

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

*Unite the left!*

**NO TO  
MAASTRICHT!  
NO TO  
NATIONALISM!**

# EUROPEAN

# WORKERS

# MUST

# UNITE!

● Against the bosses' Europe of unemployment and racism!

● For a socialist Europe without fatherlands or frontiers!

# TUC invites CBI boss

## Desperate men do desperate things

Gerry Bates reports from Blackpool

Amidst all the fuss generated by the appearance of CBI chief Howard Davies at this year's TUC, one simple point has been lost: the CBI has a strategy for dealing with the crisis of British capitalism. The TUC leadership does not.

Davies took the opportunity to spell out the main priority of organised capital - a massive escalation of the attacks on public sector workers' wages and conditions as the centrepiece of a renewed employers' offensive.

This is what he said about the public sector: "The public sector pay bill should not rise at all... that means a pay bill freeze, and given existing pay commitments you can only do that either by cutting jobs or by actually reducing present levels of pay".

Davies was also absolutely clear about the need for workers to pay for the current recession with reduced living standards so as to boost profitability.

"In 1991 each hour worked by an EC employee cost the employer \$22.21 on average compared with \$16.11 in Japan, and below \$5.00 in Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong - one big reason for falling competitiveness and high unemployment".

Davies was putting forward a clear-headed class-struggle policy for the bosses - not something matched by the TUC for our side.

The response to Davies from TUC General Secretary Norman Willis and GMB leader John Edmonds was pathetic. They talked of a "shared agenda" between the CBI and the TUC, but beyond the use of common buzzwords and catchphrases like "the European dimension", "industrial policy", and "training", it was very difficult to see what, if any, basis for agreement there was.

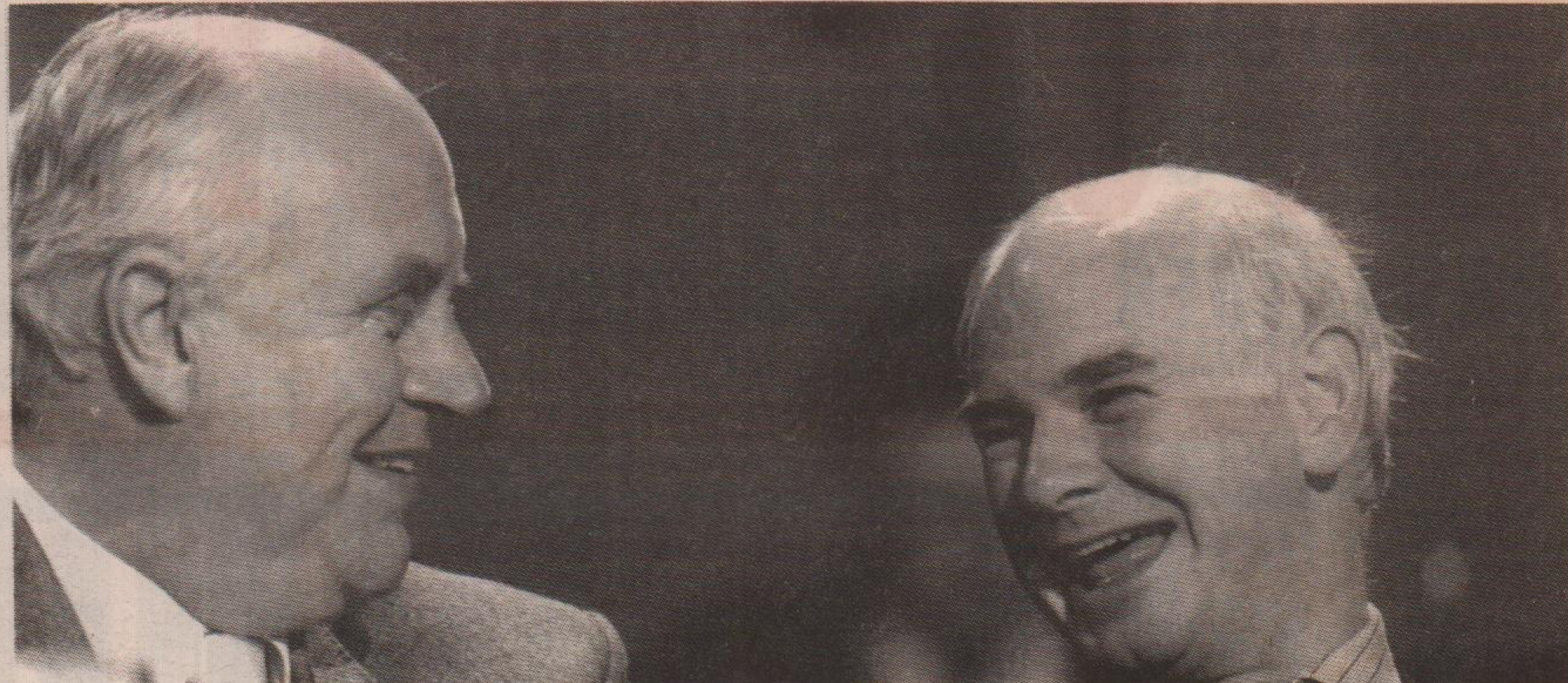
What lies behind the decision to invite Davies is a desperate drive by the TUC tops to be "in" with the powers-that-be after four Labour election defeats and 13 years of being out in the cold under the Tories.

When you see the TUC bosses in the flesh, they really do take on the demeanour of rejected puppies, unwanted Xmas presents who end up in Battersea Dogs' Home, desperate for attention from their "masters".

Whether any real change in the direction - or lack of direction - of the TUC comes out of all this is another matter. Way back in 1990, under Thatcher, the TUC was already offering, very tentatively, to talk to the Tories about wage restraint in return for tiny concessions on jobs and training.

To repeat the offer now would involve agreeing to police a wage freeze in the public sector, or something very similar. In return the Tories would give the TUC nothing.

Remember: desperate men do desperate things.



Please master, a sugar lump? Norman Willis pleads with CBI boss Howard Davies. Photo: John Harris

## The unions must fight

By Fred Crouch

This year's TUC met against the backdrop of the worst slump for 50 years.

Official unemployment figures are set to go close to three million this week - so the real figure is near four million - and they will continue to rise even in the unlikely event of an industrial recovery in the near future.

The Tories' determination to keep the pound in its present position in the Exchange Rate Mechanism can only mean more attacks on working-class living standards.

Public sector workers are the Tories' main target this time round. According to the Guardian, "Senior ministers are talking of a two per cent public sector pay rise or even a pay freeze, from April next year".

Compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) could lead to one million public sector jobs disappearing in the next few years. National bargaining is under serious attack across the public sector.

Yet the TUC refuses to lead a fight.

It is vital that socialists and active trade unionists take the

arguments for a fight back into the workplaces.

We need:

- A united cross-public-sector alliance to defend wage levels, stop the extension of privatisation and CCT, and fight the cuts. A national public sector day of action on a work day would be a good start.

- The TUC should launch a campaign of mass action against unemployment. It could mobilise millions onto the streets if it tried. We should raise the demand for work-sharing on full pay and a 35 hour week as the workers' answer to unemployment and closures.

- Government money for much-needed public projects (schools, housing, hospitals) to create new jobs; and a public programme of training and re-training at trade union rates of pay.

- A campaign for a full-blooded Workers' Charter of positive legal rights for trade unions - including the right to strike, take solidarity action, and stop unsafe jobs.

In order to fight for these policies, we need a movement of the trade union rank and file with a firm socialist backbone.

## The delegates' view

"The conference was very stitched up"

By Chris Tansey, NALGO delegate to the TUC

The TUC conference was very stitched up. The requirement for speeches to be handed in, typewritten, 24 hours in advance clearly stops the rank and file getting up and responding. The whole thing has been tightened up.

I was very disappointed about the NALGO motion on workers' rights. It started off really quite good, but got watered down so much that in the end it didn't even include the repeal of the Tory anti-union laws.

I don't think the CBI should have been invited. There was a call for a walk-out by the NALGO delegation. The vote was lost, but people on our delegation walked out with the NUM.

The TUC leaders are a bit like Labour councils who do the Tories' dirty work for them in the hope they will be re-elected - very soon it's hard to distinguish one from the other. I can see that happen-

ing with the TUC and the CBI. What we need is a different voice.

One of the most positive things to come out the conference was NALGO's motion on lesbian and gay rights. Poor though it was, at least it took up the issues.

What we need now is for ordinary rank and file members to organise. We need a national strategy of action.

"A TUC based more on accountability than accountability"

By Dave Ayre, from the UCATT (building workers') TUC delegation

The general move towards the commercialisation of the TUC worries me. Increasingly the conference exhibits and stalls are from big business. It's getting more like a TUC based on accountability than on accountability.

There's less opportunity for rank and file participation from the floor of the confer-

ence. All the motions are composed, then moved and seconded by top officials.

On the plus side, the conference gives rank and file workers an opportunity to meet other trade unionists, like for instance the Spartan Redheugh strikers [see page 15].

I was opposed to the CBI being invited to the TUC, and I was among those who walked out. There's a difference between having to meet these people to negotiate, and meeting with them to collaborate. Even right-wingers walked out.

The press said the walk-out was orchestrated by Scargill and the NUM, but many people walked out independently.

On the anti-union laws, if policy had been decided by the response from the floor, we would have won. The bureaucrats stage-managed the whole debate.

Formally, the TUC now has policy to launch a campaign on unemployment. But if you examine the policy, there isn't that much on the campaigning side. It amounted to little more than a petition; but, if you think about it, the TUC could launch an incredible fight against unemployment.

## Student leaders go along with Tories

By Paul McGarry

Two recently published newspaper articles indicate a further acceptance of Tory plans for students and student unions by sections of the National Union of Students (NUS).

The Guardian of 15 September reports that NUS leaders are preparing the ground for a change of policy in favour of a "graduate tax". The Independent of 14 September reports on moves by Sheffield University Student Union to break the united front against dismantling the existing structures of NUS and local student unions.

"Graduate tax" means that graduates pay a higher rate of income tax to pay back their college fees or a government loan.

Former NUS president Stephen Twigg, writing in the soft-left magazine *Chartist*, argues that a graduate tax is a "better option" than students paying part of their tuition fees, while his successor Lorna Fitzsimons says that NUS must jettison policies from "the dark ages".

The Sheffield move comes at a

time when the Government is planning to take action against NUS. Sheffield's six page "Submission to the Secretary of State for Education" accepts virtually all the Tories' arguments against student unions - lack of democracy, abuse of public funds for "political campaigns". It calls for services to be separately funded by college institutions, and student union campaign activities to be supported by voluntary subscriptions.

These proposals would mean an end to the student movement as a campaigning body, and transform student unionism into a higher-education, service-based business - just what the Tories want!

Student unionists should act immediately. Pressure must be put on the NUS National Executive to make a clear statement opposing both the graduate tax and the Sheffield proposals. Letters of protest should be sent to both the NUS and to Sheffield.

And the building of the Sussex Area NUS demo on 7 October and the Manchester Area NUS demo on 4 November becomes even more urgent.

## South Africa: the hungry crocodile

By Lawrence Welch

After the brutal massacre of 28 marchers near the Ciskei capital of Bisho by the troops of the South African state's front-man Brigadier Oupa Gqozo, the question for the South African working class is: how effective can the ANC's version of mass mobilisation be as a stick to keep the jaws of the South African state open?

In a report in the *Independent*, Chris McGreal described how the South African police who accompanied the march to Bisho mysteriously disappeared "to guard white-owned property on the route", only to reappear after the massacre. The tears of the crocodile drip into its gaping mouth as South Africa's rulers call for talks about the violence

and condemn mass action.

Most political forces in South Africa, including now the Pan African Congress and factions of the extreme right, agree on the necessity for negotiations of some sort. Yet apart from the retirement of 13 police generals (out of 55, excluding those most suspected of complicity in terrorist violence), the Government has offered no redress on the violence which, culminating in the Boipatong massacre, led the ANC to withdraw from talks.

At present the most likely outcome seems to be a Namibian-style election, with violent attacks on the working class alongside a temporary pumping of money into black housing and education, leaving a hungry crocodile in power alongside a reduced black majority government.

## Italy: cuts will follow devaluation

Italy's devaluation on 13 September will be followed by drastic attacks on workers' conditions and public services.

The prime minister, reports the *Independent* (14 September), "warned Italians... that... the government's calls for massive spending cuts [must be] adhered to 'even more severely' than before. His main targets are pensions and health spending..."

"Italy's industrialists in particular have been demanding drastic measures within the next two weeks..."

The government has already abolished Italy's "sliding scale of wages",

which guaranteed wage increases in line with price rises (such as those that will be caused by the devaluation), and is demanding emergency powers to make economic policy by decree.

All this is "necessary", from a capitalist point of view, to convince foreign-exchange dealers that Italy is capable of holding the lira at its new value rather than devaluing again in a few months' time.

Italy's devaluation will also increase pressure for Britain to devalue. And it shows once again how stupid it is for socialists to seize on devaluation as the "left alternative" to Tory Government policy.

**French Marxists say: neither Maastricht nor "national sovereignty"!**

# Yes to workers' unity!

Cuts, unemployment, despair and racism — that's the future offered to us by Europe's bosses and capitalist politicians, both the pro-Maastricht ones like John Major and Helmut Kohl and the anti-Maastricht ones like Margaret Thatcher and Jean-Marie Le Pen.

The answer to both capitalist factions, the Euro-bosses and the nationalists, is for workers to unite across Europe.

That is why most of the Marxist left in France will be campaigning for workers to abstain in the Maastricht referendum on Sunday 20 September. "Neither yes with Chirac, nor no with Le Pen", says the Marxist weekly *Lutte Ouvrière* — and its arguments should guide the left in Britain, too.

The main forces for a no vote in France are right-wing — Gaullists and the fascist National Front. The Communist Party also says no.

The CP's arguments, like those of the Labour Left in Britain, mix anti-capitalist feelings with nationalism: Maastricht, the CP says, is a conspiracy by the Euro-bosses to take away democracy and French sovereignty, and to impose austerity.

*Lutte Ouvrière* replies: "Whatever *L'Humanité* [the CP paper] says, a no vote is not the way to block attacks on social conditions. To suggest that is to demobilise the workers and, once again, to channel their bitterness and their legitimate worries into a blind alley.

The CP says again and again that Maastricht means worse austerity, unemployment, and social welfare cuts, that, more of what is underway in France, and in other European countries too, in order to allow the capitalists to continue to make profits... on the back of the workers and the people.

That is true, but we will get all that Maastricht or no Maastricht.

The problem for the workers is precisely to block such policies, and not to be diverted from the real issues by electoralist traps...

The CP, by calling for a no vote...



Le Pen's "no" campaign: much of the Left is lining up with the far-right in the referendum

and making itself the champion of 'French sovereignty', does nothing to prepare a counter-offensive by labour. On the contrary. On the terrain of nationalism and xenophobia, it links up with anti-working-class forces. It gives grist to Le Pen's mill. It plays on the same sentiments as Le Pen, and Le Pen is likely to be the one who gains most from this de facto unity...

The CP says that 'the yes vote plays into the hands of the right wing'. But we put this question to all communist militants: doesn't the no vote play even more into the hands of Le Pen?...

