

UNEMPLOYED FACE MILITARY DISCIPLINE

THE Tory government is to slash unemployment benefit from a year to six months. This will hit 90,000 people immediately. The move is designed to force millions into poverty-pay jobs. Unless they do what social security officials tell them, their benefits will be stopped.

Jobcentre staff will have powers to instruct the unemployed to increase their 'employability' by attending courses or improving their appearance.

At the start of a claim, an individual will have to draw up and sign a 'jobseekers' agreement' as a condition for receiving benefit.

They will have to state what they intend to do to find work. If they refuse to carry out instructions which an official claims will improve their chances of getting a job, their benefit will be stopped for up to a month.

Staff running the scheme will also be able to direct the unemployed to 'community projects'. Failure to obey will again mean benefit loss.

The move is expected to save the government £100 million in the first year and £200 million after that. These figures are tiny in comparison with the public sector borrowing requirement — a measure of the state debt — of around £50 billion which these measures are meant to be tackling.

Destroy

And a modest level of non-compliance by those sent on 'community projects' would then require measures to ensure mere attendance, let alone the enforcement of the actual work, that would destroy any government 'savings'.

The right to unemployment benefit and income support is to be replaced by a new jobseekers' allowance. This will force people to take jobs at starvation-level wages, or have their benefits stopped immediately.

As social security secretary Peter Lilley has made clear, plans for 'community work schemes' are still under active consideration.

People who have paid into the unemployment scheme all their lives will be paid for six months, not 12 as now.

The unemployed are in exactly the same situation as old people. Retired people, who

BY THE EDITOR

thought that their payments into the NHS would cover their needs in old age, now discover that their savings will be seized to cover their expenses if they have to go into special accommodation.

These attacks come from a government up to its neck in sleaze, with the lowest support in the country of any government for the last 50 years.

What is the response of the Labour and trade union leaders?

■ TUC general secretary John Monks says: 'We can only hope that there will be significant changes before it is made law.'

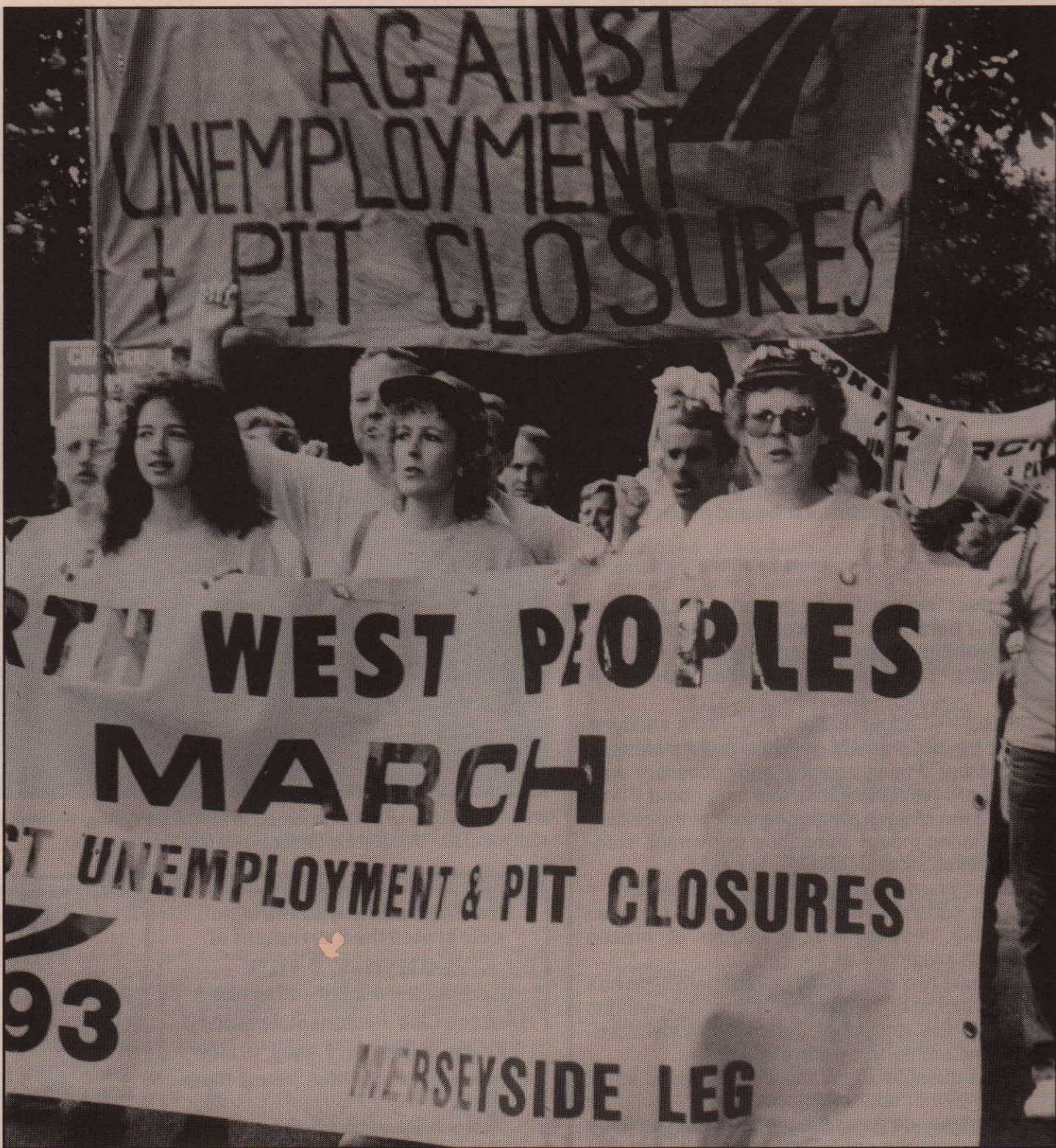
In other words Monks has no intention of leading a movement to destroy this outright attack on the unemployed. He assumes that Lilley's measure will become law, with a bleat for some 'changes' in its provisions.

■ Donald Dewar, shadow social security secretary, made a wordy attack against Lilley. But he 'acknowledged the duty of jobless claimants to search for work'.

This is Tory talk. Dewar, Monks and company half agree with Lilley. This is clear from Labour's social justice commission, chaired by Sir Gordon Borrie, which has just reported. The Borrie report involves a series of attacks on the system of welfare benefits.

The unorganised resistance to these measures that will undoubtedly arise must be politically united and organised. The unemployed and all claimants threatened by this new round of attacks on them must unite in opposition to the Tory government and all those Labour and trade union leaders who refuse to fight the government.

■ If the Borrie report is accepted by the Labour Party — and Blair has already welcomed it — the old must get ready to fend for themselves. It recommends that young people should start saving now for their old age and that old people's money should be taken for their nursing and residential care.



The unemployed must unite in opposition to the Tory government and all Labour and trade union leaders who refuse to fight

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Workers International wins

right to attend 'Socialist'
conference in South Africa

— centre pages

On other pages:

NHS rejects PRP — p.3;

Minimum wage — p.7;

Bosnia — back page.

To end the sleaze, end the system

'CASH FOR QUESTIONS', and the revelations about the 'minister for business probity', corporate affairs minister Neil Hamilton, and his all-expenses-paid junketings at the Paris Ritz, causing his resignation, are, in truth, pretty small beer compared with the overall corrupt record of this Tory government.

For 15 years this government has systematically bled the poor in order to give, and give handsomely, to the rich. Through privatisation schemes — water is only the most glaring example — it has put vast sums in the pockets of some of its supporters. There are surely many more scandals to come.

These gentry are ruled by naked, unashamed greed: greed for power, greed for money, and greed for living high on the hog.

That Neil Hamilton sees nothing to be ashamed of in such greed is shown by his obstinately clinging so long to office. Anyone with an ounce of self-respect would have resigned long before.

In their 'private accommodation' at the Ritz, Hamilton and his wife scoffed about £300-worth of grub and booze at each single evening's guzzling and swilling — and that's more than many an old age pensioner has to live on for an entire month.

This has come hard on the heels of the revelations about the way former prime minister Thatcher's son Mark earned his £12 million commission from the £20 billion al-Yamamah arms deal, which the British government pressed on the Saudis.

And yet, Labour MPs who have information about the deal are prepared only to make a brief fuss, pass the gen on to 'the appropriate authorities' (in other words the same corrupt state they should be exposing), and quietly forget about it.

In May 1989, Labour MP Jeff Rooker was sent a copy of a 'classified' document that said that government officials had lied when they told the National Audit Office they knew nothing of Mark Thatcher's commission payments. Commons public accounts committee member Rooker sent a copy to Margaret Thatcher, then prime minister, who said she had 'passed it on to the appropriate authorities'. All very proper!

And the NAO's 1991 report on the al-Yamamah deal was suppressed after another Labour MP, Robert Sheldon, chair of the public accounts committee, took advice from the Ministry of Defence.

Another NAO inquiry is not due until 1997! Shouldn't the demand be for a full and public inquiry now?

* * * * *

IN THE past two weeks the government has lost every last particle of its already fast disappearing credibility, even among many of its own supporters. The scales have fallen from their eyes.

'Tainted' — Labour leader Tony Blair's anodyne word for the government — is the understatement of the century. 'Plainly sensible and necessary' was another hard-hitting Blairism, this time about Prime Minister John Major's announcement of the setting up of an independent committee to oversee standards in public life.

This government, like the capitalist system it serves, is rotten to the core. And the rot goes incalculably deeper than a couple of brazen freeloaders pigging it at the Ritz.

In the past two weeks this government's life has often seemed to be hanging by a thread. What has saved it is the refusal of the new, 'modernised' Labour leadership to go for the jugular.

