

workers POWER

Brown sits on £10 billion worth of broken promises

Tax the rich!

Labour has been so stingy with spending on public services that Chancellor Gordon Brown is sitting on a surplus of £10 billion as the budget approaches.

But, because Labour is committed to Tory economics, there is little chance that it will find its way into better services, higher pensions and improved transport.

Brown's budget, on 21 March, is expected to make some tax cuts. But most of the money will go to the rich.

The £10 billion sitting in the Treasury's coffers is an affront to the workers who voted Labour into office. It's £10 billion Labour refused to spend on health, education, welfare and transport.

The fat cats of the City and the Bank of England still insist it is "good economics" to keep £10 billion in the bank when there are a million people on hospital waiting lists and one in three children lives in poverty. Because Labour has pledged not to tax the rich, they fear any pre-election spending increase would boost inflation.

We say £10 billion is not enough, but it must be released immediately for a crash programme of public spending to put right the years of Tory neglect that Labour has hardly made an impact on.

One survey predicted that, to meet the pledge of matching average EU health spending by 2005, Labour will have to spend £20 billion more than at present.

When you add what's needed to revive public transport, bring pensions to the level of the living wage, and fund high quality education you are left asking: where will the money come from?

The answer is simple: tax the rich. A huge tax on corporate profits, combined with a steep income tax for the rich landowners and business fat cats could bring in the billions needed to transform Britain.



Councils, schools and NHS in cash crisis



Austrian workers fight the far-right

Eyewitness reports from Vienna

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Free Kuldip Bajwa!



City of London protester gets 21 months jail, See page 7

Special report

LSA

LONDON SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

A socialist alternative for London

Why we're standing for the GLA

Workers Power candidate Kate Ford slams New Labour's record in the capital



ELECTIONS

London Socialist Alliance makes its mark

THE LONDON Socialist Alliance (LSA) launched its election campaign for the London Assembly on 4 May at a rally of nearly 1,000 people in Camden last month.

The launch followed a number of local meetings across the capital which had attracted combined audiences numbering a thousand. At both the local meetings and the rally there was tremendous enthusiasm for this challenge to Blair.

A key weakness revealed by the meetings was the relative absence of youth. The LSA needs to deal consciously with this by, for example, keying into the youthful, growing anti-capitalist move-

ment which hit the streets on "J18" last year and will hit them again on 1 May.

All of the LSA's meetings have heard not just from candidates but also from trade unionists and local campaigners keen to be active in the campaign. At the Tower Hamlets meeting one speaker told of LSA leaflets being placed on car windscreens as they went down the Ford production line in Dagenham; and a pensioner offered to put herself, and her bus pass, at the disposal of the campaign.

In Southwark, activists from the local campaign against housing privatisation spoke. In Hackney, there were contributions from a woman fighting increas-

es in play centre charges, and from one of the 11 fire-fighters at Horemton station who still face disciplinary charges for sticking to their overtime ban.

The central London rally heard from a TGWU steward at PriceCheck, Iftikhar Ul-Haq, who reported on their victorious fight for union recognition. Another speaker was Candy Udwin. Candy is an LSA candidate. She is also one of two Union officers facing disciplinary action by their own union for fighting against the Private Finance Initiative at the University College London Hospital (UCLH). Her Labour Party opponent in the Camden and Barnet constituency

is her boss, a UCLH personnel manager.

A woman, sacked along with other 11 other workers by Islington Council, described her experience and reported on the findings of an employment tribunal which concluded that the council was guilty of both racist and sexist discrimination. The borough's then mayor is now a New Labour candidate for the GLA.

The rally came just two days after the Labour Party announced that despite winning 55,000 more votes than Frank Dobson, Ken Livingstone had been robbed of its nomination to stand for London mayor. Comedian Mark Steel

quipped that Tony Blair could obviously teach Stalin a thing or two about fixing elections.

As Livingstone pondered his political future, several speakers called on him to stand for mayor as a socialist and labour movement candidate and on his Labour Party supporters to join with the LSA in building an alternative to New Labour.

Coming at such an impressive rally, and in the context of both Paul Foot and Ken Loach stressing the importance of unity in the fight against Blair, that call to Labour Party members, quite a few of whom were present, will undoubtedly have a real impact in the weeks ahead.

HOUSING

Dealing with the housing crisis

EVERYONE ADMITS that there is a serious housing problem in London. In Hackney, one of Britain's five poorest boroughs, the average house now costs over £130,000. As the cost of buying a home skyrockets, many working class people cannot afford to buy a box room in London. The need for good council housing is clear.

Yet what are New Labour doing? Selling off the entire council housing stock, while their new-found millionaire mates make a killing. Memories of Dame Shirley Porter and Westminster real estate swindles come to mind.

A GLA controlled by real socialists would block all the sell-offs and take privatised estates back into local authority ownership. This would be the first priority. But we don't want a return to old style, run-down council estates. We want local estates, owned by the councils, paid for by taxes on the rich, but run and controlled by tenants.

Given the current inadequate council housing stock, to address the issue of homelessness means that the GLA would raise taxes on the rich to fund a massive building and repairs pro-

gramme. We would seize properties left empty by speculators and use them for housing.

The GLA would impose strict rent controls. Private landlords who overcharge their tenants, and those who fail to carry out essential repairs would be fined. Any persistent breaches would result in the GLA confiscating the landlords' property. The same would apply to any landlords who put their tenants' lives at risk.

We would also tackle the super-rich's economic power over housing. Landlords like the Duke of Westminster quite literally own hundreds of acres in inner London. Such parasites use their control of the freehold to push up rents and mortgages.

We would abolish the leasehold system and nationalise the big property owners' land.

There are enough empty properties and more than enough wealth in London to ensure that everyone has a decent, affordable place to live. The LSA is committed to ending the obscenity of homelessness in one of the world's richest cities.

DEBATE

Campaign Against Tube Privatisation and the Socialist Party

There is currently some dissent in the LSA over the central list, since the Socialist Party has argued that the LSA should support the list being put forward by the Campaign Against Tube Privatisation (CATP) on the grounds that this campaign represents workers fighting privatisation.

This position has rightly been rejected by the LSA majority. Crucially, the London elections raise a whole range of questions and while the Tube is vitally important so too are other issues - the racist Met, the chronic lack of affordable housing and crumbling schools. To challenge Blair effectively we need to fight him on all of these issues.

However, the LSA has continued its attempts to achieve unity with the CATP - including negotiating a joint list. So far these proposals have been rejected by the CATP's leadership who want a single-issue campaign, not linked with socialist politics. But it is not too late to agree a joint list and, at the very least, a joint meeting of the LSA and CATP should be held to hammer out an agreement.

CANDIDATES

Kate Ford: why I am standing

AS A supporter of Workers Power and an LSA candidate for the London Assembly, my main aim is to make the arguments for socialism and for a revolution to destroy capitalism relevant to millions of Londoners.

I don't believe socialism can be brought about through a parliamentary vote, let alone a GLA vote, even if both bodies were stuffed full of socialists. The reason is that real power in society lies outside parliament - in the big firms' board rooms, in the military barracks, the secret service and police HQs, with the unelected top civil servants and judges. This state machine really cannot be touched by any parliament. Only a revolution by millions of workers can break up this machine.

But socialists can use parliaments, including local ones like the GLA, to help build the fight against capitalism.

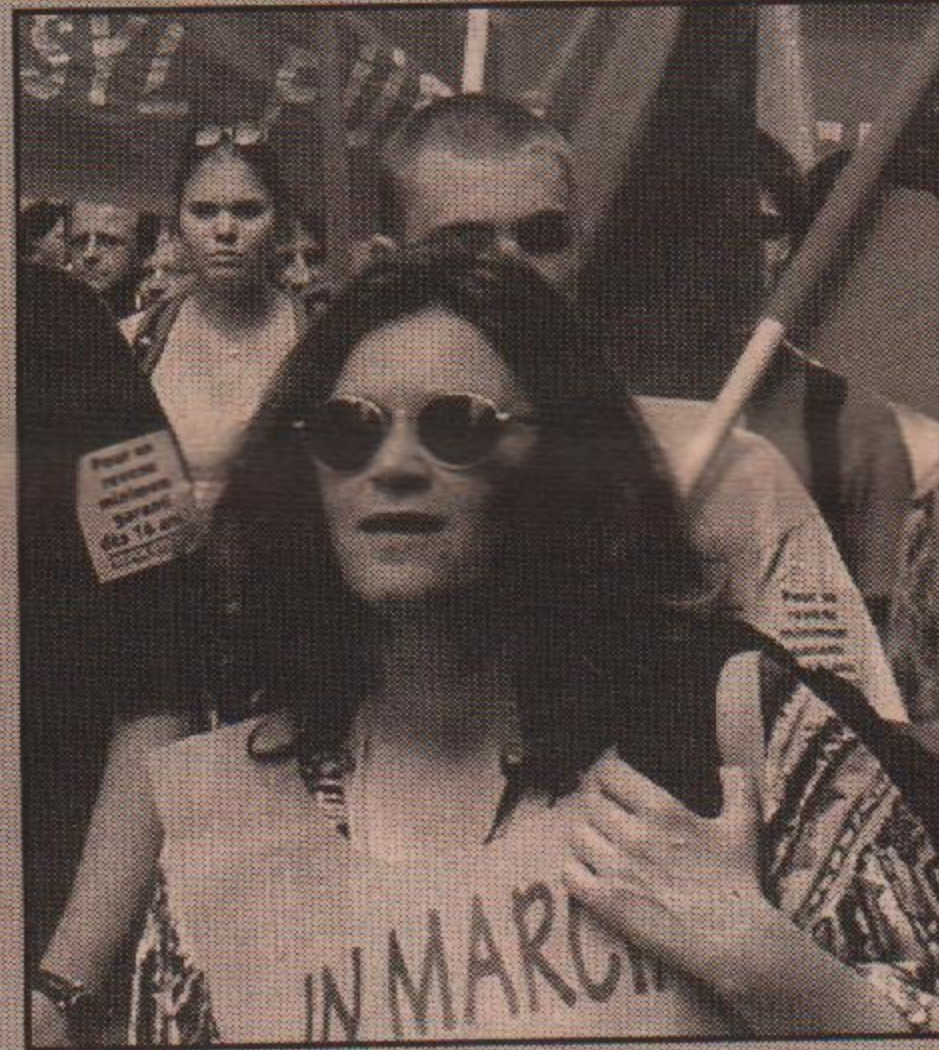
We need a campaign that involves people and that uses the opportunity provided by the election to build support for the struggles against the government and the bosses across London.

Many people feel demoralised and disillusioned with New Labour. They really thought that voting for a Labour government would change things. They are shocked when they find another hospital privatised, more cuts in local services, more schools and estates are sold off. The danger is that this disillusionment could lead to apathy rather than anger, passivity rather than action.

The LSA is an opportunity to prove to people that something can be done, offering a chance to link up with other people and build the confidence of the working class across London to fight back.

As a teacher in an inner city comprehensive school, I know what Blair's New Labour has meant for education. They have reneged on their promises for lower-class sizes, in fact in some boroughs like Newham, they are trying to increase them. Any extra resources are now linked to targets and tied to limited groups of children. The most recent wheeze is called "Excellence in Cities".

The government are offering money but only for the most able 10 per cent of children, the rest will get nothing. Whatever David



Blunkett may claim, the education system is getting more selective and for the mass of working class children that means fewer resources and less chance of success. Blair's next step is to introduce performance related pay (PRP) for teachers, to divide us.

Teachers are fighting PRP, parents are fighting to get a decent education for their children, pupils are organising in the schools against privatisation. I believe that the LSA can be another weapon in fighting against Blair's

education policies. It opposes all forms of privatisation in education and other public services. We fight for a fully comprehensive state education system.

And in this fight revolutionary socialism is relevant. If LSA candidates were elected the GLA would still have virtually no legal power over education. If you accept the rules of the parliamentary game then that would pretty much be the end of the matter.

But as a revolutionary Assembly member I would use that position to organise resistance. On the one hand I would hound the government and publicise its attacks. On the other, I and other socialist GLA members, could actually begin challenging the entire system.

We could move to implement an alternative in education - one which recognised teacher/education worker/pupil/parent control of the schools. We would allow committees made up of such people access to GLA-controlled premises and equipment to actually begin making an impact on the schools.

We could open up our facilities to striking teachers or pupils. We would organise the defiance of Section 28 or whatever Victorian guidelines Labour comes up with. Instead, we could promote enlightenment about sex and sexuality in the schools. We could fight for taxation powers to provide the necessary money for a transformed education service.

In short, we could mount a real fight against the rotten capitalist priorities that consign most working class children to a second class education. And we could conduct a similar struggle - one which puts the interests of the many to the fore - on every issue facing working class Londoners.

After the Livingstone election scandal, Jenny Scott asks where now for the Labour left?

The moment of truth

FRANK DOBSON got 25,000 votes in the electoral college to select Labour's candidate for London mayor; Ken Livingstone got 80,000 votes. Naturally, Frank Dobson won.

Welcome to New Labour land. Your opinion doesn't count. Your vote doesn't count. And if you think Livingstone won – then clearly you can't count. Because in New Labour land the votes of the MPs, MEPs and GLA candidates (selected by Millbank, voted for by no one) are the only ones that matter. Dobson's 64 votes in this section of the college, including one by a retired MEP, gave him his three per cent margin of victory over Livingstone.

Just in case this coven of Blairites hadn't been enough to get Dobson the job, the AEEU and the South London Co-operative Society gave him their block votes (totalling eight per cent of the college) without consulting their members. Elsewhere, in every single instance where the members were consulted Livingstone won by a mile.

What we have here is an election that was designed to ensure that the majority lost. It was shamelessly rigged. Everyone knows this. As a result, everyone in the labour movement with the slightest shred of honesty in their bones has also learnt something about Blair. When it comes to running his party, he has learnt a lot from Stalin.

Dissent is now off the agenda. Obey the will of the party leader or else. A shell-shocked writer for *Labour Left Briefing* summed it up thus: "the party is run by an arrogant elite which is contemptuous not only of basic Labour values but also of anyone who has the nerve to express disagreement."

What people need to learn quickly is that there is a purpose behind Blair's contempt for democracy. That purpose goes beyond his obvious determination to make Labour the natural party of government for Britain's bosses. After all, Labour's leaders have been trying to achieve this for the past 100 years. Blair wants to go further. He wants to ensure that the party's working class base is shut out, for good, from exercising any influence over the party. This is his project.

Blair's "victory" over Livingstone is another major step towards the fulfilment of this project. But the political storm that it has created could blow him

off course. The anger and bitterness that Labour and trade union members feel – not just in London but nationally – has finally and conclusively ended the period when Blair was seen as the untouchable saviour who brought Labour back to power. A political revolt against him is now possible.

To make this a reality, though, there has to be a fight. Inside the Labour Party what remains of the left needs to stage an insurrection. The signal for the rising must be Livingstone's announcement of his intention to stand against Dobson (see below). Such a move requires little justification: Livingstone won the vote and the labour movement voters will not be defrauded by the Blairite fixers.

Any other course of action is unthinkable unless you want to remain permanently subservient to a leadership that has branded itself with infamy. The leadership have quickly threatened expulsions of Livingstone, should he stand, and of anyone who supports him. So what? The choice is not stay with Blair or face the wilderness. The choice is stay with Blair or stand with the overwhelming majority of London's organised working class.

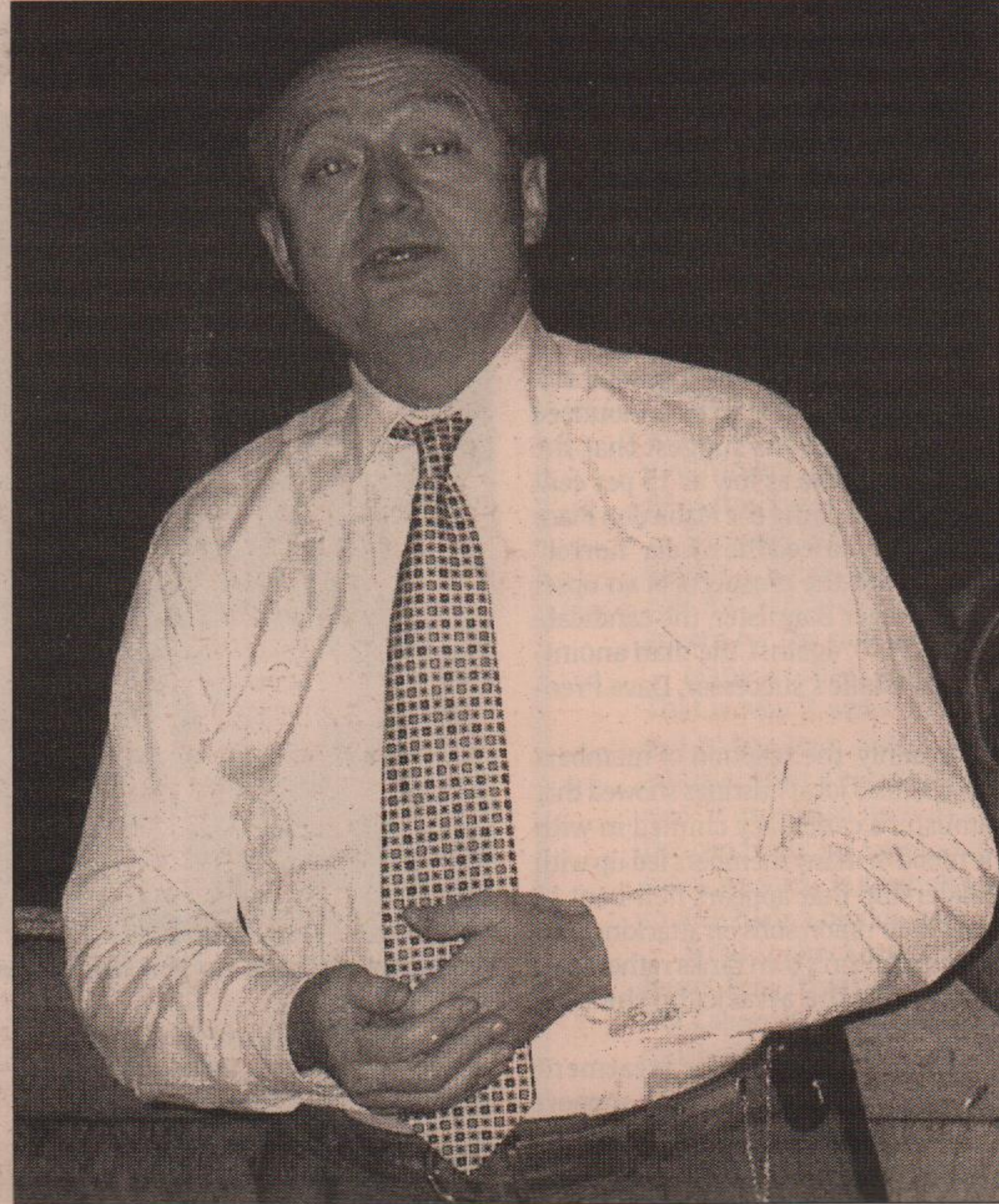
This is a moment of truth for the Labour left. If they allow Blair to get away with his chicanery then he will expel them in the near future, confident that he is dealing with a beaten and demoralised rabble instead of a battalion of class fighters. If there is no fight over this, then what will the left fight over?

Yet, we should never underestimate the fear that left reformism has of splitting the Labour Party. Take Diane Abbott, left MP. Writing before the vote she said:

"It is time for ordinary grassroots members to stand up and say 'this is our party and we will decide who our candidate for mayor is, not the machine'."

Well, they did and the machine ignored them. Abbott's response was to warn Livingstone against standing by telling him that "the entire party would turn against him." What are the "ordinary grassroots members" to make of such advice?

The left MPs have all spoken with a similar voice – warning Livingstone not to stand. This is not mere political cow-



ardice. It is part of the bankrupt strategy of the traditional left that cannot see anything in the class struggle beyond the confines of the misted-up windows of their parliamentary or constituency offices.

They tell the working class to be patient, that one day the promised land of old style reformist socialism will triumph, that Blair will fade from the scene and Labour's "traditional values" will once again shape the priorities of the party. They see this every time they are knocked senseless by the right-wing leaders, every time they are humiliated and driven from any position of influence in the party. They say it because they have no strategy for fighting the Labour traitors.

The working class – inside and outside the party – must have no truck with this "lie down and be kicked; one day all will be well" philosophy. After all, it was precisely this approach that led to the

total defeat of the left in the party in the first place.