There is only one way of not falling into a trap... that is to abstain..."

*Lutte Ouvrière* also explains why socialists cannot vote yes to Maastricht. "This conglomerate called the 'Europe of 12' is obviously not made in the interests of the workers, but in the interest of the possessing classes.

That is why, as communists and therefore internationalists and Europeans, we think we must not say yes in this referendum, where we get only a rigged choice."

A similar view is argued by a minority on another of France's Marxist weeklies, *Rouge*:

"Of course we condemn the Maastricht treaty. It is a treaty of commitment to the market economy and to capitalism..."

But... there is no frontier between the current pro- and anti-Maastricht camps. The bourgeoisie is on both sides. And [by voting no] we are objectively taking the side of

the more backward-looking section in this confrontation.

We must fight any illusions about the workers coming out strengthened by a 'no' victory. Nothing indicates that it will be the left which benefits from a de facto electoral alliance with the right and far right. Classically the opposite has been the case...

Any position we take on Europe has to start from recognising the grim fact that at present there is no tangible alternative to the Europe of Maastricht... Should we therefore oppose the building of this bourgeois Europe, since the socialist alternative we call for has not emerged? Can we suppose that keeping the current national frameworks will be less harmful for the workers' struggles than a supranational Europe established by the bourgeoisie?

For our part, we reply no to both these questions...

Revolutionaries should fight to build an alternative starting from the coming-together of struggles across Europe... Active internationalism can be revived in the struggle against the policies of the supranational state now being built, and not in the framework of a rearguard fight against its birth. Not to understand that amounts to wanting to turn back the clock of history.

Only a campaign in favour of massive abstention could have deprived the Maastricht treaty of all popular legitimacy without mixing together the votes of the future and those of reaction."

Others on the Marxist left in France have campaigned for a

"no" vote; some have tried to make their position "an internationalist no". But, however many explanations you add to it, a call for a "no" vote makes sense only if a "no" victory will bring some progress despite the right-wing, nationalist politics of the major forces campaigning for "no". It will not.

The immediate alternatives to Maastricht are either that the Euro-bosses will get a new agreement to move to a single Euro-currency, revised but similar, after greater or lesser delays and upsets, or (less probably) that the whole project of European economic integration will collapse into trade wars.

Neither offers anything better for the workers of Europe. The struggle for a 35-hour week across Europe, for levelling-up of workers' rights and conditions across Europe, for democratic control by an elected Euro-parliament over the EC, and for a European programme of public investment to improve public services and create jobs, will not be helped by a no vote.

Many on the left in Britain have grabbed at rejection of Maastricht, and pulling out from the Exchange Rate Mechanism, as "popular", "winnable" causes to campaign for against the Tory Government and the Labour right wing.

In fact they are only jumping on a bandwagon set in motion, and driven, by right-wingers — little-England flag-wavers, Thatcherites, free-market dogmatists. It makes even less sense than the long left-wing campaign to "get Britain

out" of the EC, which finally dwindled away into embarrassed silence.

Leon Trotsky commented on a similar issue: "In this period of social crisis, of economic shocks, inflation and deflation are two complementary instruments for throwing on to the people the cost of decaying capitalism.

Bourgeois parties organise formidable discussions on the question: is it better to cut the workers' throats with the saw of inflation or with the simple knife of deflation? Our struggle is directed with the same energy against the saw and against the knife".

Here the alternatives are not even inflation or deflation, but coordinated Euro-deflation or more haphazard country-by-country deflation — one knife or another knife! The answer is neither Maastricht nor "national sovereignty", but European workers' unity.

"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race."

Karl Marx

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## OUT AND PROUD

# Trade unions? Pass the valium!

You don't need me to tell you that these are difficult times for trade unionism: the statistics for membership and strike days lost speak for themselves. A lot of rank and file activists are pretty depressed just at the moment, and last week's miserable performance at Blackpool hasn't helped.

But let's not get too depressed: the movement (contrary to conventional wisdom on both left and right) has not suffered the sort of clobbering that followed the 1926 General Strike.

"New management techniques" and outright non-unionism remain the exception rather than the norm in manufacturing and the public sector.

Believe it or not, there have even been a few significant victories in recent months: the Joint Sites Committee's unionisation drive on London building sites and the Alcan dispute in Birmingham, most notably. Arguably, what we are witnessing is a generation shift, with older activists traumatised by the Thatcher years and the last election years while a younger layer emerges at shop steward/convenor level, less experienced and less "political", but more willing to "have a go".

The mood of doom and despondency that presently grips a large part of the British left is well illustrated by a funny (peculiar, not ha-ha) little pamphlet from those good folks at *Socialist Outlook*: "The Bosses' Offensive - Anti-Union Laws and the New Management Techniques".

The overall depressive tone of this slim volume can be gauged from the following extraordinary statement in the introduction: "Employers are able to sack workers and restructure working conditions more or less with impunity".

Now, hang on a minute, boys and girls - do you really believe that's true as a general statement? Only someone whose knowledge of present-day British trade unionism is limited to the NUJ could seriously come out with a statement like that.

But the pamphlet isn't just depressive, it's manic-depressive. Elsewhere the authors argue that "new management techniques" must never be "worked within" and must be opposed "as a matter of principle" and that union mergers "have to be fought tooth and nail" if they are not "based on rock-solid institutional guarantees of deepening membership participation and preserving progressive gains". Finally, the Socialist Teachers' Alliance in the NUT is held up as "an ideal model" for a union Broad Left!

This kind of bombast may seem to be at odds with the pamphlet's overall depressive and defeatist tone. Maybe it's because more than one author was involved, but you can't help escaping the conclusion that these people are simply not serious about trade union work.

Their ill-thought-out rhetoric about absolute defiance of new management techniques and the anti-union laws provides a very convenient cover for capitulation in practice. That is exactly what their supporters did on the London Underground recently. While *Outlook*, the paper, blustered about unofficial, illegal strike action as the only way to defeat the Underground bosses' Company Plan, in practice their comrades supported throwing away a legal two-to-one ballot majority for strike action in return for what have already been shown to be empty promises from management.

Joe Gormley, the old right-wing miners' leaders, invented this trick in the 1970s, when he used to declare that only a General Strike could give the miners victory, hoping that this all-or-nothing alternative would put off the less robust among his members and deflect action. *Socialist Outlook* no doubt has different intentions, but the combination of bombast and defeatism can still have the same effects.

In the 1970s, there were revolutionaries, too, who argued against such limited struggles as rent strikes on the grounds that only a "General Strike to kick out the Tories" could win; some of them, like Alan Thornett, went on to argue in summer 1984 that the miners' strike was doomed with anything less than a General Strike in solidarity, and are today on the editorial board of *Outlook*.

Sleeper's advice: buy this pamphlet (£1.50 from *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU) to find out exactly why so many people on the left are completely incapable of making a worthwhile intervention into the unions these days.

P.S. The present issue of *Socialist Outlook* now talks about "the sell-out of London Underground workers" by the RMT - this coming only a few weeks after they denounced *Socialist Organiser* for daring to criticise a certain *Outlook* supporter who told his comrades "No serious militant thought the proposed strike on LUL could have been won in the post-election situation".

"Whether to go ahead with the strike was an entirely tactical question"

What on earth can be going on?

### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper



Lesbians and gays have organised to demand their rights but the trade unions must start to take responsibility for fighting homophobia and discrimination.

*Discrimination and prejudice makes lesbian and gay workers live in fear*

# The invisible workers

**Maria Exall, BT engineer (Chair, NCU Lesbian and Gay Committee) reviews the Labour Research Department pamphlet "Out at Work"**

The overwhelming majority of lesbians and gay men lie and evade the question of their sexuality at work. Many of those who do come out are either "found out" or forced to admit it. Basing itself on a survey of trade union members, the new Labour Research pamphlet "Out at Work" argues that an understanding of lesbian and gay workers predicament is provided by explaining how *heterosexism* and *homophobia* work together.

**"Awareness that lesbian and gay rights are essential to the collective strength and solidarity that is a trade union, is something that has hardly started in most unions."**

Heterosexism is the ideology which defines male/female sex relationships as the only positive and valid sexual relationships. All others are deviations from the norm and therefore worthless.

This ideology leads to prejudice and discrimination against all those who do not "fit in", those who do not want to be the "real" men or "real" women of the heterosexual norm.

Homophobia is the fear of same-sex relations: fear of loving someone of the same sex, or fear of people who do love someone of the same

sex. This fear is the fuel of heterosexist prejudice and discrimination.

If a lesbian or gay worker begins coming out at work, they are likely to encounter this fear and the resultant prejudice. The support of other workers is vital and the pamphlet discusses how a trade union can offer support to a lesbian and gay worker and discourage homophobia.

But for most lesbian and gay workers the stakes are too high. Coming out in a supportive environment is not an option, because they cannot be sure of support.

"Out at Work" argues that it is up to trade unions to be in "the vanguard of forward change" on this issue.

Coming out at work is a positive thing for an individual worker to do and increases the possibility of countering homophobia. But many workers face real dangers of losing their jobs, their children and their promotion opportunities.

It is up to all workers to create a tolerant working environment and not just rely on the willingness of individual lesbian or gay workers to put themselves in a risky situation.

The consequences of not coming out are to be "invisible" at the workplace by hiding your sexual identity. This feeds the illusion that many people have, that no one they know is lesbian or gay, and so reinforce the idea that we are a deviant underground minority.

The price of invisibility is also high for the individual lesbian or gay man who has not come out. The stress of living a lie is real and many lesbians and gay men can feel very isolated and ill at ease at work.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual workers who try to claim their rights at work cannot be sure of the backing of the law. Various industrial tribunal decisions have justified sacking on the grounds that

## Lesbian and Gay rights Coalition

The Lesbian and Gay rights coalition is a broad based group working for lesbian and gay civil rights. It aims to be inclusive: that is, to ensure representation of minorities who are often excluded from political activity - women, black people, people with disabilities etc. It is a labour movement oriented organisation containing representatives from a range of various left political groups and aiming to make contact with as many trade unionists as possible.

The coalition believes in all parts of the lesbian and gay community working together to gain equality. The coalition is calling a demonstration on Saturday 31 October. It is asking for sponsorship of the demonstration from Labour Party and trade union bodies, locally and nationally.

The coalition welcomes new volunteers to its organising meetings - every Sunday 6.30pm, London Lesbian and Gay Centre, 69 Cowcross Street (Farringdon tube).

**Get Up! Get Out!  
Demand our Rights!**

Saturday 31 October 1992

Assemble 12 noon, Hyde Park, March to Trafalgar Square

- lesbians and gays work with children (1979)
- the wearing of a lesbian and badge could be expected to offend (1976)
- gay men are more likely to get AIDS (1987).

(The last of these was overturned on appeal). And those are the cases that get to an Industrial Tribunal! The majority of lesbians and gay workers who are sacked because of their sexuality do not get that far.

Other rights at work, including agreements on security vetting, special leave and relocation have been fought for by some unions on a national level but a commitment to lesbian and gay rights at a local branch level is necessary to expose discrimination and to support those who are victimised. Solidarity in the form of threats of industrial action are often the only way a lesbian and gay worker can

be reinstated if sacked for their sexuality.

An industrial tribunal found in a gay worker's favour after his conviction for "gross indecency" had led Tower Hamlets Social Services to sack him. Tower Hamlets refused to re-employ him until the local NALGO branch took action, including a strike.

Awareness that lesbian and gay rights are essential to the collective strength and solidarity that is a trade union, is something that has hardly started in most unions.

A large majority of manual workers and those in the private sector are untouched by the developments in NALGO, CPSA and Health Service unions.

But we have got to start somewhere. The sooner that the work that has done already spreads to the whole trade union movement, the stronger trade unions in Britain in the 1990s will be.

# Tory Britain 1992: union-bashing and poverty wages

## Support the Burnsall strikers!

By Jo Quigley (GMB Regional Official)

While the TUC were considering their future at Blackpool, some twenty workers in Smethwick in the West Midlands, mostly Punjabi and mostly women, entered the thirteenth week of their strike against the management of a small metal finishing company, called Burnsall Limited.

The company, whose address is, ironically, 10 Downing Street, could well be seen as a symbol of entrepreneurial contempt for trade union power.

Four inspectors, dispatched a week after the strike started by the Health and Safety Executive to investigate the workers' allegations, imposed improvement notices and demanded other changes that substantially confirmed the workers' complaints. Even more remarkable has been the recent decision of the Department of Social Security to allow the union's appeal against its denial of benefit to the strikers, and pay and back-date unemployment benefit to the 19 June, the fifth day of the strike.

After examining the evidence the DSS ruled that the workers refusal to return to work in the Burnsall factory was justified and advised its offices to pay unemployment benefit and provide income support.

The workforce, 26 out of a total of 29, joined the GMB in March. Their primary concern was their employer's refusal to inform them of the nature of the chemicals they were handling, and their failure to provide adequate protection against direct skin contact. A second issue was the arbitrary demand for substantial overtime; refusal produced a variety of sanctions - warnings were the most common and, it is claimed by the strikers, access to the toilet was denied to a worker the week after failing to turn in on Saturday.

When the GMB asked for recognition, the company expressed surprise at the union's claim to have 95% of Burnsall's employees in membership, and chose to test the level of trade unionism by holding their own ballot.

On the morning of 16 April, the management placed a table and ballot box in the middle of the factory, observed that only eight people declared for the union and consequently informed the GMB that to grant recognition would not accord with the democratic wishes of the workforce.

A few days later, the workforce en masse formed a queue outside the Manager's office, and one after the other handed letters to Managing Director, Terry O'Neill, stating their desire to be represented by the GMB, and urging the management to respect their decision. This demonstration of collective purpose was so unsettling that the management closed their door and kept it closed for nearly three hours.

They finally opened it late that Friday afternoon, marched up to the one white worker below the rank of supervisor, and demanded he work overtime the next day. He protested and was immediately dismissed.

The Asian workforce were firmly of the view that his selection was racially inspired, the company believing it was too risky to try and make an example of a Punjabi worker.

They began to think over past incidents.

Nirmal Kaur was unable to work one Friday last summer, and having no English, asked her son to telephone in her apologies. The following week, when she got her wage slip, she saw that for missing Friday she had been docked an entire week's wage.

Kuldip Dhaliwal was standing on a pipe and trying to clean a tank early one morning, when he slipped and severely damaged his ankle. In agony, and unable to walk, he had to wait until nine in the morning when Lena, nominal safety officer and wife of Director Jim O'Neill, turned up and refused his request to be taken to hospital. Quite unnecessary, thought Lena. Kuldip's swollen ankle was dealt with by simply removing his shoe.

His inability to walk? Well we're not unreasonable people - we'll find you work you can do sitting down. So Kuldip worked all day, including imposed overtime, until 6.30 pm, before he was free to seek medical relief.

On Friday, 22 May, Indajit Uppal, a twenty-three year old woman hardly five feet in height, and three months pregnant, was put on a job that involved lifting metal parts in a cage out of a tank by using a jig. This was heavy work, involving lifting and stretching and Indajit requested lighter work.

This was ignored as her earlier requests for time off to attend ante-natal clinic had been refused.

