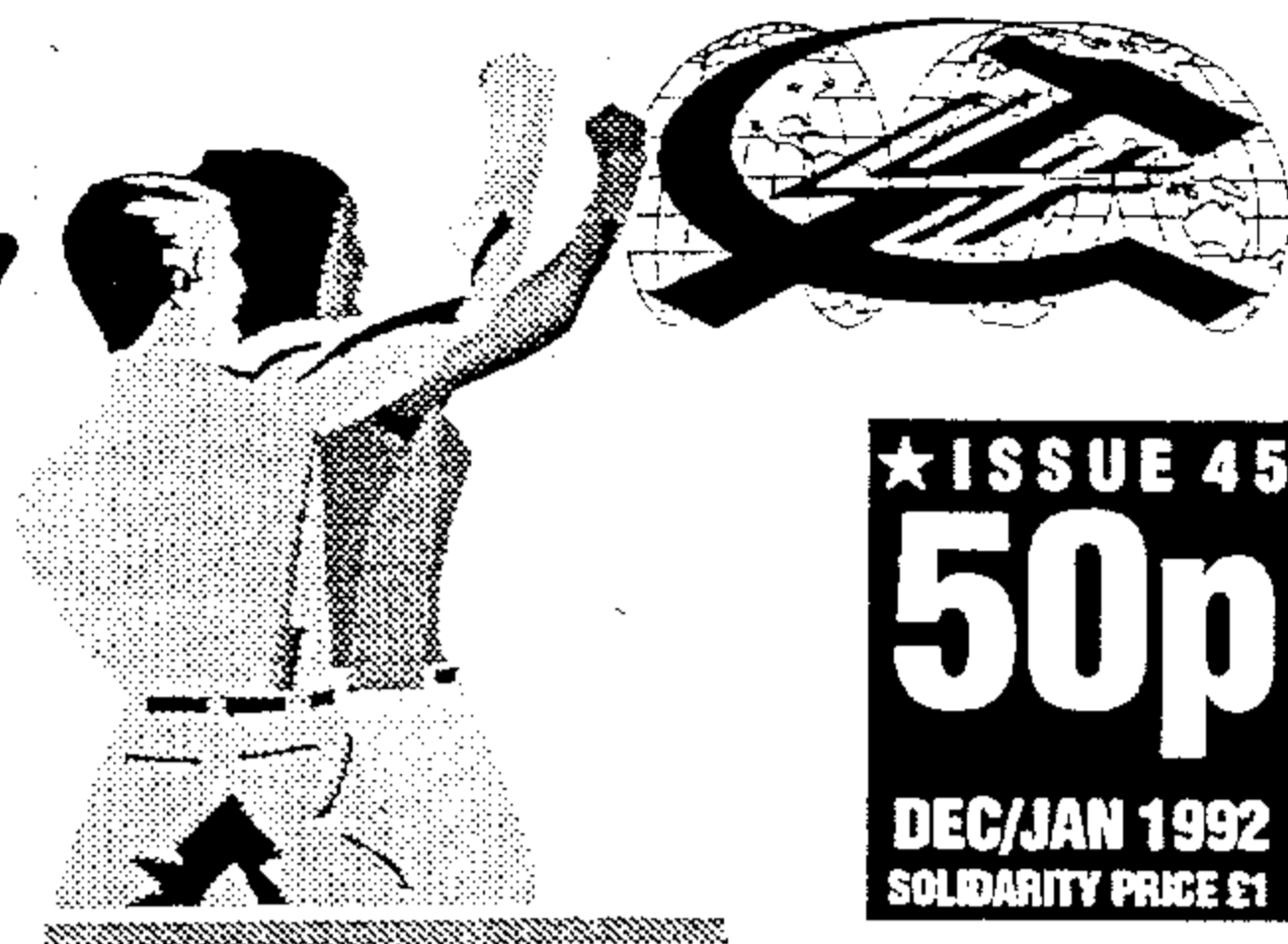


# **V** Socialist **VOICE**



★ ISSUE 45

**50p**

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# **LABOUR LEADERS SHORE UP MAJOR**

The Government stands on shifting sand. It's cabinet is in virtual continuous session and is reacting from day to day, not really knowing where the next crisis is going to hit but, all the while, working out how to make more cuts and how to break the resistance of the working class. The threat to sack all miners and the continual break-up of public services is at the centre of this attack.

The lesson of the miners dispute is that the aim must be to united all sections of workers and release the pent up anger and fight which now exists inside the class.

The TUC and Labour Party Leaders are trying to tow the movement around the miners to safe harbours. But the demonstrations and miners support groups are not completely under their control. Underneath all the human debris that goes under the name of leaders of the working class the government know that a beast stirs, not the tamed pets of Transport House but the lions of men, women and youth

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- COUNCILS IN CRISIS
- ★ FIGHT IN LAMBETH
- ★ MANCHESTER ATTACK
- THE DISABLED
- ★ DEFEND THE MINERS
- ★ A ROYAL CRISIS
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## **INTERNATIONAL**

- ★ BRAZIL
- ★ SOUTH AFRICA
- ★ RUSSIA

**PLUS CALL FOR  
CONFERENCE TO  
UNITE STRUGGLES  
IN THE PUBLIC  
SECTORS AND THE  
COMMUNITIES  
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# socialist VOICE



Monthly Paper  
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of the  
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*signed articles do not  
necessarily reflect  
the views of the ISL*

Contributions  
We welcome articles, news,  
photographs etc.  
from readers-  
please send them to the  
above address.

## THE VOICE SAYS

who can see the chaos daily disintegrating their lives and that of their families. While these thoughts do not yet terrify the very rich, the self seekers and apparatus people, they are not sure what lurks behind the next corner, the next monetary twist or the next big rise in unemployment.

The way the Labour Party and trade union leadership are forced into "organising" support for the miners is a sure sign that the feeling for the miners is more widespread than it was in 1984 and 1985 as workers and their families are hit in many ways by the crisis. Many who did not support Scargill then today recognise he was correct.

Many of the platforms for the miners are controlled by Labour Party leaders who are carrying out government policy in the public sector: they are helping to shut down hospitals, close down social services and sack council workers.

But many miners are supporting the struggle against all the closures not only the mines. It is possible to co-ordinate the activities of all the sections of workers who are now forced into struggle but this unity will be forged in a fight against the government and against many of their own union leaders.

What have the Labour leaders offered? National Recovery programmes, the orders to council leaders to stay within the law and to keep harassing those not paying the Poll Tax. All this means councils preparing, with all the deceit and cynicism of Tories, to sack tens of thousands of council workers and using all their power to prevent a united struggle against the government.

Where union leaders refuse to mobilise, shop stewards committees, branches and groups of workers must take action into their hands, keep control of their action and force the union leaders to fight.

There can only be a political solution to this crisis facing the working class. The recent movement against the Poll Tax showed that people are ready to take action and that something can be achieved by struggle. That struggle did not unite with the organised working class but it did develop independently of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy and that was an important beginning.

The working class now has to find a way of uniting the old and new organisations.

The profound changes within Britain should not be underestimated. The British recession, without a foreseeable end, will wipe out all but small pockets of industry. The chaos which everyone talks about will enter catastrophe unless the working class takes control.

The chaos is not capitalism out of control, it is the way that capitalism is developing. Almost all English editors are talking of the inevitable slump across the Eastern European countries because of the privatisation and reform programmes. Governments cannot carry out their plans. Poland, for example, has its fifth government since 1989. The bright new future has rapidly become tarnished. East and West go towards slump together, although the pace in the East is faster.

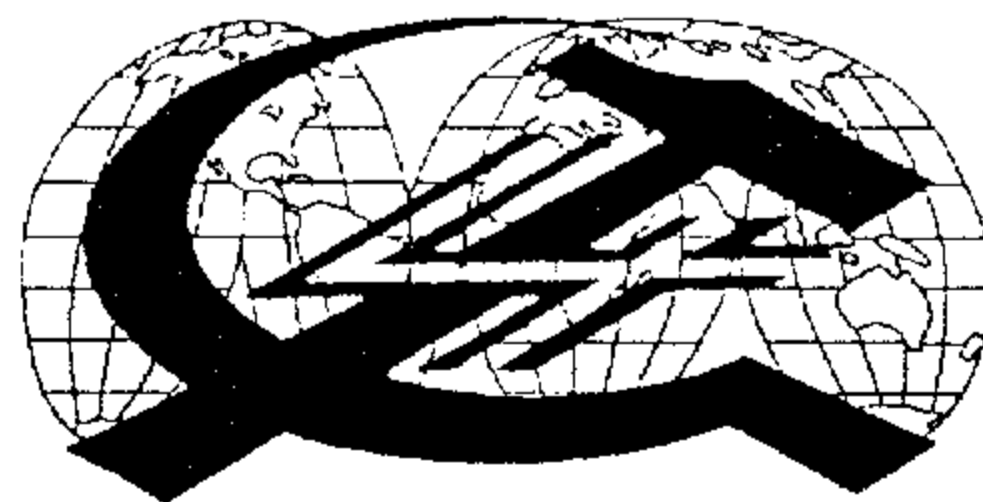
In order to hang on those who have the millions and control the factories have to take more value from the working class. They are forced to attack the "social wage", actual wages and jobs at the same time. That is why they call for wage restraints in the public and private sectors at the same time and get rid of the last remnants of the wages council. From wage restraint they will talk of wage cuts already from different parts of this country come reports of firms demanding wage cuts of between 10% and 30%.

The struggle for world markets and the driving down of wages is shown by the fate of European fighter aircraft. It was going to be cancelled but later its development was re-costed. This involved, amongst other savings, sub-contracting much more of the manufacture to smaller companies where wages are lower, hours longer and conditions for workers worse, at the same time jobs are lost at companies like British Aerospace. The same thing is happening in industry after industry.

Workers should begin to think, if they controlled the hospitals, the schools, the factories, the roads, the docks, the banks and the government what could be done to end homelessness, unemployment, racism and the rest.

Today's events prove that what Marx wrote about the nature of capitalism and that the only way out lay in the hands of the working class was correct, only on a scale which did not exist in the last century.

What all workers have to settle for is that there is no easy road out. They have to organise. There is no one who is going to do the job outside of that but inside that the need for a revolutionary Trotskyist party has never been greater.



