WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

SATURDAY 16 DECEMBER 1995

NO.481

PRICE 30c

## 2 MILLION FRENCH WORKERS TAKE FRANCE continues to be shaken by the enor-OSTREETS

mous strike and protest movement. The railway, underground and bus workers and two-thirds of postal sorting centres entered the third week of the strike last Monday.

The coal miners of eastern France have had violent confrontations with riot police.

The majority of schools, universities, hospitals, power stations, have been on strike. One million people have demons-trated on the street for the withdrawal of Prime Minister Juppé's attacks on the health service, the pensions system and demanding more money for universities.

The impetus for the strike movement started and developed with the rank-and-file. After the 24-hour strike of 10 October the government and union leadership hoped that the fight would end with this 'day of action'.

But railway workers, followed by postal workers and transport workers, both underground and bus, continued the fight and the wider movement developed.

An example of the feeling against attempts to restrict this movement can be seen in a resolution that came from teachers in an area of Paris on 21 November. three days before a proposed oneday strike.

It calls on the union leadership to take a more energetic stance against 'the attacks of the government against social gains' and that they 'call a united and indefinite strike from 27 November'.

The resolution concluded: 'The determination to push back the government has to be expressed by a massive and prolonged

Thousands of resolutions like this have been sent to the national leaderships of all unions.

#### From JANOS BOROVI in Paris

As the movement has developed and gained strength increasing sections of the working class would not accept the bureaucrat's plea that the 'conditions are not yet ready'.

Assemblies of public service employees have been organised by the rank-and-file or, under their pressure, the local union leadership to discuss the situa-

In an example of this the teachers of the working-class suburb where I am working held a meeting and called for the withdrawal of Juppé's plan, the defence of public services, pensions, social protection and employment.

It called for the following of the example of the strike of rail-way, postal, tube, bus and telecommunications workers, etc.

'Now we have to fight with everybody working together! The assembly calls for union unity at all levels. It asks the big union confederations to call immediately an indefinite general strike to push back the government.'

At the CGT's congress last weekend this proposal for a general strike was rejected.

The ex-Stalinist leadership hypocritically argued that it was not democratic for a union to call a general strike as the rank-and-file had to decide it.

But when the strike assemblies ask the national leaderships to put the strength of the unions at their service to organise the general strike these bureaucrats refuse it.

The strike movement has been built up town-by-town, workplace-by-workplace, because of the determination of the rankand-file.

The whole movement is unified around one central demand: no negotiation without withdrawal of Juppé's attacks. But in a very natural way the demands are being enlarged everyday.

They now include:

- The reduction of working hours to 35 or 32.5 hours per week without reduction of wages or increasing productivity but with the hiring of more workers. The end of casual working.
- Heavy taxes on gains made by speculation on the 'market'.
- The same pension scheme for public employees and workers in privately-owned industies.

This generalistion of demands is a real danger for the government because it can permit the unification of different categories of workers. It is not unusual to see unemployed organisations in strike meetings or to have postal workers, streetcleaning workers and student delegates together.

■ MIKE COOKE in London adds: On Tuesday 12 December, between 1.7 and 2 million workers took part in demonstrations against French Prime Minister Alain Juppé's plans to scrap the Welfare State. Newspapers and state radio stations also came out with the other strikers. 'He's groggy and on the ropes,'

said a train driver covered with stickers. Either the plan has to go or Juppé has to go. The next demonstration will be a victory

Although Juppé easily <sup>f</sup>an Anglo-Saxon soci defeated another National liberalism, selfishnes Assembly no-confidence motion, and social exclusion'.

the French prime minister faces opposition inside his own RPR party with senior Gaullist National Assembly deputy/MP Philippe Briard saying there is a real 'Juppé problem' in that movement.

Workers' leaders said that more street protests were in the offing. The transport and public sector strikes were set to continue at least to the end of the week. But CGT union leader Louis Viannet tried to restrict the scope of the movement by saying the only aim now was to make Juppé withdraw his social security proposals.

'He is making a mistake if he thinks this march is our last desperate throw,' said Viannet.

Drawing on reactionary ench chauvinism, Force French chauvinism, Force Ouvrière's Marc Blondel said his Force organisation would fight Juppé's plans in order to stop the drift to an Anglo-Saxon society of ultraliberalism, selfishness, inequality

UKRAINIAN bus workers continue their struggle for service improvements for passengers and better wages and conditions for themselves, Pavel Slutzky, now in Moscow, tells Workers Press (see 18 November article by Pavel).

But Pavel says that what the workers need urgently is direct support sent by fellow organisations to show in concrete facts that struggle is international. There needs to be an answer without delay. Protests (and messages to the union involved, SPROT) to:

Ukraina, Kiev, Ul. Narodnogo Opolchenia 14, Trolleybus Depo No.3, Zosulin Vitaly P., Direktor Silchenko Vitaly A Nachainik (SPROT organiser Anatoly Riabov).

Ukraina, Kiev, Tramway Depo No.5 im Krachina, Okolnichii Nikolay G. Direktor (SPROT organiser Baydo

## Urgent action needed to protect Bongani Mkhungo

International calls upon trade unionists and socialists throughout the world to act to protect South African revolutionary Bongani Mkhungo and his family.

Send protests to COSATU

Bongani was attacked by wards at the 10th anniversary Raise funds for his protection stewards at the 10th anniversary rally of the Congress of African Trade Unions (COSATU) on 2 December in Durban.

These thugs burnt his leaflets, took his personal possessions and threatened to kill him.

Since then armed men have harassed his children, showing them guns and telling them they will kill their father.

Bongani was distributing a leaflet which said COSATU should be supporting the workers' struggles, especially the 7,000 sacked nurses in the former Transkei.

It called for COSATU to end its alliance with the so-called Government of National Unity, which is using violence against the workers through its Safety and Security Department.

The leaflet, which was published in Workers Press on 2

delegates at the rally. Events since have confirmed that it articulated the anger felt by many COSATU members.

Less than a week later COSATU itself issued a statement expressing 'shock' and 'disbelief' at government plans to sell off

Send donations to South Africa Solidarity Fund Workers International. PO Box 735 London SW8 1YB.

parts of state-owned South African Airways and Telecom.

The unions say that these privatisation plans run counter to the ANC's previous policy of nationalisation, reiterated when Nelson Mandela was released from prison. If implemented, they will lead to the sacking of thousand of workers.

The South African Railways and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU) said it would call rallies and marches to make the government reverse the decision. Its president, Nelson Ndnisa, said:

measures to defend our members and that includes strike actions. We have been stabbed in the back by the government which we supported.'

Exactly! The Workers International leaflet was telling the bitter truths. Thousands of workers welcomed the call for COSATU to break its alliance with the Government of National Unity.

Bongani is a well-known workers' leader in Durban, active in the development of the trade union federation FOSATU and its successor COSATU. He was the first secretary of the rubber workers' shop stewards' combine. But he has no job, having been victimised by Dunlops for his trade union activity, and he has no rights to social security.

Like millions of other workers in South Africa, Bongani lives in one of the townships with his wife and five children in a tworoomed shack which he built himself, with no running water and no toilet and no toilet.

These conditions give no security against the thugs who are pursuing him, especially in the present situation in the Natal region where over 3,000 people have been killed this year in sectarian violence.

movement must be condemned Workers International (to Rebuild the Fourth International of which Bongani Mkhungo is ar executive committee member has protested to the COSATU leadership, demanding an inquiry into this serious situation Workers International calls upor workers everywhere to send resolutions and letters of protes to COSATU Fax: 0027 11 339 6940 (copies to WI on Fax: 0171-38 0569).

Bongani Mkhungo must be protected. Financial donations are urgently needed. Please rush your contributions payable to South Africa Solidarity Fund Workers International, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

For more information or copies of the leaflet distributed by Bongani and his comrades contact 0171-387 0564.

Send resolutions and letters to COSATU Fax: 00 27 11 339 6940

(Copies, please, to Workers International, Fax: 0171-387 0569

### **Workers Press** Meeting

#### Saturday 10 February, 10.30am-4pm

University of Westminster, 309 Regent Street, London (north side of Oxford Circus).

This meeting will be both a review of Workers Press's record in struggle — which celebrated 10 years of publication on Wednesday 6 December (issue no.1 was published on 6 December 1985) and a looking forward to making the kind of paper that meets the needs of the working-class movement as it moves into a period of heightened struggle and opportunity. This is part of the preparation for the

Crisis in the labour movement' conference in Manchester on 24 February. We will be publishing a list of speakers and there will be opportunity for everyone to contribute to the discussion.

Workers Press will be taking a break for two weeks in the New Year which will mean there will not be a paper on 30 December and 6 January 1996.

Asylum, p2 ★ Ken Saro-Wiwa, p3 ★ 'Picket' fraud, p4&5 ★ Teachers' union, p6 ★ Art and Power, p7 ★ Liverpool dock strike, p8

## **Workers Press**

## **Oppose new** asylum bill

IF THE government gets its way, by 8 January next year all state benefits will be withdrawn from asylum seekers who are waiting for the outcome of their appeals, as well as those who have applied for asylum after arriving in Britain.

Some 30,000 people could be affected by these racist laws.

In the following weeks the current Asylum and Immigration Bill will be passing through parliament. This comes on top of other reactionary immigration legislation and a reactionary immigration 'service'.

This extra chain around the neck of those seeking to escape conditions that may lead to the individual's death will give the government power to slash immigrants' housing and child benefits. It will also contain provisions to fine employers, managers and secretaries up to £5,000 if they employ immigrants who do not have the right to work in Britain.

Every police 'person' will have the right to arrest without the need for a warrant - anyone they think might be breaking this law.

From 8 January onwards, every asylum seeker will have to apply for entry into Britain at the border. If they enter 'illegally' they will be immediately deported, with no right of application.

The government is also considering refusing the right of anybody expelled from Britain from going to a 'safe' third country, even if they have passed through it on their way to Britain.