Later that night she experienced severe stomach pains and was rushed to Sandwell General Hospital, where, in the early hours of Saturday morning she lost her baby. The doctor who attended her limited himself to the cautious opinion that the work she was doing that Friday could well have triggered her miscarriage.

In such a factory the introduction of the most moderate trade union must have appeared dangerously threatening, and so it proved. The company's decision to refuse recognition was followed by a ballot for strike action that commenced on Monday 15 June.

The company were unmoved. They were determined to defend their right to pay women workers £93 for a 40 hour week, before tax, for hard physical work - £114 for a normal week of 56 hours.

On the 16th the workers were ordered to return or be dismissed. They did not return (and the DSS were subsequently to rule that



The reality of working life for many women and Asian workers is poverty wages and terrible conditions. The Burnsall strikers have shown that a fightback is possible. Photo: Mark Salmon

they were justified in not doing so).

As the strike hardened, the local Labour MP, Andrew Faulds, as well as local Catholic Parish Priest and the President of the Sikh Temple on Smethwick High

***"A few days later, the workforce en masse formed a queue outside the Manager's office, and one after the other handed letters to Managing Director, Terry O'Neill, stating their desire to be represented by the GMB"***

Street, all wrote the company, offering to mediate. Their offers were not even acknowledged by the company, let alone entertained.

After 13 weeks the strikers remain as undaunted as the employer remains intransigent. Output is clearly down, but the recession can probably claim as much if not more credit than sympathetic action. Although it as taken many weeks, the company have secured an alternative workforce.

Few whites appear to have applied for jobs. While community solidarity amongst the Asians living in Smethwick has been strong and generous, it has not been able to prevent a dozen or more breaking ranks and offering their services to the O'Neills to defeat the strike.

Union officials finally succeeded in meeting the Managing Director, Terry O'Neill, but unfortunately the negotiating table was in the canteen at

Smethwick Police Station, where the Chief Inspector resisted company attempts to restrict visitors and supporters joining the picket.

The management's success in avoiding public accountability for their treatment of the employees has almost run its course. Tribunal claims are shortly to be heard - 12 equal pay claims, the unlawful docking of a whole week's wages - that will reveal the reality of working life for many women and Asian workers in Britain. Twenty claims to challenge the lawfulness of the dismissals will shortly be presented by the union.

The key question posed by this dispute is the employers' ability to deny workers the right to be represented by the union they have freely joined. This is more than a sectional interest.

The growth of poverty wages and the decline of trade union organisation are intimately connected, and the consequences poison much of our national life. In the eleventh week of the strike an Asian young man of 21, a taxi cab driver, was stabbed to death while going to the assistance of

another cabby harassed by three white drunks.

Doubtless many ingredients make up a personality so brutalised that he can put a knife into the stomach of a person he doesn't know, but it seems about time that the government is forced to face up to some very unpleasant realities. One is that you cannot give managers license to abuse and exploit Asian workers, and expect some onlooking white workers not to draw the lesson of how little an Asian life is worth.

To deny workers the right to be represented is a denial of respect for their concerns a denial and reduction of their dignity that cannot be contained within the factory gate.

Terry and Jim O'Neill, and the other managers like them, ought to look closely at the picture of the murdered Ashwiq Hussain that appeared in the Birmingham Evening Mail and ask themselves, "I have young men like this working for me. Am I training their killers by the way I treat them and the contempt I display for their rights?"

## Help the strikers to win!

Hackney trade union support unit helped the Burnsall strikers to raise £1,950 in a two day tour of London last week.

The money includes £1,400 from the hardship fund of Hackney NALGO's housing benefit strikers. The cheque for £1,400 is to be formally presented on the picket line, on Wednesday 16 September. For speakers, information and to send donations write c/o Jo Quigley, GMB, 2 Birmingham Road, Hailsowen B63 3HP. Cheques to "GMB Burnsall Strike Fund".

# Di, Fergie, Mellor... and Mohammed Ali

## PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

whose main role in life is supposed to be as our Leaders, Better and Figureheads. It's our right to know about their shortcomings and any attempt to introduce a so-called privacy law on the back of this latest round of tabloid "excesses" should be firmly resisted by all socialists, democrats and voyeurs. Oh yes — I do feel just a bit sorry for poor old Frank Bough, but then he probably needs the publicity.

The multifaceted Murdoch empire has developed a most effective division of labour when it comes to dealing with salacious revelations. The *Sun* splashes the smut as good coin and then the *Sunday Times* rubbishes it and gives away the sources.

I was somewhat disappointed to read in this week's *ST*, that the latest Mellor "revelations" from gorgeous, pouting Antonia de Sancha, published in the *Sun*, were largely invented by "master PR man", Max Clifford and sold to the soaraway tabloid (for £20,000) as part of a campaign to re-launch Ms. de Sancha's flagging thespian career. Mr. Clifford's dubious *modus operandi* was described in precise detail and the *ST* more or less branded him a professional liar who lives off the tabloids' insatiable appetite for smutty gossip. Who says you can't have your cake and eat it?

The Silly Season war of "revelations" was, of course, the product of the war of circulation between the *Sun* and the

*Mirror*. The "Fergiegate" photos actually gave the *Mirror* a circulation victory over its rival for the first time in twenty years. Then, suddenly, on Friday 11 September, the *Mirror* changed tack. Fergie, Di, Mellor and de Sancha were replaced by an emaciated Somalian baby called Mohammed Ali on the *Mirror's* front page. No less than ten pages were given over to the Somalian tragedy. The editorial denounced the Western governments, the UN and the Somalian factions for allowing this obscenity. Perhaps the spirit of Hugh Cudlipp has returned to the rudderless, post-Maxwell *Mirror*?

One Ian Jack wrote a thoughtful piece about the Monarchy in the *Independent* magazine on Saturday 5 September. This was in the immediate aftermath of the Fergiegate/Dianagate revelations in the tabloids; Mr. Jack's main argument was that the "liberal" broadsheet papers (eg the *Guardian* and *Independent*) had completely fudged the issue: "So in our way we are all, even the *Guardian* (though why do I say even of a newspaper that has in its day gushed with the worst of them?), more loyal than the Queen. Apparently, we want the monarchy to change because we want it to continue. Your Majesty, we are simply thinking of your own good".

Mr. Jack went on to argue that it's about time that at least one "serious", "liberal"



No, the Mellor affair isn't over yet. There are a hundred good reasons why this Tory smart-alec should be sacked, but the tabloids have managed to find another bad one: supposed "links with the PLO" through Mellor's friendship with a woman whose father is a PLO leader.

newspaper come off the fence and announces that it is republican. He made the point that, so far, it has been the tabloids that have made the running on this question.

This article was particularly interesting because Mr. Jack is the editor of the *Independent on Sunday*. The next day, the *I on S* editorial discussed the state of the nation's schools and the shortcomings of the GCSE examination system. The following Sunday, the editorial denounced the banks. Nothing about the monarchy. Who or what is holding you back, Mr. Jack?



Biting and satirical

## Having your nose rubbed in it

### GRAFFITI

A biting satirical cartoon hit the newsstands last week. The TUC is portrayed as a small meek bald-headed Oliver Twist offering his bowl to a large, heartless beagle, the CBI. "More?!" proclaims the bosses organisation. So who is lampooning the weakness of the trade union bureaucracy in the face of the bosses' offensive, their belly crawling and begging to the rich? None less than the bosses own journal the *Economist*. Ever heard of having your nose rubbed in it, Norman?

According to a recent poll in *New Society* 6 in 10 union leaders go into TUC Conference supporting the abolition of the union block vote at Labour Party conference.

So Howard Davies, Director-General of the CBI, addressed the TUC congress, and set them straight on a few points. John Smith, the man who most people have already forgotten is leader of the Labour Party, declined the invitation to speak to the TUC — something to do with somebody's image problem. But where did the idea that there was an image problem come from?

According to an article in *New Society* by Stuart Weir, "Operation Scapgoat", the idea that the union link was to blame first emerged in a Radio 4 interview the Monday after the election. But, says Weir, this was no media lead campaign, the drive came from Labour's own Shadow Communications Agency.

As the media campaign gathered pace, the Agency attempted to flesh out the comment with hard evidence from polls which the Agency had prepared for the Labour Party NEC. The resulting press articles that snowballed through May and June to reach avalanche proportion by the time of the leadership election all said much the same thing — Labour's union links made it more or less unelectable. All of this was backed up by Agency-leaked "poll findings".

But it seems the Agency did its best to keep the poll findings themselves from being published or even presented to the NEC. In their post-election polling of floating voters who voted Tory, only 7% cited Union links as a problem. Over 30% mentioned the image of the party and past Labour governments, 20% target-

ted Neil Kinnock, 10% tax policy. The polls gave no hard evidence to support the claim that the union link was an important factor.

There has been much discontent even in the right-wing of the Party about the role of the Shadow Communications Agency — as a private office to manipulate party and public opinion in the interests of a small clique. Time for a few of those long-awaited Walworth Road redundancies.

Organised crime in South America is a terrible thing, linked with drugs often as not, seemingly immune from prosecution.

Why, just a couple of weeks ago a row broke out in a bar in Bolivia. One of the men pulled out a gun and shot. Being worse the wear for drink he missed his mark and hit another drinker in the shoulder. The authorities moved in but the gun had already been spirited away by the large and powerful organisation for whom he worked and was rumoured to be lying low in Miami. The victim was persuaded (with US dollar bills) not to allow the police to press charges.

But don't worry, the US Government knows all about the sinister group: it is their own Drugs Enforcement Agency.

Stalinist states might not be up to much but they do have good health care. Any VIP visiting North Korea would be shown around a hospital in the capital Pyongyang, full of patients who were getting better, state-of-the-art medical equipment from Sweden and Germany, full of happy smiling staff.

According to a right-wing American think-tank the whole thing was a sham, the machines, though real, were not plugged in. The patients, the nurses, the doctors were all actors. The whole thing was an illusion to convince the outside world that the North Korean system was better than it was.

You wouldn't get anything like that happening in the West. Well, those of you with long memories might remember Princess Squidgy visiting a hospital — some very important photo-opportunities were to be had and right in the middle of the battle over the health service reforms. Didn't the hospital open up a closed ward, and invite ex-patients to come and lie around in bed for a few days?

Well, you don't find right-wing think-tanks feeding stories like that to the press.

# Anorexia isn't just about food

## WOMEN'S EYE

By Claire Corbridge

I've read with interest the two *Women's Eye* columns (*SO* 529 and *SO* 530) discussing the rights of a 16 year old anorexic to starve herself to death. I feel that both articles show a misunderstanding of some of the issues surrounding anorexia and eating disorders in general.

Anorexia predominantly affects women, with 95% of anorexics being female. It usually develops during adolescence, in response to emotional pressures and conflicts felt by the young woman.

However, it isn't a way of committing suicide. And the anorexic isn't starving herself by choice. Anorexia is a way of expressing the distress that the young woman is feeling at the time.

I suffered from anorexia for over two years, and know that by the time I realised that my eating had become a problem I certainly didn't have any choice over whether I ate or

not. Anorexia doesn't develop overnight.

In my case I stopped eating gradually over a number of months without even realising it, and if anyone had told me at the time that I was anorexic I wouldn't have believed them.

Looking back now, I can see that I was under a lot of pressure and I think the anorexia developed in response to this.

I was studying for a medical degree at the time, and had a lot of doubts over whether or not I really wanted to be a doctor. Being female, I was aware that I would have to give up a lot in order to do well in medicine. I didn't feel that I could both have a family and a life of my own, and be a good doctor: but wasn't sure which choice to make.

As my weight fell, I became increasingly unhappy and eventually dropped out of university altogether, which did to some extent ease the pressures I was under. However, my weight continued to fall and I ended up being admitted to hospital at a very low weight.

I was lucky whilst in hospital to get a lot of support from the staff, who helped me to find other, more appropriate, ways of taking control of my life.

But, unfortunately, this doesn't always happen.

Too many professionals still focus on food as the problem and simply force the anorexic to eat, without looking at the reasons behind the symptoms.

Obviously, at a very low weight the issue of food can't be ignored: but they shouldn't just get the anorexic back to a "normal" weight without additional psychological support. Ideally, the situation shouldn't be left to get that bad in the first place. The earlier that symptoms are recognised and acknowledged the better, as this gives a much better chance of complete recovery.

**"Unless women's position in this society changes, I believe that the current epidemic of eating disorders will continue."**

For this reason people need to be made more aware of anorexia. It isn't only a prob-

lem for middle class young women, but is spreading, and now affects women of all classes and cultures.

But why should this be happening at a time when women apparently have so many opportunities open to them?

I think the current situation reflects the conflicts that women face in this society. We are now told to expect better jobs and more of a life for ourselves, but can't see how this is practically possible. Childcare is still largely seen as a woman's responsibility, making us economically dependent on partners or the state.

And the majority of women's jobs do not give them the option of private nursery care. Therefore young women, particularly those under a lot of pressure from teachers and family are faced with the dilemma of whether to pursue a career or have a family. It doesn't seem possible to combine the two.

I think that these conflicts have a major role in the development of anorexia. Unless women's position in this society changes, I believe that the current epidemic of eating disorders will continue.



There was more to King than the official liberal view of him as the "respectable" leader

**Malcolm X and Martin Luther King**

**Yes, black and white can unite!**

**Dion D'Silva continues his examination of the legacy of Malcolm X. What was Malcolm's relationship to the Civil Rights Movement?**

"I'll be honest with you, I was terrified. I owe my life to that preacher and so do all the other white people who were there." So spoke a policeman outside the home of Martin Luther King in Montgomery in January 1956. King's home had just been firebombed. Yet as he surveyed the damage he spoke to an angry crowd that gathered: "We must love our white brothers no matter what they do to us... what we are doing is just - and God is with us."

The birth of the modern Civil Rights Movement was the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955/56. The local preacher, Martin Luther King, threw himself into organising and leading the boycott of buses which had separate sections for white and black passengers. The black churches were the only arena where black people could gather in number, quite freely, and discuss tactics and strategy.

The boycott was the first of many that spread across the towns and cities of the American south. They were demonstrations, sit-ins, voter registrations and freedom rides involving thousands of people. In 1963 there were over 930 protests in 115 cities, with more than 20,000 arrested. The undisputed national leader was Martin Luther King.

His strategy was guided by his Christian belief in non-violence. He sincerely believed in "loving your enemy". If confronted with violence you should "turn the other cheek". He was also greatly influenced by Gandhi's campaign

of civil disobedience in fighting for Indian independence. The activists involved in demonstrations at lunch counters which refused to serve black people were obviously brave individuals who believed in this idea of shaming their oppressors. Their official guidelines were:

- Show yourself friendly at all times*
- Do sit straight and face the counter*
- Don't strike back if attacked*
- Don't laugh out*
- Don't hold conversations.*

Malcolm X was quite scathing of this approach. "Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone: but if someone puts a hand on you, send him to the cemetery. That's a good religion. In fact, that's the old time religion" Malcolm reflected the anger of the northern ghettos.

The predominantly southern Civil Rights Movement was not so confident. Often they looked for the help of the Federal Government to sort out the racist political leaders of the south. Those racist Dixiecrats had control of the local state, police force and media. Violence, even in self-defence, was ruled out as impracticable. Black people would come off the worst.

