

# WHO CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY NURSES?

WHEN the nurses put in an 8 per cent pay claim last week, Labour's parliamentary spokesman for health David Blunkett said that under Labour they would only get the rate of inflation.

The country 'can't afford' any more, whine the Labour leaders. But this 'country' being spoken about is that of the British ruling class. It is a lie that we, the people of the world, cannot be supported, cannot have a living wage and job, cannot have decent schools, health care and hospitals for our children.

What cannot be afforded is the rates of profit demanded by the capitalists in their 'countries'.

In the week running up to this coming week's Labour Party conference, deputy leader John Prescott and Blunkett have scurried around to get the signal workers to sign the deal struck on Wednesday 28 September before the underground workers came out on Friday 30 September. Timed to coincide with the signal workers action, such solidarity would have brought the fight to the verge of smashing Chancellor Kenneth Clarke's public-sector pay freeze. It would have wrecked the Tory government's policy and opened the floodgates — for the nurses, for the teachers, for all the public-sector workers.

Prescott and Blunkett's frenetic activity is part of the cold and cynical plans of the corrupt careerists who make up the Labour leadership to attract wavering Tory voters at the next general election. Meanwhile, the party leaders have granted the votes of millions of loyal working-class people. Behind the slogans 'managing the economy' and 'controlling public spending', these millions are to be cruelly betrayed.

Labour leader Tony Blair, shadow chancellor Gordon Brown, Prescott, Harriet Harman, Clare Short, Blunkett and other front-bench spokesmen have spent the days before the conference trying to persuade big business that they can 'manage' (Blair's words) capitalism, code-named 'the economy', more efficiently than the Tories.

These leaders cannot imagine any economy other than capitalist exploitation — the system responsible for 25 million jobless in the 'advanced' European countries, massive homelessness, the re-emergence of TB and child prostitution, and part-time working with no rights or protection. And, in the countries brought to 'civilisation' by the British and other colonial empires, to

## BY THE EDITOR

the grinding poverty and exploitation of the masses are now added the medieval scourges of cholera and the 'Black Death'. Labour's ~~editors~~ would raise shrieks of horror for Blair's electability!

What is being discussed behind the scenes is Labour's new role in serving capitalism. In the period since World War II, Labour served capital by appeasing the working class with reforms — the 'welfare state', the NHS, education, etc.

These benefits were only reaped in the 'advanced' capit-

alist countries — Britain and western Europe, the US and Japan. 'Independence' for the former colonial countries was a cruel joke — resulting in crushing debt and poverty for the mass of people. This was achieved on the back of an arrangement that betrayed the working class from the end of World War II, between the St. Union and treaty in the Soviet of world capitalism.

Today's capitalism is making new demands of the Labour leaders — to take back the gains of the welfare state in Britain. At the same time, capitalism insists that the starvation and death of countless millions in Africa, Asia and Latin America

must intensify, so that the interest payments on its investments and loans are met.

The Labour and reformist leaders do everything in their power to stop independent working-class action, using what remaining authority they have over the working-class, resulting from the gains made in the 'advanced' countries.

The Labour parliamentarians do not want the working class itself to defeat the Tory action ~~against~~ for example, by pay ceiling. That public-sector

their own role in question. They demand the working class's loyalty. They want to be the only ones with right to 'defeat' the Tories — in a general election!

The price to the working class for this 'service' would be continuing the anti-union laws, no-strike pledges, wage-cuts, compulsory arbitration, benefit cuts in the name of anti-inflation, and 'partnership' between the Labour government and big business. For big business itself there is 'no charge'!

Where does this leave those socialists still loyal to but fast

becoming disillusioned with the Labour Party? Socialists inside and outside the Labour Party and the working class must come together — not just for discussion, important as that is.

They must start to work more and more together on the basis of the international interests of the working class independent from the state and the interests of the ruling class. This will require the casting off of the dead weight of the Labour Party and the formation of a party that represents these interests of the working class.

## £5,000 South Africa Fund appeal Build a workers' party for socialism

FOR the past two months Workers Press has published on-the-spot news, from members of the South African section of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa), about the huge wave of strikes and workers' demonstrations sweeping the country.

The compromise government of so-called national unity between De Klerk and Mandela is blowing apart — the working class and all oppressed people are under attack. The South African workers demand and need: a workers' party for socialism. The Workers International became known in the recent elections because we stood candidates independently of all other parties with exactly that central policy.

Now strikers, homeless people and unorganised workers are daily coming to our members wanting political guidance and practical assistance. In the thick of the battle, our section has set up two offices in Cape Town and Durban and published two issues of 'Workers International News'. A third issue of this paper is to come out shortly — if they can get the money to print it. It will contain a special insert on the COSATU union federation national congress; articles on Angola, Mozambique, current strikes, Rwanda, affirmative action, local government, theses of the Third International on soviets, Hillel Ticktin on Trotsky, a letter from Europe, Brazil, etc.

Our comrades have won workers' respect

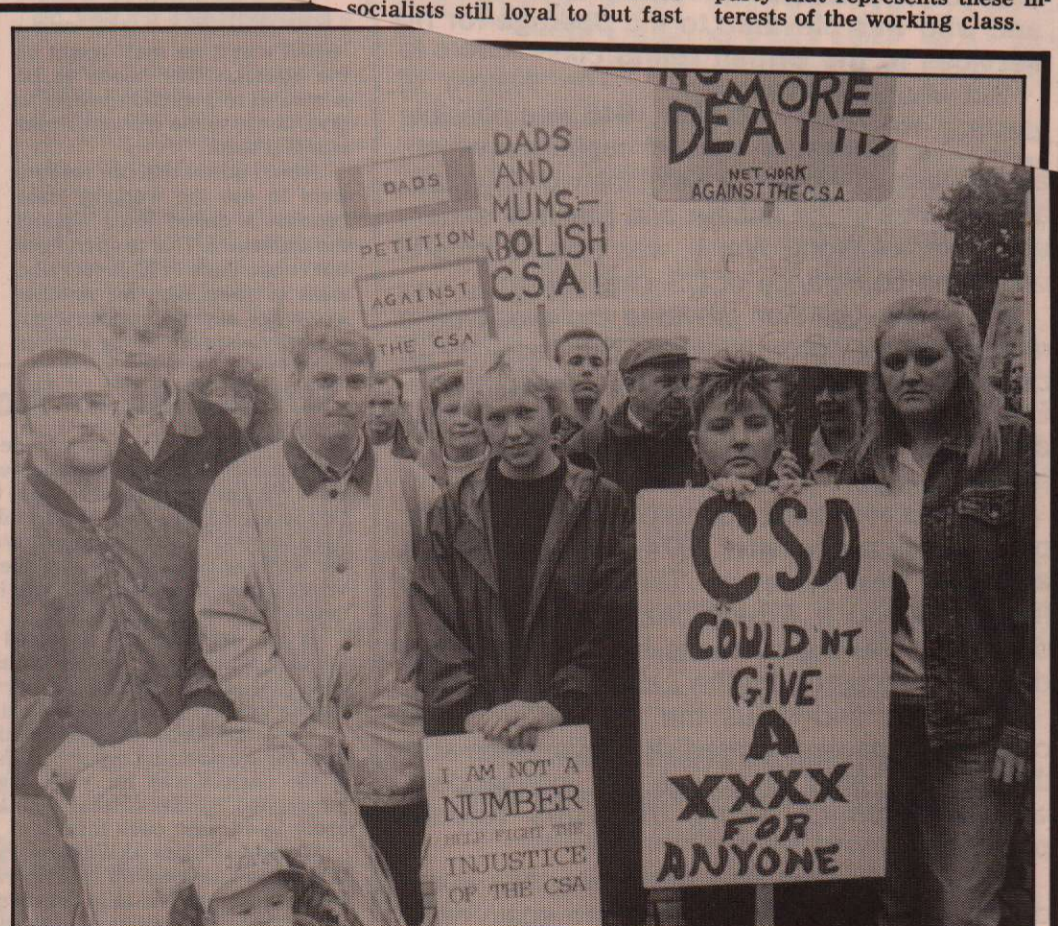
and built mutual solidarity. When Mo (a leading Workers International member) was sacked from COSATU for supporting our candidate in the election, the workers occupied the union offices and set up the 'Concerned Workers' Committee' to fight for his reinstatement.

## Speed

The terrific speed of events demands that our South African comrades have a national meeting in October and prepare for the Johannesburg Socialist Conference at the beginning of November. We will produce a campaigning pamphlet of articles for workers on imperialism, apartheid, the struggle against Stalinism, for revolutionary trade unions: build the independent party of the working class for socialism. After that, for three weeks in November, a delegation will come to Britain.

We ask you to donate to our £5,000 appeal — the struggle of the South African workers is international. Please send donations as quickly as possible so the next issue of 'Workers International News' can be brought out. Ensure your copy by subscribing — £10 for ten issues, £5.50 for five.

Send your money and details of how you want the money spent to the Workers International, South Africa Appeal, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB. Cheques, etc. payable to 'South Africa Appeal'.



The West Midlands Network against the Child Support Act attracted supporters from across the county to its demonstration in Birmingham last Sunday. Photo: Mark Salmon

Workers Press

# Lord Keynes and Mr Blair

LABOUR is no longer the high tax/high spending party, leader Tony Blair and shadow chancellor Gordon Brown declared last week. They were thereby explicitly embracing the 'market economy', and rejecting Keynesian economic policies.

In the past the Labour Party was closely associated with economic policies deriving from the work of John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946). Brown and Blair made clear that Labour has now ditched any attachment to these ideas.

In the slump of the 1930s, Keynes came to the conclusion that capitalism could no longer survive if it was simply left to its own devices, as the advocates of *laissez-faire* (free trade) proposed.

Mass unemployment could be eradicated only through extensive state intervention. In times of heavy unemployment the state should increase its spending and reduce taxes. The government, through programmes such as house building, slum clearance and road improvements, could employ people whose spending would in turn provide jobs for others.

In the post-war world the leaders of the Labour Party seized hold of Keynes's ideas and used them as the basis for their claim that Marxism was dead. Given sufficient welfare spending, they said, and a certain amount of income redistribution, the expansion of education, etc., then capitalism could be tamed and made to work for the benefit of all.

It was this sort of policy that Labour set out to implement in the immediate post-war years when it was in government. The National Health Service was created and the system of welfare benefits expanded.

All this is now finished, the present leaders of the Labour Party tell us. 'I can hardly believe my ears,' said Tory minister Jonathan Aitken, after hearing Harriet Harman attacking the Tories for the money they are spending on the poor and the unemployed.