# TORY COUNCIL HOUSE CON ON MASSIVE SCALE

Marcel Richards and Martin Mitchell Lambeth Unemployed Action Group

**Up to 70,000 families in London may never be able to sell their ex-council homes even if the property market does recover.**

Under the right-to-buy legislation in the 1980's thousands of families in London bought their council flats thinking it seemed to make economic sense. If they had the money, the mortgage worked out less than the rent. It seemed to offer security and up to 70% discounts were offered. But 53% of flats sold were leasehold flats and now thousands of owners of ex-council flats are receiving huge bills for council repairs.

For example, owners of 100 flats in Sullivan Court, Hammersmith, Fulham faced £7,000 bills for concrete balcony, window and roof repairs. At Howells Grove Court, Ealing owners

are faced with £15,000 bills for window and other repairs. At Warwick Avenue, Westminster a converted house sold by the council had a £14,500 bill for roof repairs and repainting. At Westbury House, Westminster four people had bills for £11,500 to replace the roof. At Wingfield House, Waltham Forest one person had a bill of £35,000 for major repairs to the block. Last week, at Dagenham Close, Fulham, Hammersmith bills faced are £9,000 to £5,000 for the roof.

A lot of these flats were built in the 1960's and 1970's and after 25 years it is usual for central heating and windows to be replaced. A lot were built of precast concrete that is now crumbling.

Under the 1980 Housing Act, from 10 years after purchase councils were supposed to charge for routine maintenance only, structural defects were meant to be paid for by councils but, of course, legal definitions being notoriously difficult, councils are sending out bills for everything. Even after the 1986 Housing Act, which requires councils to state clearly what works they are going to

carry out to help clarify the obligations of the council and the buyer, protection of the buyer entirely runs out after 5 years.

The government is now effectively ducking its responsibilities to subsidise local authorities by providing adequate funding to maintain and repair the country's housing stock and, in effect, using the people they have conned, and who are already in debt with their mortgages, to do their job and pay for the repairs.

Added to this repairs con, the building societies are refusing to give mortgages on precast concrete ex-council flats. They think the risk of them literally falling to bits and requiring massive repair bills will make them too great a risk to lend money on. So with mortgages not being

given to new owners these peoples'

flats are becoming virtual prisons, unsellable on the open market and effectively worthless. In Wandsworth alone 1,000 precast concrete flats have been bought by unsuspecting families.

The only help the government offers is to tell people buying their flat that they must be aware of what they will be liable for. A bit late for 70,000 families.

Despite all this councils are still selling off flats at discount prices. For example, a couple in Wandsworth recently bought a studio flat valued by the council at £32,000 at a £9,000 discount. Such flats are currently being sold at auctions for £3,000 to £5,000. Some flats are currently valued at less than the price of a second hand car.

Thousands of people are now suffering as a result of the great Tory council house right-to-buy scam of the 1980's joining the rising ranks of British capitalism's victims and, once again, the government criminally shirks all responsibility and blames the victims it has created.

...a couple in Wandsworth recently bought a studio flat in a block on an estate valued by the council at £32,000, at a £9,000 discount. Such flats are currently being sold at auctions for £3,000 to £5,000. Some flats are currently valued at less than the price of a second hand car.

# UNEMPLOYED FIGHTING A WINNING BATTLE

Martin Mitchell  
Lambeth Unemployed  
Action Group

Lambeth Council early this year had wanted to take all concessions for council services away from the unemployed in Lambeth. Initially Lambeth Unemployed Action Group had started out as a defensive campaign but later we went on the offensive. Now various concessions are being offered by the council.

In October we were told that the council had granted us an extension from 2 to 4 hours at concessionary rates to use recreation facilities. We supported this extension but told the council that the unemployed could not afford 60p a session, which they wanted to charge. We said that recreation facilities should be free.

At the same time the council had been pushing the idea of a "leisure card" for unemployed people to gain access to the borough's facilities. A "leisure card", with another complicated form-filling process would discourage thousands of claimants from using services. We have enough trouble getting housing benefit!

On Friday 6th November at a meeting with council officials it was agreed to introduce free access at all leisure facilities for the unemployed and unwaged from April. They agreed to our demand that no "leisure card" scheme would exist and that access would be by UB40 or DSS payment book. This was reckoned to cover 90% of those eligible for free access. Further work would be carried out to identify the remaining 10% and to provide them with free entry.

**Our demands now are:**

- No to council "leisure card" schemes
- Free access to all unemployed and unwaged at all times immediately
- Extend concessions
- The Lambeth Unemployed Action Group to be responsible for distributing free passes for all the recreation centres enabling free access.

# LABOUR COUNCIL

CELIA RALPH  
NUPE Steward  
Oakwood Lodge

**The decision by Manchester City Council to close Oakwood Lodge residential home for the disabled has been made without any concrete alternatives having been identified.**

Many of our residents are over 55 years of age and are quite happy there.

The residents of Oakwood Lodge cannot be given a choice, as the community care law states they should, if the decision to close stands.

Staff and residents have not had a say in the Council's decision, none of our questions have been answered in a concrete way.

The funding for community care, which is to be given to local authorities in January, is expected to be millions short of what is needed.

Councillor Harrison, Chairman of the Social Services Committee, says that our residents will have what they want without identifying the finances, accommodation and cost of care needs. Surely, he would think about his finances and alternatives before he sold his own house!

The staff at Oakwood Lodge have never opposed community care for those who want

it; we have been asking that the alternatives must be identified so residents and their families can consider them properly before any closure of the home can be decided upon.

The elderly were not consulted before the closure of their homes we do not want the same to happen again.

Councillor Harrison is trying to deceive and confuse. These closures are about saving money. He should be honest and say so. I am also sure that if the City Council were to hold public meetings explaining the financial position the government has put them in and ask for the support of the electorate to fight for the money necessary to stop the closures, they would get support. If we cannot fight to defend the elderly and disabled then we cannot defend anything.

I call on all those in the community and the unions to unite against these closure. If our elected councillors cannot do so they should make way for people who will fight to give the people the truth and assist them to develop a campaign to force the government to provide the necessary finance to care for our elderly and disabled.

There is no easy way. It is only the ordinary people of this country that have the solutions to these problems.



*Tommy Clarke (resident) and Celia Ralph (carer) on a lobby of the Manchester City Council where the council voted to close the home and refused permission for anyone to speak on behalf of the home*

The following letter was dictated by Tommy Clarke one of the residents of Oakwood Lodge. Tommy, who suffers from Cerebral Palsy, has lived at Oakwood Lodge for 8 years.

Dear Editor,

Last Wednesday we lobbied the City Council against the closure of Oakwood Lodge and other homes. The Council would not listen to us or help us.

Councillor Harrison (*Chairman, Social Services Committee - SV*) said that Oakwood is an institution and we would be much better living in the community.

Mr Harrison is wrong. It is not run like an institution and I defy anyone to say it is. It is like a home. Who are they to say any different? Mr Harrison, and the Council who support him, have no right to make decisions about our lives in this way: is not this the real institutionalisation?

I Always thought we were living in a democracy not a communist state. What right have they got to do this? I have always thought we elected them to represent our interests.

It is true some residents want to live in the community but there are others now living in the community who want to live in Oakwood Lodge. I believe there is a waiting list of people wishing to live at Oakwood.

By closing our home they are taking away our choice. Many will be forced to live in the community and other homes against their wishes.

They have not shown us any alternatives and when I ask my social worker he says that there is nothing set up yet, so how are they going to put us out into the community by 1994.

Tommy Clarke  
Oakwood Lodge  
Langley Lane  
Northenden  
Manchester

# ATTACKS DISABLED

## IT IS A GOOD THING THE COUNCIL DOES NOT OWN A MINE

Oakwood Lodge is the only residential centre for the disabled in the North-West. On 28th November the Social Services committee voted to close the Lodge by 4 votes to 3. Readers may think that 7 votes indicates a very small committee, especially for a city the size of Manchester. Well the majority of votes were for abstention.

Many of the Labour councillors who voted to close the home or who abstained have been vocal in their support for the miners.

It seems that the fight against closures can be done in a selective way if the behaviour of Labour Councillors in Manchester is anything to go by.

On 31st October these councillors in connection with Wythenshawe Labour Party held a march through the area of Wythenshawe. The march started near to Oakwood Lodge demanding no pit closures.

On that day councillors expressed a desire not to talk about the local closure. They even had a hand in stopping one of the carers of

the disabled from speaking at the rally in the Wythenshawe shopping centre. Or at least they tried to - after it became clear that she was not going to be asked to speak one of the demonstrators who said that he was against all closures asked the audience if they wanted to hear the carer speak; the answer in unison - "YES!"

The councillors were asked to meet the disabled who were present at the meeting, by the time the meeting was over, the councillors had gone.

At least the march and meeting should the cynical attitude of the Labour councillors towards the miners and the disabled. They can "fight" pit closures and close homes all in the same week.

The residents and carers however see the need to support the miners and fight the closure of their home. After the meeting they immediately started a campaign to stop their home from closing.

## VOICE COMMENT FIGHT ALL CLOSURES

The miners, women against pit closures, sacked railwaymen and many others can all see the need for a common fight against closures. The Tories have let off a shotgun against the working class and many sectors have been hit. Mines, hospitals, social service provision and factories in different parts of the country are facing closure.

Many workers readily see that no one section can fight alone. There must be a struggle against pit closures but unless there is a common front of struggle against all closures and a movement develops which will go on the offensive against all the attacks on the working class then the Tories will find a way of surviving and making cuts.

Labour and Trade Union leaders are seeking to get some cover for their attacks on the working class by giving verbal support to the miners struggle. In some areas they are setting up miners support groups while they are helping to close hospitals, Old People's Homes and homes for the disabled. Of course miners are not responsible for those who say they support the miners. But it is a matter of great urgency for the miners to seek out all those workers who are struggling at work or in the communities and find ways of developing a joint fight.

Labour councillors and Labour politicians say they have no choice but to make these closures. For them it is not impossible to close OPH's which directly kills old people or homes for the disabled which may have the same effect.

These leaders have forgotten all principles, but they remain in powerful positions so in the first place we have to force these "brothers" to fight for us while we develop our own independent strength and stop the closures.