Beyond the MPs left wingers in the party are at least considering a fight. Long-time left campaigner Piers Corbyn told an LSA rally that he was boycotting the Dobson campaign. Geoff Martin of London's Unison region has been, like Livingstone himself, keeping his options open. Most significantly *Labour Left Briefing* has hinted that it may be considering a radical rethink of its future in the party. Its editorial stated:

"Our movement is at a watershed. The next few days will be filled with tactical discussions and difficult decisions. The outcome will decide whether the Labour Party can be reclaimed in time for the general election to represent the interests of working people, or whether New Labour will go from stitch-up to witch-hunt, shedding loyalists and activists and jeopardising not only its principles but a second term."

Long standing Briefing activist Graham Bash adds that "Ken Livingstone's 'defeat' is for many of us a political fix too far."

These sentiments show that the rank and file activists have more backbone than the MPs and are at least considering alternatives. But what we do not need – with the London elections almost upon us – is a long and painful process of "rethinking" that misses the main chance to rally the forces for a real fight-back now.

Blair, by his actions, is the splitter. He fixed the vote, not us. He blocked Livingstone and imposed Dobson, not us. He rides roughshod over the members' rights, not us. We must do what is necessary to stop him. Immediately, this means fighting New Labour in the London elections so that the rank and file have the chance to give Blair a bloody nose.

The Labour left should demand that Livingstone stands as a left candidate for mayor and should give open support to the London Socialist Alliance in the GLA elections. If it does this in an organised and determined way it can ensure that those who are currently tearing up their party cards in disgust, Peter Tatchell prominent among them, don't simply leave the party as an act of individual protest but break from its leadership in a collective way that offers an alternative to frustration and despair.

In the unions, the FBU and RMT regional executive have already signalled that they would support a break. In every other union, a campaign to win branches over to an alternative would find takers among the tens of thousands who feel cheated. It would also help turn the heat on the bureaucrats who have, so far, worked diligently with Blair to ensure a smooth passage for his government's attacks.

The question for the left in the unions and the party is: if not now, when? Soon the Millbank mob will be gearing up for the general election and the old argument of "don't rock the boat or you'll let the Tories in", will begin to kick in. Now is the perfect time to fight. Failure to fight will not preserve the left's forces for a future battle. It will dissipate them still further and guarantee Blair several more years of happily trampling upon the necks of Labour's working class supporters.

LIVINGSTONE MUST STAND

Ken Livingstone is upset. Understandably so, but he should not let this get in the way of a decision. Not only must he stand against Dobson the dull, he must do so as the candidate of the labour movement who voted for him.

His "friends" have warned him against this on the grounds that it will be a dirty campaign. How much dirtier can Millbank get? They fiddled the result. They abused him at a series of stage-managed rallies addressed by Blair, Brown and others. They gave Dobson access to mailing lists while blocking such access to Livingstone.

On the other hand, the Labour members and trade unionists, as well as those polled by the *Evening Standard* and *Carlton TV*, have deluged him with calls to stand.

As we write, Livingstone himself has still made no decision. He has

not gone beyond his call – which will be ignored – on Dobson to stand down. He is being pressured by Blair, Prescott and others to capitulate. Even Dobson has offered him a "place" in a new London administration.

All of this shows quite how fearful the party machine are of Livingstone standing. And quite how fearful his "left" MP friends are too. They are afraid because they know he could win and that such a victory would be a real blow to New Labour. For this very reason Livingstone should stand.

But if he does stand, then he should quite clearly do so as a labour movement candidate. Hints have come from his camp that he might put together a slate with business people, disaffected Tories and such like. This would be a monstrous betrayal of the 80,000 working class

people who voted for him. It would help Dobson because it would sicken those people and make them think twice about supporting Livingstone. Londoners don't want a Livingstone-led popular front committed to "modernising" capitalism in the city. They want real change in the interests of the working class, the overwhelming majority.

We are under no illusions about Livingstone. He has long since shed his "Red Ken" image in the interests of furthering his political ambitions. And even as the GLC's leader, he chose to fight the Tories through the courts and the House of Lords rather than mobilising the workers of London.

Since those days he has embraced policies – such as supporting Nato's bombing of Serbia – which have aligned him with the right of the party. And his alternative to the

partial privatisation of the Tube – a bond issue to raise finance – is a pallid tinkering with the system where full-blown taxation of the rich is needed in order to redevelop the entire transport system into one that would really serve Londoners.

Despite these criticisms, we recognise that Livingstone has become a symbol of class anger against New Labour and we believe that by standing as a labour movement candidate – in alliance with the LSA which is contesting the Assembly elections – that anger could be mobilised in a fight-back against Blair.

Failure to take this course will mean the end of the political road for Livingstone. But for us the opportunity will remain open of using the LSA's campaign to fight to build the revolutionary alternative to New Labour that is so clearly needed.

UNISON

Organise to fight the witch-hunts

THE LEADERSHIP of Unison, Britain's biggest trade union, has plumbed new depths in its obsessive attempt to crush any socialist opponents.

On 10 February two branch officers from the University College of London Hospital (UCLH), Candy Udwin, the branch secretary, and Dave Carr, the branch chair, appeared before an internal disciplinary panel that assembled at the Royal Scot Hotel in central London.

Their appearance was brief: the unidentified chair of the body instructed them to leave the room within 10 minutes after their solicitor had indicated that in the absence of a stenographer, they wished to tape record the hearing.

Unison officials then instructed hotel management to escort them from the premises. With a total disregard for natural justice, the case was heard in their absence.

As we go to press the actual decision taken by the panel has yet to be officially relayed to Candy and Dave. As Candy told a central London meeting, "the only way we get a communication from headquarters these days is by recorded delivery post."

A journalist from a local paper learned from the union's headquarters that the pair were likely to be summoned to a special meeting on 8 March where they might be allowed to argue that there were "mitigating circumstances". The widespread assumption, however, is that the Unison bureaucracy has moved to expel them.

Why are Candy and Dave facing union disciplinary action? A big part of the reason is that they are both prominent members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). They also have been leading a fight, which included strike action, against a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme at the their hospital.

On paper, Unison officially opposes PFI, but in practice the union's leadership under Rodney Bickerstaffe has stymied most attempts to mount an effective fight against it.

The secretary of the Camden local government branch is David Eggmore;

he also chairs the London region's local government service group. While he has no connections at all with the SWP, Eggmore condemned absolutely the recent events:

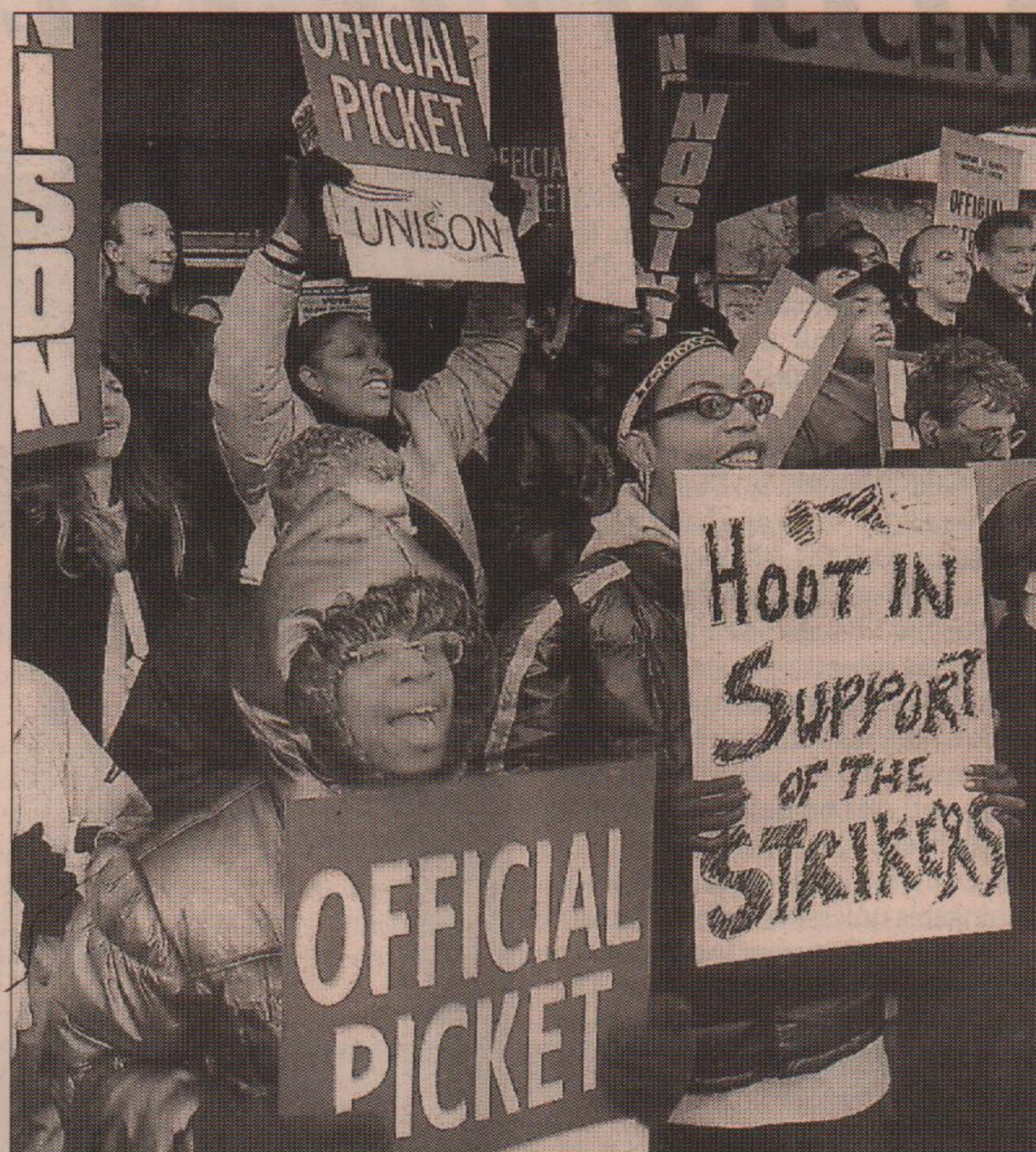
"Our union leaders ought to be paying tribute to Dave and Candy's fight against PFI, not victimising them. Unfortunately, though, this is not an isolated incident. It is the latest in a series of efforts by certain sections of the union's leadership to stamp out dissent."

Those "certain sections" happen to be in charge of the union's bureaucratic machinery nationally.

The result of the Unison general secretary election is due to be announced shortly. Indications suggest that the turnout could be as low as 15 per cent nationally, inspiring the Mabledon Place bureaucracy to feed the media "horror" stories about the prospects of an upset win for Roger Bannister, the candidate of the CFDU, against the man anointed Bickerstaffe's successor, Dave Prentis.

Certainly, the reaction of members who attended local hustings showed that Bannister's candidacy chimed in with the mood of many members fed up with a leadership that appears hell-bent to spend their union subs on attacking militants in Unison's own ranks rather than on fighting the attacks by the New Labour bosses.

As news spread of the treatment meted out to Candy and Dave, support for them grew across the union and the London labour movement. At the 14 February meeting of Unison's Greater London regional council they received unanimous support and delegates voted to elect Candy as deputy regional secretary in a gesture of solidarity. The union's Northern region also offered its backing.



Haringey strikers on the road to victory

Camden's branch committee unanimously backed an emergency motion, drafted by a Workers Power supporter, that identified the attack against the UCLH officers as part of a broader witch-hunt of the organised left and demand-

ed an immediate halt to the proceedings against Candy and Dave.

Elsewhere, the veteran Labour MP, Tony Benn, offered his support, along with the RMT's assistant general secretary, Bob Crow, an independent socialist member of Unison's national executive committee (NEC), Doug Wright, and the film director Ken Loach.

In a powerful display of support, the officers of the Communication Workers Union from the Rathbone Place sorting office near the UCLH site attended a rally on 16 February and donated £200 to the campaign to defend Candy and Dave.

This is an encouraging start, but the conduct of the disciplinary proceedings, coming less than three months after the expulsion from Unison of Glasgow social services convenor, Roddy Slorach (also an SWP member), highlights the

determination of the bureaucracy to purge the union of organised socialists who want a real fight against Blairite policies in local government.

The leadership presented a lengthy list of union members facing internal disciplinary to the NEC's February meeting. Among the listed names was NEC member Doug Wright. Another NEC member and Campaign for Fighting and Democratic Unison (CFDU) activist, Jean Thorpe, has already been under investigation. Meanwhile, two large local government branches, Birmingham and Sheffield, with some 25,000 members, remain suspended.

This new, more intense phase of a long-term witch-hunt demands a vigorous response from the left in the union.

The CFDU conference on 26 March (see below) gives us an opportunity to launch a fightback. Workers Power supporters around the bulletin, Well Red, will be arguing for maximum left unity, but on the basis of no compromise with the union's bureaucracy around the right to organise within and across branches. A united, fully democratic campaign needs to emerge swiftly in the run-up to the union's national conference at Bournemouth in June.

Such a campaign must turn to rank and file members to highlight the links between the attacks on the left and union democracy, and the bureaucracy's refusal to resist the New Labour offensive on the public sector. We need to look at how we can build a parallel conference in Bournemouth that includes those branches and individual activists that the bureaucracy has excluded or is about to exclude from the union.

Above all, we need to be prepared for a no-holds barred battle with a bureaucratic machine that is prepared to use every trick in the book (and some that aren't) to silence its opponents in order to make Unison safe for New Labour.

Messages of support, etc. to: UCLH Unison office, c/o Middlesex Hospital, Mortimer Street, London W1N 8AA. Fax/telephone: 0171 323 1162.

A number of Unison branches have jointly sponsored a conference on how to fight PFI, Best Value and other forms of backdoor privatisation on Saturday 25 March. It will take place at the NATFHE conference centre Britannia Street, London WC1 from 10.30 am. Details about registration, etc are available from Greenwich Unison on: 0181 854 8888, x5227.

The following day the CFDU holds its annual conference at the same venue. This year's meeting includes an open discussion of the way forward for the left in Unison in the light of the witch-hunt. Contact Glenn Kelly, CFDU National Secretary, at: 37 Linale House, Murray Grove, London N1 7QH, tel: 0171 251 8449.

FORD

Jobs threat at Ford Dagenham

REPORTS ON the BBC in late January set alarm bells ringing among the 9,000-strong workforce at Ford's plant in Dagenham, Essex. Then, corporation bosses at the multinational's headquarters outside Detroit announced that the factory's future was secure. The wave of fear subsided, but only briefly.

Within a month, those same bosses declared nearly 1,500 redundancies at Dagenham and the elimination of the night shift from August 2000.

Ford's press releases hinted ominously that the days of the one-time "jewel in Ford's European crown" might well be numbered unless the workforce boosted productivity still further and the plant's "industrial relations" record improved. The closure of the 70-year-old Dagenham site would have a devastating impact on workers in other industries across the whole of East London and Essex.

A statement from Nick Scheele, managing director of Ford Europe, referred to changed "market conditions". Management points to declining sales across

the continent and evidence of "overcapacity". There is undoubtedly a process of restructuring under way throughout the world's car industry, highlighted by BMW's acquisition of Rover, the Chrysler-Daimler merger and Renault's heavy investment in Nissan. But Ford continues to reap a profit approaching £18 million a year from its European operations as well as more than £4 billion from its North American empire last year.

The corporation's management is clearly trying to frighten and divide workers after conceding a substantial real wage increase and a reduction in the working week during last autumn's pay talks. The company is blatantly trying to pit the most skilled elements in the Dagenham engine plant, the sole site internationally for Ford's manufacture of diesel engines, against those in the Body and Paint, Trim and Assembly (PTA) plants.

The PTA was at the heart of last autumn's strikes against racism on the shopfloor that spurred an emergency visit by chief executive, Jac Nasser.

Whether or not Ford is bluffing about closure, this is no time for Dagenham's workforce to be either intimidated or split.

The other aspect to the bosses' strategy of divide and rule is to pit Dagenham and other British workers against their brothers and sisters at continental European plants. Unfortunately, the top TGWU official dealing with Ford, Tony Woodley, has rushed right in to the bosses' trap.

As word filtered through of Ford's announcement of the mass redundancies, Woodley told a BBC radio interviewer that, "it is cheap, quick and easy to sack British workers." True enough, since legal protection for workers continues to lag behind the rest of the EU, but then he added that Ford bosses should make workers at the plant in Cologne "share the pain".

This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster. With such remarks, Woodley is peddling poison, wrapped in the Union Jack. While Woodley and other full-time union bureaucrats pose as frustrated champions of British workers, they

are letting both Ford bosses and the New Labour government off the hook. If Ford is going for closure of Dagenham or anywhere else in Britain, the demand must be for the nationalisation of the plant under the control of the workers and without a penny in compensation to the bosses who have squeezed billions in profit from the workers on the assembly lines over decades.

Instead of pitting British and German workers against each other, TGWU and AEEU officials should be organising mass meetings at Dagenham to bolster the confidence of shell-shocked members and to hammer out a strategy for resistance rather than a cowering retreat in the face of the bosses' threats. The potential strength of Ford workers remains immense, but it lies not in a destructive competition to ratchet up labour productivity. The real source of power arises from unity and solidarity across Dagenham's maze of plants, across Britain and across national boundaries.

Stewards and other activists at the Dagenham complex need to argue

now with members not to take voluntary redundancy, but to prepare for a fight that may well include strike action and the occupation of the site. Ford has a huge capital investment to hold to ransom across Essex. Every effort must be made to break down the barriers between production workers and the white-collar staff who took their first ever strike action against the corporation on 21 February.

Rank and file delegations from Dagenham should be visiting their fellow workers not only at key British sites like Bridgend, Halewood and Southampton but also at continental plants in Belgium, Germany and Turkey. In the 1970s there was an international combine within Ford's. Now more than ever is the time to rediscover that tradition and to wage a fight across Europe to defend jobs, terms and conditions.

The bosses at Ford and the other multinationals have no respect for national boundaries when it comes to the endless quest for maximum profit. It's time that car workers went global too.

Anger as Railtrack keeps safety role

AFTER THE Paddington rail disaster, which claimed 31 lives in October last year, opinion polls repeatedly showed that nearly three-quarters of the population was in favour of renationalising Britain's railways.

At the very least, commuters and railworkers expected the Government's transport boss, John Prescott, to intervene against Railtrack, the single biggest profiteer and a corporate killer. Their hopes have been dashed.

