

Workers Press

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

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YOUTH POVERTY SOARS

NEARLY half a million people under 25 are now earning £2.50 or less an hour.

This is the grim findings of research by the Depaul Trust which says over 100,000 young people are living in a desperate state.

The Trust, whose president is TV news reader Trevor MacDonald, notes that the under 25s now account for more than one in four of all those without jobs.

As many as 44 per cent of young people forced onto training schemes leave them when they find them no use.

Massive increases in rents, the withdrawal of

BY THE EDITOR

state benefits, and the tightening up of eligibility rules, make it impossible for many young people to find a home of their own. Young people from ethnic minorities are likely to end up living in run-down houses in the inner cities.

Without urgent action, says the Trust, the situation will get worse.

It is these conditions that have driven increasing numbers of young people to petty crime and drug-taking as they struggle to survive. Many are forced to continue living in their childhood home, and are unable to bring in any wages and are entitled to no benefits.

Mental health problems are mounting for young people, with a suicide rate among young men up by 75 per cent since 1979.

Here is the stark picture of the decay of capital at the end of the century. It is a system of violence and oppression that offers no

hope or future for millions of people, and especially young people. **This is the rotting system that Blair and the rest of the Labour leaders support up to the hilt.**

It is essential that the young unemployed and homeless are not left to their own devices. Their cause must be taken up by organised workers.

Ways must be found of fighting shoulder-to-shoulder against the common enemy — the handful of super-rich people who control the wealth and exploit it for their own selfish interests.

STRIKERS AND SENIOR CITIZENS UNITE AGAINST HEALTH CUTS

HILLINGDON hospital strikers are this weekend joining with pensioners in a combined protest against the decision of the local health authority to ration emergency care to all those over 75.

The Hillingdon women, almost all Asian workers, have been on strike for over a year after refusing a 20 per cent wage cut from private contractor, Pall Mall.

Two executive directors of Pall Mall's parent company, Davis Service Group, recently enjoyed fat-cat pay increases of £29,000 and £42,000.

ASSEMBLE

Uxbridge Tube Station forecourt (Metropolitan and Piccadilly lines)
Saturday 26 October, 1pm for

RALLY

2pm at the Civic Centre

March condemns school cuts



Teachers, parents and children march to oppose education cuts

TEACHERS, parents, children and school governors from all over England and Wales turned out 12,000-strong in London on Saturday 19 October to oppose cuts in finance which are devastating the schools.

The Falcons youth marching band from Watford tirelessly provided musical inspiration as the march threaded its way through the West End to Hyde Park, where some of the speakers were heckled by angry young people.

John Monks of the TUC and Labour education spokesman David Blunkett had a hard time. National Union of Teachers' stewards moved in to remove the hecklers.

Actress Miriam Carlin addressed the rally, as did speakers from the Fight Against Cuts in Education and representatives of parents' associations.

A contingent of Liverpool dockers fighting casualisation and Women of the Waterfront brought the dockers' banner on the march.

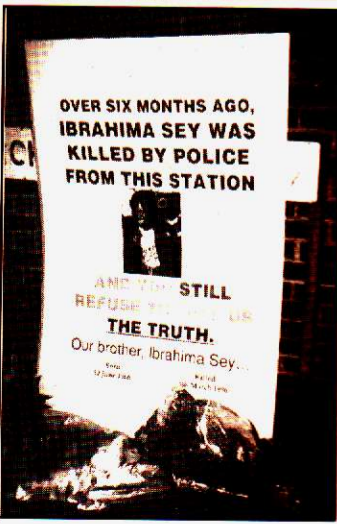


Picket condemns death in custody

OVER 100 supporters of Newham Monitoring Project held a picket outside Forest Gate Police Station in east London last week (above) to protest against police harassment of black people.

The very vocal picket highlighted the most recent and notorious case of the death of Ibrahim Say from Gambia while in police custody and following the use of a CS gas spray.

To emphasise their point the protestors left



a placard (above) and flowers outside the police station.

UNITE THE STRUGGLES!

CRISIS IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT -

THE NEED FOR A NEW SOCIALIST PARTY

RECALL CONFERENCE:

Saturday 23 November 11am-5pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

(Holborn tube) Entrance: £7 (unemployed £1)

For details write to: Steve Ballard, Secretary, Socialist Steering Committee, c/o Index Bookcentre, 28 Charlotte Street, London W1P 1HJ, or phone 0181-889 7255. Tickets £7 (unemployed £1) cheques/POs payable to 'Socialist Steering Committee'

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Please tell us if you need childcare facilities. OR JUST TURN UP ON THE DAY!

MASS PICKET OF LIVERPOOL DOCKS

MONDAY 25 NOVEMBER

10am Seaforth Container Terminal

(near Crosby Rd)

rejecting

casual labour, anti-union legislation

fighting for

real employment, trade union principles

Workers Press

The stench of morality

WHEN you hear Tory and Labour and Liberal politicians joining hands in the call for a new 'moral crusade' beware!

Frances Lawrence, wife of the stabbed head teacher Phillip Lawrence, last week published a plea for a greater sense of 'civic values', for the measures to heal a 'fractured society' and for a sense of 'mutual responsibility'.

What she wrote was immediately and cynically seized upon by both prime minister Major and Labour Party leader Tony Blair who outdid each other to show that they were the real leaders of a new 'moral crusade'. As everybody knows what determines their immediate response to every issue is: will it assist me to win the next election?

Blair demanded that every school should teach 'good citizenship' and inculcate into each child the 'three Es' — effort, earnestness and excellence.

Not to be outdone, John Major called Mrs Lawrence to Downing Street to discuss her ideas and, adding his two-pence-worth, Liberal leader Paddy Ashdown said that Mrs Lawrence spoke for millions.

Whatever their day-to-day squabbles, as they jockey for high office these three politicians have one thing in common. They all support to the hilt the capitalist system. What is this system today? It is rooted in bloody exploitation and violence. It involves hunger and starvation for countless millions throughout the world.

It involves the imposition of brutal dictatorships throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and elsewhere. It involves the deportation back to certain death or at best barbarous imprisonment for those fleeing persecution at the hands of imperialist-backed regimes in these parts of the world.

Tragic though the death of Phillip Lawrence was, these leaders bring out their handkerchiefs over the death of an individual but condone the destruction of millions in war or through starvation.

Blair is just as much an upholder of this rotting system as is Major and Ashdown.

There is no basic difference between these leaders when it comes to war against the peoples of Iraq, when it comes to the immigration laws, when it comes to the use of violence against the working class in Britain and throughout the world. Blair supports the destruction of a health service fought for by past generations of workers that now denies treatment to people over 75.

In short, Blair is a complete lackey of capital who hopes soon to be fully rewarded for his services.

