

Workers power

INSIDE

Number 171 October 1993

Where is Britain going?

*A weekend of discussion
and debate organised by
Workers Power*

6 & 7 November—see p15

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

Smash the BNP!

THE ELECTION of a British National Party (BNP) councillor in London's East End Millwall ward is a direct challenge to the entire working class. If this event is allowed to pass without determined, systematic opposition until the BNP are smashed, then the prospect of the growth of a mass fascist movement in Britain could rapidly become a reality.

- ***For a United Front***
- ***For Workers' Action***
- ***No Platform for Fascists***
- ***Build Defence Squads***
- ***No Reliance on the State***

There is no time to lose!

**Continued
on page
three** ➔

**MARCH ON
THE BNP HQ**

**Saturday 16 October
1pm Winns Common,
Plumstead, London SE18**

see pages 8 & 9

SHEEHY REPORT

Workers in uniform?

THE SIGHT of police rallies against new conditions, contracts and cuts in overtime pay must give every socialist a sense of satisfaction. The boys in blue are now copping their share of government attacks.

After a decade of bribery and cosseting, of being given every weapon they have asked for and in return carrying through every anti-working class order issued them by Thatcher, the police are now victims of the Tories' pressing need for increased efficiency and cost cutting.

This is hardly surprising. Measured by any normal standards of success or productivity the police have been a dismal failure. Spending on the police force has soared. There are now 17,000 more police on duty than in 1979 and 15,000 more civilian staff. Yet in the same period the crime rate has trebled, with only one crime in 33 ending in a conviction.

Public confidence is at an all time low faced with a series of proven wrongful convictions and the failure of crime prevention.

One solution to this, favoured by top police chiefs, is to alter the public perception of police work. Metropolitan chief Paul Condon, one of the new breed of top officers, has brought in the Policing Charter, which aims to "to achieve public satisfaction with 90% of victims of crime and 80% who call at the station".

This new version of the friendly bobby has gone down a treat with the constabulary. Police Federation spokesman Mike Bennet grumbled: "We will end up with a police force that goes round saying 'Have a nice day' to everyone."

The other solution gaining support

at the top is "tackling the criminal not the crime"—a plan for ignoring the vast majority of minor crimes. But this can only work if the public don't expect the police to actually stop petty crime—hence the stress on changing "perceptions and expectations".

But coppers have been most incensed by the proposals in the Sheehy Report. In a desperate attempt to stop rising costs and streamline the service, Sheehy proposed short term contracts, performance related pay, drastic cuts in overtime and cutting down the numerous different ranks that provide a career ladder—in other words, much the same sort of package that other workers have had to face. All such plans, besides cutting costs, put increased control in the hands of top management. This is why top grades are much less hostile to Sheehy than constables and sergeants.

The temptation for the left is to go soft on the police in the face of the revolt against Sheehy. Already the Police Federation has taken out adverts in "left" papers (*Tribune* and *New Times*, for example) and made overtures to the TUC. Every worker needs to stand firm against this temptation.

The police are in the enemy camp, and short of breaking up the force in a revolutionary situation, there is no way we should welcome them into the labour movement or dress them up as "workers in uniform". They remain the well paid guardians of capitalism, capable of murdering Joy Gardner, arresting anti-fascists and busting picket lines at Timex, all at the same time as grumbling about Sheehy.

BY LESLEY DAY

To allow representatives of these legalised thugs into the labour movement, to allow them to affiliate to the TUC or trades councils, would mean sitting down with people whose job is to break strikes. Nor will allowing them into the TUC weaken their pro-capitalist resolve.

The privileges enjoyed by the police, the command structure of the force and the anti-working class and racist codes of conduct that govern police behaviour (either officially or

unofficially) would not be touched by such a gesture of goodwill by the workers' movement. We would be bringing strike-breakers into the movement, not eliminating strike-breakers outside it.

Of course we support the right of the police to act against Sheehy, even strike against it. But we do so purely because if they took action it would help destabilise the force, make it weaker and serve the revolutionary socialist goal of breaking up and dissolving the police force.

But a thousand times more impor-

tant in achieving this goal is organising to demoralise the police further—organising to defend our picket lines, defend the black communities, assert our right to smash the fascists and organise our own patrols to deal with anti-social crimes.

The extent to which we can organise such working class force, capable of repelling police attacks, will determine the extent to which we can achieve our goal of abolishing the police force, along with every other instrument of repression that the capitalists have at their disposal. ■



All in a day's work

LABOUR BACKS TORY PANIC

The real roots of crime

VIEWING FIGURES for *Crimewatch* and other real life crime television programmes are rising almost as fast as crime rates. Distraught victims of crimes get full colour front page treatment in national newspapers. Reports of garden fetes and school plays in local papers are being replaced by endless accounts of murder and mayhem on the streets of your town.

Labour and Tory leaders are desperately trying to turn public fear at the steadily rising crime rate to their political advantage. Home Secretary Michael Howard is refurbishing the Tories' traditional image as the party of "law and order" with promises to get tough. His Labour shadow, Tony Blair is eagerly trying to outflank the Tories with the promise of a crackdown on "persistent offenders".

Explosion

There has been a steady rise in crime in the post-war years and an explosion in the last ten years. Recorded incidents alone reached 2.5 million in 1980, 4.4 million in 1990 and 5.6 million in 1992.

But the image painted by the tabloids, of a mugger on every corner and a killer down every lane, is hardly accurate. Although crimes involving violence have risen along with other crimes, homicides and woundings make up just 0.3% of all recorded incidents. The overwhelming majority are crimes against property with one burglary occurring every 24 seconds.

Some "crimes" are justified, like fighting back against police harassment or breaking anti-union laws. Others are completely harmless, like smoking cannabis. But most crime is anti-social. Working class areas

suffer from it most. For all the talk of patrols in middle class estates, it is actually working class areas that are most blighted by vandalism and thefts.

We need a working class answer to the problem.

Unlike Labour's approach, the working class solution does not involve giving the police and the courts more powers. Their ability to deploy hundreds of officers within minutes against a picket line or a demonstration contrasts sharply with the hours it takes them to turn up if you report a burglary.

The police exist to protect capitalism, not to defend working class people from criminals. Nor is the cause of crime the supposed breakdown of family values, the lack of discipline in schools or the legacy of the permissive society. As one police chief admitted:

"The increase in crime has to be viewed against the background of recession".

Poverty, unemployment and poor housing provide the breeding ground for the increase in burglaries, car crime and street attacks. The National Association of Probation Of-

ficers reports that 80% of the people in their caseloads are either unemployed, or drawing sickness benefit. In particular, working class youth have been abandoned. Jobs for school leavers are a novelty rather than a norm. Benefits have been withdrawn from the 16-18 age group and slashed for those up to 25.

The Tories deny the obvious connections between crime, poverty and hopelessness. Their solutions have failed, from the vicious "short sharp shock" regime of Willie Whitelaw (which actually increased re-offending rates), through to the current proposal to imprison 12-15 year olds.

In between they have had to grapple with other problems including the vast overcrowding of the jails and clogging up of the courts. So they introduced the Criminal Justice Bill and encouraged police to bring less prosecutions. Magistrates were given sentencing guidelines which took into account not only the severity of the crime but ability to pay, which brought cries of protest from the middle class.

Forced into retreat on these disastrous reforms, but dogged by soaring costs, Howard now has little to

offer beyond a further crackdown and privatisation of the prisons. Magistrates have introduced tough new guidelines for sentencing which will inevitably increase the numbers going to jail.

Underneath all the bluster and calls for a crackdown there is an admission that the majority of the population will be left to stew.

The Labour leaders occasionally point to the connections between social conditions and crime. But Blair, like Howard, calls for a crackdown on young offenders and "prolific criminals".

If the cause of crime is rooted in the misery and inequality of capitalism, the harshest penal measures in the world won't deal with the problem.

That is why socialists recognise that tackling the misery and inequality of capitalism is the key to eliminating anti-social crimes. This means fighting for jobs, decent pay, rights, facilities for youth, the renovation of dilapidated estates, house building programmes, benefits that are equal to the average industrial wage.

Not only will the struggle for these goals materially benefit all workers

and reduce the tendency towards criminalisation amongst the poorest sections, it will breed a sense of solidarity amongst ever more workers and youth. Such solidarity, a form of working class morality that has nothing in common with the bosses' moral panic, will actively discourage robbing other workers as a solution to individual misery.

All very well, some will say, but what about anti-social behaviour in the here and now? Again, solidarity is the key. If workers are collectively organised, on the estates and in the communities, then it is possible to organise democratic and accountable defence organisations to police our communities.

Vigilantes

Such organisations have nothing in common with middle class vigilante patrols, which are accountable to nobody and incapable of being controlled by their communities. They would be responsible, on the spot patrols, capable of dealing with violent or other anti-social behaviour rapidly and being checked by their communities if they overstepped the mark.

Unlike the police they would not be paid servants of the bosses, indiscriminately harassing black people, criminalising youth, indifferent at best and hostile at worst to the working class community and its particular social needs.

By combining the fight for economic and social justice with building working class community patrols, we can develop an answer to the problem of crime. Nor is it an answer that just says "wait for socialism". It is an answer that points the struggle in the direction of socialism. ■

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

EDITORIAL

How to beat the BNP

For a United Front

The shock wave in the aftermath of Derek Beackon's election has to be utilised to build a real, active united front of the left, anti-racist groups, black organisations, Labour parties and trade unions. The leaders should issue a joint declaration of intent to combine their efforts to smash the BNP. But it shouldn't stop there.

Local committees should be built with accountable representatives of these groups and campaigns to plan the most effective action on the ground. This must involve the Anti-Nazi League and Youth Against Racism in Europe (sponsored by the SWP and Militant Labour respectively) abandoning their sectarian attempts to outmanoeuvre each other for influence.

They must go beyond their current commitment to a joint march on 16 October and co-ordinate their actions at all levels. The successful attempts of Workers Power branches to build Unity Committees to mobilise for the demo, involving ANL and YRE, in Manchester and Sheffield are just a hint of what could be achieved by such a united front.

For workers' action

Already 500 council staff in the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Centre have walked out in a protest strike against the election of Derek Beackon and BNP intimidation at the polling stations. Their local UNISON branch has proposed a boycott of all work with Beackon which they consider to be racist. This excellent initiative must be extended to a commitment to boycott all work with Beackon regardless, and in the event of the council chamber being used as a platform for fascism, bring the council's work to a grinding halt.

Such action will bring the staff into conflict with the council management and the law. To maintain a boycott in the face of this pressure they will need active solidarity, including a commitment from UNISON and other unions to strike in their support if they are victimised. There is a real groundswell of anger against the fascists throughout the trade unions. Let's use it to stop Beackon taking advantage of his victory, and to draw the strength of the organised working class into action against the Nazis.

No Platform for Fascists

The BNP are not just another political party. They are out and out Nazis. Fascism is distinct from other forms of reaction not just because of the virulence of its racism, its anti-semitism and opposition to democratic rights. It is different because it mobilises fighting gangs to conquer the streets and terrorise its opponents. The BNP is a party of thugs and killers.

If you turn the other cheek in the face of a fascist, he'll rip it off. That is why the working class needs to organise to deny them any platform for their views, any meetings where they spread their vile doctrines, any pitches where they sell their putrid literature, any marches, press conferences or election canvasses.

That can't be done by polite persuasion. The BNP has organised teams to mete out violence against its opponents. That is why we need to be ready to stop them physically, by any means necessary.

Build defence squads

To smash the BNP and deny them a platform, we need mass mobilisations against their every move. But that is not all. It is criminal to pit an unorganised mass against well-disciplined and organised fascist fighting detachments. That is why we need to build our own well-organised defence squads.

They should be built out of groups of workers and youth that know and trust each other, that can train together and prepare

effective actions. And they should be linked as closely as possible to the community and the working class organisations.

Defence squads should not simply be built out of small groups of people who are disconnected from any mass movement and substitute themselves for a mass campaign. Rather they should be part of the mass movement, an auxiliary arm of it. We need a campaign across the working class movement and black communities for the building of anti-fascist defence squads.

That way we can regularly repeat the success of 19 September when the BNP were driven from their regular sales pitch in East London's Brick Lane, a major Asian area. They were driven into a corner by 500 protesters and then seen off by a squad of under 30 organised anti-fascist fighters.

No reliance on the State

Many "opponents" of fascism and racism run scared when the stakes are upped in the struggle. The labour movement leaders and the middle class "anti-fascists" are terrified of the working class violence that is both necessary and possible to rout the fascist gangs. Instead they plead for the police to act, or for the state to ban the fascists' marches and meetings.

This brand of "anti-fascism" is worse than useless. It is dangerous. Every serious attempt in the last twenty years to demonstrate against the fascists has witnessed the police laying into the anti-fascists. In the 1970s Kevin Gateley and Blair Peach both died at the hands of the police while they were protesting against the fascists. Hundreds of anti-fascists have been arrested in the last two years.

Likewise, the police are the perpetrators of racist violence.

APPEAL
AFTER THE BNP ELECTION VICTORY:
For a united front to smash the BNP!

THE ELECTION of Derek Beackon in Millwall is the biggest victory for the fascists in Britain since the 1970s. The British National Party are now well known across the country. They have access to the media and council meetings to spread their message of division and racial hatred. We have to stop the BNP now. There is a burning need for united action against the BNP. We appeal for a united front to deny the fascists any platform for their poisonous ideas. That means:

- * Stop Beackon operating as a councillor
- * Stop all BNP demonstrations, rallies, door sales and canvassing
- * Close down the BNP HQ
- * Organise self defence against BNP attacks

The main pillars of labour movement, socialist and black organisations must now meet together at all levels. Their leaders should issue an immediate joint statement calling for a united anti-fascist movement. All demonstrations and rallies should be co-ordinated. United action must not be limited to the demo on October 16. We must end the BNP's pitch on whose the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) and Youth Against Racism in Europe (YARE) do not meet to plan a joint joint action. Open and representative committees should be built in every locality drawing in all those committed to action. They could win support and plan the most effective activity possible to destroy the BNP. We cannot afford to delay. Support this Appeal. Build the united front against fascism.

What you can do:
Work -

APPEAL
Workers Power has launched an urgent appeal for a united front of the main anti-racist, working class, socialist and black organisations to smash the BNP. Copies are available in bulk from your local Workers Power seller, and from Unity Appeal, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX. So don't delay! Sign the Appeal, and get your local trade union, ANL, YRE, ARA, SWP or Labour Party branch to back the call for the united front.

Ask Bangladeshi youth in East London to rely on the police to protect their communities and you will be laughed out of court.

Since the Public Order Act was brought in "against" Mosley's fascist Blackshirts in the 1930s, the state has used its powers to ban marches and meetings primarily against the workers' movement.

The answer is direct working class action, not reliance on the racist state.

Answer the Lies!

The BNP, as well as the Liberals and Tories like Winston Churchill, argue that black people are responsible for bad housing. This is rubbish. They do not cause bad housing, they are forced to live in it. The idea that Asians are being put up in five star hotels or have all the housing is a classic racist myth.

In Tower Hamlets as a whole 26% of the population are Asian and the same proportion of council property used to rehouse families goes to Asians. Under the racist "Sons and Daughters" policy they have less access to decent housing than even poor whites. The answer is not for working class people to fight over who should get the crumbs that the bosses throw in our direction, but to fight together for decent homes for all.

On the Isle of Dogs and every other area where the fascists and racists are active there must be a mass campaign taking class arguments against racism and social deprivation to the local working class, black and white. The majority in Millwall did not vote for the BNP. They must be the focus for a political fight against the ideas of the pro-Nazi minority, and an organised struggle to drive all BNP members and agitators physically out of the Isle of Dogs and back into the gutter where they belong.

Fight the system

Capitalism—production for private profit rather than public need—is the source of all the ills in this society: racism, unemployment, bad housing, poverty and crime. The fascists exist courtesy of capitalism, because in desperate moments they are capitalism's weapon of last resort against the working class.

Nobody should be fooled when the fascists use rhetoric against the rich to supplement their populist message. They are bosses' marks through and through. Their programme would leave the power of the millionaire capitalists intact, just as Hitler and Mussolini did in the 1930s.

In Britain today, the discrediting of the major political parties and institutions, and the mood of increasing discontent in the country as a whole, has led to a relative strengthening of the extreme poles of the political spectrum. The sudden rise of the BNP to national prominence is one sign of what this can lead to if socialists do not step into the vacuum.

But there is an alternative, an alternative which must base itself not on the least socially cohesive, least class conscious and least solidaristic sections of the population as the fascists do, but on the most determined, most political, most militant fighters for the interests of the whole of the working class, black and white. Out of those layers a political party can and must be built, around a programme that links the fight for the immediate needs of the working class to the fight for the revolutionary overthrow of the profit system.

That way we will not just destroy the fascist bands. We will ensure that fascism is wiped out for good, and with it the inequality and poverty that afflict millions. ■

Published every month by Workers Power (Britain).
BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX
ISSN 0263 - 1121
Printed by Newsfax International Ltd:
Unit 16, Bow Industrial Park, Carpenter's Rd, London E15

workers power MEETINGS

BIRMINGHAM:

Fascism: What it is and how to fight it

Mon 4 October, 8pm

See sellers for venue.

Workers Aid to Bosnia

Public Launch

Tue 19 October, 7.30pm

Summersfield centre
Dudley Rd

CARDIFF:

Capitalism and Socialism; an introduction to revolutionary politics

Thurs 7 October

See sellers for venue

Why we need a revolutionary party

Mon 18 October, 7.30pm

Sandringham Hotel,
St Mary's Street.

LEICESTER:

Fascism - What it is and how to Fight it (plus video)

Mon 4 Oct 7.30pm

See sellers for venue

Public Meeting

The Fight for Workers Power

Wed 20 Oct 7.30pm

Castle Community Rooms
Tower Street Leicester

Student meetings

Fascism What it is and how to fight it: speaker from Tower Hamlets YRE

Mon 11 October, 1.30pm

Room 3 Student Union
Building, Leicester University

Bosnia - No imperialist solutions!

Mon 25 October 1.30pm

Room 3 Student Union
Building, Leicester University

LONDON:

Israel and Palestine - a just peace?