And the question many must be asking is why? Why do they not take each opportunity — in their own interests — to go as far as they can in bringing down this government? The answer is that the Labour parliamentarians are part of the same stinking system and play by the same 'polite' rules. Every serious worker knows that it is the entire capitalist system, not merely one passing government or one freebie-grabbing member of the Commons, that is corrupt.

In a system in terminal decay, a system that stinks to high heaven, the behaviour of the Hamiltons and their companions in the trough merely reflects that decay.

Letters

A foundation not a mantra

TO BE praised by Brian Pearce for consistency (Letters, 22 October) is rather like being congratulated by the former Bishop of Durham on being a good Christian. One's first reaction is: 'Hum ho! What does he mean by that?'

I do indeed believe in the 'self-determination of the Irish people as a whole', although I did not, as might be inferred from Pearce's letter, say so in my letter of 8 October — which was not about Ireland.

However, that proposition is only a foundation for a discussion about what policy, at this or any other particular moment, socialists should advocate to the workers — atheist, Protestant and Catholic — of the island of Ireland. It is not, as Pearce waspishly implies, a mantra to act as a substitute for further thought.

When it comes to Scotland, I do not know from what statement of mine Pearce draws the conclusion that Brotherstone 'favour self-determination by the British people as a whole'. I favour the self-determination of the working class and its supporters, like myself, who see no future for the people of Britain in capitalist exploitation.

We have the right to free ourselves from the last remnants of nationalist illusions. And this is particularly so in 'the first industrial nation' of capitalism's 19th-century heyday, which — with the active assistance of British bourgeois politicians (English, Scottish and Welsh) — has, over the past

couple of decades, been increasingly asset-stripped by transnational capital, causing a crisis of historic proportions for working people.

However, I welcome Pearce's ever-perceptive participation in this discussion. New Barnet is once again in the van of what remains of progressive discourse in south-east England.

Terry Brotherstone
Aberdeen

Perturbed and surprised

I AM rather perturbed by your apparent hostility to the Scots' struggle for national and class autonomy. As I am in a minority of one in the 'debate' in Workers Press, I was surprised that my letter, 'No Scottish preoccupation' (1 October), was edited so savagely that important points were left out.

For example, by dropping out my references to David Eyre's thought-world being closer to Jane Eyre than to Gaelic Scotland and my denial of his assertion that I was a member of 'Scotland United', Terry Brotherstone, David Eyre and Ken Singer were given an unfair advantage. I am too steeped in Marxism to assume that Scotland will ever be united this side of the 'revolution'.

I once read a comment by Engels to the effect that he and Marx were in a minority for most of their lives and felt fine about it. So do I. But it would be nice if David Eyre, Terry Brotherstone, Ken Singer and

John P. Mathieson would do some deep thinking about the Scottish national question.

Incidentally, I simply cannot believe that some of the comrades grouped around Workers Press such as Ken Singer are so abstractly 'internationalist' that they can have the effrontery to suggest that 'all our efforts' should be focused on the struggle in South Africa instead of 'spending too much time on the question of socialism in Scotland'.

So if and when big strikes and the renewal of the struggle for socialism break out yet again, we will know what to expect. The response will be: 'Sorry, you Scottish comrades, but we are concentrating all our efforts on the struggle in South Africa.' Some 'international solidarity' that will be!

The major point overlooked in the debate on the Scottish national question in Workers Press so far is that a majority of Scots, including a helluva lot of militant working people, voted in a rigged government referendum in 1979 for a Scottish parliament.

And in the four successive general elections between 1979 and 1992 the hated and alien Tories in Scotland have become a smaller and smaller minority of those who represent ruling-class England in Scotland rather than working-class Scotland in England.

And I should not need to tell Ken Singer that socialists have a responsibility to 'accentuate the positive' in the struggles against social injustice and inequality wherever they happen to reside, without ignoring real solidarity with their comrades elsewhere.

'The enemy is', as James Connolly, John Maclean and Karl Liebknecht always insisted, 'at home'; and I cannot

understand why Terry Brotherstone can be so enthusiastic about Connolly's socialist republicanism and so indifferent to Maclean's. Perhaps he will explain!

James D. Young
Falkirk

The editor responds: I am 'perturbed' to use James Young's words, that a decision to edit a letter of about 600 words is interpreted as 'apparent hostility to the Scots' struggle for national and class autonomy'.

Letters from Jim have appeared on four occasions since 20 August, when we returned from a two-week break. Ten issues of Workers Press have appeared in that time. This can hardly be called suppressing Jim's views.

As a long-time reader of Workers Press, Jim also knows that we think letters are most effective when they are about 350 words in length. The Workers Press editorial committee often criticises me when I allow in longer letters.

One further comment. I was rather disturbed by the tone of Jim's letter, in particular its description of David Eyre's contribution as 'generally beneath contempt'. This was edited out. But, if Jim felt this to be true, why was most of what he wrote on that occasion directed against Eyre?

I believe that the positions of all the different contributors to the debate on the Scottish national question mentioned by Jim, as well as his own position, have been fairly clearly expressed. I suggest that they all 'take a round out' and see if any fresh forces come into the debate. Maybe a public meeting at a suitable venue could also be arranged. I look forward to developments!

Lists of inaccuracy

IN HIS 'Personal Column' on 15 October, on the history of British Stalinism, Peter Fryer writes of a 1939 Russian report on the Communist Party of Great Britain.

It reveals that the CPGB's cadre commission had compiled 'lists of Trotskyists known to it' and of 'Trotskyist elements who have buried themselves *sic* in the ranks of the Labour Party'.

The accuracy of these lists must be in doubt if they were anything like the way the CPGB described leading members of the Independent Labour Party. In a report on Trotskyism in London (dated 10 June 1939), the ILP's chairman C.A. Smith, general secretary John McNair, and national member Fenner

Brockway are described as 'definitely Trotskyist'.

The ILP's 'New Leaders' is 'now very little more than a Trotskyist sheet', says the report, and the ILP itself is described as the main danger. Its leadership was now 'definitely Trotskyist'.

The report adds: 'The ILP has been a Party without a theory. It now has a theory, Trotskyism'; and the ILP 'can become a great danger with the possibility of forming a mass basis for Trotskyist ideas'.

It also says: 'The Spanish Trotskyist Party the POUM took up arms against the Government and were actively supported by the ILP.'

It does not take a great deal of imagination to realise what fate awaited ILP leaders and members if the CPGB had become a major force in Britain.

Barry Buitekant
London E5



A POUMista injured by Communists in Barcelona during the Spanish civil war. The Stalinists succeeded in stifling the revolution

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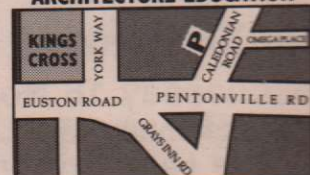
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NHS staff vote down pay by performance

NHS workers in the public-sector union, UNISON, have signalled their willingness to strike over pay, by rejecting an offer that meant acceptance of local performance-related pay (PRP) schemes in the future.

UNISON had asked members to reject the deal only if they were prepared to take strike action to achieve an improved pay offer from the employers.

The offer — worth 2.5 per cent on average — was rejected by ancillary, administrative and clerical, maintenance, and professional, technical and scientific staffs.

Only ambulance staff voted to accept.

Awareness

UNISON leaders must now start an immediate campaign to raise the awareness of the dangers of PRP among members and to convince them that effective industrial action can be successful.

UNISON activists should demand that the leadership organises speaking tours, a publicity

BY STUART CARTER
Salford Mental Health
UNISON branch secretary

campaign and workshops and briefings for stewards and that a strike ballot is organised without delay.

Many private employers are abandoning PRP, because its supposed benefits have not been realised and the schemes are expensive in both time and money.

Modern industrial production is not individual but social — based on teamwork and cooperation. Every worker knows this. If this is so in private industry, how much more

true is it in public services like the NHS.

The government's insistence on PRP in the National Health Service is not to improve performance, but to weaken the collective strength of the workforce and the trades unions. The Tories also want to destroy nationally negotiated agreements on pay and conditions.

Two types of PRP are proposed:

■ In the first, managers rate the performance of individuals. Such methods are divisive, open to bias and favouritism, and according to many studies decrease morale and motivation. Not everyone benefits and the long-term aim is to reduce the wages bill. Staff do not receive a pay rise each year to keep up with inflation and the rise in the cost of living.

■ In the second, pay rises are linked to the increase in production or the financial performance of the organisation. For NHS staff there is a fixed

volume of work and a fixed budget. The budget is usually cut back every year. So in the NHS pay rises would come out of job cuts or the intensification of work.

For example, in a hospital pharmacy, which provide prescriptions for patients, the number of staff or their working hours might be cut. The remaining staff would then become more productive by having to work harder to produce the same volume of work. Each year the targets would be cranked up by the management.

Unacceptable

Both schemes are unacceptable to trades unionists.

The government also wants PRP for doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists. At the present time their pay is determined each year by pay review bodies. This year they awarded these staff a 3 per cent rise with no

strings attached. But once PRP is introduced for one group, the government will move quickly to force it on all.

UNISON's national health care committee recommended rejection of the pay offers for non-pay review body staff because they are linked to the acceptance of PRP, and because they are below the 3 per cent award to pay review body staff.

A 5 per cent rise would be needed to keep up with the cost of living increases caused by the higher taxes and value-added

tax on fuel that were introduced this year.

UNISON said that a vote to reject the offer would be followed by a ballot for one-, two- and three-day national strike action.