## LIST OF SHAME

This is list of Labour members of the social services committee who refused to oppose the closure of Oakwood Lodge.

Carroll  
P Conquest  
Cooper  
Dungey  
Edwards  
Eko  
Gilmore

Harrison  
Kelley  
Leese  
Mambu  
Pagel  
J Smith  
S Smith  
Sram  
Young

## PLAYING MONOPOLY WITH PEOPLE'S LIVES

A trust home for the elderly in Marple, Stockport has been closed due to lack of funds. About 18 months ago the home was taken away from local government control by a non-profit making body (trust) which failed to balance the books.

The old people's home was offered back to Stockport council who refused to either take it back or give any more money to the trust. Talks failed to find a solution and the home was closed.

The 40 patients are going to be spread over the five council homes which are still open.

**FIGHT THE CLOSURE OF  
OAKWOOD LODGE  
MEETING EVERY  
MONDAY 8.30 pm  
BRITISH LEGION  
NORTHENDEN**

**On the February conference****Norman Laws**

I see I missed your meeting two weeks ago but the one proposed for February is the one where you will want a mass attendance. I have been itching to hear of a full conference for some time as something like that is a major incentive to energise all our campaigners. There are groans from several quarters about waning enthusiasm. This I think is possibly because we have never formulated an official policy for the movement. Why not? As I have said somewhere before, if we are quizzed by anyone as to what we desire in place of the Poll Tax we are struck dumb. We have no official alternative. That is why I have nipped in wherever I could with my demand for a decision - or use something based on my own idea for a local income tax.

Not only do we need this policy for a new tax, but we should be discussing political policies in general. I mean a revolutionary alternative to capitalism as, without that change, are people prepared to accept a merry-go-round of governments where they are going to present us with similar tax legislation add infinitum?

I would have thought we are all - and that means the 17 million objectors to the Poll Tax which makes up our army - pissed off with a future like that. So what do they intend to replace it with? I know the immediate future idea of our activists is to bring in Unions, Trades Councils etc. but these bodies are already, at least half way, prepared to look at future developments from a political point of view, but it should not be too difficult in the present situation to urge others, who up to now have steered clear (as they think) of politics, to start. Never have such a multitude been up in arms at government legislation. The Poll Tax gang seem to me to be the only thing on the horizon who can be organised for such a battle, including most of the left wing groups - and I think I have had correspondence from most of them, some I never even knew existed. Well, the more the merrier, provide we can all agree on a preliminary revolutionary society policy and then take it from there as quickly as possible.

Once we get this mass organisation together, and in working order, we will either take over by the constitutional method of a general election in which all other existing parties become nonentities, or we shall commence in the manner of the general strike with local groups taking control in the manner of the then Councils of Action.

Cheers

Norman

6 Socialist Voice

**Plymouth Anti-Poll Tax Federation**

At our last meeting we discussed the proposal for a conference to unite the British anti-Poll Tax Movement again. I have been instructed to write to you with the following comments:

First of all we generally agreed that the meeting/conference is a very good idea and should be open to all except, of course, fascists. Nobody from Plymouth, however, will be able to attend the organising meeting as it is far too far away for any of us to travel. We also believe that meetings and conferences should be set for later times in order for those of us who are far afield can get to the meeting in order to attend the full agenda.

We trust that future conferences will arise out of this one and will be regional as well as national and that there can be a collective transport fund for those who live further away from the venue of the conference. Also that national conference centres can be rotated around the country.

We trust that you will inform us of what the planning committee decides re: agenda etc. and that you will note our points above.

Our struggle is going very well in Plymouth with regard to the Council/Treasury not being able to move and being hemmed in. The collective struggle, however, has deteriorated dramatically.

Another final point is with reference to the petition about "Other Adjustments". Our organisation has no interest in that subject whatsoever as it is a non-issue and furthermore is divisive within the general struggle.

Yours in Solidarity

Graham Short

Dear Editor,

On October 19th, 1992 in London, a march took place for a fight to save miners job. On October 25th we marched with the TUC for a national strike to save 31 pits and the jobs in the mines.

But it does not stop there. We must fight to save 20,000 nurses. We must fight to save 20,000 postmen and women before 1995. We must fight to save 50,000 builders. We must fight to save 7,000 power workers. We must fight to save 5,000 railway jobs. We must fight to save council workers.

The railway men were told recently not to get into debt because, after privatisation, they will have to take a pay cut - if they get a new contract. We must fight the NHS cuts against the sick and the elderly and the closing down of our great teaching hospitals. We must fight for St Thomas's and St Bartholomew's, Salford Royal, Hope

Dear Editor,

As the matter of the installations of water meters into domestic household's becomes even more controversial, the public's concern and protest grows throughout our nation.

OFWAT, the water industry regulators recently published a market survey. This was conducted amongst 3,700 consumers living in England and Wales. According to OFWAT, 54% of those questioned were in favour of the meters. But these findings have come under fire from the Office of Population Censuses and surveys (OPCS).

OPCS, finds the figures questionable and feel that they don't represent the general public at large. They also accuse OFWAT of taking a biased stance in order to promote the meters and not giving sufficient information to the persons questioned.

OPCS, have warned that this survey should be treated with caution saying: "it would appear that many respondents had not thought through the issues before the interview and modified their views as the interviews progressed."

Meanwhile in Sutton, another survey was carried out by George Gaskell, a senior lecturer at the London school of Economics. Mr. Gaskell's findings were quite the opposite to those of OFWAT. The majority of those interviewed were sceptical of the meters and did not want them. Mr. Gaskell summed up by saying, "consumers do not have the information to make an informed answer to a questionnaire, if you want to know the public's views a real debate must occur with the pros and cons gone into."

As the recession becomes a depression, the water industry booms. The price of water has increased by 23% since privatisation and dividends to their shareholders have increased by 11%. These profits are to be maintained - courtesy of the system to rip off the poorest of society. If they can't afford the increased charges - then they go without. water is vital to life and don't this government just know it!

Yours sincerely

Jan Fielding

hospital, Ladywell and the Manchester skin hospital.

The Labour Party and the unions have stood back from the mess this government have got us into.

This government even went in the back door with the miners trying to make them redundant by breaking the law.

But, if this government is brought down and Labour have to take over, have Labour a policy to take over the country? NO!

Peter Docherty

# UNITE STRUGGLES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES AND COMMUNITIES

**ALL BRITAIN CONFERENCE  
6 AND 7 FEBRUARY  
MANCHESTER**

Hospital, transport, education, and council workers are being sacked in thousands throughout Britain. Those who are left do not have the equipment or resources to do their jobs. Hospitals are closing, schools are being run into the ground, bus and train services are being destroyed. At the same time, managers who have been brought in to preside over the dismantling of the public services are being awarded massive pay increases.

The financial crisis, the Poll Tax, the new Council Tax, mismanagement and misuse of council funds are driving councils towards bankruptcy. Most Labour and Tory Councillors react to this situation by trying to force even more money out of people who little or none. In this bitter struggle there will be no room for workers' rights - inside or outside the council.

Many public sector workers are fighting the devastation of their services but unless we unite workers and the community, services will go. We need to unite all workers, workers in the public sector, the families, the youth, pensioners, the gathering army of unemployed and those facing racist attacks.

The vast majority of Labour Councils - in Sheffield, Camden, Newham, Southwark - have been if possible even more vicious than the Tories in declaring that they must balance their budgets and carry out cuts - no matter what the cost in human suffering.

The trade union leaders have lead no fight against the government. They are

opposed to any attempt to strengthen the struggle against the Tories by uniting workers from all the different sectors with the communities. Their refusal to unite workers at the time of the miners' strike left the miners to fight on their own - with the result that the government now feels free to close down those whole communities. The TUC leaders now intend that every section of workers must fight on their own.

How many union leaders opposed the welcome the TUC conference gave to business leader Howard Davies? He told them they must help to keep down public and private sector wage claims. Already nurses have been told they will only get a miserable 2 per cent - below the rate of inflation - when thousands are already leaving the NHS because they are not paid enough to live.

The increase in unemployment is being measured each week in tens of thousands, and the TUC wants unity with the government and the CBI.

We are calling this conference in order to help the fight against these attacks - to strengthen all the different struggles in the communities and the public services by linking them. We need an alternative policy in order to fund the public services we need. We saw the first results of mass resistance with the poll tax, and now with the pit closure programme.

Already we have received letters of support from Scotland, Plymouth, London, Manchester and many other places. We have had a successful first organising meeting which brought together coun-

cil workers and anti-Poll Tax activists from different parts of the country. We intend to organise two further organising meetings in London and Manchester to discuss the agenda and building for the conference.

We have already received proposals to organise a march against unemployment and other activities. All those who want to fight and help build for the conference should come along to the organising meetings.

**Sponsor the conference:**  
Support this initiative by raising support in your trade union branch, anti-Poll Tax Union or any working class organisation. The conference is open to individuals and delegates. A minimum of £5 a delegate.

**Organising meeting:**  
LONDON Sunday 13th December: 1pm - 5pm  
MANCHESTER Sunday 17 January: 1pm - 5pm

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**  
Brian Patrick, NWAPF, PO BOX 9, ECCLES SO, ECCLES, SALFORD M30 7FX. TEL 061 707 1584  
Ed Hall, CRISIS IN LONDON CAMPAIGN, 6a Acre Lane, London SW2 5SG

Those supporting the conference include: Norman Laws, London Fight the Poll Tax, London Links, Lothian Anti-Poll Tax Action, North-West Anti-Poll Tax Forum, Plymouth Anti-Poll Tax Federation, Camden Trades Council.

# THE STRUGGLE

STATEMENT BY THE EDITORIAL

Major and his Ministers are shocked by the reaction to their final swipe at the miners. They judged reaction, by the behaviour of trade union and Labour leaders. They were not wrong about them. But, as with the Poll Tax, they reckoned without the frustration and anger that is seething in Britain. It is frustration and anger at the destruction of health and education while wealth from speculation and corruption is flaunted. Where increasing numbers are in deep poverty and misery or teeter on the brink, unemployment goes up and up. This is the anger released by the sudden, arrogant axing of 31,000 miners' jobs.