Even though Martin Luther King looked towards help from Washington and the outside world, he was prepared to put pressure on them by organising mass demonstrations. He always stayed true to this even though he played a balancing act between the conservatives and radicals in the movement.

The ever-so-liberal Bobby Kennedy tried to buy him off. Kennedy wanted the civil rights movement to concentrate on voter registration - hoping for more votes - rather than organising demos and sit-ins.

It culminated in the march on

Washington in 1963. Over 250,000 people marched and heard Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech. However, the more conservative elements objected to any radical statements critical of the Democratic Party. These same people saw the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act as the pinnacle of their achievements. For them it was now "out of the streets and into the suites" meaning the executives suites of top companies.

***"Martin Luther King talked about tackling the root causes of racism. He realised that the movement needed to spread its support to the north and in particular black workers. But even he was shocked by the racist reaction he received when trying to organise in Chicago."***

At the time Malcolm X was in the Nation of Islam. He referred to the "farce on Washington" as a one-day integrated picnic. Nevertheless Malcolm's split with the Nation was due to his wish to get involved in the movement more directly. The notion of civil rights seemed rather limited to him. He argued for "human rights" and the involvement of emerging independent African nations through the United Nations.

Even after he was cut down in 1965, Malcolm's idea had a resonance in the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King talked about tackling the root causes of racism. He realised that the movement needed to spread its support to the north and in particular black workers. But even he was shocked by the racist reaction he received when trying to organise in Chicago.

King began to distance himself from the Democratic Party. There was even talk about him standing independently in the 1968 elections. He recognised the need for a social programme and came out clearly against the Vietnam War. The movement organised campaigns for social welfare for poor whites, blacks and hispanics. Significantly, King was killed in Memphis in 1968, while he was supporting a strike of black dustmen.

Spike Lee ends his film "Do the Right Thing" with quotes from both Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. The old man character in the film seems to represent the worthy but old fashioned ideas of Martin Luther King, whereas the angry youth are the continuation of Malcolm X's ideals. Martin Luther King was okay for his time, but now we should look towards Malcolm X and his legacy.

The attempt to stress the continuation and similarities between King and Malcolm X is understandable. The official liberal view has always portrayed King as the honourable black leader and Malcolm X as the dangerous and violent one. Similarly the popular view on the Marxist left was and is to portray King as a conservative "reformist" and Malcolm the radical revolutionary.

I think Malcolm X made two important contributions. Firstly,

the stress on self-defence. His comment on this bears a resemblance to Trotsky's: "for every lynching, we should kill 20 lynch-ers." The official movement never mentioned self-defence, indeed they often looked to the support of federal troops.

Secondly, Malcolm was hostile to the state and its institutions. He castigated black people for voting Democrat. However, the organisation he built, the Organisation of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) was always rather small and a black independent organisation is not in itself progressive.

Martin Luther King was often criticised for being an integrationist. Malcolm X's widow, Betty Shabazz, argued that the slogans "Black and white together/We shall overcome" were no longer relevant. "Integration has failed - now we have to rule ourselves".

Surely we as socialists share the "integrationist" approach. Martin Luther King built a mass movement of black and white for social progress. It was easy to see why white workers were not seen as being important. Nevertheless in the late 1960s there was tremendous potential. A movement that built links between the Poor People's Campaign and the Anti-Vietnam War Campaign and had answers to social problems of black, hispanic and white workers would have been a threat to the racist Democratic and Republican parties.

When Martin Luther King was shot in 1968 most US cities erupted in anger. Malcolm X had said "the white man had better be glad that Dr King is leading a non-violent revolution. There are those who are waiting for him to fail. Then the revolution will begin". Unfortunately, it didn't happen in 1968.

## Yeltsin government serves the rich

# "Your rights will not be given to you, you will have to take them"

**Nikolai Preobrazhensky, a Marxist living in Petersburg, argues the case for a new Party of Labour in Russia**

No matter how the next crisis is resolved (whether that crisis be a social explosion from below or simply a "reshuffling" of those on top - which for those on top is, of course, the preferable option), no matter which new groupings take their place at the helm, not matter what beautiful promises they make, one thing is certain: the interests of the workers will not be among their priorities.

Why is that so? It is not only because our workers' movement is extremely weak, but also because it is poorly organised and has no firm structure. Should there be a social explosion, it could only act as a ramrod, crashing the gates for others, or a rocket launcher propelling other forces to great heights. The old trade unions enjoy no confidence by and large; the new ones, with the exception of those in the mining regions, are very weak. There are no serious political organisations expressing the interests of the workers' movement nor parties which the masses of workers would consider their own, their reliability to be counted on without fear of betrayal or deception.

We remember what happened a year ago in Minsk (capital of Byelorussia). There was a powerful strike wave which forced the authorities to accede to many demands. But the wave subsided, and it subsided without leaving anything behind. (Groups claiming to be the city strike committee but representing no one do not count). As a result, the workers' movement, as before, has no influence on policy decisions, great or small, general or specific, at the top or on a local level.

Whose interests do the current Russian authorities represent? Obviously, not the interest of the workers, engineers, teachers, in a word not the interest of those who labour.

Despite the isolated blows at the parasitic middlemen - such as the December revocation of licenses to sell oil, after which a number of government officials had to get guns to protect themselves; high taxes on stock operations etc - of

all the layers and social groups that exist, general government policy objectively favours precisely the large merchants, the "shadow" dealers, and corrupt officialdom.

Our directors are now making their entrance into the political arena - with all their experience, connections and real economic power; well informed with their new, considerable freedom to do what they want; no longer subject to party tutelage; ever more distinctly grouped into their various organisations; and able to count on the support of at least a part of the work collectives. It is they - not the workers' movement (except for the miners) - who have the best chance to influence real policy.

Undoubtedly they will make attempts at friendly negotiations with the authorities and their "brothers" in commerce. The much talked about banquet of 90 of the most powerful entrepreneurs in Petersburg - from the shadow economy to the VPK (All-Union Party of Communists) - and organised by a group of "democrats" helped reveal the lay of the land. Those in attendance do have some common interests.

However, their opposing interests, it seems, are far greater than what they have in common. The commercial structures in league with the corrupt apparatus often plunder the state sector. The largest enterprise in Omsk - the cotton combine "Vosotk" - is barely functioning: there is no cotton. Meanwhile, for almost six months one could see, on the outskirts of the city, freight cars loaded with cotton purchased by a commercial company set up by the firm Pilot and the city authori-

**"Government policy objectively favours the large merchants, the "shadow" dealers, and corrupt officialdom."**

ties. The paradox is this: Pilot is near bankruptcy and who is paying the storage costs for the idle

freight cars? The city budget.

Also near the "red line" of bankruptcy is Moscow's famous Dementyev Combine (MAPO), producer of MIGs. Fifty fully built and tested export model MIG-29s valued at \$1 billion are "collecting dust" because MAPO "for some reason" cannot get an export license. Meanwhile, commercial representatives are besieging the combine offering their "services" in exporting military hardware.

When in January (Akardy) Volsky organised a congress of directors and merchants the groups nearly came to blows. And the continuation of the present policy holds out nothing good for the state sector. A government "Memorandum to the International Monetary Fund" says that the state sector would be the object of open discrimination benefiting the private sector (as a result of the proposed taxes and wage restrictions).

Given this specific situation a "government of enterprise directors" could come to power only if they were to take the offensive or be called into the government to save the day. Various farsighted director "generals" and "marshalls" are pondering how to use the labour collectives and the workers' movement to their own advantage.

This is how YI Sevenard, a name well known to all Leningraders as the builder of the dam, put it: one of the two forces (the second is the army) that can keep the economy from collapsing is "experienced economic leaders, united with the labour collectives. The director - the heart and soul of his enterprise - knows the psychology of his work collective through and through. This unity of directors with their work collectives also promotes the common aspirations to protect their enterprises from rogues with fat wallets."

Generally speaking, this classic paternalism ("there are no conflicts between the workers and the bosses; they are all one happy family") is actually being advanced to justify a bid for leadership of the workers' movement.

We must not forget that in our country we have accumulated three years' experience with "director-initiated" strikes, particularly strike calls and pre-strike situations: in the Donbass,



The current Russian authorities do *not* represent the interests of

Tyumen, on the railroads, in Estonia. Undoubtedly, the directors and the workers often share common interests, even if these only relate to keeping the enterprise in operation, ensuring that raw materials continue to arrive, and getting taxes lowered.

However, the majority of the factory directors - even those who are concerned about the welfare of the collective as a whole, raise wages and organise barter arrangements to ensure delivery of produce and consumer goods - are at the same time against the independence and self-activity of the labour collectives. They strangle the STKs (Councils of Labour Collectives), restrict the activists of the independent trade unions, control the official "trade unions" and not only find ways to line their pockets at the expense of their enterprise, but also use the privatisation process to their own benefit.

The workers' movement can

form a united front with the directors around a few common causes. But it is of utmost importance that while doing so they retain their independence. They must dance to another's tune or pull the chestnuts from the fire for some "sugar daddy".

Even with a strong militant trade union organisation, only a small share of the problems that concern workers can be resolved at the enterprise level.

The key to solving the majority of difficulties lies at a higher level of power. The resolution of these often turns on the solutions of global issues, that is, political problems.

Moreover many matters cannot be resolved in favour of workers at the local level and even higher - not only because the absolute majority of today's trade unions and workers' organisations are fictitious and weak. The problem is that "by definition" one trade union, strike committee, or work-





the workers

elements, are, in fact, two natural and necessary branches of any developed workers' movement. People don't just worry about what happens to them on the job. They are also concerned over prices, new laws, what the local authorities are up to, and the functioning of collective services. People are also interested in making sure that the state implements a policy for the creation of new work places so that necessary goods in short supply can become accessible at affordable prices.

Social problems can be effectively resolved only if we have our own representatives in the organs of power: from the summits of parliament to the local councils.

It is impermissible to have any particular confidence in the representatives of the parties of others, no matter how beautiful their words or the promises they make.

The solutions to our problems cannot be reliably entrusted to some far off benefactor. He will make promises and then betray you. In addition, the majority of the existing parties are firmly linked with their sponsors - various financial-commercial structures. What we need is not to ask someone to intercede on our behalf but to have our own deputies.

To be sure, there are the sad experiences of Vorkuta, the Kuzbass - and in Leningrad, also, by the way - when some deputies from the workers' movement, upon winning elections in 1990 and taking office, cut their ties with the workers' organisations and only looked after their own careers and business interests. Precisely, what we need is a party which not only helps get candidates elected, but can also use every possible means to control the candidates activity and help in the work of safeguarding their links with the base, with those who pushed them forward.

**T**his party must unite workers on a very broad basis. If you are a worker on the shop floor, an engineer using a slide rule, a scholar at a computer, a doctor by a sickbed or a teacher at a blackboard, this is your party.

If you are against the policy plundering the broad masses and causing rapid social stratification (this policy did not begin with the "Gaidar government" and will not end when he falls) - this is your party.

If you want to make your case known, if you want to produce the goods people need but at every step in the official ladder another 10,000 rubles is demanded of you, this party must defend your interests.

The political organisations of the workers must in no case become narrow ideological sects of fanatics of any "one and only true" idea. There must be room for people with varying views, except for racists and opponents of democratic freedoms.

It does not matter which god you believe in or even if you believe in a god at all.

It does not matter who you consider your national hero: Lenin, Makhno, Kolchak, or the leaders of the Kronstadt rebellion.

It does not matter whether you appreciate Comrade Stalin or consider him the greatest criminal of all time and of all peoples or whether you applauded Nina Andreyevna or were crazy about Mikhail Sergeyvich. It does not matter whether you voted for Yeltsin or against him.

A political organisation of the workers must unite people on the basis of defense of their genuine, real, vital interests, and not on the basis of their attitudes toward the events of the distant or not so distant past. Arguments about the past have their proper place and time. But for workers parties, the priority is the struggle today for the rights and interests of workers.

All the government orders, laws and edicts make sense only as long as "The people keep silent." The present day rash of parties and politicians can present themselves as anything, puff themselves up, and wield the levers of power only as long as the masses are passive. A two or three day general strike would expose the majority of them as nonentities and seep two thirds of them away like a fallen house of cards, of no political use and destined to have a place only in some future textbooks.

If one were to describe perestroika and post-perestroika periods in one sentence, it would be that this was a time when the wealth of the people was redistributed for the benefit of a narrow layer through the impoverishment of the majority. It was a classic example of "primitive accumulation" of capital.

There was not then nor is there now a power capable of resisting this. Only a strong workers movement can defend the interests of the workers regardless of what changes may take place in the political situation. Like the hero in Gorky's play said: "Your rights will not be given to you, you will have to take them."

**This translation is abridged from the American socialist monthly Bulletin In Defence of Marxism (contact: Bulletin IDOM, PO Box 1317, New York NY 10009).**

ers' committee by itself is limited in what it can achieve - without

political support, without political parties directly, immediately and reliably (without ulterior motives) expressing the will of the workers.

The trade union and political

**"One trade union, strike committee, or workers' committee by itself is limited in what it can achieve - without political support, without political parties directly, immediately and reliably expressing the will of the workers."**

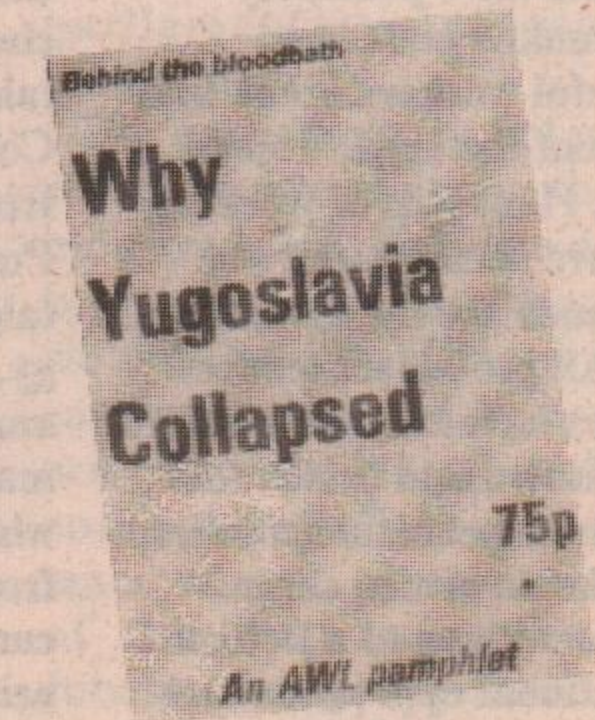


Increasing inequalities cannot be explained by the collapse of production

## Pamphlets from AWL and Socialist Organiser



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# 1913: the Labour Glorious Dublin!

The Dublin Labour War was one of the great battles of the working class. In 1913, under the leadership of Jim Larkin, the working class of Dublin was making Dublin one of the best organised cities in the world.

Dublin's slums were officially admitted to be amongst the worst in the British Empire. Infant mortality was higher there than in Calcutta. During the 1914-18 war, a British Army recruiting leaflet would tell the workers of Dublin that the war trenches of France were healthier than the slums of Dublin! But now the workers were on the move.

The workers had discovered the power of the sympathetic, solidarity strike. Where necessary they brought their weight as a class to bear on each individual employer on

behalf of his employees.

