New Labour's women's rights and the left

For free abortion on demand!

For women's liberation through socialist revolution!

A few months ago the front pages of the tabloid press were splashed with ultrasound images of foetuses declared to be smiling, waving and even “walking” in the womb. Although the overwhelming majority of the population in Britain is in favour of abortion rights, there has been an increase in calls for further restrictions on abortion from the powers-that-be who deem themselves the self-appointed guardians of what a woman should have a child. Tony Blair said that the question of the time limits for abortion should be put to a free vote in parliament as a matter of “conscience”. Liberal Lord David Steel, the former MP who introduced the 1967 Act legalising abortion, maintains that the time limit should be reduced from 24 to 22 weeks. In an article titled “We need to rethink my abortion law” (Guardian, 6 July), Steel argues that advances in medical technology have demonstrated that foetuses are viable at 22 weeks. This was captured in an article on Scotland on Sunday by Marina Benjamin (11 July): “Compared to the anti-abortion who rely on the Bible and not the arguably more influential medical profession on side, Lord Steel and his ilk sound ridiculous.” Set the limit at the age when a baby is able (technological aid notwithstanding) to survive outside the womb they argue, and bingo! You have a moral law.” She goes on to wonder, if medical science discovered a way to keep four-week-old foetuses alive in jam jars, would the government then restrict the upper time limit on abortions to one month?

Before 1967 abortion in this country was illegal except in the most extreme circumstances. Like every other social question in this class-divided society, the right to an abortion was and is fought for with power and privilege. Those with the money and the political clout were able to get an abortion while countless women, particularly among the working class and the poor, were horribly mutilated and many died as a result of back-alley abortions. And like every other right secured by the working class and oppressed under capitalism, the right to abortion was not freely granted but a benefitting right was won as a product of social struggle. The mass movement in the US for black civil rights, together with the growing protests against the Vietnam War, had an impact on youth here as well. Together with laws decriminalising homosexuality, liberalising divorce and abolishing capital punishment, which were introduced in the same period in the Second World War.

By the mid/late-1960s, there was growing disillusionment in the post-war promises of prosperity and increasing combative among the working class in the face of attacks by Harold Wilson’s Labour government, which included mounting unemployment, wage restraints and attacks on free

For free abortion on demand!

The firefighters’ struggle for a living wage has become a test of strength between the unions and this vicious Labour government that is itching to break the powerful Fire Brigades Union (FBU). The employers — local authorities mainly run by Labour — have refused to pay the meagre wage increase the FBU leaders agreed to last year. The government stacked a negotiating meeting with councillors in order to vote down a deal that was about to be agreed. Labour’s hostility to the FBU was doubtless further encouraged when the union membership voted to disaffiliate from the Labour Party at the FBU conference in June. Now, with the FBU balancing its members for strike action, John Prescott’s office has threatened that if the government will use the army to break a strike.

If today Labour smells blood, it’s because in the previous strike the FBU leadership capitulated rather than wage the kind of class battle that was needed. Taking place on the eve of the Iraq war, the firefighters strike had the potential to do enormous damage to Blair’s mobilisation for the bloody invasion of Iraq. Then as now, Labour threatened to use the army to break picket lines and to seize red fire engines. This should have been met with a commitment from the unions to build mass picket lines at the fire stations. Instead, FBU leader Andy Gilchrist announced: “Firefighters are neither prepared nor looking to hinder the armed forces.” As we said at the time: “A leadership that proposes passive acquiescence in the face of such union-busting is not a leadership! This is contrary to the interests of firefighters and all workers looking to the FBU for a lead. A battle contested before the fight is a battle lost!” (“Victory to the FBU!”, Socialist Worker leaflet, 19 November 2000).

However the FBU leadership called off the strikes just as they were beginning to bite. Hundreds of thousands of opponents of the Iraq war supported the FBU, while the strikes also rekindled the kind of solidarity not seen since the miners strike of 20 years ago, from Turkish and Kurdish organisations and others targeted under the so-called “war on terror”, to local government workers, many of whom are women and immigrants. Today, an FBU strike against the Blair government could ignite some real class struggle, including from desperately underpaid civil service workers facing massive job losses and dockers who are also being bailed out for strike action.

Arguing for disaffiliation from Labour at the FBU conference Tony Maguire, a union member from Northern Ireland, said: “Our party, the party that we nurtured through the Thatcher years and the party trade unions gave millions of pounds to, has stabbed us not in the back, but in the heart”. But even before Blair, Old Labour was hardly committed to the defence of the working class. A mass reformist party, when in power it definded the interests of British imperialism at home and abroad. Labour used troops to break the firefighters strike in 1977; sent the troops to Northern Ireland in 1969 to introduce racist immigration controls.

Today both the Iraqi people suffering brutal occupation and the multiethnic working class in Britain have a common enemy: the British capitalist class and its state — which consists of the army, the police and the prison system. The army that Labour threatens to use against the FBU is regularly used to do the dirty work of this ruling class not only in Iraq but in Northern Ireland, where it is an instrument of oppression against the Catholic minority. What’s required is a class-struggle leadership in the unions that will fight for what workers need, not what capitalism can afford. We seek to build a multietnic revolutionary workers party dedicated to the overthrow of this system of capitalist exploitation and replace it with a planned, socialist economy.
A 24 June Supreme Court ruling in the case of Bev. v. Banks puts the death sentence back in court in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Jamal was convicted in 1982 on frame-up charges of killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner on 9 December 1981 and sentenced to death. Ruling on Jamal’s federal habeas corpus challenge to his conviction and death sentence, in December 1991 the federal district court judge William Yohn overturned Jamal’s sentence. Yohn overturned the death sentence on the grounds that the jury did not consider and unanimously vote on the possible mitigating circumstances against sentencing him to death. This procedure was explicitly found unconstitutional by the 1988 Supreme Court ruling in Mills v. Maryland. At the same time Yohn affirmed the conviction, refusing to even hear the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Jamal, shot and killed Faulkner. The prosecution appealed, seeking restoration of Jamal’s death sentence. Mumia appealed, seeking to overturn the conviction.

