

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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Price 30p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

DON'T PAY

POLL TAX

DON'T COLLECT

THE POLL Tax bills are coming. Millions of ordinary people in England and Wales are faced with a choice: pay the astronomical new tax—designed by the Tories to make their rich friends richer—or fight back.

Those who choose to fight will not be on their own. In Scotland, one year after the Poll Tax was introduced, half a million people have been issued with warrants for non-payment. Another half million are in arrears, including thousands who paid the first installment then joined the anti-Poll Tax fight.

On 1 April the Poll Tax will abolish the rates in England and Wales. Up to now 19 million people have paid rates which contribute towards the cost of local council services. The rate was set according to the value of their house or flat.

Under the Poll Tax 38 million people will be liable to pay. Within each district everybody's bill is equal. You pay the same whether you are super-rich or on the poverty line; whether you live in a high rise flat or a country mansion. Some equality!

And whilst the Tories have estimated an average Poll Tax bill of £278 the councils themselves are having to set the tax way above this: Leicester £400, Bristol £500, Lambeth £760! Even Tory Berkshire will charge £450 a head!

Now the government has threatened to "cap" councils who tax too much. The Tories will reduce the tax and order councils to spend a "more realistic" amount. What this means for local councils is all too clear. Services will be slashed along with thousands of council workers' jobs.

In Manchester the Labour

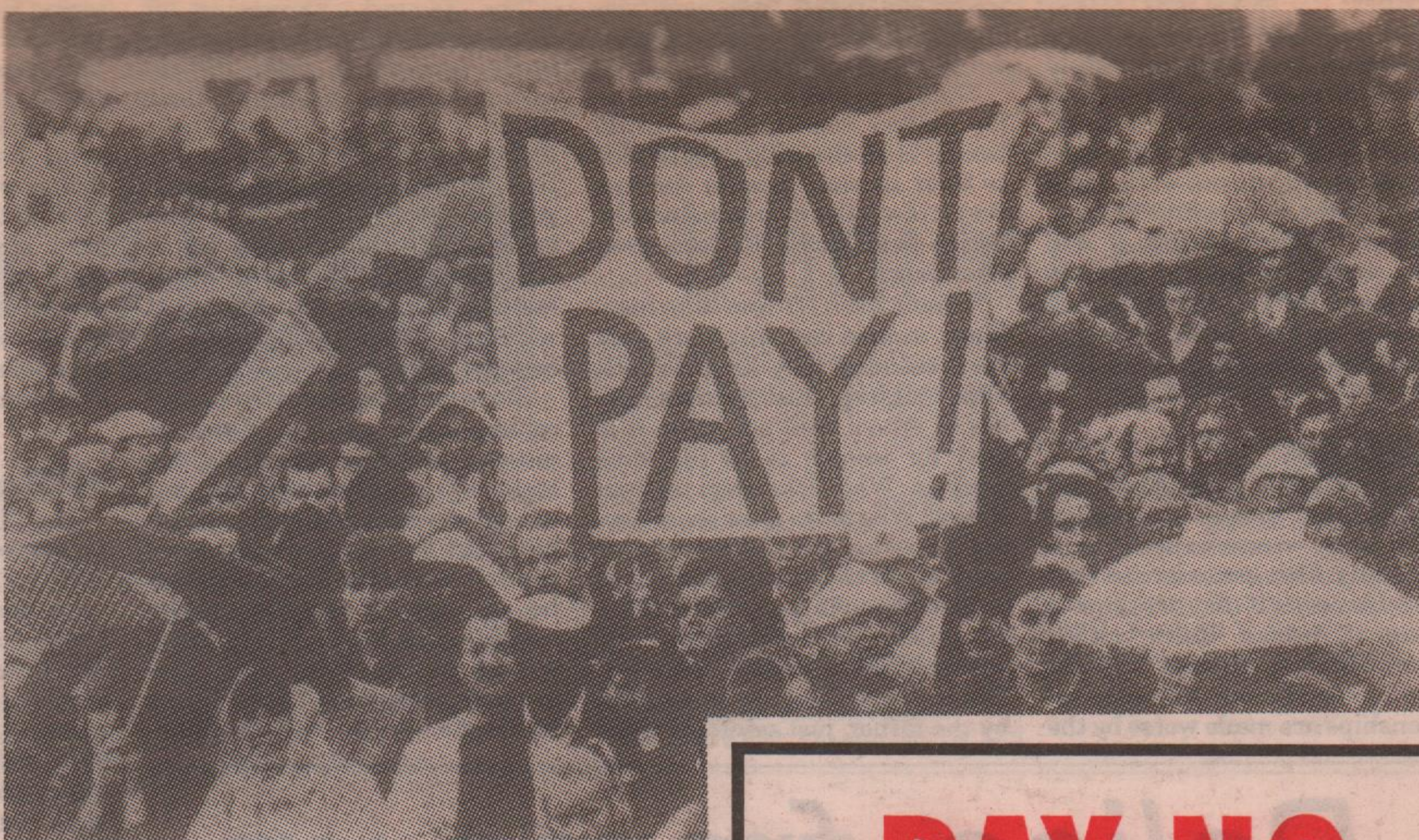
council is planning to cut 3,200 jobs including 1,000 compulsory redundancies. This is just part of a £28 million cuts package designed to get the Poll Tax bill down from £733 to £425.

These cuts are falling on essential local services; education, house repairs, meals on wheels, libraries, sports and community centres. And it's the same all over the country.

The Poll Tax is designed to attack the whole working class. But it hits us one by one. The Tories are relying on millions of people sitting at home fuming about the Poll Tax, worrying about how to make ends meet instead of doing something about it.

What you can do:

- **Join an anti-Poll Tax union.** Every working class person should go out and join their anti-Poll Tax union now. Where none exists, set one up.
- **Don't pay.** When the bills arrive hold mass meetings in your locality where hundreds of people can pledge to defy the tax together.
- **Don't collect.** Every council should be met with demonstrations demanding that they refuse to collect the tax. Council workers should boycott all work on the tax. Postal workers should refuse to deliver the bills.
- **Drive out the bailiffs.** In Scotland half a million are faced with the possibility of the bailiffs coming to sell



John Harris/FL

off their belongings to pay the tax they owe. They can't visit everybody at once. They must be met with massive demonstrations and, where necessary, organised defence of homes under attack.

- **Strike against the tax.** The Tories have threatened to deduct the tax from the wages of those who refuse to pay. The council bosses have threatened discipline against workers who refuse to collect the tax. Workers in every sector should be prepared to strike the moment they try these tricks.

- **Demonstrate.** The Poll Tax should have been met with mass action co-ordinated and led by the TUC. But the TUC has done little more

than moan about the tax. 2 April should have been named as the day for a one day general strike against the tax. Instead the TUC wants us to march around London on yet another passive Saturday protest march.

The demo on 31 March must become a massive angry protest. It must be the platform from which millions of workers demand the TUC organise and lead the kind of action we need. The moment any act of mass defiance proves effective the Tories will bring the police and the courts to enforce warrant sales and seize trade union funds.

That is why we will need, and should prepare for, a general strike to smash the Poll Tax!

PAY NO POLL TAX

All Britain
Anti-Poll Tax Federation
THE DEMO

12 noon Saturday 31 March
Kennington Park, London

THATCHER'S FAMILY CRUSADE

MARGARET THATCHER thinks that a stable family is the foundation of a civilised society. Part of her "revolutionary" crusade has been aimed at strengthening it.

She has spearheaded a series of assaults on women and youth, each aimed at forcing them to become more dependent upon the family and less able to choose any economic or social independence. She must be disturbed that during her reign her beloved model family has declined so much in numbers that it now exists in only a small minority of households.

The result of Tory regulations on benefits for 16-18 year olds can be seen by anyone walking through most large city centres. Teenagers begging, or sleeping rough in doorways and underpasses are now an all too common sight. Far from keeping them within the nurturing and caring environment of Thatcher's ideal family they have been forced out onto the streets, where prostitution, drug abuse and criminalisation are their likely fates.

Proposals

Thatcher's latest scheme to bolster the family is embodied in two recent proposals. The first plans to abolish child benefit for over-fives whilst increasing it for younger children. This particular package is being dressed up as a logical reaction to the changes in the lives of women, combined with "targeting" benefits to those most in need. Most women with children over five now work, so surely that means they have no right to state benefit? Surely it would be better to improve tax allowances for the mother or father?

This is based on the old and reactionary reasoning that child benefit is just pin-money for women with older children. This is a lie. For the many married or co-habiting women who do not work, child benefit is the only source of independent income. Abolish it and these women will become totally dependent on the housekeeping "donated" by their partners and at levels decided by them.

Oppression

This economic dependency underpins the brutal oppression which many women experience in the family. Men can exercise considerable power if they are the sole source of income. Rows can be accompanied by threats to withdraw money. Deeply unhappy relationships are made worse by the

No benefit for women



emotional and financial blackmail which can result from such inequalities. Women become prisoners within the family.

The pin-money argument is a lie for women who do work. Child benefit is an essential supplement to their income, despite the fact that it is worth much less since the Tories have frozen its level year after year.

Women earn far less than men. Many women can only work part time because they have to look after children. Just because kids are at school does not mean it is easy for women to be full time workers. Who picks them up from school? Who looks after them during school holidays? Who stays off work when they are sick?

Child benefit is a poor and inadequate compensation for women's real economic inequality. Tax benefits, likely to be claimed by the father, just reinforce these

inequalities.

The second innovation of Thatcher's family defence crusade is the proposal to make fathers take more responsibility for their children. Many women must have thought, "great!" when they heard that. From now on, a man will not get away with getting a girl "into trouble" and then leaving her to cope alone. He will have to pay maintenance. And if he refuses, it will be deducted from his wages or benefits at source.

Stop and think about the practical implications of this. If you are married and then separated, the state will go after your ex, but what if you were never married/co-habiting? You will then be expected to disclose who the father is so that he can pay. If you don't, state benefits may be withheld. Many women may not want to say, others may not know who the father is. Single women will be finan-

cially penalised in both cases.

This measure, originally advanced by the right wing Labour MP Frank Field, has two aims. First, to reduce the "burden" on the state of paying benefits to single mothers. Secondly, to strengthen the centrality of the family, and in particular biological parenthood—by making the "real" father shoulder his responsibilities.

This will make it more difficult for women with children to choose to live on their own, or to leave unhappy and often violent relationships. There will be pressure to maintain some degree of contact with their previous partner. Hostilities will increase if the state is seen to be "hounding" fathers and deducting money from their wages or, worse, their inadequate benefits. It is a charter for beatings, blackmail and harassment.

Behind all the moral hokum the Tories' real family policy is clear. The family should take on all the caring for children, other dependents and women who are unable to work due to childcare. In recent years the increase in women's participation in work outside the home has tended to undermine this very advantageous capitalist ideal of the family. The state has been pressurised into providing some of the caring services that women previously performed in the home—nurseries, homes for the dependent elderly, even luncheon clubs and after school clubs.

Mollycoddling

The Tories have done their utmost to cut all of this mollycoddling by the "nanny state". They want women with children under five to stay at home. But because of demands from industry for more workers—demands which will increase as the number of school leavers drops—some way of combining family responsibilities with work has to be found to satisfy the bosses' needs.

In classic Tory style Thatcher's answer is to leave this job to individual employers rather than provide state funded childcare facilities. This way employers who need women workers can provide workplace creches but no universal right for all women is granted. Billions can be saved to fund yet more tax cuts for the rich.

Raising children is something that the whole of society should take responsibility for. They are the next generation of workers who will create wealth and provide for all of society—not just their own family. Society should take collective responsibility for their care. Socialists do not regard children as a burden on the state or the family, but see them as an essential part of society and its future.

Collective care does not mean taking kids away from their parents and bringing them up in baby farms, as anti-communists pretend. It means providing good quality child care which can be

used at any time—not just between ten in the morning and three in the afternoon. This care should be free.

Why can't capitalism do this? Because it has neither the desire nor the capacity to do so. Workers, out of all the value their labour creates, receive only a small part as wages—just enough to reproduce their ability to work day after day, to bring up a new generation ready to carry on and to support themselves when they can work no longer.

All talk about these tasks being largely or wholly a social responsibility drives the Tories wild. Thatcher was stung to exclaim that there was no such thing as society only individuals and families.

For capitalism the family is the means of sustaining and reproducing workers. But it is also supposed to be a haven for workers, a retreat from the pressures of the outside world and a source of love and security. Amidst the chaos of market forces and the selfish ideas they spawn—"everyone for themselves", "look after number one"—the family, we are all taught from an early age, is the forum in which unselfish affection can console and comfort workers.



Police frame-up

"I WAS tried and condemned in the police station and the court just rubber-stamped the process." These were the words of Hassan Khan after three Court of Appeal Judges had finally freed him from prison. Khan had already spent the last two and half years in prison and faced the prospect of serving out a 15 year term for a 1987 armed robbery in Birmingham which he did not commit.

The circumstances surrounding Khan's conviction may seem extraordinary; he had numerous witnesses willing to back up his claim to have been at home in Caernarvon, North Wales, at the time of the robbery after the amputation of two toes. Was his case, then, a unique miscarriage of normally reliable British justice? The answer is no, far from it. Hassan Khan is but the latest confirmed victim of the now officially disbanded West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad (SCS).

The SCS has only now come under

the glare of media attention after the screening of a *World in Action* documentary. In reality, the SCS waged a long, concealed reign of terror against hundreds of black, Irish and white English working class suspects from its founding in the mid-1970s.

The current official investigation of the squad, however, covers only the period between 1986 and 1988. As a result the probe will not look at the role of the SCS in the case of the Birmingham Six, though its remit does include 754 arrests. Leading the investigation, under the aegis of the Police Complaints Authority, is Donald Shaw, an assistant chief constable. So once more the police have been left to look into their own "malpractice".

The eventual report will undoubtedly be a cover up, but in some cases the evidence of the SCS's ruthless contempt for suspects' rights and their own official procedures is too overwhelming to sweep

away.

World in Action carefully detailed charges of torture against at least one detective superintendent, John Brown. In two separate cases, more than two years apart, Keith Twitchell and Derek Treadaway both claim that plastic bags were placed over their heads with the express authorisation of Officer Brown. His apparent purpose was to terrify the men into making confessions. A doctor who examined Treadaway has since supported his allegations.

Other charges of forced confessions, intimidation and fabricating offers of bribes have also come to light against the SCS. In practice the members of the SCS wasted little time trying to hide their tracks. Perhaps they were incompetent, more probably they thought they could use and abuse their powers as they saw fit. The experience of the West Midlands SCS has undoubtedly been repeated up and down the country.■

Of course the reality of working class family life is less rosy than this ideal. A family battered by unemployment, inflation, debts and emotional tension can often be a rat-trap of poverty, brutality and domestic slavery for women. It can promote neurosis and hysteria in the relations between the sexes and the generations instead of health and happiness. Its maintenance is fundamental to capitalism and to the oppression of women.

To combat this we have to fight for the full socialisation of all the major aspects of domestic labour. But the first step is to defend and extend the right and the ability of women to participate in waged labour.

Women, organised at work, can become part of a mighty force capable of taking the final step that alone will liberate them, the overthrow of capitalism and the building of a socialist society.■

Germany – no to capitalist unity

FROM BEING the stereotype of a "hardline" Stalinist regime, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) has emerged as the first to hold "free elections". Two reasons lie behind this transformation; the complete collapse of the old regime and the existence of a prosperous and rapacious German imperialist bourgeoisie.

The Ulbricht-Honecker regime was created and maintained by Soviet armed might. As soon as the people of the GDR sensed that this threat had been removed the days of Stalinism were numbered. The speed of its collapse created a power vacuum which neither Honecker's successors nor the supporters of capitalist restoration wished to see prolonged. For them, such a vacuum only encouraged the "politics of the streets", and potentially the self-mobilisation of the working class of the GDR. The longer this lasted the more likely it was that workers would found new and democratic mass organisations, formulating demands not at all welcome to the western bourgeoisie.

Thus Kohl and Modrow both wanted early elections. But beyond this they had quite different perspectives. Like the Stalinists elsewhere in Eastern Europe the SED (PDS) hoped to find an important role for itself in a coalition government charged with overseeing the gradual, and perhaps problematic, changes leading to a full restoration of capitalism. The SED bureaucrats hoped thereby to sell their services to the bourgeoisie as labour lieutenants of capital.

But this strategy reckoned without the fact that the German bourgeoisie remained, and prospered just across the border. In Eastern Europe the lack of Czech, Polish and Romanian bourgeoisies remains an enormous obstacle to restoration. But the German bourgeoisie not only existed but had enormous financial and political levers it could use against the GDR as soon as the Soviet guarantee was withdrawn.

By continuing to offer full citizenship and finan-

cial support to those who leave the GDR, the Bonn government was able constantly to increase the political and economic pressure on Modrow and company. Bonn also offered to help solve the crisis, on its own terms. These terms have been popularly understood as the unification of Germany on a capitalist basis on a short time scale. Consequently, the elections, which were supposed to create the first legitimate government of the GDR, have turned into a virtual referendum on unification. So great is the popular pressure for unification that every party has now announced its support of this goal.

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) is opposed, in principle, to such a unification. Certainly the division of Germany was carried out against the wishes of the German working masses. However, faced with an imperialist counter-attack in order to maintain their power, the Stalinists were forced to eradicate capitalism in their zone. They had to take measures, such as expropriation of capital and the introduction of central planning, that created the economic instruments necessary for the working class to begin the task of building socialism. The Stalinists of course did not use them for this purpose. Unification under the aegis of the German bourgeoisie, would mean surrendering these gains just at the moment when the workers have the opportunity to create a real proletarian democracy and to open the road to socialist construction.

Should the bourgeoisie be successful in restoring their power by means of unification, the result will be the emergence of a more powerful German bourgeoisie as the enemy of the German workers. As internationalists, we see no greater threat in a German domination of Europe than in the present American domination.

However the people of Eastern Europe, especially the Poles and Jews, have bitter memories of Nazi genocide. They have good reason to expect that German imperialism will seek to dominate and

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exploit their countries, even if this occurs not by force, but under the aegis of the "democratic" European Community.

Already, Kohl's refusal to reject all claims to lands in Poland and Czechoslovakia has reopened the Silesian and Sudeten "questions". Revolutionaries certainly cannot regard the borders agreed by the great powers at Potsdam as sacrosanct but all claims based on "historic" title are profoundly reactionary.

If there are delimited areas, the majority of whose populations wish to transfer their national allegiance then that is their right, providing they do not thereby trample on the rights of others. The abrupt exclusion of Poland from the proposed peace conference graphically shows the attitude of the "great" western democracies to the rights of small nations. The suggestion from Moscow that a united Germany should be "neutral" and disarmed is a hopeless utopia.

NATO is an imperialist alliance no matter how it may reshape or redefine itself. Its major purpose is to confront and intimidate the degenerate workers' states. Additionally it dominates numerous semi-colonial countries in the Middle East. On all counts we are opposed to it, we fight for its dissolution and for the unconditional withdrawal of all its forces to their country of origin.