Trade union leaders, being only a little closer to this anger than Labour leaders were forced to call mass demonstrations and demand a moratorium on the closures. The days of action (or even the hours of action) is really the furthest they could get from causing any disruption of production.

John Edmonds, GMB leader and TUC General Council member, said the government and all sides of industry should set aside political and ideological differences to establish a regeneration programme. Edmonds tells us this after the class ideology and politics of the Tories has decimated shipbuilding, steel, engineering, docks, and mining industries, all, to destroy the most militant sections of British workers. **The Tories have attacked the legal rights of trade unions and workers' struggle. The trade union leaders have retreated before this onslaught and since 1980, ceased making even token resistance to it.**

## Retreat

Then, they had the experience of the unity of steelworkers, miners, railwaymen, dockers and other workers beginning in South Wales and threatening a General Strike. They hastily and fearfully diverted it, said, "*Never Again*" and retreated from any real opposition to Tory anti-union legislation.

At the TUC, the General Council brought in Davies from the CBI who had just had a massive wage rise but who said workers' rises should be limited to 2%. Willis declares: "*We are not after anybody we, are after a new start on jobs*". Why did the TUC not make a new start on jobs at their Congress?



The strategy of the Labour leadership was outlined by Robin Cook, their trade and industry spokesman who said: "*We will be doing everything possible for those Tory MPs who believe the government have got it wrong to record that view on Wednesday*". He said that the aim, was not to bring down the government, but to save the coal industry.

It is impossible to save the coal industry without fighting the Tory government. When Labour leaders put saving the Tory government first, it shows they have no alternative policy. The General Election and Gordon Brown's evasions about the ERM and devaluation proved it. They are afraid they could not control the reaction of the working class, they do not want to bring them onto the streets, they have no answers. **We remember the farce of a 'glossy' campaign for jobs, a month after the coal strike had ended. This is why there can be an accommodation between Labour and Tory leaders.**

## Movement

There has never been a bigger spontaneous movement against mass unemployment, poverty, insecurity and industrial devastation since the war. The difference between the movement against pit closures and the Poll Tax, is that a powerful part of this movement is in the trade unions. Workers are now compelled to take on their own bureaucracy and sweep it aside. Workers who have felt isolated and despairing can now see a possibility of fighting back.

Tories will only give as much as they are forced to. Everything depends on mass mobilisation. In the Poll Tax movement, they only sacrificed Thatcher when the governments' whole existence was threatened. Any fight can only be built if mass mobilisations are kept up. We have to remember the miners victories in 1972 and 1982. In 1982 they stopped pit closures, but the Tories retreated



# HAS JUST BEGUN

## BOARD OF THE SOCIALIST VOICE

to prepare the state forces and the conditions for isolating them later. For their part, the trade union and Labour leadership did nothing in face of this preparation. Worse! They capitulated before the government and bowed their heads before the anti-union laws.

One old miner said: "*The Tories' actions have made us get off our knees don't let anyone put you back on them*". He was right. Halting pit closures would be a victory, but the problems people face are created by exploitative finance capital and their most virulent representatives, the Tory government. The pit closures are just one part of British capitalism's shock programme. Finishing off the miners would be the go ahead for more public spending cuts. **Peter Lilley at the Tory Party Conference expressed their lack of feeling when he said the Tories would do away with the "something for nothing society".**

### Cuts

**This, only three weeks after the British government had gift wrapped £10 billion for the banks and insurance companies who pull the currency speculators strings. The Tories assist institutional gamblers but**

attack the poor. Tory and Labour answer the financial scandals of the City by increasing self-regulation. Their friends regulate themselves but they increase snooping on the working class.

The privatisation of electricity and the guarantee of profit to its buyers, has been one of the pillars on which their policy for coal was determined. The programme of the Tories is to transfer all state property into the hands of private profiteers who will continue to be subsidised by public finance. The railways, the prisons, welfare services, council services, education and health are up for privatisation.

The world economic crisis is rolling onwards neither Tory nor Labour can control it. It threatens to develop into a slump greater than 1931. In such a situation no one can deny that among the present Labour leadership there will be candidates to enter a coalition government in the steps of Ramsey MacDonald, Thomas and Snowden.

### Fightback

In the fight to stop pit closures, the important thing is developing organisation and leadership in the unions, communities and

work places to fight uncompromisingly for a programme to bring down the Tory government. **Today can be the beginning of a fight back by British workers. They must demand that the trade union organisations and the Labour Party make a complete break with the Tories.** In this capitalist country unemployment is rapidly heading over the four million mark. A Labour leader who declares that he is not for ending Tory rule is supporting it.

The Campaign Group of MPs and the Socialist Movement have to make up their minds and be counted. The Chesterfield conference in October was a disaster. Hundreds had flocked there to discuss a fight back against the Tories. **The conference platform would not even take a resolution against pit closures.**

This beginning of a fight back against the Tories needs the building of a leadership which will see the whole strength in mass action, a leadership which will mobilise to stop pit closures. It will base its policy on the interconnectedness of all workers and will prepare a movement to bring a workers' solution to the capitalist crisis.

A socialist solution is the only answer to the capitalist crisis which comes from production for profit. We must reverse privatisation and nationalise the basic industries under workers' control to provide the basis for this in an economy planned for use for the benefit of all.

### Socialism

It is not planning which destroyed the regimes in the USSR and Eastern Europe. It was planning in the hands of a bureaucracy which was contemptuous of the working class. The building of socialism demands the full participation of workers at every level.

Workers in every country are facing the results of a capitalist crisis. In the last twelve months there have been strikes involving many millions of workers in almost every country in Europe, including Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. These workers are the allies to a fight back in Britain, help is not to be found in commissions of Strasbourg or Brussels.

A movement here must build international links with workers throughout the world, particularly in Europe and fight for a United Socialist States of Europe.



*Youngsters in Bolivian mines show the necessity for international workers organisation*

# THE SINKING POUND

AUDREY SMITH

Britain has devalued four times since 1945. Not one devaluation has done what it was claimed it would do. Every devaluation has been paid for by lower living standards while the price advantages that devaluation was supposed to offer were quickly squandered. This latest devaluation is the worst and most devastating so far because of the state of the economy. It is the lesson of all the other devaluations that wages are reduced in real terms, welfare is cut and investment curtailed. All of this points to a system that will not and cannot work except by reducing the living conditions of workers.

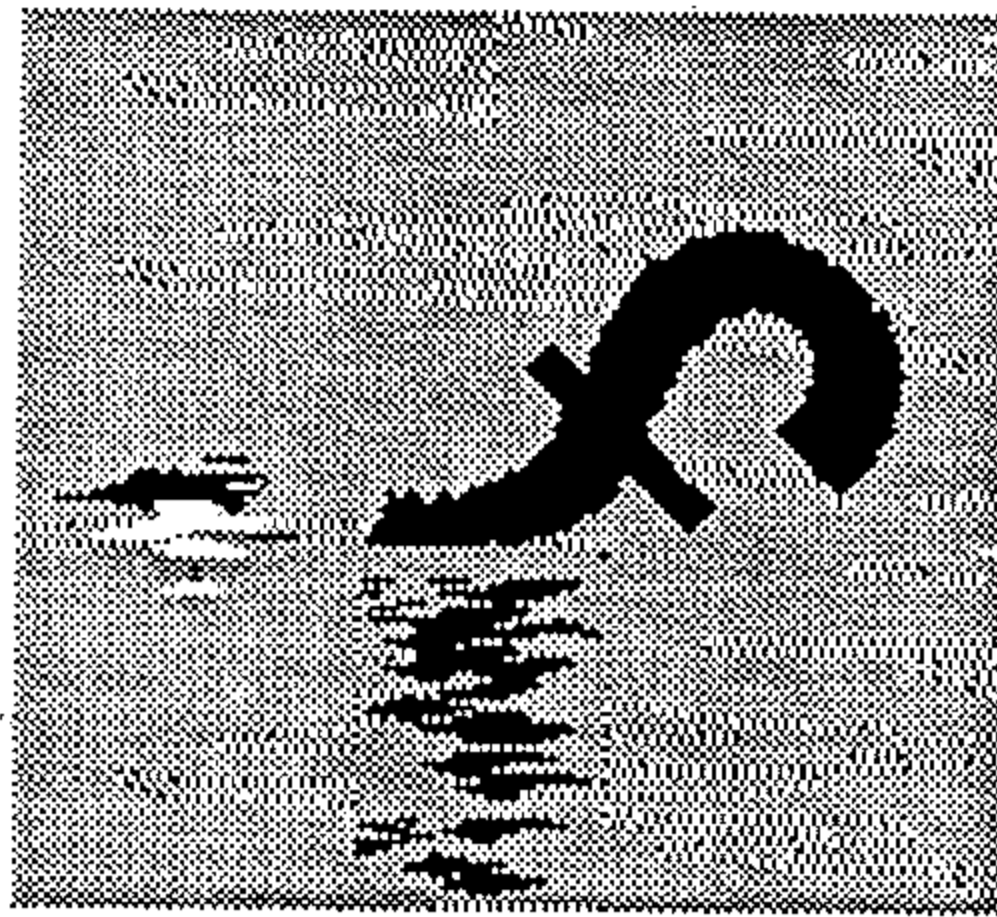
In 1949 there was a minor recession in the USA. American pressure inside the "International Monetary Fund" caused speculation against sterling. Devaluation reduced sterling from \$4.03 to \$2.80. At this time productivity was rising and the balance of payments looked as though it would go into the black. The cooperation of the unions helped reduce real wages, which were lower in 1949 than in previous years.

By the autumn and winter there was further speculation against the pound, badly needed capital investment was cut and welfare reforms postponed. The competitive edge of low prices for exports was soon lost. Lack of investment meant that worn out machinery lasted longer in an economy in which it was increasingly difficult to increase productivity.

By any indicator in the *sixties* the economy was performing well but the deficit in the balance of payments was causing problems. Added to that foreign sterling holders did not like the welfare policies of the Wilson government. There was also a popular belief historically encouraged by the Tory press that the unions were too strong. There were dockers strikes in London and Liverpool and the bank rate was raised to 6% but despite this there was still an outflow of funds. The 1967 devaluation reduced sterling from \$2.80 to \$2.40. Britain was given stand-by credit by the IMF. There were to be public spending cuts and the withdrawal of troops from the Far East.