In practice, the great majority of people fleeing oppression will lose all rights to take refuge in Britain.

This law will mean that more asylum seekers will be sent to their deaths in countries like Nigeria. It will leave families destitute and homeless, and students unable to continue their courses. It will force housing benefit workers and those in the social security service to act as police for the immigration 'service'

The home secretary will draw up a 'white list' of countries from which asylum claims will be deemed to be 'without foundation'. Countries such as India, Pakistan, Bulgaria and Romania have been declared to be on such a list. In these countries there is regular abuse of the rights of minorities, including the torture of prisoners and persecution of religious and ethnic minorities. When 'white' lists were first proposed it was thought that Nigeria would be on it — but that was before the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others by the state because they was opposing the destruction of the way of life of the Ógoni people! It would seem obvious that Nigeria isn't 'on' the 'list' because of possible

But as the Tories last week prepared to push through the first stage of this reactionary legislation what is the position of the Labour leaders?

Labour shadow home secretary Jack Straw said the proposed legislation was 'unfair' and furthermore would actually cost the government money! In order to save £100 in family benefits the government was prepared to spend up to £870 a week in putting children into care, said Straw.

Labour MP Gerald Kaufman called immigration minister Anne Widdecombe 'stupid' when she said that reserve powers were needed to stop asylum seekers.

The best these leaders could do was to accuse the Tories of trying to win votes in readiness for the next

Once again the Labour leaders evade the issues.

The ruling class are now playing the race card with a vengeance. Their concerns go far deeper than whether the Tories can win the next election. They know that big battles with the working class are una-

They have to divide the working class by every possible means and the whipping up of racist hatred is one of the old tricks in their dirty game.

In practice the Labour leadership have no objection in principle to immigration control. Their only difference with the Tories is how best to implement such racist laws. That is why the Labour front bench have spent the last weeks trying to get Home Secretary Michael Howard to agree to 'all-party' talks on the new asylum bill to make sure that it does not end up as a 'badly drafted piece of legislation', as Staw said in the Commons last week.

The working class is an international class. A worker has only one thing to sell, his or her ability to work. That is why a worker should be able to move freely from country to country, whether faced with persecution or not. The new asylum bill is a racist bill. It must be opposed by every possible means throughout the labour movement (see advert of demonstration, p.6).

**More Letters** page 7

**WE WELCOME LETTERS** SEND THEM TO: WORKERS PRESS, PO BOX 735, LONDON SW8 1YB — OR FAX 0171-387 0569

## Is it the same

K.S. of Barking ('Mistaken appraisal of Scargill's call', 9 December) I wondered whether we had read the same editorial that he was criticising ('Scargill and the need for a new socialist party' - 18 November).

that Workers Press has adopted a sectarian attitude to Scargill's proposal for a new working-class

In fact our editorial devoted about half its space to pointing to the positive aspects of this call, and especially to the fact that it would inevitably widen the debate about the future of the working class at what is a historic turning point in its develop-

that his call 'is one that deserves the widest discussion within the labour movement'. We further pointed out that it was Scargill who had taken up the fight against the ditching of Clause Four and that his principled fight during the 1984-85 miners' strike had justly given him a 'unique position' within the movement.

What on earth is 'sectarian' about that? Further, we know that Scargill's declaration is attracting some of the best elements within the Labour movement in various parts of the country and we consider that our initiative in sponsoring a discussion about the need for a new party is part of an ongoing wideranging discussion.

certain criticisms of Scargill's call for such a party. And this was not at all in terms of any Scargill 'plot' of the sort that K.S. refers

mention of Scargill's 'motives'. What were the criticisms that we did make? In the first place we drew attention to the fact that Scargill says nothing whatsoever about the nature, content or origin of the current crisis within

By implication he holds that the fault lies with the current leadership. In so doing he helps perpetuate the myth that once upon a time the Labour Party

As our editorial pointed out, it never was. But how can we go forward on a sound basis to the construction of a 'new' party if we are not striving to be clear about

In this connection, Scargill never even hints at any connection between the present crisis in the relations between the working class and the Labour Party and the crisis of capitalism. But

The former reformists are in a crisis because they can no longer deliver the one thing that was central to their former social

Scargill calls for a 'new party'? But what is to be the programme and perspective of such a party? His call says nothing about the collapse of Stalinism. That is why we said it was essentially a programme cast in nationalist terms. Isn't this of considerable significance? Should we keep quiet

Now K.S. claims that this series of transitional demands placed on a Labour government. But Scargill's demands could not solve the problem of unemploy-

demands? They are ones that point the way towards a fundafacing the working class, namely

the nationalisation of the basic industries and financial institutions, without compensation and under workers' control is just that sort of demand, and not of the type that Scargill proposes.

Transitional demands are not simply propaganda demands but ones around which to mobilise a real movement in the working class in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism.

Our correspondent counterpoises the 'drawing of a dividing line' between ourselves and the need to engage Scargill in the debate on the new party'. This is a false alternative.

It is my opinion that we should encourage all those, including Scargill, and those involved in his call, to come to the February conference which we have sponsored.

But we do so on a principled basis — where we say without fear or favour what we think about the call Scargill has made. How else does K.S. think we should proceed?

Geoff Pilling London W3

#### CPGB for 'separation'

YOU may have noticed that in a recent edition of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB)'s paper Weekly Worker there was a letter from leading CPer Phil Kent slagging me off for comments I made regarding his 'party', in an article on Bosnia printed in Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!

I accused the CPGB of promoting ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. What Phil fails to mention is that what I wrote was based on his own remarks in an article he wrote for Weekly Worker in August: 'At the moment only separation seems to offer the possibility of a future for working class politics' ('Reactionary Jamboree', Weekly Worker, 3 August

I wrote a reply at the time, which was partly printed, but without comment! In that letter I asked where 'mixed race' Bosnians were supposed to go, and whether communists should tell those in Tuzla and Sarajevo fighting to live without racism that they should give up and maybe go start a pogrom instead?

If Phil Kent was really so concerned and believed that I had misunderstood his comments he could have replied then, but he didn't.

I have now written a response Phil's current complaint, which was again only partly printed, and with my references to Phil's article edited out. Because of this I'm sending Workers Press a copy of what my full letter really said, plus copies of the articles and letters men-

Edinburgh

Iames Tait went to Bosnia with a Workers Aid convoy this Summer. An extract from James's Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! article was quoted in Charlie Pottins's Inside Left column, Workers Press, 18 November. See also 'Carve up' in this week's Inside Left column.

#### Determinist against determinism

IN HIS recent lecture at the Albert Hall, professor Stephen Hawking made his main theme an attack on the scientific determinism — most clearly expressed by the classical mathematician and scientist Laplace (1749-1827) — which, he says, is predominant among scientists today.

Contradicting Einstein's phrase 'God doesn't throw dice', Hawking says: 'God does throw dice, and sometimes throws them where they cannot be seen.'

Laplace stated that if the direction and speed of every particle in the universe was known

one could predict its future and trace it past in a mechanically determinist way.

But isn't this assumption at the heart of the current 'big bang' theory of the universe that Hawking has contributed to?

Earlier this year scientists at Cambridge exposed a glaring contradiction in this theory showing that their measurement of the Hubble constant — the rate at which the universe expands and stars recede from us as indicated by their 'red shift' - would mean an origin of about 8 billion years ago, yet with the latest telescopes constellations whose light began their journey to us some 14 billion years ago can be seen!

This horizon may recede even further as the telescopes are improved.

Hawking himself has hypothesised that time 'began' with a 'singularity' smaller than the nucleus of an atom out of which sprang the entire matter of the universe. He has suggested that matter can disappear completely inside a 'black hole', contradicting his own sometimes stated acceptance of the conservation of matter and energy.

Recent observations have been reported of what is believed to be a 'black hole', showing that these objects may in fact be 'engines' which under certain conditions reach instability and spew out their highly pressurised matter in jet streams to create new stars and constellations.

Such an explanation could show us how the universe is in fact continuously reproducing

## More on Croatia's

JÜRGEN QUICK-TOMASEVIC claims (Letters, 21 October) that the *sahovnica* on Croatia's flag — the red-and-silver chequerboard - is a fascist symbol. This is the opposite of the truth.

The sahovnica was a symbol of

state under royalist Yugoslavia. It was a five-by-five chequerboard with the red squares in the corner. When the fascist Ustashe were installed in power in Zagreb in 1941, they considered the red-cornered sahovnica too 'Yugoslav', and reversed the order of the squares, employing a silver-cornered sahovnica. This was displayed alongside the letter 'U', which was a specifically fascist symbol equivalent to the swas-

Under Communism, the redcornered sahovnica was restored at the centre of the official state emblem of the Socialist Republic of Croatia.

The present Croatian regime employs the red-cornered sahovnica used by the Communists, rather than the silver-cornered one of the Ustashe.

Nobody in the Bosnia Solidarity Campaign should accept at face value claims about Croatian or Bosnian history made by the British media. Nine times out of ten they are revisionist fabrica-

**Attila Hoare** London W10

#### Errors corrected

THERE are some printing errors in my translation of the review of Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution by Andrzej Stawar, published in the Journal of Trot-

sky Studies, no. 3 (1995): p.1, line 10 of text: '1830', not '1930'.

p.3, just before the second quotation: 'which', not 'with'.

p.18, line 21: repetition of 'by further' p.29, line 16: 'right', not 'tight'.

p.29, last line: 'detaches', not 'detatches'. p.40, line 21 from the end: insert 'to' after 'subscribed'.

p.40, line 14 from the end:

**Brian Pearce** New Barnet, Herts

## Letters

## editorial?

WHEN I first saw the letter from

The implication of the letter is

ment.

We said, among other things,

But at the same time we made

In fact, we made not a single

the Labour Party.

was socialist.

the crisis in the 'old'?

this is the nub of the matter.

being, namely ... reforms.