The vote to reject the offer and ballot on strike action was solid where branch leaderships explained clearly to members the dangers of PRP. Where this was not the case, members voted to accept, thinking 'Let's take the money and worry about next year when it comes.'

Court orders new inquest into 'unlawful killing'

BY SETH DRYSDALE

A HIGH COURT judge has overturned a coroner's court verdict of 'unlawful killing' of a 31-year-old black man, Leon Stanley Patterson, who died naked on the floor of a police remand cell, in Denton, Manchester, on 27 November 1992.

The ruling followed a challenge to the inquest verdict by police surgeons and officers.

If the 'unlawful killing' verdict were to stand this would require criminal investigation of the circumstances of Patterson's death in police custody by an independent police force.

Clearly the 'unlawful killing' verdict called into question the conduct of the police surgeons and officers involved.

A 'statement of compromise' read out in the high court said that the coroner at the original inquest, Peter Revington, had considered a police challenge to the verdict, and now 'considers that in view of the serious adverse implications of a finding of unlawful killing for the police and the surgeons it is necessary for a fresh inquest to be heard'.

The high court judge, Justice Popplewell, announced that there would be a new inquest

with a different coroner. Patterson's twin sister, Stephanie Lightfoot-Bennett, was stunned. 'I expected a new inquest,' she said. 'But I'm still shocked by the decision.'

In April of last year, a coroner's court jury delivered a majority verdict of unlawful killing of Leon Patterson.

The inquest jury had heard evidence that Patterson, a heroin addict, had been on the run from a jail term for robbery when he was arrested on suspicion of a cash-till theft, on 21 November 1992.

Unconscious

They had also heard that during his six nights in police custody Patterson had been vomiting, shouting incoherently, and was unconscious for periods. Yet police surgeons had still certified Patterson as fit for detention.

At the inquest, a biochemist from the Manchester Royal Infirmary, Thomas Richardson, had admitted that a report alleging that Patterson had had traces of the tranquilliser Nitrezepan in his blood, had been on someone else.

This rendered the Home Office pathologist's conclusion — that Patterson had died of a drug overdose — unsafe.



The attack on the NHS is growing with the attempt to introduce performance-related pay

Photo: Alan Clark

State harassment backs 'peace deal'

BY JOHN STEELE

THE Dublin coalition government of Fianna Fail and the Labour Party has wasted little time in demonstrating that the so-called 'peace process' and the IRA ceasefire will not stop the state harassment of republicans and socialists.

In dawn raids and arrests last Saturday, Irish police broke into homes across the country. The main target was Republican Sinn Fein (RSF), which split from the Gerry Adams-led Sinn Fein in 1986 when the traditional republican position of not taking seats in the Dublin parliament was reversed.

The RSF says that 32 of its members had their homes raided and at least six were arrested under the hated section

30 of the Offences Against the State Act. None was charged and all were released after questioning.

While Adams and other Sinn Fein leaders have traipsed around the world trying to convince capitalist governments and bankers that they are now respectable politicians, the RSF has been vocal in its opposition to Sinn Fein and the proposed 'peace deal'.

Threats

In areas where it has been active, such as south Armagh, south Down and west Belfast, the RSF has distributed leaflets critical of the IRA ceasefire and has complained of threats and intimidation from IRA supporters.

The police raids also included the home of at least one

member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP). In a statement the IRSP condemned the raids, saying they were 'aimed against people who are expressing a straight-forward republican position of opposition to any settlement which will lead to the maintenance of the British presence in this country'.

Following the raids, the police claimed that it seized guns and ammunition belonging to a new republican group, the Irish National Republican Army.

This is the first time there has been mention of this organisation, which has never issued a public statement and the RSF has stated it did not believe it existed.

There is no doubt, however, that there is growing resistance to the imperialist deal currently

being concocted by the Dublin and London governments, and a belief they will attempt to intimidate and silence all opposition to it.

Socialists do not have to agree with the politics of the RSF and other groups to unconditionally condemn the continuing state harassment.

But the big question is: where does Adams and the Sinn Fein leadership stand? This article is written four days after the raids and as yet there is not a word of condemnation from them.

Are they already sucked so far into the capitalist establishment that they cannot take a principled position against police raids on republicans?

Are they preparing to follow Mandela and Arafat as administrators in a state machine that crushes dissidents?

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Inside left

Old tricks

THE 'Observer' (23 October) says it has uncovered evidence that Conservative Central Office is prepared to gather and distribute highly personal "dirty tricks" information about political opponents, including details of their lifestyles, personal habits, sex lives and creditworthiness.

'So what's new?' people will ask, remembering Tory pressmen rummaging through Peter Tatchell's dustbin, when he stood for Labour in Bermondsey.

Under the Data Protection Act the Tories have to list what kind of data they are collecting on 'current, past, and potential competitors'. This includes 'marital history, details of other family, household members, other social contacts, income, assets, investments, creditworthiness, support for pressure groups and other beliefs'.

A former Tory campaign organiser says Andrew Lansley and Julian Lewis, heading the Tory central office team, call it 'oppo', meaning 'opposition' research.

In the 1930s, the Conservative research department's ex-MI5 man Major Joseph Ball boasted he could read Labour Party literature before it was printed.

Ball also bugged dissident Tory MPs, ensured cinema newsreels followed the government's appeasement line, and doubled as Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's secret link with Mussolini. So Messrs Lansley and Lewis have a tradition to uphold.

I mentioned last week Julian Lewis's activity in the Coalition for Peace through Security. I've been reading Bruce Kent's autobiography, 'Undiscovered Ends'. The former Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament general secretary describes how the coalition turned up CND's Hiroshima Day commemoration in 1986, and played loud music during the one minute's silence for the dead.

'Had it not been for some very non-violent women, the kind of brawl which the Coalition was hoping for might well have taken place,' says Kent.

A spy sent to CND's office was quickly exposed. "We regret that," Julian Lewis of the Coalition was reported to have said. "If you're going to spy on somebody you've got to do it efficiently."

Old lies

FIFTY years ago in Buchenwald concentration camp the Nazis murdered Ernst Thaelmann, chairman of the German Communist Party, which according to Fred Westcott had 'repeatedly called on the powerful Social Democratic Party to join with it in organising a united struggle to resist the Nazis' (Thaelmann: Killed by the Nazis, honoured by their enemies, 'Morning Star', 20 September).

In fact, right up to Hitler's accession to power, Stalinists like Thaelmann assured supporters that the Nazis were a passing danger, and the main enemy was social democracy — or, as the Comintern dubbed it, 'social fascism'.

When the Berlin district leadership, sensing working-class feeling, called for joint demonstrations with the Social Democrats, these proposals were, in Thaelmann's words, 'rightly rejected by the (Central) C(ommittee) of our party, and corrected . . .' The German Stalinist leader complained of 'surrender in the face of certain sentimental feelings of unity'.

It is easy to be wise after the event. But judging from letters in the 'Morning Star', three to one defending Thaelmann (and describing criticism from a Dundee reader as 'Trotskyist nonsense'), some diehard Stalinists find it easier still to remain stupid.

Charlie Pottins

Workers International wins right to attend

A DECISION to exclude the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa) from a 'Socialist' conference was overturned by the executive committee of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, last weekend.

The Workers International has now been invited to send two delegates to the conference, which will be held in Johannesburg on 5-6 November.

The conference's organising committee, dominated by the South African Communist Party, had excluded the Workers International, along with certain other groups, when it decided to have an attendance of only 120 — nine organisations and 15 individuals.

Over last weekend Workers International members met with the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action — which was not excluded — and with representatives of the other excluded organisations. COSATU general secretary Sam Shilowa was asked for the reasons for their exclusion and a press statement was issued.

On Monday they received the news that the COSATU executive was inviting the 'excluded' organisations, allowing the Workers International to have two delegates.

The resolution that called the conference, from the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), was passed at COSATU's congress in September. It called for 'a conference for all

socialist organisations to map out the working-class programme and process leading to complete co-operation and unity. The "left" should be defined as those organisations 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.

'A conference of civil society to look at new forms of organisation that will unify working-class organisations and parties to take forward a programme to implement socialism. This could take the form of a working-class party.'

The Workers International clearly has a place at such a conference and its delegates will fight for a discussion on this resolution.

But the COSATU leadership has hijacked its own congress decision. According to the preparatory material for the 'Socialist' conference, it is now called a 'Socialist Conference for Reconstruction and Development'.

This means that the discussion is now to centre around the 'reconstruction and development programme' (RDP) of the South African government, led by African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela and former president of the apartheid state F.W. de Klerk.

This RDP is in no way socialist or even 'state capitalist'. It demands that workers make 'sacrifices', 'donations', and 'work during their holidays for nothing'.

Reject co-operation and unity programme

South Africa

The decision of the COSATU leadership does nothing to change its 'built-in' majority — COSATU has 40 delegates, the SACP has 25, and other organisations dedicated to the government of national unity, including the Young Christian Students, have five delegates each.

The RDP is put forward as the means for the the working class to work with the bosses to strengthen the South African economy. In reality it is the subordination of workers' demands to the needs of international finance capital — particularly the attraction of 'investment' and loans. This will require the most brutal suppression of the working class.

The decision of the COSATU leadership does nothing to change its 'built-in' majority — COSATU has 40 delegates, the SACP has 25, and other organisations dedicated to the government of national unity, including the Young Christian Students, have five delegates each.

Pressure from workers

THE illusions in the 'new South Africa' are being fostered by the same organisations that opposed the campaign — in which the Workers International played a leading role — that, from 1989, defended the liberation fighters in the African National Congress and the South West Africa People's Organisation who had been detained in prison camps and often tortured for demanding democracy in their own organisations.