To talk about civic values and a common morality in these circumstances is a sheer fraud — outright humbug.

Under the rule of capital there can be no common, no shared values between exploiter and exploited. There is the morality of the ruling class and its hangers-on and the morality of the working class.

Indeed the only truly moral class today is the working class. For the working class alone has no stake in present-day society. Only the working class in its struggles against the decadence of capital offers the prospect of a future society in which exploitation is done away with, in which human beings can collaborate peacefully, establish genuine human solidarity and a truly common morality.

Letters

WE WELCOME LETTERS

SEND THEM TO: WORKERS PRESS,
PO BOX 735, LONDON SW8 1YB
— OR FAX 0171-387 0569

Letters longer
than 500 words
WILL be cut

Interesting

I DON'T always agree with what Chris Knight has to say, but I always find his contributions to Workers Press interesting and stimulating. It was with great anticipation therefore that I read that Chris is to provide an article for the paper on the debate about where the left would be going. How about giving him a regular column to air his thoughts on this vital issue for socialists?

Charles Murray
Tottenham

Referendum no!

WE elect governments to take decisions, not to start having referendums, giving the impression that they are somehow being democratic.

I didn't notice any of the 'referendum' politicians shouting about consulting us on the break-up of the National Health Service, privatisation of water, and all the other things they have taken back.

Make no mistake the 'referendum' people are not some sort of super-democrats. They are fighting with the Tory party for their own sake, and not for ours — that is, not for us workers.

I am now 87 years old, and ever since I've had the vote, I've voted Labour. I hope they get in next time and get the Tories out. Then we'll have to see what they do.

Les Moody
SW London

About severe divisions

A RECENT issue of the newspaper 'Militant' carried an editorial ('Tories tumble towards split', 11 October) dealing with the crisis in the Tory Party. It was concerned, among other things, with the deep divisions in that party over questions of economic policy.

'The capitulation to the anti-Europe right is not in the interests of the majority of British big business. Britain exports more to Belgium and Holland alone than it does to the US'.

It proceeds to explain that it is because Labour is more pro-Europe that sections of big business are now looking to a Blair-led government.

In the first place, there is no doubt that important sectors of capital are moving in behind, even financing, Labour. But this has more to do with the collapse of the Tory Party and Blair's commitment to press home with the fight against the working class than because of the divisions in the Tory party over Europe, profound as those differences are.

Second, these latter divisions do not concern simply the pattering of British exports, the fact that Europe is the biggest single market for British exports. The divisions now consuming the Tory party are much deeper in nature and origin than that. In particular, they concern the conflict between the City of London on the one hand and industry on the other.

As the most parasitic of all the leading capitalist powers, Britain relies to an enormous extent on revenue from financial and other services — banking, insurance, and the like. This has been the case for the past century and more, when London became the principal centre that provided money for the development of capital beyond these shores. These activities brought in considerable 'invisible' earnings for the British ruling class which more than compensated for the decline of British industry and the consequent loss of export markets.

Here lies the historic dilemma about joining a common European monetary system. It would threaten the position of the City of London. As the strongest economic power in the European Union, Germany would dominate such a system. Business would inevitably flow from London towards Frankfurt. In effect, tied to the D-Mark, sterling would have no room for independent action on the world scale. And with the loss of its vast revenues from financial activities, the British ruling class would be staring bankruptcy in the face.

At the same time, it is nonetheless true, as 'Militant' points out, that outside of Europe Britain would be cut off from her major outlet for exports. Inside or outside, the crisis of British capital can only intensify.

Hence the deep and irresolvable differences in the Tory party. But, as servants of the ruling class, these divisions are just as severe in the Labour and trade union bureaucracy, even if they will only come fully into the open when a Labour government is formed.

Peter Jeffries
West London

From a comrade and friend

I HAD known our deceased comrade Bob Pennington, about whom Bill Hunter wrote such an impressive obituary (Workers Press, 12 October) for 35 years.

I can confirm that although he was somewhat depressed over the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fragmentation of the revolutionary movement in Britain, he never lost his faith in the socialist future of mankind. He remained (although his fragile health did not permit him to participate in the movement himself) till the last an unflinching atheist, a staunch materialist and an irreconcilable revolutionary, in Leon Trotsky's memorable words.

He would have voted Labour with the working class but thought Blair was a renegade.

I would like to add (this is not generally known and was not mentioned by Bill Hunter) that Bob had visited the 'Old Man's' house in Coyoacan, Mexico some years ago and had met his grandson.

Furthermore, he had been an officer of the War Crimes Commission established by the late English liberal philosopher, Bertrand Russell in co-operation with the late French existentialist writer Jean Paul Sartre, in the late 1960s to arraign the US imperialists over their genocidal war against the Vietnamese people.

Carl Rennert
Brighton

The torture trail ends here!

COPEX — the 'covert and operational procurement exhibition' prides itself as being the 'definitive showcase of internal security, counter insurgency and special operations equipment'.

In the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) newsletter of April last year, we described Copex as a 'market place for electric-shock batons and other torture equipment.'

In an attempt to silence all criticisms of its activities, Copex launched a libel action against us.

However, because we were telling the truth, this libel action was struck out by the High Court in July, and we are now pursuing Copex for costs.

Having successfully defended the libel action, we are now looking to go that one step further, and close down their nasty

business practices altogether. It was the Channel Four 'Dispatches' programme, who went on 'The Torture Trail' to expose British companies as major suppliers of weapons used for internal oppression and torture.

From medieval leg-irons and chains, to the universal tool of the modern torturer, 'the electro-shock weapon'. Electroshock weapons are the preferred tool of the modern torturer, because if the victim survives the experience, these weapons leaves few visible signs.

A 'Dispatches' undercover film revealed Philip Morris, the British Aerospace sales manager, boasting about the supply of Electroshock batons to the brutal Saudi dictatorship as part of Britain's largest-ever arms deal, 'Al Yamamah'.

Indonesia, China, Iran, Columbia, Israel, Mexico, Singapore and Saudi Arabia are all considered as being 'torturing states' by human rights groups. Yet all these governments have been present at recent Copex annual arms fairs.

To do nothing to prevent these crimes is to consent. Withdraw your consent by withdrawing your obedience. We ask you to join us on 5 November in non-violent civil disobedience.

Assemble, 9 a.m. at Littleworth Common (off the A307, Portsmouth Road, opp. Sandown Park Racecourse).

The fare from London is just £1 for unwaged or low-waged and £5 for those who can afford it. Book in advance and pay on the coach.

There are two pick-up points, Pancras Way at 7 a.m. (between Kings Cross and St. Pancras main line stations) and outside Labatts Apollo Theatre at 7.30 a.m. (nearest tube, Hammersmith). If you are coming from outside London we are arranging overnight accommodation so you can catch our coach.