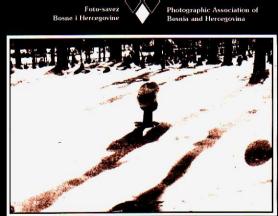
We think not. Similarly with Scargill's assertion that a Labour government could solve the problem of unemployment 'overnight'.

'could be' (but is it?) the basis for a

transitional mental solution to the questions

Thus, in connection with

the conquest of power. unemployment, the question of



## Bosanski pejzaži Bosnian Landscapes 1996

THE Photographic Association of Bosnia-Herzegovina is trying to resume activities despite the great difficulties imposed by the present war.

But this is impossible without your support. The Association has produced two sets of greetings cards and a calendar with 12 photographs portraying the beauty of Bosnia through its landscapes. Either is ideal for Christmas or the coming New Year.

A set of four cards costs £5. The calendar is selling for £6. Prices include post and packing.

Send your orders with cheques to:

Faruk Ibrahimovic, 45 Burlington Close, Elgin Avenue, London W9 3LY.

All proceeds will go towards the purchase of photographic materials and equipment and will be taken on the next Workers Aid to Bosnia convoy.

#### BY MIKE COOKE

KEN SARO-WIWA's murder by the Abacha military dictatorship in Nigeria was remembered one month on by a demonstration outside the (S)Hell Centre near Waterloo railway station in London.

About 100 black, red and green activists turned up to show their respects and to protest at the involvement of Shell oil and Great Powers like Britain in the execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni campaigners.

The action was organised by the People's Embargo for Democracy in Nigeria (PEDEN).

There were speeches, placards and protest dances in which practically all took part.

One placard was used to block out the 'S' of the centre's sign/logo to show the demonstration's feeling about the place. Many passing motorists used their horns to show their support for what was being done there that day.

■ The African Liberation Support Campaign and Workers International are organising a public discussion meeting on Friday 5 January 1996 with oilworkers' and dockers' leaders speaking (see the advert, page 6).



## Release Argentinian socialist!

#### BY ANDREW BURGIN

INTERNATIONAL support against repression in Argentina and to free Argentine trade unionist and socialist militant Horacio Panario continues to grow

A rally in London last Tuesday heard that Brazilian Workers' Party leader 'Lula' and Brazilian oilworkers leader Carlos Spiz had added their support. There have been demonstrations in many parts of Latin America and in Europe the campaign is develop-

ing.

The London rally followed on from a successful picket of the Argentine embassy in November.

Horacio Panario was arrested following a demonstration of more than 500 unemployed workers in Nequen in the south of Argentina (see Workers Press, 11 November). The demonstration was violently repressed by the police

Warrants have also been

issued for the arrests of other trade unionists, many of them members of the Argentinian Trotskyist group, the MAS (Movement toward socialism).

These attacks are part of the attempt by the Menem government to criminalise resistance to privatisation and social welfare.

At the London rally Mario Gomez from the PTS (Workers Party for Socialism) outlined the austerity programme of the Menem regime, drawing parallels with the struggles of French workers who are fighting similar policies.
Other speakers included Lee

Rock, London regional organiser

of the CPSA and Steve Gardner from the JJ Fast Foods dispute.

Send petitions, letters of

■ Send petitions, letters of protest, etc. to President Menem, c/o Argentine Embassy, 53 Hans Place, London SW1.

■ The campaign can be contacted at PO Box 7268, London

# Edinburgh couple win big response for Bosnia trip

#### BY HILARY HORROCKS

THE response has been overwhelming, Christine Simm told last week's Bosnia benefit night in Edinburgh which raised £350 towards her journey to Tuzla with her partner Rhian Jenkins.

Christine, a maintenance manager with the Clydebank Housing Association and an HGV driver, and Rhian, a school workshop technician at Armadale and Broxburn academies in West Lothian, decided several weeks ago to participate in the Christmas Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy, which leaves Britain this weekend.

Inspired by Ken Loach's film 'Land and Freedom', they concluded that the main parallel between the fight of the Spanish working class then and Bosnia's struggle today lay in the need for working people in Britain to get involved in the struggle against fascism in Europe.

#### News

Last week the women were anxiously awaiting news of the 17-tonne truck Christine is due to drive in the convoy, which is carrying much-needed food and medical supplies often over difficult mountain terrain made more hazardous by the harsh winter weather.

'I was sick to hear that the airport runway there is being opened up specially for the US troops to arrive,' Christine commented wryly.

#### Convoy

Their decision to join the convoy has resulted in remarkable community support from many different places in Scotland. A van load of medical equipment, including wheelchairs, arrived from Aberdeen in the middle of the Edinburgh benefit.

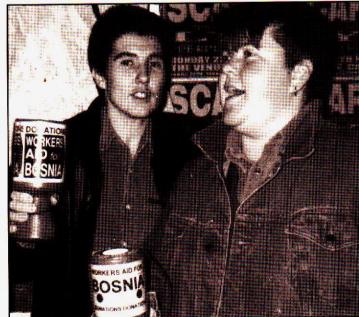
A 'Ladies' Night' at a Linwood social club, organised by Christine's mother, raised £300; the Edinburgh West Labour Party branch weighed in with a street collection of £260 and donations of food.

Christine's Transport and General Workers' Union branch and housing associations in the Glasgow area have also responded with large donations.

Students where Rhian works have been enormously interested in her journey, and put out an appeal through the school maga-

zine.

They are preparing letters
and articles she hopes to deliver



Christine Simm and Rhian Jenkins

to pupils of similar age at the gymnasia 'Mese Selimovic', a secondary school in Tuzla.

Local supporters of Workers Aid and of the Edinburgh Bosnia support group, formed in the summer after the Srebrenica slaughter, have organised street Generous personal donations have poured in from Christine and Rhian's friends and old political contacts — in many cases after being inactive for some time.

"They are eager for something they feel they can get involved in,' said Christine.

## Big business wants clampdown against Saudi dissidents

#### BY ROSS COOPER

BIG British companies with profitable arms contracts in Saudi Arabia have told the British government to tighten asylum laws and clamp down on dissidents opposing the Saudi monarchy.

A building housing US military 'advisers' in Riyadh was carbombed recently, and there have been demonstrations in mosques.

King Fahd's is in poor health, and has had to cancel official engagements.

Crown Prince Abdullah, his likely successor, is opposed to reforms, and expected to crack down hard on any opposition.

But a Western diplomat praised the prince as 'a good traditional ruler...not overly corrupt, and generous in his disbursements' (Guardian, 5 December).

Tory Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind was told when he visited Saudi Arabia last month of the regime's concern about the activities of dissidents like Muhammad Masa'ri, of the Committee for the Defence of Legiti-

Address

mate Rights, who lives in Londo

Last month, after Masa'ri sain he could understand the reason for the attack on the US officer building, the Foreign Office sain he was no longer welcome in this

British Aerospace and Vickers, involved in the major A Yamanah arms deal with Saud Arabia with British government backing, are among companied that have urged the government of tighten asylum laws to keep political dissidents out.

There was criticism both in Saudi Arabia and in Britain of kickbacks involved in the Yamanah deal.

A report from the National Audit Office was supressed before the last general election.

British firms fear they could lose big contracts because a Saudi resentment.

'There's no way of quantifyin the effect that these dissiden may have on business,' a spoke person for the Confederation ( British Industry said.

But there is no doubt that number of companies hav expressed considerable concern

## WORKERS PRESS IS THE PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

itish section of the Workers International (to Rebuild the Fourth International)			
Ple	ase send me information about t	ne WI	RP
me		date	

Send to: PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB

## Inside left

### Carve up

rker (30 November): 'Predictably, Dayton deal sees Bosnia partined into two separate mini-states: Serb Republic with 49 per cent of land and the "Muslim-Croat Fedtion" with 51 per cent.'

So they're against partition? No. ekly Worker's Phil Kent said last gust that 'only separation' offered uture for Bosnia (see James Tait's ter. p.2). Eddie Ford thinks the yton carve-up hasn't gone far

The Serb suburbs of Sarajevo have allocated to the muslim-domited Bosnian government. This has eady lead to angry demonstrations the Sarajevo Serbs, who see the ace" deal as a sell out.

Criticising Workers Press's suprt for the Bosnian people, Ford says e authority of the "Bosnian" govnment is being imposed against the shes of a large chunk of the "Bosn people". The democratic rights all the people of this area must be pected.

Does 'democracy' include the right reactionaries and fascists to forciestablish 'ethnically cleansed' claves within mixed cities? Where

#### .ast post

SIDES insisting that self-emancition of the working class must be atral to Marxism, one thing which deared István Mészáros to a recent orkers Press meeting was his derifor 'post-modernism', 'postrdism', and 'all the other "posts" hich became so fashionable in demia over the past decade.

Post-Fordism' was an 'in' phrase tter 'post-Leninism') among some mmunist Party members before ey became the Democratic Left, or ned the Independent. A new form capitalism was supposed to free orkers from the tyranny of the proction line. It wasn't taken up by rds management, nor Communist rty stewards, who remained aposs of speed-up and productivity.

Still, capitalism has released many us from the production line to the ore intellectually stimulating signg-on queue.

Post-modernism, I used to think, eant supplementing the upturned ncrete slabs on the city skyline th daft buildings that look like me giant infant just graduated to a ncier building set. Pillars appear ectically under sloping roofs on of office-blocks, what does it matsince it's all for effect?

Some pretentious academics have ected equally meaningless theories which the all-important thing is scourse', words supposedly indendent of social forces; and you can scribe the world from any standint you like (though preferably not Marxist, class one).

I couldn't help wondering whether e posts' had sprouted in inverse tio to the dearth of posts for which ople are competing. (Before you oan, let me say that some French inkers attach especial importance puns and verbal co-incidences, so in intellectually respectable com-

my. Well, sort of ...) Socialist History No.8 reports that Northern Marxist Historians roup discussed history and postodernism at its last meeting.

