

# Workers power

**DEMONSTRATE**

**Saturday 24 February  
11am Embankment,  
London**

*Demo called by CAIAB,  
supported by the TUC*

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

No 197 FEBRUARY 1996 ★ Price 50p



**ASYLUM SEEKERS SAY:**

**“We won't starve in silence!”**

*The Tories' new Asylum and Immigration Bill is an attack on us all. It means:*

- ★ No benefits, legal aid, education, school meals or housing for refugees
- ★ Claiming Asylum becomes virtually impossible
- ★ Race checks at work for 2 million people every year
- ★ More unemployment for black people

*On 24 February thousands of people, black and white, will be marching through London to oppose this Bill. Be there!*

FIGHTING THE RACIST ASYLUM BILL • PAGE 6

## SHIJI LAPITE

# Killer cops walk free!



No Justice for Shiji Lapite's family

**O**n 16 December 1994 Shiji Lapite met a violent death on the streets of Hackney, East London. He was punched, kicked, bitten and then strangled. Nobody was prosecuted for Shiji's death.

The reason? Because the police killed him.

When Shiji's family saw his battered body they complained to the local police at Stoke Newington. They were told he had died of a cocaine overdose, even though two pathologists found more than three dozen separate injuries on his body.

The Police Complaints Authority passed on the files to

the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The CPS refused to take any action. They told the family that there was "insufficient evidence" to prosecute the police who had killed Shiji.

It took more than a year for an inquest to hear the evidence. But it took the jury only 35 minutes to find that Shiji had been **unlawfully killed**.

For the second time in less than three months, a jury had found the Metropolitan Police directly responsible for a death in custody.

Shiji Lapite was a father of two, an asylum seeker from Nigeria. His killing was an act of brutal racism, by a police force which metes out racist violence as a matter of routine.

The indifference of the CPS was an act of judicial racism, by a service which routinely ignores the pleas for justice of victims of police harassment.

Two killer cops calmly admitted, in the witness box, that they had strangled Shiji Lapite. The neck holds, the biting, the kicks to Shiji's head were "self-defence" they said.

The jury said otherwise. But still there is no justice.

Until Shiji's killers, PCs Paul Wright and Andrew McCallum, are tried and convicted there will be no justice.

The police, the CPS and the racist Home Secretary who pulls the strings must be made to realise:

**No Justice - No Peace!**

## Activists' Diary

### Demonstrate: Support Liverpool Dockers!

Saturday 3 February  
Myrtle Parade at 10.30  
March to St. George's Hall  
Liverpool

### Free Satpal Ram Campaign Benefit gig

Thursday 29 February  
Banner Theatre presents  
"Criminal Justice"  
Tickets £5.00 waged, £3.00  
unwaged  
The Red Rose club  
129 Seven Sisters Road  
Islington London N7

### Demonstrate: In support of the Hillingdon Strikers

Called by Greater London  
UNISON  
Saturday 17 February  
11am at Hillingdon Hospital  
Pleld Heath Road,  
Uxbridge

### Stop the racist Asylum Bill! Lewisham Public Meeting

Wednesday 7 February  
at 7.30pm  
Albany Centre Albany Road  
Deptford London SE8

### Stop the racist Asylum Bill! Lambeth Public Meeting

Tuesday 13 February  
at 7.30pm  
Brixton Recreation Centre  
Brixton London SW2

### Demonstrate: Smash the Asylum Bill!

Called by CAIAB.  
Sponsored by the TUC  
Saturday 23 February  
11am Embankment Tube  
London.

### Workers' Power Public Meetings

### Fighting Blair's New Labour-Is the SLP the answer?

Tuesday 20 February  
7.30pm at SCCAU  
West Street  
Sheffield

Wednesday 21 February  
7.30pm at Adelphi Pub  
Lower Briggate  
Leeds

### What is the political legacy of the SWP?

Debate between the  
International Socialism Group  
and Workers' Power.  
Wednesday 14 February  
8.00pm at the  
Calthorpe Arms  
Grays Inn Road  
London

## Women in Prison

# Jailed for being poor

**W**ORKING CLASS women have suffered badly under the Tories. They are more likely to be unemployed. If they have got a job they have a good chance to be one of the four million receiving wages below the EC-recommended "decency threshold". Those with kids have seen the value of child allowance shrink dramatically. If you're a single mother then the Tories and the press hound you as a scrounger.

Now, grim new statistics show a massive rise in the number of women being thrown into Britain's jails. There has been a 40% increase in the number of women sent to prison since 1993. Most of the rise comes from by the jailing of women for non-payment of fines. At least one single mother went to prison for falling behind on her television license instalments.

Of 2,100 women in prison in England and Wales, one in four have been put there for a first offence compared to one in six men.

Since the last general election the Tories' policies have led to increased crime. The government has only one answer to this: put more people in prison and sooner. There has been an increase of 25% in the total prison population over the last three years. By Easter 1996, there will be 54,000 in jails. Next year that figure is due to rise to 70,000. Britain already jails a higher proportion of its citizens than any other country in Europe.

Once women get to prison they suffer further degrading conditions, violence and ritual humiliation. Some of this is



the lot of all prisoners; routine violence by prison officers to break their will to resist, appalling food, unhygienic sanitary conditions. But in addition, women who are pregnant or have small children have to suffer from inadequate facilities.

So bad were conditions at London's Holloway Prison that government inspectors, led by an ex-army officer, aban-

doned a surprise inspection because they could not stand being in there!

Until last month women prisoners on maternity wards were routinely chained to prison warders during labour and immediately after birth. Another woman prisoner, suffering from an AIDS-related illness, lay chained to a bed in St. Mary's Hospital. For all Ann Widdecombe's

fanciful tales to MPs of women in the ninth month of pregnancy climbing over walls, this barbarism was too much for the Tories to justify and they have backed down. But the underlying cause of this inhuman treatment remains: the jailing of hundreds of women for the crime of being poor.

The consequences of sending women to prison are also worse than for men in general because of their oppressed role under capitalism. Single mothers, who have no one to look after their children, see their kids go into care. Women are often looking after sick or elderly relatives: they too suffer as a result of this criminalisation of poverty.

When Tony Blair was shadow Home Secretary he said that Labour would be "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime". As Labour leader we have seen that he is not prepared to do anything to begin to alleviate the economic misery that criminalises some working class people.

While rightly criticising the ineffectiveness and self-defeating character of locking people up where they learn how to be better criminals, Blair has backed the general approach of stigmatising the poor.

We have heard his shadow Home Secretary, Jack Straw, decry beggars, but we have heard very little about policies that will remove the causes of crime: better housing, more jobs, higher benefits, meaningful education. And yet this is exactly what is needed if more and more women are not to end up in hell holes like Holloway. ■

## Asylum

# Ade Onibiyo must stay!



High Court picket: Ade Onibiyo must stay!

**O**n 19 January the High Court in London sentenced 20-year-old Ade Onibiyo to an indefinite stay in the infamous Campsfield detention centre.

The judges rejected his renewed asylum claim. Ade fears the same fate as

his father, Abdul. Since he was deported to Nigeria at the Tories' insistence he has not been heard of.

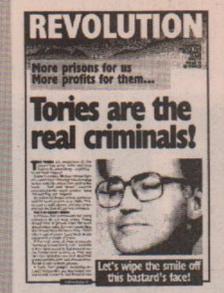
Now Ade must wait for a Court of Appeal decision next month or even one from the House of Lords much later. The government does not want to act

against the wishes of the military dictatorship in Nigeria since its friends in Shell rely on good relations with these murderers for their fat profits.

Step up the campaign. Build for the 24 February Asylum Bill demo. Release Ade from Campsfield now!

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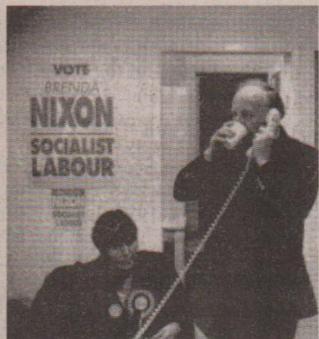


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Education

Why do the Tories want to segregate our kids? Why has Labour got no alternative to the education agenda. The great Tory education disaster. Pages 8&9



Socialist Labour

Clare Heath explains why Scargill's SLP is a false start for those who want a break with Labour's reformist past. Page 14



Disillusion in the North

What was it really like in the 60s under Labour? Page 7



The Fourth International: From Trotskyism to Centrism

Beginning a major new series, we reprint the expanded and updated version of Workers Power's ground breaking history of Trotskyism. Page 11

In next month's issue:

A to Z of Marxism • The Fourth International in World War Two • Labour and immigration.



Ireland

Major bows to Unionists

AT THE end of 1995 the Irish peace process was going nowhere. The Ulster Unionists had elected hard liner David Trimble as their leader. Sinn Fein insisted there would be no unilateral giving up of arms before all party talks commenced. John Major insisted there would be no talks until the IRA had given up its weapons. Into this situation stepped US Senator George Mitchell and his commission. Given the go-ahead to intervene by both London and Dublin, the Mitchell Commission talked to all sides and produced a report on how the log-jam could be broken.

Mitchell's solution was for all sides to sign six "principles", committing them to a peaceful solution. Crucially Mitchell told John Major to drop the precondition of no talks before the IRA gives up its arms.

All parties, including Sinn Fein, quickly signed Mitchell's six principles. But John Major trashed the Mitchell Report. He announced yet another precondition for all party talks, designed to keep the Republican Movement just where Major wants them: at peace but out of the peace process.

Major's new precondition is elections to a consultative body that will conduct the talks. This just happens to be the demand Unionist leader David Trimble had submitted to the Mitchell Commission. And Trimble's Unionists just happen to be the party that is keeping Major in office at Westminster.

Major's sop to the Unionists provoked fury, not just from Sinn Fein but from the Dublin government and the "moderate" SDLP.

It proved that Major is not interested in "peace". He is interested in winning the war against the Republican Movement, disarming the anti-unionists and, above all, staying in office.

Five hundred days of peace have brought very little for Sinn Fein.

First the Tories insisted there could be no talks without a permanent ceasefire. When this was extracted, after a fashion, they moved the goalposts. In February 1995, the Tories insisted that the IRA disarm before Sinn Fein could be allowed into allparty talks.

This was a stunningly hypocritical proposal. It was, in effect, a demand for unconditional surrender by the Republicans. Not even the PLO or the ANC had to give up their weapons before peace talks. And in Northern Ireland 130,000 legally held weapons remain in the hands of the civilian Loyalist population, courtesy of mass, part time membership of the Royal Irish Regiment. In addition the 15,000 strong, 92% protestant RUC forces, and the 30,000 British troops remain heavily armed and at the ready.

For David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) the election ploy serves several purposes. It would demonstrate that "the majority" in Northern Ireland

That is what they fear, and so do hundreds of thousands of anti-unionists, who have seen it all before.

Major and the Unionists are in solid bloc and in no mood to compromise. Even Tony Blair, who up to now has tried to outflank Major through criticising the insistence on total decommissioning, has turned his back on Hume and the SDLP.

What can Sinn Fein and the IRA do now? What should the anti-unionist population of Northern Ireland do?

When the IRA declared the ceasefire in August 1994, Workers Power denounced it as a betrayal of the progressive struggle of the nationalist population of the Six Counties.

That struggle, although it has ebbed

not because we advocated a continuation of the dead end guerrilla war against the British, which even Sinn Fein admitted they could not win. We denounced it because Sinn Fein, rather than changing the form of the struggle against Britain, abandoned that struggle for the methods of bourgeois diplomacy.

Instead of inciting a mass, working class rebellion against discrimination and repression based on demonstrations, strikes and occupations, Sinn Fein turned for help to Bill Clinton and to the Irish government.

Gerry Adams thought he could follow in the footsteps of Mandela and Arafat. But Adams has not even got his main enemies to talk to him.

The Tories have got Sinn Fein over a barrel: if the IRA goes back to war then the newly set up salubrious Washington Sinn Fein offices will close and the millions of US dollars that have been pouring in since the ceasefire will dry up overnight.

But only a turn away from the methods of bourgeois diplomacy can alter the situation decisively in favour of the nationalist population.

If the 130 armed fortresses, 30,000 troops and 13,000 armed police are to be prevented from upholding protestant power, then a mass campaign must be launched. Clinton, Major and Irish Premier Bruton all agree that they want to create a pacified Six Counties, a docile and disarmed nationalist population trapped inside a low wage region of a low wage economy.

A mass campaign of action for the disbandment of the RUC and Royal Irish Regiment, for the immediate and unconditional release of all republican political prisoners, and the withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland is still immediately possible.

The call for that campaign should go now to the masses who look to the SDLP in the North, and to the workers of the Irish Republic.

Their leaders have been marginalised too by Major's ploy, and have no answers.

Mass action against the British presence now is the only alternative to a stalled, fake peace process and a failed guerrilla war. ■

Only a turn away from the methods of bourgeois diplomacy can alter the situation decisively in favour of the nationalist population.

wants to stay within the UK—a majority purposely created by the erection of an artificial border in Ireland seventy five years ago. The elected body would also marginalise Dublin, which could have no elected representatives round the table. It would delay even further the prospect of reaching all party talks.

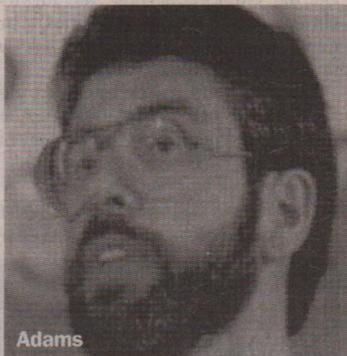
The ploy allows Major and the Unionists to prattle on about democracy: "What have Sinn Fein and the SDLP got to fear from an election?" they ask.

The answer is simple. A rigged election in a constituency with boundaries drawn to guarantee the nationalists lose.

and flowed, has been unbroken since the day in 1921 when the Britain carved out the six-county state as a preserve of protestant privilege and power.

Since then these "Loyalists" have ruled either directly (1922-1972) or indirectly (1972 and after). They have lorded it over the oppressed catholic and nationalist minority. Systematic repression and discrimination has set the anti-unionist population, armed and unarmed, against the statelet and the British troops, who have been there since 1969 to prop it up.

We denounced the ceasefire in 1994



Adams



Hume

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# Liverpool dockers No sell-out! Build solidarity action!

“PORT WORKERS aren't interested in severance payments. We want full reinstatement of all 500,” Jimmy Nolan, chair of the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards' Committee, told *Workers Power*.

A mass meeting of Liverpool dockers had just voted unanimously to reject a rotten deal struck between the leadership of the TGWU and the bosses of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

The mass meeting on 26 January was attended by virtually all the sacked men, plus members of the Women of the Waterfront support group. They listened in stony silence to TGWU Deputy General Secretary, Jack Adams. He outlined the company's "final offer", described by TGWU leader, Bill Morris, as "the best deal possible in the circumstances". The silence turned to anger when the sacked dockers realised that the deal covers only 329 workers, not all 500. The other 170, employed by another five companies, would be left out in the cold.

The offer consists of a lump sum pay-off of £20,000 to workers with more than 10 years service, £25,000 to those with more than 15. Only 40 workers, hand-picked by the bosses, could return to employment, and even then on dramatically worse pay and conditions. The bosses want to hire men at a basic rate of only £170 for a 40-hour week, cutting annual earnings by £3,500. There is no guarantee that the sacked men will get the pensions they are owed.

Speaker after speaker denounced the deal and demanded to know why national TGWU officials hadn't simply

walked out of the talks. Pleas from local church leaders to accept the offer were rejected.

The meeting agreed in principle to a postal ballot on the offer, but Jimmy Nolan insisted "we will only participate

in the ballot on the basis of all 500 taking part, and a guarantee from the Electoral Reform Society that it will be completed by Monday 5 February."

The ballot is likely to lead to a rejection of the deal. What the TGWU will

do then is far from clear. Running scared of the anti-union laws, the national leadership has been loath to raise money for the hardship fund.

