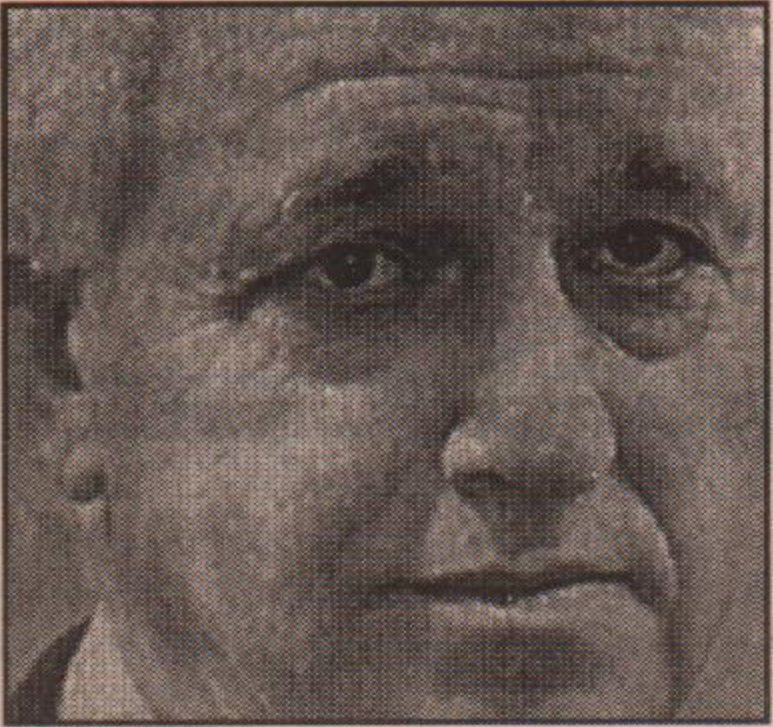


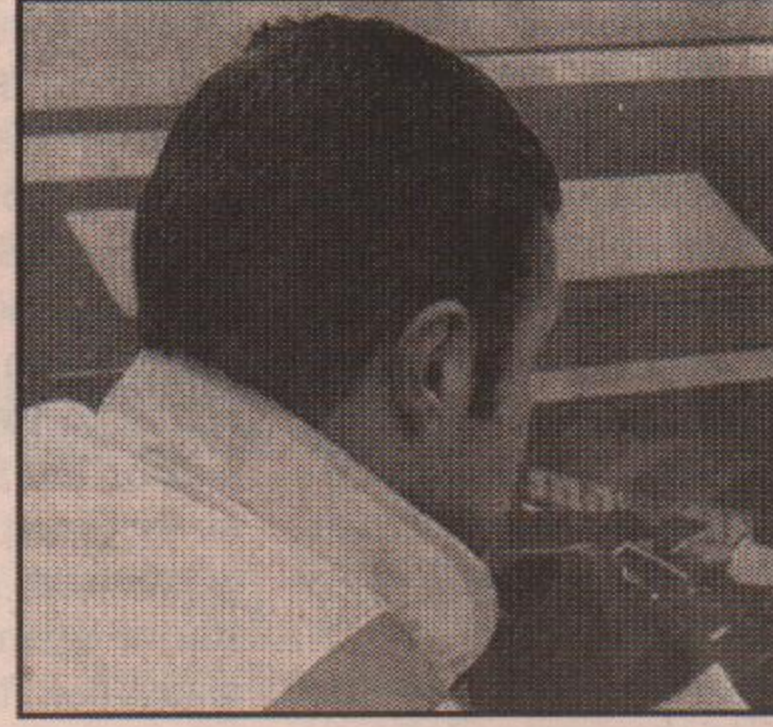
workers POWER

- **Indonesia: Wahid wobbles**
pp 6-7
- **Bush's government and the war in Colombia** pp 8-9



"I'm interested in making money, not steel"

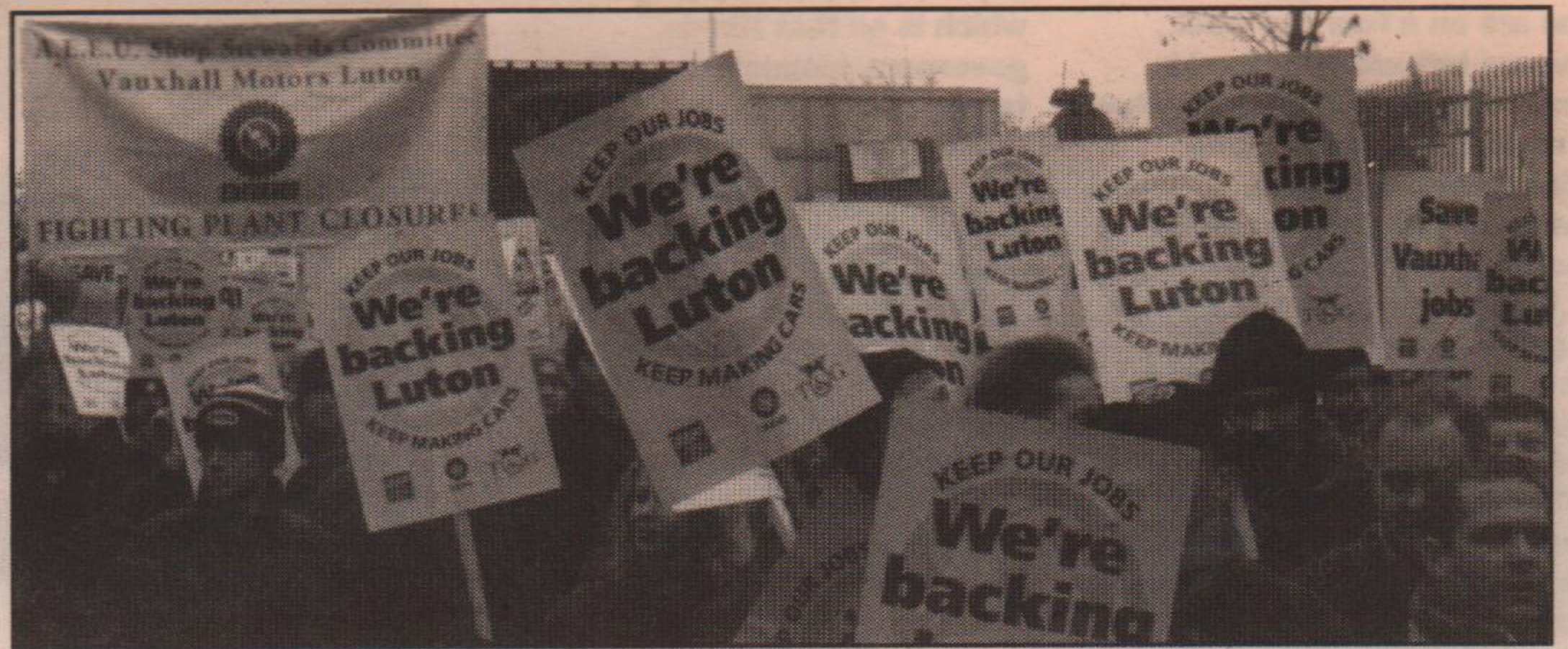
Sir Brian Moffat, Chair, Corus



"They have killed our community"

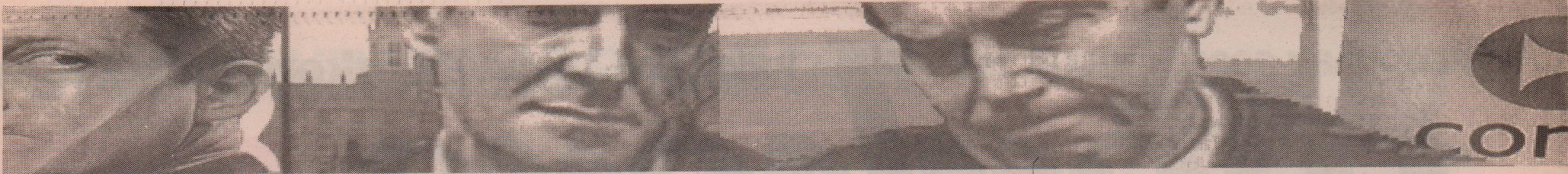
Worker, Ebbw Vale steelworks

Stop the jobs massacre



- **Occupy**
- **Nationalise**
- **Fight for the right to work**

Now turn to pages 2 and 3



UNDERGROUND

Support the tube strikes

THREE ONE day strikes on London Underground go ahead on the first three Mondays of February despite the intervention of the high court.

Anyone who has any doubts about whose side the state is on when it comes to a dispute between workers and bosses need look no further than the high court injunction granted against the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT).

A massive 89 per cent of RMT tube workers voted to strike over concerns for safety; one unelected judge decided that their strike could not go ahead. That makes the US Presidential elections look democratic.

The judge granted the injunction making the RMT strike illegal on a technicality – management claimed that the union had not told them exactly where each of the members worked.

First, you might have assumed that the management of London Underground would actually know where the employees worked! Secondly this technicality was dreamt up not by the Tories, but is actually the result of legislation pushed through under New Labour

which, they claimed, would simplify the requirements for getting official action.

The RMT decision is yet more evidence that trade unionists should demand that all anti-trade union laws should be scrapped. Workers have a democratic right to withdraw their labour.

Action on the tube will go ahead, however, since the other rail union ASLEF called the action jointly with the RMT and their ballot (74 per cent in favour) has not been challenged. With ASLEF setting up picket lines, RMT workers will not cross and the strikes look set to be solid across the tube network.

London's workers will support this strike. The right wing London newspaper, the *Evening Standard*, recently organised a poll to show Londoners' disgust with the threatened strikes but their plans went awry when Londoners voted to support the strikers!

Tube travellers experience the appalling state of the network every day and many are aware of what privatisation, leading to horrific accidents like Hatfield, could mean for the tube.

Across the country people have seen what privatisation and profit mean for our national railways. In a recent poll 76 per cent voted in support of renationalising the railways.

The rail network, and the victims of the Southall, Hatfield and Ladbroke Grove accidents, are still suffering the effects of under-investment caused by companies like Railtrack ignoring safety in order to make massive profits. The idea that at the very same time Labour is preparing to privatise the tube is frankly disgusting.

Many Londoners are putting their hopes on Ken Livingstone and his transport supremo Bob Kiley. Livingstone was greeted with a standing ovation when he told a meeting in January that he would support the tube workers and join them on the picket line. But we have heard fine words from Livingstone before and his stance against privatising the tube has always been tempered by a halfway house scheme to issue bonds to raise money for improvements rather than demand investment from the government and increased taxes on the rich.

And while the High Court was attempting to derail the tube strike Bob Kiley was in negotiation with Transport Minister, John Prescott. It looks increasingly likely that Kiley will come up with some kind of compromise deal with New Labour on a "modified" Public-Private Partnership deal. This behind the scenes negotiating shows just how right the tube workers are to fight for the safety of the tube now.

Tube workers are demanding agreements on staffing levels to ensure safety and assurances on jobs, terms and conditions. They also want a joint organisation, with trade union representation, to oversee maintenance and renewals work.

Picket lines will be organised at all depots and the unions are asking for other workers to join pickets at key tube stations across London. The first three days of strike action are a good start, but it may not be enough to shift London Underground or New Labour. More action will be needed. It is vital that rank and file members are involved in deciding how to build the action.

Regular mass meetings open to all members are needed. Such meetings should elect a strike committee to run the dispute, with delegates recallable and accountable to the members. Mass meetings, a strike committee and strong rank and file organisation will be essential to win the dispute.

Rank and file organisation will also have to ensure that the union leaderships do not hatch a deal behind the backs of members. Mick Rix of ASLEF and Jimmy Knapp of the RMT are already suggesting that the dispute could be resolved simply by management conceding on the idea of a joint safety council.

Such a body would also involve privately owned infrastructure companies (infracos). Accepting a role for such companies is a dangerous concession to the privatisation of the tube.

And the support for this strike shows there need be no such concessions. The workers on the network and the workers of London, don't want privatisation in any shape or form. A real victory is within our grasp.

TEACHERS

Pay deal offers little comfort

CHILDREN ARE being sent home, some are on a four day week, some are left unsupervised in classrooms, 10,000 more teachers are needed in London alone.

But according to the government there is no crisis in education. The School Teachers Pay Review Body, which advises the government on what to pay teachers each year, has also contributed by coming up with a totally inadequate pay award.

Most teachers will get an increase of around 3.7 per cent, with Newly Qualified teachers getting 5.9 per cent. The London allowance will be increased by £700. Little comfort for anyone who actually wants to live in London. No one in New Labour seems to be able to explain why a policeman in London needs an extra £6,000, but a teacher only needs £3,000.

But pay is really only half of the story. The major reason that so many teachers are leaving their jobs is the amount of extra work they are expected to do beyond teaching in the classroom. The Ofsted regime, government initiatives like the Literacy and Numeracy Hour, SATs, performance related pay all result in piles of extra paperwork. Teachers produce masses of

paperwork, the only purpose of which is so that Heads, governors, inspectors, league tables consultants and government ministers can pretend that they are making sure we do our job. Oh, and sometimes you might get to teach.

The response of the leaderships of the teaching unions to the crisis has been less than inspiring. The NUT and NAS/UWT will ballot their members on refusing to cover extra classes caused by the recruitment crisis.

This may protect some teachers from the most savage managements who would force teachers to take classes of 50 plus if it means that they can pretend there is no problem and avoid sending children home. But it will do nothing to resolve the underlying problems.

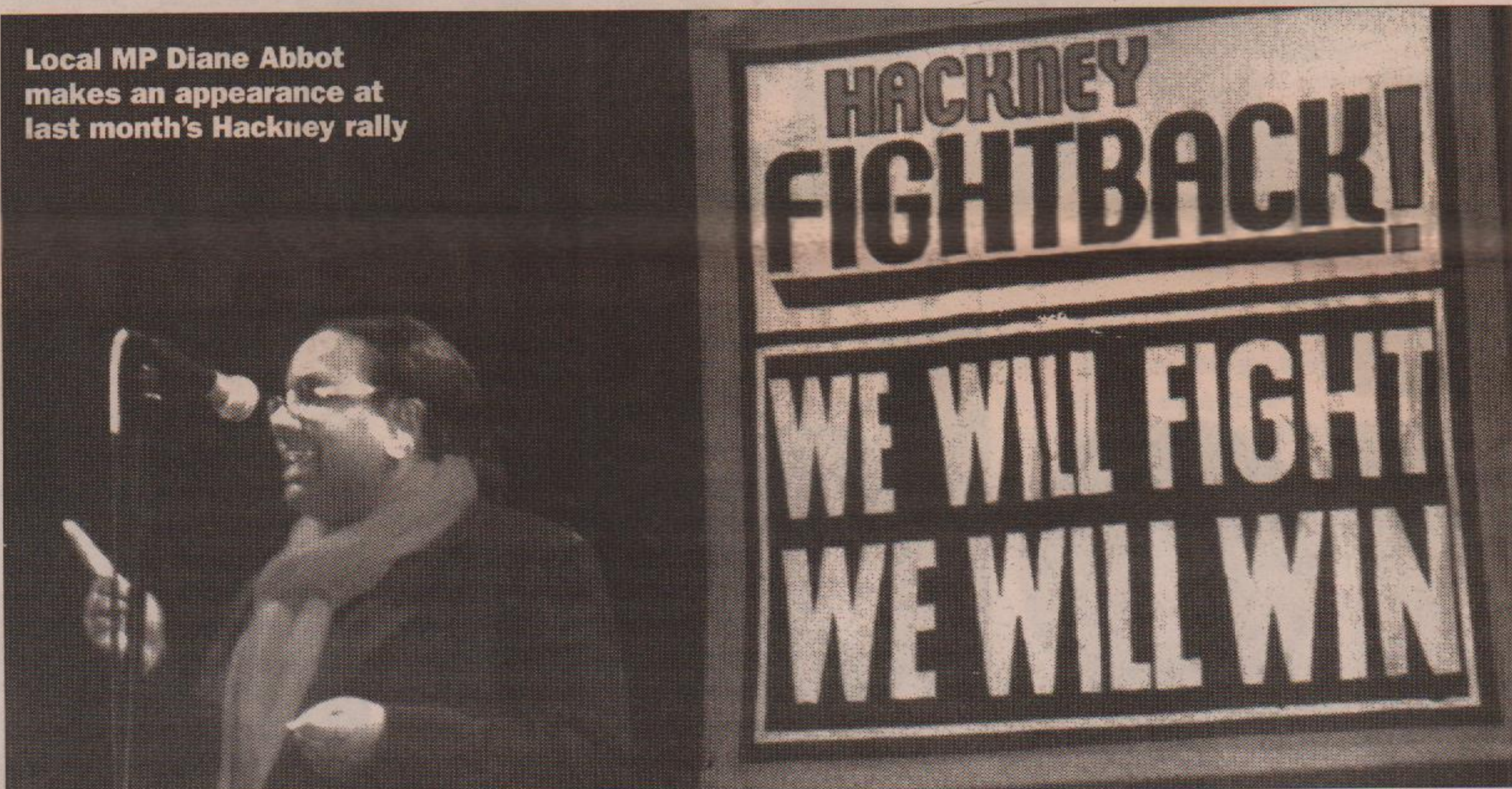
At a rally in central London at the end of January, teachers were warned not to be too militant by their General Secretary Doug McAvo. Yet demands for strike action from other speakers were greeted with thunderous applause and standing ovations. Teachers know we will have to force McAvo and New Labour to listen. And the only thing that will make them listen is strike action.



Teachers at Haggerston School, Hackney took unofficial action last month in support of striking council workers

HACKNEY

Local MP Diane Abbot makes an appearance at last month's Hackney rally



Hackney fights back

"When they meet to set the Council Tax and the next cuts budget, there should be a borough-wide general strike right across Hackney."

This was the rallying cry of Unison branch secretary John Page at a 750-strong meeting which marked the culmination of a three-day strike by some 5,000 trade unionists in Hackney.

