

## Unite all struggles, says WRP

# Congress charts path to new workers' party

**THE Workers Revolutionary Party is now striving for the formation of a new workers' party. This was the main decision of the WRP congress held last weekend.**

The congress met under conditions where new opportunities have opened up for the building of a party to bring together all those in the leadership of the struggles of the working class.

BY THE EDITOR

These new opportunities arise above all from the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which for so long dominated and betrayed the most class-conscious elements in the working-class movement.

### Changes

It is on the basis of these changes that the WRP has been able over the last period to extend its work amongst:

■ Those fighting against the attacks on welfare and community services, on police violence — especially against migrant and

immigrant workers.

■ Those who have rallied to the defence of the Bosnian people against the savage war launched against them by the Serbian regime, backed by the Yeltsin regime in Moscow and leading imperialist powers, including France and Britain.

■ A significant number of young people and students drawn into the work in defence of Bosnia, work which is centred on the struggle to re-establish the internationalism of the working class.

■ The growing numbers who have joined the fight against the attempt of the Labour leadership to dump

Clause Four and break the link between the trades unions and the Labour Party.

■ Socialists and trades unionists from Africa and the Middle East who are to the fore in the fight to rebuild socialist internationalism.

### Discuss

The WRP congress instructed the incoming central committee to organise a series of meetings amongst these groups to discuss with them the need to come together in a common organisation that would represent the historical interests of the working class.

The congress decided to work for a conference towards the end of the year at which all those who agree with this aim would unite in a new party.

Workers Press will report regularly on the progress of this campaign.

## Funds needed for new work

THE WRP faces big financial responsibilities with the coming conferences and the fight to launch a party that will unite the various leaderships coming forward to represent the true interests of the working-class movement.

Workers Press will play a big part in this and we appeal to all our supporters and members to help bring in the resources we need.

It's not going to be easy. I was encouraged by all those who promised at the WRP congress to contribute more to Workers Press, but if we are to maintain our production we are going to need a more regular

supply of money. This money must come out of the political work that is to be carried out.

Those we have begun joint work with give us confidence that we can take on the task of building a new workers' party.

Confidence is needed between us and new readers and those contacted during this work. We are pleased when this happens but it often this needs patient and consistent work so that trust can build up.

WRP members, Workers Press readers and supporters all have a role and responsibility in this. New contacts become new resources for the movement to build the revolutionary


leadership needed in the working class to defeat the destructive work of world capitalism and those who support it from within the labour and trade union movement.

This paper must become the centre where the discussion takes place of how to carry this out in reality on a weekly basis. So let us all carry out our resolution to build the revolutionary movement by taking part in the political work necessary to 'bring together all those in the leadership of the struggles of the working class'.

Mike Cooke  
Send money to 'Workers Press',  
PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.



Bihac refugees: WRP has fought for workers' internationalism in the defence of Bosnia. See p.8

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# Poor getting poorer

**THE rich in Britain are getting richer and the poor are getting relatively poorer. A report just released by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation confirms the findings of several other recent studies of income and wealth in Britain.**

The report contains not simply the findings of 'do-gooder' social scientists, but was drawn up by an inquiry team that included Confederation of British Industry director-general Howard Davies and the deputy chairman of British Telecom, along with TUC general secretary John Monks.

The report shows a rapid growth in income inequality in Britain since 1977. Between 1979 and 1992, average incomes rose by 36 per cent in real terms. But only people with incomes in the top 30 per cent got increases of this size or greater. This is a sure sign that the rich are hogging the pay increases.

The top 10 per cent had increases of 62 per cent while the poorest tenth got worse off in real terms by 20 per cent.

Not only has the gap between rich and poor increased, but there are now more poor people. In 1990, 20 per cent of the population had incomes below half of the national average, compared with only 6 per cent in the early 1970s.

\* \* \* \* \*

**THIS report kills off the so-called 'trickle down' theory that everyone benefits from economic growth. This 'theory' was always a cover for those who wanted a free hand in exploiting workers to the utmost, especially in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.**

Poverty didn't matter so long as the economy was developing because eventually the benefits would 'trickle down' to the poor. So the workers shouldn't fight the grinding exploitation that capitalism wanted to impose because it was really ultimately for the poor's benefit. In reality, this putrid lie only gave the capitalists the excuses they wanted.

This report shows that the poorest in society — pensioners, lone parents, the long-term unemployed — gained nothing. Britain is by no means alone in experiencing a rise in inequality, but it has been faster and more extensive than in any other industrialised country apart from New Zealand, which has had the most rapid demolition of the welfare state.

This rapid growth in inequality is not unconnected with the deliberate policies of the Thatcher government in 1980s. Tax handouts for the rich were supposed to encourage greater economic growth which would 'trickle down' to everyone.

\* \* \* \* \*

**THE report's authors are alarmed at the threat this growth of inequality poses to the 'social fabric'. This is shared by the commentators in the newspapers. Action is urged on the rich from the point of view of enlightened self-interest. The alternative they face is growing social unrest along with increasing crime.**

Greedy self-interest is planning to wall out this social unrest with modern technology and leave the rest of society to rot (see Workers Press, 'Two Nations', 4 February). Already Africa is seen by most capitalists as unprofitable and is being left with next to no help for the grinding poverty and wars that many of its countries face as a result of imperialism's policy.

The Rowntree report puts forward fairly common recommendations for such documents like changing the social-security system so that it's less of a disincentive to looking for work — because people can earn very little before benefits are cut. They also call for help in encouraging employers to take on the long-term unemployed.

But even the 'Financial Times' can see problems with this. There is not even the suggestion that the better off pay more tax. They only recommend that those on low wages pay less.

Capitalism can find no long-term solutions to these problems apart from increasing the barbaric nature of its system. There is a crying need for the working class to join together to make its own solution — socialism.

# Letters

## Roger and Tony

THE strange life story of colleges boss Roger Ward was revealed in this month's edition of the college union NATFHE's journal, the 'Lecturer'.

The College Employers' Forum (CEF) is the government quango, headed by Ward, that deals with conditions and pay in the colleges. Architect of the infamous 'slaves' charter' which has provoked a two-year-long running battle over conditions in the adult and further education sector, Ward recently received a CBE for services rendered.

Ward led the employers' onslaught against collective bargaining agreements and attempted to destroy long-standing national conditions of service laid down in the 'Silver Book', the handbook for trades unionists in colleges.

A classic 'poacher turned gamekeeper', Ward was formerly an ambitious full-time official in the ASTMS white-collar union, groomed by leader Clive Jenkins in the 1970s. He rose to the position of a national officer.

He left this post to become chief negotiator for management when the polytechnic sector of higher education went out of local authority control. Fired by the 'realism' of the new higher education contracts, Ward thought he could impose a similar regime on the further education sector. So far he has been remarkably unsuccessful.

The 'Lecturer's' correspondent suggests that Ward is fond of champagne and the lifestyle that goes with it.

Those of us who staffed the picket lines last summer believed that Ward was just another Thatcherite dalek. New evidence shows how wrong we were!

The taste for champagne gave it away to our enterprising union journalist. Ward is a fully paid-up member of the Labour Party and is said to be a close friend of — guess who? Yes! You've got it — Tony Blair!

Tom Owen  
Sheffield

## Knowing where to start

JANE WILLIAMS (Letters, 11 February) criticises Paul Henderson for not concentrating on building 'a Trotskyist party, that is, one based on the political independence of the working class'. The fact is that Paul Henderson does just that, and has done for many years.

It is Jane Williams who avoids the 'real arguments', that is, *how* to build such a

party. Can it be done without:

■ *Recognising* that the political independence which Williams rightly says is the basic necessity means *breaking from and going beyond* the disastrous restriction of the working class politically to the parliamentary policies of the Labour Party and its leader Tony Blair; and,

■ *Recognising* that Blair and his allies have been forced to initiate a struggle on just that question, i.e., the aims of the working class and the Labour Party.

Marxists, Williams ought to know, should *engage* in that struggle, in which, as Henderson rightly says, 'people become receptive to the idea of building an alternative party'.

The fact that they won't start by thinking 'it must be a revolutionary party based on Marxism and the continuity of the fight for the Fourth International' is not at all strange.

Williams is in danger of falling into the sectarian trap of many who have called themselves Marxist. Their message is 'We want to get to a Trotskyist party of the working class but we can't start from here' — 'here' being the working class as it is, as it must fight, as it can be armed with a strategy to overcome in *experience* its limitations.

I don't know *what* kind of 'theoretical struggle within Trotskyism' Williams thinks should be going on, but on these questions of sectarianism and how to build the kind of party the working class needs, the WRP is conducting just such a debate, as the reports of the WRP congress in Workers Press will show.

James Todd  
Leeds

## Clause 4 agendas

I ATTENDED the Defend Clause Four campaign's national committee meeting on 28 January, but after reading the account in Workers Press (4 February) I couldn't help wondering whether the writer was at the same meeting as me!

The meeting I was at was a working committee about the strategies needed to attain a clearly defined goal, and the vast majority of those present were happy to stick to that agenda. True, there were a few comrades who wanted to talk about wider issues; one wondered why, then, they were there at all.