Today leaders of the 'triple alliance' — the ANC, SACP and COSATU — accuse striking workers of undermining the government. They stand back, or assist the bosses, when shop stewards are taken before the courts. The government of national unity, of which the alliance is part, has even set police dogs on striking shop workers.

When the Workers International stood against the ANC/SACP for an independent workers' party for socialism in the elections last April, a party member, Sahied Mohamed, was sacked from his job as a Paper, Print, Wood and Allied Workers' Union organiser for his role during the elections. Many workers have demanded his reinstatement and the COSATU leadership is still considering the case.

The Workers International has



Strikers, such as these truckers in August, are accused by the 'triple alliance' leaders of undermining the government

Mandela's sharp warning to strike

SOUTH AFRICA's President Nelson Mandela and housing minister Joe Slovo have both given stern warnings that they are preparing to suppress workers' struggles in the coming weeks.

On Thursday 20 October African National Congress (ANC) leader Mandela told former members of its now-disbanded military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), that they must comply with military discipline or be discharged from the new, but largely white-led, South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

And South African Communist Party (SACP) chair Slovo has issued strong eviction warnings to would-be squatters. He is cracking down in an attempt to end a ten-

year boycott of rent and other service payments in the townships.

Before the election of the new government only 33 per cent of the township inhabitants were paying rent on council-owned homes and rates for electricity, water and rubbish collection. In June this had fallen to 20 per cent. The ministry of provincial affairs says this figure is falling all the time!

While Slovo argues that these workers must pay their rents so he can get loans for low-cost housing, the reality is that wages are such that township inhabitants cannot afford to pay rent — indeed, many are unemployed. Ignoring all this, Slovo condemned those who do not pay rent, saying that the boycott 'had in all too many cases made

way for a private strategy of convenience and self-interest'.

Slovo, in the name of the government, has reached an agreement with the banks that they will provide 2 billion rand (£357 million) for mortgages for cheap housing, in exchange for a government commitment to deploy, if necessary, the security forces to repossess defaulters' homes!

All this is done in the name of not allowing 'the spirit of populism to dominate our practice'. In reality Slovo is showing that he is working on behalf of the capitalist banks.

Many black workers who support the ANC/SACP have asked those taking action against the employers and government to give Mandela 'a chance'. Disturbing

questions must now surely be entering these workers' minds.

Earlier this month, thousands of former MK combatants walked out of the SANDF camps in protest at their shabby treatment and the squalid conditions there. On Thursday 20 October, Mandela warned the 3,000 who remain AWOL that they had seven days to return. For most, discharge would mean unemployment and grinding poverty.

A group of 150 former MK fighters demonstrated outside the president's office in Cape Town on Tuesday 18 October. They were demanding free transport to take them to the north, but Mandela said he had no plans to reward ill-discipline.

Mandela has also issued a seven-

Socialist' conference Capitalist programme for Africa!

stood out against what the new 'government of national unity' and its supporters are doing. By this stand, it aligns itself with the actions of the workers, the unemployed, and the homeless in the huge wave of mass struggle sweeping South Africa.

The 'triple alliance' is under great pressure from the thousands of workers who are on strike, demonstrating, or occupying union offices demanding that election promises be kept.

Exclusions and even exterminations of those who did not agree with 'the line' were carried out with disastrous results in the ex-Soviet Union and eastern Europe when the Stalinist bureaucracy was a power in the world. Today, Stalinism is broken and discredited. It is a measure of this that the SACP is unable to keep the Workers International out of the COSATU conference.

The Stalinist SACP has at least five factions. Pressure from the rank and file in the trades unions meant that, despite attempts by the SACP-controlled COSATU leadership to delay the 'Socialist' conference, it eventually had to organise it in some form — although now the conference discussion is to be centred around the RDP.

The Workers International fights with the struggling workers. Down with the apartheid courts!
Down with police action against strikers!

For the unconditional right to strike and picket!
Build workers' defence committees!

For democracy in the trade unions!

Build the strike wave against the government of national unity!

Reject the RDP!

For an independent workers' party for socialism!

Nationalise the big companies

without compensation and under workers' control!

Build workers' internationalism!
For us this means rebuilding the Fourth International, and we invite all workers to join us in this task.

SOUTH AFRICA £5,000 FUND

IT IS reported that, by some means, the COSATU executive committee received a copy of the resolution that was presented to the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International's South African section's conference, held on 15-16 October.

This was photocopied and passed to all executive members at their meeting on 22-23 October. Many were not pleased when they saw the call to remove Stalinists from the trades unions. However, not a single Stalinist could be found who would publicly move against this proposition!

Such are the new times in which the Fourth International — founded and fought for against the Stalinist bureaucracy — is being rebuilt today. Our comrades need money for their intervention in the COSATU 'Socialist' conference and for their future work. We thank all those readers who have already contributed so generously to our fund.

Let's now go on to its complete success. Small or large donations will be gladly received and also subscriptions to our South African comrades' paper, 'Workers International News'. Ten issues cost £10, and five are £5.50.

Send money to the Workers International, South Africa Appeal, PO Box 735, London, SW8 1YB. Cheques, etc., payable to 'South Africa Appeal'.

rs and protesters

day ultimatum to the ANC's self-defence units (SDUs) in the townships to hand over their weapons to the police. Otherwise they will face 'the full weight of the law', Mandela told them at a rally in Vosloorus township, east of Johannesburg.

This is seen as a response to the fact that a few weeks ago a police station was occupied by 200 SDU members when two of their number had been arrested for possessing AK-47s in Katlehong township.

What Mandela 'fears is that the perception of lawlessness and instability created by the likes of the Umkhonto rebels and rogue SDUs will inhibit local and foreign investors,' commented John Carlin in the 'Independent on Sunday' (23 October).



Mandela: stern warning

A giant among workers' leaders

The following account by NORMAN HARDING, of events during the strike at Covent Garden market in 1957, was prompted by a reading of Bill Hunter's book, 'They Knew Why They Fought', on the history of unofficial struggles and leadership on the docks from the end of World War II. This book, reviewed in Workers Press on 3 September, mentions Harry Constable, one of the leaders of a dockers' unofficial strike who was acquitted in 1951 during a subsequent conspiracy trial at the Old Bailey

IN August 1957, I spent a week at what was either the first or the second education camp organised by the Group, the Trotskyist organisation in the Labour Party.

During the following week I worked at the Group's printshop, Plough Press, situated in an alley off Venn Street in Clapham, south London.

On the evening of Sunday 11 August, while Tony and Mike Banda, Gerry Healy — later leaders of the Workers Revolutionary Party — and I were standing around the printing press talking about the strike at Covent Garden fruit-and-vegetable market, in came someone who I didn't know. He was introduced to me and I knew his name — it was Harry Constable, the respected leader of the London dockers.

That night Harry, I and two other comrades made a tour of east London to raise support for the strikers. The following morning Ted Knight (in the 1980s leader of Lambeth council during its fight against the Tory government's rate-capping policy, which limited the amount local authorities could levy to finance their spending), Vivien Mendelson, and I joined the picket line at 6am. This we repeated every day during the strike.

Viv, I believe, became the first

land, who was the leader of the Covent Garden strike, and the stewards.

A daily strike bulletin was produced — copy was rushed every day to a Trotskyist comrade, Dot Gibson, who typed it up, got it copied and rushed it back.

On Tuesday morning Harry visited the Covent Garden strike committee to 'see how things were'. He left the room shortly after saying that 'he would be in touch'.

Covent Garden market manager Mr Mack, better known as 'Mack the Knife', had prepared for the strike by organising an army of scabs — the market's clerical workers.

That afternoon I was in the strike office when Bernie Holland answered the phone. He wrote down a message and handed it to one of the stewards, telling him to get it to all the pickets. The message read: 'Harry Constable has brought out Tooley Street Docks in support.'

A mass meeting was held on Wednesday afternoon — in, I believe, St Pancras town hall. Covent Garden workers, and dockers and other supporters were invited — but not the press. Ted Knight and I were allowed in even though they knew we were associated with the



Harry Constable (left) chaired out with two others acquitted in the Old Bailey trial

Trotskyist to address a mass meeting from the plinth in Trafalgar Square, during the rally for the Covent Garden strikers. I remember Viv getting a great response from the Covent Garden workers and their docker and other supporters, when she condemned Frank Cousins, the general secretary of the strikers' union, the Transport and General Workers' Union, for 'sunning himself on holiday on the south coast instead of being with his members'.

During the day on Monday 12 August arrangements were made so Ted, Viv and I could go into the strike-committee office whenever we wished. I think it was Bill Boakes, a Trotskyist comrade working at the time in the Transport and General Workers' Union head office, who made this possible and took us into the strike office and introduced us to Bernie Hol-

Group's paper, the 'Newsletter', and were reporting on the strike.

Communist Party members who knew who we were complained to the stewards. They had a brief meeting and decided that to avoid a diversion we would have to leave the meeting. We agreed. Apologising, the stewards escorted us to the side door.

As we were going out, Constable was being escorted in. He wanted to know what was happening. We told him and he agreed with the decision, telling us that he had been up all night with Bernie Holland 'putting some backbone into him'. Holland and 80 others had been sacked that day.

We were later told that Constable's contribution had 'brought the house down'. The struggle continued through the week. Support grew and grew. This scared not only Mack the Knife but also Frank

Cousins, who had returned from his holiday. Covent Garden workers were anxious to speak to Cousins — and it wasn't to ask him how his holiday had gone!

At the time Cousins was being promoted by the Communist Party, and its paper, the 'Daily Worker' as a 'left' leader. During a meeting several hours long with Mack the Knife, an agreement was reached that proposed a few minor changes. Cousins spoke for an hour to the Covent Garden workers about the deal, with the result being a 509-43 vote in favour of going back to work.