In the Bev. v. Banks decision in June, written by Clarence Thomas, the Supreme Court grotesquely ruled that the Mills holding could not be used to challenge cases decided before 1988 — it could not be applied retroactively. Although the jury procedure that sent George Banks to death row was identical to that found unlawful in the Mills case, Mills would live while Banks (and dozens of others) is to die. The technicality the court used became “final” eight months before the Mills decision. This is just the latest in a labyrinth of court rules, legal machines, in-and-out-of-hand used to secure the executions of hundreds of death row inmates after evidence of innocence and exposure of gross constitutional violations that put them in the shadow of death in the first place.

In the 1992 Herrera case, the Supreme Court announced that the execution of an innocent person is not unconstitutional. Democratic president Clinton’s Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, and a 1995 Pennsylvania law adopting draconian time limitations for “discovering” new evidence to challenge a death sentence, have both been used by federal and state courts to bar Beverly’s confession and other evidence of Mumia’s innocence.

For over two years, Jamal’s habeas corpus appeal has been on hold as the third party is likely to be present and the age of consent for gay men was set at 21, until 2001 when it was lowered to 16. The 1917 Russian October Revolution led by the Bolsheviks for the first time laid the basis for real equality for women and eliminated all laws against homosexuality. These emancipatory principles were later reversed as the Stalinist bureaucracy sought to entrench itself in part by reinforcing the family and traditional social values.

The present sexual legislation in the Soviet Union is the work of the October Revolution.

After the successful revolution, after the triumph of practice over theory, people first strove for new, firm regulations along economic lines. Along with this were created models governing family life and form of sexual relations responding to the needs and natural demands of the people....

The revolution let nothing remain of the old despotic and infinitely unscientific laws; it did not tread the path of reformist bourgeois legislation which, with juristic subtlety, still hangs on to the concept of property in the sexual sphere, and ultimately demands that the double standard hold sway over sexual life,...

Now by taking into account all these aspects of the transition period, Soviet legislation bases itself on the following principle:

"It declares the abolition of interference of the state and society into sexual matters, so long as nobody is injured, and no one’s interests are encroached upon" (emphasis in original)....

Concerning homosexuality, sodomy, and various other forms of sexual gratification, which are set down in European legislation as offenses against public morality — Soviet legislation treats these exactly the same as so-called ‘natural’ intercourse. All forms of sexual intercourse are private matters. Only when there’s use of force or duress, as in general when there’s an injury or encroachment upon the rights of another person, is there a question of criminal prosecution.


TROTSKY LENIN

The Bolsheviks abolished laws against homosexuality

Tony Blair’s recent diatribe against the "liberal 1960s" is part of a reactionary crusade to reinforce "family values". In an international climate of social struggle, 1967 in Britain saw major achievements such as the legalisation of abortion and decriminalisation of homosexuality. The latter however included a misnamed "privacy clause" stating that "no act could take place where a third party is likely to be present" and the age of consent for gay men was set at 21, until 2001 when it was lowered to 16. The 1917 Russian October Revolution led by the Bolsheviks for the first time laid the basis for real equality for women and eliminated all laws against homosexuality. These emancipatory principles were later reversed as the Stalinist bureaucracy sought to entrench itself in part by reinforcing the family and traditional social values.

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**WORKERS HAMMER**

Marxist newspaper of the Spartanist League/Britain

For a federation of workers republics in the British isles! For a Society of Equals of Europe!

The Spartanist League is the British section of the International Communist League (Fourth International).

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**WORKERS HAMMER**
We reprint below a recent application letter to the Spartacus Youth Group, slightly edited for publication. ET Lenins, leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, said that each generation of youth comes to socialism in its own way. In her application, comrade Ariel traces how her fight to socialism in its own way. In her youth and oppression of capitalist society took her from politics aimed at pressuring the capitalist rulers to be more “humane” through the mass mobilisations against the Iraq war to a revolutionary perspective.

As she notes, in a political climate conditioned by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the former Soviet Union and the bourgeois triumpahal proclamations that Marxism has proven to be a “failed experiment”, it is very difficult for youth today to “imagine the overthrow of capitalism”. Her application letter underlines that beginning to study the history of the 1917 Russian Revolution, the first and only successful working-class revolution, as well as becoming aware of the lessons of both the heroic struggles of the 1984-85 miners strike and its defeat were critical to being won to the programme of proletarian revolutionary internationalism. This led her to join the SYG, an apprentice school for young revolutionaries to become the future cadre of the Bolshevik party that can lead the struggle for victorious socialist revolution.

I first became interested in politics when I was eleven years old. A small anti-abortion group was protesting outside our local hospital because it was the only place within a 60-mile radius where a single doctor performed abortions. Every day they stood opposite the hospital with placards showing pictures of aborted foetuses. I began asking questions and at eleven years old I came to the conclusion that it is a fundamental right for women to access abortion. I spent the following ten years involved in a myriad of left-wing campaigns, including, but not limited to, working on referendums to ban discrimination against gays in employment; protesting the use of child labour by Wal-Mart manufacturers; attacking the economic rights of single mothers; fighting for the rights of tenants; protesting the economic sanctions against Iraq and protesting the bombing of Iraq in 1998. I threw myself into these campaigns with the passion of someone who wanted to see a better and more just world. Though I was involved in many different campaigns, they all had one significant similarity: they all were based on the belief that one could pressure the government into acting on the side of justice.

Though I had many strong beliefs, I never thought beyond the bounds of capitalism. I grew up in a rural, back­ward area and people did not talk about socialism. I was only eight when the Soviet Union collapsed. I found it initially difficult, as I was too young during the existence of the Soviet Union to understand the significance of its collapse at the time.

At this time I was becoming more radical and unequivocally opposed to capitalism, despite not seeing any clear means to dispose of capitalism and rebuild a socialist internationalism. I began discussing socialism on any remotely political tendency in Britain and started writing political letters to left-wing journals.

I thought that two million people on the streets of London would prevent the British government from going to war; they went to war despite this and it left me and probably at least a million others feeling completely and utterly disempowered. The war had officially begun again at the Stop the War Coalition’s London demo during March and felt even more disempowered. The war had officially begun at the Stop the War Coalition’s London demo during March and the numbers of demonstrators dropped significantly. It went from two million on the streets in February before the start of the war to significantly fewer in March after the bombing had begun. I quickly understood why there was such a significant drop in the numbers by the middle of the demo, I decided that I would never again attend a demo called by Stop the War because they peddled the illusion that we could sufficiently pressure the government into not going to war by merely marching through the streets. I do not think I was alone when I thought that two million people on the streets of London would prevent the British government from going to war; they went to war despite this and it left me and probably at least a million others feeling completely and utterly disempowered.