A proposal to discuss 'what sort of party the working class needs', and comments to the effect that the Clause Four vote isn't really all that important, sounded a little odd in a meeting called specifically to discuss the defence of Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution. Yet, those of us who felt that such contributions were inappropriate

are labelled 'sectarians' by the writer of the article — worse still, "Outlook" sectarians', whatever they may be.

As a non-aligned socialist, I despair of such pettiness, and the narrow-minded assumption that anyone whose opinions don't coincide exactly with one's own is working to some sort of sinister, sectarian agenda, which must be attacked with all the venom that ought to be reserved for the real enemy.

If the Labour Party does ditch the last vestige of its commitment to socialism, we will need a cohesive, mature organisation to replace it with — not a rabble bent on in-fighting.

Jim Grozier  
Brighton

■ *The article referred to was specifically criticising the positions of two groupings inside the Labour Party — 'Socialist Outlook' and 'Socialist Organiser' — both of which claim to be Trotskyist.*

## Fussy but really interesting

TERRY BROTHERSTONE (Letters, 11 February) regrets the 'rather arcane way' that Charlie Pottins wrote in reply to Simon Pirani (4 February). His own final paragraph about some (undefined) 'internal party squabble' was *certainly* arcane (from the Latin *arcanum* meaning mystery, secret) if anything ever was.

He congratulates Simon Pirani on 'a lively correspondence about something even more interesting than Scotland', namely, 'a significant story [Richard Gott's resignation from the "Guardian" over his gifts from the KGB] for all those who want to understand — and overcome — the effects of Stalinism on the politics of the late 20th century'. A very big claim.

But just *what* does this story tell us? And where does Terry Brotherstone stand on Simon Pirani's case, that Gott was witch-hunted and should have been defended by Workers Press instead of being only the subject of a comment by Charlie Pottins?

On the first question he says nothing. On the second he comes down firmly on the fence, again saying nothing. If Gott was witch-hunted, why didn't he say so, instead of only writing to the editor, 'Yes I took the money and I should have told you; I resign'? What exactly are we supposed to defend?

What on earth is all this fuss about pen-names? George Angus, says James D. Young (what's *his* real name . . . ?) is hiding behind the name George Angus — which actually is George Angus's name . . .

Simon Pirani, who sometimes writes in Workers Press under a pen-name, is annoyed because Colin Pendleton is Charlie Pottins. Terry Brotherstone (we all know who *he* is) thinks this correspondence column is getting interesting. Let's hope to Christ it doesn't get any more interesting.

Cliff Slaughter (honestly)  
Leeds

## Face your duty

QUESTIONS of what we are going to do, how we are to achieve socialism, were raised at a meeting on the Criminal Justice Act on 14 January, which was attended by 30 local people. There were no sectarians at this meeting — only ordinary working-class people who want to know how we can survive, who will lead us out of the social crisis.

On 7 February, 18 students (all working-class adults) attended a meeting on 'the regeneration of socialism' at Northern College in Barnsley. I spoke on the perspectives and ideas of the WRP and Workers Press and received spontaneous applause.

There is a living, complex movement of which we are all part — the point is, however, to change that movement so that it becomes a new material force.

It is my feeling that the ideas and perspectives of the WRP and Workers Press can play a major role in realising the international content of every struggle at local level — put simply, people agree with us, so let's build a party with them by breaking down the barriers created by sectarianism.

Small-group politics have always played a damaging role in our national political struggles — the Communist Party of Great Britain arose out of the fusion of small groups rather than as the result of a major split in the movement. We have the chance to participate in a real split, a major division that creates a party of the working class capable of struggling at all levels of society — then we will be the true heirs of Lenin's 'What is to be done?' 'English' Marxism turned its back on the formation of the Labour Party at the beginning of this century.

In the last decade of the 20th century, international Marxism (Trotskyism) should turn its face towards a historic duty — the reconstruction and regeneration of working-class leadership on an international scale that resonates right down into the former mining communities of the East Midlands through the painful and yet exhilarating birth of a new party.

John Rees  
Shirebrook


## COMING SOON

**MONDAY 20 FEBRUARY:** Launch of Hillingdon Monitoring Group to tackle racial harassment in the borough. 6.30pm, Committee Rm 5, Civic Centre, Uxbridge High Street.

**THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY:** Defend Chechnya public meeting. Organised by the North Caucasian Centre and the Workers International. 7.30pm, Halkevi Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre, 92-100 Stoke Newington Rd, London N16.

**FRIDAY 3 MARCH:** Tom Stratton Memorial Meeting. Tom was an activist and shop steward in UCATT and the AEEU, a member of the WRP, and of the Pensions movement. The meeting will speak about Tom's life and his struggles. To be held at Ruskin House, Croydon.

**SATURDAY 27 MAY:** African Liberation Day march, 'Not just charity but complete liberation'. Organised by the African Liberation Support Campaign. 1pm, Kennington Park, London SE11. Rally at Trafalgar Sq. Details: 071-924 9033.



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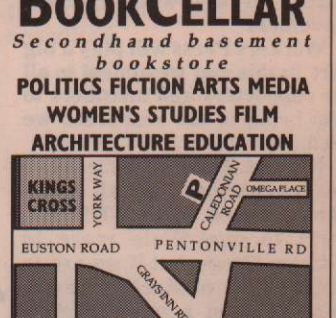
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# Public-sector pay scandal

BY MIKE COOKE

FURY greeted the announcement that while ordinary public-sector workers would only get pay increases of 1.5-3.2 per cent, top civil servants could get up to 27 per cent, or £30,000 a year.

The tired old excuses were made that these pay levels were required to attract and retain high-fliers from private industry.

These top civil servants are to get the increases on the basis of performance-related pay — but how is the performance to be measured?

Presumably it is to be related to how well they carry out the Tory policy of attacking the working class. Perhaps, like in private industry, these rises will be self-awarded!

And all down the line the Tory principle of giving more to those who already have is carried through.

In the armed forces, senior staff are to get 3.2 per cent and the ranks 2.6 per cent. Doctors are to get 2.5 per cent, GPs 3 per cent and consultants 5 per cent. Nationally nurses are to get only 1 per cent. They will need to fight locally for more.

The award prompted the Royal College of Midwives to warn that it might reconsider its policy of not taking industrial

action. General secretary Julia Allison said she was 'totally disgusted' by the award.

The two main teachers' unions responded in the usual way to their unfunded 2.7 per cent pay award by one making militant noises and the other completely capitulating. By alternating militancy with capitulation the union leaders end up by doing nothing.

The pay increase had already sparked calls for teachers' job losses leading to larger classes.

## Refused

National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers general secretary Nigel de Gruchy said: 'Now that the government has refused to fund the award, the executive of NASUWT will be making a firm recommendation to conference at Easter for industrial action, where appropriate, to tackle the problem of ever-increasing class sizes.'

'Demands for local strike action against threatened redundancies will certainly mount. Newcastle saw strike action by NASUWT on 1 February. Oxfordshire NASUWT is striking on 14 February. More will follow.'

But the other main teachers' union, the National Union of Teachers, had a completely dif-

ferent line. Its general secretary, Doug McAvoy, said the NUT would not be 'bounced' into anything that would look like a 'government victory'.

But on the recent battle on testing it was the NASUWT that crumbled first. These two TUC-affiliated unions have a history of blaming each other for losing important struggles for teachers' conditions and pay.

In addition there are the non-striking Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the Secondary Heads Association

and the National Association of Head Teachers to create divisions among teaching staff in schools.

Classroom teachers work an average of 49 hours a week. Tory education secretary Gillian Shephard says she thinks that money can be found within existing budgets.

The government is banking on the unions and teachers being so demoralised and divided that they can't mount an effective fight.