In the discussion which followed,

e speaker noted that in the postodern universe of equivalent orldviews it would make equal se for Yorkshire Water to solve its ought problems by praying to the in gods as much as by repairing its pes Another observed that hower abstract postmodernism might as a theoretical approach, once its herants had secured a significant mber of academic positions it had quired a material base.'

**Charlie Pottins** 

## FRENSHAM ROAL

TONY O'BRIEN is a building worker. As an active member of UCATT, the building workers' union for over 33 years, he has been elected shop steward on many of the largest sites in London. He has been convenor of Southwark Council's Building Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) shop stewards' committee for over 20 year and is secretary of the Construction Safety Campaign.

Today he is at the centre of a heated discussion about a 'picket' which has been mounted by the 'Building Workers Group' at the Southwark DLO's Frensham Road depot. This raises important questions for workers fighting to hold the line on jobs and trade union organisation. Tony O'Brien spoke to Workers Press (in a personal capacity).

FAILURE of the TUC and the majority of trade unions within it to mobilise the fight against the new laws at work and the anti-tradeunion laws isolated those unions which were prepared to make a

These were, for example, the National Union of Mineworkers and the National Union of Seamen. Local trade union organisations were left to battle on their own against privatisation and anti-trade-union laws. In such a situation the main task for trade unionists is to do everything possible to maintain our organisation.

We need to guard against sectarian groups which have no respect for workers' own organisations. Such groups act on their own behalf, as they see fit, with no regard for the decisions of the workers themselves.

The 'Building Workers Group' is one such organisation, and their 'picket' at the Frensham Street depot is an example of sectarianism.

### Campaign against privatisation

AT THE beginning of this year Southwark council senior management was preparing to privatise large sections of the council's ser- European Court taken by the Trans- awarded the four contracts.

least 2,200 jobs to contractors.

Council workers have been in the forefront of the fight against privatisation. In general they have been able to delay implementation of government laws, but Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) has brought in private contractors to take over the services - community care, housing, maintenance, libraries, sport centres and other amenities.

Our DLO mobilised a trade union and community campaign. All the union organisations of the council's employees agreed to put their name to our campaign material and participated in lobbies of the council, deputations, resolutions, petitions, etc. The plan was defeated.

### **DLO loses** contracts

BUT the DLO was forced by government legislation to compete with private contractors for the work. Previously the DLO had won all the contracts but these were coming to an end and CCT would again apply.

Our trade union organisation campaigned demanding that the contractors must base their estimates on the same terms and conditions for workers as those applying in the DLO.

vices. They wanted to hand over at port and General Workers' Union in connection with refuse collectors in Eastbourne.

> It is the transfer of undertakings legislation (TUPE), which also means that in the event that an outside company wins the contract then DLO workers can transfer to that company.

In the fight for TUPE to apply there was a brief occupation of the Frensham Street Depot and there was a ballot for strike action which resulted in a 79 per cent vote in

The workers were angry and felt insecure. The council insisted on TUPE. The result was that out of 60 contractors 58 either put in higher tenders or withdrew from the competition. Only Botes and Tripp remained - both are well experienced in local government contracting by now.

Botes put in the cheapest tenders on four of the contracts. We forced the council to suspend awarding them for five months to investigate complaints arising from the High Court case against Botes in which Lambeth council alleged their corruption over contracts.

Southwark agreed that if Botes was found guilty the contracts would be awarded to the DLO. Botes was found not guilty on the first charges. Other cases are still being heard. The This arose from a test case to the court finding meant that Botes was

### Main principle jobs and union organisation

THE fight now was to ensure that workers who transferred to Botes maintained their DLO wages, conditions and trade union rights. Keeping the workers' jobs was the main principle, and to keep the trade union organisation. If workers keep their jobs then they can fight the employer.

Under government legislation once the DLO lost the contract, any worker who refuses to transfer to the new employer is automatically deemed to have resigned his job. However much we condemn this system, the majority of stewards considered that refusal to transfer would be a false fight.

Botes had opposed the council and the unions over TUPE, but had finally backed down and we were able to get full guarantees of terms and conditions of employment for any worker transferring from the DLO to Botes.

At the beginning the council wanted 57 workers to transfer, but in

Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council appeal

## Don't let Serviceteam dust workers stand alone!

and Wandsworth BATTERSEA trades council has been supporting the GMB members working on the and conditions.

The dispute has now come to a head with a 24-hour unofficial walkout on 22 November and the subsequent sacking of the GMB shop stewards. As a result the GMB is currently balloting the members for official action. We have committed our full support to a vote in favour of whatever action the members and the GMB feel is appropriate.

We now need to demonstrate to the members involved, the company Serviceteam — and the residents of Wandsworth that the collectors have the support of other trade unionists, Labour Party members and concerned residents in their dis-

This means putting maximum pressure on the council and the contractor. It also means money. Four GMB members have been illegally sacked for trade union activity a month before Christmas. They need our support. We will also need large financial resources to continue the support work we have been doing.

This is possibly the most signifi-

cant dispute in Wandsworth in recent years. The Wandworth refuse collection service was among the Wandsworth dust for over a year in first council services to be sold off in their fight for decent working hours the country. The Wandsworth Tory council is still the most Thatcherite in the country 15 years on. Not only did they think that privatised workers were prevented by their laws from organising — they didn't think they were able to.

■ Send cheques made out to 'Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Councl' and marked 'Serviceteam dispute' to 177a Lavender Hill, London SW11 5TE.

All donations are welcome however small. The trades council will make sure the money is put at the disposal of Serviceteam GMB

The facts of the dispute so far:

■ The refuse collection service in Wandsworth was retendered on a loss leader bid in October 1994. The workforce have been in dispute since that time — a dispute that was bought with the contract by Serviceteam in late October 1995.

■ Before October 1994, 14 dustcarts each with a crew of five emptied the bins over a five day working week. Since then nine dustcarts each with a crew of four attempts to do the job over six days. On average the contract loses about £20,000 a week.

Between 1981 and October 1995, only collectors were sacked. Since 17 November, eight people have been sacked by Serviceteam, including four permanent workers with 50 years service between them. A further five have been suspended and saved from dismissal after intervention by the trade union.

"Task and finish" has meant a six-day working week of up to 70 hours on some occasions on a flat rate of 40 hours — leading to an equivalent hourly pay of £2.48.

Serviceteam have not recognised the GMB despite warm words and promises by its directors. Serviceteam talk about pay rises, 40-hour working weeks and no Saturday working but have failed to make any new concessions to convince the workforce of these good intentions

Serviceteam managers met with shop stewards and GMB officials on 13 November and agreed an interim package of measures to move the dispute forward.

This deal was withdrawn during the middle of the members' meeting called on 16 November to agree the

package. The sackings started next

morning. On 22 November, feelings were running so high among Serviceteam workers over the sacking of their colleagues for refusing unpaid over-24-hour unofficial stoppage. Most people these days will appreciate the crisis level that relations and trust have to reach for a privatised manual workforce to take such

■ On 28 November, Serviceteam sacked the GMB shop stewards and threatened the entire workforce with dismissal if they responded.

■ The GMB is ballotting the workforce for official action and is giving the members their full back-

A senior director in Serviceteam is Lewisham Labour councillor Dave Sullivan. He is a former chair of Lewisham Direct Services.

Protests can be sent to Wandsworth Labour councillor Aiden Grimes, The Members Room, Town Hall, Wandsworth High Street, London SW18 2PU.

Also to Dave Sullivan, The Members Room, Lewisham Town Hall, Catford Road, London SE6 4RU.

## 'PICKET' IS A FRAUD



Tony O'Brien at a Community and Union Action Campaign/Unite conference a couple of years ago

negotiations this was whittled down to seven whose work is mainly on the sites where Botes have their contracts.

Some days before the new contracts were due to start there was a mass meeting in Southwark Civic Centre to report to members the outcome of negotiations. We recommended acceptance of the proposals and explained:

■ The seven workers to be transferred could decide for themselves, but that if they refused, they would be walking away from their employ-

■ The fight against privatisation would continue, but at this point there would be no industrial action.

Nobody at the mass meeting moved for industrial action.

There was a meeting of the seven workers who were to be transferred to Botes. Five of them voted 'for' and two, John Jones (a shop steward) and Terry Mason, voted 'against'.

A further mass meeting agreed that in the case of the two workers who did not want to transfer, their right to take that decision must be recognised, but they would be dismissing themselves from their employment.

If they wished to campaign fulltime against the abuse of CCT under the direction of the DLO trade union organisation, their wages and fares would be paid by that organisation.

### **Trade** unionists against 'picket'

JONES and Mason voted against the resolution and have since mounted the Frensham Street Depot picket supported by the 'Building Workers Group'. We - the DLO shop stewards' committee — led the workers across their picket line.

The two went to see the Islington council building workers' representatives seeking support. The Islington shop stewards arranged a meeting a week later at which Jones argued his case and we argued ours. The Islington trade union organisation voted to support the Southwark shop stewards' proposals on the two

They then called upon the London Regional Council of UCATT, to support them. This is an elected lay body which makes decisions in the London area. The council would not take a decision until they had heard from

Southwark trades council has also voted to support us. The UGO25 branch of UCATT has called upon the union's regional council to discipline three members who are taking part in the 'picket' for breach of the union's democratic practice.

### **DLO** wages and conditions prevail

THE 'picket' leaflets claim that the TUPE agreement does not give the transferred workers the same wages and conditions as the DLO. Our leaflet shows that the opposite is true. We quote an extract of the agreement: Botes Building will maintain the present level of terms and conditions as determined in the current contract of employment with Southwark Direct as follows:

'Salary/wages, leave, hours of work, sick pay and other terms and

conditions as determined in the current contract of employment with Southwark Direct.

