

International boycott of Liverpool docks

DOCKERS CALL

LIVERPOOL dockers, on strike for nearly 30 weeks in defence of their right to work, are calling on their supporters throughout the trade union and labour movement to a national conference to be held in Liverpool on 27 April (see below).

The call comes as a blockade of the port of Liverpool by dockers throughout the world is beginning to bite.

Liverpool dockers called for the worldwide boycott of their port after talks between the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) and the dock's bosses collapsed on 2 April.

Within days the Liverpool men heard that:

■ Portugal is solid.

■ Dockers on the West Coast of the US want them to send a delegation and go to Vancouver, Canada, where Liverpool-bound grain ships start their journey.

■ Boycott actions are continuing in Sweden, Australia, and Le Havre, France.

■ Japanese dockers are sending 1 million yen (£6,000) even though boats from Japan do not go to Liverpool.

Blockade

Dockers' representatives entered the talks making clear that unless all 500 sacked dockers were taken on again the talks would end and a complete blockade of the port would start.

■ In December last year longshoremen on the East Coast of the United States respected Liverpool pickets at their ports and their action cost the giant shipping company Atlantic Containers Limited \$4 million.

■ In January the dockers balloted five-to-one to reject

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

From DOT GIBSON in Liverpool

the company's offer to sell their jobs.

■ The employers' next move was a writ against strike leader Jimmy Nolan in an effort to prevent pickets returning to the US.

■ After the collapse of the latest talks, the port bosses said the £25,000 offer was still on the table. The men should take this, they said, and retire gracefully. This was all they were fit for!

■ The employers declared they would continue to hire scab-herding company Drake International to bus labour into the port.

■ In a move to try and stop ACL from pulling out of Liverpool the port bosses have slapped a writ on John Bowers, president of the International Longshoremen's Association of the US.

'The only language this company understands is the language of hard cash,' says Nolan.

'They have left us with no choice but to organise boycott actions against the shipping companies using this port where scab labour is doing our jobs,' he declared.

The issues at the heart of the Liverpool strike are ones for the whole working class: the right to trade union collective agreements, against the casualisation of labour, privatisation and the anti-union laws.

On the wall of their dispute office the dockers have a map

of the world showing the places they have visited to win support. The latest marker is on Turkey.

Support

In Britain over 3,500 meetings have been held in support of the dockers. There have been 14 trade union and community marches and rallies. Women on the Waterfront, founded by the wives and partners of the dockers, has played a crucial role in the strike.

Support groups have been set up in towns and cities throughout Britain.

The international boycott of the port opens up a new stage in the struggle.

The company, and one of its principal shareholders, the government, thought that the men would soon buckle. But their arrogance has been met with tremendous working-class solidarity.

The police have started taking videos of the pickets, with the threat of arrests.

The dockers have replied in the best possible way. Their 27 April call must get the widest possible backing.

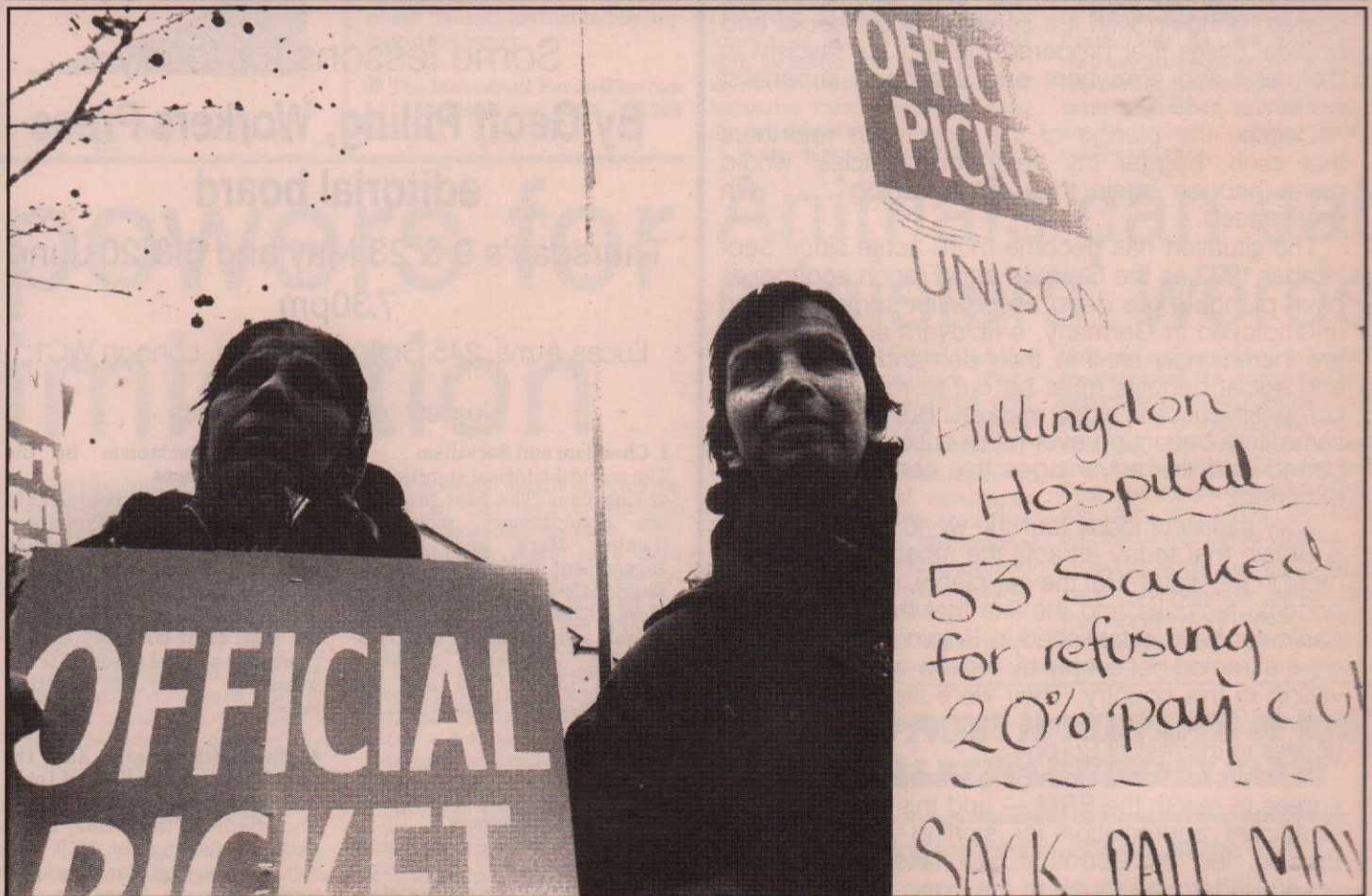
Let us do everything to win new support for the Liverpool dockers!

Let's all join together in Liverpool on the 27 April!

Defend the Liverpool dockers!

■ See French support for Liverpool, page 6.

Hillingdon cleaners take their fight to boss's HQ



The Hillingdon hospital cleaners took their fight to Brixton to demonstrate their anger at the contractors Pall Mall in Acre Lane that sacked them for refusing to accept even worse conditions Photo: Marg Nicol

A national conference for all trade union, labour movement and community supporters of the dockers
Transport House, Liverpool

Saturday 27 April, 11 am

For further details ring 0151-207 3388

For coach details from London phone 0956 138496

Workers Press

EU threatens trade war on Britain

PRESSURE from France, Germany and the European Commission is mounting to force Britain back into a new European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM).

A meeting of European finance ministers to be held at the end of the week in Verona was likely to put a stark alternative to Chancellor Kenneth Clarke: either re-join the ERM or face financial penalties and/or trade sanctions. French and German finance and economics officials met last month to prepare their stand against the British.

If such moves took place, they would involve an immediate threat to the single European market and to the European Union as a free trade area.

On 'Black Wednesday' in September 1992, Britain was driven out of the ERM, unable to maintain the pound at the rate agreed with the rest of the European Union. Upon exit, sterling was massively devalued. But, like all devaluations, this cheapened British exports in world markets, giving British firms an advantage over their trade rivals, notably Germany. At the same time the devaluation made exports into Britain from Europe more expensive, which naturally hit those countries dependent on the British market.

It is on this devaluation that any 'recovery' in Britain after 1992 has been based. But what many forget — not least the Labour Party and trade union leaders — is that this 'recovery' arose out of a profound weakness of British capitalist economy and finance, where sterling could no longer 'look the Deutschmark in the face'.

WHEREAS in the last century it was the strong pound — many considered it as 'good as gold' — that was one of the the foundations of Britain's dominant position in world trade and finance, today any hope that the British ruling class has of clinging onto its enfeebled position depends on precisely the opposite — a cheap pound.

Germany, together with France, is determined that those countries who stay outside any future common currency arrangements — and they have Britain and Italy chiefly in mind — will not again be able to steal an advantage over them by allowing their currencies to fall in value.