Wed 29 September, 7.30pm

Why the BNP won and how to stop them

Wed 13 October, 7.30pm

Both meetings held in Room
S419, St Clement's Building,
LSE, Houghton Street, WC2

SHEFFIELD:

Public meeting

How to fight Racism and Fascism

Wed 13 October, 7.30pm

The Grapes, Trippett Lane

Student meeting

Bosnia - No Imperialist Solutions

Thurs 7 October, 7.30pm

The Lounge, Sheffield
University Students Union

Bolshie Broads meeting

Where is Britain Going?

Mon 4th October

See sellers for venue

MANCHESTER:

Student meetings

Is Capitalism Collapsing?

Thurs 7 October 12.30pm

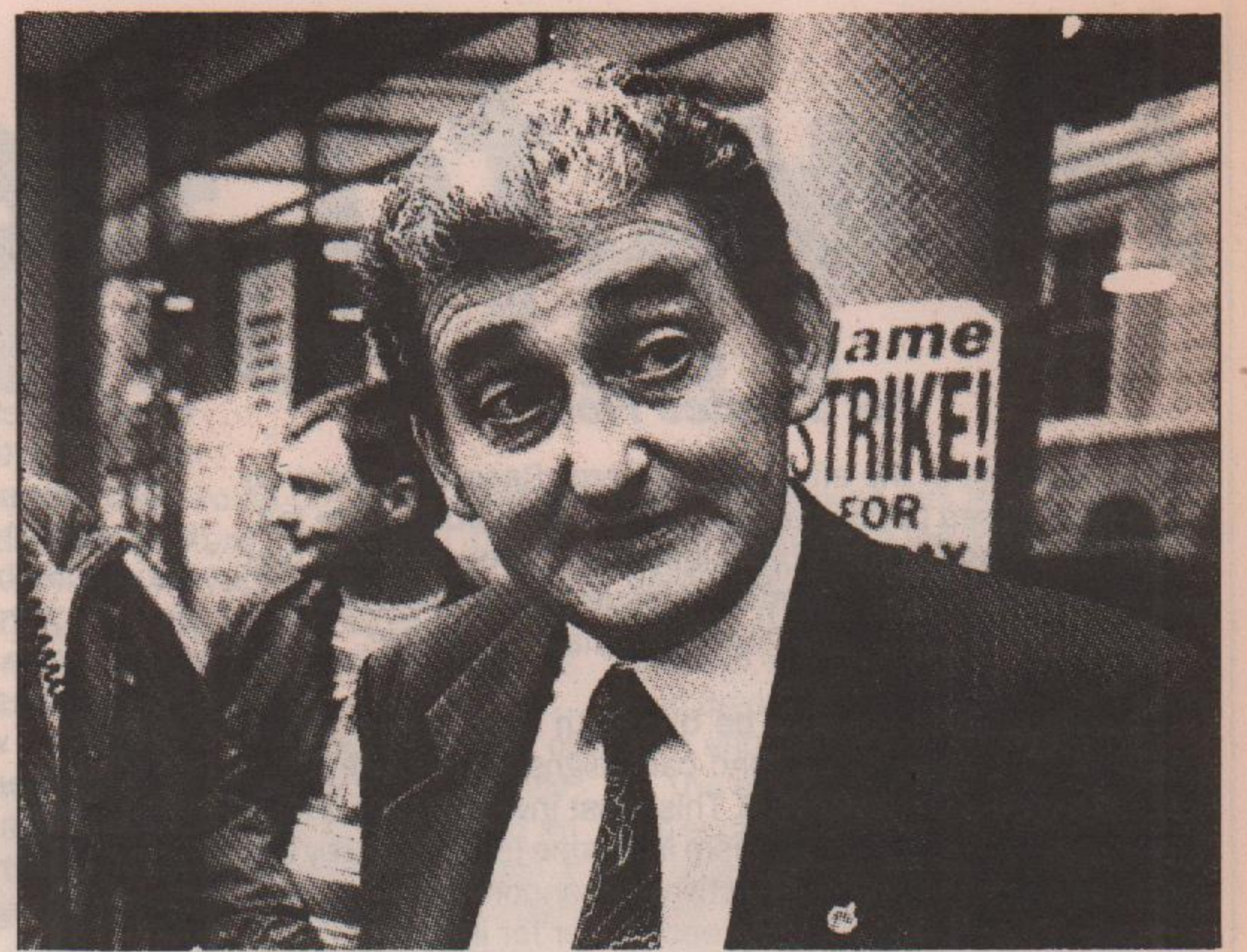
Manchester Metropolitan
Students Union
3rd Floor Salam Chamber

Where is Britain Going?

Wed 20 October 12.30pm

Manchester Metropolitan
Students Union
3rd Floor
New committee room

Firefighters prepare for action



Ken Cameron

THE FIRE Brigades Union (FBU) special delegate conference vote for strike action is an example to all public sector workers. The three to one majority was won despite threats from some employers to sack workers who strike.

In November we could have the first national firefighters' strike action since 1977/78. It has taken four months to get this far.

In May conference voted unanimously for a strike ballot. For all of the leadership's fighting talk they dithered over taking action and it is still possible that they will back

down unless they are held firm by the rank and file. A strike could have been fought and won by now.

The firefighters are in a very strong position. Both the union and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) agree that deploying police and troops to operate forty-year old fire engines (the "Green Goddesses"), a quarter of which are unroadworthy, would cost more than meeting the claim in full.

Public sympathy for the firefighters is high. Kenneth Clarke's announcement of next year's nought per cent pay freeze

could boost it massively if the struggle is seen as linked into all public sector claims. A successful firefighters' strike would raise the confidence of other workers who are also faced with cuts and the freeze. It would encourage them to take action. But there are real dangers in the approach the leadership is taking.

FBU leader, Ken Cameron, is restricting all of his arguments to the service itself. Fighting the claim as a "special case" will certainly keep the TUC leaders happy. They have explicitly come out against even a synchronisation of public

sector claims.

It will keep the Tories and the employers happy as well. They are banking on different sections of public sector workers pleading special cases. This keeps workers divided and prevents a generalised fightback against imposed pay norms.

The ballot, for a series of one day strikes, is not the most effective way to win the firefighters' claim. They are demanding the restoration of the 1978 deal, achieved by the national strike, that links firefighters to the top 25% of manual workers' earnings. This year's pay

restraint limit of 1.5% tears up that agreement.

There is no guarantee that firefighters would be exempt from next year's pay freeze despite the employers' assurances that the formula will be reinstated—they already have waste baskets full of torn-up agreements. Any backing away from action by the FBU now will guarantee that the employers, egged on by the Tories will tear up the deal for good.

The real danger exists that the employers will sit out a series of one day actions. Members will become disillusioned with action which cannot win and the leadership will move in to deliver a deal which is less than the full claim. This is the lesson of many such campaigns of one day actions, most recently on the London buses where the employers succeeded in tearing up existing contracts.

The best way to reinstate the agreement, for good not just this year, is through an all out indefinite strike as in 1977/78. The firefighters need to immediately link up with other public sector workers to smash the proposed pay freeze, the best way of guaranteeing their own agreement. This sort of action, firmly under the control of rank and file members could bring a swift victory that would punch a hole right through the Tories' pay limit. ■

UCH

Lessons of the strike

THE STRIKE at University College Hospital (UCH) is over. In their seventh week of strike action nurses and porters fighting to stop the hospital's closure were told by London UNISON that official backing for the strike had been withdrawn.

Despite massive public support, a day of solidarity strike action and a ward occupation, managers at UCH have succeeded in closing the four wards they targeted at the beginning of the dispute. As a condition of the return to work management withdrew six disciplinary charges against stewards.

Dispute

The UCH dispute holds many lessons, positive and negative, for the continuing fight against the effects of the NHS internal market.

The most important thing was that a strike was called in the first place. Many health workers in the past have suffered defeat because they accepted the Labour and trade union leaders' argument that strike action loses public sympathy.

Even many NHS militants have rejected Workers Power's argument over the last two years that, where possible, a single hospital or section should strike and seek to spark a generalised fight. Instead they counterposed union-called "days of action" as the way forward.

It is vital that nobody, either on the left or in the bureaucracy, is allowed to draw the lesson that the UCH strike itself was a mistake.

Not only could it have been the start of a fight to save the closed wards, it was the best possible opportunity to begin a generalised fight in the London NHS.

Strikers visited many other hospitals in a bid to gain support, but in the end only the UCH's sister hospital, the Middlesex, took two separate days

of solidarity strike action.

Strikers put considerable resources into building support amongst other workers, culminating in a large mid-day demonstration on Thursday 16 September. Delegations of teachers on half day solidarity strike joined bus workers, postal workers and many local estate groups outside the freshly occupied Ward 2/3.

So with good rank and file control, initial union backing, massive sympathy, solidarity action and even a ward occupation, what went wrong?

First, despite a large vote of over 130 in the UNISON branch ballot for strike action the strike was not made solid. Many *Project 2000* student nurses (college based trainees) were prevented from striking. As the strike wore on other student nurses were forced back to work because of threats to fail them.

This doesn't mean that student nurses cannot strike—many did. But the union has to be seen to be strong enough to prevent management and tutors victimising students who strike. But management were also able to successfully intimidate even the leading stewards with injunctions and disciplinary charges.

Occupation

Secondly there should have been an effective occupation of the whole hospital from day one.

Last December UCH nurses struck and occupied Ward 2.1, successfully preventing its closure. The occupation effectively seized control over emergency cover from the managers.

This time the management seized back that control by locking out all strikers in the first week. Strikers were physically prevented from returning to wards where they were needed for emergency cover. An occupation could have taken the fight to management.

Unfortunately the rank and file leadership of the strike, many of them Socialist Workers Party (SWP) members, accepted the argument that "we don't want to play cat and mouse with patients", and delayed arguing for and organising an occupation. An occupation would not have been easy—but it was not argued for, which was a big mistake.

Support

When, finally, a collection of strike supporters, strikers and local residents did occupy the already closed Ward 2/3 on 15 September the effect was electrifying. Support for the strike grew in the hospital, press attention was focused on the dispute and management momentarily panicked. But by then two of the four wards were closed.

Once it became clear that management had control of the hospital the strike's leaders turned to the argument that "only solidarity from other workers can win". Whilst the solidarity fought for and delivered was unprecedented in the London labour movement since the ambulance dispute, this ducked the issue.

The fact remains that health workers can take action and win without solidarity action. And more importantly solidarity action is no substitute for a solid strike in the hospital.

Thirdly, while the strike was totally democratically organised, with daily strikers' meetings and stewards' control, the UNISON bureaucracy was still able to sell out the dispute.

This shows the need for more than simply rank and file control. There is a crying need for rank and file organisation that can hold the bureaucracy to account and remove them when they sell out. But then some of the strike's leaders had already played a role in running down the only cross London rank and file body—the London Health

Workers Co-ordinating Committee—soon after the SWP and Militant took joint control of it in October last year.

The Committee was certainly not a strong organisation, but it did assemble over 60 stewards from across London. It fell victim to the sectarianism of Militant and the SWP, who have been repeatedly prepared to tell militants: "if you want an organisation to link up the rank and file, join our party".

But without a rank and file organisation we can't even begin to translate local struggles and activity into a lever against the bureaucracy's ultimate control. We are left having to applaud them when they give backing and denounce them when they withdraw it.

Militant

Every militant trade unionist, especially comrades in the SWP who played a major role in the dispute, have to draw the lesson from UCH: that the fight for a rank and file movement is essential, not an optional extra or a "diversion" from building revolutionary socialist organisations.

The fight at UCH may have been set back but it is not over yet. Management face the task of closing eight more wards before they can sell the lucrative property that has provided health care for central London workers for a century.

At nearby Middlesex action is being threatened over nurse downgrading. And the threat still hangs over both hospitals that Camden and Islington Health Authority will withdraw all patients in 1994, closing both hospitals for good.

Middlesex/UCH will remain at the centre of the Tory health crisis, not just because they have become symbols of the madness of the internal market system. They have become real centres of resistance. ■

ELSARF

Teaching racists a lesson

East London teachers launch a new anti-racist initiative this month: East London Schools Against Racism and Fascism (ELSARF). Its aims are simple. To monitor racist attacks and police violence, to mobilise on the basis of no platform for fascists and to support anti-racist and anti-fascist activities and organisations initiated by students. The Campaign's commitment to support the defence of the youth arrested after the Qaddafi Ali vigil is particularly important at the moment.

ELSARF could become a model initiative not just for education workers but in all services and industries. Education workers are well-placed to link up with and involve local youth in the campaign as well as to monitor racist and police violence.

Workplace and community activity and a clear commitment to no platform are combined to make ELSARF just the sort of initiative we need at the moment. Workers Power supporters are committed to building ELSARF and we urge all of our readers in the area to do the same. You live outside East London? Why not set up something along the same lines in your area? ■



LABOUR What price party democracy?

sive elections and is now down to a claimed 200,000 paid up members because voters identify it too closely with the unions and the accompanying "outdated" ideals of collective action, solidarity and socialism.

The opposite is the case. The party has suffered a long-term decline because it failed to firmly identify itself with the working class and its struggles.

It has refused to fight for policies that offer a real alternative to the Tories. It has declined because it has alienated its mass base of working class support through decades of betrayal.

A recent survey revealed that 25% of members who have left the party identified "abandonment of principles" as their reason for leaving, another 25% cited disagreement with specific policies, the most important being the party's support for military intervention in the Gulf.

All of the polls and the pundits show that the last election was lost on policies, not because of Labour's

relations with the unions.

Today the leadership is in a cleft stick over the union link.

It is on a trajectory that could end with a party that has severed all its links with organised workers. At the same time it is dependent on the unions for money. The bureaucrats are simply terrified that they will lose their voice in parliament, and do not have democracy in mind when they challenge Smith.

The block vote not only needs defending it also needs democratising, but this does not mean accepting the NEC's idea of democracy.

- Take the block vote out of the hands of the bureaucrats—for democratic elections of union delegates to all Labour Party conferences.
- Fight for the block vote to be cast proportionately in accordance with votes cast at democratic union conferences
- All union representatives in the Labour Party to be democratically elected and accountable to levy paying members.■

AS WE go to press, John Smith is threatening to resign if the party conference rejects his plans to reduce the unions' role in the party. Good. The prospect of kicking out the most lacklustre Labour leader for years is the best possible encouragement for delegates to vote down his proposals.

The Tory press, and liberal papers like the *Guardian*, are full of articles calling on Labour to "modernise itself" by reducing the link with the unions to a minimum. They even dare to argue that it would be more "democratic" to give millions of trade unionists no say at all in choosing the party leadership.

Of course none of these democrats would dream of criticising the fact that the MPs already get as much say as all of the 200,000 constituency members put together. After all, that is the type of conference democracy that the Tories have always had: total control for the parliamentary fractions while the members only get the chance to express themselves during the standing ovations.

The leadership of all the TUC affiliated unions, with the exception of the AEEU, are against the NEC's proposals for weakening the union link. Even John Edmonds of the GMB, a key figure in winning Smith the party leadership contest, is standing up to his old pal. The union leaders have already accepted a reduction to seventy per cent of the vote at conference but the proposed "levy plus" scheme is too much for them to swallow.

This would exclude affiliated trade unions from having a separate vote in elections for local parliamentary candidates.

Rather than having an automatic say in the life of the party, members of affiliated unions would have to pay three pounds on top of their political levy to get membership and have a say. On top of that, the NEC proposals will stop the majority of constituency parties and any unions with less than 200,000 members putting resolutions to conference!

The so-called halfway house proposal which is before the conference is to draw up a register of supporters from levy-paying members of the affiliated unions. It will have the same result, eroding the influence of the unions on the party exercised through the block vote. The leverage that the organised working class could have on the parliamentary party and the leadership—already limited enough because of the bureaucracy within the unions—will be even weaker.

The basic premise of the reformers' strategy is wrong. They believe that the Party has lost four succes-

NATFHE

Stop the sell-out!

THE LEADERSHIP of the college teachers' union, NATFHE, has backed off from the fight against new contracts in colleges. The union leadership called off a planned one day national strike in September and entered negotiations with the College Employers' Forum (CEF). The talks will include "all contractual issues". This means the contracts of all existing staff and those of new starters are in jeopardy.

The union leadership has hailed this as a "victory" because the CEF has agreed to talk, and in the meantime no more colleges will introduce new contracts. But the estimated seventy institutions that have already brought in new contracts will be allowed to continue. The CEF has made clear that it will return to its college-by-college approach in January.

NATFHE activists are furious at the sell-out. Militants grouped in the Socialist Lecturers Alliance have consistently argued that the union should go on the offensive to force the withdrawal of all new contracts through all-out strike action. Unfortunately the left failed to overturn the leadership's strategy at the Sectoral Conference on 25 September. Representatives from the "moderate" areas argued that members were relieved not to be taking action and wanted negotiations.

Against this, delegates from the more militant areas pointed out that members were willing to take action if given a clear lead and if told the truth about the dangers that face them. Head office failed to issue a single leaflet about the planned September strike. Branch activists worked hard to win support only to be told it was called off. However, there remain opportunities to prevent this climb down leading to a total sell-out. About a third of the conference delegates were hostile to the leadership's action and a resolution which congratulated the negotiators only just scraped a majority.

Activists are now faced with a number of urgent tasks. One is to fight for action in the colleges where new contracts are already in place. This is now an uphill struggle, especially as any new balloting for action is supposed to take place under the

new Tory law which means a vote could take seven or eight weeks to complete. Not surprisingly, the CEF has advised college management that they do not expect that NATFHE can organise any further action before Christmas.

The CEF can be proved wrong if local militants immediately fight for a commitment to action in the affected colleges, demand support from head office and fight for both a proper levy and solidarity action from other branches.

There are many other issues where managers are going on the offensive including the tearing up of procedure agreements, imposing new disciplinary codes and trying to increase teaching loads, all of which must be resisted.

Jobs are on the line in a number of colleges where enrolments have fallen and funding is threatened. Fighting redundancies and new contracts must go hand in hand. If branches capitulate on jobs this will give the bosses added confidence. And if new contracts come in each teacher will work longer hours and force others out of work.

Wales Region has called a "Stop the Sell-Out" conference which will discuss these issues and plan a campaign against the threatened sell-out. It will have to plan a propaganda offensive to convince rank and file members that it is possible to defend existing conditions through strike action.

The conference also gives us an opportunity to convince more members of the need for a rank and file movement in the union, capable of organising at college, area and national level. The leaders of our union involved in selling our conditions must be removed and replaced by militant fighters. NATFHE members must take the opportunity to build the Socialist Lecturers Alliance and ensure that it is committed to this task.■

Stop the Sell-Out Conference
Saturday October 9
2.00-5.00pm
Hotel Diplomat
St Mary Street, Cardiff
Admission £2

STUDENTS NUS MUST FIGHT!