The Warsaw Pact was created in response to the imperialist threat to the Soviet Union and those states it had conquered. Whilst its troops were and are a form of defence of the post-capitalist property relations of those states, the only combat they have ever undertaken has been the suppression of the insurgent working classes of the GDR, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. That was the Pact's principal function and we are in favour of its dissolution and the withdrawal of its troops. But we fight for the workers' movement in these states to oppose all attempts—as in Hungary—to join NATO and for the conclusion of a free and voluntary defensive alliance with the other workers' states including the USSR. ■

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LSE sit-in

THE DAY before the NUS national demonstration saw a wave of 24 hour occupations hit several London colleges. The targets ranged from student union facilities to libraries and administrative buildings, with the numbers of students involved ranging from a few dozen to more than 200.

Students at the LSE staged what was probably the largest of the London actions after an Emergency General Meeting of more than 250 voted overwhelmingly to occupy the college's Old Building. The occupation served to mobilise about 130 LSE students for the 15 February demo, and was in stark contrast to the NUS leadership's call for "Valentines" to be sent to Tory MPs.

The occupation provided a forum for debate and discussion on

wider issues too. A Workers Power trade unionist in the NHS spoke on the way to defend and advance women's reproductive rights. There was also a speaker from CSWEB on the theme of forging links with workers and students in the developing independent unions in Eastern Europe.

Whatever its limitations, the LSE occupation was more than a token gesture. It indicates the kind of direct action necessary to defeat the Tories' plans.

● LSE students may soon face a more direct battle with the college's own bosses. Though the union has voted in favour of erecting a "Pink Plaque" to mark the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Gay Liberation Front at the LSE, the Court of Governors has denied permission for the work

IN brief

to go ahead even in the union's own buildings. In the homophobic climate fostered by Section 28 the authorities are clearly embarrassed at the prospect of a "Pink Plaque".

Students should heighten that embarrassment by a campaign of direct action, to promote lesbian and gay rights and defend union autonomy. ■

Iranian Five

IN SEPTEMBER 1989 reports appeared of the trial of five members of a left wing group in Iran called Workers Unity. The five admitted to "stealing and murder" to raise funds for their group.

Their confession should be taken with a pinch of salt. It was extracted from them by the Iranian state through torture of the most brutal kind.

The five now face the death penalty, while more than thirty of their comrades have gone into hiding, fearing that they will be next on the regime's hit list.

Amnesty International have taken up their case and a defence campaign has been launched by supporters of Workers Unity in Europe and the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI). Workers in Britain should support this campaign, raising support for it in labour movement organisations.

Details can be obtained from:
CARI, BM CARI, London WC1N 3XX



TAKING THEIR cue from the USA where harassing abortion patients and arson attempts on the clinics have become widespread, the SPUC/Life brigade have started picketing clinics in Britain. The above demonstration took place in Streatham.

It is monstrous that at a moment when they are already subject to acute moral pressure women should have to run a gauntlet of ghoul's waving pictures of foetuses and accusing them of murder. Socialists and feminists should mobilise to let these religious bigots know, in no uncertain terms, that their presence outside abortion clinics will not be tolerated. ■

Revolutionary History

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CHINA
SPECIAL ISSUE

£2.50 per copy

Nick Mullen Defence Campaign

Public Meeting

Speakers

Paul Hill, Gerry Conlon,
Nicky Kelly

Camden Irish Centre

7.30

Wednesday 7 March

BLACK SECTIONS

Stop the retreat

THE ATTEMPT to organise a constitutionally recognised Black Section within the Labour party has met with opposition at every stage. The latest defeat was at the 1989 Labour Party Conference. After a year of negotiations with the Labour NEC, the compromise solution of a "Black Socialist Society" was rejected at the last minute. Conference then rejected all the options on offer. Back to square one!

Since then the Black Section has, seemingly, been paralysed. It spent the best part of 1988 drawing up its contribution to Labour's policy review (see *WP* 110) only to see it dismissed out of hand. It spent the whole of 1989 in semi-secret negotiations with the Labour bureaucracy drawing up the Black Socialist Society proposals. Its conferences have been small, without perspective, and obsessed by the question of official recognition within the party.

Anyone who expected the Black Sections' leaders to draw self-critical lessons from the Conference debacle will be disappointed. Writing in the *Black Parliamentarian*, Narendra Makanji—National Chair of Black Sections—claims: "The Labour Party has accepted the principle of self-determination and direct representation for black members of the party."

There is a widespread and mistaken belief that Labour has indeed accepted the principle of black self-organisation and that only its form remains to be decided.

In fact the party leadership remains resolutely opposed to official Black Sections. The right granted to women and youth is denied to black workers in the party because, according to Kinnock and Hattersley, it is divisive and a form of "political apartheid".

Even the Black Socialist Society proved too radical for the NEC. Those who had spent the year persuading Black Sections members that the Society was "Black Sections by another name" stood by as the NEC allowed first "non-voting white members" and then "voting white members with no right to hold office" to join it.

As Makanji and the T&G's Bill Morris look set to come back with a revamped version of the Black Socialist Society, Black Sections' members should be clear about one thing. It is not a step towards black self-organisation and anti-racism within the party. It is a step backwards.

It is designed to channel the fight against black oppression away from the centre of the party's activity. It is designed to integrate black activists into Kinnock's new model Labour Party and persuade them to accept Kinnock's strategy: no active support for workers in struggle and disowning "unpopular causes" like anti-racism.

Workers Power has fought consistently for Black Sections' right to existence and representation within the Labour Party. This is not because we believe the Labour Party can meet the needs of black people or ever be won to a consistent anti-racist position. The dis-

gusting antics of the Labour front bench over Hong Kong immigration prove that they are at least as racist as the Tories and can even surpass them in their appeals to white working class racism.

We fight for Black Sections because we believe that black people should have the right to caucus within all workers' organisations. The right to caucus separately from white workers can be crucial to organising resistance to Labour's racist policies.

The coming Black Sections' conference must commit itself to a renewed fight for full recognition. It must reject the Black Socialist Society proposals.

Most importantly it must be won to a programme of action to meet the needs of black workers and youth in struggle, not just a fight for its democratic right to exist. It must organise, mobilise and represent the mass of black workers inside and outside the Labour Party. If it does not, there is little chance of it ever forcing the Labour Party leadership to allow it official recognition.

Right now this means committing Black Sections to a fight:

- Against all immigration controls
- Against all deportations
- For black self-defence against police, racist and fascist attack
- For workers' control of hiring and firing to end racist employment practices.

It means stopping the Black Sections' retreat in the face of religious bigotry within the black community, whether over the Rushdie question or Muslim schools, and taking a clear stand for secular education and freedom of speech.

This is the only way for Black Sections to break out of its isolation and apparent helplessness in the face of the racism of the Labour leaders. ■



Should old acquaintance be forgot?

CONFERENCE

Goodbye to all that?

LABOUR'S ANNUAL party conference may soon become a thing of the past. Instead party policy will be largely decided by commissions, committees and postal votes. Conference itself will become a rally held only once every two years. This is what Labour's National Executive Committee is proposing in its document—"The Future of Labour Party Conference".

Every socialist should reject these proposals as an attempt by Kinnock and the leadership to destroy party democracy. Of course, the document uses democratic language and talks about making party conference more "streamlined", but the practical consequences of the NEC proposals will be to transfer decision making and policy making powers from party members and trade unionists into the hands of the leadership.

For instance the elections of leader, deputy leader and NEC are to be carried out before conference; certain policy matters, resolutions and amendments are to be "sifted" through special commissions and regional conferences; the subjects discussed by conference will be limited and less wide-ranging.

Under the guise of efficiency this will mean that passive postal voting will replace active democracy, argument and mandating delegates

as a result of democratic debate. Minority (i.e. left wing) views will be sifted out by commissions controlled by Kinnock's officials.

Supposedly "controversial" issues like Ireland will be kept off conference agendas. Kinnock's ultimate purpose is to show to the bosses that the Labour leadership is free from control by either the party rank and file or the trade unions. In future more Labour spokespersons like Tony Blair will be able to renounce long held positions such as adherence to the closed shop without any consultation with the membership.

Diminishing

Hand in hand with undermining the democratic rights of party members at conference, Labour's leaders are intent on diminishing the role of the trade union block vote. On this the left in the party agree with the Kinnockites.

For Kinnock, the present voting strength of the trade unions, which amounts to 89% of the total vote at conference, has become an embarrassment. It invites the charge from the ruling class that under a Labour government the unions will run the country. On the other hand, for groups like the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) and

Campaign Group MP's such as Tony Benn, the block vote is used by right wing bureaucrats like Bill Jordan (AEU) and John Edmonds (GMB) against the left. Their argument goes that the left's hand would be strengthened at conference if the voting weight of the CLPs were to rise at the expense of the trade union block vote.

Of course, any socialist for democracy should be sickened by the arrogance of the bureaucrats with hundreds of thousands of votes but no real mandate from their rank and file members. Yet reducing the block vote is no solution.

It is dangerous because it threatens the very link which the Labour Party has with the organised working class—the trade unions. Without this link the Labour Party would be fundamentally no different from the open bosses' party—the Tories.

Historically, in its policy, programme and actions in government the Labour Party has consistently defended the interests of capitalism against the interests of the working class. In that sense the Labour Party is a bourgeois party.

However, it also grew out of, and has since maintained an organic link with, the base organisations of the working class—the trade unions. This link means that the Labour Party is not simply an open bosses' party, like the US Democrats, but is a bourgeois workers' party.

Any electoral success has depended on massive support from trade union members. Any progressive policies have been as a direct result of pressure from workers in the unions.

Weakening

The Labour NEC's proposals for postal voting and party policy commissions go hand in hand with weakening the trade union link.

Our alternative to the NEC's proposals does not centre on devising a different formula for voting at conference.

We must start from the need to take the block vote out of the hands of the few bureaucrats who wield it. Both in the CLPs and the unions we should be for the democracy of the activists. Political issues should be debated out and voted upon at meetings, after having the arguments.

At party conference minority positions should be reflected in the trade union delegations. The party leader, deputy leader and National Executive should be accountable to conference each year and recallable by conference. Delegations should consist of rank and file representatives, not head office bureaucrats. ■

WITCH HUNTS

Kick out Field!

FRANK FIELD, the far right Labour MP for Birkenhead, has a rotten record. In 1984 he denounced the Camell Laird's occupation, stirring up a press witch-hunt against the shop stewards.

He is a rabid anti-abortionist and believes that single mothers should not get any social security unless they name the child's father. He supports privatisation, including gas, water and British Telecom. In addition he has repeatedly threatened to stand against Labour if he is not re-elected.

If the Labour Party really was a socialist party, or was even half-way loyal to the class whose name it bears, then a reptile like Field would be out on his ear so fast he wouldn't remember he'd ever been a member.

As it is this man is being supported by Neil Kinnock and the NEC majority. Joyce Gould is to investigate *Militant* "subversion" in the constituency and now fearless Frank has persuaded the Labour leadership to add *Socialist Organiser* (SO) to the list. It is reported that SO may be

banned and its supporters declared ineligible for Labour Party membership. It is an upside down world where socialists—utterly loyal to the Labour Party—are hounded out while crypto-Tories like Field arrogantly hold onto their Westminster seats like a feudal fiefdom. How dare the trade unionists and Labour Party members be allowed to vote out their MP. Good god, they'll be trying to deselect the Pope next!

This upside down world is Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. With the Tories trailing in the opinion polls, Kinnock can see the lights of Downing Street twinkling invitingly in the distance. A messy by-election, forced by Field, must be avoided at all costs. So Field has the whip hand over Walworth Road.

Every affiliated trade union branch, every ward and GC must bombard Walworth Road with protests against

the witch-hunt of *Militant* and SO supporters in Birkenhead and neighbouring Wallasey. They must demand the unconditional right of the Birkenhead party to de-select Field as an enemy of the trade unions and a repeated flouter of progressive party policy. We declare our full support for SO against attempts to ban their paper and we urge all *Workers Power* supporters and readers in the Labour Party to support any campaign to defend them.

A successful attack on party members' rights to read, sell and organise in support of socialist papers would mark a return to the dark days of the 1950s. The real reason for the leadership's resort to bans and proscriptions is that they foresee a right wing Labour government launching massive attacks on workers as soon as it gets to power. They want no internal opposition when this happens.

The fight for workers' democracy in the party now is the beginning of a fight against Labour's sell-outs and betrayals in the future. It is a fight that cannot start too soon. ■

POLL TAX Build councils of action

BY 11 MARCH councils in England and Wales will have set their Poll Tax, completing Thatcher's master plan to control local council spending and gut local democracy.

From the outset of her attack in the early 1980s Labour councillors became book-keepers, conjuring up extra funds through creative accounting. Now they have all become lawyers, religiously refusing to break the legal web Thatcher has woven around them.

The Labour councils' decision to give in and set a legal budget means a savage attack on the working class. Councils will either try to fund their existing spending through the Poll Tax, with bills as high as £760 a head, or they will try to reduce it through making cuts in jobs and services.

In most councils the likelihood is a combination of cuts and a tax as high as the Tories will allow without "capping". Councils will try to play off the workforce against the community. To the workforce they will offer "a higher tax than the Tories" to maintain jobs and pay. To the community they will point to the cuts made to keep the tax bills as low as possible.

The only difference between the left and right on the Labour councils will be the balance between the tax and cuts. The left will be seeking higher tax bills; the right will want deeper cuts. Crucially, the left and right are united in their commitment to implement the tax and remain legal.

Not only are workers facing the tax and the cuts. The government has also introduced "ring fencing" to stop councils paying for council housing with money other than rent. As a result most tenants will face a rent rise of over 20% this year. Finally, compulsory privatisation of council services will be speeded up this year, bringing yet more job losses and a decline in service standards.

All this amounts to a declaration of war on working class communities. In response we must set up our own "councils of war".

We need to turn the existing town based anti-Poll Tax federations into councils of action to beat the tax, the cuts and the rent increases. These should draw in delegates, not just from every Poll Tax union or tenants' association but from every local workplace and every union branch in the public and private sector.

The aim should be to mobilise for mass demonstrations and strike action against the cuts in council jobs and services as well as in support of the campaign to stop the council collecting the tax.

This is the way to link the mass non-payment campaign against the Poll Tax with the power of strike action by council and other workers.

Transforming the anti-Poll Tax federations from loose co-ordinating bodies into councils of action is vital if the fightback is to succeed. As well as a mass campaign of recruitment the anti-Poll Tax unions should put the question of building councils of action onto the agenda of every meeting and conference. Only in this way can we begin to mobilise for the kind of mass strike action needed to beat the tax. ■

FORD Bureaucrats to blame

FORD'S UK bosses could be poised for victory over all sections of workers in the combine.

While the unofficial strike by AEU members at Halewood has remained solid so far, it is now dangerously isolated. The action has had an effect on production, not only on Merseyside and at the Southampton van plant, but even in Belgium. Even so Ford's management will not retreat from its deskilling drive without a much harder fight.

At the same time, the national walk out by EETPU electricians shows real signs of crumbling. EETPU members at the relatively small Daventry and Leamington facilities have already abandoned the strike, while at the strategic Bridgend plant engineers have voted to cross picket lines which they had honoured for two weeks. Worse still at the giant Dagenham complex, members of the EPIU have broken EETPU picket lines. Though EPIU stewards had urged their members not to scab on the EETPU strike, they are now recruiting one-time EETPU members who did not support the strike call.

The EPIU was formed by electricians who broke from Eric Hammond's scab-herding leadership after the EETPU's expulsion from the TUC. Though heavily influenced by the *Morning Star* wing of British Stalinism, the EPIU began with a commitment to basic principles of trade unionism. Now, in an attempt to gain members, the EPIU at Dagenham finds itself waging a self-defeating war against a strike it should have supported.

The real blame for the weak and divided resistance to Ford's pro-

ductivity offensive lies with the bureaucrats of all the unions involved. The union leaders on the National Joint Negotiating Committee wasted a month in pointless talks which helped management's divide and rule strategy.

The EETPU leadership, on the other hand, has sanctioned a strike but maintained an iron grip on its running. Instead of arguing that every worker has an interest in cutting the strings attached to the pay rise the EETPU has openly called it a "craftsmen's dispute". EETPU national officer, Lew Britz, painted the TGWU as the real enemy which "would trample over the rights of all skilled workers". After remarks like this it is hardly surprising that line workers do not see what is at stake for them in the wake of the 60% majority vote to accept the deal.

The EETPU leaders probably set out on a cynical poaching expedition amongst angry skilled workers which has gone badly wrong. This gives no excuse to the other union bureaucrats who have sanctioned scabbing on the electricians' strike. It does, however, highlight the desperate need to overcome the sectional divisions which both the Ford's bosses and the union bureaucrats have played on in recent weeks. This requires a fight to found an industrial union across the Ford combine and the car industry as a whole, which would unite the whole workforce whether skilled grade or assembler.

In the long term, with the competitive pressures of 1992 just around the corner, only an industrial union based on class struggle politics will be capable of fighting all of Ford's attacks. ■

BRITISH AEROSPACE Spread the action

A MASS meeting of nearly 2,000 British Aerospace (BAe) strikers in Preston shouted a resounding "no" to the shoddy deal cobbled together by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Union (CSEU) and BAe management.

Though their strike pay has fallen dramatically since the New Year, the Preston engineers and their 5,000 fellow strikers at Chester and Kingston-upon-Thames have stuck it out. They have made plain their commitment to fight for the original CSEU claim of a 35 hour week with no strings.

At Rolls Royce, Smiths Industries and dozens of other smaller engineering firms AEU chief Bill Jordan has sold the members short. The AEU has settled for phased reductions in the working week to 37 hours, tied to more "flexible" working practices and a boost in productivity. This means even worse conditions at work with the scrapping of formal tea breaks and, in some cases, the introduction of six and even seven day working.

BAe's bosses took an even harder line. Having underestimated the determination of the workforce they refused to negotiate for nearly three months, demanding an end to strike

action before talks could begin. Since December BAe has repeatedly mounted scabbing operations against the Preston strikers. In response to their failure management has suspended up to 830 workers from other local plants for refusing to cross the Preston picket line.

Neither BAe nor any other Engineering Employers Federation boss will concede a 35 hour week without a major escalation of the action. From the start of the campaign Jordan and his friends have refused to call for the national strike necessary to win its stated aims. They have hidden behind the Tories' anti-union laws and kept a tight rein on the conduct of the dispute.

To ensure victory the BAe strikers at the three sites need to break out of their current isolation and spread their action throughout the combine. Beyond this militants must go to target plants on the CSEU's recently announced second "hit list" They should address mass meetings at Weir Group, Catton and Lucas factories and win them to immediate strike action. Fighting around the full claim and for rank-and-file control offers the best chance for reviving a campaign which the CSEU bureaucracy has wilfully mishandled for months. ■



SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

Free choice . . . at the market price

THE CONSUMER is king. So say the proponents of the market under capitalism. The market gives people what they want, planning tells them what they want. The market lets people choose from a wide range of goods and services while planned economies provide only a narrow range of poor quality merchandise.

One look at the bulging shelves of a West German supermarket compared to their empty counterparts in the GDR seems to confirm the truth of this.