It was in the slump of the 1930s that the world's leading trading countries tried to steal an advantage over their rivals by successively slashing the value of their currencies.

In the course of this 'devaluation cycle' world trade shrank by some 40 per cent, unemployment soared, bringing with it a series of acute social and political crises that prepared the way for fascism in Germany and elsewhere and a second imperialist world war in 1939.

Despite the pledge of the Keynesian reformers that such 'beggar thy neighbour policies' would never happen again they are returning . . . with great speed.

The situation has become more acute since September 1992 as the German and French economies have plunged into deep crisis. With some 6 million unemployed in Germany, employers and financiers are increasingly shrill in their demands that wages and social benefits must be cut to restore German competitiveness in world markets. But they are at the same time becoming ever-more critical of the cheap pound and the advantages this confers on British exporters.

Tory ministers today tour the world boasting that it is Britain that today attracts the most foreign investment in the world. But the car plants, electronic components factories and the like that the Japanese in particular have established in Britain in recent years were attracted not simply by the low wages now prevailing in this country. They were also lured by the knowledge that via Britain their goods could gain access to the rest of Europe.

Now a situation is emerging where, unless Britain agrees to re-join the ERM — and this would mean a significant appreciation for sterling — the rest of Europe, led by Germany, will take action which would undermine much of the basis for such Japanese investment in this country.

However this crisis unfolds, one thing is certain. It is only the united action of the European workers that can save the continent from the catastrophe with which capitalism now so starkly faces it.

Letters

What gives us confidence

I REGRET not having been able to attend and contribute to the 'Crisis in the labour movement' conference but extend my best wishes for the most practical outcome of what we will look back on as an occasion of historic importance for the working class.

As a scientist, I wholeheartedly agree with the need for a revolutionary party as part of the self-movement of the working class. It may be well-worn, but it is not a cliché to say that this growing movement is the highest point in the universal self-movement of matter.

It grows out of a long and complicated evolution within nature on this planet, that reached its peak with the emergence of human consciousness in our relationship with the rest of nature.

We are on the brink of being able for the first time to break free of the backward-looking ignorance that forms one of the main fetters imposed by class society, and to open up the possibility for a fully conscious mastery of nature.

The issue is to humanise nature, and in doing so to become fully human ourselves. This means breaking apart the economic system that capitalises nature as a source of commodities and dehumanises the working masses as a source of surplus value.

The future has two possible directions. Our road is one in which humanity relates to its surroundings as both a source of use values for the benefit of all and yet a potentially fragile condition for human life.

The other is where all the positive achievements of all the sciences are transformed into their opposites, collapsing the

unity of humanity with nature and throwing society back to earlier modes of existence, but where a much greater population will be engulfed by war and famine in a struggle for survival.

It is no exaggeration to say we face 'socialism or barbarism'. Yet the growing international working-class movement in defiance of the so-called 'New World Order' of imperialism gives us the confidence that the outcome will be continuously forward.

Steve Drury
Brampton, Cumbria

In defence of morality

PAUL B. SMITH (Letters, 23 March) makes an absurd attempt to portray me as an aspiring 'religious' leader who is allegedly full of 'mystical ideas'.

Smith has heard me speak often enough — and sometimes in hostile surroundings — to know that I am an *historical materialist*. And, though he hates me for this, I am also a Scottish Socialist Republican.

And, although I refuse to be simplistic or anti-intellectual, he knows very well that my article 'We must rediscover our history and culture' (9 March) was in fact easy to follow.

The major question I was raising was where Marxism itself came from — out of the heads of 'the bourgeois intelligentsia' (Kautsky) or out of the early materialist workers' movement of Moll and others?

Smith worships 'the magic of the intellect' without understanding that real intellectual achievement of any sort owes much to an immersion in ordinary life.

Marx's leadership of the First International owed as much to his qualities as a *socialist fighter* as to his 'intellectual achievement'. Identifying with the Marx who was above all else a fighter, I

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want to remind Smith that, in many circumstances, 'an ounce of action is worth a ton of theory'.

It is arrogant of Smith to lump together in a single sentence all 'the world's religions' and their allegedly shared conception of leadership.

Someone needs to remind Smith of the Trotsky who 'surprised the Dewey Commission [Mexico, 1937] with his theory about the birth of a new religion on the morrow of the coming revolutions, when mankind would have time to rest after the struggles which would have ushered in a new future'.

Far from quoting this neglected comment to rekindle Smith's notion that I have become either 'religious' or 'mystical', I simply want to suggest the richness, subtlety and multi-dimensional cultural, intellectual and moral content of the (socialist) culture that I have spent my adult life defending and attempting to foster.

And I seem to recall that in his pamphlet *I Stake My Life*, Trotsky appealed to 'all those for whom socialism is the content of their moral life' to expose the perfidy of Stalinism at the time of the Moscow trials.

What I find most offensive in Smith's letter is not his deliberate misrepresentation of my arguments, but his sickening attack on the working class — the class into which I was born and in which I was raised.

When he writes of the workers' 'inability to live up to moral ideals', I can only hang my head in shame on his behalf. How anyone with such an elitist attitude towards working people can hope to contribute anything to learning or thought or agitation is beyond my comprehension.

If Smith thinks that there is not a deep and unbreakable moral dimension to socialism, there is no hope for him!

In his book on Leon Trotsky (1986), Irving Howe said Trotsky 'wrote, not just about the reactionary drift of Stalinism, but

also about its "baseness" and "perfidy" — terms taken from the traditional moral lexicon implying a preference for their opposites, 'nobility' and 'integrity'.

James D. Young
Falkirk

John Maclean

PAUL B. SMITH's obdurate attack on Hamish Young with sleek references to Stalinism and nationalism (Letters, 2 March) is not new to us in the John Maclean Society.

Perhaps my English comrade would need a native interpreter who has heard this whit man speak with forked finger on so many occasions. Paul has been hammered many a time in debate with his silly assertions.

His reference to 'Stalinism' meant for Macleanists, as he believes believe in 'socialism in one country'. Paul told us that John Maclean were alive today he'd change his mind about the Scottish workers' republic that he suffered so much abuse for. Methinks he's being playing with his Ouija board too much and blind to reality.

Neither John Maclean nor later-day Macleanists believe in this assertion that Paul keeps repeating to anyone daft enough to listen. We just do not want to be ruled as Brits by persons like him. His reference to nationalism is his confused way of mixing the nationalism of the Scots who want to break from Westminster with his version of fascism.

And he's been told often enough that it is also a porky pig. All his 'theorising' on Scottish nationalism or republicanism hatched in a vacuum as if there were no such thing as British/English nationalism and imperialism.

Domnhall MacAindrea
Glasgow

Workers Press — May/June lectures MARXISM AND THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT

Some lessons for today

By Geoff Pilling, Workers Press
editorial board

Thursday's 9 & 23 May and 6 & 20 June
7.30pm

Lucas Arms, 245 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1.

Nearest tube King's Cross

1. Chartism and Socialism
The world-historical significance of Chartism. 'The first proletarian revolutionary movement' (Lenin). Marx and Engels's engagement with the Chartists. Engels's *Condition of the Working Class*. Chartism's two wings: 'moral' and 'physical'. The relationship between socialism (Robert Owen, etc.) and the Chartists. Some lessons for the new party.

2. Karl Marx and the British trade union movement
The role of British trade unions in the formation of the International Workingmen's Association (The First International). How Marx saw the International and how he worked in, organised and led it.

against sectarianism in the labour movement
The role of the petty bourgeois in the International. The Proudhonists and the followers of Bakunin. The fight against this tendency by Marx and Engels and its historical significance. The fight for the legal eight-hour day against those who wanted to separate the industrial from the political struggle.

4. Frederick Engels and the foundations of the Second International
The origins of the Second International, founded in 1889. The role of the struggle for mass trade unionism in its formation. The entry of new forces into new politics in this period. Struggles in the East End of London. The part played by Marx's daughter, Eleanor, in the formation of the 'New Unions' and the International.

Revolutionary History

The Annual General Meeting of *Revolutionary History* will take place on Saturday, 20 April 1996 in the Fenner Brockway Memorial Room at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 at 2.30pm. All subscribers are welcome (subscriptions are available at the door).

This will be followed by a public meeting at 3.30pm, addressed by the noted German historian

Theodor Bergmann

From the Ashes

The Attempt to Rebuild an Authentic Marxist Movement in East and West Germany After the Second World War

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Put racist government on trial Defend Mawhinney Five!

BY NAVEED MALICK
Movement for Justice
Kingsway student union

THE racist state wants to jail five Movement For Justice members for their part in the 'Orange Paint Protest' against the Tory Asylum Bill last November. The five have been charged with common assault and threatening words and behaviour.

Last November, orange paint and flour was thrown at Tory party chair, Brian Mawhinney, on the day of the state opening of parliament.