\* \* \* \* \*

NATURALLY Workers Press does not call for a 'return to Keynes'. Keynes was a virulent anti-socialist who despised the working class and who was elevated to the peerage for his services to the British ruling class.

But what leads them dead? The system of state benefits built up after 1945 was possible only in the context of a world capitalism which, on the basis of the betrayals of the working class at the hands of the Labour and Stalinist leaders at the end of World War II, was able to expand under the dominance of US imperialism.

It was the US that provided the credit on a massive scale through which the recovery of capitalism in western Europe was made possible. But by the 1970s it was becoming increasingly clear that the US could no longer sustain its former role.

When Labour tried a classical Keynesian-type policy in the period after 1974 it almost immediately ran into the sand. The City refused to finance Labour's expansionary programme; it demanded severe cutbacks in state spending, demands accepted by the Labour leaders.

Since the mid-1970s the decline of British capitalism has accelerated. It is even less able than it was then to pursue an 'independent' economic policy along the lines Keynes proposed.

When Brown and Blair announce their abandonment of Keynesianism they are again reassuring big business that if they form the next government they will act 'responsibly'. That is, they will do everything to safeguard the interests of capitalism against the working class.

# Letters

## ICP are anti-union

FURTHER to my article 'Slandering slammed' in last week's Workers Press, about the International Communist Party (ICP) and its lying campaign against Workers Aid for Bosnia, there's some more I should add.

The ICP's paper 'International Worker', on 27 August, had an article on the 'Sefton Two' case (two members of the public service union UNISON fined under the anti-union laws). Attacking the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Chris Marsden said: 'They have now organised a Sefton UNISON Fightback Conference...'

It was actually organised by Sefton branch of UNISON, of which the two brothers are chair and secretary, and in which doubtless there are SWP members. As with its attacks on the WRP and Workers Aid for Bosnia, the ICP and its mentors in the US Workers League don't believe in such subtle distinctions. Witch-hunters never do!

Criticising the SWP for calling the union bureaucracy 'intermediaries' between workers and bosses, Marsden says: 'The union bureaucracy are not "intermediaries", but the well paid functionaries and policemen of the capitalists who will never fight in the interests of the workers.'

Leaving aside that unlike state functionaries and policemen, union bureaucrats are paid (and sometimes elected) by workers, one might ask why the capitalist state requires legislation (Marsden doesn't call it 'anti-union') to make sure unions do its bidding; and why, if the ICP regards the unions as no better than policemen, it writes to them denouncing Workers Aid for Bosnia? (Doesn't that make the ICP into 'copper's narks'?)

Marsden says 'counterposing of the leaders to the unions is completely false', because in response to the changed needs of capitalism, 'the unions have become a second arm of management and adjuncts of the state in imposing these attacks on the working class.'

Advocating 'political rebellion against the unions', and de-

velopment of 'independent rank and file organisations', Marsden offers no examples of the ICP engaging in such moves. Indeed, scanning 'International Worker', it looks as though the only campaign they're engaged in is against Workers Aid.

Colin Pendleton  
London SW2

struggles, rather than spending too much time on the question of socialism in Scotland.

Ken Singer  
Dundee

## A gross caricature

PLEASE allow me a few lines to answer the gross caricature of myself as depicted by James D. Young (Letters, 24 September). I have never met him, yet he seems to know me better than I know myself.

Far from identifying with the Communist Party of Great Britain I dissociated myself from it at least 15 years ago. As to that party's document, 'The British Road to Socialism', I never thought of it as anything other than a boring irrelevance when a CP member.

At no time have I thought the Scottish working class spineless. Apathetic, yes — all too obviously — just as they are anti-conservative.

Marxism is only that which left-wing groups mull over. The Scottish working class, generally, supports trades unions, a reformist Labour Party or the Scottish National Party. Only occasionally do they break out of the stranglehold.

James D. Young also knows what I was taught in the CPGB — 'the only yardsticks for measuring militancy... were trade unions' and left-wing parties' membership figures'. News to me!

As to the royal family, I've still to see detestation and to hear them being called parasitic.

I'm glad to learn that the middle classes are stout defenders of the National Health Service. I know the working class is.

I do not know how the workers of Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland will find their way to socialism. If I did I'd prepare a paper for 'The future of Marxism' conference to be held in London in April next year.

But James D. Young has the capacity to do just that — and look forward to his contribution.

John P. Mathieson  
Glenrothes, Fife

## Never above the struggle

HAVING followed the polemic on whether socialism is attainable in Scotland I feel I would like to add my comments.

Separating the national question from the class question is only giving the proletariat a noose to hang itself with. This does not mean that the struggle for national self-determination does not play a large part in the lives of workers and, indeed, the middle classes as well (note the existence of the Scottish National Party).

The question of national self-determination and the struggle for 'Scottish socialism' can never stand above the class struggle. To operate in any other way is sheer formalism.

The presence of a large Labour Party majority in Scotland poses problems for the revolutionary party in breaking the working class from the reformists.

The working class in Scotland could rise up against the Tories before their counterparts in the rest of Britain — every country has its national peculiarities.

Internationalism means that the class struggle will reach its high and low points at different times and in different countries. An international workers' party is, therefore, the only way forward in fighting for the world revolution.

Our comrades in South Africa are fighting valiantly in the growing upsurge of discontent against the African National Congress and South African Communist Party government coalition with De Klerk.

South Africa is the weakest link in the imperialist chain at this point. All our efforts should be spent in aiding those comrades in their

## Workers Press £3,000 Monthly Fund

In so far for September: £1,947.56

'WHAT's in it for me?' might be the question that needs to be answered to persuade people to give money to the Workers Press monthly fund.

Now, I guess that our readers want to see the working class become a united force against the capitalists. That is apart from our subscribers in Whitehall who want to keep tabs on whether we've got any insurrections imminently planned, or the various

shades of revisionists/sectarians who like nothing more than to see a political opponent go down.

Some of our readers might even support the Workers Revolutionary Party and the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International!

We think that Workers Press is pretty good. We have slender resources and somehow we keep the thing together on less and less. But we have to ask ourselves if we can keep the paper on the road for much longer without more support.

## SUBSCRIBE to Workers Press

IN RECENT weeks many trades councils and union district and regional organisations have had a letter from Workers Press asking them to take out a subscription to the paper. They need to do this to ensure they keep up with the news and analysis of the struggles of the working class. Have you checked that your union organisation has dealt with our letter, and how many copies have they ordered?

If you want to get it raised again, or you want another letter sent, please let us know the person it should be sent to, and we will forward a copy to you to enable you to get the matter raised.

Try to get the postal subscription for Workers Press paid for by standing order (see form back page). That is the easiest way for your organisation to get the paper, and Workers Press then knows the money will come in on time each month.

Careful readers of Workers Press will have noticed that we now have an 'advertising rate notice' in the paper each week. You can help both Workers Press and your organisation by putting an advert in the paper for any event you have organised, or anything you need to sell.

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## No Scottish preoccupation

I THOUGHT Workers Press wanted a debate on the Scottish national question until I read David Eyre's silly letter (1 September).

I should note that my books 'Socialism Since 1889: A Bibliographical History' (1988) and 'Socialism and the English Working Class' (1989), do suggest a preoccupation with Falkirk or Scotland.

I have never suggested the Scottish working class is the key to 'the international socialist revolution'. But Eyre's indifference to Falkirk's workers seems odd. His major weakness is his picture of a 'struggle between capitalists and workers as unfixed entities on a global scale'.

In Falkirk workers are unemployed or employed part-time for low wages. We must talk about the international working class; to call this 'the only way' to expose capitalist exploitation before individual workers is doctrinaire (empiricists added).

What does Eyre say to workers aware of the nature of capitalism but lacking the confidence to challenge it? What does he say to the unemployed, to Third World peasants, to women?

Eyre's 'Marxism' consists of ageless, sexless and nationless abstract 'workers' who have never existed. In dismissing the difficulties of writing the history of this abstract 'international working class', he ignores the point that I was referring to the writing of history. Eyre is wrong if he thinks he has thrown me from the Scottish national question. He and Brotherston must answer my questions.

Who will educate the 'Marxist' vanguard out of their Great British chauvinism? It is 'What is to be Done?' question the early 1990s; but it is urgent in a Falkirk, a Scotland, and a bigger world dominated by capitalist thinking, where capitalists have more to say than the remnants of the left.

However, I want to know the real role of the Scottish working class'. Inform us, comrades Eyre!

James D. Young  
Falkirk

— from workers' action to revolution. Much less do they listen to people who disagree with them.

Workers Press is a 'party paper', but the 'party', the WRP, honestly struggling with the real questions facing the working class.

The working class needs a party and its paper. Workers Press and the WRP are part of this struggle. Join our struggle and send a donation. Make it a regular contribution by asking for a standing order.

Send money, payable to 'Workers Press', to PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Mike Cook

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# Employment puzzlers

BY PETER JEFFRIES

ACCORDING to official figures unemployment has been falling by an average of 27,000 a month in the past year, a trend loudly trumpeted by the Tory party as evidence of the success of their policies and the growing number of jobs available.

The real story is quite different from this fairy-tale.

■ The 'expansion' of the economy has been brought about almost entirely by the sharp devaluation of sterling following Britain's enforced exit from the exchange rate mechanism. It is this devaluation that made British exports cheaper compared with those of other countries and thus allowed British firms to sell more abroad. But such an advantage cannot last for long. Already the devaluation is bringing strong inflationary

pressures which last month forced up interest rates. On present trends, the City expects that interest rates will rise to almost 10 per cent in the next 18 months.

Here is an indication of the fragility of the so-called 'recovery'.

■ Secondly, the fall in unemployment is highly deceptive. Official figures show that for June — the last month for which statistics are available — the number of people in work was

25,232,000 — 9,000 fewer than in June 1993.

Yet over the same 12 months the unemployment total dropped by 272,000. Clearly, it is not the creation of new jobs that is cutting the length of the dole queues.

## Survey

According to the Department of Employment's quarterly Labour Force Survey, the number of full-time jobs is fall-

ing, while the number of part-time jobs is rising rapidly.

The survey estimates that the total number of hours worked in the economy per week in the spring of 1994 was 826 million, just 1.3 per cent greater than a year earlier. Hardly the sign of a growing labour market!

How can the big fall in the official unemployment total be explained? The answer is that more people are joining the ranks of those neither employed

nor officially unemployed.

This 'economically inactive' group has been boosted by more people staying on at school until 18 — often because they know there are no jobs.

A two-tier labour force is rapidly emerging in Britain. A minority of well-paid managers and professionals who have managed to hang on to their jobs after widespread cost-cutting programmes and another of low-paid, largely unorganised, often casual workers.