Wages were pushed up. Conditions began to improve. The workers, long downtrodden, became everywhere assertive and confident. A tremendous growth of working class dignity and self respect began to make Dublin uncomfortable for the upper classes.

So the bosses organised themselves in a cartel and locked out every worker who would not leave or promise never to join "Larkin's union".

This week along with James Connolly's article "Glorious Dublin" we print Lenin's comments on "Bloody Sunday" in Dublin, when the British authorities backed the Irish nationalist Dublin capitalists by letting hoards of drunken

baton-wielding policemen loose on workers engaged in a peaceful demonstration. Two men were beaten to death.

The Dublin workers are out and determined. They have stopped the bosses offensive. To gain outright victory, they need the help only the powerful British labour movement can give them. In Britain there is for the first time in 70 years talk of general strike to help Dublin. Rank and file militants on the railway, docks and other industries are agitating for a policy of active solidarity with Dublin: the trade union bureaucracy stand in the way.

Next week: the special TUC Conference to discuss Dublin

## Glorious Dublin!

To the readers of *Forward* possibly some sort of apology is due for the non-appearance of my notes for the past few weeks, but I am sure that they quite well understand that I was, so to speak, otherwise engaged. On the day I generally write my little screed, I was engaged on the 31st of August in learning how to walk around in a ring with about forty other unfortunates kept six paces apart, and yet slip in a word or two to the poor devil in front of or behind me without being noticed by the watchful prison warders.

The first question I asked was

**"Baton charges, prison cells, untimely death and acute starvation - all were faced without a murmur, and in face of them all the brave Dublin workers never lost faith in their ultimate triumph"**

generally "say, what are you in for?" Then the rest of the conversation ran thus:

"For throwing stones at the police." "Well, I hope you did throw them and hit." "No, by G—, that's the worst of it. I was pulled coming out of my own house."

"Pulled" is the Dublin word for arrested. It was somewhat mortifying to me to know that I was the only person apparently in prison who had really committed the crime for which I was arrested. It gave me a sort of feeling that I was lowering the moral tone of the prison by coming amongst such a crowd of blameless citizens.

But the concluding part of our colloquy was a little more encouraging. It usually finished in this way:

"Are you in the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union?"

"Of course I am."

"Good. Well if they filled all the prisons in Ireland they can't beat us, my boy."

"No, thank God, they can't; we'll fight all the better when we get out."

And there you have the true spirit. Baton charges, prison cells, untimely death and acute starvation - all were faced without a murmur, and in face of them all the brave Dublin workers never lost faith in their ultimate triumph, never doubted but that their organisation would emerge

victorious from the struggle. This is the great fact that many of our critics amongst the British labour leaders seem to lose sight of. The Dublin fight is more than a trade union fight; it is a great class struggle, and recognised as such by all sides. We in Ireland feel that to doubt our victory would be to lose faith in the destiny of our class.

I heard of one case where a labourer was asked to sign the agreement forswearing the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and he told his employer, a small capitalist builder, that he refused to sign. The employer, knowing the man's circumstances, reminded him that he had a wife and six children who would be starving within a week. The reply of this humble labourer rose to the heights of sublimity. "It is true, sir," he said, "they will starve; but I would rather see them go out one by one in their coffins than that I should disgrace them by signing that." And with head erect he walked out to share hunger and privation with his loved ones. Hunger and privation - and honour.

Defeat, bah! How can such a people be defeated? His case is typical of thousands more. Take the case of the United Builders Labourers' Trade Union, for instance. This was a rival union to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Many sharp passages had occurred between them, and the employers counted confidently upon their co-operation in the struggle; Mr. William Martin Murphy especially praising them and exulting in their supposed acquiescence in his plans. Remember also that they were a dividing society, dividing their funds at the end of each year, and therefore without any strike funds. When the members of their union were asked to sign the agreement, promising never to join or help the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, not one man consented - but all over Dublin their 2,500 members marched out "to help the ITGWU boys". Long ere these lines are written, they have experienced all the horrors of starvation, but with grim resolve they have tightened their belts and presented an unyielding front to the enemy.

It is a pleasure to me to recall that I was a member of their Union before I went to America, and that they twice ran me as their candidate for Dublin City Council before the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was dreamed of.

What is true of that union is also true of most of the tradesmen. All are showing wonderful

## Lenin on the 1913 strike

In Dublin, the capital of Ireland - a city not of a highly industrial type, with a population of half a million - the class struggle, which permeates the whole life of capitalist society everywhere, has become accentuated to the point of class war. The police have positively gone wild; drunken policemen assault peaceful workers, break into houses, torment the aged, women and children. Hundreds of workers (over 400) have been injured and two killed - such are the casualties of this war. All prominent leaders of the workers have been arrested. People are thrown into prison for making the most peaceful speeches. The city is like an armed camp.

Ireland is something of a British Poland... National oppression and Catholic reaction have turned the proletarians of this unhappy country into paupers, the peasants into toilworn, ignorant and dull slaves of the priesthood, and the bourgeoisie into a phalanx, masked by nationalist phrases, of capitalists, of despots over the workers; finally, they have turned the authorities into a gang accustomed to every kind of violence.

At the present moment the Irish nationalists (ie the Irish bourgeoisie) are the victors. They are buying up the land from the British landlords; they are getting national Home Rule (the famous Home Rule for which such a long and stubborn struggle between Ireland and Britain has gone on); they will freely govern "their" land in conjunction with "their" Irish priests.

Well, this Irish nationalist bourgeoisie is celebrating its "national" victory, its maturity in "affairs of state" by declaring a war to the

death against the Irish labour movement.

The Irish unions have begun to develop splendidly. On the heels of the Irish bourgeois scoundrels engaged in celebrating their "national" victory followed the Irish proletariat, awakening the class consciousness. It has found a talented leader in the person of Comrade Larkin, secretary of the Irish Transport Workers' Union. Possessing remarkable oratorical talent, a man of seething Irish energy, Larkin has performed miracles among the unskilled workers - the mass to the British proletariat which in Britain is so often cut off from the advanced workers by that cursed petty-bourgeois. Liberal, aristocratic spirit of the British skilled worker.

A new spirit has been aroused in the Irish workers' unions. The unskilled workers have introduced unparalleled animation into the trade unions, even the women have begun to organise - a thing hitherto unknown in Catholic Ireland. Dublin showed promise of becoming one of the foremost towns in the whole of Great Britain so far as organisation of the workers is concerned. The country that used to be typified by the fat, well-fed Catholic priest and the poor, starving ragged worker, in tatters even on Sunday because he is without the wherewithal to purchase Sunday clothes - this country, bearing a double, triple, national yoke, was beginning to turn into a land with an organised army of the proletariat.

Murphy proclaimed a crusade of the bourgeoisie against Larkin and "Larkinism". To begin with, 200

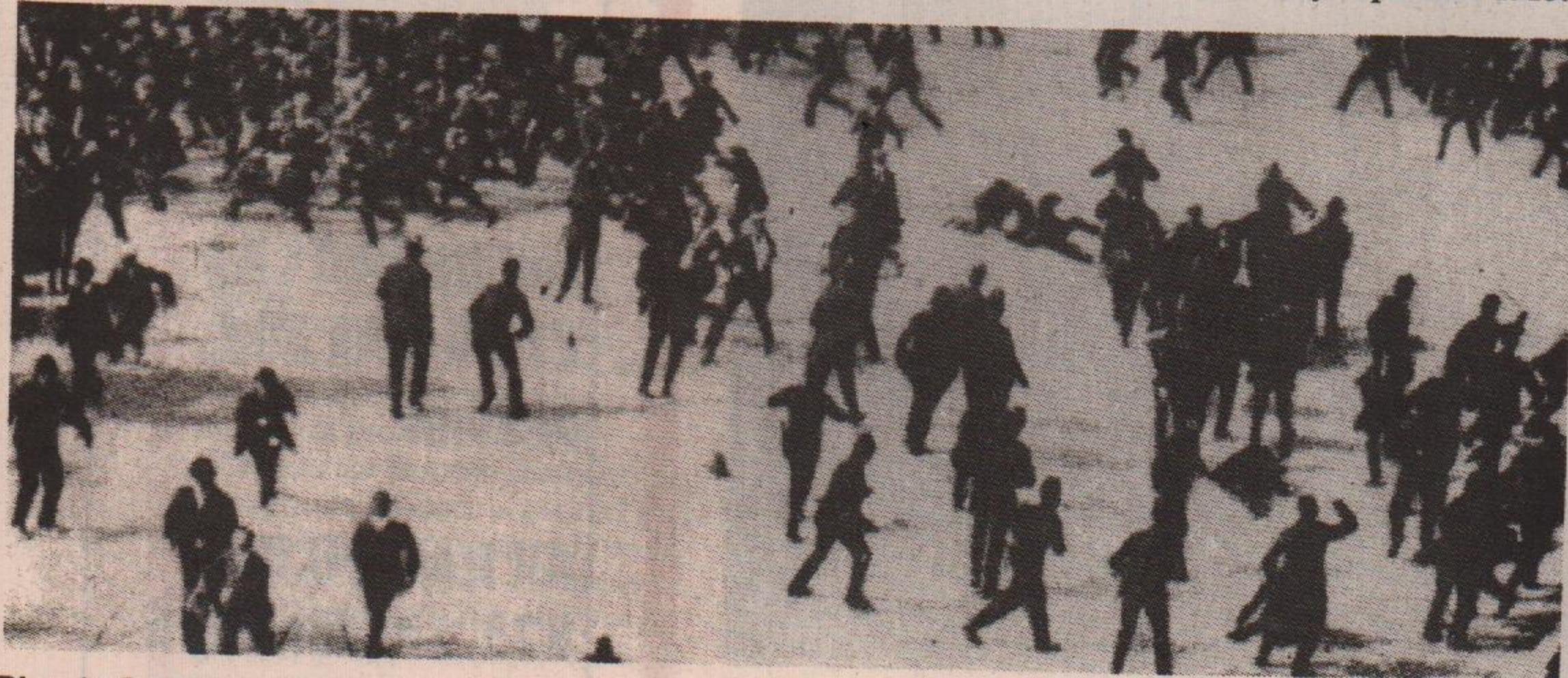
tramwaymen were dismissed in order to provoke a strike during the exhibition and to embitter the whole struggle. The Transport Workers' Union went on strike and demanded the re-instatement of the discharged men. Murphy engineered lock-outs. The workers retaliated by downing tools. War raged all along the line. Passions flared up.

Larkin was arrested. A meeting called by the workers was banned...Larkin declared that he would be at the meeting no matter what happened. He came to the meeting disguised, and began to speak to the crowd. The police recognised him, seized him and beat him. For two days the dictatorship of the police truncheon raged, crowds were clubbed, women and children tormented. The police broke into workers' homes. A worker named Nolan, a member of the Transport Workers' Union, was beaten to death. Another died from injuries.

On Thursday, September 4 (August 22, old style), Nolan's funeral took place. The proletariat of Dublin followed in a procession 50,000 strong behind the body of their comrade. The police brutes lay low, not daring to irritate the crowd, and exemplary order prevailed.

The Dublin events mark a turning point in the history of the labour movement and of socialism in Ireland. Murphy threatened to destroy the Irish trade unions. He only succeeded in destroying the last remnants of the influence of the nationalist Irish bourgeoisie over the proletariat in Ireland.

VI Lenin, early September 1913.



Bloody Sunday

# War in Dublin



Liberty Hall, headquarters of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Outside is the Citizens' Army built by Connolly after 1913 and the Labour War to protect the workers



James Connolly

field, are becoming more and more absorbed in questions of administration, or taxation, and only occasionally, as in the miners' national strike, really rise to a realisation of their true role of parliamentary outposts of the industrial army.

The parliamentary tail in Britain still persist in wagging the British industrial dog. Only the dog really begins to assert his true position, we will be troubled no more by carping critics of labour politics, nor yet with labour politician's confessions of their own impotence in such great crises as that of the railway strike or the Johannesburg massacres.

Nor yet would we see that awful spectacle we have seen lately of labour politicians writing to the capitalist press to denounce the methods of a union which, with 20,000 men and women locked out in one city, is facing an attempt of 400 employers to starve its members back into slavery.

And thou, Brutus, that you should play the enemy's game at such a crisis! Every drop of ink you spilled in such an act stopped a loaf of bread on its way to some starving family.

loyalty to their class. Coachbuilders, sawyers, engineers, bricklayers, each trade that is served by general labourers, walks out along with the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union boys; refuses to even promise to work with any one who signs the employers agreement, and, cheering, lines up along with their class.

***"As we believe that in the socialist society of the future the entire resources of the nation must stand behind every individual, so today our unions must be prepared to fight with all their resources to safeguard the rights of every individual member."***

Or think of the heroic women and girls. Did they care to evade the issue, they might have remained at work, for the first part of the agreement asks them to merely repudiate the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and as women, they are members of the Irish Women Workers' Union, not of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. But the second part pledges them to refuse to "help" the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union - and in every

shop, factory and sweating hell-hole in Dublin, as the agreement is presented, they march out with pinched faces, threadbare clothes, and miserable footgear, but with high hopes, undaunted spirit, and glorious resolve shining out of their eyes. Happy the men who will secure such wives; thrice blessed the nation which has such girls as the future mothers of the race! Ah, comrades, it is good to have lived in Dublin in these days!

And then our friends write deprecatingly to the British press of the "dislocation of trade" involved in sympathetic strikes, of the "perpetual conflicts" in which they would involve great trade unions. To those arguments, if we can call them such, our answer is sufficient. It is this. If the capitalist class knew that any outrages upon a worker, any attack upon labour, would result in a prompt dislocation of trade, perhaps national in its extent; that the unions were prepared to spend their last copper if necessary rather than permit a brother or sister to be injured, then the knowledge would not only ensure a long cessation from industrial skirmishing such as the unions are harassed by to-day, it would not only ensure peace to the unions, but what is of vastly more importance, it would ensure to the individual worker a peace from slave-driving and harassing at his work such as the largest unions are apparently unable to guarantee under present methods.

Mark, when I say "prepared to spend their last copper if necessary," I am not employing merely

a rhetorical flourish, I am using the words literally. As we believe that in the socialist society of the future the entire resources of the nation must stand behind every individual, guaranteeing him against want, so today our unions must be prepared to fight with all their resources to safeguard the rights of every individual member.

The adoption of such a principle, followed by a few years of fighting on such lines to convince the world of our earnestness,

would not only transform the industrial arena, but would revolutionise politics. Each side would necessarily seek to grasp the power of the state to reinforce its position, and politics would thus become what they ought to be, a reflex of the industrial battle, and lose the power to masquerade as a neutral power detached from economic passions or motives.

At present I regret to say labour politicians seem to be losing all reality as effective aids to our struggles on the industrial battle-

## Who's who in the Dublin Labour War

### Jim Larkin

A Liverpool Irishman, Larkin was a foreman on the docks there until he sided with his men in strike and was sacked.

He became an organiser for the National Dock Labourers Union (which grew into today's GMB) in Belfast. There, in 1902 he succeeded for a while in uniting Catholic and Protestant workers in a carriers trade union struggle. There was a spectacular strike, during which even the Belfast police went on strike!