This was the launch of the

Movement For Justice's militant campaign to smash the Asylum and Immigration Bill by any means necessary. Earlier that day, Mawhinney had been on TV defending the bill with racist talk about the country being 'flooded with immigrants'.

The 'Orange Paint Protest' was designed to focus attention on the threat of these racist proposals which will leave thousands of refugees and asylum seekers with no money and the threat of deportation back to countries where they face death and torture.

It aimed to show the need for militant action to defeat them —

in the words that millions of people heard the protestors shout on the news, 'Howard's law no way, non co-operation the only way!'

It certainly achieved its purpose. It was on the news for days and put collective resistance on the agenda nationally. But soon after, a wave of repression was unleashed, under government pressure, against the five leading members of the Movement For Justice involved in the protest against Mawhinney.

The press went on to witch-hunt and terrorise the five protestors for days in the national newspapers. But even the most right-wing press were

shaken by the impact of the protest; the Sun, for instance, wrote about police fears of 'a poll-tax-style rebellion' against the Asylum and Immigration Bill led by the Movement For Justice.

Soon after the protestors faced victimisation in their colleges, universities and workplaces.

Three are officers of Kingsway college's student union — Nick de Marco, the president, Karen Doyle and myself. They were suspended and Nick has been expelled.

Amanda Egbe, student union campaigns officer at the University of North London, was suspended for three months.

Tony Gard, a teacher at Langdon Park school in Tower Hamlets, was disciplined and faces the sack if he is involved in any fight against racism.

Despite all these attacks, the leaders of the Movement For Justice have fought for non co-operation and mass militant action against the bill all over the country.

Trade Union branches and student unions have already adopted policies of non co-operation.

Policies

We must now begin to put our policies of non co-operation into practice and refuse to implement this racist bill. We must build a national movement of mass non co-operation. Already, the Movement For Justice has built branches and has supporters all over the country.

The trial of the Movement For Justice leaders must be used to challenge the government's racism. We must build for a mass demonstration outside Bow Street Magistrates' Court on Monday 15 April at 9.30am.

We must make it clear to everyone that it is not really the 'Mawhinney Five' who are on trial, but the government who stand indicted to incitement to racial hatred.

Refugees, asylum seekers, workers, students and anti-racists must join the Movement For Justice and build branches in the schools, colleges, universities, workplaces and areas to build a national anti-racist movement to smash the anti-asylum bill by any means necessary.

■ The Movement For Justice can be contacted on 0956 365393 (mobile).

**PROTEST OUTSIDE BOW STREET
MAGISTRATES' COURT
MONDAY 15 APRIL 1996, 9.30am
Nearest Tube: Covent Garden**

Clear thinking on mad cows

THE Socialist Science Forum kicked-off with a public meeting on mad cow disease (BSE) in London on Wednesday 3 April.

Around 20 people, including scientists and concerned consumers, attended a meeting held at very short notice to review the crisis that has alarmed meat-eaters since the confession by government advisers that cattle BSE may cause a new form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in humans.

There was a feeling that this was an important beginning for the forum and that there was a need for scientists and the working-class movement needed to get together and take action for socialism.

The meeting was given an inside account of the biology of BSE and CJD by Jonathon Bruce, a scientist who has researched CJD. He made the point that CJD is an extremely infective agent that requires very stringent sterilisation of contaminated materials. Like BSE the new form of CJD is caused by prions — mysterious infective proteins whose impact on human health, despite government reassurances, is totally unpredictable.

Prions work by changing the structure of natural brain proteins. The argument that these are too different in humans to be affected by cattle prions is undermined by the observation that only a small part of the protein molecule may be involved in this fatal change — this may be present in a range of animals.

Daniel Robertson, who writes the regular Science Focus column (see page 7), reviewed what is known of the development of BSE in cattle. The government's delays in implementing control measures were described using its own documents.

Some damning contradictions

in these demonstrated the dishonesty that has marked government statements — for instance a recent document listing measures taken to address BSE misleadingly stated that farmers have always been given 100 per cent compensation for slaughtered, diseased cows. The true figure was only 50 per cent for some years — leading to covering up of the incidence of the disease at a critical stage.

Recent Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee's statements were subject to withering analysis. The extraordinary claim that if the government rigorously enforces the current and newly recommended controls the committee believes that this risk is now likely to be extremely small' was quoted as an extraordinary suggestion that measures to be taken in the future will render beef safe now.

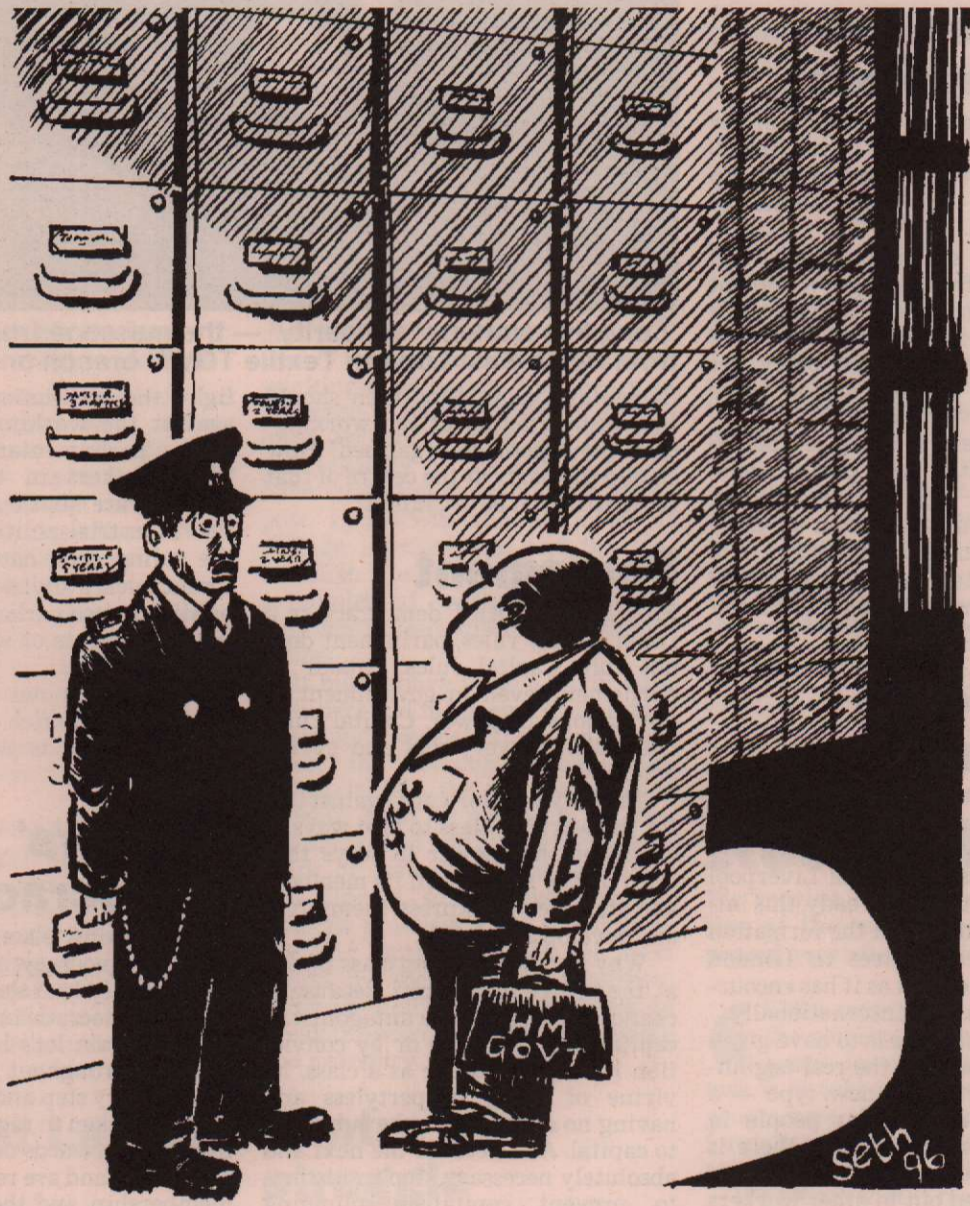
Time-travel

Prions can apparently not only reproduce without DNA, but can also travel in time — truly science fiction material!

After an excellent discussion the meeting agreed to move forward to the formal establishment of the Socialist Science Forum.

Early actions will include convening a planning meeting, producing a pamphlet on BSE based on the discussions at the meeting and reviewing the possibility of establishing a people's enquiry into the BSE crisis.

■ Any readers who would like to become involved with the work of the forum should write to Daniel Robertson at Workers Press. You do not need specialised knowledge — just an interest in how health, environment and other 'science' issues are becoming of greater political importance.



PRISON MORTUARY? NO MINISTER, ... THIS IS THE PRISON

More PTA powers for police intimidation

BY JOHN STEELE

WITH the rushing through of the Prevention of Terrorism (Additional Powers) Act, the British police have been given extraordinary new powers to intimidate and arrest dissidents and minorities.