But its not just teachers that

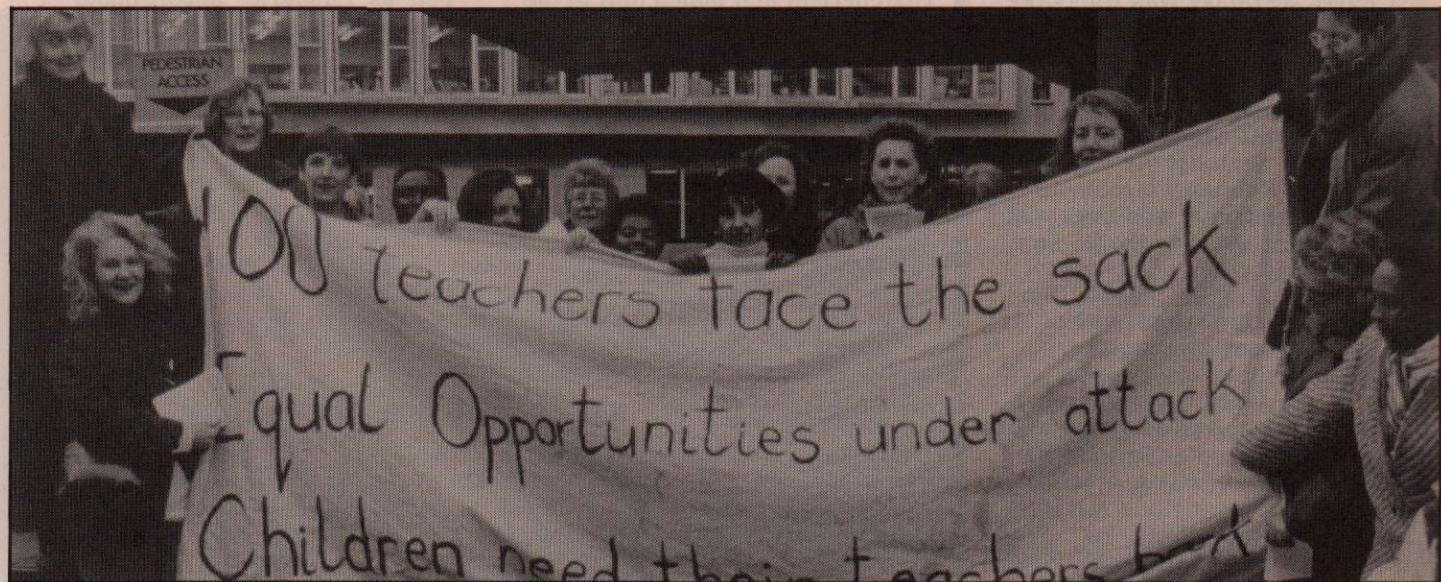
are affected. Saxon Spence, who chairs the Association of County Councils' education committee, said: 'We are absolutely astounded that minister could show such callous disregard for the education of our children. It is asking parents, schools and governors to pay the price of government fiscal policy.'

National Governors' Council chair Simon Goodenough said: 'School governors will be greatly disappointed that the government has ignored calls for full funding of the pay award.'

Heads have threatened to send pupils home if class sizes get too big.

Labour councillors in the hung council of Oxfordshire have threatened to set a budget at £7 million more than that specified by the government's council-tax capping.

Oxfordshire Labour group leader James Plaskitt said: 'The severity of the cuts and the extraordinary stubbornness of the government in the face of all our representations forces us into this position.'



Protest against education cuts at Lewisham town hall, south London, on 6 February— 100 teachers face the sack Photo: Alan Clark

# EU strengthens powers to expel asylum-seekers

FORTRESS Europe is to be strengthened and yet Tory ministers and Labour politicians still fear 'a large influx of economic migrants, for example from eastern Europe'.

These reactionary fears, expressed in this case by Labour's shadow home secretary Jack Straw, reflect the crisis in the British ruling class over the European Union.

Straw was calling for a full statement on the resignation of the junior trade minister Charles Wardle's resignation over opposition to opening the internal borders of the EU.

Meanwhile, EU ministers have agreed a specimen treaty to secure the rapid expulsion of 'unwanted aliens' to their countries of origin in eastern Europe and the 'Third World'.

The document was approved by Home Secretary Michael Howard last November but not published. It was prepared by the Immigration Group (Expulsion) which reports to the shadow K4 committee of the EU. K4 is the inter-governmental body which runs EU policy on justice and home affairs. These moves are meant to compensate for the progressive removal of

border checks at internal frontiers of the EU.

Fortress Europe has been strengthened over a period of three years. The increase of refugees that started with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 appears to have been halted.

The Dublin Convention stopped asylum-seekers looking for a country until they got accepted. Other measures allowed the fast rejection of so-called 'manifestly unfounded' claims. Arrangements have been made to remove refugees to 'safe' countries, not their own but outside the EU.

This has all been arranged between the government ministers of the various countries involved without consulting the normal Brussels machinery, like the European parliament.

Howard is certain to block moves to force Britain to drop its internal checks at Dover, Folkestone, etc. The proposal to include Britain in the dropping of these checks requires unanimity and so will not happen. Downing Street confirmed that John Major's government will veto any attempts to remove these border controls at the 1996 'Maastricht II' summit.

# College teachers fed up over contracts dispute

BY JOHN PETERS

FURTHER-EDUCATION college lecturers are fed up with the way their dispute over employment contracts has been going.

Since Easter 1993, teachers have been appointed on the basis of the so-called 'New Contract' imposed by the College Employers' Forum (CEF) which covers colleges in England and Wales. The CEF chief Roger Ward is a friend of Labour Party leader Tony Blair (Letters, page 2).

The CEF wants the 'New Contract' to replace the Silver Book contract which was nationally negotiated in the 1970s between employers and the lecturers' union NATFHE. The 'New Contract' significantly worsens conditions with an increase in attendance time from 30 hours to 37 hours, compulsory weekend working if required, and no limit on the number of classes in any one week.

NATFHE has called off nationally co-ordinated strike action, particularly at the beginning of September 1994.

The union has been on the defensive for too long. Many members fear that their union will give no support to action and will undermine the struggles that have gone on in many colleges. It does not help that a noisy left wing is calling for no retreat from the Silver Book and is denouncing every settlement that has been reached locally as a sell-out.

Saturday 25 February is the annual general meeting of the further education conference

of NATFHE. Many regions are calling for co-ordinated strike action early in March, but there is no real campaign by the national executive committee. Over half the branches have not felt confident enough even to declare a dispute with their own management.

The only way forward that is practically possible is to follow the example of those branches that have agreed or are negotiating a new contract that will supersede the Ward contract as well as the Silver Book. Those agreed so far have introduced slightly longer hours and shorter holidays, but they have safeguards on the number of hours taught each week.

## Contract

This sort of contract is not a victory, but those who were appointed on the Ward contract and their colleagues still on the Silver Book will be brought together. It gives NATFHE an opportunity to go on the offensive in the interests of its members and the students, mostly unemployed young people dumped in the colleges, as well as the schools with their impossible pay offer and no money for repairs or replacements, and for the universities which are in their own developing crisis.

The offensive must include a united campaign for the 'substantial increase' in pay which has been NATFHE policy for years, and for a reduction in teaching hours to deal with new courses like the National Vocational Qualification. These new courses have caused a huge increase in workloads and stress-related illnesses.

# Mexican government bombing civilians

MEXICAN government forces have been bombing civilian areas and killing children in their attempt to smash peasant rebels in the southern Chiapas state, according to the rebel Zapatista National Liberation Army.

'We are being bombed and machine-gunned,' the rebels said. 'The government of Ernesto Zedillo is killing us, it is killing children, it is beating up women and raping.'

An officer of the International Red Cross who tried to reach the conflict area to check conditions was turned back at an army roadblock.

Red Cross operations in the town of Guadeloupe Tepeyac were suspended because the army had taken over the clinic. Paratroop General Ramon Arrieta accused a female Red Cross worker who had tried to shelter civilians there of 'inciting rebellion'.

More than 2,500 troops with 30 tanks and 32 armoured cars have been sent into Chiapas, assisted by 31 planes, the de-

fence ministry said. Neighbouring Guatemala has mobilised 10,000 troops to forestall any attempt by the guerrillas to cross the border.

The ostensible purpose of the huge operation was to track down former philosophy lecturer Rafael Sebastian Guillen, better known as 'Subcomandante Marcos', and other

leaders of the Zapatistas, who take their name from Emiliano Zapata, legendary leader of an army of peasants in the 1910 Mexican Revolution.

It was reported last week however that army helicopters had bombed civilian areas around the towns of Morelia and La Garrucha, while the rebels retreated into the dense jungle

of the Monte Azules nature reserve. An army colonel was killed in an ambush.

Several alleged Zapatistas who were arrested at the start of the crackdown denied having any connection with the guerrillas. In Mexico City over 50,000 people joined one of the capital's biggest demonstrations of recent years, declaring 'We are all Marcos'.

## Opposition

Only a month ago the Zedillo government had talks with Zapatista leaders and promised concessions, while persuading the opposition Democratic Revolution Party to sign a national accord.

The Zapatistas say that suspecting the government was playing for time, they made preparations for renewed war. Zedillo's opponents accuse him of playing the strongman to try and restore Mexico's financial stability, whose recent upsets sent ripples throughout the Americas.

# US's spy island

A US military team has set up operations on the island of Brac in the Adriatic Sea, to gather intelligence on neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina. Protected by plainclothes Croatian guards, the Americans mainly keep to themselves, departing each morning by bus to an undisclosed location.

A nearby small airport is fenced off by Croatian military police and armed guards turn back the curious. The mission is named 'Lofty View'. It's 'an operation to map and survey

primary and secondary lines of communication in Bosnia-Herzegovina,' said Commander Ron Morse, a spokesman for the US European Command in Stuttgart, Germany.

The American journal 'Aviation Week & Space Technology' reported the CIA was launching manned and unmanned reconnaissance aircraft from Brac. A private US consultant, Military Professional Resources Inc., has been contracted to help train Croatia's army, according to the US State Department.

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# Inside left

## Die-hards

Die-hard Stalinists in the United States are in disarray over the Russian invasion of Chechnya. 'The barbarous bombing and shelling of the tiny Chechen republic on Russian soil is the monstrous enactment of the tank-storming of the Russian Supreme Soviet on a monstrous scale,' wrote Mike Dawidow, Moscow correspondent of the US Stalinist 'People's Weekly World', on 16 January.