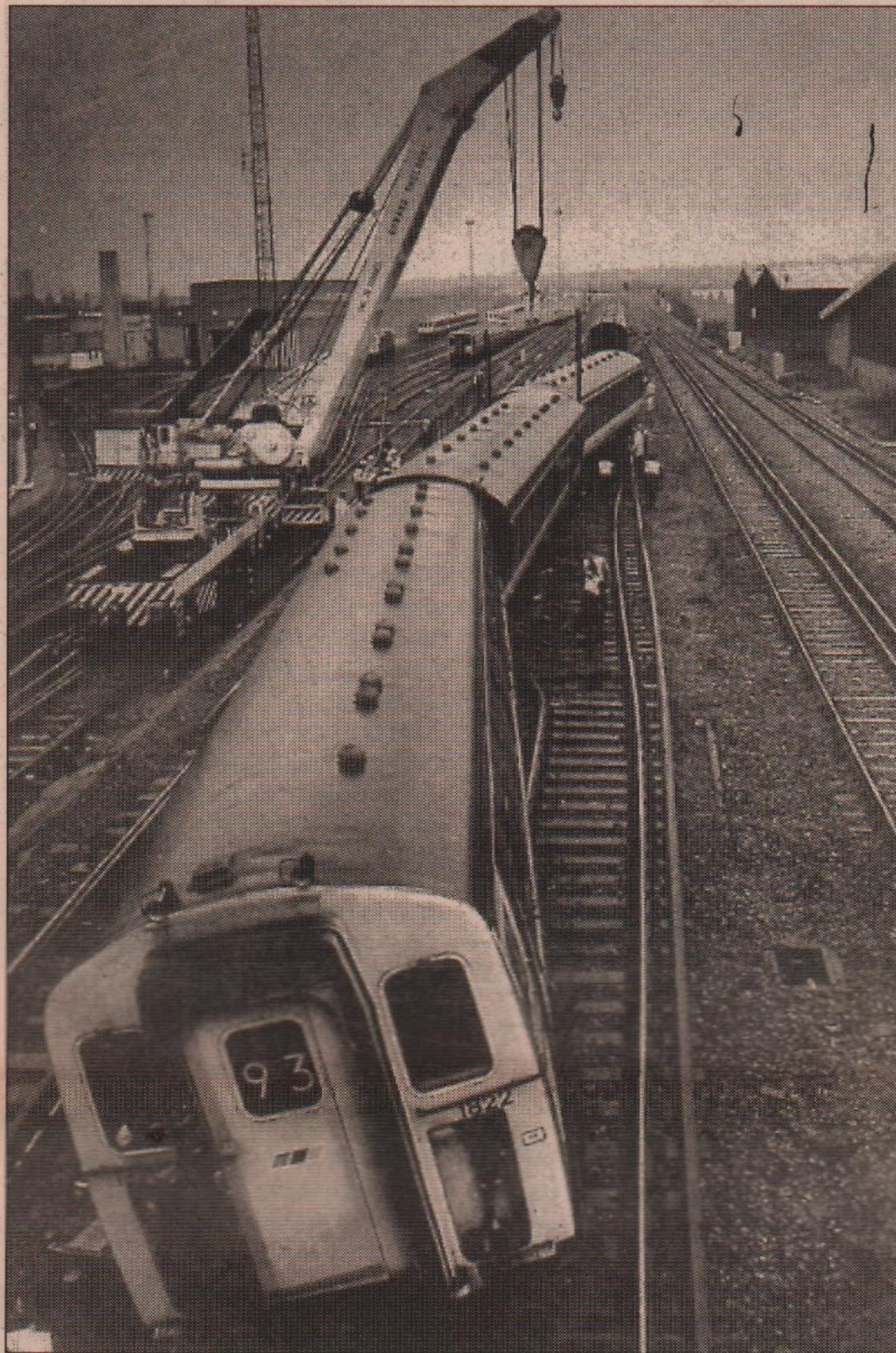
On 22 February John Prescott, an MP still sponsored by the RMT rail union, made it plain that overall responsibility for safety on the network would remain with Railtrack. Within 48 hours of Prescott's announcement, Professor John Uff's report, examining the fatal Southall train crash in autumn 1997, pointed the finger of blame at Railtrack for allowing a high-speed train to operate without a functional Automatic Warning System. It also blasted the Great Western Train company, which, like Railtrack, was a culprit in both the Paddington and Southall disasters.

Prescott's blatant U-turn has revealed that new Labour was prepared to ride out the wave of public revulsion against the private rail bosses following Paddington and then to carry on with business as usual. In an attempt at humour, Prescott even boasted of being "fair to Railtrack" at a ceremony to launch a new metro link between Newcastle and Sunderland. But railworkers in both the RMT and the drivers' union, ASLEF, have shown that Prescott may still not have the last word.

Concerns about safety have been central to two disputes in recent weeks. As we reported last month, drivers at the two rail franchises run by Connex took strike action. The strike followed a sustained overtime ban in opposition to punishing shift patterns that meant some drivers worked up to 132 hours in less than a fortnight. Fearful of losing its lucrative franchises, Connex quickly struck a bargain with ASLEF negotiators to move towards a 35-hour week.

But Connex bosses just as swiftly sought to undermine the agreement. As one driver put it: "Instead of negotiating in a constructive way, they are trying to renege on the spirit of the deal." Other union members spoke of depot managers bullying both ASLEF reps and trainee drivers. By 18 February, ASLEF's leadership had declared that the suspended strike action was back on as they announced seven strike days from 29 February through mid-April.

A week later, however, another deal emerged from negotiations with Con-



nex and once more the ASLEF tops have called off the industrial action. The union's executive has given its seal of approval to the agreement, but drivers will clearly have to be prepared for renewed action in the near future, given Connex's deceitful record.

In the meantime, RMT members at 16 of the 25 privatised rail companies have voted overwhelmingly for a series of one-day strikes. The trigger to this dispute is an attempt by management, at the behest of Railtrack, to deskill guards by stripping them of their responsibility for safety checks at the rear of the train. As an RMT spokesperson put it: "This is a dumbing-down of the job of the guard so they can sell more: tickets, drinks and KitKats."

This marked the second ballot for strike action by guards in the past five months after the rail bosses had obtained an injunction against action in the autumn and the RMT leadership bowed down to the courts. This time RMT general secretary, Jimmy

Knapp, has refused to name any dates for action, pending further talks with management at the 16 firms. RMT members should demand that the national leadership squanders no more time on negotiations behind closed doors and mobilises for action now.

The two recent disputes show the potential strength of the railworkers' unions, but also the urgent need to forge links at a rank and file level between RMT and ASLEF members across Britain.

The profits of the privatised rail operators are extremely vulnerable to any sustained campaign of strike action, while New Labour's cosy relationship with the rail profiteers has angered a wide swathe of its own supporters.

A united campaign of railworkers in defence of both their own terms and conditions and passenger safety would prove popular and effective. It is now also the only way of putting the issue of renationalisation of the railways, without compensation to the bosses and under the control of railworkers and passengers, firmly back on the agenda.

RMT members at South West Trains (SWT) are in the process of balloting for strike action in support of Sarah Friday, a victimised union activist at London's Waterloo station. The pretext for her sacking was a visit to the loo without her manager's permission. Sarah described her sacking by SWT bosses as "pay-back time for union work I have done as the local safety rep for the last three years." Workers Power supporters joined with others in the London Socialist Alliance and RMT members at a 28 February rally at the station to build for a massive "yes" vote to win Sarah back her job. Messages of support, etc.: c/o 3 Blades House, London SE11 5TW.

London Socialist Alliance

STOP THE VICTIMISATION
by South West Trains

Reinstate Sarah Friday

(RMT Waterloo drivers' Health & Safety rep)

Sarah Friday, the RMT Waterloo drivers' health and safety rep, has been sacked by South West Trains (SWT) for 'failing to advise a supervisor that she required to use a toilet'. Sarah has been in the forefront of a campaign to reduce train drivers' hours in the aftermath of the Paddington disaster. This is an outrageous act of victimisation by a company owned by Stagecoach, and its purpose is clearly to weaken the union. The RMT is now balloting its Waterloo train staff for strike action in support of Sarah. Greg Tucker, RMT Waterloo branch secretary and candidate for the London Socialist Alliance in the May elections, is leading the call for industrial action to overturn this injustice. The London Socialist Alliance demands SWT stops this victimisation and reinstates Sarah immediately. Join RMT rail workers in a rally to support Sarah on the day strike ballot papers are issued.

workers POWER

BCM BOX 7750 LONDON WC1N 3XX ★ 0181 981 0602

COMMENT

Why we are standing in the London elections

Millions of people voted Labour in the last election in the hope that it would bring an end to years of rule by the rich, for the rich. But, in government, Labour has been as corrupt, repressive and pro-capitalist as the Tories.

Workers Power is not shocked by that: in fact we said it would happen. Labour was founded 100 years ago by the working class and paid for largely by the trade unions, yet it always has and always will govern for the rich, not the rest of us.

Many workers who don't believe this needed to be convinced. That is why it was right to vote for Labour in 1997. Blair had to be put to the test. Since 1997 more and more workers have grown angry at Blair's betrayals. Today, that anger has become more organised. It expressed itself in the massive support for Ken Livingstone as the candidate for London mayor. Workers supported Livingstone for many reasons - but a unifying factor was that they all saw it as a chance to give Blair a bloody nose.

What is shocking many loyal Labour supporters is the total contempt Tony Blair has for them. Blair stopped Livingstone from becoming Labour's candidate by the kind of vote rigging Stalin would have blushed at. Wherever Labour party and trade union members were allowed to vote, they voted Livingstone: but Blair's hatchet men and women were determined to stop him.

Now, whatever Livingstone himself decides to do, there is a "Livingstone effect". The London labour movement came to life with rallies, meetings and ballots. Unlike at the Blair/Dobson meetings, the Livingstone campaign allowed working class people to raise the real things they want to fight against: tube privatisation, council estate privatisation, police racism and brutality, education cuts, the health crisis and the rampant inequality that exists in London.

We cannot let that energy go to waste. That is why Workers Power is part of the London Socialist Alliance: an alliance of left-wing groups, trade unionists and community campaigns that is set to challenge Labour for seats on the Greater London Assembly (GLA).

We don't just want your vote - we want you to get active. Parliamentary and council politics are, at the best of times, a sham. The GLA will have fewer powers than most parish councils. And the first time it challenges what Tony Blair wants, Labour will use every trick in the book to win. After all he was prepared to rig the vote to stop Livingstone in order to ensure that his pet plan to privatise the tube gets through. If he will go to these lengths for one privatisation imagine what he would do faced with opposition to his policies on a whole range of issues.

We need a new kind of working class party: one dedicated to active struggle and real democracy.

The only way we are going to end poverty and inequality, stop more corporate murders by private rail companies, defend our children's education and our health service is by fighting back from the grass roots.

If the LSA's candidates win they have promised to turn the GLA into a focus of struggle against the do-nothing Labour councils, the racist Met, the greedy city firms, the sweatshop employ-

ers and the murdering transport privateers that dominate life in London.

Many who join the LSA's campaign will be there to "teach Labour a lesson": a one-off act of protest against what they see as "their" party. We aim to prove in this election why they should make a break with Labour altogether. Global capitalism means a return to "Old Labour" is impossible: capitalism can no longer afford the reforms it once delivered to the working class.

We need a new kind of working class party: one dedicated to active struggle and real democracy. One that fights elections in the knowledge that the real power does not lie in parliament or the town hall, but - so long as capitalism exists - in the boardrooms of the multinationals.

We need a revolutionary socialist party. In the coming weeks - as the London Socialist Alliance hits the high streets, the workplaces and the council estates - it can and must bring together all those fighting back against the profit system. Workers Power will do everything it can to make sure this election campaign takes the struggle to build a revolutionary socialist party forward.

We are not just fighting back any more: we are fighting to turn the existing order upside down. We are fighting for:

A London run by the working class people who live there and an economy designed to meet the needs of ordinary people, not the profits of the bankers and bosses.

WELSH ASSEMBLY

BY JON BOWEN

Rhodri to the rescue

IN MEMORIAM, Michael, Alun. Passed peacefully from power 9 February 2000. Greatly missed by nobody.

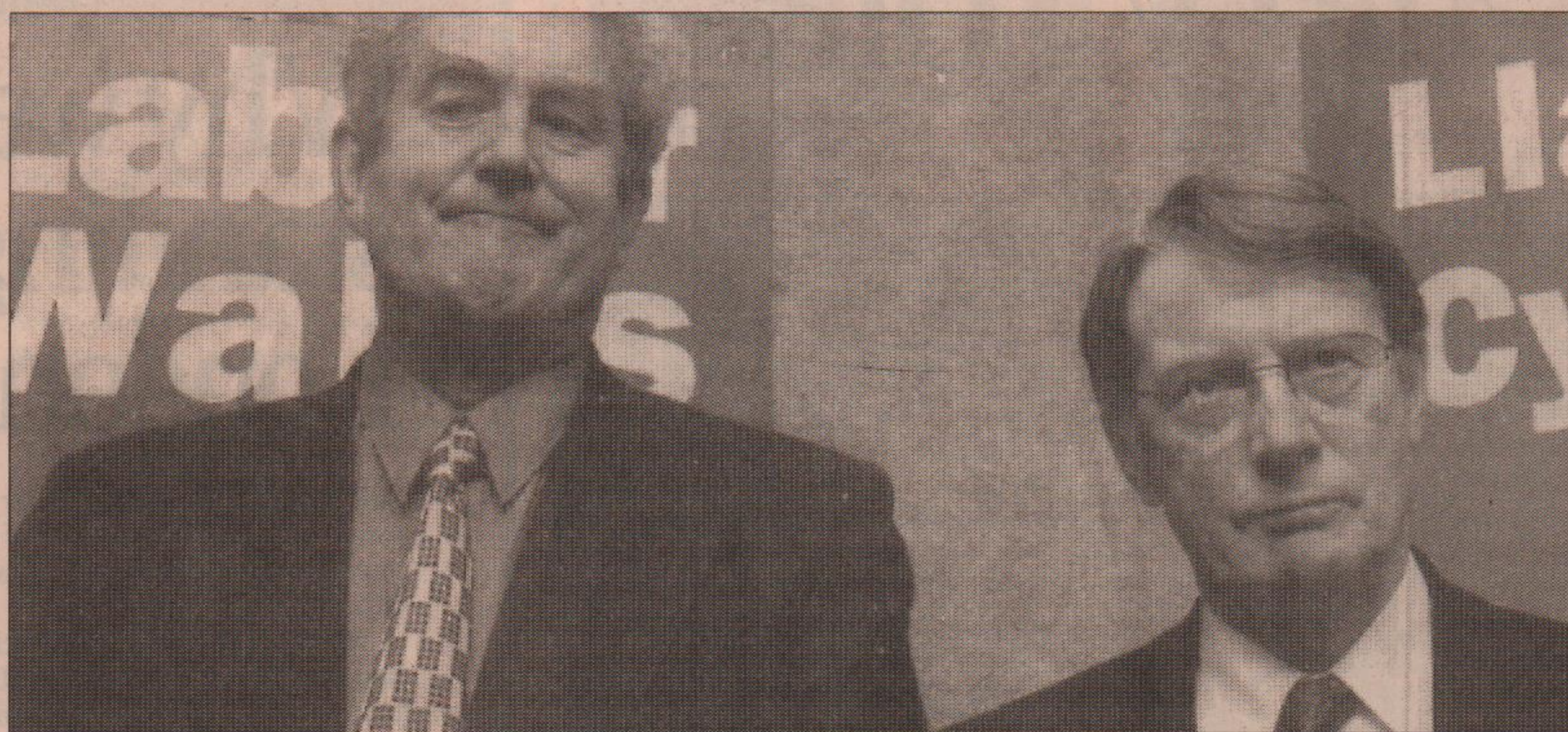
Few developments have dented Tony Blair's democratic credentials more than his efforts to control the Welsh Assembly. Now, with the ousting of his favourite brown-nose, Blair's embarrassment is complete.

But there is a downside to Alun Michael's fall. It was engineered not by the Welsh labour movement, but by the nationalists of Plaid Cymru. Alun Michael was consistently portrayed not as a right-winger, but as "London's man". The political debate has been consistently couched in the nationalist language of England versus Wales. Now, Rhodri Morgan, the new first secretary, is happily following the nationalist agenda; indeed, he has suggested that Plaid and Labour would make natural bedfellows.

Plaid have certainly presented a left face to the electorate. This reflects the nationalists' attempt to relate to the strong labour movement traditions in urban Wales and the former industrial valleys. For all Plaid's left talk, however, the issue which brought down Michael - European Objective One funding - is almost solely concerned with handouts and services for business.

It is easy to see why west Wales and the valleys are so desperate for European aid. West Wales, with its poor infrastructure and low-quality farmland, is among the EU's most underdeveloped regions. The plight of the valleys is even more tragic.

At the turn of the last century, the Rhondda was at the heart of an industrial boom. Now, with the decimation of the mining industry, it and several other valleys are matched only by Mersey-



Who's sorry now: Alun Michael hands over to Rhodri Morgan

side in their deprivation. The valleys' GDP is only two-thirds of the UK average. Unemployment is high and rates for long-term illness are higher still. The social fabric is in tatters.

The supposed aim of Objective One is to create an "entrepreneurial culture" in depressed areas, to attract the new industries of the information age, and to equip the working class with the skills and "attitudes" demanded by these industries. We already know what attitudes suit multinationals such as Sony, Ford and Bosch in South Wales. Would-be employees take psychometric tests to weed out any potential militants. Ex-miners and steelworkers need not apply.

But Sony and the rest do not represent the vanguard of a Welsh "Silicon Valley". They operate low-skill final assembly plants. After all, why would the sunrise industries come to the valleys

when the M4 corridor already has an abundance of skilled workers, plant, and research and development facilities?

There is a big question mark over whether Objective One can ever achieve its supposed aims in South Wales. Like most EU-funded projects, it is about facilitating the business of business: making a profit. Local authorities will participate, but only as "partners" with private enterprise and the voluntary sector. Around small community projects, workers may get a sniff of influence. Elsewhere, though, they are no more than spectators.

Assembly members don't have to look far to see an example of the public-private partnership so beloved of Objective One. The Cardiff Bay showcase (largely funded by EU money) sports a new five-star hotel, warehouse-style apartments for the wealthy, state-of-the-

art office blocks for insurance companies, and a brand new road linking the bay to the city centre - shielded from any view of the poverty-stricken Butetown council estate.

At last year's Assembly elections and the recent Ceredigion by-election, Welsh workers made clear their disillusionment with New Labour's "partnership politics". Rhodri Morgan still enjoys great kudos - helped no end by Blair's desperate attempts to keep him from power.

Like Ken Livingstone, Morgan is seen as a man of the people. He is remembered for rooting out corruption in the Welsh Development Agency and standing up for a variety of workers' struggles.

However, Rhodri Morgan is a career politician. Though still regarded by many as on the Labour left, he has been blinded by the headlights of the neo-lib-

eral juggernaut.

Despite his perceived rebel spirit, he has ended up going along with almost all of Blair's plans, barely raising a whisper against Alun Michael. Morgan simply bided his time and watched Michael's "leadership" self-destruct. He phoned Number 10 to assure Blair of his loyalty almost as soon as he was elected first secretary.

For the moment the perception persists that Morgan will boldly "stand up for Wales" in negotiating matching funds for Objective One (the government must match the EU contribution for programmes to go ahead). It is unlikely, however, that Morgan is about to change the mind of Gordon Brown, the Iron Chancellor.

The truth is that the Welsh first secretary has as much clout as the Assembly - damn all. Little wonder there is mounting disillusionment in Wales with devolution. Workers Power predicted the Welsh Assembly would be an expensive talking shop, virtually irrelevant to Welsh workers' lives. The past 10 months have certainly proved us right.

But we agree with the growing numbers of Welsh workers who now call for increased powers for the assembly. Only with the capacity to enact laws and, crucially, to tax the rich can the assembly begin to repair the damage capitalism has inflicted on Wales in recent decades.

Without such powers, Rhodri Morgan will still have an excuse for Labour's failures. The Welsh working class must look beyond Morgan to its own rich history of struggle and still considerable strength in order to fight for socialist answers to the current realities of mass unemployment and underdevelopment.

WESTERN MAIL

Journalists fight single union deal

The National Union of Journalists' (NUJ) chapel at the Western Mail was one of the first to be derecognised in the late 1980s. Things are now changing.

The recent attempt by the Western Mail and Echo paper group in South Wales, in conjunction with the Amalgamated Electrical and Engineering Union (AEEU), to impose a single-union deal on its workforce has provoked a fightback among journalists.

The NUJ chapel in Cardiff has doubled in size since the AEEU reneged on a deal with the NUJ and the Graphic Print and Media Union (GPMU) to jointly negotiate a recognition deal. When the AEEU began separate talks with the company, anger at this betrayal began to grow.

An NUJ representative explained: "On a national level there was a working relationship between the NUJ and the GPMU. It was hoped that the AEEU would play ball and we would agree to negotiate elements of common areas but reserve the right to negotiate separately on specifics that only our union could deal with. The AEEU rattled on that."

The company first invited the engi-

neering union in for talks when it realised that under Labour's softer version of the Tories' anti-union laws, the NUJ would be in a strong position to become the recognised union at the workplace. The AEEU was given the green light to canvass for members, regardless of job description. They set 100 members as the base line for the single-union deal, which the AEEU now claims to have met. This, however, represents less than 10 per cent of the 1,000-plus workforce.

The management were keen on the AEEU for one simple reason. Under its current right-wing leader - Sir Ken Jackson - it has become notorious for operating company-union style deals with the bosses. Sir Ken "I see a world without strikes" Jackson is precisely the kind of union leader that Western Mail union-busting bosses can actually get along with.

Despite strong protests from the NUJ, the bosses have signed a partnership agreement with the AEEU which covers all non-editorial staff. The NUJ, meanwhile, is in separate negotiations to gain recognition. General secretary, John Foster, was due to meet the managing director in late February, though

chapel members were not expecting the company to cave in.

From 1 April, however, another aspect of the Employment Rights Act will come into effect and strengthen the NUJ's position. With the 50 per cent plus one criteria for securing a union official status within a workplace, the NUJ, which has nearly reached that target, should gain automatic recognition as soon as it recruits a handful of new members. In the editorial section alone, its membership nearly equals that of the AEEU across the company.