But under capitalism choice is far from unrestricted. And the market certainly does not allow people to choose what they consume from the point of view of the most rational use of resources.

The first and most obvious point about choice under capitalism is that in order to exercise it you have to have money. "You pays your money and takes your choice" as the saying goes. The less money you have the less choice you get.

Economists call this "effective demand". Given that gross inequalities of income are the norm—indeed a necessity—under capitalism this ensures that the most basic human needs often go unsatisfied. The market's laws throw people out of work or demand that they be paid a pittance and cannot exercise their choice to be properly fed and clothed.

In Thatcher's Britain, after a decade of supposedly expanding the boundaries of choice, there is a booming market in the construction of second homes for the rich while hundreds of thousands are homeless.

Capitalism restricts choice despite providing a vast array of different types of the same product.

Look at rail fares. There are umpteen kinds of ticket you can buy from British Rail. But try buying a saver or a day return at a busy time. Here the laws of supply and demand work against choice. There is a massive demand for train travel from people who, in this case, can pay. But there aren't enough trains. So BR puts the fares up to drive people off the trains.

Capitalism restricts choice in other ways too. Contrary to the utopian fantasies of the reformists the laws of the capitalist market, left to their own devices, lead inevitably to the growth of monopolies in production and distribution. As these giant corporations account for an ever bigger slice of overall output or retail outlets then the range of goods and services available becomes reduced.

Take the daily newspaper industry as an example. Today the vast bulk of titles are owned by three mega-rich outfits. Most are loyal to the Tories, only one supports Labour and even then only in a very right wing way. Given the massive range of political opinions held by the population the structure of newspaper ownership is a denial of choice.

Competition and profit are the mainsprings of capitalism. Both serve to narrow down the effective choices we are allowed to make about the goods and services we buy.

Competition leads to the production of a massive range of products which are very similar to each other in content. The actual differences between them are essentially a matter of packaging, or worse, the ability of advertising to dupe, en-

duce and deceive the customer about the merits of a product.

So we get the situation where, a year ago, you could hardly find "environmentally friendly" products. Now everything on the supermarket shelves is "environmentally friendly" but we still have no real knowledge of what is in shampoo or washing powder.

Imagine then if we were able to avoid the destructive and wasteful effects of competition, advertising and unnecessary distribution costs. It was recently calculated that the actual cost of the coffee in a cup of coffee on sale was 5% of the total price. If we were to cut down the cost of such a cup to the essential material outlays, including attractive and informative packaging, it becomes clear how cheaply it could be sold. Then more people could choose to buy it.

Under capitalism things are produced not because people need them but because a profit can be made from selling them. This leads directly to the abrupt curtailment of choice when the monopolies decide one product line is no longer profitable.

Often goods that are perfectly functional, and may be using resources more efficiently viewed from the point of society as a whole, are discontinued and replaced with another line that can earn a higher margin of profit.

Certain pharmaceuticals have been subjected to this and a more trivial example has been the replacement of vinyl records by compact discs. Very soon (before the twenty-first century?) you will not have the choice to buy new LPs! Unless you can afford the £12 asking price for CDs your choice of music will be limited to what second-hand LPs you can buy!

Finally Marxists make no apologies for saying that in some cases society, not the individual, should make the ultimate choice on certain goods and services. The motor car market is by and large directed at family units and especially commuters. The choice of cars is structured to service their perceived needs, advertising is angled to appeal to them. The result? Millions of cars each day polluting the atmosphere, clogging up the roads, all with one or two passengers in a car made for five or more!

A planned economy would undoubtedly lead to a majority of people deciding that this is bizarre and choosing instead to construct a clean, regular and efficient system of public transport, avoiding all the present system of waste.

And this leads to the fundamental point about choice. Choice under capitalism only comes after someone else has decided what to produce. If there is no market for something, no money to buy it, it lies rotting when millions of people could be using it—whether it is the EEC's food mountains or the car companies' acres of unsold cars.

The writer Anatole France once remarked that in class society the rich and poor alike have the choice whether or not to sleep under a bridge at night! At present the 75,000 Londoners exercising this choice each night are 75,000 reasons why the East European workers should reject the market and fight for genuine, democratic planning. ■

Can planning work?
Turn to page 9

Why we oppose the Embryo Bill

THERE IS much debate in the pro-choice movement about the Embryo Research Bill. Many activists, including the Socialist Workers Party and *Socialist Action*, argue that the Bill is essentially progressive, but has been "hijacked" by the anti-abortionists. But even as it stands, unamended, this Bill would restrict women's reproductive rights. The purpose of the Bill is to regulate the use of human embryos in medical research. However, the restrictions it imposes are the result of concessions made to arguments from religious leaders and anti-abortionists. The Bill was developed in the context of a debate about the "ethics" and "morality" of experimenting on "human life". A dispute then raged

BY JANE POTTER

about when life begins.

Research on embryos is possible due to the large number of extra embryos produced when women are having treatment for infertility. So far research has extended our knowledge of the causes of infertility, opening up the possibility of developing better forms of infertility treatment and contraception. It also has great potential for detecting, at this early stage of development, genes that are responsible for inherited diseases and congenital defects. At present 12% of children in hospital are there because of inherited disorders.

Therefore it is not just scientists

who may benefit from embryo research. The 10% of couples who are infertile and millions of women wanting safer forms of contraception stand to gain. In a society based on meeting human need such research would be used to make sure women had maximum control over their fertility. Known genetic disorders could, potentially, be eliminated. But under capitalism the research will not be developed in this way. Eliminating human suffering and creating conditions where people control their own lives is in conflict with the commercial criteria that imbues all research under capitalism. But does our support for embryo research mean that we should oppose any regulatory legislation? Not at all. We are in fa-

vour of legislation for several reasons. In the British legal system judges make law when there is no clear guidance from Parliament. We should not leave it to the unelected judiciary to rule on embryo research. We recognise that laws should be enacted which protect the donors of embryos from commercial exploitation.

We are not in favour of the indiscriminate pressures of the market deciding what research goes on and who should have access to the technology. We oppose financial desperation driving people to sell embryos, blood, kidneys or any other human tissue.

There is a need for legislation that prevents commercial exploitation, that guarantees funding and facilities for research and provides access to the benefits of that research for all. We are opposed to the current system where embryo research has primarily been available to white middle class couples. All couples and single women should have free access.

But the present Embryo Research Bill does none of this. If it is passed there is danger of restricting rather than opening up choice for women.

Licensing

The Bill seeks to set up a Statutory Licensing Authority (SLA), appointed by the secretary of state, which will replace the present voluntary medical body which governs research. The SLA will be responsible for licensing and regulating all clinics and practice concerned with embryo research, donor insemination and in vitro fertilisation (IVF).

A code of practice, as yet unwritten, will set down operating rules for such clinics. The Bill proposes to outlaw experimentation on embryos (and the later stages of development) when the embryo is more than 14 days old.

This would not currently restrict research up to now as up to now scientists have only been able to keep embryos alive outside the womb for nine days. But the decision to limit research to 14 days, in advance of scientific developments which may make fruitful experimentation possible for longer, is based not on scientific but moral grounds. Scientists believe that much could be learned from older embryos, and once it is technically possible to keep them alive the 14 day rule will block such advances.

The 14 day limit is a concession to the anti-abortionists and religious bigots. The arguments go back to the Warnock Committee set up in 1983 to debate precisely the "moral and ethical" issues involved in research on human embryos. The committee decided in favour of such research, but sought to allay the fears of the religious lobby who were concerned about tampering with a human being which already had a "soul".

The Warnock Report attempted to pinpoint the moment when an embryo could realistically be considered "an individual". They agreed that this should be at 14 days when the primitive streak first appears (the tissue which

develops into the brain and spinal cord) and when the cells demarcate into those which will form the foetus itself and those which form the supporting membranes such as the placenta.

Giving the 14 day old embryo the status of an individual which requires particular protection in law is a dangerous precedent. Legal regulation of embryo research does not have to be based on such a concession. The key issue is the protection of the woman from commercial exploitation or abuse at the hands of quack doctors and profiteers.

The "rights" involved should lie with the woman—to give informed consent about the use to which any spare embryos will be put, just as individuals should give consent to the use of any organ or tissue (such as blood or sperm) which they donate.

By giving the embryo protection as an "individual", when outside the woman's body, the Bill has already prompted the anti-abortionists to argue that similar status should be given to a 15 day embryo when it is in the mother. That is, it should not be for the mother to decide what happens to it, but it is a legitimate matter for the courts to rule on. This idea we absolutely reject.

There are thousands of anti-abortionists who wish to become advocates of the embryo and protect its right to "life". These people, in the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and Life, are constantly trying to find ways of giving the foetus/embryo rights independent of the mother. They have indicated that if the Bill is passed they will take test cases to court suggesting the same rights be granted to embryos and foetuses in the womb. In this way they hope to outlaw abortion completely.

Whilst the anti-abortionists are unlikely to succeed in this mission, we think that the Bill does set the ground for continued legal debate in which the starting point is not the protection of women and the regulation of research and treatment to ensure it is safe and widely available, but the status of the embryo itself.

Individual

Our position is clear. A foetus only becomes an individual with rights of its own when it is no longer part of the mother's body. Up to that point it is part of her, and its destiny completely tied to hers. We say that it is for her to choose what happens to the foetus—if she wishes to have an abortion however late on in the pregnancy, that is her right. If in a late abortion the foetus is delivered and born alive, then clearly that foetus becomes a child with its own independent rights and the state should take responsibility for it.

We think both the whole Bill and the restrictive amendments should be opposed. Obviously allowing experimentation up to 14 days is better than outlawing it completely; therefore if we had communist MPs, they would vote for 14 days rather than none. But when the whole Bill came before Parliament, they would vote against it.

We must use the opportunity of the debate around the Bill to fight for the kind of legislation which we want.

We seek to increase the boundaries of choice for women. Reproductive technology has the potential to give women better control over their fertility. We seek to extend that control as part of a strategy for the liberation of women from their oppression in the family and capitalist society. ■

Choice is the issue

BY LUCY ASH

THE UPPER time limit for abortion is likely to be threatened by amendments to the Embryo Bill. That was the rationale for the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) setting up a new group to fight the attack. The Stop the Amendment Campaign (STAC) is opposed to any such reduction in the time limit and declares its support for women's choice.

Fierce debates have been taking place in STAC, NAC and other pro-choice groups about the basis for the campaign. Should we be sticking to the single issue of defending the 28 week time limit against attacks contained in amendments (yet to be tabled) to the Bill? Should we also oppose the other reactionary amendments, such as the restriction on single mothers and lesbians having access to donor insemination and IVF, or should we campaign against the Embryo Bill as a whole, regarding it as a general attack on women's reproductive rights?

Workers Power has argued in these meetings that the campaign should be based on taking up all the issues. The Socialist Workers Party argue strongly against this line. They say that the fight against anti-abortion amendments is the key. This is a popular cause (as shown by opinion polls) and the labour movement can be won to defending abortion rights as it has in the past. To link it up with wider issues, such as rights to fertility treatment and lesbian rights for donor insemination, would narrow support for the campaign, they argue.

We would not disagree that abortion and contraception rights are the central issue in fighting for women's control over their fertility. In the past we have supported the single issue campaigns on abortion, whilst arguing that they should take up the positive struggle for abortion on demand rather than simply defending the inadequate 1967 Act.

But the situation we face today is different. It is not only abortion which is under attack. The Embryo Bill and amendments to it contain a series of conditions which threaten not only abortion but other aspects of women's reproductive rights.

A unified offensive demands a



Workers Power

unified response. We think that it is mistaken to refuse to campaign on the wider issues just because you think they are less popular; activists must take up the arguments in the trade unions and labour movement about why lesbian rights are an issue for all workers, and why infertility treatment should not be the exclusive preserve of heterosexual, married, and generally middle class, couples.

But are we being sectarian by arguing that people must agree with all these positions before they can join the campaign? Not at all. On every particular issue we want to unite with the widest possible forces. Many people who were previously part of the pro-choice lobby, such as Clare Short, now support an upper time limit of 24 weeks. We totally disagree and would fight her all the way on any amendment or Bill (including the Houghton Bill) proposing that. But if there is an amendment proposing 18 weeks, we will unite with her and those like her in trying to defeat it.

We can organise joint lobbies and demonstrations specifically opposed to the 18 week restriction. But it does not mean that we would argue to set up a joint campaign with her. We think that the pro-choice campaign, which STAC claims to be, should not flinch from taking up all the arguments on the "single issue"

of women's choice in relation to reproductive rights.

To restrict STAC to abortion when wider attacks are underway is short sighted. Far from maximising the forces involved it will, and has, divided those forces. Many lesbians have been active in the campaign for abortion and contraception, regarding it as a general issue of women's choice even where it may not directly affect them as individuals. By refusing to take up the issue of donor insemination STAC has forced them out of the campaign and into a separate one. This is a mindless waste of resources and time.

We will continue to argue that we need a campaign which fights for:

- Defeat the Embryo Bill
- Defend the 1967 Act against any reduction in the time limits, and fight for free abortion on demand and a woman's right to choose
- Defend and extend reproductive rights—stop restrictive amendments to the Embryo Bill
- For free and open access to reproductive technology on demand
- For a massive extension of NHS provision of contraceptive, abortion and reproduction facilities.
- Defend the Family Planning Clinics.
- For nationalisation of the drug companies, private clinics and research institutions under workers control.

BORIS KAGARLITSKY is a leading figure on the left of the anti-bureaucratic opposition in the USSR, part of the Sotsprof and Socialist Party movement based in Moscow. His book gives an insight into the thinking behind his wing of the opposition.

The Sotsprof/Socialist Party current once described itself as the left wing of *perestroika*. This is confirmed by Kagarlitsky's book which reveals him to be reformist, not only within the USSR but also on a global scale.

Kagarlitsky aims to combine a revolutionary goal with a radical reformist strategy. His book starts from a historical appreciation of the struggle between reformists and revolutionaries from the time of Marx and Engels onwards. In the context of the debate within the Second International he takes the position that in order to achieve real reforms a self-limiting strategy is required. This must allow for tactical alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie willing to concede such reforms, and include the possibility of governmental blocks and popular fronts.

The key problem with his strategy lies in a misunderstanding of the nature of the state.

Marx and Engels regarded the state as essentially bodies of armed men and an administrative bureaucracy. As such they argued that the state had to be smashed.

Kagarlitsky's view can be summed up as follows. The democratic state is a qualitative improvement over all other state forms (fascist, Stalinist or military dictatorship). When it exists then the class struggle must be waged within its norms. Class struggle methods of direct action should be limited to pressurising for reforms or defending existing gains.

Once achieved, these gains will become structural, part of the

Reforms and revolution

Mike Evans reviews:
The Dialectics of Change
by Boris Kagarlitsky
Translated by Rick Simon
Verso £10.95

very fabric of society. These structural reforms will be a ratchet mechanism for the steady advance to socialism. It is essential in this schema that the state should not be smashed, since it becomes the structure within which these reforms are lodged.

The glaring weakness of Kagarlitsky's book is its failure to tackle the theoretical and practical legacy of the Russian Revolution. For Kagarlitsky the October Revolution is a completely negative factor, a sort of "dead end" because it transcended and smashed bourgeois democracy. Its temporary creation of workers' democracy is not even considered.

Kagarlitsky focuses attention instead on the problems of the reformist governments in Western Europe. He is aware of their miserable record. He puts it down to a loss of vision of the goal on the one hand, and an inflated belief in technocracy on the other. His answer is for the left to return to the fold of the mass reformist organisations, transfuse them with revolutionary idealism

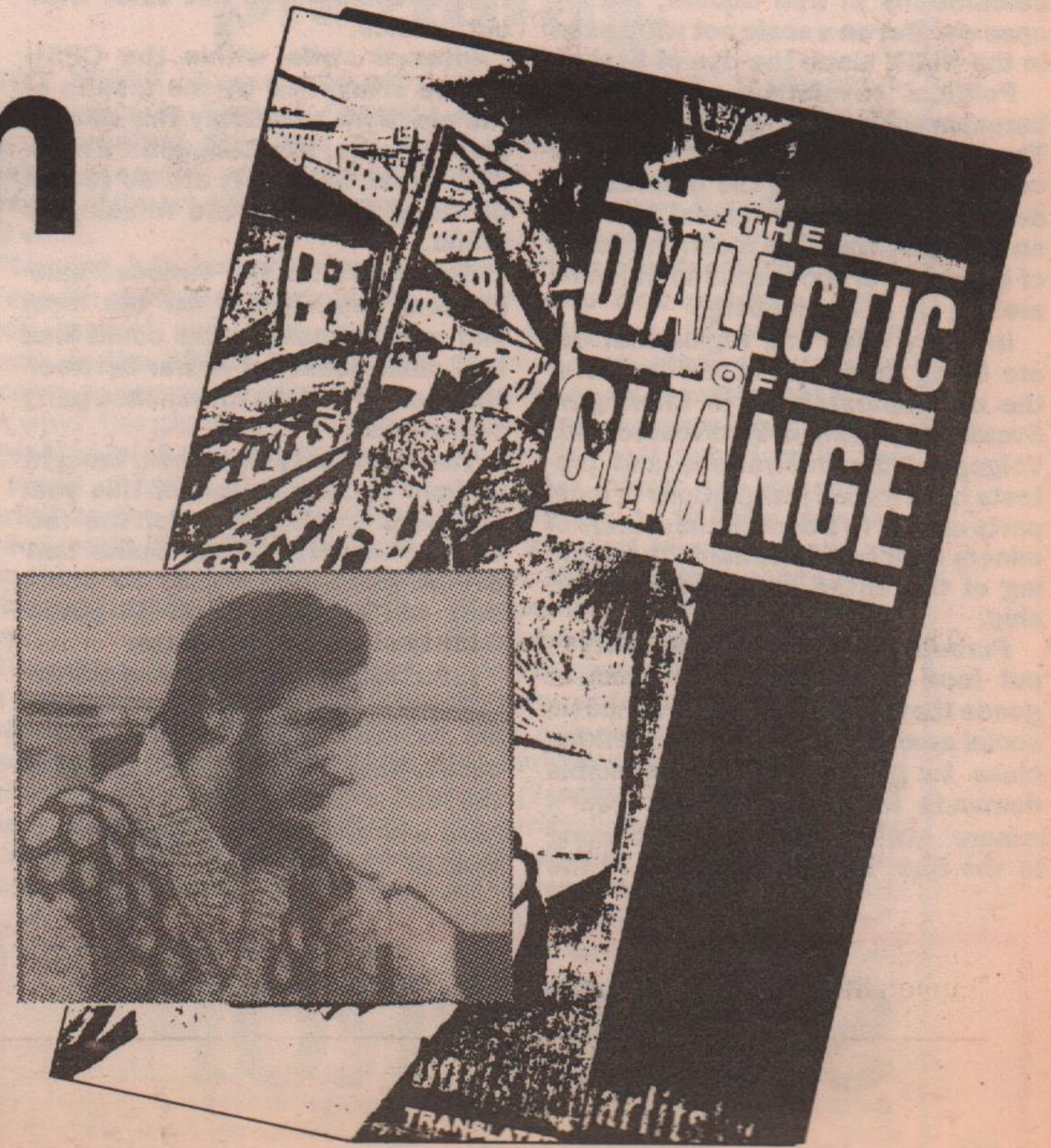
and win them to a programme of major but practical reforms.