Under the pretext that MI5 had information on an IRA Easter bombing campaign, the Act became law less than 48 hours after it was published thanks to the cowardly support of the Labour Party leadership.

As they have brutally demonstrated on innumerable occasions under the existing PTA, the police and secret services already have draconian powers of arrest and imprisonment without charge.

especially as they claim to have knowledge of the planned IRA actions. The rushing through of this legislation shows how this Tory government, with its tiny majority, is increasingly afraid of its own so-called 'democratic' institutions as power is more and more vested in a few people.

Undoubtedly another factor in steamrolling the legislation into law was the need to restrict the possibility of any challenge under international human rights conventions.

Just like the original PTA, which was rushed through by the Labour government of 1974 with the argument that it would be a temporary measure, these powers are designed to be a permanent weapon for the capitalist state to use against the working class, particularly the Irish and other

police can cordon off an area for up to 28 days and search houses and their occupants as well as stopping and searching pedestrians at will. Anyone who is judged to be not co-operating can be jailed for up to six months or fined £5,000.

Any infringement of any kind uncovered during such a search may be prosecuted. No effective legal challenge is possible to a police decision to act in this way.

Curfews

This legislation brings police powers in Britain closer to those enjoyed by the police in the north of Ireland. How soon before they are looking to impose curfews?

Since the PTA was first introduced tens of thousands of Irish people have been stopped and

their personal details put on computer so that their movements can be checked by the state.

Thousands more have been detained and harassed while living and working in Britain. The PTA, which allows the police to jail anyone without charge for up to seven days, has been used to attempt to deter and silence political activists — 86 per cent of those detained have been released without any charge against them.

But it is also used to frame up many innocent people. Paul Hill was the first person to be arrested under the legislation in 1974 and he was quickly followed by the other three members of the Guildford Four.

In supporting these new powers the Labour leadership is preparing for the major conflicts

Animals can eat ministers' words

IT WAS in January 1989 that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food confirmed that 'material containing human effluent' could be fed to animals.

This bizarre practice, reported by the Independent newspaper on 14 January 1989, was first made possible in the 1981 Protein Processing Order which allowed unspecified human effluent to be included in animal feed.

The same article 'Effluent of

humans can be added to animal feed' exposed the practice of renderers, who supply animal protein to feed manufacturers, of applying less heat to the feed than had been the case in the past. This is now regarded as a key reason for the entry of some pathogens into the food chain.

So much for the hypocritical Tory government's claim that they are above all concerned with the well-being of the consumer.

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British section of the Workers International (to Rebuild the Fourth International)

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Inside left

Class shows

THREE middle-class sixth-formers from Home Secretary Michael Howard's home town, Cardiff, have been convicted for bottling a disabled pretaker and giving him a savage kicking. After celebrating VE day at a pub near their affluent Cyncoed homes, they attacked the man outside the church where he worked.

He was obviously not a Cyncoed person, he was different, one of them explained. Evidently drink hadn't clouded their social perceptions. Obviously officer, or senior manager material, or potential Tory MPs. Two years in a young offenders' institution (half what I've seen young workers get for an evenly-matched rap) should not permanently damage their careers. It's not as though they were arrested on a left-wing demonstration, or smoking herbal roll-ups. These shining examples of educational selection were not cited by Gillian Shephard when she addressed the National Union of Teachers conference. With privatised prisons, how about a choice of better-class borstals?

The Tory education minister could have drawn upon Claire Fox's article 'comprehensive failure'. Attacking those who reacted so furiously to Labour Party spokeswoman Harriet Harman's decision to send her son to Olave's, Fox claims supporters of comprehensive education have tried to cover social differences, hide 'educational failure', and avoid making children feel inferior, by cultivating mediocrity.

Everything associated with excellence was derided as 'elitist', she declares. 'The old liberal attitude to education is a case of sour grapes.' It's not just leftie teachers who're at fault. The Tories have avoided abolishing comprehensive schooling after 17 years in government. Was Fox writing for the *Mail*, the *Spectator* or the *Disbury Review*? No, the April issue *Living Marxism*.

Aside from its incongruous title, the article about that magazine surprises many more. Once dubbed 'the Socialist Workers Party with hair gel' (by *Living Marxism* as was), its supporters seem to be changing, from trendy intellectual yuppies, to Sloanes-with-titide.

Balkan expert Joan Phillips ('What herb war crimes?') has joined the *Economist*, another regular. Kenan Malik, has appeared in the *Spectator*, arguing 'global warming is good for

'A mad, mad, mad world' was how the February issue pooh-poohed farm over BSE. Compare the *Sun* (26 March): 'HAS THE WORLD GONE MAD? Are they related? A spiteful article in the April issue accuses *Disbury* by-pass protestors of 'intellectual regression', concluding: 'It is just a shame it was left to the police to tell them to run along and play somewhere else.'

By contrast, Phil Murphy's article 'Taking care of business' is worth reading. He argues that behind privatisation and deregulation, capitalism is more dependent than ever on state support. But from criticism of the class struggle, is a step *Living Marxism* won't take. A letter in the March issue asked why it had not mentioned the Liverpool dock strike. A letter in reply dismisses the dockers as a 'dying breed', comparing public support with campaigns to 'save the whale'.

Criticising Ellen Meiksins Wood's book *Democracy Against Capitalism*, James Heartfield fears 'direct democracy' will only elevate 'prejudices'. The Marxist project 'is about transforming 'the state of consciousness of the mass of people', he says. But the essence of Marxism is that the working class must emancipate itself, and raise its consciousness in doing. Would-be 'educators' who can't grasp this try to misappropriate 'Marxism' to disguise bourgeois

Charlie Pottins

'Crisis in the labour movement' conference

A new party for

At the 16 March 'Crisis in the labour movement' conference on 'The need for a new socialist party', CLIFF SLAUGHTER's speech on behalf of the WRP/Workers Press was based on the following notes. This concludes the first part presented in last week's Workers Press.

Programme

IN PREPARING the programme on which a new party will be founded, it is necessary once more to have at the front of our minds that this programme must express the needs of the working class and all ordinary people whose future is threatened by the continuation of capitalism.

To this we must add: for a party of the working class (again, not 'for' the working class) the programme must be the expression of how the class is moving forward, what it must do next; in short, its strategy, its *self-movement*. The programme, therefore, is more than a list of demands.

Once this programme is set down, a charter of transitional demands to unite as many different sectors as possible in common action must be agreed, demands which express burning needs and basic rights. Then it will be crystal-clear that to even begin to satisfy these needs means a head-on collision with the 'needs' of the ruling class and the policies of its government — Tory or Labour.

To break from Labour is thus not a matter of doctrine but a necessity, if the needs of the ordinary people are to be met. For its own protection, against casualisation, attacks on benefits, destruction of rights (which began with the removal of the right to strike in the anti-union laws), against all the consequences of so-called 'deregulation', the working class will have to make this break.

And in the course of this it is absolutely necessary and possible to build a different kind of party, a fighting party, not a tame parliamentary debating club with those great working-class leaders Tony Blair, Jack Straw, Robin Cook and the rest, who once in office will be not debaters but faithful capitalist ministers. On all the basic demands of a working-class programme a clash with a future Labour Government is inevitable.

The preparation politically for that clash, at the centre of which is the formation of a new party, is long overdue.

Elements

THE elements of such a programme of action are plain enough:

- **Down** with privatisation! Open the books of the privatised industries and services! On this basis, restoration to public ownership of all privatised companies, without compensation to the major shareholders, and under the control and management of the workers in these industries and services, joined by committees of the users.

- **No** closures! Instead, open the books to inspection and control by workers and consumers, and establish a programme of public works.

- **No** casual labour! Full rights of contract and protection for all workers. An end to the 'flexible labour market'.

- **Repeal** all anti-union laws!
- **Restore** all resources to the NHS, education and social services.

- **Restore** the value of benefits. These measures to be based on an open and public accounting of all state finances. We refuse to accept that there is a 'shortage of money'. The money for these essential services must be taken from the banks and big business who are richer than at any time in history. Do they deny it? Then open the books!

- **No** anti-asylum bill! Remove all immigration controls.

- **No** Criminal Justice Act!

- **Equality** of women in all jobs. Equal pay for equal work. Provision of facilities to enable women to work on an equal basis.

- **Control** of all matters of planning and protection of the environment by citizens' committees.

Process and development

IN THE process of formation of the new party, there must be the broadest discussion in order to develop and add to this programme of demands.

We do not say 'Elect Labour and hope they do these things'. We do not say 'Elect Labour and put pressure on them to do these things'. We do not say 'We will form a new party, get elected, and promise to do these things'. What we must say is:

It is necessary to organise a political movement, a new party, which advances the fight of the working class itself and its allies on all these questions. It is not parliament or a Labour cabinet that will do these things but the working class itself together with its allies.