CAAT
11 Goodwin Street,
Finsbury Park,
London, N4 3HQ

Telephone: 0171 281 0297

THE TORTURE TRAIL

ENDS HERE! — STOP



THE COPEX

ARMS FAIR!

NON-VIOLENT SIT-DOWN BLOCKADE

AND CEREMONY IN REMEMBRANCE OF ALL TORTURE VICTIMS

TUESDAY 5 NOVEMBER

Porcupine Press

You are cordially invited to attend the launch of Porcupine Press' latest book

Terry Brotherstone and Geoff Pilling (ed)
History, Economic History and the Future of Marxism
Essays in Memory of Tom Kemp (1921-1993)

7.00 pm, Thursday, 7 November

The Woburn Bookshop

Woburn Walk, off Upper Woburn Place

London WC1 (near Euston)

Bring a bottle!

WHAT'S ON? WHAT'S ON? WHAT'S ON?

2 Nov. 9 pm — 2 am — Benefit for Reclaim the Streets featuring FREETOWN AND FIN DE SIECLE. Canterbury Arms, Canterbury Crescent, Brixton, SW9.

5 Nov. Assemble 9 am — STOP THE COPEX ARMS FAIR. Non-violent, sit-down blockade and ceremony in remembrance of all torture victims. Littleworth Common (off A307, Portsmouth Road, opposite Sandown Racecourse).

12 Nov. — Day of Solidarity with McLibel defendants and McDonald workers — Picket your local store. For leaflets and information 0171 713 1269.

23 Nov. 11 am Direct Action Conference in Brighton (details 01273 685913)

23 NOV. 11 am — 5 pm Recall Conference — NEED FOR A NEW SOCIALIST PARTY, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1.

London Support Group for Liverpool dockers meets every Thursday, 7.30 pm Kings Head, Swinton Street, off Grays Inn Road (near Kings Cross station).

Hillingdon Hospital Support Group meets every Sunday 11 am at Uxbridge Civic Centre.

PLEASE SEND US DETAILS OF EVENTS WHICH WE CAN INCLUDE IN THIS LISTING EACH WEEK:

Phone 1071 387 0564, Fax: 0171 387 0569
or post to PO Box 735, London, SW8 1YB

Reclaim the Unions

150 back dockers at
London Support
Group public meeting



JIMMY NOLAN, chair of the Liverpool Docks Shops Stewards Committee said last week: 'We think that all trade union leaders should make clear to the government that we will not accept any oppression.'

He was speaking at a public meeting organised by the London Support Group for the 500 striking dockers last Wednesday in Conway Hall.

He went on to say: 'Wherever we go working class people do hesitate because employers use the law and contracts to threaten them.'

'We have been on strike for 13 months. The trade union leaders should be acting in the way that the early founders of the trade union movement did in order to build the movement.'

'We have been to 22 countries in the last 12 months to build support for our fight. In many different countries our fellow dockers are taking action.'

'We won't accept any poncing around in relation to our reinstatement. We will not accept severance.'

He went on to criticise one particular organisation. 'We have received support from some left-wing groups.'

'However I will mention one group — the International Communist Party. I'm telling you, you've got it all wrong.'

'The Liverpool dockers have addressed 6,000 meetings throughout the country. If you can organise better than us, and



Platform at the London dockers' meeting

can get power in a few weeks or months — if you can get workers to come out on a mass scale then please do so.'

Doreen McNally from **Women of the Waterfront** spoke of the times you have to deprive elderly parents of a visit because you are speaking at a group to raise support, of how you can't sleep, and your hair falls out because of the anxiety.

'Up and down the country there is tremendous support for Liverpool dockers — everyone has their own struggle. People should join together — we are the ones with the power.'

'I was brought up to understand that the unions fought against oppression but the Transport and General Workers Union have worked within the framework of the law.'

'People are in isolated groups acting independently. It makes

sense to get together — we are all fighting the same thing.'

'Young people coming out of university can't get a job. Sixty-year-olds are told not to bother to sign on. We have become more socially and politically aware and we now need to harness the power at grassroots level.'

Michael from **Reclaim the Streets** spoke as an individual, and explained that RTS was a loose organisation which started two and a half years ago.

Westminster

It began with cyclists who decided that the London Cycling Club was not radical enough. They went to Westminster outside the Houses of Parliament and painted cycle tracks along the road.

The movement against road building then took off, then street

parties. In August this year they supported the tubeworkers' strike, and then went up to Liverpool.

The campaign against the Criminal Justice Act brought larger numbers together, then Twyford Downs, Shrewsbury, and opposition to the Job Seekers Allowance. They were finding new forms of struggle.

He said he was attracted to the dockers' dispute because they are running it themselves without the interference of bureaucrats.

One hundred and fifty people turned up for the meeting — Tony Benn MP, the Hillingdon hospital workers, and Tekin Kartal from the North London Textile Workers branch of TGWU also spoke from the platform.

Many people spoke from the platform and the floor about the necessity to 'Reclaim the Unions' for their membership.

Dockers go to Manchester street party

BY RACHEL ROBERTSON

MORE than 600 people gathered together last Saturday to Reclaim the Streets of Manchester.

Glasgow's *Desert Storm*, who for the last two years have joined with Workers Aid for Bosnia and taken their mobile sound system to play dance music on the streets of Bosnia, led the procession.

It left Albert Square at around 2 o'clock, coming to a halt and blocking off a 200-yard stretch of Oxford Road, one of the main roads into the city centre.

Banners proclaiming 'Reclaim the Streets', 'Turf out the Traffic', 'Jobs not Bombs', and 'Support the Liverpool Dockers' adorned the street and a tripod was erected in the middle of the road.

People, young and old, from a diverse range of backgrounds, interests and organisations were present.

Fire-eaters and jugglers mingled with Earth-Firsters, other eco-activists, members of the Campaign Against the Criminal Justice Act and 45 Liverpool dockers, as all enjoyed the music, entertainment and carnival atmosphere.

Andy Dwyer, of the Liverpool Dockers Shop Stewards' Committee explained why they turned out in such numbers.

'We are indebted to the people from Reclaim the Streets for the support they showed us at the mass picket and rally to commemorate the anniversary of the sacking of the 500 Liverpool

dockers.

'We went to Manchester to support them first of all as friends and to thank them for the tremendous support they gave us in Liverpool.'

'I'm 49 years of age and I hold them a debt I can't repay. We'll be building closer links — there's no doubt about that. We're aligned with them now and have plans for future events.'

The festivities continued until about 6p.m. when, after a last round of frenzied dancing, the music wound up and the procession returned to Albert Square and dispersed without incident.