NUJ activists have been arguing with non-NUJ journalists - often successfully - to join the chapel and create a strong collective opposition to the company's efforts to thwart recognition.

More than a decade on since derecognition it will be very satisfying to make the Western Mail chapel one of the first to win back recognition, especially in the face of management's determined campaign to sabotage its chances. As one NUJ member commented: "People who had left the union rejoined simply on a point of principle." Now they must remember that principles must be backed up by action.

SECTION 2A

Dewar bows to the bigots

Donald Dewar, Scottish First Minister, has retreated from his original commitment to abolish the anti-lesbian/gay Section 28 (Section 2A in Scotland). He has bowed to pressure from the campaign against the abolition of Section 28.

Dewar announced a compromise formula to the Holyrood parliament on 24 February. The new replacement clause stresses the importance of "stable family life in a child's development" and imposes a duty on Scottish local authorities to "have regard" to this in developing a sex education curriculum.

In contrast to the wording evidently favoured by Education Secretary David Blunkett for binding guidelines in English and Welsh schools, there is no specific mention of marriage.

Dewar and the Scottish executive had come under increasing fire from a well-financed campaign after Communities' minister Wendy Alexander first announced the executive's intention to lift the gag on serious discussion of homosexuality in schools.

The "Keep the Clause" campaign was led by Cardinal Thomas Winning and enjoyed the backing of Scotland's most popular paper, the Daily Record, and was bankrolled to the tune of £1 million by Stagecoach boss, Brian Souter.

Immediately after Dewar's statement, Souter blustered: "This is an insult to Scotland's parents. It offers no protection from the promotion of homosexuality and it places homosexual relationships on the same moral basis as marriage." If only!

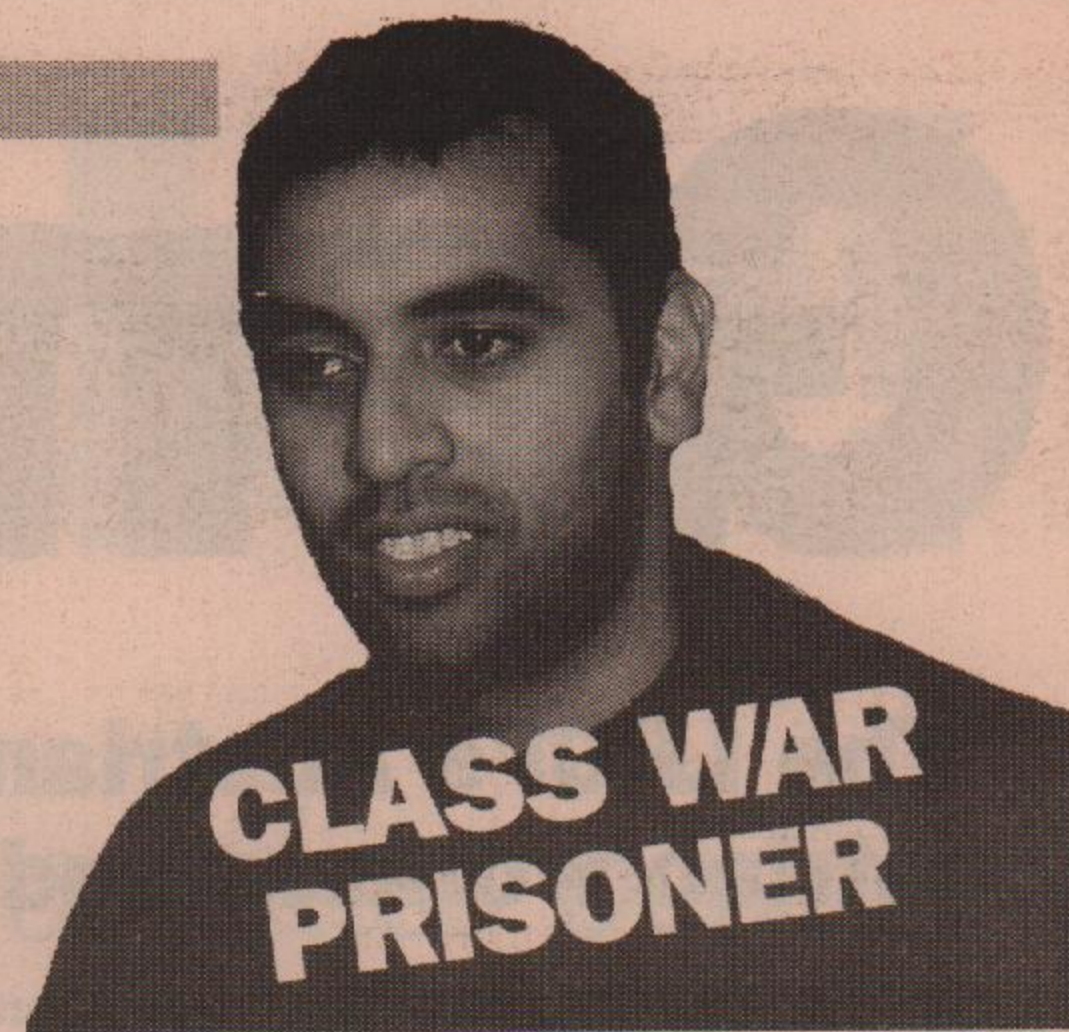
The veteran campaigner for lesbian and gay equality, Peter Tatchell, was considerably more accurate when he said:

"It's red meat to the bigots of 'Keep the Clause'. There is no legal duty on schools to discuss gay issues in an honest and non-judgmental manner, and to provide advice to lesbian and gay pupils which validates their sexual orientation."

Privately, a number of Labour MSPs have voiced their discontent with their leader's climb-down but have remained silent. A show of strength on the streets of Glasgow and Edinburgh is needed to renew the pressure on politicians in

J18 Prisoners

Defend class war prisoners



Kuldeep Bajwa is 26 years old. He has been a revolutionary socialist since he was 16, was a founder member of Revolution and is a member of Workers Power. He has just been sent to prison.

ON 7 FEBRUARY 2000, Kuldeep Bajwa, 26, was sentenced to 21 months in prison for violent disorder, under Section 2 of the Criminal Justice Act. Kuldeep was convicted for his defence of demonstrators against police attack during the Carnival against Capitalism in the City of London on 18 June 1999 (J18).

Judge Bathurst-Norman admitted making an example of Kuldeep because he "encouraged others" to resist. The sentence is a typical act of class justice on behalf of the banks and multinational corporations of the City of London. Its aim is to intimidate the growing number of those, like Kuldeep, who are mobilising against these global bloodsuckers.

It won't work. Kuldeep is determined to continue his fight against British and global capitalism. Prison will not break his spirit of resistance.

Kuldeep, as an active member of Revolution, the socialist youth organisation, helped build for J18, which was the British contribution to an international day of action, organised by Global People's Action to coincide with the Cologne summit of the Group of Seven (G7) imperialist capitalist countries.

Following a morning protest against BP at its City headquarters – which was defended by four van loads of police – the Revolution group, including Kuldeep, joined in the demonstration from Liverpool Street station down to the LIFFE stock exchange on Cannon Street.

After a couple of hours partying in a carnival atmosphere, some protesters started to vent their anger at the intense police harassment and surveillance that took place throughout the day. There was superficial damage to the LIFFE building (e.g. smashing its CCTV cameras) and a few activists burst through security guards into the building, before being roughly evicted.

This was hardly a riot, yet the atmosphere suddenly changed when heavily equipped riot police moved in to break up the street party. It was the City of London Police Force, who initiated a major riot by baton-charging the crowd and driving police vans at full speed into the demonstrators.

They would not even listen to appeals that there were children, elderly people and passers-by who were clearly confused and caught up in the situation. One woman was run over by a police van – miraculously escaping death or serious injury.

There is also mounting evidence that a van load of agents provocateurs (undercover police agents) was involved in starting the fighting so as to give the

police an excuse to attack the party and launch the wave of repression that has followed.

During this police riot, Kuldeep vigorously defended those being attacked by the thugs in blue – personally rescuing a woman protester who had fallen and was being clubbed by a policeman in full riot gear. Naturally these assailants will never be brought to justice. The real origin of the unprovoked aggression can be seen by the figures for those hospitalised: more than 40 activists, as compared with two police officers, received treatment.

Long after J18, Kuldeep was arrested at the end of a peaceful lobby of the Labour Party conference in Bournemouth on 26 September 1999. He was snatched from the body of the march as it re-entered the park for the rally.

He was held for two days in police cells and charged with "violent disorder" at the City of London magistrates' court on 28 September. At the court hearing, the political motive behind the charge was revealed when the counsel for the prosecution demanded (unsuccessfully) that Kuldeep be denied bail on the grounds that he was an "activist" and a "member of an organisation", neither of which are (yet) criminal offences in Britain.

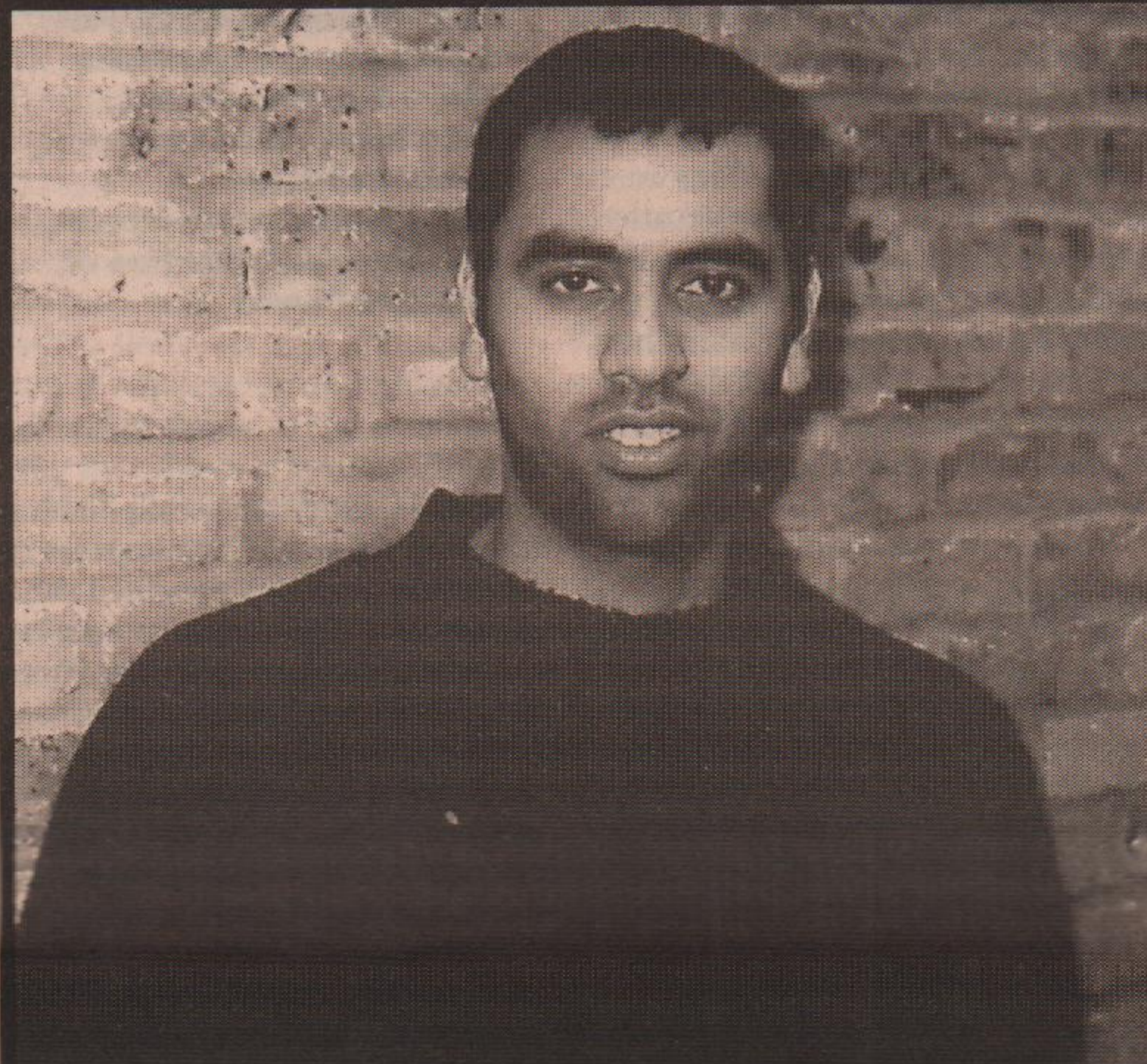
The evidence against Kuldeep turned out to consist of more than 100 photographs and selective video footage showing Kuldeep striking a fully equipped riot policeman with a thin banner pole.

The racist police no doubt took special delight at arresting and prosecuting an Asian protester. The City police are notorious for "helping out" their Met colleagues in next door Tower Hamlets where the racist harassment of, and attacks on, the large Asian community, especially the youth, is routine.

The advice of Kuldeep's lawyer, who has a track record of successfully clearing the names of others who have been caught up in police riots, was that Kuldeep would receive a considerably longer sentence if he pleaded not guilty. Under the Criminal Justice Act it was excluded that he would be found innocent – given the selective police surveillance evidence. A plea of self-defence was also excluded for the same reason. Amazingly, self-defence is only accepted by a court if the action of defence occurs within seconds of being attacked.

The lawyer's advice was confirmed when the judge, in sentencing Kuldeep, said that if he had not pleaded guilty he would have given him an extra nine months in jail.

A LETTER FROM PRISON



Dear Comrades,

AS I'VE got a bit of time on my hands I thought I'd write a short note to say thank you for the support and solidarity I've received over the last few months. From the moment of my arrest when a solicitor was arranged within minutes right through to opening the "Good Luck" card I have just received from comrades in Sheffield I've been left in no doubt that my welfare has been of prime concern to the group.

Witnessing British class "justice" at first hand has only served to reinforce my belief in the necessity for revolutionary socialism. The last few months have also shown the benefit of having a group of committed and organised revolutionaries behind me.

It meant I was extremely well prepared for prison and I am reaping the benefits of this in my first week as I see others struggle to come to terms with their imprisonment.

While we have lessons to learn from the day [J18] I have no regrets about taking action to defend the demo. This belief has meant that my mood since sentencing has been upbeat and I feel a certain pride at being a class war prisoner.

Receiving a longer sentence than expected has only determined my resolve not to let the bastards get me down. I aim to use my time in here to educate myself and I hope to come out a better revolutionary because of it.

I also hope you can all use my imprisonment to full advantage – let's ensure their pathetic attempt at class vengeance backfires on them.

Revolutionary greetings
Kuldeep

It is clear that the arrests, trials and jail terms arising from J18 are politically motivated. The prisoners are political prisoners. As Kuldeep made clear before

sentence was passed: "Me and the other J18 'convicts' are class war prisoners; we are being locked up because of our political – not criminal – activities."

The scale of the witch-hunt of J18 activists is astounding. The City of London police has published a "rogue's gallery" of about 150 activists on the internet, and is believed to have arrested about 70 of these. Miles of video tape, thousands of hours of matching photos and surveillance footage, the spying on hundreds of meetings and protests in the following months – no expense has been spared to track down those who protested against global capitalism.

This is because the bankers of the City of London and the British state are determined to crush a growing layer of young people who want social justice and control over their own lives. We must not let them succeed. We must meet their repression with resistance.

This is why Kuldeep wants to publicise his case – not to gain better treatment for himself, but to help build the growing movement against global capitalism. The police and courts have been encouraged to incarcerate as many J18 activists as possible to try and crush the movement in its infancy. But as it draws in wider and wider layers their repression will backfire on them.

In Seattle on 30 November 1999, the trade unions joined environmental and third world activists and police repression was ineffective and self-defeating. The same is true at the moment in Austria where youth and anti-racists are on the streets and where workers are joining in to kick out Jorg Haider's racist Freedom Party.

Kuldeep himself wants to encourage as many people as possible to join in the May Day 2000 events in London and throughout Britain. Indeed he wants it to be a renewal and revival of "the workers' day" as a real day of struggle against capital. From his cell he said: "I want to do everything I can to build an international protest in Prague next September. I want to encourage people to get involved. My sentence hasn't altered my views or my belief that our struggle is just." Prague is where the International Monetary Fund and World Bank are due to host their annual general meeting from 26-28 September.

We call on everyone who wants to fight for a world free of oppression and exploitation to publicise Kuldeep's case and those of other J18 political prisoners and support our campaign.

- Drop the charges against the J18 activists now!
- Unconditionally release all J18 prisoners!
- Build the movement against global capitalism – forward to May Day and Prague 2000!

What you can do:

- Send donations; please make cheques payable to Workers Power Welfare Fund, BCM Box 7750, London W7750, London WC1N 3XX
- Publicise Kuldeep's case in your paper, or union branch and ask for donations to the welfare fund
- Send Kuldeep your publications (books and papers must be sent by retailers or publishers)
- Write letters of solidarity to Kuldeep

To write to Kuldeep or send him publications, write to:

Kuldeep Bajwa
DN 7230
HMP/YOI Highpoint
Stradishill
Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 9YG

To write to other J18 prisoners:

Sean Brown (sentenced, 12 months)
BP5610
HMYOI Ashfield

Sherwood Road
Pucklechurch
Bristol
BS16 9LY

Jeff Booker (sentenced, 21 months)
DN7071
Elmley
Eastchurch
Sheerness
Kent
ME12 4OZ

Stuart Tokam (sentenced, 12 months)
DN7072
HMP Brixton
Jebb Avenue
Brixton
London
SW2 5XF

Thomas Wall (sentenced, 18 months)
FF4431
HMP Belmarsh

Western Way
Thamesmead
London
SE28 0EB

Jon Barnett (sentenced, 6 months)
FB5538
HMYOI
Bedford Road
Feltham
Middx
TW13 4ND

General strike

■ The LRCI's Austrian section, Workers Standpoint, reports from Vienna as Austrian workers and youth take to the streets to fight the far right government.

MORE THAN 300,000 people demonstrated in Austria's Helden Platz on Saturday 19 February. They were united by determination to fight Austria's new far-right government.

The government is a coalition between the traditional conservative party, the OVP, and the racist-populist FPO of Jörg Haider.

Austria's immigrant population will face sustained prejudice and discrimination from this government. The declaration of democratic values, extracted from Haider and the FPO, in an attempt to appease the European Union governments, is little more than a figleaf.

What the mainly "socialist" governments of the EU have not protested against, is the programme the new government has for demolishing the post-war social gains of the Austrian working class in the interests of Austrian, European and global capitalism.

For the above reasons the Austrian workers must launch a general strike to prevent this government consolidating its hold on power and make its lifetime as short as possible.

Workers across Europe and around the world must support them.

But why has the Austrian ruling class resorted to such a dangerous figure as Haider, provoking condemnation by the EU, the USA and Israel? Certainly not because of his anti-EU demagoguery nor even because they want to adopt his naked policies of racial discrimination. It is because they see an OVP-FPO coalition as the only government able to carry through the long delayed demo-

lition job on the gains of Austria's workers embodied in the "social partnership" system which has kept Austria in a state of incredible social stability for forty years or more (see article, right).

The Freedom Party's demagoguery against the mounting corruption and cynicism of this system – as well as its racism against Eastern European and Balkan asylum seekers – won it an electoral mass base. Millions of workers and middle class voters have been alienated from the "social partnership" system by the run down of the welfare state and local services.

The fact that these reductions were justified by the Socialist-Conservative coalitions of the last thirteen years, citing firstly the need to meet the budget conditions for entering the EU and then the competitive challenges of the global market, drove large numbers of working class and middle class voters into Haider's arms.

Such policies opened up many blue collar working class voters to Haider's anti-EU, anti-corruption, demagoguery. The SPO's failure to openly challenge Haider's racism—his lying propaganda that immigration is to blame for unemployment and rising crime—has handed over working class voters to their own worst enemy. The results of the recent elections show that the FPO's increased vote came mainly at the expense of the SPO.

The long term paralysis of the Austrian labour movement—the product of decades of coalition and "social partnership" with the bosses – is also to blame for Haider's triumph.

Who's who in Austria:

SPO – Socialist Party. Ruled Austria for past 30 years
OVP – Austrian People's Party. Conservatives. Broke coalition with Socialists to form alliance with Haider
FPO – Freedom Party. Far-right party led by Haider
OGB – the trade union federation allied to the Socialist Party
AST – Workers Standpoint, the sister organisation of Workers Power

Haider is out to smash the welfare state.