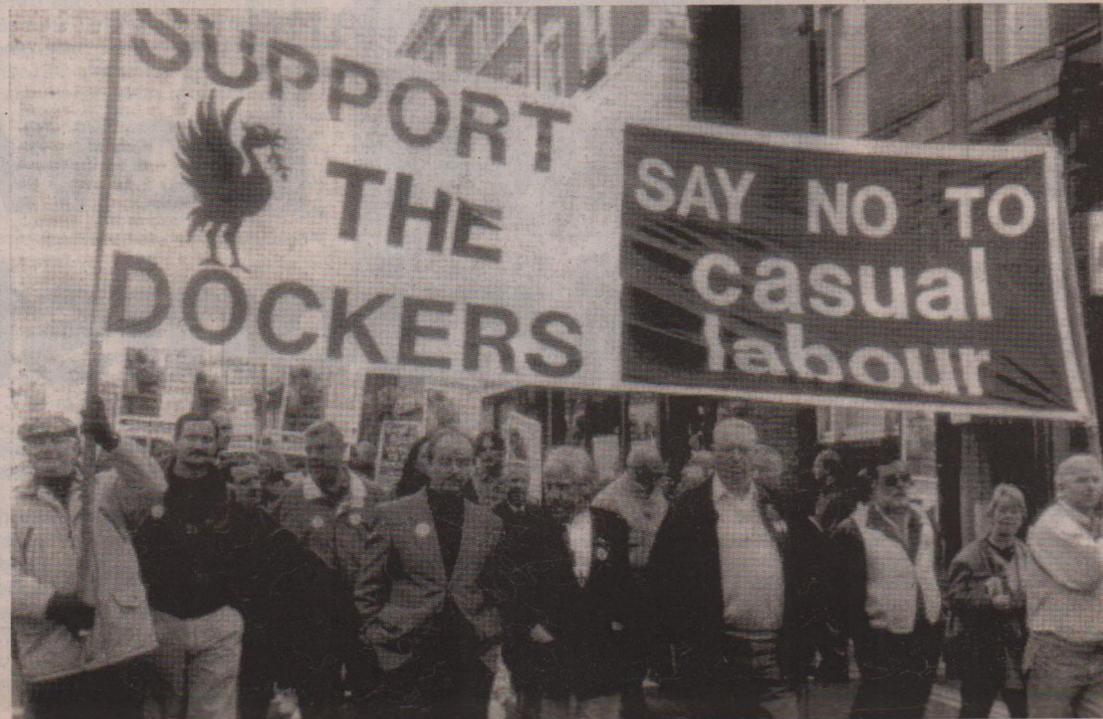
The dockers have not had much backing from their union, but if the TGWU

openly disown them it would be a major blow. The dockers and their supporters must pile pressure on the union to demand that they continue to recognise the dispute and start providing more material support.

The dockers' strongest card has been international solidarity—both financial and physical—from Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Israel. Boycotts of freight from Liverpool have led shipping giant ACL to threaten to withdraw from the port. This has embarrassed the Mersey Docks and Harbour bosses and eroded their profits.

The dockers are committed to staging an international conference in Liverpool in February and have already attracted 40 delegates from nine countries. At the same time as building this conference the dockers need to build on the practical international support and boycotts, even in the face of bureaucratic interference from the top brass of the International Transportworkers' Federation. ■

● Send urgently needed donations to: Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards' Committee, c/o Mr J Davies, Secretary/Treasurer, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS



**Shoulder to shoulder:** Liverpool dockers have won solidarity from across the globe but still have to fight the TGWU leaders at home.

**NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION**  
in support of the dockers  
**Saturday 3 February**  
**Assemble 10.30 am**  
**Myrtle Parade, Liverpool**

## Postal workers

# Another week, another wildcat!

**A**NOTHER WEEK, another wildcat in the Royal Mail—or so it seems. Postal workers in the larger sorting offices have been at the forefront of strike action in the 1990s. From Dartford to Dundee thousands of postal workers have struck over local grievances at least once in the past two years.

In 1995—the second year running—postal workers' action accounted for more strike days than any other section of the working class. Though the final figures for last year are not yet complete, members of the 150,000-strong postal group within the Communication Workers Union (CWU) probably accounted for nearly a third of all strike days across Britain. Much of the action has been unofficial, sometimes in the teeth of stiff opposition from a right-wing union bureaucracy that has been only too glad to disown strikes in front of High Court judges in the name of saving union funds from sequestration.

Already, 1996 has seen another major walk-out, involving more than 3,000 workers, halting deliveries for several days in north west London and eventually paralysing the service across the capital.

The recent London strike, sparked by the victimisation of a CWU representative at the Cricklewood office, was neither as widespread nor as active as the January 1995 dispute which paralysed London's post for 48 hours. It certainly lacked the flying pickets much in evidence during the Scottish wildcat in November last year. Even so, it was a symptom of the ongoing discontent throughout the postal workforce.

What lies behind this militancy? Over the last decade the bosses at the Royal Mail and the Post Office as a whole have set out to "restructure" the service preparing it for privatisation or, at the very least, greater "commercial freedom". This meant savage cuts in the workforce and speed-ups for those still employed. To a large extent, however, Royal Mail management and the Tory government have not realised their agenda.

The main obstacle to their plans has been the unbroken strength of union organisation at a local level. Unlike the miners, printworkers and dockers, postal workers have not suffered a decisive defeat during the Thatcher-Major years. In contrast to many industries employing large numbers of less skilled manual workers, the Post Office's demand for labour actually rose during the late 1980s. Even if many of the new recruits were hired as casuals, the prospect of mass redundancies appeared less of a threat than in many other industries.

Since the last national strike in 1988, management and the Tories have retreated from head-on national confrontations with postal workers. The anxiety among Conservative backbenchers in marginal seats, combined with the spectre of a national strike, sank Michael Heseltine's privatisation plan in autumn 1994.

Nevertheless, on top of attempts to victimise union activists, management have attempted to introduce, on a piecemeal basis, a series of radical changes in working practices. They have also tried to erode existing terms and conditions and cut full-time, permanent staffing

levels. These localised attacks took a particularly acute form in Scotland, thus triggering the furious six-day battle that began in a depot on the outskirts of Edinburgh on 27 November.

Royal Mail's Scottish division had made plain its intention since summer 1995 to axe second deliveries and so cut some 1,500 jobs. While the wildcat strike persuaded management to put their plans on hold, it appears that Royal Mail's latest national restructuring package, the "employee agenda", includes the elimination of second deliveries. This new management offensive will test the limits of purely local resistance.

There is every reason to expect that the CWU's joint General Secretary, Alan Johnson, and the right-wing majority on the national executive, will recommend acceptance of this package.

Despite the widespread local resistance and the partial success achieved by

several strikes, workers face an uphill fight if they are to thwart the bosses' latest plans. The single biggest problem facing CWU militants is a national union leadership ready and willing to sell out their members' rights in the name of supporting greater "commercial freedom" as the road to safeguarding jobs.

Alan Johnson, who heads the union alongside Tony Young (who is in charge of the telecommunications section, comprised largely of BT engineers), is the personification of the Blairite bureaucrat—articulate, sharp-suited and firmly committed to "modernising" the Labour Party and his union. Among the TUC's top brass, Johnson was at the forefront of the leadership's campaign to ditch Clause 4 of Labour's constitution.

Last year's special rules revision conference voted in favour of a ballot for a national strike from 1 February if Johnson did not reach a satisfactory agreement on the issue of second deliveries. Even if Johnson does not endorse the "employee agenda"—a big "if"—he will be reluctant to mobilise any resistance on a national basis in the run-up to the General Election.

Unfortunately Johnson still wields considerable influence among the majority of CWU members, reflected in his success in selling two lousy pay deals in as many years. In January, an overwhelming vote among CWU members in the Royal Mail ratified a settlement that provides for a nominal average rise of 3.5%. Fewer than 13,000 voted against the package.

The absence of a substantial, organised rank and file opposition is crucial to Johnson's power. Clearly, the scope of

wildcat action testifies to both the depth of anger at management's provocative tactics, and the enduring sense of solidarity among postal workers. It also shows that a number of local officials are at least partly prepared to defy orders from the CWU's head office.

But this falls far short of what will be required to mount an effective challenge to the existing union leadership, which will almost certainly stand in the way of a national strike against the "employee agenda" and has time and again denounced unofficial walk-outs. In addition, the growing use of casuals in many areas poses a divisive threat to union organisation. Militants must push for the aggressive recruitment of casuals to the CWU, tied with a fight to win permanent contracts for these workers on the basis of existing union-negotiated terms and conditions.

Whatever its limitations, the wave of local strike activity has laid the basis for a rank and file movement in the CWU that must go beyond the narrow electoral horizons of the traditional Broad Lefts in the former UCW and NCU. A conference assembling elected delegates from the many branches whose members have engaged in action is a matter of urgency.

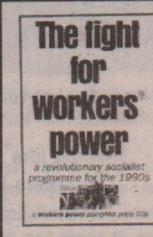
Militants must put on its agenda the issues of democracy in the union, how to fight the anti-union laws, which both bosses and CWU bureaucrats alike use to hamper action in defence of jobs, terms and conditions and the fight to safeguard the Post Office from the profiteers. As the full implications of the "employee agenda" become clear, time is of the essence. ■

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## Employment Services

# Vote 'yes' for action!

**T**HE CRUNCH time has come for the long-running pay dispute in the Employment Service (ES).

The so-called "Moderate" (actually very right wing) clique that dominates the higher reaches of the CPSA bureaucracy has cynically sprung a ballot for an indefinite national strike in the hope that it will go down to defeat. General Secretary Barry Reamsbottom is looking for the perfect excuse to pull the plug on the limited strike action that began at the end of November and has so far involved only 5% of the workforce. Union militants must fight to ensure that Reamsbottom and the "Moderates" get a rude awakening by winning a massive "yes" vote.

There has been a long argument over the timing and the nature of the ballot between the right wing National Disputes Committee and the ES Section Executive. The latter is dominated by the Left Unity faction composed of Militant Labour and *Morning Star* supporters.

But now, finally, the ballot will go ahead from 1 February and close on 14 February. It will only be consultative, however, and therefore not binding on the union leadership. It will pose at least two questions: one for a programme of regional strikes, the other for an indefinite national strike.

ES workers should vote "yes" to both action proposals and fight for the ballot to have authoritative status—that means that a majority for upping the action becomes a mandate for it.

Rolling regional action on its own, however, will not secure serious concessions from the ES bosses. It could even hamper the campaign for the necessary escalation of the dispute so long as the bureaucracy retains control over its conduct.

Against this background, it is absolutely vital that rank and file activists start to mount an effective challenge. Concretely, this will mean a vigorous campaign for "yes" votes focused on workplace meetings, twinned with a recruitment drive and fund-raising to offset the inevitable hardship of indefinite action.

A national strike committee is also long overdue. It should be elected and accountable, with responsibility for the day-to-day running of the dispute including control over all negotiations and the allocation of strike pay. The strike committee would also be crucial in mobilis-



**Crunch time:** ES workers must vote yes to all out action

ing opposition to the impending attempt by the bureaucracy to call off all action from 19 February. There should be no return to work in the fifty offices currently on strike unless all the votes for action go down to defeat, and then only on the basis of national and local agreements ratified by mass strikers' meetings. Strikers also need to strengthen ties with workers both in the ES and the Benefits Agency, linking the pay campaign to the developing fight against the Job Seekers Allowance.

The Socialist Caucus, a grouping of rank and file activists in the CPSA and the PTC (formed from the 1995 merger of NUCPS and the IRSF), has adopted these positions put at a recent meeting by supporters of Workers Power. As well as SWP militants in Liverpool and Cardiff, Caucus members have been instrumental in the fight against the leadership's treachery. The Caucus is putting forward a rounded programme to win,

seriously addressing members' concerns about the lack of strike pay, which the SWP looks set to ignore.

To keep up the fight, strikers have already had to repel at least two attempts by the "Moderate" leadership who have approached ACAS with an eye to settling the 1995 pay claim for no more than divisive, performance-related deal which would mean a real pay cut for the overwhelming majority of the workforce. Since the national protest strike on 30 November, most of the CPSA bureaucracy has done nothing to build even the most basic support for the action.

Unfortunately, the record of the Left Unity ES Section Executive is little better. It has failed to mount an active campaign or produce recruiting material during the dispute. It delayed calling for a levy of other offices. Its sorry performance highlights the need to build a militant rank and file movement across the CPSA and the civil service as a whole. ■

## Natfhe

# London pay campaign in danger

**P**OLITICAL BLINDNESS and bureaucratic manoeuvre threaten to ruin any effective pay campaign in NATFHE's Inner London Region. The pay claim, for a flat rate increase of £2,887, was agreed at the May 1995 national conference, but the leadership refused to fight for it. In fact, they called off a national campaign in October.

In response, Inner London Region decided to press ahead with the claim—only to be told that we could not pursue a national claim regionally!

Under pressure from members, who have had no pay rise for over two years, the national bureaucracy has now conceded that branches within the region can "convey" the claim to their employers—but they are not permitted to negotiate in response to the ensuing offer.

Delegates to the Region's Further Education Sector Committee met on 27 January and agreed a timetable designed to ensure that, if the claim is not met in full, branches can proceed together through the prolonged nightmare of balloting procedures, and begin strike

action in mid-March. Although such co-ordinated action is absolutely essential, these tactics hold very serious dangers.

They represent a tacit agreement between the likes of the Regional Secretary, Chris Powell, who believes that all actions must be taken within the rules as interpreted by the union leadership and full-timers, and SWP comrades who seem to think that isolated local action will suffice to overcome bureaucratic or legal obstacles.

The greatest danger is that national officials will control every step in the campaign. If any management proposes pay negotiations, it is likely that the union branch will not get permission to ballot until talks have taken place.

Even if we clear that hurdle, and a ballot is held and won, officials can still refuse to authorise action if they believe that the ballot has created the conditions for new negotiations.

With more than a dozen colleges involved, the possibilities for bureaucratic foot-dragging and manoeuvre are practically endless. In addition, effective

strike action must mean indefinite strikes but, according to Chris Powell, the union has suspended all sustenance payments (strike pay). Given the leadership's obvious reluctance to fight at all, the absence of strike pay will undermine morale unless we raise a fighting fund regionally.

Finally, the greatest strength of the campaign is that it involves the whole region.

That could be destroyed, though, if different settlements are proposed in individual colleges, as has happened already in the contracts campaign. To prevent that, all negotiations should be controlled by elected delegates from the colleges, even though this goes against the union's rules.

The SWP comrades are right to point to the anger amongst the members and to argue for strike action to win the claim, but they are wrong to ignore the need to prepare the membership from the start for the likelihood of bureaucratic betrayal and the need for unofficial and potentially unlawful action. ■



## The politics of victimisation

by Dave Grant, an East London NUT member

**T**ONY GARD, a teacher at Langdon Park School in Tower Hamlets and one of my fellow trade unionists, is facing the sack for his activities in opposition to the viciously racist Immigration and Asylum Bill.

His is not the only case. Trade unionists are frequently targeted because of their political activity. Workers were sacked for taking part in anti-Poll Tax demos. Bosses frequently try to dismiss healthworkers who talk about the state of the Health Service and campaign for extra funds.

Teachers, in particular, have always been open to this kind of victimisation. It is part of the professionalism myth surrounding teachers that we are supposed to be "above" any kind of politics. This is in case we influence the children with our nasty ideas. It is also a way of attempting to control teachers and stop us from getting involved in any kind of political activity. This attitude even infects our own union. For years, the NUT had a rule which said we could not discuss any issue at a union meeting which wasn't to do with education!

It seems that the Labour-controlled Local Education Authority (LEA) in Tower Hamlets has decided to crack down on political teachers.

Last November a demonstration took place outside Parliament, on the day of the state opening, against the Immigration and Asylum Bill. During the demonstration Tory Party Chairman Brain Mawhinney found himself at the wrong end of some paint and flour—to the amusement of millions who saw the incident on television. The governors of Langdon Park School, with the support of the LEA, have brought charges of gross misconduct against Tony for his alleged role in the incident. They have also made clear that their objective is Tony's "summary dismissal". In addition, three student union officers at Kingsway College face disciplinary action, while a fourth at the University of North London is serving a two-month suspension in connection with the same incident.

Tony's case is a particularly crude piece of political victimisation. The charges against Tony are entirely related to political activity, not his work as a teacher. This is the second time he has faced victimisation at the hands of his school governors and the LEA. Last year he was charged with "professional misconduct" for his part in the campaign to defend the Langdon Park Four—Asian school students whom the police, with the zealous assistance of the Langdon Park head teacher, attempted to criminalise.

Tower Hamlets LEA has already sought to intimidate four other NUT members with the threat of disciplinary action. Last year the four, all teachers at the borough's Mowlem School, faced the prospect of an inquiry by the authority for campaigning against SATs testing. The teachers concerned had—along with many other NUT activists in the borough—

given out leaflets to parents before and after school informing them of their right to withdraw their children from the tests. They had also leafleted local estates. In July they were informed that they were under investigation by an LEA inspector.

After a lengthy union-backed campaign in their support, the Mowlem Four were recently notified that their action had not "constituted gross misconduct". They have, however, also been informed that "attempts to induce parents to withdraw pupils from testing in the future whether conducted during school hours or in your own time will constitute a serious breach of discipline". In other words, if they do it again, they will be disciplined.

