

Workers power

INSIDE

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British section of the LRCI - League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

Nurses, teachers, rail, council workers...

Start the pay fight now!

“THEY WANT something for nothing.” That’s the refrain we hear every time the Tories want to cut benefits and services. We hear the same refrain from bosses whenever they face a pay claim. But it is the bosses and their Tory friends who are getting something for nothing. They are fleecing millions of workers in the process.

The figures speak for themselves.

INFLATION stands at 2.7%. But Chancellor Kenneth Clarke has decreed that, for the second year running, there will be no pay rise at all for 5 million public sector workers. He says that all pay rises have to be paid for by productivity.

But **PRODUCTIVITY** is soaring ahead of pay. A 4.2% rise in productivity in the private sector, with only a 2.7% average rise in wages, means it is the bosses who are reaping the benefit, not the workers.

PROFIT figures prove this. The total profits of British firms have risen 23% in the last year, to over £21 billion, with some firms recording profit rises of 50% to 100%.

DISPOSABLE INCOME, the actual amount of money workers get in their wage packets,

has fallen—dramatically. In the spring it fell by 1.8% - the biggest drop since 1981.

While many workers’ wages have stayed just ahead of inflation, Clarke’s tax bombshell has sliced pounds off real wages.

Workers are working harder, producing more.

But it is the Tory government and the bosses that are reaping the benefits in higher tax and higher profits.

That is why millions of workers have demanded the unions launch a fight for a living wage.

NURSES have demanded 8.3%. **TEACHERS** are calling for rises between 4% and 9%. One and a half million **COUNCIL WORKERS** look set to reject the employers’ offer of 1.7% plus £75.

Nurses are being told that

How the bosses fleece us...

only “higher productivity” will allow any rise this year.

Britain’s half a million nurses are already working like slaves. In London alone there has been an 11% drop in the number of nurses.

The effect is feeding through not in better treatment—the only real measure of “productivity” in the NHS—but in closed beds, cancelled operations and rising sick leave amongst nurses themselves.

Across the public sector the Tories are demanding “performance related pay” in return for meagre increases.

That means setting one worker against another, making us compete with one another in front of our managers like participants in a grotesque beauty contest.

Meanwhile the Tory MPs have awarded themselves a 4.7% pay rise.

No worker has to sit back as the Tories add insult to injury. We should demand our unions launch a determined fight on pay.

When Tory legislation threat-

ened to reduce union membership, undercutting income and threatening the union leaders’ own jobs and pay - then they pulled the stops out.

In the coming pay battle we need the same level of determined campaigning to win a yes vote for strike action as we saw in the recent union “sign up” campaigns.

As the signalworkers’ dis-

pute shows, you need more than just one day strike action to beat the bosses—and you can’t rely on public sympathy.

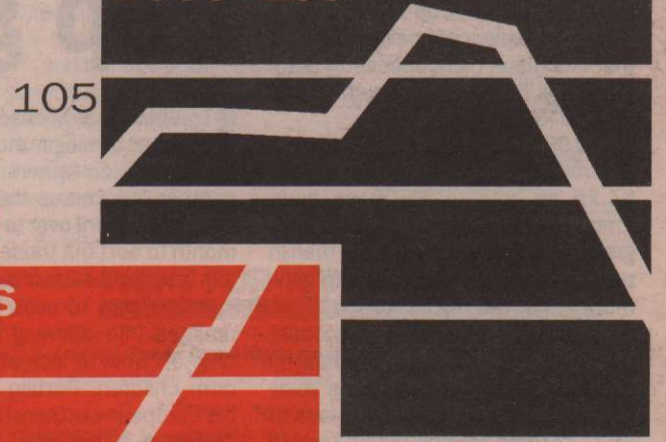
All out strikes, backed up with occupations and mass demonstrations, are the way to force the bosses to hand over the living wage workers need and deserve.

We need a massive, across the board, pay increase to make up for years of being swindled. The rich have had something for nothing for far too long.

They won’t give up a penny of their profits without a fight. That’s why we have to start the pay fight now. ■

TAKE HOME PAY

1990=100



PROFITS

£ BILLIONS



Minimum wage now! page 2

SIGNAL WORKERS SPEAK OUT - PAGE 6

IF YOU live a lifestyle modelled on Enid Blyton books you have nothing to fear from the CJB. If you are young, working class and especially if you are prepared to fight back against poverty, homelessness and exploitation then watch out. The CJB has been designed with you in mind.

- For black people there is a return to the racist "Sus" law of the 1970s. Whole areas can be swamped with police, who will have the right to stop and search anyone without giving a reason.

- For trade unionists there is a new attack on the right to picket. "Trespass" and "insulting behaviour" when standing on your bosses' private property can lead to a £2,500 fine, three months prison and a three month ban from picketing.

- For demonstrators the police have new rights to ban marches and even to stop people on their way to them.

- For young people there is a clamp-down on raves, and a ban on loud music involving "a succession of rapid beats".

- For squatters and the homeless, occupying empty property becomes illegal.

- For travellers there is the removal of council-provided sites and new police powers to break up illegal sites.

- For children there is the threat of prison. Ten year olds can be jailed for up to 14 years. Children as young as 12 can be imprisoned even before they are proved guilty.

- "Suspected terrorists" will be presumed guilty until proved innocent.

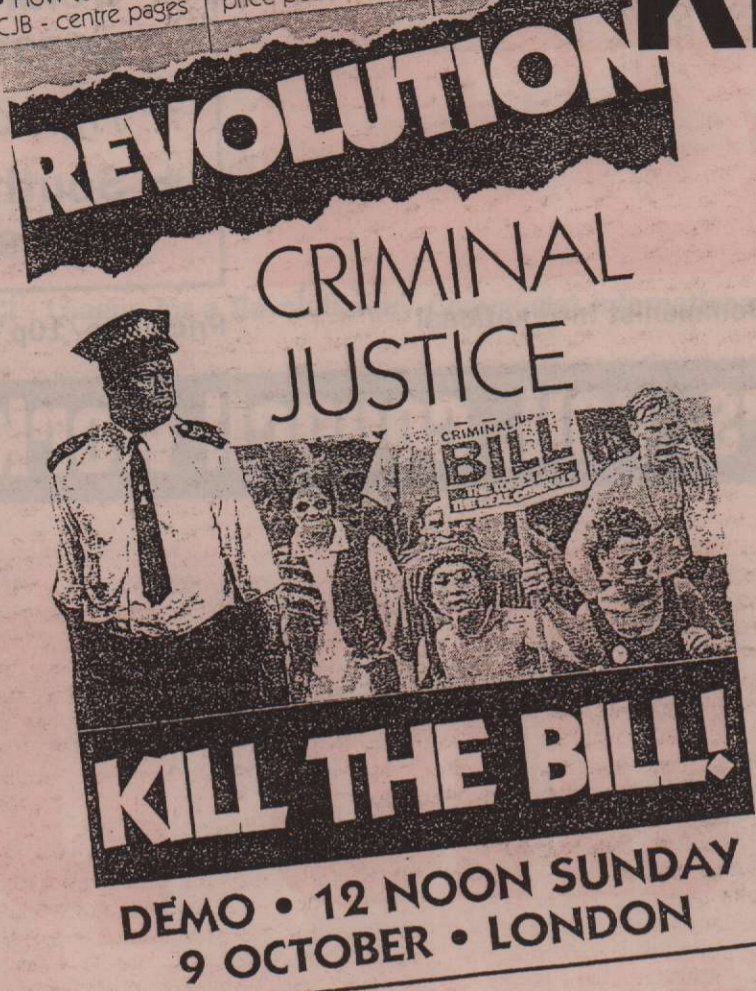
- Anybody held for questioning will no longer have the right to remain silent without a court being able to "infer" guilt from that silence.

The Tories' attack on "job culture" is designed to turn people against a

• How to stop the CJB - centre pages

• Ireland: what price peace? - p2

• The fight for abortion rights - p



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fictional minority of "jobs" who cause all the trouble in society. But as our hit-list shows, their repressive law is aimed at the vast majority, at the

hundreds of thousands of teenagers who attend raves, at the seven million workers who have joined trade unions, at Britain's black communi-

Kill the Bill!

ties, at hundreds of thousands who go on demonstrations, at anyone who ever gets questioned by the police.

The Tories are introducing a new "police culture" to beat back any resistance.

HOW CAN WE STOP IT?

The demo against the CJB on 9 October should be built into a mass, angry protest. But marches alone cannot stop a determined Tory government.

Should we wait for Labour to come to power and repeal the CJB? We cannot even rely on them to vote against it. Tony Blair is trying to outdo the Tories on law and order—he boasts of having thought up some of the Bill's worst provisions. We demand that Labour should fight tooth and nail against the CJB in parliament, and commit itself to repealing it immediately when in office.

But even if Labour did make such a promise, we need to fight the Bill now. Every act of defiance—like last year's march on the BNP HQ in Welling and this summer's student occupation at the University of North London—will now be hit with the full force of the law. The CJB will only be prevented from taking effect by mass resistance.

We need:

- Mass non-cooperation with the law, including occupations of empty properties
- Organised self-defence of squats,

marches and pickets.

- Strike action and workplace occupations in response to any attempt to use the Bill against unions or other workers' organisations.

The CJB links up all our protests—anti-racist struggles, environmental struggles, strikes, pickets and marches. But all too often they are fought separately by the workers and youth involved.

From now on every fightback will have to defy the CJB. We will need solidarity and mutual support to take on and defeat the provisions of the CJB.

Only one force in society can provide the cement to bind together the different forces that are being attacked by the CJB. That force is the working class, organised in the unions and in its communities.

The campaign to defy the CJB, to make it unworkable, needs more than a few activists bravely defying the law on their own. Even a "coalition" of all those affected by the Bill will not be enough unless it is based on winning action from the organised working class.

Everyone who has been drawn into fighting the Bill on single issues should be organised into active support for all workers' struggles. We need strike action in support of any group of workers or youth who are victimised by the Bill.

This way we can smash the Tories' new "police culture"! ■

For a national minimum wage

THE TORIES hate the idea of a minimum wage. It goes against their whole idea of the free market where wages, like prices, are supposed to find their own level. Not surprisingly, they think this level should be low.

They argue that a minimum wage would cost jobs. In the 1992 election campaign, the Tories said that Labour's national minimum wage would lead to the loss of up to two million jobs. Now evidence is being produced that questions this supposedly automatic link between minimum wages and job losses.

In 1992 the US State of New Jersey raised its minimum wage from \$4.25 an hour to \$5.05 an hour. Employment in the fast-food industry grew in New Jersey, 13% more than in nearby Pennsylvania where the minimum wage was not increased.

In a new report a British economist admits that he was wrong when he wrote in 1992 that Labour's minimum wage would lead to the loss of 167,000 jobs. He now thinks it would have no impact on jobs.

There is also evidence from the abolition of the wages councils. The Low Pay Unit have found that 37% of workers who would have been covered by the wages council are now receiving less than the old minimum, and there has been no increase in jobs. There are now 27,000 fewer jobs in hotels and catering. So much for lower wages creating jobs!

Labour is committed to a minimum wage. So are the TUC. So are some Liberals. The bosses are beginning to realise that it might actually happen,

and so they are preparing to minimise the impact, starting to talk about the level of a minimum wage instead of dismissing it as an impossibility.

Surprise, surprise, the level they want is a very low one. They want to persuade Tony Blair to adopt a minimum wage so low that it has virtually

no effect on the wages of low paid workers.

At the moment the TUC has a formula for calculating the minimum wage, at half of average male earnings—about £4 an hour. But the Labour Party is "considering the options", no doubt they want an option

Pop goes paternity leave

IT SEEMS that Michael Portillo, the scourge of single mothers, is not too keen on fathers either. In yet another "us versus them" Euro-battle, Portillo went over to Brussels last month to sort out those mad Europeans on the question of paternity rights.

He refused to allow Britain to be dragged into allowing men to take time off work to look after their newborn children. Portillo explained to his European partners that this was a "question of principle". Principle? In fact it is a question of profit.

It may seem prehistoric in the "age of sexual equality", but in our society women are seen as the only people capable of looking after small babies.

No one should have been surprised. Tory policy is not pro-family in the sense of making it easier for working class parents to bring up their kids. If it were they would be in favour of more nurseries, adequate benefits, better housing and paid leave for mothers and fathers.

Tory policy is to keep women bearing the main burden of childrearing.

This is done unpaid, saving the state and the employers the millions of pounds it would cost to provide decent amenities, social services and nursery education.

The fact that women remain the main carers for children also means that there are large numbers of workers with breaks in their working lives. Women with children often have to take part time jobs, and stay in low grades with bad rates of pay and few employment rights. In short, by making women take responsibility for childcare the bosses also get a flexible, low paid workforce.

But what of the actual EU directive? Fathers would be allowed to take three months off work after the birth of the child, but without pay. How many fathers can afford to take three months off without pay? Unless parental leave is paid leave, most parents have the "choice" of poverty or staying at work.

Whilst most of the European capitalists have been forced to grant paternity leave, very few have made it a

that won't frighten the bosses. Blair doesn't even want to make any concrete commitment before the election.

A minimum wage is necessary to defend the living standards of the working class. We should demand that Labour and the TUC call for a living wage—not poverty wages of £4 an hour, but £8 an hour—the average industrial wage. A minimum wage should be linked to inflation, with a guaranteed 1% increase for every 1% on the cost of living. To those who say it will cost jobs, we say open the books and see where the money really goes—the fat salaries, perks and profits of the bosses. If paying a living wage would really bankrupt the firm it should be nationalised without compensation to the bosses and placed under workers control. ■

realistic prospect by granting paternity pay.

Even for women, levels of maternity pay are pretty appalling. In Italy you can be off work for six months but you only get 30% of your earnings. You can get half the national minimum wage in France . . . but only if you're looking after your third child—how's that for an incentive! In Britain, again reflecting our "positive" approach to parenthood, you can luxuriate for 15 weeks on sick pay.

There is only one real argument being raised against decent paid leave: employers cannot afford it. For anyone who has seen the size of the profits of the multinationals this is plainly ridiculous. But, to ensure that everyone gets the benefits, regardless of their employer, they should be paid by the state and funded through taxing super-profits of big business.

All parents, not just those who can afford it, should have the same chance to spend time with their children. This right should apply to men as well as women. ■

LANGDON 4

Drop the charges!

A WHITE YOUTH, known to be racist, was slightly injured in a fight outside Langdon Park School in Poplar. Police have arrested four Asian students at the school and charged them with Grievous Bodily Harm, which could lead to long prison sentences.

Meanwhile, the racist thugs who nearly killed Quudus Ali and left him injured for life have yet to be found, and racist attacks continue on a daily basis across East London.

The police are clamping down in the hope of intimidating anyone who fights back against racism.

The four students were arrested after their headteacher, Chris Dunne, took it upon himself to carry out the investigation. Dunne hid in a broom cupboard with the racist's sister, spying on students in an attempt to pick out the alleged attackers. He showed her photographs of students and then, going only on this highly dubious identification and not even speaking to those involved, he handed over their names and addresses to the police.

Teachers and parents at the school should support student demands for an immediate investigation into the activities of Chris Dunne, conducted not by the bosses but by students and workers. NUT members at the school have a particular responsibility since Dunne is a member of the union! Other students and teachers should support the campaign, demanding that the charges are dropped and supporting calls for police out of schools altogether. ■

Messages of support and donations to:

LANGDON PARK 4 DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

c/o TUSU, The Colin Roach Centre
10a Bradbury Street,
London N16

EDITORIAL

Hypocrisy over Haiti

THE US MILITARY occupation of Haiti is yet another example of the hypocrisy of the "new world order". Under the guise of restoring democracy, thousands of US troops now occupy this tiny island in Washington's backyard, while Haiti's future is determined in the White House.

As in the recent case of Somalia, this invasion draws its "legality" from the United Nations. UN Resolution 940 authorises the USA to use "all necessary means" to remove the military regime led by Lt General Raoul Cédras and return power to the elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The timing of the intervention is no accident. It is based more on Clinton's domestic difficulties than any particular concern for more than 3,000 oppositionists who have been killed by the military regime in Haiti. Clinton is unpopular. His foreign policy is looking frayed at the edges, after the bloody nose the USA got in Somalia and their inability to sort out Bosnia and Rwanda.

The policeman of the "new world order" has been looking a bit shaky. Clinton badly needed a foreign policy success before the Congress elections in November. An intervention to "restore democracy" in Haiti appeared as a relatively low risk way of showing that the USA can at least police its back yard. But Congress—and according to opinion polls most people in the USA—were hostile to plans for a full scale invasion. No one wanted to risk US casualties just to restore a radical priest to power.

So Clinton planned the intervention while Congress was in recess. Economic and political pressure was piled on to try and avoid an actual invasion. This led to a deal brokered by former President Jimmy Carter, allowing the US troops to go in unopposed.

Yet Cédras remains in charge for the time being, courtesy of this deal. The regime which President Clinton described in his address to the nation as "the most brutal in the western hemisphere", made up of rapists and murder-

ers, was being described within 48 hours as one of "honourable" soldiers, worthy of a comfortable retirement in Haiti itself.

Clinton was enthusiastic about this deal, even if Aristide and the Haitian democracy movement were not. Without such a deal, the invading troops faced the possibility of an anti-US alliance between the military and sections of the masses hostile to the invasion.

Since Aristide was driven into exile in 1991 the objectives of the US ruling class, Republican or Democrat, have been fundamentally the same: to ensure a stable parliamentary government which is subservient to US strategic and economic interests in the region.

This explains Washington's ambiguity towards Aristide. He was elected by a massive 67% of the vote in the 1990 elections against the candidate favoured by US imperialism. Aristide, a priest committed to "liberation theology", headed a coalition of popular forces, peasant and workers' organisations and a sector of the bourgeoisie largely based on the trading and merchant classes in the capital of Port-au-Prince.