The FPO programme calls for: drastic cuts in the budget and in pensions; the privatisation of nationalised industries and other institutions; tax cuts; lowering wage costs by reducing employers' contributions to holiday pay and accident and unemployment insurance; and a major reform of welfare benefits.

Two examples should guide Austrian workers, anti-racists and youth. The first is the marvellous example of the Italian workers who brought down the coalition government of millionaire media magnate Silvio Berlusconi with Fini's Alleanza by means of mass demonstrations and strikes.

But the other example—to be avoided at all costs – is the failure of the lead-

ers of the British labour movement to mount a class-wide resistance when Margaret Thatcher first launched her privatisation programme. The official leaders of the Labour Party and the TUC stood by whilst the Tories defeated section after section of workers.

During its first months the far right coalition government is at its weakest. As the enormity of its programme becomes clear, active trade unionists, socialists and youth must go all out to mobilise a mass movement against Haider and his conservative allies.

The left, anti-racists, students and individual workers took to the streets night after night after the formation of the government. The 19 February demo saw 300,000 on the streets.

In the week following that there were 20,000 on the first of the planned weekly demonstrations. The task now is to maintain momentum and draw in the rank and file workers – in particular the industrial working class that has been only partially mobilised by its bureaucratic unions so far.

The activists must unite and set out to draw in ever wider forces. In the schools, universities, and at workplaces and meetings of all the unions resolutions must be passed to support stoppages, and to call further massive demonstrations.

The leader of the SPO's youth organisation has talked openly of the need to bring down this government. The Vienna tramworkers, the railway workers' union and the garbage collection workers have all threatened strike action. Let's turn words into deeds. The OGB (Austrian TUC) must call out the

entire trade union movement and the SPO must mobilise its membership too.

Regular demonstrations, strikes by workers, by school and college students, by immigrant workers, by all horrified by the prospect of Haider in power, can build an unstoppable movement.

We need a general strike to kick out the far-right coalition.

Action committees should be formed of all organisations joining the struggle. This movement must draw into its ranks the immigrant communities and asylum seekers to show them, in deeds, that they are welcome in the worker's movement; here to stay and here to fight together for a better world

■ Down with the racist, anti-worker government!

■ Down with racism – by the police, the Freedom Party or by fascist thugs!

■ Down with the attack on jobs, wages, pensions and social services!

■ Down with the privatisation of industries and services!

■ For mass demonstrations and a general strike to stop the anti-working class assault and bring down this government!

■ For a government of the workers' movement, to reverse the social destruction of this and recent governments and to take the offensive against Austrian and multinational capital!

Workers' Standpunkt (AST)
 German language material on:
www.workerspower.com

School students go on strike

The 19 February demo shook Austria to its foundations, but what happened the day before in Vienna might, in the long run, be just as important: 10,000 school students walked out of lessons in protest at the far right government.

As part of their "blame the immigrants" strategy to divide the working class, the FPO are demanding that a limit of 30% be set on "ethnic minorities" in the classroom.

But school students reject this racist policy. On Friday morning, schools all over Vienna were leafleted and picketed by their own students. The revolutionary youth movement, Revol, was in the thick of the action. Despite threats from school authorities and attempts to stop pickets from talking to their own friends and classmates, 10,000 school students walked out and joined a demonstration through Vienna.

The sheer size of the demo, coupled with the impact of the Heldenplatz demo events, ensured that none of the threats were carried out on Monday.

Now school students are getting organised for the next round of the struggle.

300,000 on the streets

Workers Power members Peter Main and Jeremy Dewar were in Vienna for the biggest demo in the country's history and sent this report

The demo began like many others. Carloads of comrades struggling with armfuls of red flags, placards and banners as a biting wind whipped across the ring road and the square in front of the Westbahnhof rail station. This was the assembly point for one of the four feeder marches to the central meeting place on the Helden Platz.

Our feeder march was organised by the "Action Committee against the Black-Blue Coalition" a united front of left organisations including Workers' Standpunkt, the SLP (Militant/CWI) the KPO and SOAL (the USFI section). This is the alliance that has organised the daily demonstrations in Vienna since the coalition was sworn in.

By 1.30pm the crowds were beginning to assemble – mostly Viennese socialists until the strains of the song "Bandiera Rossa" heralded the arrival of a delegation from Italy, organised by the former communist party, the PDS. Next to arrive was a sixty or seventy strong contingent of Young Socialists from Belgium and France.

On the fringes, and looking a bit out of place with their face masks and head scarves, fifty or so anarchists from Berlin kept themselves to themselves until, without warning, they were



Workers Standpoint contingent marching against Haider, 19 February

rushed by a platoon of the armed police that had also taken up position. Most got away safely through the crowds, though we heard later that several were badly beaten up – obviously this was a special day for the forces of law and order, as well.

Workers Power comrades from Britain were invited to kick off the mass meeting before the march set off. We stressed the parallels with the rise of the Thatcher government, the change of strategy by the ruling class and the need to mobilise the entire working class in a general strike before the regime could consolidate itself. The concluding words, "Your fight is our fight – let our lessons be your lessons!" brought a warm round of applause and the chanting of a slogan we were to hear repeatedly, "Hoch, die internationale solidarität!" – Long live international solidarity!

Our route wound through the shopping streets, thronged with onlookers, many of whom joined the march. From the flats over the shops, red sheets, red shirts – in fact, anything red people could get hold of – flapped wildly in the wind. A special cheer went up when someone hung out a hastily daubed banner – "Widerstand!" Resistance – that is becoming the one word motto of the anti-government movement.

In front of Parliament, our feeder march which, according to police radios had swelled now to twenty thousand with the addition of trade union contingents that had arrived at the Westbahnhof, merged with another that had begun further north in the university quarter. The barrage of slogans reached a crescendo, as each group vied with others to be heard.

It was only as dusk fell, about

5.30pm, that we began to move again. As the banners were hoisted and comrades raised a chant from hoarse throats, people suddenly realised that they were in fact soaking wet – it had been raining most of the time but, somehow, no-one had really noticed.

Nor did it make much difference now as any spirits that might have been beginning to flag were roused by the roar of the crowds as they passed through the huge monumental arch into the vast expanse of the Helden Platz. The half-light reflected from the floodlit columns couldn't help but conjure up images of another time, sixty years ago, when the same walls echoed to the ranting of Hitler as he celebrated his entry into Vienna.

But now the Helden Platz was ours. As many as 300,000 people, from all over Austria, indeed, from all over Europe, had come here to oppose the far right government

By 8.30pm, as the last speech ended, every one of the thousands of leaflets that we had printed overnight was gone. Thousands of copies of Workers' Standpunkt, the Ast's paper, were sold. One comrade sold all his 100 copies of the paper so had resorted to selling the back copies he had brought for the bookstall: now they'd all gone too!

That evening, a group of demonstrators discovered Haider eating in a restaurant. Within minutes the place was surrounded and the would-be puppet master of the new coalition was obliged to leave by the backdoor.

workersPOWER

to stop Haider!

The end of 30 years of class peace



The formation of the far-right coalition marked a dramatic change of strategy by the ruling class.

Austria's capitalists have been, in their eyes, shackled by decades of class-collaboration.

After 1945, the Austrian ruling class adopted a strategy of institutionalised collaboration with the Socialist Party who were as anxious to preserve capitalism as the bosses themselves.

Throughout the Cold War, this arrangement was also sheltered by Austria's supposed neutrality. It is not a member of NATO, and it has a poorly armed conscript army.

The class truce allowed Austrian capitalism to slowly recover, although at the cost of some significant concessions to the working class.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and with the entry into the EU, Austria's bosses are no longer prepared to pay that price. For over ten years, the bosses got most of what they wanted through a Social Democrat led coalition with the OVP, the main conservative party.

But last year they decided that this strategy was unviable. The Social Democrats had undermined their own support in the working class through cuts and privatisations. But the capitalists wanted more attacks and faster attacks on the working class.

The OVP pushed for a massive attack on social spending and further pri-

privatisations. Significantly it was not the SPO leaders who opposed this – it was the unions, organised in the trade union federation OGB. Union rank and file members bombarded the union HQs with phone calls telling them not to sign up for a socialist-conservative coalition on these terms.

Meanwhile a section of the ruling class had begun to see Haider's far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) as the solution. Haider had no commitment to the old "social partnership" and his promises played well with the most Thatcherite section of the bosses.

When the OVP-SPO coalition talks failed, conservative leader Wolfgang Schüssel saw his chance and forged the coalition with Haider.

Haider's pro-Nazi comments, his far-right populism and racism have identified him as one of the most dangerous politicians in modern Europe.



AST and Revo banners on demonstrations

Unfortunately the total failure of the SPO to meet workers' needs drove sections of the working class to vote Haider, including putting him in power in the province of Carinthia.

Winning the workers and youth away from supporting Haider means taking on racism head on – a racism that has been fostered by both the conservatives and Social Democrats jumping to Haider's tune on immigration.

The new coalition has set out to rip up the whole system of class collaboration. The bosses' new strategy combines a demagogic racism and nationalism, intended to divide and demoralise the working class, with a "neo-liberal" economic programme similar to that of Thatcher in the 1980s.

For socialists, the urgent task in Austria is to organise the working class to shake off the complacent habits of the past and prepare for battle.

The 19 February was an excellent start an alarm signal to the whole country and a chance for the working class to review its forces.

But no demo can force a ruling class to back down and the working class has now to plan for a sustained campaign whose first objective should be to force a strategic defeat on the bosses by bringing down the coalition.

The first of the regular weekly demonstrations in Vienna, on February 24th, attracted 20,000. That is a sure sign that opposition is set to grow.

Jorg Haider, the controversial leader of the Freedom Party is a far-right racist with a record of sympathetic comments about Hitler's Germany.

Haider comes from a Nazi family. He has praised former Waffen SS men as patriots who fought for their country and attended gatherings of these Nazi war veterans. He has said that Hitler's employment policies were "orderly" and that not everything about the Nazi period was bad.

But is Haider a fascist? And is the Freedom Party the same as the Hitler's Nazis or our own British National Party today? If "Haider is Hitler", as the Anti-Nazi League placards say, then the Austrian working class is in deep trouble. If we have "fascists in power" as the front page of *Socialist Worker* said last month, that has profound impact on perspectives for the class struggle, not just in Austria but throughout Europe.

"What does it matter?", you may ask: "If people think he's as bad as Hitler that will bring even more onto the streets to fight back."

But correctly assessing the threat Haider poses to the working class is crucial to mobilising the workers to fight back.

There are important differences between a far right conservative parties and fascist parties. Fascists use mass mobilisations of the middle class to crush the workers' movement. Conservative politicians and dictators are content to use the state machine.

Fascism is a mass movement made up of the lower middle class and non-class conscious workers. In the most desperate situations, the ruling class turns to fascism to crush the workers' movement. Fascism is, as Trotsky said,

Who is Haider?

He's a dangerous racist - but fascism is something different, writes *Dave Stockton*

a mass, popular weapon of civil war against the working class. It can only be fought by equally warlike methods: workers' and immigrants' defence organisations which defeat the fascists on the streets and drive them from the workplaces. Once the fascists begin their bid for power, they can only be defeated by a workers' revolution.

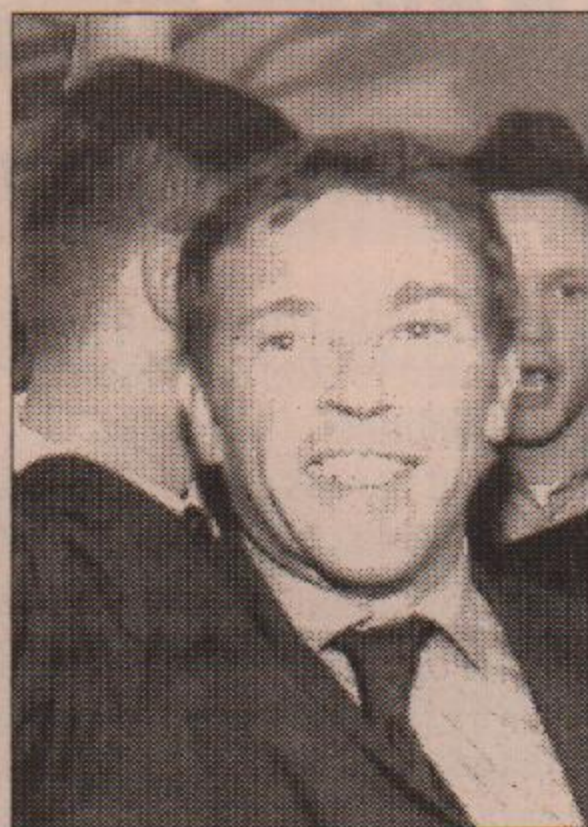
A fascist movement is fought with bricks and baseball bats on the streets. A fascist government is fought with machine guns – not placards.

But judged against history does Haider fit the bill? The Freedom Party took in a very large number of ex-Nazis after the war but all the other parties also recruited and "cleansed" former Nazis, including the SPÖ. Today there are a small section of ageing war veterans in Haider's party.

But the party's action is consistent with that of a far-right conservative party. It has no defence squads, no wing that actively campaigns for a Nazi-style solution. Haider talks of Austria being "swamped with foreigners",

wants to limit immigrant children in school classes to 30%, wants to deport illegal immigrants. That is disgusting racism – but then so are the racist policies of the conservatives and the Social Democratic leaders.

If the FPÖ is not fascist, could it become fascist? Yes, but the key question is what tactic to adopt to it now. How do you confront mass meetings of FPÖ supporters in the workplace, FPÖ fractions in the unions etc?



The SWP's "fascists in power" rhetoric could rebound on the left because it degrades words we will need people to take seriously when the real thing appears.

If Haider's party does take a fascist turn, how then do you ring the alarm bells louder if you have already pressed the ultimate panic button.

Socialist Worker is obviously aware of the difficulty of squaring "Haider is Hitler" with the Marxist definition of fascism because it tries to make a distinction between Haider the man and his party. The Freedom party,

we are told is "a coalition of different groups from Nazis through Thatcherite businessmen to those who are simply disillusioned by the two main parties".

As for its future: "It can become a full blown fascist movement, go towards a right wing Tory movement or split between its Tory and hardline fascist wings."

It is true that fascist parties can emerge out of conservative or populist parties. But when that occurs the structures, tactics and ideology radically change: from electoralism to pogroms, and from paying lip service to democracy to the open espousal of dictatorship.

Haider's party remains a reactionary, racist populist party. It has no street gangs: up to now, Workers Standpoint has been able to go in and disrupt its election rallies without resistance. The FPÖ aims not to smash the workers' movement by fighting on the streets but to use the government to demolish the workers' gains.

In Germany before Hitler, and also in France, right wing regimes came to power which were semi-dictatorships. At that time the Stalinists loudly proclaimed that these were "fascist" regimes.

Trotsky denounced this because, under a show of verbal radicalism, it encouraged passivity in the working class: "If this is fascism then it is not so different" and, even more dangerous: "Can the real fascists be so much worse?"

To say "Haider is Hitler" today is wrong. It will sow confusion – and if the movement goes off the boil pessimism and passivity.

Where next?

We need a general strike to drive the coalition from office. Demonstrations – no matter how big – are not enough to force the ruling class to change its strategy.

Paralysing the economy by strike action is the quickest and surest way of driving the government from office.

While the movement has to be built from below it is crucial to use mass action to force the bureaucrats to fight.

The OGB did not initiate the 19 February demo: they responded to pressure from the unions and anti-racist groups.

The unions must be forced to organise the opposition – especially as the anti-welfare budget is set to be introduced.

Workers Standpoint calls for action committees against the far-right coalition government, based on the workplaces, estates and immigrant communities.

The SPO can never defend workers against the bosses' onslaught.

Austria needs a new revolutionary workers' party – that is what Workers Standpoint is fighting for.

IRELAND

Mandelson marches to a Unionist tune

The Northern Ireland Assembly has been suspended while Loyalist paramilitaries kill. But it is the IRA and Sinn Fein that are blamed for not being serious about peace. Rachel Thomas examines why Mandelson backs Trimble

TWO MEN are shot dead in what police describe as a revenge attack. They report that these murders mark the escalation of a feud between two loyalist paramilitary groups. According to the Secretary of State, however, the peace process in the North of Ireland is still on course. A week earlier the same Secretary of State, Peter Mandelson, suspended the fledgling Northern Ireland Executive on the grounds that some people were not serious about the peace process. Loyalist paramilitaries? Unionist politicians? No, the republicans!

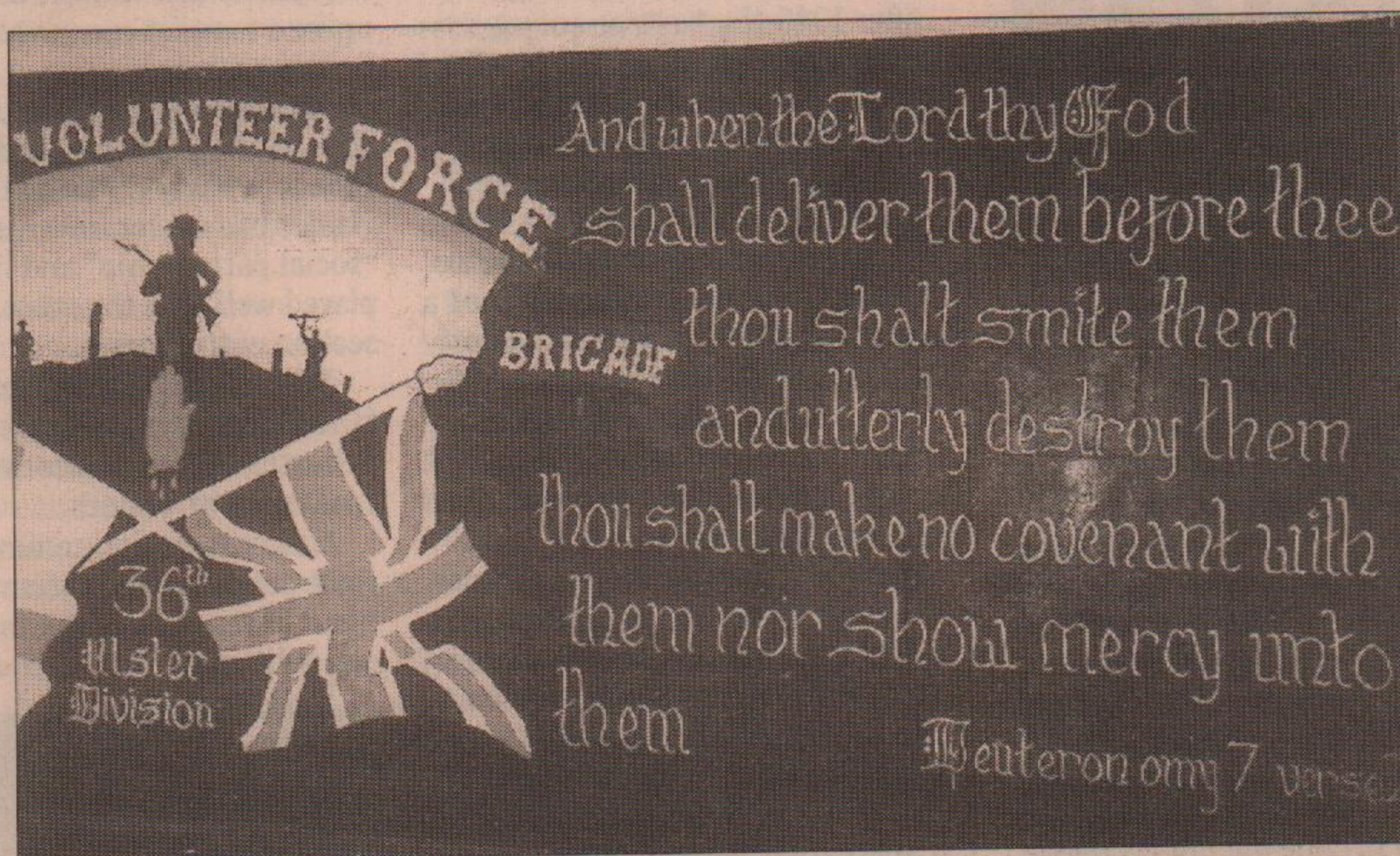
For anyone who has ever doubted the British state's role in Ireland, the events of the past month serve as a sharp reminder.