This is a blatant attempt by the LEA to curb trade union activity that is directly related to conditions at work. Not even the Tories' anti-union laws proscribe such campaigning. Determined resistance by NUT members is needed to defeat such threats. Campaigning against the SATs must continue this year. Teachers have a right to talk to the parents of the children they teach and advise them when the state is attempting to impose tests which are harmful to children's education. Any attempt by the Authority to interfere with this right through gagging orders and disciplinary measures must be taken up nationally by teachers and other trade unionists.

Meanwhile, NUT members in Tower Hamlets have begun the campaign to defend Tony Gard, demanding that all the charges against him are dropped. If this victimisation is not defeated, it will send a green light to the LEA and school managements to continue their campaign of victimising trade union activists.

At the last meeting of ELTA, the Tower Hamlets branch of the NUT, a resolution about Tony's case won unanimous support. It agreed to launch a campaign in support of him, to issue a press statement and to organise a picket of Tony's disciplinary hearing on 30 January. Petitions have also been circulated.

These are important, necessary activities. But, if they do not force the management to back down, NUT members must be prepared to take strike action. It was the threat of just such action on an indefinite basis that led to the success of the campaign to reinstate suspended NHS shop steward Dave Carr at UCH last year. When the bosses target activists, they are targeting union organisation and every union member.

■ NUT groups should send letters of protest, calling for the charges to be dropped to:

Judith Hamilton, Chair of Governors, Langdon Park School, London E14 0RY  
Abdul Asad, Chair of Education, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London E14 2BG.

Messages of support to:  
East London Teachers' Association, 86 Bow Road, London E3 4DL.

Write to: BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX

**T**HE TORIES are pressing ahead with their attack on refugees. Social Security Minister Peter Lilley was forced to postpone the implementation of new rules for asylum seekers until 5 February. But from that date a vicious new immigration code will mean:

- no income support, legal aid, school meals or housing benefits for refugees who fail to claim asylum within one week of entering Britain;

- the same applies to those who entered after October 1995 and whose appeals for the right to stay have failed.

From now on asylum seekers will be in a sick "Catch-22" situation: it is virtually impossible to claim asylum at the port of entry, due to the "safe third country" rules which allow asylum seekers to be deported if they passed through another country on their way to Britain. But now, those who fail to claim asylum at the time of entry face loss of all livelihood.

The new laws literally mean starvation and homelessness for people who are already traumatised and fleeing repression in their own countries.

The Asylum Bill itself will mean:

- a "white list" of so-called "safe countries" where Ministers deem it is impossible to be a genuine refugee. These include countries like Ghana, with its repressive government, and India, wracked by communal violence;

- a new fast track procedure for immigration appeals, making the process like a revolving door, so that asylum seekers, with little access to legal advice and support, will find it more difficult to win their appeals;

- immigration checks at work. Public officials will be forced to act as immigration officers, with up to two million people a year facing nationality checks when they change jobs.

It is a racist law, designed to divide and rule.

#### It can be stopped.

We need a mass campaign of non-compliance with the new Asylum rules and the Immigration and Asylum Bill currently going through parliament.

Already many trade union branches have passed resolutions condemning the law and pledging themselves to non-compliance. But to turn this into action we need strong local organisations, linking refugees—who are often marginalised from the labour movement—with the workers being asked to cut their benefits and services. We need to pledge the entire labour movement to launch strike action to defend any worker victimised for refusing to imple-

# Asylum Bill

## Fight for non-compliance!

ment the new laws.

Council workers and service users need to place maximum pressure on Councils to use any means necessary to stop the new laws, refusing to withdraw housing benefits, refusing to evict refugees, refusing to deny school meals to refugees' children.

The Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill (CAIAB) has called a mass demonstration on 24 February, with TUC backing. Across the country

local CAIAB groups are springing up to organise transport and mobilise support for this demo.

Unfortunately, the national leadership of CAIAB seems determined to do no more than organise a passive protest. It claims that a "broad campaign" can beat the Bill.

But to keep the church leaders and the Liberals on board it has to prevent active and militant protest. Above all it refuses to call for or organise non-com-

pliance with the new law.

On 9 January CAIAB called a "candlelit vigil" and "procession" from Trafalgar Square to Downing Street. They refused to call or organise a demonstration because the charities explicitly threatened to withdraw support.

In the end there was a lively demonstration and picket of Downing Street, but only because Workers Power supporters, along with other socialists and refugee organisations from different

parts of London, actively defied the organisers.

After urging us to "stop chanting because you're putting people off" most of these woolly hatted, woolly minded liberals went home.

They did not stay to hear refugee after refugee speak about the trauma and hardship the Bill will cause them.

CAIAB is a classic "cross class alliance". The organisers claim it is a broad campaign but they would rather have a narrow, exclusive "vigil" than a mass protest.

The Labour Party front bench has gone ominously silent on the new Asylum Bill. After pledging to oppose the Bill, Tony Blair then offered John Major a deal to push it through in a back-room committee.

Blair and the Labour leaders are running scared of the Tories' attempt to play the race card. Major refused Blair's offer but it seems that Labour is going ahead anyway with an attempt to "defuse" controversy over the Bill.

Labour MPs on the committee considering the Bill *abstained*, along with the Liberals, when it was put to a vote! Diane Abbot MP, one of the CAIAB leaders, *missed* the vote! ■



## Smash all immigration controls!

**T**HE NEW Asylum Bill is just part of the racist system. Britain plundered the world, building an Empire that spanned the globe. It stole natural resources from Third World countries and encouraged white capitalists to make millions out of colonial investments. British armies massacred and enslaved their populations and British governments encouraged mass emigration from Britain to steal the best land and supervise the indigenous population. Now it says to people whose countries are destroyed by famine and flood, who are persecuted by the puppet rulers of the former colonial world: you're not welcome.

The imperialist system is alive and well. The big banks and bosses send their money all over the world in search of profits and cheap labour. They call that "globalisation". But when workers "get on their bike" and try to move to another country to find work, peace and safety they are treated like scum.

We should welcome all Asylum seek-

ers. But we refuse to play the racist game of dividing immigrants into "economic migrants" and "genuine refugees".

All the immigration laws are racist. They all divide workers on the grounds of colour and ethnicity. That much is obvious at any passport desk of any British airport. Black British people have to join the long queue of black non-British to have their status checked. Meanwhile white people from every part of the globe generally waltz through passport control.

Tory and Labour hypocrites say that immigration controls are "colour blind". But they insist that "only tight controls can keep good race relations". The logic is clear. Black people, the victims of racism, are wrongly being blamed for causing racism.

We should scrap *all* immigration controls, and step up the fight against the imperialist system of exploitation they are there to protect. ■

I is for Imperialism, Page 9

**S**HIJI LAPITE was one of at least three black men to die in Metropolitan Police custody between December 1994 and December 1995.

Brian Douglas was battered to death by two police officers during his arrest in Clapham, London, in May 1995. Wayne Douglas (no relation) died after reportedly being battered by arresting officers from Brixton police station.

A fourth man, David Ewin, died from his wounds after being shot by a police officer in Barnes, south west London in February 1995. Ewin carried no weapon at the time of the shooting, though the police have claimed self-defence.

In addition, an inquest jury in London returned a verdict of "unlawful killing" in November following the death in custody of a 38-year-old Irish man, Richard O'Brien. The jurors clearly believed his widow's eyewitness testimony of anti-Irish abuse and a severe beating at the hands of arresting officers.

In January a leaked report from within the Met's own ranks revealed that black drivers were **five times** more likely to be stopped on the roads than their white counterparts. Only one in nine of those stopped are ever charged.

The Metropolitan police is riddled with violent racists. And it harbours murderers.

In a bid to divert attention from this obvious fact Metropolitan Police Commissioner Paul Condon took to the airwaves on 26 January to blame an African-Caribbean newspaper, *The Voice*, for the Brixton uprising triggered by the death in custody of Wayne Douglas. Condon, who took office posing as a liberal concerned about racist violence on the streets, is now anxious about the damaged reputation of his force, also plagued by corruption scandals involv-

## "This racist justice system"

by George Baxter

ing embezzlement, jury nobbling and drug dealing frame-ups at Stoke Newington.

But the Tories have shown no appetite for clamping down on the activities of any more than a tiny handful of "rotten apples" in a thoroughly rancid barrel.

Nationally, the Police Complaints Authority (PCA), a body where the "police investigate the police", received a record 19,103 complaints in 1994.

Its performance is a far cry from the aggressive, dedicated team of truth hunters depicted in *Between the Lines*. Only 288 of the complaints resulted in any disciplinary action whatsoever. Faced with 362 allegations of "racially discriminatory behaviour", the PCA pursued *only one* charge.

To date, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has not brought *any* charges against the police involved in the cases of Shiji Lapite, Brian Douglas, Wayne Douglas, Richard O'Brien and David Ewin. The CPS has only pursued criminal charges in two of the many instances where police stood accused by an inquest of killing a black person. Time and again, the CPS has refused to charge police on the grounds of "insufficient evidence".

Last year three police officers walked

free from the Old Bailey for the death in July 1993 of Joy Gardner. She had been manacled and strangled by police and immigration officers as they attempted to deport her. The acquittal of these officers followed an intense media campaign to vilify Joy Gardner and absolve the cops of any responsibility.

Subsequent to the verdict, the PCA refused to take any disciplinary action against the police involved in Joy's death, citing the "double jeopardy" clause of the 1986 Police and Criminal Evidence Act. Not surprisingly opinion surveys find a fast declining proportion of black people who have any confidence in the PCA, with only 27% viewing it as an independent body.

The CPS has an appalling record of prosecuting the perpetrators of racist violence, in or out of police uniform.

The family of Stephen Lawrence, an 18-year-old black student murdered in Welling in 1993, have gone to enormous expense to pursue a private prosecution against white youths whom the CPS refused to prosecute despite an impressive body of evidence.

As Director of Public Prosecutions,

Barbara Mills, told a parliamentary committee hearing in early 1994 that the CPS had identified 140 cases where a crime had a "racial motivation" in the nine months from April to December 1993. While 81 of these had ended in convictions, the figures stood in sharp contrast with the police's estimate of between 8,000 and 9,000 racial incidents a year, in itself ridiculously low. Even according to the police statistics, the CPS ought to pursue some 1,500 cases annually.

The CPS has not brought any charges against an avowedly racist inmate formerly at Long Lartin prison who boasted of having killed "Bunson" Manning in a savage attack inside the jail. The trial of John Rutter, the only person charged in the horrific September 1993 gang attack that left Qudus Ali permanently brain damaged, also ended in his acquittal at Southwark Crown Court.

Nicky Fuller was the only person charged in connection with the attack on Mukhtar Ahmed, despite comparably strong evidence against several of the 15-20 thugs who took part in the beating that left Mukhtar with a fractured skull and irreparable facial injuries. Fuller walked out of Inner London Crown Court, even though he had been convicted, because he had already served

an 11-month stretch in a young offenders' institution.

These cases have gained notoriety in the media, but they are only the tip of the iceberg. The overall record of the police, the PCA and the CPS is a lengthy indictment of racism throughout the justice system. That racism is built in to capitalist "justice" and is a graphic argument in favour of the overthrow of the entire system.

That struggle has to start now. Against the rigged inquiries of the state we will get a better crack at justice by fighting for genuinely independent inquiries into cases of police racism involving local community and labour movement representatives.

Against the unchecked racism of the judges and magistrates we must fight for them all to be elected and recallable, and for the right of black people on trial to have juries that are, at a minimum, 50% black. Free legal advice to victims of racism, paid for by the state, and independent police monitoring, backed and funded by the labour movement, can help tip the balance in the courts against the racist legal system.

As the police get their hands on CS gas sprays—classified as firearms if a civilian carries them—we must fight to strip the police of their physical weapons and their arsenal of legislation such as the Criminal Justice Act and the Criminal Evidence Act. We do not believe the racist police can be democratised or made accountable. We fight for organised working class defence, and for the labour movement to support organised black self defence in the communities, against the harassment and violence of the racist state. ■

## Our Friends in the North

## Disillusion in the north

PETER FLANNERY had to wait fourteen years to get his series *Our Friends in the North* screened by the BBC. Such was the pressure of Thatcherism within the BBC that they were wary of a screenplay which concentrated on political disillusion and corruption. As a result of the delay the series had to be extended to encompass the Thatcher years. If the later episodes are as sharply observed as the first two then it will have been worth the wait, although evidently the BBC's lawyers have insisted on cutting references to Saudi arms deals!

Set in the North East, *Our Friends in the North* consists of nine episodes which deal with British social and political life over three decades. It starts in the world of Harold Wilson, T. Dan Smith and John Poulson and ends in the world of Peter Mandelson and Tony Blair. It is about idealism, disillusion and corruption—both in personal life and in politics.

In the first episode we are back in the mid sixties with the Animals' *House of the Rising Sun*, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and the Bob Dylan's *The Times they are a'changin'*. The world was changing—though not fast enough for the young. The economy was booming. The old slums were gradually being demolished, though many remained. Labour's 1964 election manifesto *A New Britain*, promised that the "white heat of the scientific revolution" would sweep away the old and outdated practices "on both sides of industry".

Along with the demolition of the rows of red brick terraced houses was the demolition of much of working class community life. The future was tower blocks. "Streets in the sky built of steel, glass and sunlight" as Donahue, the character modelled on Newcastle's T. Dan Smith, describes them. But as we are to see these are not streets where you can easily meet, talk politics or where



Friends like these: T Dan Smith, model for Nicky's hero Donahue

young mothers can escape isolation.

The series parallels the evolution of political disillusion with disappointment in the personal and sexual lives of the main characters and their families. Where they live and the quality of their lives is handled well. As such it escapes the one-sided political didacticism of so much work by left playwrights. None of the characters are cardboard cut-out heroes or heroines.

The series is based on four friends; Nicky, a student, Mary, about to start college, Geordie, a young miner and

Tosker, an apprentice. Nicky is political. He has been to the United States in his summer holidays and seen the idealism and self-sacrifice of the Civil Rights Movement.

His father Felix is a former Labour activist, street corner orator, and veteran of the Jarrow March. It is after a bitter exchange about politics with his father that Nicky decides to become active in the Labour Party. He is eager for change. He rails against the lack of ideals and dynamism of Britain, even of the Labour Party; "Wilson's making no promises,

not as I can see" he says.

On the night of Labour's 1964 election victory, Nicky decides to abandon university and goes to work for Donahue instead, believing that the latter has a vision to make huge changes, tearing down the slums and building a bright new world.

Here too he rapidly faces disillusion. He sees the corruption of the Tory building magnate who is working hand in glove with Donahue, bribing councillors with free holidays and building cheap, poor quality, soul-less tower blocks.

After the 1966 election his disgust boils over and he leaves believing that "the great moral issue facing British politics is corruption".

Tosker, who fancies himself as lead singer in a group, seizes the opportunity that Nicky's engrossment in politics brings, to begin a relationship with Nicky's girlfriend, Mary. They are soon married with a kid and both their ideals—his to be a professional singer and hers for education—are abandoned.

Geordie, like Tosker and thousands of others at the time, wants to get a band together. Nicky, too busy canvassing for Labour, refuses to join the band. Geordie bitterly turns on him: "Its crap, the Labour Party is just for old women, old crocks and crawlers."

The imminence of a shotgun wedding, a violent clash with his drunk, lumpen father, combine to put him on the road to London. There he is rapidly involved in the gang wars and police corruption of the Soho porn industry.

Clearly the main theme of the series is corruption—the sort engendered by the selfish scramble to line your pockets at other people's expense. But what the first two episodes show is how this is related to the loss of ideals. From the older characters we glimpse a labour movement, reformist as it was, whose working class members once had a passionate ideal of building a qualitatively different society, "the new Jerusalem", the "socialist commonwealth".

Faith in this final goal was eroded by a practice of electioneering and broken promises and finally rubbished in the 1960s for a load of waffle about scientific revolutions. But doing so had its price; the corruption and decay of Labourism itself. In some senses the 70s, 80s and 90s were a re-run of this for another generation. Obviously this history has powerful lessons for the 1990s in the era of New Labour. ■

## Film

## No Easy life



Chris Swan reviews *Devil in a Blue Dress*

TRUE TO the best traditions of "film noir", *Devil in a Blue Dress* is about sleaze, corruption and murder. And, as usual, sleaze and corruption in high places mean hardship, harassment and death further down the class ladder. But this is film noir with a difference. Added to the usual ingredients—a tangled web of cross and double cross, blackmail, violence and murder—is the graphic depiction of the racism of post-war American society.