But the military, with its links to the landowning oligarchy, remained the real power in the country. To counter them, Aristide had to lean on the popular organisations and even endorse their attacks on the thugs of the old regime. This was too much for Washington. If the Bush administration did not actually initiate the military coup, it certainly turned a blind eye.

Having ritually denounced the Cédras coup, the USA set about making clear to Aristide that he could only return to power on Washington's terms. When the Organisation of American States announced a blockade of Haiti shortly after the coup, the Bush administration refused to enforce it.

Aristide capitulated. The "Governors Island Accord" of 1993 was a deal brokered by the Clinton administration. Aristide agreed to appoint a prime minister acceptable to Washington, and Cédras promised to step down and allow

Aristide to return. The whole deal was to be overseen by a UN force - mainly made up of US soldiers - based on the island.

Cédras proceeded to renege on this deal, with the encouragement of the Republicans and sections of the US military. This infuriated Clinton. With growing numbers of Haitian refugees fleeing to the USA and being locked up in camps at the US Guantanamo Bay military base on Cuba, Clinton enforced the blockade and prepared the invasion.

Jimmy Carter's deal is basically the same as the Governors Island Accord. Aristide will be allowed to return in mid-October but only with a prime minister acceptable to Washington and with US troops firmly in control. The existing army will be "retrained" under US supervision, while in the countryside the semi-feudal landowners will continue to rule through their private armies. The reformist government of Aristide will have become a US prisoner.

One force can destroy this rotten deal—the oppressed peasant and worker masses of Haiti. They can draw on a fine revolutionary tradition, that of Toussaint L'Ouverture, who led a slave revolt in 1791 and went on to defeat both the British and French armies of occupation.

While the occupying US forces might appear today as a shield against the Haitian military, police and civilian death squads, tomorrow they will be revealed as the main enemies of the masses, repressing any attempt at fundamental change.

These imperialists, posing as defenders of democracy, are engaged in an exercise to defend US rule and the new world order. There is nothing progressive in this "order". It exists to shore up the inequalities which keep the masses in poverty, in Haiti and across the semi-colonial world. ■

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workers power

MEETINGS

NATIONAL

REVOLUTION YOUTH
DAYSCHOOL

Sat 15 Oct 11am • Free!

- What is Socialism?
 - Do all revolutions end in dictatorship?
 - Is Europe going fascist?
- Manchester: See seller for venue and details.

LONDON

Public Meeting

Wed 19 October 7.30pm
Stop all deportations!

Wed 2 November 7.30pm
Why we need a rank and file movement

Venue: Room S421 St Clements Building, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, WC2 Nearest Tube Holborn, Temple.

MANCHESTER

Wed 5 October 7.30pm
How students can fight the CJB

Wed 19 October 7.30pm
Ireland: Why socialists oppose the ceasefire
See seller for venue

SHEFFIELD

Wed 5 October 7.30pm

Which way forward for the signalworkers?

Venue: SCCAU, West Street

Tues 11 October 7.30pm

Bolshie Women (Women Only):

Feminism in the 70s and 80s - the struggles and the politics

See seller for venue

Tues 18 October 7.30pm

Refugees - victims of the New World Order

See sellers for venue

COVENTRY

Thurs 20 October 7.30pm

The meaning of the new world order

See seller for venue

BIRMINGHAM

Thurs 13 October 7.30pm

Public Meeting: Ireland after the ceasefire - what next?

Union Club 723 Pershore Road Selly Park

LEICESTER

Fri 30 September 12.30

Workers Power Student Society Meetings

Tony Blair - Red Rose Tory?

Green Room LUSU

Thurs 6 October 12.30

Women's liberation and socialism

Green Room LUSU

Thurs 15 October 12.30

Ireland after the ceasefire - what next?

Union Lecture Rm LUSU

Public Meeting:

Wed 26 October 7.30pm

Ireland after the ceasefire - what next?

See seller for venue

CARDIFF

Wed 5 Oct 7.30

Why we need a rank and file movement

Cathays Community Centre, Cathays Terrace, Cathays

Thurs 20 Oct

Ireland after the ceasefire - what next?

See seller for venue

THE RAHMAN Family's campaign against deportation took a tremendous step forward last month.

A meeting called by UNISON drew over 100 people to Manchester Town Hall to hear speeches from Azize Rahman and other victims of the racist immigration laws. Supporters marched from the meeting to the Immigration Appeal Court in Salford, where die-hards camped out all night in front of the building. By nine o'clock the next morning—the day of the family's appeal hearing—there were around 200 dem-

onstrators outside the building. Workers Power supporters played a major role in the campaign, with some travelling from Sheffield, Birmingham and London to be there at the vigil and picket.

The lively picket and loud slogans clearly had an effect. The chair of the Tribunal commented that she had never seen such strong local support, and the Home Office suggested that they will now be considering new evidence.

Most important of all, the appeal was not just dismissed but was adjourned.

This shows how a militant campaign directed not just around the individual case of the family but focusing on the immigration laws themselves can have a real effect. But the struggle is far from over. The Rahman family still face the threat of deportation. We need to redouble efforts to raise this case in union branches up and down the country. ■

Contact the
Rahman Family Defence
Campaign,
Socialist Club, 16 Wood St,
Bolton BL1 1DY

OUT NOW!

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AS ANGER MOUNTS TUC will not fight

THE FIRST congress of the relaunched TUC was held in September. What was new? Well, apart from its logo which aptly enough represents a waffle drifting off to the right, not a lot. Cowardice, hypocrisy and deception were all generously displayed.

Cowardice: When it comes to the crucial issues that confront workers

on the ground, the TUC Congress might as well have been a million miles away. An NUM motion which called for the repeal of the Tories' anti-union legislation was roundly defeated. Monks, who hasn't worked a day on the shop floor in his life, denounced the motion as "old-time religion". Defiance of the laws, he said, was "not a practical option".

This will come as a surprise to the Sefton 2 who not only led a thousand workers to defy the law, but got very "practical" results when they stopped contracting out and forced the council to overturn its decision!

Hypocrisy: A standing ovation was given to the RMT delegates as the signal workers were given a unanimous vote of support. Monks even

lauded the strike as "thoroughly modern". What? The RMT dispute is a thoroughly old-fashioned dispute for decent wages, and what the signal workers desperately need is some good old-fashioned solidarity, not just in words but in action: solidarity strikes. The signal workers have yet to receive a single act of solidarity from the TUC.

Deception: Trade unionists up and down the country have looked warily at the election of right-winger Tony Blair as Labour Party leader. His support for further loosening union links to the party, not to mention the anti-union laws, privatisation and ditching the party's commitment to a legally enforceable minimum wage, were well known long before congress met. Blair repeated them at a TUC dinner where he promised that a future Labour government would offer "fairness not favours" to the unions. His sense of "fairness" can be gauged by his refusal to support the signal workers whilst the Tories continue to support the employers by setting up a Cabinet sub-committee to run the scabbing operations.

But there is something new about the TUC. Since July John Monks has begun to stamp his mark on the old cart horse. He invited David Hunt, then the Employment Secretary, to Congress House for a conference on full employment. He appointed Liberal Democrat Des Wilson, at £40,000 a year, as TUC advisor on European affairs. Monks is due to be the first TUC General Secretary to address fringe meetings at all three main party conferences.

Monks wants a TUC which will fit into the "new reality" of Blair's Labour Party. The Labour government will not do "favours" for the unions, but the TUC will try to do some favours for the bosses. The new realists are seeking the CBI's backing for works' councils and rights for all employees (not just union members) in consultation. Workers' profit sharing schemes are being touted as the new vision of the future. All this is simply window dressing for tired old class collaboration whereby workers' pay is tied to the company's fortunes. The bosses hope to gain compliance with speed-ups and job-losses, whilst any

industrial action is bought off by the fear of losing dividends.

The GMB has taken this notion even further. Along with four other unions they have been invited to enter a multi-million pound consortium bidding to build the channel tunnel link. John Edmonds is said to be "very excited" by the prospect. How many GMB members working on the tunnel link sites will be excited at the prospect of being represented by their employer?

Whatever schemes and sellouts the union bureaucrats come up with, it clearly isn't working. Union membership is down 400,000 to 7.2 million (30% of the workforce). The abolition of the check-off system will chop off roughly another 500,000 this month. One union, UCATT, is nearly bankrupt. With the intensifying attack on public sector jobs, wages and conditions, more may follow.

It is workers who have to pay the price, not the union bosses. Jinkinson, General Secretary of Unison, may be put out by Blair's abandonment of the minimum wage formula, but he doesn't have to live on the take home pay of the health workers and council employees he represents. The public sector unions managed to squeeze an extra 1% out of the treasury this year, while 327,000 lost their jobs. Those in work have to work longer and harder. Half of the eleven million workers in the EU who regularly put in more than 48 hours are British.

Service unionism, John Edmonds' "vision of the future" in the 1980s, has failed. If you want a mortgage you go to a building society. If you want to keep your job you need a fighting union.

Militants across the unions must warn workers that in the struggles ahead they will have to take on not only the bosses, but their union leaders as well. Monks and Co are gearing up for a fresh lash-up with those bosses. We need to be prepared to fight. We need unions which fight for the working class, not ones who sell us out in deals with the bosses. We need to build a rank and file movement to transform our unions. And we can start by throwing out Edmonds, Monks and Co, as well as all their "visions" and "new realities". ■



THE UNISON leadership is upset about the Sefton Two. Not only did Sefton's illegal strike jeopardise union funds by defying the Tory anti-union laws, but it was a success as well. The Unison leadership are out to ensure that this example is not repeated.

The Sefton Two, Nigel Flanagan and Martin Murphy, were taken to court over the unofficial strike. Now the Unison bureaucracy are trying to remove them from their positions as branch secretary and chair. When the branch decided to pay Nigel and Martin's fines, Regional officials attempted to reverse the decision.

They failed. They then produced an internal document accusing Nigel and Martin of being "odious liars". The National Executive Council on 24 September was due to hear a report on Sefton. They are likely to institute proceedings to close the branch, impose an alternative branch secretary and chair and expel the Sefton Two from Unison.

The "Unison Fightback" Conference met on 17 September to respond to this witch-hunt. Thousands of Unison members had already shown their support for Nigel and Martin outside their trial at Manchester Crown Court. Many branches and stewards' committees sent messages of support and made donations in direct opposition to an instruction from Alan Jinkinson. The 200 delegates representing 60 Unison branches showed the support for the Sefton Two throughout Unison.

Opportunity

The conference represented a real opportunity to build on this support for the Sefton Two. It could also have laid the basis of a rank and file movement within Unison, which could transform Unison into a fighting union controlled by the membership not the bureaucrats. Unfortunately this opportunity was squandered.

The conference was bureaucrati-

SEFTON A wasted opportunity

cally organised by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The agenda was circulated just days in advance. Only four resolutions were up for discussion, three of these from the SWP. Just half an hour was allowed in the morning for any amendments to these resolutions, and amendments had to be approved by an unelected standing orders committee made up solely of SWP members! You might be forgiven for thinking the SWP have been taking a few lessons from Jinkinson.

The conference discussed three issues: the pay round, privatisation and the way forward.

All the resolutions were calling for action on national issues, but there was consistent opposition from the SWP to any means of co-ordinating action, or ensuring that it was effective. They falsely counterposed local branch organisation to any strategy for building at a national level.

The conference passed a resolution calling on branches to demand a special delegate conference around the Sefton Two. Twenty five percent of the membership have to demand such a conference in the space of two months.

This is a positive step. But without any rank and file organisation to co-ordinate it, the chances of success are slim. Even if the required number of branches did act in time, the rule book states no time limit within which such a conference must occur, and there is no mechanism for pressuring the bureaucracy into obeying its own rules.

The final debate on the way forward was around a resolution from

the SWP presented by Sefton, Newcastle and Sheffield branches. It included proposals for a number of immediate actions in support of the Sefton Two, such as a lobby of the NEC. But there was no perspective for action should the NEC ignore the lobby and commence disciplinary action. As worthy as the demands contained in the resolution were, they contained no strategy for the defence of the Sefton Two, or for a wider fight against the bureaucracy.

Commitment

An amendment from Leicestershire County branch attempted to commit the conference to fighting for a rank and file movement within Unison. This was opposed by Nigel Flanagan on the grounds that "the time was not right". Despite the fact that many of the largest branches were represented, he argued that we had to wait until 200-300 branches were represented.

But a rank and file movement within Unison is desperately needed. Any strike, even if it begins as an official one, runs the risk of breaking the anti-union laws. Militants must not allow the Unison bureaucracy to complete the job that Manchester Crown Court was afraid to carry through.

We need to seize every opportunity to organise rank and file members to defend militants from the attacks of the union leadership. We shouldn't wait for 300 branches to come to us—we have to go out and organise now! ■

COLLEGE TEACHERS

Organise the rank and file

OVER 130 MEMBERS of the lecturers' union Natfhe met in London on 24 September at a conference to discuss developments in the long running contracts dispute.

Natfhe members returned to work in September with over two hundred branches planning strikes or balloting for action. Wales, West Midlands and Inner London Regions had planned co-ordinated strikes in enrolment weeks.

As a result of strike action in June, the employers were beginning to divide. A group of college principals threatened to leave the College Employers' Forum (CEF) unless there was a return to national negotiations. Any decent union leadership would have gone for the jugular. But Natfhe, led by new general secretary John Akker, managed to deliver yet another blow to the members. A series of meetings with the CEF led to Natfhe suspending all strike action in return for negotiations.

The result was disastrous. Once the strikes were off, the employers turned up to the negotiations de-

manding an extra 244 teaching hours on average per year, with no weekly maximum on hours taught. All the other attacks on conditions from the new contracts remained. Natfhe negotiators declared a breakdown.

The National Executive now says it is up to the regions and branches to pursue local deals, at the same time saying there is no more money for strike pay!

Throughout this dispute the leadership have allowed the employers time to erode resistance to the new contracts, by refusing to fight the Tory anti-union laws, threatening branches who defied those laws and cancelling national strikes.

This has produced a very uneven situation. A few colleges have gone over completely to new contracts. But the CEF has failed to break the resistance of the majority of Natfhe members.

Any local negotiations need to be monitored by the rank and file at membership meetings. Any deal which erodes conditions should be rejected. We have to recognise, how-

SEIZE THE TIME

We need a rank and file movement

BY JEREMY DEWAR

THE LAYER of bureaucrats who run our unions live lives completely different from the workers they claim to represent. Some of them, like Alan Johnson, General Secretary of the Union of Communication Workers (UCW), are on salaries of £70,000 a year or more. Others may take home less, but still enjoy perks like expenses-paid globe-trotting trips.

At the very top, characters like John Monks, General Secretary of the TUC, and Bill Jordan of the engineers' and electricians' union, the AEEU, run joint conferences with the employers' organisation, the CBI, and hobnob around the fringes of the Tory Party conference.

In every struggle these time-servers squander the opportunity to turn the tide against the bosses and the government. Worse still, they often actively sabotage the fight back.

The boss needs to cut jobs—bureaucrats negotiate some minor concessions in return. The workers demand more pay—union officers work out a productivity deal. Full-time officials are skilled only in compromise. That is their job, the source of their comfortable existence.

Interests

For the vast majority of workers the opposite is the case. The union is a means to an end. Take the case of the Sefton strike in June (see opposite). The local Unison branch took effective strike action against privatisation of council services. The union bureaucracy—headed by Alan Jinkinson—repudiated the action, instructed the branch not to strike and is now actively trying to exclude the branch from the union altogether. The dispute proves two things. Action which breaks the anti-union laws can be effective. But because it puts union funds and the incomes of the bureaucrats at risk, they will do anything they can to stop it.

The whole affair shows clearly that the privileged caste of union bureaucrats has interests quite different from the workers they represent.

That is why we need a rank and file movement.

It should aim to organise groups of militants within every union and link

them together in a national organisation. Its immediate aim should be to break the hold that the bureaucrats have over the unions and put them back in the hands of their members. This means:

- Paying elected union officials no more than the average wage of the workers they represent.
- Regular election of all officials, at least annually, with every official subject to recall if they betray their pledges.

But a rank and file movement should not limit itself to changing the union rule book. Organising on the ground—in the workplaces and union branches—would enable it to start building links that could in time enable militants and strikers to make serious attempts to bypass instructions of officials in the course of disputes, prevent sell-outs and win active solidarity directly. The watchword of a rank and file movement should be: "with the officials where possible, against them where necessary."

The time is ripe for building such a movement.

In the RMT we have seen the longest-running campaign of strikes in the union's history.

In the Post Office, UCW activists up and down the country have organised strikes with astonishing success every month this year, often without formal ballots. Hospital porters in Glasgow have defied their officials and saved their jobs through strike action. Lecturers are still resisting the onslaught of personal contracts, longer hours and shorter holidays, despite the Natfhe leadership twice calling off nationwide strikes this year.

What does all this prove? Certainly not that there is a general "upturn" in trade union struggles. There were only 211 strikes in 1993, fewer than any year since records began. The number of strike days lost improved from its all time low in 1991-92, but not dramatically.

But the current rash of disputes does show that more and more workers are prepared to fight back even when union officials use their position to crack down on disputes.

There have probably been more unofficial (and therefore illegal) strikes this year than at any time since 1989. With the recovery in manufacturing, one fifth of the top 500 UK companies reported "industrial unrest" in the past year, often falling short of all out strikes and, according to a recent report, failing to show up on the strike figures.

Links

Unofficial conferences of postal workers, local government workers and lecturers have drawn large numbers of delegates who want to share their experiences, make effective links and forge a way forward.

But the desire to forge links will not necessarily lead to the building of an effective rank and file movement. In the past, attempts to build such a movement have foundered in two ways.

First there is the experience of the Broad Lefts, the form of rank and file organisation pioneered by the Com-

munist Party and taken up by the Militant Tendency in the 1980s.

These Broad Lefts developed in a number of unions in response to right wing executive committees. They organised activists who wanted to change their union leadership. The civil service union, the CPSA, had the largest and most militant Broad Left in the 1980s. So it was in the CPSA that the shortcomings of Broad Leftism were most starkly exposed.