## No discipline against anti-union-law busters

DEMONSTRATORS in support of the 'Sefton Two' outside the national executive meeting of the public sector union UNISON on 24 September were able to disperse having heard good news (picture right).

UNISON general secretary Alan Jinkinson had condemned the Two in a letter to branch secretaries after an unofficial strike against privatisation, led by Sefton branch secretary Nigel Flanagan and chair Martin Murphy, had led to fines under the anti-union laws on 29 July (see Workers Press, 10 and 24 September).

Doug Wright, a member of the national executive and a supporter of the Two, came out of the plush Bloomsbury Crest hotel, London, where the 24 September meeting was being held to tell the demonstrators that the executive had voted against taking disciplinary action against the Two.

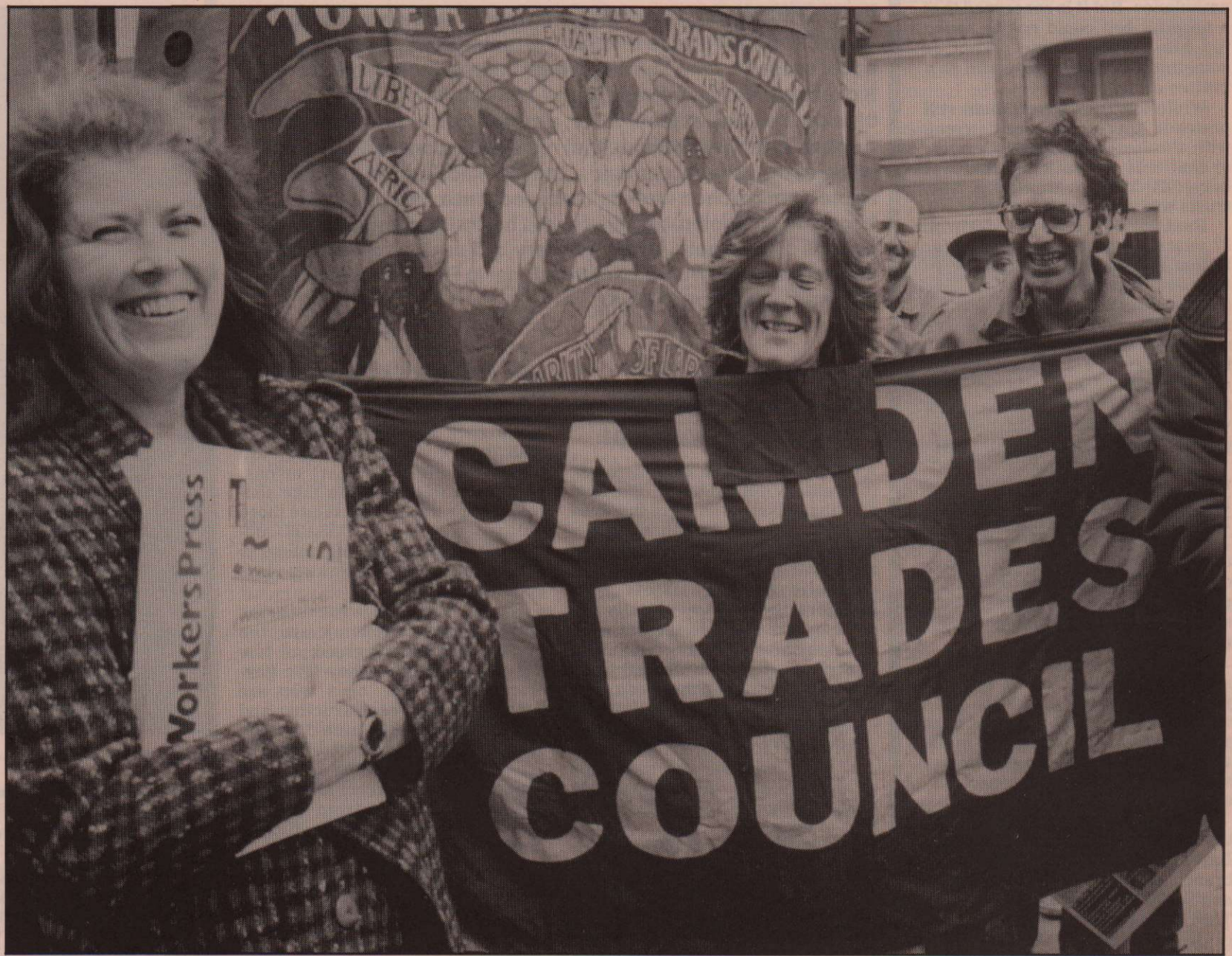
Wright said the decision not to take disciplinary action was made in response to the strength of feeling shown by the demonstrators.

Jinkinson's circular instructing UNISON branches not to pay money towards the fines imposed on the Two for contempt of court was not overturned by this decision. As the demonstration broke up the executive was still discussing the issue.

Story by Jim Smith  
Photo by Rex Dunn

■ Protests should be sent to Alan Jinkinson, UNISON General Secretary, Holborn Tower, 137 High Holborn, London WC1V 6PL. Tel 071-404 1884, fax 071-404 1694.

■ Messages and money made payable to the 'Sefton 2 Defence Fund' should be sent to Sefton No.1 UNISON, 38 Crosby Road North, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 4QQ. Telephone 051-920 6140, fax 051-928 0298.



## Two cases for workers' control

BY PETER GIBSON

THE TORIES have never been keen on elections. They see themselves as the 'natural party of government'. So they are developing a policy of doing away with elections they cannot win.

They did away with the GLC, and the metropolitan councils. Just to be on the safe side they have been taking powers from elected councils at all levels — in education, transport, health services, roads etc. — and giving them to Tory nominees in quangos.

It is called 'rolling back the state', but what they really mean is getting their hands on the money!

At Drumchapel in Scotland, where youth unemployment stands at 41 per cent, the Tories established the Drumchapel Opportunities Ltd quango in 1989. It was the largest urban aid agency of its kind in Britain.

Glasgow City Council has recently published a report on this agency which led to the resignation of the quango's chief executive and its enterprise director.

The agency's debts stand at just under £500,000, but Glasgow council has said there will be no police involvement.

A spokesperson said: 'Much of this is simple poor management of projects and lack of adequate financial control.'

### Without

It is comforting to know that they — probably — did not steal the money, they just lost it. But what about the 41 per cent of young people in the area without jobs? They could have done with £500,000.

The other news is from Wales, where many functions of the local councils will, as of May 1995, be handed over to quangos. The number of elected councils and councillors will be reduced as part of the government's 'slimming down of government'

policy. The Tories will appoint unelected quangos to do their jobs instead.

In fact there will be more members of unelected quangos appointed in Wales than there will be members of elected councils.

Elected councillors cost about £1,000 each year in expenses, but the quango members will expect the market rate for the job.

From next May the 1,700 quango members will be responsible for spending more than the 1,250 elected local Welsh councillors.

The appointment of quangos and the doing away with elections is entirely in line with the policy of safeguarding profits at a time when productive industry is closing down and profit-margins are getting tighter.

If they cannot make a profit out of you because there are no jobs from which they can make a profit out of your labour, then they try to make a profit out of local and social services.

## Edinburgh supports signal strike

A RALLY in support of striking signal workers held in the Portobello town hall, Edinburgh, last week heard speakers stress the political nature of the dispute.

NUM President Arthur Scargill told a 500-strong audience, 'If you believe this is an industrial dispute you don't understand the nature of the society we are living in'.

This Tory government's policy, he said, was a continuation of Margaret Thatcher's. She had made it clear in 1979 that she wanted to destroy socialism and the trades unions for good.

'The cost of the dispute so far amounts to 42 years' payment of the original offer to the union', Scargill said. This proved that the government was waging a political campaign, just as it had against the miners in 1984-85.

'If the labour movement as a whole had been called out in support of the miners, we would not now have a signal workers' strike', he said. The way to deal

with the Tories' anti-union laws was to defy them: 'secondary' picketing in support of strikers was outlawed, but it was perfectly legal for Railtrack, the employers, to recruit scab labour from another company, British Rail.

Graham Buchanan, local RMT union branch secretary, maintained that the resolution calling for a resumption of talks with Railtrack, passed at the previous week's signal workers' conference, did not represent a climbdown. The crucial second part of the resolution, which had been played down by the media, demanded that the executive committee should look at ways of escalating the strike if no agreement was reached.

'We'll still be here supposing it takes another year', said Buchanan. 'The union cannot

walk away from its members on this justified claim.'

Labour MP Tony Benn told the meeting that the struggle should be set in its historical context. 'It is part of an attempt to revert to the relationship which existed between owners and producers a hundred years ago.'

Victory for any section of workers in dispute depended on the mobilisation of full support, said Benn. But he conspicuously said nothing about the Labour leadership's refusal to back the signal workers. It was left to Scargill to condemn this — after Benn had left the platform.

■ The Edinburgh Signal Workers' Support Group meets every Monday at 7.30pm at the Trades Council, Picardy Place, Edinburgh.

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■ Please note correction of date in last week's Workers Press!

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## Inside left

### Cuts and confidentiality

RED CROWTHER, 77, died not long after being admitted to the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. He had had a heart attack at his home in Salford, Greater Manchester, and was driven 55 miles before reaching hospital intensive-care bed.

The North-Western regional health authority says staff did all they could for Mr Crowther. A doctor and nurse with intensive care experience accompanied him in the ambulance. But it is concerned that the hospital bed could not be found for him nearer home. 'That is something we are looking into as a matter of urgency.'

While the Tory government still pretends there is nothing wrong with the National Health Service, that it is the patients' fault for being ill, the government's NHS consultants are arrogant as ever.

Pat Cooksley, a ward sister with 25 years' service, was sacked for refusing to obtain a doctor's signature on a repeat prescription. The Central Council for Nursing, which sets professional standards, has said sister Cooksley acted in the best interests of the patient. Her union, UNISON, supports her. And so do junior doctors, who passed a vote of no confidence in her employers, the Plymouth NHS trust.

Likening sister Cooksley's treatment to that of 'whistleblowers' like nurse Pink in Stockport and Dr Helen Zeitlin, professor Harry Cohen of the NHS Support Federation says: 'The market culture has created an intimidatory atmosphere where health professionals speak out about patients' conditions at their peril.'

This isn't new. In the last century a young man called Tobias, who was starting in his profession, was warned not to 'repeat a word of what is said in this shop, or dare to make any supposition, or draw any conclusion from anything you see or hear, or fancy you see or hear'.