On Monday 19 August there was a return to work. 'It is better now in the markets', said the 'Daily Worker' on 24 August.

At the end of the strike Constable told me that, win or lose, you have to draw out the lessons. This he did in his 'Newsletter' pamphlet, 'The Lessons of the Covent Garden Defeat'. Here he wrote:

'If blacklegs could be found to carry crates of fruit and sacks of potatoes in Covent Garden itself there was no one on the docks who was prepared to handle "black" produce. The market men had an ally and a powerful one in the shape of thousands of portworkers.'

'True to their traditions of soli-

**'The message read:
"Harry Constable has
brought out Tooley Street
Docks in support.'"**

arity, London's dockers stopped work rather than touch produce that was to be taken across a picket line.

'Especially significant were the facts that the permanent men, i.e. fruit loaders and unloaders, were amongst the highest paid and privileged sections on the docks.'

'Twelve thousand men were out in support of the 4,006 market men. 2,000 more dockers a day were joining the strike. The dockers voted to stay out until the market men decided to go back. Added to this the dockers in Leith had refused to handle ships carrying fruit and vegetables. It was spreading. This was the background to the sell-out.'

On returning home to Leeds on Sunday 18 August, I was asked by my parents if I had enjoyed my 'holiday' in London — which was what I had told them I was doing — and if it had been a change from dashing about here and there. Of course, I said I had enjoyed my 'holiday'!

Then they told me that they had been watching the news on TV which had shown pictures of events at Covent Garden. There I was on the screen, they said, completely with placards and leaflets. My cover was blown!

I had just spent the week amongst some of the most courageous and principled workers I have had the pleasure of meeting. Harry Constable was a giant among working-class leaders, not just a trade union fighter.

Members of the Workers Revolutionary Party/Workers Press should be proud that Constable always fought as a Trotskyist in the working-class movement.

'They Knew Why They Fought' by Bill Hunter is to be published by Index Books on 6 November. The price is £7.95 including postage, less 10 per cent for bulk orders. Send cheques, payable to Living History Library, to PO Box 9, Eccles Street, Eccles, Salford M30 7FX.

IQ idiocy

SOME 55 years ago I was told by my English 'master' — that was how the person who taught us English liked to be described — about the difference between women and men.

What he had to say wasn't exactly what a class of 30-odd prurient 12-year-old boys, some with yet unbroken voices, would have preferred to hear. It was about brains, not bodies.

If, he said, you compared the intelligence quotients of women with those of men and plotted your findings on graph paper, you got two curves that differed in very interesting and significant ways.

More men than women, he assured us, had high and very high IQs. And more men than women had low and very low IQs. But women of just average intelligence slightly — but only slightly — outnumbered men.

So what you had was two 'bell curves', as they would now be described, though I don't recall his using the phrase. They were indeed shaped like the outline of a bell.

He drew them on the blackboard. Size of IQ was plotted from left to right across the board, and number of people was plotted from bottom to top. And the female bell curve sank markedly lower than the male one at the left and right extremities, and soared a bit higher in the middle.

We swallowed uncritically what we were told. Only later did it dawn on me what arrant nonsense our 'master's' voice had been expounding.

But not accidental nonsense. For it served admirably what was clearly one of the school's basic functions: to justify a social system in which men hogged the leading positions, the top jobs, the highest salaries.

If there were more bright men and male geniuses, comparatively few bright women and female geniuses, then it was right and proper for women, unlikely to be more than averagely bright, to hew wood and draw water, to work as secretaries and housewives and cooks and cleaners, to do that which nature had obviously best fitted them for.

Here was the British equivalent of Hitler's 'church, cooking, and children' as the appropriate fields of activity for German women.

Of course this 'theory' had to admit, for the sake of those bell curves' elegant symmetry, that there must be quite a few male dullards and idiots knocking about. But that aspect of the matter wasn't stressed.

OVER the past half-century the whole pseudo-scientific IQ idiocy has been exposed for what it is.

We now know that all that is measured by an intelligence test is the ability to solve certain limited kinds of pencil-and-paper puzzle, whose nature is strictly determined by the cultural 'set' and preconceptions, as well as the social and 'racial' prejudices, of those who devise them.

What is not and, by these methods, cannot ever be tested is, for example, moral intelligence, political intelligence, and musical intelligence.

By which I mean the ability to discern patterns and solve problems in these areas. Such abilities bear no relation whatever to how good or bad a person is at filling in the missing number, or spotting the odd one out, or solving anagrams.

But now 'The Bell Curve' has made a highly publicised comeback in the US. It is the title of a book written by one Charles Murray in collaboration with the late Richard Herrnstein; the sub-title is 'Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life'.

In his youth Charles Murray

PERSONAL COLUMN

once helped set fire to a cross — it didn't occur to him, he now says, that this could be seen as having racist implications. More recently he called for welfare payments to be abolished because they did no good.

Murray and Herrnstein claim in 'The Bell Curve' that the IQ of black Americans is on average 15 points less than that of white Americans; and that one in four of the black population of the US has an IQ below 75.

This is a black 'underclass', which is breeding faster than are people with high IQs. Its breeding should be restricted by slashing welfare payments and clapping the babies of unmarried teenage mothers into orphanages.

The book's message — though the authors take care not to put it so plainly — is that black people are inherently inferior to white people.

This racist message will be eagerly taken up and branched by every feculent little fascist on both sides of the Atlantic.

Though 'The Bell Curve' will assuredly furrow their brows too much for them to be able to read it, we can expect the British National Party to grunt and snarl the name of Murray with high glee as they go about their murderous activities.

And not only the fascists. The eminent professor of psychology at the University of Ulster, Richard Lynn, has lost no time in contributing to 'The Times' (24 October) a hysterical and repetitive article hailing 'The Bell Curve' as 'convincingly documented and brilliantly expounded' and warning darkly that '[t]he social threat of the growing underclass will not be easily solved'.

Lynn's most recent contribution to scientific knowledge was a paper saying men are much more intelligent than women. Now, after telling his readers they belong to 'an intellectual elite' (but 'Don't imagine the rest of the population are like you. They aren't'), he raves as follows:

'[T]he underclass has an intelligence deficit. . . . With an average IQ of 77, the chronic unemployed are not much above the level of mental retardation and many of them are below this level. . . .

'[T]here is an increasingly interbred low IQ underclass which produces low IQ children manifesting multiple social pathologies. . . . In the United States . . . 16 per cent of blacks have an IQ of below 70 and are mentally retarded, as compared with only 2 per cent of whites.

'There are therefore many more blacks in the low IQ range being sucked into the underclass. . . . [T]he black underclass is growing in numbers, partly as a result of high fertility and partly through immigration. This means that the problem of the black underclass is likely to get worse in the future. . . .

'The underclass will turn more and more to crime because it has little to lose. . . . The underclass has more children than the rest of society. . . . [I]t will expand in numbers and become increasingly troublesome.'

This must be the most naked statement of pseudo-scientific racism to appear in a supposedly reputable British newspaper for half a century or more.

Its publication disgraces 'The Times'. And Professor Lynn disgraces his university and his profession.

Peter Fryer

Turkey: fear that police are torturing seized teachers

FOUR teachers held by Turkish police may be undergoing torture. At 3am on 13 October, plainclothes police raided the home of Emrullah Cin, a member of the teachers' union, Egit Sen, in Diyarbakir, Kurdistan. They seized him and a visiting colleague, Mustafa Asig.

In the same block they raided the home of Suzan Isbilen, also a teacher and Egit Sen member, detaining her and her sister Pervin, a student-teacher. The police carried out identity checks on other flats in the building before taking the four away.

The four Kurdish teachers are thought to be held incommunicado at Diyarbakir police headquarters, and it is feared they may be tortured. The authorities have not even acknowledged the arrests, let alone given reasons.

Held

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, set up by the Council of Europe, of which Turkey is a member, found equipment in Diyarbakir police headquarters from which people could be suspended by their arms.

Two journalists working for the Diyarbakir newspaper 'Ozgur Ulke' and arrested earlier are still being held. Nezahat

Ozen has been committed to Diyarbakir prison. She is reported to have undergone torture while in police custody, including being hung up by the wrists.

Her colleague, Vehbiye Tuzun, who was grabbed by police at the bus terminal, has reportedly had a haemorrhage. Under emergency law in force in Kurdish areas, she can be held without charge for a month.

The Turkish state has stubbornly refused to recognise the rights of the Kurdish people. Almost 13,000 people have been killed, and many villages des-

troyed, in the ten-year-long war which Turkish government forces have been waging in Kurdistan against guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), and anyone suspected of supporting them.

Emergency

A state of emergency is in force in ten provinces. Police operations against suspected PKK supporters and other opponents are continuing.

Musa Ulosoylu, an official of the public-service workers' union, Tum Maliye Sen, was de-

tained in Ankara on 11 September. The following day, teachers Ozer Akdemir and Mehmet Ali Gurel were detained. Mujdat and Emine Yilmaz were detained that afternoon. Their house was sealed by the police, and a sign put up saying it had been a safehouse for an illegal organisation.

These were among about dozen people taken for interrogation, accused of membership of the banned Turkish Revolutionary Communist Party (TDKP). They were held by the Ankara police anti-terror squad.

Ankara's secret prisoner in cell 8

KENAN BILGIN was among a dozen people detained in Ankara in mid-September, on suspicion of belonging to the banned Revolutionary Communist Party of Turkey (TDKP).

He had been detained last year, and was picked up by the police anti-terror squad at a bus stop.