"DO THINK there is a very strong moral argument for saying that those who benefit from higher education for a lifetime should make some contribution, as indeed they do through the present loan system."

This was John Patten's Tory-speak for yet another attack on students' ability to have access to higher education. Not content with reducing students to unprecedented levels of poverty through cutting grants and forcing them into debt through the loans system, the Tories are now about to hit students with massive tuition fees!

Fees are currently paid by local authorities. The money is part of the grants system originally set up to enable students, rich or poor, to attend the university or polytechnic of their choice. Now all this is up for grabs. Another idea being floated is to make students pay a graduate tax throughout their working life. The more favoured proposal is to make students pay "top-up fees" for

their tuition. The local authorities would pay part, the students the rest.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, the top management of the universities, have suggested a combination of the two. Students would pay fees but through a graduate tax that would be paid when they begin work.

The Tories would like to make students pay for the whole of their education. Of course if you come from a wealthy family, like the top Tories money will not be a worry. But for most students it will mean further hardship and further years of indebtedness. With graduate unemployment at its highest ever there is no guarantee that many will even get a job when they have finished their studies.

It should come as no surprise that at the same time the Tories are planning fresh attacks on student unions. They want to prevent student unions from meeting these attacks by banning them from taking

part in "political campaigns". They also hope to destroy the National Union of Students (NUS) as a national organisation.

They propose to split up the areas of funding for the student unions so that money can only be used for "core" services but not for "non-core" (i.e. political) services. They want student unions to become purely beer and social clubs and intend to give the university and college authorities new powers to police these rules.

The NUS is in a pathetic state to face these attacks. Dominated by right wing Labourites, the NUS has set its face against any direct action campaigns, even the episodic ones it used to organise. The new realist NUS has set out to defend itself by putting forward "reasonable" and sensible arguments in order to convince sympathetic Tories to change their policies. In their enthusiasm to demonstrate their "moderation" the leadership even pushed through a proposal last year to turn itself into a

"charity" barring themselves from political action!

They have sought to ally themselves with the Vice-Chancellors and Principals to get them to plead with the government as to how moderate and useful the national NUS is. All this has been to no avail. The Tories have steamed ahead with their attack.

The NUS may not even bother to oppose the idea of students contributing to fees. Labour is producing a Green Paper also looking at different ways to make students pay for their education. They will most likely opt for some form of a graduate tax. In principle they will have accepted the Tories argument that students should pay fees.

We will have to organise to make the NUS fight, whichever scheme the Tories decide on. We will have to commit the NUS to a policy that makes it absolutely clear that students should not have to pay for their education. It is a right not a privilege.

We cannot afford to wait for the NUS leaders to start a campaign against these payments or in defence of student unions. The current leadership has no fight in it. We need to organise action at colleges and area level now, linking up with other colleges around the country. Such a campaign must be based on militant demonstrations and campus occupations.

This campaign should lay the ground for an alternative, fighting, student union organisation if the NUS capitulates before the Tory proposals and bans political and campaigning action from its organisation.

We must also link up with the struggles of the workers on campus. We can start such a campaign by getting every student union to build for a massive and militant demonstration in Manchester on 3 November against the latest Tory attacks on students.■

National Demonstration
Hands off our student unions!
No to graduate tax!
Wednesday 3 November,
Assemble 12 noon, All Saints Park,
Oxford Rd, Manchester. Called by
Manchester Area NUS.

Tories head for tax crisis

LAST MONTH a Tory Councillor went on TV to suggest that single mothers should have their benefits stopped if they had another child. Meanwhile health managers in Camden announced they would stop sending patients to their two main Central London hospitals, effectively closing them next year. In the same month British Rail wiped ten thousand trains from its timetable, and Kenneth Clarke announced that the wages of five million workers would be cut next year.

The crisis of public spending lies behind all of these attacks. Despite more than a decade of spending cuts the Tories are having to borrow nearly £1 billion a week to finance public spending.

Like the debate over Europe, the issue of coping with this debt is a major source of division within the Tories' ranks.

Even the relatively minor tax extension they announced last March—VAT on fuel—threatens to turn the Tory Conference into a bear garden. The wider debate on long term answers to the government's debt crisis threatens to tear the Tory party in two. Whatever the outcome, a sharp attack on workers' living standards is guaranteed.

Opposition

The opposition to income tax rises as the solution to this crisis has deep roots in the party. In their 1979 election manifesto the Tories wrote:

"The state takes too much of the nation's income; its share must be steadily reduced. When it spends and borrows too much, taxes, interest rates, prices and unemployment rise so that in the long run there is less wealth with which to improve our standard of living and social services."

Thatcher's aim was to cut state spending, reduce borrowing and reduce taxation. On the eve of the recent recession she seemed to have achieved all three.

Chancellor Nigel Lawson presided over one tax handout after another to the rich and to the best paid sectors of the working class. However the latest recession threw new light on the Tories' public spending and borrowing achievements.

Public spending crept back up to over 42% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from a 1988-89 low of 39%. More dramatically the trend in government borrowing has been reversed. The Institute of Fiscal Studies expects total state borrowing to reach £54 billion in 1994. This represents a jump from a Public Sector Borrowing Requirement equal to 3.75% of GDP in 1991-92 to an expected 7.5% of GDP next year. Compare this to 1987-91 when there was no state borrowing at all!

Borrowing

The Economist, along with most Tory commentators, consoles itself with the view that:

"Most of the extra borrowing is caused by the inevitable cyclical effects of recession in squeezing tax revenues and boosting expenditure on e.g. unemployment pay."

This is not true. As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has warned, Britain faces a deeply-rooted structural debt problem, over and above the effects of the recession.

Public spending grew by an estimated 26.2% at constant prices between 1979 and 1991. But some areas benefited and others were ruthlessly slashed.

Defence spending grew overall by 17%. "Law and order and protection services" registered the

largest rise, at 79.7%. Meanwhile most of the sectors representing real gains in public services made by the working class during the post war boom fell, some of them dramatically. Government spending on housing fell by 50.5%. "Trade, industry, energy and employment" spending fell by 26.8%.

rich less hard.

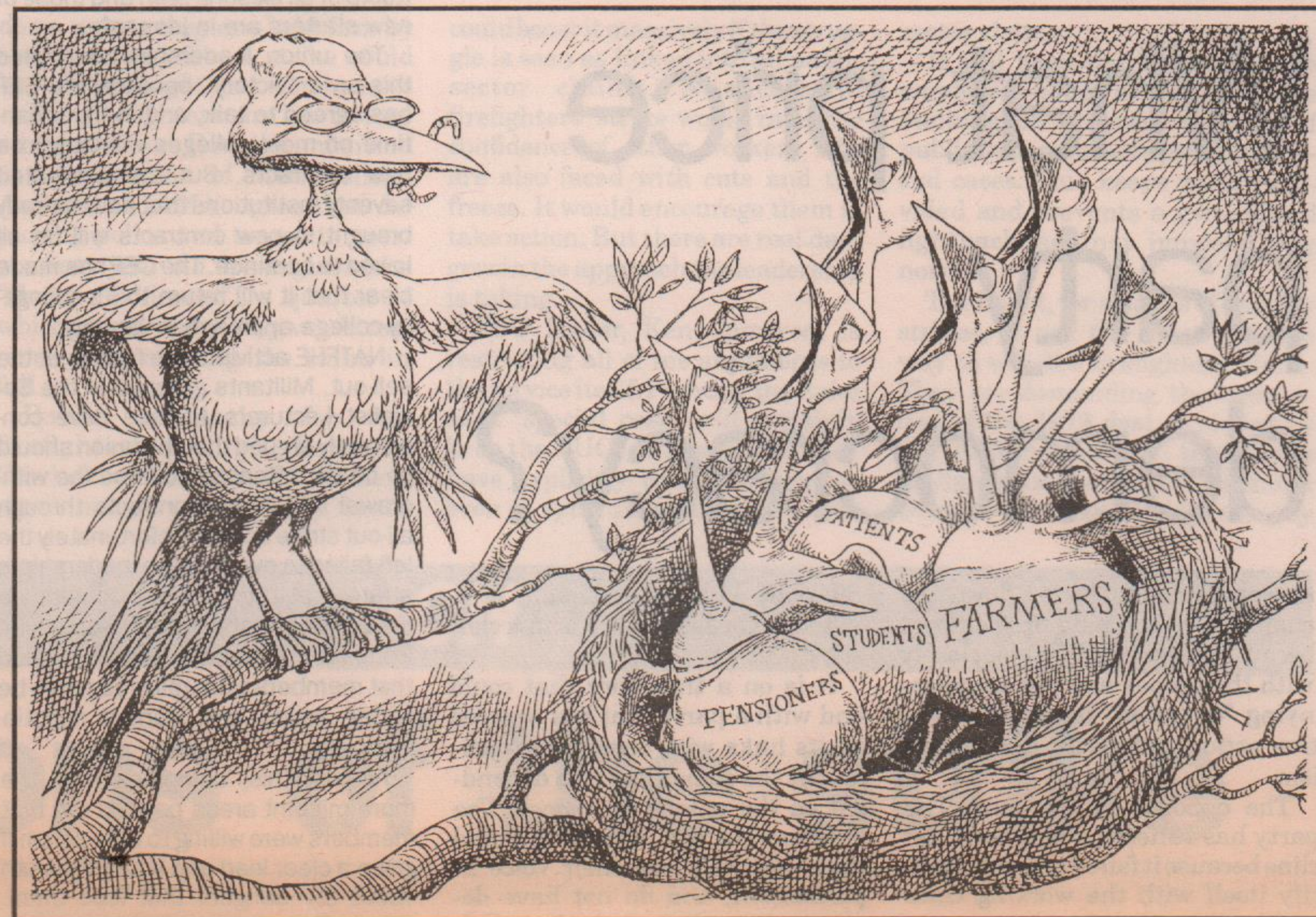
But income tax is only one form of taxation. Cuts for the better off have been offset with rises in indirect taxation. These taxes are not at all "progressive" (i.e. rising according to income levels). They are "regressive". The millionaire and the unemployed youth pay the

shift from rich to poor via the Poll Tax. When this failed a further 2.5% was added to VAT, raising it to 17.5% in order to pay for a reversal of the ten year trend in local taxation.

As a result taxation levels increased under Thatcher, and continued to rise under Major. Taking into account corporate taxes, taxation accounted for 37.6% of GDP in 1988-89 compared with 33.1% in 1979. Within this rise the balance was altered in favour of the capitalists and against workers.

The poorest tenth of the population is poorer than it was in 1979, in part because it pays more tax as a proportion of its income than any other sector, and is set to be stung even harder by VAT on fuel.

With the current economic "recovery" proving weak and shallow, the Tories are faced with an immediate and strategic choice: raise taxes and alienate their middle class and upper working class voting base even further, or cut spending drastically—or do a bit of both.



The Tory view of the public spending crisis

Like many anti-working class governments, the Tories bought their electoral support by featherbedding the middle class and some skilled workers who still had jobs.

The one enormous rise in public spending which nominally "benefited" the working class was the rise in social security payments which totalled 77.1% over the period. Less spectacularly, but importantly, health spending rose by 40.4% and represented 14.2% of all government spending by 1991, the highest proportion ever.

The Tories may have cut public spending and redistributed what is left in favour of the bosses, but the benefits system and the NHS show that they have not yet fundamentally solved the problems they set out to in 1979.

The same picture emerges when we look at tax. "Thatcher brought us tax cuts" is one of the great myths of Toryism.

The real picture is more complicated. When we look at sources of government revenue in Britain the biggest remains income tax. Throughout the last decade the Tories have focused on lowering general levels of income tax and on making the system less "progressive"—i.e. making it hit the

same indirect tax. Value Added Tax (VAT) is the most well known indirect, regressive tax.

Thatcher's first budget almost doubled VAT (from 8% to 15%). Between 1979 and 1990 the share of local government costs levied through local taxation grew from 18% to 27%. Within this growing burden of local taxation Thatcher attempted a massive regressive

TAX THE RICH!

TAXES SHOULD be aimed at the super-rich. There should be a swingeing tax on unearned wealth. Those who try to run away and become tax exiles must forfeit every penny they've got.

We oppose so-called "indirect" taxes, which effect everyone no matter how much they earn, like VAT on fuel. Under the Council Tax the biggest and most expensive properties are taxed only three times more than the smallest

homes, even though they are worth ten times as much.

Instead of this daylight robbery workers must demand a steeply progressive income tax, on a local and a national level, that hits the richest the hardest.

That is why we should oppose any attempt to slap an across the board increase on the lowest rate of tax or to penalise workers and the lower middle class for the crisis of the bosses' system. ■

Like many anti-working class governments, the Tories bought their electoral support by featherbedding the middle class and some skilled workers who still had jobs. They divided the working class, accusing the millions of poor and unemployed of being "scroungers" and wasting "taxpayers' money". Tax cuts were crucial in buying upper working class and middle class support.

Because of their general unpopularity in the country, many Tories are desperate to avoid attacking this voting base through any talk of further tax increases. Another source of opposition to using taxation as a solution is the organised neo-Thatcherite right wing who see Major undoing the "revolution" of the 1980s and regard tax increases as the symbol of all this.

The Tory right favours an all out assault on the two major areas of government spending. They want to completely abolish the principle of universal benefits and introduce even more stringent conditions and means testing on everything from child benefit, to the dole, and housing benefit.

Noose

At the same time they are determined to make the NHS internal market tighten like a noose around free health care. Already a million are waiting for treatment. But the Tory right is insisting that Major implements real cuts in the budget of NHS fund holders and trusts. It will lead to a spate of hospital and bed closures, with BUPA waiting in the wings for the few who can afford private health.

The Tory leadership—Major and Clarke—insist they will not rule out tax increases. They are desperate to avoid provoking opposition from Tory pensioners and middle class voters, 5 million public sector workers and three to four million unemployed all at once.

That is why they are casting around for some form of tax increase that will begin to claw back the £50 billion the government owes to the bankers and city bosses.

Whatever balancing act Clarke performs in his November budget the pay freeze, health and education cuts and attacks on benefits are guaranteed. Whether all that comes with a double whammy of VAT on more basic goods, or even a penny on income tax, it should be met with a huge protest movement.

Strike

The TUC should call a one day strike on the day the budget is announced. That should be backed up by a week of mass protest to rival the week the Poll Tax was introduced. All over the country workers should be raising the arguments against the coming budget bombshell, showing how every one of the attacks flow from the budget and how they could all be stopped at source if the budget is defeated.

Last autumn it was the threat of mass strike action that forced a few Tories into temporary opposition over pit closures. Even now the Tory right is threatening to vote against or abstain on any budget that raises income tax. Meanwhile the wetter wing of the Tory party is under pressure to stage its own revolt over spending cuts and VAT on fuel.

No worker should rely on Tory rebels to defeat Major and Clarke. The best way of making the Tories self destruct is if the workers' movement leads a mass revolt over the coming budget—a revolt designed to mobilise millions in a fight to drive the Tories from office for good. ■

ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

Revolutionary capitalists?

FOR MANY years bourgeois historians have treated the English Revolution of the seventeenth century as a purely constitutional or religiously motivated struggle. It was a deviation from the normal "gradualist" path of development in Britain. Above all, they tell us, it had nothing to do with the class struggle.

Such an explanation of the English Revolution is self-serving. It underlines the message, drummed into us with mind-numbing regularity at school and in the media, that revolution and violence in the course of the class struggle are "un-British", and as such, unnecessary.

The English Revolution itself was an aberrant interlude, never to be repeated and always to be regarded with some embarrassment. That is why they still cover up the statue of Oliver Cromwell when the Queen visits Parliament!

In this case we can declare, with some justification, that "history is bunk". Any history that divorces the events of the English Revolution from the struggle of classes, from the revolutionary victory of the bourgeoisie over the remnants of feudalism, which was necessary to clear the way for the development of capitalism, is bunk.

Faced with the Marxist explanation of the English Revolution as a class struggle from which the bourgeoisie emerged victorious, bourgeois historians recoil. They have attempted to deny the bourgeois character of the revolution by highlighting the role of the petit bourgeoisie, as against the bourgeoisie proper, in the revolution, or pointing to bourgeois forces ranged against the revolutionaries. Similar arguments are used by revisionist historians to deny the bourgeois revolutionary character of the French Revolution of 1789.

These seemingly convincing arguments do not stand up any better than earlier revisionist interpretations of the English Revolution. The important point is that revolutions in general are made by the masses. In seventeenth century Britain the masses were predominantly petit bourgeois, yeoman farmers, artisans and the like. The bourgeoisie then, as now, was a minority of the population. But the revolution's goals were bourgeois and the bourgeoisie played a pivotal role in leading and underwriting the revolution.

Likewise, the fact that sections of the bourgeoisie opposed the revolution is no mystery. Some bourgeois elements feared the scope of the revolution, just as they did in France after 1789. Either such sections had a material stake in maintaining the old order and fought accordingly or they soon turned against the revolution for fear that its democratic dynamic would threaten their rule in the new order.

Proof

In *Merchants and Revolution* Robert Brenner provides important proof for the Marxist explanation of the bourgeois character of the English Revolution. He shows how English merchants, a key section of the nascent bourgeoisie, were central both in bolstering the absolutist monarchy of the Tudors and Stuarts and in creating a new capitalist class who fought for its overthrow.

Capitalism grew within the absolutist state, supported by the creation of a national market and a state apparatus capable of defending its trading interests overseas. But the monarchy became increasingly unable to fund its growing obligations from traditional sources of revenue.

To pay debts it sold land. The sale of land lowered the royal income and in turn increased its debts. The monarchy became ever more dependent on the City of London and Parliament for loans and new taxes in order to maintain the state machine. The English monarchy faced a "scissors crisis".

Thus it supported the expansion of trade, because this provided a method of raising funds which did not rely on the City or Parliament, and increased the monarchy's independence vis-à-vis the rising bourgeois class. The sale of merchant monopolies was the vehicle for this expansion. These monopolies restricted the right to trade to "mere merchants", excluding the manufacturing capitalists. A fresh source of income and a powerful group of royalists amongst the monopolists were created. The crown levied extremely high import duties. By 1640 these duties accounted for 40% of Charles I's revenue.