This was not unlike the 'confidentiality' clauses in today's contracts. Members were once regarded as a part of the surgical profession, and Tobias's employer was Sweeney Ltd, of whom health secretary Virginia Bottomley would surely approve? His cuts were almost as bad as this government's, and heaped the private sector produce delicious meat pies.

### Blame the workers

THE greatest danger confronting national workers and all rail workers is not union busting but the continued domination of the discipline by the RMT itself,' warned 'International Worker', paper of the International Communist Party (ICP), on 27 August. 'The RMT is defending the jobs, wages and conditions of its members but its intent to bargain these away and to oversee the exploitation of the work-force.'

It is not just Jimmy Knapp who is to blame. 'Seven of the Executive-Committee are so-called "leftists", including Bob Crow, a member of the Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain, and Pat Gorski, of the Socialist Organiser Group,' points the anonymous writer's inaccurate finger. 'Yet not one of them has uttered a single word of opposition to Knapp...'

There is 'no opposition' however, 'because the working class has not yet begun to delineate its independence from the corporatist leadership of the labour and trade union bureaucracy. Rail workers have accepted the sectional and limited character of the strike...'

So, sisters and brothers, the ICP asks you've only yourselves to blame!

Charlie Pottins

# Support S. A. truckers' strike

Last month South Africa's big cities were virtually cut off by more than 3,000 trucks blockading motorway links in an action spearheaded by the Turning Wheel International Workers' Movement (Workers Press, 3 and 17 September). This blockade started at Mooi River, a small town in mid-Natal, on 22 August. After negotiations that resulted in concessions to some of the drivers' demands, the blockade ended. But the agreement reached was dishonoured and a new blockade began on 20 September. We reprint here statements on the actions of the South African military by Turning Wheel and our comrades in the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa)

## From the Turning Wheel International Workers' Movement

AT ABOUT 10pm on 20 September, the military descended on unarmed striking drivers who were involved in a peaceful and disciplined democratic protest. Using troop carriers, tear-gas, rifle butts and what we believe were pistols with silencers, the military brutally forced workers to move their trucks. At least one striker has been shot.

Strikers were not allowed to go to his assistance and the shot driver was taken away by the military. A number of workers were arrested. To prevent further injuries to workers, union officials recommended to workers that they move their trucks, although they were reluctant to do so.

Workers are not intimidated. This action was not a defeat. The truck drivers will continue pursuing their demands.

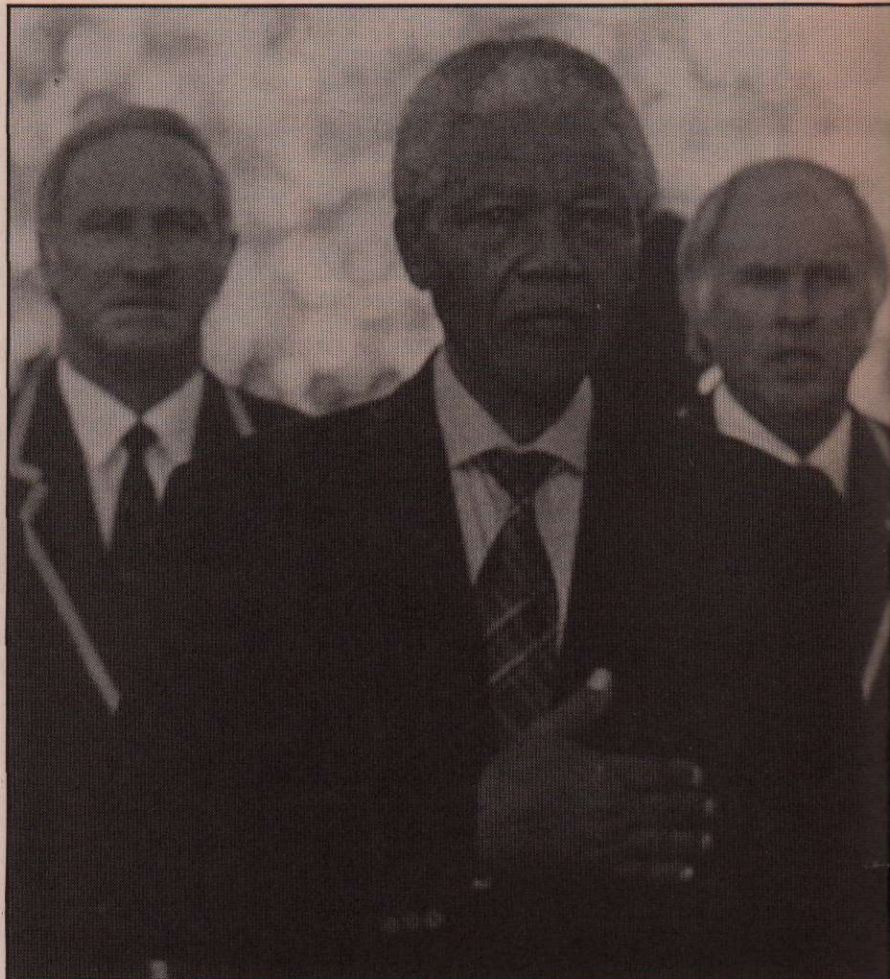
The Turning Wheel is a democratic trade union formed by truck drivers ourselves and represents the vast majority of drivers. These actions by the military show that the government of national unity sides with the rich against the poor — it is a bosses' government. The COSATU trade union feder-

ation and the TGWU official transport workers' union leaderships, which have condemned the actions of the truck drivers, have lost touch with their constituency. They are fast becoming sweetheart unions. We appeal to workers to take control of their unions. We salute those militant workers in COSATU unions who support us and refuse to collaborate with anti-working-class policies.

Those who are wrecking the South African economy are the bosses, who in their greed put profits before people. They [the government] are the ones who are sabotaging the reconstruction and development programme (RDP) by reducing taxation on bosses. We are tired of tightening our belts while the rich get richer and we get poorer. The gravy train for the bosses and government officials must stop.

The Turning Wheel condemns the dishonouring of the agreement made at the first Mooi River blockade, which prompted yesterday's action. This was taken after warning the minister of labour and parties to the industrial council negotiations well in advance about workers' frustration.

The Turning Wheel reasserts its commitment to pursuing the demands made by workers at the first



Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk: the government of national unity sides with the

Mooi River blockade. The demands include:

- No tax on overtime.
- A basic monthly salary of 2,500 rand [£450], code 14 drivers to receive R700 [£128] per week minimum, code 11 R650 [£120].
- Reinstatement of dismissed workers.
- Better working conditions and safety on the roads.
- A national industrial council.

No amount of force, slander or distortion will prevent us from pursuing these demands.

On behalf of the interim executive committee

Richard Madime

## From the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa)

THE Workers International salutes the Turning Wheel International Workers' Movement. We support

# Reality of A

BY MIKE COOKE

THE 'Guardian's' reporter in South Africa, David Beresford, described the breaking of the truck drivers' blockade as follows:

'The trade unions show a determination to pursue their members' sectional interests. But fears that an African National Congress government would prove hostile to a labour movement with which it is politically entwined were allayed this week when the cabinet sent in troops to bust motorway blockades by striking truck drivers.'

'The party's secretary for information, Senator Jackson Mthembu, raged that the truckers should be arrested and their vehicles impounded, suggesting that, in some sections of the ANC, Thatcherism is alive and well.'

Coming as it does after 20 inches of putrid eulogising for the ANC

government, with only nine inches left to the end of the comment article called 'Creditable ratings for the ANC' (Saturday 24 September), this gives a real flavour of the manic cover-up that is being made by the liberal press for the ANC's role in the shameful government of national unity.

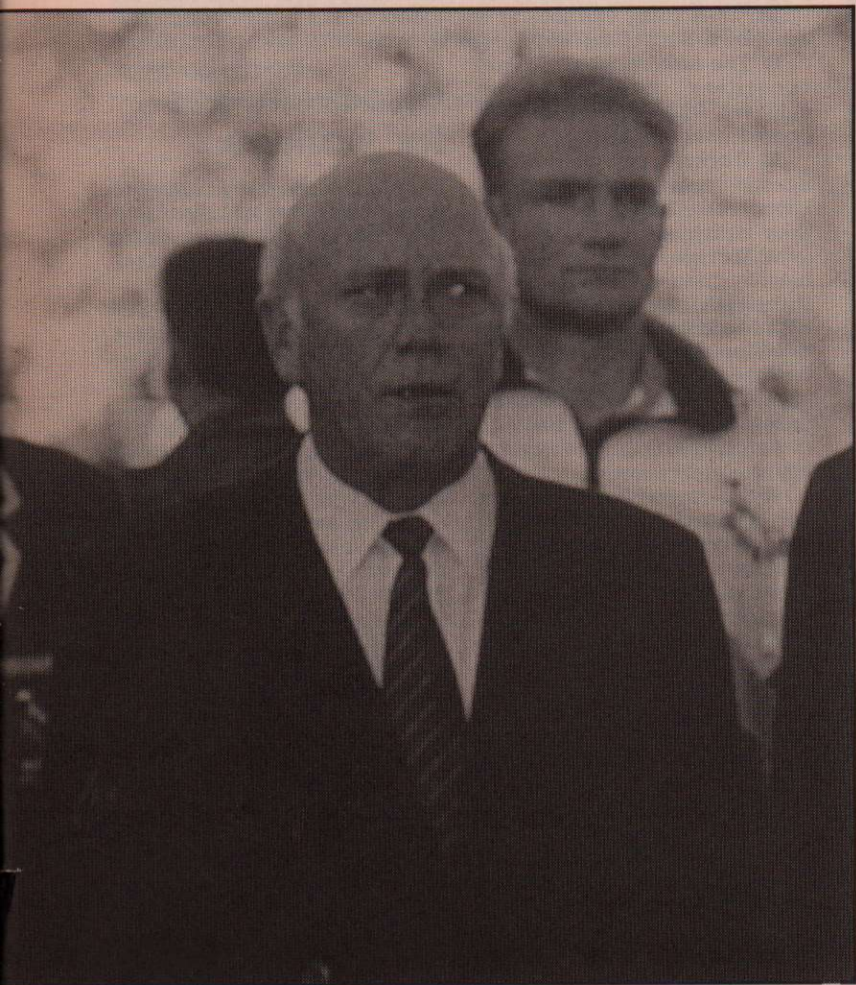
Compared with the reports of one man dead and the use of rifle butts and tear-gas from the Turning Wheel International Workers' Movement and our own comrades of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa), Beresford's account of the sending in of 'troops to bust' the strike sounds positively genteel.