In 1987, the CPSA Broad Left gained a majority on the National Executive. They had "control" of the union. Here was a golden opportunity to transform the union, to oust the time servers and to lead low-paid civil



Sefton—rank and file must be organised

service workers in a fight against the Thatcher government.

But to do that the Broad Left would have had to turn the CPSA over to the control of the rank and file, sack the full-timers and replace them with elected and accountable members on the wages of the average civil servant. They would have had to fight to win the members to defy the anti-union laws and launch an all out indefinite strike against job cuts and privatisation.

The CPSA Broad Left did nothing of the sort. Unable and unwilling to base themselves on rank and file control, its leaders, supporters of the Militant Tendency, chose to compromise with the bureaucratic structures. As a result they even demobilised a strike wave in the London and Bristol Job Centres for fear that any attempt to spread the action would backfire on them in the following year's elections. They lost control of the union and, seven years on, the Broad Left has shifted even further to the right. Today it has virtually no rank and file base.

A form of Broad Leftism still exists in the unions. The Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Union (CFDU) emerged in the RMT as a result of anger at sell-outs over pay, job losses and privatisation on the tubes and the rail in the early 1990s. It was an honest attempt to make the RMT fight.

Today it has two members on the RMT's Council of Executives. But it has been unable to co-ordinate any action from below on the railways in support of the signal workers.

Organisations that see elections as the sole or main means of fighting

the bureaucracy are doomed to fail, because they leave the rank and file as passive onlookers. This is why supporters of Workers Power in the unions argue to combine the fight to transform union structures with organising an alternative to the bureaucrats on the ground.

Unfortunately up to now a major obstacle to the rebuilding of a rank and file movement has been the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP organises the largest group of militants in several unions. It has the power both to launch or to obstruct the establishment of rank and file organisations. In recent years it has devoted considerable time and effort to the latter.

The SWP is critical of Broad Leftism. In the 1970s it stood at the head

from standing as stewards.

The recent recovery of militancy has posed the SWP with a problem. They are able to stand at the head of an important section of the militant minority, in Unison over the Sefton 2, in Natfhe over the sell out, in important struggles in the NHS like the UCH occupation. But instead of putting itself at the head of the fight to build a rank and file movement, the SWP opposes it. Instead it argues that workers who want to knit our struggles together should "join the party".

The problem is, what to do with the majority of militants who do not want to join SWP, who do not yet regard themselves as revolutionary socialists, but who can be organised to stop strikes being sold out? As two reports opposite show, the SWP has yet to bite the bullet and accept the responsibility to organise the rank and file. Yet the pressure from below is greater than for many years.

Alternative

It is quite wrong to present the need for a political party as an alternative to the need for a rank and file movement. The possibility of building a rank and file movement is an opportunity for revolutionary socialists to ally themselves in struggle with reformist and non-revolutionary workers who want to fight the bureaucrats. In this way a revolutionary party could demonstrate its real value, how the superiority of its politics allows it to put forward practical proposals that can turn the tide against the Tories and the employers.

Far from being an alternative to a revolutionary party, a rank and file movement would be a vibrant arena within which such a party could grow. It could provide a real centre for organising the widest possible and most effective opposition to the bureaucrats, and at the same time socialists could fight within it for answers to the whole range of problems that face the working class, not just over pay, conditions and redundancies, but on crucial questions such as racism and solidarity with struggles of workers abroad.

A rank and file movement needs to be formed, and there is no better time than now. If you want to collaborate with Workers Power supporters in your union or industry in the fight for a rank and file organisation, contact the address below. We are keen to collaborate with all existing rank and file groups. ■

READ

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ever, that in the absence of a real national fight many local leaderships and branches may settle for something less.

This is why the reconvened delegates' and activists' conference was an important step in trying to turn around the dispute.

The conference agreed a common strategy to combat the sabotage of the leaders and to take the dispute forward. This involves a dual approach. On the one hand we need to fight at the coming FE Sector Conference for a return to national strike action; we need an all out strike. But if we cannot win such action we must win more colleges to local strike action, co-ordinating this action on the widest possible basis.

Socialist Lecturers Alliance members and Workers Power supporters proposed a resolution to set up a rank and file organisation aimed at organising the militant minority during the dispute, laying the basis for kicking out the current sell out leadership and transforming Natfhe into a democratic and fighting union. This was opposed by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

An SWP amendment was carried setting up a steering committee but limiting its role to co-ordinating activists during the current dispute. While this is certainly a step forward, it avoids the question of how we transform our union and counter the growing disillusion with Natfhe amongst rank and file members. ■

AS WE go to press the signal workers' dispute is at a turning point. RMT negotiators are locked in secret talks with Railtrack. Secret from railworkers, that is.

While RMT officials are keeping rank and file signal workers in the dark, the Tories are involved up to their necks. They are keeping up their pressure on the bosses not to concede any deal that breaches the public sector pay ceiling.

Signal workers should be in no doubt—their negotiators are prepared to reach an agreement that will be little more than a sell out.

They have already abandoned the claim for an up-front payment. Following the decision of the recent signalling grades conference (see below), negotiators will be discussing the pay claim alongside proposals for restructuring of the workforce. One RMT negotiator has already suggested to the press what this might mean: **job losses**.

The union is considering cuts in the signalling workforce as part of a pay package. That way an increase above the pay limit could go through, without Railtrack's overall pay bill going up. To keep their profits intact signal workers' jobs will be slashed.

SIGNAL WORKERS Where next?

A deal along these lines would be a tragedy, because **the signal workers could win**. To do that, as the signal workers interviewed below point out, they need to step up the action. The signal workers need to go beyond the series of one and two day strikes, and launch an all-out indefinite strike.

Big business is already losing millions from the existing campaign. Escalation would have them all on the phone to their pals in the Tory party begging for a quick settlement. Management's scabbing operation would crumble—a handful of supervisors could not run the service indefinitely.

All well and good, many signal workers will say, but how could we get an all-out strike? After all, the RMT leadership are dead against it. But there is a growing opposition among signal workers to sticking with the existing

strategy. Willesden and Coventry branches took resolutions to the signalling grades conference calling for an all-out strike.

The small but significant base of support for escalation has to link up nationally and use every opportunity to extend the action. One excellent example of this was the unofficial walkout by West Midlands signal workers in early August in response to threatened disciplinary action against a supervisor who refused to operate a strike bound signal box.

Management provocations, threats and victimisations of union activists, cover-ups of near accidents and scapegoating of drivers for the incompetence of scabs—all of these could be used to build unofficial walkouts and to pile on the pressure for an all-out strike.

Strike committees, like the one in

Manchester, need to be in direct contact with other such rank and file bodies across the country. Picketing teams need to be co-ordinated to target the weakest areas, and the call should go out for the £200,000 plus in the RMT hardship and strike funds to be released, both to alleviate hardship and to fund delegations of strikers to the weaker areas.

Could solidarity action be won? Yes. Other railworkers are already seething with anger over Railtrack's cynical disregard for safety. The Bickley derailment and the near disaster at the Long Eaton level crossing were the direct responsibility of management for letting untrained scabs run the signal boxes on strike days.

Solidarity strikes need to be built for, initially on health and safety grounds, but also by pointing out to rank and file drivers and other grades

how a defeat for the signal workers will greatly weaken trade unionism on the railways, speeding up the process of privatisation with all the consequences in terms of jobs and conditions that that will mean.

As for the anti-union laws, every railway worker needs to realise that management are already breaking the law on safety.

What is more, British Rail is colluding with Railtrack by offering its staff to scab. This is the employers' "secondary action". We need secondary action of our own—solidarity strikes.

The signal workers have won respect and sympathy from millions of workers.

It is a popular dispute. If they can bust a hole through the Tories' pay norm it will be a massive step forward for all workers fighting for a living wage—for nurses, teachers and council workers whose claims exceed the government ceiling.

That is why the threatened sell-out must be stopped.

Signal workers need to demand report back meetings from the negotiations and fight to reject anything less than the full claim with no strings. The stakes are too high to settle for anything less. ■

Workers Power: How solid would you say the strike is now? How would you assess the current mood among the signalworkers and other railworkers?

It is a very difficult situation. Listening to reports at the conference we are solid in Manchester but nationally we are not totally solid. Without any kind of leadership some people are ready to go back to work.

Other railworkers are concerned and worried. They've got genuine fears. We are getting a lot of sympathy and support. They are worried about taking trains out. There is no clear instruction from the union. We need secondary action.

Manchester branch put a resolution to the conference calling for secondary action. We were not allowed to discuss it.

We think RMT drivers will be out on Friday 23 September. They are coming to an executive meeting on the Wednesday to discuss coming out. ASLEF have shown their true colours on this. It is shameful as ASLEF drivers are in imminent danger.

WP: What do you think of the Labour Party's position on the dispute? What else could they be doing?

Absolutely deplorable. Blair doesn't say anything in support. Look at our sponsored MPs, they're not standing up and speaking out. If they don't support us, we shouldn't support them.

WP: Given the government's determination to impose a public sector pay freeze, do you think that the one and two day stoppages can win?

We are not going to win with one and two day strikes. They've tried all sorts of dirty tricks to undermine the union. Personal contracts was the latest one. I think they are waiting until Christmas. Signalworkers can't see any light at the end of the tunnel. Men are going to go back to work. We need a severe course of action. We need secondary action. They are using workers from other firms—why shouldn't we spread the dispute?

WP: Railtrack's investigation into the recent derailment on a strike day has blamed the train driver for allegedly passing a danger signal. Do you believe them?

The Health and Safety Executive are covering up and Kent Railtrack are doing the same thing. It will take a loss of life for this to be addressed. It will only be addressed with a proper public enquiry. All drivers should come out and back us.

The RMT, ASLEF and all drivers should have come out straight away.

INTERVIEW

"We need to break the law to win the strike"

Workers Power spoke to three signalworkers from the North West who were delegates to the recent RMT Signalling Grades Conference in Great Yarmouth. Their names have been withheld because of Railtrack's policy of gagging employees.



SOLIDARITY WITH THE NATIONAL WORKERS

BE THE DAY E

It's been shown on TV and nothing has happened. There is no loyalty from Railtrack to their drivers—they are putting the blame on the drivers, scapegoating the drivers.

Scab supervisors have half an hour playing with train sets and then they are let loose with real trains and real people. They are not trained to do the job. I know that one of the office work-

ers was asked to work a signal box.

The union should be involved in any public enquiry into accidents on the rail. If there was a fatal accident it would get a lot of publicity. The Health and Safety part of the union should have observers and maximum involvement by the union to stop a cover up. It should not be behind closed doors. We must make it clear that that is not

what we want to happen, but that will be what is needed to make people realise what is going on in terms of health and safety.

Rank and file ASLEF men support us. They want to come out—but their hands are tied.

WP: What do you think of the Tories' role in the strike?

This is nothing new. We have had 15 years of it. They are treating workers with contempt. They want to end up paying us nothing. They hate the unions and want the working class to accept anything—fairness doesn't come into it. They will do anything to keep their public pay freeze and they know that if we win their pay freeze goes out of the window.

Their ultimate aim is privatisation. They want to sell us off at a cheaper price. They want a weak workforce, they want to break our back. The money the Tories spend to compensate Railtrack will be got back when they sell us off cheaply.

WP: Do you think the bosses and Tories want to see the RMT broken as a national union?

Yes, if they can break us they haven't got a problem with privatisation. ASLEF and TSSA are in the bosses' pockets. They know that if they break the RMT there won't be a union.

It's not just us who recognise the importance of this dispute. Other unions and other workers recognise it. That's why we are getting so much support. We had a £10 cheque from an old age pensioner the other day; she wrote a letter apologising for the lateness of her contribution to the hardship fund—she had been saving the money up! Support like that gives us added strength and makes us feel even more anger towards the scabs.

WP: What do you think the union and the TUC should be doing now? Cracks are appearing. But they are

not preparing people for an all-out strike. We should spend a few weeks preparing and campaigning for it, then call an all-out strike.

We must also try to get secondary action. We wanted TUC Days of Action. The employers are breaking the law, so we must do it too. We need to break the law to win the strike now.

WP: What do you think of the resolution that was passed at the conference?

It is a joke and a compromise. Let's face it; this is historically the most important National Grades Conference we have ever had. The union's future is at stake. The trade union movement is at stake. We have to take dramatic action to win. Were we discussing that at this conference? No. Instead we were talking about binding arbitration.

We had a ballot and 80% of our membership voted for strike action. Our leadership could "up the ante" at any time. The resolution was just repeating where we are already. It's a waste of time.

WP: What should rank and file signalworkers be doing now?

We've got to realise what's going on. We need to stop treating strike days as days off, we need to be active. We need to picket, attend other union branch meetings and get information out to other unions and the general public. We need a strong show of support and solidarity throughout the grade.

WP: And the RMT Support Groups, what should they be doing?

Go to other union meetings and argue about our dispute. People in the support groups must raise the strike wherever they can. Collect money, give financial and moral support. We need agitation in the unions to put pressure on the TUC to take some form of action. ■

Millions unemployed...

John Major recently announced that the British economy was facing its "best outlook for nearly fifty years". He predicted "a recovery without inflation, a recovery that will last, a recovery for the long term". He could point to figures released during the previous months showing economic growth, falling inflation and falling unemployment. Then on 12 September Chancellor Kenneth Clarke raised interest rates by half a percent. This apparently small step is very revealing. It allows us to predict that Major's claims will be shown to be utter rubbish over the next few years. The "feel-good factor" will not be coming to the Tories' rescue before the elections. British capitalism is gripped by a deep sickness, writes **Paul Morris**.



"recovery" the capitalists have done very little to prepare for an upturn in economic demand.

Investing, and thereby increasing capacity and productivity, would be the only way to enjoy a non-inflationary recovery. But this has not happened in the UK. One reason has been the high cost of borrowing and the fear—justified it now turns out—that the cost of borrowing would rise again.

When the upturn in demand came it led to the fear that manufacturers would rush to borrow money to invest in new capacity, fuelling inflation. Secondly, the Tories fear that with the appearance of shortages manufacturers will start increasing their profit margins by passing on price rises to the consumer, once again fuelling inflation.

Raw material prices have risen 10% over the past year, and investment has begun to pick up.

These were the reasons that Clarke and the Bank of England gave for raising interest rates—a measure designed to damp down the recovery. At the same time Clarke signalled that there would be no let up on tax increases—the other measure which has already damped down the recovery.

Thatcher had to demolish whole swathes of British industry in order to undermine and weaken what lay inside the factories, docks and mines: one of the most militant working class movements in the developed capitalist world.

Now British capitalism is paying the overhead cost of the destruction of its manufacturing base. Chronic inflation, and the Tories' tireless chase after a cure for it, ensure that the recovery will not be strong. It will be weak and inflationary.

In short, we are not facing a new dawn for British capitalism. Certainly the capitalists have altered the balance of class forces in the workplace and are pressing home a vicious offensive on pay and conditions, centred in the public sector.

But the *strategic* problems of British capitalism—chronic inflation, under-investment, a declining manufacturing base—all these remain.

They are haunting the Tories' celebrations. They are what makes the "feel good factor" so elusive for millions of voters.

That is why the smile on John Major's face looks so false. And that's why it won't be there for long. ■

THE INTEREST rate rise to 5.75% means an extra £12 to £30 a month on mortgage repayments for working class homeowners. This is at a time when millions of workers' pay is at a standstill. But the political significance of the rate rise goes far beyond this.

The interest rate rise was designed to "stem inflation" and to slow down Britain's economic growth. Yet inflation is at a fifty year low. Two years into the economic "recovery", there are over 2.6 million unemployed on official figures, with 92,000 being laid off in the last three months. So what's going on?

The economic cycle of recession and recovery is intrinsic to capitalism. The performance of British capitalism in both phases of the cycle are a clue to the problems it faces. The last period of economic recovery, 1983 to 1989, finished with a feverish "boom". Tory tax cuts, house price rises and financial deregulation unleashed a spiral of inflation which almost breached the psychological 10% barrier.

The Tories like us to believe that inflation is caused by workers demanding "excessive" pay rises, rises that run ahead of productivity increases. That this is a lie has been proved time and again over the last five years, when productivity in Britain has run far ahead of real pay increases.

The truth that the employers try to hide is that workers are not to blame for inflation. The source of Clarke and Major's current fear of inflation is the bosses, who always put up prices to increase their profit margins when demand runs ahead of supply. This is true whether the goods in question are from abroad or made in the UK.

At the end of the 1980s inflation was in danger of getting out of hand, a danger that materialised as a result of economic policies (like tax hand-outs for the rich) which were introduced by the last Tory government in 1986 to win the 1987 election.

To rein in inflation, the Tories embarked on a campaign of steep interest rate rises. Interest rates are the cost of borrowing money. If the cost of borrowing goes up people spend less on hire purchase, credit cards, house mortgages. Demand is cut back, investment falls away and prices drop.

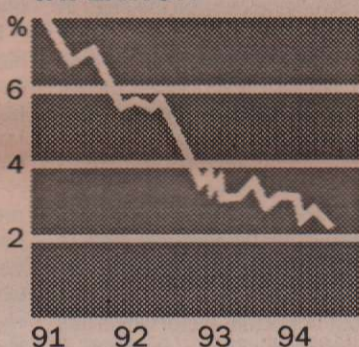
High interest rates not only helped tip Britain into recession sooner than many other countries, they were maintained above 10% throughout the recession in order to keep Britain in the European Monetary System (EMS).

Because Britain imports more than it exports—a consequence of UK manufacturing industry's poor competitiveness in the post-war period—there was and is a constant downward pressure on the value of Sterling, and a tendency for the price of imports to rise.