I, too, would have stayed home and had I not encountered the Spartacist League and the Spartacus Youth Group. I had been reading Workers Vanguard for a few months and after the March demonstration against the war, I decided to contact the organisation as its revolutionary politics were beginning to appeal to me. I felt an amazing sense of self-gratification when I filled nine coaches bound for London. I felt that if we got two million people on the streets that would be enough to pressure the British government to listen to the people and not to go to war. All sense of gratification faded shortly after I arrived in London. In every direction I could see liberal placards with slogans such as “US—no, UN—yes” and “No war without a second resolution”. I was frustrated and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good idea that we had defeated and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good idea that we had defeated and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good idea that we had defeated and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good idea that we had defeated and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good idea that we had defeated and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good idea that we had defeated and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good idea that we had defeated and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good idea that we had defeated and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good idea that we had defeated and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good idea.
The American left and the "Iraqi resistance" US/Britain out of Iraq now!

We publish below in slightly adapted form an article from Workers Vanguard no 830, 6 August 2004, the paper of our sister group the Spartacist League/US. Many capitalist governments around the world, not least in Europe, are hoping for the election of John Kerry who promises to "mend fences" with America's "allies", meaning he will allow them to join in the brutal occupation and subjugation of Iraq. The article expounds the militant pretensions of groups on the American left whose aim is to utilize anti-war sentiment to boost support for the Democratic Party, which they sometimes disguise behind cheering for the so-called "Iraqi resistance". As can be seen in the case of Workers Power in Britain, who raised the call to May for "victory to the Iraqi resistance", this is not as radical as it sounds. Workers Power has been part of the Stop the War Coalition that didn't even call for defence of Iraq and whose strategy was to pressure Blair's Labour Party to associate itself from "Bush's war", which is a far cry from seeking the military defeat of British imperialism. Not to mention that it called for "critical support" to Labour in the May local elections! Meanwhile in the US elections, the Socialist Workers Party (Britain) and the American affiliate of the Socialist Party have both endorsed Ralf Nader, a capitalist politician who has made his name coming up against the imperialist "war coalition to push the Democratic Party in a "progressive" direction.

What does Iraq look like since the belated handover of sovereignty?

Exactly like a country under merciless US/British imperialist military occupation with hand-picked satraps returned from exile and crowned by Washington as local "democratic" leaders. The new prime minister, Iyad Allawi, is a thug who did well work for the American CIA, British MI6 and the Ba'ath Party's intelligence agency. Just days before becoming prime minister, Allawi personally shot dead six handcuffed and blinding prisoners in the courtyard of a Baghdad police station (reported by Paul McGeough, Sydney Morning Herald, 17 July). The morgue overflowed with rotting corpses and as the mercury hits 114 degrees Fahrenheit, "Baghdad is a city that reeks with the stench of the dead" (Robert Fisk, Independent, 28 July).

Ordinary citizens are blown to bits by US/Britain and their allies. The new Iraqi Hommes de main, like the US ambassador in Baghdad, James Jeffrey, are turned in by the very same forces fighting the occupation armies. And we condemn the kidnappings and disappearances of foreign civilians workers in Iraq.

We are external to the situation in Iraq and our task at this point in time is therefore necessarily largely propagandistic, but no less crucial. While making clear that the main enemy is US imperialism, a revolutionary party with roots and influence in Iraq today would mobilise against the reversion of sharia, against communist sectarianism, against all vestiges of the workers movement and the legions of the unemployed on a class basis through strikes and workplace occupations against the thieving imperialist occupiers and parasitic clerics.

Equitable resolution of the democratic rights of all the peoples of Iraq, and the Near East more broadly, cannot be achieved under capitalism but only with the overthrow of the imperialist rule in the region and the establishment of a socialist federation of the Near East. This is the Trotskyist program of building a "counter-revolution". This means combining the struggle against the occupation with a struggle against all manner of bourgeois nationalism and religious fanaticism. It poses the urgent need to forge Marxist parties to lead the struggles for the working people to come to power throughout the international. Regional extension of the revolution to the rich centers of imperialism—the United States, Germany, Japan, Britain—is vital, or, as Marx noted, "all the old crap" will return.

Revolutionaries vs reformists in the anti-war movement.

We oppose calls to cloak an imperialist occupation in "humanitarian" United Nations garb. We oppose the liberals and ostensible lefties who forget that the way out of the Iraq occupation is "regime change" in Washington in November. The rape of Iraq was 3 years and 4 years of crippling United Nations sanctions and thousands of murderous bombing sorties ordered by Democratic president Clinton. John Kerry aims to reclaim the White House for the Democrats this fall by outflanking Bush as a war candidate. A solution to the suffering of the peoples in Iraq depends heavily on class struggle at home against US and British imperialism. We fight to instil in the American proletariat the consciousness that the same profit-hungry rulers who smash their unions, drive down wages, destroy health care and education, treasure the workers of Iraq in the interest of capital. This requires a tenacious struggle to swing the tide of reactionary "national unity" which has been cynically whipped up and manipulated by the Bush gang, the Democrats and the AFL-CIO...We call for a labor movement to grow out of the Iraq occupation is "regime change" in Washington in November. The rape of Iraq was 3 years and 4 years of crippling United Nations sanctions and thousands of murderous bombing sorties ordered by Democratic president Clinton. John Kerry aims to reclaim the White House for the Democrats this fall by outflanking Bush as a war candidate. A solution to the suffering of the peoples in Iraq depends heavily on class struggle at home against US and British imperialism. We fight to instil in the American proletariat the consciousness that the same profit-hungry rulers who smash their unions, drive down wages, destroy health care and education, treasure the workers of Iraq in the interest of capital. This requires a tenacious struggle to swing the tide of reactionary "national unity" which has been cynically whipped up and manipulated by the Bush gang, the Democrats and the AFL-CIO...We call for a labor movement to grow out of the Iraq occupation is "regime change" in Washington in November. The rape of Iraq was 3 years and 4 years of crippling United Nations sanctions and thousands of murderous bombing sorties ordered by Democratic president Clinton.