Members of Unison, the TGWU, GMB and UCATT have now walked out three times since early November 2000 in opposition to a savage attack on council services, jobs, pay and conditions. Other speakers at the rally included the retiring Labour MP, Tony Benn, *Guardian* journalist, Gary Younge, comedian Jeremy Hardy and the MP for the Hackney North constituency, Diane Abbott. Her appearance at the rally, after several flip-flops, was her firmest identification to date with the fight against the council leadership.

Meanwhile in the Town Hall, New Labour and Tory councillors met to rubber stamp a proposal to sack the whole workforce in the early spring and impose new terms and conditions.

The immediate rationale for cuts totalling £51 million and the associated assault on the workforce is Hackney's acute financial crisis. Senior management, led by managing director Max Cäller on £150,000 a year, are hell-bent on balancing the books on the backs of the workforce and tenants, who will almost certainly face rent rises above the rate of inflation.

There is also a core element of the Labour group leadership, now in alliance with the Tories, that is clearly committed to a programme of widespread privatisation of public services.

The council has already sold off its waste management (street cleansing and refuse collection) service to a profiteer (Servicteam) and has still not resolved the future of its hapless

housing benefit service.

The private contractor, ITNet, has overseen the dramatic worsening of this vital service in a borough where one in three households live on annual income of less than £5,000 a year.

Hundreds of tenants have either been evicted or faced notices from private landlords as a result. Despite claims that the council has "sacked" ITNet, the council looks poised to hand over the service to still another privateer.

For some staff the new contracts would mean a pay cut of £87 a week. Stewards from the Social Services department effectively countered claims by the council leadership that low-paid workers would not be badly affected. An analysis of a careworker's pay slip revealed that she would lose nearly £205 a month from her current take-home pay of just under £970.

The closure of nurseries, homes for the elderly and the threat of an increase in the working week have all fuelled anger among the council workforce and beyond. The three-day strike commanded overwhelming support among unionised workers. The first day of the most recent walk-out saw at least 20 of the borough's schools shut, as NUT members refused to cross picket lines.

Links between community organisations, service users, trade unionists and striking council workers need to be developed. Workers Power is calling for a borough wide action council made up of accountable and recallable delegates representing all groups of workers in Hackney. Such a council could organise an investigation into the financial mismanagement, formulate a needs based budget and co-ordinate the strike action. Such an action council is urgently needed if John Page's call for a general strike is to become a reality.

STEEL

Bosses at the Anglo-Dutch steel giant, Corus, announced more than 6,000 redundancies on 1 February. They have since made plain that no job in steel making in Britain is safe. *Jon Bevan* reports from the region hardest hit, South Wales

Butchering the industry

CORUS WILL "take on the world": these were the words of steel union leader Michael Leahy when British Steel and Hoogovens merged in 1999. But Corus' first aim was to take on the workers.

Now the full savagery of their intentions has been revealed: the closure of Shotton and Ebbw Vale works, 1,320 jobs sacrificed at Llanwern, and a host of other cuts.

The butchery has come as no surprise to steelworkers. Since the defeat of the 1980 strike, closures and mass

redundancies have come thick and fast in the metal industries. At first these were in the name of higher productivity. Now steelworkers' productivity could not be greater – and they still get sacked.

With worldwide demand down and steel prices at their lowest in 20 years, Corus bosses looked to make the quick cuts – the plants where workers were easiest and cheapest to sack. That, for the bosses, is the beauty of Blair's Britain, where the government still refuses to implement a timid European Union directive about workers' rights to con-

sultation and information disclosure.

Blair has undoubtedly been embarrassed by Corus' actions. His Welsh lieutenant, Rhodri Morgan, has sought for the past year to persuade the government to soften the blow. But Corus have heard from their new bankers. Plant closures and job cuts were the preconditions for a new loan worth £1.5 billion. Hatchet-man Brian Moffat was put in charge of the company.

And what were Blair and Morgan offering Corus? Yet more public money, much in the form of rate relief, to add

to the huge grants they have already received, having bought the nationalised steel industry at a knock-down price in the first place.

The truth is that faced with the realities of globalisation, Labour has no answers. In maintaining Thatcher's "deregulated" labour markets, they have served up workers on a plate to ruthless capitalists like Corus. And in refusing to countenance renationalisation, they are forced to suck up to the multinationals as the only way of keeping plants open.

LABOUR HAS betrayed the working class. Despite the blathering of Rhodri Morgan, this is the overwhelming conclusion of workers at Llanwern.

We are, however, on the verge of an election and the people of Newport East have an ideal opportunity to make their feelings known. The Welsh Socialist Alliance (WSA) will almost certainly contest the seat currently held by ex-Tory Alan Howarth. The WSA is committed to the renationalisation of steel and full employment.

The WSA needs to take action now. It should concentrate its forces on Newport, getting speakers into meetings of Llanwern steelworkers, calling street meetings in the affected communities, and being the prime mover and supporter of strike action. The active support for the WSA of workers in struggle will massively increase its appeal in the election.

Plaid Cymru, as usual, are gunning for left-of-Labour votes. But workers who already have the misfortune to be represented by Plaid AMs and councillors know just how anti-working class the nationalists really are. Plaid represent the interests of a professional Welsh-speaking elite. The party has never enjoyed popularity in Newport. An active, committed WSA campaign will soon demonstrate who is the genuine socialist alternative to Labour.

Don't trust the union leaders

WORKERS AT Llanwern, Ebbw Vale, Shotton and other threatened plants on Teesside should place no trust in their union leaders. The ISTC's Michael Leahy has been a consistent apologist for Corus, praising their productivity drives and talking down the threat of redundancies.

In 1999 he dismissed rumours that the British Steel-Hoogovens merger would lead to the closure of a UK plant, calling it "ill-informed speculation".

Sir Ken Jackson, meanwhile, stands at the head of a union which time and again has undermined the labour movement. The AEEU has shamelessly poached members of other unions and set up sweetheart deals with bosses, often with no-strike deals included. He has personally been an enthusiastic cheer-

leader for the Blairite project in the Labour Party.

Sir Ken Jackson said of British Steel and Hoogovens, "a merger could bring huge benefits".

Redundancies do not really affect the likes of Leahy and Jackson. Nevertheless, they must be seen to be doing something: hence the talk of an ISTC buy-out at Llanwern, and possible industrial action.

A union buy-out was never a viable option for steelworkers. It would replace one set of bosses with another. Market forces would lead to union members being sacked by the very people who are supposed to defend them. Does Leahy mean business when he threatens industrial action? Again, workers should be sceptical. Union leaders have staged token stoppages to save face or improve their bargaining position, but they will resist

any attempt to pursue the kind of all-out indefinite action which can lead to real victories.

That is why rank-and-file steelworkers must take control of the struggle themselves – call action to occupy the affected plants, and set up strike committees composed of those with the stomach for a fight. Workers must demand the immediate renationalisation of steel, without compensation and under the democratic control of workers themselves.

Action must be spread to all affected plants and beyond via an organised rank-and-file strike network. It is vital that this involves Corus' plants in Holland. One encouraging sign has already come from the Dutch union, FNV, whose members will refuse to touch any work transferred from British plants.

CAR WORKERS

Vote 'Yes' in the ballot

THE BALLOT for strike action, triggered by the threat to close the Vauxhall complex at Luton, is now under way. The result of the vote among 6,000 workers at the Luton and Ellesmere Port plants should be known on 12 February.

The ballot comes in the wake of a brilliant demonstration of more than 10,000 Vauxhall workers, other trade unionists and socialists through the streets of Luton on 20 January. Five days later Luton workers staged a mass "sickie", as a means of skirting Britain's anti-union laws and taking part in a day of action against General Motors' bosses across Europe.

Across Europe the strikes, rallies and other protest actions cost GM the equivalent of £1 million in output. The four Opel plants in Germany witnessed hour-long rallies involving more than 15,000 workers, another 6,000 in Antwerp mounted a warning strike while 3,000 Spanish workers struck for the day and marched on the company's offices in Zaragoza.

As Peter Jaszczak, the president of the works council at the GM/Opel factory in Bochum, Germany put it, the 25 January day of action was "a signal that the era of the European-wide strike has come." In addition, dozens of workers from the continental European plants joined the 20 January march, where they received a tremendous reception.

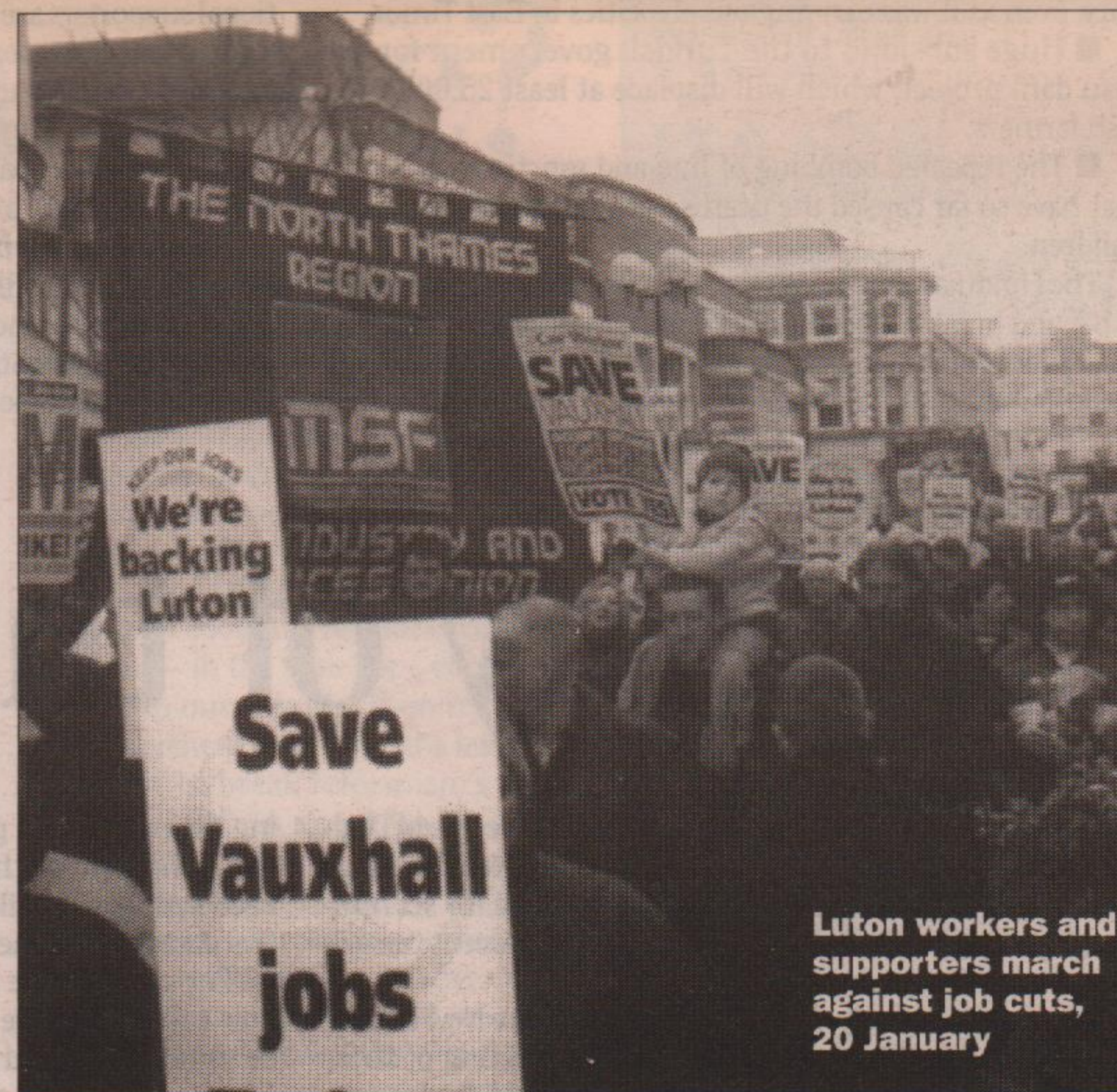
At the same time, however, workers at Luton and Ellesmere

Port, itself clearly under threat, cannot just rely on their brothers and sisters at European plants to come to the rescue.

As the TGWU convenor at Luton, John Jack, told Birmingham Trades Council: "We need total action ourselves – otherwise, how can we ask others to support us?"

At least now the ballot is under way among Vauxhall workers. But the top union officials from the TGWU, AEEU and the MSF are spending little time building for a "yes" vote. The general secretaries of all three unions addressed the January rally in Luton without once mentioning the need for industrial action. The TGWU's chief car industry negotiator, Tony Woodley, mouthed the phrase "industrial action" only once on the day.

Against the background of an upcoming general election national union leaders will be especially reluctant to stage any action that might embarrass New Labour. That is another reason why militants at Luton and Ellesmere Port need to be pushing for rank and file control over this fight. A democratically elected and accountable strike committee is a basic necessity. One of its urgent tasks, once a "yes" vote is won, will be co-ordinating action between the plants in Britain and seeking to spread it to GM's continental European operation.



Luton workers and supporters march against job cuts, 20 January

JOB LOSSES

The alternative to the dole queue

AS 2000 drew to a close the TUC published a report suggesting that up to 10,000 manufacturing jobs a month would be axed over the course of 2001.

January offered ample proof that the TUC was not exaggerating about the scale of this jobs' massacre.

In the first fortnight of the month, bosses announced 5,800 redundancies in manufacturing industries. That was before Corus bosses declared over 6,000 redundancies. It followed on from more than 5,600 job losses announced in December of last year.

In addition to the immediate threat to 2,000 plus jobs at Vauxhall Luton, the recent casualty list has included:

- Marplace, East Midlands: 1,200 jobs.
- Excel Mouldings in Devon and Oxford: 470 jobs.
- BAe Systems: 3,000 jobs nationwide on top of 4,500 last year.
- Goodyear in Wolverhampton: 560 jobs.
- General Trailers in Norfolk: 680 jobs.

Taken together, such mass sackings point to another sharp downturn in manufacturing, which is likely to prove a harbinger of a recession across the economy as a whole.

New Labour has enjoyed a relatively easy economic ride over the last four years, not least because unemployment rates were falling almost every month, even as the official figures

showed that nearly one in eight people in Peter Mandelson's Hartlepool constituency were unemployed.

The months ahead are likely to see rising jobless statistics across Britain unless workers start to mount a real fightback around a programme of demands that rejects the bosses' solution to their crisis of profitability and overcapacity. New Labour has warmly embraced the logic of the global market. In the face of a sharp downturn it can do little more than feign surprise and horror, while offering the workers of Luton and Llanwern an earlier appointment at the job centres.

We don't want this from New Labour.

Instead, here in Britain and across the whole of Europe, we need to be fighting now for:

- the opening up of company accounts to real scrutiny by workers' representatives with the support of experts of their choice so that we can pierce the shield of business secrecy behind which decisions about our lives are made;
 - a 35-hour week with no strings attached: no loss of pay, no speed-ups and "no" to still more flexible working and productivity drives; and
 - the nationalisation of those bosses threatening closures and mass sackings.
- The take-over of the capitalists' property should come without a penny in

compensation to those who have made their profits from exploiting the energy, skills and talents of their workers. These corporations must be under the control of the workers themselves, empowered to make everyday decisions and develop alternative plans for production and to share out available work to the entire workforce.

To translate such demands from rhetoric into reality will require mass action: all-out strikes, workplace occupations and militant demonstrations. It will also need the forging of links between and across plants and workplaces in Britain, throughout the European Union and beyond.



NEW LABOUR: friend of the rich...

SO, FAREWELL Peter – again! Once Mandelson's dodgy dealings with the mega-rich Hinduja brothers were revealed by *The Observer* his departure was inevitable. The ruthless New Labour machine that he had spent so much time building and perfecting, turned on him. Mandelson's continued presence at the heart of government was viewed as a liability in the run up to the election.

The scandal may still claim at least one more minister's career, that of Keith Vaz, and Mike O'Brien at the Home Office may still have to carry the can for fast-tracking the Hinduja passport application.

Mandelson's final fall from grace has laid bare the moral and political vacuum at the centre of the New Labour project. It has begun to reveal the spider's web of contacts that links businessmen like the Hinduja to ruling class politicians internationally.

Mandelson may be the embodiment of arrogance, who fancies himself as the friend of the rich and famous, and something of an "A-list" celebrity in his own right. But he is just one of many players in the comic drama of "Hindujagate".

New Labour came into government with a commitment to being clean and above board, and to be seen as such, in contrast to the persistent charges of "sleaze", which dogged John Major's administration. There would be no more "cash for questions" in the Commons, no more nights at the Paris Ritz paid for by international arms dealers. There was the promise, too, of a fundamentally different, explicitly ethical approach to foreign policy under the stewardship of Robin Cook.

What we have instead is a government mired in allegations of cronyism, a Labour Party that is increasingly dependent on the largesse of a handful of multi-millionaires to run its election campaigns, and various government departments up to their necks in promoting that great British export industry – arms manufacture. The ethical foreign policy has consisted of the following.

- Continuing sales of Hawk fighters to the Indonesian military, even as it was carrying out atrocities in East Timor.

- Huge subsidies to the Turkish government for the Ilisu dam project, which will displace at least 25,000 Kurdish farmers.

- The repeated bombing of Iraq and sanctions against it that have so far caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of children.

The Hinduja was no petty crook and it stretches credibility beyond breaking point to accept that not only Mandelson but a whole string of politicians, both Tory and Labour, did not know exactly who these men were.

The two brothers at the centre of the current scandal have been deeply implicated in one of the most serious and protracted scandals in the history of post-independence India. They face serious criminal charges arising from the Bofors affair, an example of gross corruption involving leading politicians in India and Sweden's biggest weapons manufacturer. The spectre of this scandal stalked Rajiv Gandhi right up until his death.

Yet, *The Observer* finds that the Hinduja can call on the likes of Ted Heath and former Labour minister, Jack Cunningham, to act as referees on passport applications. Politicians from Margaret Thatcher through to Tony Blair have appeared as "honoured guests" at the Hinduja's lavish Diwali celebrations.