The police eventually acknowledged the detention of all 12 — except Kenan Bilgin, despite testimony from fellow-detainees now in Ankara central closed prison.

One of them, Bulent Kat, states: 'I was detained in the

TEM [anti-terror] branch at Ankara from 8 to 23 September. Almost everyone was being tortured while I was there. . . .

'A person was dragged past my cell towards the shower area. While they interrogated him in there under torture, they continually shouted and asked his name.

'I could see the person only from behind when he was being taken to his cell because they covered the grills on the doors as they took this person along. This person, whose name I later learned was Kenan Bilgin, was tortured by a large group of

police in the shower area on, I think, 19 September.

'About one-and-a-half or two hours later, I saw a person emerging with a doctor's bag from the shower area. This area was opposite, but a little ahead, of my cell, therefore I could more or less make out people being taken there, even though the grills were covered when torture was taking place.

'I think this person was kept in cell no. 8 because when prisoners were being taken to the toilet in order, only cell no. 8 was not opened, and when the grills were left uncovered, no. 8 alone remained covered.'

Another detainee, Ozer Akdemir, states: 'I was in TEM from 12 to 25 September. I and others were systematically tortured. I was staying in cell no. 6. A person in cell no. 8 was severely tortured every day. He was taken naked to torture, and brought back, naked and unable to stand.

'I could see quite easily this person being taken to torture through the gap in the grill on my cell. The person was about 1.65 metres tall, had brown hair, a moustache, a dark complexion, with a slight beard. . . .

'I could easily recognise those who were taking him to be tortured because I was tortured without a blindfold. They were from team A3 — or the TDKP team. One day when they brought out the man in cell no. 8 to the toilet, he said: "I am Kenan Bilgin, they want me to "disappear". They have not registered me.'



TDKP banner on London anti-Gulf war protest: Turkish forces are cracking down on members

Colombian farmworkers under fire

TWO members of a commission investigating conditions in Colombia's flower-growing industry have been fired on by gunmen, possibly members of the security forces, and farm unions fear they are being targeted.

Olga Matilde Ortiz Solano and Ruth Rueda were driving to the capital, Bogota, when the shooting happened on 10 October. At about 2.15pm they were close to a village called Bojaca when two men and a woman in an unmarked car drove alongside and shouted insults, then one of the men opened fire.

State security forces in Colombia often use unmarked cars on illegal operations.

In the days before the attack, the car in which the two women had been travelling had reportedly been kept under surveillance while it was being used by a leader of the National Federation of United Agricultural Unions (FENSUAGRO). FENSUAGRO is one of the unions which makes up the Interinstitutional Flower Commission.

Both Olga Solano and Ruth Rueda are members of the commission, which is examining the social and environmental impact of the flower-growing industry, together with the working conditions of those working in the industry in the Sabana de Bogota region.

In recent weeks it has been

reported that FENSUAGRO's headquarters have been kept under surveillance and its telephones tapped. There has also been an increased military presence in the area.

On 20 September, four men who refused to identify themselves forced their way into the union's offices asking questions which did not relate to the union's activities. On 29 September, three men on unmarked motorcycles kept the house of Luis Carlos Acero, FENSUAGRO'S president, under surveillance. Another union leader was followed by a man on an unmarked motorcycle wearing part of a police uniform.

Between 1988 and 1994, some 500 members of FENSUAGRO have been killed, and from 1992 to 1994 some 250 workers in the

agricultural sector and peasant farmers belonging to the federation were killed, many having been targeted for their trade union activities.

President Ernesto Samper Pizano took office in August this year promising to improve the human rights situation in Colombia. However, members of the security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious abuses almost with impunity. Trades unionists and popular leaders are frequently targeted.

Workers Press urges trades unionists and supporters of workers' rights to send messages expressing concern for the safety of Olga Matilde Ortiz Solano, Ruth Rueda and members of FENSUAGRO. Please urge that full and impartial in-

vestigations are undertaken into the attempt on the lives of Olga Solano and Ruth Rueda and the harassment faced by members of FENSUAGRO — those responsible must be brought to justice.

Urge also that the government takes all possible measures to protect the lives of Olga Solano, Ruth Rueda and members of FENSUAGRO and to ensure they can carry out their legitimate trade union activities in safety.

Send faxes to: President Samper (+ 57) (1) 286 7434/287 7939. And to: His Excellency Mr Luis Prieto-Ocampo, Embassy of Colombia, Flat 3a, 3 Hans Crescent, London SW1X 0LR. Fax: 071-581 1829. (Or send them to the Colombian representative in your country.)

Government forces terrorise villagers

ARMED gangs operating alongside the Colombian army in counter-insurgency are terrorising villagers in parts of Colombia.

On 1 October a dozen heavily-armed men arrived in the village of Limonal, El Carmen municipality, with a list of people they were looking for.

They found one, Antonio Navarro. They accused him of helping guerrillas, tortured

him, and then shot him dead. Minutes later an army patrol arrived in the village, and made no effort to pursue the paramilitaries.

The paramilitaries then went to the nearby village of El Paramo. They forced their way into the house of a woman called Ludy, whom they also accused of being a guerrilla collaborator, but she managed to evade capture. Shortly after the killing

of Antonio Navarro, guerrillas fought a combined force of the army and the paramilitaries, and three soldiers were reportedly killed.

Paramilitary groups operating in alliance with the armed forces have been responsible for a number of murders of civic, peasant farmer and trade union leaders in the region in recent months, and have threatened many civilians.

Turn up the heat on low wages

MIKE COOKE explains why a minimum wage is important for workers' future struggles, and calls for a campaign to achieve it

DURING the recent Liberal, Labour and Tory conferences, a statutory minimum wage was a hot issue. Even former Tory prime minister Ted Heath supported it!

But the Labour leadership was determined to whittle down the demand to some notion of what the 'nation' can afford. Labour's 'social justice commission' has just recommended a rate of £3.50 an hour, instead of the £4, itself totally inadequate, demanded by the unions.

But, as was pointed out in Workers Press's front-page article on 1 October, what Labour means by 'nation' is the interests of the ruling class, that is what the banks will accept to maintain the state's finances.

As is made clear in the experiences of the young worker who writes on this page, along with low pay goes long hours. To earn £200 in a week at £2.50 an hour takes 80 hours work. That's more than 11 hours a day for a 7-day week!

This is the obscene meaning of employment secretary Michael Portillo's appeal at the Tory party conference for the Eurocrats to give British workers the 'right' to work as long as they 'want'. It's not a right so long as they are forced to accept the pay by grinding poverty.

And in industries where people need to stay awake for the safety of others, Portillo's 'right' to work as long as you 'want' is criminal. The 'Herald of Free Enterprise' ferry disaster in 1987 occurred when a worker, who had worked long hours, fell asleep. School minibus crashes have killed children because teachers have fallen asleep at the wheel. And what

about medical staff in hospitals?

Some socialists and anarchists would say that workers should not fight to make the capitalist state enact laws. They should only fight for better wages and conditions against the employers, they say.

But the problem is that many workers are now unorganised. They cannot force employers to pay them decent wages. It is only through the fight for a legal minimum wage that workers, organised and unorganised, can be united.

These unorganised sections consist of the young, who cannot claim any benefits when they are unemployed; immigrant workers; the unskilled; and women, particularly those with child-care responsibilities, etc.

Without a statutory minimum wage, the isolated sections of the working class will not be able to unite in a fight to improve their wages. Many of the workplaces create a sweatshop atmosphere of intimidation — complain, or organise a fight, and you're out.

And it only by linking unemployment, and other, benefits to a legally-fixed wage that the employed and unemployed can be united.

A political struggle is needed for the working class to unite in its own party.

Determining the rate

MUCH of the discussion on a minimum wage has centred on the rate per hour — £4, £3.50, £5, etc. An amount could be simply proposed. For example, a rate of £5 an hour would immediately be popular with those earning

below £5. But a serious proposal has to be justified. The working class has to be convinced of the need for such a rate.

■ It would have to take in the costs of all aspects of what is required to support a decent way of life: housing, food, heat, light, clothing, a holiday, transport costs, leisure (a football match, a pint of beer, etc.).

These costs have to be the basis of index-linkage, in other words a 'rate of inflation' based on the needs of workers and not a 'shopping basket' thought up in Whitehall.

■ The basis of the campaign must be made as international as possible. Competition between workers is not only used against the low paid. The wages of higher-paid workers are also relentlessly driven down and work-rates increased.

The unemployed and those not able to work

MANY cannot work or cannot find work, so what does a minimum wage mean for them? The unemployed, sick, aged, and carers, etc., would have to receive the minimum wage. The result would be *no* means-testing of individuals.

This would mean a fight against the tendency to attack social security in all the main capitalist countries — Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and the US. Canada is the latest to announce an £18.30 billion spending cut.

Working hours

THE working week must also be legislated for. This should be 35 to 37.5 hours, with maximum overtime hours being equivalent to *one* day's hours (seven to seven-and-a-half hours per week). Any overtime, Saturday/Sunday working and unsocial hours must receive a decent

rate in compensation. Most low-paid jobs *do not* give a higher rate of pay for such working.

Trade union rights

THERE must also be legislation forcing an employer to recognise and concede negotiating rights to trades unions if they recruit a certain percentage of the workforce.

This is vital if a minimum wage is to be enforced.

Campaigning for a minimum wage

THESE considerations are extremely practical and easily identified. There is the need to make them a vehicle for uniting all in society: those in work and those out of work, the young and the old, trades unionists and the non-unionised, etc.

It would expose *all* those who want to keep the present class

divisions, discrimination, poverty, exploitation and oppression that capitalism thrives on. The Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy also owe their existence to their role in maintaining these divisions.