Liverpool's example

TO DEFEAT the casualisation which is everywhere being imposed, you have to take the organisational and political steps which the Liverpool dockers have taken. Already, this initiative has stimulated the formation of support committees in London and other cities, just as it has encouraged similar action internationally.

To have built this is to have given political leadership, the real beginnings of a party of a new type — a very difficult thing for people in Britain to conceive of. But there is nothing mysterious about it.

They turned out to other workers in struggle. They made it clear that the problems they were fighting on were common problems of the working class. They turned to the international working class.

They organised with the maximum working-class democracy and at the same time the maximum discipline. They drew their community around them. They joined together with the women who organised around the dispute. They worked for the collaboration of Marxists not immediately connected with their own work.

In doing all this they were only doing what they found they had to do! As one speaker from the dockers put it they began with an ordinary dispute, and became a vanguard! This begins to answer for us the question: What kind of party?

Party of not 'for' the working class

I HAVE tried at every point to emphasise: a party not 'for' the working class but of the working class, addressing its urgent needs, developing our theory, our scientific understanding, to express and meet those needs, finding ways to fight on them, refusing to be tied down to the par-



'Long live workers' solidarity' — the message from the mainly K from North-East London Textile TGWU branch on 23 March Live

liamentary game. How then should the reconstruction of the working-class movement be organised? How should the party at the centre of that reconstruction be organised?

Parliament

PARLIAMENTARY democracy is a fraud. Money rules, parliament does not rule. Capital rules. Labour in parliament, even in government, is not Labour in power. Capital rules over labour, every day and everywhere.

The only way forward against it is for the working class to find ways to challenge that power in ways that open up the road for all its members and its allies to express themselves and develop and decide.

Why is it the working class that is at the centre of all this? Because it cannot help but be the antagonist of capital, not by choice or by conviction but by its nature as a class, by virtue of being propertyless and having no choice but to be subjected to capital. And because the next and absolutely necessary step in history, to prevent capitalism plunging humanity into a new barbarism, is to turn upside down the domination of dead labour (capital) over the living.

It is only by the working class taking control of its own destiny that humanity will make the leap to freedom.

In saying that the Liverpool dockers are giving a vital example of the overcoming of the division between the industrial and political arms of the working-class movement, we are talking about overcoming the longstanding situation in which the working class has been excluded from mobilising its organised strength for the political struggle.

Organising politically in such struggles as the dockers' dispute means refusing to accept the atomisation of our class which is imposed by restricting our political role to voting in elections. In our 'parliamentary democracy', for political purposes the working class is shattered into individual voting fragments, each bombarded by press and TV and then placed in solitary confinement in the polling booth.

Against this, real working-class politics means to move as a class against the class enemy. That requires organisation and leadership. (Again: 'We began with a dispute. We had to become a vanguard.') In the very first place, today, this political fight as a class means to

fight the anti-union laws, passed against the working class by that very 'parliamentary democracy'. Thus workers in their organised strength are kept out of politics by the 'industrial-political divide', but the ruling class naturally does not accept such a division for itself: its politicians use parliament to abolish the basic rights of workers in their 'industrial' life.

Everyone knows the old saying: one law for the rich, another for the poor. . . . This is their democracy, their justice.

Workers' democracy

THE working class needs another kind of democracy, and a party that will not only lead the fight for it but will be democratic in a new way.

Here again let's look at the dock strike. Throughout the six-month strike, every step and every proposal has been taken to regular mass meetings. The stewards on the committee are elected and are responsible to the membership, and the officers of the committee are responsible directly to the committee.

All delegations and contacts must be reported. At the international conference there was openness, and free expression, assistance and participation by those in solidarity with the strike was welcomed.

Support committees, similarly, are open, as is this present conference. At the same time, on the basis of this democracy and openness, real authority is given to those who are given responsibilities by the mass meetings and the stewards' committee.

There is democracy in arriving at decisions and centralism in carrying them out, and both are essential for democracy to be real and effective.

We can see a similar example in the Transport and General Workers' Union textile workers' branch office opened in north-east London this week. It has come into being as a result of drawing in the workforce as a whole into a common struggle. As the struggles in the area gain momentum this centre can become a real source of strength and solidarity.

Comrades in Workers Aid for Bosnia report this week that the women of the mining community of Banovice are organising with a main decision-making body consisting of an assembly of all members.

The need for a new socialist party

socialism II

Bosnian and Turkish workers
Liverpool dockers' demonstration

unevenly but inexorably growing, movement of realisation of the need for a new party of the working class.

We think that the new party must take full cognisance of the whole experience of the working class having been failed by both Labourism and Stalinism, of the experience of the struggles since the miners' strike, and particularly of the lessons of the Liverpool docks dispute, which we have tried to draw out.

These show that we should not be for some kind of half-way-house party, somewhere between a parliamentary reform party like the Labour Party once was, on the one hand, and a party organised by the working class for its own struggle to break the power of capital and build socialism. It is the latter kind of party that we need. And this is the kind of party which, as in the docks strike, is coming out of the real movement of resistance and reconstruction of the working-class movement.

It will be a party formed of those in the working class who come forward as the vanguard of its struggles. It will be founded on the only theory which can serve as a guide to working-class action, the theory of Marxism. It will be based on a thorough reckoning with the practice and ideology of the parties which have failed the working class in the past, Labourism and Stalinism. It will be international and internationalist. It will be organised on the principles of workers' democracy and centralised, disciplined, united action.

It must strive to be a party with members and influence in all sectors of struggle against capitalism. It will reject the division between the industrial and the political. This is because what is needed is to constantly spread and strengthen a network or web of mutual solidarity and support, so that every partial struggle produces a real strengthening and preparation of the next round and for the kind of political crisis in which a *decisive* blow to break the power of capital is possible and necessary.

Socialist Labour
Party Centre of
struggle

A TRUE party for socialism is built in and through such a development in the working class, at the centre of it.

In the lead-up to the decisive struggle, from the present support committees, alliances and networks, the working class and its allies will progress to broad workers' committees and councils of action which are ready to take over all the essential social functions. A true party for socialism must come forward not only with the right immediate demands but also with this clear picture of the road ahead and the ultimate socialist objective.

Such a working-class, socialist party will strive always not to control from above but to unite the efforts of many and varied struggles, campaigns and movements.

We live in a society where capital plunders and ruthlessly exploits the whole of humanity and, increasingly, everything in the natural world. It is the essence of capital that it is uncontrolled and unregulated in its search to accumulate more value.

Everything and everybody is subjected to this imperative, to the point now where the planet itself and the life upon it are endangered. To the constant danger of war is added the threat of total desolation. Countless millions die of famine and diseases old and new.

From this universal crisis it is inevitable that many, many movements of resistance and protest on all kinds of issues are thrown up. By no means all of these are directed at a socialist solution, and yet if the fight for socialism is to succeed then it must grow together with these movements.

We must have confidence that the experience of struggle, the discovery in action of the nature of the enemy, and the solidarity and strength which grow from cooperation, will demonstrate that all these problems have a common source in the historical crisis of capitalism, and that the condition of success of each and every one of them is a common struggle to overcome the power of capital.

A truly socialist party will therefore be the party of a movement which is truly humanist and truly pluralist. To found such a party is a big proposition, and to truly reflect the needs, the aspirations and the strength of the working class and all those who come forward to fight for a socialist future, the new party must be founded on the widest possible discussion and common work.

It must be said again, we must now act on the understanding that the working class is being compelled to face up to the truth that the historic parties of the working-class movement, Labourism as well as Stalinism, have failed us. The alternative must be built, and the way forward to it has been opened up in the real movement of resistance to the capitalist offensive. From this beginning, let us at this conference resolve to firmly take the next steps together.

Resolution

We reprint here the main resolution of the conference which was passed overwhelmingly:

THIS conference resolves that the working class needs a new party for socialism. Now the task is to take the discussion on the programme, organisation and the formation of a new party as widely as possible into the working class.

We affirm that it must be a party of the working class, formed out of its struggles, and not a party 'supplied' to the working class.

Conference constitutes a steering committee, open to all present and all who share this common objective.

The next tasks are:

■ To organise in every area a report meeting on this conference.

■ To participate actively in the main struggle of the day, building a network of support committees for the dockers. This network can be the basis of permanent working-class organisation to support such struggles.

The discussion in every area should firstly centre on how to unite the working class on the problems confronting the dockers, and at the centre of this need for unity is the urgent need for a socialist party. Out of the dockers' fight must come the bringing together of the vanguard of the working class in one party.

We must seek every avenue of discussion and united action with members of the Socialist Labour Party and discussion and participation with the Socialist Alliances in various areas.

The steering committee should work to set up a 'Policy Research Unit' to assist in all struggles. Conference resolves to reconvene in October this year to discuss the next step.

City Lights

Alice in
Wonderland
stuff

IT'S HAPPENED again. As the Easter break ended, the London stock market was bracing itself for a renewed period of volatility after bond prices (the price of government paper) tumbled on both sides of the Atlantic. Why?