Nevertheless, the Mandelson/Hinduja affair provided the perfect opportunity for those in the government who despise Mandelson to put the boot in. Blair's press secretary, Alastair Campbell, made sure that journalists heard remarks questioning Mandelson's mental stability.

"Blame Mandy", the man whom Blair had once declared the Labour Party must learn to love, became a convenient rallying cry in the subsequent damage limitation exercise. In the short term, the biggest winner in the cabinet will certainly be Gordon Brown, long known to be one of Mandelson's many enemies.

Rarely, if ever, has a government been so obsessed with its media image. There can be little doubt that the revelations arising from *The Observer's* initial probe into a Mandelson telephone call have rattled quite a few gilded cages in Downing Street and Millbank. On 30 January there were rumours circulating around the BBC that the cabinet had taken such fright at the potential fallout from "Hindujagate" that it was considering postponing the general election until the autumn.

Behind such rumours lies an important reality in British politics today. New Labour have shown, in office, who their friends are – the rich and powerful. Many of Labour's traditional supporters are beginning to realise that is a government riddled with the most hypocritical double standards. On the one hand, it locks up an ever increasing number of asylum seekers for the "crime" of applying for refugee status. On the other it expedites passport applications for those with a million quid to throw at the Dome.

New Labour without Mandelson will continue this hypocrisy. And it will launch many more attacks on the working class in a second term government. That is why part of building an alternative to Labour involves challenging it in the forthcoming election, as the Socialist Alliance is doing.



Build the

The Socialist Alliance, with over 60 candidates in England, together with the Welsh Socialist Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party, is mounting a serious left challenge to New Labour in the forthcoming election.

The Socialist Alliance stands for socialism: real equality, real justice, real fairness and a world that is not for sale to the giant global corporations. It wants a world run by the people who work in it, not the bosses who rip it off and ruin its environment in their drive for profit.

New Labour is backed by millionaires. Its government is stuffed with bosses like Lord Sainsbury. It is a "business friendly government", which means that when business decides to sack us, cut our wages and attack our rights New Labour helps them do it.

After four years in government Labour has dashed the hopes of the millions who voted for it in 1997.

- Miserly increases for pensioners culminating in the infamous 75 pence rise. Its handout this year can't erase the memory of that insult, especially as it refuses to restore the link between pensions and earnings.

- Privatisation – the Tory mantra – has been taken up with enthusiasm by New Labour. Under the guise of the Private Finance Initiative and the Public Private Partnership those bits of the public sector that the Tories forgot to privatise

have been earmarked for sale to the highest bidder by New Labour, along with council housing and education services.

- Instead of things only getting better New Labour has feigned surprise and pleaded innocence as jobs have been massacred at car plants like Vauxhall at Luton and in hi-tech industries like Panasonic in Cardiff. Now it wrings its hands at the destruction of jobs by Corus, the privatised steel company, but doesn't lift a finger to defend those jobs.

- Racist attacks are on the rise thanks to Jack Straw and Barbara Roche waging their campaign, tireless and sickening in equal measure, against asylum seekers. William Hague is now playing the race card with confidence – confidence given him by New Labour's own racist record.

- Transport is a million miles away from the accountable, integrated system promised by Labour. The railways are a death trap for us and a honey pot for the likes of Richard Branson. The roads are clogged with traffic and the air with fumes because of the appalling state of public transport in every town and village. Yet, not once has New Labour offered to do the obvious thing – the thing the majority of people want – and renationalise the railways.

- New Labour's four years have been marked by the growth of a divided society, divided between rich and poor. Under business friendly, low tax Labour the gap

Rotten compromise with Socialist Party

TOO MUCH of the Socialist Alliance's time has been spent trying to keep the Socialist Party (SP) on board despite its refusal to abide by the democratic decisions of the Socialist Alliance national conference.

Instead of mollifying this organisation, we should be spending our time constructively, discussing the work needed to fight a successful election campaign and the policies we should fight it on.

The SP suffers from a long term infatuation with electoralist politics; they constantly bang on about how many councillors they've got as though that is the sole measure of political success. They then use this to claim privileges within the Socialist Alliance that no one else has.

At the Coventry conference of the Socialist Alliance last autumn it was agreed that local socialist alliances should choose their own candidates. Obvious, democratic and unobjectionable.

However, no sooner had this agreement been reached than the SP declared its intention to stand in a number of constituencies regardless of any decisions by Socialist Alliances where they existed and without attempting to build them where they did not exist.

The dispute over this unilateral approach – which spurned the democratic decision at Coventry – dominated every meeting of the national network of Socialist Alliances through to early January.

The SP's big gripe was that because the SWP had more members than them there was a danger that they would out-vote the SP.

Ignoring the fact that provisions were made at Coventry for fair representation on the slate of candidates and ignoring evidence that in many areas SP candi-

dates would have won selections at Socialist Alliance meetings, the SP were determined to engage in a crusade to defend their right to stand where they liked regardless of the decisions of any local alliances.

In January a deal was finally made, proposed by the SWP and the SP. This deal gave the SP most of the seats they wanted – probably an acceptable compromise in order to avoid a damaging split on the eve of the election. But then the deal went on to state that everywhere they stood the SP would have "political and organisational control of the campaign".

The Workers Power's delegate to the national Liaison Meeting attempted to amend this bit out of the deal. Dave Nelligan of the SP declared that no more amendments would be taken which the meeting accepted. This left our delegate with no choice but to vote against a resolution that completely marginalises the Socialist Alliance wherever there is an SP candidate, which gives the SP control where they have candidates – something no other affiliated organisation has demanded – and undermines the tenuous democratic structures of the Socialist Alliance itself.

Workers Power's was the only vote against this rotten compromise (there was one abstention). The Communist Party of Great Britain subsequently announced they were wrong to vote the way they did.

Everyone who voted for this rotten compromise has contributed to a situation where there is now a risk of two election campaigns – an SP campaign and a Socialist Alliance campaign. If the only alternative to this was that the SP would walk out, then at least everyone would have seen that it was the SP that would have been responsible for the split.

...enemy of the poor

"YOU STRIKERS are the ones letting down the people of Dudley and undermining the NHS." That was the stark message that Dudley South Labour MP Ian Pearson had for six hundred NHS staff in Dudley who are fighting to prevent the privatisation of their jobs.

If anyone was in any doubt before about where New Labour stands they aren't now. And that is why a meeting of strikers confirmed that they will be standing a candidate as part of the Socialist Alliance in the Dudley South constituency at the general election.

This is an excellent initiative. It shows the appeal the Socialist Alliance has to workers in struggle. It can be used to mount an electoral challenge to Labour's rotten support for undermining the NHS and be a platform for continuing to escalate the strike action to win a vital victory.

The Dudley strikers, Unison members who work in non-clinical posts for the Dudley Groups of Hospitals NHS Trust, have now taken over 100 days of strike action in the past six months. They are trying to stop the transfer of their jobs to private companies, including Summit Healthcare, under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme to replace the existing local hospitals with one "super hospital".

In addition to transferring the jobs of non-clinical staff to the private sector, the PFI plan would cut 170 jobs and get rid of 70 of the existing in-patient beds.

Pearson's outburst came at a closed meeting between two local Labour MPs and 250 of the strikers. It followed exchanges in which angry strikers had given the MPs a roasting. They contrasted Pearson's 1997 election literature proclaiming total opposition to PFI as a means of privatising the health service with his lack of action to oppose the Dudley Trust management plans since being elected.

The Labour Party and the Trust management are increas-

ing the pressure to get the strikers to return to work before the campaign for the general election starts. Letters have been sent to all strikers at their homes setting out "indicative dates" when their jobs might be transferred.

For many of the staff, the date is 12 April. The Trust are now saying that the contract with Summit Healthcare will be signed at the end of February. "This is the sixth time they have said the contract with Summit is just about to be signed," one striker responded, "but they are still not scaring us back to work."

New Labour ministers continue to back the Trust management's PFI plans, so the strike leaders are correct to argue that political pressure in the run-up to the general election is vital to winning the dispute. The Socialist Alliance will be doing everything it can to build support for the strike and the strikers' candidate in the weeks and months ahead.

Within Dudley hospitals there needs to be a fresh move to translate the sympathy of clinical staff for the strikers into active support and to prevent the continuing use of agency scabs. The build up to the election campaign should be the occasion for re-visiting every shop stewards committee and workplace in the Black Country not only to appeal for the financial donations which continue to be essential, but to begin to build a campaign of action throughout the local labour movement.

The strikers are calling on the UNISON leadership to organise a national demonstration in Dudley supporting the strike. With more and more PFI announcements being made, such a national demonstration is needed urgently. At the same time efforts to link up all the anti-PFI struggles through an anti-privatisation national conference to spread the action – called by Unison officially if possible, by rank and file trade union bodies if necessary – must be stepped up.

Socialist Alliance



London Socialist Alliance candidates demand the renationalisation of the railways

between the rich and the poor has widened. So much for social justice. So much for ending poverty.

Thousands of Labour's supporters know full well that New Labour has shafted them. And they know that things can only get worse during a second term, especially when the inevitable recession hits Britain. But they still believe there is no alternative. They still argue that the only way to stop the Tories is to vote Labour.

There is an alternative. It is the Socialist Alliance. Instead of being "business friendly" it will tax the rich, nationalise the corporations who try to sack their workers and close their plants, renationalise the railways and put industry under the control of those who work in it. Public services will stay public and will get the funding they need. The Socialist Alliance will wage war on poverty. It will combat racism, sexism and homophobia.

The Socialist Alliance has brought together socialist organisations, trade unionists, community campaigners, anti-racists and socialists who have been driven out of the Labour Party by Blair's casual disregard for social justice and fairness.

It is a campaigning alliance, not here today, gone tomorrow politicians. It is involved in every campaign and every struggle across Britain to defend public services, to end poverty, to fight racism.

You don't have to queue up at a surgery to find the Socialist Alliance. Its supporters will be shoulder to shoulder with you in the fight to stop the bosses and the government closing or selling off surgeries, hospitals and schools.

Above all we, in Workers Britain, believe that the Socialist Alliance can offer real hope by fighting for a totally different type of government to those on offer from Blair, let alone Hague. It must be a government that is truly democratic, a government controlled by the organisations, campaigns and communities of the ordinary workers of Britain, not one run behind the scenes by the bankers, the global corporations and the unelected bigwigs in the courts, the police, the army and the civil service. It must be a workers' government committed to destroying capitalism and the state machine that defends it.

Already the Socialist Alliance has made its mark. In the London Assembly elections Socialist Alliance candidates won over 50,000 votes, yet it had only been going a couple of months. In both Tottenham and Preston we have shaken New Labour in by-elections by taking over five per cent of the vote. In Coventry, Lancashire and in Lewisham there are now Socialist Alliance councillors.

Vote for the Socialist Alliance, work for the Socialist Alliance, join up. Help the campaign to put socialism back on the political agenda.

What kind of programme?

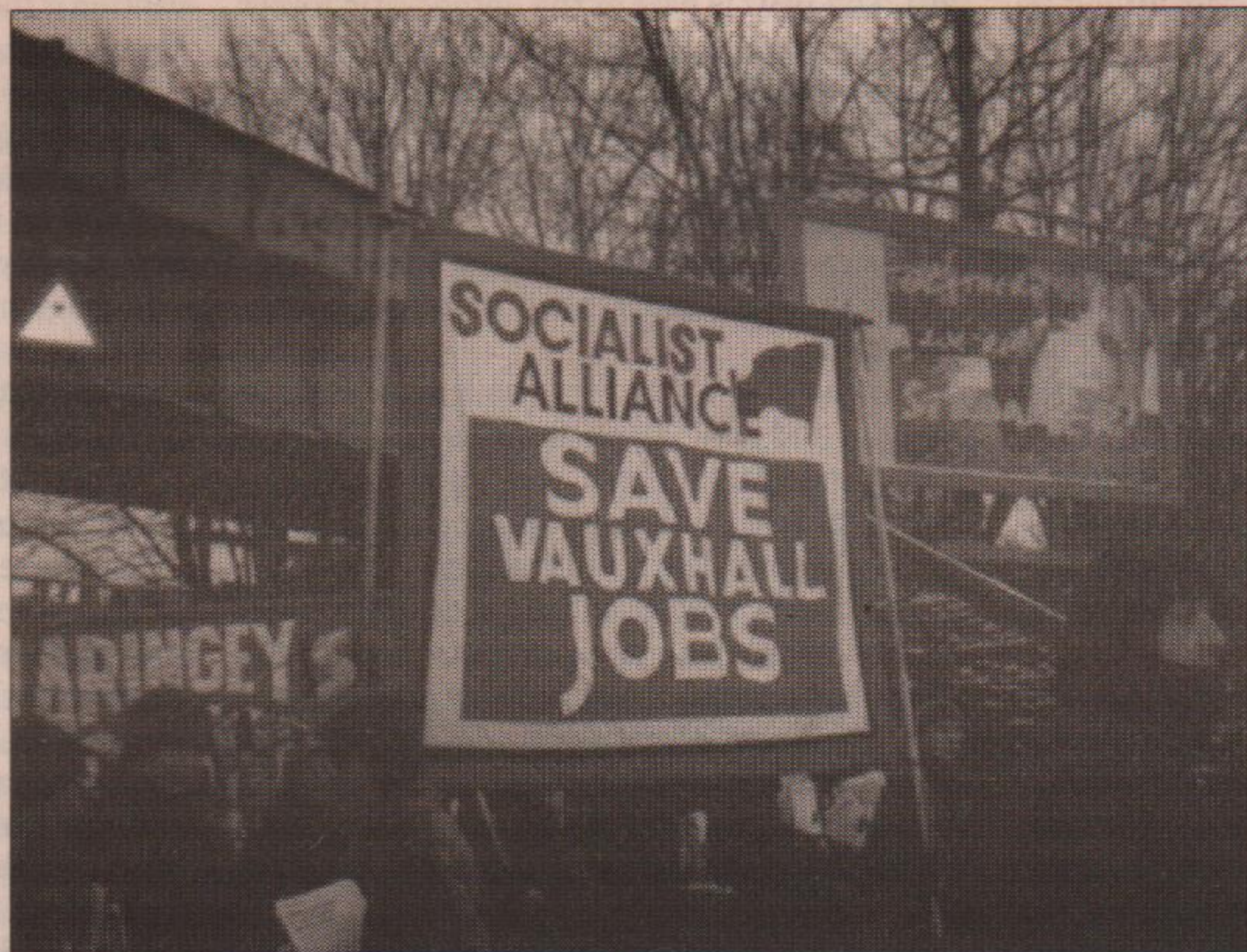
THE CREATION of a united left alliance to fight New Labour is a positive and welcome development. We believe that the entire project should be directed towards building a new revolutionary party, with real roots in the working class.

Such a party can act as a pole of attraction for thousands of working class militants dismayed at Blair's betrayals and the thousands of youth outraged at the barbarism of global capitalism. It could unite and organise the struggles to defend jobs, to stop privatisation, to block the workings of global capitalism's institutions like the IMF and the World Bank.

Armed with a revolutionary programme, such a party could take the fight for socialism forward in leaps and bounds in the coming years. A revolutionary programme is simply a strategy for working class power, articulated through a series of demands, forms of action and organisations that take existing struggles beyond their immediate sectional confines and towards a challenge to the rule and control of the bosses and their government. It culminates in the fight for a revolutionary workers' government, based on the mass, democratic organisations of the workers themselves and defended by an armed working class.

If we are going to win workers to such a strategy, and to the ranks of a party fighting for such a strategy, then it is self-evident that we endeavour to get the Socialist Alliance to start the ball rolling. It is after all made up mainly of people who would describe themselves as revolutionary Marxists. It could use the election to win numerous new supporters to a revolutionary goal.

The truth of the matter is that this is unlikely to happen in the near future. At the policy conference scheduled for



Socialist alliance supporters on the march

10 March the Socialist Alliance's two largest components the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party (SP) have already indicated that they favour advancing a programme that falls well short of being revolutionary. In a bid to capture the votes of discontented Labour supporters they argue that we cannot go "too far" and should limit our programme to a series of radical reforms, combined with vague platitudes about socialism in the future.

This method – encapsulated in the so-called "80/20" Socialist Alliance programme agreed in the West Midlands in 1997 for the European parliamentary elections – leaves out the most important question: how are such demands to be won? For example, it calls for the 35-hour week, a demand we can all agree on. But will Blair implement such a demand? Will the bosses, hell-bent on sacking workers and increasing pro-

ductivity in the face of a looming recession, concede it? The answer is obvious – no. So who will implement it and how?

Revolutionaries have no qualms when faced with such a question from workers seeking a means to save their jobs. We say, fight for the demand with direct action, impose and maintain it with workers' control of the hours worked, and of hiring and firing. Above all, we say, a workers' government would impose the 35-hour week as law against the bosses as part of a struggle to destroy capitalism and the state machine that defends it.

Yet the main forces in the Socialist Alliance – despite formally agreeing with us – draw back from such an open espousal of the revolutionary answer for fear of alienating left-moving reformists whom we want to win over.

We are not indifferent to the current

political consciousness of the mass of Labour-voting workers. That is why the programme must be built like a bridge between the present outlook of the most politically engaged workers and the recognition of the ultimate and necessary aim: the overthrow of the capitalist order.

We are certain that the longer we keep quiet about the revolutionary programme – in the false hope of coaxing people to our side and then trying to convince them by stages – the less likely we are to break reformism's ideological hold. In short, we will not make lasting gains for socialism.

At best, we will create a sort of permanent non-aggression pact between disparate forces of the socialist movement that is incapable of advancing a united and decisive solution when faced with crises in the class struggle. At worst, we will create a party so confused in its understanding of how to get to socialism that when it gets the opportunity to try it will – like Allende's Popular Unity in Chile in the 1970s – enrage the capitalists enough to make them strike back with ferocity but fail to mobilise the workers for a revolutionary struggle against those capitalists.