There was no improvement in the balance of payments, the measure of our goods and services sold abroad. Austerity measures were blamed on strikes; not on the devaluation, and in 1969 the Labour Government tried to bring in curbs on the unions with Barbara Castle's "In Place of Strife"

The biggest effect on sterling and on the



economies of the West came from the Middle East wars and the rise in oil prices. Even then the pits were shedding men, miners were told that coal was the fuel of the stone age. Oil was cheap plentiful and secure. The comparisons with the present pit closure programme scream out!

In 1972 sterling was floated; that was what it was called but the effect was for sterling to sink!

At the end of the seventies barriers to the free flow of money abroad were lifted. Huge amounts of money were shifted abroad and with it went the hope of future investment. Foreign money to the delight of the government was brought in for investment - obviously all profits to be repatriated.

Devaluation is not something which is separate from other exploitation. Not one single attempt to manipulate money has resulted in any benefit for the working class, just the opposite, in every case the economy was worse off than before. Why then is this devaluation so much more catastrophic than the others? Every other devaluation has been against the dollar; this is against the German Mark. In the shift of the balance of forces it is inevitable that weaker countries are squeezed; the shift from the Dollar to the Mark sets up a new hegemony of interests, a new balance of power the result of which is for Britain along with poorer European countries like Italy to become marginalised. This is inevitable in the capitalist dog eat dog politics. Britain's recession is more severe and longer lasting than others and there is little likelihood that there will be a recovery as the industrial base has shrunk and the work force has been de-skilled. Britain was already on the edge of the precipice before devaluation and unless there is a united fight back less than three million unemployed will seem like the good old days!

## A ROYAL TIP

The minor amounts which royalty has decided to pay in taxes is like a millionaire giving a tip to a taxi driver. The existence of so many homeless and a government ready with an open cheque book to rebuild Windsor Castle together with such visible wealth created such disgust among many workers that some slight modification had to be made.

The following article, by Audrey Smith, throws some light on the issues behind the mass of recent publicity of Royal antics.

**W**hen the 'Sun' published pictures of the bare breasted estranged royal wife, being the best writers in the sleaze business, they headlined it 'Fergie's last boob' The implications for the House of Windsor were clear; behave as we expect you to behave or there could be a constitutional crisis.

Sara Ferguson, aka the Duchess of York, helped keep up newspaper profits in the August 'silly season' when there is little news about. Diana Spencer, aka the Princess of Wales, also made an outstanding contribution with tales of a broken marriage and 'love tapes'. The British public was royally entertained, all the available pundits have written serious articles and claimed their appearance money.

Perhaps we should be grateful. They helped create a new summer industry giving a boost to consumer demand. We have been entertained at little expense. The Royal soap opera has certainly given value for money to someone, but to whom?

Royal soap operas like their television counterparts offer something for everyone. The royal hunt for the virgin in Diana's selection satisfying the romantic conservatives, neatly contrasted with Sara Ferguson, who had had a past, encouraging the feminists. The royal family was moving into the modern world. But, like the television soap

# AND ITS SINKING FIGURE HEAD



operas the questions raised are kept within the strict limits of the soap opera itself, how the characters relate to one another not how their real life position came about.

Why it is that the fact of marriage elevates two average women above the rest? Marriage with the Queen's sons fits them for high office, chancellors of universities or presidents of learned societies. Pictures of them playing with their children become icons of family life, the banality of their utterances on public occasions reassures because it represents the "common man", the glitter of their wealth and privilege is part of an inaccessible dream, as distant as a fairy tale.

Even the disintegration of the role model of family life protects the rest of the Royal Family from real scrutiny, at least for the time being. Sara Ferguson is portrayed as a betrayer of her royal gift. The girl chosen to be a royal wife has now declined it, and, according to the tabloid photographs, scandalously so.

Add to that image the other failed marriages and the heir to the throne who is ridiculed and the public derision becomes critical. It was not always so. John Grigg in the fifties, Malcolm Muggeridge and MP Willie Hamilton were much less scathing of

the royal family than we can read in today's newspapers but they were attacked and reviled. Dennis Skinner can now shout in Parliament, 'Pay your taxes' as the Queen passes by and there is little comment. **But the image of the Queen is shifting from gracious mother of us all to greedy old woman with a gang of unruly offspring with very little to offer and making on average more mistakes than the rest of us but with an income of around £50,000,000 per year to do it.**

How did it happen and what are the consequences?

Favourite villain for the clowns of the House of Windsor is Rupert Murdoch. Locked out of the establishment, so the story goes, and strategically determined to identify with 'real' power, he needed a circulation booster and the royals have always been that. His papers represented themselves as having an unctuous concern for the royals, best seen in the stories about Diana Spencer's anorexia, Margaret Windsor's 'illness' or the size of Sara Ferguson's behind.

Elizabeth II has become much less than the constitutional monarch of the liberal establishment. The public dissection of her nearest family implicitly questions her role

and capability. The bones of the royal family have been picked bare, there are no more questions to ask except those about the Queen herself. The murmurs are beginning as to what kind of character it is who is at the head of a family that seems disaster bound.

The monarchy is only one of the components of differentiated capitalism. That combination which formed the liberal establishment came under attack with the rise of the new right at the end of the seventies. Murdoch helped to demolish it with the destruction of the print unions at Wapping and the liaison with Hammond and the EEPTU. He made newspaper owning profitable. He made £2,000,000 a week profit from his newspapers which went to pay for his American adventures. It was not invested in Britain.

If it is a soap who made it into this type of soap, whose interests does it serve and could we have a newspaper version for less than the millions each year it costs untaxed for the Civil List. Using the governments own criteria, is it cost effective?

The problem with the House of Windsor is that it is a lot more than a soap opera. Behind the comical attitudes, the ghastly out of touch approach there is the potential for the exercise of power. The queen is the fountain of all honour the courts dispense justice in her name, the armed forces owe their loyalty to her the monarch and Parliament passes Bills which become law with the assent of the monarch. But real power lies elsewhere.

Murdoch courted the new right, the free market policies of the Tories, a rampant nationalism which paradoxically courted investment from abroad at the expense of British manufacturing. It is better to be dependent on Japanese and American capitalists than on the British Trade Unions.

What have the Royal family to do with this? Those with the stomach can check the Murdoch headlines for the past fifteen years.

There are clear signs that the arrangements around a constitutional monarchy could end with its replacement by either a monarch more in tune with the thinking of the new right or a republic embodying the same ideology but more visibly stripped of the mystique surrounding the present monarch. When, or if this shift comes about, it will aim to help to entrench more firmly the strangle hold on our freedoms that have increasingly been taken since 1979.

# ONLY WORKERS CAN

Mr Collor, who became President of Brazil in May 1990, was finally impeached by the Brazilian Congress for corruption in September and Itmar Franco, his vice President, took over. Collor himself began his presidency as Mr. Clean, and as the man who was going to clear up the desperate economic plight "with one bullet". However, he neither cleared up the economy nor the corruption that is endemic to it.

For Brazil's dispossessed and exploited, in the country and in the cities, conditions worsened and the gap between the poor and the rich widened. The impeachment of Collor is a victory for the mass movement. But it has not ended the fundamental causes of misery and poverty in Brazil or the brutal treatment of shanty dwellers, street children, the people of the land and the toilers generally. Sixty per cent of the national wealth is concentrated in one per cent of the population.

An enormous number of the population in the country were driven off the land to make

way for large scale production and further increase of wealth for rapacious landowners. They crowded into the shanty towns on the outskirts of the cities.

Brazil's leading statistical body, IBGE, published a study in September which showed that Brazil has 32 million under-18-year-olds living with families whose average income is 80p a day. And the situation is getting worse. To-day only 30 per cent of Brazilian children finish primary school.

As the crisis of imperialist world economy grew acute at the end of the eighties, the great multi-national conglomerates and their governments began searching for more tribute from Latin America. US Imperialism, in particular, has been exerting extreme pressure on Brazil, demanding, as part of their plan for an imperialist protectionist sphere of influence in Latin America, it open up completely its markets and the country to investments and drop its barriers behind which it was developing its own technology.

There are insoluble contradictions for a capitalist government of Brazil. It must carry out the demands of imperialism, including the payment of a huge foreign debt which grew threefold from \$40 billion to \$118 billion in the decade 1980 - 1990 despite the fact that Brazil paid an enormous \$112 billion in interest during that same period. To meet the demands of the IMF for a cut in federal spending and the demands for the opening up of the country the government must change the 1988 constitution. Above all, the greatest problem is that the Brazilian "economic miracle" created a powerful working class

Collor was corrupt but the mass of the people know that behind him were thousands upon thousands of other corrupt "Collors". The Guardian correspondent in Brazil, Sue Banford, wrote in that paper on 29th September that a group of accountants had gained access to the files of Paulo Cesar Farias, who was at the heart of the corruption scandal.



*MOVEMENT OF MILLIONS LED BY STUDENTS FINISHED COLLOR, BUT ONLY WORKERS CAN END CORRUPTION*

# END CORRUPTION

"Under the file name 'Collor' they found a list of several of the biggest government ministers, beneath each of which were listed in methodical fashion the main projects in that ministry, the value of the contracts allocated and the commissions charged". The problem of corruption goes far beyond Collor into all sections of the ruling class and its institutions. In July a Brazilian Inland Revenue study found that 76% of big companies were not paying any tax at all while the informal "black economy" is estimated to be at least half as big as the formal economy.

The hope of Brazilian capitalists, North American financiers and businessmen and their government is that by the removal of Collor they can better carry out their economic programmes. On the morning of the impeachment, stock markets rose 6 per cent in expectation of a vote against Collor.

After Collor was impeached, the leader of the PMDB (the biggest capitalist party in Brazil), Mr. Orestes Quercia, insisted that "the modernisation programme had nothing to do with Collor's downfall and it will now have to move ahead more smoothly."

That modernisation programme means a "social pact" to keep wages down, privatisation and, in line with austerity programmes in capitalist countries throughout the world, subsidies to maintain profits, while driving down the conditions of already impoverished masses. Inflation has been more than 20 per cent a month for more than a year. Industry is at its third year of recession and wages are at their lowest real level for twelve years. Most industry is operating with 30 per cent idle capacity and unemployment in Sao Paulo is at the record level of 16.2 per cent. Land occupations take place almost daily.