Brenner details the rise of a major monopoly merchant: the Levant Company. It controlled the import of commodities, like currants, from the Far East. There was a massive and growing demand for these in the English market. Under Charles I the Levant Company was the backbone of the royalist City establishment.

Development

The development of trade, however, meant that a new class of commercial seafarers, shopkeepers and small manufacturers arose. These merchants wanted to export to their particular markets but were prevented from doing so by the monopoly restrictions. They had to seek out new markets not protected by monopoly privileges. The discovery of the Americas gave this group the impetus they required. As Marx noted in the *Communist Manifesto*:

"The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East Indian and Chinese markets, the colonisation of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange, and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development."

The Americas were therefore central to the development of a new group of merchant capitalists, distinct from the old monopoly merchants. They were to play a key role in the Parliamentary opposition to the King and in the civil war itself.

The Americas were significant because the Virginia Company—which had been established as a traditional monopoly merchant company in 1609—collapsed in 1624. Its backers were not prepared to engage in the creation of plantations which were necessary to ensure the regular supply of tobacco and sugar for the English market. Monopoly merchants refused to engage in production because their charters restricted them to being "mere merchants", and because easier and more lucrative profits could be garnered from expanding far eastern trade.

The new capitalist merchant class had no option but to take up the opportunity presented to them. They were unable to invest in the foreign markets open to the monopolists, and as they arose not from merchant families but outside the ruling elite they

Bill Jenkins
reviews
*Merchants and Revolution:
Commercial Change, Political
Conflict, and London's Overseas
Traders, 1550-1653*
By Robert Brenner
Cambridge University Press 1993

had no prejudice against engaging in production. In addition their close links with London's developing urban bourgeoisie meant they were able to establish firm ties with the leading Parliamentary oppositionists, and had a ready base to organise mass protest action at the outbreak of the revolution in 1640-42.

Through pioneering the use of slaves, it was these bourgeois merchants who began trade with Africa and who controlled the provisioning of the new colonies from England. It was from their American base that they undertook piratical raids against their Spanish rivals. They used their base in the colonies to promote radical Protestant ministers, and support the Parliamentary opposition in England.

They demanded free trade, and an aggressive anti-Spanish foreign policy. They had close links with capitalist merchants in the United Provinces (Holland), which was England's chief trading rival, and supported them against the Spanish King. They were fiercely opposed to Charles I's concessions to "papism", and his attempts to levy unparliamentary taxes. They supported the oppositionist MPs in the Parliament and were in the forefront of opposition to the imposition of Ship Money in 1636.

The unstable alliance between the developing bourgeoisie and the absolutist monarch was breaking down. Rather than a war against Spain as the new merchants demanded, Charles I adopted a conciliatory po-

litical foreign policy. This allowed him to avoid expensive wars which increased his dependence on Parliament, maintain peaceful trade routes for his monopoly merchant allies, and aid his campaign against the radical Protestant sects who were closely allied to the developing bourgeoisie.

In 1640, following the invasion of England by the Scots, the crisis of the feudal regime came to a head. Charles I was unable to raise the necessary funds to muster an army against them and was forced to recall Parliament. When it tried to place conditions on its support, Charles immediately dissolved the Short Parliament. But in spite of a loan of £250,000 from the Levant Company, he had no choice but to recall it again in the autumn.

The new merchant leadership were at the heart of the parliamentary opposition to the King and supported and organised much of the opposition against him. They demanded the impeachment and execution of Stafford, and mobilised their supporters amongst the small traders and apprentices in the City to ensure it happened.

They supported the Root and Branch Bill to reform the state church, and the Grand Remonstrance which appealed to the people to aid Parliament, and which split Parliament between the royalist and revolutionary camps. They allied themselves with the Independents, religious radicals who represented the most revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie. Unlike the Presbyterians they were prepared to look to their natural allies amongst the petit bourgeoisie to achieve their own revolutionary ends.

In the winter of 1641-42 a new capitalist City government was established in London and the feudal

aldermanic government was overthrown. Brenner calls this a revolution, as it placed the bourgeoisie in power for the first time. The colonial merchants were at the centre of events throughout this period. They organised the City petition campaign, the mass rising in London which defended Parliament from Charles I's attempted *coup d'état*, and made up a large part of the membership of the Committee of Safety which organised a militia in the winter of 1641-42.

The colonial merchants led the main organising committees for the Parliamentary war effort. They took control of the collection of customs duties. They reorganised the navy, donated ships, and established a new officer corps made up of their supporters. In 1644 they supported the establishment of the New Model Army.

Parliament's Presbyterian leadership were prepared to accept the fruits of the 1642 revolution. But they were terrified of the "middle sort of people" gathered under the leadership of the religious sectarians in the New Model Army. This meant that there were strict limits as to how far they were prepared to allow the revolution to go.

After the defeat of the King in 1645, they attempted to re-establish control of the City institutions, demobilise the army and establish a new accord with the King. They systematically removed the colonial merchant leadership from their seats of power in the City government and on the Parliamentary committees.

The New Model Army responded by invading London in 1647 and purging Parliament of its opponents. After some hesitation the Independents supported them. This placed the colonial merchant leadership at the centre of power. A renewed outbreak of civil war in 1648 was rapidly defeated. "Pride's Purge" removed the Independents' opponents from Parliament.

Execution

The remaining Rump Parliament now had no barriers to implementing the Independents' programme. The execution of the King, the abolition of the House of Lords, and the religious reformation in the winter and spring of 1649 completed the major planks of the bourgeois revolution. The danger of Leveller opposition was removed through their defeat at Burford.

Brenner shows how the new regime responded immediately to the demands of its major supporters and centrally the colonial merchants. Although the Independents were constrained due to the destruction of their mass support amongst the Levellers, the new government implemented the programme of the colonial merchants.

In foreign policy they embarked on the conquest of Ireland, destroyed royalist influence in the West Indies and approached the United Provinces with proposals to unify the two countries. When these proposals failed they implemented the Navigation Act which replaced the policy of unification with that of war and destruction.

Merchants and Revolution is a profound and rewarding analysis of the development of capitalist merchants under feudalism, and their role in the English civil war. Brenner provides a wealth of detail and evidence to show the contradictions between the bourgeois merchants and feudal society and how those contradictions exploded in the civil war. He enables the reader to grasp the massive scale of capitalist development under the feudal regime, and shows with remarkable clarity the energy and class consciousness of the rising bourgeoisie in their revolutionary past.

Today the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie is exhausted. All those who are striving to imbue a revolutionary spirit in the rising class of today—the working class—would do well to study Brenner's monumental work. ■



Seventeenth century merchant banker

FOR THE first time since the late 1970s fascism has scored a significant victory at the polls. In London's East End, Derek Beackon of the British National Party (BNP) won 1,480 votes in a council by-election. An out and out fascist was returned as councillor for the Millwall ward on a platform of throwing black people out of Britain.

How did this happen?

The right-wing capitalist papers have a simple answer. The voters of Millwall had a point. Woodrow Wyatt, the *News of the World's* "Voice of Reason", declared that they were "not wrong" to blame immigrants for the ills in their area, and used the election result to call for a halt to all black immigration.

The *Sun* quoted Nazi councillor Derek Beackon extensively on its front page, carefully leaving out his more rabid statements and printing no answers to his racist lies. A black reporter for the *News of the World* claimed that he would "go for a drink" with Beackon, creating the image of a fairly decent sort of bloke who just happens to have a few violent mates.

All of these responses are of a piece with the attempts of the Tories to whip up racism and xenophobia as an excuse for Britain's decline. Winston Churchill, who only last year was posing as a friend of the working class by opposing the pit closure plan, summed up the attitude of "official" racism to the growth of the BNP. "Immigration", he argued, "adds to the pressures" in society. The voters' reaction was, he claimed, "inevitable".

The conclusions to be drawn from these lies can only strengthen the arguments of the BNP, allowing their election victory to shift the ground of the bosses' political "consensus" well to the right. Once people swallow the

lie that black people are to blame for unemployment, bad housing and crime, it will not be long before they draw the conclusion that black people should be thrown out of the country.

The more "respectable" bourgeois papers were completely unable to understand what had happened. The *Independent* insisted that it would be "wrong to take fright" at the election result, and contented itself with saying that "Britain can still claim to have fewer racial problems than most European countries."

As if that smug comparison with Germany and France—where mass fascist organisations feed on an atmosphere of pervasive racism and bigotry—was consolation for the victims of the scores of racial attacks that are mounting across East and South London, for the terror meted out by BNP canvassers to black people on the Isle of Dogs, or to the parents of Quddus Ali, still unconscious after a vicious attack in nearby Stepney, just a week before the election. Virulent racism is rising in this country, and the election of a Nazi councillor is just the most dramatic expression of this sickness.

No area, no group of working class people is *inherently* racist. There are profound social and political reasons why extreme racist and fascist ideas gained a foothold in Millwall, allowing the Nazis to grow.

Millwall is a run down and impoverished ward on London's Isle of Dogs, part of the borough of Tower Hamlets. Over one in seven people of working age are on the dole. There are next to no leisure facilities. And there is a massive housing problem.

According to Tower Hamlets council themselves, 44% of council housing in the borough fails to meet minimum standards, nearly 50,000 homes are in desperate need of repair or already unfit for human habitation. At the same time over 1,500 flats are empty.

Despite this, some people are doing all right. The most deprived areas are in the shadow of the plush yuppie flats and redevelopment projects of Docklands. Canary Wharf stands like a sick joke, reminding residents of the twisted priorities of the London Docklands Development Corporation and the studied neglect of their own area and living conditions by the authorities.

In the 1980s, gentrification was rampant. Over the last ten years the proportion of business people and smart professionals living in Millwall has risen from 0.9% to 7.4% of the population. Their riverside apartments are fitted out with every mod con and comfort while nothing has been done to improve the housing of working class people.

Millwall was always a strongly working class area, returning Labour councillors in the last four council elections. But the decline of the docks, the failure of the Labour and trade union movement to resist the destruction of this core industry which employed so many in East London, has led to a decline in numbers of the working class in the area and, in particular, of the organised Labour movement.

In 1981, 53.3% of the population were skilled workers and 23.8% were semi-skilled or unskilled workers. Ten years later this had fallen dramatically to 36.3% and 15.6% respectively.

The weakening of the organised workers' movement in the area was exacerbated by the Labour Party's role. The Millwall councillors did nothing to fight for decent conditions and living standards for working class people in the area. In line with the Labour leadership's attempts to tailor their politics to the middle class and bosses, they failed to build a class-based campaign against poor housing and unemployment. And, crucially, they failed to challenge racism when more and more local whites started to fall prey to arguments that blame black people for their problems.

On one thing and one thing only over the last weeks, Derek Beackon has been absolutely right. He called the Liberal Democrats the East End's "secret racist party". The Liberals tried to step into the breach left by the decline of the Labour movement in Millwall. While the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood was run by Labour, Tower Hamlets as a whole was under Liberal control from 1986 onwards.

The Liberal regime systematically discriminated against black people, in particular against Bangladeshis over housing allocation. In the Isle of Dogs they fought for the racist "Sons and Daughters" housing scheme, whereby housing would be allocated to the families of existing white residents. In Millwall their local election leaflets constantly whipped up racism, asking "Do you believe that new homes should go to Islanders [read whites] and not homeless families [read Bangladeshis]?"

They attacked the Commission for Racial Equality, which had been critical of the Liberals' discrimination, saying, "What Islanders want is important, not what the CRE wants". In case the insinuation was not clear enough, one article was headed "Bangladeshi Shocker", and attacked Labour for giving a grant to support a Bangladeshi youth group and even for donating money to victims of the flood in Bangladesh.

This was no "accident" as the cynical Paddy Ashdown has dared to suggest. It was a deliberate policy to win votes from Labour. Indeed in a previous council election the Liberals put out a bogus Labour Party leaflet, de-

The election of Derek Beackon in Britain since the 1970s. What happened, and point to the way if the Nazis are to be stopped.



BNP thugs celebrating their election victory

signed to whip up racism. Ashdown knew about this incident. It was reported in the national press. But so long as it helped keep his racist party in office he was happy to allow it to continue.

Ashdown's moral outrage against the BNP now is produced by fear, fear that the Liberals will lose further ground to the BNP. He hasn't suddenly become an anti-racist.

Labour, with its eyes only on the prize of unseating the Liberals, not on combating racism and fascism, adapted to the growing mood of racism. They raised the slogan "Island homes for Island people". This was not a piece of harmless localism. It is code, a code well understood by everyone living on the Isle of Dogs, for racism. It is one step away from the BNP's very own "Rights for Whites" slogan.

In this atmosphere the BNP stepped in. They made a conscious decision to target the area back in 1989. Tower Hamlets was designated a national priority. Steadily they increased support. In the 1990 council elections in the St Peters ward of Tower Hamlets they got 12.8% of the vote. At an Anti-Fascist Action public meeting in the area the Labour MP Mildred Gordon pointed out that since the ward was divided roughly 50% white and 50% Asian, the BNP's result actually represented one in four of the white vote.

At the 1992 general election the BNP stood two candidates in the area—their two national leaders, John Tyndall and Richard Edmonds. Their combined vote was 2,417. The BNP's strategy of concentrating their forces in one area in order to use that as a springboard from which they could leap into national prominence was paying off. They were gaining ground from

RACIAL ATTACKS

YOUTH FIGHT BACK!

QUDDUS ALI was beaten close to death by a gang of nine racist thugs as he was returning from his local video shop in East London. That was on the 8 September. He remains in a critical condition following this vicious and cowardly attack.

The response from the local Bangladeshi community was angry and immediate. Hundreds of people, mainly local youth, attended a vigil outside the London Hospital, Whitechapel where the 17 year old was on a life-support machine.

While members of the family and other supporters were speaking the police attacked the demonstration. The youth showed great heroism in refusing to allow the thugs in blue to break up their protest. The police wasted no time in using their truncheons, riot equipment and dogs against young demonstrators, many of school age.

Despite this not all the police got away without a good lesson in just how determined the youth were. At one point an older lad had to drag his younger brother away to get him home. He wanted to stay and defy the police!

Hundreds of young Bangladeshis defiantly marched through Whitechapel shouting "racist police off our streets!" and "we say fightback!" The police kept charging the demonstrators and using snatch squads. Finally the police managed to disperse many people and corner the rest in a small park.

Nine protesters were arrested that night. They all face serious charges under the Public Order Act. At the moment they are out on bail but under restrictions such as a curfew from 10 pm to 6 am. Their next trial date will be the 26 October.

The local youth and community



Quddus Ali

have organised Youth Connection to fight a defence campaign for the Tower Hamlets Nine. On 13 September a militant picket of their court hearing was organised. Another picket should be built for 26 October demanding that all the charges are dropped. These nine people are heroes not criminals. They fought to make sure that no other attacks like that against Quddus Ali happen again.

It is no surprise that the police attacked the demonstration. They are racists. Not only can they not be relied on to do anything about racist attacks, they also see any demonstration of black people against these attacks as a challenge to their control of the streets. This is why time and time again the police will attack demonstrations.

The problem on the night was there was no organised defence of the vigil. This allowed the police to wade in and then to use their training to disperse and break up the demonstration.

The Anti Nazi League (ANL), which helped organise the vigil, had not prepared any defence of it. That meant that when the police attacked the demonstration it was up to individuals or small groups to defend

themselves. This was not just an oversight. It was a political error. The ANL has failed to fight for organised self-defence since it was set up. But the police are trained and organised. We need to be as well trained and organised as possible to repel their attacks.

Workers Power responded immediately to the attack on Quddus Ali with a leaflet calling for the building of defence squads. This demand is an integral part of our programme. The Socialist Workers Party, which runs the ANL, and Militant Labour, who run Youth against Racism in Europe, have always scoffed at this demand, calling it too advanced.

These so-called revolutionaries have been put to shame by the local youth. Already local gangs have called a truce and are organising street patrols in case of any fascist or racist attacks. This marks a tremendous step forward in making sure that racist thugs are not able to get away with racial attacks without getting a taste of their own medicine.

The attack on Quddus Ali, although particularly vicious, is not an isolated incident. There are an estimated 70,000 racist attacks every year. There is no doubt that the attack on Quddus Ali is connected with the activities of the BNP. But it is not just a question of the BNP. Many racial attacks by unorganised gangs and individuals occur as a result of the general racist climate in Britain.

In East London, and everywhere else that black communities face racist attacks and police harassment, we must make sure the local labour movement, along with the community, support black self-defence organisations as the best way of combatting racist attacks, wherever they come from. ■

WON

Beackon in Millwall is the biggest victory for the fascists in the last local election. Richard Brenner and Mark Harrison examine how it happened and the lessons that the working class movement needs to learn from it.



Victory

both Labour and the Liberal Democrats and benefitting from the apathy of many of the larger left wing organisations, like the Socialist Workers Party, who at first refused to accept that there really was a fascist threat in the area.

At the last local election they got 20% of the vote, beating the Tories. They made the Isle of Dogs a national priority this time round, pouring canvassers in and holding regular systematic door to door sales of their filth. Racial attacks increased sharply. This was allowed to happen for years by the labour movement and the left who failed to unite in action to drive the BNP's thugs and agitators off the streets and out of the estates.

Derek Beackon's victory is only a surprise to those who know nothing of what has been going on in East London, and who know nothing of the BNP's four year campaign in the area. The fascists have been allowed to seize the initiative.

In Britain today the official politicians are discredited and people are looking for answers. Appeals to reason, "moderation" or our "great democratic tradition" will be utterly useless in mobilising people who are the victims of the decline of British capitalism, the crisis of direction in society, and the helplessness and betrayal of the leaders of the Labour movement.

Militant answers must be put forward, based on working class action for better housing and jobs, for a council that builds new homes and relies on the power of the working class to force the Tories to provide the necessary funding, for the rich to pay for putting right the decay of the inner cities and communities, and for the profit system itself to be overthrown, or the fascists will gain more and

more ground.

It would be wrong—dead wrong—to imagine that this was just another protest vote, that the BNP voters were somehow "not really" racist. It would be criminal to argue, as the despicable Kenan Malik of "Workers Against Racism" put it in the *Independent*, that socialists should feel "far more sympathetic" to BNP voters than to "Anti-Nazi moralists".

The 1,480 people who voted for the BNP are not somehow the most advanced sections of the local working class, expressing opposition to official pro-capitalist parties. They are the least class conscious section of the voters, the section most atomised and demoralised by the effects of recession and industrial decline, and they are saturated with the lies of the racists. The BNP made no bones about its position. It describes itself as a "100% racist" party. The voters knew what they were voting for.