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You can’t raise political consciousness and struggle against war while subordi­
nated to representatives of the capitalist class engaging the war! Coalitions based on
this kind of class collaboration are an obstacle because they shackle anti-war
workers and youth to their class enemy and promote the illusion that the priorities of
the American ruling class can be shifted in the interest of working people through
peace talks with the war criminals. The truth is that anti-capitalist struggle against
war is not merely a policy, but the inexorable product of the drive to conquer new
markets for exploitation and export of cap­
it. That’s why only a series of socialist revolutions to overthrow capitalist power can
create a world planned economy that will put a stop to imperialism. This is the only
solution, and to achieve it requires a fight for the political independence of the
working class of the world and the handfast workers’ party. Break with the Democrats!
Frankenstein’s monster, the "anti-war movement" and the “resistance”
The imperialist war against and occupa­tion of Iraq is a direct consequence of the
counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. Although the
USSR had fallen under the influence of Stalinist misrule, the Soviet Union was still a
workers state with a planned economy and collectivised property. The “anti-war
movement,” led by Stalinist bureaucrats and to implant the revolutionary internationalist and social­
ist perspective in the names of Lenin and Trotsky, Bolsheviks, as we did in the former
USSR, East Germany and elsewhere. Without the Soviet Union to stay the hand of
US imperialism, the world has become a more dangerous place of unbridled
American military intervention and access to petroleum among capital­
ers, which threaten wider conflicts, ultimate­ly including with nuclear weapons.
From the beginning of the Cold War, US policy under Democrats and Repub­
licans was to bolster Islamic fundamental­ism and murderous, authoritarian regimes
(however much they cite as a "democratic"
"Iraqi revolution") which they cite as a
just struggle, requiring the overthrow
of reactionary oppressors of Iraq’s work­ing class. But resistance forces in Iraq
they helped bring about in their own small way through their
craven anti-communism.
The myth of the “national resistance”
Cheerleaders for Third World nation­
alisms among Naomi Hussein and the Ba’athist Party, WWP peddles the myth of
an “Iraqi revolution” which they cite as a
victory for the "national resistance". The
Socialist Worker Party, WWP, is an anti-imperialist and the
independent political force in a strugg­
le against neocolonial rule, each of these
people with their own agenda and alliance with
US imperialism. What “resistance forces” like Moktada al-Sadr’s Shi’ite armed forces are after is to rule Iraq as the local
satraps for imperialism if the US forces
would just get out.
The struggle of the Kurdish people
explores the myth of a unitary Iraqi
nation. Their fight for self-determination is a just struggle for the independence
of four capitalist states. We call for a
Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan! But in Iraq today — and only in Iraq — the
Kurdish question has become decri­
ately subordinated to the occupation, in the sense that the Kurdish political parties and their movement is the local part of the occupation forces. In fact, many Iraqi Kurds mistakenly look with favour on the US forces as a guarantor against Arab reconquest. The struggle for Kurdish independence can only go forward in opposition to the occupation and the Kurdish nationalists who collaborate with US imperialism. To understand what is happening in
Iraq is a myth promoted by US and West­
ernal imperialism and cynical Leftists. When the American military bombed the Sunni town of Falluja and simultaneously went out after Shi’ite cleric Moktada al-Sadr, there were thousands of Kurds fighting against the foreign occupier. But resistance forces led by religious clerics are by definition sectarian. This is the most “anti-war” movement to organise guerilla attacks on US forces — and often against rival groupings and random civilians. In that case, an award for the most analine analysis should go to Nat Weinstein’s Socialist Viewpoint (a split from Socialist Action) whose front page in April cheered, “Iraq: The People United Can Never Be Defeated”.
Defeat US imperialism through a global movement
The flip side of the reformist left’s pan­
dering to liberal Democrats is the dim and
pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric of Jan Nor­
den’s tiny “Internationalist Group”. (For an
expert analysis of this trendy radical organisation, see “IG’s Potemkin Village
continued on page 9

Left: Workers World Party’s ANSWER coalition at 30 March 2003 protest in LA promotes pro-imperialist lie that American occupation forces are “our workers”. Right: Al Sharpton speaking at 26 October 2002 anti-war rally. ANSWER built platforms for capitalist politicians during anti-war movement, serving to bolster illusions in Democratic Party.
Abortion...
(Continued from page 1)

school milk for children. This was com-

bined with a radicalisation of youth in

opposition to the government's support

for the Thatcher government's policies —

Labour slammed the door in the face of
desperate Asians fleeing Kenya — and

Labour's 'marginalisation of Britain' to

the Soviet dominated NATO which was
aimed at the Soviet Union.

In the 1970s, young radicals, many of

whom had joined self-declared Marxist

organisations, fought to defend and

expound the slogan “free abortion on

demand — a woman's right to choose”. Today, a

number of these one-time radicals warm

Among those who view themselves as

feminists today are the so-called "Blair
babes" like Patricia Hewitt and Harriet

Harman who, having "made it" them-

selves, now sanctimoniously preach that

working-class women's "right to choose"

women need a "hand up, not a hand
out" as Labour benefits for single

mothers and rolls back other welfare

programmes. At the same time, it is a

measure of how far to the right the puta-

tive socialist left in this country has gone

that the self-proclaimed alternative to

Blair's New Labour Party — the Social- ism Workers Party's Respect coal-

ition — has become a vehicle for

delivering. A man who openly boasts of his

opposition to abortion. In an inter-

view with the Independent (5 April), Galloway

decided: "I'm against abortion by

choice. I believe life begins at conception,

and therefore unborn babies have rights.

I think abortion is immoral... I believe

women's rights.

Women's rights are won through

struggle. International

Women's Rights...
section of the class against another, we fight for jobs for all through working class action.

—Spartacist League

London 1993. Spartacist League placards at demonstration against reactionary anti-abortion forces.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Soviet Union put forward motions for the right of women to enter the professions and for the right of women to belong to the unions put forward motions for the right of women to enter the professions and for the right of women to belong to the unions. The Soviet Union also put forward a motion for the right of women to vote. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was set up in 1968 and the formation of the National Abortion Campaign in 1975 whose central slogan was “free abortion on demand—a woman’s right to choose”. In the face of a renewed anti-abortion move in Parliament, the Corrie Bill, leftists in the unions put forward motions for the TUC to take up the defence of abortion rights. In October 1979, a few months after the Corrie Bill resoundingly passed second reading in Parliament (as Labour MPs voted with their “conscience”), a demonstration was called by the unions in London. By then more than 60,000 people, with wave after wave of union banners, it was the largest pro-abortion demonstration in British history. In its aftermath the Corrie Bill was withdrawn.