Despite the OSD presence, and in contrast with the events in Liverpool last month, the police maintained a low profile throughout the day, and made no arrests.

Manchester Reclaim the Streets was a huge success not only because it raised awareness of the Criminal Justice Act and many environmental issues surrounding road-building and air pollution, nor just because it was so well-attended and passed without incident.

The strength of this event lay in the diverse range of people with different views gathered together, combining party and protest to further a common objective, joining together in organised struggle for a better future and a better world.



Anti-Asylum Bill march, 1995

Arrested - for reading poetry

BY JACKIE VANCE

SUSSEX police actions in trying to stop a 'Reclaim the Streets' (RTS) demonstration in Brighton on 24 August have been condemned as 'aggressive, unreasonable, violent and illegal'.

These are some of the conclusions of a recently published report of the independent Brighton Legal Defence and Monitoring Group (BLDMG) which was formed in April 1995 to monitor policing of protests in Brighton and to offer legal information and defence to those attending.

As the state intensifies its street attacks and harassment of unemployed and young people — including an attempted clampdown on RTS — the monitoring of police actions becomes more important.

The Sussex cops are certainly aware of this. They tried to stop the BLDMG obtaining evidence of the police brutality by arresting two of their representatives, clearly identified by orange tabards with 'Legal Observer' written on the front and back, at the start of the demonstration.

the rights of an individual on arrest.

Both of the legal observers were held until late that night, refused access to solicitors, and eventually bailed only after being charged with conspiracy — a more serious charge than the one they were arrested on. They have subsequently been told

A black man with dreadlocks is grabbed from his bike by a police officer and rammed head-first into the back of a police van. A qualified first-aider, seeing the man is unconscious, offers to help but is refused access by the police. The police refuse to confirm if an ambulance has been called. The unconscious man is hand-cuffed in the van.

the charges will not be pursued and intend to sue Sussex police.

The BLDMG report gives details of the unprovoked police violence against the protesters and the public at the demonstration which, they say, was 'good-humoured and peaceful until the police themselves became violent'.

They have received written and verbal reports, photographs and

● A man is violently arrested, apparently for drumming. He is grabbed around the neck and forced to the ground by a police officer who head-butted him with a crash helmet giving him a bloody nose.

● A black man with dreadlocks is grabbed from his bike by a police of-

ficer and rammed head-first into the back of a police van. A qualified first-aider, seeing the man is unconscious, offers to help but is refused access by the police. The police refuse to confirm if an ambulance has been called. The unconscious man is hand-cuffed in the van.

● A man is deliberately hit in the face with a baton by a police officer at the seafront. The event is captured on video.

tempt to intimidate the crowd they arrested people for: reading out poetry; carrying a papier-mache sea-horse; singing; reading aloud an article about pollution; tripping over a kerb.

The BLDMG reports that the police attempted to prevent a public meeting called by the group *Justice?* on 2 September to discuss the policing of the demonstration by the landlord of the pub where the meeting was planned to take place.

The Brighton police assault was undoubtedly part of the national clampdown on RTS following July's successful street party on the M41 in London. With the turn of many RTS activists towards collaboration with workers in struggle and the success of the 28-30 September solidarity actions with the Liverpool dockers, these assaults will become more widespread.

● *Cause for Concern*, a report on the policing of the Reclaim the Streets demonstration in Brighton on 24 August 1996, can be obtained from

The Brighton Legal Defence and Monitoring Group,
c/o 6, Tilbury Place

Officials disbelieve refugee trauma

SUICIDE attempts and mental breakdown are a predominant feature among the 800 asylum seekers locked up in British prisons and the notorious detention centres.

Research by a Birmingham university psychiatrist, Christina Pourgourides, has found that a third of a sample group of detained asylum seekers had attempted suicide, mostly by hanging.

Her year-long study which will be published next month reveals how those who have fled from political repression and torture suffer acute mental torture when imprisoned and threatened with deportation.

One of the people interviewed, a 30-year-old Muslim from Algeria, was raped by prison guards in his own country and then mocked by inmates in Rochester prison. He tried to hang himself in his cell when they made fun of

held in prison like a criminal having committed no crime', said Dr. Pourgourides.

Her study will be launched at a conference run by the Asylum Rights Campaign. It shows that two thirds of detainees were depressed, one third were tortured and one third had been fled from in the country they had fled from.

She was strongly critical of the powers given to immigration officers to detain refugees 'with no set time limit and for no clearly stated reason'. Trauma already suffered meant mental breakdown in prisons or detention centres was likely after three or four months. The average stay was eight months and some were detained for up to two years.

Nick Hardwick, chief executive of the Refugee Council said a 'culture of disbelief' existed in the immigration department over the suffering of detainees, who had trebled in number since 1993.

Inside left

Narks and agents

XX-policewoman Janet Lovelace's revelation that she was asked to infiltrate the Ploughshares peace group, four of whose members were acquitted of wrecking a Hawk jet destined for Indonesia, prompts some recollections by Patrick Avaakum, in the current *Workers Liberty* (October 1996).

One night he was drinking with political friends in a Salford club. A fellow came up claiming to know him from the docks. Drawing him aside, the newcomer asked whether, being Irish and a "commie", Patrick knew anyone interested in acquiring guns and ammunition. Patrick gave a non-committal answer, and the man went off. He later learned the man was out on bail on an armed robbery charge.

About this time the first IRA bombs were exploding in England. Police agents had tried to frame a group in Hackney, East London, by offering them guns. The offices of *Workers Fight*, a paper Patrick supported, were raided. Word went around the docks about the man in the club offering guns for sale, and he was given a good hiding by some lads who didn't like narks.

The British state and employers have a long history of using spies and provocateurs. Late 18th and 19th century government spies set up 'plots' so those ensnared could be arrested. The famous Tolpuddle Martyrs, deported in 1834 for starting a farm workers' union, had been betrayed by an informer sent in by a Dorchester landowning JP, in touch with Home Secretary Lord Melbourne.

In 1965, a Young Socialist friend of mine, organising engineering apprentices, noticed an older man taking notes at the back of the meeting. The man claimed he worked at a factory in Southall, but people from the area didn't know him. By the time my friend asked them, the man had slipped away.

The following Monday morning, returning to his job at the AEI factory in Willesden, my friend was told to report to the personnel office. There his P45 and two security men were waiting, and he was escorted to the gate before he realised he'd been victimised!

Many workers and campaigners have stories to tell. But experiences that should be put together often go unrecorded.

Too often the water was muddied by crazed sectarians like the late Gerry Healy, smearing left-wing opponents as 'agents', to generate paranoia, while discouraging more serious inquiry. People with genuine stories or information may fear ridicule, or think nobody will listen. They shouldn't.