The task now is not to downplay the seriousness and dangers inherent in this situation. The French *Front National*, a mass party with a fascist leadership, also began its rise to national prominence by a victory in a local election. The task now is to fully understand how, in the absence of a fighting lead from the Labour movement, fascism can organise and grow.

It can mobilise desperate sections forced out of the working class through mass unemployment, and even sections of the working class itself that have only a tenuous connection with class organisation, into a mass movement directed against class unity, against black people, against democratic rights and against the workers' movement itself. Our task is to stop them. ■

AGAINST COMPLACENCY AND SECTARIANISM!

LET'S GET one thing straight from the start: Workers Power is in favour of working class unity to smash the fascists. This means that we support, and will work to build, a workers' united front that includes the Anti Nazi League (ANL) and Youth Against Racism (YRE).

Both of these organisations are the undeclared property of the two largest left wing organisations in Britain. The ANL is run by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the YRE by Militant Labour. The membership of both organisations taken together is around 10,000 people. Such numbers, mobilised to physically smash the fascists, will be an invaluable force in the struggle to prevent the British National Party (BNP) from capitalising on its victory in the Isle of Dogs council by-election.

But to take advantage of this hard lessons need to be learnt. The sectarianism that both the SWP and Militant Labour have displayed in the past will have to be overcome.

Take the evolution of the SWP's approach over the past few years. As early as 1989 Workers Power, then engaged in common actions with other forces involved in London Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), argued that fascism was a real threat in London's East End and needed to be fought before they were able to build a base. Accordingly we engaged in a series of direct actions to counter BNP meetings, marches and paper sales in the area.

The SWP denounced all of this as a fantasy. They labelled our activities, which included physically confronting the BNP but were not restricted to that alone, as "squadism". In stark contrast to our attempts to drive the fascists from Brick Lane, the SWP continued, as they had done for years, to sell their own papers in Brick Lane, observing a peaceful co-existence with the fascist sellers up the road.

Today *Socialist Worker* informs us: "The Nazis have—with police protection—sold papers in the Sunday market there [Brick Lane] for several years."

This is not accurate, to say the least. The fascists have sold in Brick Lane unopposed and without police protection since 1979. The reason

was because in that year the original Anti Nazi League abandoned its previous attempts to stop the sale. For over a decade the fascists sold their papers without police protection.

Police protection became necessary when AFA launched a campaign to "Reclaim the Lane" in October 1990. A series of successful demonstrations were launched and the fascists were put on the defensive. The SWP responded to this campaign in a classically sectarian manner, boycotting it completely.

Their renewed declaration of driving the fascists from the Lane is to be welcomed. But this time it will need to be consistent. And above all, the ANL must actively collaborate with other forces in a united front.

What underlay the SWP's previous indifference to the fascist presence in East London, even after the BNP announced that they had made the area a national priority in 1989, was their belief that fascism was not a threat and that racism was on the wane. In June 1990 their journal, *Socialist Review*, countered our arguments about the fascist threat with this piece of nonsense from Pat Stack:

"There does not appear to be any generalised increase in levels of racism within society as a whole. If anything the opposite seems to be the case... The far right groupings have not grown in any significant way. Despite their best efforts they have failed to gain any real foothold in many of the areas they have targeted. They still remain on the margins with no real influence."

Workers Power described this as a piece of "frightening complacency". We were right, as Beackon's election in the BNP's number one target area shows beyond dispute.

Today the SWP's paper declares: "The Nazis were only able to win votes because of the failure of the main political parties."

This is an important part of the truth. But it is not the whole truth. They were also able to win votes because the SWP, the largest left wing organisation in East London, refused to unite with other anti-fascists and smash them before they were able to build a

base. This is the hard lesson of Beackon's victory. It means the SWP/ANL needs to put aside its sectarian manoeuvres—which include debarring other activists from ANL meetings and refusing to organise joint stewarding with other forces—and work jointly at all levels with other forces to implement the policy of No Platform for Fascists.

Militant and the YRE have shown themselves more willing to work with other forces and implement No Platform. But this has not stopped them from indulging in their own brand of sectarianism. The worst example of this is their method of building for the 16 October Unity Demonstration against the BNP headquarters.

The idea of a unity demonstration is excellent. But Militant Labour are keen to keep this idea away from their readers and supporters. Their paper regularly informs people that the demo is a YRE demo, and only a YRE demo. In a number of areas they are refusing to collaborate with other forces in mobilising for it and organising transport to it (a manoeuvre the ANL are also busy carrying out).

Of course we would be the last people to call on political organisations to hide their own distinct politics from the people they are mobilising. We too will do everything we can to recruit people we mobilise for the demo to revolutionary politics. But that need not stand in the way of co-ordinating our efforts so that the maximum numbers of workers and youth are brought to London for the march.

What is more, the struggle won't be over on 16 October. Every town and city should see the ANL and the YRE building joint committees to vigorously counter fascist activity. Otherwise the possibility of reversing the defeat we have suffered through the election of Beackon will be set back. A united front at a national and local level will be able to send the fascists scurrying every time they try to show their faces and rally thousands more workers and youth to action.

We have to learn the lessons. Sectarianism and complacency are self-defeating. Build the united front to destroy the fascists! ■

UNITY WITH THE LIBERALS?

AFTER THE BNP's election victory and the Liberal Party conference a *Guardian* writer whinged:

"... the war between Labour and the Liberal Democrats makes increasingly little sense. (Its main result in Millwall, of course, was to let in the BNP)."

This gem of wisdom is reducible to simple arithmetic: together they would have had more votes than the BNP's 1,480. But it leaves out of account a simple fact. The Liberals are a racist party.

They are responsible for creating a climate of vicious antagonism to Asians in Tower Hamlets. The Liberal leaders knew all about this from the outset—they have faced complaints about the racism of their local association and council policy since 1987.

The Tower Hamlets Liberal Democrat campaign manager has said "we reject absolutely that we have done anything wrong." He is an unabashed racist, declaring that they won't change their position "just because there are some unpalatable truths that must be aired".

These are the people that the jour-

nalists want Labour to unite with. It shows that their priorities are not fighting against racism, not challenging the conditions that breed fascism, but undermining the independence of the Labour Party as a party based on the working class movement.

But the idea of an "anti-fascist" alliance with the Liberals has supporters within the ranks of the working class movement. Bill Morris of the TGWU has called for an all-party demonstration in East London, led, he hopes by that well known outside agitator, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Marc Wadsworth of the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA), who have already put the pact principle into operation by welcoming Tory and Liberal sponsors, went a step further. He called on the Liberal conference to come on the "peaceful demonstration" and called for Ashdown to head the Liberal delegation on the march, to give "practical expression" to his opposition to racism.

The "peaceful demonstration" Wadsworth is referring to is the ARA event called for 16 October in Central London. There is nothing wrong

with ARA having its own event... except it was called as a divisive manoeuvre against an already planned Unity march against the BNP headquarters on 16 October.

The invitation to Ashdown is scandalous, putting the ARA well to the right of Labour spokesman Jack Straw. The workers' movement has no interest in propping up the Liberals. Instead their racism in Tower Hamlets should be publicised as widely as possible, they should be branded with responsibility for their actions and humiliated at the next council elections. They should be allowed no chance to wriggle off the hook. Yet that is precisely the opportunity that Wadsworth and Morris want to give Ashdown and his racist local activists.

To smash the BNP we need working class unity in action. We won't get that by trying to lash up with the racist Liberals. They would demand conditions for their support. Crucially, they would refuse to allow any movement in which they were involved to take effective action to break up BNP meetings, counter their marches and meet their violence with justified physical resistance. ■

No justice,

1 Yasser Arafat and the majority of the PLO leadership have betrayed the Palestinian people. Israel has secured an historic victory for Zionism. The USA now has within its grasp a *Pax Americana* over the whole of the Middle East. The peace settlement, signed in Washington on 13 September 1993, is the biggest blow yet delivered against the Palestinians since they were first driven from their land 45 years ago.

2 The first element of the betrayal lies in the PLO's official, unambiguous and final diplomatic recognition of "the right of Israel to live within secure borders". At a stroke this legitimises the barbarous pogroms and forced population transfers carried out by Zionism in 1947-48 against the Palestinian people. It sanctions the results of a war by which Israel was founded on 73% of the territory of the Palestine mandate by 33% of its (Jewish) population. The surviving victims of this monstrous act and their descendants have been told that they must now forgive the crime of their oppressor. The new autonomous area will contain less than 30% of all Palestinian people, less even than those that live in Jordan.

Secondly, this agreement forever confines the 20% Arab minority within the Zionist state of Israel to permanent second class status with no hope of unification with their Palestinian brothers and sisters. Subject to virulent anti-Arab racism, ghettoised and super-exploited in a few sectors of the economy, they are forced into competition for jobs with their Arab brethren across the Green Line.

Thirdly, the PLO has betrayed the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. In the short term because they have agreed to distance themselves from the heroes of the *intifada*, to preach conciliation against the army of occupation, to cease armed and unarmed resistance against a force that has claimed over 1,200 Palestinian lives since 1987. In the longer term, by renouncing real sovereignty over the territory they have been granted by Israel, the PLO abandons the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinians for their own state in return for a supervised bantustan with limited devolved powers.

3 For twenty years—since the Arab defeat in the 1973 war—the PLO leadership has in principle accepted that self-determination for the Palestinian people would fall short of the destruction of the Zionist state of Israel and its replacement by a secular, democratic state in the whole of mandate Palestine. The idea of the mini-state was born—a plan for a West Bank and Gaza state, possibly in some sort of confederation with Jordan.

This plan itself accepted the de facto right of Israel to its 1948 conquests. It accepted the right of Israel to supervise the interests of the USA in the region, armed to the teeth and able and willing to intimidate and bully the Arab states into compliance. In 1967, 1973 and in 1982 in Lebanon, Israel has done this directly, effectively annexing parts of Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. In 1991 Israel acted as a listening post and second line of defence for the USA in the Gulf War against Iraq.

This mini-state idea therefore turned self-determination for the Palestinians into a mockery, a denial of its genuine democratic and national content. During the 1980s, the PLO moved further and further towards a compromise with Zionism. In December 1988 in Geneva, Arafat declared to the UN that the PLO recognised the right of Israel to exist. The next four years saw the contin-

ued weakening of the PLO in terms of its support amongst the Arab masses and its financing by the Arab bourgeoisies. In the meantime, the Israelis continued their state terror campaign against the PLO, killing hundreds of Palestinians in the *intifada* and assassinating PLO leaders Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad.

The US-backed negotiations which began in November 1991 marked the recognition by imperialism that the collapse of Stalinism, coupled with the increasing preparedness of the PLO leadership to compromise, opened the way for the stabilisation of the Middle East. Desperate to negotiate away the rights and aspirations of the Palestinians, the PLO was keen to accept even the terms of today's abject surrender. By the September 1993 "peace plan", the mini-state of 1973 has shrunk to a micro-bantustan composed of two non-contiguous regions.

4 The agreement allows for Israeli troops to be withdrawn from Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank by the end of the year. A PLO police force will replace them and Israeli military administration of these areas will give way to PLO administration in tourism, education, welfare, health, taxation. None of these go to the heart of state power—that is, sovereign political institutions, with control over all areas of civil society, the ability to conclude diplomatic treaties and an army to defend its borders.

The Israeli army will be stationed in the West Bank for an indefinite period, outside of Arab population centres but capable of immediate deployment against the Palestinians. In nine months elections are to be held for a Palestinian Council to give a democratic mandate to this arrangement.

Will this lead, as some PLO leaders promise, to a gradual widening of the spheres of authority and territorial control until, step by step, the Palestinian state is secured by the end of the century? Despite the claims of Abu Mazen that the accords will unleash an "irresistible dynamic" towards the creation of an independent state in the whole of the Occupied Territories, nothing could be further from the truth. As the journalist Azuri Bishara put it shortly before the agreement was signed:

"'Irresistible dynamics' only exist in the heads of vulgar determinists. What counts is the balance of forces."

At the moment the balance of forces is against the Palestinians because of the bourgeois politics of the PLO. Thus the agreement makes no mention of any future Palestinian state, even in the present autonomous areas. Rabin insists on his three "No"s: no return of East Jerusalem, no return of the Golan Heights to Syria, no to a Palestinian state. The Zionists insist that the 125,000 Jewish West Bank settlers will stay. They will remain as permanent enclaves of Zionist authority, armed to the teeth, protected by an Israeli garrison and occupying some of the most profitable commercial enterprises in the West Bank (e.g. the Qatif Block).

5 The PLO—above all its Fatah faction—has presided over 25 years of defeats. These diminished its military and diplomatic power and

reduced its political ambitions, while allowing it to retain a leading position in the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian diaspora. Being a bourgeois nationalist bloc, the PLO has always refused to put working class goals and methods of struggle at the centre of the fight for national liberation. Instead it has relied on bourgeois diplomacy on the one hand and futile, though heroic, guerrilla actions against one of the most sophisticated armies in the world on the other.

Increasingly in the 1980s, the Palestinian bourgeoisie in the diaspora felt that their own narrow class self-determination would be satisfied by the tiniest of territorial enclaves—a fragment of land on which to haul up the Palestinian flag. Like an oil tanker registered in Panama, it is to be a flag of convenience, a legal entity in which to register its financial and commercial interests held across the globe.

The last thing in their minds was that this state should be a vibrant, dynamic and self-sustaining economic entity capable of providing for the needs of the masses. What is more, the PLO's paymasters in the conservative Gulf monarchies were always a pressure for settlement, though wary of outright capitulation to an unbridled and ambitious Israel.

The Gulf War convinced these petro-monarchies that powerful Arab national states such as Iraq may provide more of a threat to their own rule than Israel. Arafat's support for Saddam Hussein in that war provided them with the opportunity to withdraw their colossal funding of the PLO and make them sue for peace. In addition, the collapse of the USSR and Stalinism removed an ideological and diplomatic prop against the pressure of US imperialism. Finally, the exhaustion of the *intifada* in the Occupied Territories assisted Arafat. The PLO neither wanted nor organised the *intifada*. When it came they tried to direct it in order not to lose control of it to the Islamic groups—above all Hamas. Having used it and exploited it but not armed it effectively, the PLO exhausted it. This has given rise to a deep sense that some political settlement, any political settlement would bring relief from the daily and grinding brutality of Israeli military occupation.

6 Labour's election in July 1992 marginalised the Likud "expansionist" wing of Zionism. While little divided the Likud bloc from Labour on domestic economic policies they increasingly differed on the way to solve the Palestine question. Likud favoured more and more settlements leading in the direction of annexation. At root this project was based on the need for Likud to consolidate its electoral base within the oriental Jewish community of Israel, the growing proportion of whom formed the bulk of the new settlers, having diminishing economic prospects inside Israel. The Labour Party, by contrast, increasingly feared the consequences that perpetual war would have on the age old cross-class Jewish bloc within Israel. The marked economic decline of Israel has seen unemployment among Israeli Jews mushroom, which both further undermined Jewish cross-class unity and lessened the need for cheap Arab labour. Prime Minister Rabin's "agrarian" wing of the Labour Party were forced to accept the decisive

The Israeli-Palestinian deal is a sell out designed to shore up the imperialist order in the Middle East, sacrificing the national rights of millions of Palestinians. We print here in abridged form a statement by the International Secretariat of the LRCI, issued on 14 September 1993.



argument of the pro-European Perez faction: the Labour government could get a solution which did not cede sovereignty to the Palestinians but could end Israel's economic and diplomatic isolation in the region. Moreover, a settlement acceptable to European and US imperialism would induce them to take financial responsibility for the reconstruction of the Occupied Territories away from Israel's creaking budget. Israel stands to gain considerably from a settlement. US funds will flow more liberally as a reward, boosting the \$5 billion a year already given. Saudi can be expected to stop penalising Arab companies that trade with Israel. In the medium term Israel, through investments and trade with the Arab states—blocked off after the 1967 war—could increase its penetration of markets and thus offset its present economic problems.

7 Norway may have provided the "honest broker" for the negotiations between the PLO and Israel, but the agreement was signed on the lawn of the White House in Washington. The USA is the main architect and guarantor of this agreement. This "solution" to the Palestinian "problem" is not an end in itself but a means to an end. US imperialist foreign policy in the region is guided by the need to strengthen its client state Israel and through this weaken the unity of the surrounding Arab bourgeois states which may combine to attack US economic interests in the region. Egypt was tamed between 1973 (humiliating military defeat by Israel) and 1978 (Camp David Accord); in return Egypt is now the second biggest recipient of US foreign aid after Israel. Iraq, the world's fourth largest military power, was

crushed in 1991. Now Syria and Iran remain.

Syria is key in the short term. It plays host to all the oppositional factions of the PLO and Arafat and thus to a continued source of Palestinian guerrilla attacks on Israel. But Syria could be bought off like Egypt and some deal struck on the occupied Golan Heights.

Syria could soon follow behind, the jewel in the crown for Zionist and US diplomacy. It has not accepted the agreement but neither has it rejected it. They, like Jordan, the PLO, the petro-monarchies and Egypt all have an interest in a settlement that could isolate and crush the threat posed by Iranian sponsored fundamentalist groups that pose a plebeian, but reactionary, threat to settled bourgeois rule in these states.

8 Can the agreement be made to stick? In south Lebanon the biggest demonstration since the end of the 1982 war protested against the agreement and was fired on, killing tens of Palestinians. Rejectionists have taken revenge on Israeli soldiers in Gaza. Yet in the short term the prospects for a counter-revolutionary settlement from above are good.

The EC has promised to increase its annual aid from \$47 million to \$340 million. The World Bank has said that \$4 billion is needed for an immediate transformation of the infrastructure to have a noticeable effect on the lives of the masses. This scale of injection—equivalent to the annual GDP of the West Bank—could have a significant short-term impact, providing homes for some of the 250,000 camp dwellers and jobs for the 20,000 Palestinian

no peace

UN workers in an administrative bureaucracy. This kind of public works programme could lead to a bolstering of the PLO in the run up to elections and marginalise Hamas if the latter refuse to be incorporated into the process.

Nevertheless, it will not bring long term prosperity for nearly two million Palestinians. The new homes will continue to house impoverished workers in sweat shops on contract to Israeli textile firms; the new roads will still carry workers to Israel to fill the worst paid and most arduous jobs. Key agriculturally productive and strategically important parts of the West Bank are now controlled by Israeli settlers, armed to the teeth. These settlers' "rights" are explicitly protected by the agreement. The GNP per capita of the Occupied Territories is only 20% that of Israel and 30% of their inhabitants' income is derived from salaries earned within Israel. Far from being viable or potentially independent, these regions can never hope to escape from the complete control of the Zionist state.