"The left's task is to provide a fresh impulse to reformist activity through a revival of the revolutionary ideal." In this task he argues that "every current from Trotskyists to social democrats can make its contribution to the common cause, co-operate with others and change without losing the originality of its own best traditions."

The problem he fails to recognise is that the social democrats and Trotskyists do not have a common cause. The social democrats want to save capitalism and have done so on many occasions. Trotskyists wish to destroy it. The social democrats wish to eternalise bourgeois democracy. Trotskyists wish to replace it with workers' democracy. Social democrats wish to restore capitalism in the workers' states. Trotskyists wish to defend planned state property and put it under workers' democratic management.

Kagarlitsky's fundamental reformism is even clearer with regard to the USSR:

"A consistently implemented democratisation is already in itself a movement towards socialism", he says. But what sort of democratisation? Democracy is never abstract, never the same for



all classes.

Those who wish to restore capitalism in the USSR concentrate on all the aspects which characterise bourgeois democracy—private ownership of the press, parliamentarism, an "independent" judiciary, the rule of law, a professional army.

Workers, on the other hand, must establish the right to strike, democratic and free trade unions, the right to form political parties. For a whole period it may well be that the bourgeois democrat and

the proletarian will have common goals such as the right to demonstrate, to publish leaflets, to register parties etc. But the two democracies must increasingly diverge and come into conflict as the pro-bourgeois reformers use their newly won rights, their seats in parliament, to introduce ever more private ownership and the market into economic life. Then the workers' democratic right to strike, for example, will come into conflict with the newly emerging bosses' "right" to a profitable enterprise.

Kagarlitsky's view of a democracy that simply has to be extended to all social and economic life leads him to see the working class as an auxiliary agency of radical reform rather than the historic actor in the establishment of its own power:

"Only if the real collaboration of the intermediate and lower strata can be secured within the framework of a radical reformist project will it be possible to forge a powerful social bloc capable of opposing the bureaucracy."

With regard to the economy he asserts:

"It is not a matter of choosing between plan and market (in any modern society there are both). The genuine choice today is between a developing civil society and bureaucracy."

Kagarlitsky therefore places himself on the left wing of the reform movement inside the bureaucracy in the USSR.

The Dialectic of Change is a thorough exposition of left reformism in the late twentieth century. His popularity amongst socialists and workers in the west is understandable—he represents a struggle for independent working class organisation and the creation of a socialist party in the USSR. But our solidarity for his working class orientation must not lead us to ignore the fundamental flaws of his political method and programme.

Reformism has been the curse of the workers of Western Europe for nearly eighty years. It must not be allowed to drag the workers of the USSR and Eastern Europe down to defeat. ■

Not such a rich tapestry

THE RECENT release of the film *Last Exit to Brooklyn* has highlighted the dangers which lurk behind the Campaign Against Censorship and Pornography (CACPC).

CACPC claims that any depiction of sex, or violence in a sexual context, which is not based on equality, is porn. For them porn is simply violence against women and so must be banned. According to this suspect radical feminist logic *Last Exit to Brooklyn* should face the censor's chop. Neither the film nor Hubert Selby Jr's book on which it is based are porn. Yet a British Judge banned the publication of the paperback edition of the book in 1967.

Sir Cyril Black, a reactionary Tory MP, brought the prosecution against the book which led to its suppression. The lawyer prosecuting Black's case argued that there was a danger that reading the book would corrupt "the normal average reader". He claimed that the depiction of the homosexuality of a trade unionist in the book might lead many an unhappily married man astray.

The feminists who would be censors stress their "right on" attitude to homosexuality.

Yet their premise for censorship—that seeing or reading something "objectionable" causes you to repeat the act—mirrors that of Sir Cyril Black and his anti-gay lawyer.

The book's eventual publication was a victory against censorship. The film, directed by Uli Edel, has caused less controversy, but given that the script has gathered dust

Arthur Merton reviews:
Last Exit to Brooklyn
Directed by Uli Edel

for years, ignored by the Hollywood moguls, its appearance marks a small triumph.

The book is a series of different stories, all dealing with the difficult lives of both workers and lumpen proletarians in the Brooklyn of the 1950s. Their difficulties are not just economic. They are sexual and personal too. And Selby deals with the brutal realities of sexuality in a world of unequal sexes and classes.

Selby's uncompromising style forces the reader to enter the thought processes of the characters, enduring their anguished responses to violence, drugs, loneliness and sexual frustration. None of this translates easily onto the screen.

Edel has chosen to make a more accessible film by imposing a clear narrative structure which concentrates on two of the book's many characters, Tralala, a prostitute, and Harry Black, the trade unionist.

The book and film are necessarily different art forms so Edel's approach is sensible. The film's major flaw, however, lies in its concentration on the two victims, overplaying their personal tragedies. Selby sought to shed light on the general sense of alienation and desperation in the deprived working class neighbourhood. He creates no heroes and shuns sentimentality at their plight.

The film, on the other hand, uses



sentimentality to generate sympathy with clearly identified heroes. After Tralala is gang raped, one of the film's most harrowing scenes, a young boy from the neighbourhood comes to her aid and her humanity is redeemed. There is no such redemption in Selby's version of the same incident.

Similarly, the film shows Harry Black playing a heroic part in a picket line battle. His sole mistake is to arrive a bit late one day after a night spent with his new male lover. The book does not evoke our sympathy for Harry with such moral backslapping. Selby depicts him as a coward and a cheat, a man who deliberately dodges the fighting and swindles the union. For all that the power of his sexual awakening is undiminished. The book only aims to expose the cruel contradictions wracking the lives of ordinary people living amid ach-

ingly oppressive circumstances.

The film wants us to make moral judgements not posed by the book. It provides us with answers which Selby did not believe existed. The author was neither a Marxist, capable of charting a path out of this hell, nor a moralist demanding that we pass judgement on the sexual proclivities of the workers and lumpens he portrayed. Selby was a writer with enough talent to convey much about the tortured nature of working class life, particularly in its sexual and personal dimensions.

Despite its flaws the film is riveting as well as harrowing. The performances are uniformly good. The picket line battle will make you jump out of your seats. And after a decade of fluff and tripe dominating the big screen, *Last Exit* marks an auspicious start to the 1990s. ■

The extent of the crisis

"WHEN WE embarked on our course, we did not know the extent of the crisis." Gorbachev's words betray panic. His fifth anniversary as leader will not be marked by stage managed celebrations in Red Square, but by open conflict on a scale not witnessed in the USSR since the rise of Stalin.

Political revolution against the bureaucracy is now on the agenda. The CPSU is riven with factional conflict. Everywhere the masses are demonstrating their refusal to carry on in the old way. The recent marches of hundreds of thousands in Moscow are the tip of the iceberg.

In every town and region matters are being taken out of the hands of the old apparatchiks. In Chernigov, Sverdlovsk, Tyumen, Vladivostok and Volgograd demonstrations and protests have forced resignations of local party chiefs. In Donetsk thousands of miners marched to demand the sacking of the entire local party leadership.

Perestroika's continued inability to put food in the shops, to produce goods that work and to provide basic social amenities, has led the working class to go beyond the economic demands formulated in last year's miners' strikes. Politics are coming to the fore. In Novokuznetsk, in the

Siberian Kuzbass mining region, Ravil Vakhitov, a leader of the Workers' Committee explained this change:

"Last year we rejected all political points. But then we understood that economy does not exist without politics."

Internal strife within the CPSU will be sharpened by the results of the elections underway this month. Party bosses, like Leningrad's hardliner Boris Gidasov, are so fearful of losing that they are refusing to stand.

Successes for the various "independent" candidates for the local and regional assemblies could lead to a clear duality of power between themselves and the entrenched party secretaries.

The 28th Party Congress, brought forward to June or July of this year will be a battleground for the factions within the CPSU. Splits cannot be ruled out. If they do occur they will be the prelude to potentially bloody confrontations.

A further intensification of the nationalist revolts, which have already led to near civil war in the Caucasus, heightens the possibility that the fate of Gorbachev's troubled regime will be finally decided arms in hand. ■

SOTSPROF

Workers Power interviewed Oleg Voronin, a member of the Soviet trade union organisation SOTSPROF, who has recently done a speaking tour in Britain. We print extracts from the interview.

What were the origins of SOTSPROF?

SOTSPROF came into existence because in the USSR in practice there are no real trade unions. The official trade unions are simply part of the state structure and cannot defend their members' interests. And because workers' rebellions continue to take place in the Soviet Union, trade unions are necessary.

So one and a half years ago three activists from the democratic movement—an academic, Sergei Kramov, an engineer, Lev Volovick, and a worker in a footwear factory, Valerie Karalya—came together to form a co-ordinating committee for an independent federation of socialist trade unions, SOTSPROF for short.

They managed to get their own bank account and official stamp from the state. Under the constitution to establish a trades union organisation you don't have to register directly with the state, you simply have to register with a higher trade union organisation. The co-ordinating committee, having announced itself as a trade union organisation, was then able to legalise other unofficial or independent trade unions around the country. For the first three or four months of its existence this was all it did.

That's how SOTSPROF was formed and now we have about thirty organisations within SOTSPROF with about 60,000 members. The basic growth of SOTSPROF took place last summer during the strikes of the miners. SOTSPROF activists took part and helped the miners to formulate their demands in all the major regions. SOTSPROF organisations sprang up in all the main coalfields involved in the strikes.

Do the workers' committees that have been formed have any powers over management? Have they won any "workers' control"?

During the strike the workers' committees of the Donbass, the Kuzbass and Vorkuta were in effect the only power in the towns. They organised

the distribution of goods, set up workers' militias under their own control to keep order in the towns, closed down shops selling alcohol, established patrols on the main routes into the town. If they found speculators bringing in alcohol then they stopped them and smashed all the bottles there and then.

Now in the Donbass and Prokopievsk, there are workers' committees everywhere but there is a big struggle taking place between them and the local state apparatus. For example in Karaganda the workers' committee supported the Committee for a Socialist Party but members of it had to try to hide their identity for fear of repression by the local state authorities.

In the mines on the other hand the local management are partly in control through the means of leasing—they have leased the mines but we don't believe that that is the best route for us to go because the ministry still takes a large chunk of the mine's profits. They do nothing to assist the mine but still demand a lot of money.

In the miners' committee in Vorkuta they are demanding changes in conditions in the mines. For example in the pit Halmeriu they have to work in almost vertical shafts hanging on to a ladder with one hand and digging coal with the other. In such conditions it is inevitable that new strikes will break out. They are demanding that shafts be closed down where conditions are particularly bad.

Can you tell us about some of the different organisations in SOTSPROF?

Refrigeration workers on the railways have joined SOTSPROF and we've been able to gain for them pensionable age of fifty, higher wages and a number of measures related to safety at work. At Moscow University we have a branch of SOTSPROF which managed to get some students re-instated who had been dismissed for political activity.

FACTIONALISM IN the Communist Party and the growth of countless unofficial opposition movements are the explosive ingredients in the USSR's crisis of leadership. The factions and the oppositions are now attempting to construct alliances in preparation for the conflicts ahead.

Gorbachev is a pivotal figure within this process. Through the policy of *glasnost* he is attempting to construct an alliance committed to his own version of *perestroika*. That is, he needs to win support within the party and the population for an economic programme based on a "plan-market" economy.

Support for this thoroughly confused programme is proving difficult to rally. As revealed in the party platform agreed by last month's Central Committee meeting, the programme envisages "a diversity of property forms, competition between independent manufacturers and a developed financial system". Private property is explicitly called for.

At the same time, however, the platform argues that: "Modern production is impossible without a centralised planned management." So, the market is to be introduced, but it is to be regulated by the plan.

Under a healthy workers' state such a combination would exist. But the scope for sharp contradictions between the plan and the market would be curtailed by the direct democratic control of the plan by producers and consumers. Under Gorbachev no such democracy is envisaged. The two sectors will compete.

As such his programme opens the door to the restoration of capitalism, even though he is not, yet, a fully fledged restorationist.

The compromise with planning will not satisfy his hard line opponents in the CPSU, and the compromise with private property is insufficient to win over the "radical marketeers". And the shortages that will inevitably continue—and get worse—will alienate the masses from the president.

To offset this hostility to his economic programme, Gorbachev

About the relationship of the market and the plan, how do you see this? Which should be dominant over the economy, the plan or the market?

Our policy is against the command economy which has existed and still exists in the Soviet Union, but not for the unfettered capitalist market. We are for a synthesis of these things. We are not looking for a middle way but a real synthesis which is neither one nor the other.

We call for democratic planning from below, not planning from above to below as happens at present. Plans should be formulated at the level of the firm, at the level of the region and at the level of the republic. And within any plan it is foreseen that part of production should not go to the state but should enter a real free exchange between firms, firms which are collectively owned.

The plans should be reworked at the state level but the state apparatus should be cut to a minimum; at the moment it is enormous. In the hands of the state there should remain strong powers to regulate such a market. In particular the state should have in its hands control of an investment fund. Thus the state can avoid the problems of a disorganised market.

I should stress that all these measures only work together as a complex—that is: workers' self-management, collective ownership of the means of production, demo-

is attempting to use greater *glasnost* to win mass support. He has won the Central Committee to a plan for the extensive restructuring of the role and organisation of the party. The reformulation of Article 6 of the constitution (on the leading role of the party), the promise of legalisation for other parties, the democratisation of internal party elections and the formal abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat were all measures that the radical oppositionists have called for. By implementing them Gorbachev hopes to win support.

At the same time he recognised the need to give himself room to manoeuvre against his hard line enemies. His support in the party comes mainly from technocrats, academics and engineers. He has very few friends within the extensive network of local and regional party apparatuses. To avoid becoming their prisoner he has struck at their power base by increasing democracy within the party.

But these moves have been coupled with a struggle to concentrate more and more power in his own hands. He is openly pushing for a strong state presidency, free from party control and with extensive executive and military powers. Such a Bonapartist post would enable him to move against his enemies inside and outside the party when the need arises. Little wonder that hard liners and radicals alike have expressed the fear that he is trying to become a dictator. His failure to get such powers at the Central Committee is an indication of how slender his real base of support is.

To counter the threat to their power from Gorbachev, and the restorationists around him, the hard liners are organising their own mass base. The "conservative" leader Yegor Ligachev, the Leningrad boss Boris Gidasov, and the ambassador to Poland, Vladimir Brovnikov, all used the Central

committee meeting to attack Gorbachev. Ligachev argued:

"After somewhat of an enlivening in the first two years of *perestroika*, the economy began to decline, inter-ethnic feuds reached bloodshed, people began to experience fear, and in some places there is practically dual power."

Brovnikov insisted that: "what we are witnessing is not

paramilitary police). In general our platform includes demands for workers' self-management.

All the changes SOTSPROF wants in the economy and the political system—do you see these coming about by a series of reforms with the existing system or by a revolutionary struggle to oust the bureaucracy from power?

Again I emphasise that the level of the workers' movement is the key. If it reaches a high level then this process of political change can happen very quickly. If not, and I believe this to be more likely, then it will be a long drawn out series of struggles. In my view we need a political revolution from below. *Perestroika's* reform implemented from above. It's a question of terminology what form the political revolution will take.

Why is it likely to be at a slow speed? Surely Eastern Europe shows that when things start they gather momentum and are concluded swiftly. Why is the USSR different?

The USSR is not Eastern Europe. Its huge population and vast distances make things very different and have an influence. I come from the workers' movement and I know it well, I know the strengths and weakness of the democratic forces. For that reason I make this prognosis.

The warring



Committee meeting to attack Gorbachev. Ligachev argued:

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USSR crisis leader

g factions

coherent, but they are prepared to unite behind Ligachev's rallying cry of "this far and no further". They accept the need for some reform, but want it to be carried through with discipline, and they seek to maintain the command economy and the authority of the party.

Despite the setbacks they have suffered at the level of policy they remain a powerful formation and enjoy support at the top levels of the army and security services. In the face of Gorbachev's blatant attempts to secure support outside the party they too are attempting to line up mass forces.

At one level this support comes from sections of the party's working class base. Particularly within the Russian republic there is widespread hostility amongst workers to the reintroduction of private property. Informal organisations like the United Front of the Workers of Russia and the New Communist Party of Workers subscribe to Ligachev's declaration of opposition to "opening in anyway even a chink for the introduction of private property". They represent a loyal Stalinist current within the working class who could be mobilised in any showdown between the hard liners and Gorbachev.

Worse, their Russian "patriotism", may well lead them into an alliance with the fascists of Pamyat. Pamyat is tolerated by the NVD (internal security) and patronised by Gidasov. That Stalinism is capable of uniting with a force whose programme includes slogans like, "god into the schools", "women into the family" and calls for pogroms against the Jews, speaks volumes about its degenerate nature. But the fact that sections of the working class could follow Stalinists into such an alliance only illustrates the weakness of the "left" opposition.

This "left" ranges from social democratic and Eurocommunist elements within the party, organ-

ised in the recently formed Democratic Platform, through openly restorationist forces who critically support Gorbachev, to the programmatically incoherent Popular Fronts, the workers' committees and socialists such as Boris Kagarlitsky.

These forces are united in their opposition to the Ligachev wing and their impatience with the slow pace of Gorbachev's reforms. They are divided in their solutions to the current crisis. Within the party Leonid Abalkin, the deputy prime minister, is spearheading a drive for full scale restoration. *Pravda* reported him saying:

"We have become convinced that there is no worthy alternative to the market mechanism".

His programme includes the denationalisation of industry and decollectivisation of agriculture, the creation of private banks and a stock exchange and the removal of all price subsidies. His affinity to Gorbachev is based on the belief that the reintroduction of capitalism will require an authoritarian regime to deal with working class resistance. It is little wonder, therefore, that sections of the working class profoundly distrust such "radicals".

Boris Yeltsin, the maverick radical, is similarly in favour of the reintroduction of capitalism. He told western journalists that he now supported "private ownership of production means and land." His difference with the Abalkin wing is that he combines his marketism with radical phraseology about democracy.

Yeltsin is attempting to straddle two horses. His democratism earns him the support of the Democratic Platform reformers while his "marketism" wins him the support of the open pro-capitalist elements.

Yeltsin's future will be crucial to Gorbachev's, as in any mass turmoil he could prove crucial in either throwing his supporters into battle alongside Gorbachev, or in destroying any hope of the president securing a mass base.

What alternative is offered by the "socialist" wing of the movement?

The Democratic Platform offers the muddle of a mixed economy. Kagarlitsky and his Socialist Party are weighed down with reformist illusions. In the stream of interviews given by Boris Kagarlitsky his economic programme emerges as a mixture of utopian self-management schemes and controlled marketisation. But it does include a clear opposition to the restoration of capitalism. His political methods for realising this however are to encourage the process of democratisation rather than to take up revolutionary struggle against the ruling bureaucracy.