The demand to remove Collor unleashed the discontent throughout the country in demonstrations led by the students. A rally in Sao Paulo was attended by an estimated 700,000 people. Significantly enough the crowd gave a rough time to the mayor of Sao Paulo a member of the Workers Party and a former left winger and to leaders of the capitalist parties, but listened to Lula, the leader of the Workers Party, who, however, made a speech which, according to reports was confined to an attack on Collor.

Corruption cannot be eradicated without a thorough programme of action purging it from all the relationships of government and economy. Only a government based on the



masses and the all-seeing eye of their control could do this. While demanding this, the co-thinkers of the International Socialist League in Brazil will encourage the labouring people to develop committees which will exert control and impose the power of the masses upon businesses, swindlers and speculators who are bribing the state tax gatherers and growing rich on speculation.

Faced with the danger of an explosive reaction from the powerful Brazilian working class, Brazilian capitalism and US imperialism succeeded in the past two years in bringing the bureaucracy of the Workers Party and the CUT (Brazilian TUC) to assist them in the imposition of the "social pact".

The Workers Party made a statement after the impeachment saying it would not join Itamar's government but, in the interests of stability, it would follow a "minimum" programme. Thus the Workers Party leadership want to throw away and dissipate the victory which the mass mobilisations won in getting rid of Collor. It is a continuation of the right wing course which the WP leadership has been pursuing.

"Down with Collor" was a slogan which played a big role in the struggle in the CUT and the WP. With the development of the mass upsurge, it is more than ever vital, however, to add something more - the alternative government for which the masses

fight. Its negative character made it the slogan of a Popular Front movement of various bodies and individuals who had their own ideas of what they were seeking to put in Collors' place.

The corruption issue unleashed all the tensions and frustration of the masses at the brutalities, uncertainties of the future, exploitation, unemployment and misery. Immediately after the formation of a new government, those feelings may appear to have retreated. But they are only just under the surface and masses have tasted the possibilities of mobilisations. The task is to develop this spontaneous reaction into a conscious struggle for a revolutionary alternative. The demand for a WP-CUT government carries them toward a fight for power. The next step for Brazilian workers is to force a break of the WP and CUT from the capitalist politicians to a policy of struggle against the attempts to impose a "modernisation" plan and the tribute demanded by imperialism and to develop a government of workers and peasants organisations which must have the Workers Party and the CUT at its centre.

To get workers demanding such a government goes together with calling for building organisations - action committees - which will back such a government and organise the masses to root out all corruption and unite workers in a network of such committees in the workplaces, neighbourhoods, countryside, schools and colleges. The most elementary tasks they would demand of a WP-CUT government would be to bring in workers control over production, shift the main burden of taxation on to the propertied class and organise workers inspection and control of tax collection.

Such a government must develop, not a capitalist "modernisation" plan, which is a plan of looting by Brazilian capitalists and landlords and imperialism, but a plan of workers, peasants and exploited people, controlled by them and placing the burden of the crisis upon the capitalists and the landlords. It would also, as Lula and the Workers Party proposed in the past, suspend the burden of foreign interest payments and seek the unity of working people in the semi-colonial countries and in the major capitalist countries to fight the colossal plunder of the "Third World" countries by the imperialist banks.

# YELTSIN'S

In the turbulent years of 1989/90 the Russian people shook down the Stalinist government. Their revolution stopped short - they did not succeed in flushing out and destroying utterly the corrupt rule of a bureaucratic class and in instituting workers' democracy. A collection of demagogic former Stalinist bureaucrats, "democrats", members of the Stalinist academic institutions, western economists, speculators and criminal elements came to the top out of the upsurge to dominate their lives. This is the rabble which represents the counter-revolution in Russia with a perspective of returning it to capitalist rule, and who set about the aim of smashing up public property in their own self interest. Since then the mass of the Russian people have gone through one crisis after another with the acceleration of the decline of their standard of living and general conditions. The Russian population's harsh experiences have been shared by their fellows in the rest of the former Soviet Union and in the countries of Eastern Europe as well as Eastern Germany.

For three years the Socialist Voice has hammered home that the chief problem for the imperialist governments and their bankers and financiers and the leaders of Russia has been to create a stable capitalist class. Capitalism, however, in the famous phrase

of Karl Marx, came into the world dripping blood from every pore, as the history of Britain bears witness. To recreate it in these eastern areas is bound to mean even more suffering, because, as is shown by the grave problems in the world today, capitalism is now a system in decline.

The Russian Parliament, has endorsed the privatisation policy with a minority of a third of its members against it. There are many reports that the privatisation is not universally popular.

The capitalist restorationists ruling Russia, no longer attempt to paint market relations as something which guarantee a better life for all and superior conditions for the mass of the population than under the rule of Stalinism. Gone are the days when Sweden was the model of prosperity which the Soviet people would attain. According to John Lloyd of the Financial Times, *"the young officials, who are carrying out the privatisation project no longer hide the fact that the capitalist counter-revolution and the restoration of capitalism means the rapid development of a conspicuous wealthy class."*

It means also, of course, the development of a conspicuous poverty stricken class going deeper into misery and despair. Maxime Boika, chief aide to Mr. Chubais, says, *"There already was in the socialist times a privileged class. In a market economy of course, it becomes open and evident. But I think this country has a large tolerance for inequal-*

*ity."* The likes of these young academics have been responsible for the various plans in Russia which have collapsed one after the other amid a decline of production and chaos far far worse than under Stalinism. Boika continues to put their subjective interpretation on reality. His last sentence contradicts the continuous complaints by commentators on Russia in the capitalist press who have often told us, in the past, about what one called, "the fierce egalitarianism" of the population.

It also contradicts Lloyd when he writes that under the old Stalinist regime, *"people were accustomed to officially promoted egalitarianism"*.

Certainly there was a great deal of inequality and the rule of a corrupt parasitic privileged and arrogant Stalinist caste. But it is this elite which the Soviet masses have seen becoming one of the chief beneficiaries and chief pillars of a capitalist society. Yet it is only two or three years since the great explosion against their privileged rule.

On every side there is opposition to and suspicion of the sale of shares and the development of an "entrepreneurial spirit". They do not trust the speculators, the "entrepreneurs and the Mafia and those who are selling them into semi-colonialism.

The privatisation proposal tries to create the impression that all the population will benefit. The population evidently sees through this. Mr Gannady Sevinko, Parlia-



*Yeltsin's democracy has resulted in more killings by the gangsters*

# "REFORMS" SHAKE



*In recent months there has been an increase in workers' actions*

mentary Deputy, threw a fistful of privatisation vouchers in the face of Mr Chubais shouting, "All property of any worth will end up in the hands of the rich". This is a widely held view says Lloyd.

The St Petersburg News Agency, quoting two Russian papers, gave a reaction of two groups of Russian citizens to the new voucher plan. Drawing its information from "Rossiyskiye Vesati, 22nd September, it related that 40% of the citizens of Russia could not answer the question, how they were going to use their voucher. About 25% of Russians are going to sell it to buy badly needed goods. About 16% of respondents intend to buy stocks of their enterprises for vouchers and 5% decided to start their own business with the vouchers. 44% think vouchers are issued just for show and they will not change anything. About 16% agree that it is an attempt to form a class of proprietors. 13% believe that it is a sort of financial support to people. 28% could not answer the question.

In fact, it is the response from below and the fear of its explosion which has caused the break up of all the "elegant" academic schemes of restoration and the vacillations in policy at the top. Now Yeltsin has been forced to slow down the plans he promised to carry through firmly and make noises against some of the demands of the capitalist financiers. The crew of adventurers, demagogues, self-seekers, bureaucrats and academic economists, who plan to restore capitalist property relations, has not brought the democratic Utopia it promised. Trying to explain this, Mr Anatoly Chubais, the deputy prime minister in charge of privatisation, said: "*Privatisation on this scale is unprecedented in the history of Russia and of the world*". Absolutely true! The Russian Revolu-

tion, itself, which created the foundation for the nationalised property relations, was also unprecedented. It, however, had a historical validity which is not possessed by Chubais' plans. It resulted from a mass uprising expressing the wishes of workers and peasants. Yeltsin, by personal edict, evicted Gorbachov and his staff from the elegant parquet floored building which his "Gorbachov Foundation" was using. Three busloads of police plus the anti-riot squad arrived early in the morning to carry out the eviction. Mr Gorbachov then said that this expressed "the *increasingly authoritarian tendencies of today's leaders*."

Certainly there are increasingly authoritarian tendencies. But for some time they have been directed at sections of workers and independent unions. In September the Fed-

*"Privatisation on this scale is unprecedented in the history of Russia and of the world". Absolutely true! The Russian Revolution, itself, which created the foundation for the nationalised property relations, was also unprecedented. It, however, had a historical validity which is not possessed by Chubais' plans. It resulted from a mass uprising expressing the wishes of workers and peasants.*

eration of Air-traffic Controllers Union of Russia was raided and its membership list seized. Its leaders are the subject of an investigation by the Minister of the Interior and are facing criminal charges of economic sabotage because they called a one day strike in August. We have not heard about Mr. Gorbachov protesting at the treatment of the

air-traffic controllers and when he was President he was just as much opposed as Yeltsin to the independent mass activity of workers. But independent mass activity is in the traditions of the Russian Revolution to which they are all opposed.

The Russian Revolution was not a coup d'état or the result of edicts by individuals. It was a period when the mass of people came on the stage of history and made their mark. The Bolsheviks won the following and allegiance of the soldiers, peasants and workers by the correctness of their policies and leadership. At first, they were a tiny minority in the Soviets which bound together workers peasants and soldiers and which were filled with a content of masses deciding their own destiny. In February the Bolsheviks had *less than five per cent* of the delegates to the Soviets. In nine months they won the majority. They were proved right by tumultuous events and the firmness of their principles.

All sections of the old Nomenklatura and all the recently recruited privileged elite seek to destroy the validity of the Russian Revolution because they go in fear of the recognition by labouring people in Russia today of their power to change history and build on the egalitarian, internationalist and socialist traditions of the Russian Revolution.