But in the same issue Communist Party secretary Gus Hall said: 'Let me ask, how would we react if confronted with the prospect of an oil-rich Oklahoma seceding from the United States and becoming a separate state or country?' quoted in 'Socialist Action', San Francisco, February issue).

Well, Oklahoma was once 'the Indian Territory'; and the US Communist Party once proposed a black republic in the southern states. Such historical curiosities aside, Chechens are not Russians. They have their own country and history (much of it fighting Russia).

Is the right to self-determination ruled out for peoples who have oil under their land, or even pipelines? Does Hall's 'we' include Rockefeller and J. Paul Getty jnr? How similar the Stalinist mentality can be to that of the imperialists!

Blaming 'Gorbachev's capitulation to Estonian secession' for starting the USSR's break-up, Hall warns that 'capitulation to Chechen secessionists' would signal the 'dismemberment of Russia', and be 'a major victory for US imperialism'.

Oddly, the US state department has not recognised this. Instead, it declared that the war in Chechnya was an internal Russian affair for Yeltsin to settle. It understands its interests better than Gus Hall, who invokes 'imperialism' only to defend its Russian ally.

## Get it right!

WHY Auschwitz matters today', was the subject of John Molyneux's column in 'Socialist Worker' (4 February). In it he observed that it was 50 years since 'the Russian army liberated Auschwitz'.

The commander of the troops that took Auschwitz was Russian. So perhaps were his troops. But it was the Soviet army, or Red Army, that liberated Auschwitz. Because 'Socialist Worker' says the USSR was 'state capitalist', must Molyneux refer to 'the Russian army'?

True, the USSR was not really socialist, and the soviets no longer organs of revolutionary workers democracy. The Red Army's founder, Leon Trotsky, was only one of thousands of communists murdered by Stalin's regime. The first workers' state had degenerated and Stalin (a Georgian) had adopted 'Great Russian' chauvinism.

But the army that smashed its way to Berlin was made up of units from many Soviet nationalities.

Did you know the highest percentage of posthumous medals for bravery went to Armenians from Nagorno-Karabach? I expect Armenians do. Lenin urged extra sensitivity to the feelings of small nationalities. Socialists have yet to learn this.

Molyneux also explains: 'The Nazis did not come to power through the evil of the German people or the charisma of Hitler, but as a result of the extreme crisis of German capitalism. . . .

'At the decisive moment Germany's big capitalists lifted the Nazis into power in order to use them as a battering ram against the labour movement.'

Could the working class have stopped them? Did Stalinist misleadership help? Molyneux doesn't tell us.

Charlie Pottins

# As Labour prepares to decide on whether to ditch its formal commitment to attain the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, a good question is: Why did Clause Four find its way into the Labour Party's constitution. TERRY BROTHERSTONE looks at the history, and says that the debate opens up the issue of what sort of party the working class needs

'WE MUST learn from our history, not live in it,' intones the Labour leader. Quite so. But history, a more complex creature than Blair seems to imagine, could be about to step out from the shadows of Thatcherism and punch him in the solar plexus.

Labour leader Anthony Charles Lynton Blair (Durham Choristers, Fettes College, and Oxford) may succeed in his immediate goal of having Clause Four taken out of the constitution at the Labour Party's special conference in April.

But it could be at the expense of raising for open discussion the one question that, from the point of view of the capitalist establishment, the Labour Party exists to keep under wraps: What sort of political organisation does the working class require?

Marxists, who hold that the historical role of the working class is to establish the socialist basis for a truly human society, have long been aware that the British Labour Party does not fill the bill. But in 1918, when it adopted a new constitution and a new programme, the party was about to step into the political vacuum created by the crisis in the ruling-class parties (particularly the Liberals) by the trauma of World War I.

In the 1920s one of those rare sea changes in the relatively stable structure of modern British politics took place. The two party par-

relationship together — to bind the working class to parliamentary politics. It is no accident that it became the one section of the party constitution to appear on its membership cards.

Yet, as Labourite opportunists afraid to challenge Blair now like to stress, Clause Four got into the constitution almost by default. Its author was the Fabian Sidney Webb, whose formidable wife and collaborator, Beatrice, confided to her diary on 21 January 1918 that the 'leaders of the labour movement are distinctly uneasy about the spirit of revolt among the rank and file, which openly proclaims its sympathy with the lurid doings in Petrograd'.

## Fruits of their industry

IT WAS only a few weeks since the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, the world war was dragging on with no certainty of victory for either side, and the militant shop stewards' movement in Britain was threatening to develop as a serious national organisation. Beatrice Webb was in Nottingham, attending the 17th annual Labour Party conference. Three days later she wrote:

'The new [Labour] constitution was adjourned for one month for consideration by the affiliated bodies. It would have been rejected altogether if it had not been for a powerful speech by [Arthur] Hen-

'Blair may succeed in removing Clause Four at the expense of raising for open discussion the one question that, from the point of view of the capitalist establishment, the Labour Party exists to keep under wraps: What sort of political organisation does the working class require?'

liamentary system, although rocked by the war, the class struggles which followed it, the impact on society of the slump, and various attempts to establish a 'new world order', stayed in place.

But only at the expense of the rise of Labour and the rapid demise of the Liberal Party, which — in the not so distant days of W.E. Gladstone — had been a symbol of the claimed political and moral superiority of the British. By 1924 — less than two decades after the Liberals' greatest-ever general election triumph — the first (albeit minority) Labour government was in place.

It was sworn in by Queen Victoria's grandson, George V, who wrote in his diary:

'Today 23 years ago dear Grandma died. I wonder what she would have thought of a Labour Government!'

When Ramsay MacDonald, the new prime minister, apologised because enthusiastic Labour MPs had sung 'The Red Flag' in the House of Commons, and insisted on presenting himself and his Cabinet in the traditional knee-breeches, His Majesty realised he had little to fear from them.

But underpinning even this pathetic parade lay the growing strength and self-consciousness of the working class, yet to be crucially damaged by the trade union leaders' betrayal of the 1926 general strike.

Clause Four was, above all, a formulation designed to hold this

person, appealing to the great working-class organisations not to miss becoming a great national party . . .

It was this 'new constitution' that contained what was to become Clause Four (4). The Labour Party was now to seek: 'To secure for the producers [later, 'workers'] by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service.'

Arthur Henderson, chairman of the Labour Party for three terms between 1908 and 1932, was a much less flamboyant figure than the more notorious MacDonald, but one even more symbolic of the party's nature. He was a Methodist from north-east England who had made his way as a trade union official. His politics were liberal, and he shifted to the idea of separate Labour representation in parliament only because, at the turn of the century, this became union policy.

Faced with a series of legal challenges which threatened their financial stability, leading trades unionists had decided that, despite the disadvantage that it meant getting together with avowed socialists, they should form a parliamentary pressure group separate from the Liberals.

The Labour Representation

# Crucial Clause



Clause Four was brought in during the period after World War I that saw police general strike in 1926 (above), eventually betrayed by the trade union leaders

Committee, renamed the Labour Party in 1906, had been through many vicissitudes (and at times was almost written off) by 1918. But the wartime crisis and the upsurge in class struggle internationally, culminating in the Russian revolutions of 1917, had created a new situation.

In Britain a wave of strikes in the munitions industries in 1917, the growth of war-weariness, and the mounting strength of Sinn Fein in Ireland were harbingers of a crisis to come. John Maclean, the revolutionary Marxist and consul in Glasgow to the Soviet government, was thought sufficiently dangerous to be tried at the Scottish High Court and imprisoned for five years.

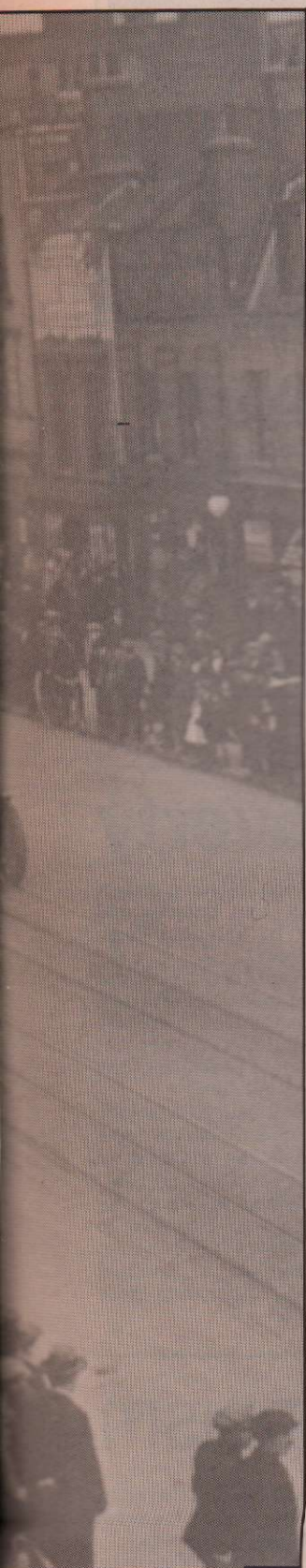
The period between the end of the war in November 1918 and the early 1920s was to see a near-general strike on 'Red Clydeside', and national strikes on the railways, in

the mines and other major industries. There was the threat (until the union leaders funk'd it in 1921) that the 'triple alliance' of the rail-workers, the miners, and the transport workers would unite in industrial action which could bring down Lloyd George's coalition government, and, so the prime minister himself claimed, threaten the constitution itself.