'Botes recognise the right of trade union membership and representation at any meeting with management. Botes will include all employees in broadly comparable pension schemes with no loss of benefit. A wage of £350 a week (pending a productivity scheme) plus £10 meal allowance will be paid.'

We also say:

'We are well aware that neither Southwark council or contractors are prepared to give indefinite guarantees for workers' terms and conditions of employment. This fight cannot be separated from the overall struggle for political change.'

In the meantime the Southwark Trades Council Trade Union Resource Unit will monitor the Botes' TUPE agreement on behalf of the transferred workers.

### Shop steward should stay with workers

HOWEVER unsatisfactory CCT is, since the DLO could not remove government legislation on its own, the outcome of negotiations was the best that could be obtained. It kept the workers' jobs and trade union

Jones was a DLO shop steward. He should have transferred to Botes with the other workers in order to represent them, and he should have assisted us to persuade Mason to also transfer.

Instead of that these two have dismissed themselves from their jobs, broken with their trade union organisation and mounted the picket – an individualist and sectarian action - with their friends in the

'Building Workers Group'. Our leaflet explains they never took up their right to oppose and move alternative action at our stewards' meetings or the mass meetings:

'At no time have Jones or Mason moved at the two mass meetings or the stewards meetings that preceeded their picket that a vote should take place for strike or any other form of industrial action.

'At no time had they proposed a picket of our depot. Why then place a false picket on our depot?

'No one has the right to impose what they think is best for workers. The principle of not crossing picket lines cannot be separated from the practice of "workers democracy".

'In the context of our particular situation, to suggest a picket line exists, when no such decision has been made, is a fraud and is an abuse of the principle of "workers' respect for picket lines".'

Even before the 'picket' was set up, our DLO shop stewards' committee complained to the secretary of the Broad Left in UCATT that at that organisation's October meeting the 'Building Workers Group' members spent half the time attacking the Southwark DLO organisation.

We would like to know in whose interests the 'Building Workers Group' acts and we have pointed out in our leaflet that information circulating London from this group 'is full of blatant lies, scapegoating and witch hunting. As such it discredits a fight for principles and undermines the struggles of workers.'

But we have also said to John and

'It is not too late to retain your job. take the advice from the shop stewards' committee.'

Compare this with the 'Building Workers Group' whose leaflets call for my removal even though they know that Southwark council has given me a redundancy notice!

(The DLO shop stewards have decided on a ballot for industrial action to oppose my sacking.)

### **Unity and** solidarity against sectarianism

WHEN does a picket become a principle? You cannot separate picketing from the actual struggle at any given time. The main question is the resistance of workers. In some circumstances it can be right to have a minority, or even only one of the workforce on a picket.

Picketing has to do with the context in which the workers are struggling.

For instance, when the Liverpool dockers refused to cross the picket line put up by the Torside dockers they were supporting workers who had already democratically decided on an industrial dispute and it was a principled act of solidarity. In the case of the 'picket' put up

outside our depot, it is against the democratic decisions of our trade union organisation and we are acting in a principled way to cross it.

Here are two examples of the relation of a picket and the actual struggle of workers:

I was sacked after only three days on the Langs YMCA site in Tottenham Court Road because manage-ment realised that I had a history of

trade union struggle. I refused to leave the site and sat in the canteen until I was physically removed.

Then I stood outside the gate with a placard round my neck saying that I was being victimised.

I never said 'this is a picket and you must not cross'. I said to the other building workers: 'I am being victimised. Could you please discuss my

They called a meeting and threatened to take action if I was not reinstated. I got my job back.

The other example was at the William Willets site in Mile End. There were about 400 building workers. We got towards the end of the job and the painters came on.

Their shop steward said that they were earning less than us and wanted parity. They voted for strike action, but before they put up the picket line, they consulted the other stewards on the site.

We agreed to stay on the job, but collect £5 per head from the other workers to maintain the painters. We all agreed: we would not work with sub-contract painters and the pickets would only stop painters. Parity was won.

The Frensham Road 'picket' is a fraud. But, as with all experiences, there are lessons to be learned.

For trade unionists at work, a picket is traditionally mounted to ask workers to join a strike action taking place after the democratic decision-making procedures have been observed.

Neither the strike nor the picket can be separated from the democratic processes. This is not the case with the 'Building Workers Group' standing outside our depot. It is against the decisions of two mass meetings.

Nobody has the right to impose a decision on the workers. Those who shoot off from workers' decisions are substituting themselves for the workers' organisation.

### He's at it gain

ANY readers will recall the me of Richard Lynn, until ely Ulster University's profesof psychology, who last year ntributed to The Times a glowreview of that notorious book Bell Curve (see this column, October 1994, 10 December 4. and 25 March 1995).

The Bell Curve, by Richard J. errnstein and Charles Murray, largely based on Lynn's ork about which Leon J. min, professor of psychology Northeastern University, Bos-Mass, wrote in the Scientific perican (February 1995):

Lynn's distortions and mispresentations of the data contute a truly venomous racism. mbined with scandalous disrerd for scientific objectivity....

It is a matter of shame and sgrace that two eminent social entists, fully aware of the senlivity of the issues they address, ke Lynn as their scientific tutor d uncritically accept his surs of research....

The book has nothing to do

Now Lynn, who retired ently, has contributed a paper the Journal of Biosocial Scice in which he claims that iminals are more fertile than

His conclusions are based on a rvey of 411 boys living in south andon, and were reported in the wth London Press - which lls him a '[l]eading psychologist' under the headline 'THEY'RE EEDING LIKE GRAB-ITS'.

Claiming that 'the fertility of minals is higher than that of n-criminals drawn from the me social class and urban resince', Lynn goes on:

If criminal behaviour has a mificant heritability, and if minals have higher than avernumbers of children, the

underlying criminal haviour must have increased in equency in the population in middle decades of the twenticentury

This is likely to be one factor the increase in criminal activwhich has been a marked feare of Britain and a number of er economically developed tions from the 1950s onwards.'

These conclusions are doubtmusic to the ears of the Tory vernment, which is unable to mowledge that crime among poor is caused above all by

How convenient for the Tories have those 'genes underlying minal behaviour' to fall back The South London Press even ites of 'criminal genes', hitho unknown to biology.

Such deterministic theories of redity have long been closely sociated with racism, fascism, d the pseudo-science of eugenwhich held that 'superior' per-class stocks had to be proted against the 'careless breedof the 'inferior' poor.

Lvnn's latest variant of this rant nonsense is challenged by ofessor Donald West, who hapns to be joint author of the very dy on which Lynn based his

Professor West has dissociated mself from Lynn's conclusions, tich he says flatly are 'halfked, adding: "There are ... many ber factors involved, particuly social class and income.

### le liked to e saluted

HAVE two vivid memories of Piratin, Communist MP for east London constituency of le End from 1945 to 1950, who ed last Sunday aged 88.

Soon after returning from a it to one of the Stalinist-conled countries of eastern rope, he told me with evident esure of the respect he wived there by virtue of being member of the Communist rty of Great Britain's political

You step off the plane, and if Fre a political committee ber you're saluted by every-

## COLUMN

body in uniform. The police and the soldiers all salute you — even the senior officers.'

This clearly gave enormous personal gratification to a man whom no one in his own country had ever saluted, or ever would

When I came back from Hungary in November 1956, just after the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolution, I attended a meeting of my local CP branch. Phil Piratin was also a member of the Hampstead branch, and he too was at the meeting.
Under discussion was my sus-

pension from the party by its London district committee for the crime of publicly opposing the Soviet intervention.

Phil Piratin's contribution consisted mainly in insisting that I was in breach of party rules. But when he was challenged to state exactly which rule I had broken, he was unable to reply.

I can't recall the exact vote,

but it was something like 17 to two against the suspension. That of course cut no ice with the party leaders, who soon afterwards expelled me.

### Eleanor Marx on xenophobia

BRIAN PEARCE has kindly lent me a photocopy of an article by Marx's daughter Eleanor which appeared in The Weekly Times &

Echo on 6 May 1894. Entitled 'Evil May Day', this describes the events of 1 May 1517, when some 2,000 London apprentices, blaming foreign residents for their poverty, hunger, and raggedness at a time of depression, sacked the houses of a number of Frenchmen and suffered harsh reprisals, perhaps 40 of the rioters being executed.

Eleanor Marx describes the role played in these events by Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), author of *Utopia* (1516), who seems to have helped to pacify both the London mob and the indignant French merchants.

'More was incapable', she writes, 'of the prejudices of most men of his time, and the insular hate of the "foreigner" he could not even understand.' And she quotes a contemporary description of him as 'friend to Irishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, and Hin-

Eleanor was clearly concerned with agitation in the 1890s against Jewish refugees who had fled to London's East End to escape the pogroms in the tsarist empire — agitation which would in 1900 lead to the formation of proto-fascist British Brothers' League.

She concludes however on an optimistic note:

'And now, once again, Londoners are beginning to keep a May holiday... If their processions not the gorgeous old Court pageants, still they are brave with the gay flags and banners of the workers.

'Above all, they meet, not to declare war upon the "stranger" and the "alien", but to declare that for the workers there is no such thing as an alien or a stranger; to declare that for them the workers of all countries are their brethren, and their only enemy the capitalists of all lands.

'And so, in the better, happier time to come, the May Day of 1890, when the people first met to proclaim this new gospel of international fraternity, may perchance come to be known as the Good May Day, and then the evil of the old times and old conditions will have passed away, and be no more than a memory, a tradition, no more than a story like that of the Evil May Day of 1517.'

Peter Fryer

## The left's struggle in teachers' union

COMMENT BY DAVE FINCH Assistant secretary **Croydon Teachers** Association (NUT) In a personal capacity

IN HIS article on the National Union of Teachers (2 December), Phil Edwards fails to grasp the main purpose of general secretary Doug McAvoy's recent actions in the union.

If Phil's article was designed to prepare and warn the left in the union then it falls short. His article also tends to exaggerate the result of the recent McAcvoy inspired ballot on 'union democracy' as a 'set back' for the left.