Peter Mandelson was appointed by British Prime Minister Tony Blair to exercise his "right" to rule in the North of Ireland. At the time, the move was seen as a blatant attempt to placate Unionist opinion. Subsequent events have confirmed that view.

On 11 February Mandelson suspended the Northern Ireland Executive after just 72 days in existence. His reason was that the IRA had not begun decommissioning their weapons. Yet the suspension took place just hours before the publication of a much-awaited report from the de Chastelain commission. This report signalled a major development in the negotiations with the IRA in which they offered to look at ways of putting their weapons out of action.

Mandelson was dancing to a Unionist tune. When the Executive was set up in November the Unionist leader David Trimble built in his own unilateral ultimatum; a detonator set to go off in February. Unionism's leaders have been determined from the outset of the "peace process" to force the IRA into a humiliating surrender.

Trimble wrote a resignation letter which was due to take effect from 12 February at a reconvened meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council if the IRA had not begun decommissioning their weapons. Mandelson jumped, at the Unionists' behest, when they were threatening to accept Trimble's resignation the following day. Direct



Loyalism: killing for God, Queen and Country

rule from London was re-established.

In Portadown, a week later, two men David McIlwaine, aged 18, and Andrew Robb, 19, were found dead with their throats slashed. They had been abducted and killed by members of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in revenge for the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) shooting of UVF man, Richard Jameson.

It is believed that neither of the young men were members of the LVF. But the LVF attempted to strike back with the attempted murder of Martin McClean.

Amid this spiral of violence, a spokesman for the Secretary of State commented that Mandelson was regularly briefed by the security services and "would not hesitate to act where he judges it appropriate to do so but we believe that on bal-

ance the main ceasefires are holding."

Mandelson wants the currently silent guns of the IRA handed in, yet he is deaf to the sound of Loyalist guns.

The Blair government had ensnared the Sinn Fein leadership

Whatever their bluster about IRA weapons, it is clear that Trimble and the Ulster Unionists have scuppered the peace process. And yet within the process they already have a built-in majority, which guarantees the continuation of their privileges in housing and jobs. They are clearly prepared to obstruct even the modest reforms proposed

for the 93 per cent Protestant RUC, advanced in the Patten report last autumn. In the longer term the Unionists retain a veto over any moves towards a united Ireland and the continuing support of the British army.

As for Mandelson and the British Government, yet again they have responded to the Unionists' threats, while blaming the republicans. In what appears to have been a cynical attempt to offer a sop to Sinn Fein, Mandelson hinted at the possibility of a joint ceremony involving the IRA and the British Army to mark the surrender of weapons by both sides. This suggestion was dropped like a lead balloon after British officers threatened to resign if the government pursued the idea.

Republican frustration, however, is evident and mounting. Clearly, the return to direct rule will put greater pressure on the IRA.

At the same time, the Sinn Fein leadership is deeply implicated in a peace process that is itself hopelessly flawed.

The Blair government had ensnared them, administering aspects of a sectarian statelet that they were not so long ago committed to destroying.

The Continuity IRA are already placing themselves in a position to recruit IRA dissidents with actions such as the attempted bombing of the Shackleton Army Barracks in Ballykelly. But the road to a progressive solution to the Irish national question does not mean a return to the methods of the guerrilla struggle. While the IRA should not surrender a single weapon to the British state, it should put its arsenal at the disposal of the nationalist population for the purpose of organised self-defence.

There must be a renewed emphasis on politics, but not the charade of the Stormont assembly chamber. Instead, the task for those committed to a united Ireland is to mobilise the nationalist population on the streets to demand an immediate end to London's direct rule and for a genuinely democratic solution.

A lasting peace in the North of Ireland will not be built without justice – and that still means:

- Disband the RUC and RIR
- British troops out of Ireland now
- Self-determination for Ireland as a whole
- Fight for a 32-county workers' republic

IRELAND

Racists on the rampage in Spain

Phillipe Martin reports on racist terror against immigrant workers in a Spanish town

At the beginning of February, El Ejido, a small agricultural town in the south of Spain, witnessed three days of widespread racist violence.

The starting point was the murder of a young Spanish woman by a young Moroccan with learning difficulties. The local skinheads and racist kids then decided to step up the tension.

Two thousand people took to the streets, armed with iron bars and baseball bats, attacking Moroccan shops, houses and cars. Some of the racists even tried to burn immigrant families alive.

Forty-nine immigrants suffered serious injuries during the three-day rampage. Union leaders and members of left parties were also attacked, with one local councillor only just being saved from lynching.

This reactionary wave of hatred was rooted in the economic conditions in El Ejido where, as is often the case, the immigrant community is doubly oppressed. North Africans are victims both

of abysmal poverty and racism.

The town has a large Moroccan population, employed in circumstances that verge on slavery. They work mainly in vegetable production. Out of 72,000 inhabitants of El Ejido, 24,000 are immigrants; only 8,000 of them have papers, the others have no legal status and no access to healthcare or legal protection at work.

These workers have to live in sprawling shanty towns without electricity and running water – out of sight of the wealthier Spanish community.

The local council has done nothing to improve their living standards – indeed, the Mayor, Juan Enciso, is a member of the right-wing Popular Party and openly harks back to Franco's fascist regime. His municipal policies have been influenced by the activity of a small, openly pro-Nazi group called Platform 2000.

Apart from supporting the racist rioters, the mayor delayed calling the police to stop the

pogrom, and when they eventually did arrive, he called on them to stop the Moroccans from organising self-defence!

All the left parties and unions have condemned the racist attacks, but their passivity with regard to "ordinary" racism, and their support for anti-immigrant legislation has helped legitimise the current racist atmosphere.

Moroccan workers went on strike for a week, paralysing the regional economy in protest. But without any support from workers in the rest of Spain, they were eventually obliged to return to work.

Mahmoud, a young Moroccan worker, who was sacked for participating in the protest strike, gave this account of the immigrant workers' conditions:

"I have a temporary contract, but no fixed termination date, which means that the employer can sack you at will. The working day begins at 8 a.m. until 1 p.m., and then goes from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., the temperature sometimes rising to

45 degrees Centigrade. For this I get £20. Every day we have to work an hour overtime – unpaid, and in the morning you cannot stop, not to eat or to drink."

Spanish workers and the labour movement internationally must take up the cause of these immigrant workers.

We must fight against the racists and alongside the Moroccan workers for:

- Immediate citizenship rights for all immigrant workers – Open the frontiers!
- Equal housing conditions, working conditions and salaries for immigrant and Spanish workers.
- Kick out the mayor of El Ejido – immediate prosecution of all those involved in the pogrom!
- Support for self-defence of the immigrant community against racist attacks!
- Mass unionisation of immigrant workers! Organisation of a national labour movement campaign against racism!

How Loyalist terror killed Robert Hamill

Jeremy Hardy reports on the case of Robert Hamill, murdered by a loyalist mob as RUC members watched

IN BRITAIN, the cases of Stephen Lawrence, Ricky Reel, Michael Menson and many other victims of racism who are still barely known, have brought a growing understanding of why so many black people do not trust the police. In Northern Ireland, if you want a single example of why so many Catholics do not trust the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), consider the case of Robert Hamill.

In Portadown, at about 1.30am on 27 April, 1997, Robert Hamill, a 25 year old Catholic, was kicked to death by a mob of about 30 Loyalists in full view of an RUC Land Rover, 200 yards from an RUC station. Four armed RUC officers remained in the Land Rover during the attack. Robert had been to a dance at St Patrick's Hall, a Catholic social club that stands in isolation in the centre of Portadown. To get home to their enclave around Garvaghy Road and Obins Street, Catholics leaving St Patrick's have to travel down Thomas Street and across Market Street onto Woodhouse Street, which is safe territory.

On Saturday nights, young Loyalists tend to hang around on Market Street after returning by bus from the Rugby Club and the Coach Inn in nearby Banbridge. One of the officers on duty that night has described the Loyalists on Market Street as "the usual crowd from the Coach".

Local publicans had warned the RUC that the junction of Thomas Street and Market Street was becoming increasingly dangerous for Catholics. Late at night, anyone heading from Thomas Street toward Woodhouse Street would be presumed to be Catholic.

Indeed, just a few minutes before the attack on Robert, another man was able to get past a hostile group of Loyalists and warned the officers in the Land Rover that more Catholics were on their way from St Patrick's and would be in danger. But the officers remained in the vehicle, and radio logs show that nothing was done to warn people at the hall until 2.11am, some thirty to forty minutes after the attack.

Robert was with three friends: Joanne, Siobhan and Gregory Girvan. They left the club at about 1.20am. Unable to raise a taxi, they walked cautiously toward Market Street. Seeing the Land Rover, they felt safe enough to proceed, Robert walking slightly ahead of the others. But as soon as Robert stepped onto Market Street he was beaten to the ground. Gregory ran to help and was also knocked down. Both were kicked and beaten unconscious. Gregory survived. Robert was to die after 12 days in a coma.

Joanne and Siobhan screamed for help. They could be heard at a bar 120 yards away, from where people came running to help, trying in vain to get through the mob to reach the injured men. No one, however, got out of the Land Rover, just 20 yards from the attack. Siobhan ran to the vehicle, shouting and banging on the side, but there was no response.

The kicking and stamping went on for sev-

eral minutes, until the attackers seemed to tire of it and it petered out. Finally, some ten minutes after the attack, two of the officers, Constables Neill and Atkinson, got out of the Land Rover, at which point the reinforcements arrived: two officers in another Land Rover and another two in a car.

The Northern Ireland Office confirms that there were 19 RUC officers on duty in Portadown that night and four army units available within 10 minutes. At 2.11am, a mobile army unit radioed Portadown police station to offer assistance, but were told that they were not needed.

The murderers loitered, apparently unconcerned, for about an hour but nobody was arrested. When the ambulance arrived, it had to drive through the mob. No first aid had been given to Robert or Gregory by the police. One of the officers to arrive after the attack was Constable Clare Halley. She took one of the crowd, Wayne Lunt, and put him in the Land Rover. She took his name and address and, after confirming these by radio, let him go.

Halley has testified that two men approached her, one of them, asking why she had released Lunt and telling her, "He's one of the ones that did it." She did not even take this man's name. No statements were taken from anyone - witnesses or suspects. Even after the arrival of a senior officer, no crime scene was declared and no evidence gathered. In short, the police made no effort to start any sort of investigation at all, when all the evidence was right in front of them.

At 6.00am, the first of a number of contradictory press statements was put out by the RUC. According to the police, the attack had been a clash between "two rival factions". A second statement three days later claimed, "A police Land Rover crew in Portadown town centre were alerted to a disturbance and immediately intervened to gain order and prevent assaults."

It was not until 7 May, after the Hamill family had passionately protested at this distortion, that an RUC statement was issued acknowledging that the incident was, as all the witnesses say, an unprovoked assault on two men by a large group.

The next day, Robert died from his head injuries. It was after this that Lunt and five others, Rory Robinson, Allistair Hanvey, Dean Forbes, Stacey Bridgett and Paul Hobson, were arrested and charged with his murder. All asked to be held with Loyalist prisoners in the Maze. The Loyalist Volunteer Force produced leaflets championing the "Portadown Six".

By October, charges against Forbes, Hanvey and Robinson had been dropped. Releasing the men, the magistrate said, "It has been a terrible ordeal for all three of you". He said nothing to members of the Hamill family who were present in court. In November, charges against Bridgett and Lunt were dropped. This prompted Colin Prunty, the witness who had approached Hal-

ley, to complain to the Crown Prosecution Service that he had never been asked to attend an ID parade.

Paul Hobson finally came to trial earlier this year. Constable Neill testified that, approaching the scene, he saw Robert lying unconscious and Hobson aiming a kick at his head, but couldn't tell if it connected. Lord Justice McCollum convicted Hobson of unlawfully fighting and causing an affray but, ruling that Robert was probably already fatally injured by the time Neill approached, acquitted Hobson of murder.

A few days after the attack on Robert, his sister Diane, unhappy at the quality of the investigation, had enlisted the help of Lurgan solicitor, Rosemary Nelson. Rosemary's response to the dropping of charges was to announce that the family would bring a private prosecution against the suspects and the RUC. An appeal was begun to raise the funds and Rosemary became the family's leading campaigner, as well their legal adviser and beloved friend.

By March, Hobson's trial ended, with judgement reserved, and she was in no doubt that he would be acquitted. She had spoken to Michael Mansfield QC about the planned private prosecutions. On 15 March, she was blown up by a car bomb. The sophistication of the device and the unusual level of RUC activity close to her home before the explosion led to accusations of collusion. The day after the bombing, graffiti appeared in Lurgan, reading, "Rosemary Nelson, human rights defender, murdered by RUC".

Rosemary had received an increasing number of threats from RUC officers. The Independent Commission on Police Complaints unusually called in a Metropolitan police officer to oversee its investigation of the threats. The ICPC reported that officers barely disguised their hatred of her.

The Hamill family has also become unpopular with the RUC since querying the handling of Robert's case. Diane cites many instances of intimidation, including a police car swerving in front of hers, forcing her to brake, and officers pointing their fingers at her in imitation of guns.

The family has also suffered emotional torture by Loyalists since Robert's death. According to Diane:

"At the place where Robert was attacked, we placed flowers in memory of him, but within hours every petal would have disappeared. Regularly my family have been taunted in Portadown town centre. I have been called a Fenian slut, and men and women have shouted, 'Where is Robbie now?'. As recently as April, we discovered some graffiti saying, 'Where is ya Robbie now, where is ya flowers now?'. I wouldn't want to be inside the minds of these people; it must be a very frightening place. On occasions some Loyalists have taken to jumping up and down in front of me, this is their imitation of Robert's murder; this is funny to them. In the early stages I

called the RUC on several occasions following incidents of this nature but they never did anything about it. After a while I decided it was pointless calling the police for assistance; we now have no one to turn to. The taunt of 'What about Robbie Hamill?' has now become commonplace around Portadown when Catholics are being abused; this doesn't appear to be a crime either."

The Hamills are looking for justice rather than vengeance. In the words of Diane Hamill:

"Everyone is talking about peace, but you won't get peace in Northern Ireland without justice, and you can't have justice without truth, and you won't even begin to get near the truth until there is a public inquiry into Robert's death."

What you can do:

- Write to the Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Tony Blair, 10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA demanding he take up this case.
- Ask your MP to support the call for an enquiry and forward his/her response to the campaign.
- Ask your trade union branch to pass a resolution supporting the call for an enquiry and affiliating to the campaign.
- Help distribute information and publicity material.
- Make a donation

Contact the campaign at:
BM Hamill Campaign,
 London WC1N 3XX
 E-mail: hamillcampaign@hotmail.com
 Website: www.justice.club24.co.uk
 Cheques payable to
Robert Hamill Campaign

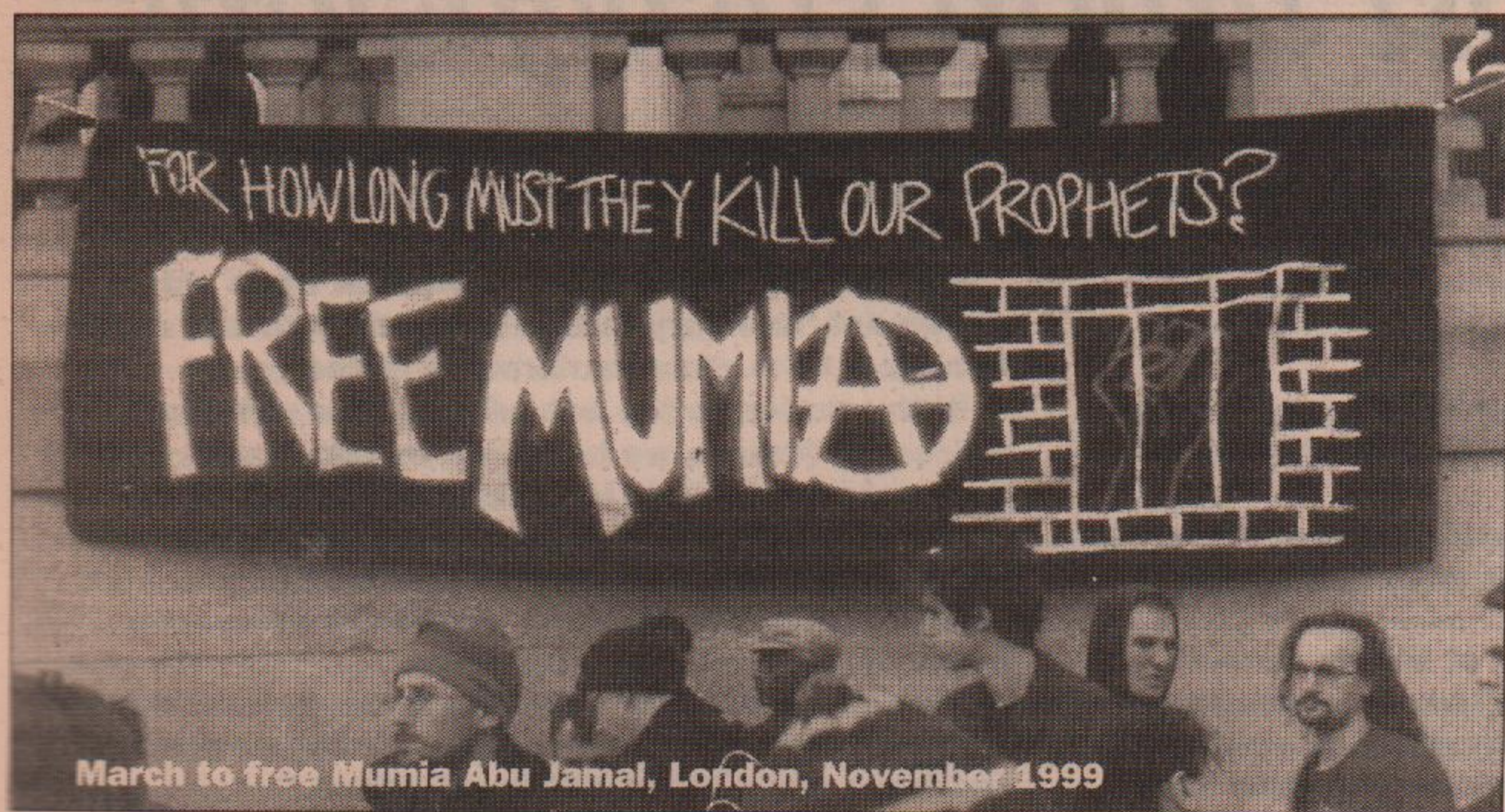
AN EVENING FOR ROBERT HAMILL

The Jazz Cafe, 5 Parkway, Camden Town, NW1 7PG
 Sunday 5 March 2000 at 7.30 pm

FEATURING

Jo Brand, Ardal O'Hanlon,
 Kevin McAleer, Jeremy Hardy,
 John Moloney, Robert Newman,
 Ed Byrne, Gino Lupari,
 Larry Love, Alabama 3, Neck

Tickets: £15 (subject to booking fee)
 available from credit card hotline
 0171 344 0044 and all Ticketmaster outlets.
 Tickets available at face value from
 The Ticket Shop, 3 Parkway, Camden.
 Information line: 0181 963 0940



FREE MUMIA ABU JAMAL

DEMONSTRATE

Saturday, 4 March
 Assemble 1pm, Embankment
 March to Trafalgar Square

Mumia Abu Jamal is a political activist and a former member of the Black Panther Party. In 1982 he was convicted of shooting a police officer in Philadelphia and sentenced to death. The court case violated Mumia's constitutional rights and denied him access to evidence. In effect it was a frame-up (See WP 238). Since then he has been fighting to prove his innocence. Last year, Governor Ridge of Pennsylvania signed Mumia's execution order. Mumia and his lawyers will soon be in a federal court trying to have his conviction thrown out and the sentence overturned. In support, a weekend of international action has been called for 4/5 March. Stop the execution of Mumia Abu Jamal, support this demonstration.

Masses reject Mugabe's bribes

Getting rid of a corrupt government will improve the life of the Zimbabwean masses. But they should beware replacing the greed of Mugabe and his cronies with the austerity of the IMF, writes Lesley Day

ZIMBABWEANS THREW out president Robert Mugabe's proposed constitution last month, despite threats, bribery and media manipulation.

Fifty five per cent voted against the plans that would have increased Mugabe's presidential powers. The ruling party, ZANU-PF, had promised to use the new constitution to nationalise white owned land and distribute it to peasant farmers – but even in rural areas, many voters saw through the bribery. Mugabe has been promising land reform since he took office 20 years ago, but the only real beneficiaries so far have been his cronies who have bought up estates on the cheap.