Unlike the typical hero (a white ex-cop who's seen it all and has nothing but his honour to show for it), Easy Rawlins, played by Denzil Washington, is an ordinary black factory worker who has saved hard to buy his own house. "Let go" by his racist foreman, Easy suddenly finds himself unable to pay the mortgage. Like millions of others, he is forced through poverty into a world of crime. Hired by a sinister political fixer to look for a missing white woman, he gets deeper into trouble the more he strays into this new, white world.

In Los Angeles in 1948 the colour bar is open, acknowledged by black and white alike, and seldom crossed. White

racism is open, vicious and endemic. Suspected of murder, Easy is arrested. Taken back to the station by two (white) detectives, he is threatened with a bullet in the brain if he doesn't talk.

He knows, and you know, that this happened to black prisoners often enough to be a real threat. He knows, and you know, that the cops would get away with it. But Easy is "lucky", and gets away with only a mild beating. Released into the night, miles from home, he is immediately taunted by two uniforms in a passing patrol car.

To the cops, it's part of the game. To Easy, it's a fact of life. As he puts it just before he calls for help from his murderous friend, Mouse, "everyone keeps pissing on my head and telling me it's raining!"

*Devil in a Blue Dress* is altogether an excellent film, faithfully adapted from the Walter Mosley book of the same name. Like the book, it gives a real sense of period and place. But more than that—the atmosphere it creates and the detail it shows of racism and corruption evoke the question: why has so little changed since then? ■

## Trotskyist International 19

## Can the bosses unite Europe?

In March the Inter-Governmental Conference of the European Union (EU) meets to discuss the closely linked issues of monetary union and moves towards "ever closer political union". But it will meet in the shadow of economic and political crisis.

## Europe

First and foremost is the faltering of the economic recovery and a Europe-wide "feel-bad factor" that has made nearly every existing government in Europe unpopular with the electorate.

Unemployment has remained obstinately high despite the recovery. But whilst the ruling parties of the right are sinking in the opinion polls the opposition parties of the left and the trade unions are still drugged with neo-liberalism and are too frightened to promise any substantial alternative.

The IGC may well postpone monetary union from its present target date of 1999. If it does the only ones cheering will be the British Tories—delirious at being let off the hook during an election year.

The latest issue of *Trotskyist International* (TI) focuses on this crisis-racked Europe. In particular it looks at the class struggle in France, Germany and Britain. Keith Harvey argues that the federal Europe

project of Germany and France is no optional extra for these powers. Monetary and political union is the only way to transcend their current weakness relative to their US and Japanese rivals. But this is a project full of explosive contradictions.

Mark Abram details a working class answer to this crisis, showing that it would be disastrous for workers to tie themselves to nationalist opponents of Maastricht. What the working class needs is a strategy of Europe-wide unity in action against the attacks being launched by European bosses, the national states and the EU itself.

## Strikes

The December strike wave in France gets extensive coverage in *TI 19*. This issue contains an analysis of the strike wave, concentrating on its positive lessons but also on the weaknesses that must be overcome by the French workers at both a trade union and a political level.

The coverage also contains a telling polemic against the French left's response to the strike wave, and contains translations of leaflets and bulletins issued by the LRCI's French section, *Pouvoir Ouvrier*.

Two articles by members of the German section of the LRCI, Marcus Lehner and Martin Suchanek, look at the "return of the class struggle" in the unified Germany and at the former Stalinist

party of the old GDR.

Turning to Britain Mark Harrison asks "What's new about New Labour?" He analyses Blair's project: "to prepare for the total transformation of Labour into a liberal party". He concludes that the decisive struggle that could turn Labour from a bourgeois workers' party to a simple bourgeois party is unlikely to come until after the election of a Blair government.

## Australia

If British Labour has been in the wilderness for 16 years, Australian Labor has been in the promised land for thirteen. Yet this record is one of right wing policies that only prepare for the ultimate return of the open bosses parties. Lloyd Cox looks at the Australian Labor Party's record in office.

With all these articles, plus reviews of books on subjects as diverse as gay liberation, Trotsky's legacy, Rwanda and the future of warfare, *Trotskyist International* is a must for all readers of *Workers Power*. ■

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Trotskyist International

**O**VER HALF of all 11-year-olds did not achieve minimum standards in English and Maths last year. A quarter of 7-year-olds also failed to make the grade. Who is responsible? As Tony Blair pointed out:

"These are children born under a Conservative government, sent to school under a Conservative government, educated under a Conservative government".

After 1987 the Tories decided to "sort out" education.

One of their first initiatives was the compulsory national curriculum. Prior to this, schools had wide freedom to decide what was taught in the classroom. Driven by ideology, the Tories decided to stamp out that freedom.

They drew up the National Curriculum without consulting with teachers or parents. Not surprisingly, the result was completely unworkable. In most subjects it was impossible to get through everything even if the children had been kept at school until ten at night.

The "ten level" scale, designed to be a simple way of labelling kids was vague. In English for example things expected of a child at level five were more complex than at level seven.

The initial chaos was followed by still more as the Tories gave in to pressure to review the new system.

The curriculum was constantly re-

viewed, amended and overhauled. Every two years a new version had to be read and understood, lesson plans altered, new jargon learned. The endless stream of glossy documents cost millions of pounds.

Alongside the National Curriculum, the Tories pursued their goal of marketising education. They could not privatise education for the mass of children. But they could introduce "competition". Again they believed their own ideology: good schools would attract pupils, more pupils would bring more funding. Bad schools would wither and die. All that was needed was to put schools in control of their own budgets—Local Management of Schools (LMS)—and introduce compulsory testing, so that league tables could be drawn up. Schools, and the children in them, were to be labelled as thoroughly as the tins on a supermarket shelf.

Testing, was imposed on all 7, 11 and 14-year-olds. Again the Tories listened to their own experts, not teachers and parents. The biased and ludicrous nature of the tests led to a widespread boycott. The boycott hit home, giving Education Minister John Patten a nervous breakdown.

But the Tories persisted with a watered down version of the tests and last year the tests finally went ahead.

They are incredibly disruptive, particularly in primary schools. They take valuable teaching resources away from the majority of children. Teachers are forced to coach pupils to take a test instead of concentrating on the education of the children themselves. During the summer

LMS was similarly an educational disaster. At first sight this seems a highly democratic measure since it allows schools to control their own budgets.

In reality it has led to head teachers and governors with no accountancy training spending hours trying to balance

sory teachers, research units and units for problem pupils. Under the LEAs these were shared. Under LMS, if some schools opted not to have them they became financially unviable.

The end result of LMS, testing and school league tables has not been to create more choice. What happens when there are more pupils choosing one school than places there? The school gets to choose the pupils. How does it choose them? By informal selection. What are the criteria? Mainly social class.

Alongside all this, the Tories have been conducting a creeping privatisation of the state education system.

They established a mechanism to allow schools to opt out of state education and be-

come Grant Maintained (GM); that is run directly by central government. Schools were effectively bribed, with additional money made available to those who left the LEA. GM schools are allowed to select 15% of their pupils, the first step to the widespread reintroduction of grammar schools.

## THE TORY EDUCATION DISASTER



term many children spent hours practising how to take the tests.

As for accuracy, the tests look about as reliable as Iraqi election results. Research is still under way, but there is a massive variance between teachers' assessments and the test results. Many papers were sent back to be re-marked.

budgets. It is also difficult to balance a budget which is far too small to meet even your most basic needs.

In addition moving funding away from the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) caused the collapse of many centralised services. Schools decided they could no longer afford extra music classes, advi-

**W**HY DO the Tories want selective schools? Why do Tony Blair and Harriet Harman send their kids to selective schools, whilst claiming to be "against selection"?

The rich guarantee their children a future by buying decent education. In the top public schools selection is by income, not intelligence. One by-product is that the top civil servants, generals and politicians these schools churn out have a worldwide reputation for ignorance.

The middle class used to guarantee their kids a decent education through the grammar school system. At age 11, all children sat the "11-plus" test and were divided into two categories: bright and stupid. That stigma stayed for life, because the "secondary moderns" where 11-plus failures—the vast majority—went were clearly second class schools. Under the grammar school system, selection was by intelligence testing. But there was a big class bias.

Middle class parents could afford the time, the books and often the extra coaching to get their kids to grammar school.

In the 1970s Labour abolished grammar schools. Comprehensive education was not some gesture by the "loony left", it was the brainchild of the old Labour right. They wanted a capitalism that offered real equality of opportunity. And many Tories supported them.

During the post-war economic boom, when comprehensive education was designed, there seemed no reason why pooling the resources of grammar and secondary modern schools should not benefit everybody.

But by the time it became a reality, the long boom had ended. Successive economic crises became the capitalist norm, demanding deep attacks on public spending.

Under Thatcher, the bosses demanded an education system explicitly aimed at training youth to be passive and obedient workers, not thinking, questioning individuals.

All this has led to a situation where comprehensive education is a lottery, with the best odds on winning if your school has a predominantly middle class catchment area.

That is why calls for selection have returned and selection is quietly on the increase. Grant maintained (GM) schools can select 15% of pupils and are due to gain greater powers.

The new kinds of selection, especially in GM schools, are more insidious than the 11-plus system. They are much more to do with schools selecting parents. The Blairs had to dine with the Headmaster of the London Oratory, presumably to see if they had the table manners the school expects of its parents. Here, as at Eton and Harrow, class is fundamental, despite their pretence to the contrary.

Blair, Harman and the rest of the Labour Party insist that they are against selection. "No selection either by interview or exam" says Labour policy. At best, that makes Blair and Harman stink-

### Selective schools

# Why they want to segregate our kids

ing hypocrites, refusing to practice what they preach.

But in fact Labour will not abolish selection. It will not touch the private sector at all. The existing grammar schools, mainly remnants from the old system, will only be made to end selection after a ballot of their parents. Labour talks vaguely about "all potential parents" having a say in such ballots but you can guarantee that vague talk is all that will remain of that commitment.

And Labour supports selection *within* schools. It is not committed to mixed ability teaching. It is in favour of streamed classes. Labour believe that within state schools certain classes should be made up of the more academic, whilst the rest can get on with something else. There is a lot of bluster about "vocational qualifications", but what they are actually talking about is adding yet another tier to the education system.

Selection works for the bosses, not for the millions of working class children who are actually being educated.

Capitalism requires that children be labelled. Employers want to know who to put in the supervisor's job and who will take orders on the shopfloor.

Capitalism cannot afford a decent education for all our children. So it must select a few: the middle class, the well behaved, those whose natural talents shine instead of being buried by poverty,

Capitalism requires education to be an indoctrination process as well as a learning process. In sink schools young working class people can learn to be shouted at, to victimise each other, to shiver in the cold and be treated like rubbish. In selective GM schools, middle class kids can learn that, unless they toe the line and become conformist managers, technicians and professionals they could be back down there with the inner-city kids. In the private schools, the children of the

bosses can learn to be bosses, judges, generals and politicians—as well as thoroughly nasty individuals.

When Harriet Harman said that her son was "suited" to the luxurious surroundings of St. Olave's, she was also saying to thousands of parents in Southwark: your kids are more suited to under-funded, run-down comprehensives.

Capitalism needs selection, we don't. We should demand a free comprehensive education for all. ■



ETON: Where the bosses learn to rule us

**E**DUCATION IS now at the heart of political debate in this country and looks set to remain so until the election. On this key issue, where does the Labour Party stand? Last year Labour published its core statement on education policy, *Diversity and Excellence*. The signs do not look good.

Blair policy documents seem blithely unaware of the catastrophic state of education after sixteen years of Tory rule.

*Diversity and Excellence* makes hardly any reference to the years of cuts which have severely damaged education, particularly in the inner cities. This is not surprising, since Labour under Blair has no intention of putting any more money into schools.

The starting point for Labour is the fact that teachers and students will have to continue to live with a desperately under-funded education system.

*Diversity and Excellence* spells out four principles which guide Labour's education policy. Number one is:

"Schools are responsible for delivering the highest possible quality of education."

There is no mention of the responsibility of central government to ensure that schools have sufficient funding to carry out this task. No matter how many teaching jobs are cut, how many cleaners are sacked and even if the roof is caving in, schools will still be expected to deliver high quality education.

The only mention of funding comes in principle number three:

"Pupils within a local community are entitled to equity in the funding of their education. The efficient use of limited resources is key in education. So is an equitable distribution of those resources."

So parents in Hackney, whether they live in the north or the south of the poorest borough in London, can be assured that under Labour their child's school will be *equally* under-funded.

Instead of cuts, according to Labour, the major legacy of the Tories is "conflict".

Recently, Gillian Shepherd announced that there would be more selection allowed in GM schools. Such schools will be able to change their admissions policy to choose the students they want more easily. Clearly, GM schools are part of the Tories' attempt to create a three tier education system. Namely, elite private schools for those who can afford to pay for education. Selective grammar schools for the middle class. And "sink schools" for the rest.

Despite all the bribes, all the sweeteners and all the ideology, only a tiny minority of schools have opted for GM status.

The most recent Tory scam is nursery vouchers. Apart from a likely black market, the effect of the vouchers will be more money for private and less for state nurseries. Many may be forced to close. Meanwhile, there will be more money for rich parents who were paying to send their kids to private nurseries anyway.

This year's pilot scheme will give vouchers worth £1,100 to parents of four year olds. A full year's nursery education costs around £3,000; middle class parents will get back £1,100 they would have spent and working class parents will not be able to afford the extra £1,900, thus losing at least two terms of nursery education which their children could have

received through the state system.

Giving more money to private education and cutting state education has been the constant theme of Tory education policy. For all the rhetoric about the importance of education, the Tories have consistently cut education funding.

**Class sizes have increased as fewer teachers are employed.**

**In some primary schools there are as many as 45 children in one class.**

Currently, Britain spends less per child each year than other imperialist countries—under 65% of the OECD average. Each year they claim to put more into education but, as *The Economist* pointed out after the last budget, which supposedly gave an extra £878 million to education:

"... most of this money exists only in the virtual reality of Whitehall's notional budgets for local government... It is giving English councils an extra £980 million in grants but telling them as firmly as it can... to spend a total of £1.5 billion more on schools, police and social services. As well as making up the differ-

ence between the two sums, councils will have to meet any increases in pay and other costs for the rest of the services." (2 December 1995)

This fiddling with the figures means it is impossible to measure under-funding. But you only have to walk into any state school to see its effects.

Under-funding has created schools which are literally falling apart. Roofs leak, classrooms are damp and the fabric of buildings is crumbling.

Class sizes have increased as fewer teachers are employed. In 1991 there was one teacher to every 17.2 children, the ratio is now one to 18.3. In some primary schools there are as many as 45 children in one class.

Teacher training has been cut. The majority of the training is now done in schools by teachers who are also trying to teach classes, leading to inefficient teaching and training.

According to Ofsted, 500 schools are failing and up to 10% of state schools have "serious deficiencies".

And what are the Tories doing about all this? One of Major's new ideas is the doubling of assisted places, places at private schools for which the state pays—helping private schools again.

These are the results of 16 years of Tory education policy. By any objective standard the Tories have failed our children.■

league table it spends money to solve the problem. But that's one thing Blair won't do.

To provide a modern, decent education for every child would need a massive injection of funding. That is the baseline. But because Labour will not tax the rich or take the property from the powerful bosses it can't make any promises to spend.

Labour wants to retain Local Management of Schools (LMS). They have swallowed the Tory lie that it means greater choice. But, as thousands of school governors already know, with under-funding the choice isn't about what books to buy but which teacher to sack.

Labour's most recent education docu-

skills labour market, education is one of the most valuable services the state can provide. Knowledge is power. The rich know that: that is why they spend their money on private education. Their kids go to "centres of excellence", with on-site swimming pools and more personal computers than they know what to do with.

Labour must make a commitment to fund education according to need. That means our needs, not simply the employers' needs for workers with a minimal level of education.

The money should be found by taxing the rich, their wealth and their profits. The working class create the profits, our kids should get the benefits.

Labour should close down all private schools. It is a disgrace that millions of workers pay through their taxes to keep such schools open for the children of the rich. No to any subsidy or tax concession to private schools!

Integrate them into the state sector, using their full facilities to educate all local children.

We need a national curriculum that satisfies the educational needs of children, not the ideological fantasies of the Tories. We need a core curriculum which spells out what every child has a right to be taught, not a restrictive curriculum which limits what teachers can teach.

Labour must immediately restore teachers' negotiating rights, and abolish appraisal, replacing it with union control over standards with access to adequate funds for training and support. Labour must disband Ofsted, the so called "Education watchdog".