As if to emphasise the intensely political nature of the conflict, in 1919 even the police went on strike, notably in Liverpool.

We can only imagine how anticipation of such a situation weighed on the minds of the intensely conservative Henderson and his Fabian friends, the Webbs, when, in 1918, they sought, in effect, to create a new party. The Webbs, disgusted at the disarray of the Liberals, had by now broken from their preferred policy of 'permeat-

# Clause 4 question in 1994 debate



on strike in 1919 and a

Workers protest against privatisation of the health service (top) and the bus service (above): Clause Four commits Labour to 'the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service'

ing' the existing political parties with statist or corporatist ideas, which they miscalled 'socialism'.

Henderson's temporary difficulty in persuading that year's party congress, which first met in Nottingham, to go along with his plans was not the result of Clause Four. It arose from the proposal to allow individual membership of the Labour Party. Previously it had been a purely federal body, with membership dependent on belonging to an affiliated organisation — a trade union, or a socialist or a co-operative society.

Some union leaders feared that their control over their own political creation would be weakened if it became a party in its own right. Henderson, however, saw the necessity to create a serious electoral machine.

But he was determined that the unions would hold the purse-

strings, and play the main role in determining the policies of the organisation, which he now hoped might relatively soon form a government, with himself as prime minister.

When the Labour Party conference reconvened in London late in February 1918, there is no evidence that Clause Four caused any more controversy than it had done in Nottingham. Henderson had done further deals with union leaders and the new constitution was duly agreed. Later in the year came a new programme, 'Labour and the New Social Order'.

## Not a class party

WHY was Clause Four so uncontroversial? In the late 1950s, when Blair's political forerunner, Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell, failed to ditch the clause, Labour

intellectual Richard 'Tricky Dickie' Crossman said it was because it committed a Labour government to practically nothing.

Phrases such as 'the most equitable distribution . . . that may be possible', and 'the best obtainable system of popular administration and control', left everything to the interpretation of those in office at a particular moment.

This is only part of the story, however. It is true that Webb, in drafting the party's goal, sought to bind together a disparate organisation. Workers 'by hand and by brain', for example, was intended to show that Labour was not a class party, but was appealing to other sections of the community — particularly the administrative and managerial middle classes, whom Sidney Webb, a former civil servant, himself typified.

The clause was formulated to

allow everyone with anti-capitalist ideas about running industry to believe they had a stake in it — from middle-class romantics like the guild socialists through to the shop stewards with their demands for 'workers' control'.

Nationalisation went unmentioned not because it was controversial, but it was simply assumed that the industrial policy needed for social stability would include the maintenance of much of the effective nationalisation of major sectors of the economy deemed necessary during the world war.

From the late 19th century in Britain, there had been a history of discussion of nationalisation not only amongst socialists, but also from the standpoint of reforming and preserving capitalism. The world war had brought that discussion into the realm of practical politics.

Having rapidly abandoned all commitment to continue to prosecute the class struggle after war had broken out, the main Labour and trade union leaders had worked — notably on the War Emergency Workers National Committee — as, in effect, partners with the government to mobilise the war effort.

They already saw themselves as labour representatives within the capitalist state.

Henderson was a coalition government minister from 1915 to 1917 — he resigned after a spat with his Cabinet colleagues over how best to handle the Kerensky regime in Russia following the overthrow of the Tsar. For him the new Labour Party was to be an instrument for raising people like himself to office in their own right by mobilising the working class in peacetime behind the (capitalist) 'national interest', just as they had aided the ruling class in organising workers for war against their brothers and sisters in Germany.

The most perceptive and class-conscious workers and socialists who grasped this, went on, inspired by the Russian revolution and militancy at home, to form the Communist Party. How the Communist Party, after its promising beginnings, became a counter-revolutionary adjunct of the Labour Party, rather than a revolutionary opposite to it, is something that cannot be rehearsed here.

## Fear of revolution

In 1918, Henderson's determination to limit any revolution of the 'social change in England'. Henderson and the Webb government sought to ensure that they could possibly have understood.

In what they feared might become a revolutionary situation, they could only discipline the working class politically by making real gestures towards its aspirations —

'The fight is to re-establish the continuity of working-class consciousness and internationalism.'

for a world of peace and social justice, free of capitalist exploitation.

Clause Four was part of that process, unrecognised as such at the time. But it was to become, in the minds of the most class-conscious workers, a formula in which they could invest their own socialist convictions. Through decades of betrayal, it has played a big part in sustaining the loyalty of the best fighters who stayed in, or even merely voted for, the Labour Party.

And as long as capitalism could concede certain real gains to the working class that loyalty had a rational basis.

Blair has no quarrel with the tradition of Henderson and the Webbs — he stands in line with it. But he is bent on definitively dissociating his leadership from the strength and consciousness of the working class, which — informed by the revolutionary upheavals internationally after 1917 — made such an impact on their 'new' Labour Party.

Those who fight to defend Clause Four act in that revolutionary tradition, though some may be shocked to realise it. The essence of the fight is not to save a reformist Labour Party, which, superseded by the passage of capitalism ever deeper into unreformable decay, already lives under the death sentence of history.

The fight is to re-establish the continuity of working-class consciousness and internationalism. And to ensure that the necessary, new organisational forms can be developed to carry forward those traditions in a period of unprecedented, socialist opportunity.

## False memories and false charges

BEATRIX CAMPBELL seems to have abandoned her febrile campaign on 'Satanic abuse' now that it has been conclusively shown that there is no evidence for its existence in Britain, and that allegations about it were generated by Christian bigots.

Now Campbell has gone off on another tack. In an article in last Saturday's 'Guardian' she set out to rubbish both the idea of 'false memory syndrome' and the False Memory Society set up two years ago by a man accused by two of his daughters of sexually abusing them when they were children.

Campbell's approach to this painful question is painfully one-sided. Her partisanship does less than justice to the complexity of the subject.

In particular, by denying that 'over-zealous therapists actually encourage tormented patients to conjure up . . . memories' of being sexually abused in childhood, she ignores the work that has been done in the US, notably by Frederick Crews.

Crews and others believe there is in the US and elsewhere a 'plague' of false charges based on pseudo-memories. These false memories conform to the expectations of therapists who believe that a whole range of symptoms strongly indicate long-repressed sexual abuse.

The critics of such therapists affirm, and Campbell denies, that their techniques are untrustworthy and are doing a great deal of harm.

'Baseless charges of molestation are now as common as rain', Crews declares. There is in the US 'a horrendous epidemic of malpractice' by psychotherapists. Over 50,000 of the 255,000 licensed therapists in the US are now 'willing to help their clients realise that they must have endured early molestation'.

Crews also points to obvious shortcomings in the way children suspected of having been molested — sometimes on the basis of the flimsiest of accusations, or merely of malicious rumour — have been questioned in the US.

Children who deny having been molested are frequently torn from their parents' arms, placed in foster homes, and subjected to terrifying and humiliating physical examination and a regime of protracted and remorseless questioning.

Sometimes the daily grilling continues for months until the child can stand the torment no longer, breaks down, and goes along with the false accusations.

It seems to me a great pity that Campbell does not, or cannot, summon up the necessary objectivity to take these arguments on board and grapple with them, rather than blandly denying that there can be false memories and false accusations.

Most people share her concern for children who are molested and her determination that those who make children suffer should be brought to book.

But we should be no less concerned for the adult victims of false charges that are notoriously hard to disprove many years afterwards.

Malicious accusers who poison innocent people's lives and split families asunder, and therapists who bow to the winds of fashion and moral panic, should also be given short shrift.

TWO new anecdotes about Stalin, from a 'New York Review of

## PERSONAL COLUMN

Books' notice of recent books on Soviet spies.

At the height of the 1930s purges, Stalin — who regarded his foreign agents as hypocrites, deceivers who betrayed their own country and would next deceive him — asked the KGB chief Yezhov why, if Kim Philby was working so well in Spain, Franco's forces kept on advancing.

'That's not logical', he said. Terrified, Yezhov hinted that Franco might be assassinated. Stalin knocking his pipe out and said nothing.

Philby was told to do the job, but Maly, his control, told Moscow it was an impossible assignment since Philby hadn't got that sort of courage.

Maly was summoned back to Moscow and shot. So was another of Philby's controls, Reif. So were two other KGB officials, Gorsky and Ozolin-Haskin.

During World War II Stalin caught sight of General Rokossovsky and asked him: 'Why haven't I seen you for so long? Where have you been?'

Rokossovsky sprang to attention and replied: 'In prison, Comrade Stalin.'

Stalin puffed on his pipe and said 'A fine time to be inside', and went on working.