“Labor, what will you do for the women of your party? What will you do for the women of your party?”

The fight for abortion rights in Britain.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the British working class fought for a better world. The rights won by the working class were hard fought for and hard won. The struggle for abortion rights was a key part of that struggle. The fight for abortion rights was not just a fight for women’s rights, but a fight for the rights of all working people.

Respect leader George Galloway openly spouts anti-abortion views while claiming to be “pro-choice”. A year after the victory of the Vietnamese Revolution, by which time the IMAG was already heading Khomeini’s “Islamic Revolution” in Iran, with its pre-feudal imperialism as well as by the Bolsheviks abolished all laws against abortion and homosexuality. They made marriage and divorce simply civil acts, and abolished the concept of illegitimacy. They opened private hospitals to the masses, began to build public kitchens and nurseries and to create residential nurseries.

As Lenin wrote in What Is To Be Done?

The fight for abortion rights in Britain.

Ladies’ starvation threats, their cast-iron morality of family life the husband was to be preserved in his role as the “breadwinner” and the working class were expected to pay a full contribution nor to get full benefits if they opted to pay. Singing workers to the ranks of the unemployed were encouraged to continue to play their traditional role as mothers and domestic servants regardless of whether they worked.

The legalisation of abortion in 1967 was a substantial gain for women. It was never extended to Northern Ireland, where abortion rights are militarised, by churchmen on both sides of the sectarian divide. This left women with the “choice” of either having the child or risking to raise the money to travel to Britain to get an abortion which an estimated two thousand women do each year. In 1968, many women who had abortions here were the product of social struggle, they were also partially prompted by the British rulers’ truly vicious class-hatred of the working class.

As Lesley Hoggart notes in a paper “Feminist Principles meet Political Reality: the case of the National Abortion Campaign”:

“War over a million women were driven out of industries to which they were recruited for the “war effort”. But by the end of the 1940s the Labour government of Clement Attlee appealed for women workers because of a severe labour shortage, particularly in hospitals and transport. By 1948 women were employed in industry by a decade earlier. While this obviously served to loosen “Victory over male chauvinism,” a central ideological pillar of the “wellfare state” was reinforcing the family. As Martin Pugh notes in his book Women and the Women’s Movement in Britain (MacMillan Press, 1992): “its guiding spirit, after all, was an Edwardian social imperialism.” William Beveridge. ‘In the next thirty years’, he wrote, “housewives as Mothers have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate con- tinuance of the British Race and of the British Ideal in the world.”

The fight for abortion rights in Britain.

As a central actor in the National Abortion Campaign was the International Marxist Group (IMG). Its then-young militant cadre, like Tariq Ali and others, were overwhelminly the “children of ‘68” who were radicalised by the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese workers and peasants against US imperialism as well as by the impact of the 1968 general strike in the former Soviet Union, conditions have been thrown back to a level comparable to the time of the tsars. Infant mortality, the standard of life, and expectation of life have plummeted.

Just as attacks on women’s rights are a measure of the increasing depredations of the capitalist order, the rights granted to women following the 1917 Russian Revolution provide a measure of the advances for all of humanity that will come with the overturn of capitalism, the bourgeois philosophy of utilities and the bourgeois economy based on the needs of the many not the profits of the few. Immediately following the 1917 October Revolution, the Bolsheviks abolished all laws against abortion and homosexuality. They made marriage and divorce simply civil acts, and abolished the concept of illegitimacy. They opened private hospitals to the masses, began to build public kitchens and nurseries and to create residential nurseries.

Continued on page 8
Women and Revolution

Heroic women of the miners strike

We print below an edited version of the remarks of Comrade Julia Emery at our well attended anniversary of the miners strike. First of all, I really enjoyed the talks by comrades and by the miners here today, it’s been a very valuable experience for me as obviously I wasn’t around during the strike. I wanted to speak a little bit about the support from the women in the mining areas during the strike. When the strike started the bourgeois press went off to find wives of scabs and printed articles saying the miners must go back to work because they were families. Like most of the coverage of the strike in the bourgeois press, the truth was far different.

Soon the strikers’ wives and girlfriends began to organise food kitchens and fundraising. Without that support the strike simply would not have been able to keep going as long as it did. The women organised demonstrations and protests against the police and they raised the profile of the strike. The women were certainly not encouraging men to go back to work. As one woman put it, “we shall eat grass” rather than give in to Thatcher. Women played an important role towards the end of the strike, when some miners were wavering. They told them: “you are not going to go back and scab on this strike”. The women sometimes had to confront fairly backward attitudes. On some occasions they actually had to fight their way onto the picket lines, because some of the miners’ leaders said it simply wasn’t “their place”. But for example when the cops blocked villages and mining areas, getting through to picket in another area, sometimes women were able to get through and they joined the picket lines to help stop scabs.

We Marxists often say that women are doubly oppressed as workers and as women. The miners strike showed the capitalists’ attempts to keep women confined to traditional roles in the home can be reversed. An article that appeared in the New York Times in May 1984 said: “For these women, the strike has become a social revolution. Women in the pit villages have never worked outside the home. Now they sit at the strike committee tables with the men and fiercely argue a cause which to them has become more than an industrial dispute.” Women understood that the union was their sole defence against the capitalist onslaught on their livelihoods and communities. And they wanted to discuss, including with our comrades, a strategy to win the strike.

Our opponents intervened very differently because they, particularly the Revolutionary Communist Party and Workers Power, pandered to the idea of women being supportive but apolitical. They used to intervene to give advice on how best to raise funds and to run soup kitchens. Once, while we were discussing Soviet troops in Afghanistan with a women’s support group, Workers Power was telling us about chip pans. By the end of the strike it was unthinkable for many women to go back to their previous lives as housewives. And why should they?