As Patrick Avaakum concludes, 'It would be daft to be paralysed by suspicion and spy-hunting, but equally daft to pretend there is no problem.'

Clever Cloggies

I'm told Chris Knight once caused as much upset trying to discuss his anthropological theories at the Socialist Workers' Party 'Marxism' summer school as some of us did last year trying to raise the realities of Bosnia. But devotees of the dance should appreciate Andrew Wood's account in *Workers Liberty* of selling outside Marxism '96:

... a sizeable number of SWP comrades formed a circle around one of our people. ... We continued selling ... they stopped playing ring-a-ring-a-rosie ... Later ... Hacks stood in front of us, to stop us selling or talking to people. We jiggled from side to side a bit to show how ridiculous they were being — and yes, they just jiggled from side to side in time with us ...

Charlie Pottins

HUNGARY

1956

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, *Workers Press* prints extracts from an account by BALAZS NAGY of how the Central Workers Council of Greater Budapest was set up. The full account will be published shortly for the first time in English as a pamphlet.

Nagy deals with only one aspect of the Hungarian Revolution and its aftermath. He is concerned to explain how and under what conditions the working class in Budapest was able to form its own independent city-wide organisation to express its own demands and exercise its own power.

The extracts printed here explain the background against which such an organisation became necessary. Later parts describe how the task was carried out and the importance of the help given by intellectuals.

Balazs Nagy talks about the workers who set up the Central Workers' Council, especially its leader, Sándor Bali, to whom the pamphlet is dedicated.

This account makes it clear that the development of the workers' political consciousness could not follow a preconceived, perfect, plan. It is essential reading for those today who seek to rebuild the movement of the working class and re-establish revolutionary internationalist working class consciousness.

THE brutal intervention of the Soviet army on 4 November 1956 did not end the Hungarian revolution. Its most authentic organ, the Central Workers' Council, was only born ten days later.

Although the Central Council only came into being after 4 November, similar initiatives by workers had already been seen during the victory of the revolution (...)

Thus some factory representatives occasionally formed district-wide workers' councils, inspired and led by the councils in the big factories. In the working-class suburbs like Újpest and Csepel the workers' council represented the whole district (...)

Resistance

I emphasise this phenomenon because I wish to counter a widely-held view that the Central Workers' Council was organised and brought into being merely in response to and as the only possible form of resistance to the Soviet intervention. Even before that attack the workers of Budapest had already started spontaneously to organise their actions and therefore to set up an organisation that had a territorial basis. To forget this is to reduce the revolution to a political or governmental combination, or to see it simply as an anti-Soviet action, and thus in the last analysis as something negative (...)

Thus there is no doubt that during the revolution workers took up issues not merely at a factory but also at a district level, uniting their demands and their forces in the organisational sphere (...)

Consequently the formation of a working-class body at a higher level did not merely translate the spontaneous wishes of workers, but was also a necessary condition for the consolidation of the revolution. Thus the formation of a central workers' council lay fair and square in the nature of events, even before 4 November (...)

It could not have been any other way. The councils were the product of the workers' own experience and their spontaneous wishes. They realised the need to join together, first

in districts and then at a higher level. It dawned on them that their influence grew the more they lent it weight through their organised strength.

We should not forget that it was the workers themselves, without any organisation, party, group trade union or whatever, who as it were relearned the experiences of the whole history of the workers' movement, enriching it as they did so.

That is why, lacking 'reliable' theoreticians, they organised their strength gradually. There was one other important factor in their relative slowness to organise the central council: the Nagy government adopted the people's demands as its own and the person of Imre Nagy was some sort of pledge or guarantee that they would be carried out. There was thus an alliance between the workers and the central government which acted as a brake upon the formation of a separate workers' power (...)

The concentrated surprise attack by the Soviet army at dawn on 4 November changed the situation completely. The armed resistance which was quickly set on foot could not withstand it, although it held out until 10-12 November, especially in working-class districts.

In the provinces, the struggle was fiercest in the industrial and working-class areas. In the Sztalinvros steel-making centre, newly built in the course of the first five-year plan, the workers rejected the Soviet commander's call to surrender on 7 November. The general assault which followed this rejection did not break the workers' desperate resistance until three days later. In the north, resistance continued in the Borsod region, the undisputed centre of the Hungarian metallurgical industry, and the Tatabánya and Dorog coalfields. In the south, the armed struggle did not stop until the very last minute in the industrial city of Pécs and the coalfield in the surrounding hills. In the capital the armed struggle continued until 11 November in Csepel, the traditional bastion of the workers' movement (...)

The workers were the backbone of



Tanks and devastation in a Budapest street during the revolution

the Hungarian revolution; it was they who fought for its aims and spilled the most blood to defend it. To establish this historical fact is not in any way to minimise the part played by the intellectuals and students. But it has to be laid down once and for all unequivocally that in its essence the Hungarian revolution was identical with the workers' struggle (...)

Determined

The nature of the change on 4 November was obvious to the workers. Just as they were determined to return to work on 5 November, so, after the Soviet attack, it was completely natural for them to strike. Indeed, it was a more significant weapon than the armed struggle, which was hopeless from the start.

There has never been a strike as complete and general as that launched by the Hungarian workers following the Soviet invasion (...)

The workers rose up against the Soviet intervention and the Kadar government. They sought to use the general strike to impose their demands and have their wishes respected. Consequently the consolidation of the Kadar regime was closely bound up with the return to work. Hence the endless and tireless campaign for a return to work by the press and the radio and in the speeches of government ministers. The best way to grasp the enormous extent of the strike is therefore to follow the considerable but vain efforts and attempts of the Kadar team to get the workers back to work (...)

The demands advanced by the workers were the same as those of the revolution. The Hungarian people, and the workers in particular, wanted to change the Stalinist regime into true socialism.

In doing so they found that they faced a system established by the Communist Party and at the same time its foreign prop, the Soviet Union.

Consequently the revolutionary struggle was inevitably intertwined with the struggle for national independence. The repression, too, combined the Soviet attack with the installation of the Kadar regime in power (...)

The Hungarian workers could do no other than demand the with-

drawal of Soviet troops and the return to power of Imre Nagy, who was the only person in their eyes who could guarantee that their revolutionary objectives would be carried out. A general strike was not enough to achieve this. The government knew only too well that its power depended on more than Soviet bayonets and that the workers held the key to political consolidation, on the one hand in the general strike and on the other in the workers' councils (...)

While the government made cautious overtures to the workers, the latter quickly realised that an unorganised strike would be no use at all (...)

The workers' councils in the factories resumed activity and became the real organisers of the struggle (...)