Because unemployment in the United States is not rising rapidly enough. The same thing happened a month ago when news that 700,000 extra jobs had been created in the US sent bond prices tumbling throughout the world. This month's bad news was that 140,000 extra jobs had been generated in the US over the last month, far more than the 'experts' had predicted.

Speculators had been hoping for better news — namely that unemployment was rising rapidly and that, as a consequence, the US government would be forced to drop interest rates in an effort to stimulate the economy.

Now there seems little likelihood of such a fall; indeed 'the markets' currently fear that interest rates might have to go up to stop the US economy overheating.

The point is this: bond prices and interest rates are inversely related. If interest rates fall, by, say, 2 per cent, bond prices tend to rise by a similar amount. Speculators have been gobbling up government bonds in the expectation of a fall in interest rates and a consequent rise in the price of their paper.

Now, with their fingers burned for two months running, they are unloading their paper and thereby inducing sharp price falls.

Thus we have the bizarre spectacle of Clinton administration officials assuring Wall Street that the increase in employment has not been as bad as all that and that the severe weather and snowstorms of January gave a particularly distorted picture, paving the way for February's sharp jobs increase.

Alice in Wonderland stuff perhaps, but what a lesson in the nature and functioning of capital! Capital is not interested in the creation of jobs. (That it is so is only one of the many lies told by Blair and the Labour leaders.) Indeed it is not interested in producing anything... except profit. In fact, as this experience shows, capital often has a vested interest in seeing fewer goods produced and greater numbers unemployed.

They're
damned if
they do...

THE disagreements between Prime Minister John Major and his chancellor, Ken Clarke, over the question of a referendum on a common European currency may for the moment have been patched up. But nobody pretends that anything important has been resolved. Indeed the dilemmas facing British capital in its relations with Europe grow ever deeper.

Let us assume that France and Germany, perhaps joined by a handful of other states, go ahead and create a single currency. (This is a formidable assumption — at the

and Denmark seem to have any chance of meeting the eligibility rules for European monetary union. And Denmark has declared that it does not want to take part!)

Anti-Europeans in the British ruling class have stressed that joining a common currency could well undermine the position of the City of London and sterling, leaving any British government with no possibility of pursuing an 'independent economic policy.'

Damned if British capital joins a common monetary system it may be. But it is just as damned if it stays outside. For one thing, any common currency — and in effect it would be controlled by Germany — would almost certainly appreciate against sterling, the Spanish peseta, the Italian lira and any other surviving European currency with less than a sound record on inflation.

And the appreciation of the Euro would be accelerated if Asian central banks decided to hold a greater proportion of their reserves in a single currency than they have up till now in the Deutschmark. At the moment world central banks hold only a sixth of their reserves in Deutschmarks, with two-thirds in dollars.

A depreciating Euro-sterling exchange rate would involve two great risks. Germany and France could not sit by and watch British exporters gain advantage in world export markets that a falling pound would bring.

Indeed there are already growing complaints that German exports are being hit by the low pound which resulted from Britain's forced withdrawal from the European Monetary System in 1992.

Chancellor Kohl has already hinted that rules might be necessary to stop European countries that remain outside a common currency system from depreciating in order to gain advantage for their exports. All the ingredients are present for the erection of trade barriers against the 'devaluers'.

Should this happen, then a second peril would loom. At the recent so-called 'jobs summit' of the G7, Tory ministers boasted that their policies of labour market deregulation had made Britain the biggest recipient of inward investment.

But the Japanese and others who have poured money into the British car, television and microchip plants have done so on the assumption that Britain will remain safely inside the walls of fortress Europe. But if there was a risk that Britain was likely to be on the receiving end of tariffs from Europe this would no longer apply.

'Essential'
child labour

MORE than one in four children under the age of 15 are employed in Ghana, India, Indonesia and Senegal and must hand over their earnings to their parents, according to a report from the International Labour Office.

Among the working children studied between the ages of five to 14, the majority worked nine hours a day and often for six or seven days a week, especially in rural areas.

The ILO, a body supposedly committed to the abolition of child labour across the world, says that such labour is often seen as 'essential' to preserving the economic level of the household, either in the form of wages, of help in household enterprises, or in doing household chores.

Marxism and working-class history

HOW welcome was the advance notice in last week's Workers Press of the course of lectures this paper is sponsoring next month under the general title 'Marxism and the History of the British Working-Class Movement'.

That Marxist education is being taken seriously is excellent news — and most timely, as the discussion on the need for a new socialist party continues and broadens.

Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it. And, while some of the mistakes with which the history of the British workers' movement is strewn were merely painful, some had disastrous consequences.

So there are lessons in abundance for us in our stormy history of 200 years of struggle against a ruling class as rapacious and cunning as any in the world.

IT SO happened that I read that announcement the day after seeing in the *Guardian* a dispatch from Havana about the way Marxism, or what passes for Marxism, has been mistaught in Cuba since the University of Havana's philosophy department was reopened in 1967.

Department head Jorge Luis Acanda is nothing if not frank. 'For many [Cubans] today Marxism means nothing', he is quoted as saying. 'And the fault is all ours.'

It is indeed. As in the former Soviet Union, the subject was taught as a set of formulas to be memorised by rote and regurgitated word for word in exams. Independent thinking was a sure way of getting into trouble.

Seminars on 'scientific communism' are caustically recalled by Cuban professors and students as 'science fiction'.

Revolutionary enthusiasm, which at first brought 200 students at a time to these seminars, could not long survive Stalinist teaching methods that so grossly violated the critical, revolutionary essence of the Marxist method.

Today in Cuba, as in many other parts of the world, there is what Acanda calls a 'crisis of reason'. According to him, no one is buying the works of Marx and Lenin, but books 'dealing with the irrational, the occult, religious cults, fortune-telling and Nostradamus' are in great demand.

In the irrational, as Acanda puts it, 'people search for what Marxism can no longer give them'.

What Acanda calls 'Marxism' I would call 'pseudo-Marxism'; but he's certainly right about the stultifying effects on education of any state-imposed dogma, whether it calls itself Marxism or Catholicism or Islam or anything else.

IN THE same *Guardian* article a former philosophy professor at the University of Havana, now living in exile in Miami, is quoted as saying that 'Fidel Castro's only interest in Marxism lies in the part that says a single party must control all of society'.

He may be right about Castro's 'only interest', but what does he mean about a 'part' of Marxism 'that says a single party must control all of society'? Where, in the writings of Marx and Engels, is this 'part' to be found?

Nowhere, of course. And in fact in the first living example of working-class power — the first example of that democratic substitute for the smashed bourgeois state machine, that 'semi-state' which the founders of Marxism called the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' — there was not a 'single party' but a seething multiplicity of views, trends, and organisations.

Followers of Marx and Engels in the 1871 Paris Commune were very much in the minority. The Communards included many fol-

PERSONAL COLUMN

lowers of utopian communists like François Babeuf (1760-97) and Louis Blanqui (1805-81), of utopian socialists like Claude Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and François Fourier (1772-1837), as well as assorted anarchists.

The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is by definition the rule of a single class. But neither Marx nor Engels — nor, indeed, Lenin — ever equated that with the rule of a single party.

Lenin in fact went out of his way (in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, 1918) to emphasise that even the disfranchising of the bourgeoisie was 'not absolutely necessary for the exercise of the [proletarian] dictatorship' (emphasis in the original).

NEXT month's lectures will no doubt find time to study what British workers have themselves thrown up in times of struggle in the way of councils of action, support groups, and similar forms of self-organisation, and what rules these bodies adopted.

The pioneers of 200 years ago set and insisted on the highest standards of conduct and democratic procedure. So did their successors the Chartists. So did those stalwarts of the 1926 General Strike whose instinctive reaction, when the TUC general council called the strike off, was: 'Double the pickets.'

Here is a rich experience to be drawn on and analysed by all who seek to reconstruct the workers' movement.

And, to paraphrase the words of a wise writer: it's only those who remember their past and have a vision of the future who don't get lost in the present.

The right to quote

MY RECENT piece on the Dunblane massacre ('Dunblane, politics, and silence', 23 March) has attracted more praise and more blame than anything else I have written for Workers Press since this column began in 1987.

To be disapproved of by Keith Flett, in particular, makes me think I must have been roughly on the right lines. Flett found the piece 'too impressionistic and moralistic by far for my liking, particularly when [it appeared] to support the ramblings of the Scottish mystic Andrew O'Hagan whose "thoughts" on the matter appeared in the *Guardian*'.

As usual, Flett falls to the occasion. His letter has nothing to say about the murdered children of Dunblane — except, by implication, in this mysterious sentence: 'The slogan of German workers before 1914, namely "eight hours a day and a gun" seems to me to have it about right.'

Now, O'Hagan's 'thoughts' about what the *Guardian* called 'a society which... is showing signs of deranged and violent breakdown' seemed to me to sum up very well, and very vividly, what I have been told by more than one Scots friend about the daily — and daily worsening — reality of life for the poor and dispossessed in their country.