In the urban areas the vote against Mugabe was clear cut. Unemployment of around 50 per cent, fuel shortages and 60 per cent inflation have created anger and frustration. This is combined with resentment at the party officials who have enriched themselves at the expense of the workers and peasants.

Zimbabwe's intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is also deeply unpopular: many workers and other oppositionists realise that the million pounds a day spent on the war has been used to protect the interests of investors. Army leaders have created companies to do business in the Congo, such as the diamond mine at Mbuji-Mayi. The state-owned Zimbabwean Defence Industries won a £35m contract to supply the DRC army, a deal which will benefit generals and politicians.

In the same week that Mugabe suffered defeat in the referendum, it became clear that Zimbabwe would default on debt repayments to several international creditors including the European Investment Bank.

Mugabe retains support from a layer of state bureaucrats, army officers and political cronies. And ZANU-PF still has roots among the Zimbabwean masses, gained in the guerrilla struggle for independence and maintained over two decades through state support and media manipulation. It still has 147 out of 150 seats in the parliament. Mugabe has bought the continued support of the military, civil servants, community chiefs and MPs by printing money and awarding 300 per cent pay rises, further fuelling inflation.

But opposition is becoming more widespread. The main opposition comes from the new party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which is led by the trade unions. Leaders of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) hold the key posts in this movement.

Miners' leader Morgan Tsvangirai has now been



MDC supporters (left) and their leader Morgan Tsvangirai



confirmed as president of the new party. As we reported last October (WP 237), the MDC is a coalition of trade unions, church and civil rights groups, but has working class organisations and support at its heart. There is, however, a real danger that pressure from the international and Zimbabwean bosses will turn it into a safe alternative party for capitalism in Zimbabwe.

Worker militants and students have taken the lead so far in opposing Mugabe, courageously launching strikes and protests over the last two years. But now it is clear that global multinationals and their representatives in the IMF are eager to see change. South Africa, too, is waiting in the wings seeking to extend its influence.

The global capitalist vultures have their own version of what has gone wrong in Zimbabwe. They argue that the heart of the problem lies in the high element of state control of the economy. This has prevented the "freeing up" of the economy, as well as encouraging corruption and cronyism.

For instance, Zimbabwe economist John Robertson, has been accusing the government of "fiscal profligacy" (too much state spending) and continuing state ownership which harms investment. According to Robertson and others like him, experimenting with "social engineering" – i.e. not simply doing what the multinationals want – means that the economy has withered and stunted job creation. Mugabe stands accused of allowing policies to be "driven by political ideology instead of economic reality".

This is the same old neo-liberal rubbish we have heard for decades. What it really means is that international investors and the local bosses would like to see more opportunities for them and their cronies to cream off profits, as opposed to government bureaucrats!

The IMF has been putting heavy pressure on Mugabe to cut the budget deficit and external

debt. The Zimbabwean government is currently operating without an IMF programme, having failed to meet set targets. It has a total of US\$4.5 billion external debt, mostly owed by the government. This means it will be difficult to raise further loans from member countries of the "Paris Club" of international banks. The government has told the IMF that it will not be able to meet targets for reducing the budget deficit until after the elections, planned for April.

Mugabe wants to bribe his way to a ZANU-PF victory at the polls and, at the same time, state institutions have been calling on government guarantees when unable to meet their own repayments.

The big imperialist powers want to see change – not because they are eager for a fairer deal for Zimbabweans but because they are anxious to see an end to the old restrictions on investment. It is not in their interests to let a country like Zimbabwe, with relatively high levels of industrial development, compared to the rest of Africa, and with many valuable raw materials, sink into chaos and poverty.

Already South African President Thabo Mbeki

Mugabe wants to bribe his way to a ZANU-PF victory at the polls

SOUTH AFRICA

Car workers strike against union suspensions

On 20 February, a mass meeting of South African car workers agreed to fight for the unconditional reinstatement of all workers at the Volkswagen plant in Uitenhage. This followed a strike in January against the suspension of 13 shop stewards by their trade union, National Union Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa).

Numsa refused to defend the militants when they were sacked by VW after they had led a strike last year against worsening conditions. In February, Numsa officials signed two further agreements with VW for the return to work of more than 3,500 workers under worse conditions. VW had threatened to transfer production from the plant unless Numsa "takes control" of its own members.

The dispute came on the eve of the conference of Cosatu, the South African trade union federation. Despite threatening a one day general strike on 4 May, the Cosatu leaders are trying to head off militancy and are preparing an agreement with multinationals that will remove various obstacles to profiteering.

Car workers at Daimler-Chrysler in Germany have linked up with engineering trade unionists in Serbia to issue this statement of solidarity with the Numsa militants. Get your union to endorse it and send messages of support to: wivl@sn.apc.org

**Solidarity with South African Volkswagen workers
"Your struggle against worsening conditions at work is a just struggle."**

We condemn the lock outs and sackings of workers and shop stewards. All workers and shop stewards must be reinstated!

We call on Numsa, IG Metall at VW [in Germany], and all other trade unions that represent workers on VW sites, to support these demands. Lock outs – and the sacking of striking workers and their trade

union representatives are an attack on all VW employees and on all who work in the automobile industry throughout the world.

The old slogan of the South African trade union movement 'An injury to one is an injury to all' applies throughout the global automobile industry.

With relation to the behaviour of the national officers of Numsa, we have this to say: in no circumstances should internal conflicts within the union be solved with the help of the employers. Only the members have the right to choose their representatives! In the end, only the workers can decide to strike or to end a strike.

We call on all trade unionists in the automobile and transport industry to support the struggle of workers and trade unionists at VW South Africa."

The struggle for the revolution in Ukraine

At a meeting in Prague in January representatives of the Molodiye Revolutsioniye Marksisty (Young Revolutionary Marxists – MRM) from Ukraine and of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) agreed the following declaration of fraternal relations.

THE MOLODIYE Revolutsioniye Marksisty (MRM) was founded in 1992 as the Ukrainian working class emerged from its domination by Stalinism inside the USSR. Originating as a circle of independent revolutionary Marxists, the MRM discovered by their own efforts the vitality of Leon Trotsky's revolutionary critique of Stalin's counter-revolution in the USSR and its legacy in a degenerated workers' state.

Through its experience in the workers' and student movement in the Ukraine, the MRM saw the hopeless parliamentary cretinism and opportunist entrism of the Committee for a Workers International as well as the grotesque pro-Stalinism of the Spartacists (ICL) and its offshoots in the International Bolshevik Tendency.

Because of this experience, the MRM is determined to break with national isolation and to participate in the active building of a revolutionary Leninist-Trotskyist International. Since the autumn of 1999 the MRM has been in contact with the LRCI and has begun to study its programme – the *Trotskyist Manifesto* (TM) – and other publications.

The LRCI was founded in 1989 and has sections in Britain, Ireland, Germany, France, Sweden, Austria, Czech Republic, Australia and New Zealand. It has re-elaborated the revolutionary programme and fights for the building of an authentic, orthodox Trotskyist International. It sees Eastern Europe as a strategic region in the coming period of intensifying class struggle and will therefore support the building of revolutionary organisations in these countries. It also sees its work in Eastern Europe as an opportunity to assimilate the important experiences of the new workers' movement and to help the international workers' movement to learn from them.

The MRM and LRCI are convinced that the struggle for a new revolutionary International is the most urgent task for the international working class. Therefore the MRM and LRCI will make it a priority to undertake a serious study of each others' positions, to initiate privileged and confidential discussion and practical co-operation with the aim of reaching a principled programmatic agreement as soon as possible and to fuse their organisations into a united International based on the principles of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky.

To reach this goal, and to clarify programmatic agreement, a systematic and serious discussion from both sides will be necessary. The LRCI will discuss MRM publications and positions. All members of the MRM will read and discuss the *Trotskyist Manifesto* and, if possible, other Russian language publications of the LRCI. The MRM will send the LRCI its opinion of the *Trotskyist Manifesto*. It will also discuss Chapter 5 of the Manifesto (dealing with Eastern Europe and Stalinism) and organise the translation of selected LRCI material for its members.

The MRM and LRCI will exchange letters where we comment on each other's positions. The letters and a selected set of publications will be made available to all members and supporters of the MRM and LRCI. The two organisations will also discuss a common declaration on the coming class struggles in Ukraine – particularly on the coming referendum and Ukraine president Kuchma's attempted plebiscite putsch. The MRM will write an article on the state of capitalist restoration in Ukraine and its political analysis for publication in LRCI journals and papers.

The LRCI will give the MRM its advice on the draft of a revolutionary Action Programme for the Ukraine.

The discussion already undertaken reveals several areas of agreement:

- We agree on the revolutionary strategy and tactics in the war in Chechnya.

- That only a socialist revolution of the armed working class – and not a parliamentary and peaceful reform – can overthrow capitalism and Stalinism. Only revolution can lead to the power of the working class, which takes the form of a workers' self-government based on workers' councils.

- That the struggle for workers' control in the enterprises plays an important role in revolutionary strategy.

- That revolutionary organisations can only be built on the basis of democratic centralism and as part of an international tendency.

- That Marxists have to participate in elections for bourgeois parliaments and – if they are too weak to stand their own candidates – to employ the tactic of critical support for bourgeois workers' parties – traditional left parties of Stalinist and social democratic coloration – which is a form of the united front with reformist and centrist forces.

- That reformism – Stalinism and social democracy – is a counter-revolutionary force which has and will always betray the working class and therefore revolutionaries have to warn workers against the betrayal but at the same time put demands on the reformist leaders.

- That it can be legitimate as a tactic to build revolutionary fractions inside reformist parties which fight against the party bureaucracy on an open revolutionary programme and which try to break workers from this leadership.

- That Marxists had to oppose the Yanaev coup in Russia in August 1991 and had to critically support those forces who fought against it – even if they were under the reactionary leadership of Boris Yeltsin.

- that the working class must fight against the bureaucracy in the unions and build revolutionary fractions and a rank and file movement inside the unions. The goal of revolutionaries is to win workers and the unions to a revolutionary action programme.

The discussion in the coming months should test if there are any serious disagreements between the two organisations. In particular, we will study and discuss our understanding of the national question – in principle and as applied to the Ukraine past and present. We will also discuss the present day character of the Ukraine economy, the situation of women in Ukraine and strategies to fight against women's oppression, and the concrete class character of Stalinist parties in Ukraine.

Concerning the tasks of revolutionaries faced with the 16 April 2000 referendum in Ukraine initiated by President Kuchma, the MRM and LRCI agree that the referendum has the following goals:

- i) to destroy the power of parliament and eventually to dissolve it so as to engineer the election of a pro-Kuchma parliament;

- ii) to change the constitution so as to concentrate more power in the hands of the President which would represent a strengthening of his bonapartist role;

- iii) to fulfil the dictates of the IMF and to accelerate capitalist restoration, as it is already set out in the constitution; and

The MRM and LRCI are convinced that the struggle for a new revolutionary International is the most urgent task for the international working class

iv) the reduction of the political, economic and social rights of Ukraine citizens.

A victory for Kuchma at the referendum would mark an important step from the present day bourgeois democratic system to an open bourgeois bonapartist dictatorship which would be an enormous setback for the All-Ukraine working class.

Given this the tasks of revolutionaries are:

- The organisation of a mass movement against Kuchma's referendum. We call for the organisation of self-defence squads to protect the parliament from dispersal or closure.

- To demand from the mass reformist parties, the official and independent trade unions and workers' strike committees to organise an All-Ukraine mass protest strike.

- To vote No in the referendum.

- To fight for the election of a Constituent [Constitutional] Assembly. Militant workers should fight for the adoption of a new constitution based on the principles of working class power.

- To fight for the workers' self-government in the factories, plants, enterprises and the organs of state power.

- To fight for a government which is elected by delegates of workers' councils.

- To fight for the socialist revolution.

Concerning the agrarian question in Ukraine and Kuchma's attack on collective land ownership we agree on the following points.

In April 2000 the privatisation of agricultural collectives (Kolhoz) and agricultural state enterprises (sovhoz) will begin as a result of a decree by Kuchma which is in turn dictated by the IMF. Kolhoz and Sovhoz will be sold together with the land held by them – mainly to multinational enterprises.

The privatisation of land marks an important step in the final establishment of capitalist prop-

erty relations in Ukraine. If the kovhoz and sovhoz are privatised the majority of their members would either become unemployed or will be forced to work for a minimum wage for the new bourgeois class.

Therefore: we vehemently oppose the privatisation of land; we call on all workers' parties and organisations, plus the Peasant Party of Alexandre Tkachenko, to organise mass protest actions against the privatisation of land and the IMF decrees. They must also oppose unambiguously Kuchma's decree in parliament and vote for a bill against this decree.

Similarly, we call on all workers' parties and organisations to stop the privatisation of the large, strategic state owned enterprises – mainly by mass actions but also by legislation or the enforcing of a referendum. We agree to participate in the organising committee set up by the left parties which will try to organise an alternative referendum calling for the abolition of the Presidency, a halt to land privatisation and the privatisation of the state owned enterprises, and for the convening of a constituent assembly.

To accelerate the discussion between the MRM and the LRCI, the latter will send a delegation to Kiev this spring. This will give the LRCI the opportunity to meet the members and supporters of the MRM and also some militant workers' leaders with whom MRM is in contact. We also agree to collaborate in practical fields – in particular in the campaign against the IMF which will culminate in common protest actions in September 2000. The MRM will try to rally support for this campaign in the Ukraine workers' movement and to organise actions in Kiev and – if possible – other cities on the same day as the anti-IMF demonstration in Prague.

The MRM and SOP – the Czech section of the LRCI – will issue a common declaration against the racist super-exploitation and harassment by the Czech state of Ukraine immigrants and consider concrete activities in this field. The MRM will also inform the LRCI about practical needs of the new independent workers' movement in Ukraine and for which purposes it is most useful to call on the Western workers' movement for donations.

The LRCI will assist the MRM in organising literature from Leon Trotsky in the Russian language. The LRCI in Europe will call for donations for the MRM to assist the purchase of the necessary equipment for the establishment of a revolutionary publication in Ukraine.

As a result of the fruitful discussions and convinced of the need and actual possibility of a fusion, we announce here, with this declaration, the establishment of fraternal relations between the MRM and the LRCI.

The representatives of the MRM will propose to its membership to change the name of the group to Workers Power/MRM.

- Long live the struggle for the proletarian revolution in Ukraine!

- Long live the international struggle for World Revolution!

- Forward together in the building of a revolutionary party in Ukraine and the Leninist-Trotskyist International!

Prague, 24.1.2000

NB Subsequent to this declaration the MRM changed their name to Robitnychya Vlad/MRM.

Bolsheviks and elections

As socialists prepare to stand against New Labour at the polls, **John McKee** looks at what we can learn from the Bolsheviks in the Tsarist "Duma"

HOW SHOULD revolutionary socialists act in parliament? Should we risk legitimising powerless legislative bodies? And how do we stop the workers' MPs from being corrupted in the bosses' parliaments? These were some of the problems faced by the Bolsheviks before the First World War.

After the 1905 revolution in Russia was defeated, the Tsar established a "Duma" (parliament). The Russian socialists had been split between Bolshevik (revolutionary) and Menshevik (moderate) wings, but were temporarily reunited at this point.

Should the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) stand candidates and participate in the Duma? Previously they had boycotted the proposed Duma in favour of a revolutionary government based on the workers' councils (soviets) that grew up during 1905. But by the time the 1906 Duma was convened the soviets had been smashed, and the workers' movement had suffered a serious defeat.

The Tsar felt confident enough to dismiss the first Duma within a few months, considering its liberal capitalist majority (the Constitutional Democrats or "Cadets") too radical after they clashed with the nobility over land reform. The second Duma lasted a little longer, it too was dissolved in June 1907.

By then a period of reaction was in full swing. Stolypin, the Tsar's chief minister, presided over a third Duma whose electoral system was designed to ensure the radical demands of workers and peasants found no voice in the assembly. It was dominated by outright proto-fascists, the so called "Black Hundred" pogrom politicians.

The Bolsheviks boycotted the 1905 Duma. The Stockholm unity Congress of 1906, where there was a Menshevik majority, decided to stand candidates for the second Duma and 12 Mensheviks and 11 Bolsheviks were elected. When it was dissolved, the RSDLP fraction was arrested and put on trial: many of the MPs went straight into prison camps.

The Bolshevik faction of the RSDLP had submitted to the decision of the Stockholm Congress, but "unity" could not disguise the deep differences between the two factions of the united party. By 1906 the Mensheviks believed the revolution had been smashed and that Russia had embarked on the road to a constitutional monarchy. They welcomed the Cadet majority, and called for "responsible government" – i.e. a constitutional monarchy.

The Bolsheviks had a very different perspective. They recognised that the workers had suffered a serious defeat, but realised 1905 had been just the first engagement with the enemy. They expected a new revolutionary upsurge following on the heels of 1905. When this upsurge failed to materialise, and the Stolypin "coup" took place in 1907, divisions started to appear within the Bolsheviks.

The majority around Alexander Bogdanov wanted to withdraw from the Duma and boycott the elections. Lenin opposed this. He recognised that Russia was moving into a different period, when the workers would be on the defensive for a considerable period. Lenin said every method of struggle, legal and illegal, had to be used to reach the largest number of workers. As he put it in debate with Bogdanov: the third Duma is a "cowshed", but if it was in the interests of the workers to spend time in it, the Bolsheviks would.

Lenin had no illusions in the Men-



Peter Stolypin

sheviks' approach to the Duma, but at the 1907 Fourth Congress he blocked with them to defeat Bogdanov's call for a boycott. Lenin's own proposal to take part in the Duma in a revolutionary way was only passed with Menshevik support, with the majority of Bolsheviks voting against. Lenin gradually won the majority for his position and in 1909 the Bogdanov group was expelled.

The third and fourth Dumas ran their full terms. Between 1907 and 1914 the Bolsheviks had a continuous presence in the parliament, first in a united Social Democratic fraction with the Mensheviks, then – from 1913 – as a separate Bolshevik fraction. The two Dumas covered very different periods.

The period 1907 to 1912 was a period of demoralisation among the working class. The gains made in wages and conditions during 1905 were eroded. The employers used the blacklist to drive out militant workers from the factories: the lock-out became a chosen weapon to break strikes and the unions.

The workers' organisations functioned in semi-legality: trade unions were regularly dissolved, and the secret

police worked hand-in-glove with the bosses to imprison active militants.

The RSDLP was an illegal organisation whose leadership functioned abroad. Its underground organisation suffered badly from repression, desertions and splits after 1907. Zinoviev, one of a later generation of leaders, could talk of the (Bolshevik) party being in a state of disintegration by 1909 and having to be "rebuilt" from the bottom up.

The early revival of the workers' movement coincided with elections for the fourth Duma in 1912. A massacre of miners on strike in the Lena Goldfields of Siberia set off a wave of protest strikes in both St Petersburg and Moscow.

Pravda was launched at this time as a daily paper. Officially it had no connection with the Bolsheviks. The editors were constantly fined; many of its issues seized by the censor; its offices were raided and searched. But it remained the most powerful weapon and organising focus for the Bolsheviks – a workers' paper whose circulation reached 140,000 by 1914. *Pravda* worked closely with the Bolshevik deputies, at one point Badayev, elected to the Duma in 1912, was also its publisher.

One of the advantages of having revolutionary MPs in the Duma was that their speeches could be legally published in *Pravda* and as leaflets. As the MPs also had immunity from prosecution, unlike other Social Democratic workers, they could not be arrested for making "inflammatory speeches". The Bolshevik MPs made full use of this immunity while it lasted.

Strict party discipline was enforced to make sure the MPs did not get corrupted by the privileges they enjoyed and the plush surroundings of the Duma. For revolutionaries, the parliamentary group is not the party leadership but a unit of the party under the control of the wider membership.

Lenin compared the arrangement to an army command structure: "A par-

liamentary group is not a general staff but rather a unit of trumpeters in one case, or a reconnaissance unit in another."

The elections of 1912 showed the growing strength of the Bolsheviks. The Duma electoral system was designed to ensure an overwhelming majority for the ruling landlords and capitalists. Those who were entitled to vote were divided into four separate electoral groups known as "curiae": landowners, urban middle class, peasants and workers.