This is why we are against the method of introducing the revolutionary programme by stages – in fact an excuse for never fighting for it in the open. We will be trying to win the Socialist Alliance at its coming conference to a clear commitment to revolutionary goals and a revolutionary government. Moreover, we are convinced that the mood of the anti-capitalist movement means that we can win thousands of youth to such a programme and party. They will, rightly, not be satisfied with reforms, no matter how radical. They want a root and branch transformation of the world.

HELP RAISE £100,000

THE SOCIALIST Alliance is aiming to stand at least 65 candidates in the coming general election. The Welsh Socialist Alliance will be standing in up to ten constituencies, while the Scottish Socialist Party is planning to stand in every seat in Scotland.

This is the biggest left challenge to any government for the last 50 years. To make it effective we need money. Unlike New Labour and the Tories, we have no millionaires financing us. Nor do we plan to spend millions trying to con voters. But we do have to raise money for deposits, for posters, for meetings.

We rely on contributions from ordinary workers – trade unionists, community activists, students and pensioners. And we need those contributions in the months ahead. That is why we have launched a fund appeal to raise £100,000 to help us get our message across.

Please rush your donations to:
Socialist Alliance
PO Box 121
Coventry
CV1 5DA

Makes cheques/POs payable to "Socialist Alliance"

President Wahid fi

The Parliament in Indonesia has censured President Wahid for his part in financial scandals, opening the way for possible impeachment. Here John McKee looks at the background to the current situation, the state of the left in Indonesia and the struggles for independence in Aceh and West Papua

PRESIDENT ABDURRAHMAN Wahid's position was shaken after the Indonesian Parliament voted 393 to four to censure him for his involvement in two corruption scandals. Wahid's own party, the National Awakening Party (PKB), walked out before the vote. A censure motion could be the first step to impeachment and dismissal.

The vote came after months of investigation by a special parliamentary committee examining the disappearance of \$(US) 6 million – \$4m of it from the State Logistics Agency (BULOG) and the remainder a \$2m donation from the Sultan of Brunei. The money from BULOG had been extracted by a scam, with Wahid's masseur and sometime business partner playing a major role. The Sultan's donation, Wahid insisted, was personal to him.

In themselves such incidents of siphoning off state assets for personal or party use would not cause a crisis in Indonesia. President Suharto, who was overthrown by mass protest in 1998, and his family are under investigation for looting billions from state coffers during their decades in power. Since then, ex-president Habibie and his GOLKAR party, currently the second largest in parliament, stole at least \$50m in the Bank

of Bali scandal to finance the party's election (and bribery) campaign in 1999.

At the heart of the dispute is the major parties' growing dissatisfaction with Wahid's presidency. The coalition which brought Wahid to power has fallen apart and is now out for his blood.

party in parliament with 153 seats, compared to the PKB's 51. Megawati was perhaps the most popular leader of the campaign to oust Suharto. Yet she was swindled out of the presidency by a coalition of Muslim parties, known as the "central axis", acting in alliance with major

Whether the parliament will pursue the road of impeachment, or use the censure to extract concessions from an autocratic President, depends on how much it will profit the different bourgeois parties and figures in parliament. The masses have no interest or side to support in this parliamentary game, aside from needing to sweep the corruption of the old order into the dustbin of history.

Despite Wahid leading the largest Muslim organisation in Indonesia, the 35 million-strong Nahdatul Ulama, the PKB only achieved 10 per cent of the popular vote in the June 1999 elections, compared with 35 per cent for Megawati Sukarnoputri's PDI-P. The PDI-P is the largest

factions of Habibie's GOLKAR.

Soon afterwards, Wahid redistributed the spoils. Megawati was made Vice-President (but only after mass rioting by her supporters), Amien Rais, leader of the Muslim PAN, became the Chair of parliament, and GOLKAR received impor-

Indonesian left ties itself to

THE PEOPLE'S Democratic Party (PRD) has played an important role in the history of struggle against the Suharto regime. Founded in 1996, many of its militants and leaders were jailed by the dictatorship. It has an international ally in the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) of Australia which has both guided and publicised the PRD (and its various youth, peasant and trade union fronts), depicting it as a socialist force in Indonesia.

But the DSP and the PRD have a fatal flaw – they see the struggle for revolution in Indonesia as going through watertight stages. First comes the struggle for democracy, the destruction of all the remnants of Suharto's "New Order" regime – and only once this is completed can the struggle for socialism commence. They reject the perspective of "permanent revolution", developed by Leon Trotsky, which sees the struggle for democracy as inextricably linked with the struggle for socialism. This perspective sees the working class taking the leading role in the struggle to solve the democratic questions as part of the struggle for socialist revolution.

In practice, the stages strategy leads the PRD to seek "democratic allies" in the liberal bourgeoisie to pursue and strengthen the struggle in Indonesia. This tactic invariably limits the demands of the working class so as not to scare off the so-called liberal bourgeoisie. In short, this is just another twist on the Stalinist "popular front" tactic. The dangers of such a strategy could not be clearer than in the PRD's actions in the current crisis.

At the end of January the PRD approached the leadership of the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) for an alliance for "reformasi total". This was a slogan raised by sections of the student movement in the struggle to finally defeat the old Suharto regime. It means ending the influence of the military at all levels of society, the so-called "dual function" of the army – political and military. The army (TNI) has 38 unelected representatives in Parliament, and a similar representation at every level of government down to the village council.

The slogan also means the trial and punishment of Suharto and all the agents of the old regime for the mass murder and torture carried out under the dictatorship as well as the expropriation of their ill-gotten wealth. It means the dismantling of the system popularly called KKN – "corruption, collusion and nepotism", which still dominates the parliament and Indonesian society. Excellent demands, but ones

which can only be carried out by a revolutionary mass movement, which destroys the basis of crony capitalism for good.

The PRD sees it otherwise. In a "Political Call to the NU" (23.1.01) it says: "This problem must be seen in the framework of the development of the democratic forces which are responsible for the processes of the transition to democracy. The PRD is part of the democratic forces which desires consistency and joint work in order to complete reformasi total. What we truly hope for is truth – or siding with Gus Dur (Abdurrahman Wahid's nickname) and PKB – to struggle for reformasi total."

The call goes on to invite the NU to join in a "peaceful mass movement" to achieve reformasi total.

In practical terms this has led the PRD to organise and join demonstrations in support of Wahid and against those, including many student organisations denouncing corruption, calling for the President's resignation.

The Jakarta Post described the demonstration the day before the impeachment: "Late in the afternoon hundreds of Gus Dur supporters arrived to demand the dissolution of GOLKAR as a symbol of the New Order regime. The protesters came from various groups such as the PRD, FAMRED and the Student League for Democracy."

The excuse for siding with one bourgeois faction against another was developed by the DSP in their paper, *Green Left Weekly*. It describes the campaign to censure Wahid as a bid for power by the TNI and GOLKAR, a re-assertion of the old order's power. The DSP conveniently ignore the fact that the PDI-P and the PAN are equally involved in this struggle against Wahid. This is because these two parties were part of the anti-Suharto popular movement and therefore do not fit into the "right-wing coup" scenario being invented by the DSP.

The 17 January issue of *Green Left Weekly* declared that the "PKB was the only party which attempts to show some support for the liberal democratic agenda" and cited among the "successes" of the PRD the initiation of the National Assembly Campaign which "brought together 75 mass organisations including supporters of Wahid and other elements of the liberal bourgeoisie"

Of course, there is no evidence that Wahid and the PKB support the "liberal democratic agenda", let alone a radical democratic struggle along the lines demanded by reformasi total. Wahid had threatened the Parliament with mass demon-

strations by "hundreds of thousands of NU members" if they went ahead with the censure – in fact hundreds turned up. His allies talked about the president "freezing" parliament, a reference to President Sukarno's 1959 coup against the parliament, which ended the "democratic experiment" of Indonesia's first presidency. Wahid's Defence Minister even threatened military intervention if the politicians' "bickering continued". Hardly the actions of a "liberal democrat"!

Not only has Wahid implemented the most anti-working class IMF measures, but he has:

- abandoned his promise of a referendum for Aceh on independence
- is on record as blaming Australia for the "chaos in East Timor" at the height of the attempt to crush the independence movement, and
- reneged on his promise to lift the ban on "Marxist-Leninist" parties and literature introduced under the Suharto dictatorship.

Of course, the TNI is manoeuvring to strengthen its powers and to sabotage any concessions to independence movements that it depicts as threats to the integrity of Indonesia. And, of course, GOLKAR benefits from the failure to root out the corrupt old regime, drawing its strength primarily from central government and local bureaucrats dependent on its nepotism and favouritism.

But this is not an argument for siding with an undemocratic attempt to forcibly dissolve it, as advocated by Wahid supporters.

It is instead an argument to fight for a series of radical democratic demands that sweep away the material basis for corruption of all the parties – an end to the TNI's dual function, parliamentarians and bureaucrats to be paid a worker's wage, expropriation of all property (including those of the New Order parties) misappropriated under the dictatorship, direct election to all government posts, corrupt officials to be arraigned before workers' and peasants' courts, dissolution of the corrupt supreme court and for the election of all judges etc. Such demands cannot be given priority over the other burning demands of the masses in the midst of a deep social and economic crisis.

A revolutionary socialist party would put to the forefront, alongside its demands for a democratic revolution, an emergency programme to address the crisis facing the workers and peasants suffering under the unbearable burdens of poverty and exploitation. Such a programme would include the following.

ights for survival

tant cabinet positions, as did other parties like the Muslim PPP. But the parties that brought Wahid to power are now disillusioned and are jockeying for position in a future presidential race.

Wahid has presided over a deteriorating economy for the mass of the population. The enormous economic crisis that rocked the country, together with the rest of South East Asia, in 1997/98 has been followed by an austerity package imposed on the country by the IMF and the major imperialist "donor countries". Saddled with billions in debts from the Suharto period, with virtually bankrupt state corporations and banks, the Wahid government has swallowed the bitter pill of a neo-liberal Structural Adjustment Programme.

Subsidies to fuel and electricity have been slashed, with prices jumping 12-20 per cent, while wages of those lucky enough to work have been held down. Major universities are about to be "corporatised" and fees have rocketed as the government withdraws funding. Expenditure on education in the current budget has fallen to one per cent of GDP – a 30 per cent cut on last year's budget.

Between a quarter and a third of the government budget goes on debt repayments, while



an estimated 30-40 per cent of the population of 200 million remain unemployed or underemployed. The number of the population living in poverty, defined as less than \$2 a day, has leapt from 31 million in 1996 to 56 million in early 1999. Meanwhile, the IMF has targeted 60 state conglomerates that they want broken up and sold off to international corporations over the next decade.

With such policies producing growing resistance in the form of strikes, demonstrations and riots, it is useful for the bourgeois parties to try and divert the masses' attention to corruption scandals and target the president.

More importantly, Wahid has failed to hold the nation state together. The loss of East Timor was not only an enormous blow to the army, the TNI, but also to the idea of Indonesia as a uni-

tary state. Wahid has desperately attempted to head off the growing independence struggles in Aceh and in West Papua (officially called Irian Jaya by the Indonesian state). The President took personal responsibility for Aceh, a strongly Muslim province with a long history of struggle both against the Dutch and against the Jakarta government. He has also played a major role in dealing with West Papua.

In both cases his offers of greater autonomy have been spurned, not least because the army and police have continued their atrocities against the people of these territories. The moves for independence now are stronger than when Wahid came to power – his policies are seen as a failure. The TNI, GOLKAR and the PDI-P, which takes a hard line in defence of the unitary state, are demanding tougher measures to crush the independence movements.

Whether the parliament will pursue the road of impeachment, which will take many months, or uses the censure to extract concessions from an autocratic President, depends on how much it will profit the different bourgeois parties and figures in parliament. The masses have no interest or side to support in this parliamentary game, aside from needing to sweep the corruption of the old order into the dustbin of history.

Wahid

- The cancellation of the foreign debt run up by Suharto and his cronies.
- The expropriation of the large landlords and the formation of co-operative enterprises for the peasants – with cheap loans and subsidised fertilisers from state banks.
- The expropriation of the large industries – placed under the control of the workers, with their resources and production used to address the needs of the masses – not the profits of the few.
- A massive programme of public works involving hospital and school building – putting the unemployed to work on a living wage.
- End the oppression of national minorities – independence for Aceh and West Papua, for a voluntary federation of Indonesian peoples based on regional and local autonomy
- End the oppression of religious minorities – for the separation of mosque, temple and church from the state, for secular, state-run education up to 16 years of age.

Such a revolutionary democratic and socialist programme could only be implemented by a workers' and peasants' government, brought to power and protected by the armed people. This is the real alternative which socialists should be fighting for, in sharp contrast to the parliamentary squabbles and manoeuvres. Any appeal to the worker and peasant rank and file of NU, the PDI-P, PAN etc. should be based on such a programme of struggle.

The PRD adopts another course, the programme of the popular front, which reduces the demands of the workers to those acceptable to the "liberal democrats" and ties the PRD to the coat-tails of Wahid. This policy has predictably produced a crisis in the PRD. In November a Democratic Socialist Faction, including 22 leaders and organisers based in Jakarta, was expelled from the PRD. One of their differences was over critical support to the PKB.

In an interview they said: "The truth is that the PRD presents (Gus Dur) as a progressive bourgeois. We find no proof of this at all, nor of the existence of a progressive wing of the bourgeoisie in Indonesia." On this the faction were absolutely right.

Predictably, the DSP denounced the split and supported the line of the PRD leadership. The task is now to rally a real socialist party around a resolute defence of independent working class interests, one that does not attempt to find and tie itself to a "progressive wing" of the bourgeoisie.

Repression continues in Aceh

ACEH, AN oil-rich province of Indonesia, has been struggling for its independence since 1873 when the Dutch declared war on the independent state. Integrated into what became Indonesia, an independence movement under Muslim leadership, continued the struggle against the Sukarno government in the 1950s and 60s. Crushed in the 1960s the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) emerged strengthened from the struggle against the Suharto dictatorship.

The offer of a referendum on either autonomy or independence for East Timor in January 1998 gave an enormous boost to the independence movement. The National Committee of Human Rights sent a mission to Aceh under the new President Habibie. It brought to light horrific atrocities committed by the armed forces, and revealed a series of mass graves of Achenese massacred by the military.

Both General Wiranto, then head of the armed forces, and Habibie delivered apologies to the people of Aceh. In August 1998 Wiranto announced that all combat forces would be with-

drawn and its designation as a "military operations zone" cancelled.

The All-Aceh Students' Congress launched a campaign for a referendum, which spread like wildfire across the province. Habibie's visit to the province in March 1999 was greeted by mass demonstrations demanding a referendum. A few days later combat troops were being moved back in and the repression was restarted. In November 1999 half a million people travelled from all over the province to attend a peaceful rally in the capital called by the Centre for Information for a Referendum in Aceh (SIRA), a body set up to campaign for a referendum. The massive turnout followed on the heels of the vote for independence in East Timor in September.

President Abdurrahman Wahid, elected in October 1999, at first offered a referendum but soon went back on his promise realising that autonomy would be rejected. Instead, he allowed the province to introduce Sharia law, hoping this would appease Muslim sentiments and isolate the GAM – the opposite happened. Increasing military repression, including the massacre

of civilians and the razing of whole villages and market areas in reprisal for guerrilla actions, pushed ever large numbers into the resistance.

Last November a similar rally called by SIRA in Banda Aceh was systematically disrupted, fishing boats and buses were fired upon and turned back. Still 400,000 rallied in the capital – almost 30 people had been killed trying to reach the rally. Ten days after the rally the chairperson of SIRA was arrested and charged with "showing hostile intention/treason against the state", part of the criminal code developed by the Dutch colonialists and taken over by the Indonesian state.

On-off negotiations between the Wahid government and the GAM have been taking place in Switzerland. Since the truce was first declared in May 2000, 230 people have been killed. During the current "Humanitarian Pause", two colonels were killed in a drive-by shooting at the end of January. The military responded by immediately burning down 100 shops and houses in the vicinity.

WEST PAPUA FIGHTS FOR INDEPENDENCE

WHEN THE Dutch were forced out of Indonesia in 1949 they retained control of West Papua which had been part of the Dutch East Indies empire. By the 1960s President Sukarno was campaigning to get West Papua "back". In 1961 some West Papuan leaders declared their independence, but the Dutch ignored them. In 1963 under US pressure the Dutch handed the territory over to the UN, who gave it to Indonesia to organise an act of self-determination. A thousand tribal chiefs were selected by the Indonesians to ratify the take-over. This ironically named "Act of Free Choice" was ratified without debate at the UN.

As with Aceh, events in East Timor gave enormous impetus to the independence movement, despite West Papua being divided by clan and tribe. The Free Papua Movement (OPM) grew and extended military operations, often operating across the border from Papua New Guinea.

President Wahid entered into

negotiations with the Papuan Presidium Council on autonomy early in his presidency. It is likely that some of the money siphoned from the BULOG scandal was used to bolster the moderates within the Papuan Congress (as well as for similar purposes in Aceh).

Compromise was sought on the emotive issue of the West Papuan independence flag, the Morning Star. Raising the flag was considered treason by the military police units (BRIMOB) and the army, and is a constant source of tension. Wahid insists it can only be flown for "cultural not political reasons".

The issue came to a head in the run-up to the December 1999 anniversary celebrations of the declaration of independence, where flag-raising ceremonies were to take place all over the island. The Second Papuan Congress, in spite of Wahid's best efforts, had called for a declaration of independence to be made again at the celebrations.

More than 20,000 military and police reinforcements poured into West Papua. British-supplied Hawk jets flew over the capital and other towns to intimidate independence supporters. The Presidium Council Chief and six other council members were arrested in November and charged with separatist activities. They face possible life imprisonment. Wahid demanded their release to no effect and then dropped the matter.

Tens of thousands of West Papuans defied the heavy police presence and celebrated independence day. A series of clashes with police left nine dead.