This "watchdog" has stood idly by while Tory ministers destroy education standards, but barks incessantly at "failing" schools in inner cities. Instead of a stick to beat inner city schools, we need an advisory body to support schools and ensure additional resources are effectively targeted.

Labour must fight for an education system which is focused on teaching and learning, not sorting and selecting.

This means scrapping the compulsory national tests and making the resources available for meaningful teacher assessment. Schools should make information available to parents, but in a way which enables them to make informed choices about what is best for individual children, not which is the "best" school.

All this will start to turn round the appalling education working class kids receive. But it will only be a start. As any teacher knows, teaching hungry, poverty-stricken children is an uphill battle. Motivating youth to learn when there is only unemployment at the end of the line is near impossible. Demanding "discipline" when the fabric of working class life is being torn apart by violence and criminalisation is next to useless.

Only when workers are guaranteed of a job, a decent wage and a place to live can education start to empower the mass of working class children.■

# I is for Imperialism

## The A-Z of Marxism

is for

by Mark Harrison

IMPERIALISM IS such a dirty word that, today, no politician would ever talk of "popular imperialism" in the way they talk about "popular capitalism".

But imperialism is the essence of modern capitalism.

Imperialism describes capitalism as a whole in the twentieth century. Understanding imperialism is the key to understanding most of the world's economic and political crises: from wars, to famines, to acts of racist genocide.

The world economy today is dominated by giant capitalist monopolies and multinational corporations based in a handful of imperialist countries.

Adverts for Coca-Cola in remote African villages, the Ford and General Motors car plants dotted around Latin America and Europe, the international Big Mac: all testify to the truth that we are in the epoch of *monopoly capitalism*.

The growth of monopolies—roughly from the 1870s onwards—also saw the transformation of the role of the banks, their growing interconnection with the giant industrial firms and the development of what Lenin termed *finance capital*.

Banks became fused with industry, and have come to dominate the industrial life of entire continents.

The IMF and World Bank dictate austerity packages to Third World countries. They decide what can and what cannot be produced, not the people who live in these countries. This is a striking confirmation of the dominance of finance capital as described by Lenin:

"The supremacy of finance capital over all other forms of capital means the predominance of the rentier and of the financial oligarchy; it means that a small number of financially 'powerful' states stand out among the rest."

This financial oligarchy (tiny elite) penetrates the entire world; transferring funds to where it can best make a profit, exporting capital to other countries in order to extract super-profits from its investments and controlling the trade and markets of those countries in the process.

Imperialism divides the world up. The different powers have their different spheres of influence and interest.

Even today, when the direct rule over colonies by the imperialist powers has given way to a world of supposedly independent states, the subordination of these former colonies is guaranteed by economic power and political interference. They have become not free, but semi-colonies of the imperialists.

The only problem is that, since the dawn of the imperialist epoch, there have not been enough colonies and spheres of influence to go round.

The big imperialist countries: Britain, France, Germany, the USA and Japan, fought each other in two world wars.

They fought each other in between in "proxy wars", where each side in a small scale or civil war was supported and armed by one or more imperialist power.

It used to be fashionable to criticise Lenin's theory of imperialism by pointing to the relative absence of conflict between the big imperialist powers after the Second World War.

Imperialism had changed, said the critics of Lenin. It has become "more benign".

They praised imperialism for beginning to develop the economies of backward countries. Soon, they said, Africa and Asia would be as prosperous as Europe and the USA.

Fashions quickly go out of date. The re-emergence of inter-imperialist conflict, even though it is as yet confined to trade wars and economic struggles, anticipation of future military conflicts.

The process of concentration of the world economy into three regional blocs is a guarantee of future conflict as each bloc struggles for economic domination of the global economy. Speculation on money markets will give way to war.

And the idea that imperialism has brought prosperity to the Third World now looks like a sick joke. Tell it to the millions who have died in Africa's famines, who live in shanty towns across Latin America, or who are forced to sell their children in Asia.

Lenin described imperialism as the *highest stage*—i.e. the final stage—of capitalism.

Some opponents of imperialism see it differently. They believe imperialism is simply a policy which the imperialist powers could change if they wanted to. This is an illusion.

The wars, the economic devastation of the semi-colonial world, the grotesque distortion of entire national economies to suit the needs of the imperialist power, the destruction of the environment: all of these things are inevitable so long as imperialism exists.

And with these things go the terrible civil wars, dictatorships and political instability that torture the semi-colonies.

With imperialism goes systematic racism. As the capitalists lined up their own workers as cannon fodder in the decades before the First World War they permeated culture with rabid nationalism, militarism and racism. They brought in systematic laws against immigrants and racial minorities.

All this is the real legacy of imperialism. But there is an alternative.

Capitalism has nowhere to go after the imperialist epoch.

It will either be overthrown by the workers or it will degenerate into ever more vicious wars, genocides and economic crises. Imperialism poses the question: *socialism or barbarism?*

Today that choice can be seen in Bosnia, in Rwanda, in the Horn of Africa.

In its own way it was evident in the revolt of the masses in France late last year.

Imperialism, as Lenin said, is the "eve of revolution". To end the horrors of the modern world we need to fight it to the death.■

Next month: J is for Justice

# LABOUR'S POLICY FIASCO



even, though not officially, by the Tories. But compulsory appraisal is still the Labour Party policy on education.

Another cause of conflict has been the endless Tory attacks on any kind of progressive education—mixed ability teaching, coursework and anti-racist education. This went alongside the introduction of tests, league tables and the National Curriculum.

What does Labour have to say on these Tory reforms? To Blair and Blunkett they all seem like very good ideas and they intend to keep them.

Labour is committed to retaining tests and publishing school league tables.

This is supposed to give more information to parents. The truth is tests and tables conceal more information than they supply. The information they do contain is inaccurate.

A half hour test, marked by a former teacher who has never met your child and is working on cheap wages, will not tell you about the progress of your seven year old child. Sitting down with their teacher, who has had time to work with and continuously assess your child, will.

League tables show which schools get the best exam results. But they tell you more about the nature of the intake of a school than how well they can teach your child.

Blair wants to retain the league tables as a rough guide for middle class parents like himself wanting to make sure their middle class kids don't have to mix with the "wrong sort". If a football team finds itself consistently at the bottom of a

ment *Excellence for Everyone* is obsessed with the word crusade. It is in the subtitle, "Labour's crusade to raise standards" and is repeated again and again throughout the document.

Who is this crusade against? The teachers.

"We will not tolerate failure," Labour thunders. A new body, the General Teaching Council, will: "have the power to advise the Secretary of State when to 'strike off' a teacher in breach of the professional code."

Inspection reports will include a addendum identifying under-performing teachers. After advice from the head teacher, if they do not improve then "dismissal must follow".

No-one wants bad teachers, least of all teachers themselves.

But Labour's crusade is a recipe for blaming teachers for failures in the system. Head teachers will use the procedure to get rid of teachers they don't like. If a school drops a few places in Labour's version of the league table, there will be a ritual sacrifice of staff.

This policy will not address the needs of working class kids in schools across the country. It will continue to fail them, to restrict their chances and limit their potential.

Those who support Labour, who will be voting for Tony Blair in their millions at the next election, have to demand something better.

We want an education system which will meet the needs of working class kids.

In a world of new technology, in a high-

## personal view

Mark Harrison

## One of the select?



**I** HOPE that Harriet Harman never recovers from the scandal caused by her decision to send her son to St Olave's. Sadly, she will probably survive and prosper. She is one of Blair's chosen people. Besides, her other son is at the Brompton Oratory and might take it out on Euan Blair if his dad sacks her.

A lot of people were rightly shocked by her decision to send her son to a selective grammar school in leafy Kent, miles away from her Southwark home and her working class constituents in inner-city, poverty stricken Peckham. But it's not the first time she has been selective about her children's education.

She used to live in my road in Southwark. But she moved after she had her first son apparently because the local state primary school wasn't good enough for her. She didn't do what most parents have to do—fight for better facilities for their children's schools. She opted out of that fight and used her privileged position to move to a "nicer" area.

Every charge against her—her hypocrisy, her snobbish disdain for the working class of Southwark, her undermining of Labour's existing education policy—is true. But I also think she is guilty of cruelty to her son. I know, I was selected. And it made me start biting my nails!

In the old days of the 11 plus nearly every parent—working class and middle class—hoped their child would get into the local grammar school.

Many working class parents dreamed that from grammar school their kids might go on to college, thus getting a better opportunity in life than they themselves had—an understandable and generous sentiment. The middle class parents spurred on their kids to pass the 11 plus to preserve their social status or so that they wouldn't have to spend years paying school fees. Understandable, if less generous.

The Tories—and New Labour too—talk about the importance of parental choice. But the inescapable reality behind all selection is that "many are called but few are chosen". Under the 11 plus if you were working class and didn't get chosen, then that was it. It was the secondary modern for you—a cynical term to describe schools where education was indeed secondary and not in the slightest bit modern.

If you were middle class and you failed the 11 plus you could still get into the grammar school so long as your folks paid up.

This difference was one of my earliest memories of class distinction. There you have the first and most

important problem with selection. So long as there is a private sector, or private element within the state sector, the school can dictate its selection policies which combine exam results, interviews with parents, and, crucially, the ability to pay.

Working class children who fail a selection exam are then denied the opportunity of going to better schools. Their parents do not have the money to overcome this problem. They cannot move to a leafy middle class suburb where there is a "good" state school. Their "parental choice" is to "take it or leave it".

Many of my friends in the catholic "secondary modern" were the academic equals of boys at the grammar school, but had absolutely no chance of being allowed to sit, let alone pass, the sort of exams that could have got them entry into higher education. Selection had seen to that—selection, on the basis of a single test on a vulnerable 11 year old! It is cruelty to children.

But there was another problem with selection that only dawned on me later in life. That is, you are selected for a very one-sided type of education—one designed to channel you into the professional or upper level commercial sectors. Grammar schools concentrate on academic qualifications. The result with me is that I have a half forgotten knowledge of Virgil and Shakespeare but an unreasoning phobia and lack of confidence when it comes to technical matters.

This is accentuated by the fact that you are cut off from many other children who have a rich diversity of talents or even just experience of life. Schools generally tend to be pretty self-contained. Grammar schools are hermetically sealed. Contact with people from "rough" schools is discouraged. If you are working class you are separated from the majority of working class kids. If you are middle class you hardly ever meet any.

The whole purpose is to intensify middle class snobbery and turn those working class children who fall for it against their old friends. They are encouraged to rise "out of their class" by their "own efforts" rather than fight collectively against poverty and privilege so that the whole working class can rise to the position of running society and thus abolish classes altogether.

This is a particularly twisted method of bringing up children—and it why the NSPCC should be called in to rescue Joseph Harman from "parental choice". Of course there is just a chance that he will hate grammar school so much that he'll become a revolutionary. That's what I did! ■



## Palestine

## Sham elections

**J**ANUARY's Palestinian elections were a total fraud. Arab citizens of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip turned out to vote for candidates to an all but powerless Palestinian Council.

The Oslo peace accords do not clearly define the role or the powers of the Council. But it is quite clear what the Council cannot do. It cannot influence foreign policy. It cannot pass any laws or regulations concerning the borders of the new Palestinian authority. It cannot take decisions affecting the thousands of armed Israeli settlers in the West Bank. It cannot deal with questions relating to the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees outside of Israeli territory. And, above all, it cannot pass any laws that Israel does not like. Any legislation it passes must be formally approved by Israel.

The Palestinians are to have no real influence over their own affairs; the elections were designed to give a cloak of legitimacy to the fraudulent "peace process", in which Arafat signed away the right of the Palestinians to resist the occupation of their homeland. In return he "won" an impotent authority which will police the Palestinian youth and resistance on behalf of the Israeli government.

Yet even these sham elections were too much for some sections of the Zion-

ist state apparatus. Israeli interference was widespread. Soldiers set up roadblocks to prevent certain candidates canvassing in Jerusalem. The Israeli army stopped Hanan Ashrawi, an independent candidate mildly critical of Arafat's role, entering Jerusalem because "her car was plastered with election materials".

The reactionary Islamist movement Hamas, which rejects the fraudulent peace deal, bore the brunt of the repression. On 5 January, despite a formal "ceasefire" agreed by Israel, agents of the Zionist secret police blew up Hamas militant Yahya Ayyash with a bomb concealed in a mobile phone. Eleven days later soldiers gunned down three Palestinians at a roadblock outside the West Bank town of Jenin.

The European Union election observers refused to declare the poll "free and fair", but found their own slippery words to give imperialism's seal of approval to a landslide win for Arafat. They declared that the elections "can reasonably be regarded as an accurate expression of the will of the voters on polling day."

There was no real organised opposition in the elections. Hamas organised a boycott of the poll. Certain Fatah members were excluded from Arafat's electoral list. Their crime was being prepared to speak out against his increasingly autocratic rule. Whilst the poll was un-

doubtedly a victory for Arafat with over 85% ignoring the boycott in the Hamas stronghold of Gaza, many independent Fatah candidates polled strongly. Arafat critic Haider Abdel Shafi got the highest individual vote of 55,000. In Bethlehem, Salah Tamari won more than twice the votes of his official Fatah rival.

Palestinian workers and youth must recognise that the Oslo Accords have brought them "peace" without justice, self-determination or democracy. Especially now, trade unionists, workers and youth need their own party, separate from the structures and programme of the PLO and Arafat. Such a party could draw on the deep suspicions of the Palestinian masses about the inadequacy of the deal, and build a mass movement for a real sovereign Constituent Assembly, based on universal suffrage, convened by mass assemblies and guarded by militias in the towns, workplaces and refugee camps.

The fight for real democracy could become a launching pad for renewed struggle against the undemocratic and racist occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and the whole of Palestine, and for the destruction of the Zionist state to be replaced by a workers' republic in which Arab and Jew could build a common future free from privilege, discrimination and national oppression. ■

## COSATU betrayal

**O**NCE UPON a time the public ownership of South Africa's mines, banks and industrial monopolies was a key plank in the programme of the African National Congress (ANC). But that was before the ANC became the leading element of South Africa's Government of National Unity.

This commitment, contained in the famous "Freedom Charter", soon disappeared when the ANC drew up its manifesto for the 1994 elections. Now the ANC-dominated government has gone even further, it has started the process of privatising existing state industries!

In December 1995 the government announced that parts of the telecommunications firm Telkom would be sold off along with South African Airways and several other "parastatals". Trade unionists in these industries reacted with outrage, responding to the announcement with two-hour stoppages, pickets and blockades of workplaces.

COSATU, the largest trade union federation, initially denounced the measures and called a one-day general strike in protest. But COSATU is part of the tripartite Alliance which brought the ANC to power. Many of its former leaders are now in the government. The third Alliance member is the South African Communist Party (SACP), which also has ministers in the government. Not sur-

prisingly the ANC and SACP put pressure on the COSATU leadership to withdraw the strike threat in the spurious interests of unity.

The partial privatisations will go ahead. Indeed, advertisements for the sale of parts of Telkom appeared the same day as COSATU called off the strike. The ANC government has targeted the public sector as a whole. ANC politicians roundly denounced a wage strike by municipal workers, with one provincial ANC leader calling for strikers to be jailed.

In September last year the nurses received similar treatment despite their justified grievances over their appalling pay, a legacy of the apartheid era. In 1994, the government effectively outlawed strikes by nurses. But when the COSATU unions agreed a pay settlement which was a cut in real wages, there was a national nurses' strike. The action was particularly solid in the former Transkei area of the eastern Cape; the provincial government proceeded to sack 6,000 strikers. When ANC Minister of Health Dr Nkosazana Zuma, faced angry nurses at a health forum in Johannesburg, she declared that the government "did not have a mandate to renegotiate nurses' salaries".

South African trade unionists need to draw the conclusions from these events. Whilst the workers' demands are re-

jected the employers quickly get what they want—growing privatisation of some of the most profitable sectors of the economy. COSATU's links to the ANC do not enable it to pressure the government—quite the reverse. It has become an ANC instrument for selling out and demobilising workers' struggles. COSATU must break with the government and fight for working class interests.

The policies and actions of the ANC led Government of National Unity have proved how right those forces were that refused to support this Alliance in the elections of 1994 and who put forward a workers' alternative at the polls. The course of events has confirmed Workers Power's long standing argument that the ANC would take power as a bourgeois government which would attack the workers.

South African workers must demand that their leaders break from the ANC and fight for a mass workers' party that is genuinely independent of the bourgeoisie: a revolutionary workers' party that struggles to end the exploitative system of capitalism in South Africa and for a workers' government. ■

● Solidarity with Bongani Mkhungo! see page 13

● For more on South Africa, buy the latest *Trotskyist International*, out now! (see page 7 for details).