Such a perspective is currently, by his own admission, failing to rally key sections of the urban Russian working class to his side. The Socialist Party, he explained, is based on "low-ranking intellectuals, agitators, and, I am happy to say, a growing number of skilled workers. Also, of course, students."

While such elements will indeed be vital to any new party, victory can only be assured by winning over the core of the working class. And that means developing a programme that can win those sections currently mobilised behind the Stalinist hard-liners as well as appealing to those anti-Stalinist workers, such as the miners, who have illusions in self-management projects within a mixed economy.

Failure to win both types of worker to a programme of political revolution will disarm them in the face of either a Ligachev-led bureaucratic retrenchment or a counter-revolutionary restoration of capitalism. ■

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



Bureaucratic planning

FORTY YEARS of economic mismanagement in Eastern Europe has discredited the idea of a planned economy amongst large sections of the working class, east and west.

Planning has become synonymous with shortages, queues, the black market and poor quality goods. In the 1980s it has also become a byword for stagnation. But why? The gloating capitalists argue that such chaos is the natural result of trying to abolish the market as the decisive regulator of economic life. This opinion is now shared by many of the Stalinist bureaucrats responsible for this mess.

The real problem lies in trying to run a planned economy through a bureaucracy. "Bureaucracy" in this case means not just few overzealous red-tape merchants. It means a distinct, economically privileged caste of functionaries which has a monopoly of political power.

In the USSR it numbers some 17 million, varying in importance from the chiefs of the party and central planning agencies right down to the individual factory managers. It is this tight, secretive minority that runs the economy and society. Planning is an essential part of the Marxist programme. Instead of the profit motive determining what is produced and consumed, socialism aims for production and distribution according to human need.

Any planning system which aims to meet human need has to evaluate the available resources of society; how much energy and raw materials are available, how much labour there is to be deployed etc. Secondly, the plan has to identify the needs of society and determine what to produce and how much; everything from tonnes of iron ore to pairs of blue-tinted contact lenses. Finally, the system must contain a way of controlling the implementation of the plan, verifying the results and making any adjustments.

The planned economies of the Eastern Bloc do not work because the bureaucracy carries out all of these functions.

The bureaucracy administers the plan without reference to workers' needs. It treats the working class as one of the objects of planning (as so much labour available to the bureaucrats) rather than the key subject of planning. It ignores the fact that workers' needs are defined, at every level, not simply by the quantity of goods but the overall quality of life.

The plan that does exist flows from the bureaucracy's need to preserve and extend its privileges, hide them from the working class and secure advancement through the apparatus of power.

The manager of an individual factory will advance up the hierarchy, if he or she fulfils and surpasses the norms set by the central plan. Such norms are overwhelmingly quantitative, measured by weight and volume, since they are the easiest for a bureaucrat to monitor and achieve and since the workers who consume the goods have no say in setting the norms.

So the bureaucrats resist the introduction of quality control techniques that threaten to undermine their chances of fulfilling the norms set by the plan. Many of the idiosyncrasies of bureaucratic planning flow from this. For example the bureaucrats resisted the introduction of new high quality plastic piping, despite its benefits to society, because it weighed less than metal and threatened norm fulfilment.

The same conservatism is dis-

played with respect to the range of products. The bureaucrats try to standardise goods in a narrow range, especially in consumer goods, because it reduces the complications in production and evaluation and helps them to reach their production quotas.

At every level the bureaucrats deceive each other as much as possible so as to retain maximum room to manoeuvre. Plant managers lie to their superiors in the ministries about the resources they have so as to keep plan targets low and keep as many reserves hidden as they can to meet unexpected demands on them. One ministry competes for available resources with another, as does one enterprise with another.

Not only does the existence of the bureaucracy distort and sabotage planning. Its whole strategy for survival skews the plan away from meeting the needs of working class consumers. The strategy of "socialism in one country", rejected by Lenin and Trotsky but adopted as the watchword of the Stalinist bureaucracy, means isolating the bureaucratic workers' state from the world economy. It means building the basic industries and infrastructure from scratch and, as Trotsky put it "at three times the cost". The whole emphasis of planning is focused away from the consumer goods sector towards heavy industry.

The effects of this were bad enough in an economy the size of the USSR. In Pol Pot's Kampuchea and Ceausescu's Romania this strategy of retreat behind the economic borders of one nation led to disaster.

Neither does the bureaucracy have the incentive to increase productivity. Under capitalism competition drives individual capitalists to introduce new techniques and machinery. Under a healthy workers' state the plan would consciously seek to shorten the working week and increase leisure time by raising productivity.

But the bureaucracy has a need to do this. In the first place it can force the workers to work harder on the same machines. Secondly, if it wants to increase the volume of production it will build a new factory with the same type of machines rather than invest in new technology.

A genuine planning system could only exist as what Trotsky called "a democracy of producers and consumers" i.e. a genuine workers' democracy.

Democratic planning would be designed to ensure that the different sectors of industry and agriculture grow in harmonious proportion to each other. Democratic planning would ensure that a balance is maintained between growth in absolute output, the quality of both goods and the environment. Increased leisure time, prolonged and repeated spells of education would be weighed against the length of the working day in order to ensure a balance between growth and a population that can make informed choices.

And all the time a healthy workers' state would never lose sight of the goal of international socialism. It would not attempt to build socialism in one country, but would pour resources into support for revolutionary movements across the globe. It would conclude international planning agreements with other workers' states.

The planned economy can work. But to make it work the working class must overthrow the bureaucracy, rescue and democratise the planning mechanisms and unblock the transition to socialism. ■

the result of yesterday's stagnation but of *perestroika*."

This wing of the CPSU represents those within the bureaucracy who stand to lose most by party democracy and by the introduction of the market. They are a coalition based in the agricultural ministries, the KGB and the regional party apparatuses.

Their programme is far from

the s of rship

The way forward

THE KEY to the many layered crisis of leadership in the USSR lies in the development of independent working class organisation and the espousal of a coherent political and economic programme that can open, once again, the process of transition to communism.

Only a proletarian political revolution can resolve this crisis in a progressive way. Such a revolution combines the destruction of the rule of the bureaucracy and its replacement by the direct rule of the workers with an economic programme based on the formulation of a new plan centred on meeting the burning needs of the masses.

Such a plan will have nothing in common with the command structures of the Kremlin ministries. It will be discussed and democratically decided upon by the workers themselves, organised in workers' councils and centralised through a state that it is directly accountable.

And on the national question, the programme of political revolution will win the support of the victims of great Russian chauvinism, by championing their right to self-determination, up to and including secession from the USSR.

Is this programme espoused by any of the forces within the CPSU or amongst the "Informals", the new opposition movements? Alas no. And without a new revolutionary party, a Trotskyist party (for it was Leon Trotsky who outlined this programme) no such progressive outcome can be hoped for.

The task of the hour, therefore, is

to assemble the forces for such a party, to win the best elements of the opposition and of the CPSU itself, to Trotskyism. Revolutionary turmoil creates the best conditions for doing this. That is why we are not wringing our hands at the fate of the USSR and CPSU. Out of the turmoil the forces for real socialist change can emerge.

The recent growth of workers' committees in the land that created the revolutionary soviet must be our starting point. Developing these committees into real workers' councils, equipping them with political answers, breaking them from all wings of the CPSU and all opposition movements patronised by those wings, these are the tasks of the day.

And, in conjunction with an organisation like Shield, the army middle rank officers union, these committees must spread into the ranks of the five million strong army. As the day of confrontation draws near it is vital that links between the workers and soldiers are developed.

Through the development of such independent organisations political ideas will continue to flourish. As Trotsky remarked workers will learn the need for Marxism once more by being allowed to breathe the fresh air of freedom. But within those organisations it is necessary to build a new revolutionary party. Time is precious. Decisive struggles are approaching. If a new Russian revolution is to triumph the crisis of leadership must be resolved. ■

THE LONGEST WAR

The Wallace affair

"DURING THE first six months of 1975, 35 Roman Catholics were assassinated in Ulster. The majority of these were killed by members of the security forces or loyalist paramilitary groups . . . working as agents of the security services and supplied with weapons by the security services."

These are the allegations made by Colin Wallace. And he should know what he is talking about. He was an information officer for the British army in Northern Ireland and specialised in peddling false briefings to the press designed to discredit and damage the republican movement in the 1970s.

An example of Wallace's disinformation campaign was when he got the press to print a story about an IRA plot to take over Belfast in the run up to the Sunningdale power sharing agreement. He now concedes that this was a total lie.

His activities, and those of the security services in general, were not confined to Northern Ireland. Wallace has revealed that covert activities were carried out to try and destabilise the then Labour government.

Why is it that a formerly loyal and trusted state spy decided to reveal all? Wallace got cold feet about his job when it came to the Kincora Boys' Home affair. The housefather of the home was a prominent loyalist, William McGrath. Allegations of widespread sexual abuse of the boys at the home were made and Wallace pressed for an investigation.

Straightforward enough you might think. But what was really at stake was that for some time British Intelligence used the home as part of an elaborate blackmail set up that they could not afford to reveal. So, Wallace was transferred to England and then sacked. Subsequently, to silence and discredit him he was framed up on a manslaughter charge and put in prison from 1981 to 1986.

The Labour Party has railed and

fumed about the smear campaign directed against them, the "Clockwork Orange" operation as it was codenamed. Tom King, the Tory defence minister, has now been forced to admit that the government has had, since last year, documents supporting Wallace's allegations. But beyond this Labour will not go.

They have a lot to hide as well, having been up to their necks in intelligence operations directed against the republicans when they were in power. Even the Tories are embarrassed since smears were also launched against Ted Heath on the say so of Airey Neave, one of Thatcher's lieutenants!

What is clear is that both parties favour the use of lies and deception when directed against their common enemy, the IRA, but get upset when they find themselves the victims. So it is in the interests of British imperialism that a bipartisan veil is drawn over the Colin Wallace affair quickly.

Workers here must take warning. The security forces and intelligence agencies are the mortal foes of the labour movement and those fighting imperialist oppression. They have been used against our brothers and sisters in the Six Counties. They have been used to compile files on trade unionists here. They are part of the oppressive state apparatus. They are our very own Securitate and will have to be dealt with in the same way.

In the meantime we should use the Wallace revelations, the continuing Stalker affair saga, the attempt to frame the republican leader Danny Morrison and all other examples we can find, to expose the Labour and Tory use of the machinery of the secret state.

We should draw the simple conclusion that those who use such methods do so in order to maintain their own, imperialist, rule over Northern Ireland and to smash all those fighting to free it from this rule. ■

Sinn Fein Ard Fheis

JUDGING FROM the deliberations of Sinn Féin's recent Ard Fheis they have, yet again, succumbed to the lure of building a "broad movement" and tailoring all objectives to satisfying the most moderate elements within such a movement.

The central debate was around the question of building "an all Ireland anti-imperialist movement".

This movement is to include the broadest range of political and social forces. The concept of the "broad front" has been elevated from the rank of a subordinate (and not very effective) tactic to the strategic centrepiece of "any liberation struggle".

Following the 1989 Ard Fheis the Forum for a Democratic Alternative (FADA) was formed last February. At its launch Sinn Féin proposed a series of conferences and political dialogues "aimed at nationalist writers, feminists, cultural activists and radical lawyers" to discuss "the quality of life and where the state has failed".

FADA's talks did lead to

the launch of the Irish National Congress, in January.

To cater to a "broad" spectrum of opinion the conference limited its objectives to a call for maximum unity to mobilise "the maximum dissent against those oppressing us nationally, socially and economically".

A demo against Thatcher at the Dublin EC summit was called and plans for the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising (due in 1991) were laid.

This is hardly the scale of action expected from a genuinely mass anti-imperialist movement. Nor does it suggest that any real working class forces have been won to the movement.

As long as Sinn Féin refuse to base their strategy on the independent mobilisation of workers, North and South, they will find that the forces of any broad "all Ireland anti-imperialist movement" will be powerless in the struggle to drive out the British army and free the Six Counties from the yoke of imperialist rule. ■

ROMANIA

The struggle for power

The revolutionary crisis in Romania continues. Clare Heath describes the forces competing for power.

"DOWN WITH communism" thousands of demonstrators chant in Bucharest. The next day a counter-demonstration attracts thousands more chanting "no bosses" in opposition to the marketeers.

Romania, clearly, is still in the midst of a revolutionary crisis. The struggle continues. The burning question facing the working class is how to resolve this crisis.

The danger posed by the rise of the pro-capitalist reactionaries in the National Peasants Party (Christian Democratic)—NPP(CD) and the Liberal Party has led many Romanian workers into supporting the National Salvation Front (NSF) government. They see the NSF as their government, the product of their struggles. They are wrong to do so.

The armed workers, students and soldiers destroyed the most brutal representatives of the regime when they defeated the Securitate and executed the Ceausescu. After that first phase of revolution, the task of completely ousting the ruling bureaucracy remained. The clashes that have occurred during the past two months demonstrate that the future of Romania will not be decided by peaceful negotiations—the masses, having tasted their own power, continue to play a key role.

Insurgents

The provisional administration of the NSF was brought to power by the leaders of the army. The generals finally came over to the side of the insurgents once they recognised that there was little to be gained from siding with the Securitate. They fell in behind the rank and file soldiers in supporting the masses, and during the final days of the civil war they came to the head of the movement.

They joined forces with the self appointed political leaders of the revolution, many of whom were former Stalinist bureaucrats. They were people who had been ousted from Ceausescu's regime in previous years and now sought to lead the government. As such this government was not the product of the mass revolution, but an attempt to contain that revolution.

The alliance of the army chiefs and bureaucrats managed to "expropriate" the revolution. None elected them. They were not the leaders of a long-standing opposition movement. They were opportunists who saw their chance and, once the main fighting was over, they emerged from their bunkers to assume power.

The NSF Council is composed mainly of Stalinist ex-members of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), often with long histories in the party. Some had tried to form a Gorbachevite opposition in 1989, but they were not the leaders of the actual revolution.

These Stalinist time-servers were quick to renounce their past. One leader of the NSF, Silviu

Brucan, an ex-RCP member himself, said: "My opinion is that the Communist Party in Romania is dead". He explicitly opposed the idea of any extraordinary congress of the Party to "seek a new identity, image and name". Self-reform, on the Hungarian model, was a dead letter.

To maintain their grip on power the Stalinists in the NSF have conceded to pressure from the NPP(CD) and Liberals and formed a Provisional Council of National Unity. This has 180 members, 90 of whom are from political parties (over 30 had registered by the end of January) with three representatives each. The other 90 seats on the council are for "participants in the revolution". The NSF now has three members, as it has become a political party. But it is likely to exercise considerable influence through the 90 "revolutionaries" in the new government.

The December revolution also led to the creation of mass organisations in most towns, cities and villages. Factory committees were set up, some of which created their own armed militias to fight alongside the army. These organisations are still in place, usually as local and enterprise National Salvation Committees.

The NSF Council has tried to limit their powers from above, but they have been active in kicking out managers, organising strikes against members of regional NSFs who are hated Stalinists, and building for the demonstrations in support of the government. Other local committees have demonstrated against the NSF Council when it has proposed closure of a particular factory.

In Timisoara the Regional NSF Council has been elected by a series of NSF committees in enterprises, institutions and localities. There is one delegate per 200 citizens in the town itself.

In the army unrest is also continuing, with rank and file soldiers demonstrating against officers who they believe should be kicked out and tried for complicity with Ceausescu, including their suppression of the masses in the first days of the revolution.

This mobilisation of workers and the army in organisations which identify with the progressive aspects of the revolution places great pressure on the NSF leaders. The majority of workers and soldiers do consider the NSF to be "their" government, and defend it against what they rightly regarded as reactionary restorationist monarchists (the NPP and the Liberals). They also place demands on it when their needs are not being met.

This pressure translates into many of the progressive steps which the NSF Council took in January—the stopping of exports of shortage goods, the legalisation of abortion, wages rises, rights for national minorities, social welfare provision. It is also reflected in the extremely cautious approach to the restoration of capitalism the NSF are pursuing. Their declarations in favour of the market are accom-

panied by promises that the workers' welfare will be safeguarded. Today, at least, the NSF need working class support.

At the same time the government is continuing its attempts to demobilise and restrict the self-activity of the masses in the workplaces and the army. In the factories Iliescu has asked that NSF committees should "not have political ambitions of management and control", and should not change the executive of the enterprise. In the army they have called for calm, for the slow process of democratisation, and oppose the soldiers' call for full investigations and the kicking out of hated officers.

Romanian workers, pressing forward in the construction of their own organisations in Timisoara, Brasov and elsewhere, should take heed. The NSF, despite the concessions it was forced to make, is an obstacle to the triumph of genuine democracy, workers' democracy.

In no sense does this mean that workers should line up behind the reactionary forces of the NPP(CD) the Liberals or the social democrats. All favour the return of capitalism. Some favour the return of the monarchy. And these reactionaries will trample on the gains made by the masses with little concern for the niceties of democracy. Their violent attacks on government buildings are a sure indication of this.

The opposition from the newly legalised parties, most of which have now joined the provisional government, does not represent any better alternative for the masses. If they are allowed to grow by the working class they will quickly seek to destroy the workers' organisations, beginning with those associated with the NSF, in an attempt to restore capitalism and, in particular, break up the state farms.

Counter-demonstrations

In response to mobilisations of the reactionary parties, the workers' and soldiers' organisations should oppose their slogans and organise counter-demonstrations. In the event of these parties attempting a reactionary seizure of power we would advocate that the workers' and soldiers' committees mobilise to smash such a rising, even if this means engaging in a limited united front with the forces loyal to the NSF.

At the same time the workers, soldiers and peasants of Romania should give no support to either the Provisional Council or the NSF Council. Even while placing demands on the NSF, the central task is to continue the anti-Stalinist revolution, to get rid of hated generals and bureaucrats who collaborated with Ceausescu's regime.

The best way to do this is through the development of the workplace, local and army committees into real workers' and soldiers' councils which take power into their own hands in the factories and the administration—just as they began to do during the revolution. Regional and national co-ordination of these bodies should be built, with a congress of workers' and soldiers' deputies challenging the unelected Provisional Council's power. The final victory of the political revolution lies in the seizure of power by such a congress. ■

REPEAL THE PTA!

Demonstrate Saturday 17 March

12 noon

Whittington Park, London

THE ELECTIONS in the GDR on 18 March are a direct result of the revolutionary mobilisations since last November. They are an admission by the Stalinists of the illegitimacy of the old regime.

But they are also a last bid by those same Stalinists to cheat the masses of the fruits of their victory. Modrow and company hope that a new government will be able to "stabilise" the situation and impose the conditions demanded by the West German capitalists as the price of unification.

Nor is Modrow alone in this. All the main parties agree with him on this and they are echoed by Gorbachev, Kohl and Bush, "Nothing must be decided on the streets!"