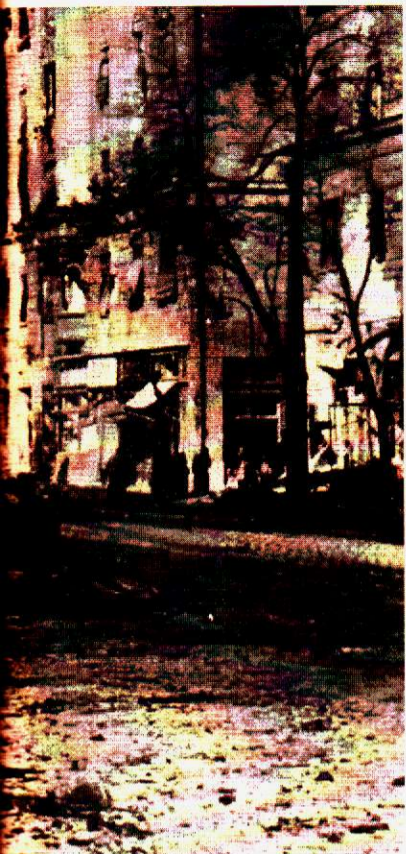
These directly-elected workers' councils represented the workers and the factories and formulated the workers' demands (...). The councils regarded themselves as the owners of the factories and rejected any central authority whatever. Politically they organised the strike and opposed the central government.

But they knew that the strike on its own was not an adequate guarantee of success. Lacking an authority they



A meeting of the revolutionary

Now workers re-learned and enriched the lessons of their history



To overcome this lack, certain councils, even in early November, formed district-wide councils. We know that such councils were formed the 11th, 13th and 14th districts, in Ujpest and Csepel. These councils were set up by delegates from the councils in the district and almost their only function was to coordinate the activities and demands of the factories. (...)

The government had to act. On 12 November it decreed that the revolutionary councils could only act as consultative bodies, they could not longer directly run things. At the same time the government decided to appoint 'government liaison officers' to the regional councils 'to assist in carrying out government decrees'. (...)

Their intentions were clear. Faced with the dangers of the strike and the intensification of the councils' activities, the government had decided to go on to the counter-offensive.

To combat the revolution's clear tendency to decentralise power, it reinforced the central power. Its decisions, decrees and orders bear the stamp of a resolutely centralist and bureaucratic spirit, pushing back workers' rights and autonomy, concentrating the administration in the hands of the central government, imposing functionaries appointed from above against the elected representatives of the people.

Autonomy

Leaving aside for a moment the political coloration of the two sides, a careful and objective study of the decisions of the Kadar government shows that its main, if not only, concern was to destroy the autonomy of the workers and the people and to reorganise the central power as quickly as possible in all its centralised majesty and omnipotence.

But it had to break the growing power of the workers' councils. (...)

And yet this government functioned on paper only! Its members and its very few employees only ventured onto the streets with Soviet tanks and an armed escort. They were above all as scared of going to the factories as the devil is of entering a church.

The Kadar government could do practically nothing. The people boycotted it as the civil accessory of an

oppressing army. There was absolutely no administration. Its decrees and decisions appeared and nobody carried them out. Thus, from the first day of the intervention, Kadar and his team rested on the Soviet army not only politically and militarily but also administratively. It was the organisation of the Soviet army which served as a government administration. (...)

The workers were faced not only by a government organising its own, anti-working class power, but above all by the whole Soviet army. Their weapon, the strike, became the form of opposition to this army to as it more and more concerned itself with getting a return to work using police methods. (...)

The workers understood that they would have to act to defend the revolution and their own demands, not only through the general strike but by developing forms and means of struggle to make it more effective.

Hungarian Tragedy, Peter Fryer's eye-witness account of the 1956 events, is to be republished by Index Books in November.

Peter Fryer was sent to Hungary by the Daily Worker, only to have his dispatches suppressed. His account of the role of Stalinism in brutally suppressing the new-found freedom of the Hungarian people came as a profound shock to those in and around the Communist Party in Britain.

This new edition includes the text of the original book plus Peter Fryer's other writings of the time—his appeal against expulsion from the Communist Party and other articles and book reviews which explain more of what he learned from the Hungarian revolution.

Hungarian Tragedy and other writings on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution by Peter Fryer costs £11.99 from Index Books, 28 Charlotte Street, London W1P 1HJ. (ISBN: 1-87158-14-8)

on

trusted, such as the Nagy government, they relied upon themselves. The form of organisation for the required consolidation thus became quite naturally the council. The task then was to organise and strengthen it. The councils put forward their revolutionary demands, one of which deserves particular attention: On 10 November a delegation from the Ganz electrical factory, one of the biggest in Budapest, met Kadar to discuss their demand for the workers to be armed. (...)

Nothing could have terrified this government more than the arming of the working class. The councils were a growing inconvenience, not to say a danger. (...) Kadar and his companions had to confront the councils and definitively install their own regime. (...)

The workers' councils saw all too clearly that when all was said and done their power was only potential, since their influence on the situation was informal, unorganised and solely due to their presence and mass strength. The actions of the individual councils was disorganised and there was a lack of collaboration between them, of collective decision-making.



committee of university students



Budapest: the gigantic statue of Stalin lies toppled

City Lights

'Killing Fields' scandal

THE European Union is dumping inferior, highly toxic, tobacco designated unfit for consumption by western European smokers onto eastern Europe as the give-away price of \$0.09 per kilo. The market price for wholesale tobacco is about \$4 a kilo.

Exports of tobacco to eastern Europe doubled between 1991 to last year's figure of 147,000 tonnes, despite the fact that this dumping policy — selling a product abroad for less than in the home market — has been condemned by various European authorities.

Some 90 per cent of the tobacco grown in Europe is too poor a grade to be allowed in the EU and is sold on to eastern Europe and north Africa. Terry Wynn, MEP for Merseyside East says:

'There is no one... with the political will to do anything about it and until they do, things will remain as they are. Ninety per cent of the EU's tobacco has no market value, no one will pay for it because it's rubbish.'

Even the European Court of Auditors has denounced the practice.

'Almost all this [tobacco] is exported to countries where there are insufficient controls for content, which can hardly afford the additional built-in mortality and high health care costs.'

Last year a quarter of tobacco produced in Europe was sold in Hungary. Sales of this lethal substance are stimulated by subsidies to growers that last year came to \$1.26 billion.

This makes a mockery of the current anti-cancer campaign sponsored by EU Commissioner Padraig Flynn's health department.

Four years ago subsidies to tobacco exporters, as distinct from producers, were banned after the exposure of widespread corruption in the sector. The EU official responsible for administering the export subsidies committed suicide.