Just like the MPs in Tony Blair's electoral college, the vote of a landlord was worth 45 times that of a worker! Elections were indirect. The workers, for example, had to elect representatives from their factories, these had to meet to elect "electors", then the electors were sent to the electoral colleges, where all four groups sat.

It was these colleges that elected the deputies! The workers were only guaranteed six deputies in the whole parliament. The names of Bolshevik candidates could only be released a day or so before a vote, to prevent them being arrested or sacked. Despite this, all the candidates put forward to the electoral colleges from the workers' curiae were Bolsheviks.

In a straight fight with the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks swept the board – four metal workers and two textile workers formed the Bolshevik "six" in the 1912 Duma. The Mensheviks had six MPs – largely elected from rural areas on a platform of opposing national oppression in the Tsarist empire. The real expression of workers' anger was funnelled through the Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks put forward three key demands at this period; the democratic republic, the eight-hour day and the confiscation of the landed estates. This was a programme for the destruction of the tsarist regime based on a revolutionary solution to the land question.

In addition to the three strategic demands, the Bolsheviks argued for a

whole series of partial reforms: freedom of assembly, freedom for trade unions to organise, freedom of speech. But the Mensheviks raised only these partial demands – not the full programme of revolutionary democracy. Instead of winning them votes, as they expected, the Mensheviks' half-hearted reformist programme lost them support among militant workers.

The Mensheviks' increasing reformism was reflected in the relationship of MPs to the party membership. They saw their MPs as "above" the party. Their leader, Chkheidze, refused to attend a party conference to defend his tendency to ignore party policy in the Duma.

Being a revolutionary delegate in a reactionary parliament was no easy matter for workers elected straight from the shop floor. Badayev in his book, *Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma*, talks of the nervousness they felt when they had to speak:

"Each of us experienced great difficulty when making his first speech in the home of the Tsarist autocracy. It was a great strain to talk down the howling of the Black Hundreds, to fight against the continual interruption of the chairman, and, having described the political and economic enslavement of the working class, to challenge its oppressors."

Lenin summed up the difference between the future of the workers' representatives and the other parliamentarians: "Some leave the Duma rostrum to become ministers, others, workers' deputies, to become convicts."

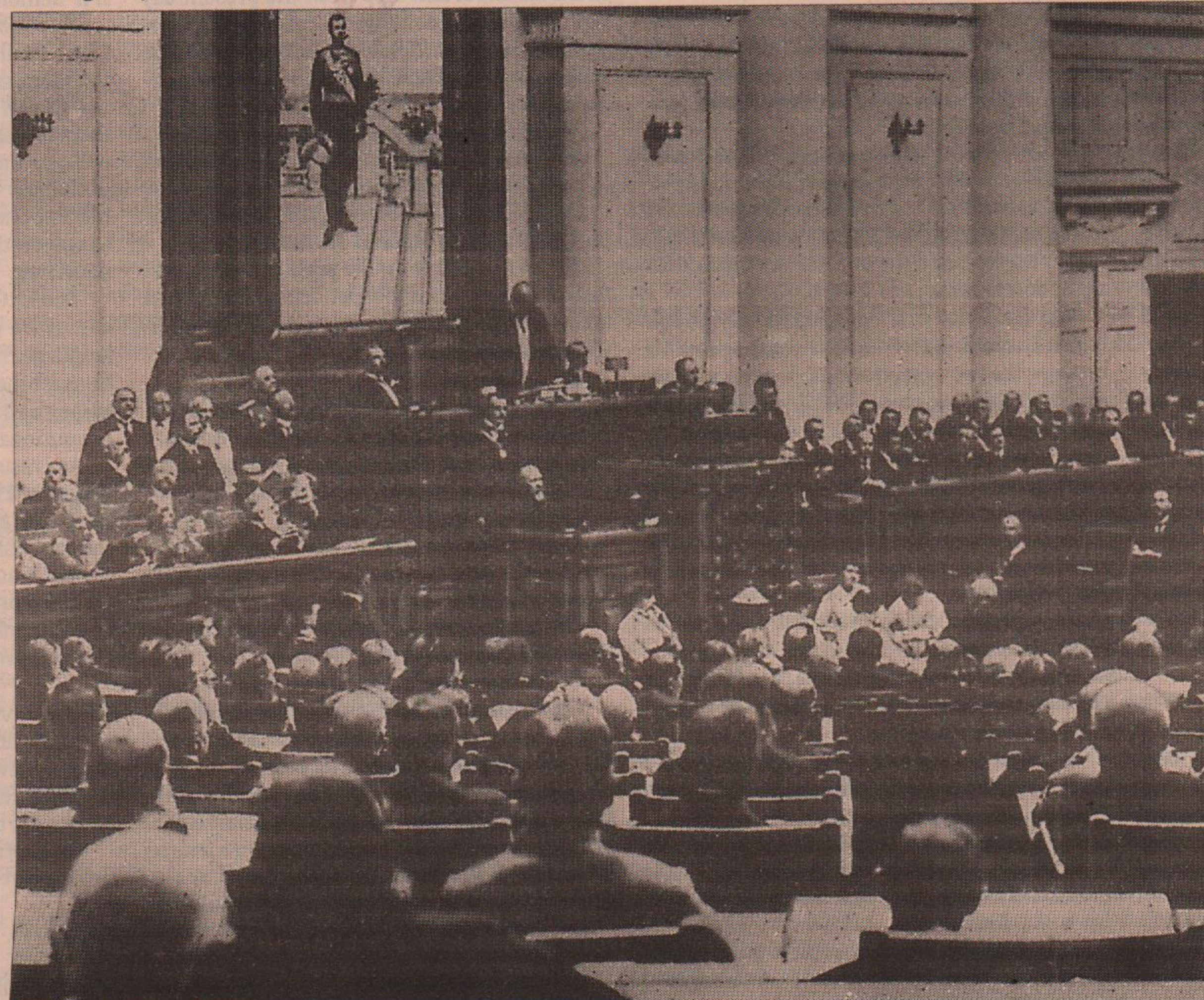
The Bolsheviks used parliamentary procedure to the full to make the case for revolutionary socialist politics: they put questions to ministers, they framed Bills that had no chance of being passed. That was because they understood that the Duma – like all capitalist parliaments – could not change much: it had to be used as a soapbox to address wide layers of the working class.

In April 1914 the deputies brought the Duma to a standstill by obstructing the budget. Each deputy was expelled from the chamber, but only after defending themselves at length and having to be physically removed by Duma guards. Outside, *Pravda* organised strikes and demonstrations in their support.

The MPs regularly formed the organising centre for collections for strikers. Using their immunity, the MPs would regularly address the strikers, demand to see and protest to the management, and denounce the police to their faces for their brutality.

Not surprisingly, this activity focused the hatred of the tsarist regime on the Bolshevik fraction. Within weeks of the outbreak of war in 1914 the police raided an underground Bolshevik conference and arrested the five remaining Bolshevik deputies. They were stripped of their immunity and charged with treason, having in their possession the Bolshevik declaration against the imperialist world war. All were sentenced to hard labour terms in Siberia, terms which were mercifully cut short by the outbreak of the 1917 February revolution.

But the experience of these Bolsheviks proved invaluable. Their work demonstrated how revolutionaries could use elections and parliaments to advance the cause of the working class without for one minute spreading the illusion that parliaments or elections to them were the real means of securing lasting victory for that cause.



The final meeting of the Duma under the Tsar.

marxism THE BASICS

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

The revolution in the third world

Globalisation strangles the Third World, but how can the working class of the poorest countries come to the head of the struggle against it? *Colin Lloyd* explains the theory of permanent revolution

THERE IS massive inequality between rich and poor countries. The world's richest 350 people, with combined assets of \$762 billion, own more than the annual incomes of the world's poorest two billion people.

The G7 countries – the richest and most industrialised powers – effectively rule the world: they dominate the economy and can dictate all key political decisions to the governments of the poorest countries.

In turn, the tiny elites that run the Third World countries collaborate with the wishes of the world's banks and businesses. These elites are agents of western exploitation, taking their "cut" from the proceeds, and presiding over a variety of undemocratic and even dictatorial regimes supported by their rich western backers.

Marxists call these countries semi colonies and the system imperialism. The existence of semi colonies, dominated economically by the rich countries but formally politically independent, means that the fight for socialism in these countries has to overcome even bigger obstacles than in developed countries.

This is because to build a socialist society, economic development is needed: you cannot get rid of poverty, illiteracy and epidemics without roads, electricity and computers. So in the Third World, the working class is not just faced with the task of taking over and running the modern economy – it has to unblock the path to economic development.

It has to combine the fight for socialism with the fight for political democracy, an agrarian revolution and real national independence. The Marxist strategy for achieving this has been labelled "permanent revolution" – after a slogan coined by Trotsky during the 1905 Russian Revolution (see WP 237).

What Trotsky meant by the word permanent is a revolution that does not stop at winning democracy, land and national liberation but combines that with the fight for socialism and working class political power. Because of the structure of global capitalism even basic rights that we take for granted in the west – like real national independence and parliamentary democracy – cannot be won without a workers' government.

But in many Third World countries, the economic backwardness inflicted by global imperialism means the working class is a minority among the exploited population. Alongside the factory, mine and office workers, who earn their living from wages there are:

- The peasants, who own small farms and partially subsist on their own crops and on seasonal labour on a big estate and in the worst cases are forced into semi-slavery to pay off debts to landlords.

- The shantytown dwellers, who live on the edges of big cities and generally live on small trading and handicrafts.

- The urban middle class from traditional shopkeepers to self-employed "professionals" who generally have to battle alongside the rest of the urban poor to earn a living.

The workers can't ignore the struggles of these oppressed and exploited masses, but they will often have different immediate grievances and goals. Above all, the political expression of resistance by the peasants, shanty town-dwellers and middle classes will often be led by small businessmen or professionals (and even clerics) who genuinely want to free the country from imperialism but do not want socialism.

The classic programme of bourgeois nationalism includes:

- The fight for democracy and the rule of law – against dictatorship, arbitrary arrest and torture etc.

- The fight for national self determination – against foreign domination or occupation.

- The fight for land rights – against the remains of the feudal landowning class in some countries – or against the large capitalist estate farmers in others.

IN BRIEF

■ **Historically, the bourgeoisie led the democratic, national and agrarian struggle. But the bourgeoisie has retreated from fighting for these demands and now act as agents of imperialism in the semi-colonies.**

■ **Since the second world war, it has been the middle classes that have led anti-imperialist revolts. But while these movements have been able to achieve political independence, third world countries are still subordinated to capitalism and the imperialist powers.**

■ **To achieve even these bourgeois demands, the working class must destroy the capitalist system. It must combine the fight for socialism with the fight for political democracy, an agrarian revolution, and real national independence. This is permanent revolution.**

Historically, Marxists called these bourgeois questions: not to belittle them, but because the democratic, national and agrarian struggle had been led, in 19th century Europe, by the rising bourgeoisie (capitalist class).

On their own, national freedom, parliament, and agrarian revolution will not bring socialism. They would not even begin to allow a country like Haiti to develop a modern industrial economy. To really free Third World countries from the grip of imperialism you have to confiscate the property of the imperialists and their cronies among the elites who currently run the Third World. You have to cancel the debts. And you have to spread the revolution.

Because of this, the "national" bourgeoisie of the Third World countries has increasingly retreated from the struggle against imperialism. The bigger the working class became, the more the capitalists backed off from any notion of anti-imperialist revolution.

Early this century, some Third World capitalists were forced by the masses into starting a struggle – for example Kemal Ataturk's revolution in Turkey, or Chiang Kai Shek in China. Today, most Third World capitalists are content to take a small cut of the profits of the imperialist, through the stocks and shares system.

So after World War II it was generally the middle classes that led the anti-imperialist revolts.

Anti-imperialist struggles such as the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979, democratic revolts like the struggle to bring down the Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia, and land struggles such as those in Colombia or Brazil in the 1990s all necessitate an alliance between the workers, the peasants and the urban poor. Often this alliance starts out being led by middle class parties and even maverick capitalist politicians: the Chavez government in Venezuela is a good example.

But for these movements to win – to end up with anything other than replacing one local elite with another – the working class must come to the head of the alliance and win the battle to combine socialist goals and socialist methods with the tasks of the democratic revolution.

Generally, revolutionary socialists are faced with the following objections.

The middle class will argue that, to keep the anti-imperialist alliance together, there must be no raising of socialist demands. They will want to win friends in liberal Western regimes. They will want to get rid of foreign multinationals only to take over the local firms themselves. They will want democracy like Britain or the USA where behind the facade of parliament and courts, big business is the real ruler.

Peasant politicians will generally argue for solutions that free rural labourers from debt, bonded labour and landlord's rent and often for the setting up of subsidised co-operatives so that producers can have more economic clout in the world market. But they will stop short of saying: nationalise the banks and factories.

The political differences between the middle class, the peasants and the workers will also lead to differences over forms of struggle. The middle class will call mass demonstrations and even be forced into insurrection and war against the imperialists. But they will say: no strikes, no factory occupations, no land-grabs by the peasants. And they will, if the revolution succeeds, move swiftly to squash any independent organisations of workers' power.

The peasants will seize land, burn the landlord's property and set up local governments. But the focus of their struggle will inevitably be the countryside: this is what explains the prevalence of guerrilla tactics in peasant-dominated anti-imperialist struggles.

The workers, in contrast, are the only class that can ensure the victory of the anti-imperialist struggle because:

- They are the only class with the ability to take over

society and run it democratically. They are the only class without any property and therefore have to fight for a classless, propertyless society.

- Only by attacking the capitalist profit system, replacing it with state ownership and democratic planning, can imperialism be defeated.

However, even within the workers' movement there has been strong resistance to the idea that the workers should lead the anti-imperialist struggle and transform it into a socialist revolution. Not just from the equivalents of Tony Blair in the Third World labour movements but the Stalinist parties, as well, have always argued for a two stage revolution.

The Stalinists argue that first, we fight for democracy and national liberation and after that socialism. Because the first stage will be bourgeois democratic, say the Stalinists, the national bourgeoisie must be in the alliance. So anything that frightens them away, like fighting for socialism, must be banned.

But every time this has been tried – from the Chinese revolution of 1927, through the Spanish revolution in 1936-7, to the Iranian and Nicaraguan revolutions of the 1970s or Indonesia today – it ends in bloody failure.

It ends up with the workers being forced to support the "anti-imperialist" government run by the colonial bourgeoisie. It ends up with the workers voluntarily giving up the fight for their own interests. And, regular as clockwork, the workers' unions and parties are then crushed and repressed by the new governments.

Instead of socialism being put off until after democracy is achieved, not even the full democratic and national goals are achieved. The struggle in Zimbabwe started as an anti-imperialist revolution where the workers were told to hold back on their economic demands: now the former guerrilla leaders are corrupt autocrats who rule in the interests of the Western banks.

Closer to home there is Northern Ireland. The Stalinist-influenced Sinn Fein leaders persistently refused to adopt working class methods and socialist goals as part of the anti-imperialist revolution. "Lets get rid of the Brits first, before we start talking about workers' revolution" they used to say in the 1980s. They built a pan-nationalist bloc with the Northern Ireland middle class party, the SDLP, and the Irish bourgeois government in the south. And what did it deliver – the near surrender of the IRA, the changing of the Irish constitution to renounce Eire's claim on the North, and the demobilisation of a mass struggle that 18,000 British troops could not stamp out.

The working class in Third World countries has to be at the forefront of the democratic and national struggles. It has to build an alliance with the peasantry. It must fight for nationalisation of the land, and give to those who till it massive subsidies and modernisation programmes for agriculture, including collective and co-operative farming. It must fight for full political democracy by advancing the slogan of the Constituent Assembly.

Alongside the fight for democracy the workers and peasants must create their own democracy in the factories and fields: workers' and peasants' councils should form the basic units of struggle and socialists fight for these to become the organs of the government that replaces the pro-imperialist dictators and cronies.

Alongside the fight for national liberation must go a rejection of nationalism. We need internationalism – above all spreading the revolution and ensuring that national or ethnic minorities in the Third World states do not become the new oppressed once imperialism is chased away.

Anti-imperialist revolutions cannot hold onto power or achieve much progress unless they are accompanied by revolutions in the world's rich countries. For us it is yet another argument for permanent revolution.

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

Build the action against global capitalism

OVER THE past three years global anger at international capitalism and its institutions has been growing. May Day 2000 could be one of the biggest protests yet.

The roots of this anti-capitalist movement can be traced back to the Zapatistas of Mexico, who called a meeting of all those engaged in struggle throughout the world. A diverse range of groups attended from Indian peasant organisations to the Canadian postal workers, leading to the formation of the People's Global Action Movement. This called for world wide protests aimed at the faceless and unaccountable organisations of the bosses – the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the G8 (the group of countries which dominate the world economy).

The first of these actions, in 1998, coincided with the G8 summit meeting in Birmingham. Since then any major gathering of the capitalist organisations has been faced with a counter gathering of environmentalists, anarchists, trade unionists, socialists and others who are generally fed up with capitalism; from the WTO in Geneva, through J18 in London, and culminating in the riots in Seattle last November.

"Where next after Seattle?", has been a familiar question posed since last year's events. The proposal by the Canadian postal workers to reclaim May Day is the answer.

Workers' struggles in the late nineteenth century and international solidarity with those struggles led to May Day becoming International Workers Day.

Following the call from the Canadian workers organising groups have begun to spring up throughout the country, (in Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Nottingham and Southampton) and internationally to build action for this year's May Day. Much of the debate has centred around where the focus of the weekend's activities should lie. Many are in favour of small local actions of a few hundred people taking place simultaneously throughout the country.

However, as the events in Seattle and in London on 18 June proved, large national events can have a far bigger impact. It was not the actions of a few hundred isolated individuals that caused the WTO talks to break down. It was the thousands of radical youth, trade unionists, environmental activists and peasant and worker activists marching together against the damage wrought against both people and the environment by global capitalism.

RECLAIM MAY DAY!



This is why it is crucial that we try to build a mass anti-capitalist action in Britain for May Day. The imagination and potential that exists has already been shown. In Sheffield, for example, around 80 people have been attracted to the organising meetings which has sparked a level of political activity not seen in the city for years. Events prior to the day itself have been organised, such as an anti-privatisation rally, culminating in a festival against capitalism on the 29 April.

It is vital that this momentum is not lost. Local events can be used to build a huge gathering of anti-capitalist forces. Any national event (probably in London

Get involved! Come to the organising meetings and demos

London: Tuesday evenings; Arsenal Tavern

Manchester: 6 March 7.30 pm; Friends Meeting House

Day of workshops and discussion: 8 April, 11 am; Friends Meeting House

Sheffield: 7 March 7:30, 14 March 7:00;

Mount Pleasant Community Centre, Sharrow Lane

Anti CSL/ council privatisation demo: 7 March 12:30, Town Hall Steps

where the main centres of political and economic power lie), must be organised to ensure mass participation, rather than restricted to being the property of a small and self selected clique. Decisions such as that made by some anarchist organisations, the Anarchist Federation and Solidarity, to exclude certain groups (such as Revolution, the socialist youth organisation, and the SWP) from nominally "anti-capitalist" events need to be exposed and challenged.

Revolution comrades were told that they were banned because, as socialists, they were the wrong kind of anti-capitalists!

The sheer weight of numbers and the involvement in the labour movement gave some protection to the demonstrators in Seattle. But, given the mas-

sive police crackdown and the severe sentences meted out after J18, defending protesters by means of organised teams of stewards, is vital on local and national May Day events.

We must build May Day among rank and file trade unionists, as well as in schools and colleges and on the streets and estates. Mayday 2000 is the perfect opportunity for us to show the bosses what we think of their rotten system. No more exploitation, privatisation, rape of the planet, or paying for their profits.

May Day can also be a day to remind the bosses of our collective strength. From the US strikes in 1886 to Barcelona 1937 workers across the world have shown, on 1 May, the power of collective action. It is time we flexed our muscles on May Day once again.

TURN PRAGUE INTO SEATTLE

The International Monetary Fund are holding their annual meeting in Prague in late September (23-28) to discuss how best to increase the exploitation and misery of the world's poorest people. But this year their discussion will be interrupted.

Socialists and activists from across Europe are gathering to show that wherever the bosses get together we'll be there to protest against them. Be there, make your voice heard.

Contact Revolution on 0181 981 0602 if you are interested in coming to Prague.

Further details on the events in Prague can be found at: www.destroyimf.org

FEEDBACK ■ Contact us on 0181 981 0602

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