In this situation, the task of Trotskyists is to find ways to renew the revolutionary impetus of the mass movement, despite the fact that most workers have put their faith in elections which are expressly designed to demobilise them. The problem is common throughout the Stalinist states and, already, working class practice has provided the basis for a solution. In the Soviet Union and Poland last year although the elections were rigged, the workers found a way to make their voice heard by standing "unofficial" candidates. In the programme of the LRCI, *The Trotskyist Manifesto*, this idea is taken up and developed as the tactic of the "workers' candidate":

"We fight for workers to stand their own candidates, elected by and recallable and accountable to, workers' assemblies. We fight for such candidates to stand on a workers' programme against bu-

SECTARIANS ARE both useless and dangerous. The intervention of the International Communist League—formerly the international Spartacist tendency—into the crisis of the GDR has demonstrated the truth of this observation.

The Spartacists claim to be Trotskyist. No worker in the GDR should take the slightest bit of notice of this claim. They are a pro-Stalinist sect whose politics have evolved further and further away from Trotskyism over the years.

They suffer from a complete inability to distinguish between revolution and counter-revolution. In the GDR this expresses itself as a systematic adaptation to the very force that the masses have struggled to overthrow, namely, Stalinism, in the form of the SED-PDS.

The roots of the Spartacist position lie in their theoretical understanding of Stalinism. They see it as having a "dual character", a good side and a bad side which exist in a rough equilibrium. The "good side", they ar-

Workers' candidates and the GDR elections

reaucratic rule, privilege and marketisation and for the defence of the rights of national minorities, for subsidies and for the right to work. We fight for all candidates to be directly responsible to workers' assemblies and to be paid no more than the average wage of a skilled worker."

The importance of this tactic is that it relates to the democratic aspirations of the masses but seeks

to give them a proletarian form. It provides a basis, not only for revolutionary propaganda against an uncontrollable parliament, but for concrete measures that can be taken, in the factories, by the workers themselves.

In the recently published LRCI action programme for the GDR, the tactic is summed up:

"Here, in the GDR, where there is so little time to ensure that the

elections are not turned against the workers, revolutionaries propose that every major factory and workplace hold a meeting to select their own candidates and to agree on the political platform upon which they should stand for election. Such candidates should pledge themselves to obey the future decisions of the workers they represent or to resign. They should pledge themselves to regular re-

As the GDR goes to the polls Peter Main explains how workers' candidates can help rally the forces against capitalist restoration. Richard Brenner looks at the sectarianism of the Spartacists and Michael Kaien of Arbeiter Standpunkt (Austria) reports on the politics of the United Left.



SPARTACISTS Left cover for Stalinists

gion, allows the Stalinists, on occasion, to act in a revolutionary way. At an SED-called rally in East Berlin, Renate Dahlhaus of the Spartacists' group in the Federal Republic of Germany, TLD, gave an example of this in relation to the foundation of the GDR itself:

"The Soviet working people smashed Hitlerite fascism. It was they, comrades, who exported the revolution to the Elbe, on the bayonets of the Red Army, founded by Leon Trotsky."

This is a systematic distortion of history. The Soviet armed forces of Stalin—purged and turned into his obedient servant—is equated with the revolutionary Red Army of Leon Trotsky. Its role in what became the GDR is glossed over. Its "good side" eclipses its "bad side".

The fact that this same army, on Stalin's orders, smashed all elements of independent working class organisation, choked any manifestations of workers' democracy and installed the rule of unelected bureaucrats in the GDR, is all overlooked.

The simple reason for this oversight is that the Spartacists refuse to recognise that despite its occasional ability to perform actions which, considered in isolation, are progressive, Stalinism is a counter-revolutionary force.

These "Trotskyists" choose to forget that Trotsky himself made clear that the bureaucracy "cannot play a revolutionary role in the world arena" (*The Transitional Programme*). Instead they seek to lull the GDR proletariat with their songs of praise for the Soviet army's continued revolutionary generosity:

"Comrades, as you know, the SED's monopoly of power has been broken... it is only through the benevolent pressure of the Soviet army that this has been

made possible."

Typically, for sectarians, the Spartacists see the biggest threat to the revolution not in the Stalinist parties and state apparatus but in the mobilised working class!

Shortly after the SED rally at which Dahlhaus spoke, the SED government attempted to re-establish the security police (Stasi) but were prevented by mass mobilisations and seizures of the Stasi buildings. For revolutionaries this is the very stuff of revolution, but not for the Spartacists: "... those who call for violence are doing the work of the imperialists who, at all costs, want to undermine the peaceful development of the political revolution in the GDR."

What are we to make of this? Far from encouraging upheaval, the imperialist politicians in the CDU and SPD agree wholeheartedly with Gorbachev that, "nothing must be decided in the streets".

The restorationists want the calmest possible situation in which to re-impose capitalism. An aroused and mobilised working class, confident that it can take on and defeat security forces is an absolute nightmare for imperialist and Stalinist alike.

Worse, far worse, what kind of Trotskyist talks of a "peaceful de-

veloping sessions at which they will account to their voters for their actions in parliament and they should agree to remain on a worker's wages if elected."

The action programme is, of course, the political basis upon which we believe workers' candidates should stand. In certain circumstances they could be addressed to candidates of the bourgeois workers' parties who have expressed their opposition to the restoration of either capitalism or of the rule of the Stalinists.

In the weeks leading up to the election, the LRCI will be intervening directly in the electoral campaigns in the GDR. As well as arguing for the workers to stamp their own mark on these elections, our comrades will also be warning of the attacks being planned for the period after 18 March. The enthusiasm for unification will soon evaporate under the impact of inflation, social service cuts and unemployment. Illusions in parliamentary democracy, however, may not disappear so quickly. It will be necessary to maintain workers' organisations, forcing the elected deputies to resist the passing of laws legitimising private ownership of the means of production and absorption into the FRG.

If a revolutionary party of the working class is not built in the coming months, the political initiative will remain with the pro-capitalist forces. In any event revolutionaries and worker militants will have to fight every step taken against the working class' interests. It will be in such actions that the nucleus of a revolutionary party will be forged around the Trotskyist programme. ■

velopment of the political revolution?" The very term "political revolution" was coined by Trotsky to denote the necessity of the revolutionary forcible overthrow of the Stalinist state apparatus despite the fact that it rested on post capitalist property relations. As Trotsky argued:

"To believe that this state is capable of peacefully 'withering away' is to live in a world of theoretical delirium."

The Spartacists attempt to cover their defence of the Stalinists by emphasising their call for workers' militias, which certainly sounds revolutionary—until we find that their main task is to guard Soviet war graves! No mention is made of the need for such organisations to ruthlessly root out and punish every filthy bureaucrat and secret police agent who made life hell for the GDR's workers for forty years.

Stalinism is, necessarily, a contradictory phenomenon, a privileged caste resting on the property relations of a workers' state. Consequently, spontaneous working class opposition to Stalinism is likely to equate Stalinism with the revolutionary movement to which it owes its origins. This confusion can be overcome, not by siding with the Stalinists against the working class, but by basing ourselves on the mobilised working class in its progressive struggles.

The elemental hatred of the working class of the GDR for its Stalinist oppressors is a predominantly progressive sentiment. It has to be developed and channelled into the construction of a new, Trotskyist party to lead the overthrow of both Stalinism and capitalism.

The LRCI is committed to this task. We leave to the Spartacists the shameful, and we trust unrewarding, task of providing left cover for the Stalinists, the mortal enemies of the working class. ■

The United Left

SINCE ITS foundation last September, the "Initiative for a United Left" (IUL) has become the biggest and best known of the groups to the left of the SED-PDS. However, it has failed to consolidate itself as a coherent revolutionary current.

Its fundamental weakness is an adherence to a version of the "stages theory" against which Trotskyism has always had to battle. In the case of the IUL, the stage that is counterposed to proletarian revolution in the GDR is one of "stabilisation" and defence of planned property. It was in the name of "stabilisation" that IUL members entered the Round Table talks. These were aimed at demobilising the masses after the fall of Honecker and Krenz. As for the

IUL's defence of planned property, it entails not the overthrow of the Stalinist regime, but its reform:

"The example of the Soviet Union gives a basis for hoping that it will be possible once again to understand by 'socialism' sovereign people's power and freedom." (*Boehlen Platform*, 13.10.89)

Even the most "left" group within the IUL, the Democratic Socialists, who called for a congress based on workers' councils, see it only as a "corrective" to parliament, not as the means to overthrow the regime.

To complete this picture of disoriented, if well-intentioned, centrism, this group has now entered an electoral alliance in Leipzig which includes the openly restorationist "Democracy Now"! ■



the
LRCI
NEWS FROM
THE SECTIONS

**IRISH WORKERS
GROUP**

**Student
conference**

ON SATURDAY 24 February around thirty students from various colleges met in Trinity College Dublin (TCD), to found a National Federation of College Socialist Societies. Representatives from Socialist Societies from Magee University (Derry) and from colleges in Cork and Galway as well as TCD laid the foundations for expanding the network.

The initiative for this proposal came from members and supporters of the Irish Workers Group. Other political tendencies present were the Socialist Workers' Movement (SWM) and some sympathisers of the International Communist League (Spartacists).

Neither tendency gave any clear or unequivocal support to the project, yet both participated. The meeting decided to launch a practical campaign around the issue of abortion rights, concentrating on decriminalisation and the right of information within the overall perspective of the fight for a woman's right to abortion on demand.

Unfortunately the meeting narrowly defeated the IWG proposal for a Campaign of Solidarity for Workers in Eastern Europe. Here sectarianism and opportunism joined hands. The SWM argued that only a SOTSPROF tour and money raising campaign was "concrete". A more general campaign of solidarity with workers' struggles in Eastern Europe would, they said, be an "abstract, grand scheme".

The Spartacists were also opposed on the grounds that it would be a "propaganda bloc" for groups with differing analyses of Eastern Europe. This from a group which tried to hijack the whole conference into becoming the captive audience for their Saatchi and Saatchi style promotion "Spartacists address millions in the DDR".

The IWG was able to sell many copies of their new pamphlet *The Politics of the Spartacists* which deals with the general history and background of this sect and focuses on their gross capitulation to Stalinism over the political revolution in Eastern Germany. (Copies available from Workers' Power, price £1)

The LRCI
Arbeiter/Innenstandpunkt (Austria),
Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany),
Irish Workers Group,
Poder Obrero (Peru),
Pouvoir Ouvrier (France),
Workers Power Group (Britain)

Guia Obrera (Bolivia) is in the process of discussions with the LRCI with the aim of becoming an affiliated section.

SOUTH AFRICA

**No to
negotiations!**

NELSON MANDELA'S first speech after his release sent Thatcher into a frenzy. He publicly refused to call off the armed struggle and reiterated the ANC's commitment to nationalisation.

But as the masses celebrated his release apartheid's leaders too were celebrating, albeit more cautiously and discreetly. In the weeks since his release Mandela has made it clear that the ANC is preparing to enter negotiations with the apartheid state. It is preparing to lead the black workers of South Africa into De Klerk's well laid trap. Now only the lifting of the state of emergency and the freeing of political detainees stands in the way of round table discussions between the ANC and the apartheid butchers.

And the ANC is preparing to sit down with apartheid's black stooges, including Buthelezi's murderous Inkatha movement.

On his release Nelson Mandela spelled out the ANC's commitment to the goals of "one person, one vote in a unitary state" and to "nationalisation of the mines, banks and monopoly industries". Since then, however, the ANC leadership has fallen over itself

to assure De Klerk that these remain only "principles". As Mandela commented:

"I have said that we are prepared to compromise, and again this is the view of the ANC. We must recognise that all this hullabaloo about nationalisation is totally misconceived because nationalisation of certain sectors of the economy is part of the history of this country."

The nationalisation programme which the ANC and South African Communist Party have presented to the masses for years becomes limited, at this crucial point in history, to preserving the existing state owned industries of apartheid South Africa.

Likewise the process of negotiations will bring forth a similar compromise on political democracy. De Klerk stated the government position clearly on 2 February. Any votes for the black majority would be conditional on "a system for the protection of the rights of individuals, minorities and national entities". In return Mandela outlined the need for the ANC to "address white demands for structural guarantees to prevent black domination".

It is not just De Klerk's guile

"I have said that we are prepared to compromise, and again this is the view of the ANC. We must recognise that all this hullabaloo about nationalisation is totally misconceived because nationalisation of certain sectors of the economy is part of the history of this country."

which is leading the ANC towards fatal compromises. The ANC's whole strategy for ending apartheid, outlined in the Harare Declaration of the Organisation of African Unity, is one which guarantees the exclusion of the masses from deciding the outcome. It calls for a ceasefire and for a new constitution to be drawn up by an "interim government". Then when

the constitution is in place sanctions will be lifted and South Africa admitted into the OAU.

There is no mention of elections to this interim government, nor of the constitution guaranteeing black voting rights to a unitary parliament.

The ANC has been forced to the negotiating table by its failure to lead the masses to victory in the revolutionary situation of 1984-86, by Soviet pressure and by pressure from the "front line states" eager to prostrate their economies even further before South African imperialism.

The South African masses should reject negotiations with their exploiters and oppressors. You cannot negotiate the transfer of power from one class to another. Workers should demand the immediate convocation of a sovereign constituent assembly to decide the future constitution of South Africa. Such an assembly would have to be convened in the face of resistance from the apartheid state and its puppet organisations, and sabotage by the ANC leaders.

That is why the masses must reject Mandela's calls for pacification, for an end to strikes and school boycotts, for "throwing your weapons into the sea". They must renew the struggle against the occupation of the townships, against rent increases, against the attacks on trade union rights, and against the blood-thirsty death squads of Inkatha in Natal.

In the current conditions of flux, of semi-legality, where the opportunity exists to challenge and overcome mass illusions in the ANC's strategy and leadership, the task of founding a revolutionary workers' party has become an unpostponable necessity. ■

MANY OPPOSITIONISTS in Eastern Europe have looked to Sweden as their model of social democracy. An extensive welfare state combined with a stable mixed economy appeared to fulfil their dreams. They, and generations of British Fabians, must be cruelly disenchanted by the recent collapse of the Swedish social democratic (SAP) led government.

Last month saw the SAP, which has ruled for 52 of the last 58 years, plunged into its deepest crisis. The collapse of Premier Ingvar Carlsson's coalition government came after parliament rejected his two year austerity programme.

As we go to press Carlsson's advisers have cobbled together a more sophisticated series of crisis measures, calling for price, rent and dividend freezes and the appointment of a "super mediator" to defuse industrial disputes. This appears likely to win a parliamentary rubber stamp and save Carlsson's political skin. It will only postpone the launch of another assault on Swedish workers.

The SAP-led government had sought to introduce a draconian package of public spending cuts coupled to a wage and price freeze and a two year ban on all strikes. The party leaders swiftly dropped the latter proposal in the face of furious protest as even the bureaucrats of LO (Sweden's TUC for blue collar trade unionists) were forced to join the chorus of opposition from the working class.

The essentials of the attack on living standards remained intact, however, leading the Communist Party, the Greens and even former coalition partners in the Centre Party to vote down the whole package. This in turn forced the resignation of the Carlsson cabinet including the departure from politics of finance minister Kjell-Olof Feldt, architect of the plan, who had been much praised by Swedish bosses.

The SAP had turned viciously on

SWEDEN

Paradise lost ...

its supporters in order to solve the crisis of stagflation currently wracking the economy. After an apparently robust revival of profitability and export-led growth in the mid-1980s, the past two years have recorded negligible expansion. The current growth rate is already the second lowest amongst major capitalist countries and is forecast to slump to 0.5% this year.

New manufacturing investment has all but dried up, while the balance of payments deficit doubled in 1989 to Skr 40 billion (more than £4 billion). Swedish multinationals have greatly boosted their levels of overseas investment in a quest for higher rates of return. Accompanying these woes is an inflation rate running at over 8% and rising.

Taken together these symptoms mark a chronic perhaps terminal illness for the historic compromise between Sweden's bosses and the labour bureaucracy. Sweden had developed imperialism's most comprehensive welfare state in the period since the Second World War. This was combined with highly centralised bargaining structure between the bosses and the union with which the bureaucracy promised class peace in return for the welfare gains.

The always fragile basis for this class "peace" has eroded rapidly in the 1980s in the face of mounting pressure from the bosses to roll back the limited gains of welfare. This has combined with renewed militancy from sections of workers who have refused to bail the bosses out by accepting real

wage cuts, job losses and worse conditions.

The SAP leadership, fearful of this winter turning into a spring of discontent, moved to clamp down on the upsurge which came to a head with a three week lock-out of 50,000 bank workers. Their dispute ended in a partial victory with a 13% pay rise. Stockholm's bus and underground workers paralysed the capital for four hours in opposition to the proposed strike ban.

The total days lost to the bosses through strikes soared to over 500,000 by the end of February. The push for action has come from below, with union leaderships reluctantly giving official sanction.

The current crisis has done more than force the SAP government to resign. It has exposed the myth of Sweden as any sort of workers' paradise.

With 145,000 children living below the poverty line, a health service whose budget has stagnated for 15 years and a new battery of racist immigration laws on the books, the case against Swedish social democracy is long and damning.

The exceptionally high rates of absenteeism, approaching 25 sick days for each worker every year, hardly suggest widespread satisfaction with the conditions in the factories and offices.

In order to underpin its relatively high standards of wages and welfare provision the Swedish bosses have maintained a classic imperialist relationship with much of the semi-colonial world. Key corporations have relied heavily on the sale of sophisticated weapons to

such states as Zia's Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Israel. The Bofors scandal, involving the payment of bribes to Indian state officials in exchange for military orders, has laid bare the seamy reality of Swedish imperialism.

The severe assault which the SAP still hopes to inflict on its working class supporters does, however, provide the best opportunity in many years to break workers from the SAP and turn them against the system of capitalist exploitation it has so cleverly defended.

To achieve this will mean going beyond the recent success of sectional strikes and forging a general strike against the next, inevitable round of austerity. This will undoubtedly mean a fight, led by rank and file militants, against the deeply entrenched LO and TCD (white collar) trade union bureaucracies.

Workers need to link the wide range of pay struggles around demands for a sliding scale of wages and the expropriation of firms unwilling or unable to pay up, to be run under the control of workers themselves. They must also struggle to reverse the rising tide of racism in Swedish society which the bosses and SAP have played upon and reinforced.

By going down this road Swedish workers can achieve enormous gains for themselves towards a truly socialist society. They will also give an inspiring example to other workers in the west and to those in the Stalinist states facing the grim prospect of capitalist restoration. ■

From mass uprisings to negotiations, has the ANC changed its strategy? Lesley Day argues that the current danger of a sell out flows from the fundamental nature of the ANC

Where is the ANC going?

In 1986, the African National Congress (ANC) declared the "year of Umkhonto We Sizwe". It called on the township youth to join in a "people's war". Thousands of the new generation were won to the revolutionary banner of the underground ANC.

Four years later, Congress is preparing to negotiate with the apartheid regime. It is preparing for a settlement far short of the aspirations of the revolutionary generation of the 1984-86 uprising. Its leading figures, including Nelson Mandela, have been treading a careful path, insisting on the aim of "one person one vote" in a unitary state but at the same time stressing the importance of compromise and "assurances to the white minority".

Has the ANC undergone a fundamental transformation? Not at all. Its leadership and programme have remained the same.