9 The agreement has found its enemies within the PLO and in the Palestinian refugee camps.

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for the liberation of Palestine (PFLP) members on the PLO executive denounced the recognition of Israel as "illegal" and called for the majority to be removed from the leadership. Can this opposition be relied upon?

The DFLP and PFLP already had a chance to derail the PLO Executive's agreement to the plan but they walked out of the meeting that was to vote on it. Thus they secured Arafat's majority. The leader of the DFLP, Naif Hawatmeh, was the originator of the idea of a liberated West Bank as being the first stage of the national liberation struggle, an idea Fatah transformed into the mini-state with ease. The DFLP have for the most part been critical not of Fatah's aim, but of its reliance upon Arab regimes to achieve it. Both the DFLP and PFLP's programmes for the liberation of Palestine are not fundamental breaks with Arafat's mini-state idea.

Hamas will try to reap the rewards of disillusionment among the most intransigent of the camp dwellers in Gaza. Mass rejection could lead to a civil war among Palestinians. Arafat would then rely on Israel to defend his life and new power against the Palestinian left. But even if Hamas were to prosper despite the attentions of the new PLO police force and Israeli troops, the Palestinians must firmly reject the entreaties of Islamic fundamentalism. It embraces a reactionary ideology containing a large measure of anti-semitism.

If Hamas were to triumph then one need only look at present day Iran to see the consequences of an Islamic republic. It would, of course, be a disaster for the Jews, ending any prospect of class solidarity between Jewish and Arab workers. But it would also lead to enormous oppression for women and a sharp curtailment, if not eradication, of democratic rights for the mass of the people

ment. Some, tailing both Labour Zionism and the PLO, are hailing the agreement as a step towards lasting peace. The Stalinists of the Israeli Communist Party are backing Rabin and the former Palestine Communist Party (now PPP) is openly supporting Arafat against the radicals.

The frail forces of Israeli centrism have failed the test dismally. In particular, the Revolutionary Communist League (Matzpen), section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, is paralysed by internal differences, but has stated that the agreement could provide the basis for a just settlement if only the Israelis were to withdraw all settlers and carry out a series of democratic reforms, such as freeing political prisoners and opening the borders. Failing to understand the nature of the betrayal, Matzpen and the USFI are paying the price of their long term accommodation to the PLO. The Israeli and Palestinian left must break from all varieties of nationalism and the dead-end centrism of the USFI.

11 The reactionary settlement and the co-option by the Israelis of the PLO leadership may divert the struggle against Zionism into an even worse blind alley than before. There is a serious possibility that the most desperate, disillusioned (and bravest) people in the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the shanty towns in the Occupied Territories will become convinced that there is no other way to abort the agreement than through individual terrorism. Randomly chosen Israelis or even Palestinian supporters of the settlement could well be attacked.

We can understand the bitter frustration and rage of those who have been betrayed by this deal, but we say individual terrorism is not the answer! It can only play into the hands of compromisers, the Israeli state and even the most fascist Zionists who will be playing a similar game. They after all are also against the settlement, because it "betrays" their expansionist goal of a Greater Israel.

All acts of individual terrorism teach the masses to be passive and await a saviour from above. The elit-

ist guerrilla warfare strategy has already left the masses too dependent on their leaders or on saviours from the other Arab states. All such Saladins (Nasser, Hussein) have miserably disappointed or betrayed the hopes placed in them. So it will be in the future. Yet the first years of the *intifada* showed what mass action can achieve. Indeed, it achieved a greater shift in the positions of the Zionists than twenty years of sporadic guerrilla war and fruitless diplomacy, or even the 1967 and 1973 wars by the surrounding states. The narrow space which even this reactionary settlement may open is ultimately the product of the mass action of the *intifada*.

If the Israelis are now obliged to grant some extension of democratic rights to Palestinians, in the micro-autonomous zone, in the occupied territories or even in Israel itself, then the masses must take advantage of this to create mass organisations of the workers, the urban poor and the peasants. They must use these insecure and limited "rights" to mobilise their own mass strength to the full. New investments may create an enlarged proletariat. In time the class contradiction between Palestinian worker and boss—a contradiction that has been partly smothered for so many years in the name of national liberation—will emerge. This in turn can feed into a rich heritage of trade unions—in the Gaza Strip especially. The effect of daily collaboration between Zionists and Palestinian bourgeois and officials to the detriment of the real needs of the masses will engender class hatred.

As the Palestinians awaken to a new class consciousness they must also seek to win allies amongst progressive forces in the Israeli working class and intelligentsia. They must make clear that their aim is not to expel Jewish workers, farmers and professionals from Israel but to create a secular workers' Palestine, where Muslims, Jews, Christians, Druze and atheists have equal rights. The Israeli workers also suffer increasing capitalist exploitation and many resent privileges given to the Ashkenazis. Palestinian workers and poor peasants should unite with the Israeli workers to fight against imperialism as well as the Israeli and Arab

bosses. In this way the Zionist alliance of all classes can be broken up, the armed forces of Zionism can be undermined partly from within.

But the first step must be for the Arab workers to take the initiative in class actions against the settlement and its consequences. The Palestinian workers will soon see the reactionary role of "their" bourgeoisie exposed by their actions. Thus the need for class independence, a class party, a revolutionary workers' party is becoming a burning necessity. The PLO must be broken up. The workers' organisations should split from this popular front with the Palestinian bourgeoisie and fight for a workers' party. All elements of the PLO rank and file, especially those who call themselves Marxists or Leninists, must be won to building a workers' party.

12 The Palestinian masses of the West Bank, Gaza and Jordan have a chance to stop this betrayal from going any further. The PLO National Council has yet to confirm the agreement. Its rejection by such a body would throw the whole process into reverse. But this can only occur through the biggest possible show of resistance by the masses in the Occupied Territories. An immediate and indefinite General Strike across the Territories is needed; the closure of all campuses and shops, mass demonstrations and a reaffirmation of the *intifada* must throw the capitalists back on their heels.

- Renounce the "Declaration of Principles". No to recognition of the state of Israel's right to oppress 750,000 of its population. For the right of return to all Palestinians to their home and to their property.

- Immediate free elections to all bodies of the PLO; recall and replace the traitors who negotiated, signed and voted for the agreement! Break up the cross-class alliance of the PLO; for a party of the Palestinian workers based on the unions. Break with guerrillism. Build a Leninist vanguard party among the Palestinian and Israeli-Jewish proletariats, committed to the destruction of the Zionist state and the establishment of a secular workers' state.

- For an unconditional and imme-

mediate end to the military occupation in all of the Occupied Territories! Drive the Zionist settlers—front line troops of Zionist expansionism—back to Israel; there can be no self-determination for the Palestinians while they are there against the will of the Palestinian people. For an end to the closing of the borders between the West Bank and Israel; remove all restrictions on movement. Immediate release of all political prisoners and an end to all repressive and discriminatory legislation.

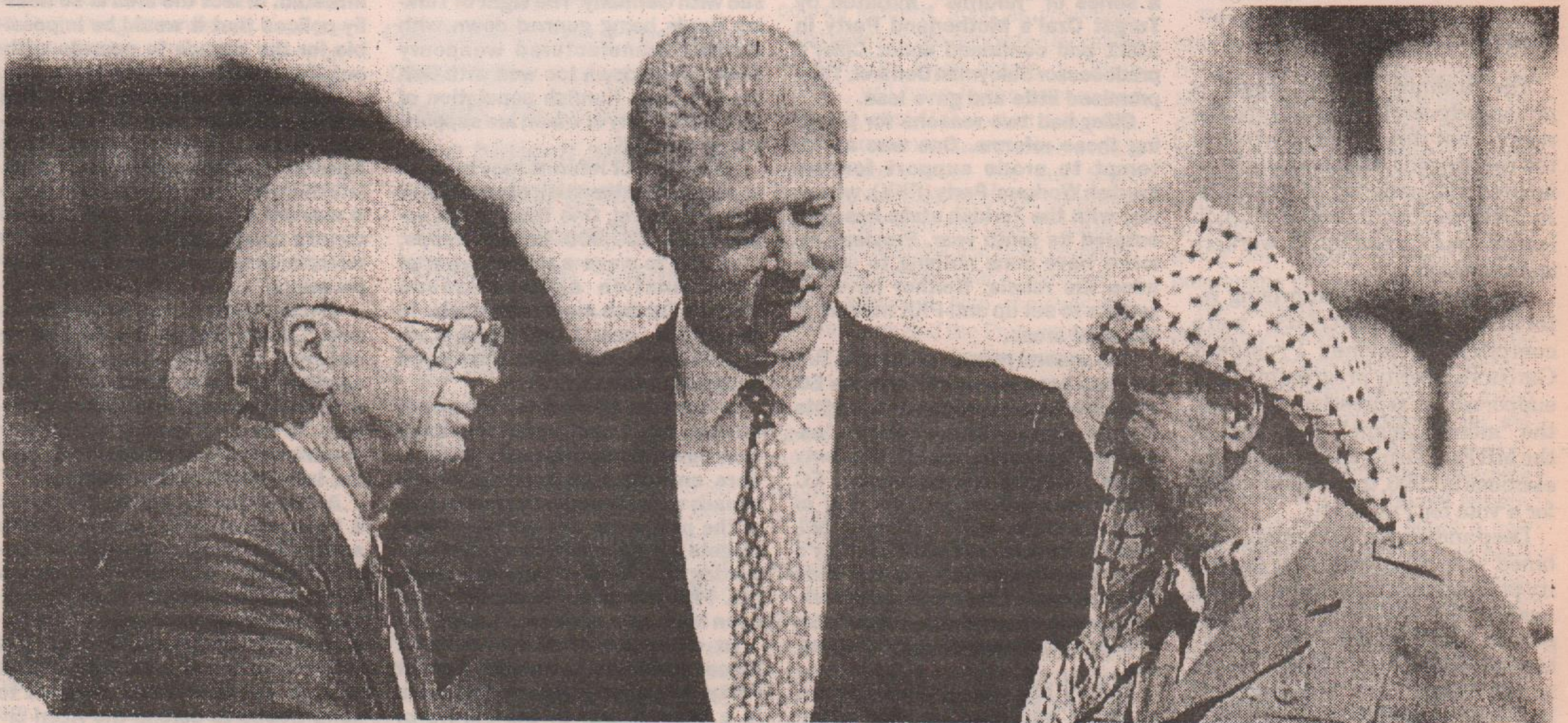
- Immediate building of popular camp, village and workplace committees of resistance to the occupation. Build mass defence militia. Arms to replace the stones! Broaden the *intifada* to struggle against all aspects of national oppression and super-exploitation.

- The Palestinian masses in the region have played no role in this peace process, yet they are asked to accept the results. The DFLP has raised the demand for a referendum on the agreement. This should be taken up and seriously agitated for and organised in the Occupied Territories and the diaspora. Better, organise mass meetings and elect delegates to a sovereign, mass democratic Palestine Assembly to decide on the peace agreement and resolve the future of the national struggle.

- Any financial aid and assistance must be controlled directly by the popular mass committees themselves, not by the PLO. For the committees to draw up an emergency programme of public works. This money is not charity but small recompense for decades of plunder of the Palestinian people.

- The news of the agreement has polarised Israeli Jews in a manner not witnessed since 1982. The most progressive elements are likely to be drawn into support for Labour and Rabin. They must be broken from this support while resisting all attempts by reactionaries and settler groups to expand their influence, to extract guarantees and concessions from the government, to further arm themselves. They must campaign for a return of the settlers to Israel and an end to the garrisoning of Jewish enclaves in the Occupied Territories.

- Throughout the Middle East, the masses must fight against their governments' support for the betrayal of the Palestinians. Bourgeois nationalism, in particular in its "anti-imperialist" variant, has repeatedly sold out the needs of the masses. The only solution to decades of oppression and war is the permanent revolution, the overthrow of all the bourgeois governments of the region and the creation of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East.



All smiles—but no milk and honey for the Palestinian masses

10 The forces of the Israeli left are split and confused by the agree-

AT THE end of October there will be a referendum on a new constitution in Peru. Fujimori, the presidential dictator in Peru, got his misnamed "Democratic Constituent Congress" to adopt a new "Magna Carta" to place before the people.

The new constitution is designed to further attack workers' living standards, suppress democracy and preserve the Fujimori dictatorship. It eliminates the right to a job or benefits for workers, free public education and the state monopoly of strategic industries that were guaranteed in the country's old constitution.

Democratic rights, including the right to rebel against a *coup d'état*, will be abolished. The sovereignty of parliament will also go. The death penalty for anti-imperialist guerrillas will be re-introduced. Fujimori wants to get the death penalty clause implemented retrospectively, so he can kill existing political prisoners from guerrilla groups like Sendero Luminoso (SL). This is in defiance of the human rights treaty that all Latin American states have signed.

Military

Fujimori intends to introduce the right of a president to be re-elected for a second term, a measure designed to keep him in power into the next century. The referendum is intended to legally sanction existing policies. Since the presidential coup in April 1992, when he dissolved parliament and purged the judiciary, he has attacked the masses across the board.

The military, the real power in the country, have unleashed their death squads. Every day more victims' graves are unearthed. Nearly 10,000 have been murdered since Fujimori was first elected. Thousands of political prisoners are condemned by secret tribunals to rot and die in jail. The secret police relentlessly hound all those suspected of opposition.

Peru's workers have been hit hard. Hundreds of thousands have lost their jobs. Activists and union leaders have been systematically victimised. Less than 10% of the population have stable employment. This has resulted in terrible poverty. Those workers who are in regular employment are nearly all paid below subsistence rates.

Despite his terrible record Fujimori remains popular, with a constant 60% approval rating in opinion polls. This paradox is due to the failure of the left to offer an alternative and by the deep discrediting of the established bourgeois parties.

Terror

The Stalinist SL has waged a prolonged guerrilla war against the regime, but their reign of terror in the countryside has completely alienated the majority of peasants. In the cities their murders of union leaders has turned many workers against them.

The United Left, comprising reformists and centrists, were complicit in former President Garcia's austerity programmes and supported his repression of SL and the "more humane" guerrillas of the MRTA. During the presidential elections in 1990, these "lefts" called for a vote for Fujimori!

Deep and brazen corruption, combined with repression and austerity programmes turned the masses against the established bourgeois parties like Garcia's Apra. Important sections of the masses looked to the "clean" and "independent" Fujimori as an alternative. His dictatorship is excused by many as necessary to root out the corruption of the previous regimes.

PERU

Fujimori's referendum

BY JOSE VILLA

Such illusions are fatal. Fujimori is neither clean nor independent. He is backed by imperialism and its multinationals, especially US and Japanese imperialism. He promises the military a war against terrorism and he promises the USA a war against "narco-traffickers". The Peruvian capitalists support his attacks on the unions. And the petit bourgeoisie and the street-sellers of Peru's cities see him as the man to control hyper-inflation.

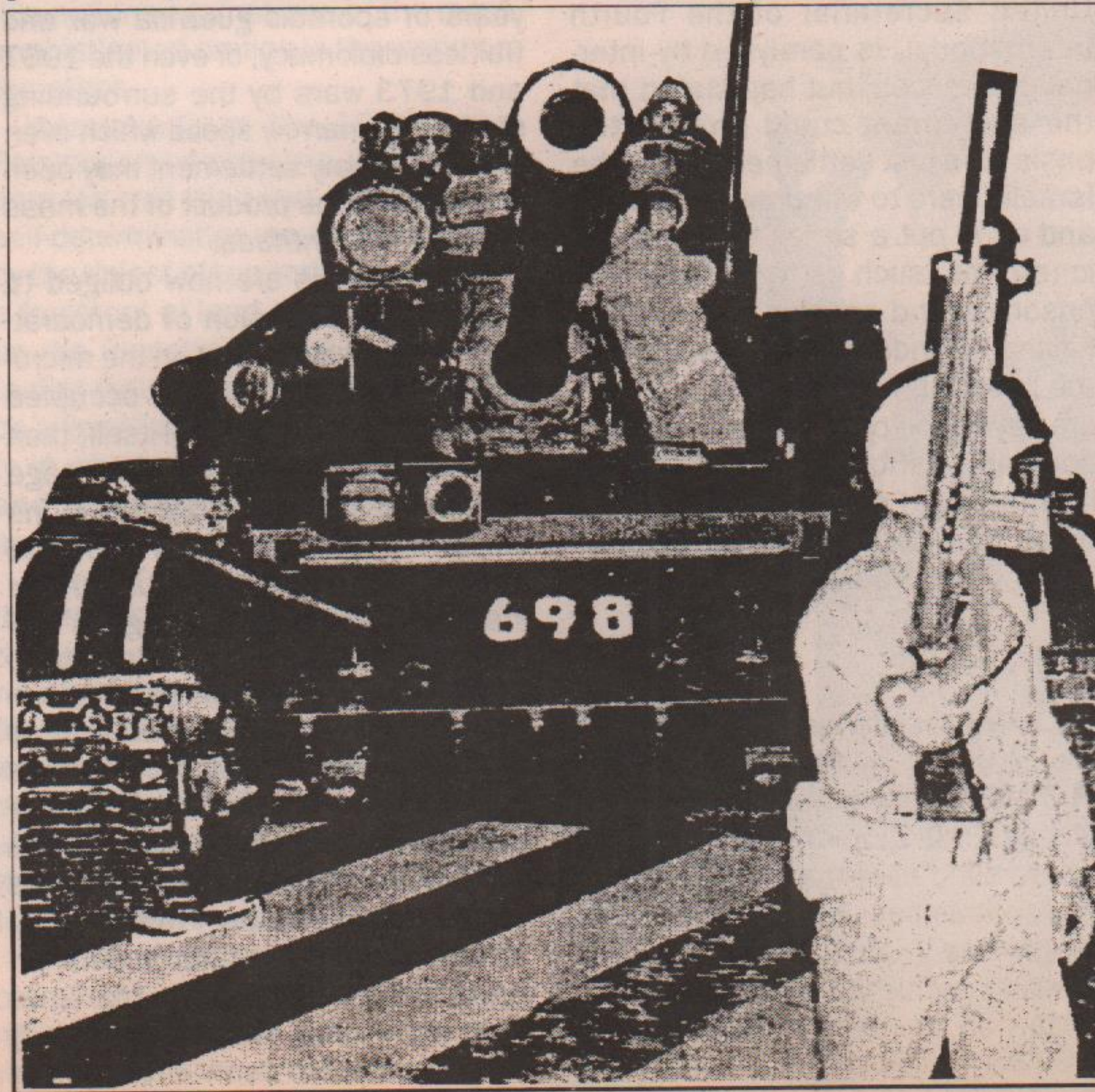
To counter the illusions in Fujimori and start a serious struggle against the dictatorship, workers will have to vote no in the referendum. To abstain, as SL propose, will strengthen Fujimori because the masses themselves are not convinced of the illegitimacy of this referendum. But voting no does not mean supporting the bourgeois opposition to Fujimori.