Phil explains the motive for the attacks on the left by McAvoy and his allies, the so-called Broad Left, by saying: 'The NUT leadership wants to create the illusion that it is possible to put pressure on the newly elected "reformed" Labour government rather than lead a real struggle.'

This is, at least, a superficial analysis.

#### Fight

Before saying why I think we have to look at the struggle in the NUT more carefully, I want to go back to another fight.

Thatcher's enemy within was the National Union of Mineworkers and particularly its leadership. Years before the showdown, she prepared using all the resources available to her (MI5, MI6, the media, etc.) and then, in 1984, used these together with Special Branch, the police, GCHQ and Central Electricity Generating Board managers (see Enemy Within, Seamus Milne).

But we must not forget the help she received from the rightwing leadership of the unions and the Labour Party, spearheaded by Neil Kinnock.

The 'enemy within' for the modern-day Kinnock, i.e. Tony sion is the left wing of the most powerful union, the NUT. The union has shown its willingness to fight despite the resistance of its right-wing leadership.

The Tories have progress in worsening educational provisions for workingclass children and conditions for teachers but they have not yet defeated the left.

Blair knows that if Labour is returned, the NUT as it is at present will remain a threat to his plans to continue the Tories' policies:

Opting-out to continue.

Selection.

■ Increased class sizes (with a vague promise for pupils of five to seven years of age).

Sacking of so-called 'failed teachers' (a green light to authoritarian heads, right-wing governors and local authorities to get rid of determined union representatives and militant teach-

League tables.

■ Closure of 'failed schools'.

Hostile inspectors to be used to identify 'bad' teachers.

'Streamlined' dismissals. Tests.

Such is Labour's crusade: 'Ex-

cellence for Everyone'. Labour's shadow education

minister David Blunkett is close to McAvoy. They meet from time

#### Convinced

I am convinced that he has conveyed the concerns of the Blair leadership. The exaggeration of the incident with Blunkett at this year's NUT conference indicated that the Labour leaders' demand is 'curb, control and defeat the left'.

After all, the traditional role of the union bureaucracy is to act as the state's police.

Blair wants a quiescent, 'cooperative' teaching profession his way. He expects McAvoy and his allies to deliver and that is what they are attempting to do.

That is why his 'office' intervened in the recent elections for five national officers by making it clear that members should not vote for 'extremist, non-democratic' candidates — an unprecedented action, which in a sense shows McAvoy's desperation.

No NUT general secretary has ever openly intervened in an election before this.

In the ballot he instigated for 'union democracy', it is not difficult to understand why he got a large majority for his proposals (albeit on a very small return, less than one-in-five members vot-

The union leadership has put up no real fight to stop an ever increasing burden of work being imposed on teachers. They have little time and only the most dedicated are able to get to the union meetings and involve themselves in union affairs.

As a consequence, when teachers receive literature (with onesided arguments) — and a form which asks, in effect: 'Do you want more democracy?' course most will vote 'yes'.

I don't see this as a serious set back for the left, any more than a majority vote for one of de Gaulle's phony plebicites in the past was a set back in France. In any case, McAvoy's new rules have to be endorsed by the union's annual conference. We shall see if delegates, many of whom (perhaps, most) understand the democracy the leadership will introduce if successful.

Indeed, when members can choose they vote against more power for the leadership and for control of their actions.

At almost the same time as the members were being balloted for 'democracy' there was another ballot for the five national offic-

Two of those who won were on a left slate and of the three rightwing candidates who won against the other three left-wing candidates their vote declined.

I am surprised Phil did not counterpose these result against those on 'union democracy'.

#### Quoting

It is worth quoting from the election address of the left candidate who won the post of 'Examiner of Accounts'. She started her

#### 'Conference decisions and the Examiners' role

'Rule 3 states conference is the supreme authority of the union. If elected, I shall ensure that priority is given, when spending money, to the fight for conference policies.

She went on to say: 'Considerable sums of money have since been expended on circularising and balloting members on policies conflicting with conference decisions. As Examiner of Accounts I should challenge such expenditure.

She then argues for union money to be used in campaigns to improve conditions of service and to build up the strike fund to defend members facing redundancy and finally ends with her determination to 'carefully scrutinise' money spent by some officials 'entertaining visitors'.

Clearly, despite the more limited resources of the left, they intend to fight back. It is true they are not always clear on the best way to do so.

As Phil indicated, the Socialist Workers' Party intends to continue along a sectarian path, but I hope teacher members of the WRP and readers of Workers Press, who I feel in the past have tended to turn their back on the main left group in the union, the Socialist Teachers' Alliance, will play a more active role in that organisation.

### Don't put asylum-seekers on the streets

Protest against government plans to cut all welfare benefit to asylum-seekers, introduce the 'safe countries' list, increase internal immigration controls

Lobby of parliament

Tuesday 19 December, 1pm-5pm Committee room 14, House of Commons ,(St Stephen's entrance)

organised by the Asylum Rights Campaign with the Campaign against the Immigration and Asylum Bill

## No justice! No peace! picket

Maidstone prison, County Road Wednesday 20 December, 12noon

Support Winston Silcott (B74053) and Raphael Rowe (MP3660). Write to them for Christmas at HMP Maidstone, Kent ME14 1UZ.

Sponsored by Winston Silcott Defence Campaign, the M25 Three Campaign, Gravesend Resistance, Colin Roach Centre and Kent Militant Labour

#### African Liberation Support Campaign & Workers International to rebuild the Fourth International

Invites you to a **PUBLIC DISCUSSION MEETING** 

### We say the NIGERIAN **DICTATORSHIP DOES NOT ACT ALONE**

The execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his comrades by the Nigerian dictatorship on 10 November 1995 shocked and angered millions of people throughout the world. The Nigerian dictator, General Sani Abacha may have put the rope round the ecks of these brave fighters, but who gave him the confidence to

■ The British government has continued to supply arms to the Nigerian government despite the known brutality of the dictatorship. The British government is deporting asylum seekers and people who have lived in this country for years to an unknown fate under the Nigerian dictatorship.

■ Shell, the British-Dutch oil company, has laid waste the Niger delta. The rich farmlands and rain forests have been polluted by the leakage of crude oil. While the multi-nationals get rich, the poor people do not have even the most ordinary amenities clean water, roads, electricity. Speakers will give their views and discuss what can be done.

There will be time for people to participate.

Camilla Berens — Journalist and member of Freedom

Ronnie McDonald — Gen. Secretary — OILC (Offshore oil workers' union)

Jimmy Nolan — Chair — Liverpool Dockers' Shop Stewards' **Julie Affiong Southey** — People's Embargo for Democracy in

Cliff Slaughter - Executive Committee of Workers International

#### 7.30pm Friday 5 January 1996

Brixton Recreation Centre, Station Road, Brixton. PO Box 735, London, SW4 1YB. Telephone: 0171-627 8666.

## Which was worse for culture?

The exhibition Art and Power: Europe Under the Dictators, 1930-45 runs until 21 January 1996 at the Hayward Gallery. The following is a 'taste' of a longer piece by REX DUNN that will appear in a future editon of the The International, journal of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International

STALINISM or fascism — which was worse for art and culture?

We cannot expect this Art and Power exhibition to raise such questions let alone try to answer them. But it does not pull its punches. It deserves full credit for its attempt to analyse the real and complex causes of why art lost out in its fight to participate in humanity's liberation.

This has to be one of the most important exhibitions of the decade. Not because of the size and range of art on display. Certainly the art itself is not the reason much of it is 'bad' art!

Rather it is because this exhibition seeks to illuminate and educate on the fate of Modernist art during the age of the dicta-

'Art and Power', explains the exhibition guide, 'looks at the relationship between art and political authority in Europe from 1930 to 1945, and focuses on those countries whose situation, for artists and architects, was most extreme: on the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet Union under Stalin, Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany, and on Spain during the Civil War which preceded Franco's dictatorship.

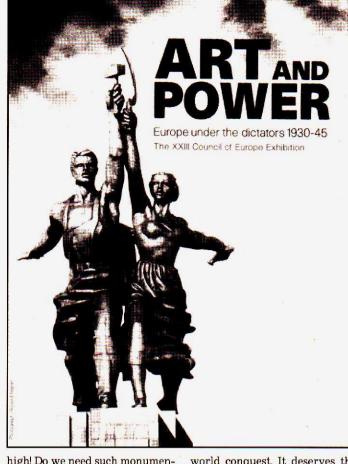
'In these countries, distinctions between art and politics were eroded, and artists were compelled to take sides. Some prospered; others were censored, forced to flee or killed.'

Art and Power is organised around the 1937 Paris International Exhibition of Arts and Technology in Modern Life. In the first section is a giant photographic panorama of it. The German and Russian pavilions confront each other, 'symbolising the ideological battle between Fascism and Communism'.

A huge eagle and swastika faces Vera Mukhina's towering sculpture of the Industrial Worker and Collective Farm Girl striding boldly toward the enemy camp, arms raised, one holding a hammer and the other a sickle.

Mukhina's work is fascinating, not because of its power to influence, but as a grotesque reflection of reality. If only the workers and peasants were in the throes of their own emancipation, sweeping reaction and the 'muck of ages' before them.

The original was eight stories



high! Do we need such monumental art?

The Spanish pavilion, recreated in the next section of Art and Power, contained Picasso's Guernica, 'his protest against the bombing of the Basque town in April 1937 by German planes of the Condor Legion', made especially for the Paris exhibition.

The Spanish Civil War still raged between the Republican government and Franco's fascist forces.

Linking this exhibition with Ken Loach's Land and Freedom, I would say Stalinism was, in a sense, more barbaric than Fascism. Not that it was more aggressive toward bourgeois democracy, or more anti-semitic, or had a more insane desire for

world conquest. It deserves this harsh judgement because of its betrayal of the working class, the agency of the world revolution.