What we would be fighting for would be an immediate raising of standards of living and of health. On top of this would come increased employment through reduced overtime working, a reduced number of second jobs, increased consumer spending, etc.

This is merely the beginning. Practical steps must be taken to organise a campaign, bringing together the necessary elements and knowledge.

Everyone may contribute. Please send your name, address, and telephone number to Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB. Write to us of your knowledge of low pay, hours worked, etc.

Londoners give off a hopeless feeling

Here WENDY tells of the demoralising effect on life of low pay

LONDON town! Your future is dying. I arrived in this country six months ago. Apart from being blown-out about just how corrupt the government and media are, I was really distraught at the feeling of hopelessness from the people, even those who are young.

I soon experienced this feeling myself after I joined an employment agency seeking casual work. I take home £2.50 an hour. The agency gets its £1.50 of flesh for every hour I work. (In my home town of Sydney, Australia, I was earning twice this amount for unskilled work, but even there conditions are now under attack: in Victoria they've already scrapped the minimum wage.)

At my workplace we have to work 40 hours before we qualify for overtime pay. This means that if we work on Saturday or Sunday we only get Monday-to-Friday rates.

Most of us do demoralising production-line work. But quite a few guys do manual labouring for the same rate — for example bricklaying.

Sony-owned UK Entertainment is part of this sunny empire. It employs largely Asian women — and, of course, casuals.

I was a 'picker'. This entails pushing a trolley around hundreds of shelves picking out assorted CDs and cassettes.

Lobotomy

We were never told when we would finish that day and often had to work 12 hours or face the sack. After a couple of days of this you think a lobotomy is probably the best way to go.

On one occasion a few of my friends at work were instantly dismissed for entering the complex through a vehicle barrier, rather than waiting at a gate to be let in.

Paranoia runs rife in these places, with permanent staff grassing on us and each other, resulting in more execution-style dismissals.

These companies are exploiting the young, the poorly qualified, migrants, illegal immigrants, and even the old. They are completely ruthless.

For a reasonable existence, a minimum wage of at least £5 an hour is needed.

Do not take *any* excuses to rule this out.



Cleaning is low-paid, and it 'nobbles your social life'

More workers are forced to take two or three jobs

LOW PAY means long hours — even if that means taking up three jobs at once! Department of Employment figures show that more than 1.1 million people have two, and sometimes three, jobs.

Over ten years the number of workers with second jobs has increased by 65 per cent, from 677,000 in 1984. Of male full-time workers 316,000 have second jobs, a 53,000 increase since 1984.

But, in the same period, the number of women classed as part-time workers who have two jobs has increased twofold, to 364,000.

And these figures only show those who declare a second job. Many are forced to take second jobs paid 'cash in hand', to avoid income tax on already low pay.

Boasts

When employment secretary Michael Portillo boasts about the number of new jobs he includes those second jobs. At the recent Tory party conference, Portillo claimed these jobs had been created by a deregulated market free of petty restrictions. 'Work has changed, changed completely and changed forever,' he said.

The 'changes' Portillo has brought have driven low-paid

workers into even more desperate poverty — hence the second and third jobs.

A year on from the abolition of the wages councils, low-pay units around the country show a sharp fall in wage rates. Wages councils set minimum wages in some of the most exploited, sweated industries, such as textiles. While these minimum wages were frequently broken and legal action was rare, the threat of prosecution at least made employers think twice and stopped some of the worst abuses.

A survey of Jobcentres in the Greater Manchester area showed 40 per cent are now paying below old wages-council rates, which for a shopworker, for example, were £124 for 39 hours.

And compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) has contributed to the trend. CCT has forced already low-paid workers to take pay cuts or lose their jobs. Cleaning and building services for local councils and in hospitals have been 'tendered out' to contractors, which have only taken on existing workers if they accepted swingeing pay cuts.

An accepted package has to include a wage bill of less than the old one — so the contractors' profits come as 'a pound of flesh' (or more) out of pay pack-

ets. It also usually means an intensification of workloads. Women carry a disproportionate share of these poorly paid jobs.

In Newcastle city council, 38 per cent of cleaning staff have two part-time jobs to make ends meet. Almost 4 per cent have three jobs. Many work at two jobs at 30 hours each.

Total average earnings are under £100 for two jobs. Those with three jobs earn little more.

Scrabble

For 15 hours, most public-sector cleaners earn around £50 — £3.33 an hour. Often they are the only earners in a household and they have to scrabble around to increase this through a second job of, say, 12 hours to achieve a total weekly wage of about £100. But cleaning hours are unsocial.

'It nobbles your social life,' said Shelly, a cleaner from Newcastle who spoke to the 'Guardian' (Monday 24 October). 'But if I didn't do this we'd be well and truly up the financial creek.'

Shelly used to manage a travel agency. Her husband is a security guard who earns £1.80 an hour. He has no choice but to work 'seven days a week, 12 hours a day'

Britain's indecent pay levels

THERE are 5.47 million full-time workers who earn less than £221.50 per week, the Council of Europe's so-called decency threshold of 68 per cent of average earnings, currently £312.80.

And the Low Pay Unit's threshold of £208.53 a week (66 per cent of male median pay) is not reached by 4.74 million people. For a 37.5 hour week that's £5.56 an hour.

The LPU and many trade union and other organisations would like to see a statutory minimum wage of £156.40 or £4.15 an hour — 50 per cent of male median earnings. There are 1.7 million people who don't even reach this standard.

And this is only for those in full-time work. Part-time workers and the unemployed fare even worse. About 70 to 80 per

cent of part-timers are below the Council of Europe threshold — about 4 million people.

And all these so-called 'decency thresholds' are based on the wages of other workers and not on people's needs to achieve a decent life.

For women, the ten worst-paid types of worker are:

1. Waitresses (£137.00 per week).
2. Hairdressers (£141.00).
3. Kitchen hands/porters (£142.40).
4. Child-care (£146.00).
5. Bar staff (£146.40).
6. Launderers (£152.20).
7. Dental nurses (£157.60).
8. Cleaners and domestics (£157.80).
9. Sewing machinists (£159.20).

10. Caterers/catering assistants (£158.30).

And for men:

1. Kitchen porters (£161).
2. Counterhands, catering assistants (£164.70).
3. Hairdressers (£169.90).
4. Bar staff (£180.50).
5. Lift and car-park attendants (£188.60).
6. Sales and service occupations (£193.70).
7. Sales assistants (£195.10).
8. Clothing cutters, milliners and furriers (£199.80).
9. Cleaners and domestics (£200.50).
10. Hospital porters (£202.60).

Not only does this show the scale of low pay, it also shows that the brunt is carried by

Bosnians attack UN blackmail

BOSNIAN troops being forced to leave Mount Igman, outside Sarajevo, exchanged fire with French United Nations troops last week. It was the second time French forces had been in action against the Bosnians, who needed to hold positions on the mountain to guard the only aid route into their besieged capital. Bosnians say the UN is trying to blackmail them into surrendering to aggression.

British UN commander Lt General Sir Michael Rose, had responded to Serb nationalist pressure by ordering the Bosnians to withdraw, in exchange for the Serbs allowing fuel through to UN forces. Bosnians see the UN forces' apparent weakness, or willingness to do the Serb nationalists' bidding, as amounting to an alliance.

General Rose had already threatened to use air strikes against the Bosnians trying to defend their own capital, when UN propaganda about a Bosnian 'atrocities' — in reality a commando operation against enemy forces — was used as a pretext for UN forces shelling Bosnian government troops.

Serb Chetniks — clearly well-supplied despite supposedly having been cut off by Serbia's Milosevic regime — went on the offensive: shelling Bihac, a supposed UN 'safe haven'; threatening the aid route to Tuzla by attacks near Vares; and, with UN compliance, cutting the road from the coast to Sarajevo.

A relief convoy driver under UN 'protection' was killed by the Chetniks near Gorazde. Five truckloads of badly-needed medical supplies, including a kidney dialysis machine, were hijacked from a convoy heading for Sarajevo.

British troops near Gorazde who asked for back-up to retaliate against the Serbs were denied it by their commander. The so-called UN 'protection force' could not even protect its own fuel supplies! Or so we are expected to believe.

Commended

In fact, British Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind personally commended the decision not to order air strikes against the Chetniks. Instead, Bosnian forces are being forced off vital high ground guarding the aid route into their capital.

As winter approaches, Sarajevo is starving. The food warehouses only have one-tenth of their capacity, that is three days' supplies.

The Serb Chetniks are, according to the UN High Com-

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

mission for Refugees (UNHCR), 'allowing' neither food nor fuel into the city. Elsewhere, apart from the province of Tuzla, things are even worse.

Almost nothing has reached the towns of Gorazde, Srebrenica or Zepa since September. In the Bihac area, the Chetniks have been allowed to block all convoys, according to the UN's own officers.

Pierre Salignon, head of the aid organisation Médecins sans Frontières, has accused the UN of 'playing the Serbs' game'.

Writing in the Paris daily 'Liberation' on 20 October, he says: 'The cord is being tightening daily around the enclaves of Eastern Bosnia — Gorazde, Srebrenica and Zepa — which have become nothing but prisons without the bars, although the UN describes them as "safe areas". There, the law of the aggressor rules and the UN's forces, lamentably, make sure that law is respected... the UN has played the Serbian "game", by reducing the Bosnians to nothing but victims awaiting execution, hanging from the thread of aid from outside.'