There are 200,000 tobacco producers in Europe, the vast majority small farmers in impoverished areas in Greece, Italy and Spain

The Goldsmith File

SIR JAMES GOLDSMITH, the notorious financial speculator, is again back in the news as leader of the Referendum Party which last weekend held its first and almost certainly its last conference. Goldsmith is threatening to stand against any MP who fails to declare for a referendum on the question of a single European currency.

He is spending £230m on the campaign — small change for this multi-billionaire. One of the candidates who will stand for his Referendum Party is that arch monetarist and one-time Rasputin at the Court of Lady Thatcher, Sir Alan Walters.

There is growing fear in Tory circles, expressed most vehemently by that literary giant Lord Archer, that Goldsmith's intervention could help lose the Tories the election.

He controls a number of organisations and 'think tanks' and is a close supporter of the 'euro-sceptic' wing of the Tory Party.

He was born in Paris in 1933, the son of a one-time Tory MP who made a fortune in the continental hotel trade. Asked why as a young boy he was reluctant to learn to read Goldsmith replied: 'Because when I grow up I'm going to be a millionaire and hire someone to read for me.'

Many would think that a fair sum-

mary of the man and his mores.

After school at Eton Goldsmith set about the task of acquiring serious money. After marriage to Isabel Patino — one of the richest women in the world, who died shortly afterwards — he began the aggressive selling of pharmaceutical products, but quickly turned his attentions to the more enticing possibilities created by the take-over wave which was starting to gather pace in the London of the 1960s.

He became friendly with Jim Slater, then rapidly emerging as the 'take-over King' of the decade. He joined Slater in speculation in property deals and as his financial empire soared he appeared to walk on water.

His growing political ambitions saw him befriend Edward Heath and offer money to the Tory Party. But he was knighted by none other than Labour premier Harold Wilson — his name on the famous 'lavender list' drawn up, it is reported, by Wilson's private secretary Marcia Williams. He was knighted for services to 'exports and ecology', a sure sign that the age of satire was already more than dead.

His interests in Britain extended to the press, where he launched a weekly magazine 'Now'. In Paris he explained famously to a 'Financial Times' correspondent:

'I think reporting in England is a load of filth, and that's why I'm going into the newspaper business there.'

Within two years 'Now' was no more.

Declaring Europe dead, Goldsmith then turned his tender eye to the US where he again embarked on a dizzy round of take-over moves which amassed him a further fortune, and brought him the reputation as one of the most ruthless 'financial engineers' [] and 'corporate raiders'.

He also had fortune, or something, on his side. Just before the Wall Street crash of 1987 he disposed of most of his assets and appeared shortly after the crash on the front cover of 'Time' magazine, billed as the 'lucky gambler'.

The only interest in Goldsmith lies in the fact that he represent a new breed of capitalists for whom the production of goods is of little or no importance. Their activities lie elsewhere — in the buying of companies that can be 'asset-stripped', that is broken up and sold at an often astronomical profit.

And he is certainly not averse to using his vast wealth to buy political influence.

Sterling woes

WHEN big business is not complaining about 'the plunging pound' it is griping about... 'the soaring pound'! Strange but true!

When the currency falls, the cry goes up about the danger of inflation and the shift of funds out of the City of London. But its 5 per cent rise since August has sent alarm bells ringing. British exports will lose their advantage in world markets, especially European markets, shout the industrialists.

Exporters know that it was the massive devaluation of sterling after the ignominious exit from the European exchange rate mechanism in September of 1992 that alone allowed exports to soar and create the conditions for a so-called 'boom' in Britain. But this boom is so precarious that despite the fact that sterling is still some 13 per cent below its level of 1992, those fighting for sales in an increasingly competitive world market already have the jitters.

And this is the economic system that Blair will manage on behalf of the ruling class!

Threaneedle

at cats playing leapfrog

PERSONAL COLUMN

the old days, speakers and propagandists concerned putting the case for Marxism used to be constantly on the lookout for telling facts and figures.

Each day you would read the newspapers scissored in hand, and clip out and save — and organise in the appropriate envelope or folder — any item that might provide a clinching argument in a forthcoming article.

We don't seem to operate in a systematic way these days, and more's the pity. One of the jobs of the new socialist party we are currently discussing is surely to give its members, particularly its young members, a thorough training in how to speak and write effectively, and how to carry out the necessary research to enable them to do so.

This, of course, will be part of a general task of educating members in socialist theory and the history of the working-class movement. This aspect of the new party's activities has not been much discussed so far, but I can't see the party making real progress unless such education, including training in how to do propaganda, is taken with the most seriousness from the start.

So, if I were taking a speaker's course this month, I would call attention to a useful article by Alan Foot in the *London Review of Books* (17 October). Here's an extract:

Last year, the remuneration committee at Bass decided that chairman Ian Prosser should get a 7 per cent rise, to bring him up to a respectable £593,000 a year.

The chairman of Bass's remuneration committee was Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy, chairman of Kingfisher, whose own remuneration committee decided to give him a £1.3m a year.

Kingfisher's committee was chaired by Sir Nigel Mobbs of Hugh Estates, whose own remuneration committee decided that, after a bad year, Sir Nigel was the only executive who deserved a rise at all — his pay went up to £312,000.

Slough Estates' remuneration committee was chaired by Sir Christopher Harding, chairman of BET, whose own remuneration committee brought him up to £40,000.

Sir Christopher is now chairman of the remuneration committee at GEC, which recently decided on a remuneration package for a new chief executive so large that it almost caused a shareholders' revolt and had to be renegotiated.

'They are, to be sure, only playing leapfrog.'

I would have Foot's article photocopied and distribute it to my students, advising them to master its contents, put it in a file labelled 'Fat Cats', and keep an eye open for further examples.

We have to learn to make the best possible use of bourgeois journals, and of writers with whom we may have massive political differences. Anything that helps to open people's eyes to what is really going on in this society — anything that makes their blood boil and advances their understanding — is grist to the mill.

Remembering Bob Pennington

ALTHOUGH it was 37 years since we last met, the death of Bob Pennington greatly saddened me — and stung my conscience.

Bill Hunter knew him a lot better and for a lot longer than I did, and there aren't more than a few odd brush strokes that I would wish to add to Bill's portrait (Workers Press, 12 October).

For many years I had a

photograph of Bob, taken at some Trafalgar Square demonstration in, I think, 1958. It shows him gazing straight at the camera with his handsome grin: slightly cheeky, slightly quizzical, slightly cynical. One hand, in a typical gesture, is lightly fingering the lapel of his well-cut overcoat.

Bob was quietly determined that, despite the voluntary poverty that went with the job of full-time Trotskyist organiser, he was going to be warmly and, not least, smartly dressed. So that particular overcoat, to my knowledge, was bought on tick and never paid for.