In January, 16 hostages were seized including three Koreans – the demands for release included an end to logging, financial compensation, withdrawal of military police and release of the imprisoned leaders. Meanwhile, the Australian and Papua New Guinea governments have reiterated their recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over West Papua.

Hail to the thief

On 20 January *George W Bush* took over the White House, signalling the start of the most right-wing US administration in 20 years. *GR McColl* looks at where the US working class goes from here

TENS OF thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Washington, DC on a bitterly cold January morning to protest the inauguration of George W Bush as America's forty-third president.

This was the biggest show of opposition at a presidential swearing-in ceremony since Richard Nixon started his second term in 1973.

Bush had, of course, "won" the November 2000 election, even though he gained 600,000 fewer votes than the sitting vice-president, Democrat Al Gore.

The new Republican occupant of the White House owed his victory to the inherently undemocratic character of the nation's electoral college and the very right-wing majority among the nine justices of the US Supreme Court.

The judges ruled by a five-to-four margin that there would be no more recounts in the crucial state of Florida. So the Republican appointees to the Court added Florida to the Bush column, amidst allegations of large-scale fraud and the systematic exclusion of tens of thousands of African-American voters from the poll.

Subsequent analyses of the ballots in a number of Florida counties for the Washington Post and the Palm Beach Post both indicated that Gore had, in fact, won the "sunshine state" - if only those assorted "chads" had counted.

In a word the Bush administration has no democratic legitimacy.

Despite talk of "healing wounds" after a bitter contest and "being president for all Americans" Bush's cabinet appointees swiftly confirmed that his first administration would have a hard-right ideological core and that it would do the bidding of two key components of US capital: the multinational oil and pharmaceutical corporations. These outfits helped foot a \$20 million bill for assorted inaugural parties and other festivities.

And private utilities also jumped gleefully onto the Bush bandwagon. The water and electricity supply industry giant, Enron, not only pumped \$100,000 (£60,000) into the January partying and \$620,000 from its corporate funds into the Bush campaign, it also placed its fleet of jets at Bush's disposal. Enron's president and corporate chief executive both dug into their own deep pockets with private donations of \$330,000 to the Republicans.

Bush's choice for Secretary of the Interior certainly met with the approval of the likes of Enron. Gale Norton will undoubtedly gain the necessary votes in the US Senate to assume the post as the nation's first minister for the environment. Norton has extensive ties with some big corporate polluters. She will doubtless prove a keen advocate of Bush's stated views on environmental protec-

tion: "work with local jurisdictions using market-based solutions and not try to sue our way or regulate our way to clean air and water".

Norton is just one of several Bush appointees who appear to have an unusual degree of sympathy with the "Old South", meaning the Confederate slave-holding states. Such views seem to sit somewhat uncomfortably with Bush's boasts of a presidential cabinet that displays the greatest degree of ethnic diversity in US history.

Bush's initial choice for Secretary of Labor fell before the first hurdle, however, when reports surfaced that the Hispanic-American, Linda Chavez, had either harboured an "illegal" immigrant from Guatemala or, alternatively, had exploited the woman as cheap domestic labour.

He swiftly found a Chinese-American woman to replace her. Bush can point to his Energy Secretary, Spencer Abraham, as the first Arab-American to sit in the cabinet, but his most marketable choice was undoubtedly General Colin Powell, the Jamaican-born African-American, who continues to cash in on his reputation as some kind of hero from the high-tech barbarism of the 1991 war against Iraq.

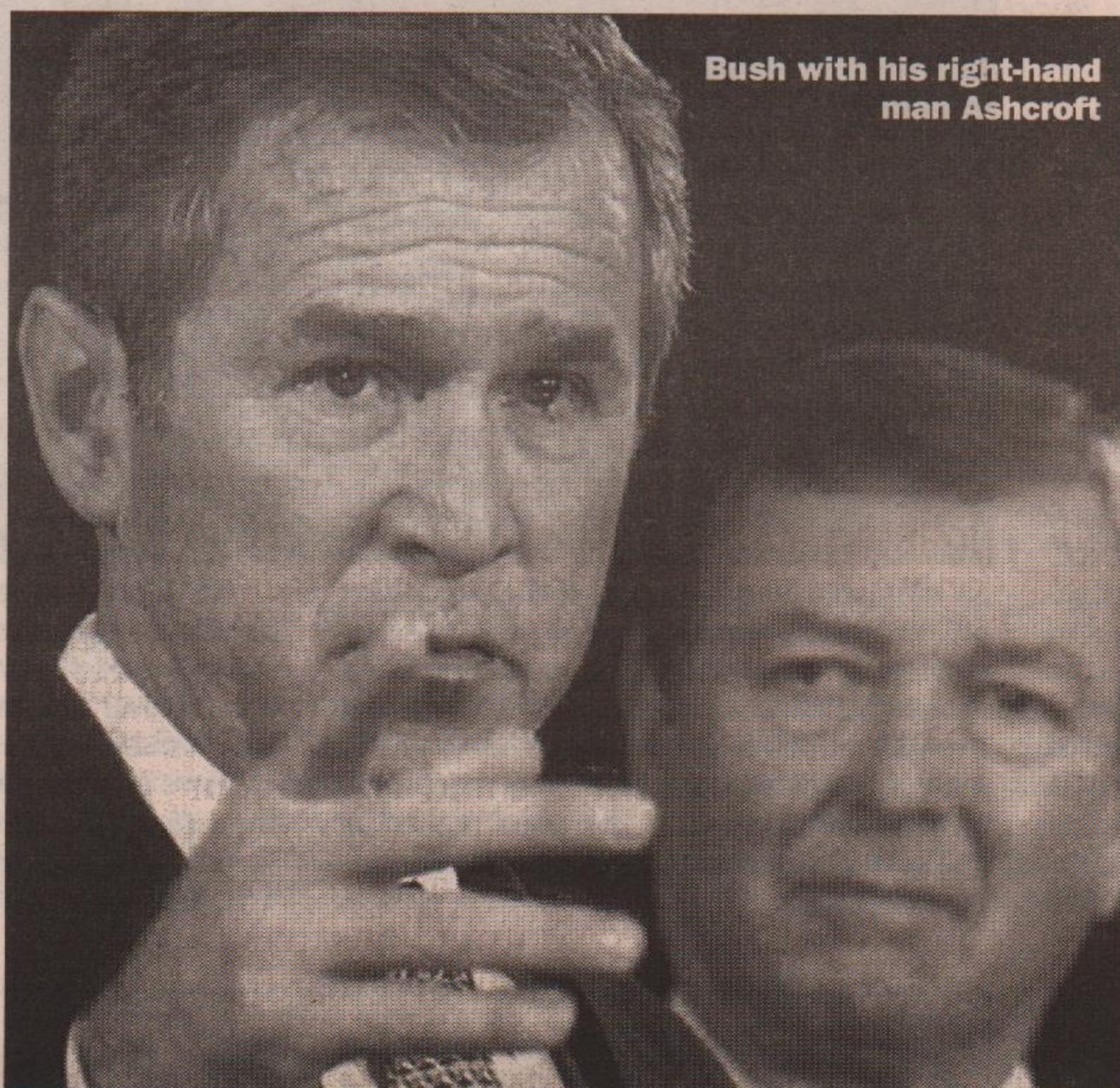
Powell will be Bush's Secretary of State: the man in charge of US imperialism's "foreign policy". The early signs are that there will be some shifts in emphasis from the Clinton years, though any talk of a new isolationism is quite simply nonsense.

There can be little doubt that Bush and Powell will both continue and intensify the regime of sanctions and aerial bombardment against Iraq, while it is looking increasingly likely that the US will pour more money, arms and military personnel into crushing guerrilla opposition to the Colombian military.

The administration will also be pump-priming major defence contractors with its so-called "son of Star Wars" that should eat up a sizeable chunk of the federal budget surplus, even before the \$1.6 trillion tax cuts for the rich.

This pre-emptive "missile shield" makes a mockery of the Nixon administration's assent to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty. Once again, however, this particular military initiative began not with Bush but with his Democratic predecessor, Bill Clinton.

However, Bush's most controversial nominee for his first cabinet was John Ashcroft (see box). By naming him as his choice for Attorney General (roughly Home Secretary), Bush resurrected the apparently doomed political career of a man who had lost his US Senate seat to a Democratic opponent, who died in a plane crash three weeks before the 7 November election. But George W also



John Ashcroft - "Christian Patriot"

George W Bush's single most provocative Cabinet nomination has been John Ashcroft, former US Senator and Governor of Missouri. His appointment has reassured right-wing Christian evangelicals that Bush really is their president.

Ashcroft's record includes:

■ **Co-sponsorship in the Senate of an amendment that would have outlawed abortion, even in cases where the pregnancy resulted from rape and/or incest.**

■ **A thinly veiled defence of the slave-holding Confederacy in a 1998 interview with the extremely right-wing Southern Partisan magazine.**

■ **Acceptance of an honorary degree from the fundamentalist Christian Bob Jones University, which until recently maintained a ban on "inter-racial" dating and counts among its good friends the Reverend Ian Paisley.**

■ **Opposition to a Clinton appointment to an ambassadorial post on the sole grounds that the nominee was gay.**

■ **Using Senatorial privilege to claim that an African-American judge had a "tremendous bent toward criminal activity".**

Who does George W's thinking?

THOUGH HE may have degrees from Harvard and Yale, George W Bush can't quite do all his own thinking, so his father has bequeathed not only a trust fund but a brain trust of sorts that includes the Vice-President, Dick Cheney. Bush the younger's National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, also did a stint in his father's one-term administration, while several other key figures with the president's ear are veterans of either the first Bush administration or Gerald Ford's abbreviated term in office.

In addition, however, Bush seems to pay considerable heed to a handful of right-wing intellectuals who won't hold any governmental office. Three right-wing think-tanks, the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the Manhattan Institute, have shaped his social welfare agenda. The three individuals most associated with his brand of "compassionate conservatism" are:

● Gertrude Himmelfarb - an academic historian in New York City, who wants to inspire a return to "Victorian values". Best-known for her polemics against the welfare state in such works as *Poverty and Compassion*, Himmelfarb has argued for a return to church-run orphanages and

railed against assistance to those she deems "the undeserving poor".

● Myron Magnet - based at the Manhattan Institute, Bush has claimed that Magnet's book, *The Dream and the Nightmare*, embodies "the formula for compassionate conservatism". A Dickens scholar, Magnet has a somewhat rosier view of Victorian society than that held by his supposed literary hero. Like Himmelfarb, he advocates that churches and other religious institutions should be responsible for ministering to the welfare of the poor.

● Marvin Olasky - a journalism professor at the University of Texas is personally closest to Bush, having been a key figure for several years in his policy and speechwriting team. Now a fundamentalist Protestant, Olasky was born Jewish and spent his early twenties in the Communist Party USA. Olasky apparently regards this dalliance as a grievous sin, redeemed for him by Jesus Christ. Bush most probably is not an ardent believer in much of the self-styled Christian soldier's message. But there can be little doubt that on essential questions such as abortion, Bush will be listening to Olasky as the most fluent advocate of the Christian right's agenda.

sent out a clear message that he was prepared to lead a moralistic crusade on social questions that would placate all but the most militant elements on the Christian right.

The widespread assumption is that Bush will use Ashcroft and then his control over Supreme Court nominations to further erode and, ultimately, eliminate legalised abortion in the US. Lending weight to that view was the announcement on 22 January - Bush's first "working day" in the White House - of a decision that banned federal funding of any international aid organisation that promoted abortion.

This was not any sneak attack but a high profile signal of a major offensive to come. The move to withdraw government money from the likes of Planned Parenthood was a calculated provocation, timed to coincide with the anniversary of the *Roe v Wade* decision, which had partly legalised abortion in 1972.

Ashcroft's nomination proved the only one to spur a substantial number of Democrats into opposition. Ted Kennedy, who is the closest thing to a symbolic leader for Senate liberals, had talked of a filibuster to block Ashcroft's confirmation, but that will almost certainly not happen since there is not a sufficient number of fellow Democrats to back him. Ashcroft has now scraped through the Senate's Judiciary Committee by a 10 to eight margin.

The refusal by the bulk of Congressional Democrats to offer even token opposition to the most reactionary of Bush appointees highlights how hopeless it is to look to this overtly pro-capitalist party to blunt, much less reverse, other aspects of the Bush offensive.

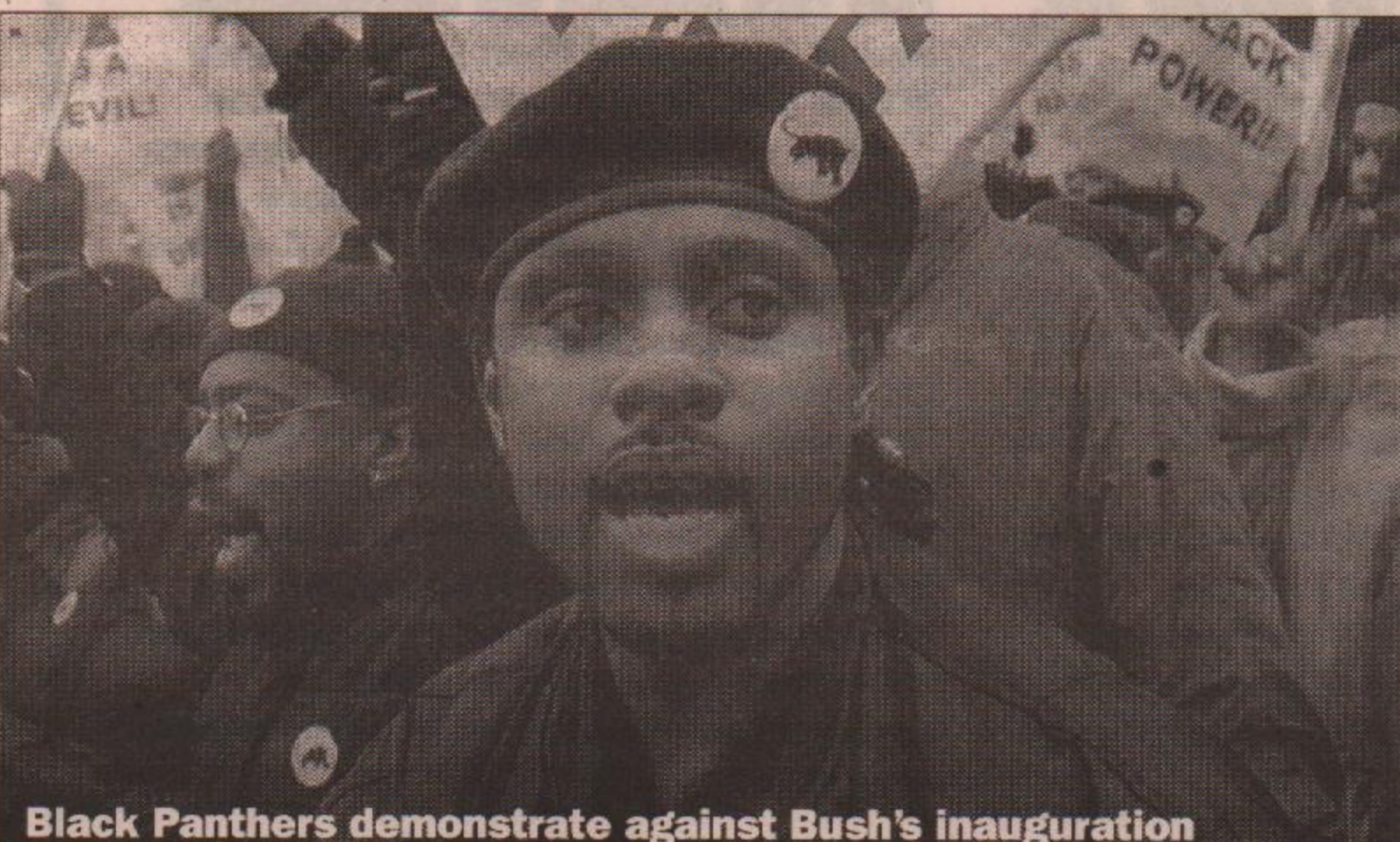
The nominal head of "extra-parliamentary" left-liberal opposition, Jesse Jackson, is now on the sidelines after revelations about an extra-marital affair. However much some socialists in the US regarded Ralph Nader as the candidate who embodied the "spirit of Seattle", there is little evidence to suggest that he is about to lead a protest movement against the Republican administration.

But there are reasons to be hopeful: the first decade of this century need not be a repeat of the disastrous defeats of the Reagan-dominated 1980s. The organised working class, after taking a battering for some 20 years has begun to stage a significant recovery in its confidence and militancy.

There is greater political ferment within the unions generally than at any time since the early 1970s. This resurgence of class organisation and militancy has coincided with the growth of a vibrant, and diverse movement among young people openly hostile to big corporate power and even capitalism in general.

As an analysis of the 7 November elections soon revealed, there are deepening lines of fracture within US society, based on race, gender, geographical region and, ultimately, social class. Bush has entered the White House shortly after the end of a protracted economic boom, with a jobs massacre now in full swing especially in manufacturing: 26,000 workers to be axed by Daimler-Chrysler, some 75,000 by General Electric.

The stage is set, therefore, for much sharper conflict and the time has rarely been riper for the organised working class to make the decisive break with the "lesser evil" of the US Democrats and find its own political voice.



Black Panthers demonstrate against Bush's inauguration

TWO YEARS ago the newly elected President Pastrana agreed to surrender control of a demilitarised zone the size of Wales to the FARC in return for negotiations. In truth Pastrana had little choice since his army was in no position to sustain an offensive against the FARC.

Crucially, it also gave Pastrana the time and space to push ahead with the savage cuts in social welfare and a privatisation programme, demanded by the USA, against the working class in the cities.

In addition, during the last two years the Clinton administration has massively increased the attention paid to Colombia. It became a high priority for the US to intervene more vigorously than before given the destabilising effect of the continued guerrilla war and economic crisis on the whole region.

Clinton and Congress also believed that more military and economic aid to Pastrana would allow the USA to break down the continued political resistance of Venezuela and Brazil to Uncle Sam's regional ambitions.

