poverty of the townships.

The news of this deal met with opposition in South Africa. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, chief of the reactionary Inkatha Freedom Party, at first uttered dire threats of violent opposition to the deal. But Buthelezi knows when the game is up.

The National Party has signalled that its Inkatha stooges have served their purpose. Armed and propped up by the security services in its bloody civil war against the ANC in Natal, it has played its role in forcing concessions from the ANC leadership. Now, with less than 3% of the national vote and, at most, 25% support amongst the Zulus, its opposition lasted all of a week. It quickly agreed to join the multi-party conference rather than be left out in the cold.

The ANC is proposing a broad "Government of National Unity", in which every party which gains more than 5% of the vote will be represented. In this way the ANC/SACP hope to invite into their coalition not only the National Party but the Pan African Con-

gress, Inkatha and the extreme right Conservative Party as well!

Whether this unholy alliance can be achieved has yet to be seen, but it is certainly the ANC leadership's "dream ticket". Already multi-party talks are underway to form an unelected Transitional Executive Council which will rule until the elections. These will be put off until April 1994 at the earliest.

From the "left" Winnie Mandela rushed forward to refurbish her tarnished radical credentials, warning accurately that an ANC "elite" was hurrying to wrap itself up in the "silken sheets of power". But Winnie Mandela, as the black workers know, is no stranger to "silken sheets", to luxury bought at the expense of the masses. Nor have they forgotten the murder of young Stompie and her role in it.

More serious was the opposition voiced from the ANC leaders in Natal, Harry Gwala and Blade Nzimande. The Natal Zulu ANC members had borne the brunt of the murderous onslaught launched by Inkatha and the South African security services. These leaders are the most under pressure from their supporters, outraged at the idea of any deal which not only protects these killers but offers them seats in a "unity government".

Gwala's opposition was short-lived. He will not break



Security forces in action — ANC will protect these racists

with the ANC leadership. Within a fortnight of the news of the deal, Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC's Secretary General, announced that the ANC National Executive had unanimously endorsed initial agreements for a government of national unity.

At a national fundraiser in Soweto for the coming electoral campaign, the ANC's Oliver Tambo insisted that "the oppressors" should be freed from their "guilt ridden fear of retribution".

Symbolically these same oppressors had just finished clubbing and teargassing protesting taxi-drivers, striking against police harassment. The ANC did not utter one word of criticism.

This former liberation move-

ment knows full well what "national unity" and power means. It means unity with the capitalist class, running a capitalist government as a fully fledged ruling party.

Many more workers and strikers will be clubbed and teargassed by this very same government in the years to come, all in the name of "national unity".

The black workers and trade unions of South Africa need to organise now to stop this sell out.

Every trade union local, every workers' meeting, every ANC militant should denounce this betrayal of the black majority's right to rule. They should demand the immediate prosecution and trial by special workers' tribunals of

all those guilty of murderous attacks on the black masses, of the killing of black fighters for liberation.

They should demand immediate elections for a Constituent Assembly on the basis of one person one vote.

- No amnesties for the racist murderers in the police and army, nor for the murder gangs of Inkatha!
- Down with the "sunset clauses", no power sharing deals with De Klerk!
- No to an unelected Transitional Executive Council, for immediate elections to a Constituent Assembly!
- For a workers' government!
- For a workers' republic of South Africa/Azania!