Back then we also raised the question, why shouldn’t women be allowed down the mines with the men? There’s a history to this question in Britain. In the early 1880s, women did work underground in backbreaking conditions. There were so many accidents, deaths, stillbirths, babies born deformed, that it was a real problem in society. In 1842 an Act was introduced excluding women and children from working underground, which in this context was beneficial. But women continued to work at the surface of the mines. They were known as “pit brow lasses”. In the late 1880s and early 1900s there were attempts to exclude women from that kind of work as well, but in a different context. Capitalist development had introduced more mechanisation and it was necessary that these attempts to exclude women were simply a reflection of bourgeois moral codes that were important at home.

Abortion... (Continued from page 7)

At the same time they understood that the material conditions necessary to alleviate poverty and inequality required extending the revolution from backward, overwhelmingly peasant Russia to more advanced industrial countries. The failure of revolutions in other countries, particularly Germany, led to the increasing isolation of the first workers republic, which paved the way for the rise of the conservative and repressive Stalinist bureaucracy that reversed many of the liberating advances of the 1917 Revolution and reinforced the backward ideal of the family to subvert the working class, free and social property. Second, the activity of women must be integrated into the social production of a new order free of exploitation and subjugation. Only the realization of these two conditions will prevent women from becoming economically dependent on men as wives and mothers in the family, or, as a result of the class conflict between exploiter and exploited, falling under the economic subjugation and exploitation of the capitalist as proletarian women working a job.

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Under capitalism, women are often the first to be thrown out of work and onto the scrap heap. For example, during WWII women were drafted into many sectors of British industry traditionally reserved for men. But when the men came back from the war, many of the women were made unemployed.

We also pointed out that, if legislation is needed to protect workers against dangerous conditions, it should not just apply to women, but to men as well. If work is too backbreaking for a human being, it should be done by a machine. When the labour aristocracy tries to exclude women from working in mines and other sectors of industry, it just reinforces job-trusting unionism and the bourgeois values that women should be kept in the home. During the miners strike we said that when the strike ended, women should be able to work in the mines. One of my favourite lines in Workers Power at the time was you say there aren’t enough jobs for women, get rid of every last filthy scab and give the jobs to the women who’ve been fighting to win the strike. Many of the issues that affect women, such as the fact that they tend to be in low-paid, non-union, marginal jobs, often with no childcare, can actually be addressed through class struggle. The miners showed that women’s struggle and class struggle go hand-in-hand, and that is what we fight for. We fight for an end to discrimination in employment, free abortion on demand, free 24-hour childcare and equal pay for men and women in society. We fight for the programme of class struggle, for the programme of socialist revolution that can establish a society where domestic slavery will be abolished and household duties and childcare will be collectivised.

Permission... (Continued from page 7)

For women to achieve full social equality with men in truth and fact and not just on passive pages of dead law books, for women as well as men to win the possibility of unrestricted achievement and free development of their full human personality, two primary conditions must be met. First, private property must be uprooted and replaced by social property. Second, the activity of women must be integrated into the new social production of a new order free of exploitation and subjugation. Only the realization of these two conditions will prevent women from becoming economically dependent on men as wives and mothers in the family, or, as a result of the class conflict between exploiter and exploited, falling under the economic subjugation and exploitation of the capitalist as proletarian women working a job. ... The foundation of communism is the social ownership of the large, economically dominant means of production, distribution, and commerce. In doing away with private ownership in this realm, communism eliminates the cause of the subjugation and exploitation of man by man, the social conflict between rich and poor, exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed. In so doing it also eliminates the economic and social conflict between men and women.
Iraq...

(Continued from page 5)

Idiocy Ad Abrahnam", WY no 828, 11 June.) The IG audaciously denounces Workers Vanguard for demanding "U.S. Troops Out of Iraq, Now!" (see the IG's "Sink U.S. Imperialism in the Quicksands of the Quagmire: Internationalist, November 2003). Falseely claiming that our demand for the withdrawal of US troops is addressed to the American rulers, not to the people's movement, the IG thunders, "The imperialists must be driven out of Afghanistan and Iraq. The Zionist puppet state, driven out of the West Bank and Gaza" (emphasis in original). What kind of idiots oppose the demand for the immediate withdrawal of imperialist military troops? Answer: fraudulent "socialists" who despair of mobilising the American proletariat against the capitalist ruling class.

Norden's group equates our slogans - "Down with the colonial occupation of Iraq! All U.S. troops out now!" - with the reformist American Socialists Workers Party's "Out Now" slogan during the Vietnam War, which was used in appeal to bourgeois politicians who wanted to cut US imperialism's losses and get out of Vietnam. Actually, our position is based on the Spartacist revolutionary history on which Norden falsely claims to stand. We refer readers to our "Out Now" editorial (November-December 1965), which reprints the press release "Spartacist Breaks with New York Parade Committee" wherein we state: "The slogan "Stop the War in Vietnam Now" can mean many things to many people, given the history of that Committee, the fact that it is dominated by right-wing pacifists and "liberals," i.e. pro-capitalist and pro-LBJ, it is clear that the slogan is deliberately ambiguous in order to avoid facing the duty to advance the only demand that has any meaning: 'For the Immediate, Unconditional Withdrawal of All U.S. Troops from Vietnam!'" (emphasis added)

The IG's polemics against us boil down to this: they say 'they're for the military defeat of the imperialists and lie that we are not. Always prone to invention, they are full of conjecture and adventurism, and willing to fight to the last drop of someone else's blood, they are nothing but the co, substituent fantasies of revolution against imperialism in the Near East today in the abortive and fruitless struggle to build an international Trotskyist party to bring revolutionary consciousness to the workers, glorifying false victories and military victories. When Norden broke from Trotskyism, a British comrade aptly asked, "What is the difference between a Stalinist and a Trotskyist?" The answer has been a capitalism of 'smoke and mirrors' imperialist propaganda to make the workers of the world to the revolutionary defeat of the imperialists, especially the American imperialists, which means the crushing one-sided slaughter being prepared before our disbelieving eyes.