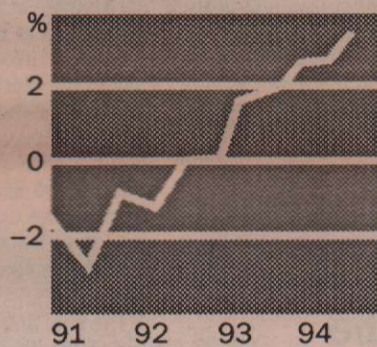
To offset this Britain joined the EMS in 1990, pegging British cur-

but recovery is "too strong"

INFLATION



GDP GROWTH



rency to the strength of the German currency. This was hailed as a new anti-inflation strategy.

But it backfired. In the depth of the recession (1992), the German bosses refused to lower punishing interest rates. The British capitalists were faced with a choice: either keep British interest rates cripplingly high, as demanded by the rules of the EMS, or get out of the EMS, lower interest rates and try to escape from the recession.

Major pulled Britain out of the EMS,

allowing a steady fall in interest rates from over 10% to the recent low of 5.25%.

The problem was that this left British capitalism without an effective strategy against inflation. The kneejerk reaction was to impose a public sector pay freeze. While this provides a good cover to restore profits at the expense of wages, it does not tackle the real cause of inflation.

Clarke's decision admits as much. Major decreed that everything would be done to make sure that the com-

ing recovery would not be inflationary. They could not afford to repeat the politically damaging cycle of boom and bust of 1987-90. So he set a target rate of between 1% and 4% and beefed-up the power of the Bank of England to demand interest rate rises should inflation threaten to rise again.

The very fact that counter-inflationary measures are being taken so soon in the cycle of a recovery illustrates how sick British capitalism is. Output has begun to pick up, approaching the level it was at four years ago.

Yet with growth "surging" from 2.5 to 3% this year, with order books filling up, British industry is starting to work nearer and nearer to its full capacity. The CBI's index of "capacity utilisation"—the amount of factories and machinery lying idle compared to the amount being used—shows "above average" use.

This sounds like good news—and indeed to the individual boss, in the short term, it is. But to the Tories it is bad news. It means that throughout the recession and during two years of

THE TORIES are being forced to damp down the recovery as soon as it has started. At the same time over two and a half million people are on the dole.

On the face of it the Tories have defied all previous trends over unemployment. After the last two major recessions (1973-75, 1979-81) unemployment continued to rise for several years after the end of the recession. On official figures the latest recovery has bucked that trend, falling from just below 3 million to 2.6 million over the last year.

The Tories' jiggery-pokery with unemployment figures is well known. That and the fact that every news bulletin seems to bring another story about closures and lay offs has led many working class militants to simply disbelieve the figures. But when we look at the Unemployment Unit's figures—calculated on the old, more accurate, basis—we still see a falling trend. These show a fall from just over 4 million in June 1993 to 3,568,000 in July 1994.

Yet employment is also falling. According to *The Economist*: "For

the last 18 months employment has on average declined by 17,000 a month."

So what is really happening, and why?

First of all this cycle of recession and recovery has seen a new phenomenon: "disappearance from eco-

ployment figures, at the same time as providing the bosses with a large pool of cheap, casual labour—because most students have to work part time or for some of the year to supplement falling grants.

But "disappearance" doesn't account for the entire fall in unemploy-

Jobless totals: fact or fiction?

nomie activity". Men aged between 35 and 60 are dropping out of the labour market altogether. The latest *Labour Force Survey* showed that 110,000 men in this age range withdrew from the labour market last year, some taking early retirement, some going onto sickness benefit, some going onto the streets, some going back into further or higher education and all of them disappearing from unemployment figures.

Amongst 18-24 year olds the massive rise in FE and University attendance has also reduced the unem-

ployment figures. Some of this trend has to be put down to increased "flexibility" in the labour market resulting from successive attacks on workers' job conditions and contracts.

In past recessions, employers carried on sacking throughout the first phase of the recovery, rather than take on new labour under old conditions. At present it is likely that two processes are under way. Some bosses are taking on temporary, part time and other "flexible" workers, whilst others are continuing to get

rid of the existing workforce.

This trend does not mean the Tories have solved the unemployment problem. The last two recoveries each had a successively higher level of unemployment when they reached the bottom of the curve—over 1.25 million at the height of the late 1980s boom.

During Major's drab recovery the "low point" of unemployment is likely to be much higher.

While disappearance from the unemployment figures helps the image of the Tory government, it does not help the health of the capitalist economy at all. It places a greater burden on sickness benefit and social services and it reduces demand.

British capitalism cannot find work for more than 13% of its workforce—even after two years of recovery, and with official estimates that factories might soon be producing to capacity! That is the insanity of the profit system.

If that is what it is like when it is supposed to be "working", imagine what is in store when this puny "recovery" comes to an end. ■



After the IRA c

THE DECISION of the IRA on 31 August 1994 to completely end military operations against the British state marks a qualitative turning point in the 25 year struggle of the anti-imperialist population against British imperialism.

The IRA has called off its 23 year long guerrilla struggle without forcing the British army to leave Ireland and without achieving national self-determination for the Irish people or the revolutionary destruction of Protestant privilege enshrined in the Orange state. Their endorsement of the idea that a peaceful road to unity exists through negotiations with the British state, the Southern bourgeoisie and the Unionists marks an historic betrayal of Irish revolutionary democracy by Sinn Féin and the IRA.

The so-called ceasefire declaration by the IRA in fact does not include the word "ceasefire". In reality we are in a transitional phase, of indeterminate length, in which we have something more than a ceasefire and something less than a collapse into full constitutionalism.

The declaration renounces in principle the legitimacy or necessity of armed struggle (even as a subordinate tactic). On the other hand, the IRA have not given up their arms nor ceased their intelligence work. Hence they have not in practice fully recognised the right of the bourgeois state in Northern Ireland to a monopoly of violence. But the British and the Unionists are demanding a renunciation of violence, and partial demilitarisation, as the price for entering into negotiations over constitutional questions. Sinn Féin have no principled opposition to this.

The IRA have sanctioned the first steps on a road that leads to complete capitulation before the oppressor and will in time see them take responsibility for imposing bourgeois order on their supporters. The IRA have signalled in their declaration that the revolutionary, anti-imperialist threat from petit bourgeois nationalism is at an end.

The new world order comes to Ireland

Ideologically and politically, the possibility of a betrayal of this nature has always been lodged in the confused, utopian, petit bourgeois programme of Sinn Féin and the IRA.

But its timing is a result of long-maturing changes in the political economy of Ireland and Britain within Europe, and above all the new international diplomacy of imperialism after the end of the Cold War. After the collapse of Stalinism between 1989 and 1991, Sinn Féin's "socialism" has no economic model, no allies in the Kremlin proxy regimes (Libya, PLO) and no workable ideology. Without these, the influence of US Democratic bourgeois politics and Irish pan-nationalism has become decisive within the Republican movement.

Imperialism's determination to impose a counter-revolutionary settlement on "trouble spots" has been seen over recent years in Central America, South Africa and the Middle East. In each of these the USA has played a pivotal role. The advent of the Clinton administration in 1992 shifted the balance of political forces

within the US administration under the pressure of the Irish-American lobby. This was sufficient for Clinton to become a "persuader" of the British to work for a settlement based on a renunciation of the armed struggle by the IRA. Sinn Féin mistakes these developments for a historic achievement of their own struggle, which for the first time makes possible the achievement of Irish unity by negotiation, without first forcing from the British a promise to withdraw.

A powerful alliance of Britain, the USA and Dublin has determined on a settlement and the IRA has taken the decisive first step. The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the largest Unionist party, has agreed not to obstruct the process. The largest constitutional nationalist party in Northern Ireland (the SDLP) has been an architect of the sell-out. As a result it will prove very difficult indeed for any other political or military current to derail the momentum from outside. Only the internal contradictions that exist between these major forces, and which are not transcended by the agreements so far, can abort this process.

Demobilising the anti-imperialist mass revolt

The high point of the mass anti-imperialist revolt was 1968-72. It achieved its greatest success with the downfall of Stormont. Only in the latter stages of that period did the IRA rediscover its own existence and relaunched its guerrilla campaign, inflicting the first fatality of the modern period on the British army in 1971.

But with the fall of Stormont the mass struggle was definitively subordinated to the guerrilla struggle of the IRA. Only in the 1980-81 period was there a resurgence of the mass movement. Although it resulted in actions across the 32 counties and brought working class organisations into the movement, this was in reality never able to escape the pan-nationalist and humanitarian straitjacket imposed upon it by the leaders of the Republican movement.

Since the effective defeat of the hunger strike campaign, the mass character of the anti-imperialist struggle has been progressively exhausted by a number of factors.

- The defeat of the hunger strike struggle itself tended to strengthen for a while the hold of the IRA/Sinn Féin leadership who argued that mass support should be mobilised primarily via the ballot box as an auxiliary to the continuation of the armed struggle—the armalite and the ballot box.

- The British war machine, including the Ulster Defence Regiment/Royal Irish Regiment and Royal Ulster Constabulary has been able to contain the struggle, aided and abetted by the savage repression of the Southern bourgeoisie.

- The British propaganda offensive, once again ably assisted by the Irish government in the South and by the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracies in Britain and Ireland, has largely succeeded in hiding the real nature of the struggle from the working class and youth. They have portrayed it as one of irrational sectarian strife which would turn the whole of Ireland into a Lebanon if it were not for the peacekeeping role of

the British aided by the Southern security forces.

- A range of political and economic measures from Westminster since direct rule have tended to undercut the explosive potential of the revolutionary democratic civil rights struggle which started the present phase of the Irish national freedom struggle in 1968-69. The issue around which the mass civil rights struggle began—housing allocation—has been effectively removed as an issue of mass province-wide struggle. Moreover, various community projects, funded by British and EC money and channelled through the SDLP, have both boosted the political prestige of the SDLP and blunted the edge of resistance to partition.

- Class divisions within the nationalist community in the North have grown very rapidly since 1972. The main dynamic has been the rapid growth of the Catholic upper middle class (bourgeoisie) who are the direct and most important base of the SDLP. This has been a key factor in blunting the edge of the cross-class revolutionary democratic threat of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association which emerged 25 years ago.

- The final and most important factor which has led to the peace process and the ceasefire is the bankrupt political strategy of the leaders of Sinn Féin and the IRA.

The failed strategy of Republicanism

The strategy of Sinn Féin and the IRA had one central component—guerrillaism. Marxists do not rule out any tactic whatsoever in the class war, including guerrilla warfare. But for us the centre of revolutionary strategy is the mass action of the working class culminating, in a revolutionary situation, in an armed insurrection.

In an industrially developed country, with a sizeable working class, an offensive urban guerrilla strategy is doomed to failure. For most of the time it is even an obstacle to the mobilisation of the masses. For the IRA, an offensive guerrilla campaign aimed at forcing the British withdrawal was central, while mass mobilisations were auxiliary at best.

For Marxists the tactic of guerrilla war would always be subordinated to the principle of developing the independent class action of the working class and the rest of the labouring masses. For the IRA it was just the opposite—the action of the masses, including the working class, was at best only tolerated intermittently when it could not be avoided (as in the H Block struggle) or when it could function as a useful cover for guerrilla tactics.

When the gun is silent Sinn Féin's reformist, electoralist and petit bourgeois outlook shares the bourgeoisie's conception of politics.

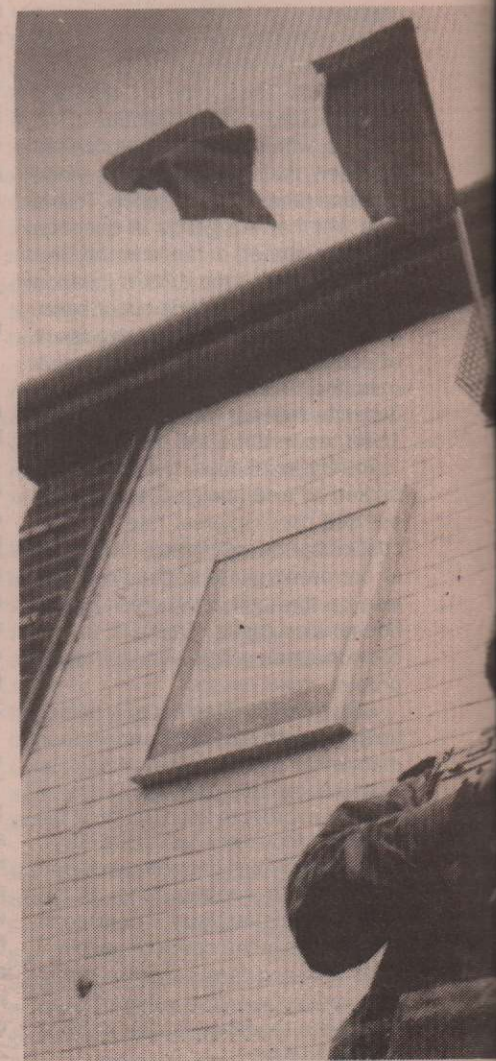
Its local councillors in the Six Counties have had to resist the attacks of the Loyalist and British terror gangs, and have battled against the censorship imposed on them by the British and Irish media. But this courageous commitment has been fatally weakened by anti-working class collaboration in the town halls of Northern Ireland—with the SDLP and even with the Unionists—and by failing to mobilise against cuts

aimed at workers and the poor. In the 1980s Sinn Féin tried and failed to extend its electoral strategy into the wider arena of the South. But, outside of a few border areas and parts of Dublin, support for Sinn Féin was dismally low, dashing its hopes of bargaining with Dublin and Westminster in the future from a position of greater strength.

In the 1980s Sinn Féin's utopianism was proved by the nature of world economic developments and the rapid economic growth of the 26 counties under the impact and domination of inward imperialist investment and EU revenue transfers.

In this context the Irish Republic—a privileged semi-colony—has seen levels of growth, modernisation and development much more impressive than any achieved under the protectionism of De Valera, to which Sinn Féin harked back.

This fact disoriented Sinn Féin. Its economic romanticism and nationalism cannot comprehend the changing forms of imperialist domination. Its intellectual framework is too brittle to withstand the experience of economic development under the spur of imperialist investment. It snapped under the pressure. Hence during the 1980s Sinn Féin's economic programme for a new Ireland came to be seen by everyone as a historical curiosity.



Above: Real peace means getting the troops

easefire

Finally, the Republican movement came up against the obstacle of the Loyalist bloc. Having abandoned the idea of coercing the Unionists into a united Ireland, and totally lacking any strategy for breaking up the reactionary bloc along class lines, Sinn Féin left itself with only one option—making unrealistic and even unprincipled concessions to it. This Sinn Féin has started to do increasingly since its new conception of the peace process took explicit form in Adams' 1988 book *A Pathway to Peace*. Adams explicitly accepted the principle of Unionist consent as a condition to the realisation of Irish self-determination.

The result of the above failures of perspective has been to push the petit bourgeois revolutionary nationalists of Sinn Féin and the IRA towards the bourgeois nationalists of the SDLP and Fianna Fáil.

The emphasis of Adams and McGuinness on a "pan-nationalist alliance" showed the drift to a reconciliation on Sinn Féin's part with the bourgeois nationalists of the SDLP and Fianna Fáil. This drift has strengthened in the context of the ceasefire and all the activities of Sinn Féin leading up to it. Though it would be premature, as yet, to say that a long lasting reconciliation of Sinn Féin has been consolidated, the drift is undeniably in this direction. Any such long-lasting reconciliation would mark the end of

Sinn Féin as a revolutionary nationalist-led movement and the beginning of its development along the path the old Sinn Féin took in the 1920s into the bourgeois nationalist Fianna Fáil party.

Dublin proves its pro-imperialist credentials

Dublin has proved its pro-imperialist credentials over the 25 years of the Northern revolt and especially in the last decade. The Anglo Irish Agreement of 1985, the cross-border patrols and its willingness to extradite Republicans to Britain have reassured the British bourgeoisie that the Southern Irish ruling class can be trusted with the important task of brokering a counter-revolutionary peace deal.

Moreover, the election of a coalition government has enabled the Labour Party (and especially its leader Dick Spring as Foreign Minister) to be pushed to the fore in the negotiations. This is designed to reassure the Unionists and the British that, further down the road, the Irish Republic will renounce its constitutional claim over the North. The Labour Party has been

stamped with a long history of anti-republicanism ever since it effectively repudiated the 1916 Easter Rising. That is why Spring can be dispatched to glad-hand the Unionist parts of Belfast with such confidence.

Naturally, the Irish government plays its part in this drama out of self-interest. The Southern bourgeoisie stands to benefit from any deal with Britain. Even without the removal of the border as a political, constitutional and legal reality, any settlement based on the abandonment of revolutionary violence will accelerate the development of trade and investment links with the North (via the development of the Belfast-Dublin corridor) which even at present are very marginal to the economic life of both parts of the country.

How Sinn Féin got its followers to accept the ceasefire

There is little mass opposition to, or even suspicion of, the Sinn Féin and IRA move among the base of the Republican movement. One third of the IRA army convention voted against the ceasefire, but the likelihood of a split in the IRA seems small. The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) is probably down to no more than twenty active guerrillas and are unlikely to risk defying the IRA. Meanwhile, Republican Sinn Féin have rejected the whole of the IRA's peace process, including the ceasefire, but they remain marginal to the broad Republican movement.

More importantly, twenty five years of struggle, with no victory or end in sight, has clearly taken its toll in the lives and morale of thousands in the anti-unionist communities and workplaces.

Sinn Féin has presented the ceasefire as a courageous act, an honourable compromise in the name of "peace". For Sinn Féin's followers the 25 years of struggle have been justified by the break-up of the Unionist monolith, the fall of the old Stormont parliament and the pressure they have exerted on Britain to introduce reforms in housing and employment equality. In turn, these have compelled Britain to recognise the legitimacy of the nationalist aspirations of the anti-unionist population and ensuring that the Six County state could never go back to what it was before.

Initially the majority of Sinn Féin's supporters see in the 31 August statement a new way to achieve at least some of the immediate democratic and anti-imperialist goals that they have pursued by the armed struggle: the end of censorship, removal of the RUC from Catholic areas, release or return of prisoners from the 26 Counties and Britain and relief from on-the-street harassment by the Crown Forces. In addition, they have been sold the idea that with US, EC and Southern help they can improve the social and economic class position of the oppressed masses.