Flett misses a trick. For I also quoted lines that I thought pertinent by the Irish poet W.B. Yeats, who, I am reliably informed, was never referred to by the late Brendan Behan in any terms other than 'that fascist Yeats'.

I am unrepentant. I will quote any writer whose words seem relevant to the point I'm seeking to make. Why, I'd even be prepared to quote Keith Flett if he ever wrote anything worth quoting.

But that has yet to happen.

Peter Fryer

French support for Liverpool

'All together with British dockers on strike for 26 weeks!'

On the left we publish a statement from the Sotteville Railworker's branch, of the French CGT trade union federation. Rouen was the centre of the strike wave last December. Below is an appeal from the railworkers

IN THE name of Maastricht and 'the globalisation of the economy' governments and international big capital have undertaken a general offensive against social gains and employment.

The laws of the market and the race to maximise profit mean everywhere the same measures which every day lead to more and more young people and wage earners living in insecure jobs, in unemployment or even in complete poverty.

In France, thanks to the tremendous December movement against the Juppé plan we have succeeded temporarily in frustrating their aims. But we must stay on our guard because nothing has been settled. The fate of British workers calls on us for support: for a long time they have been in the front line of the anti-social offensive in Europe.

British miners were on strike for a year before being defeated. British Rail has been dismantled, the health service is on the road to being privatised.

Now the Liverpool dockers have been on strike for more than six months for the defence of their jobs and against casualisation. Quite rightly they demand the same status for the young trainees as for the older established workers.

National Federation of Railway Workers, Supervisors and Technicians and General Confederation of Labour, Railway Workers' Union of Sotteville, 161 rue Pierre Corneille, 76 Sotteville-les-Rouen. Tel: 72 01 69.



Last December's strike movement in France

IN November and December last year French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppé tried to play 'Thatcher's apprentices'.

What the French government and the bosses wanted to do was apply in France the anti-social shock-treatment policies which have been tried out in Britain in recent years. But the great December movement put a temporary stop to their aspirations.

Millions of us took to the streets to say 'no' to the Juppé plan, no to the dismantling of public services, 'no' to unemployment and social injustice.

Despite the defeat of the British miners after more than a year on strike, despite the privatisation and break-up of the railways, despite the industrial and social catastrophe that Thatcher's laws have brought about, British workers still continue their struggle, which is the same as our struggle.

For the last six months the Liverpool dockers have been on

strike to defend their jobs and fight against casualisation. The port employers want to finish off the Liverpool dockers because they are a bastion of the trade union movement. French dockers know something about this too!

But for six months the Liverpool dockers have held out and solidarity has continued to spread. The dockers' wives are also taking part in the struggle. Dockers throughout the world have supported them.

After the strikes in December a delegation of English dockers came to Rouen and met our union organisation. Because we think that their struggle is also our struggle, we give them total support.

Workers of the world, let us unite against the Europe of Maastricht, of the bosses, of unemployment and social regression!

Let us support the striking Liverpool dockers!

US Supreme Court rules docks solidarity lawful

From AFL-CIO News

THE US Supreme Court recently upheld a court decision that America's East Coast docks union, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), could not be held legally responsible for solidarity action by Japanese workers five years ago.

Two non-union Florida stevedoring companies, Coastal Stevedoring in Fort Pierce and Port Canaveral Stevedoring at Cape Canaveral, filed charges of 'unfair labour practices' against the union in late 1990, alleging it had engaged in an unlawful secondary boycott.

Responding to an ILA request for help, Japanese dockers' unions told companies in 1990 that their members would not unload fruit that had been loaded with non-union labour, resulting in the two companies losing business.

The National Labor Relations Board ruled the ILA, acting through the Japanese unions, had engaged in illegal conduct. But

the US Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia refused to enforce the board's decision.

The ILA is also claiming victory for 208 New York harbour workers employed by Moran Towing and Transportation Co., who have been awarded \$5.4 million in back pay, and \$224,000 in reimbursable expenses to their union, the ILA's Local 333, United Marine Division, from a dispute eight years ago.

After a lockout and strike over bargaining rights workers were ordered back to work, but management failed to meet a court mandate to recruit through the union's hiring hall. Civil contempt charges are still pending against the company.

The agreement specifies that reinstatement be offered to 79 former workers who have not yet returned to work, and brings to nearly \$13 million the amount of back pay the National Labor Relations Board has helped secure from various marine transport firms for 662 employees, as well as reinstatement offers for 370 former strikers.

Imperialism's 'war on drugs'

BY MIKE COOKE

DRUG abuse costs many lives each year: drink-drive accidents, heart disease, lung cancer, liver damage, etc. But the process by which some drugs have become 'illegal' has been driven more by economics and imperialism than by concerns about the health of people.

Indeed, last century Britain waged a number of 'opium wars' on China, not to stop the use of this drug, but to ensure that it had a trade monopoly.

In this century, it is the US that has led the way in the 'war on drugs', reflecting its own rise as the leading imperialist power.

After World War I, the US insisted that ratification of the 1914 Hague Opium Convention would be part of the Versailles Treaty.

Since 1920, Britain has faithfully followed the US in the prohibition of drugs.

One particularly interesting case, the growing of the cannabis plant, has recently been highlighted in the *New Law Journal* ('Update on the US drug war', by US lawyer Keith Evans, 16 February).

cannabis plant is illegal and its products are not even allowed to be used medicinally — in spite of its illegal use by multiple sclerosis sufferers for whom it gives the only relief for some symptoms of that incurable disease.

But until 1937 hemp/cannabis/marihuana was legal. In 1925, an American commission had found that the drug was more or less harmless. This was a study prompted by concerns about the use of this drug by US troops stationed on the Panama Canal. Commanders had wanted guidance on what their attitude should be on this and the Canal Zone Report concluded that no action was needed.

However, during the 1930s a government agency, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, and two huge corporations, the Hearst newspaper empire and Dupont chemicals, mounted a campaign to outlaw hemp. Clearly the FBN had an interest in promoting its own activities, but why should Randolph Hearst — the model for Orson Welles's 'Citizen Kane' — and Dupont want hemp out of the way?

There were commercial interests involved.

First a new process to sena-

much cheaper newsprint than that produced by cutting down trees. Secondly, the new process made it likely that hemp could have become a direct competitor to Nylon.

It just so happened that Hearst had heavy investments in pine forests, Dupont owned the patent on the wood-pulp process and supplied the chemicals for converting trees into newsprint. And Nylon was the artificial fibre developed and patented by, you guessed it, Dupont!

So the Hearst presses churned out forests of anti-hemp propaganda, warning the US public that a new 'killer drug' was on the loose.

'Killer'

The new 'killer' was never referred to as hemp, a commonly used material, but as 'marihuana', the Mexican slang-word for the drug. Hearst newspapers reported a bloodbath of marihuana-inspired killing sweeping America.

FBN head Harry Anslinger made speeches, wrote articles and gave testimony to a Congressional committee claiming that marihuana reduced ordinary people to homicidal psychopaths.

aware of the Canal Zone Report.

A federal statute outlawing cannabis was enacted and Britain quickly followed with its own laws.

But now some of the ecological properties of hemp are being discussed in the US. It is claimed that one acre of hemp could produce the same amount of newsprint as four acres of pine forest.

Further, it is claimed, motor fuel could easily be produced at least some of the 'greenhouse effect' reduced because the hemp would take in carbon dioxide. Its oils could be used for most industrial purposes and its seeds contain more vegetable protein than anything else except soybean. It is said that hemp is good for the soil and is highly pest-resistant, certainly grows vigorously and can be harvested twice a year.

However any of these uses would encroach on some immense multinational interests dictated by capital: the oil companies. As has been shown in Nigeria, their power will continue to be used to suppress opposition. Only by overthrowing the interests, these powers, will the use of 'ecological' alternatives

US accused of covering for Milosevic

BOSNIA'S UN representative Muhammed Sacirbey has accused the US government of trying to conceal 'conclusive evidence' linking Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic with the mass killer Zeljko Raznatovic, better known as 'Arkan'.

Sacirbey said former US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, who brokered the Dayton, Ohio, summit negotiations, had given Milosevic an account of Arkan's activities.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

'If Mr Milosevic is entitled to that written information, then I'm not sure why we, the Bosnians, the international community, or the Hague war crimes tribunal is not.'

US officials could not comment on what evidence they had, although James P. Rubin, of their UN mission, said: 'We provide more information and financial support than any other government, and we do, in fact, favour an investigation into Arkan's activities.'

It was reported last May that documents purportedly containing Serbian interior ministry instructions to Raznatovic on running concentration camps in Bosnia, handed over by a Serb defector, had disappeared from the files of the Dutch security police, to whom they'd been entrusted by the UN.