In short, occasional phrases to the contrary notwithstanding, the IG has no interest in fighting for decisive world proletarian cheapening imperialism in the US and other imperialist states to wage class struggle against imperial war. Indeed, in Afghanistan war in 2001, the IG explicitly denounced our slogan "For Class Struggle Against Capitalist Rulers at Home and Abroad," a slogan which is consistent with the Stalinist horizontal attacks on imperial war, which was designed to cut the unions and streets if the courts can be relied on to ultimately do the right thing (see the IG's polemics against us boil down to this: they say 'they're for the military defeat of the imperialists and lie that we are not. Always prone to invention, they are full of conjecture and adventurism, and willing to fight to the last drop of someone else's blood, they are nothing but the co, substituent fantasies of revolution against imperialism in the Near East today in the abortive and fruitless struggle to build an international Trotskyist party to bring revolutionary consciousness to the workers, glorifying false victories and military victories. When Norden broke from Trotskyism, a British comrade aptly asked, "What is the difference between a Stalinist and a Trotskyist?" The answer has been a capitalism of 'smoke and mirrors' imperialist propaganda to make the workers of the world to the revolutionary defeat of the imperialists, especially the American imperialists, which means the crushing one-sided slaughter being prepared before our disbelieving eyes.

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Miners...
(Continued from page 12)
now as hated by the population and by the trade union movement as Margaret Thatcher was in 1984. You have a huge sentiment to fight Blair's privatisation—PPP, Private Finance Initiatives, etc—which is a frontal assault on the public sector unions. These unions have tended to elect more loyalists to New Labour. The so-called “awkward squad” of the public sector unions...give generously, including Asians and the working class in Britain today is its solidarity and in addition the immigrant rights for all immigrants..."socialism", or what they called “Scargillism” and bailed them for lack of patriotism, the FBU leaders said no, we’re going to play by the book. Scandalously, when Blair threatened to use the army to break the strike, FBU leader Andy Gilchrist said the union would allow the government to send scabs across the picket lines. With that kind of strategy the miners strike would have never taken place. The RMT leadership is no better.

The working class in Britain today is its multiethnic composition: second and third generation black and Asian workers. An integral part of the workforce, and in addition the immigrant component is growing. Every week there is a..."socialism", or what they called “Scargillism” and bailed them for lack of patriotism, the FBU leaders said no, we’re going to play by the book. Scandalously, when Blair threatened to use the army to break the strike, FBU leader Andy Gilchrist said the union would allow the government to send scabs across the picket lines. With that kind of strategy the miners strike would have never taken place. The RMT leadership is no better.

The working class in Britain today is its multiethnic composition: second and third generation black and Asian workers. An integral part of the workforce, and in addition the immigrant component is growing. Every week there is a racist furore against immigrants by the bourgeoisie press and the Labour government. The public sector unions are among the largest and strongest in the country. Yet their strength is being undermined by the “contracting out” that goes with privatisation. We insist that the working class must take up the defence of immigrants and the fight against racism, and that immigrant workers should be organised into unions. That seems very straightforward and is one of the most potent lessons of the miners strike. In the course of their class battle, thousands and thousands of miners learned to oppose racism because they understood for the first time that the state brutality they faced is the same treatment regularly dished out to British black and Asian minorities. We apply this lesson today when we say that the unions must oppose the so-called “war on terror” by fighting against the Labour government.

Autumn 2003 FBU strike posed potential for challenge to Labour government on eve of war.

The other component of Labourism that would become clear immediately after the Russian Revolution was anti-Semitism. Social-chauvinism and anti-Semitism became hallmarks of the politics of Labourism. The Cold War had a major impact on the Labour Party, and anti-Semitism was evident at the time of the miners strike. From around 1981 there had been a cold split in the Labour Party between the pro-NATO CND right and the left wing led by Tony Benn. The fact that the left refused to split and allowed the right wing to control the leadership was a disaster for New Labour. New Labour emerged out of Kinnock’s Labour Party, and Kinnock had contempt for the striking miners. Many of today’s New Labour politicians made their political careers either by attacking the miners strike, or by colluding with Robert Maxwell and Neil Kinnock in the frame-up of Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield a few years later. We sought to magnify the split in the Labour Party so that the “lefts” would become the leadership. By making clear the limitations of the politics of the “lefts” we sought to create an opening for the growth of a revolutionary party. But the “lefts” didn’t split, not even during the strike, in the heat of battle. Even Scargill didn’t split until much later. In 1995 he left to form the Socialist Labour Party. This party put forward the core elements of Old Labour reformism that had been upheld by reformist “socialists” (including the Communist Party) for decades. Scargill’s Socialist Labour Party had abandoned Clause IV—Labour’s nominal commitment to “socialism”, or what they called “common ownership” of the means of production. The clause was abandoned in 1918, in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, to fool workers into thinking that you could get socialism through parliament, through nationalisation of industry under capitalism. Clause IV was abandoned by Tony Blair in 1994 as part of his efforts to remodel the Labour Party along the lines of the American Democratic Party.

Clause IV “socialism” was based on two planks: the large-scale reforms that led to the “welfare state” in the aftermath of the Second World War and nationalised industry of which the coal industry was a prime example. This was a commitment held deep among the left in Britain for two generations that nationalised industry plus welfare paved the way for a move towards socialism. This was a central disagreement we had, for example, with Scargill’s Socialist Labour Party. In 1917, the year before the Australian Labor Party’s intervention in the 1917 election in the heat of battle, in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, to fool workers into thinking that you could get socialism through parliament, through nationalisation of industry under capitalism. Clause IV was abandoned by Tony Blair in 1994 as part of his efforts to remodel the Labour Party along the lines of the American Democratic Party.

The RMT leadership is no better.

RMT leaders like Bob Crow promised that the Tube would be shut down during the FBU strike, the same way they threatened to strike during the miners strike. When RMT members in the Tube refused to drive trains and came under pressure by management to go back to work, Bob Crow and the RMT leadership gave in on the safety issue. There was no question of solidarity strikes. There is a long, long history of that kind of treachery and betrayal within the trade union movement. This is why any kind of serious struggle in the unions has to be undertaken as a political struggle against Labourism and against the left wing in particular, who posture as militants. One of the most striking features of...
Internationally, you have to look at the international picture and what’s called the “post-war consensus”. Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair, and the neo-liberals today all set their faces against the “post-war consensus”. This refers to the outcome of World War Two. British imperialism emerged from World War Two bankrupt, massively in debt, and shocked that the American rulers insisted Britain should repay all her loans to the US. The United States emerged as the dominant imperialist power. However, imperialism more competitive in the world market.