Peace without justice

The oppressed population of the Six Counties have been told that they can achieve all their goals in time by a different, peaceful road. Sinn Féin has dropped, without apology, its former claim to be a party of Republican socialists fighting for the social emancipation of the working class as well as national freedom. This is further proof that only a revolutionary proletarian, and not a revolutionary nationalist, strategy against the oppressive Northern Ireland state could ever lead to social and economic emancipation for the workers of the whole island. As it is Sinn Féin's "peace offensive" will help guarantee continued capitalist exploitation.

There will, of course, be some immediate and tangible benefits for the capitalist economy from the renunciation of revolutionary violence. However, the settlement will involve the withdrawal of up to £3 billion a year in security spending. Twenty thousand jobs in the security sector (equivalent to a fifth of the present total number of unemployed in Northern Ireland) will disappear. They cannot be balanced by new jobs from US/EC projects, tourism or multinational investment. The Protestant workers fear this, and know that they stand to gain little or nothing materially from de-militarisation. Only a political programme

which is clearly anti-capitalist can hope to mobilise the mass of Protestant and Catholic workers to fight for their class interests.

Can the settlement be made to stick?

Powerful forces, nationally and internationally, have put their weight behind the present round of negotiations. But there remain considerable obstacles in the path of imperialist-sponsored diplomacy.

Sinn Féin based its struggle on the lesson of the years 1968-74: that the Orange state cannot be reformed. It rejected appeals for reforms based on a Bill of Rights and insisted correctly that only the destruction of the sectarian Northern Ireland state itself could end the oppression of the six county nationalists. It was the nature of that state which inherently guaranteed the marginal privileges of the Protestant workers.

The mass of Loyalists were not prepared to give up these privileges and the British were unwilling to demand real equality and incapable of enforcing it within the Northern state.

But just as economic super-exploitation of the black masses in South Africa is surviving the end of political apartheid, so too the wealth and power of the Unionist bourgeoisie can survive the ending or substantial modification of the institutions of open Loyalist supremacy within local government. What cannot survive indefinitely without these institutions are the privileges of the Protestant working class. That is why, at present, they form the reactionary battalions of Unionism.

For a stable counter-revolutionary settlement to have a chance of success requires the following conditions:

First, that Dublin renounces its constitutional claim over the North. This is essential to help de-fuse and split Orange resistance to the deal. The British have to put flesh on the bones of their statement that they have "no selfish or strategic interest in Northern Ireland" by modifying the Government of Ireland Act of 1922. This falls short of the British becoming "persuaders" for a united Ireland (which the Tories cannot do but which a Labour government may do). However it would make explicit that the British ruling class does not want the Loyalists, even if the Loyalists want to remain British.

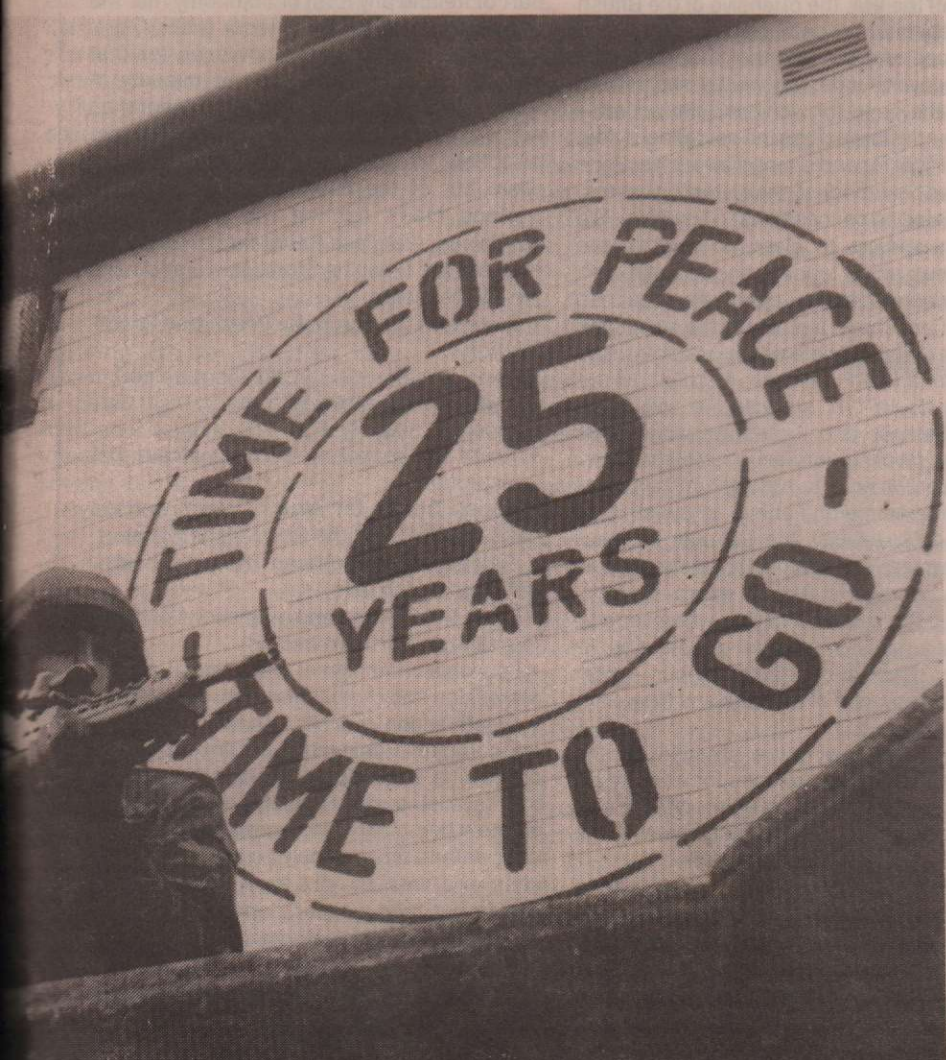
Secondly, the Loyalist paramilitaries have to call a ceasefire and the UUP has to make constitutional concessions and help to marginalise Paisley.

The Unionist bourgeoisie, which the UUP represents, can defend its economic wealth and capital under slightly modified political arrangements. But the Protestant working class must at all costs hold on to the machinery of privilege to keep itself above the condition of the rest of the working class. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) see proportional representation and any voice for Dublin as inevitably weakening their ability to maintain those privileges. The DUP's petit bourgeois following are mostly fanatical fundamentalist Presbyterians. More importantly, the DUP's working class following faces large scale lay-offs from the scaling down of the British and Ulster security machine. Paisley and the DUP are thus likely to survive for a considerable time as intransigent opponents of the Downing Street Declaration and any other concessions to the anti-unionists.

The Loyalist assassination squads of the UDA/UFF, UVF and Red Hand Commandos have refused to declare a ceasefire and are continuing with their counter-revolutionary terror. They have declared that this terror will not cease until they have studied the framework document which Reynolds and Major hope to agree on and publish by the end of October, which centres on a power sharing Executive. Any serious further concessions to the anti-unionist population in this document will feed the fears of a sell out which so inflame the assassination squads of Loyalism. Even though the moral pressure on the Loyalist assassins will be very great they will remain perhaps the most serious threat to the IRA's ceasefire holding.

Thirdly, and crucially, Dublin and London have to keep Sinn Féin on board, with its perspective of an all-Ireland solution. Simultaneously they have to devise a power-sharing administration within the six counties which can hold together bourgeois Unionism (Molyneux's UUP) and

Continued overleaf



Top: Sinn Féin Conference—"Our day will come."

constitutional nationalism (Hume's SDLP)—one which, furthermore, cannot be derailed by the Loyalists of Paisley's DUP and Protestant paramilitaries.

Fourthly, the US, EC and Britain have to make good their promises that there will be social improvement in the North. This is a real utopia and the weakest link in the prospects for a capitalist settlement. Ireland's vigorous semi-colonial development of the 1986-92 period is running into difficulties. This development is unlikely to be extended or deepened throughout the remainder of the decade, because the recovery from the present recession will be shallow and will not constitute a period of vigorous economic expansion. Added to this there is the prospect that Eastern Europe will become a more attractive location for investment.

The centrists and the ceasefire

The response of centrism in Britain has been scandalous. After three weeks of mealy mouthed prevarication over the ceasefire the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the largest centrist organisation, declared: "Socialists should welcome the IRA ceasefire".

Though "cautious" rather than "enthusiastic" the overt rationale for this welcome is the fact that it opens the way for class rather than national issues to come to the fore. It is "a step forward" according to the SWP because it is a step away from the guerrilla strategy. The fact that it is a step towards a pan-nationalist bloc, a sell out of 25 years of anti-imperialist struggle, is not clearly explained.

Despite the pan-nationalist alliance, the SWP asserts that the ceasefire improves conditions for a socialist strategy. It claims that not only can the economic struggle now come to the fore but that the agreement "creates the conditions to isolate Loyalist killers and turn Protestant workers against them". The SWP says that with the ceasefire, "An important obstacle to class politics in Ireland has been removed."

Nothing could sum up more clearly the bankruptcy of the SWP's approach. The revolutionary national struggle against imperialism could only be an "obstacle" to the "class politics" of an organisation which could not project class politics into the national struggle.

The SWP will sell this policy to its members on the basis that, as we also point out, it opens the possibility of a reconstitution of a vanguard, and that the loyalist bloc will fragment. But the entire SWP statement avoids characterising the proposed settlement as counter-revolutionary.

Socialist Organiser's (SO) response has been even worse. Their phobia of Republicanism means they have placed initial emphasis on the argument that it could all be a wily ploy by the IRA which has not really given up the bullet and ballot strategy.

Added to this SO says that the mass political struggle now being waged by Sinn Féin is only a continuation of the war by other means, and that socialists should not support it! Anything which stirs up the national question (border opening and anti-RUC protests) is worse than the spontaneous demise of national issues, they claim! In fact the whole situation as it is developing threatens to prove



Gerry Adams

in practice the reactionary logic of SO's position. SO substituted support for the revolutionary national struggle with the fight for a federal, capitalist united Ireland. This, they argued, would split the loyalist bloc and open the road for class politics. But precisely because the Protestant workers would not gain anything from a capitalist united Ireland they do not want a "federal" solution.

Oppose the ceasefire, fight for an Irish workers republic!

Given the hopes and expectations of Sinn Féin supporters in the new turn why are revolutionary socialists opposed to the IRA ceasefire?

Quite simply, because it is not a proposal to shift the armed units into a defensive role in relation to a new offensive mass campaign. Rather it means the disarming of the Northern masses and the abandonment of the struggle against partition altogether. It means that the Republican movement will become a force for imperialist law and order in Ireland against the inevitable continued eruptions of resistance.

The answer to this is not an even smaller scale guerrilla war by die-hard elements of the IRA or republican Sinn Féin.

An answer must begin from the self-organisation of the anti-Unionist working class and masses in mobilisations which can prevent the Sinn Féin ceasefire turning into a general defeat, fighting to:

- disarm and disband the RUC and RIR
- demolition of army observation posts
- Troops Out Now!
- release all Republican prisoners.

Such mobilisations would have to organise community self-defence and counterpose to the ceasefire the demand for the IRA to put themselves under the direction of the self-defence committees of the anti-Unionists.

Our primary orientation is to propaganda

and agitation for a united front of Republicans, workers, socialists and youth within the anti-imperialist population on the above platform.

We must argue for the building of such a front in the North now as a matter of urgency and its extension to the South, initially through solidarity committees. In this context our position on the Sinn Féin sponsored campaign *Time For Peace/Time To Go* is that it is chiefly a propaganda bloc for Sinn Féin's peace process without significant mass militant mobilisations to its credit. In the event of the campaign being forced, by events, to call such mobilisations, then even if it continued its peace-peddling propaganda and included bourgeois nationalist forces, we would join it in order to fight for a principled united front. For the moment we will support and join in any progressive mass actions it calls and intervene in its meetings.

For workers' joint action and united fronts

The end of the counter productive guerrillaist strategy of the IRA, the offensive of the British and Southern state on the public sector and on services and the fact that the world economic recovery underway will be short lived, all pose the need for workers' joint action—wherever possible across the sectarian divide.

We will fight for and support all such actions no matter how modest their starting points, while making no concessions to Loyalism. We will warn workers to place no trust in the treacherous union leaders and to build rank and file workers' mass united fronts that can resurrect and make a reality of the old slogan "With the union officials where possible; without them and in defiance of them where necessary". In this struggle we will argue among Catholic and Protestant workers for our entire revolutionary action programme.

However, we need to highlight certain parts of this programme and above all the struggle against cuts, against the scourge of mass unemployment and against threatened redundancies. We will stress a mass struggle, straddling the sectarian divide wherever possible, for a massive scheme of useful public works by direct public-sector labour—under the control and veto of the rank and file worker masses.

We will stress a mass struggle on the streets and round workplaces for *work for all*, Catholic and Protestant, at union rates of pay, or full benefits from the British state at the rate of the average industrial wage.

We will fight for these from the British state and government. We will fight to get the mobilised workers to place these demands on the ICTU and the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU, on the national and local union officials of all the relevant unions, on the Labour parties in Britain and the South and on the Workers Party in the North and on Sinn

Féin—while not waiting passively for any of these to act. And we will fight for solidarity and joint action where relevant between Northern and Southern workers.

A revolutionary anti-capitalist strategy can relate to the real fears that the Protestant workers have of an imperialist peace deal: the scaling down of subsidies and the economic underpinnings of their privileges. These privileges are privileges only in relation to the discrimination that exists against the nationalist community.

Jobs for all, decent housing and social services, education and recreation are the right of all whose labour sustains society. But this is not consistent with the superprofits of the multinationals. For this very reason it is imperialist ownership and control of the whole island that must go.

The unity of Ireland can only be achieved and founded on the unity of the working class, North and South, Protestant and Catholic.

This cannot be achieved by reconciliation between "traditions" or churches. The Protestant workers can only really fight for a secure and decent life for themselves and their families when they break the baneful ties that bind them to their own bosses, the first and foremost of which is their defence of the Northern Ireland statelet and their privileges over the Catholic working class. The declining strength of Orangeism is a testimony to this possibility.

But Protestant workers do not have to pass through a stage of "reconciliation" to Irish nationalism. They can and must be won to a programme of immediate and transitional demands based on building organs of workers' democracy in struggle, workers' control of the economy and the fight for a workers' government.

We fight for all aspects of the revolutionary democratic programme connected with the secularisation of society:

- Total separation of Church and State. The Church must be separated from the Constitution, the universities, schools, hospitals and social services
- Not a penny of state finance to any Church.
- For free and legal contraception and abortion on demand
- For free divorce on the consent of one partner

We support any real steps in the direction of these revolutionary democratic demands.

This can begin the process of showing the Protestant working class and the most progressive sections of Protestant youth that they have nothing to fear from the Republic that the workers establish under a revolutionary communist leadership, i.e. a totally secular workers republic as a step to workers' power in Europe and the world.

A workers' republic could even grant to any part of Ireland any form of autonomy that the democratic majority living there wished, providing this did not entail privileges for that majority or oppression for the minority. A workers' Ireland would also seek federation with a workers' Britain and a workers' Europe. Its outlook would not be that of narrow nationalism but of the international unity of the working class fighting for a classless, nationless, stateless future for humanity.

- Reject the Downing Street Declaration and the IRA ceasefire
- Down with the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation
- No to a referendum in Northern Ireland, a gerrymandered state with an in-built anti-democratic majority.
- No to the repeal of Article 2 of the Irish Constitution
- British Troops Out Now! Disarm and disband the RUC and the Royal Irish Regiment
- Release all Republican militants held in British and Irish jails
- Scrap the PTA and end restrictions on travel to and from Northern Ireland
- Launch a campaign of mass action against repression and exploitation in the six counties
- Create action councils based on workplace and community delegates with an armed workers' militia subordinate to them. Faced with the Loyalist terror campaign workers must create a democratically controlled armed militia to defend the nationalist communities. IRA units who wish to fight for a united Ireland should put their weapons and military skills under the democratic control of the workers' militia
- Forward to a United Irish Workers' Republic and a socialist United States of Europe
- Build a single revolutionary communist party in the whole of Ireland, North and South. ■

OUT NOW!

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Too many people?

"TOO MANY kids. A soaring world population now threatens to spill over into the West's own territory." Next to this bold headline the *Observer* placed a picture of dozens of miserable looking black children.

This kind of propaganda was thick on the ground at the time of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo last month. The airwaves were awash with talk of population explosions, demographic time bombs and an intolerable build up of environmental refugees on "our" borders. President Clinton's advisors warned that the threat of people being deprived of basic needs such as food, water and shelter is "one of the main engines of world instability", and vowed to tackle population growth, even at the expense of a rift with fundamentalist Christians.

Bigots

The conference itself created an opportunity for ideological tussles between religious bigots on one side—both Christian and Islamic—and the UN, USA and their allies on the other. The latter were able to pose as advocates of women's rights. Empowerment of women is to be central to future policies aimed at controlling population, we were told.

At first sight it is the "threat of overpopulation" that has forced imperialist policy makers to take up the banner of women's freedom and reproductive rights. In reality, the whole conference was a sham, a public relations exercise. The rhetoric about women, education and investment in family planning programmes covers up a totally false presentation of the problem and a totally inadequate set of policies for progress.

Starving children and overcrowded urban shanty towns make potent images. This propaganda is essentially racist camouflage. The images tell us that people starve because there are too many mouths to feed. More specifically, but rarely voiced openly, the message is that poor black people starve because there are too many poor black people.