## PART 1

# From world war to world revolution?

In 1983 Workers Power published a ground-breaking history of Trotskyism, *The Death Agony of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Trotskyists Today*. Long out of print in English, this book has been translated and updated in both French and German. Since its publication a number of key contributions to the history

of Trotskyism have added to the insights of the original book. This month we begin a major new serialisation of the updated book. The series will include a chronology, references and explanatory notes. It is designed as a self-contained guide to the mistakes of post war Trotskyism and a pointer to revolutionary regroupment.

IN SEPTEMBER 1938, 19 delegates from 15 countries met in Paris to found the Fourth International (FI). It was the fruit of 15 years of political struggle by Leon Trotsky and his followers—a struggle to save the USSR and the international communist movement from degeneration and betrayal.

The FI represented a small minority within the workers' movement. But it was, in the words of its founding document "strong in doctrine, programme, tradition, in the incomparable tempering of its cadres." (L Trotsky, *The Transitional Programme*, Pathfinder, p152)

In the years that followed, the mettle of some of its cadres proved weaker than Trotsky had hoped. The revolutionary optimism of the FI's perspectives were dashed. Out of the discrepancy between perspectives and post-war political reality came the decisive political degeneration of the FI in 1951, and the first of many splits in 1953.

During the Second World War the FI's young members often played a heroic role. In their struggle to maintain revolutionary politics under appalling conditions, they suffered the attacks of Stalinism, fascism and "democratic" imperialism alike. Hundreds of militants were killed or imprisoned for carrying out their revolutionary duty. Yet in spite of this heroism, the international leadership set up in 1940 was not capable of rising to the historic challenge of the hour and some sections made major political adaptations.

After the war, the International's perspectives and programme did not change to take account of a more complex reality than had been anticipated. Consequently, after the war the FI moved further and further away from Trotsky's method.

Beginning in 1948 the whole International was won to a centrist position in relation to Stalinism. The Third World Congress in 1951 not only endorsed this centrist method, but drew from it a number of disastrous practical conclusions: the ability of the "objective process" of class struggle to carry out the tasks of revolutionaries for them, the need for "deep entry" into Stalinist and reformist parties. By 1953 the FI was to split, essentially, over which of these alternatives—Stalinism or social democracy—was the best target for opportunist adaptation.

Since 1953 there have been numerous other splits and fusions, each of them heralding a false start for those committed to rebuilding a revolutionary international. Each of them failed to identify the fundamental and crucial errors of the FI after the war, and thus doomed themselves to repeating them.

The purpose of this series is to educate a new generation about the history of the degeneration of Trotskyism, the better to arm them for the struggles ahead.

## Trotsky's revolutionary perspectives

When Trotsky founded the FI in 1938 he thought the war would create a favourable climate in which to build the International as a mass organisation. The parallel with the consequences of the

First World War—revolutionary situations and the 1917 revolutionary victory in Russia—was felt by all, and Trotsky was no exception.

At the Emergency Congress of May 1940, the FI adopted a manifesto written by Trotsky. In the face of a new war which threatened the entire planet, the FI issued the only revolutionary response.

It denounced the predatory nature of the imperialist war, committed itself to defend the USSR from imperialist attack and clearly advocated "revolutionary defeatism" in imperialist countries as the best way to prepare for the coming revolutions.

In June 1940, Trotsky took up Lenin's slogan from the First World War:

"From the standpoint of a revolution in one's own country the defeat of one's own imperialist government is undoubtedly a 'lesser evil'." (Trotsky, *Writings 1939-40*, p297)

The Manifesto was clear; even in the event of a "democratic" imperialist war against Hitler, revolutionary defeatism would still be the only valid position:

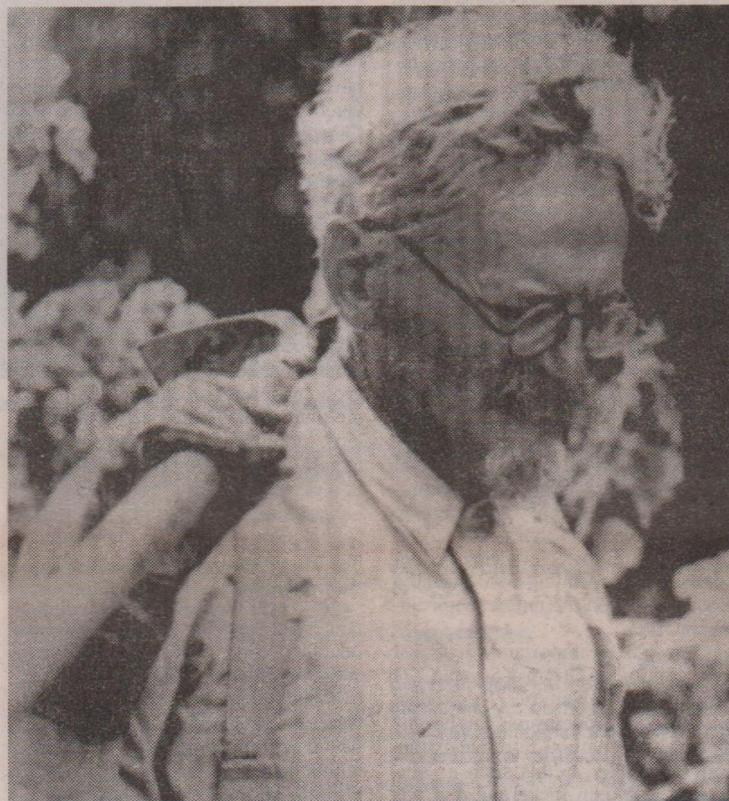
"By his victories, Hitler provokes naturally the sharp hatred of workers the world over. But between this legitimate hatred of workers and the helping of his weaker but not less reactionary enemies is an unbridgeable gulf. The victory of the imperialists of Great Britain and France would not be less frightful for the ultimate fate of mankind than that of Hitler and Mussolini. Bourgeois democracy cannot be saved. By helping their bourgeoisie against foreign fascism, the workers would only accelerate the victory of fascism in their own country. The task posed by history is not to support one part of the imperialist system against another but to make an end of the system as a whole." ("Manifesto of the FI [1940], Imperialist war and world revolution" in *Documents of the FI*, p 349)

But the FI's correct and heroic maintenance of the revolutionary opposition to imperialist war went alongside perspectives which were to prove flawed. In the Manifesto, Trotsky predicted:

● The collapse of capitalism, not as an historic or epochal reality, but as an immediate perspective for the years and decades after the war:

"The capitalist world has no way out, unless a prolonged death agony is so considered. It is necessary to prepare for long years, if not decades, of war, uprisings, brief interludes of truce, new wars, and new uprisings. . . The question of tempos and time intervals is of enormous importance; but it alters neither the general historical perspective nor the direction of our policy."

● The collapse of Stalinism, either at the hands of the workers in a victorious political revolution or at the hands of



the imperialists. The International took for granted Stalinism's inability to defend the workers' state:

"The Kremlin has once again revealed itself as the central nest of defeatism. Only by destroying this nest can the security of the USSR be safeguarded."

● The collapse of bourgeois democracy during the war or its replacement by Bonapartism after the war because of the destruction of the economy and the productive forces brought about by the war:

"The war has not halted the process of the transformation of democracies into reactionary dictatorships, but on the contrary is carrying this process to its conclusion before our very eyes."

● The emergence of revolutionary unrest in all of the belligerent countries, victorious or defeated, which might appear quite rapidly:

"The conditions of the present war differ profoundly from the conditions of 1914. The economic position of the imperialist states, including the United States, is infinitely worse today, and the destructive power of war is infinitely greater than was the case a quarter of a century ago. There is therefore sufficient reason to expect this time a much more rapid and much more decisive reaction on the part of the workers and of the army."

A few weeks later, Trotsky added: "Twenty-two years ago not only the

form of democratic republic.

Secondly, Stalinism emerged from the war greatly strengthened. The invasion of the USSR by German troops in 1941 was a debacle—Stalin had been warned of the invasion but didn't believe it would take place. But the Soviet population went on to play a huge role in the war effort and was in no small measure responsible for its change of course, notably during the Siege of Stalingrad in early 1943.

The bureaucracy demonstrated its incompetence time and again but its prestige was boosted in the eyes of the masses by the Nazi defeat. Moreover the territorial expansion of Stalinism into Eastern Europe and the assumption of power in Yugoslavia led to a global strengthening of Stalinism, not a global weakening.

To be sure, revolutionary situations came and went during and after the war, as the collapse of fascist regimes opened up a great many revolutionary opportunities: Vietnam saw the creation of workers' councils, Greece endured a long-running civil war, Italy witnessed a shorter, more intense civil war distinguished by the creation of embryonic workers' councils, while in France and Belgium there was an armed Stalinist resistance movement, factory occupations and brief pre-revolutionary situations.

But none of these situations resulted in a revolutionary victory. Each time "subjective" factors intervened in the shape of reformist and nationalist (especially Stalinist) leaderships who acted to derail the developing mass movements. Moreover the Trotskyist "alternative leadership" was too weak, insufficiently tested in battle and insufficiently rooted among the workers to be able to lead them to victory. Consequently in the immediate post-war period democratic questions came to dominate more and more of the political terrain. In countries which had been occupied or under fascist government constitutional questions were fundamental.

This was the brutal reality of the end of the war. The FI needed to re-examine its perspectives in the light of events and refocus its programme to address the tasks of the hour.

Instead, in 1944, 1946 and again in 1948, it continued to put forward its old pre-war positions, still waiting for the collapse of capitalism, the fall of Stalinism, fascism in Europe and America, mass growth and the victorious revolution.

As we shall see, each of these errors was challenged—partially or totally—from within the FI. As a whole, the errors of perspective did not push the FI away from being able to argue a fundamentally revolutionary line in practice, faced with the struggles of the immediate post war years.

But with the onset of the Cold War, the creation of Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, the obvious stabilisation of capitalism and the beginning of the long boom, something had to give. In the end what gave was the FI's revolutionary programme. Under the post-war leadership of Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel and James P Cannon, the FI made its first serious error, hailing Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito as an anti-Stalinist, and refusing to call for a workers' revolution against the Tito-led bureaucracy in Yugoslavia. ■

## In Part 2: Trotskyism in World War Two

● The international leadership falls apart ● Cannon on trial ● Sectarianism and opportunism in Britain and France ● The 1944 European Conference ● The debate on democratic demands.

## TIMELINE

- September 1938: Fourth International (FI) founded *Transitional Programme* issued as the international programme of the FI
- September 1939: Stalin Hitler Pact. Hitler invades Poland  
World War Two begins
- May 1940: FI holds Emergency Congress
- August 1940: Trotsky, in exile in Mexico, is assassinated by Stalinist agent Ramon Mercader

The December 1995 issue of *Workers Power* carried a letter from Ian Kellogg, a Canadian socialist, advocating the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada. In reply to Ian's contribution, **GR McColl** considers the historical background to the Quebec national question and concludes that revolutionaries should not advocate independence.

## Quebec

# Birth of a nation state?

IN THE 30 October 1995 referendum the inhabitants of the largely French province of Quebec rejected, by a narrow majority, moves towards national independence. Despite the 93% turnout, the narrowness of the margin—around one percentage point—meant that the issue was far from being resolved.

With very few exceptions the Canadian far left groups correctly supported Quebec's *right to self-determination*. Wrongly, in our view, they also *advocated*

independence for Quebec.

The persistent growth of support for bourgeois nationalism since the early 1970s is directly related to the crisis of working class leadership. Chauvinism against the Quebecois and French-speakers in the other provinces is undeniably rife among English speakers, including the working class.

Some seventy municipalities in English-speaking Canada have passed "no French" laws in open defiance of the 1969 Official Languages Act. A 1989

survey of public sector employment found evidence of substantial discrimination against French speakers in New Brunswick. The situation was only marginally better in the federal capital of Ottawa.

At the same time Quebec's largely French-speaking working class has gravitated to the increasingly right wing Parti Quebecois (PQ). In contrast to most of Canada's nine other provinces, Quebec provides no substantial base of support for the New Democratic Party (NDP),

Canada's equivalent of the Labour Party. These national-linguistic divisions tie the French speaking workers directly to their own bourgeoisie, and the English speaking workers to chauvinistic reformism.

Nationalism, whether Canadian or Quebecois, is a dead end for the entire working class even where elements of national oppression exist and need to be fought.

An ethnic break-up of Canada would lead to reactionary results for all Canadians. ■

## Roots of Quebec nationalism

Quebec's French-speaking population are direct descendants of the colonists who came under British rule in 1759. After this the Quebecois suffered systematic discrimination and, occasionally, brutal repression but they retained a solid geographical base. In the first half of this century Quebec exported labour to the factories of New England and its economy remained an economic backwater.

The 1960s however witnessed a massive expansion of Quebec's economy, coupled with a far-reaching liberalisation and secularisation of society—hitherto dominated by the Catholic church. A vigorous campaign for reproductive rights won the province's women the most liberal abortion laws in North America by the mid-1970s.

The 1960s also saw substantial growth in the ranks of organised labour, albeit divided into at least three union confederations. The parallel growth of the Quebecois bourgeoisie fuelled an eventual split in the province's Liberal Party. This split gave birth to the Parti Quebecois—ultimately the crucial element in a fractious but rapidly growing nationalist movement.

In 1972 the union confederations in Quebec buried their differences to form the Common Front. This led to an effective General Strike that gripped most of the public and part of the private sector, but culminated in the jailing of the three principal strike leaders, who had been disavowed by the leadership of both the NDP and the Canadian Labour Congress.

This shameful betrayal of the strike movement by the leaders of the predominantly English-speaking reformist labour movement helps to explain the shift by the Quebecois union bureaucracy and many of its members into the PQ camp in the 1976 provincial election.

Rene Lévesque's PQ swept into office for the first time in 1976 on a social and economic programme which was in some respects more radical than the Keynesian consensus then dominant in bourgeois politics under Trudeau.

In its first term the PQ government nationalised a major aluminium company, increased Quebec's minimum wage to the highest level in Canada, and introduced a progressive new labour code for the unions. It also pursued policies to foster the growth of specifically Quebecois capitalism, while spurring the exodus of monoglot English-speaking businesses by its "language-of-work" legislation.

The PQ administration finally held a referendum on sovereignty which took place in 1980. Its stated aim was simply

to strengthen Lévesque's hand in negotiating much greater autonomy with the federal government. In the event, however, the PQ suffered a stinging defeat as the vote went against the sovereignty proposal by 60-40.

The PQ remained in office for several years, executing a sharp right turn under the impact of renewed economic crisis—an evolution that has not been reversed. It unleashed a vicious offensive on public spending and inflicted a serious defeat on the public sector unions in 1985.

Canada is an important imperialist power, one of the Group of Seven (G-7) top industrialised countries. The productive core of its economy remains heavily dependent on natural resource extraction, especially metals such as aluminium, cadmium, nickel and zinc. It is a vital component of the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) created in 1988. Quebec is an integral part of this Canadian economy dividing its Atlantic from its continental and Pacific provinces.

Quebec also possesses a strategic natural resource in the form of vast quantities of hydroelectricity developed in the '70s with the James Bay Project. This is a crucial component of the electricity grid for eastern Canada as a whole and much of the north-eastern USA. James Bay is under the aegis of HydroQuebec, a provincial corporation established in the early '60s.

After generations of relative back-

wardness, Quebec's economy became a focus for major capital accumulation in the '60s; its domestic capital became a growing force and largely US-based multinationals also invested in the province. Montreal, far and away Quebec's largest city, had long been established as a centre for almost exclusively English-speaking banking and insurance capital. Since the first PQ government in 1976, some of these firms have shifted west, mainly to Toronto.

This flight of capital, though important, is not the main cause of Montreal's relative decline, which has far more in common with the "de-industrialisation" of many older North American cities. Nevertheless Canadian capital as a whole would very much like to keep Quebec within the federal framework, if only to keep the cheap electricity flowing.

Quebec at present suffers from low growth, though its position is not qualitatively worse than that of Canada in general. The unemployment rate is slightly above the Canadian average and has rarely fallen below 12% since the late '70s.

But unemployment hits young French-speakers especially hard, running at 25-30% for those under 25. It appears that the pro-separation vote was especially strong in this age group. On the other hand the French-speaking workers of Montreal rejected the sovereignty/independence option. Whilst some observers have argued that Montreal succumbed to economic blackmail in vot-

ing "No" to sovereignty, an alternative argument suggests that the city's genuinely inter-ethnic character tipped the balance.