The power of art is no match for 'bodies of armed men', either the Stalinist GPU secret police or Nazi Gestapo.

Yet art can and must recover from the events of 'midnight in the century' — the 1930s — and now the collapse of so-called 'Communism'.

Today the crisis of art is expressed through cynicism, and art for money's sake. But the revival of art in opposition to tyranny and capitalist alienation also requires the revival of the intelligentsia's belief in Marxism, as both a dialectical science and an emancipatory ideology.

### Science focus A monthly column by Daniel Robertson,

principal scientist at a leading bio-technology company

Workers Press Saturday 16 December 1995 PAGE 7

#### The economics of genocide

I WROTE on 9 September that UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCG) was producing a report which concluded that actions to prevent global warming were not 'cost effective' due to the allegedly low value of black lives that would be most affected by the damage.

In a last-minute development, a foreword to the report effectively denounces this conclusion by saying 'the value of life has meaning beyond monetary value'.

This was the result of a virtually one-person campaign by an unemployed viola player — Aubrey Meyer — disgusted at the 'economics of genocide'.

Working from his bed-sitter in Willesden, north London, he has lobbied people all over the world in a frontal attack on these inhumane calculations.

Cuban delegates, backed by the Brazilians, at the recent IPCG meeting in Montreal forced through the amendment, taking the lead from Aubrey's arguments. The document is still intact, but the foreword makes clear the nature of the objections to its contents.

This is an example of the way bourgeois economics reduces everything, even human lives, to commodities or exchange values.

It also demonstrates the clarity that could be brought to environmental issues and the opportunities to illustrate capitalist economic theory's inhumanity by an organised Marxist intervention.

We should not shy away from tackling 'official' world bodies on these issues.

#### It's official!

ANOTHER deliberation of interest from the IPCG is a statement from its scientific working group that global warming is a reality.

After this year's dry summer and unnaturally warm autumn (the warmest this century) readers will not want much convincing. But this conclusion was only reached after tortuous debate.

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Dow Chemicals were particularly vocal in their objections! The statement includes the conclusion that the evidence now suggests 'a discernible human influence on global climate'.

The scientific evidence examined includes the data referred to in my article on 26 August that includes the impact of both CO2 and aerosols such as sulphur dioxide on likely warming.

This produces a close fit between the theoretical model and observed temperature increases since the industrial revolution.

But most of the 0.5°C increase attributed to global warming this century has actually occurred in the last 35 years. But 0.5°C in 35 years sounds more dramatic than

A further unfortunate conclusion is that as efforts to reduce acid rain and smog by reducing sulphur dioxide emissions have an impact the warming effect will be given a dramatic boost.

The warming curve is now clearly beginning to accelerate upwards. Now it's official we can expect the excuses for inactivity from capitalist governments will become even more ingenious.

#### The dialectics of destruction

I HAVE argued a number of times that the development of the world-climate crisis is a good illustration of the strength of the dialectical method.

Now Professor Goudie at Oxford university has claimed that although some projections of sea-level rises are over-pessimistic, great damage could still be done because of the way in which

this process will develop. Gradual rises in global temperature will not produce a steady rise in sea level, but sudden catastrophic changes over

short periods. Researchers at St Andrews university have also observed that past sea-level rises have always been sudden and catastrophic, rather than gradual.

Even the IPCG report above observes that 'surprises and unanticipated sudden changes' are the order of the day.

This is a clear illustration of the Hegelian transformation of quantity into quality, although the scientists involved would not be aware of this!

The dialectical method needs to be developed for application to other controversial areas of science where the political right are attempting to score ideological points. The stormy area of race. class and genetics is a particularly urgent area.

#### Ossie rabbit wipe out

THE cataclysmic damage that viruses can cause to mammalian life has been illustrated by recent developments in Australia.

Apparently an experiment being performed on an island that involved infecting rabbits with a calcivirus accidentally jumped to the mainland.

At least 7 million rabbits have now died in a matter of months. The virus is spreading at the rate of 8km a day. It is projected to wipe out Australia's rabbit population in a very short time with quite unpredictable effects on the balance of nature.

Grazing by rabbits dominates the ecosystem in many areas.

The only people happy about this are farmers. This outbreak is similar in impact to the myxomatosis that devastated rabbit populations around the world some decades ago.

Like then farmers are deliberately spreading the virus to wipe out unwanted rabbit populations.

Conservationists are less happy as the long-term effect of a sudden change is unknown. This illustrates again the threat to all mammals. including humans, from previously isolated viruses.

#### Calory-free fat

J.J. PLANT wrote recently of the way in which capitalism manipulates women into looking and smelling differently from the way they normally do (Letters, 18 November). The obsession with slimming, promoted to support a vast range of highly profitable industries, is a prime example.

The latest gimmick is a synthesised fat material that cannot be digested. Foods prepared using this material will thus have much reduced calorie content.

The American FDA's Food Advisory Committee has decided 'Olestra' is safe to eat.

However, there are dissenting voices. Side effects such as stomach cramps, bloating and diarrhoea have been reported.

One symptom is 'passive oi loss', which is anal leaking of the undigested material!

But more serious is the possibility that it will leach essential vitamins and important anti-oxi-

dant carotenoids from the body. Manufacturers Procter & Gamble claim they will try to address such problems, but con-

cerns remain. Hopefully full approval of this material will not be granted. Is this another food

#### 'Mad cow' disease

THE first draft of this column included a section on 'mad cow disease in which I commented on the failure of the media to take this topic sufficiently seriously.

In the last two weeks this has changed with a vengeance! Readers must be wondering what to

Next week's paper will include an article looking at this frightening problem objectively

## **Earliest out-of-Africa** BY STEVE DRURY

A TEAM of Chinese, US, Canadian and Dutch scientists has found fascinating new evidence about early human evolution and migration in a cave in central China, and report their discovery in the scientific journal Nature

(16 March). The cave deposits contain jaw fragments of what may be the early human Homo erectus together with the most primitive stone tools known, and they are dated at up to 1.9 million years

Previously, the oldest Asian hominids (the general term for species on the human evolutionline) in China and Indonesia dated back at most to 1.5 million

The much earlier age throws up several fascinating aspects about the conditions under which conscious beings migrated from their evolutionary birthplace.

Aside from the fact that it is Africa where most of the fossil evidence for human evolution comes from, studies of the genetic make up of modern humans from all continents provides strong evidence that fully modern humans originated there.

The genetic evidence suggests that all living humans can trace back their ancestry to a single woman living in Africa about 200,000 years ago.

Her lineage survived, but those of all other women living at that time ended some time in the past, probably before 100,000 years ago.

The migration of Homo sapiens out of Africa, taking a sophisticated tool-using culture and language to all corners of the Earth except Antarctica began about 100,000 years ago.

## migration

The further from Africa and the more recent the colonisation. the greater the difference between an indigenous group's genes and those in Africa.

In Africa, different regional groups of people show greater genetic differences than anywhere, which confirms the great antiquity of human occupation of that continent.

The Chinese find represents the very first wave of migration of early hominids out of Africa.

The tools that were found are extremely primitive, being broken and crudely sharpened pebbles of hard, flinty rock — they are known to be tools because such rocks are not found in the immediate vicinity of the cave, and must have been brought there deliberately.

These so-called 'erects' were conscious beings; had they been unable to create a 'second nature' of tools and social culture around themselves they would not have survived outside the warmth and plentiful food supplies of Africa.

The primitive stone tools are an indisputable sign of consciousness and labour, but at the high latitude of the cave deposit survival must have depended on tools made of less durable materials, fire, shelter and perhaps even

One of the peculiarities of the Asian 'erects', which spanned a period from 1.9 million to little more than 100,000 years ago, is that their stone tools remained primitive throughout their occupation.

At about 1.7 million years, African archaeology records the

sudden appearence of a revolutionary new design of great intri-

cacy: the Acheulean hand axe. Such tools, that crop up throughout Africa and in Europe and India from about 600,000 undoubtedly were 'invented' by African 'erects', and were used by both Neanderthals and early modern humans.

The implication of long-lived primitive culture in Asia is that the early migrants were isolated for 1.8 million years, and evolved separately.

Another anomaly is that 'erects' did not make appearence in Europe and the Middle East until 1.4 million years ago at the earliest; had the earliest migration been along the west coast of the Red Sea the migrants would surely have dispersed in all directions through Eurasia.

An explanation for this is that at 1.9 million years, the Red Sea was land locked, and the most likely route would have been direct from Ethiopia to Yemen, and then through Arabia and eastwards.

Some time later the Red Sea opened to the Indian Ocean through the Straits of Bab el Mandab, forcing later waves of migration through Palestine and opening up the route to Europe, as well as to Asia.

Finally, the 1.9 million year date for the Chinese remains is indistinguishable from that of the first appearence of African 'erects', suggesting either an

explosion out of Africa with some ill-defined advance in conscious-ness or culture, or that the Chinese remains are of some yet older human species.

Detailed studies of the teeth shows enough differences from those of definite African 'erects' to suggest that they belonged to an earlier African species, Homo ergaster or 'Action Man'.

These and many other developments in human prehistory in the century since the posthumous publication of Engels's The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man in 1896, show a much more complicated and protracted picture than he envisaged.

We are not the first conscious single surviving branch of a complex 'bush' of at least five tool-using, social and therefore human

All originated in Africa, but their creation of a 'second nature around them gave them the opportunity to spread far and wide, as circumstances both demanded and permitted.

Each sprang from a continuous line of evolutionary descent that led eventually to ourselves but evidently underwent separate development only to become extinct.

It is quite possible that when modern humans reached east Asia around 100,000 years ago, they came into contact with Action Man's descendants, who had almost 2 million years of continuous biological and cultural heritage.