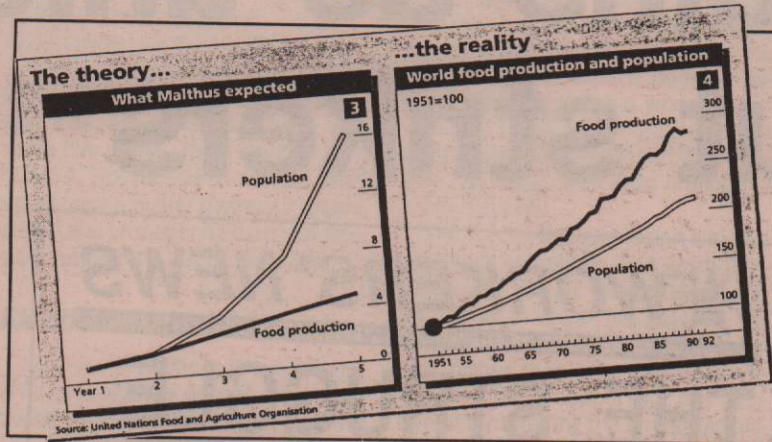
Posing the question in that way obscures the real issues: people do not starve in Africa because there are too many people or too little food in the world.

They starve because the system for producing and distributing food is inefficient, inequitable and crisis ridden. The population conference did not even ask why that is the case, because to even ask the question is to point the accusing finger away from poor people and towards the imperialist system itself, including the UN and its flashy conferences.

By focusing on population rather than food production and wider issues, the conference ensured that the real reasons for poverty, overcrowding and famine could not be addressed.

Famine

The arguments around the conference are not new. Those calling for emergency measures to check population growth are being described as "neo-Malthusians" because they use arguments similar to those raised by Reverend Thomas Malthus back in the eighteenth century. Malthus noted that poor people were having difficulty feeding their children and suggested that world population was growing faster than food production, leading to inevitable famine. He proposed measures to reduce population growth, particularly among the poor.



BY CLARE HEATH

He was wrong. Even the neo-Malthusians admit it, but they will criticise only his timing. They say we now face a situation where population growth outstrips production of food and other necessities.

At the time Malthus wrote, there were those who disagreed. Condorcet, an Enlightenment mathematician and social scientist, argued that productive methods would keep ahead of population growth. Education and voluntary birth control would help solve the problem, he wrote. He did express concern about using up the world's resources too quickly, but had a degree of confidence in humanity's conscious ability to tackle these problems.

Condorcet, not Malthus, has been proved right. Food production has increased at a faster rate than population for the past 200 years, and shows no signs of slowing down. Indeed advances in food technology, including selective use of high yield crops and genetic engineering, have led to an acceleration in the global increase in food production. Food production per person in the world has increased by 3% in the last decade alone, with spectacular rates of growth in India (23%) and China (39%), the two most populous countries in the world.

Africa

Where there is a real problem in food production is Africa. There food production has actually declined 6% per head over the same period. The population is growing faster in Africa than anywhere else in the world, and food production is not keeping pace. In some countries, such as Somalia and Malawi, there has been an absolute decline in food production.

Why the difference? The population theorists argue it is all to do with the lack of success of population control programmes in Africa, compared with the relative success of such programmes in India and China.

However, a more general look at economic and social conditions show that Africa has suffered a lack of investment in agricultural methods, except where they are directed towards cash crops for export. It has had declining productivity across the whole economic spectrum at a time when it has increased in most other parts of the semi-colonial world.

This is a direct result of the imperialist distortion of the semi-colonial economies of Africa.

The technology exists to increase food production in Africa and other parts of the world enormously. What is lacking is investment and planning. Everyone is aware of the food mountains in Europe—excess food which cannot be sold. It is too expensive for the countries that need to import it, so it is being destroyed or given away cheap in one-off aid programmes.

Planning of food production to meet need, rather than chaotic production in the hope of finding a market, is

literally a question of life and death. But capitalism is going firmly in the opposite direction.

A lot of agricultural land in Africa, for example, is being used to produce vegetables for export to Europe. Last year a supermarket advertised Kenyan green beans, grown on the side of Mount Kilimanjaro, which could be on your Christmas dinner plates within a couple of days of being picked. That may be very convenient for British consumers, but it is totally illogical. Neighbouring countries in East Africa have food shortages and the money and resources spent on transporting that food could be far better used.

Africa is an extremely fertile continent. It is not overpopulated, but underpopulated. Its population density is about a quarter of that in Europe and vast stretches of land are uncultivated.

Empowering women ... excusing imperialism

ISLAMIC MILITANTS of Gama'at al-Islamiya waged a campaign against the delegates in Cairo, threatening anyone who attended the "conference of licentiousness". An Islamic newspaper called the proceedings "a satanic scheme".

The Pope, not usually partial to Islamic theology, agreed that "what is at stake is the future of the family and of society itself".

With these religious bigots opposing anything that referred to "sexual health", access to contraception or anything which condemned back street abortions which kill tens of thousands of women every year, talk of empowering women and promoting safe family planning sounds almost revolutionary.

Reactionary

The Islamic opponents of the conference used anti-imperialist phrases in their support, arguing that contraception programmes are a part of the West's strategy for destroying Muslim people by preventing them reproducing. They use totally reactionary arguments against birth control and liberalising sexuality. But because the imperialists are using racist arguments on population and migration, and have used coercive population control in the Third World, the fundamentalists' arguments appeal to some anti-imperialists.

The Pope is also trying to appeal to the impoverished masses. "He sees the future strength of the church in the Third World, and in Eastern Europe, in the multiplying numbers of good and faithful people," reported a Vatican spokesman. This is not surprising, given that his flock in the West has the good sense to ignore his crusade against birth control. "Catholic" Italy has the lowest fertility rate in the world and its population is falling.

Marx criticised Malthus, arguing that production and distribution were the problem, not population. These arguments remain true today. People are a resource, they create things through their labour. People do not just consume, they produce. That is one reason why peasant families are often large—more children means more labour which, potentially, means more production and wealth. The massive leaps in population in the West during the Industrial Revolution were sustainable as a result of technological innovation allowing fewer people to produce more food, freeing others for industrial production.

The rates of population growth we have seen in Asia and Africa over recent decades are similar to those of the Industrial Revolution in the West. But, unlike 18th century Europe, today capitalism is proving itself incapable of increasing productivity to meet the needs of a growing population. This is not because the natural resources are missing to increase food production. The limitation is investment. In the late 20th century capitalism cannot make use of the potential for production and expansion in the semi-colonial countries of the "Third World". Instead it turns its attention to limiting the number of people.

Like Marx and Condorcet, we can be optimistic about the possibilities of increasing production. But we cannot be complacent about the overall

use of the earth's resources. Resources are finite, and although technological innovation will increase the use we can make out of what exists, we should also be looking to control any unsustainable uses of natural resources.

Again, the West would like to blame poor countries for threatening the ecosystem, as they did at the Earth Summit held in Brazil in 1992. Here as in Cairo, hypocrisy predominated.

On average a child born in the USA will consume hundreds of times as many natural resources as a child born in Africa. This remains true even when we account for the dire poverty of America's inner cities. The enormous privileges of the bourgeoisie and middle classes of the foremost industrial and financial powers, push up the average. Consumption in the West is massive, irrationally planned and very destructive of the environment.

Comforting

Focusing solely on population increase as an explanation for the world's problems is comforting for the imperialists. It suggests that a relatively small investment in family planning programmes combined with encouraging education for women will solve the problem. But the problem is not population, it is production for profit: capitalism.

The imperialists cannot solve that problem, for they are the system's most direct beneficiaries. Only the working class and poor peasants of the world can tackle the problem—real empowerment and control means the revolutionary overthrow of the imperialist system and its replacement by democratic planning. ■

Any promotion of birth control through safe, effective and cheap contraception and abortion is clearly an advance on the spiritual ravings of the fanatics. But we should not be fooled that this means a major shift towards liberating women.

Hypocrisy

The talk of empowering women through better education, higher status and improved access to health care is hypocrisy at its worst. The finance departments of the UN—the IMF and World Bank—have been systematically starving semi-colonial countries of money. They have made it a condition of loans that public spending on health and education is cut, and that governments undertake large-scale privatisation programmes. The UN, IMF and the World Bank, acting for the US, have demanded "structural adjustment programmes" that promote external trade to obtain dollars to repay debts, rather than providing food, shelter, transport or health care. Far from

being "empowered", women and men are being starved to death. Even UNICEF, itself a UN agency, estimates that the imperialist-imposed debt crisis leads to the unnecessary deaths of half a million children every year.

Empowering women is a trendy catchphrase, whose content is to place responsibility on individual women and families for the problems created by capitalism.

Educating women, providing employment and family planning programmes will lead to a decline in population growth. But they cannot be successful at improving the lives of women, cannot make smaller families a positive choice rather than an economic imperative, unless they are accompanied by a major redistribution of wealth and investment in the production of the things people need to live.

Without that, these programmes are simply a way in which imperialism is off-loading problems of its own creation onto the backs of the world's women. ■



Women need more than contraception to be empowered

John McKee interviewed the Editor of Workers News, newspaper of the Workers List Party

SOUTH AFRICA Left gains as unions sell out strikers

Workers Power: Can you explain briefly the origins of the Workers List Party (WLP) of South Africa?

Workers List Party: The WLP originated as an electoral front for participating in the elections of April this year. It was formed by two socialist groupings, the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) and the Independent Socialist Movement (ISM). These two groups had been in discussion with each other and some other socialist groupings for a year prior to the elections. There was agreement to work toward the formation of a Mass Workers Party (MWP). In the final event, of the groups in the discussions, only WOSA and the ISM agreed to use the elections to put across the need for a MWP.

WP: There have been a series of strikes recently; Pick'n'Pay, the truckers, Durban hospital workers, auto workers. Is there a general cause you can point to behind this strike wave?

WLP: There has been a push from the working class for a better deal in the new South Africa. Most of the demands have centred on wages, but have also involved anti-racism demands, adult education, anti-overtime tax demands, ending of retrenchments etc.

They reflect raised expectations after the elections and a certain amount of frustration on the part of the workers with the lack of any real results for their own lives from the ANC victory. They are finding out that it has not worked out like that. It is important to note that because of illusions in the new government, the strikes have not generalised into a broader united attempt to undermine the government. They are probably the first steps towards clearing away these illusions.

Strikes

WP: Are these strikes now over? What did they achieve?

WLP: All the strikes you mention have ended now. There has been a general hardening of management's position in the strikes. They have often refused to budge on demands. Of course the bourgeois media are heaping blame on workers for damaging the economy with their "irresponsible demands". The intransigence of the bosses is somehow seen as legitimate.

In most cases the workers have had to concede a lot of ground. The intervention of the ANC government officials helped defuse the situation and persuade workers to lower their demands. COSATU's alliance with the ANC has not helped. In some cases the unions have opposed strike action and disowned their members.

A frequent line of attack on strikers is that they are damaging or actively seeking to undermine the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP). The RDP is becoming more clearly a stick in the hands of the ruling class to beat down workers' aspirations. The fear of chasing away foreign investors whose money is supposed to ensure jobs is another ruling class weapon. Workers have by and large either bought these arguments for the time being or in some instances, such as the hospital workers and the truckers, have broken with the whole ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance and denounced it for collaborating with the bosses.

WP: Can you tell us anything about the "mysterious" Turning Wheel International Workers Union which seems to have provoked so much hostility from both employers and trade union leaders?

WLP: There is nothing mysterious

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about the Turning Wheel. It grew out of dissatisfaction of truckers with their union, the COSATU affiliated T&G. Truckers had a number of grievances such as long hours of overtime, which is heavily taxed, resulting in very little increase in their basic income. Their attempts to get support from the union were frequently met with arguments for sticking to the procedures agreed upon by bosses and the unions.

Organiser

WP: What has the WLP being doing around these strikes?

WLP: The leading organiser of the Turning Wheel has a history of association with the ISM and is now a member of the WLP. The strike was not organised by the WLP but was supported by the WLP. The strikers formed the Turning Wheel when the strike and its organisers were denounced by the T&G officials in the bosses' media.

The Turning Wheel is now actively supported by the WLP as we feel they have legitimate demands and that the accord they signed with their employers, the T&G, and Labour Minister Tota Mboweni of the ANC are not being honoured.

We have members in many other unions and have given active support to them during strike action. We have supported the demonstrations and marches by striking workers and offered any other assistance that workers may want. The fact that we have a national presence has made this more possible.

WP: Is it true that you have been "working underground to create havoc, bring down the government, undermine the RDP and discredit the unions" as a T&G leader has alleged?

WLP: The bourgeois media is a strange animal. They actively exclude the left from getting our message across, then accuse us of being little known and secret!

It is certainly true that we do have a problem with the RDP. Our problem is not what it claims it will achieve for the working class but that we feel it will not do this because it is built on cracked foundations. It is not us who will undermine the RDP's stated objectives but the ruling class themselves.

Compromise

Our intention is definitely not to undermine the unions but to strengthen them. They have already been undermined by the capitalist tripartite alliance of COSATU, SACP (The Communist Party) and the ANC, through their policy of compromise with the capitalists.

COSATU themselves have expressed concern about the weakening of their structures. The only way to strengthen the unions is to fight for workers' demands and not by taking the path to sweetheart unionism which pro-ANC officials appear to be on. The very same T&G union official you are quoting has admitted that the union has been taking the truckers' subscriptions while ignoring them. The strike did not need to see the truckers breaking away to set up an alterna-

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THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Conference on Socialism - when will it take place?
At the COSATU Congress in 1991 a resolution was passed calling on the COSATU leadership to convene an urgent conference of the left. This was seen as particularly urgent at that time for two reasons. Firstly, the bourgeois media and capitalist politicians intentionally were an offensive against socialism after the collapse of the Eastern European Socialist regimes. The collapse of these regimes resulted in many "socialists" becoming reformist and joining the bourgeoisie. Secondly, the comrades who pushed for the resolution in 1991 (many of whom are now part of the WLP), felt the left must formulate a joint response to the negotiations between the ANC and the Apartheid regime. Despite the importance placed on the conference it was not convened by the COSATU leadership.

MASS STRIKES IN NIGERIA
For the last 24 years Nigeria has been under military rule. Now Nigerian workers are saying enough is enough. And they are using their strongest weapon - the mass strike. Strikers are calling for the impeachment of Moshood Abiola as president and an end to military rule. Businessman Moshood Abiola won Nigeria's elections in June last year. But the real struggle began when the oil workers' union, NUPENG, went on strike in August last year. The Nigerian Trade Union Federation, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) (the COSATU and NACTU have), has been half-hearted in their support for strike action.

ELECTIONS
South Africa's first all inclusive election of April this year are now behind us. Many bourgeois commentators called it a "democratic triumph". The results were in fact planned - an ANC majority but not more than 66% so that it still looks like a "government of national unity". This way any party can blame the other partners if they do not fulfil their party mandate. Free and fair?

Despite the utter shamness the election was accepted as "free and fair". They had to be. The alternative would be the breakdown of the T&G deal and all the school closures and compromises agreed to by the ANC. How free and fair were the elections?

Only those who do not want to see could agree that the final election result was democratic. The results were negotiated behind closed doors.

Yet another secret deal
The ANC leadership in Natal knew this only too well. It was difficult for them to swallow this fraud. But the ANC created a compromise on those below and got the Natal ANC leaders to withdraw their own action against Inkatha. This is after IFC officials pointed to huge fraud having given the ANC the two thirds majority to make the new

the larger parties including the newly formed Volksfront. The bourgeois agenda in the election was quite clear. All bourgeois parties were to be included in the new government and the election results had to reflect this. So they did.

But if they were hoping we would just give way through the system. They are mistaken because they do not understand our strategy. There are no concessions to be made.

increasing at the same time that the IFC admitted that their computers were tampered with.

The way forward
But if they were hoping we would just give way through the system. They are mistaken because they do not understand our strategy. There are no concessions to be made.

The WLP banner joins SACCANU members in a march in Johannesburg

were different arguments in the left about what to do in the elections - the left was not united. Some wanted to support, others voted for the ANC, others for the PAC. Despite hostility from the bourgeois media the WLP succeeded in popularising the idea of a Mass Workers' Party and in establishing a national presence. We now have branches in most regions and are daily being approached by new members and requested to take steps to repress socialists in South Africa, as inevitable as the class struggle itself. As it is becoming clearer to workers that the new regime is not delivering, workers will fight back. The ruling class as usual will want to attack those who give voice to the opposition. However three factors remain. The first is that when they suppress us they take the first steps to de-legitimising their regime. It will be democracy only for

tive union, but the union's hostility to the strikers pushed them to respond like this.
It is to be expected that when the working class fights, its enemies who do not understand class struggles will cry "agitator". They do not think the workers can think for themselves.
WP: Do you think the government will attempt to repress the left in the near future?
WLP: It is inevitable that the govern-

Solidarity with South African workers

The ANC Government of National Unity is faced with a wave of militant strikes by workers demanding a new deal in "post-apartheid South Africa". Following the ANC election victory they have demanded better wages and conditions and an end to racial discrimination at work and in the colleges.

When Pick'n'Pay supermarket workers took militant action they were attacked by the new police force with a violence equal to the old. Batons, dogs and stun grenades were used against strikers.

But South African workers continue to fight. A truckers' strike and road blockade spread across South Africa. Truck drivers blocked the main roads, including a 30km stretch of the main Durban-Johannesburg highway. The strike united black, white, Indian and "coloured" workers.

The strike sent government ministers and employers scurrying to negotiate on the drivers grievances—low pay, poor facilities and exorbitant travel permit fees.

They found themselves negotiating not with the COSATU-affiliated union, the T&G, to which many of the drivers belonged, but with a completely unknown body the "Turning Wheel International Work-

ers Union".
The drivers felt that this organisation should represent them. Unlike the COSATU officials, it supported their militant action.

Striking hospital workers belonging to NEHAWU in Durban have also found themselves up against their own leaders. When workers at the King Edward VIII Hospital complained of low wages and racism before the election they were told their grievances would be looked into. So they put off a strike. Nothing happened, so they launched a series of strike actions.