And the suggestion that the unions are determined to defend members is bizarre when many of the truck drivers joined Turning Wheel in frustration at the COSATU union federation's TGWU transport workers' union, which main-



Ousted squatters: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer

# African struggle



The rich against the poor — it is a bosses' government

their struggle against the bosses and all who side with them. We support the workers' demands and condemn the police and military actions against truckers on 20 September.

The government led by the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party is here showing its true colours by siding with the bosses. We condemn any action by the COSATU and TGWU leadership against workers — this only strengthens the hands of the bosses.

We call on all workers, socialists

and democrats to urgently discuss ways of supporting the truckers' struggles. We urgently call on all workers to consider raising the demand for the nationalisation without compensation of the transport industry under workers' control. Only in this way, as part of a broader socialist programme, can all injustice in society be eradicated.

We call on truckers and fellow workers in neighbouring states to also discuss solidarity action with the Turning Wheel International Workers' Movement.

*A luta continua!*

# ANC's role

maintains its alliance with the ANC and South African Communist Party as part of the government of national unity.

Earlier in the article, Beresford talks of 'the triumph of Nelson Mandela's handling of white extremism'. And the example given? 'The presence of General Constand Viljoen in the chair of the powerful parliamentary defence committee — the very man chosen by right-wing Afrikanerdom to lead rebellion.' What more convenient place for the general to lead such a rebellion should capitalism require it?

'Violence loomed large in South Africa until April,' says Beresford. And since then? The suggestion is obviously that it has abated since then. But later we read: 'The most serious violence in South Africa is criminal. The murder rate is probably the worst in the world.'

The reality constantly appears through the whitewash as it falls

off. In talking of the reconstruction and development programme (RDP) of the ANC, which is meant to address the grievances of the dispossessed and the disadvantaged without damaging the profits of the ruling class, Beresford reports:

'There are plans, in the re-vamping of the intelligence services, to set up an espionage department to "monitor" implementation of the RDP. The ANC component of national intelligence is drawn from its own security department, the Mbokodo, the "stone that crushes" responsible for the horrors of the liberation movement's detention camps. Which gives ground for unease that they might discover in the RDP a new god.'

The detention camps were set up to imprison hundreds of young fighters in the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, who demanded more democracy in their organisation.

# Defender of bourgeois society

On 17 September the philosopher Sir Karl Popper died. He was one of the leading anti-Marxists in the West. Here MIKE MCKENNA, who teaches sociology and philosophy at Middlesex University, criticises Popper's approach to the philosophy of science

KARL POPPER was born into a prosperous Austrian Jewish family on 28 July 1902. He was exposed from an early age to the advantages of a fine library and his parents had connections to some of the foremost intellectuals of the time. He is celebrated today as one of the greatest philosophers of science, as an expert in scientific method.

From the beginning of World War I to the early 1920s, he encountered the tremendous ferment of events and ideas which characterised that remarkable period. His most intense intellectual formation coincided with the immediate aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Though he professed a certain sympathy for the workers' movement, by the age of 17 (1919) he had, in his own words, 'become an anti-Marxist' (his autobiography, 'Unended Quest', page 34).

The evidence from his writings is that he never achieved an adequate understanding of Marx, hardly surprising given his milieu and the early age at which he took his decisive stand. Anti-Marxism remained a central motif in his thought to the end of his life. Undoubtedly much of his reputation is bound up with his ideological contributions in this area.

Notwithstanding this, his reputation was built first around his contribution to the philosophy of science. In 1934, he published the book that embodies his most significant work, 'The Logic of Scientific Method'. In this text he correctly criticised a certain naive empiricist account of scientific method, the approach he termed 'inductivism'.

According to the inductivist, science arises as a set of theories established as generalisations from a range of immediately given observations. Popper rejected this passive and mechanical view, arguing that scientists were actively involved in formulating theories

**'Anti-Marxism remained a central motif in his thought to the end of his life.'**

and hypotheses prior to any encounter with the empirical evidence.

He proposed that these conjectures should be rigorously tested by exposing them to the danger of empirical refutation. Empirical evidence was not a basis for confirming or verifying scientific conjecture, rather it was to be the basis for criticism, in a process whereby inadequate conjectures would be falsified or refuted. There could be no straight path to truth in science. Progress could only be the result of the systematic elimination of error.

Popper went on to argue that the falsifiability of a theory is the basis of its scientific status. He formulated the so-called 'principle of demarcation', by which he claimed to be able to distinguish science from non-science. A scientific conjecture could be empirically falsified; it should be possible to conceive of a definite set of empirical events such that their occurrence would refute the theory.

This provided Popper with what he considered to be a decisive argument against Marxism. The categories of Marxism were, he claimed, too vague, too general or too abstract to allow any empirical refutation. They were compatible with any conceivable set of 'facts' and so would always seem to be

richly verified (inductively credible).

But this seeming strength of Marxist categories was, according to Popper, a weakness. Because it was impossible to falsify, Marxism had to be considered a pseudo-science. Some disciples have been prone to see these as unique ideas originating with Popper. In fact such an approach is prefigured in the work of the 19th-century philosopher William Whewell. Notwithstanding this, we find in Popper's 'The Logic of Scientific Method' a rigorous working out of the logic of the approach, which is expressed persuasively and with great clarity.

All the same, the perspective was arguably suspect from its inception. It is a commonplace for commentators to misread Popper's project. On one reading we face a philosopher who spends many years studying the question of scientific method with particular reference to the natural sciences. At some juncture, armed with the demarcation principle, he turns his attention to Marxism and almost inadvertently discovers that Marxism is not scientific.

Such a reading of Popper is in fact a travesty of the truth. According to his collection of essays 'Conjectures and Refutations' (1963), he first decided at a very young age to reject the notion of inductive verification in favour of falsification. He found that this allowed him to draw a line of demarcation between science and non-science such that he could use it to reject Marx, and for that matter Freud. However, it was not until many years later, in 1934, that the idea of falsifiability was worked up into a systematic philosophy of science.

Popper did not develop a philosophy of science that led him to reject Marx, rather his anti-Marxism was, in part, the root of his philosophy of science. There is an anecdote, possibly apocryphal, to the effect that the compilers of the collection of essays, 'Conjectures and Refutations', found themselves with two unreconciled index entries under Marxism: 'Marxism irrefutable' and 'Marxism refuted'.

Because his ideas were ideological in origin, it cannot be concluded from that fact alone that they are mistaken. More substantial criticisms have been advanced. Perhaps the most telling criticism originated in a work by Pierre Duhem called 'The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory' published when Popper was just four years old (1906). In a now famous section of this work, Duhem demonstrated that the notion of testing a theory against empirical evidence (the idea of falsification) was logically naive.

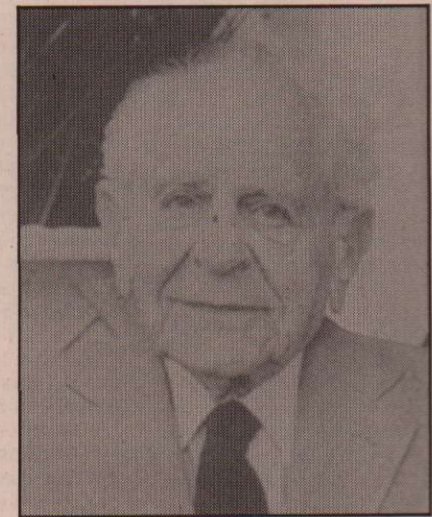
Duhem showed that a conjecture, theory or hypothesis never faces the evidence alone. Implicitly or explicitly it is necessarily accompanied by an ensemble of related theories, assumptions and statements concerned with the specific conditions of the test. In the event of a failure to predict the observed outcome of the test, there is no logical reason to assume that the theory is falsified. Any one of an infinite set of related assumptions may be responsible for the apparent falsification.

Popper and those influenced by him have in various ways tried to get around this area of difficulty (see for example the later work of Imre Lakatos). But these attempts have tended to be unsuccessful, if one measures success in terms of ability to avoid the sort of relativism that tends to bedevil all efforts to produce an empiricist account of science.

Another level of criticism concerned the historical development of science. The philosopher Paul Feyerabend in his book 'Against

Method' dealt some serious blows to the Popperian project. He demonstrated that in the history of science most of the major theories were routinely accompanied by a range of unexplained and even unexplainable empirical counterinstances. In fact, these apparent refutations, with the adoption of a Popperian methodology, would have resulted in the rejection of most of the landmark scientific theories from the moment of their birth. These were telling if not decisive criticisms, especially since Popper was prone to stress the realistic character of his methodological advance.

By the end of World War II, he had completed a number of works in an attempt to understand fascism, the main text being 'The Open Society and its Enemies'. Strangely, in the face of the atrocities of the right and the fact that tens of



Karl Popper

thousands of Marxists and socialists had died in the struggle against fascism, this work centred on a critique of the dialectical tradition and the works of Plato, Hegel and Marx. In a bizarre way, the disgusting irrationalities of fascist thought were said to be rooted in the works of thinkers who had been central to the struggle for a free and rational society.

The prominent idea developed in this work is the proposal that an abstract and total system of ideas formulated by an intellectual could be the basis for a totalitarian system. Such a system imposed on an intractable mass of individuals would inevitably lead to an oppressive and closed society.

Popper seemed blissfully unaware that the element of truth contained in this line of argument had already been understood within the dialectical tradition, particularly by Hegel and Marx. The issue is dealt with by Hegel in his analysis of the period of terror during the French Revolution. And it is part of the argument, in Marx and Engels, against utopian socialism of the kind offered by Robert Owen and his like.

It is possible to get a clear idea of the inadequacy of Popper's understanding of Marx in 'The Open Society and its Enemies'. For example, there we read the following:

'In so far as, according to Marx, all accumulation of the means of production may be termed "capital", we may even say that "capitalism" is in a certain sense synonymous with "industrialism".'

Given that Marx spent a lifetime demonstrating that 'capital' was an historically specific form, it is hard to imagine a more fundamental misreading.

In the face of the intellectual inadequacies in Popper's work, we are left with just one explanation for the size of his reputation. Clearly he is recognised for his services in the defence of bourgeois society. It will come as no surprise then to learn that he was much admired by Margaret Thatcher and that he received a knighthood from a Tory government.

## The cream of the jest

MAYBE I'm growing too old to appreciate it, but the slapdash ignorance of many journalists — including all too many who write for the 'Guardian' — doesn't seem funny any more. It's just irritating.

Especially when they have anything to say about Trotskyism and Trotskyists, subjects on which an ounce of prejudice plus a pinch of venom are thought more important than accuracy, checking of facts, research, or mere elementary fairness.

For many years, the 'Guardian' has been publishing the occasional anti-Trotskyist gibes of its former political correspondent Ian Aitken, who evidently learned at his father's knee all he thinks he need to know about Trotskyism.