The narrow defeat of the PQ referendum triggered only modest street protests. The main casualty of the referendum result was PQ premier, Jacques Parizeau, who announced his resignation within 24 hours of a chauvinistic speech conceding defeat and blaming "money and ethnics" for the PQ's failure.

Parizeau's racist reference to immigrants from neither English-speaking nor French-speaking countries provoked criticism even from within the nationalist camp. But his replacement by the more charismatic and more right wing leader Lucien Bouchard makes another referendum on sovereignty likely in the next two years, though this would require another general election first. Meanwhile his first task is to cut the massive C\$3.9 billion deficit which means big cuts in public spending, not designed to enhance the PQ's popularity.

The far right Reform Party concentrated in the western provinces is keen to say "good riddance" to Quebec. But the Canadian bourgeoisie is undoubtedly prepared to make some concessions to keep Quebec in a unitary federal state. Meanwhile the PQ under Bouchard's leadership is probably prepared to settle for less than an independent nation state. ■

For the right of self determination but...

**No to separation!**

In the current situation a two-fold task confronts revolutionaries: to defend the right of the Quebecois to self-determination and to advance the fight for a united labour movement across Canada.

Marxists support the *right to self-determination* for the Quebecois, or any other nationality within Canada. Only by proving themselves consistent and active democrats on this question can the English speaking working class convince their French speaking brothers and sisters that a call for class unity is not an appeal for them to stop struggling against discrimination and oppression. This way they can prove in practice that the main enemy is the bosses of all languages and nationalities.

Concretely, this means a mass campaign within the predominantly English-speaking working class in support of the right to self-determination for both the Quebecois and the so-called First Nation peoples (the indigenous North Americans), and against all remaining privileges.

This means a battle among the NDP's trade union affiliates to act upon its paper commitment to support for the right of self-determination. In English-speaking areas that have adopted "English only" local statutes, we must fight for their immediate repeal and for the defence and extension of truly bilingual education.

However reactionary the programme of the PQ, Canadian chauvinism remains the greater evil and effective resistance must be mobilised against any attempt to coerce Quebec into submission by threats of economic reprisals etc.

At the same time revolutionaries should have fought for a "No" vote to separation in the October 1995 referendum on the basis that state separation will do no good to the Quebecois workers or the workers of Canada as a whole. A united workers' movement fighting for a workers' Canada is the only way to transcend not only national oppression and discrimination but all exploitation.

Quebecois nationalism is now clearly a major obstacle to class independence. There clearly exists a basis for nominally autonomous Francophone Quebecois capitalism. There is in other words a bourgeois nationalist "solution" to the Quebec question. But it is not a progressive one. The bourgeois nationalists have an appetite to, and indeed a record of, reversing language discrimination. Their attitude to immigrant workers, to the indigenous Americans, as well as to the English speaking minority is far from democratic and these minorities correctly fear a "sovereign" PQ government.

Moreover the whole of the French speaking working class in Quebec has not embraced separation. What can bring workers of all linguistic or ethnic backgrounds together is a united fight against the bosses, of all languages, in Canada by a positively internationalist workers' movement cleansed of all forms of prejudice.

As well as fighting for full language rights for French speakers outside Quebec, we should also fight for the abolition of the discriminatory Bill 101 (La Charte de la Langue Française) in Quebec itself, and for the free public provision of high quality education and training in other languages (including English). In the event of another referendum, we would fight for a question that clearly and unambiguously poses the issue of full national independence. If the electorate again rejects secession, the case becomes clear that the Quebec national question has been resolved in as much as it can be within the confines of bourgeois democracy. ■



Pro-independence demo June 1995

# Chechnya

## Wolves at Yeltsin's door

**T**HIRTEEN MONTHS ago Boris Yeltsin sent in the tanks to crush the regime of Dzhokhar Dudayev, and to end Chechnya's three year struggle for independence from Moscow.

Yeltsin did so for both economic and political reasons. Chechnya has its own oil fields, which are relatively small, but carries the main oil and gas pipelines which carry Russian exports from the huge fields in Siberia and Central Asia.

The Chechens are also the vanguard of the nineteen non-Russian, Islamic peoples of the north Caucasus, who have aspirations to either autonomy or outright separation from the Russian Federation.

These peoples have historically resisted Russian rule. In 1944 Stalin deported them to Central Asia, an attempted genocide. One third perished during the deportation. Krushchev allowed the remainder to return in 1956, and with Gorbachev's relaxation of the dictatorship in the late 1980s a movement for independence grew once again.

The December 1994 invasion of Chechnya—by one of the largest and most heavily equipped armies in the world—turned into a near fiasco. Lightly armed Chechen fighters fought the Russians street by street in Grozny, capital of the breakaway republic. For six months they held out and then the survivors broke through the encircling Russian forces and withdrew into the mountains. The Chechens have carried out a guerrilla war ever since. In June 1995 they humiliated the Russians by taking hostages in Budyonovsk in southern Russia.

### Puppet

The Russians have installed a puppet regime in Chechnya, headed by Doku Zavgayev. It was recently "legitimised" by a blatantly rigged election last December.

So it was no surprise when Chechen fighters struck again in the new year. A 250 strong unit—the "lone wolves"—launched a raid on an airfield in Kizlyar in neighbouring Dagestan. They were forced to retreat and occupied a hospital in the town. They took patients as hostages, and a platoon of OMON "special forces" as prisoners.

After negotiations they were allowed to depart in a fleet of buses for the Chechen border, taking over a hundred

In January events in Chechnya once again shook Russia. **Dave Stockton** reports on the struggle for independence, and the political crisis Yeltsin faces in the run up to the Presidential elections.



While some hostages were released, many more were massacred by Yeltsin's blundering troops.

A potentially disastrous humiliation faced the beleaguered Yeltsin. Calling in defence minister Grachev and the generals, he read them the riot act, publicly, on prime-time TV. A plan was hatched to stop the convoy before the border and "annihilate the Chechen bandits".

The Russian "crack units" sent to do this, however, were delayed at police checkpoints. The Chechens were warned of the attack by the blowing up of a bridge into Chechnya. The Chechen fighters dug-in at the border village of Pervomayskoye.

Yeltsin vowed to crush the Chechens "in 24 hours". A five day stand off ensued. On 15 January an attempt was made to storm the village. Three days of all out attack by the Alpha units of elite Russian assault troops failed to take it from the Chechens.

A member of the Russian assault units revealed that they had been promised that after a heavy artillery barrage, they would only have to pick up the charred remains. Instead they met withering fire, and suffered heavy casualties. The Al-

pha unit member reported that they had to face not only the ferocity of the lone wolves, but also "friendly fire".

"Quite simply we were left exposed. They said that the artillery and airforce would be brought into play. Well they were, but so badly. How can you talk of hostages when the target is being completely annihilated? So hostages were being annihilated, (Chechen) militants were being annihilated, *we were being annihilated*. That's all there is to it."

Yeltsin then ordered a bombardment by *Grad* multiple rocket launchers. In justifying the attack, Yeltsin claimed that the Chechens had already killed the hostages. Yet immediately after the attack he claimed that 82 hostages had been saved and 153 Chechen fighters killed. Premier Chernomyrdin almost simultaneously gave the figure as 42 hostages saved.

### Fiasco

Within days it was revealed that more than a hundred of the Chechen fighters, including their leader (Dudayev's relative, Salman Budayev), had escaped

from Pervomayskoye.

This bloody fiasco has led to a storm of criticism of Yeltsin. Human rights commissioner Sergei Kovalev resigned, saying he could no longer stand "the bloodshed for which the leaders of the state are to blame, and the lies which have been uttered by the same mouths".

Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, denounced the blood bath. Grigory Yavlinsky, the head of *Yabloko* (Apple) the largest of the market reform parties denounced it and put a motion of no confidence in the government and the President.

The only support Yeltsin received was from fascist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who praised his response and urged him to "napalm Chechnya".

The incompetent generals and the demoralised soldiers of the Russian army are unlikely to be able to bring about a military solution in Chechnya.

Further hostage taking and "terrorism" are possible in the coming months. Chechnya will continue to be an open wound for Yeltsin, at a time when he needs to rally support for the Presidential election.

The position of revolutionaries in Russia and internationally should be clear. The Russian army of occupation should be withdrawn from Chechnya at once. Without giving the slightest political support to Dudayev or to his tactics, revolutionaries must support all Chechen forces striving to drive out the Russians.

### Federation

Socialists stand for the right to self-determination, and indeed secession, of all the peoples of the north Caucasus. The only solution is for a federation of workers states' of the north Caucasus, immediately seeking a broader federal unity with the workers of Russia and the "independent" CIS states of Transcaucasia (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia).

Russian workers should remember Marx's words that "a nation which oppresses another can never itself be free". A brutal dictatorship by the Russian government in Chechnya will lead inexorably to such a dictatorship in Moscow, a dictatorship at the service of capitalist restoration for the benefit of the bureaucratic "industrialists". ■

## And for my next trick. . .

**Y**ELTSIN'S ACTIONS in Chechnya coincide with his sharp turn towards the nationalist right, in the wake of the December elections.

Reports show that the election results were partially falsified by the Kremlin. Votes for the Stalinist Communist Party (KPRF) were boosted by three or four percent, and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's party "Our Home is Russia" was docked a few votes. The aim was to make Yeltsin appear as the only candidate capable of beating the KPRF and saving Russia from a return to "communism".

The vote rigging and the Chechen events were both aimed at improving Yeltsin's standing through repackaging him as a Great Russian patriot and critic of the social consequences of the market reforms. This process has been further advanced by significant changes in the government.

### Replaced

Yeltsin dismissed Andrei Kosyrev, the pro-western foreign minister, and replaced him with Yevgeny Primakov, a former KGB official known to be sympathetic to the old Soviet policy of friend-

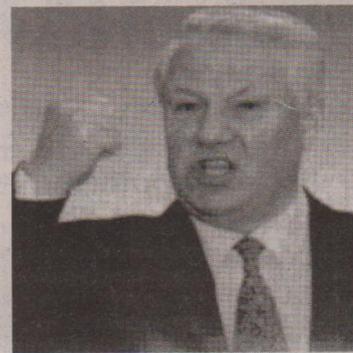
ship towards Saddam Hussein.

The last of the original team of "radicals", Anatoly Chubais, has also been sacked. In charge of privatisation since November 1991, Chubais is well regarded in the West. He is the man who has taken Russia to the point where 75% of GDP is now produced outside the state sector, where the market services sector represents nearly 40% of GDP, and the inflation rate fell to 3.2% in December, the lowest since the reforms started.

### Budget

The state budget adopted for 1996 is a strict one and the new president of the Central Bank, Sergei Dubunin had been promising to keep credit under tight control. But Chubais is to be replaced by what *The Economist* calls "an old style Soviet industrialist". Alarm is spreading in Washington and London.

Chernomyrdin's future looks bleak. He will be dismissed by Yeltsin as a scapegoat for the enormous public hostility to the reforms. But not until after 16 April, the deadline for candidacies in the presidential elections, so preventing him from standing against Yeltsin.



Yeltsin's swing against "market reform" has upset his Western backers. The latest \$9 billion IMF loan is, according to the *Herald Tribune*, "unlikely to be approved in time for an IMF board meeting in mid-February". Jeffrey Sachs, guru of capitalist restoration, said he thought it would be "a big mistake" to conclude any agreement with Russia before the elections:

"It is difficult to imagine that this loan will give us any real leverage over a gravely weakened administration that has already turned towards a hard line

six months before an election."

Yeltsin is likely to drop Chernomyrdin's tight money policy which would jeopardise his re-election plans.

Yeltsin knows that it will take more than a little vote rigging, to get him re-elected. Workers in Russia are beginning to feel the effects of the market, a reality that is shattering their illusions. Workers who were once committed to the market reforms, like the coal miners of the Kuzbas, voted heavily for the KPRF in December.

Yeltsin has been forced to promise to pay Russia's workers the vast sums owed them in back wages. He has been under pressure from many sides, not least from the Kuzbas miners, who recently demonstrated in Moscow and are threatening a nation-wide strike over pay.

### Rubles

Yeltsin will in all probability run the printing presses to produce extra rubles and try to stimulate a feel good factor. Inflation would then take off, and rapidly devalue any pay increases. Yeltsin hopes that the Russian workers will fall for this old trick one more time. But this time he may have overplayed his hand. ■

## A World to Win

### Japan

EVENTS IN downtown Tokyo late last month gave the lie to those peddling the illusion of Japan as a model of social cohesion. Hundreds of police battled for hours with homeless men in a huge "cardboard village".

The shantytown dwellers, a combination of older jobless men and day labourers on wages too low to afford Tokyo's staggering rents, resisted the cops with bottles, cans, eggs and tin buckets as they tore through barricades made from plywood and cement blocks.

The men number among an estimated 10,000 homeless people in Tokyo, whose worsening plight the authorities have simply ignored through Japan's lengthy recession.

The governor of the Tokyo region, Yukio Aoshima, promised to provide accommodation to the evicted men in a temporary shelter, but this will close after two months.

Meanwhile, the spirited fight of the shantytown dwellers has focused attention on the reality of homelessness in one of the world's most affluent societies. Part of the reality of Japanese "stakeholder" capitalism which Tony Blair did not draw attention to—if he even knows, let alone cares about it.

### Swaziland

THE FIRST General Strike in the history of the small African state is rocking a brutally corrupt monarchy to its foundations.

The country's trade unionists originally came out to demand the immediate release of three of their leaders who had been arbitrarily imprisoned.

They have since extended their demands to include the lifting of the ban on political parties — a call so far rejected by the stooge parliament.

The monarch appoints the prime minister and the whole cabinet as well as 40 of the MPs, while members of his extended family milk fortunes from a network of monopoly businesses. King Mswati III has threatened to unleash his household warriors on the strikers, but some ten days into the strike the workers show no signs of backing down. This is part and parcel of a wave of workers struggles' throughout Africa in recent years not just for union rights but for political democracy as well.

### South Africa

EVIDENCE MOUNTS that the leadership of the COSATU union federation would rather fight its own militants than the austerity policies of the ANC-led government (see p.10 for more on South Africa).

In December during COSATU's tenth anniversary celebrations, union stewards beat up comrade Bongani Mkhungu, a former shop steward at BTR/Dunlops and a supporter of the Workers International.

His "crime" in the eyes of the organisers was to have distributed leaflets in support of several thousand striking nurses in the Transkei, who have been sacked by the provincial government. The stewards confiscated and burned Bongani's leaflets and eyewitnesses confirm that his life was threatened.

Please rush letters of protest to: Sam Shilowa, General Secretary, COSATU, PO Box 1019, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa.

**W**HEN ARTHUR Scargill announced his intention to open discussions about the founding of an SLP, Workers Power welcomed the call. The British working class has been shackled to the reformism of the Labour Party for too long. Any opportunity to launch a wide-ranging debate about what sort of party we need to fight and destroy capitalism should be seized with both hands.

But it has become increasingly clear that this promised "discussion" is over before it has begun. The SLP has already been launched with a constitution, a structure, policies, a leadership and a membership card too. To save working class militants all the trouble of discussing these things, they have been agreed in advance of any members joining, by around forty people who attended a series of invitation-only seminars.

Given how it was drafted and by whom, the constitution of the SLP is no surprise. It combines total dedication to Labour electoralism with the worst features of Stalinist bureaucratic centralism.

The constitution bans "individuals and organisations . . . with their own principles and policies, distinctive and separate propaganda etc." thereby excluding any existing left organisations such as Workers Power, Militant Labour, the SWP or the Communist Party. It would also preclude joint membership with the Labour Party.

In this respect the SLP constitution is worse than the Labour Party one, as is its bizarre insistence on British or Irish citizenship or residence in Britain for at least one year!

As well as a constitution obviously designed to keep people out of the party rather than maximise its membership, its unelected leaders have made it clear to the press that no organised oppositions would be allowed inside the party. This is less democratic even than the existing Labour Party.

What are they frightened of? The answer is simple—criticism from the left. Scargill wants to set in concrete programme and policies well to the right of most militants on the left. Members can of course change the constitution, with a two thirds majority, at conference—but not at the founding conference in May! Why?

Because it will not be allowed to take any resolutions because there are no branches to submit them. To change the pre-prepared constitution members have to wait until 1997! This is bureaucratic dictatorship run riot. Such a regime will never attract a mass following. The history of the CPGB and the CPB proves that the best that will come of this is a neo-Stalinist sect.

If the constitution precludes any organised discussion of the best way to achieve socialism, do the existing policies represent an advance on old-style Labourite reformism?

The constitution has a new "Clause Four". Its text replaces "workers by hand and by brain" of Labour's old Clause 4 by "the people of Britain", a clear concession to Stalinist popular frontism.