When the ANC Health Minister for Kwa Zulu/Natal, Zweli Mkhize, intervened and asked the workers to return to work in exchange for negotiations, the workers refused.

Order

Mkhize immediately sought a court order to force the strikers to resume work while at the same time declaring that "certain elements" whose background needed to be "fully investigated", were "within the ranks of the strikers". Regional officials of NEHAWU are now threatening to de-recognise the strikers unless they return to work.

The workers saw it differently. S'bu

some.
Secondly we are well schooled in working politically under repressive conditions. Most of us have in fact worked under such conditions for longer that we have been able to work openly. And here I mean repression not only from the bourgeois state but also from the Stalinists within the liberation movements. We have not only survived but grown under these conditions. Thirdly the opposition of the workers will not go away because we are repressed. When they target us because we give voice to the workers they will help to build us, as they are already doing now.

Congress

WP: At the recent COSATU Congress were affiliates in favour of the Alliance between the ANC/SACP/COSATU continuing? What has the WLP been arguing about this question around the Congress?

WLP: The COSATU Congress ended last weekend. They were not unanimous on the tri-partite alliance. The metal workers' union NUMSA restated their commitment to socialism and called on COSATU to terminate its alliance with the ANC and "look at a new form of organisation that will unify working class organisations and parties". They argued that this "could take the form of a working class party". Unfortunately, although there has been support for breaking the alliance from a number of other unions, none of them supported NUMSA's resolution.

Worker participation has declined considerably in COSATU. A lot of dis-

Mtshali, Chairman of the Workers Forum which leads the strike, told the *Weekly Mail*:

"The ANC is in government. NEHAWU is a child of COSATU and COSATU is in alliance with the ANC. Just because we got an ANC government NEHAWU is siding with the employer. It is very wrong to do that."

Similar events have occurred amongst students. Recently the Johannesburg branch of the South African Students Congress (SASCO) led a strike and protest march from Wits University campus to the regional ANC Education Minister's office, to protest about students being thrown off courses because they were behind with their fees.

State subsidies were cut under De Klerk and fees have rocketed. This has badly effected the poorer black students who are falling behind with fees. The students demanded a moratorium on the debts and for funds to be made available. They were refused. At the same time stories were planted in the press about violence and intimidation during the strike.

ANC-supporting SASCO members then denounced the executive as being run undemocratically by a "cabal" and having been "infiltrated by

discussion tends to be dominated by officials. It is therefore difficult to get a sense of what grass roots membership are thinking at this point. The WLP has called for the tri-partite capitalist alliance to be broken and for the unions to support the building of a Mass Workers Party. We attended the congress and distributed a pamphlet making this call.

WP: Workers Power believes it important to address the worker militants of the SACP in an attempt to win them away from the leadership of the SACP. What is the WLP's attitude to this question and how do you intend to go about winning SACP members and breaking up this road block to the revolutionary party?

WLP: We have contact with individuals in the SACP and are well informed on what's happening there. For example we know that the SACP regards its membership as being 5,000, although it is not saying this openly. They were claiming over 50,000 at the beginning of the year. One of the reasons why we are growing and they are shrinking is that their politics is indistinguishable from that of the ANC.

They have very little separate activity and the ANC has very little activity among the workers. The worker militants in the SACP are first and foremost COSATU members and we are certainly addressing them through support for their struggle wherever possible.

It should be noted that in the COSATU Congress there was one sharply polarised debate around the "conference of the left". The one argument is that the agenda should be changed to a discussion on the implementation of the RDP.

We know that it is the SACP leadership who are behind this position. NUMSA was among those arguing that the conference should be as originally planned: a conference of the left defined as those "with a programme reflecting the following:

- Commitment to control of the means of production by the working class for the benefit of society as a whole
- Democracy
- Internationalism
- Anti-imperialism
- Non-racialism"

Appeal

Dear Comrades

As you probably are aware, a wave of strikes has swept South Africa. Quite predictably, the WLP and many of our individual members have been singled out for being responsible for many of these actions. This is done in order for the state and the bosses to deflect attention away from the real demands and grievances of the strikers.

While most WLP members are directly involved in the strikes and in support activity, it is absurd to claim that their exists a "clandestine conspiracy", and that we have "masterminded" the strikes. This is a transparent attempt to undermine the independent activity of the workers and to set up both WOSA/WLP and militant workers for repression. Already many strikers have died on

We support this position.

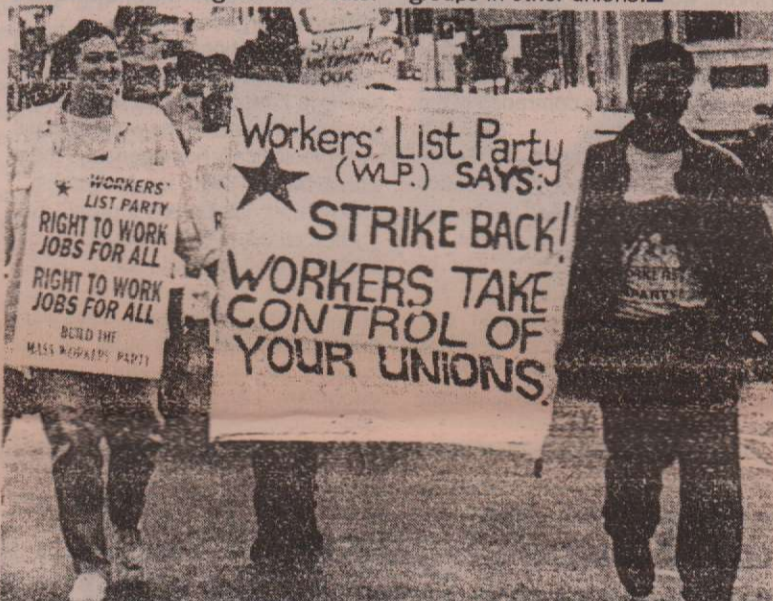
WP: Do you think that the support for a break with the Alliance and for a Mass Workers Party has evaporated within the left of COSATU? Was this tendency reflected in the very low vote the WLP received in the elections? If this is the case what is the current perspective of the WLP in relation to this question?

WLP: I think that the belief that there was much support for COSATU breaking from the capitalist Alliance a year ago was exaggerated. There was some talk of this, most strongly from NUMSA. But for this to sustain itself would take a higher degree of organisation and propaganda than was possible among the left at that time.

Elections

Around the elections the most powerful propaganda organs were controlled by the National Party and the ANC. There was a tendency for the media to counterpose these two organisations as if they were the only two parties in the running. They both had millions of Rands available to them for campaigning, which assisted this polarisation. As the elections drew nearer the workers were confronted with the illegitimate question of whether they wanted the Nats or the ANC to win.

We were accused of dividing the democratic forces against the Nats.



The question was illegitimate because in a situation of proportional representation all votes counted.

If a socialist candidate had been elected that candidate would have supported any progressive position put forward by the ANC so that it would not mean a representative lost to the democratic forces. Nevertheless we anticipated that their propaganda would outshine ours on the day. We did not expect, perhaps naively, the blatant fraud whereby our vote count was stopped at a certain point while others' votes continued to rise. Our votes were even reduced in some regions.

The Electoral Commission claimed that their computers had been tampered with. So we do not accept the final count of votes they gave us. We believe our real figure was considerably higher than this. Even if there was decline in support for the position of terminating the bourgeois alliance, there can be no doubt that the position is getting a better hearing from militant rank and file workers now and that we are gaining support. It is still too early to show this in any significant manner beyond certain developments, such as our relationship with the truckers. As can be seen NUMSA has not backed away from the call to break the alliance and we do know that the idea has not disappeared amongst individuals and groups in other unions. ■

the picket line.

The hysteria against WOSA/WLP has now reached a crescendo. The bourgeois media, the bosses and sections of the state are now openly calling for direct repression against WOSA/WLP and militant workers.

Our comrades among the 3,000 truck drivers who blockaded roads, ask for your messages of support. Please send messages to our fax number (+27 11 337-8423), addressed to "Turning Wheel Workers' Movement". Leading and militant shop stewards among the truck drivers are daily facing physical threats and ambushes on the road.

We assure you that despite the threats the WLP will continue supporting the ongoing strikes. Our work has made us very popular among militant sections of the working class and we are growing rapidly in size.

Yours for proletarian internationalism,
Salim Vally
for the WLP Secretariat.

a "political analyst" as saying:

"The devastating, out-of-the-blue truck blockade had all the hallmarks of classic Trotskyist subversion."

No prizes for guessing which party this "political analyst" came from—the SACP, which may have forgotten its Stalinist "socialism" but has not forgotten how to witch-hunt revolutionaries.

The masses saw the ANC's election as a step forward to the realisation of their demands and their struggles. The workers do not intend to wait for promises of a brighter future. They are fighting now against

racist practices in the workplace and for better pay and conditions.

COSATU, tied into a governmental alliance with the ANC, has to play the role of holding back these struggles wherever they threaten to get out of control and thus upset the ANC's agreements with the IMF and the South African capitalists.

Sidekick

The SACP is playing its usual role of sidekick to the bourgeois nationalists. It is using traditional Stalinist methods to denounce "outside agitators" and "Trotskyite wreckers" in an attempt to isolate the militants.

Workers must fight for the unions to break with the ANC government, pointing out how COSATU is beginning to police the workers on behalf of a capitalist government.

They must defend the right to strike and fight for democratic control of all strike action. They must organise a "militant minority" in every union to fight for their demands and to remove any union leaders who obstruct the workers' fight.

They must call on SACP members to demand their party breaks with the ANC government and enters onto the road of struggle for a real workers' government in South Africa.

In Britain every trade unionist who has supported the South African workers' fight against apartheid should raise the need for solidarity with their fight against "post-apartheid" South African capitalism, and defend militant workers and the left from the government inspired witch-hunt. ■

SWEDEN

Voters kick out the right

SWEDEN IS moving left. Elections on 18 September witnessed the revival of the reformist Social Democrats (SAP). Defeated in the elections three years ago, they have made massive gains as a result of a steep rise in unemployment during the last year and cuts carried out by the openly capitalist government led by the conservatives.

Recent signs of an economic upturn, at least for companies producing for export, were not enough to save the government.

Votes

The 45% vote for the SAP was one of the highest votes for a single party in Europe for many years. Significant votes were also cast for parties in the so called "red bloc": 6% for the Left Party (the former Communist Party) and 5% for the Greens.

The Greens projected a left-wing image, relying heavily on anti-European outbursts against "the market". With this rhetoric they, like the Left party, won support from many first time voters.

Supporters of the openly bourgeois coalition got 41%, with the Christian Democrats barely scraping passed the 4% hurdle for representation in parliament. The populist New Democracy, a right wing opposition to the coalition government, failed to make it with only 1%.

The reformist leaders of Social Democracy are now under heavy pressure from their base to ally themselves with the Left Party and the Greens. But before the elections they announced their intention to create a coalition with the Liberals. Strong support for the Left-Green parties, which in some parts of the major cities reached more than 25%, and their popularity among youth and women, create a real problem for the reformist leaders. Many social democrats are demanding a "left" coalition.

Coalition

Under pressure from the rank and file, prime minister Ingvar Carlsson broke off negotiations with the Liberals. But this should not be seen as the last word on a Lib-Lab coalition, and workers should continue to demand no collaboration with the openly bourgeois parties. Such a coalition would allow Carlsson and the other SAP leaders

to use the Liberals as a scapegoat for not carrying out their own policies. A Lib-Lab coalition would make it more difficult for militant workers and youth to judge the leaders by their deeds.

While the SAP did not make great promises to fight the market, they did promise not to introduce anti-union legislation or change existing labour laws. These laws are unique in regulating the rights of unions and their representatives, and are rightly seen by Swedish workers as precious gains. It is likely that the leaders could get away with some austerity measures to deal with the budget deficit, but strong resistance will meet them if, as during their last period in government, they try to change labour market legislation.

As soon as the election ended, the referendum campaign began. Campaigning for a Yes vote are the representatives of big capital, stressing the "demands of the market". Alongside them are the leaders of Social Democracy, who don't want to be confused with their partners and therefore stress the importance of fighting for social justice and progressive legislation on a European scale.

Campaigns

The No campaign is also made up of a mixture of reformist and reactionary forces. Besides the Greens and the Left, there are organised groups of No voters in all the major political parties. The Social Democrats, with the biggest proportion of potential No voters among their electorate, have decided to give a free hand to members in both campaigns.

Another component of the No side are the major centrist groups (the USFI, Militant, and left Stalinists) whose members will find it increasingly difficult to distinguish their opposition to the EU from that of the reformist and petty bourgeois leaders in the No campaign. They also run the risk of getting mixed up with reactionary opponents to Sweden's entry into Europe.

The political conjuncture presents an excellent opportunity to make propaganda for a revolutionary action programme. The immediate task for revolutionary socialists in Sweden will be to intervene in the EU referendum, defending working class independence from both the Yes and the No campaigns—which are just two different ways of trying to tie workers to the fate of capitalism. ■



Social Democrat leader Ingvar Carlsson

QUESTION: On important matters, whose opinion—other than your own—do you trust most?

Answer: Chris Harman, the editor of *Socialist Worker* and Lindsey German, editor of *Socialist Review*. I can't think of a single other living person I could consult."

This was Tony Cliff, leader and founder of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), responding to questions from the *New Statesman*. His answer speaks volumes about the SWP's internal regime.

That regime is supposed to be democratic centralist. Cliff claims it is thoroughly democratic. Yet, by his own admission, he is not accustomed to being held accountable to the party membership. In an organisation claiming over nine thousand members, with an elected Central Committee, he can think of only two people that he would even consult!

Despite a formal adherence to democratic centralism, the SWP has never practised it. The extent of this has been revealed by a recent pamphlet, *Democracy and the SWP*, by the International Socialist Group (ISG). The group is made up of dissidents who have been expelled or driven out of the SWP.

The party is, according to the pamphlet, a grotesque parody of democratic centralism. The central committee consists of a self-perpetuating coterie of Cliff loyalists. All district committees and organisers are appointed by the central committee, winning their jobs only after proving their abject loyalty to the leadership.

Appointed

All subordinate committees and functionaries are appointed by these organisers or by the central committee itself, rather than being elected. There are no branch committees elected by branch members.

Conferences of the organisation—nationally and locally—are not so much working bodies as political rallies called on to rubber stamp the leadership's predetermined line. They rarely discuss amendments or alternative resolutions. Any planned or systematic education of experienced party members (cadres) is denounced as abstract theorising. Political debate is caricatured as passive or sectarian.

Outside of the conference period there is no internal bulletin to allow members to exchange experience or express their political misgivings. Anybody who expresses dissent is called a "factionalist" or expelled. Unlike Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party, which allowed organised opposition to exist within the party even on the eve of the revolution and in the midst of the Civil War, SWP members may only form tendencies or factions in a restricted period prior to conferences.

After that period has elapsed, they must cease to organise and stop campaigning for their views within the party, as if the emergence of vital issues in the class struggle runs to a strict timetable like a suburban bus.

As the leadership lurches from one "line" to another, hundreds of activists are effectively driven out of the party if they express any disagreement:

"Each new perspective requires a new cadre (below the level of the Central Committee), so the existing cadre are actively marginalised in the party. In this way, the SWP has failed to build a stable and experienced middle cadre capable of acting independently of the leadership. Successive layers of cadres have been driven into passivity, and even out of the revolutionary movement altogether. The result is the loss of hundreds of potential cadres."

This method has become accentuated in the SWP's recent "dash for the growth". Anybody who opposes the line is effectively opposing the

WHAT KIND OF PARTY DO WE NEED?

How should a revolutionary party organise itself? The Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky once explained:

"Without internal democracy—no revolutionary education. Without discipline—no revolutionary action. The internal structure of the Fourth International (the World Party founded by Trotsky in 1938—WP) is based on the principles of democratic centralism: full freedom in discussion, complete unity in action."

This whole idea of democratic centralism has, to put it mildly, had something of a bad press over the last seventy years. The

experience of Stalinism means that the phrase is associated in most people's minds with bureaucratic control from above, blind loyalty to the party leadership, and the purging of anyone who dares to raise disagreements. But for revolutionary socialists, it means the opposite of this.

As Trotsky explained, the party must have full internal discussion in order to educate its members and to develop and correct the party's politics. Once a decision is made, however, it must be binding. All of its members, including party leaders, must carry it out.

This prevents the leaders acting like Paddy Ashdown at the Liberal Party conference and declaring that they will not act on the decisions of the majority. It also means that the party is not a permanent discussion club, but has unity and effectiveness in action.

Unfortunately, it is not only the experience of Stalinism that has made many on the left suspicious of democratic centralism. The structure and regime of the biggest left-wing party in Britain—the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)—has reinforced fears that democratic centralism means bureaucratic control.

Democracy and the SWP

BY MARK HARRISON

growth of the party and is therefore indirectly helping preserve the Tory government! As the pamphlet wryly observes:

"Understandably enough, comrades are reluctant to feel responsible for the continued existence of the Tory government, and so prefer to keep any criticisms of the party to themselves."

Doubtless the leadership will tell members of the SWP that the pamphlet is a pack of lies. Many will accept this. After all, the SWP is growing. It is "on a roll". How could this be the case if it was bureaucratic centralist rather than democratic centralist?

SWP members need to wise up, and wise up fast. Bureaucratic centralist organisations can, and have grown very rapidly in the past, many times. Stalinist parties experienced massive growth after the Second World War. There wasn't a shred of democratic centralism in any of them. Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) grew in the 1960s and 1970s with a regime and a leader to match that of any Stalinist party.

Growth is not automatic proof that the party's approach is right. All too often short term success has been at the cost of Marxist principles. In the long term, bureaucratic centralism discredits the whole idea of a disciplined revolutionary party in the eyes of thousands of working class activists. The SWP leadership today is preparing the ground for such future discredit.

But there is more to this than an authoritarian regime. And this is where the comrades of the ISG go wrong.



Scourge of spontaneism and economism.