Bosnians are not just criticising General Rose, as the BBC and others would have us believe, still less do they blame the soldiers. The action of Rifkind after the Gorazde convoy attack was noted, and Bosnians draw the conclusion that Rose is carrying out the policies of the British and French governments.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe's article in 'Le Figaro' on 17 October said, in terms the Chetniks couldn't have bettered, that Yugoslavia had broken apart because it was 'the line of contact between Christianity and Islam'.

Juppe stated: '[T]he international community has already recognised for the Croats and Muslims certain rights, notably the right to confederate with a neighbouring state; the Serbian republic of Bosnia should be assured that after having accepted our plan she will benefit from the same right.'

'In private everyone has said that this is the only logical position. Let us therefore have the courage together to affirm it publicly.'

The French Foreign Minister suggested that towns like Gorazde which have resisted Serb aggression could be handed over after talks. 'We know that the Belgrade government advised the Bosnian Serbs to give up all claims upon Sarajevo in exchange for the enclaves in eastern Bosnia. A number of Muslim officials themselves doubt whether these enclaves are viable in the long term and would also entertain that hypothesis, though with regret.'

The French Foreign Minister effectively advocates a Greater Serbia, and later in the article encourages to the Croat regime to collaborate with Serbia.

There has been uproar in both Croatia and Bosnia at what is seen as a new carve-up threat. 'Serbs getting state in Croatia!?', asked 'Slobodna Dalmacija' (20 October).

It claimed a diplomatic leak had confirmed Belgrade press reports that the Serb mini-state at Knin in Croatia would be recognised as part of the carve-up, and said representatives of Croatia's president Tudjman and Serbia's Milosevic had met secretly in Graz, Austria.

It was under a secret deal between Tudjman and Milosevic that Bosnia was invaded. Now, as Bosnian commentators noted, Juppe is calling for a Croatian-Serb 'rapprochement' and leaving Bosnia-Herzegovina out. The Croatian government denies that it is willing to trade occupied territory.

The Bosnian government has protested that the great powers' 'contact group' on Bosnia had evidently consulted behind its back, and decided to alter its 'peace plan' to suit the Serb nationalists.

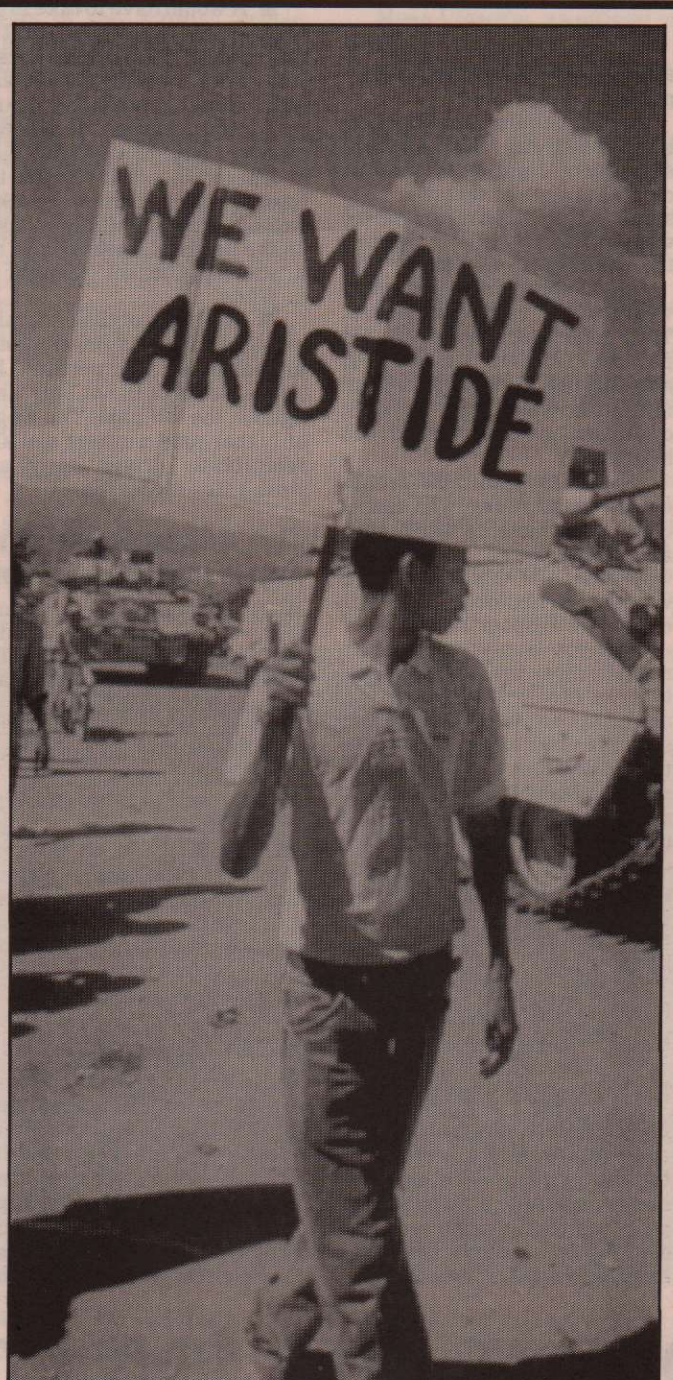
Onslaught

It was noted that Britain's Lord Owen, who did so much to encourage the onslaught on Bosnia with his partition plans, was talking about 'the necessity of changing borders'.

Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has also had his say on Bosnia.

In an interview to Czech radio reported by the Serbian news agency Tanjug, Kissinger said: 'My standpoint has always been that Bosnia should not have existed within its current borders. It would have been better that five years ago, Bosnia had been divided in accordance with the national criteria with the region for Muslims, as, historically, Bosnia has never existed.'

Washington experts say that, although no longer in government, Kissinger and his associates such as Eagleburger, played a big part in the Bush administration's decision in 1992 not to oppose Serb aggression. Kissinger also influenced former UN mediator Cyrus Vance, Lord Owen's collaborator in partition schemes, and Clinton's Secretary of State Warren Christopher.



Aristide's presidency ends in 1995 — he can't stand again

US seeks new Haitian leader

BY MIKE COOKE

THE political tentacles of US imperialism are preparing to wrap themselves around Haiti following its occupation of that country.

A popular leadership is being sought that will come out wholeheartedly as the US's representative.

After the honeymoon — during which the US will be seen as a liberator whereas usually the people of Haiti, correctly, see it as the oppressor — will come the hard demands of US imperialism.

The US has an ambivalent view on President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who goes in 1995 anyway — under the constitution he can't stand again — and has only used him as an excuse to occupy.

One candidate who seems to fit the US's job description is Port-au-Prince mayor Evans Paul. Paul has aimed to get support among the Haitian rich, many of whom sup-

ported the coup that ousted Aristide.

'We have to accept that we are all Haitians, that we share this country,' he says. What he doesn't say is that some have a bigger share than others.

One US diplomat showed enthusiasm by saying: 'There's no one on the horizon who can come near the guy.'

Hostility

Paul is apparently not worried by future hostility to the US: 'Once you would see American flags being burned in protest. Now you see the US flag being displayed everywhere. People are proud to be identified with America.'

The fact that the guys and gals carrying the guns are American presumably has nothing to do with this!

Paul was a dissident DJ in the days of the brutal dictator Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier. 'Baby Doc's' father, 'Papa Doc' Duvalier was a product of US military intervention.

Police violence kills 13

BRAZIL's president-elect Fernando Henrique Cardoso is coming under mounting pressure to tackle police violence, corruption, and private death-squads. But many doubt if the bourgeois state can clean up its act.

At least 13 people were killed, including three children, when heavily armed police raided Nova Brasilia favela (shanty slum), outside Rio de Janeiro. Police claimed their dawn raid was aimed against drug traffickers, and that the innocent victims were killed in crossfire.

But the families of those killed said some were dragged from their beds and killed on the spot. The police themselves are involved in the cocaine trade and may be protecting their 'patch'. Cardoso admitted to reporting 'The Rio police are one of the sources of the violence. It cannot be allowed to continue.'

Elections for federal and state deputies have been annulled in Rio because of widespread fraud. But Cardoso wants to use army officers to root out police corruption — hardly a promise of democracy, particularly in a country which has been through military dictatorship before.

Two leading members of the United Workers Socialist Party (PSTU) were murdered at their home in Sao Paulo in June. Rosa Henriques Fernandez had been organising poor farmworkers, and her partner Jose was a leader of university workers. Police are no nearer making an arrest, for what many people in the workers' movement believe was a professional killing.

In Sergipe, a military police officer and several journalists have been threatened after exposing a death squad linked with senior officers, called 'the Mission'.

In the state of Para, gunmen charged with attempted murders have testified that a 'hit list' was drawn up of people including local priests, who had helped peasant farmers in land struggles. Six people who appeared on the list of 40 in the town of Xinguara are already dead. Two more have been attacked, and others have fled the area.

According to police in Parana, Goias state, a pistoleiro (gunman) accused of attempted murder also confessed in a statement on 21 September that he had been contracted by someone to kill 'a certain Father Ricardo Rezende'.

On 23 September a man telephoned Father Ricardo's house to say: 'Tell Father Ricardo that his days are numbered and tell those who work with him to watch out too.'

Greece: reinstate sacked workers!

FROM DEMITRIS HILARIS IN ATHENS

LAST month in Greece two workers from the bookshop 'The Vanguard' were made redundant. The new-born trade union of booksellers set up a campaign to reinstate the two who had been sacked. Workers came out on strike at the bookshop. Now the only people working at the shop are some relatives of the owner. Three more workers have been sacked for taking part in the strike.

For this reason the trade union set up a boycott of this bookshop — one of the biggest in Greece. The union demands the reinstatement of the five sacked workers.

For more information contact Workers Press.

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