"Plan Colombia" is a key element in the US offensive. It aims to destroy coca fields, the source of income for hundreds of thousands of poor peasants, and thereby obliterate the base of FARC's financial support.

The US wants to force the guerrillas to accept a "negotiated surrender". Washington will spend \$1.3 billion to train and equip three anti-narcotic battalions, made up of 3,000 Colombian soldiers, who will fly into combat aboard 60 helicopters.

With this added reach, Colombian forces will destroy coca plantations, laboratories and distribution networks in joint operations with the Colombian National Police.

The US itself will provide logistics, intelligence and unified command-and-control support to Colombian forces deployed on anti-drug missions. More than 500 US advisers already work alongside the local army. The money will be controlled by the American embassy and the operations will be supervised by a US general who served in El Salvador and in the Southern Command.

Some of the money will go to funds

US hands off Colombia!

At the start of this month President Pastrana of Colombia and Manuel Marulanda, leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) agreed to resume "peace talks" aimed at resolving the decades long civil war between the state's forces and the guerrilla army. *Keith Harvey* looks at what brings both sides to the table.

for "social development" (the European Union would also contribute) to rebuild the state and to win the support of the rural population by means of "public works" schemes.

Combining the stick of military pressure and the carrot of negotiation, the US wants to impose an outcome similar to that in Central America in the 1980s, when "peace agreements" derailed and defeated the revolutions in Nicaragua and El Salvador. The former-guerrilla fighters of the Nicaraguan FSLN, the Salvadoran FMLN and the Guatemalan URNG were transformed into legal parties willing to take responsibility for imposing severe austerity measures on the workers and peasants.

THE FIRST step in defeating Plan Colombia is to carry out the agrarian revolution: a mobilisation of peasants to take over the land and militant resistance to all attempts to destroy the coca fields.

Yet despite the importance of peasants and their great tradition of agrarian struggles, Colombia is mostly an urban country: 70 per cent of the pop-

ulation lives in the cities where the working class movement is the decisive social factor. This sector has carried out important strikes and struggles against Pastrana which must be stepped up.

Factory and neighbourhood committees are crucial, built locally and centralised nationally. These will draw the further hatred of the state and paramilitaries, and workers' and peasants' self-defence units are urgent for unions whose leaders are subject to systematic assassination.

As for the FARC, all those who support social justice in Colombia should defend the guerrilla forces and their urban supporters in the face of the attacks by the state and the US. But the FARC and the other main guerrilla force, the ELN, should use their resources, fighters and arms to develop workers' and people's self-defence organisations, subordinating themselves to the democratic bodies of the mass movement.

A political general strike and a mass uprising in the countryside will be essential if the Colombian people are to destroy the plan of Pastrana, the bourgeoisie and imperialism, and to pave the

way for a struggle to impose a workers' and peasants' solution, by taking over political power.

In order to win the most basic demands - the land, work for all, political and organisational freedom - the mobilisations must be independent of big business in Colombia. The Colombian bosses, unable to bring the crisis to an end, and fearful of the masses, have already shown that they want to be saved by a US intervention. A "just peace" for them means the surrender and disarmament of the guerrillas and ending the struggle for land.

Against this outcome the masses must counterpose a revolutionary Constituent Assembly built from the bottom up on the ruins of the old regime, on the grave of the armed forces, and the corpses of the paramilitaries.

Even then, only the seizure of power and the establishment of a worker's republic can guarantee the success of the democratic and national tasks. There is no other progressive solution that can stop the ruin of the country. The workers' movement needs to fight for a workers' and peasants' government.

■ Down with the Plan Colombia! US

hands off Colombia and Latin America!

■ All US advisers out of Colombia! For mass international solidarity to defeat imperialism's intervention!

■ Halt attacks on the demilitarised zone! Stop assassinations of trade union and peasant leaders! For workers and community defence guards to combat the paramilitaries!

■ Reverse the privatisation programmes of the 1990s! Massive rise in minimum wage, for an expansion of social welfare, education and health!

■ Land to those who work it! No enforced displacements.

■ Nationalise the big ranches, banana plantations and coffee haciendas and place them under workers' control!

■ Tax the rich. Expropriate the wealth and property of the banks and big corporations, including the narco-barons.

■ For a revolutionary Constituent Assembly convened and protected by workers' and peasants' militia!

■ For workers' and peasants' government and socialist republic.

■ For a Federation of Socialist Republics of Latin America.

WAR ON DRUGS?

THE US government claims that Plan Colombia is about attacking those responsible for escalating hard drug use in the USA and hitting at the profits made by drug barons. This is a barefaced lie.

■ Colombian farmers who grow coca are displaced peasants who have been awarded a few hectares of land by the state. They have been forced off more productive land elsewhere by right-wing paramilitaries engaged in war against the FARC and others.

■ These peasants get five or six harvests of coca leaves a year. They then break down the leaves into coca base. They sell the coca base to a buyer for around \$1,000 a kilo and on average can expect to get up to \$18,000 a year. But they only make a profit of \$1,800 a year due to the high costs of the raw materials needed to break down the coca leaves. This leaves the peasant farmer in poverty.

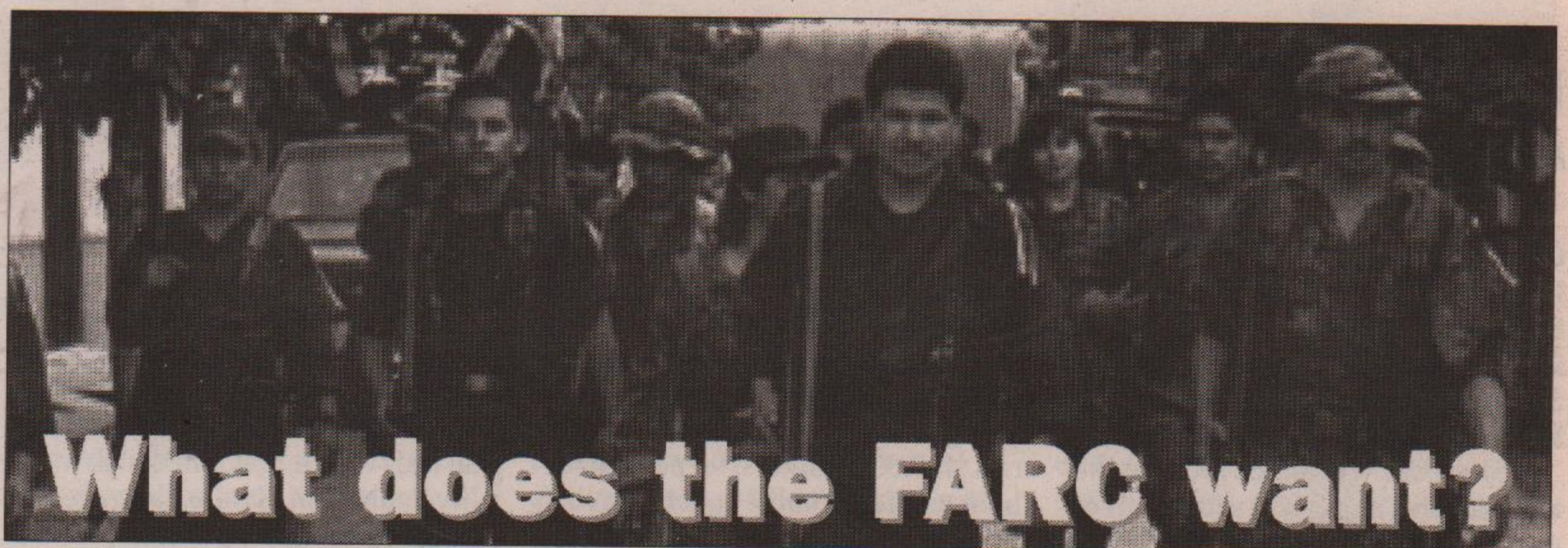
■ The coca base is then industrially processed by various cartels in Colombia and Mexico, many with connections to the Colombian army and state. It is then that real value is added as cocaine is produced.

■ The cocaine is sold on to US and European wholesalers who then make 85 per cent of all the profits that come out of the drugs trade. The original \$1,000 a kilo of coca base is sold as a kilo of cocaine for \$100,000 in the USA, more in Europe. When it is adulterated for street sale it sells for even more.

■ The peasant farmer in Colombia is thus ripped off by the big capitalists in Colombia and especially in the USA. The OECD estimates that more than \$500 billion a year is made by these people in illegal drugs traffic. Over half passes through the US financial system.

■ Moreover, most of the essential supplies to the drugs Mafia and peasants to turn leaves into coca base and coca base into cocaine (e.g. cement, gasoline, sodium bicarbonate, acetone, ether) come from US and EU big companies.

■ The role of the FARC in all this is disputed, but most accept that it makes money by taxing the Colombian buyers of coca base as it moves out of the areas of peasant production under their control at a rate determined by the street price in New York. US intelligence insists that the FARC are involved in the later stage of industrial processing of coca base in their own laboratories.



What does the FARC want?

THE FARC is not willing to accept the unconditional disarming of its forces demanded by Pastrana. Its leaders and militants remember only too well how right-wing paramilitaries slaughtered more than 5,000 members of the Patriotic Union when they exchanged their fatigues for suits, forcing the FARC to resume the guerrilla war in 1987.

While Pastrana has used the last two years to build up the army, the FARC too has consolidated. During their two year control of the DMZ (an area in southern Colombia about the size of Wales) they have recruited and trained new fighters, acquired a large arsenal, expanded their civilian support militia from about 36,000 in 1998 to nearly 100,000 today, and positioned its forces near towns.

Today, the FARC numbers about 17,000 well-armed fighters scattered across Colombia in at least 66 separate units or fronts.

But the FARC are opposed to developing a mass mobilisation and to forging a worker's and peasants' alliance. They seek to bring the European Union into the peace talks. They supported Pastrana in the 1998 elections!

They promote collaboration with sectors of the ruling class to put pressure on the government.

They claim that "the just national expectation of bringing together the two Colombias will come true with strong economic investment in the countryside and the cities; with a strong and resolute struggle against corruption and weakening the state security forces so that never again the weapons and the government laws are used against the hungry and the destitute when they fight for their rights. We hope this

expectation of people at home and abroad regarding the peace will materialise in a treaty for development, independence, sovereignty, equal distribution of wealth."

It is a utopia to suggest that the "two Colombias" can be reconciled on the basis of private property and capitalism. The winning of land and social justice can only be achieved with the destruction of the state forces and its fake democratic institutions, and the total expropriation of the wealth and property of Colombia's top bosses and big foreign corporations.

The FARC's chosen method of gaining concessions is the guerrilla struggle. It takes and holds territory to use as a bargaining counter.

They are opposed to uniting the struggles of the city and the countryside. In several general strikes over the past two years they have not even issued official statements in support. Their distrust of peasants' self-organisation and self-defence was seen in the massive demonstrations in Florencia, where a great opportunity to develop the agrarian struggle was squandered, paving the way for a repressive paramilitary counter-attack.

As in Central America and Cuba, a guerrilla army would transfer the bureaucratic methods employed in the military struggle to all political institutions and society in general. The democratic impulses of the masses would be viewed with suspicion, subject to surveillance and repression.

The final success of the Colombian masses demands both an independent workers' strategy and a revolutionary internationalist workers' party.

SPORT

The slam dunk and Nike's Knight

Andy York reviews *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism* by Walter LaFeber, Norton and Company, £9.95

THIS IS an excellent book on how Nike used basketball and Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls to hugely expand its empire. Jordan is a basketball phenomenon who excelled at every aspect of the game but whose shooting ability was incredible.

But what really turned him from top player into a living legend was his jumps and slam-dunks – Jordan was nicknamed "His Airness" and it was this

which spawned the whole Nike line of Air Jordan shoes.

There is no doubt he was a great player: the whole book is peppered with quotes by people who just couldn't believe what they saw him do. Magic Johnson of the LA Lakers put it best after one incredible Jordan dunk: "He did the impossible, the unbelievable". These parts are brilliant to read, they really capture the march of the Bulls from zeroes to heroes in the 1980s, with Jordan leading the way.

But it was Nike founder and boss Phil Knight who turned Michael Jordan into a global icon. In the process Nike used Jordan's fame to turn Nike into a global sportswear company. It went from being the new kid on the block, clawing its way into the marketplace against established giants Reebok and Adidas, to a global giant in its own right. LaFeber charts the particular circumstances that allowed Phil Knight to pull it off. The 1970s and 1980s saw the development of the technology – satellites, fibre optics – that allowed a few media barons like Ted Turner and Rupert Murdoch to develop global satellite-cable networks.

The NBA and local team owners were looking to promote basketball, in the doldrums next to the big all-American sports – baseball and football. The NBA wanted to commercialise the

game more vigorously, selling TV rights and pushing merchandise hard.

What small and hungry Nike did better than any other company was realise the power of television adverts, and then spot the globalising networks that were opening up huge markets to television. To get around the language barrier, ads were designed with no language at all, just strong images, with music blasting in the background.

By the end of it Nike was a market leader and Jordan known globally, mobbed by people wherever he went, dubbed a "24 hour commodity". Thousands of people would descend wherever Jordan appeared. In China school-children ranked Jordan, along with Stalinist leader Zhou En Lai as one of the two greatest figures of twentieth century history; he was better known than Clinton! *Fortune* magazine estimated that Jordan made \$10 billion for the US economy, half to Nike, the rest to the NBA and television and cable companies.

Of course, the money was really made by the incredibly cheap labour of China and the rest of Asia, which was the other half of Phil Knight's global vision. Nike was based in Oregon on the West coast and Phil Knight was one of the corporate barons to realise the potential of Asia for cheap labour.

"Puma and Adidas were still manufacturing in high-wage European countries. But we knew that wages were lower

in Asia, and we knew how to get around in that environment."

Nike pioneered the move into China in the 1980s, as multinationals looked for ways to escape Japan and Korea where unionising workers were getting higher wages. Their labour made the shoes, their starvation wages boosted the profits.

Michael Jordan himself was up for being turned into a global brand. Nike and later McDonalds sponsorship and all the other deals earned him \$100 million a year. LaFeber criticises Jordan's money-hungry self promotion, and how he sat on the fence during allegations that Nike ripped off inner-city black kids and only paid starvation wages in Asian sweatshops.

LaFeber pulls together many strands – the history of basketball, its racism, how women's leagues were always shut out. And the sweatshop issue is briefly but thoroughly dealt with.

There's lots to think about, like how Phil Knight started a home-made Nike business selling shoes out the back of his car to kids at track meets, which just goes to show how utopian it is to say "keep capitalism but get rid of big business." With the market, the snakes will just eat each other and grow into dragons.

LaFeber recognises that Western, mostly American, culture is destroying traditional culture as it goes global. But this development is complex, not just one-way and dominating: to work-

ing class Trinidadians, basketball was taken up as a symbol of black and class pride, replacing the cricket of the racist British Empire.

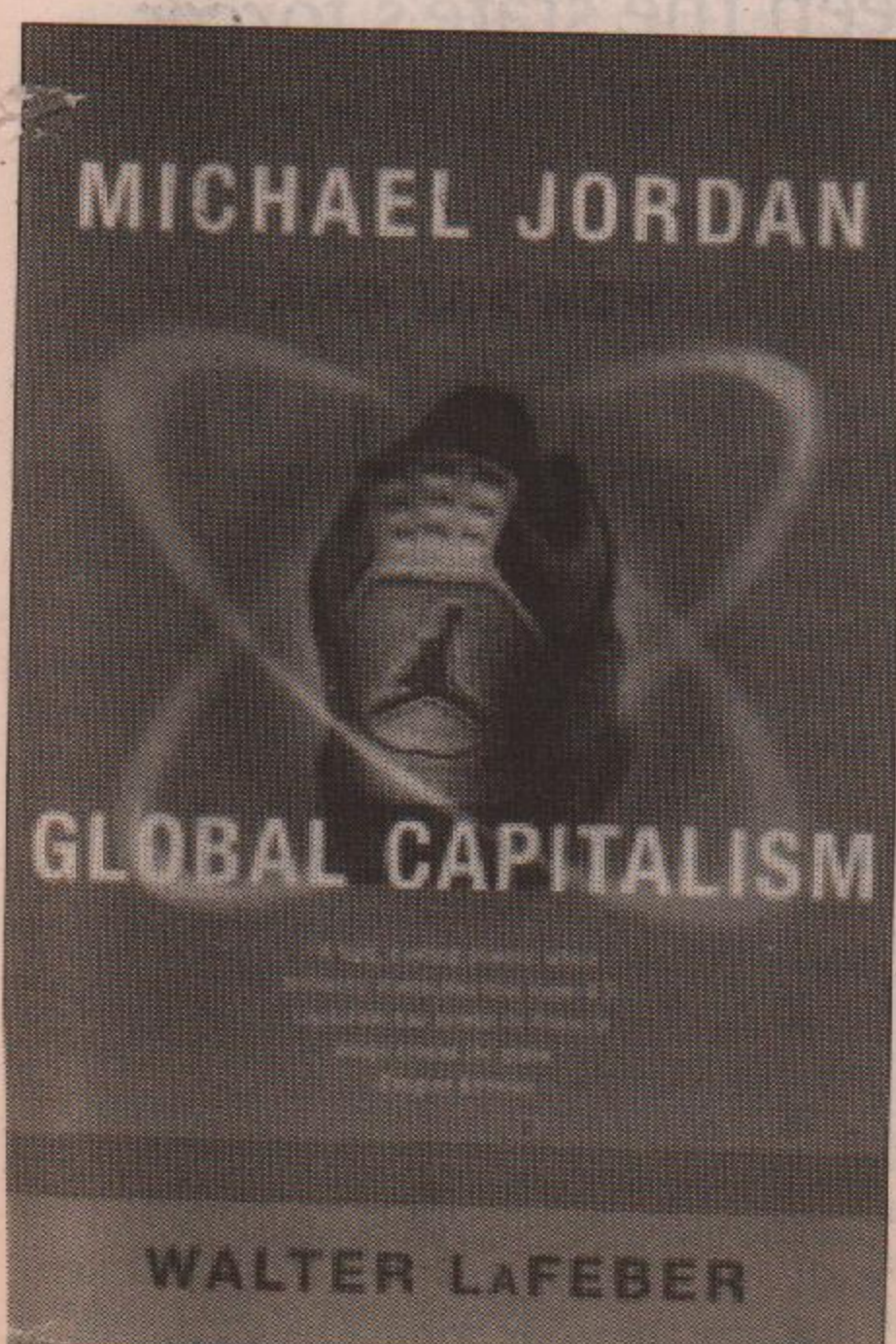
LaFeber sees the problem as one of Americanisation destabilising the world, as it antagonises nationalists and elites in Asia and Europe, along with Islamic fundamentalists. He concludes we need to control it, with capital controls, to make the world more orderly and peaceful.