## African troops in war in Burma

REMINDING me that North Africa was not the only area where soldiers from East and West Africa fought under the Union Jack in World War II (see 'A slap in the face', this column, 11 February), Brian Pearce writes:

'It is not as widely realised as it should be that we had in Burma two West African divisions and one East African. This is particularly relevant to the commemoration of VJ day, in August.

'I recall passing, when I entered Burma from India, many temporary graves of soldiers whose obviously African names were inscribed on the simple strips of wood stuck in them.

'In hospital out there, I found myself with an officer with East African troops on one side of me and an officer with West African troops on the other. I took the opportunity to ask them what effect they thought their men's time in India and Burma would have.

'The "West African" said that his sergeant-major had remarked to him: "We see that there are Indian officers. Why are there no West African officers?" The officer was sure that there would be a lot of national self-assertion in the West African colonies after the war.

'The "East African" said that his sergeant-major had made this observation to him: "You know how it is, back home — all the business and professional people are Indians. We look up to them as higher beings, almost as high as the Europeans.

"But now we have been in Calcutta and have seen that most Indians are poor fellows just like us, and not 'higher beings' at all. . . ."

'The officer thought that, after the war, partly as a result of this de-mystification of the Indians, there would be a movement to oust them (as well as ourselves, of course). Which is what happened.'

Peter Fryer

# Union betrayal at BT

AN INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT comments on the loss of workers' rights at British Telecom

WORKERS' rights at British Telecom have been betrayed by their union over several years. Compulsory transfers have been introduced and there is now Saturday working without financial compensation.

Compulsory transfer, agreed by the National Communications Union before last month's merger with the postal workers' union to form the Communication Workers' Union (CWU), means workers can be moved to less senior posts.

Their salary will be maintained for four years but after that they get no more pay increases until the pay for the lower position catches up.

Employment conditions in the new jobs are often different, for which they receive different taxable payments. All the new conditions are worse than before.

## Uncertain

If workers don't accept the new jobs they become 'redeployees' and face an uncertain future with redundancies coming up the line. BT has shed 110,000 jobs since 1990. Workers reluctantly sign as they know that they won't get adequate support from the union. They have no choice but to accept the new jobs.

'A substantial number of people have been ringing up the union about this,' said a CWU official.

The union executive has also rushed to accept the Customer

Service Improvement Programme (CSIP). It was agreed after a section of CWU members were balloted — 80 per cent voted against. Redeployees had no chance to vote. So those compulsorily transferred into the sections affected had no say in the agreement.

CSIP calls for Saturday working as normal. While sick and holiday cover will receive overtime payments, a normal Saturday rostering will only receive time in lieu. These conditions are likely to be systematically imposed on other sections.

## Solid

Management gained the upper hand at BT after 1987, when a strike by workers was effectively sold out by the union. A ballot for industrial action including strikes was supported by four to one. The action was solid nationally and strikes were spreading beyond the control of the executive.

But the executive settled with management and conditions were lost.

In the early 1990s shift work was rejected in a ballot of union members; but the executive went ahead and settled anyway.

■ The CWU was last week fined £7,500 and ordered to pay 90 per cent of the estimated £100,000 court costs. The fine came as the result of a spontaneous walk-out of 13,000 London postal workers in sympathy with 41 Camden staff who were suspended for refusing to sign obedi-

ence clauses. The action followed a dispute on working practices concerning the imposition of a new computer-aided delivery system.

Post office management was well pleased 'that the vital principle that the union is responsible for the actions of its members was upheld'.

Union officials had tried to stop the action after a court injunction, but because two lay officers had called the strike the union was held responsible.

The judgement means that unions will be penalised when they are not successful in policing their members on behalf of management.

'NCU Journal' greets merger with the CWU

## Major snubs global summit on poverty

THE Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, organised by the United Nations, is to be snubbed by Prime Minister John Major.

More than 100 heads of state are to meet in early March to plan for 'a global attack on extreme poverty, unemployment and all forms of discrimination and intolerance'.

Britain is sending a junior minister — probably Ann Widdecombe.

The summit will make governments address 'structural causes of poverty' and set national targets for the reduction of overall and extreme poverty.

Britain and the European

Union refused to allow any explicit references in the summit's draft declaration to the role of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in creating world poverty, through their lending policies which impose huge burdens involving 'austerity measures'.

## Solve

The summit proposes to solve the problem of structural poverty without changing any structures. It is significant that neither Major nor US President Bill Clinton are to attend.

Last week's report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

found that, apart from ultra-Thatcherite New Zealand, inequality was increasing fastest in Britain.

The Rowntree Foundation Inquiry into Income and Wealth in Britain also found:

■ Income inequality is at its highest level since 1945.

■ In real terms the lowest paid in 1992 were worse off than they were in 1972.

■ The incomes of people on benefits have fallen relative to those of the working population.

■ The non-white population is at much greater risk of poverty than the white population.

The market mechanism

alone does not deliver a decent level of education, training and investment in human beings, says the report.

A leaked note of a meeting of eight permanent secretaries, chaired by Cabinet secretary Sir Robin Butler, confirms that the government is aware of the effects of its policies.

The note is said to conclude that government policies have contributed to the widening of the gap between rich and poor, have not helped the most deprived, and have, in seeking to increase 'choice' in housing, education and health, benefited the better off rather than those most in need.

## Dockers' history vital for trade unionism

IMPORTANT issues are raised by Tom Cowan's comment (28 January) on Bill Hunter's book, 'They Knew Why They Fought: Unofficial Leadership and Struggles on the Docks 1945-1989', and by Bill Hunter's response (in the same issue), both of which concerned the role of Trotskyists in the struggles.

Cowan is correct to draw attention to the role of the Oehlerite Socialist Workers League (SWL) in the 1940s. Dockers' leaders Bert Aylward and Harry Constable were members of the SWL. Cowan is wrong, however, to doubt whether Constable and Aylward joined 'Gerry Healy's group'. They both did, although Harry Constable did have disagreements on entrism in the Labour Party.

Cowan professes the need for 'historical correctness' but then tears a quote from Bill Hunter's book totally out of its original context.

Hunter's comment, 'We were almost the only group of politically motivated men and women — who gave consistent and loyal support to their struggle', refers specifically to the move to the 'Blue Union' — the National Amalgamated Steve-

KEITH SINCLAIR comments on the recent articles in Workers Press on the post-war dockers' struggles, and says an understanding of this history is needed if effective trade unionism is to be rebuilt in the ports

dores and Dockers Union — in the mid-1950s. It is taken from a chapter entitled 'Balance Sheet of the Blue'. Cowan is therefore wrong to suggest it refers to the SWL which, according to Ernest Rogers, only survived to 1951.

One of the values of Hunter's book is that it should be seen as a starting-point to pull together material on all aspects of the post-war dockers' struggles.

## Valuable

Many of the leaders of the move to the Blue Union in 1954-55 are still alive and very willing to discuss the period. In some cases, valuable documents have been carefully stored for years and have only recently re-appeared.

It would be very helpful if those such as Tom Cowan were to write up their experiences. Current and past political disagreements should not present a barrier to collaboration on the

collecting of materials, interviews, etc.

One element that does need to be brought out is the difference between the various ports. For example, there was not a single Trotskyist in Hull in 1954, whilst the Birkenhead Unofficial Committee was clearly influenced by Trotskyism. The Communist Party dockers in Hull joined the 'Blue Union', whilst their fellow members in

Liverpool and London stayed in the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Finally, it is worth remembering that dockers' trade unionism is a living question as well as an important historical matter. At the end of last year, Hull trades council organised a public meeting to help 'launch' Bill Hunter's book. We aimed that meeting at past and present dockworkers. Current dockers came along and discussed with the local TGWU dock's branch about (re-)joining the union.

An examination of the history of dockers' struggles can play a small but important role in trying to re-build effective trade unionism on the docks.

## The wit and wisdom of J.V. Stalin

TWO new anecdotes about Stalin, from a 'New York Review of

## THEY KNEW WHY THEY FOUGHT by Bill Hunter

Index Books, £7.95

'The historic struggle of the dockers' movement and the part played by workers from the Royal Docks are told in a fascinating new book' (Catherine Howard writing in the Newham 'Recorder').

Available by post from Index Books Centre, 28 Charlotte Street, London W1P 1HJ. Add 65p for mail orders

# Chechnya and workers' international leadership

**CHARLIE POTTINS replies to Simon Pirani's recent comment on Workers Press's treatment of the war in Chechnya**

IN HIS article on Chechnya and the Workers Revolutionary Party (4 February), Simon Pirani says: 'As a newspaper addressing the working class in Britain, the central attack of Workers Press should be on the tacit support for Yeltsin's war by Britain and other imperialist powers.' Leaving aside Workers Press's international readership, what has our paper said so far?

In an article on 17 December, I wrote: 'US and European interests are rivals for Caucasian oilfields, and therefore for Boris Yeltsin's hand, if he can succeed'. I went on to refer to Yeltsin's 'alliance with British and French imperialism against Bosnia', and the formation of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), whose summit Yeltsin attended just before ordering in the tanks.