Does the SLP's everyday policy stand any closer to this socialist goal than old-style Labourism? Unfortunately not. Moreover, policy is being developed by Scargill and a few chosen advisers—again a bizarre parallel with the way Blair develops New Labour policy.

So far these policies include; "a free health service . . . a society where unemployment would be banished and where there would be an end to homelessness". Well and good, but hardly different from Old Labour's calls for full employment and defence of the welfare state.

The important question is how to achieve these goals, whether they will be won through parliamentary reform or workers' revolution. All this is skated over.

If the SLP is serious about its Clause Four how will it go about abolishing capitalism and replacing it with socialism?

Is Brenda Nixon calling on the working people of Hemsworth, and indeed Britain, to take up the fight against the Tories by direct action, by organising councils of action which will take on and eventually replace the bosses state? No. She doesn't even have an answer to where the proposed new pits would sell their coal, and whether they would be privately or publicly owned.

## Socialist Labour Party

# A squandered opportunity

Ninety years after the Labour Party was founded, Arthur Scargill has decided to leave and set up a new, socialist version.

Should socialists inside and outside of the Labour Party renounce their existing parties and sign up to the Socialist Labour Party?

Clare Heath shows how the SLP is set to become just the kind of new party we don't need.

Some might think that the lack of clarity in the SLP's politics is simply a reflection of its recent birth. We think it reflects Scargill's politics.

Arthur Scargill is a reformist. He believes in changing society through a combination of working class pressure and radical policies from a government elected in the normal way. He does not believe the working class needs a revolution, where mass workers' organisations confront the state, arms in hand, and destroy its class based institutions.

This was seen even during the heroic

work and relied on a backbench Tory revolt and street demonstrations, rather than seizing the real opportunity for a general strike. This "realism" always leads to defeat. The pits were closed and the NUM is a shadow of its former self.

Even the way that he has set up the SLP, ensuring that there is no discussion and no possibility for other political tendencies to influence the constitution or policies, suggests that he has not broken from his old belief in socialism from above: through elections, with mass organisations placing pressure on elected

from workers' democracy.

Scargill has created a miniature left reformist party. The SLP will either sink rapidly into obscurity, or become a confusing obstacle in the way of socialists who want to really get rid of capitalism.

The working class needs another new version of old Labour like it needs a hole in the head. Unless conditions within the SLP change, Workers Power would be banned from joining the SLP. We have no intention of trying to slip inside it quietly, nor of meeting Scargill's demand that we abandon our newspaper and

Scargill has created a miniature left reformist party.

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miners' strike of 1984-5 when he went further than any trade union leader in living memory in supporting militant direct action. What he would not do—and in the end this was central to the miner's defeat—was call on the TUC and the Labour Party rank and file as well as the leaders to launch an all-out indefinite general strike.

He may even have wanted such support but he dared not condemn the TUC and Kinnock for their sabotage of it. He dared not address directly the rank and file with this call. He had no perspective of a head-on political clash with the bosses' state which would pose the question of power.

Ultimately he always tries to pressure the trade union bureaucracy rather than lead a fight against them. He tries to force the bosses' state into making concessions rather than trying to overthrow it.

This was seen even more sharply in 1992 with the Campaign Against Pit Closures where he kept the miners at

MPs rather than taking control into their own hands.

Scargill's attitude is in keeping with his whole political method. We are not surprised by it. We did expect wider forces to be involved, in particular Militant Labour. Despite its centrist politics, a new party involving Militant Labour would have presented far more opportunities to debate out and act upon a revolutionary alternative to Labour. What we did not expect was that Scargill would suicidally ban all existing left activists from the party at the outset.

Scargill and his chosen few have destroyed the opportunity for workers to discuss a real alternative to Labour.

Most of the discussion meetings taking place around the formation of the SLP have been called either by Militant Labour or other individuals in defiance of Scargill.

These discussions, important though they are, have had no bearing on the course of the SLP itself, which is immune

independent activity.

Therefore we will not be joining the SLP. We will work with SLP comrades, and with the diaspora of banned groups around Militant and the Scottish Socialist Alliance in any united action that takes the working class struggle forward.

But we issue this warning. The central task remains: to break millions of workers away from Blair; to use the unions link with Labour to place demands on Labour and to organise resistance to Labour once in office. Both Scargill and Militant Labour as new converts to "life outside the Labour Party" are demonstrating an alarming inclination to ignore these tasks.

On present form Scargill may be capable of organising a bureaucratically run Stalinist sect, but not the fighting alternative to Labour the working class needs.

The SLP has been, so far, a squandered opportunity: part of the workers' movement's past, not its future. ■

## Hemsworth

### Should workers vote SLP?

THE NEWLY formed SLP was launched in the Hemsworth by-election. Rather than go for it himself, Scargill persuaded Women Against Pit Closures activist Brenda Nixon to stand.

Nixon's opponent, John Trickett, leader of Leeds City Council, was hand-picked by the Blair leadership.

He is a trusted right winger. Local Labour Party and trade union members are angry that their preferred candidate, Steve Kemp, was prevented from standing.

Kemp was nominated by four wards, 13 union affiliates and the Constituency Executive, which voted eleven to one to endorse him.

But the response of Labour Chief Whip Donald Dewar on hearing Kemp was an NUM nominee, was:

"He certainly won't be selected. We have decided on our man."

The local Labour Party wards and union branches that had supported Kemp should have immediately called a meeting of the entire local labour movement to decide on standing their candidate against the imposed outsider. It should have drawn up a programme and created a fighting, democratic organisation to run the campaign, keep the candidate accountable, and mobilise action and solidarity with ongoing workers' struggles.

That would have been a way of using a by-election to mobilise a fightback and place pressure on New Labour nationally to meet working class demands.

This did not happen. Instead Brenda Nixon and Scargill argue that people should vote SLP. Why?

The SLP has no internal democracy. Neither individual workers nor trade unions could influence the choice of candidate or call her to account, if elected.

The SLP is standing for old Labour-type policies but is in no position to carry them out.

The biggest left groups, Militant Labour and the Socialist Workers Party, have thrown their weight behind the SLP election machine, only to be told that they cannot sell papers and are not welcome as canvassers.

As we go to press, on the eve of the by-election, it is not clear how big a protest vote Brenda Nixon will get. Whatever its size, her support will not represent an active break from Labour by a section of the working class.

Workers Power members and supporters will not be voting for the SLP in Hemsworth.

We will vote Labour. Not because we cannot bear to vote against Labour. We have and will vote for left-wing candidates representing an ongoing struggle by a section of the working class breaking to the left.

But in the absence of such conditions, a critical vote for Labour is the best way to put Labour to the test, exposing the illusions of millions of workers.

Our job is not to put illusions, which the mass of workers do not have, in the SLP.

The Labour Party is the main obstacle. The best way to tear it down is to put it in office, demand that it act in the interests of the working class, and organise to force these demands upon it. ■



Moderniser Mandelson (left) and Scargill (right): Scargill now accepts Labour was never socialist

# LETTERS

WORKERS POWER 197 FEBRUARY 1996

## Wrong on SLP?

Dear comrades,

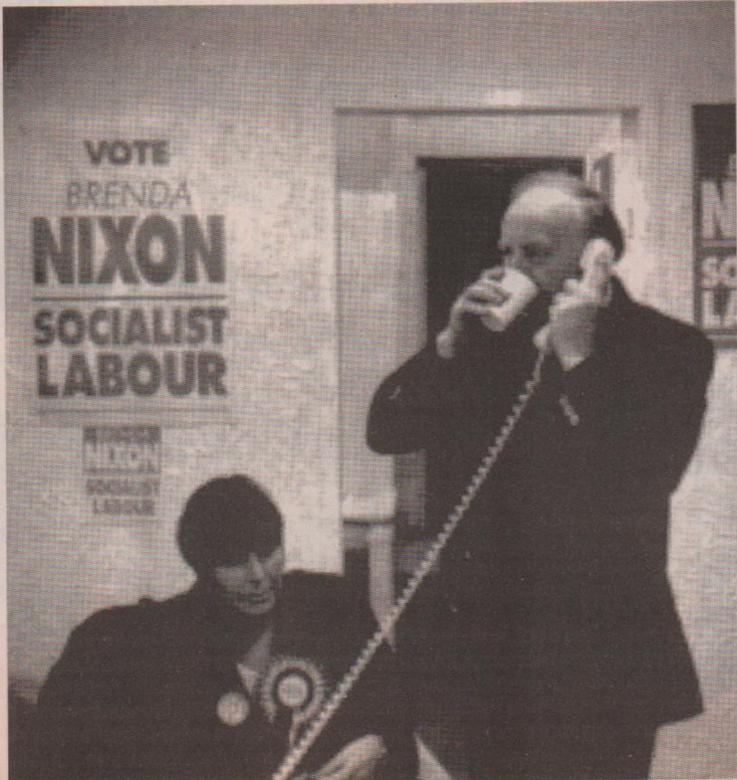
I think S. Lyle is in danger of drawing a pretty one-sided conclusion in his letter about the SLP (WP 196). Fair enough, Workers Power overestimated the scale of potential support for Scargill's new party. But is it really right to say that in the context of the fight for a new revolutionary party, the SLP project was "irrelevant"? This sounds a bit sectarian to me.

When Arthur Scargill issued the call it raised the whole question of what sort of party our class needs.

He called for a wide-ranging discussion about this on the left. WP said the party should be set up on a revolutionary basis and explained just what that means. Now the whole process has been cut dead. Scargill's constitution prevents any real debate about the party programme. The SLP has been set up and it is a reformist sect. The potential for discussion that appeared to exist in November has been snuffed out.

But before the party was founded I think it was quite right to try to influence the politics it would be putting across. That is what WP tried to do. What's wrong with that?

In comradeship,  
Frank Begbie.



Dear comrades,

So Walter Daum (Letters, WP 196) thinks there is a contradiction between Workers Power (WP) calling in the 1980s for the class struggle to be waged "in the Labour party" and arguing at the same time for a "break with Labour".

In fact the contradiction is in his head. In the 1980s there was a very sharp class struggle going on in the Labour Party—whether Daum recognises it or not. If it had been led by intransigent revolutionaries it could and would have led to a break with Kinnoch and the building of a new party.

The problem was not a serious orientation to the Labour Party as such, but the politics on which the left fought.

In Liverpool, Militant had substantial influence.

They dominated the District Labour Party and exercised a decisive influence over the city council. If they had fought uncompromisingly for workers' interests it would have brought the council (and local Labour parties) into a head-on

collision with the state—and, needless to add, with Kinnoch. Yet in the middle of 1984, whilst the miners were on strike and the Liverpool docks were at a standstill, Militant compromised in the struggle against cuts in local authority provision, and raised the rates in return for a minor concession from the Tory minister Patrick Jenkin. A year later they paid a high political price for squandering a really golden opportunity as Kinnoch turned his rhetorical cannon on Militant at Labour Party conference.

The reason for this, and countless similar examples of compliance rather than defiance, was that the Labour left—including the Militant Tendency and Arthur Scargill—clung to the illusion that the Labour Party could be transformed lock, stock and barrel into an instrument for socialism.

Daum says he followed the strategies of the British left during the miners' strike very closely, and wonders if he missed WP's "call for a revolutionary break with Labour". Strange then that

he should have missed statements such as this from WP's popular pamphlet on the strike:

"The Bennite left has shown that despite its rhetorical 'left' positions . . . faced with the threat of a split or all out war from the Labour right they will pipe down". The pamphlet went on to call for "a new revolutionary communist party, one which can assemble in its ranks the cadre of a new revolutionary working class leadership . . ."

WP's approach aimed to break tens of thousands away from Labourism in struggle, by pursuing the civil war in the party through to the end. Most of the forces that rejected this approach ended up skulking out of the party years later, defeated and with very little support.

Daum asks if perhaps he missed something overseas. Sorry, Walter, it's not your nationality or location that blinded you to this—it's your sectarian politics.

In comradeship,  
Dave Pearson  
Liverpool.

## Opium anyone?

Dear comrades,

Steve Davis really hasn't understood the Marxist critique of religion. He objects to Marx's idea that religion is a distorted reflection of reality, and questions whether "we can ever really know what reality is" (WP 196)

Marxists do believe that we can "know what reality is", although our knowledge will always be relative, never complete. Reality is constantly changing and in motion, so it is impossible ever to know everything about anything. But does this mean we can't "really know" anything? This just doesn't follow. In fact it is a concession to idealism, (a philosophical assumption common to all religions, not just Judeo-Christian ones), to the useless and disabling idea that, beyond our impressions and thoughts, we can't be sure there is anything real "out there".

But if there is nothing there "really", or if true reality is "unknowable", where do our ideas of reality come from? Either they are mere dreams in the indi-

vidual mind rather than reflections of real things (who put the dreams there?), or they are shadows of some "real" thing which exists sealed off in a completely different sphere (where?). Either way, the logical log-jam can only be broken by positing the existence of an ideal being—our father in heaven, or whatever else you want to call it.

Scientific enquiry and ultimately experience show us that some of our ideas about things accord with reality. That is where knowledge comes from. It is why science has brought us medicine, shelter, space flight and every other advance in human history, whilst theology has never even succeeded in proving the truth of its central assertion—the existence of God. The reason: it is claiming something that can never be proved.

And this points to an answer to Steve's other question, that if religion is opium, how can some people get free of it? Because science, philosophy and political democracy have advanced far

is enough over the last centuries to undermine all of religion's central claims. The opium is not total in its effect because the conditions in which human beings live ("reality") can and will reveal the need to dispel useless idealist prejudices.

Steve should not rest content with one part (the best known bit) of Marx's analysis of religion, but should examine the whole of his critique.

Religion is not just opium, but also "the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soul-less conditions." Of course, religion will not disappear overnight (unfortunately)—for millions it provides consolation in their pain. But once the root causes of human isolation, fear and pain have been removed, the need for the opium will disappear with them.

Meanwhile Steve, you are in a position to judge this rationally and with detachment. You don't need opium—Just Say No!

Richard Brenner.

## Where We Stand



### 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.



### The Trade Unions

must be transformed by 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.



### October 1917

The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin 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 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. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' 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.



### Social oppression

is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of 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.



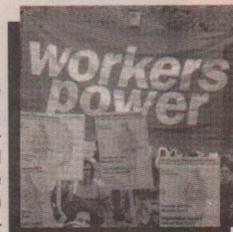
### Imperialism

is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. 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. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism 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 a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third International and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. 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

**INSIDE**

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Major  
bows to  
Unionist  
bigots  
page 3



For Internationalism, Socialism and Workers' Revolution

No 197 FEBRUARY 1996 ★ Price 50p

**Tory cuts ravage  
state schools**

**Labour's hypocrites  
desert our kids**

# Education is a right!

**L**abour's Harriet Harman sends her son to a selective grammar school. Labour is against selective grammar schools. What happens next?

Tony Blair backs her to the hilt, the Labour left slinks away muttering in the parliamentary corridors. Major wipes the floor with Blair at Question Time. Labour—

controlled Southwark has to explain to thousands of working class parents why its schools are good enough for them, but not for one of Labour's leaders.

The Tories have destroyed our education system. Yet they manage to get Labour on the ropes.

Any half-decent opposition would have knocked the Tories and their lousy education policies out for the count.

But Blair's New Labour has different priorities.

Labour priority number

one is not to frighten the rich.

That's why it has refused to abolish private education.

Labour priority number two is winning over the "middle classes", that amorphous mixture of small business people, professionals, managers and well paid workers.

That is why Labour has promised to keep a two-tier

state education system.

Labour has promised to keep grant maintained schools, like Blair's son's school.

While the official policy is "no selection", it has even promised to keep selection, "where parents want it".

It has promised equality "across local areas" but no equality between areas.

Under Labour, children from the leafy suburbs will still have better chances than working class kids from the estates and inner cities.

But the needs of working class children are low in Labour's priorities.

To really meet their needs, to make a decent education a right, not a privilege, would need massive new spending.

But the only spending Labour is committed to consists of tax subsidies for the rich who send their kids to private boarding schools.

As technology advances by leaps and bounds, allowing manual work to be supplanted by brainwork, education becomes a key necessity for every child.

*Education is a right, not a privilege!*

Harman's snub to the state schools in Southwark is a warning to us all.

Labour will do nothing to improve the crumbling education system, unless it is forced to by those whose kids cannot attend the same posh schools as the Harmans and the Blairs.

Blair's New Labour would rather look stupid, than look the least bit socialist.

**They would rather insult millions of workers, than frighten the rich parasites who own and control the profit system.■**



Hypocrite Harman

# Not a privilege!

**New Labour on education:  
what they say and what they  
really mean—pages 8&9**