We draw a strict line between working class opposition to Fujimori and that of those bosses whose noses have been put out of joint by the dictator. They support his attacks on the workers and are only concerned about restrictions on their own democratic rights. They do not favour the release of all po-

litical prisoners, including SL. Any crimes SL have committed against the masses must be judged and punished by workers' and peasants'

tribunals, not by the secret tribunals and firing squads of the bourgeoisie.

In calling for a no vote, Peruvian



Fujimori's tanks crush opposition

TURKEY

Kurds resist slaughter

BY CHRIS BRYANT

ON COMING to power in July, Turkey's new president Tansu Ciller promised the Kurds reforms. The mainly Kurdish south east of the country was to receive £1 billion of aid. Education, TV and radio in the Kurdish language were to be permitted. But nothing has been done.

Ciller's promises are the latest in a series of "reforms", initiated by Turgut Ozal's Motherland Party in 1991 and continued under Ciller's predecessor Suleyman Demirel. They promised little and gave less.

Ciller had two reasons for pledging these reforms. One was an attempt to erode support for the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), whose war with the Turkish state has now entered its tenth year. Previous reforms have done nothing to undermine the rebels. Neither have attempts to set up anti-PKK militias in the rural areas.

The second reason is Europe. Turkey has been excluded from the EC explicitly because of its human rights abuses, although it has been an "associate" member of the EC for twenty years. Despite the exclusion, EC countries account for over half of Turkey's trade. With a growing balance of payments deficit (Turkey's total imports are 50% greater than total exports) it is vital that the Turkish bosses place themselves firmly within the European integration process.

Turkey has the potential to become an important regional superpower. It is ideally placed to act as a bridge between the EC and the ex-Soviet Republics of Central Asia, as

well the Middle East. The proposals for reforms have already won the Turkish government full customs union with the EC, to be implemented in 1996.

But Turkey's treatment of the Kurds is a particularly sensitive issue with Germany. The sight of Turkish Kurds being gunned down with German manufactured weaponry does not go down too well with Germany's large Kurdish population of 400,000, many of whom are supporters of the PKK.

The carrot of reforms may be slow in coming but the stick of repression is in full swing. One third of the entire army, 200,000 Turkish troops, continue to wage a ruthless war of extermination against around 10,000 Kurdish mountain rebels. In the 1980s, over 1,000 Kurdish villages were "emptied" or abandoned because of the war.

In the last two years, the south eastern town of Batman has seen over three hundred unexplained murders and disappearances. Death squads operate under the protection of the police and the military. Their targets are anyone suspected of supporting the Kurdish national struggle. PKK members, journalists and even MPs are considered fair game.

In early September Mehmet Sincar, an MP of the People's Labour Party, was gunned down with others in a busy bazaar in the centre of Batman. President Ciller shed some crocodile tears and tried to shift the blame on to Hizbollah, the Islamic

fundamentalist rivals of the PKK.

This is nothing new. Turkish governments have consistently tried to cover up the work of their death squads by pinning blame on Islamic fundamentalists, Syrians, Iranians, Armenians—anyone but the real culprits. Despite all the murders in the area, only one person has ever been arrested. In fact the area is so heavily policed that it would be impossible for the squads to operate without the complicity of the state.

Opposition journalists are singled out for particular attention. One pro-PKK paper, *Ozgur Gundem* (Open Agenda), has had eight of its journalists murdered or "disappeared" since it was set up last year. The state is clearly compensating for its paltry reforms by stepping up unofficial repression.

The Turkish government will try to deal a death blow to the Kurdish resistance as soon as possible, because it has other business to deal with on its eastern and southern borders. To the east there is real danger of war breaking out with Armenia over the latter's war with Azerbaijan.

Although Turkey is a secular state, it has supported the Muslim Azeris against the Christian Armenians, fueling historic antagonisms between Turks and Armenians. There has already been one exchange of fire between Russian troops, who support the Armenians, and the Turks. Ciller is likely to come under pressure to send troops to defend the Azeri enclave of Nakhichevan in Armenia. This would mean crossing Armenian territory—a *de facto* declaration of

Trotskyists seek to force all the workers' organisations to build a united front to defend all working class gains and liberties and oppose the new constitution. We fight to commit the workers' organisations not merely to opposition to the dictatorship and its new constitution, but to fight for job security, a minimum wage of \$500 per month, a sliding scale of wages and hours, full jobs or full pay, the cancellation of the foreign debt, the expropriation of all companies declaring closure and the nationalisation of all imperialist holdings, without compensation and under workers' control.

We fight for the freedom of all political prisoners, the right of assembly and for self-defence by all working class and popular committees. We demand that the workers' leaders and organisations convene a National Assembly of rank and file delegates from all the union and popular organisations, and that this Assembly calls and organises a general strike.

Self-defence

In voting no, we do not counterpose the old bourgeois constitution to the new one. We demand immediate elections to a new and sovereign constituent assembly, convened free from military rule and interference and with the media placed under workers' and popular control.

Democratic control should be guaranteed through building committees and self-defence organisations. All workers, whatever age, and anyone else over the age of sixteen should be allowed to vote in the Assembly elections.

A determined struggle around these demands in the course of fighting for a no vote can unite the workers' movement against Fujimori and begin to lay the basis for defeating the dictatorship altogether. ■

war.

If Turkey is to take on the role it seeks as a regional superpower, it will also have to address its long running territorial dispute with Syria to the south. The internal instability caused by the Kurdish resistance obstructs this.

This summer's wave of terrorist attacks and kidnappings of tourists—though combined with protest strikes in some Kurdish towns—are more a sign of the PKK's desperation than strength. While the small force of mountain guerrillas can keep a large part of the Turkish army occupied, there is no chance of an outright military victory.

Their programme is based on the classic guerrillaist strategy of Stalinist-influenced national liberation movements, which fail to base themselves on the working class in alliance with, and leading, the peasantry.

The working class must come to the head of the struggle against all manifestations of Turkish chauvinism. The workers' parties and unions must fight for complete freedom of speech, language rights, dress and culture. And they must support the right of the Kurdish people to full national self-determination—including separation from Turkey if they so desire.

This is the only way to achieve a united working class fight against national oppression and genocide, a fight which can only be guaranteed victory through the revolutionary overthrow of the Turkish capitalist class. ■

RUSSIA

Fight Yeltsin's Coup!

WHEN BORIS Yeltsin announced that he was dissolving the Russian parliament, cutting off its finance and seizing its building, the White House, he was assured of support from all the major Western governments.

Douglas Hurd, for the British Foreign Office, was quick off the mark, declaring that Britain had consistently "supported the process of democratic and economic reform in Russia" and that the "mandate of the President had been thwarted by institutions with less democratic credentials".

Clinton and US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, quickly followed suit, declaring that this constitutional coup was fine, because elections had been promised in the near future. An identical coup launched by President Fujimori of Peru against his congress in April 1992 resulted in Western condemnation and suspension of all aid. In Yeltsin's case it has been accompanied by calls to speed up the distribution of aid to Russia!

Dispensed

As always for the imperialist powers, constitutions and laws can be quickly dispensed with when real economic interests are at stake. And they certainly are in Russia today.

While the struggle between the President and the Russian parliament appears to be about constitutional issues it has always really been about differences over the pace and nature of the final dismantling of the planned economy and the restoration of free market capitalism throughout Russia. The sharpest clashes have been over who controls the budget and decides on economic priorities, over who controls the Central Bank and the degree of subsidies to the state industries.

Yeltsin and his government have continually tried to implement a "fast track" programme for the restoration of capitalism. They want to follow the Polish model of freeing prices, removing subsidies, privatising the big state enterprises and using the Central Bank as a weapon to ensure the market, not the state, determines production.

The programme would lead to the collapse of thousands of state enterprises that only continue to produce because they receive massive credit from the Central Bank. Unemployment will rocket, probably to tens of millions, inflation will increase dramatically as subsidies on basic goods are removed.

Media

Yeltsin's problem was that he could not win a parliamentary majority for his programme. This was not, as the Western media likes to pretend, because the parliament was stuffed full of "hardline Communists". Far from it.

Ruslan Khasbulatov, Speaker of the parliament, was Yeltsin's comrade-in-arms on the steps of the White House during the August 1991 coup attempt. He even authored the call-to-arms speech delivered by Yeltsin from the top of a tank. Alexander Rutskoi, who declared Yeltsin's actions in September an "open coup d'etat", was Yeltsin's running mate in the 1991 Presidential elections. One of the biggest groups of deputies is lined up behind Civic Union, which is committed to a transition to a market economy.

Certainly there are remnants of the



BY JOHN MCKEE

old hardline Stalinists, linked together with the monarchists and far right in the Russian Unity faction, but they remain a minority. They have come to prominence since Yeltsin's coup as defenders of the White House because they have links to the Stalinist hardliners and survivors amongst the August coup-mongers in and outside the army. It is they who can supply the arms and the muscle men to defend the parliament.

The roots of the conflict between President and parliament lie in the social basis of the hundreds of Peoples' Deputies. Many of them still represent the old disintegrating ruling bureaucracy; the local council and regional officials, the managers of industrial and farm enterprises and the leaders of the old state trade unions. While being in favour of the restoration of capitalism these groups are afraid of losing out in any "big bang" transition to capitalism.

They want guarantees that privatisation will be carried out in such a way that the old bureaucracy can be the beneficiaries of the new capitalism by turning themselves into the new ruling class. They also fear that mass unemployment and hyper-inflation will cause mass social unrest directed at them, the nearest "representatives" of the government.

This is the cause of the dual power situation in Russia over the last period. Yeltsin has been unable to push through his programme against the powerful remnants of the old bureaucratic caste. These remain particularly strong in the regions, despite Yeltsin's appointment of his own supporters as governors and executives in the localities.

Meanwhile, at a national level, parliament has been able to water down, evade and occasionally block Yeltsin's measures. The forces that united in August 1991 against the military coup are now confronting one another on the streets.

The imperialists never had any doubts about where they stood. They wanted Yeltsin's quick road to capitalism, whatever the cost to the masses of the Russian people. They made it quite clear that there would be little investment until capitalism is firmly entrenched. Yeltsin's appeals for aid to cushion the impact of his

reforms fell on deaf ears. As inflation rose, soaring to 350%, wiping out pensions and undermining wages, the parliamentary obstruction increased, as did the disillusion of the masses.

In May this year the Tokyo meeting of G7 promised \$43 billion in aid to Russia. Again the imperialists, especially the US, made sure that little of it was given. A mere \$1.5 million has been released by the IMF up to September. A key demand of the imperialists was an end to the massive subsidies to industry and basic food products that resulted in the parliament adopting a budget that involved a 25% deficit for 1993.

Yeltsin and his imperialist backers know that to carry out the programme necessary for the restoration of capitalism, the President must have extraordinary powers, must be able to raise himself above the contending groups and classes in society in a "Bonapartist" fashion.

Yeltsin has tried every means at his disposal to end the "dual powerlessness" of the last two years. The April referendum in which Russians were called on to give a vote of confidence to Yeltsin and secondly to approve his reforms, in which just over half (58% and 53% respectively) voted yes, was a victory for Yeltsin but one which did not solve his problems with parliament.

His next ploy was to try and go round parliament, convening a series of meetings of regional and republic bosses, to tempt them into agreeing a new constitution which would give him, and them, greater powers. His final attempt was rebuffed in September. Two days later he announced the unconstitutional dissolution of parlia-

ment by presidential decree.

What will Yeltsin do now? In an editorial, shortly after the referendum, Workers Power said that to turn his result into a decisive victory, Yeltsin would have to oust his enemies in parliament and the provinces and gain undivided control over the Central Bank. We wrote, "This will require some sort of unconstitutional act that the army and KGB chiefs will support and carry out. This could mean promulgating a constitution by decree and calling elections to a new parliament."

This is exactly what Yeltsin is doing. The Western governments' lauding of Boris Yeltsin's "democratic credentials" is total hypocrisy. His decree not only swept aside the constitution by dissolving parliament but also proposed a new constitution which has only a few trappings of democracy.

The elections announced for December would only be for a lower house in a bicameral parliament. A "Federation Council" will form the upper house made up of regional and council leaders, such as governors, most of whom are appointed by Yeltsin himself. The lower house, a "State Duma", will have fewer powers and be made up of 400 elected delegates. Yeltsin could not have chosen a more appropriate name. The last State Duma to function was one convened by Tsar Nicholas the Last in 1905. It was dissolved twice until its composition reflected the Tsar's opinions!

The proposal also removes the Central Bank and the Procurator General's office from parliamentary control and places them under the direct control of the President. The Constitutional Court, which unanimously ruled Yeltsin's actions unconstitutional, is suspended until the new parliament convenes.

Yeltsin's new constitution is designed to focus enormous power in the hands of the President and his government, leaving the elected house of the parliament a largely impotent talking shop. Little wonder that Yeltsin, having previously said he would not stand again for President, calmly announced he would have new presidential elections next June and stand for another five year term.

Yeltsin and his imperialist backers know that to carry out the programme

necessary for the restoration of capitalism, the President must have extraordinary powers, must be able to raise himself above the contending groups and classes in society in a "Bonapartist" fashion. Yeltsin is aware that he cannot let the discontent of the masses be reflected in democratic institutions.

He is acutely conscious of the results of the Polish elections where the former "Communists" are now the largest party, elected on a platform not dissimilar to the Civic Union's, committed to slow down, not stop, the pace of privatisation. Neither Yeltsin nor his backers in Washington are willing to contemplate such an outcome and therefore "representative democracy" has to be moulded to the task in hand.

Provinces

Yeltsin's path is not completely clear yet. He still has to overcome the opposition in the provinces. Out of the 88 local parliaments, 24 have already gone on record as opposing his coup, threatening to withhold taxes and fuel. His Prime Minister has threatened to dissolve parliaments that obstruct the constitutional reforms.

The Russian President's success will above all depend on keeping control of the army. So far it has repeatedly declared its "strict neutrality" which in effect means it is siding with the government as long as Yeltsin's police and interior ministry troops can keep order. Only an outbreak of mass revolt and disorder would lead the army to question its role.

So far the mighty working class in Russia has remained passive, showing no signs of wanting to defend the parliament, or its institutions, stuffed as they are with former bureaucrats and placement. Neither have they shown any enthusiasm for Yeltsin.

The President cannot count on the kind of mass demonstrations or strikes which rallied to his support against the August coup.

Giant

The Russian working class remains a sleeping giant which still has to recover from the atomisation inflicted on it by more than 50 years of Stalinist dictatorship.

Revolutionary socialists in Russia should nevertheless use the crisis to try and rally the workers against this attack on their democratic rights. The parliament should be defended against Yeltsin's coup even if it means temporarily blocking with the Stalinist and restorationist deputies opposed to Yeltsin, without for one moment giving any support to their political programme or positions.

The workers must organise independently to stop the Yeltsin/Gaidar economic programme for the restoration of capitalism which will mean poverty and unemployment for millions and riches for the few.

They must demand the immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly with full powers to adopt a new democratic constitution and to pass a programme of emergency measures to deal with the food shortages, economic chaos and inflation.

Such an assembly must be convened and protected by workers' militias organised by workers' councils throughout Russia. The soldier and sailor conscripts should be called on to refuse to obey Yeltsin and his Generals in implementing their plans for a dictatorial regime. These are the immediate tasks of the hour. ■

SWP IN CONFUSION

Defend the Bosnian Muslims!

SEPTEMBER SAW the imperialists attempt to put the finishing touches to an agreement which ensures the destruction of the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the same month *Socialist Review*, the journal of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), led with an article attacking those on the left who called for an end to the arms blockade, and for the arming of the Bosnian Muslims in order that they could defend themselves and their state.

The SWP refuses to take sides in the war in former Yugoslavia. It has constantly argued that revolutionaries should give no support to the "nationalist demagogues who have plunged the ex-Yugoslavia into civil war".

This "plague on all your houses" position sounds very revolutionary, until we look at the concrete and complex reality of the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Then it reveals itself to be not a revolutionary position but a pacifist one.

The war in the former Yugoslavia has gone through many turns and stages. The current phase, which began in October 1992, has been dominated by a concerted Serbian and Croatian offensive to carve up Bosnia between them.

Blockade

The results are indisputable. Over a million Bosnian Muslims have been driven from their homes as a result of a massive programme of ethnic cleansing by both Croat and Serb forces. The Muslims, who made up 44% of a population that included 32% Serbs and 17% Croats, have been driven into a tiny area of the country, less than 20% of the territory. Under the latest plan the Serbs control 52% of the territory.

The imperialists and the UN troops on the ground have overseen this bloody war. They have imposed an arms blockade which in reality has only had an impact on the Bosnian Muslims. The Serbs have their own arms industry, while the Croats have no problems receiving arms courtesy of their German backers.

Each defeat of the Bosnian Muslim forces has been followed by a new imperialist plan giving them an ever-dwindling piece of territory. The Vance-Owen plan offered them barely a third of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The latest proposal offers little more than a South African-style "homeland" with the Izetbegovic government desperately trying to win a narrow outlet to the sea.

These are the circumstances in which *Socialist Review* denounces those who want, as it puts it, to "reduce the civil wars in the ex-Yugoslavia to the suffering of the Muslims". This, according to the article, is "single issue politics of the worst kind". Those who call for the arming of the Muslims, for ending the arms blockade, are involved in an "act of conscience salving".

This is the position that led the SWP to have nothing to do with the Workers' Aid to Bosnia Campaign. Fortunately the average British worker has a better sense of internationalist solidarity than this supposed "vanguard" party. Despite the very small forces involved, large numbers of trade union organisations rallied to this campaign.