This is utopian. What limits to the expansion of capital are reasonable and compatible with social justice? Should Knight's business have been confined to the boot of his car, or one factory in Oregon? The capitalists would go to war to prevent set limits to their growth.

Our efforts should focus on ensuring the workers employed by bosses like Knight have the right to organise, earn living wages, enjoy secure contracts and working conditions. This is the starting point: a struggle against capitalist exploitation, not capital mobility.

By building up workplace strength and internationalising the links we can create a movement that is strong enough to run affairs without bosses, overcome the anarchy and inequality of the market and destroy capitalism which underpins them.

We should use the global brands, now part of billions of people's consciousness, to turn them into global targets.



GLOBALISATION

Women and Globalisation

Kirsty McGinty reviews *The Globalized Woman: reports from a future of inequality* by Christa Wichterich, Zed Books

CLARE SHORT, Labour minister of International Development recently declared that globalisation was good for the poor and good for the globe. Ms Short could well do to read Christa Wichterich's book *Globalized Woman*.

In her book Wichterich provides the anti-capitalist movement with plenty of ammunition against the defenders of corporate greed and global exploitation. But whilst *Globalized Woman* will provide you with lots of factual evidence and insight into the impact of globalisation on women, Wichterich offers a series of unconvincing remedies for the women affected.

In the North, women are being drawn into the flexible markets of temporary contract and homeworking. These new labour markets, we are told, allow women to create harmony between job and family. As Wichterich points out, the real winners are the corporate companies.

"A computer operator midway between cot and office is part of the corporate strategy of globalisation and decentralisation; it is a considerable amount in rent, electricity and telephone costs." (p47)

These corporations omit to mention on their web sites that sick pay, maternity and pension rights aren't included.

In the South, millions of young women are being drawn into the factories and offices that service the consumption of the North. In a bid to maximise profits and take advantage of cheap labour, the corporations relo-

cate; banks sub-contract data entry to the offices of Jamaica and Bangalore, where women's "nimble" fingers perform 12,000 key strokes an hour.

The garment industry produces most of its goods in the South. In 30 countries, 400,000 workers, 90 per cent of them women, cobble together Nike trainers for less than a dollar a day. And when women organise, as they did in Jakarta in 1997, when over 10,000 women stopped work demanding the minimum wage, Nike moves on, seeking out even more exploited labour in China and Vietnam.

It is the desperate poverty of the South that forces women to find work in the North. Millions of young women leave their families to get work as housemaids in the affluent districts of Europe and the US. The Philippines has an estimated seven million people working abroad, 60 per cent of them women.

Some of them find work as a servant on poverty wages, others find themselves sold into prostitution. Poland is now the main supplier of prostitutes for Europe. The collapse of the economy after capitalist restoration means that only 54 per cent of Polish women are in work.

As Wichterich illustrates with hard facts, it is the policies of the World Bank and IMF which have ripped out the heart of communities and it is women who bear the brunt of it. Seventy per cent of the world's poor are women.

Wichterich gives a harrowing account of what happened to Zimbab-

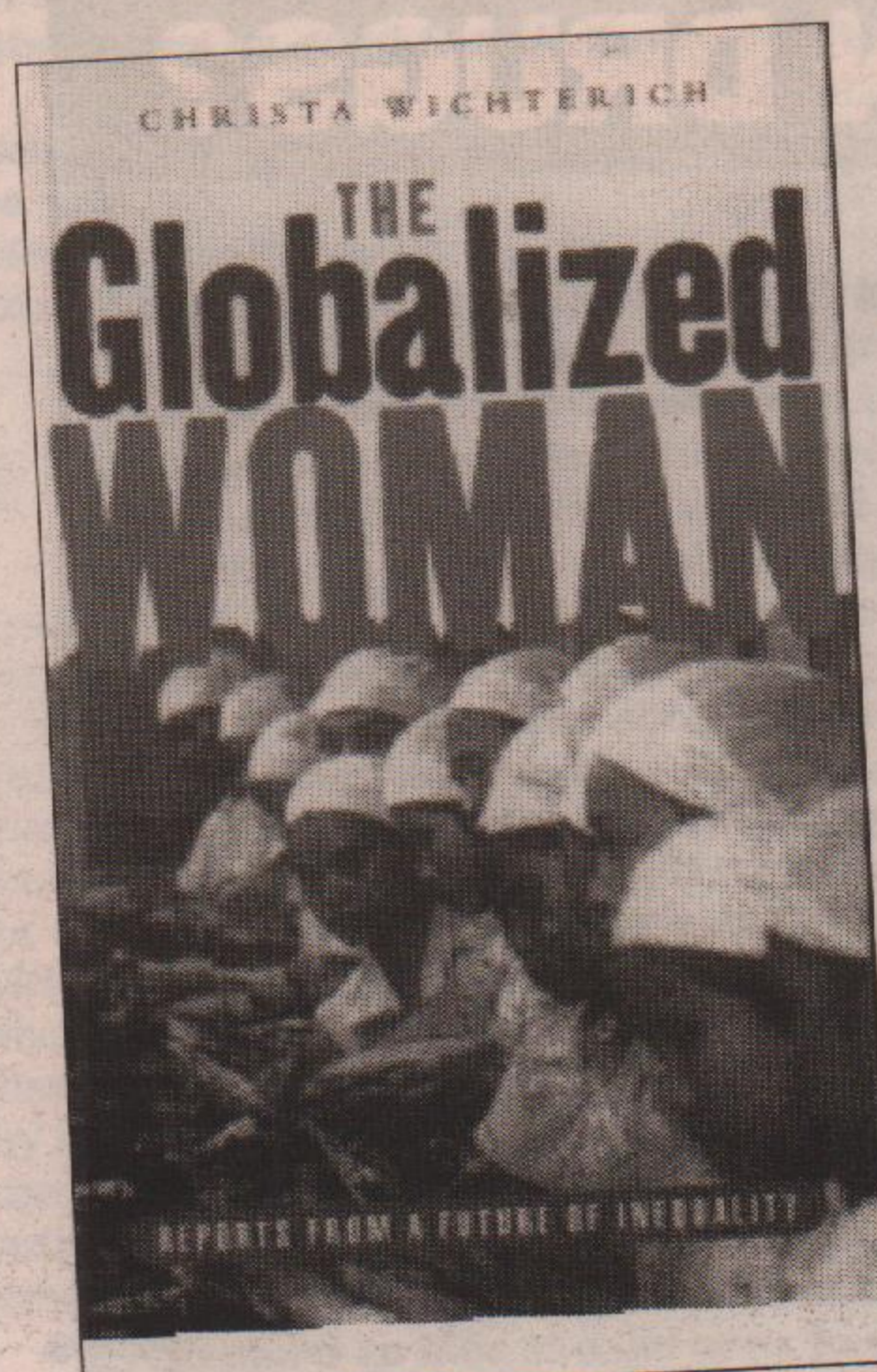
we after an IMF structural adjustment programme:

"After fees were introduced between 1991 and 1993 as part of a structural adjustment programme, 40 per cent fewer x-rays were taken, 20 to 30 hospital beds were empty, childbirth mortality doubled in Harare...average life expectancy fell by five years, 26 per cent of school age children stayed away from school." (p123)

The strength of this book lies in the interweaving of stories of women's lives and a wealth of empirical evidence that exposes what corporate greed is doing to women across the globe. Its biggest weakness lies in the final chapter when Wichterich attempts to outline what the growing anti-globalisation women's movement must do.

Wichterich describes how the development of NGOs have provided a voice for women and a base from which they can organise. She writes enthusiastically about the "global women's village", the counter conference to the UN women's conference in Beijing in 1995 describing it as a "a rainbow encompassing the most diverse structures and politics". She names some of those involved: Women's World Banking, Canadian pro-lifers, Latin American lesbians, Indian peasants, women from villages and slums.

Wichterich sees no harm in embracing coalitions of anti-abortionists and women involved in progressive campaigns! Nor does she see a difference between those women who want to modify inter-



A system of exploitation and oppression which benefits one class, the capitalist class. Working class women have nothing to gain from this system, whether it be reformed, remodelled or restructured.

From Mexico to Phnom Penh, millions of women are swelling the ranks of the world working class. By organising across borders and continents as the women in Kukdong, Mexico are doing now and fighting for international solidarity, this movement can put more than a spanner in the works of international capitalism.

But if the burgeoning anti-capitalist movement is to appeal to this new generation of women fighters, then it must take up their struggles: for land rights, against the barbarity of the sex industry, for reproductive rights.

What working class women need is not well paid delegates from NGOs lobbying the conferences of multinational capital, but a movement that takes their sheer determination and fighting spirit and builds revolutionary action across the globe.

Such a movement – a working class women's movement – could unite the struggles of working women across the globe. It could organise women and bring them together with male workers and peasants in the battle to destroy global capitalism.

www.workerspower.com

REBEL HEART

Romance, republicanism and revolution

IF YOU missed *Rebel Heart*, a four-part historical drama shown last month on RTE and BBC television, then beg, steal or borrow a friend's tape of it. Failing that buy it when it is released as a BBC video.

Despite having the mandatory romantic core – the hero Ernie falls in love with the heroine Ida, as she offers to lead a grenade attack on a British machine gun post on Stephen's Green – the series, written by Ronan Bennett, is the story of Ireland's fight for independence between 1916-22. It is shot through with sharp insight into how the politics of nationalism were riven by class conflicts.

The series opens with the Easter Rising and does not shy away from affirming that, although heroic, it was greeted with apathy by most in Dublin and shambolically organised from a military point of view.

But also underscored was the clash of perspective between Connolly's Citizen's Army fighting for a Workers' Republic, and those in the Volunteers who only wanted to be free of the British. O'Toole, a working class friend of Ernie's and a soldier in Connolly's Citizen Army, wryly comments during a lull in the

fighting, that exchanging a British boss for an Irish one will make very little difference to the lives of workers at the end of the day. "Fuck the Irish republic, I want the workers' republic", he declares to an initially incredulous and naive Ernie.

Despite the crushing of the Rising, or rather because of this fact, support for independence soared as war progressed. The trade union movement grew after the war, as did the revolutionary nationalist movement, Sinn Fein. In the general election of December 1918, Sinn Fein refused to take their seats at Westminster and argued instead for an independent Republic.

They swept aside the old constitutional nationalists of the Irish Party and won a large majority of the Irish seats, after which they set up the first Dail Eireann. The British responded with repression. The political struggle quickly became transformed into an armed one, waged by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The guerrilla war against the British army and its agents in Ireland, like the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), began in earnest in the autumn of 1919 and continued until the truce of 1921.

Rebel Heart is the story of these

events in revolutionary Ireland, told against a background of the fraught romance between Ida, a working class Belfast republican, and Ernie, an upper class Dubliner, who breaks with his family and studies to join the struggle for independence.

Imprisoned for his part in the Easter Rising he matures into a trusted commander under Michael Collins and reorganises a southern IRA Brigade into an effective unit in the guerrilla war.

Along the way the second episode pulls no punches as it depicts the bigoted RIC loyalists in Belfast murdering the male members of Ida's family in a midnight raid on their home. Ernie witnesses this brutal ethnic cleansing, a factor which shapes his final decision to side with those Republicans opposed to Michael Collins' sell-out Treaty with the British. The Treaty surrendered the Northern Catholics to the murderous loyalists in the North.

But once again *Rebel Heart* makes clear that this was not simply an intra-nationalist dispute. It shows that many workers wanted to go on from kicking out the British to struggling against their own Irish bosses, a perspective fiercely resisted by the leaders

of Sinn Fein. As Collins' troops storm a bakery held by anti-Treaty forces a banner declaring the soviet of Irish workers goes up in flames.

A real strength of the series was its portrayal of women republicans. Ida and her sister are centrally involved in the military action in 1916. And later it is a woman who leads the first uprising against the Treaty in Dublin. Ida's class instincts and superior grasp of politics break Ernie from his attachment to Collins and lead him to see the Treaty for the betrayal it is.

At a time when we have just seen history repeat itself via Sinn Fein's sell-out in the Good Friday Agreement, which leaves partition in place and sets up an assembly that enshrines sectarianism, *Rebel Heart* is very much to be welcomed. Especially so in the wake of the last big film treatment of the War of Independence, Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins*. Jordan's film was a romanticised endorsement of Collins' betrayal, hitting the screens just as Gerry Adams was accepting the terms of the peace deal that led to the Good Friday Agreement.

The bourgeois press in the South have generally rubbished the series,

ignoring its central theme – that the war of independence was a just war to oust Britain from the whole of Ireland and that workers and bosses had different visions of what that independent Ireland should look like.

Instead, they rely on smoke screens to fudge the issue: the script is too romantic, they quibble; the balance of the personal and history is askew; why bother with the past, when there are modern issues to deal with? Television critics get paid handsomely to miss the point like this.

Meanwhile in the North, Trimble wanted it banned, because it presented a "one-sided" view of history, written by an ex-republican prisoner. That is, it showed his political forefathers as the murdering ethnic-cleansers they were.

Rebel Heart shows us that there was a revolutionary war in the early part of this century; that it sought once and for all to solve the national question in Ireland and that it was betrayed by bourgeois nationalism. Bennett clearly sympathises with the men and women who did not accept a rotten compromise that Connolly rightly predicted would lead to "a carnival of reaction North and South".

An open letter to socialists in the anti-capitalist movement

THE TOP bankers, executives and politicians of the World Economic Forum assembled in their favourite Swiss ski resort last month.

But they were not alone. A broad coalition of 80 anti-globalisation groups braved the snow, tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannon of the cops to protest against the destruction of our environment, our jobs and our communities by this economic elite.

But our movement has achieved more than just protesting at summits. Millions of workers across the world took strike action last year against the IMF's structural adjustment programmes, with general strikes in South Korea, India, Turkey, South Africa, Nigeria (twice), Ecuador and Argentina.

Our movement is also growing among the youth in the "advanced" capitalist countries.

They see the invasion of their schools by McDonalds and Adidas, the incorporation of sports clubs and stars by Nike, the uncontrolled growth of GM foods by Monsanto and their distribution by Tesco.

They're putting two and two together and getting ... angry.

In the United States a mass movement already exists, based on the campuses and in the trade unions. In Europe, too, the movement is beginning to grow.

Ya Basta! is involved daily fighting for welfare rights,

defending immigrants, linking up with the militant COBAS trade unions.

In Britain, we have to build a similar movement. It is excellent that the Socialist Workers Party turned towards the anti-capitalist movement. Only dead-head sectarians deny that it has bought new young activists to the cause.

The strengths of our movement are obvious: it is mass, militant, internationalist and young. But its weaknesses also need to be openly recognised and overcome.

Our movement, as with all young movements, is broad and eclectic. At the top it is represented by writers and journalists from liberal papers, the NGOs and anti-globalisation think-tanks. Excellent as their exposures are, the solutions they advance are for REFORM of the system.

Yet on the streets, the slogans which get taken up are "the IMF has got to go!", "capitalism is killing us/kill capitalism!" and "one solution – REVOLUTION!".

This is due to the simple fact that at the base of the anti-capitalist movement third worldism, radical ecology and various strands of anarchism have a strong hold.

With this comes prejudices against taking majority decisions, hostility to centralisation, strong anti-party feelings and the fetishising of "affinity groups".

Both worship of spontaneity and phobia about mass political and trade union movements are

dangerous for a growing movement.

For whilst a new movement can and must grow from the young and the unorganised it needs urgently to draw in the organisations of the working class and the rural poor.

Prague and Nice were fantastic demos. We proved to the International Monetary Fund and the European Union leaders that Europe is not a safe bolt-hole for their gatherings.

But only a few thousand already committed activists can travel hundreds of miles to a blockade. Only a few hundred can do it on a regular basis. And even then, what do we do in between?

WORKERS POWER, along with the independent socialist youth organisation, Revolution, has been pursuing various campaigns for several years.

In the build-up to June 18, 1999 we linked up with peasant and trade union activists from Colombia, the oil workers' union, the OILC, in Scotland and Reclaim the Streets in London to highlight BP's use of death squads to kill off protesters in Casanare.

We have recently launched a No Sweat! campaign aimed at forcing Gap, Nike, Adidas et al to stop employing child labour, to pay a living wage and to improve conditions in their factories around the world.

Not only has this involved making links with T&G and KFAF union activists in the garment

trade in Britain, but we have directly contacted the leaders of a strike against Nike's sweatshop factory in Kukdong, Mexico, raising solidarity right outside Niketown in Oxford Circus. In other cities we have targeted Gap stores.

We are involved in the May Day committee in London and setting up others across Britain. This gives us an excellent opportunity to link workers' struggles against privatisation – Dudley hospitals, London Underground – with imaginative, in-your-face type actions against the symbols of capitalism – such as Gap stores, Vauxhall showrooms.

Far from being a diversion from the election, May Day is ideal for highlighting the profile of Socialist Alliance candidates.

In every school and college, in every workplace we need to win supporters to the anti-capitalist cause. Wherever there's a Gap store, a PFI project or a factory closure, there needs to be an anti-capitalist mobilisation and militant protest.