In November, war crimes tribunal Judge Richard Goldstone asked President Clinton about aerial photographs which were being withheld 'for security reasons', and transcripts of intercepted radio messages from Milosevic's chief of staff, General Momcilo Perisic to Serb nationalist General Ratko Mladic, during the assault on Srebrenica.

Arkan's 'Tigers', the Serb Volunteer Guard, might better be described as jackals. They moved in after the fall of Vukovar, in Croatia, mopping up civilians, and their possessions.

Arkan himself was wanted for murder in Sweden before the war, but was protected by the Yugoslav

interior ministry for whom he carried out dirty jobs.

The Arkanovci went into Srebrenica and Zepa when these UN 'safe areas' fell last Summer, and may well have been involved in the murder of thousands of Bosnian men and boys.

Then last Autumn they arrived in north-west Bosnia, terrorising remaining Muslims and Croats before the US-imposed cease-fire. About 9,000 people were driven from their homes, and at least 2,000 'disappeared'.

Neither Arkan nor Milosevic have been indicted so far. Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj, accused for crimes against humanity carried out by his 'White Eagle' Chetniks, teasingly asked for a visa last month to go to the Hague and testify against Milosevic.

Henchmen

Arkan has used some of his ill-gotten loot to buy Belgrade's Radio Pingvin from an Italian businessman, putting one of his political henchmen in charge.

Sacirbey has charged the US with holding back information that implicates the Serbian government, in return for Milosevic's collaboration in implementing the Dayton deal.

When Madeleine K. Albright, chief US representative to the UN, went to visit a mass grave near Janje, north east of Tuzla, security was provided by US troops together with Serbian interior ministry officers and Chetnik

forces. American diplomats said the visit was a joint one, meant to show Serb co-operation with the war crimes tribunal.

Efforts to confine the tribunal to small fry, or draw a line between 'Bosnian Serb' nationalists and Belgrade, were upset in February, when Bosnian forces captured General Djordje Djukic, and handed him over to the tribunal.

Djukic has been charged with responsibility for military operations around Sarajevo in which Serb forces on a widespread and systematic basis, deliberately and indiscriminately fired on civilian targets that were of no military significance in order to kill, injure, terrorise and demoralise the civilian population.

Djukic, chief logistics officer for General Mladic's 'Bosnian Serb' army, had supposedly resigned from the Yugoslav National Army in 1992 when the war began.

But the Guardian's Ed Vulliamy reported evidence which, as he said, would 'propel the Hague war crimes investigations in a direction the diplomatic world most fears, towards Belgrade and the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic', and have 'explosive implications for the Dayton peace process'.



Serb Chetnik war-criminal Arkan poses with his jackals

Djukic's military identity card was headed 'Vojska Jugoslavija', the Yugoslav army.

'It is stamped annually until 1996, showing the number of his military post, 2130, and its location, Belgrade. The card bears the symbol of the double-headed eagle of Yugoslavia, distinguished from that of the Bosnian Serbs by the fact that the eagle has no crown.'

'A second card headed Yugoslav army also attaches him to VJ unit 1089 in Belgrade, citing his address as 3 King Aleksander Karadjordjevic in Han Pjesak, just inside Bosnia, where Gen. Mladic has his headquarters' (Guardian, 21 February).

After carving out territory for Karadzic, the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) supposedly withdrew

his word that his army had looted abandoned General Mladic.

Milosevic was lying, and the UN knew it. As Workers Press reported ('Lord Owen's loophole: Serb blockade', 11 February 1995), UN monitors were told to turn a blind eye to military supplies heading for Krajina, from where Serb forces launched their offensive, including bombing raids against Bihac.

But monitors' reports to the UN Security Council show a constant traffic of military equipment, munitions, planes, troops and armour across the border late as May 1995, before the assault on Srebrenica.

Djukic had also obtained supplies through secret deals with Croat HVO forces. In the summer of 1993, the heavily-mechanised Chetnik forces were short of fuel.

A deal was struck with the HVO in Kiseljak. Fuel from Srebrenica was delivered to the Chetniks in return for arms which the HVO used against Muslims. Croats opposed to the national extremists were eliminated (Guardian 18 March).

Reportedly an expert on special ordnance, including banned weapons, Djukic might have something to say about the provenance of cluster-bombs used by Serb forces like those supplied by Britain to former Yugoslavia.

Behind the US cover-up could be not only the desire to keep the Milosevic regime inside, but Secretary of State Warren Christopher's aphorism, that 'NATO unity is more important than Bosnia.'

Racist attacks increase in Germany

BY BOB ARCHER

ATTACKS on foreigners are on the increase in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the north of the former east German DDR.

The political police, the 'Constitutional Defence', report that the incidence of such attacks rose from 483 in 1994 to 644 in 1995. Racists have switched from attacking refugee hostels to vandalising Turkish snack stalls. Nevertheless, almost 100 of the attacks put foreign workers in direct physical peril, an increase of 20 per cent.

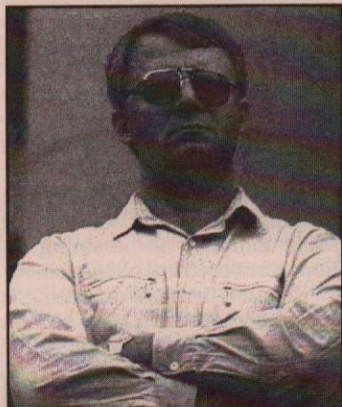
On 25 March there were arson attacks on two Turkish establishments in Bremen and a Turkish

bistro in Bielefeld. Although three young Kurds were arrested in Bremen, they were unconnected with the attacks and were released.

Magdeburg skinheads attack Sudanese refugee

In mid-March four skinheads were arrested in Magdeburg following a brutal attack on a 23-year-old Sudanese asylum seeker. One of the youths, who were aged between 15 and 25, shot the man in the head at close range with what was supposed to be a replica gun.

The youths had first stoned the man who suffered severe injuries.



'White Eagle' Chetnik leader Vojislav Seselj (left) teasingly asked for a visa to go to the Hague last month to testify against Slobodan Milosevic (right)



Bosnia Solidarity Campaign IS THERE A MULTI-ETHNIC FUTURE FOR BOSNIA?

Tuesday 16 April, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn)
Bob Myers, Workers Aid for Bosnia secretary

'Disregard for safety was death warrant' — US rail union chief

BY DAVID KAMERAS

EMPLOYERS' neglect of safety measures has been directly to blame for a spate of fatal rail accidents in the United States, including two earlier this year in New Jersey and Maryland, union leaders have charged.

'We have lost 17 engineers in the last two years, four of whom died this month due to these accidents,' BLE President Ronald P. McLaughlin told the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation committee.

'In some instances, we feel that the disregard for rail safety by the railroad companies has sent a death warrant to our members with faulty equipment, improper rest and improper or no inspections. We hold the railroad management and the Federal Railroad Administration responsible for the loss of our engineers.'

McLaughlin described several factors that singly or in combination may have contributed: lack of adequate back-up or fail-safe pro-

cedures to protect against possible human error, excessive crew fatigue, inadequate inspections, testing and maintenance of brakes, poor enforcement of safety laws, payroll cutbacks at the expense of safety and failure of the industry to install technological improvements.

Crew fatigue and a possible signal malfunction are being investigated in the Maryland crash, which killed 11 people. In New Jersey, where three died, the engineer had worked an overnight split shift of more than 14 hours.

The railroad signalmen have pointed to preliminary federal data suggesting that signals in both incidents were operating properly.

Disturbing

'What is so disturbing to rail labour is that these issues are not new, and we constantly meet roadblocks from the industry and FRA to our recommendations for adequate safety protection for our members and the public,' McLaughlin said.

'We do realize that the Federal Railroad Administration cannot adequately police the railroad industry with the present number of inspectors that are allotted by Congress,' he added. The agency has just over half the number determined to be needed as far back as 1978.

The locomotive leader identified several issues affecting safety:

- Cumulative fatigue caused by irregular work schedules and inadequate sleep opportunities.
- Drastically reduced employment and crew sizes.
- Failure by the FRA to meet congressionally-mandated deadlines for implementing safety improvements.

- Substandard radio communications and inadequate signal systems.
- The use of 'push-pull' commuter operations with the locomotive at the rear, and improper train make-up.

Mac Fleming of the Maintenance of Way Employees said an added problem was that accidents and injuries were under-reported.

Carriers harass and intimidate employees to withhold reports, charged, and 'actively engage attempts to influence and manipulate medical treatment injured railworkers to assure injury remains unreportable FRA.' The same under-report holds true for train derailments he said.

Critical

Fleming has been especially critical of the use of 'cost-benefit analysis' to delay implementation of safety regulations that could have saved some of the 53 railworkers killed since 1986 as being struck by moving trains equipment. 'This is one of the most dangerous industries in the world,' he said.

US rail unions are fighting proposed merger of South Pacific and Union Pacific roads. Pointing to line closures after other mergers, Fleming, vice-president of the AFL-CIO, told the union federation's executive council the merger could 'cost' jobs and services.

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