We were convinced two years ago that the development of events would disillusion Soviet workers in capitalism as an alternative to bureaucratic rule. So we are confident that experience is pushing them to see that they alone have the power to remould society, control it and clear out all the new privileged and their corruption. They will be heartened immeasurably by the development of struggles in the West and the rise of a new international from the working class.

# THE END OF BUSH

Bill Clinton's election as President of the US comes exactly 6 months after the Los Angeles riots and at the same time as the development towards open trade war takes another vicious turn.

The unemployment rate in the US is now 7%; in California alone, 700,000 jobs have been lost just recently. In a television interview during the election campaign, a resident of Washington expressed the desperation of many Americans when she explained that the level of violence in cities was such that you did not know when you went out of your front door whether or not you would ever come back!

The state of the US economy caused George Bush to suffer the worst result ever of an incumbent President seeking re-election. Clinton receiving 272 votes in the electoral college as opposed to Bush's 28.

Despite not receiving the traditional backing of the trade union machine, workers voted for Clinton, as did women and blacks. In fact, all categories, except religious fundamentalists, supported the Democratic candidate.

Just a few months ago we reported that the changes in the Soviet Union had profound effects on the economy of other European states such as Finland. Now the US election illustrates the inter-connectedness of each country on others. In the US the mighty arsenal that defeated Iraq in the Gulf War now seems irrelevant when living standards have been stagnant or falling for a generation, health care costs are spiralling out of control and education standards are inadequate.

The election of Clinton will be followed by a so-called "honeymoon" period which promises to be as short as the one enjoyed by John Major in Britain. The fact is that neither Clinton nor Major have the necessary answers to the problems of workers and their families.

Clinton promised \$20 billion annual expenditure, part of which would be used for education and social programs. He made many other promises about spending. But, with the U.S. economy in crisis, and a national debt which will be over \$4 trillion by November, there will be no money for Clinton's programs.

## What have you done for the homeless this week?

We think Voice readers will be interested in the struggle, to the end, of Henry Graber, a lifelong union militant and revolutionary socialist, who died on July 5 at the age of 88 in Long Beach, California, against the actions (or inaction) of the Long Beach City Council, California.

He regularly attended the council meetings over a period of 12 years. Henry denounced the council for not helping the homeless, not demanding funding for schools, not protecting the environment and for not opposing the Gulf War. He would easily have recognised his adversaries in the Lambeth, Glasgow or Manchester city councils.

"At first" we are told (Press-Telegram quoted in Socialist Action), "he walked into the meetings with his cane, wearing a broad-brimmed straw fedora and black sunglasses. Later as emphysema and old age took their toll, he came in a three-wheeled electric cart, the fedora tilted to shade his weathered face from the sun.

"He'd get to the podium, hang his cane on his pants pocket, lean on the lectern and glare at the nine council members through his dark glasses. Then he'd give him hell.

"What have you done for the homeless this week?', he'd ask. 'Have you thought about the homeless this week?'"

# A NEW PARTY IN POLAND

A new party has been formed in Poland. It is called the "Workers Party". It is a small group but their paper "Anti-Government Weekly", which they had been developing before the formation of the party, had already become known to many of the workers struggling against the Walesa government and the privatisation plans. Readers of Socialist Voice will have seen the contributions from *Elizabeth* (a member of the IWL) concerning Poland and the struggles of the working class, some of which "Anti-Government Weekly" has been involved in.

Since its formation the party has already been contacted by workers involved in particular struggles. One battle is over the privatisation of homes that previously went with the job. As factories close or lay people off, families are now being also threatened with ejected from their homes. Some of those facing this brutality have written directly to "Anti-Government Weekly" asking for their assistance in their fight.

### REFUTE THE SLANDER

We have been asked to publish the following information to clarify the position of the new party.

Unfortunately, not all those on the left have assisted this development. On the contrary, for reasons best known to its editors, DALEJ, Polish paper of an International known as the United Secretariat and lead by Ernest Mandel, published a factually incorrect article in which they described certain members of the GSR, which was one of the founder groups of the new party, as Stalinist and supporters of "Socialism in one Country".

The trick used in their article was that they attacked the views of someone called Jaroslaw Tomaszewicz who had written some letters to "Anti-Government Weekly". There had been a discussion against his views which appear to more nationalist than socialist. Whatever the views of this man, DALEJ attacked him as a Stalinist. But, instead of attributing the true source, they wrote that these views were that of a young man called Jan Tomaszewicz who had been a member of the GSR before he temporarily moved to England.



# WORLD BANKS CALL THE TUNE

PETER WINDELER

With the withdrawal of Britain from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism the impossibility of integrating European economies has been vividly illustrated. As the *Financial Times* said three days after Black Wednesday "...the political cost to Europe is incalculable".

The pressure that sterling came under revealed the extreme weakness of Britain which now a trade deficit of £6bn and an industrial base that is falling apart.

Although Britain is not the only country that faces problems (even Germany's economy is weak and getting weaker) it illustrates how capitalism in the late 20th Century and nothing to offer workers and their families. Things are so bad that the British working class faces mass unemployment and even starvation in the years ahead if capitalism is to achieve equilibrium again!

It's ironic that we can talk about mass unemployment and starvation when only yesterday capitalism had all the answers. What we saw in the days of share ownership and yuppies was the last gasp of breath from a terminally ill patient.

In fact the Stock Market nowadays is not that important. The real power lies with the world's banks which even dictate to individual countries whether to starve the population or throw them a few crumbs depending whether or not they are likely to revolt.

The power has been with the banks since the transformation of capitalism into capitalist imperialism at the turn of the century. This occurred when rivalry between individual capitalists made way for the rule of monopolies and cartels

## FICTITIOUS CAPITAL

Throughout the last century capitalism developed albeit at an uneven pace but wealth continued to be created. A period of prolonged stagnation set in just before the First World War after 20 years of turbulent development. At this time the world market was inadequate for the development of German, English and American capitalism. The war crisis was deliberately engineered to destroy capitalist rivals. From Europe's point of view the war lasted too long resulting in European capitalism being destroyed and facilitating America's feverish development.

Since then America has been the major power on the world stage. The Second World War burst on the scene in 1939 but this was very much a continuation of the First World War and only resulted in increased American hegemony that was officially recognised when the world adopted the Dollar Standard at Bretton Woods in 1945. The Bretton Woods agreement broke down in 1973 and since then fictitious capital has expanded and real capital - that representing value has disappeared.

Throughout the world during the 1980's money expanded at an ever increasing rate. For example in 1980 lending by banks worldwide amounted to \$324bn but by 1991 it had risen to \$7.5 million million million. Lending had increased from 4% of the major countries GDP to 44% of it. In short as manufacturing became less profitable fictitious assets in the form of loans and bank notes came into being - "financial services" expanded without any underlying value being created. The increase in fictitious capital represented a claim on the creation of future capital or a representation of deceased capital. The former would be, for example, loans to Third World countries where the products of the workforce are mortgaged for years ahead to repay loans whilst the latter would be government bonds used to pay for armaments which although expensive to produce can never have a value which can be extracted and put back into the economy.

## LIVING STANDARDS

The conditions of the working class must be driven down in order for profits to be made. This can only be done by the ruling class attacking the living conditions of workers in the form of wage reductions and the removal of provision for social services, housing and education. This would be by way of an inter-class conflict. Otherwise the economic crises must be turned into an interstate crises resulting in a war out of which capitalism will emerge on a new basis.

Already workers throughout Europe are seeing their standards of living reduced. At the same time capitalism is deliberately destabilising international relations.

According to the Institute for Strategic Studies there is a 50% chance of the Yugoslav conflict spreading to other parts of Europe. It should not be forgotten that the main spark that ignited the conflict was German recognition of Croatia.



One member of the new party wrote to us saying:

"In issue number 12 of DALEJ there is a long article discussing the points of view of Jaroslaw which they attributed to Jan. They pick out a couple of loose phrases from Jaroslaw's contribution to prove that he is for socialism in one country, and therefore a Stalinist. Now, as they take Jaroslaw for Jan, they blame the editors of Anti-Government Weekly for his errors and extend the accusation to all the members of the editorial board.

To call Jaroslaw Tomaszewicz a Stalinist is rather far fetched but to ascribe these positions to Jan and therefore to Anti-Government Weekly would be a silly mistake if it were committed by someone who does not know who is who in Poland. But the Usec people know Jan personally. So this comedy of errors could only be explained if we assume that they intentionally wish to destroy the attempt at building a new party."

For our part we ask DALEJ to retract this "comedy of errors" and we ask the United Secretariat and its section in Britain to refute the slander.

Slander is used in the political movement to fight an opponent when it is impossible to continue an honest exchange of opinions. Such methods will never build a revolutionary party, even less a Trotskyist party. To make such errors does not strengthen the workers in the sharpening class tensions of Poland it acts in the opposite direction.

# FREE PHILEMON MAUKU

We recently received the following letter from the Campaign for a Socialist South Africa concerning the campaign in South Africa for the release of Philemon Mauku.

Dear Comrades,

Please write an urgent letter of protest to the South African Ambassador (SA House, Trafalga Square, London) about the continued imprisonment of Philemon and other activists, such as the Inanda Marshalls in Durban who have been sentenced for organising self defence?

This is particularly pressing in the light of events in the last few days. The government have gained considerable publicity for the release of a number of political prisoners. Whilst this is to be welcomed, the government, on the one hand, still refuses to accept that congress activists arrested for organising self defence are political prisoners, holding them in the same cells as gangsters and rapists, and on the other hand have also released the notorious racist mass murderer Barend Strydom as part of this amnesty!

The need for organised self defence is reinforced by the speech last weekend by Inkatha gangster leader Buthelezi at which he threatened to intensify the civil war against the ANC, especially in Natal. His promise to defy the ban on "traditional weapons" and tear down fences built around Inkatha controlled hostels confirms warning made by Philemon in the letter enclosed (see below) that these measures will not bring peace and should not be seen by the ANC and its supporters as sufficient justification for reopening negotiations with De Klerk. The regime has on its hands the blood not only of those murdered at Boipatong and Bisho but of all the victims of Inkatha and racist murderers such as Strydom.

.....