Union leader James Sexton, who would become a Labour MP and end his days as "Sir James", sold out the Belfast workers. Strike pay was stopped and a demoralising deal made over Larkin's head.

Larkin broke away from Sexton's union and start-

ed the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, which became the Irish expression of the great wave of working class militancy to strike the "UK" in the years before the First World War. In Britain it took the form of a rank and file movement in defiance of men like James Sexton: in Ireland a great new union was formed. Last week in SO James Connolly described what the ITGWU did.

In 1914, Larkin went to the USA where eventually he was jailed in the anti-red witch hunt, returning to Ireland in 1923 and joining the Communist International. He fought the bureaucracy of the Irish labour movement. In the Stalinist ultra-left period he drifted away from the "Communist" movement. Living through the decades of clerical reac-

tion in Ireland he never repudiated the communism of the Russian Revolution. When he died in 1947 many tens of thousands of Dublin workers braved the sub-zero temperature to mourn at his funeral.

### James Connolly

James Connolly, the son of Irish immigrants, was born in the Irish ghetto in Edinburgh in 1868. He left school at 10 and joined the army at 14. Back in Edinburgh, he married and, with a job as a dustman collecting "night soil", stood as a socialist candidate in a local election, losing his job for doing it. Although, like Larkin, he never ceased to be a Catholic, he was both a radical Marxist and a Fenian Irish Republican. In 1896, he went to Dublin

and founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party. He adhered to the "De Leonites" a group of Marxists, centred mainly in the United States who made the sort of criticisms of the official socialist movement Lenin would make over 10 years later, when that movement collapsed.

Between 1903-10 Connolly was in the USA where he fell out with De Leon and was an organiser for the Industrial Workers of the World. He returned to Ireland in 1910 and became an organiser for the ITGWU in Belfast. He led the "Citizen Army" into the 1916 Rising and was badly wounded and shot - strapped in a chair - on 12 May 1916.

Next week: The bourgeois leaders William Martin Murphy and Joseph Devlin

*In the beginning was the critique of capitalism*

# Marxism lives!

**Chris Arthur has prepared for Lawrence and Wishart an abridged edition of Marx's *Capital*, to appear shortly. Here he explains why we still need it.**

**W**hy *Capital*? Why now? The truth is that Karl Marx's masterpiece is as germane today as when it first appeared in 1867.

All those who are not taken in by the current triumphalist discourse of capitalist apologetic, and who want to understand the world in order to change it, will find that in the end the inescapable starting point for all social criticism is Marx's *Capital*. Trade Unionists, socialists, feminists, ecologists, anti-imperialists, all those who find themselves in opposition to the existing order, need to grasp Marx's theory because even where it does not address their immediate concerns, it marks out the parameters within which their problems arise.

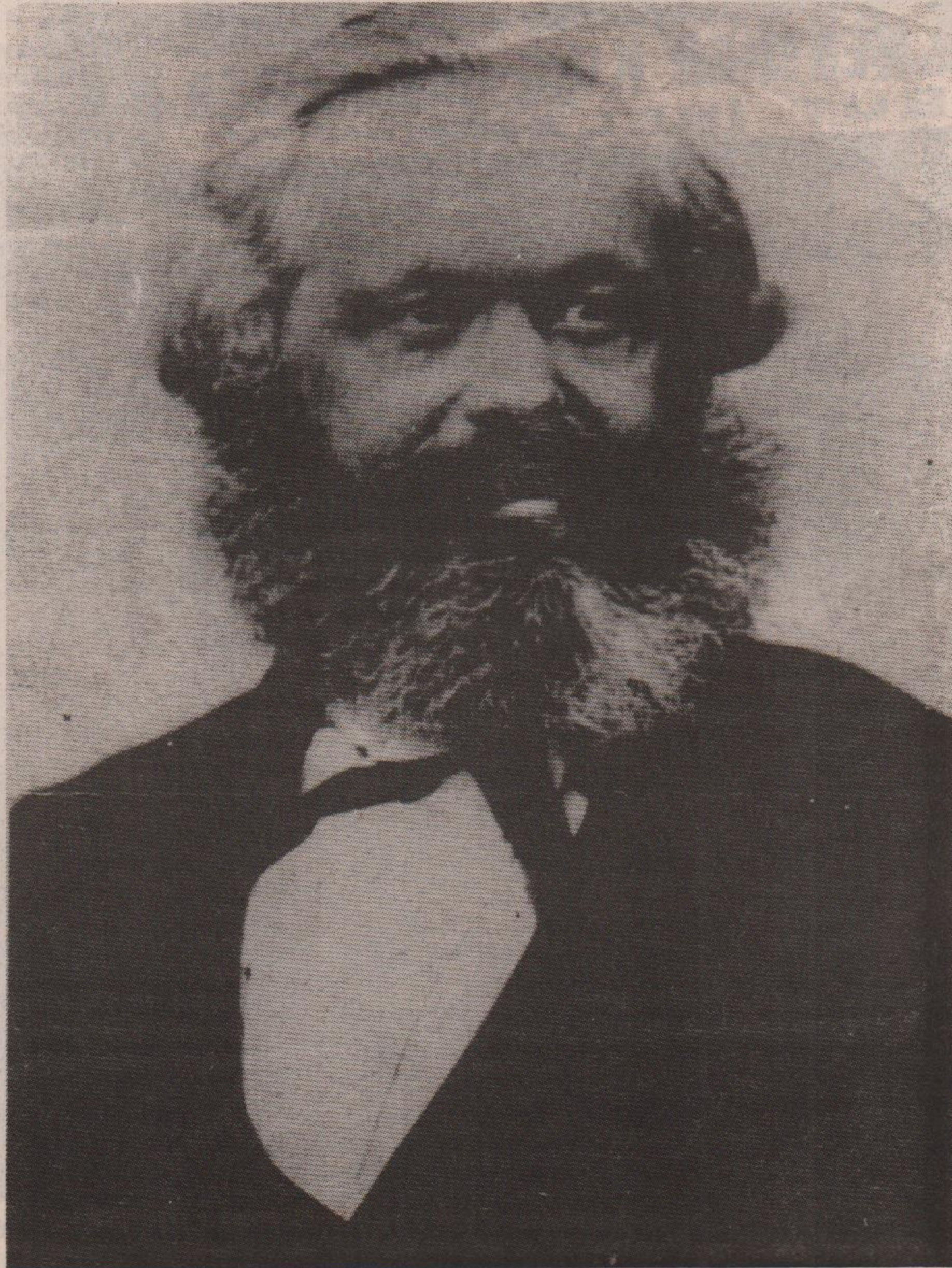
This is because today, as yesterday, the single most important determinant of social development is the ruthless drive of capital accumulation and its inexorable penetration into all corners of the world (the last frontier, the Amazon, has just fallen) and all aspects of our lives.

What is most remarkable is that Marx himself had in front of him only the beginnings of the story. Yet only his book makes any sort of sense of the last one hundred and fifty years, of industrialisation and urbanisation, of slumps and booms, of imperialism and multinational companies, of hunger in the midst of plenty. With tremendous intellectual power he cut through to the essentials of the capitalist mode of production and elaborated a theory of its development which remains the fundamental starting point for understanding new phenomena as they arise and offer themselves for analysis.

Marx foresaw the increasing power of the forces of production; the increasing socialisation of the labour process; the transformation of the great majority of people into employees; the application of science to industry and agriculture; the transformation of the instruments of production into instruments only usable in common; mechanisation and automation; increasing productivity of labour; the creation of a world market; the erosion of national boundaries; the concentration and centralisation of capital; recurrent recessions; a declining rate of profit; strikes and revolutions.

Of course the twentieth century brought new phenomena – imperialism, fascism, Stalinism, and so on – but again the only people with any grip on events were the Marxists: Luxemburg, Lenin, and Trotsky, for example. Trotsky predicted that the twentieth century would be a century of wars and revolutions. The bourgeois apologists fantasied about universal harmony based on the mutual advantages of trade. And if there were still slumps they were teething troubles in 'the system of natural liberty' (Adam Smith).

At the time of writing we are in the middle of a slump. The explanation offered in the financial press is that there is a lack of "consumer confidence". What a circular argument! Because the explanation for this lack of confidence is precisely the current crisis. Compared with the pover-



Marx's theory of capitalist development and production is *still* an essential starting point for anyone who wants to fight oppression and exploitation.

ty of this philosophy, we might be forgiven for preferring Marx's investigation of the underlying laws of capitalist development with its recurrent crises.

Marx's remarkable achievement in this respect is ignored by critics whose sole concern is to refute a prediction he did not make, namely a supposed law of

***"With tremendous intellectual power he cut through to the essentials of the capitalist mode of production and elaborated a theory of its development which remains the fundamental starting point for understanding new phenomena as they arise and offer themselves for analysis."***

immiseration of the working class. In truth, Marx's assumptions of capital growth through increasing productivity implicitly points to an increase in real wages. (A firm cannot profit from mass-producing TVs unless there is a mass market for them).

Marx himself points out that the real wage and the value of labour-power can vary in opposite directions, given improvements in productivity.

Examination of the 'increasing misery' passage reveals that it relates to the semi-permanently unemployed.

Certainly Marx held that capitalism constantly reproduces a 'reserve of army of labour'. For Marxism it was the post-war boom that was exceptional, not mass unemployment. Thus it was no surprise when large-scale unemployment reappeared in the eighties.

It might be said that however many people live on the poverty-line the welfare system stops them dying in the street. True – for what is worth.

But capitalism is a world system. To cushion the proletarians at the core it exported misery to the huddled masses of the periphery. What about the workless inhabitants of Third World shantytowns? For that matter what about the people there who actually find work? Next time you eat a banana try to guess the wage of the person who picked it. Next time you open a tin, try and guess the life expectancy of a Bolivian tin-miner.

Then ask yourself how many centuries it will take until the fantastic wealth evident in the imperialist megalopolises 'trickles down' to them! Nor do higher wages than in Marx's day, or the shareholdings that some better-off workers currently possess, directly or indirectly, mean Marx's perspectives are to be abandoned. The key question is who holds power in society. Who can give or withhold a livelihood for someone else, and who has to beg for employment.

Marx points out that possession of sav-

ings, even of investments, does not make someone a capitalist unless the returns are sufficient to live off. The truth is that the big companies are still controlled by a handful of people no matter how many small shareholders get a few crumbs off the table.

Of course Marx did not get everything right. He would be surprised that capitalism is still 'alive and kicking'. This is partly a matter of a telescoped time-scale. Partly it relates to deeper problems, of which the most important is that Marx over-estimated the unity of the working class.

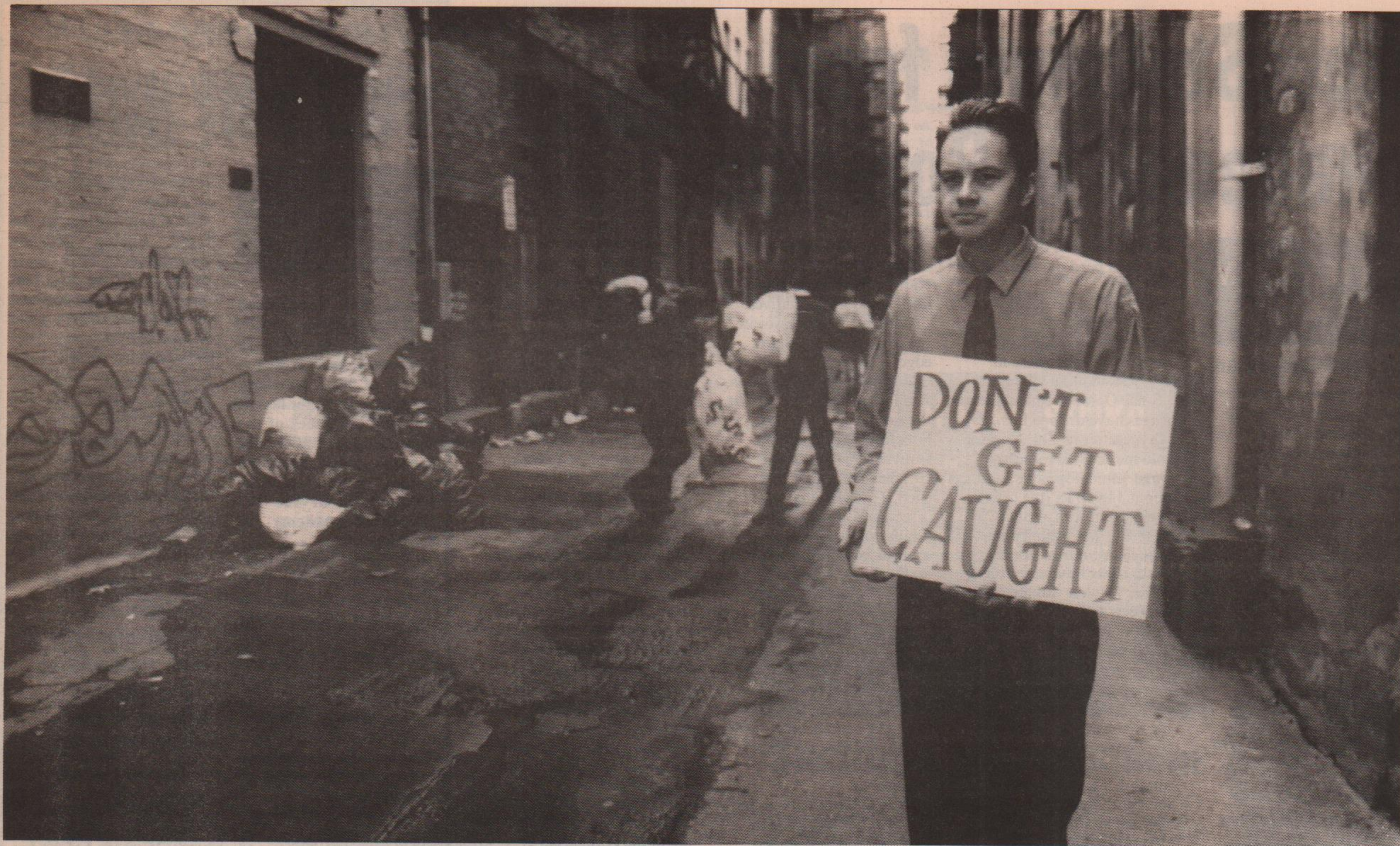
The fragmentation of the class by nation, race, religion, sex, occupation, industry, skill, and culture, together with the uneven global development of capitalism itself, has meant that the shortcomings of the system have always been experienced differentially, and the slogan of the Manifesto "Workers of the World Unite!" has remained almost a dead letter. Conversely, the lack of united opposition promoted accommodation and incorporation, partial perspectives, or unrealistic attempts at short-cuts. History will have the last word. As always..

Nonetheless, for those today who need to situate their oppositional practice theoretically Marxism remains, as Sartre pointed out, "the inescapable philosophy of our time". This is not to say it has always been understood. The tidal wave of student protest (and not only students in fact) in 1968 affiliated, in its bulk, to Marxism. *Capital* reading groups abounded in the universities throughout the seventies. Yet it has to be said that most activists lacked the patience to come to terms with its weight.