Whilst masses of black workers and youth have rallied to the newly legalised ANC it remains a petit bourgeois nationalist movement representing the interests of the aspiring black middle class. Its aim is the removal of apartheid and the achievement of liberation for the black majority—but within a capitalist South Africa.

The apparently contrasting tactics of the ANC are part of a long term "twin track" strategy, developed in the last three decades and adapted in the light of the rise of the black working class.

The South African Communist Party (SACP) has a powerful voice within the ANC. Over the years it has used that voice time and again to present the South African workers with a "Marxist" justification for the strategy of the ANC.

In 1934 the whole of the Stalinist Comintern swung behind the strategy of the "popular front". Throughout the world this meant subordinating the working class struggle to an alliance with so-called "progressive" sections of the capitalist class.

Opposite

In South Africa, before the Second World War, the SACP and the ANC attempted to persuade the regime to reform. In fact the regime was moving in the opposite direction.

After the war and the defeat of the black miners' strike of 1946, the white ruling class embarked on a strategy of total racial segregation. Its aim was to weld white workers to the state through systematic privilege, and allow the continued super-exploitation of the black masses. This was the system

of apartheid introduced by the National Party in 1948. With its triumph, and the banning of the SACP, it was clear that the popular frontist strategy of the old ANC/SACP had failed.

A new generation of young leaders came to the fore—the ANC Youth Leaguers. They included the young lawyers Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo. They were impatient with the old leadership, and sought to extend methods of mass action. They were at first hostile to reliance on "white liberals", including those in the SACP.

Despite this there were a number of reasons why an alliance between the SACP and the ANC should re-emerge. ANC leaders such as Mandela were in favour of mass action, but were not thoroughgoing revolutionaries. They wanted to build a mass protest campaign to shake the National Party regime and force reform. Neither were they socialists except in the general sense that socialist ideas influenced African nationalism in the 1950s—the need for some state ownership, welfare, a redistribution of wealth etc.

Stage

The politics of the SACP fitted in neatly. Despite the fact that popular front policies had failed in the 1930s and 40s, the SACP clung to that strategy. It shared with other Stalinist parties the concept of the two stage road to socialism. This had been spelt out by AT N Zulu in the 1930s:

"The basic content of the first stage of the revolution in Black Africa is a struggle for land and a war of national liberation. In this case, therefore, the revolution will in its initial stage be a bourgeois democratic revolution".

Throughout its collaboration with the ANC the SACP provided a theoretical rationale for the ANC's nationalism and for limiting the workers' struggles to the democratic stage.

The Communist Party developed the theory of "colonialism of a special type". The white ruling class was seen as a colonial power. The oppressed nation or nations were the African, Coloured and Indian populations. The designation of the South African struggle as anti-colonial meant that class war should be subordinated to the fight for national independence. At the same time the SACP promised that the march to socialism would follow the achievement of nationhood.

In 1955 the ANC formed the Congress Alliance with the white Congress of Democrats (Stalinists



Cape Town crowd celebrate De Klerk's reforms

and liberals), and the Indian and Coloured Congresses. Meeting in Kliptown it adopted the famous *Freedom Charter*, a document which clearly embodied the two stage strategy of the ANC/SACP.

Mandela made clear at the time, and the ANC leadership have reasserted again today, that the *Freedom Charter* is not a socialist document:

"Whilst the Charter proclaims democratic changes of a far reaching nature it is by no means a blueprint of a socialist state but a programme for the unification of various classes and groupings amongst the people on a democratic basis."

The realisation of the demands of the Charter would, argued Mandela, allow the development of a black capitalist class:

"For the first time in the history of this country the non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own, in their own name and right, mines and factories."

Defiance

Around this programme the radical petit bourgeois black leadership Mandela and Tambo were able to assemble a movement with a mass base in town and countryside, an alliance with the communists and their trade union base, and to maintain their alliance with tribal chiefs and the Indian and Coloured petit bourgeoisie. A renewed campaign of defiance at the end of the 1950s met further repression, culminating in the Sharpeville massacre.

Botha's faltering attempts at reform—the toothless parliament for Indian and Coloured South Africans and limited freedoms for the black trade unions—unleashed a tidal wave of struggle.

From 1984 to 1986 the townships were in ferment. A new layer of youth and community organisations organised rent strikes, boycotts of the structures of apartheid, action to defend squatter camps and against the military presence in the townships. The ANC swung to the left and called on the youth to "make South Africa ungovernable".

But the essence of the ANC's strategy remained the same. Its aim was the achievement of a non-apartheid capitalism. Its method was that of the popular front. It had encouraged the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983, designed to coordinate non-collaboration. Within the UDF the working class organisations in the townships and the trade unions were tied to the churches and middle class led organisations.

Guerrilla

Congress called on the youth to rebel, but offered them no strategy to win. It failed to call a general strike against the emergency provisions of either 1985 or 1986. Its armed struggle tactics remained at the level of guerrilla action rather than linked to working class struggle through the building of armed defence of pickets, occupations and the townships.

After the defeat of the 1984-86 uprisings the compromising element of the ANC's strategy quickly returned to the fore. It was spurred on by the rise of Gorbachev in the USSR. Gorbachev began a strategic foreign policy retreat from areas of potential confrontation with imperialism. This sea change in Moscow's policy forced the ANC further from the conceptions of overthrowing the apartheid state.

The present moves towards a negotiated settlement with guaranteed rights for white capitalists reveal the fundamental problem with the two stage strategy. It does not simply relegate socialism to the distant future. It invariably makes the "democratic" goals negotiable as well.

According to the ANC/SACP the workers must set aside the goal of expropriating the South African capitalists in order to win "one person, one vote" first in a campaign alongside them.

Subordination

But the need to maintain the alliance with the "progressive" capitalists means accepting their partial and undemocratic schemes for constitutional reform. In South Africa, with its millions of white workers potentially mobilised by the far right, and its massive concentrations of capital, this means nothing less than the total subordination of black votes within a system of guaranteed seats in parliament, and the total subordination of parliament to the Bonapartist presidency and armed forces.

In return for this the ANC will be expected to lift the call for sanctions, hold back workers' struggles and create a climate for the consolidation of a black middle class of small businessmen and administrators.

Stalinism and petit bourgeois nationalism failed the test of the revolutionary period 1984-86. Now the ANC, with the Kremlin's blessing, is preparing to deliver the masses defenceless into the hands of a "reformed" South African bourgeoisie. It must not succeed! ■

SOCIALIST ORGANISER AND EASTERN EUROPE

IN NOVEMBER 1988 *Socialist Organiser* (SO) decided that Trotsky's analysis of the Stalinist states was no longer valid. It was "utterly nonsensical", SO declared, to go on describing such societies as degenerate workers' states.

The task of destruction proved easier for SO than the reconstruction of a coherent alternative theory. Amidst the disintegration of the Stalinist order it is, as a tendency, riven by differences as to what exactly the class character of these states is.

Some in its ranks claim the Stalinist states are a variety of state capitalism. Others refer to them as simply bureaucratic states, leaving us guessing as to which class rules. The majority view, it seems, is that these states are "bureaucratic collectivist" societies.

While SO's iconoclasts are eager to denounce us Trotskyists for clinging to the "old" degenerated workers' state theory, they forget that "bureaucratic collectivism" is hardly the latest theory to hit the high street. It has been championed by an unsavoury collection of renegades, from the anti-Semitic Bruno Rizzi through to the pro-imperialist Max Shachtman, since the 1930s.

Reactionary

Of course neither Rizzi nor Shachtman started out as reactionaries. They both served apprenticeships as Marxists. But the theory they eventually embraced, and counterposed to Trotsky's analysis of the USSR, had a reactionary logic to it. SO, already exhibiting pro-imperialist leanings on both the Irish and Palestinian questions, has clearly embraced one aspect of "bureaucratic collectivism's" reactionary logic: the counterposition of a purely democratic programme to the specifically socialist programme of the working class.

The theory of "bureaucratic collectivism" holds that the Stalinist states are ruled by a new, bureaucratic class of exploiters. The emergence of such societies parallel to capitalism, and regressive as compared with it, is, we are told, a direct result of the underdeveloped nature of the countries concerned. Socialism can only grow out of advanced capitalism. It is, today, a pipedream in the underdeveloped "bureaucratic collectivist" states.

SO emphasises the totalitarian nature of the Stalinist regimes. As far as this goes we can agree. But for "bureaucratic collectivism" this question eclipses all others. The transition to socialism is not on the immediate agenda, according to SO. Therefore, the restoration of capitalism, and with it bourgeois parliamentary democracy, would be a relatively satisfactory outcome to the revolutionary crises currently gripping the degenerate(d) workers' states.

SO draws the inevitable conclusion. At the moment it is only necessary to advocate a democratic stage in the anti-Stalinist revolution. But this strategy is likely to strangle the working class just as when it is applied in the anti-imperialist struggle. SO points out that:

"Everywhere the rallying cry of the revolution has been democracy—undifferentiated classless democracy."

For revolutionary Marxists democracy is never classless. It can be, like bourgeois democracy, the disguised dictatorship of the capitalist class. Or it can be, like soviet power, the undisguised dictatorship of the working class. It is always the means for one class to rule over another. Revolutionary Marxists, therefore, are not indifferent to the restoration of a specifically bourgeois form of democracy.

Parliamentary democracy holds

The revolutions of Eastern Europe have put the theories and programmes of all left tendencies to the test. Colin Lloyd explains why Socialist Organiser has failed it.

A democratic stage?

two dangers for the working class of Eastern Europe.

Firstly, it can be a means of demobilising mass action. Where workers' councils come into existence the Stalinists and the pro-capitalist reformers will try to incorporate them constitutionally into the parliamentary system. In 1980, faced with the potential for the Polish Inter-Factory Strike Committees to develop in a soviet direction, the Stalinists toyed with the possibility of creating a second "workers'" chamber in the Polish parliament to offset the revolutionary threat.

Secondly, parliamentary democracy can become the vehicle through which the Stalinists carry out and legitimise the sell-off of state property and attacks on workers living standards that are the pre-condition for restoration. "Don't endanger our fragile parliamentary democracy with strikes and demonstrations" is the theme of Mazowiecki and Walesa in Poland today.

For SO neither danger is relevant. There are no soviets at present, it argues, so the call for their creation should be ruled out. Any parliamentary system will be a step forward.

Democratic planning, "the democracy of producers and consumers" as Trotsky called it, can only exist on the basis of direct democracy; the democracy of workers' councils.

And the restoration of capitalism is not a problem either, since Stalinism is only a "backward parallel" to capitalism. Consequently SO's immediate programme limits itself to the most radical form of parliamentary democracy and cites the illusions of the masses as justification for this stageism.

The action programme, printed in *Towards Capitalism or Workers' Liberty*, begins with a ritual genuflection to soviets as the ultimate goal of struggle but qualifies this with the argument that:

"The experience of history does not, for the workers now challenging the bureaucratic system, recommend this form of democracy. The model they take is that of west European parliamentary democracy."

This is true. But how can Marxists remedy the situation? Eastern Europe and the USSR are in the grip of mass uprisings. In certain places and at certain times the possibility of forging soviets has existed and will exist as long as the revolutionary situation continues.

That is why the immediate programme of democratic and transitional demands can and must include the call to form soviets. It is not inevitable that the emerging workers' committees and trade unions in, for example, Vorkuta have to become a "Soviet Solidarnosc"—a free trade union. They also contain the potential, as did the early Solidarnosc, to become soviet-type bodies.

Neither is it inevitable that the East European revolutions have to go through a parliamentary stage before soviets can come into exist-

ence. On the contrary, as with "democratic revolutions" in the third world there is little chance of achieving anything like a democratic parliament without soviets to convene and defend it.

SO has no need for soviets because its programme for the anti-Stalinist revolutions is essentially a minimum-maximum programme, not a transitional one.

In 1987, when SO still formally adhered to Trotsky's analysis of the USSR, it published, in its magazine *Workers' Liberty*, what it called "a clear programme for workers' liberty".

This is plainly the prototype for the list of demands published in *Towards Capitalism or Workers' Liberty* and it is instructive to note the differences.

Workers' parties

In 1987 SO called for: "Breaking up of the bureaucratic hierarchy of administration and its replacement with a democratic regime of councils of elected and recallable workers' delegates with freedom to form many workers' parties". In 1989 it called for: "Break up the bureaucratic hierarchies which still run the East European states".

In 1987 SO called for: "Abolition of bureaucratic privileges; reorganisation of the economy according to a democratically decided plan". In 1989 it said: "Fight against existing bureaucratic privileges! Fight against the growth of market generated inequality".

These revisions demonstrate the real political consequences of junking Trotsky's analysis. It means junking the demand for soviets and junking the demand for democratic planning!

Democratic planning, "the democracy of producers and consumers" as Trotsky called it, can only exist on the basis of direct democracy; the democracy of workers' councils. The most democratic parliament in the world cannot substitute for this. SO's

programme embodies neither of these intrinsically linked aims.

Nor is it just reticence at the words *soviet* and *planning*, words that have to be rescued from the rotten reputation Stalinism has given them, which leads SO to exclude them from their programme. They have methodologically uncoupled the idea of working class self-emancipation, of "workers' liberty", from the transi-

tion to socialism. They want one without the other. This is what underpins their stageist programme.

According to SO:

"The cardinal value for socialists must be the free activity of the working class—even when, in the opinion of those who take the long historical view, the workers are muddled and mistaken." (*Towards Capitalism or Workers' Liberty*)

But what is the purpose of that free activity? It is to enable workers to overcome their muddles and to take the first steps to real "workers' liberty". What do Marxists mean by the self-emancipation of the working class? We mean the working class freeing itself and the whole of society from the oppression of want. There is one road to that liberation and it lies through abolishing the cause of political oppression and economic hardship—capitalism.

There is no other way of abolishing capitalism *irrevocably* other than for a workers' state based on democratic soviets to seize the property of the bosses and begin to plan production according to human need.

Any transitional programme for the present crisis of Stalinism would have, at its heart, demands focused around re-starting the transition to socialism. These would include resistance to selling off the plants to private enterprise, maintenance of the state monopoly of foreign trade and the replacement of the bureaucratic plan with a democratic plan drawn up and discussed by the workers. To "fight against the growth of market generated inequality" is a worthy aim. But the best way to fight it is to stop the reintroduction of the

market now.

Nothing of this appears in SO's current programme. Instead of a strategy of resistance to capitalist restoration and advance towards socialism SO starts from the accomplished fact of restoration. Their solution is democratic not socialist.

The clearest outline of SO's stageist perspective appears in the conclusion to the article "In defence of socialism" (*Towards Capitalism or Workers' Liberty*). After asserting that its programme remains, like Lenin's, to "construct the socialist order" it continues:

"Circumstances and events defeated Lenin. The working class will yet start to 'construct the socialist order' in better and more favourable circumstances. We do not know when, but for certain the disintegration of Stalinism will bring that day closer."

It might well add: "but it certainly isn't on the cards at present".

Pro-capitalist

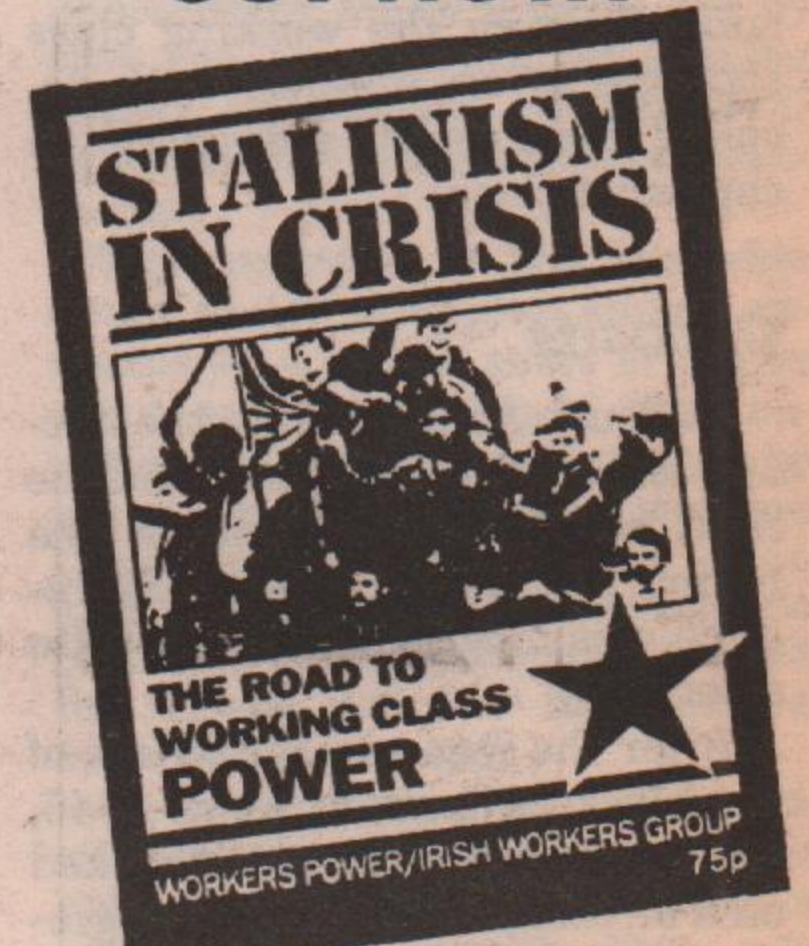
Given all of this it is not surprising that SO lines up with pro-capitalist forces. Its support for Solidarnosc is a case in point. It is now clearly neither a real trade union nor a reformist workers' party. It is a bourgeois, Christian Democratic, formation, busy privatising the Polish economy in a thoroughly Thatcherite fashion. It is doing this in alliance with the Stalinists.

SO's answer? Solidarnosc should carry out its capitalist programme on its own. Its slogan of "Break the coalition! All Power to Solidarnosc!" is a perverse rendering of Lenin's 1917 slogan addressed to the Mensheviks to "Kick out the capitalist ministers!" Perverse because today it can only mean "In with the capitalist ministers." This is the real, reactionary conclusion that emerges from the theory of "bureaucratic collectivism" and the programme of stages.

SO's abandonment of Trotsky's analysis has not helped it understand the generalised revolutionary crisis of Stalinism. Their new position, designed to explain Stalinism's permanence, has proved useless in the period of Stalinism's destruction. It has led directly to a stageist understanding of the dynamics of the situation and a programme which is at best inadequate, at worst a disastrous guide to action. It has led to abandon soviets and democratic planning as the cornerstones of the socialist action programme. It leads it to ignore the threat of capitalist restoration at the very moment when millions of workers are confronting that threat as a reality. And, through the creative use of "Leninist" tactics, it has led it to call for "all power" to the restorationist forces.