George Aitken was for a time a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain's central committee, and it can only have been from him that his son picked up the tawdry debating trick of never referring to Trotskyists without prefacing the word with a belittling adjective, for preference one casting doubt on our sanity: 'crazed' and 'cracked' seem to be his favourites.

The pen is the pen of Aitken Junior; but that Stalinist croak from beyond the grave is the voice of Aitken Senior. And the gramophone record is getting a bit worn, not to say cracked.

Now the 'Guardian' has found a new way of rubbishing Trotskyists. Reviewing last Monday 'The Oxbridge Conspiracy' by Walter Ellis, Patrick White told his readers that Oxbridge, which 'has the best of everything', 'has the cream of the Trotskyists too'.

Cream? Whatever can this mean? The only example we're given is Paul Foot, former editor of the Oxford publication 'Isis' and former president of the Oxford Union.

Following Ellis, Wright attributes the 'discipline, motivation... historical understanding' and even 'basic literacy' of the Socialist Workers Party to Foot, who, it seems, has been single-handedly responsible for creating these qualities in the party he supports.

It is he who has been 'near the tiller', even if others have actually steered the boat through such troubled waters as first the creation, then the destruction, of the Anti-Nazi League in the late 1970s.

But there are two snags here. For one thing, the SWP is in no recognisable sense a Trotskyist organisation. Half-educated journalists in a hurry often classify it as such, but what they say isn't evidence. What the SWP says and does is what counts.

The other snag is that, whatever his sterling qualities as writer and orator, it's simply an abuse of language to call Foot 'the cream of the Trotskyists'.

This phrase means nothing. It's silly and vacuous, and (as Foot himself, one hopes, would be the first to recognise) it's a calculated insult to the whole history of British Trotskyism.

If we are to look for the outstanding British Trotskyists of the past 60 years, our search would not begin in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, but in the factories, among those dedicated and self-sacrificing working-class fighters who stood firm against capitalism and Stalinism alike.

Not that Ellis or Wright will have heard of the late Rae Hunter, for example — or of her widower Bill Hunter, currently at work on his autobiography, which, I confidently predict, young workers will be reading with great profit and enjoyment long after 'The Oxbridge Conspiracy' has been remaindered.

## Modest corruption by modern standards

A COUPLE of weeks ago ('Debt-collector's perks', 17 Septem-

## PERSONAL COLUMN

ber) I wrote about the goodies appropriated, and dished out to their guests, by the top officials of the Student Loans Company, whose purpose is to squeeze cash out of hard-up graduates.

This affair, which was hushed up at first but couldn't be hushed up forever, has aroused resentment and anger among the graduates this outfit has been hounding, and also among undergraduates, for whom grants have been transformed into loans by the Tory government and who will themselves one day be chased for repayment.

Anger over these perks billed to the taxpayer has been further fuelled by last week's admission by Malcolm Hurlston, the company's former chair, that he accepted an all-expenses-paid trip from the US firm that ran the Student Loans Company's computer operations.

Standing in for chief executive Ron Harrison, Hurlston was flown by jet to Paris to watch the Scotland-France rugby match and be entertained to lunch.

'It was a modest meal by Paris standards', Hurlston claimed last week. However modest it may have been, the whole jaunt was a clear breach of company rules forbidding the acceptance of entertainment from suppliers.

The US computer company that did the entertaining, EDS Scicon, has recently acquired £1 billion of Whitehall business from the Inland Revenue and the Drivers, Vehicles and Operators Information Technology Agency.

Graduates' anger over the Student Loans Company scandal, however, is as the cooing of doves compared with the feelings that have gripped students and teachers at Huddersfield University over the scandal that erupted there this week.

Earlier this year the university's vice-chancellor, Professor Kenneth Durrands, kicked all elected representatives off the governing council. It was a clean sweep: students' representatives, staff representatives, and local councillors alike were removed, allegedly because without them the university could be run more efficiently.

In protest, the teaching staff registered a 90 per cent vote of no confidence in the rump council. And, last June, Professor Durrands resigned, though he will stay in his post until January 1995. Soon after his resignation, it is said, he received a handsome 50 per cent pay rise: from about £80,000 a year to somewhere between £120,000 and £130,000, backdated to February 1994 and making him, as many believe, the highest-paid vice-chancellor in the country.

And his pay-off is said to be three years' salary, plus a car for life, plus BUPA health care for life.

This package, it is estimated, totals somewhere in the region of a modest £500,000.

## Cuffay's place of exile

OWING to a telephone mishearing, the word 'Tasmania' appeared as 'Australia' in this column last week.

It was to Tasmania, then known as Van Diemen's Land, that the black leader of London's Chartists, William Cuffay, was transported for life in 1849 for the crime of 'levying war on Queen Victoria'.

He died on that island in 1870 at the age of 82, having remained active in the working-class movement there to the very end of his life.

Peter Fryer

# Not a flexible friend

## BERNARD FRANKS looks at the benefits to employers and costs to workers of flexitime working

FLEXITIME, flexitime, gliding time, rational working hours, and variable working hours are all names for the system today most commonly called flexible working hours — although the terms 'fix your own hours' and 'do-as-you-like working' may even be used.

Applied mainly in office employment since the early 1970s, the system is being revamped and reapplied on a wider basis today in the name of providing equal opportunities for women to work hours convenient to their 'home chores' in general, and to child care in particular.

Other benefits to employees allegedly made available by a freer choice of when to start and finish work are: avoidance of rush hour travel; extended lunch breaks, for shopping etc.; accommodation for those with slow 'biorhythms' who like to get up late; and provides for an accumulation of credited time to the point where an extra half-day's or day's holiday can be taken.

An increase in morale may also be claimed, on the basis that the workforce gets the impression of greater individual independence while seeing an end to disputes over lateness.

In fact such schemes include a number of serious dangers for working people, not least by being a half-way stage to many adverse measures not at first defined or foreseen.

The basic elements of flexitime are as follows:

Employees are given a set of 'flexible' hours in addition to compulsory 'core' times, allied to a fixed accounting period during which the total of contracted hours must be worked.

The core times are those in which all employees at work on a particular day must be present. For example, core times might be 9.30am to noon and 2pm to 4.30pm. Flexible times might then be 8am to 9.30am during which employees could start work, noon to 2pm during which lunch could be taken (with possibly a minimum of half an hour), and 4.30pm to 7pm to accommodate leaving time.

In theory, workers can begin and finish as they please in the flexible periods so long as they work their contracted times.

Where the accounting period is a month, perhaps a required 150 hours in four weeks must be worked, with a possible maximum carry-over into the next period of eight hours debit or credit. Where the accounting period is a day, the start time would more or less dictate the day's lunch-break and finishing time, ensuring that the minimum contracted time — seven

hours say — is worked.

According to expert J. Harvey Boulton, with everyone starting and finishing at different times, 'time recording is essential to the operation of flexible working hours' ('Flexible Working Hours', page 35). This will not be an old-fashioned timeclock but a sophisticated, personalised, coded, digital time-recording device. It will provide a computer print-out of start and stop times; total hours worked, and time debited and credited, possibly in five-minute units.

The flexible working hours system originated in west Germany in 1967, when it was named gliding time (*Gleitzeit*) by the management of the Messerschmidt engineering, aviation and aerospace company. It was taken up and developed by sociologists and management consultants supported by time-recording specialists.

Messerschmidt had previously worked a day lasting from 7.30am to 4pm, with half an hour for lunch, and everyone clocking on at the gate at the same time and completing daily time sheets.

Under *Gleitzeit*, the change was made to a single core time of 8am to 4pm, with flexible times of 7am to 8am and 4pm to 6pm. Ten hours a month were allowed to be carried over.

By 1973, 6 per cent of west German firms had adopted similar schemes and the idea had been taken up in France on the urging of government ministers. It was introduced in Britain in the early 1970s, by such companies as ICI, Pilkington Glass and Wiggins Teape, along with various insurance firms.

Trade union leaders made no objection to it, but in November 1973 'Workers Press' (an earlier paper of the WRP) did carry an article warning of the development.

Use of the system was widely extended during the 1974 three-day week, to take advantage of daylight hours, but the experts claim that it was rarely a genuine application in that case.

## Benefits for employers

ACCORDING to present-day advocates, as well as 'Financial Times', 'New Society' and 'New Scientist' articles during the early days of selling the system, its advantages to employers of labour are:

■ Lateness is totally eliminated — all late starts have to be worked off subsequently.

■ One-day absenteeism is dramatically reduced, much of this has to be worked off also — the German airline Lufthansa claimed £1 million saving on lateness, a 50 per cent cut in one-day absenteeism and a rise in turnover of 5 per cent.

■ Overtime is reduced or eliminated because the normal

operational time of the company — the so-called 'broad time' — is extended, for example from 9am-5.30pm to 7am-7pm.

■ Bonus schemes can be eliminated — extra output is achieved by the extended working time while the extra benefits for workers occur in terms of their chosen start and stop times, not cash.

■ Greater flexibility is achieved in the use of staff — covering for absent colleagues on a regular basis gets employees used to doing other tasks, even doing two jobs at a time for a part of the day.

■ The introduction of time-recording equipment is achieved where this previously proved unacceptable.

■ Workers can be encouraged to arrange work-loads and cover with each other to fit with their individual work times.

■ Workforces can be cut back by 'natural wastage' and a 'frozen posts' policy with no loss of production. The Losenhausen machine factory claimed a reduction in staff from 630 to 520, yet an increase in turnover from an equivalent of £4 million to £5.3 million with the extension of hours of operation.

■ Alternatively, the system can be used to impose short-time working while maintaining full cover. According to an early flexitime guru, Willi Hallor, manager of Interflex: 'Companies can cut the number of hours, then let the employees sort out their work patterns among themselves and you will have full-time cover while employees are working short-time.'

He added: 'Naturally this will be accompanied by an appropriate drop in salary as in the case of blue-collar workers on short-time. However, white-collar workers might find this preferable to being fired' ('Financial Times', 3 March 1975).

■ Employers will claim that they must have an equal right to fix start and finish times to fit their needs — for example, to match working time to peak work-loads or to ensure that a late job is completed instead of being left to the following day. Shopworkers might be required to stay on when there is late-night or weekend shopping, with time off in lieu (of extra pay) to be taken in slack periods.

■ 'Above all, it gives better control of staff' declared an early article in the 'Journal of the Institute of Work Study Practitioners' (August 1973). And there might even be parallel advantages to sub-contracting 'lump' labour, said the same source.

Modern-day exponents say that some form of work measurement might be needed, to ensure that the work of those on different times is co-ordinated and to check that those starting early are actually working once

they have clocked in.