But Marxism without *Capital* is a nonsense. This is the work for which Marx sacrificed his health, his family, and the best years of his life. This is the very centre of his thought. According to his materialist conception of history it is the way society organises its system of production that provides the key to understanding social and political struggles. It is the economic structure that divides society into classes, and quarrels over the disposition of the wealth created that set them against one another. It is economic crisis that is the most potent source of revolutionary changes in the entire social order (although the specific modalities of class struggle determine whether and how change occurs).

Hence Marx devoted his life to studying that mode of production which dominates the modern epoch, namely capitalism; the result he hoped would aid the working-class movement he believed would overthrow it. Without a firm grasp of *Capital* radical social criticism can only be partial and impressionistic, unable to grasp the underlying unity behind apparently independent problems, and issuing in well-intentioned proposals that are in fact utopian, because they do not go to the roots of the problem, the nature of capitalism itself which will negate their effect one way or another.

Not only does *Capital* remain relevant in the West; but, paradoxically perhaps, if the East goes capitalist unpleasant realities will force them to turn back to it also. In short, anyone who takes Marxism seriously and wishes to further their own political education must come to terms with *Capital*.



Tim Robbins plays Bob Roberts, a self-styled "reactionary rebel"

# Forgetting to be angry

**Cinema**

Belinda Weaver reviews *Bob Roberts*

"Bob Roberts" suffers from the problem that faces any film satirising American politics – how do you caricature a caricature?

The film is good on the increasing emptying out of all content from American politics, and its replacement with images and icons, with soundbites and presentations and staged events. But it isn't sharp enough; it isn't angry enough.

Another weakness is the star (and writer and director) Tim Robbins.

He plays the bigoted, wealthy, folk-singing candidate, Bob Roberts, but he's too likeable for the part. Roberts should be frightening; he should – on some level – convey menace. Robbins can't pull it off.

Of course, that's partly his message – that Bob Roberts has appeal, that people like him and follow him – but his performance pulls the punch. He can't put over the right wing politics.

Bob Roberts also doesn't seem so different from the people who do get elected to Congress. The place is awash with rednecks and holy rollers; Roberts would fit right in. He's not as far right as he needs to be to be any kind of threat to

democracy. Pat Buchanan, for one, is worse.

***"What threatens American democracy is not people like Roberts, but the system as a whole. The government is in hock to big business, the military, the CIA, and the rest."***

What threatens American democracy is not people like Roberts, but the system as a whole. The government is in hock to big business, the military, the CIA, and the rest. It governs in the interests of a powerful, wealthy ruling class.

Democrat or Republican, it makes no difference. They serve the same master.

In the film, Roberts is contrasted with the incumbent, the liberal Brinkley Paiste. Paiste is played by Gore Vidal, and he's not bad – full of fine words that you know don't mean a damn. He pays lip service to the homeless, the jobless, but he's done nothing, and he'll do nothing.

You can see why people, after twenty years of that stuff, go for Roberts – the way some people went for Ross Perot. They want change – any change. They'll risk a leap of faith.

Faith, unswerving faith, is what it's all about for many of Roberts's followers. They're fanatics, so

rational argument is lost on them. It doesn't matter that Roberts is dirty, that his campaign manager has dabbled in drugs and guns – they simply close their ears and cling blindly to their faith.

The media too connive to white-wash Roberts, by accepting his reinvention at face value. Yes, Roberts is a phony and a hypocrite and probably a crook, but his emptiness matches theirs. They won't expose him. They're part of the same system that produced him.

One person who does want to expose Roberts (apart from Paiste, who really only wants to beat him) is Bugs Raplin, a journalist who produces a radical paper called *Troubled Times*. Unlike any of the official media, Raplin has done his homework, painstakingly uncovering Roberts's links to gunrunning, drug dealing, a failed Savings & Loan.

Like Paiste, who willingly concedes the country is run by the National Security Council, along with the military and the CIA, Raplin can see through the charade of Senate politicking. The difference is Raplin cares about it, and wants to change it. He's prepared to publish, only the mainstream media don't want to know. It's part of Raplin's conspiracy theory that the truth always gets ignored.

What's missing from his tirades is why this happens; why the people behind the scenes are pulling the levers. To Raplin (and to Paiste), it's about power, when really it's about money. Power is simply the means to get money; having money gives you more power.

Because money talks. As Roberts shows, Americans can forgive mil-

**Periscope**

10.20pm Sunday 20 September. The Monarchy

The fifth episode of this six-part series looks at the relationship between the monarchy and elected politicians. Previous episodes have been very bland, but will this one tackle the issues?

Why should an unelected dimwit parasite have the right to veto all legislation before it goes through Parliament, to veto it afterwards and to make and unmake governments?

lionaires anything; "self-made" millionaires are the American Dream. Money doesn't stink.

Raplin's may be the voice Tim Robbins wants heard, Raplin's rather than Paiste's. Paiste doesn't offer anything; Raplin has passion and conviction. But Robbins sets Raplin up to seem a crazy, a monomaniac, a pest. He's always hyper, and sweating, and he's disabled; Robbins couldn't have hampered him more.

Of course we do empathise with Raplin. After all the smooth empty faces we've seen, his is at least alive, but Robbins sacrifices him for effect. And there's no knowing where Raplin comes from, whether he's part of a movement. Like Bob Roberts, he comes out of nowhere.

The character of Bob Roberts began as a satire, and that may be the problem. Robbins may think he's a bit of a laugh, when really he's appalling. In sending up people like Roberts, Robbins may have got even, but he forgot to get mad.

**Thriller with a new angle**

**Book**

Dan Katz reviews *Yardie*, by Victor Headley. X Press, £5.95.

I read the reviews, and now I've read the trendy book. The reviews are more interesting than the novel itself.

First, contrary to what the black press may say, this is not a big step forward for black writers. *Yardie* is an average thriller, with a poorer-than-average ending. The only interesting angle is that the gangsters are the Jamaican "Yardies", straight out of the Sunday papers. D. is the central character.

He is from the West Kingston ghetto. He moves to London to get out.

"Getting out" means pushing drugs and killing a few people.

Back in Jamaica, D.'s brother tries another, more decent, way out – Rastafarianism. He winds up murdered because he tries to show the youth an alternative to a this violent life.

*Yardie* has few redeeming features. There's no humour and little story, just grim violence.

This is a picture of one small section of black youth, largely the product of poverty and the brutalisation which goes with it.

# Neo-Stalinists face challenge in Romania

## LETTER FROM ROMANIA

By John Cunningham

Returning to Hungary after a three-week visit to Romania, I was struck by stark contrasts.

In Romania bread lines form early. The fashionable Vaci utca in Budapest has equally long lines, but instead of tired, harassed women, you see young people eager to snap up the latest offering from Reebok or Adidas.

On every social and economic index, Romania fares worse than its neighbour.

**"The despair, and the continuing economic hardships, probably account for the large number of abortions, illegal under Ceausescu, now performed."**

Traffic lights often don't work, street lamps have no bulbs, the buses are falling apart, trolley buses stop dead as electricity supplies fail, petrol is rationed and getting a full tank can take half a day.

Telephones are erratic, as is the mail; and although there is now more food in the shops, the choice is limited and supplies are irregular. The appearance of grapes in time caused a general celebration while I was

there. It was the first time they had been on sale in several years.

However, eggs disappeared, despite the seemingly thousands of hens, ducks and geese in every Romanian village.

Since October 1990 real wages have dropped by 22%. A typesetter in Cluj Napora told me that his monthly wage, after stoppages, was about 14,000 lei (the official exchange rate is about 373 lei to \$1); an ordinary-size tube of Aquafresh toothpaste being advertised on TV as we were talking costs between 400 and 700 lei.

Those who can, simply leave. One family I stayed with, an old couple, part of Tirgu Mures's once flourishing Jewish community, told me that every household in their street had at least one member of their family abroad. Their two daughters, both dentists, live in Sweden and the USA.

Another family, in the beautiful town of Sibiu, asked for help in emigrating to Canada. "We don't want our child to grow up here", they said. "There is nothing for her".

This despair, and the continuing economic hardships, probably account for the large number of abortions, illegal under Ceausescu, now performed. In 1991 there were 882,000 abortions and only 275,000 live births.

The general pessimism is only partly alleviated by the prospect of the upcoming 27 September general election. Virtually all the people I spoke to, whether Romanian or ethnic Hungarian, see it as a

chance to rid themselves of the hated Ion Iliescu's National Salvation Front (NSF) and its derivatives.

A university professor in Brasov, on the southern edge of the region, told me that support for Iliescu was stronger in the south and in the east. Even so, he was hopeful of a Democratic Convention (CD) victory.

In the area where I travelled, Transylvania, the NSF is seen as a successor to the Ceausescu machine, not quite as bad perhaps, but qualitatively the same. Many of its members are former loyalists of the Romanian Communist Party, and rumours abound about its access to, and use of, Securitate files.

This political "hangover" is largely responsible for the refrain heard everywhere: "Nothing has really changed".

The CD scored major successes in February's local elections, when it gained control of almost all the urban centres in the country. It consists of the Civic Alliance Party, the National Peasants' Party, the Social Democrats, the party of the Hungarian minority (the Hungarian Democratic Alliance, RMDSz), and various green parties. RMDSz participation guarantees the vote of the two million Hungarian minority in Romania, virtually all in Transylvania.

Some Romanians fear that the Hungarian minority want reunification with Hungary. The area was transferred to Romania when Hungary was chopped up by the Allies after the

First World War.

In Cluj Napora, Gheorghe Funar's election as mayor in February has meant trouble for the town's 25% Hungarian minority. A bigoted, ignorant racist without an ounce of political culture, Funar has been widely denounced by Romanian and Hungarian alike as a fascist. His entire political stance rests on anti-Hungarian sentiment, ranting about national purity and similar drivel.

Funar received 52% of the vote in Cluj Napora, though it is hard to find anyone there who has a good word to say about him. In fact, in all the places I visited relations between Romanians and Hungarians appeared good, and some people put Funar's victory down to a low Hungarian turnout and manipulation of the military vote. (There is a large army base in Cluj Napora).

Bilingual signs and teaching in the Hungarian language are under threat in Cluj Napora, and Funar's language about the Hungarians is alarmingly reminiscent of the phraseology of "ethnic cleansing" in Romania's neighbours.

Things are better in Tirgu Mures where, despite ethnic violence in recent years, the local elections returned a Hungarian mayor. (The town is 60% Romanian, 40% Hungarian). Here, as in most towns, many people can speak both languages. Only the Roma (Gypsy) population is loathed by both Romanian and Hungarian.

## Alliance for Workers' Liberty public forums

**Thursday 17 September**

**"Should we support the banning of pornography?"**

SW London AWL meeting. 7.30, Lambeth Town Hall. Speakers: Mary McIntosh and Cathy Nugent.

**Thursday 17 September**

**"Capitalism in slump and crisis"**

Glasgow AWL meeting. 7.30, Partick Burgh Halls. Speaker: Jim Kearns.

**Wednesday 23 September**

**September**

**"Which way for Britain's black communities?"**

AWL London Forum. 7.30, Calthorpe Arms, Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

**Thursday 24 September**

**"The politics of Socialist Organiser"**

Sheffield AWL

meeting. 7.30, SCCAU, West Street. Speaker: Ruth Cockcroft.

**Thursday 24 September**

**"How to stop homelessness"**

Leeds AWL meeting. 7.30 Adelphi Hotel.

**Thursday 1 October**

**"The legacy of Malcolm X"**

Middlesbrough AWL meeting. 7.30, St Mary's Centre.

**Also coming up...**

**Fighting racism**

Wednesday 30 September. ANL benefit from 7pm at the Marquee, 105 Charing Cross Road, London WC2.

**Saturday 14 November. Anti-Racist Alliance conference against racist attacks. 9.15 to 6 at Greenwich Borough Hall, London SE18.**

**Inside the unions**

● The Trade Union News

conference will be held in Manchester on Saturday 10 October. Details from TUN, c/o 28c Barnsbury Park, London N1.

● The "Keep the Link" campaign, organised to defend Labour's links with the trade unions, has produced a petition for union and Labour Party branches. A campaign planning meeting has been called for Sunday 27 September, 2pm at the Helmsshore Hotel, 24 Charnley Road, Blackpool. For copies of the petition, or of the letter of invitation to the meeting, write to 120 Northcote Road, London E17 7EB, or phone Bob at 081-520 5386 or Tom at 071-277 7217.

**Left Labour ticket**

The Campaign Group slate for the Constituency Labour Party section of Labour's National Executive is: Diane Abbott, Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone, Alice Mahon, Dawn Primarolo, and Dennis Skinner.

**Conference of the left**

Saturday 17 October, Winding Wheel, Chesterfield. Organised by Chesterfield Labour Party and the Socialist

Movement.

**Red weekend**

The London committee of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty has called a "Red Weekend" for Saturday 26-Sunday 27 September.

AWL members will be selling *Socialist Organiser* on the streets on Saturday, and round estates on the Sunday.

We will be visiting sympathisers as part of our drive for subscriptions to the paper and donations for our fund drive.

There will be a fund-raising social on the evening of Saturday 26 September.

**Stop David Irving!**

Saturday 19 September  
Irving is a fascist and anti-semite who says the Holocaust is a myth. Picket his house! Assemble 12 noon at 80 Duke St, London W1.

## The pioneer of "jumping genes"

LES HEARN'S

### SCIENCE COLUMN

One of the world's most outstanding women scientists, Barbara McLintock, has just died at the age of 90. A geneticist, she made a name for herself studying the genes of the maize plant. In 1944, she became only the third woman to be elected to membership of the US National Academy of Sciences.

But her discoveries (perhaps in combination with her sex), contradicting the established wisdom of the 1950s, made her something of an outsider. Belatedly, she received recognition in the form of the Nobel Prize for Physiology when she was 81 years old, more than 30 years after she published her remarkable findings on "jumping genes".

It comes as something of a shock to realise that nearly all our extensive knowledge of the nature and behaviour of our genetic material, DNA, has come during this century. Much work has been done on the genetics of the fruit fly, *Drosophila melanogaster*, whose chromosomes\* are particularly easy to see under the microscope. A parallel investigation on the important food plant, maize (or American corn) has also gone on since the 1920s, with a significant input from McLintock.

Her skill as a microscopist enabled her to identify all the chromosomes of maize. She was able to identify some 400 maize genes\*\* and to find out which chromosomes they were on.

By 1931, with her co-worker Harriet Creighton, she had shown that crossing-over occurs between pairs of chromosomes during the formation of ova and pollen (sperm in animals).

The importance of this discovery is that it explains how we can pass on a mixture of the characters inherited from our parents to our offspring.

In the 1940s, following her appointment to her first secure job at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Long Island, McLintock made the first observations that were to lead ultimately to her Nobel Prize. These were that the genes of the maize plants were unstable. Thus, in some plants that should have had just yellow seeds, purple seeds were appearing.