On 21 January, Workers Press reprinted a statement from Caucasians in London, which said: 'some governments, especially including the US, have fallen over each other to support the genocide'. In the same issue a front-page item headed 'Defend Chechnya', alongside a photograph of a demonstration in which WRP members participated, said:

'The British, US and other imperialist governments, each with their own bloody records to defend, and their eyes on the Caucasian oilfields, have been reluctant to criticise Yeltsin. They just hoped he could get it all over quickly.'

On 28 January, Workers Press's

**'We must mobilise as widely as possible, not just among trades unionists but students, young people, ethnic minorities — not least Caucasians!'**

front-page declared: 'European powers back Yeltsin, but workers must . . . DEFEND THE CHECHEN PEOPLE.'

So despite Simon Pirani's criticism, I'd have thought the message was clear enough.

## What should workers do?

SIMON complains that Workers Press has not 'directly answered the question: what should the working class here in Britain do?' So far as I know, not many people have called on Workers Press to answer this question. Workers who read our paper will want to know what the WRP thinks about the war, to discuss it, and to decide what can be done. Workers Press must try to arouse the feeling that exists, by articles, meetings, demonstrations, and making itself more widely known so that we can influence more people.

I don't think we can 'try to compel' trades unions and other workers' organisations to denounce the war' (my emphasis), as Simon puts it. We can only urge that they do so, as Workers Press's editorial did on 7 January:

'Workers' organisations should be calling meetings, demonstrations, and pickets of Russian embassies. Our comrades in the Socialist Workers Union of Russia have been leading the way in the protests.'

Simon suggests: 'Let us appeal to the North Sea oilworkers.' He provides some valuable background on imperialist oil interests in the Caucasus, which reinforces the emphasis on this aspect.

Workers Press reported last year

how the North Sea workers' union, the Offshore Industries Liaison Committee (OILC), had expressed support for Nigerian oilworkers. It would be great if the union also gave support to Chechnya. But most wars involve oil interests somewhere along the line. (Even Bosnia, though it has no oil, lies along the strategic line from central Europe to the Middle East.)

We can't ask the oilworkers to shoulder responsibility for all of them! (And since Western backing for Yeltsin is mainly political and financial, what about civil servants and banking staff?) It's up to all workers.

We should have learnt from our experience in the Workers Aid to Bosnia campaign, where we thought the

I don't disagree with Simon's call for trades unionists here to assist sisters and brothers in the former Soviet Union. But if, as he says, the main issue for us is imperialist support for Yeltsin, then surely we must mobilise as widely as possible, not just among trades unionists, but students, young people, ethnic minorities — not least Caucasians! (If we want to contact workers in the Caucasus, it will be useful to know their history and language.)

We must address everyone fighting imperialism and racism. That also means exposing the rotten misleadership of the workers' movement, and all those so-called 'lefts', liberals and 'peace' campaigners who have refused to lift a finger over Chechnya, just as they have done over Bosnia.

But here I think Simon's comments were less than helpful. Whatever may have been wrong with formulations in the resolution on Chechnya agreed at the Workers International's public

meeting in London on 20 January — a resolution hastily drawn up — isn't it right to alert workers to the fascist menace represented by Zhirinovsky?

Simon says: 'if we understand "fascism" in the way Marxists have used it — roughly, to describe a mass, violent movement of declassed, impoverished people, mobilised to support an extreme form of capitalist dictatorship — Zhirinovsky has no fascist movement behind him'. How very reassuring.

But the truth is, Marxists have come up with various analyses of fascism, which has varied in different countries and periods. Hitler, whom Zhirinovsky admires, had no mass movement behind him to begin with. In Spain, the mainly middle class fascist party only played an auxiliary role. Franco didn't need 'impoverished and desperate people' — he had the army. In France in the late 1950s various fascist groups competed in street violence and terrorism, assist-

## Essence of fascism

THE essence of fascism is not whether it recruits a mass movement of impoverished and desperate people, but that it represents an extreme, murderous form of capitalist rule.

Workers have experienced what this means in practice. A Bosnian worker, a former World War II partisan, brought a placard on last year's

affected relationships between communists.

Simon says Trotsky's 'Between Red and White' justified the Bolshevik invasion of Georgia. This work was mainly written against the hypocrisy of the reformists, hence its other title, 'Social Democracy and the Wars of Intervention' (New Park, 1975).

Trotsky himself had cautioned against a Bolshevik military adventure in Georgia. And if we are going to refer to what Trotsky wrote in this work, which we should study, surely we must add what Lenin wrote when the dangers of the Georgian example became clearer. Trotsky had also advocated subordination of the trades unions to the workers' state, and was corrected by Lenin, who was ahead of him in recognising and starting the fight against bureaucratism.

It is dangerous, and un-Marxist, to quote this or that statement by revolutionary leaders out of historical context and as though it were the last



**Chechen volunteers in Grozny: European powers back Yeltsin, but workers must . . . defend the Chechen people, says Workers Press**

miners could take the lead but they were not ready to do so. We have to start where we are — and the Russian embassy, trade mission, airline offices and banks, as well as the British Foreign Office, are here in London, not on North Sea oil rigs.

'Let us organise British women to link up with those soldiers' mothers,' says Simon, referring to a Russian movement opposing the war in Chechnya. It would be a good thing if British women did this; but I suspect that when they decide to organise as women it won't be at the bidding of me or Simon Pirani.

Not without reason, there's a distrust of political parties including the WRP. It won't be overcome if we give the impression that we think women are just waiting for us to 'organise' them. There's something to be said for spontaneity. And on past performance, working-class (and even middle-class) women could teach us a few things about organising!

meeting in London on 20 January — a resolution hastily drawn up — isn't it right to alert workers to the fascist menace represented by Zhirinovsky?

Simon says: 'if we understand "fascism" in the way Marxists have used it — roughly, to describe a mass, violent movement of declassed, impoverished people, mobilised to support an extreme form of capitalist dictatorship — Zhirinovsky has no fascist movement behind him'. How very reassuring.

But the truth is, Marxists have come up with various analyses of fascism, which has varied in different countries and periods. Hitler, whom Zhirinovsky admires, had no mass movement behind him to begin with. In Spain, the mainly middle class fascist party only played an auxiliary role. Franco didn't need 'impoverished and desperate people' — he had the army. In France in the late 1950s various fascist groups competed in street violence and terrorism, assist-

ing De Gaulle to play a Bonapartist role and replace the Fourth Republic with a stronger state.

Zhirinovsky has enough supporters, not least in the army, and sufficient funds to be taken seriously electorally — as well as when he struts the European stage, even if his present role is auxiliary to Yeltsin's war and threatening dictatorship.

So should we alert workers to the danger Zhirinovsky represents, or try to lull ourselves to sleep with academic nostrums?

Workers have experienced what this means in practice. A Bosnian worker, a former World War II partisan, brought a placard on last year's

word on any subject.

In any case, the Red Army's war against the Whites, using a communist strategy of civil war (which included encouragement of oppressed nationalities to revolt against the White Russians and imperialist interventionists), can hardly be compared with Stalin's brutal policy of subjugating, almost destroying, entire nationalities such as the Chechens, or with Yeltsin's present war for imperialist interests against the Chechen people.

The Chechen people's history of resisting tsarist Russia, their memory of Stalinist genocide, and their experience of present-day Russian racism are material conditions that have to be understood — and responded to with real solidarity.

It is through such tests, on Bosnia and on Chechnya, that the rightful inheritance of the mantle of Bolshevism will be decided, and that the future international leadership of the working class will be built.

# Bihac war continues despite UN ceasefire

**MORE than 100,000 people trapped in the Bihac area of Bosnia, a supposed United Nations 'safe area', are facing starvation and enemy attack, as Serb nationalist Chetniks tighten their blockade and resume the offensive.**

Over 1,000 Chetniks from Serb-held territory in Croatia crossed the border into the Bihac area, where fighting raged around the towns of Bihac, Velika Kladusa and Bosanska Krupa. Thousands of artillery and mortar shells rained down.

The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) has been allowing supplies from Serbia to reach the Chetniks in the Krajina area of Croatia, and delivering fuel to them along with relief supplies, but says it is unable to take aid into the besieged Bihac pocket.

## Offensive

In Bihac itself there is reported to be barely enough food for hospital patients.

The Serb offensive escalated as the new British UN commander in Bosnia, Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith, sought to persuade Bosnia-Herzegovina army commander Rasim Delic

to take part in further ceasefire talks. UN officials claimed 'a major breakthrough' a week ago when Serb commanders held direct talks with officers of the Bosnian Croat HVO militia in Gornji Vakuf, central Bosnia. They agreed on demarcation lines between their forces around Kupres, which the Bosnian army assisted the Croats to take last autumn.

'The HVO and the Bosnian Serb army might be looking at ways to reach a separate deal,' a UN source said.

Many Bosnians — and many people in Croatia too — remain suspicious that the Western powers may encourage Croatian President Tudjman and the Croat nationalists to do a deal at Bosnia's expense, as they did when the war started. US gov-

ernment policy is to impose a Croat-Bosnian federation while leaving Serb nationalists areas to federate with Serbia — effectively partitioning Bosnia.