DISADVANTAGES for employers are said to be: the extra cost of heating and lighting in the extended period; a problem that many key employees cannot be transferred to the system, for example cleaner/switchboard operators, security staff and caretakers; and a serious problem that no extended cover will occur if the great majority of staff want to start early and leave early, forcing management to undermine the basis of its own 'voluntary' system.

## Disadvantages for workers

IN MOST cases, the advantages for the employer are disadvantages for the workforce. Some specific dangers to be cleared about are:

■ Unavoidable lateness and short-term absence become hours to be worked. In general the right to paid time off is undermined.

■ There is an increase in work intensity, and extra tasks are undertaken without negotiation and with no increase in pay.

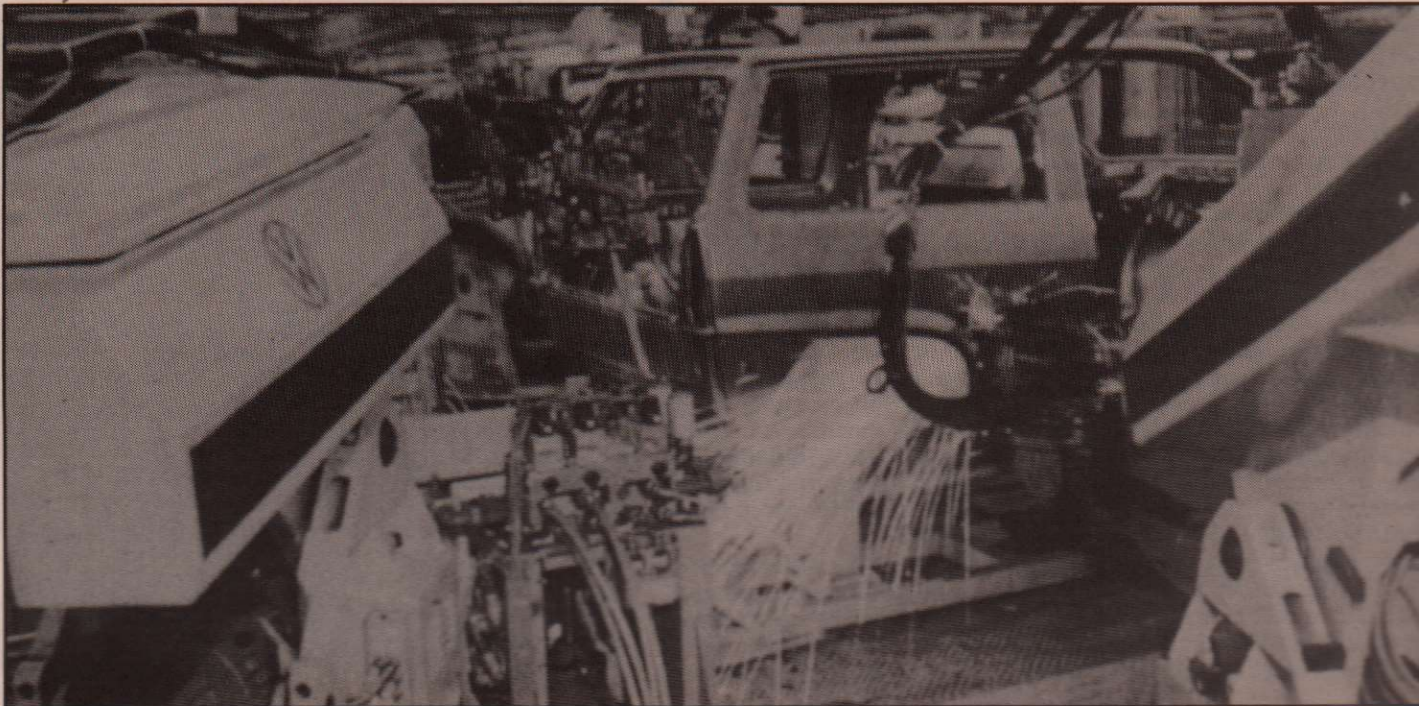
■ Contracts of employment may have to be re-written to fit the new system and these may include totally new job descriptions involving practices never originally applying — for example agreement to flexible working (not the same as flexible working hours). In general there could be a turn to short-term contracts and individual agreements and negotiation, and a turn away from collective bargaining and trade unionism.

■ Regular meal times and rest breaks may be undermined. Meals taken by all employees at the same time were a victory for the trades union against arbitrary breaks whose time and duration were dictated by the employer. In general regularised hours and 'normal' weekend working' guarantees may both be lost.

■ Often the much-vaunted benefits for mothers and married women have not materialised. A late start must be matched by a late finish, so that children dropped off late at the minder's cannot be collected early — unless a change is made to part-time work.

■ Introduction of flexible working hours may constitute a half-way step towards the introduction of shift work in areas of employment — for example offices — where this has not previously applied. Currently 1 per cent of workers are on shift and another 9 per cent are on 'atypical' or non-daytime hours.

Flexitime, at its worst, involves a wide range of damaging disadvantages for workers. At its least effective, it operates as a glorified system of attendance control.



German firms have been among the first to introduce flexitime working

# Rwanda campaign says no to the 'new world order'

Workers Press prints a statement below from the African Committee for Aid to Rwanda in France as part of the discussion about how the working class should respond to the effects of the 'new world order'.

On 30 July, a Workers Press statement called for international working-class action to save Rwanda: 'We know also that some will tell us that it is "not enough" to use "pressure" to make the imperialists do this, you have to overthrow them. Yes, but our fellow workers are dying in Rwanda today, and we must do what we can to force our governments and exploiters to intervene by sending supplies.'

The statement below appeared in 'Le Monde', 3 August.

'WHO cares whether the blacks of Rwanda die or not?' — this is what some of the French say about the war in Rwanda.

But what we black people of Africa say is this: we don't accept the demands made of us by the 'new world order'. We are sons and daughters of Africa. We don't want anything to do with petrol or diamonds. We are concerned only with our land, Rwanda.

We speak softly at first; we are speaking only to ourselves... The day before yesterday we heard Biafra's cry... Yesterday we heard Somalia. Today we hear the cries of Liberia, Angola and others. No one knows where the Angel of Death will strike next. We will not talk about the diseases that afflict us. We feel it is not decent to do so.

Africa confused by herself and by her governments, struck dumb by horror, paralysed by the mess, and entangled in underdevelopment, which will go on for ever if we don't do something about it. Simply to hope that things will improve is no good.

## Failures

Most of our republics are no more than 'comic operas'; and their so-called Organisation of African Unity is no more than a point in space in which all of our failures have accumulated over the past 30 years.

Let us look back a little. We are the generation who were going to win independence. But who remembers those dreams? And those speeches about the Messiah's army coming to release us! Remember all the slogans, expressed in the voice of

Victor Hugo! 'Arise Africa!' 'Africa marches to victory!' And what have we to say now, except to argue and criticise each other?

Of course we proclaim that we are fed up to the teeth! We are sick of all the constituted and instituted authorities of our continent. At the top of our voices we proclaim that aid to Rwanda should not be just a Western concern. But that Africa should be involved too!

Hope is a risk we run.

## Stand

As Africans we ought to make our contributions to Aid to Rwanda. We stand together with Rwandan brothers and sisters. But at the same time we don't want it to be said that our activity should be claimed by one of our states. We thank France for having sent her elite soldiers to Rwanda. But we, ourselves, as sons and daughters of Africa, call on all Africans, saying to them: 'What have you done to help Rwanda?' Africa is disregarded by the other countries... The great countries of the world vie with one another to show their indifference, to our continent in general, and in regard to Rwanda in 'particular'.

The time has come for you, an ordinary African, to stop being cowardly. You must open your eyes to Hutu-Tutsi genocide! What do you intend to do for Rwanda?

In these months of famine, cholera and every other disease, what are you ready to give for your Rwandan brothers and sisters? How much of your income will you sacrifice?

Will you just cross your



Wounded from Kigali: 'What have you done to help Rwanda?', asks the African Committee for Aid to Rwanda in France

arms? Will you utter only useless phrases, such as: 'We must set up a court to judge all of these crimes against humanity'?

Will you wait passively for the next catastrophe to devastate our continent, so as to satisfy yourself with a bitter victory? Yes my African brothers and sisters: hope is certainly a

risk to run. Alan Paton's 'Cry the Beloved Country' shows that South Africa is on the right path now. Tomorrow, perhaps, the rest of the African continent will follow... The time has come when you must stop criticising others, and seeing in them the source of all our ills.

Now is the time for you to

consider yourself. You must act on your thoughts. The time has come for you to see things differently. You have the capacity to do harm.

But it is time now for us to really organise ourselves. It is time for us to really organise our continent so that it becomes a land in which we can all live

peacefully. We, as sons and daughters of Africa, solemnly proclaim that we are sufficiently egotistical still to love our continent of Africa.

■ **Comite Africain pour l'aide au Rwanda, M422, La Mare des Noues, 95130 Franconville, France.**

## Dirty business in Sudan

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

WHILE the French government gets 'tough' with Islam by banning schoolgirls from wearing headscarves, it is promoting its business interests in Africa by supporting the reactionary Islamic regime in Sudan.

Behind their headline-making handover to France of Illich Ramirez Sanchez, or 'Carlos the Jackal', the Sudanese intelligence services have been receiving training from their French counterparts, in Paris and at bases abroad.

### Contacts

'We have been going to France regularly for the past two years,' boasts Abu Bakar Shingiti, of Sudan's external relations department. 'It was from these contacts that we were able to trap and hand over Carlos to the French.'

This ought to upset the US government, which just over a year ago branded Sudan a sponsor of Islamic terrorism. But the handover of the supposed 'Marxist' Sanchez may remind Washington strategists that the

Islamic regime, even if aligned with US imperialism's rivals for now, is also keeping down the Sudanese working class.

The Sudanese regime was provided with French 'spy-in-the-sky' satellite photographs to guide its bombers attacking rebel camps in southern Sudan. French influence persuaded Zaire and the Central African Republic to permit Sudanese government forces to operate from their territory against the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

French and US companies have their eyes on the Upper Nile province, where the US Chevron company discovered oil in 1978. In 1983, SPLA guerrillas attacked Chevron installations, and the US company withdrew.

After a split in the SPLA exacerbated by Sudanese intelligence penetration of some groups, government forces regained the oilfields, and invited Chevron back.

But the US company sold its interests cheaply to a Sudanese businessman, from whom they were acquired by a company called Arakis.

Together with Sudan's State

Petroleum, Arakis hopes to be pumping out 35,000 barrels from two oilfields in southern Sudan by the end of 1995.