She was able to prove that this was due to rearrangements within the chromosomes - the genes were jumping! This was so contrary to current opinions

on the stability of the chromosomes during the life of an organism that it was difficult for other geneticists to accept. When she presented her findings to the Cold Spring Harbor Symposium of 1951, many of the audience may just simply not have understood her findings. Others could not see how such gene rearrangements could take place, despite the compelling nature of the evidence McLintock supplied. Most geneticists were working on bacteria, whose DNA is organised in a different way from that of the higher organisms. McLintock had to wait

**"Her discoveries (perhaps in combination with her sex), contradicting the established wisdom of the 1950s, made her something of an outsider."**

some 25 years before her ideas were accepted, following the discovery of similar "transposable elements" in bacteria and in yeast. These elements have a great importance in the evolution of bacteria, allowing the spread of multiple drug resistance, for example, far faster than would occur by the more usual pattern of inheritance. This has led to serious setbacks in the treatment of infections.

The way that genes can "jump" is now well understood and is being used in genetic engineering to insert genes into plants and animals that would not normally acquire them.

McLintock believed that "jumping genes" might have implications for the evolution of higher organisms and it may well turn out to be the case in more ways than one. For example, under conditions of high environmental stress, rates of "jumping" seem to increase, leading to an increased rate of evolution. The produce of this may be an organism that is more fitted to the new environment.

Some "jumping genes" are similar in structure to viruses like HIV and it may be that these are genes that have managed to become independent.

Barbara McLintock died shortly after the publication of a "Festschrift" celebrating her 90th birthday, by which time she was probably the most famous living geneticist.

\*Little rod-shaped structures found in pairs in the nuclei of cells of higher animals and plants that contain the genetic material, DNA.

\*\* Lengths of DNA that carry the information for a particular character.

## Wandsworth wants to "contract out" estates Sink the Tory flagship!

By Dion D'Silva

All across Britain, local authority housing departments are in turmoil. The Tories have already stopped most councils building any more homes (only 1600 "starts" this year). Now they want to take housing management away too, and hand it over to the private sector.

Housing management has already been cut so much that it has become misery for workers and tenants alike. The strategy is obviously to run it down so much that almost anything seems better than the council.

Repairs take years, renovation is never done, transfers are a joke, as is security. Tower blocks are fire-traps, cockroaches and crime are rampant.

For every pound spent, another hundred is needed.

Despite all this, most council tenants want to keep the council as their landlord.

The Tories have tried every way to persuade tenants to leave the councils. First there were Housing Action Trusts (HATs). Tenants said no.

Then there was voluntary transfer. Many estates have transferred, but only after being promised no rent rises and enough money to do up the estate.

Up till now tenants have always been given a choice. The current

White Paper, "Competing for quality in housing", proposes to remove that choice.

The plan is for the housing stock to be split up into estates or other small units, with the management then put out to tender. Housing Associations, private management companies and estate agents are to be invited to bid for the three or five year contracts.

**"Wandsworth is starting to contract out before the legislation is in place! It has introduced a "pilot" plan to contract out four estates and one of the six district offices by next April."**

Contracting out of council and government services is not new, but this is the first direct attack on white-collar council workers. It represents the next step in the Tories' campaign to smash effective trade unionism in the public sector.

Not surprisingly, Wandsworth

council, in South London, the Tories' "flagship", has jumped the gun. It is starting to contract out before the legislation is in place!

Over half the council's services are already privatised, so Wandsworth has had plenty of practice. They have introduced a "pilot" plan to contract out four estates and one of the six district offices by next April.

The Director of Housing gleefully told the press that he had been talking to local estate agents about taking over the estates. He said that tenants would be consulted, but even if they said no the plan would go ahead. Which district office, and which estates, have been targeted is still a secret, but not one of them will volunteer - every tenants' group consulted so far has said no.

Local people are not exactly fans of the council. It was Wandsworth which discovered several million pounds' deficit in its education budget earlier this year, and demanded that schools sack teachers. Angry parents and teachers filled the High Street, getting national publicity just before the General Election. With only a few days to go, more money was promised. After the election schools found the coffers still empty; the teachers were sacked.

In July, an isolated estate had its school closed. The children were moved to a school a mile away up a busy road. "Sorry", said the council. "Insufficient demand. This building will never be used as a school again".

This week residents discovered that the building had been rented out - to a private prep school.

Wandsworth council knows who its friends are. These Tories know which class they serve. They are happy to create work and profit for the private sector while reducing services for residents.

Wandsworth has a zero poll tax. So residence in Wandsworth has become very desirable, and house prices have gone up, forcing out the poor.

Council homes are ruthlessly sold, through designated sales areas where vacant homes are sold rather than re-let.

Recently the council declared sales areas containing another 2000 homes, despite the property slump. Wandsworth would rather have the homes empty than let them to poor people, despite its long waiting list.

The message is clear - if you're rich, come to Wandsworth. If you're poor, \*\*\*\* off!

**Oppose contracting-out of housing services! Lobby the Housing Committee: 6pm, Thursday 17 September; Wandsworth Town Hall.**

## Newham strike back on

The Newham council workers' strike is back on. Monday morning, 14 September, saw pickets out in force across the borough after a High Court judge ruled that it is not unlawful for a union to campaign for a yes vote prior to a strike ballot.

This represents a small victory on the legal front, softening the courts' previous interpretation of the 1990 Employment Act.

According to NALGO branch secretary Andy Campbell, the

strike is also set to escalate and involve the 250 Newham NALGO members in local schools.

The dispute started in defence of sacked poll tax workers and has since turned into a battle against compulsory redundancies.

Messages of support and requests for speakers to:

Newham NALGO,  
47 Eve Road, London E15  
(081-519 7457).

## NALGO blocks strike

230 housing and benefit workers, members of Greenwich NALGO, have voted yes to strike action for the reinstatement of nine workers made compulsorily redundant nine months ago.

The workers were due to strike from Thursday 10 September, but a combination of the branch leaders and district officials has stood in the way.

A district official, speaking on Tuesday 15 September to

a small meeting of those balloted, suggested that only half those who voted to strike be brought out.

A Greenwich NALGO member told SO that the branch leaders have been "given the wink by managers that there may be a deal. They are negotiating and may stitch something up. In the meantime we have lost momentum, and the union has lost credibility".

## Sheffield job cuts loom

Last week the Government-appointed District Auditor served a "Section 15(3) notice" on Sheffield City's Labour council.

This means that the council Treasurer has to produce a report on how to balance the budget, or get surcharged, and then the councillors have to implement it or get surcharged.

It now appears certain that the council will announce large numbers of compulsory redundancies this month.

Trade union officials are burying their heads in the sand. Their approach is to agree cuts in members' terms and conditions, but we need a huge campaign of

industrial action in defence of jobs, work conditions, and local services.

## Residential workers still out

180 Sheffield NALGO residential workers have been on strike for 10 weeks in pursuit of proper training and a career grade which gives them parity with field social workers.

Sheffield's Labour council has not only rejected these demands - part of a national agreement resulting from the Howe report - but also set up a scab children's home staffed by agency workers.

The main focus of the dispute is now the scab unit at Osborn House, where pickets have succeeded in preventing the refuse from being collected or the post being delivered.

The dispute is costing the council a lot of money and becoming very bitter. It has national importance - if Sheffield council can get away with not implementing the national agreement, then it is certain that other councils will also try it on.

Messages of support, and cheques payable to "RSW support fund", to Sheffield

## Cardiff NHS jobs fight

By a Cardiff health worker

Bosses have announced 98 compulsory redundancies at Cardiff Royal Infirmary. Their long term plans involve closure of the hospital and selling off the site to property developers.

## Councils in brief

### Islington action stepped up

Over 700 Islington council workers are on all-out indefinite strike.

250 housing and poll tax workers have been joined by neighbourhood office workers in their fight against the once-left Labour council's programme for compulsory redundancies.

Ten or more of the 24 neighbourhood offices have been closed, which means rent cannot be collected.

Council leader Margaret Hodge enraged a tenants' meeting last week when she threatened to bring in agency staff to open up the offices. Temporary workers are already helping scabs to keep the poll tax office open.

### Hackney workers win

70 Hackney council housing benefit workers ended their strike last week when the council agreed to create over 40 permanent new posts.

### Camden strike

Over 100 Camden playleaders are on all-out indefinite strike.

On Thursday 20 August, 29 playleaders received letters telling them that the Labour council was taking away their jobs. About 100 other playleaders were told they had six days to sign new contracts. If they did not reply, it would be assumed that they did not want their jobs.

The new contracts mean a loss of over 20 hours work for some workers.

The strike became official on 2 September after a ballot showed 90% in favour of strike action.

## Unite to stop the Plan!

By a Central Line guard and RMT member

So, after two weeks "hard negotiating" in the Watford Hilton, the Tube unions have not managed to move LUL one inch.

All of the Plan is still in place. Everything that makes the job bearable is to go!

Even the ASLEF leadership seem to be aware of the dangers involved. According to their press spokesperson, the EC thinks that life under the plan "isn't worth the money on offer". And they want a joint meeting with RMT and TSSA to discuss what to do next.

What we need is a united campaign for a cross-union ballot and strike action to force LUL to withdraw the Plan lock, stock and barrel.

## Poly workers strike

NALGO staff at Hallamshire University, Sheffield, are today balloting for all-out action after management sent threatening letters to 16 of their members out on strike.

A national day of action over pay and conditions in the upgraded colleges was followed by key worker action by the Debtor and Cashier workers.

When they were threatened, the whole of their department, along with student administration and CATS came out. Support is growing around the college, and after today's ballot all-out action may follow.

NALGO, 48-62 Pinstone Street, Sheffield S2 2HN.

## Wanted: emergency NALGO conference!

The big local authorities, nearly all Labour-run, are all attacking the council workforces, and in particular the white-collar union NALGO.

Such a concerted attack demands a concerted response. Islington NALGO has already called for a special recall NALGO conference; other branches should follow.

Phone 071-387 3960 for more details.

## Southwark Council building workers

Management have proposed halving the number of apprentices, from 32 to 13.

They want to cut the whole workforce from 283 to 244. New apprentices will come via the Youth Training Scheme to be paid £29 per week, replacing those currently on union rates.

The Labour Council are also semi-casualising the workforce by introducing unpaid lay-offs. They are also bringing in "extended flexibility", which could see plumbers mending fences in the parks and gardeners doing the plumbing!

The icing on the cake is a £35 per week pay cut. Only strike action will stop the Council.

## Defend sacked rail shop stewards!

By RMT Manchester no.1 branch

Guards at Piccadilly rail station, Manchester, are involved in a fight against the British Rail management which concerns all trade unionists.

Four shop stewards, members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union, were sacked for mobilising to resist management's attempts to break local and national agreements. In full public view, management gave the stewards, surrounded by their workmates, their dismissal notices on the station platform. This was a blatant attempt to intimidate the whole workforce.

The sackings took place on 20 August, and were immediately followed by a walk-out and 24 hour strike. Since then the guards at Piccadilly have shown their resolve to continue the fight

to ensure the full reinstatement of their representatives by voting two to one in an RMT ballot for further strike action.

The sackings of the four cannot be seen in isolation, and form part of the continuing attacks on working people and our unions in this country.

Wide support to build a campaign for national action is imperative if the Piccadilly guards are not to be isolated.

What you can do:

- Pass resolutions in your branches supporting the guards at Piccadilly. Send messages of support.

- Hold workplace collections. Money will be vital to sustain the dispute.

- Invite speakers to your meetings.

For further information: R J MacDonald, Secretary, RMT Manchester no.1, 7 Franton Road, Clayton, Manchester M11 4HE (061-223 1064).

## "The production management walked out in support, and were all sacked"

The strike at Spartan Redheugh is now entering its tenth week.

All the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) members at the rolling mill near

Gateshead walked out on 6 July in protest at the use of sub-contractors. ABEU and GMB members then joined the strike on 13 July. Two days later all production staff were sent dismissal notices.

Then, as a strike committee leaflet explains, "Three women were told to sign a disclaimer distancing themselves from the

industrial action. They started they were not part of the strike but felt morally unable to sign. They too were sacked.

"The Site Engineer was asked to cover striking workers' jobs. When he refused he was sacked.

"The Production Management walked out in support of the Site Engineer and were all sacked."

There are 116 people on strike, receiving basic strike pay which does not go very far. We are fighting for our jobs, homes and families against a management which doesn't care. We need your help to fight these appalling tyrants".

The strikers need solidarity to help them win. Last week the strikers met the ISTC executive and demanded a one-day strike of the entire ISTC membership in support of the dispute and defence of union organisation.

As one striker told a fringe meeting at the TUC: "The executive said they couldn't help us because of the Tory anti-union laws. But it's not that they can't help us. They don't want to!"

Messages of support and donations to: Spartan Redheugh Strike Fund, c/o Brian Quinn, 35 Lovett Walk, Clasper Village, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear.

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

## Britain should have a referendum on Maastricht

The vast majority of the Establishment want to push the treaty through quietly and quickly, without debate - but why should we let them?

Any referendum that the Tory Government calls will only offer us the choice of voting yes with John Major or no with Margaret Thatcher; Socialist Organiser would call on voters to abstain to show we reject both Maastricht's Euro-monetarism and nationalist flag-waving.

But even such a referendum would allow wider debate, and it would be better than everything being decided among small groups of capitalist politicians.

## Every railworker is at risk

# Piccadilly guards must win!

As British Rail moves towards privatisation, the bosses have declared war on the unions.

Four guards at Manchester Piccadilly were sacked a month ago after organising a walk-out in defence of a local agreement. This Monday, 14 September, the four lost their final appeal.

All four were union reps. Their sacking is a clear sign that BR management is on the offensive and wants to weaken what remains one of the strongest organised sections of the working class.

Guards at Piccadilly are now expecting the Executive of their union, the RMT, to authorise a one-day strike this Friday, 18 September, at Piccadilly, to be followed by a ballot for national strike action by guards in support of the four.

"By sacking the four in the way they did, management have broken a national agreement, so we can go for national action. I'm confident we can

win this dispute and stop BR management in their tracks", says John MacDonald, secretary of the RMT Piccadilly no.1 branch.

More on the dispute see inside, p 15.

Alliance for Workers' Liberty Railworkers' day school "Privatisation - how to fight back"

3 October 1992. 11am to 5pm at Motherwell YMCA.

Sessions including ● Fighting privatisation ● The way forward for the railway rank and file ● Ravenscraig: could the workers have won?

Speakers: London Underground District Council delegate and RMT guard (personal capacity); speakers from Sheffield RMT S&T (Sectional Council) and from AWL.

All ASLEF, RMT and TSSA members welcome. Contact: Jon, 041-557 1124, or Tom, 071-639 7965.



Manchester Piccadilly strikers in 1989. Three years ago united action helped stop BR. It can do so again.

Help us fight the witch-hunters! Send us a donation!

Ten Labour Party members, active now or recently in Sheffield Central CLP, have been hauled before Labour's National Constitutional Committee, charged with association with Socialist Organiser.

In hearings on 14-15 September, the cases were dropped against Cath Fielding and Alison Brown, and Neophitos Ttofias was acquitted, but Wendy Robson and Chris Croome were expelled from the Labour Party for doing no more than selling and writing for *Socialist Organiser*. Five more cases are to be heard at dates not yet decided.

*Socialist Organiser* is campaigning against this witch-hunt - and that costs extra money.

If you are for labour movement democracy, and you think our paper has a place in the Labour Party, then please send a donation to Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA (cheques and POs payable to "Socialist Organiser").

Our fund total stands at £428.00. Our new target is £5,000 by 1 February 1993.

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## National guards' ballot now! Respect all picket lines!