In this there is little difference with French, British and Russian policy, though Clinton works through Croatia and this Triple Alliance favours the Serbs. A Russian trade mission arrived in Belgrade recently. France proposes three-way talks in which Bosnian President Izetbegovic would only figure as a representative of the country's Muslims, not as head of a sovereign state.

Izetbegovic recently spoke at a rally of Muslim fighters in Zenica, which included Mojaheddin volunteers from the Middle East whose fundamentalism has antagonised ordinary Bosnians, of whatever religion. Last year the Bosnian government transferred responsibility for the besieged Maglaj enclave from the Tuzla regional command to Zenica in a purely political move, because Izetbe-

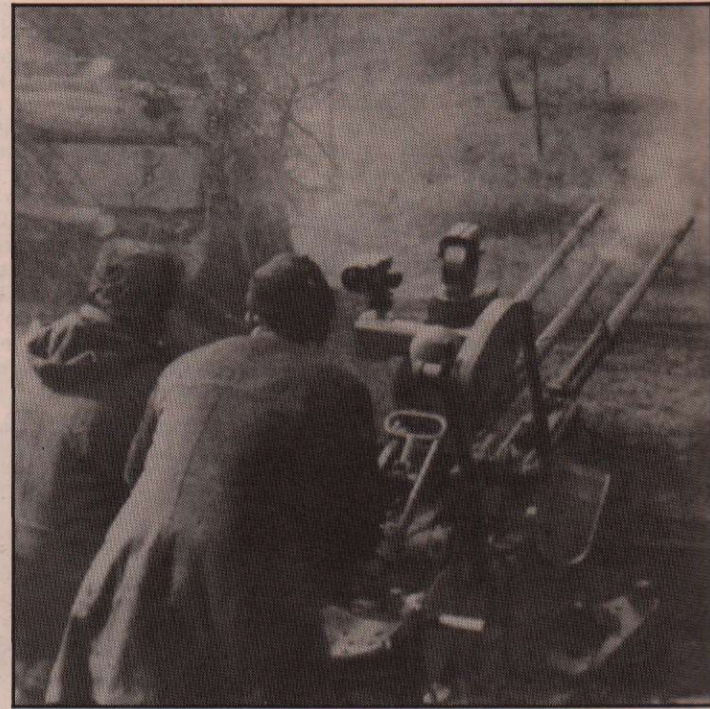
govic's Muslim SDA party controls Zenica.

Izetbegovic's posturing with Muslim separatists and his government's little-veiled discrimination against secular forces play into the hands of Bosnia's enemies.

The UN plan is to freeze present ceasefire lines into permanent borders. Bosnian officers have boycotted the regional ceasefire commission talks because they object to the presence of Serb liaison officers on territory under their control, accusing the UN of failing to properly consult them about it.

'Many people expected that, after the ceasefire was signed, the Bosnian army would become passive. Probably the [the Serbs] expected the same and that is a reason why they signed the agreement,' Bosnia's General Delic said recently.

Last week the Bosnian commander pointed to the renewed Serb attacks in Bihac as further reason to doubt their intentions, and those of the UN.



Serbs shelling Bihac last December

## Yeltsin's advisers claim their peace plan ignored

TWO of Yeltsin's top advisers have complained that the Russian president did not consult them before deciding to invade Chechnya.

The head of Yeltsin's analytical centre, Emil Pain, and a consultant to the centre, Arkady Popov, claimed they had presented a plan for peaceful resolution of the conflict which was ultimately rejected.

Their plan, presented in September, proposed economic and social help to improve conditions in three northern regions of Chechnya where people had shown sympathy for remaining in the Russian federation.

The plan sought to strengthen the position of Umar Avturkhanov, head of the Nadterechny regional administration, and make public Mos-

cow's attempts to reward loyal regions.

The advisers claimed ministers in Yeltsin's security council rejected this plan because they did not want to deal with 'either the Chechen opposition or political partners deserving respect and confidence'. Much of the presidential apparatus and many of Yeltsin's advisers were excluded from reviewing the military plans for Chechnya.

Deputy prime minister and then minister for nationalities and regional policy Nikolai Egorov did not inform his ministry's board of the secret plans. As a result, his deputy, Vyacheslav Mikhailov, head of the Russian negotiating team, went to Mozdok without knowing that war would begin before he could start his work.

## Milosevic wants settlers for Kosovo

SERBIA's Milosevic regime is trying to turn refugees from the war in Bosnia into settlers to reinforce Serb domination of Kosovo, where most of the people are ethnic Albanians.

The government is offering a new housing project, housing subsidies, farm land and other benefits, and has begun a media campaign to encourage resettlement.

The Belgrade daily newspaper Borba carried two articles on 7 February calling for more Serbian settlements in Kosovo. One article reported about an economist from Pristina who wrote a letter to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic offering to exchange his house in Serbia proper for one in Kosovo and to move back.

The other, headlined 'Kosovo Is Serbian,' dealt with Radmilo Bogdanovic, president of the Serbian parliament Security Committee and a former interior minister.

Bogdanovic has tried to convince Serbs to settle in Kosovo, saying that 'the situation of public order, peace, and personal security in Kosmet (Kosovo-Metohija) is not always satisfactory . . . but it is safer, for example, than in Belgrade or Kragujevac'.

The independent paper 'Nasa Borba' on 7 February raises doubts about the program, arguing that it does not make sense to settle people in a region that already is densely populated and where most industry has stopped working.

Serbian nationalists claim Kosovo as centre of the historic Serbian 'homeland', disregarding its overwhelmingly non-Serb population. Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic earned his preeminence in the Yugoslav League of Communists and government by playing to this nationalist gallery.

ing 'underground' in people's homes.

Albanians currently make up 90 percent of the population, while Serbs continue to migrate from Kosovo, driven out by economic ruin and a tense political conflict.

'They told us they wanted to move Serbs to Kosovo. They made us big promises,' said Jokic, a Serbian from the town of Vlasenica in north-east Bosnia.

Milosevic's resettlement drive resembles the Turkish government's movement of peasants from Anatolia and Kurdistan to northern Cyprus, and the Israeli Zionist policy of settling Russian Jews around East Jerusalem on the occupied West Bank.

## Rule

After using troops to put down a miners' strike in Kosovo in 1992, the Milosevic regime took away the province's autonomy, imposing direct rule. Kosovo has been run like a police state. Local people refuse to co-operate with the regime, and schools and colleges have been closed, sometimes operat-

## Austrian racists attack Gypsies

BY DAVID DORFMAN

GYPSIES and refugees are being targeted for terrorist attacks by neo-Nazi racists in Austria. Four Gypsies were killed by a high-explosive booby-trap when they tried to dismantle a sign saying 'Romanies back to India', erected outside their settlement at Oberwart, eastern Austria.

A second bomb exploded a few days later in a rubbish bin next to a children's playground at Stinatz, where many Croat refugees from former Yugoslavia are living. A refuse collector was injured by it as he opened the bin and triggered the blast.

Both attacks were in the Burgenland province, eastern Austria. Gypsies and left-wing organisations criticised the police for initially telling the media that the four murdered Gypsies had accidentally blown themselves up.

About 2,000 people, including

leading politicians, attended the funeral of the four men at Oberwart on Saturday, 11 February.

Members of the SOS-Mitmenschen human rights organisation held an all-night vigil at the site of the wartime Gestapo headquarters in Vienna, and on the steps of the Ruprechtskirche, the capital's oldest church.

In the early hours of Sunday morning, two gangs of skinheads shouting racist slogans attacked the church vigil, kicking and stamping on candles lit in memory of the murdered Gypsies. SOS-Mitmenschen members called the police, but none arrived until later in the morning.

Gypsies have lived in Austria for centuries, and most live in Burgenland. The Nazis set up a concentration camp at Lackenbach to hold Gypsies before they were sent to Auschwitz. Although now officially recognised as an ethnic minority, the Gypsies have received little or no reparations for their suffering under fascism.

## Winnie Mandela in new rows with government and Women's League

SOUTH African arts minister Winnie Mandela apologised to President Mandela last week for publicly saying the government in which she serves was more interested in appeasing whites than helping black South Africans.

Mrs Mandela had made the statement at the funeral of a black policeman killed by white officers in Soweto.

But this was only one of the rows Mandela's estranged wife was embroiled in.

Led by Adelaide Tambo, the Women's League treasurer and widow of the ANC former president, they walked out after learning that Winnie Mandela had signed a deal in the league's name with actor Omar Sharif, setting up a tourist scheme called Road to Freedom Tourists. They say the executive had not been consulted.

## Resigning

Among those resigning was health minister Nkosazana Zuma.

Mrs Mandela had earlier attacked the Rolling Stones for not hiring a black promoter for their South African tour this month. But a newspaper accused her of using her position to further her daughter Zinzi's fortunes as an entertainment promoter.

## Talks

After four hours of talks with the president last weekend, a group of 11 leading members of the African National Congress Women's League re-affirmed their resignation from the executive over Mrs Mandela's tourism deals.

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