Competition for resources at a time of globally deteriorating climate led to the earliest migrants' demise, as happened to the Neanderthals 35,000 years ago when they met modern humans in Page 8

Saturday 16 December 1995

Newsdesk 0171-387 0564

Send your letters and photos — Deadline Monday 🕏 Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB Telephone: 0171-387 0564 Fax: 0171-387 0569

E-mail: s0gp@exnet.co.uk Liverpool dockers fight strike-busters

#### CKET FLIES T SACKED Liverpool dockers are putting a picket line BALTIMORE on the docks at Baltimore in the United States to ask members of the International Longshoremen's Union to refuse to work on the 36,000-tonne 'Atlantic Conveyor' which was loaded by scabs. Two pickets flew It now looks certain that the strike will be a long and bitter battle.

In 11 weeks of strike, the dockers have won enormous support throughout Merseyside. Their last march and rally on 2 December was attended by thousands of trade unionists from all parts of the country and now they are beginning to win support from seafarers and tugboat workers.

■ Israeli seafarers delayed cargo handling on their vessel for 48 hours in solidarity with the Liverpool dockers, and the captain of a steel ship took his vessel out of Liverpool with much of the cargo still in the hold when he saw the damage being wreaked by scabs.

■ Mersey's tugboats were pulled off the river for 24-hours from midnight on 11 December by crews acting in solidarity with sacked dockers. Tugboat workers are discussing further support. Their jobs are also threatened in proposed changes to their present contracts by Alexandra

Towing and Cory Towing.

The dockers' stand is assisted by the decision of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) executive to launch a hardship fund for their families. But the union leadership will not make the strike official for fear of sequestration of its funds. The same fear in 1989 isolated the dockers, defeated the strike and left every port in the country, except Liverpool, without trade union organisation.

That is why Liverpool dockers find themselves in opposition to other dockers in Britain. Strikebusting employment agency International, already operates in Southampton, is shipping in scabs to Liverpool from there. Scabs are also being brought from the Medway now owned by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, bought with money obtained by cashing-in government shares (i.e. taxpayers' money).

Dockers in those ports have no union recognition, no guarantee of permanent employment and their contract stipulates they must work where and when the employer decides. That is how the port employers were able get the labour to handle 'Atlantic Conveyer'.

To add fuel to the fire, under e direction of the ship owner, Atlantic Conveyor's captain manoeuvred the vessel out of the port without the help of tugs. The

#### BY DOT GIBSON

company and the captain are not in contempt of the law despite taking such a risk with a 36,000tonne vessel.

But, less than a week after the TGWU executive committee meeting had decided against official recognition of the docks strike, EC member Danny Maher, leader of the tugboat workers, found himself in contempt of the law by supporting the dockers and their families.

But how could it be otherwise? In a Workers Press interview (9 December), the Liverpool dock-

'The answer to this question has a lot to do with the type of labour movement we are talking about.... It's illegal for workers in one [section] to support workers in the others. Do we let that stop us from supporting each other? We say, no!'

The Liverpool dockers are determined to defend their union and resist the conditions which exist in Southampton, Medway and the other British ports. That's why they are breaking the law. And it was for similar reasons that the post office workers in Scotland also

Writing in 11 November edition of 'New Times' (paper of the Democratic Left) Steve Mumby says that the dockers should not have been provoked into refusing to cross a picket line.

But the picket line was not the provocation. The provocation was the port employers' decision to sack 20 Torside dockers and introduce casual labour in a port where tonnages are at an all-time high at over 32 million tonnes and profits have risen from £8.3 million in 1989 to £33.6 million in 1994.

The Liverpool dockers' decision to act against casual labour without delay was 100 per cent correct. They knew when the strike started they could not rely on dockers in other ports to support them because the 1989 defeat meant that the tradition of trade union solidarity was broken.

Shop stewards' committee sec-

ers' leader Jim Nolan said:

broke the law.

retary, Jim Davies said: 'These problems are to be expected, but with assistance from our international brothers, we can change the situation.'

## Bosnia: it's not yet over

protesters (banner on right) outside Lancaster House as foreign ministers from 40 countries arrived for talks last week on implementing the US-imposed Dayton peace agreement.

'Bosnia is not the end of the story . . .', said the Kosovans' leaflet. Since 1989, 2 million Albanians in Kosova have confronted an apartheid regime in the heart of Europe.'

Tory Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind was challenged at a press conference later as to what would happen if trouble broke out in Kosova, where 60,000 Serb troops and special police are stationed, and over 140,000 ethnic Albanian workers have been sacked on racist grounds.

In Sarajevo last week, thousands of students demonstrated for unity of the city, countering Serb-nationalist demands for partition. 'Serb Republic' vice-president Nikola Koljevic, tipped as NATO and Milosevic-backed replacement for Karadzic, was revealed as responsible for artillery bombardments of civilian areas of Sarajevo. The Bosnian capital has not yet recovered from siege. As bitterly cold weather came this month, gas and electricity were rationed. Pneumonia was rife.

Croat opposition parties demonstrated in Dubrovnik against the Tudjman regime's plan to hand over the Prevlaka pensinsula to Serb rule in exchange for land in Bosnia and Herzegovina. UN officers complained Croat troops were looting and burning houses in Mrkonjic Grad, central Bosnia, due to be handed back to the Serb nationalists under the Dayton agreement. There were also reports of more Muslim and Croat familes being evicted by the Serb Chetniks around Banja Luka.



## Australian miners defend their trade union rights

#### **BY COLIN PENDLETON**

MINERS at the Weipa bauxite mines in Queensland, Australia, owned by a subsidiary of the British Rio Tinto Zinc company (RTZ), have beaten off an attack on their right to union represen-

Conzinc Riotinto Australia (CRA) began introducing individual work contracts at the Weipa site two years ago, having already used them elsewhere. Many workers needed a job and were prepared to sign on. although a condition of the contract was that they give up union membership.

Out of 430 manual workers at Weipa, just 71 resisted the antiunion move. Two months ago they went on strike demanding the same pay as those on contract, as in many cases they were doing the same work.

The company was paying from A\$12,000 to A\$15,000 above the going rate achieved by union bargaining, in order to break people from their union.

It had also cut back overtime for those who refused to sign contracts, and was imposing confidential individual contracts as a condition of employment for new workers.

For almost a century Australian workers have worked under industry awards which were either legally binding agreements or arbitrated decisions. These covered both wages and conditions, and applied to all workers, whether union members or not.

In the post-war years of relative boom and union strength, workers gained wage increases, better conditions and shorter

Over the past decade, employers have sought to weaken unions, replace centralised pay awards with 'enterprise bargaining', and put increasing numbers of workers on individual con-

The right-wing Labour federal government has helped, and so has unemployment. Meanwhile union membership fell from over half to just over a third of the workforce.

The Weipa dispute is seen as a turning point. Driven by workers' anger and readiness to fight back, which the approach of federal elections early in 1996 has encouraged rather than dampened, the leaders of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) actually decided to support the struggle for once. They might even win back some mem-

When the company took out summonses against striking workers, threatening them with huge fines, miners took solidarity action at other CRA mines, and began a week-long strike in the coal industry.

#### **Blockade**

Dockers and seafarers, now combined in the Maritime Union of Australia, imposed a blockade on tugs bringing ships in and out of Weipa with CRA cargoes, and held up a ship handling CRA cargo in New Zealand.

The ACTU said it would extend the action against CRA to power, oil and chemical industries, and to all forms of transport. Nigel Gould, secretary of the Construction, Forestry and Mining Union (CFMEU) lodge at Weipa said members were fighting for equal pay, two years' back pay, 'and we want a future for our children'

Messages of solidarity poured in with donations to the Weipa strike fund. Despite the company's divisive tactics and media attempts to discredit solidarity action, the Weipa strikers had community support. Weipa is a 'company town', with only one, high-priced supermarket, but local small businesses anonymously helped strikers' families.

Rupert Murdoch's the 'Australian' typified capitalist media support for CRA: 'The changes are desirable and inevitable,' said an editorial on 17 November.

'The traditional role of unions has had to give way to the rise of individual choice, as exercised by the movement towards individual contracts. These changes provoke two key questions: are they good for workers? and are they good for the nation? The answer in both cases is "yes".'

Some free choice! You can either have a job or join a union! And remember, the Murdoch executives were Tony Blair's hosts when he flew to Australia.

Faced with widening action, the federal Labour government decided to call in the Industrial Commission, a judicial body which has binding arbitration powers.

The Commission declared that union members must not be discriminated against, and that unions had a right to be part of

collective bargaining. It reaffirmed a previous statement that 'a system of individual contracts between a company and each of its employees is one at variance with our system of industrial relations, which since its inception has been based upon collective processes as the means of providing terms and conditions of employment.

#### Affirmed

It also affirmed that 'equal pay for equal work should be based on a fair assessment...

Having declared these principles, the Industrial Commission ordered a return to work and further negotiations, but not before deciding on an 8 per cent rise for all non-contract workers, backdated to March 1994.

Negotiations have begun, with union participation. The rightwing Labour leaders have reasserted their backing for enterprise agreements and individual contracts, talking of 'unhitching' workers from national awards. The ACTU leaders remain hitched to Labour's

But 71 workers at a remote north Queensland town have taken on a giant mining corpora-tion for their principles, and tasted victory with the backing of their mates throughout Australia; and the Australian working class has shown solidarity is strength.

## **Workers Press** SUBSCRIBE

to the socialist weekly that tells the truth Please send me

□ 10 issues for £5.60

 $\square$  50 issues for £27.60

INTERNATIONAL RATES: Europe and Near East, £7.70 for 10 issues, 50 for £38.50; Africa, Americas and India £12.70 for 10 issues, 50 for £63.50; Australia,

Japan and E Asia 10 issues for £13.70, 50 for £68.50. Address .....

> ...... l enclose £...... for my subscription, and

an extra donation of £......

Make cheques, POs payable to Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Printed by Trade Union Printing Services, 30 Lime Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 2PQ (0191-222 0299)