The French company GTM was forced to abandon work on the 350km Jonglei canal in 1984, leaving a \$50 million giant bucket-wheel digger behind to rust. Five GTM technicians had been kidnapped and held hostage by SPLA rebels.

### Rebels

Now the Sudanese government is claiming it has the rebels on the run, and wants French companies to resume work on the canal and on Juba international airport.

While encouraging Islamic militancy which diverts the masses and attracts Iranian or Saudi Arabian funding, the Sudanese regime is mainly concerned with repressing the working class at home, crushing the rebels — mostly Christian or animist — in the south, and making Sudan safe for imperialist exploitation.

Handing over the clapped-out, stateless Illich Ramirez Sanchez for a Paris publicity stunt was a cheap price to pay.

## Mounting unrest in China

UNREST in China is increasing — and that is what has prompted the introduction of a Labour Code, says Zhang Kai in the 'October Review' (Hong Kong).

He quotes a Hong Kong capitalist returning from Heilungjiang province who told a magazine that he saw 100,000 state-enterprise workers protesting in the streets, shouting: 'We need to live! We need to eat!'

The Labour Code was passed earlier this year by the Standing Committee of the National Labour Congress and is due to be implemented next year.

The Labour Code lays down certain rights for workers; but at the same time workers' duties are also spelt out — 'much in line with the general theme of "beneficial to both the employer and the employee"' that was much heard in the early 1950s.

Labour minister Li Boyong is quoted as admitting that in 1993 there were more than 10,000 incidents of strikes, go-slows, collective petitions, and demonstrations resulting from labour disputes — many of which occurred in foreign joint-venture enterprises.

In the first quarter of 1994 there were about 270 strikes, some of which lasted longer than 40 days; and 3,000 labour disputes, mostly due to workers' grievances over pay, working hours, and health and safety conditions.

Zhang Kai claims that by means of the Labour Code, introduced almost 45 years after the Chinese Communist Party came to power, the authorities are seeking to restrict the super-exploitation of the workers and grant some reforms and concessions 'as a safety-valve against more conflicts'.

### Favour

The official 'People's Daily' has revealed that there have been more than 30 draft versions of the Labour Code, reflecting efforts to satisfy the various parties and often in favour of the capitalists.

In many ways the Labour Code retreats from the provisions of the Chinese constitution. For example, the Labour Code says the workers have the right to participate in democratic management; this is a retreat from the rights of workers'

councils to decide on issues in the enterprise and to elect the enterprise director.

The Labour Code gives employers the right to sack workers, lay down wage levels and define working hours. This is specially detrimental to workers in small enterprises.

Labour disputes are to be resolved by arbitration committees formed by the state, the official trades unions and the capitalists, without the participation of the workers' own representatives.

Zhang Kai makes the important point that, though the right to strike has been deleted from the constitution for many years and the official press had instead used the expression 'work stoppages', the growing number of strikes has compelled the authorities to refer to them as such.

Thus, 'through their action, the workers have... obtained a semi-legality for strikes'.

Zhang Kai concludes that 'with the development of the market economy and increased exploitation, the workers have to depend on their own action to defend their interests and rights'.

# Land war in Mexico

**MEXICAN police are waging war on entire communities. Early in September, in the state of Veracruz, a large force of the state police, accompanied by dozens of armed men, attacked the Nahua and Otomi Indian peasant community of Plan del Encinal, in Ixhuatlan de Madero.**

During the raid, 17-year-old Rolando Hernandez Hernandez and 28-year-old Atanacio Hernandez Hernandez were wounded by the police, and taken away to a nearby ranch, called Las Tejas. Rolando and Atanacio were both members of an Indian peasants' rights movement, Opemorelos.

They were not seen again by their friends until 17 September, when their mutilated bodies were found in a nearby river. Both had been shot at close range in the head and chest.

The peasants are reported to have fled their village, which remained surrounded by the security forces.

The Nahua and Otomi Indian peasants from the Plan del Encinal community have been trying for the past 64 years to claim back their right to land which is held by Las Tejas ranch.

On 21 August, they peacefully occupied the disputed land. The land owner summoned government security forces and private guards to forcibly evict the peasants and arrest their leaders living in the nearby community.

## War

In the ongoing war between indigenous peasant communities and the big ranchers — or caciques — the peasants know which side the authorities are usually on. That is why the tradition of the peasant rebel leader Emiliano Zapata remains

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

alive and potent.

More state terror is reported from Chiapas state, in southern Mexico, where the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, the EZLN, waged an armed insurrection in January. The guerrillas agreed to give bourgeois democracy a chance to work. A National Democratic Convention was organised in Chiapas in the first week in August, to discuss political reforms and the general elections.

## Blocked

After the conservative Institutional Revolutionary Party won the presidential elections on 21 August, and the Chiapas governorship, local people, protesting that the results were fraudulent, blocked streets and took over government buildings. But since then the reactionaries have gone to work with a vengeance.

Roberto Hernandez Paniagua, a schoolteacher and municipal leader of the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) was shot dead on 6 September, in the town of Jaltenango de la Paz, in Chiapas, as he was cycling to work. The same

day, another PRD municipal leader, Enrique Murias, was detained by federal police in the town of Mapastepec. He was released later, but there are fears for his safety.

On 2 September, in Mexico City, student leader David Lozano was abducted and tortured by four armed men believed to be from the security forces. His injuries included burns from electric shocks to the back. Released the following day, he was warned about what could happen to him if he continued to do the same things.

Lozano had been one of a group of students who wrote to a national newspaper, calling for a national student meeting to discuss the political situation after the elections.

Rosario Ibarra, president of the Committee of the Relatives of the 'Disappeared' — Comité Eureka — who participated in the National Democratic Convention in Chiapas, says that since the elections she has been followed by two cars and a motorcycle without number plates.

Members of the Fray Francisco Vitoria Human Rights Centre in the capital report their centre has been under observation by unidentified persons after they denounced the illegal detention of David Lozano to the authorities.



Distributing water near Mexico City ... poverty is growing and so is police terror

# Indonesia: frame-up 'won't break union'

INDONESIAN trades unionists admit that the frame-ups the state is prosecuting against their leaders are a blow, but say this will not halt their movement.

A heavily armed police presence has surrounded the court in Medan, on the island of Sumatra, where the trial of Mukhtar Pakpahan, chair of the independent Indonesian Welfare Labour Union (SBSI), resumed last week.

Pakpahan and other SBSI leaders face possible jail sentences on charges of inciting violence during strikes in Medan last April.

Workers are adamant that it was the employers and police

who caused the trouble. Workers at the KIM industrial estate walked out after police refused to investigate the death of a young worker, Rusli, who had been involved in a struggle against lay-offs at his factory.

About 50,000 workers took part in a peaceful march through Medan. Riot police used tear-gas on them. After stones were thrown at shops, four battalions of troops with armoured vehicles entered the town.

During the next few days, Chinese-owned shops and businesses, and some private homes and cars, were burnt or wrecked. A Chinese businessman was beaten to death when he tried to enter his factory.

The government blamed trades unionists. Lt General Mantiri, chief of the general staff, told the press: 'We have data indicating that the SBSI, which is not recognised by the government, masterminded the violent worker rallies.' A number of SBSI officials and activists were arrested or went into hiding.

But the military, which runs Indonesia in collaboration with foreign big business interests, often uses the Chinese as scape-

goats for anti-rich feeling. The military also uses two notorious youth gangs in Medan, giving them free rein to extort and operate rackets in their own 'zones of influence' so long as they do the army's dirty work.

Many people say gang members were responsible for anti-Chinese attacks. The SBSI's Mukhtar Pakpahan says he has evidence that gang members were hired to create provocations and cause trouble during the riots.

The SBSI was officially outlawed in May, but the unofficial movement has continued to gain support from workers fed up with low pay, poor conditions, and tame official, state-backed unions.

'Ours is a young organisation and the building process is still going on,' says SBSI spokesman Tohap Simanungkalit. 'With Mukhtar's arrest we are facing difficulties.'

But while observers expect the government will try to make

an example of the SBSI leader they don't think this will stop the workers' movement.

■ South Africa's President Mandela found time amid his country's industrial strife and his reported illness earlier this month to follow in the footsteps of British Tory ministers by visiting Indonesia. Indonesian authorities later denied they had discussed a compromise over occupied East Timor. Was the South African president discussing industrial relations?

## Is aid to Malawi a family business?

WHO said the government was stingy with overseas aid, or that it doesn't help working mothers?

Kathleen White has just landed a £200-a-day position with the government's Overseas Development Agency (ODA), as an adviser on aid to Malawi. Most Malawi ODA employees don't earn that much in a month, and many are going to lose their jobs when the agency moves much of its work to Harare, Zimbabwe.

### Disgruntled

White has an MSc in international affairs and development from a US university. According to a disgruntled local: 'She is going to do a job a Malawian used to do for £1,000 a month. There are lots of local people who could do this job.'

that White has another qualification. Her husband, John Martin, who was Roy Hattersley's private secretary when he was at the Foreign Office, is British high commissioner in Malawi. He has held previous posts in Buenos Aires, Athens, Nicosia and Lagos.

### Asset

'Kathleen White is a unique asset not available locally,' claimed an ODA official. Another British woman, Dr Julia Watson, who has a doctorate in health economics, has just taken up a position at £30,000 a year with the ODA in Malawi. Her husband, Mark Lowcock, is the deputy head of the agency's development division there.

The government is proving its commitment to the family.

## Mossad moves into Zambia

BY DAVID DORFMANN

ZAMBIA'S President Frederick Chilube has reportedly asked Israel's Mossad intelligence service to help him reinforce his grip on the country by strengthening the state security.

Last month Chilube commandeered a Zambia Airways DC10 and flew to Israel for high-level talks. No official report has come out on what was discussed, apart from explaining that an Israeli firm is to rebuild market stalls in Lusaka — hardly a topic requiring sudden top-level talks.

Unofficially, the word is that the Israeli secret service is to train Zambian security operatives. According to the influential business newsletter 'Africa Analysis' (16 September), Chi-

rest is growing, particularly in Zambia's copper belt.

Hurt by accusations of corruption and ministerial deal-making, the government has deported an opposition MP to Malawi, as an alien, and is introducing legislation to curb the press. But its security service consists of a few inadequately trained full-time officers and some 15,000 part-time informers whose reliability is suspect.

While Mossad can boast of several intelligence coups, the training of internal security officers to run informers sound more like the work of Israel's security service, Shabak — notorious for torturing Palestinian detainees and prisoners. With the handover of Gaza and Jericho to the control of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, some of Shabak's operatives may be looking for

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