Does supporting the Bosnian government and its army in the current phase of the war mean we are uncritical supporters of its government? Absolutely not. Workers have no interest in supporting the nationalist



Timex workers backing the Convoy: an act of "conscience salving"?

BY JOHN MCKEE

policies of Izetbegovic, nor of forcing Croats or Serbs into a Muslim-dominated state. We fight for a workers' republic in Bosnia with autonomy for minority groups and a Socialist Federation in the Balkans.

But by showing that revolutionaries and the workers' movement are willing to support a just struggle for national rights, and even survival, by fighting alongside and aiding this struggle, socialists can undermine the hold of the nationalists.

By refusing to support this struggle, the SWP's policy plays into the hands of the extreme nationalists and reactionaries. They can say to workers and small farmers: "Look who the only people actively supporting us are: the Iranian government, the Afghan Islamic fundamentalists etc. They are your real allies".

Does it mean we have to cover up for the actions of the Bosnian army that also have committed atrocities and "ethnic cleansing" in the war, although on nothing like the scale of the Serbs or Croats? No, we condemn them when they occur. We call for the disbandment of the Musulmanska Brigada—the main,

overtly Muslim nationalist unit in which many of the Arab fundamentalists serve—and the disciplining and reorganisation of any unit found to be involved in ethnic cleansing.

But *Socialist Worker* goes out of its way to equate the two sides with such headlines as "Terror used on both sides" (SW 19.6.93), as though this justifies a position of neutrality in the war. Does *Socialist Worker* think that the NLF in Vietnam never committed atrocities? The FLN in Algeria? The ANC in South Africa? Marxists decide to support a struggle on the basis of whether it is a just one or not, not on the basis of the methods used in it.

The SWP has correctly argued against imperialist and UN intervention, rightly arguing that any such intervention can only be for the benefit of the imperialists. They have argued that any bombing of the Serbs will drive the Serbian masses further into the arms of the nationalists, just as the economic blockade has. Yet at the same time the SWP opposes the lifting of one key element of the eco-

conomic blockade: the arms embargo. It is this embargo that has prevented the Bosnian Muslims from defending themselves. It is an embargo imposed by the imperialists—a form of imperialist intervention just as surely as an embargo of food or fuel.

The SWP strategy for breaking the masses from the nationalist leaders in Serbia and Croatia is as deeply flawed as its strategy in Bosnia. All hopes for change are pinned on a spontaneous "popular revolt" against nationalist "warlord leaders" resulting from the growing war weariness.

Of course it is greatly to be hoped that such a movement develops. But to ensure its success, to prevent it leading to a reactionary outcome or even fascism, a party of Serbian workers who are free from national chauvinism has to be built. In concrete terms this means supporting the right of Bosnia to defend itself against a predatory war of conquest and genocide being pursued by the Serbian rulers.

The perspective of a spontaneous revolt conveniently absolves the SWP from taking sides in various phases of the war. So keen are they to bolster

their position that they have consistently exaggerated and painted up in progressive colours all oppositional movements.

First they looked to the pacifists, who organise amongst the students and intellectuals. Most of these groups are now small and isolated. Many of them wanted UN intervention to ensure peace—precisely what the SWP argues against.

In August *Socialist Worker* declared that the real hope for peace lay in the outbreak of a strike wave in Serbia, including a one day general strike. These were strikes for better pay to compensate for hyper-inflation and back pay owed. Of course such strikes resulting from the economic crisis caused by the war and blockade are vitally important. But they do not necessarily take an anti-war or anti-nationalist direction. Workers in Serbia can only be broken from the nationalists if they are won to an internationalist position. For this they need a party which campaigns not only for the defeat of Milosevic and his army but clearly stands for the rights of the Bosnian Muslims and victory in their struggle.

In fact the mass "oppositions" to Serbian leader Milosevic are just as nationalist or further to the right. The "democratic" opposition of Draskovic stands for a Greater Serbia but opposes the present war, while the Serbian Radical Party is both powerful and openly fascist. Workers' discontent could just as easily be funnelled in these directions as any progressive one.

Tactics

The latest "most hopeful sign yet" discovered by *Socialist Worker* (25.9.93) was the revolt by Bosnian-Serb soldiers in Banja Luka. Crack troops and tanks seized the town and demanded measures be taken against war profiteers mainly ensconced in the local government.

Socialist Worker seems to find it particularly hopeful that these were "the largest and toughest outfit in the Bosnian Serb army". Indeed they are. They are also responsible for many incidents of ethnic cleansing against Bosnian Muslims. These are precisely the units that are most opposed to any concessions on territory they have seized and "cleansed".

That is not to say that all these troops can be written off. But their current revolt would have to be entirely transformed if it were to become a vehicle for a progressive solution to the war.

The situation in the former Yugoslavia has brought into focus all the weaknesses in the SWPs politics. In the face of a bloody civil war it is politically disarmed. It can only rail against the nationalists, while having no tactics that relate to workers in Bosnia who are fighting a just war of defence but are under nationalist influence.

It opposes UN intervention, but opposes the lifting of the arms embargo—a key imperialist policy that has disarmed one side in the conflict. It desperately hopes that somehow the economic struggle will reassert itself and solve all problems. Rather than worry its head about developing strategy and tactics that can take the workers forward, it relies as ever on the spontaneous explosion to sweep away the nationalism that infects the workers.

SWP members have the chance at their forthcoming conference to change this rotten position. They should take it. ■

From the miners of Tuzla

Dear miners and friends,
We have received the news that you are organising an "aid convoy", which started from Scotland and left London on 6 September; and that the working class in Europe is supporting you on your way to Tuzla.

We are deeply touched by your kindness and your understanding of our problems. This gives all of us miners of the Kreka area new hope and more strength to succeed, to win.

We have already written to you about our suffering and the destruction that has taken place. We miners are not only defending our country from fascist-style aggression, we are also doing our best to continue with the production of coal in this war situation; to provide coal for energy that means life.

During the last couple of months we have been living and working in conditions of total blockade.

We are surrounded by an aggressor—more than one million people are living in very difficult circumstances on the very minimum of food, water and electricity. It is with great fear that we face the coming winter with no communications.

It is impossible to give you an

These greetings to the Workers' Aid for Bosnia convoy from the miners of Tuzla were received by fax in Serbo-Croat and translated by a Bosnian living in London.

adequate picture of our situation. We are so grateful for your support, for telling the truth, for getting the attention of the media, and for campaigning across Europe to help the Tuzla miners.

We have had the opportunity to see for ourselves that you have provided great support in Britain—not only from miners but also from all workers, young people etc.

We watched one of the U2 concerts on MTV. They have provided £15,000 to support Bosnians through these concerts. Besides the money, we urgently need food and we need assistance to continue production. We are not able to do so without petrol, explosives, fuses and safety materials for the deep shaft.

Because of that, dear comrades, we hope that your initiative and

your goodwill will meet with more support on your way through Europe. We want you to succeed, for your sake and for ours.

We want to defend ourselves, but we also want to work and survive next winter. Without outside help we will not be able to succeed.

With your great solidarity and assistance to help the population of our region, a great contribution will be made from your movement to reopen Tuzla airport.

In the meantime we wish you good luck on your journey of goodwill until we meet in Tuzla, where we wait for you with great hope and happiness.

We remind our friends in Britain that our miners' hearts have always been beating for the goodness of humanity, for justice for the working class.

With right on our side, we are expecting understanding from all workers in Europe, and from all people who love human beings, freedom and democracy.

We wish you good luck until our meeting in Tuzla.

Miners from the Kreka mines, Tuzla.

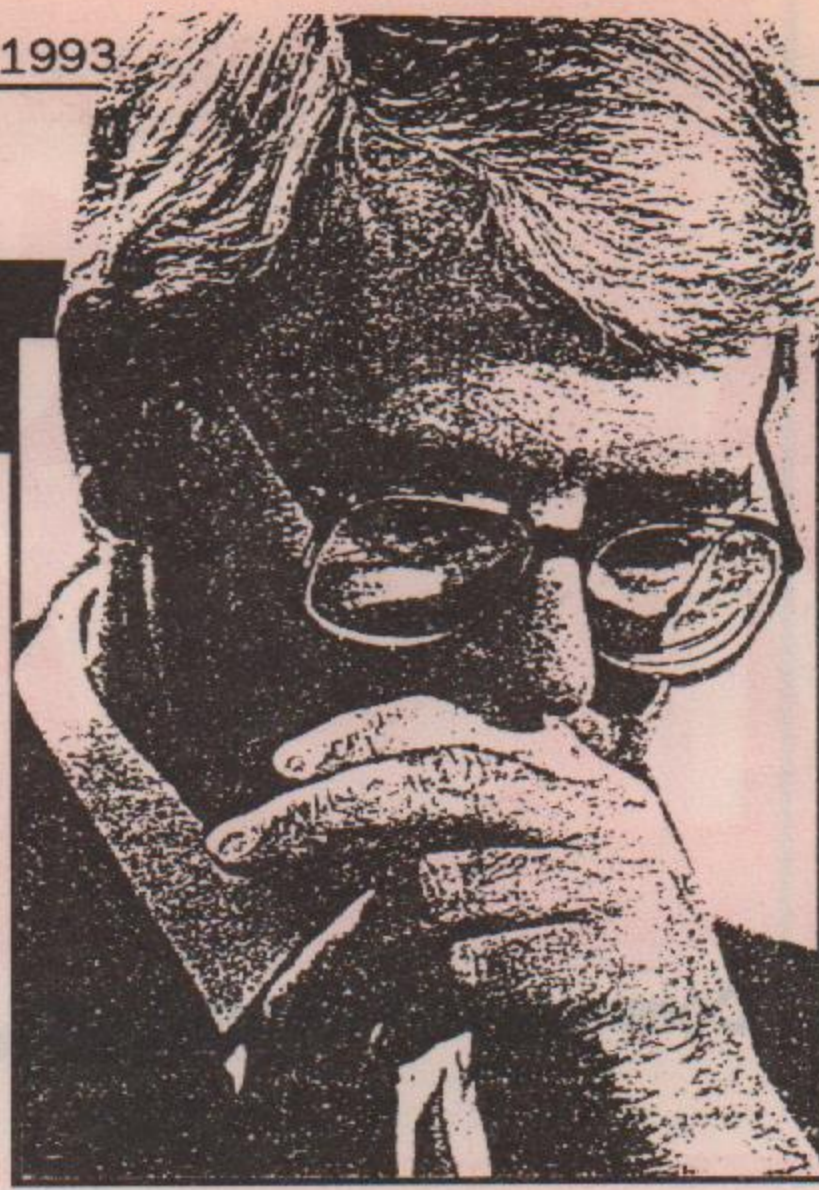
For the unity of all miners!
For the unity of British miners!

6 & 7 NOVEMBER 1993

Where is Britain Going?

A weekend of discussion and debate organised by **workers power**

CAXTON HOUSE, ARCHWAY, LONDON N19



The Tories are weak and divided. The monarchy and the legal system are discredited. The press is whipping up a moral panic over the results of economic deprivation—crime, unemployment and crack wars. The last vestiges of public services and the benefits system are under attack. Racism is growing. Poverty and homelessness are on the increase.

But so is the anger of millions of working class people.

Meanwhile the trade unions decline in numbers, striking workers are locked out and victimised and the Labour Party leaders fight their own members instead of the Tories.

To change this situation we have to understand it.

Understanding Britain's position in a changing world—the collapse of Stalinism and the emergence of a new world disorder—is a vital task for socialists. So is accounting for Labour's decline and explaining the defeats suffered by organised workers.

Where is Britain Going? is a weekend of discussion and debate devoted to explaining the changing conditions of the class struggle, and giving concrete answers to the problems facing the working class.

The economy, the Tory splits, the Labour leaders, the union bureaucrats and the rank and file, racism and black liberation, the changing role of women workers, Ireland and Bosnia—all these will come under scrutiny in two days of open discussion and debate. ★

Agenda

Saturday 6 November

Registration from 11am

11.45 to 1pm:

★ Will the Tories survive?

2 pm to 4pm:

★ Britain and the Bosnian war
★ Can the unions fight and win?

4.30-6pm:

★ The IRA - at an impasse or on the road to victory?
★ Strategies for black liberation

7.30-9pm:

★ Fighting Racism Today

A panel discussion with speakers invited from Newham Monitoring Project, Workers Power, Tower Hamlets Youth against Racism, South West London Anti-Fascist Association and Manchester Anti-Fascist Youth

9 til late:

★ PARTY with bar and DJ

Sunday 7 November

10.30am-12.30pm:

★ Fighting fascism in the 1930s - lessons for today from Germany, France, Britain and Spain
★ Britain's economy - miracle or disaster
★ Where is Labour going?

1.30-3.30pm:

★ The life and death of Stalinism: lessons for the left
★ From Burnsalls to Timex: are women the new vanguard?

4-5 pm:

★ What kind of party does the working class need?

Information

Food will be on sale at lunchtime and in the evening. Tea and Coffee available all day.

Creche will run from 11 'til 6 on Saturday and from 10.30 'til 5 on Sunday.

PLEASE let us know in advance if you are bringing children for the creche.

Workers Power Books will have a wide selection of books and periodicals on sale at publishers' prices.

Other bookstalls and exhibitions are welcome and must be reserved in advance (£15).

Accommodation on Saturday night is limited and must be arranged by booking in advance. Bring a sleeping bag.

Venue: Caxton House, St John's Way, Archway, London N19

Getting there: Transport will be arranged by Workers Power branches.

By public transport: Archway Tube (Northern Line), Upper Holloway BR, Buses 210, 41. By road: map available from address below. There is parking at the venue.

Tickets

Tickets for *Where is Britain Going* are on sale now price:

£10 waged

£5 unwaged/students

Fill in the form below, and make cheques payable to Workers Power.

For further information, and a free four page guide to the event write now to the address below

Book now!

Please send me [] tickets for *Where is Britain Going*?

I enclose £ _____

I am bringing [] children to the creche

I need/ do not need accommodation (delete as necessary)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Send to: Workers Power BCM 7750 London WC1N 3XX

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, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

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, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

The first victorious working class revolution, the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, established a workers' state. But Stalin and the bureaucracy destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The corrupt, parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

Internationally Stalinist Communist Parties have consistently betrayed the working class. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist and their influence in the workers' movement must be defeated.

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 fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. 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 (the 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

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

COMING SOON
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*An action programme for
socialist revolution in Britain*
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Bust Tory pay freeze!

THERE WAS no rising sun for John Major during his tour of Japan. Lamont renewed his attack on the "humiliated" leader. A Tory MP suggested that Major was about to resign. New battle lines emerged in the Tory party over tax and spending cuts.

Like a stuck pig Major squealed that the "stupid intermecine squabbling" in his party had to stop. He knows that it won't. He knows that his party remains bitterly divided over Europe and the economy. He knows that his government is weak.

Every policy move he makes is accident prone. If he upsets a mere nine of his MPs he faces parliamentary defeat. If he upsets enough people to whip up a storm of protest then nine MPs, frightened of losing their seats, can easily be found to threaten a backbench rebellion.

None of this stops the Tories from getting on with their favourite sport - attacking the working class. The one thing that every Tory minister agrees on is that the working class must be made to pay - one way or another - for the public sector debt crisis, for the rising inflation rate, for the slowness of the economic recovery, in short for the chaos that is capitalism.

The most startling evidence of this is the announcement by Chancellor Clarke that 5.5 million public sector workers are to have their pay frozen, a year after having had it limited to a rise of 1.5% or less. The freeze was justified, claimed the Tories, because the economy was "inflation free". The day after this announcement, official inflation figures jumped to 1.7% (headline rate) and 3.1% (underlying rate).

These rates exclude all rises in mortgage costs. They are not based on a real assessment of most workers' cost of living. But even these fiddled figures are set to rise with the introduction of VAT on fuel, the increase in the amount workers have to pay in National Insurance, and the price increases with which the bosses are trying to take advantage



of the shallow recovery.

Inflation is set to increase further. This means one thing: Clarke's pay freeze is a pay cut. Moreover it is a pay cut for some of the lowest paid workers in Britain. Since 1979 average public sector pay fell 8% lower than private sector pay. Public sector workers in filthy jobs, in caring jobs, in physically exhausting jobs, are being condemned to poverty line wages.

The viciousness of the attack on wages is unprecedented, even by Thatcherite standards. But it is the viciousness of a weak and desperate government. A determined fight

by 5.5 million workers to smash this pay policy now, linking up with those workers still to settle under last year's 1.5%, such as the firefighters, could have the Tories reeling.

It's common sense. When your enemy is at its weakest you attack. A united all out public sector strike would terrify the weak and divided Tories. It could destroy their pay policy and their government.

When a further round of pay restraint was hinted at the union leaders were full of fiery words.

UNISON's Alan Jinkinson promised that "public sector workers will not tolerate further restraint. So far

- no further". He even promised an "uprising" against the government. Jimmy Knapp of the rail union threatened "a winter of discontent".

Yet when Clarke actually announced the freeze, a meeting of 36 unions, under the auspices of the TUC and its new leader John Monks, agreed not to take action. On behalf of the 45 bureaucrats at this gathering Monks announced to the press:

"We have set a fuse burning. It is a slow burning fuse, but it is burning away. We don't rule out industrial action, but the emphasis will be on keeping the public on our side."

Monks' gunpowder plot is an insult to Guy Fawkes. The bureaucrats have lit a slow fuse because they haven't got a bomb at the end of it. They are terrified of all out industrial action and have been for years. Yet it is precisely such action that could blow the Tories apart. And in doing this a lot of public sector workers will be saved from a savage reduction of their wages.

The firefighters are balloting on strikes against the 1.5%. Every worker affected by the freeze must organise for action alongside the firefighters. If the bureaucracy restrict the firefighters to one day strikes, workers should use these as launching pads for united all out indefinite action.

The rank and file members of the 36 unions at the TUC meeting should begin building cross-union action committees to organise such action, win the arguments with the members, start raising strike funds, and publicise their case in the whole labour movement so its justice can be seen.

To counterpose winning public support to such action is stupid. Apart from anything else the 5.5 million affected by the freeze are a pretty big chunk of the public. But more important, public support for a good cause does not stop the Tories. Last year the miners had more public support than they knew what to do with. It didn't save a single pit.

The Tories are ripe for a good kicking. Millions of workers, the most important "public" there is, feel this and are looking for a lead. A massive united public sector strike to destroy the freeze will give such a lead.

Never mind the slow fuse. Bomb Major and Clarke into submission!■