Factions were banned. Hundreds were expelled, the internal bulletin was suspended, the National Committee abolished, cadres were purged with each new turn. The central committee became absolute.

For them the fundamental politics of the SWP are fine. They argue that the election of district committees and genuine democratic centralism, if granted, would solve the whole problem. Not true. In the early to mid-1970s the SWP and its predecessor the International Socialists had all of the features that the comrades of the ISG describe today.

Factions were banned. Hundreds were expelled, often as whole groups (Workers Power originated as the Left Faction inside the International Socialists—expelled in 1975). The internal bulletin was suspended, the National Committee abolished, cadres were purged with each new turn and new recruits deprived of a Marxist political education. The central committee became absolute.

What produced such a regime?

The answer to this problem has to begin from a different premise to that adopted by the ISG. Organisational questions are not separate from political ones. The regime in the SWP flows from its politics.

Stalin did not crush party democracy for the sake of it. It flowed from his need to crush the politics of Bolshevism which were in complete contradiction to his reactionary creed of socialism in one country.

Cliff is not Stalin. But the key to understanding his regime lies in his politics. Specifically, it is the SWP's fundamental method—*economism*—that dictates its structure and organisational methods.

Economism does not mean overlooking the need for a revolutionary party, as the SWP claims. It is the idea that the economic struggle of workers, in and of itself, automatically generates revolutionary political consciousness within the working class. This consciousness emerges spontaneously. The party's job, therefore, is simply to generalise and organise this spontaneity.

The practical conclusion of this is to devalue the party's role as the ideological vanguard of the class. It negates the party's role as the fighter for a clear strategy for working class power. After all, if the trade union struggle spontaneously generates revolutionary class consciousness then there is no need to fight for a strategy. It will simply emerge in the course of struggle.

Lenin fought these ideas for the

whole of his political life. He argued that the party had to challenge and transcend the existing consciousness of the class through the fight for a revolutionary political programme. Cliff rejects this, writing that Lenin's views "still bedevil the movement". Instead he argues:

"... a revolutionary party is needed because of the uneven levels of culture and consciousness in different groups of workers. If the working class were ideologically homogeneous there would be no need for leadership." (*International Socialism Journal* 1:58)

This leaves out of account the political consciousness—ideas about society, the state and so on—which are held by workers. If the class were ideologically homogeneous on the basis of *wrong* ideas—for example, reformism, nationalism or even racism—there would obviously still be a need for a revolutionary party to fight

for the leadership of the class, ideologically and in practice.

To conduct such a fight the party needs more than a set of general principles. It needs a programme—a combination of principles, strategy and tactics. The programme is a manual of action that charts the road to power. It stands in opposition to the wrong programmes of misleaders of the class, and also to workers' spontaneous, but often wrong, beliefs about how to change the world.

The SWP leadership's dismissal of the idea of a revolutionary programme—developed by communists in the course of the class struggle and from the lessons of that struggle—is at the root of their disregard for real democratic centralism.

Without a programme—democratically developed and agreed by the party as a whole—twists, turns, policy shifts, and the consequent expulsions of dissidents, become the norm. The "mood of the class" becomes decisive. And that mood is gauged by Cliff and his clique. On the basis of their impressions alone new turns are initiated. The party—without reference to a party programme—is called to order.

The absence of a programme means that the membership have nothing against which they can judge these impulses of the leadership. That is why the SWP leaders recently resisted the attempt to provide the party with a "minimum programme". It is why they shelved forever Duncan Hallas' draft SWP programme in the 1970s. The extent to which this is a departure from Lenin's view of democratic centralism is enormous. It is not simply that Lenin was more democratic than Cliff (though he was). It was that Lenin's famous "stick bend-

ing" in the direction of one or another tactic was judged by a membership who knew what the fundamental line of march of the party was because they had been won to its programme and fought for it in the working class.

Disciplined

Lenin was no shrinking violet when it came to the need for the party to be disciplined and to fight for common goals. But this was absolutely linked to the party programme:

"The party is a voluntary association, which would inevitably break up, first ideologically and then physically, if it did not cleanse itself of people advocating anti-party views. And to define the border-line between party and anti-party there is the party programme, the party's resolutions on tactics and its rules..." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 10, pp 47-48)

In the SWP the criteria for judging who is "anti-party" is simply those who are against Cliff's new line. Without a programme against which to judge the line, this will always be the case. Even democratically elected district committees will not change this.

Lenin's fight against economism was a fight for the revolutionary programme. His concept of democratic centralism was based on the need to build an organisation united around such a programme. He recognised that under conditions of extreme police repression centralism would inevitably predominate over democracy within the party. But he insisted on full democratic debate during periods of legal existence. Workers won to the party on the basis of its programme could be trusted to develop that programme and play a full critical role within the organisation. He wrote:

"We are all agreed on the principles of democratic centralism, guarantees for the rights of minorities and for all loyal opposition, on the autonomy of every party organisation, on recognising that all party functionaries must be elected, accountable to the party and subject to recall." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 10, pp 310-311)

What a striking contrast to the world of cliques and intrigue, purge and furtive discussion that characterises the SWP. And what a gulf between Cliff's trust in two acolytes and Lenin's trust in the critical spirit of party members.

Bureaucratic centralism has done immeasurable damage to the revolutionary movement. The answer is not to "democratise the SWP". It is to recognise that the SWP's politics give rise to its regime. We need revolutionary politics as the only guarantee of a healthy regime and genuine democratic centralism. That is what Workers Power is fighting for. ■

Inconsistent?

Dear Workers Power,
Does Mark Harrison read *Workers Power*? His prescription (WP 181) is to "make life uncomfortable for Blair" by voting for the Campaign Group slate for the NEC, fighting to commit the party to unambiguous pledges on full employment etc, and preparing for the General Election by direct class struggle action now. At the election, "workers will vote Labour in millions regardless" of the party's record.

In the longer term, Harrison favours "laying the basis for a new revolutionary party, capable of challenging Labour's hold over the working class and ultimately replacing it".

The clear implication is that in the coming election Mark Harrison will call for a Labour vote because the revolutionary party has not yet reached maturity.

A few pages later, however, an unsigned article states that in South Africa, "The actions of the ANC/SACP government prove that *Workers Power*—unlike almost every other left-wing newspaper—was absolutely correct to refuse to endorse a vote for the ANC's electoral alliance in the April election."

The behaviour of the Blair government, if it comes, is even more predictable than

the action of the ANC/SACP in power. A revolutionary party capable of really challenging the ANC/SACP inside the South African working class did not exist in April 1994, though it may develop in the years to come. *Workers Power* does not favour fighting to commit the ANC to a socialist programme. So who is right, Mark Harrison or *Workers Power*?

Greg Dropkin

● We reply: Looks like an open and shut case, doesn't it. And so it is... if you take no account whatsoever of the different concrete situations facing working class organisations in Britain and South Africa.

In Britain the main working class organisations—the trade unions—founded a political party just under a hundred years ago: the Labour Party. Its politics and programme are pro-capitalist. But it is linked organisationally to the trade unions. Until such time as a revolutionary party exists that can mount a meaningful challenge to Labour, the task of socialists is to vote Labour at elections, whilst putting demands on them to act in the interests of the working class organisations on which they are

based.

The illusions of the mass of workers in "their party" make this necessary, and the real link of the party to the unions makes this a practical possibility.

But what would socialists say if the unions, far from founding a party of their own, formed an alliance with an entirely different party, one that was not linked in the same way to the trade unions and their rank and file, one that was based in fact on a different class?

It would be necessary to call on the unions to break from such a party—however heroically its members and leaders might have fought in the past against racism or for democratic rights—and to found a

party of their own. Socialists would then have to campaign for the new workers' party to adopt a fighting revolutionary programme.

That was and is the situation in South Africa. The working class organisations—the trade union federation COSATU and the South African Communist Party—formed an alliance with a capitalist party: the ANC. And the ANC formed a government with the main party of capitalist apartheid—the National Party. The unions have no say in determining ANC policy, the rank and file workers can bring no pressure to bear on the ANC from within the structures of their own organisations.

You can not be delegated onto a local ANC committee from your union or put a motion to its conference in the way workers can with the Labour Party in Britain. The alliance between the ANC and the workers' organisations is purely an alliance between the leaders.

Though Greg Dropkin may think he has discovered something hilarious in *Workers Power* treating the two cases differently, his attempt to transplant British conditions to South Africa would leave worker militants helpless.



ANC in government with the racist National Party

✓ Agree
✗ Disagree?
! Got something to say?
Write in to:
Workers Power
BCM 7750
London WC1N 3XX

Animal wrongs?

Dear Comrades,

The total condemnation of "animal liberationism" and the classing of ALF activists as "tweedy Tories with letter bombs" as well as "a target for fascist infiltration" (Letter from Colin Lloyd, WP 181) is utterly slanderous. The accusation that the "animal liberation" campaigns are a separate issue from that of "human liberation" is a misunderstanding.

Fighting for "human liberation" means that we have to destroy the capitalists based as the ruling class. Within this fight, we are challenging the ways the capitalists make their own individual profits. Animal liberationists, in their actions against the useless and profit-making exploitation of animals, are fighting against the capitalists; we are all fighting the same struggle.

Attacking capitalists' shops, like fur shops and hunting shops, is no crime at all. It is actually a relatively easy way to stop capitalists making more money and stopping them continuing their "power games" like hunting and wearing the carcasses of many killed animals.

There is nothing wrong with smashing laboratories and liberating "laboratory animals" so long as these laboratories are continuing to test on animals so that they can produce more cosmetics and secretly

discover new drugs to make enormous profits for the company bosses.

Not until workers have control over the laboratories they work in should we even consider using animals for research that is putting the profit of a few before human needs. Using animals is also not reliable and tests are always done

Dear Friends,

The letter by Colin Lloyd (WP 181) on the wrongs of Animal Rights was depressing in its hard-heartedness and display of ignorance.

Colin argues that because animals cannot devise and institute a socialist society, they are worthless of consideration! Well, we humans have signally failed to devise

on humans before products are brought out. There are many ways other ways of humanely testing new drugs, these include using the ever developing technology and computer based models right through to using cell, tissue and organ culture.

Attacks on individual animal abusers is not the way to get

and institute a genuinely socialist society, but that does not mean we are without worth as living, thinking, feeling beings. Nor are animals!

In fact we could perhaps argue that dolphins live in far greater harmony and in a state of shared caring far closer to the socialist ideal than humankind has yet attained. Surely socialism

Dear comrades,

At last! Colin Lloyd's letter in last month's paper struck a long overdue blow against the ridiculous nonsense being talked about animal "rights".

There are clear, qualitative differences between all other animals and the human species. Humans have evolved into tool-making, thinking, talking, writing, self-conscious social animals.

Human beings are able to consciously change their environment, and themselves. Animals can't. Human beings can consciously determine the fate

of whole species, including their own. Animals can't. Human beings can reflect on whether animals do, or should, have rights. Animals can't.

In short, people are more important than animals!

Of course people shouldn't be wantonly cruel to animals. But neither should they be to people. And until all the people on this planet are free from oppression and exploitation, animal "rights" activism should be seen for what it is—a sentimental cop-out.

In comradeship,
Chris Swan

rid of these capitalists and their exploitation of animals and humans.

Instead of condemning all animal liberationists, every revolutionary socialist should try to demonstrate that we're fighting the same battle. We all have to get them to join us so we have a stronger and more effective force to bring the capitalist class down and allow workers to be able to do what's best for their own needs.

Adam Bishop

should be inclusive, not apartheid and exclusive. Animals have every bit as much right to life and justice as we do.

To argue that only those who can think of the concept of socialism should be allowed to enjoy its fruits opens the door to all sorts of barbarisms—from the brutalisation of Down's Syndrome persons to the disposal of any and all other individuals who suffer from mental retardation.

The point is not whether animals can think or reason (which clearly some, in varying degrees, can) but whether they can suffer. If they can suffer, then the protective arms of genuine socialism should and must be stretched to embrace them.

Human rights, socialism, justice, fairness and animal rights: these are all intertwined and mutually supporting. We must face the truth that an injury to one, man or beast, is an injury to all.
Yours in universal solidarity,
Tony Page

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 (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership. If you are a class-conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

Workers power

British section of the LRCI - League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Troops out now

THE IRA ceasefire brought predictable howls of anguish from the murdering bigots of the Loyalist far right. Elsewhere it was a cue for celebration.

President Clinton welcomed it. So did John Major. The Irish prime minister Albert Reynolds invited Gerry Adams onto the steps of the Irish parliament for an "historic handshake". Catholics staged celebration motorcades through Belfast. And millions of workers in Britain no doubt heaved a sigh of relief that the war, which has killed over 3,000 people since 1969, looks set to end.

But for socialists, opponents of imperialism and consistent supporters of democratic rights there is little to celebrate in the IRA ceasefire.

The Northern Ireland state—an undemocratic statelet founded on sectarian privileges for the Protestant population—is left intact. Whatever agreements are worked out in the negotiations to come, they will leave in place the Loyalists' veto over the future of the border. That border divides Ireland artificially. It was created by the British to guarantee a Loyalist majority in the North. It has divided the Irish working class for over 70 years.

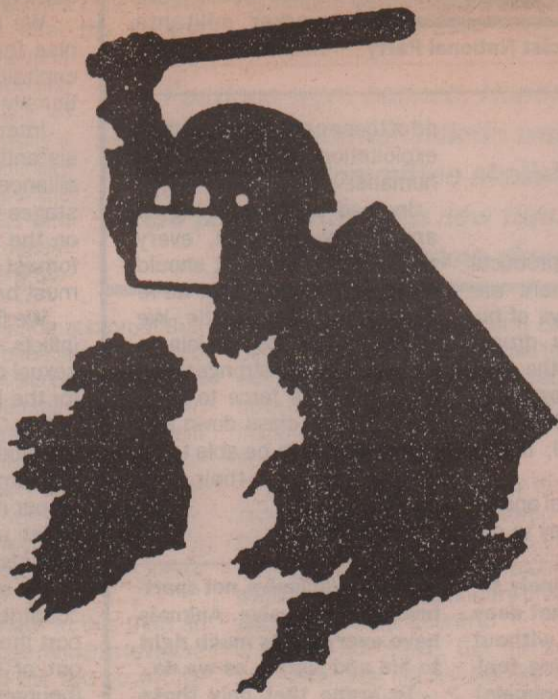
The ceasefire has been declared while hundreds of Republican prisoners remain in jail, with the Tories insisting that there

will be no amnesty.

The ceasefire offers the British establishment a peaceful, "constitutional" settlement of a justified struggle for national unity and democracy which flared into revolutionary life in the late 1960s and which has proved a thorn in the side of British imperialism ever since.

Does the ceasefire guarantee an end to violence? No. The Loyalist paramilitaries have continued their murder campaign and even extended it into the Republic of Ireland. The ceasefire leaves the Catholic masses of the North even more defenceless than before, unless they can organise armed mass self-defence of the anti-unionist ghettos.

Does the ceasefire open the way for working class unity? Will it, as many Labour and trade union activists believe, allow the class struggle to replace the national struggle? No. The settlement, which both British and Irish bosses want, will strengthen the conditions of exploitation in Ireland, North and South. The Loyalist bosses will have little to lose and much to gain from the opening up of cross-border trade and the removal of politically motivated subsidies to



ailing industries. The British state can look forward to ending its annual £4 billion subsidy to the Northern Irish economy.

The ceasefire strengthens the hand of the workers' enemies in the class struggle. And it does nothing to overcome the division of the workers of Northern Ireland. Protestant workers, because their small but systematic privileges are founded on the existence of the sectarian state, have nothing to gain and much to lose from a capitalist negotiated settlement. Sinn Féin's turn from middle class Guerrillism to middle class constitutional nationalism will lead its working class supporters

down a blind alley. Without a revolutionary socialist alternative to imperialist domination of Ireland the Republican movement's gestures of reconciliation with the Protestants will remain just that—gestures.

Is the answer a return to the Guerrilla struggle? Does the hope lie with the small band of IRA members and the ultra-nationalist splinter group Republican Sinn Féin, who have rejected the ceasefire? No.

It lies with the fact that to defend themselves, to wage a real and not a token mass campaign of civil disobedience, the anti-unionist masses will have to break with the

SMASH the Criminal Justice Bill

IT IS ALMOST as if they know their days are numbered. The Tories have decided to roll up every nasty prejudice of the ruling class into one piece of legislation and throw it in our faces. The Criminal Justice Bill, set to become law this

month, is a sustained attack on the democratic rights of every group in society that has crossed the Tory government over the past fifteen years. **It can be stopped!**

See page 2



DEMONSTRATE!

to stop the Criminal Justice Bill
Sunday 9 October 12 noon, Embankment Tube, London

strategy and politics of middle class nationalism which have led their leaders into a military stalemate and to the negotiating table.

Time after time we have seen the former enemies of British imperialism transformed, almost overnight, from "terrorists" and "criminals" to responsible statesmen. The same process is under way with Sinn Féin. It exposes the hypocrisy of the British state. The very people who were slandered as "mindless terrorists with no support" are now treated as the legitimate representatives of a large minority of the population.

Anti-imperialists on both

sides of the Irish Sea should remember exactly why British imperialism has been prepared to go through this charade in India, Africa and the Middle East in past decades. They did it to guarantee continued imperialist exploitation. Exactly the same reason that they are doing it in Ireland today. They are going to make sure that the signs advertising the cheapest labour in Western Europe, which greet visiting foreign businessmen at Ireland's airports, never come down.

That is why Workers Power does not celebrate the ceasefire, nor support it. We say it is a sell out, a betrayal not just of the heroic fighters against Brit-

ish occupation who have been killed, maimed, jailed and tortured over the last 25 years but of the masses who supported them in the face of vicious repression.

It is why we renew our call for the only just solution, the only basis for a lasting peace:

- immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland
- the self-determination of the whole Irish people, without British interference or Loyalist veto
- a renewed mass struggle, North and South, for a workers' republic throughout the whole 32 counties of Ireland.