By building the anti-capitalist movement as broadly as possible and linking it directly to the workers' movement, we will also be laying the basis for a new revolutionary party.

But we will only succeed in that vital task if we combat the ideas of the reformists on the one hand and the anarchists on the other. Those who believe that capitalism can be peacefully reformed, that private property and production for profit can be harnessed for

the good of humanity and the planet are wrong.

Because unless we can convince today's anti-capitalists of the weakness of the reformist argument, tomorrow they may be incorporated by the capitalist machinery of consultation and participation: just like Jubilee 2000 were in Prague, or the NGOs and trade union leaders were in Davos.

The poorer, more radical layers will gravitate towards anarchism if Marxists do not criticise the "new" reformists but offer an alibi for them. The movement will split and disintegrate in confusion.

Similarly we need to overcome anarchism's hostility to the mass organisations to the working class, their hatred of centralisation, their reduction of tactics to fighting the police and/or the mounting of a humourous spectacle.

These weaknesses, unless overcome, will eventually lead to the movement's isolation and demise as it exhausts itself in fruitless tactics.

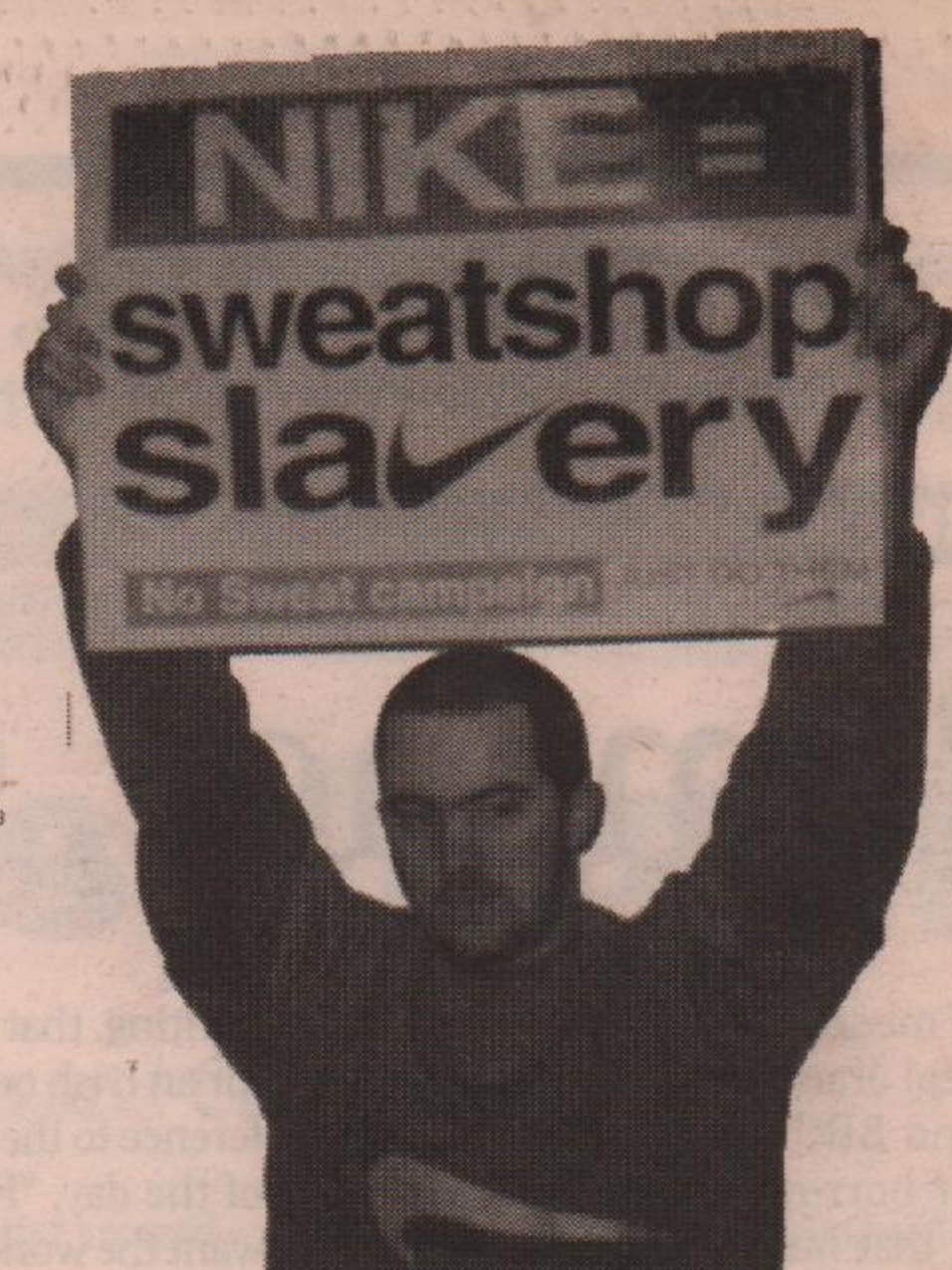
In other words, the idea that "we agree on 90 per cent, so why argue about the 10 per cent?" does not serve the movement. Nor will it lead to a new revolutionary party and international.

We have the best opportunity for thirty years to make such a party and international a reality. Then, as socialists, we will be in a position to answer the global capitalists in the best way possible: with global revolution!

STOP SWEATSHOP LABOUR

BUILD

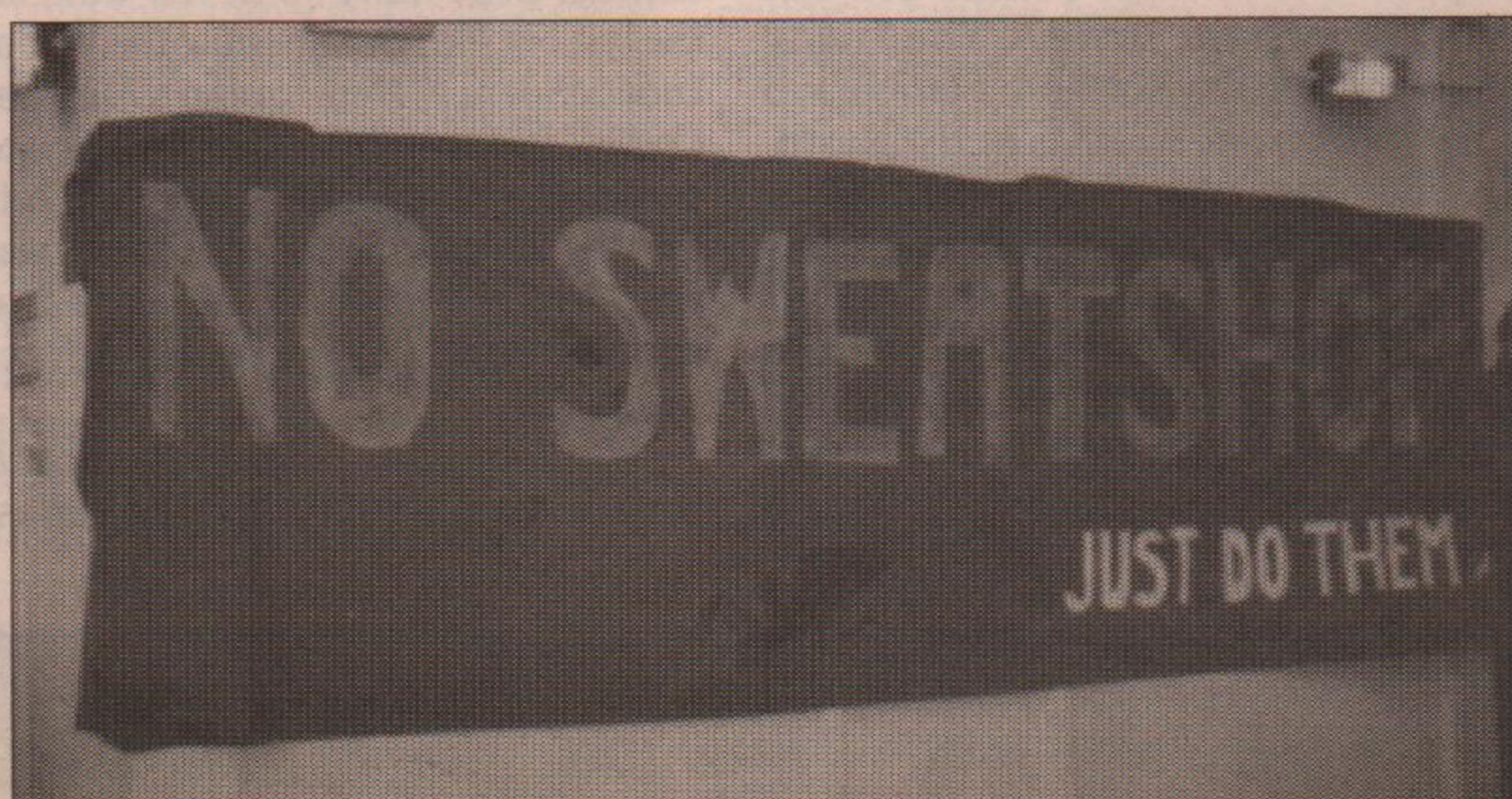
NO SWEAT



No Sweat, the campaign against sweatshop labour throughout the world, just keeps growing. Action against the corporate giants - like Nike and Gap - has taken off across the country.

After the Christmas visit by elves and a cruel Santa, Niketown on Oxford Street has received more visits from a growing number of protesters who are disgusted at its brutal exploitation of children. Hundreds have signed petitions demanding an end to this cruelty. In China Nike pays its workers just 10p an hour.

Gap, which employs 12 year-olds in its Cambodian factories, has been the target of regular action by No Sweat supporters in Birmingham, London's Oxford Street, Bristol, Cardiff, Sheffield and East London. In Birmingham one protest organiser received a worried phone call from a Gap executive in California asking why No Sweat were "paying a visit" to one of his stores. He wasn't happy with the answer.



Now that the campaign is growing, so are its targets. At a London meeting activists agreed to take up Nike's sponsorship of football and is contacting the independent supporters' fanzines linking No Sweat to the replica football kit racket.

The other great thing about the campaign is the international links it has established. It is now in regular contact

with students and trade unionists in the USA and elsewhere, and through these links has been able to organise rapid reaction solidarity - in the form of action and, crucially, money - with 800 strikers at the Mexican Nike factory who were sacked for organising a union (see box).

Revolution, the independent socialist youth organisation, along with Workers Power and other socialists, have been



at the forefront of building this campaign. We have all been amazed at how popular it has been with youth, in schools and colleges, and with militant trade unionists. We know that this campaign can become really massive. That is why we are appealing to all socialists, anti-capitalists, school and college students and trade unionists to join in, build the protests and really give these giant cor-

porations whose bosses think they can do what they want, a hard time.

- Join No Sweat.
 - Build an action in your area.
 - Pass the model resolution in your trade union or student union (see box).
- For more information or to join the campaign ring: 020 7793 1468 or e mail nosweat@destroyimf.org.**

THE GLOBAL BRANDNAMES ARE GLOBAL EXPLOITERS



Adidas produces its goods in Burma, where wages are 6p an hour and the army keeps out trade unions



Gap employs children as young as 12 in its factories in Cambodia



Nike pays children 20 cents an hour in its factories in China

Take one example. Gap had profits of \$1.1 billion in 1999, and Millard Drexler, the head of GAP, earned \$172.8 million last year, a bit down on 1998 where he earned a whopping \$660 million, poor guy. Where did all that super-profit come from? Their sweatshop labour. Gap pays their workers in Russia 11 cents an hour. They are not alone. Phil Knight, Nike Prez, is now worth \$5.8 billion dollars after years of heading this profitable sports company - Nike pays 16 cents an hour in China.

SUPPORT THE NIKE STRIKERS

WORKERS AT the Kukdong factory in Atlixco, Mexico make university sweatshirts for Nike. 800 of them stopped working on Tuesday 9 January in support of 20 sacked fellow workers.

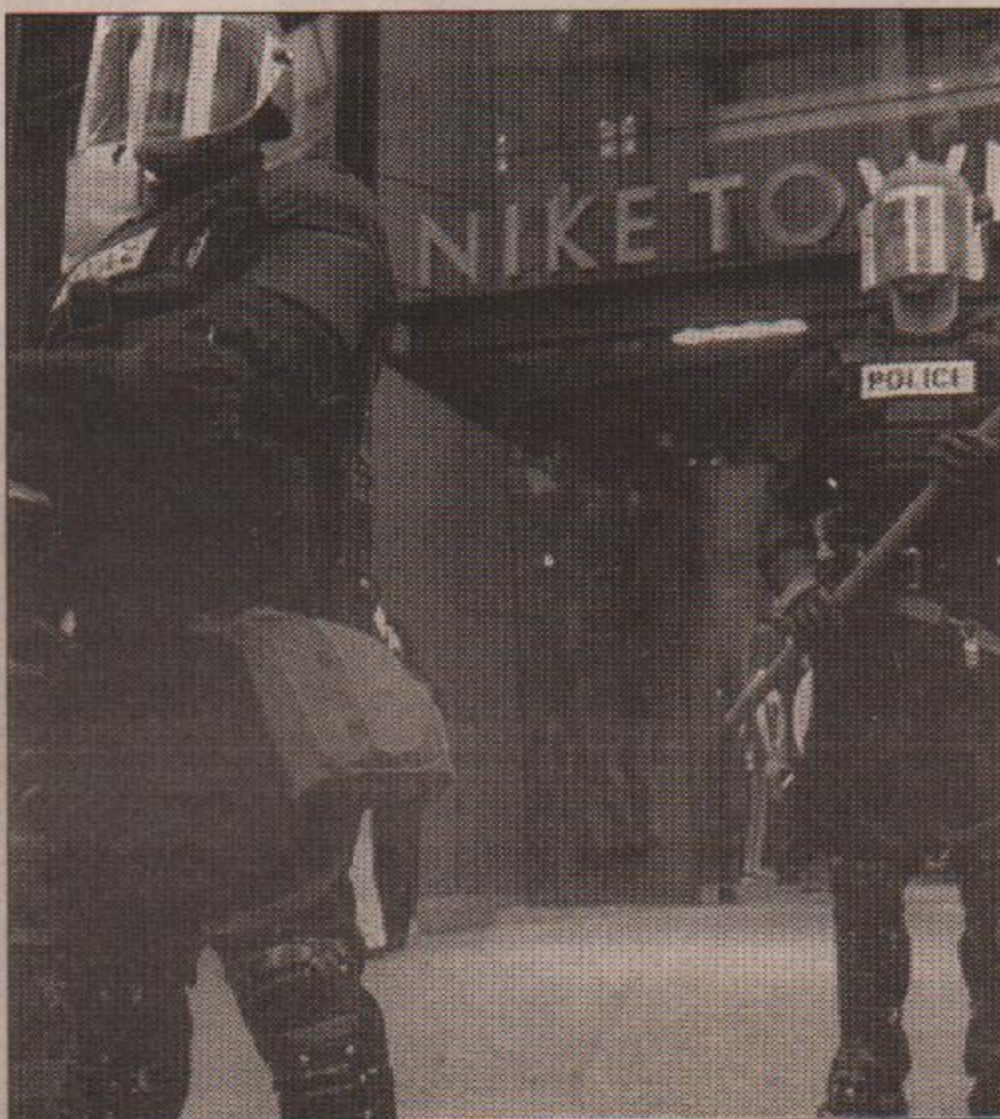
These workers had protested at the low wages (\$30 for a 45-hour week), rotten food in the cafeteria, and the failure of the company to pay their Christmas bonus, as required by law.

The strikers' demands are for the reinstatement of the illegally fired workers, and that the company allows the workers to have their own independent union and recognises it, instead of imposing a company union.

Most are young women from the surrounding villages. They have blocked the factory gates and ask for people around the world to support them against the Kukdong owners.

The No Sweat campaign has been protesting outside Nike shops in London. No Sweat demands that Nike and Kukdong comply with Mexican law, with Nike's Code of Conduct and with Convention 87 of the International Labour Organisation regarding the rights of freedom to organise.

For further information phone 020 7793 1468 or visit nosweat@destroyimf.org



Nike's "friends"

NO SWEAT TRADE UNION RESOLUTION

This branch recognises that:

■ Multinational companies such as Nike, Adidas, and Gap produce their goods in the third world in order to cut labour costs by using child labour, exploiting women workers, paying starvation wages, and forcing overtime. The workers are forced to work in unsafe conditions, often as indentured labour, and are not allowed to organise trade unions.

A campaign in the US and Canada, initiated by university students with union backing and drawing in other human rights and community organisations, has been successful in putting the apparel giants on the defensive, and forced them to adopt a code of conduct banning child labour and forced overtime.

This branch believes that:

■ This code of conduct cannot be left to the companies themselves to enforce - as shown by the recent BBC Panorama documentary on Nike and Gap factories in Cambodia, which were still using child labour. The campaign in North America has continued in order to force these companies to publicly disclose where their factories are and accept inspections by genuinely independent labour and human rights organisations, both local and international.

■ The aim is not a consumer boycott or banning the imports of such goods, but rather solidarity to help the workers to win better wages and

conditions, and to organise unions.

■ An integral part of the campaign is international solidarity, with speaking tours of union organisers from the factories, and delegations sent from North America to visit the sweatshop workers.

This branch resolves to

1. Affiliate to the campaign "No Sweat" that has been set up as part of the international campaign against sweatshops on the basis of:

■ No child labour: for the company to pay for the educa-

tion of any child workers discovered working on its premises and fired as a result.

■ Equal pay and maternity rights for women workers.

■ No forced overtime: for the 8-hour day and at least 1 day off in 7.

■ The right to an independent trade union.

■ Public disclosure by the company of factory locations and the right to independent monitoring by labour organisations and human rights organisations.

2. Raise the support of No Sweat with region and the union NEC, conference and the TUC.

3. Donate £50 to the campaign; cheques payable to No Sweat Campaigning Fund. Send Cheques to No Sweat BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX. NO SWEAT the anti-sweatshop campaign