The phenomenon known as “globalization” in part refers to a change in the objective situation of the working class over time. The idea that the British government should subsidize British coal and British steel to make it competitive against French coal and French steel is integral to Old Labour. It incites nationalism and chauvinism and is diametrically opposed to the internationalism that was shown by French and other workers in support of the miners strike. And internationalism is what’s necessary to defend the interests of the working class.

One of the fastest growing economies in the world today is China. The Chinese Revolution triumphed in 1949, very shortly after World War Two. This victory created the Chinese deformed workers state, which exists to this day. China is often branded by ideologues of the “anti-globalization” movement as the “sweatshop of the world”. Indeed it is becoming the factory floor of the world for certain light manufacturing industries. Our organisation is one of the few remaining tendencies that hasn’t written off the Chinese deformed workers state as capitalist. In fact what’s successful about the Chinese economy is not the result of capitalist investment but the fact that it’s a collective economy, that the bourgeoisgeoisie was driven out in the 1949 revolution. The phenomenon known as “globalization” in part refers to a change in the objective situation of the working class over time. The idea that the British government should subsidize British coal and British steel to make it competitive against French coal and French steel is integral to Old Labour. It incites nationalism and chauvinism and is diametrically opposed to the internationalism that was shown by French and other workers in support of the miners strike. And internationalism is what’s necessary to defend the interests of the working class.

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Lessons of the 1984-85 miners strike

Class struggle, "globalisation" and the working class today

We publish below an edited version of a presentation by Eithleen McDonald of the Spartacist League/Britain at our day school in London on 10 April to mark the twentieth anniversary of the 1984-85 strike. Other presentations were published last issue—see The workers’ hammer no 187, Spring/Summer 2004.

Our job is to build a revolutionary party that’s based on the lessons of previous struggles, including defeats. Having listened to other speakers describing the level of political consciousness that was achieved in the miners strike, you could be forgiven for thinking that consciousness was always at that level. But that’s not the case, this was achieved in struggle. I don’t need to tell comrades that the political landscape in Britain was changed dramatically by the outcome of the miners strike, or that the international political landscape was also changed by counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991. When young comrades look at videos of the miners strike they say it was a different world then and it was, politically speaking. The level of political consciousness is indeed one of the most striking differences between then and now.

A lot of myths have arisen about the miners strike. To this day the British ruling class is haunted by “Scargillism”, as they call it. As previous speakers have said, in terms of his political perspective, Scargill wasn’t so different from Tony Benn, or Dennis Skinner. Yet Scargill represents something the rulers still hate and fear, which is the proletariat mobilised in struggle as the miners were in 1984-85.

One major effect of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union is that the United States emerged as the unrivalled world power, which led directly to the war in Iraq. The American rulers have made it quite clear that they feel they can go anywhere and do anything because they have the mightiest military arsenal in the world. And as for British imperialism, Tony Blair so slavishly supports US imperialism he is described as Bush’s “poodle”. That role has not changed much since the days of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, based on a recognition that British imperialism’s role in the world is to defend itself, once a very important component of the British trade union movement, have been removed as a fighting force. But this is still an island and, unlike the coal industry, the government cannot simply shut down the docks. It’s true that containerisation has reduced the number of dockers on the docks. But the main problem in Britain is not that there aren’t enough dockers, it’s that most are not unionised and they don’t have union conditions on the job, ever since the defeat of the Liverpool dockers. There were two dock strikes during the miners strike, which were the key opportunities for struggle in defence of unionisation in the docks. But those opportunities were betrayed and the National Dock Labour Scheme was abolished in 1989. Liverpool docks, the last remaining stronghold of the union, had the most militant and class-conscious dockers. There is a famous story that miners went to collect money at Liverpool docks in 1984 and the dockers treated the striking miners as a picket line and went home.

The betrayal of the Liverpool dockers

What happened to the Liverpool dockers? In 1995, the company fired the unionised workers and replaced them. The sacked dockers picketed for months and even years, but the leadership of their union, the Transport and General Workers Union, openly disowned their struggle, refusing to shut down the docks in fear of the anti-union laws. There had been international solidarity actions and there was plenty of local sympathy. It was necessary to mobilise other unions, especially around Liverpool. The role of Bill Morris and the Transport and General Workers Union’s national leadership was a gross betrayal. And faced with this treachery, the leaders of the sacked Liverpool dockers themselves began to argue that you couldn’t expect workers from other unions to go on strike alongside the Liverpool dockers because of “globalisation”, meaning the work would be relocated elsewhere. Thus the term “globalisation” came to be used to justify a betrayal of workers in struggle. It was used in tandem with the idea that the dockers should wait for a Labour government, which of course is nothing but contempt for striking workers.

You might be interested to know that the struggle of the Liverpool dockers also coincides with the early days of what became known as the “anti-globalisation” or “anti-capitalist” movement in Britain. “Globalisation” was a new buzzword used by union bureaucrats to strongly reinforce their argument that you can’t defy the anti-union laws, you must not have solidarity action, etc. With this perspective, the trade union movement never would have been built in the first place. The dockers union was born as a militant union. One of the early leaders of the National Union of Dock Labourers was James Larkin, a Liverpool-born Irish socialist who organised thousands of unskilled workers into unions for the first time. The unions were built using methods such as the picket line, solidarity strikes and class struggle. It is not an accident that these same weapons came under attack by Margaret Thatcher’s anti-union laws, nor that they were central issues in the miners strike: whether to con­form to the anti-union laws and organise a ballot, whether to use the picket line as the method of spreading the strike, or whether to use the picket line as the method of spreading the strike, or whether to use the picket line as the method of spreading the strike.

The discussion about the dockers strike and the quick­ly trade union struggle becomes a political struggle against the government. Social­ist consciousness is vitally important in the fight, but it does not drop from the sky. For us it is linked to the struggle to build a revolutionary party. Our model for that is the Bolshevik Party that led the October 1917 Russian Revolution. The fight for revolutionary leadership and for socialist consciousness is another integral part of the to build a revolutionary party, a Leninist-Trotskist party.

The Tony Blair Labour government is continued on page 10

November 1984: Mass picket of miners and transport workers. TUC/Labour leadership spiked joint class struggle, leaving miners to fight alone against massive state repression.

Stefano Legnani (report)