Such theory, programme and tactics deserve to be abandoned, along with the organisation that has embraced them. ■

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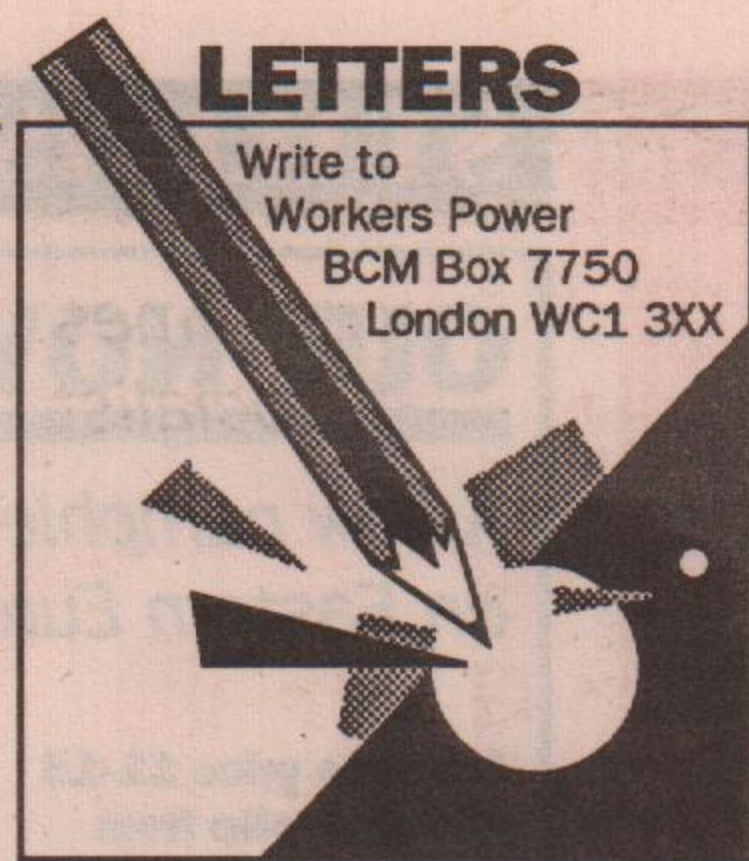
Nuclear safety

Dear comrades,

Our programme for the nuclear power industry stresses that the key to tackling safety lies with the workers in the industry conducting their own enquiry into the issue. A workers' enquiry would enforce standards or ensure a shut down if safety cannot be guaranteed. Workers' inspection and control of safety has been central to our demands.

But in arguing this we have often come up against people in the anti-nuclear movement who say that the power plant workers are a lost cause. A common argument is that these workers will never take up the safety issues as they risk losing their jobs. Having written off the working class these campaigners look to the local "community" to lead the struggle against the dangers of nuclear power.

The high number of cases of leukaemia in the communities around the Sellafield nuclear power plant has caused concern for some years about the safety of the relatively low levels of radiation emitted from the plant. But investigations have never been able to show a definite link between the level of exposure of the local children and any increased risk of disease. The recent report by Professor Gardner finds that the high incidence of leukaemia is linked to radiation exposure of their fathers who worked in Sellafield. The radiation appears to have its effect not in the community once the children are born, but through their fathers even before they are conceived.



This finding is a revelation. It explains the high numbers of cases in the area and exposes the complacency of the government and nuclear bosses about the dangers of radiation. But it also reveals that there is no real counterposition of interests of "the community" and "the workforce" in West Cumbria. They both share an interest in safety at the plant.

We can now see that it is workers and their families who have been most at risk. It is wrong to suggest that nuclear power workers will resist or obstruct moves to increase safety. What is more, they have the power to enforce better safety. They can refuse to work in areas of high radiation, they can, if necessary, close the plant down through strike action.

Gardner's report shows a very strong link between leukaemia in children and fathers who had received high total doses of radiation before conception of the child. Workers should immediately refuse to work where they are exposed to such level.

... trade union leaders of the workers in the plants have been very complacent in the past, siding with management in downplaying the risks.

They have refused to struggle over safety precisely because of fears

Can capitalism be restored?

Dear comrades,

The fact that for many decades the working class of the east has grown up and fought under conditions where the means of production have been wholly nationalised (albeit under the control of the bureaucracy) cannot lead us to the conclusion that a capitalist restoration is a possibility. Just as it is not possible to have a return to feudalism in the capitalist west, so it is not possible to have a return to capitalism in the east.

The fact that the Stalinist bureaucracy is not able to govern on its own in a series of countries, and is being forced into coalitions with groups which praise the mixed economy of the west, does not mean that this programme can be put into practice.

Stalinism is convulsing as it has brought the economies of the Eastern Bloc to the brink of collapse and the central plan, without any control by the producers, only serves to

maintain inequality. The Stalinists' grip is weakening in the factories with demands for democracy, freedom of expression, the distribution of workers' bulletins, the creation of factory committees in place of the now defunct "official trade unions". This is clearly not the expression of the strengthening of the bureaucracy inside the factories, so that they can, at some future point, become the owners of the means of production.

The dilemma for the bureaucracy is the following: from whom, for how much and in what currency will the factories of the east be bought? On what internal social forces will the privatisations of the economies be based and which parties will carry them out?

The end of Stalinism in the east is quite clearly on the horizon, especially after the political revolution in Romania (which has only just begun). Insurrections will occur in all those countries which will try to maintain regimes of inequality and privilege. Workers' control of the factories through recallable factory committees will be the workers' reply to the plans of the bureaucracy to privatise the economy.

All those who hope or believe that western capitalism is able to buy back half the planet (when it can't sort out the Latin American debt) or increase its influence through joint ventures, is living in cloud cuckoo land. The bankruptcy of Stalinism is at the same time the bankruptcy of capitalism. Capitalism could not avert the creation of degenerate workers' states and now it cannot avert the political revolution which has started against the Stalinist bureaucracy and its hangers on.

Hopefully this latest research will mobilise the plant workers into action—it is not just their own health that may be at risk, but that of their children. The unions must be forced to launch a real workers' enquiry into safety at the plant, involving representatives from local community and chosen, sympathetic experts to advise on safety.

about job losses. But the workers should not pay for any safety measures, even where shutdowns are necessary. The unions must fight for the defence of the living standards of the workers.

In comradeship,
Clare Heath

Fraternally
V N Gelis (Athens)

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party and the LPYS, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

The misnamed Communist Parties are really Stalinist parties—reformist, like the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class world-wide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions and councils of action.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary international (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

workers power

The Trotskyist Manifesto

WITHIN TWO months of being published the *Trotskyist Manifesto* has been put to the test by events in the class struggle. From the upheavals in Eastern Europe to the safety of the nuclear power industry, our programme charts a revolutionary course for workers.

The programme for political revolution outlined in the Manifesto includes a section on the oppressed nationalities within the USSR, which has informed our positions on the crisis in the Caucasus and the Baltics. We support the rights of nations to self-determination and secession, but, as we explain in the programme:

"In conditions of war (external or

civil) we subordinate this right of secession to the legitimate defence of workers' states under attack from the forces of imperialism and counter-revolution". (p102)

This section anticipates the conditions which occurred in Azerbaijan where a counter-revolutionary movement threatened to seize power in the context of a civil war with another oppressed nationality.

Our programme for safety in relation to nuclear power or other hazardous procedures includes:

"Against dangerous processes and practices within plants we fight for factory committees and trade unions to impose a veto and to oversee the introduction, at the expense of profits, of safer technology or working conditions. Where the danger extends beyond the plant we are for direct action involving workers in the plant and the local community, with the aim of forcing the government to impose the use of safer methods and materials." (p42)

Workers in the Sellafield nuclear power plant need to be armed with such a programme to protect themselves and their children from the dangers of radiation.

We would urge all our readers to study the *Trotskyist Manifesto* and discuss it with us. In particular we want comrades from other left groups to read the Manifesto, to debate out areas of difference and to compare this international programme with that of their own group. We welcome public debate and urge all those who find that they agree with our programme to join Workers Power and the LRCI.■

Meetings this month

Public Meetings

Birmingham:
The great Poll Tax robbery
Thursday 29th March 7.30pm
Summerfield Centre,
Corner of Winson Green Road
and Dudley Road

Central London:
Public Meeting
Trotsky: the prophet rehabilitated
Friday 30 March 7.30
Conway Hall,
Red Lion Square
(nr Holborn tube)

Coventry:
The Trotskyist Manifesto
Wednesday 14 March 7.30
West Indian Social Club
Spon Street

Leicester:
The Trotskyist Manifesto
Tuesday 20 March 7.30
Unemployed Workers' Centre

Oxford:
South Africa
Tuesday 6 March 8pm
Meeting room XVII, Balliol College

Marxist Discussion Groups

South London:
South Africa
Wednesday 21st March 7.30pm
Londor Hotel,
Londor Rd, SW9
(nr Clapham North tube)

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Fighting Fund



Thanks this month go to a supporter in central London for a £1,750 windfall, £15 from Birmingham, £10 from Chesterfield, £10 from a reader in Wigan and £40 from a health worker in South London. Keep it up!

Workers Power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

THE TRIUMPH of Violeta Chamorro in the the Nicaraguan elections is a triumph for US imperialism. It poured millions into supporting the anti-Sandinista coalition, the National Opposition Union (UNO), to help it secure its election victory.

Just over ten years ago the FSLN (Sandinistas) led a revolution against the Somoza dictatorship. Their heroic struggle against this savage agent of US imperialism earned them the overwhelming support of the Nicaraguan masses. It also earned them the undying hatred of Washington.

Reagan cut off all aid to this tiny country in 1981. In 1982 he began to finance the "Contras". This gang of pro-Somoza murderers, still armed to the teeth today, plunged the country into a war that cost it 30,000 lives and \$12 billion.

To ensure that this war would destabilise the Sandinista regime, in 1985 the US launched an economic blockade that helped turn Nicaragua into the poorest country in the western hemisphere.

Few countries as small as Nicaragua, its population is only three million, have had to face such a sustained assault by the world's most powerful imperialist power. Certainly the US offensive, backed up by a sustained propaganda barrage directed against the regime, caused war weariness amongst the masses. Desertions from the Sandinista camp were the

SANDINISTAS

THE COST OF COMPROMISE

inevitable result of this. But this is not the only reason why Daniel Ortega and his FSLN government were defeated at the polls.

The fall in support for the Sandinistas was, to a considerable extent, a direct consequence of the policies they pursued, especially over the last two years. These policies were designed to make the workers and peasants pay for the country's economic crisis.

Inflation reached 36,000% in 1988. Thirty-six devaluations of the currency ravaged the incomes of the masses, leading to real wages falling by as much as 90% in one year. In

1989 the government sacked 30,000 of its own workers. It called a halt to land reform. Faced with such policies from the "revolutionaries" the masses became deeply disillusioned.

Of course the bourgeois leaders of the UNO made the most of their elections. Without US money, to the tune of at least \$5 million, without Chamorro's mouthpiece, the daily *La Prensa*, produced courtesy of USA Incorporated, without the backing of the catholic hierarchy, without the massive propaganda barrage directed from outside, the bosses' and their electoral coalition would

have been reduced to what they really are, a tiny minority of society.

Yet it was the Sandinistas themselves who preserved this parasitic class in Nicaraguan society. Indeed it was the Sandinistas' commitment to preserving a "mixed economy" capitalism that led them to take a series of "austerity measures" which hit the masses hardest. If you run a capitalist economy you have to use capitalist measures.

Will the UNO coalition be able to immediately roll back the remaining gains of the 1979 revolution? The extreme right within the coalition would

certainly like to do so. Its goals are to give back to the landlords the land distributed to the peasants, to restore the untrammelled rule of the capitalists in the factories, to destroy the rights won by the trade unions and to dismantle the welfare system established by the Sandinistas.

But UNO has to be careful. Such a broad coalition stretching from "Contras" to "Communists" could easily fragment, leaving the Sandinistas the biggest bloc in the assembly.

In opposition the Sandinistas will try to refurbish their "revolutionary" image. Though

it cannot be ruled out that the FSLN itself might split over the question of ceding power to UNO. Tomas Borge was quoted, before the results were in, as saying that the Sandinista army will not give up power to a UNO government. Whether or not this leads to armed conflict it is likely that the UNO victory will open up a period of defensive struggles by the working class and poor peasants to preserve the gains of the revolution.

For too long most sections of the British and international left have acted as uncritical cheerleaders for Ortega and his regime. They have greeted every new concession to imperialism as a clever gambit to gain time "for the revolution".

The worst offender in this regard is the self-proclaimed Trotskyist, United Secretariat of the Fourth International and its British sympathisers around *Socialist Outlook*. These people went so far as to call Nicaragua a dictatorship of the proletariat and a workers' state. The idiocy of such a position is now plain to see.

Revolutions against imperialism cannot triumph except as workers' revolutions against capitalism. There is no "third way" between capitalism and revolutionary communism, that can survive in a world dominated by imperialism.

In the struggles ahead it is vital that this truth is put squarely before the masses. To defeat the likely UNO capitalist offensive, to smash the still armed "Contras", to overcome the setback suffered in these elections the masses of Nicaragua must set as their goal not only the struggle against imperialism, but the destruction of capitalism itself, not just in Nicaragua but throughout Central and Latin America. Only through the building of a Trotskyist party committed to this task can the masses finally put an end to the rule of the Bushes and Chamorros. ■

ers. Secondly, the inflation rate it is linked to is worked out by the government, not the workers who have to live on the wages. Thirdly, the only pay formula ambulance workers are likely to get from Clarke is one which includes a no strike deal. Poole in fact offered such a deal earlier in the dispute.

The solution lies in a sliding scale of wages. Ambulance workers should fight for a formula which guarantees a 1% rise in wages for every 1% rise in the cost of living. Ambulance workers and their families should say what the cost of living is, not some top civil servant. They should accept no other kind of pay formula.

The militants who have led the dispute from below should issue the call for a national conference of rank and file delegates and organise a national strike committee empowered to run the action and negotiate with the bosses.

Renewed strike action, with emergency cover only under workers' control, would quickly bring Clarke back to the negotiating table. But this time he would have to deal with the workers themselves, not some bureaucrat on wages far above those of the average ambulance worker.

Until that happens all crews must:

- Reject the deal!
- Vote to strike!

AFTER A marathon session behind closed doors Roger Poole emerged describing his deal with the NHS bosses as "simply staggering". What really staggered most ambulance workers was the barefaced cheek of their union negotiator.

Liverpool ambulance workers rightly threw it back in Poole's face with a vote to strike.

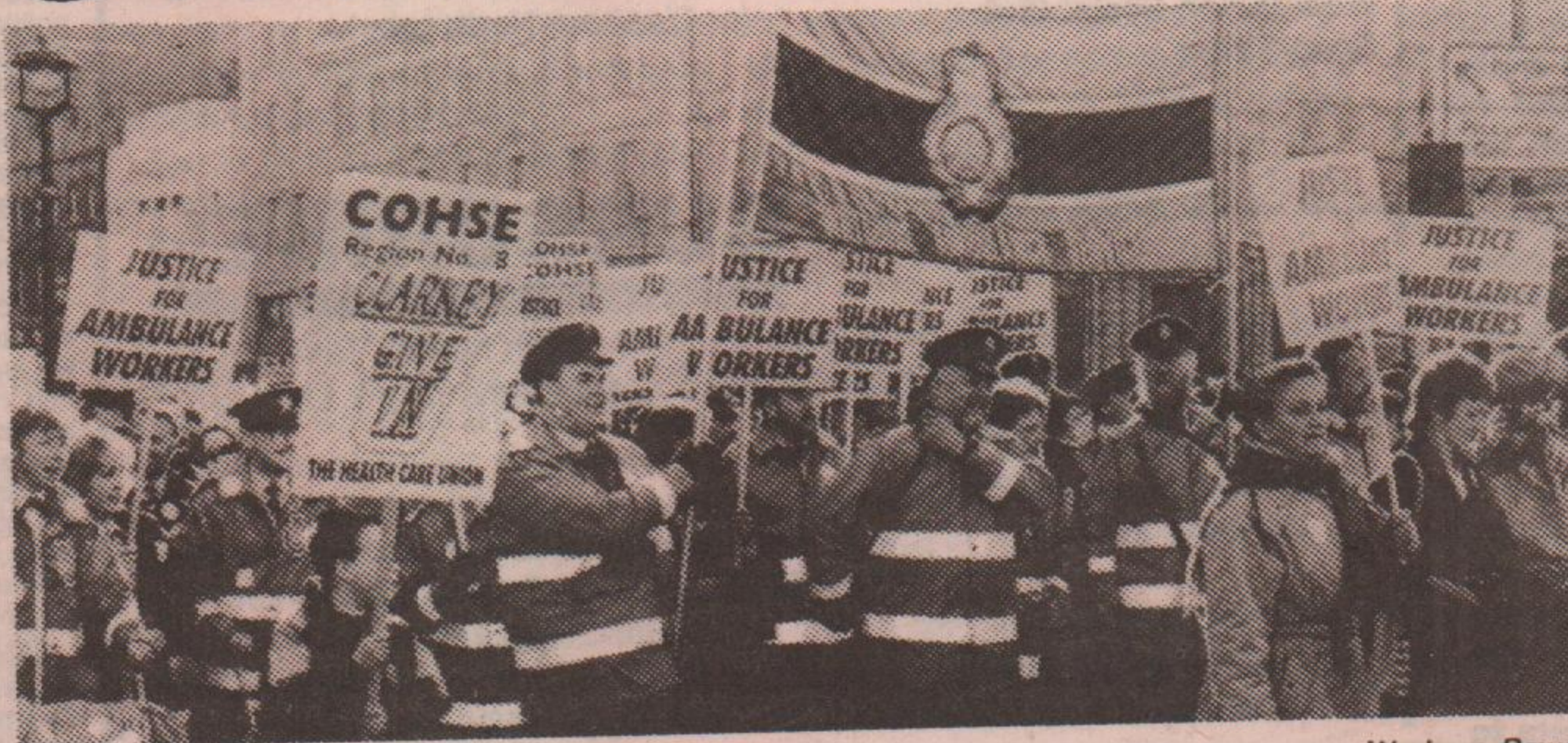
Now ambulance crews in every area should follow their example and reject the deal.

The new deal is a 9% rise from April 1989 to October 1990 followed by a further 7.9% between October and the 1991 pay deal. It will cost the NHS bosses an extra 13% over two years.

It will do nothing to eliminate low pay for day staff. Worse still it will sharpen the divisions between the day and emergency crews.

The deal allows for a further 2% increase from October based on local productivity agreements. "Productivity" in the NHS always means cuts in the service to patients. In the ambulance service it is bound to mean longer hours, fewer breaks and more stress for the workers. If ambulance workers accept this deal it will not only mean a sell out on the original claim. It will open the road for Clarke's plans for a two-tier ambulance service outlined on Channel 4 News in

Ambulance dispute NO SELL-OUT! STRIKE TO WIN!



Workers Power

January.

The national leadership is now pulling out the stops for a "yes" vote. Poole and his fellow bureaucrats have the full backing of the bosses' media. The militant areas need to organise an immediate and effective campaign for a "no" vote. The best way to do this

is to take an immediate show of hands on the deal and strike.

But what should ambulance workers fight for instead of the two year deal? It is clear that, as the dispute has worn on, many have taken up the demand for a pay formula that would prevent the need for action in future years.

Workers do need a mechanism which protects them against the ravages of inflation. But the kind of pay formula the firefighters have only strengthens the hand of union bureaucrats like Poole. In the first place all negotiations within a pay review body go on behind the backs of the work-