The following is the letter from Philemon which was smuggled out of prison:

"I have written a letter of complaint to the head of the prison about my problems. Since I'm here I use cold water. There is no hot water in our place...I have met the colonel and asked about that. The answer was that

the has got 25 with cold water, that was a problem to me.

"Secondly I sleep on a bed without a sponge (mattress), and it is very hard. I have got pains all over my body, when we go to hospital they harass us.... I have tried to tolerate for this but it is a slow poison that will kill me in future.

"This place is very cold, and some time the water freezes if it is too cold, more especially around the veranda. And we always eat mealy rice. I think it is for chickens. We don't change diet so I'm depending on bread. I will also lay a complaint to the colonel. I think I have to try and deal with all this, because I'm not a slave but a prisoner so don't have to be a slave. It might sound not difficult to somebody to survive in such condition, but to me it is and I have to defy it.

"I would also like to comment about the dismantling of battalion 31 & 32 (of the SA army, mercenaries from Angola and Mozambique used against SWAPO in Namibia and now heavily implicated in the township violence). According to my point of view that will never help in any way; because we cannot supervise anything that can exist underground as a killing machine of the government....

"And the surrounding of the hostel (used as a military base by Inkatha) is bullshit unless it can be changed into family units. It cannot give an idea to go back to the (negotiating) table .... People stay in shacks while our money is being misused. The security of which they are voting for from the UN, will also protect capitalism as they use it to else where.

"The people have to understand that the reformation of capitalism they support will exploit them too. The democracy that will exist will be for .... some middle class people. The majority of the working class will suffer."

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Details of the campaign and can be obtained from PO box 74, Fishponds, Bristol

# SOUTH AFRICAN MASSES

(CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE)

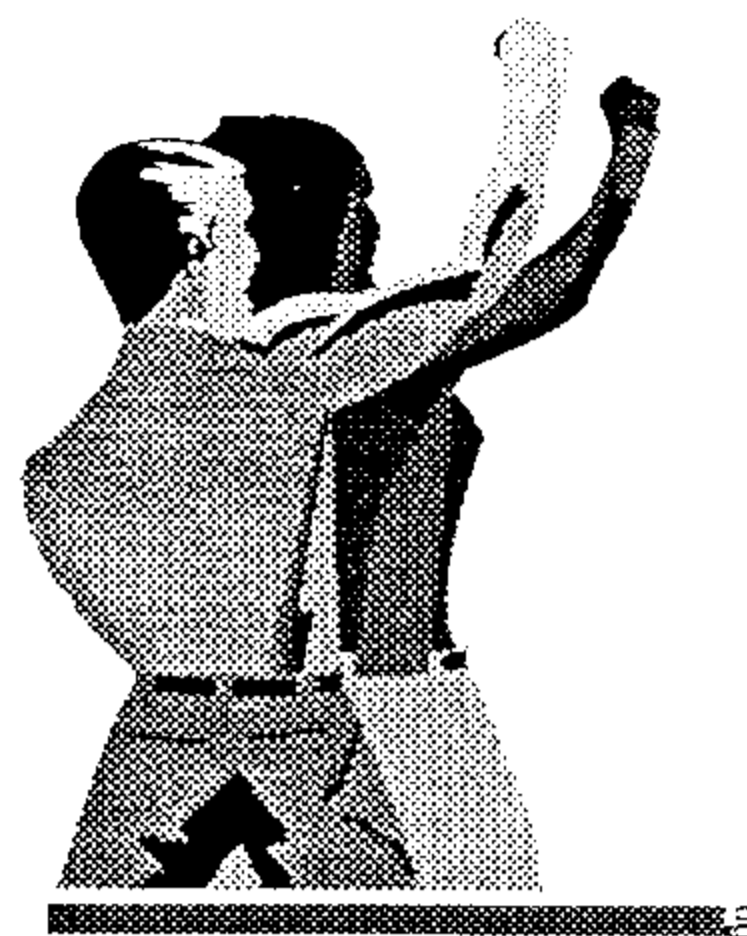
The working class has spoken by its actions, while the ANC negotiated, they tried to fight on what was most dear to them - a complete ending with all aspects of Apartheid. The ANC leaders want some kind of power sharing with the old regime but under no circumstances will a Western style parliamentary state come about. With South African society in decline, with such high levels of unemployment and such deprivation amongst the Black masses democracy will be a luxury the capitalist class will be unable to give.

What type of government is going to solve these problems? It is certainly not one that is based on the favoured status for the whites. How can any one of the measures that Blacks want be won unless those who need them are in the centre of the struggle for them? That is why which ever the question is looked at the only solution for the poor will be a workers government based on and directly controlled by the organisations of the Black masses.

The South African regime is a crisis ridden one. In the depth of its economic crisis it has some parallels with Britain. A rising movement of the masses organised could shatter it, but that is not going to be led by the leaders of the ANC. On the contrary Mandela and the ANC is now propping it up. "...ANC leaders have restrained the urge to kick the South African president when he is down. If anything, they (ANC) have tried to give him a helping hand." Independent 26/11/92.

But the masses do have the recent experience in the 1980's of building the movement in Townships and the factories, it was their sacrifice which built some of the world's leading working class organisations of COSATU and the Workers' Charter. All this expressed a demand for workers power, nationalisation and socialism, it showed that the South African working class was and is imbued not only with a deep hatred of apartheid racist brutality, but also with a hatred of the monopolies and smaller capitalists, past and present, who benefited from state repression. Workers have to build on that struggle and raise it to a new, international level - that is the road of struggle ahead.

# **Socialist** **VOICE**



Monthly Journal of the  
International Socialist League  
British Section of the  
International Workers' League (FI)

Our paper has supported many struggles in this country and abroad. It seeks to give a Marxist analysis and leadership to the major events developing in the world in order to help the working class fight for socialism.

In this issue we have published material from Camden about the Council Tax and we are supporting the All-Britain conference which aims to help and develop the struggles in the public sector and the communities.

If you are involved in a strike, campaign or struggle, let us know the details and we will do our best to support you.

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# SOUTH AFRICAN MASSES GET NOTHING FROM NEGOTIATIONS

PETER MONEY

Years of negotiations between the African National Congress and the White government of De Klerk have brought nothing for the poor and the working class black people of South Africa.

More people are dying now than during the state of emergency of the 1980's and whole sections of the black population are living in constant fear of their lives from attacks by Inkatha gangsters, secretly supported by the security forces of South Africa. Unemployment has reached 40%, many black Africans live without electricity; six million houses are needed to house people properly, rent and food prices have been increased. Workers are still working at best 44 hours per week whilst many are forced to work ever longer hours. Conditions in schools and hospitals have deteriorated. The CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) talks have provided the cover for the difference between the rich and the poor to increase.

The release of Mandela raised great hopes of the overthrow of apartheid, the establishment of a workers government and the building of a socialist South Africa. These hopes were raised not only amongst blacks in South Africa but throughout all the black African countries that had been dominated politically and economically by South Africa.

But these hopes have been dashed.

The release of Mandela was the result of the great upsurge of the black workers and youth at the end of the 1980's. But, instead of leading the movement forward, the ANC together with the South African Communist Party leadership said the struggle had entered a new phase - a phase of negotiating an end to apartheid. In his first speech Mandela told the students and school children to back to their classrooms. The holding back of the movement has had devastating consequences for millions of poor blacks.

## HOMELANDS

One of the central questions of the struggle has been on the homelands.

The abolition of the homelands is one of the deepest held demands of the black masses. They are the source of much of the suffering and hardship of the masses. There is no work in the homelands and every day thousands of blacks are forced to leave their homes to look for work. They live in squatter camps or single sex hostels. It is the homeland system that is at the heart of the violence in the townships and districts of South Africa.

In 1989 the petty dictators in the home-



lands were on their knees. However, the failure of the ANC leadership to take the struggle forward let them off the hook and Buthelezi has been able to develop Inkatha into the national Inkatha Freedom Party with all the bloodshed and killings that have accompanied it.

**It was the depth of feeling concerning the homelands and the violence that is endemic to that system that forced the ANC to lead the demonstration into Ciskei in September.**

However, the ANC leadership's policy has never been for a struggle to unite the homelands. The homelands are a central pillar of the apartheid system as long as they exist there can be no one man one vote. They have always sought to achieve it through negotiation and have shown themselves to be always willing to seek a compromise. The craven callousness of this policy showed itself after the Ciskei massacre when Mandela agreed to re-enter negotiations with De Klerk with the only conditions being that fences be erected around "immigrant" hostels and that there should be a ban on the carrying of cultural weapons by Inkatha.

The astounding weakness of these demand

was shown by the contempt with which they were treated by Buthelezi who said that they would simply tear the barriers down and Inkatha continued to carry their weapons on demonstrations.

But the government has ignored even these demands.

There had been an agreement to release all political prisoners by 15 November but many are still held (see the case of Philemon Mauku page 18). Prior to this one of the CODESA working groups even recommended that an interim government must have the power to detain people without trial. In addition the ANC continue to assure the state apparatus of civil servants that their jobs and pensions will be secure. This includes those who helped organise the terror against the majority black population in the past.

## A "NEW COURSE"

With the rise of the black working class during the second half of the 1980's the policy of imperialism towards South Africa changed. Imperialism recognised that apartheid could not be retained. They started to encourage the growth of a black middle class. Their aim became the creation of a new state in which capitalism could re-establish its rule over the working class.

They have had some success in this aim. They have succeeded in persuading the leadership of COSATU to drop its socialist demands. Cyril Ramaphosa, General Secretary of COSATU, for example, has stated that nationalisation is "an option" that could be considered by a future government in a new South Africa and other leading members constantly make speeches about the need not to frighten of foreign investment.

But nothing is yet settled in South Africa. The country was brought to a standstill in August in the two day general strike. Support for the strike was reported to have been 90% in Johannesburg region, 60% in the Western Cape and 75% in Durban. The day after the strike tens of thousands of blacks took part in demonstrations in the cities.

The ideas and outlook of Mandela offer no way out for the black workers and poor of South Africa. Throughout Africa pro-western countries are in dire economic and social straits. They have been ripped apart and bled dry by international capitalism. They all in debt to the banks of the West at levels they have no chance of ever repaying.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 17)