That was his 'spivvy' side, as it would have been called a decade or so earlier: his highly personal interpretation of the 'unwritten code' that for generations governed the attitude of the poor to smuggling, coining, poaching, evasion of tithes, and other activities which authority chose to call crimes, but which working people saw as getting back a bit of what had been grabbed from them.

Bob's rationale was that an occasional discreet appropriation to satisfy one political activist's basic needs was justified as an instalment of the future expropriation of the expropriators that the working class as a whole would carry out.

If in his personal life he could sometimes be a bit of a rogue, he was never less than a charming one. In conversation and on public platforms alike, he had the gift of the gab; his silver-tongued speeches could sway most gatherings.

And he could write remarkably well. He had the makings, and more, of a brilliant socialist reporter. By far the best reporting of the 1958 Notting Hill white riots, and of the mischievous part played in them by Mosleyite fascists, was published in *The Newsletter* under his byline, and I'm sure it was those articles more than anything else that brought the Special Branch down on us with an absurd threat of prosecution for 'seditious libel'.

Bob had energy, stamina and an infectious fighting spirit. And he had courage.

Sitting working in the next room with the door open, I saw and heard one day a noisy quarrel between Bob and Gerry Healy, who even then had the notion that physical violence was an appropriate way to convince comrades who persisted in disagreeing with him.

At one point Healy raised his fist, and Bob warned: 'If you lay a finger on me, Gerry, I'll drop you.' Healy backed off instantly; but it must have taken courage to stand up to him.

This incident, as closely as I can date it, took place in the first half of 1959. I don't know whether Bob's later break with the Socialist Labour League, which Bill mentions, was solely over political differences, or whether it was partly due to his antipathy to Healy and Healy's methods. There was no love lost between them, certainly.

Around 1985 I heard through a friend of a friend that Bob had read something I'd written and thought that, politically speaking, I hadn't done a bad job. This comment touched me, and I meant to write and thank him, but never did. That is a dereliction I regret.

A word of thanks

I'M VERY grateful for the 'get well' cards and letters that readers sent during my recent spell in hospital and since, and am sorry for not yet having been able to answer them all.

Peter Fryer

GERMANY

Deutsche Bank in ratings war

AMERICAN bankers 'want to open the German market with a crowbar', says Walter Dieck, who runs the Bayerische Handelsbank. And they are not scared to 'hit below the belt' to get what they want, the indignant Bavarian banker adds.

BY BOB ARCHER

These dignified comments were made in his capacity as president of the Association of German Mortgage Banks. He was a little flustered because analysts at the (American) investment bank, Salomon Brothers, had hinted that the mighty Deutsche Bank may not be able to hang on to a triple-A rating.

And very soon Moody's Investment Services, the US ratings agency, confirmed that they were considering taking away this coveted bill of financial health.

The question mark over Deutsche Bank arose because of well-publicised problems last month at a British firm they own, Morgan Grenfell.

Morgan is an integrated investment house, a kind of

financial conglomerate. One part of the company, for example, organises unit trusts to channel investments from individual savers and firms' pension schemes into hopefully safe and profitable fields of investment.

A man called Peter Young was particularly successful in attracting investors' money into the European Growth Fund, the Europa Trust and the European Capital Growth Fund.

Unfortunately it turns out he had circumvented some basic rules which safeguard investors' cash. Investment managers like him are not meant to invest more than 10 per cent of what they control in any one company. Nor is it considered safe for them to hold

more than 10 per cent of the stock of any particular company they invest in.

Peter Young lined up a number of Scandinavian technology companies and invested in them heavily. It is now claimed he set up a number of front companies to recycle extra money into these companies. Developing new technology is a very expensive area where the risk of getting nothing for your money is very high.

Connection

This came to light when American investigators into the Mafia traced a connection between Morgan Grenfell, a London broker called Fiba Nordic Securities and a firm called Solv-Ex.

Fiba was involved in many of Peter Young's investment activities. Then British regulatory authorities started to worry about how 38-year-old Young could afford to buy outright a spacious house in the home counties.

Deutsche Bank moved quickly to provide £200 million to re-imburse investors who may have lost out from all this. Understandably, this only went some way to reassure investors, particularly firms who allowed Morgan Grenfell to run their pension schemes.

Deutsche Bank have assured investors any losses will be covered. It is a decisive move which was greeted with some relief in the British press.

Now US financial interests have unsportingly kneed Deutsche Bank in the groin, no doubt hoping to spread the view that the Bank is in severe difficulties.

The background to this is that Deutsche Bank recently moved into the City amid great fanfares in order to participate in the lucrative global finance market. They bought up finance houses and poached whole teams of dealers from other banks.

They wanted world-class players. They may be regretting it.

In the shadow of the Euro

WHATEVER the British government decides about European money union, a lot of major financial deals are going to involve the new currency — the Euro — from the word go.

Pension Fund managers and other investors in Britain and across Europe cannily bought German government bonds over the years. Safe as houses, you can hear them telling themselves on the train home to the stockbroker belt and Dutch, French, Danish etc. equivalents.

The German government promised that only new bonds issued after January 1999 would be denominated in the new Euro. The old bonds would be quoted in Deutschmarks as always.

But German bankers don't want a messy, two-tier finance market. They have put pressure on the government to switch all bonds from marks to Euros.

Big investors in Britain could find themselves with a very strong commitment to the success of the Euro and European monetary union simply because overnight large investments of theirs are denominated in the new Euro.

Undoubtedly this will increase the tensions about European union which are currently ravaging the British ruling class.

East German engineering flagship collapses

ATTEMPTS to save SKET, the former east German engineering flagship which went into administration last week, have been thrown into further confusion after revelations that the court-appointed administrator is himself under court investigation for alleged fraud.

Mr Wolfgang Wutzke, a Bremen lawyer, is alleged to have been responsible for the illegal disposal of toxic waste while he was acting as SKET administrator.

Company workers and management have joined forces in trying to overturn his appointment as administrator.

Under the former Stalinist regime SKET employed 30,000 workers. Its labour force is now down to some 1,500. Discussions about saving what is left of the company are currently underway in Brussels. The plan is

to break up the company into several units, further reduce the labour force, and negotiate an EU subsidy package.

The collapse of SKET is indicative of the fate of industry throughout eastern Germany and particularly in Sachsen-Anhalt. Once an industrial powerhouse it is now one of the states hit hardest by the collapse of the east German economy.

Sachsen-Anhalt was home to many of the most powerful firms in the former east Germany, centre of the chemicals industry, one of the main bases for the

German workers sick — pay struggle to escalate

Recent budget cuts have removed the legal obligation on employers to continue paying workers a full average wage while they are absent due to illness.

Indignant right-wing media commentators have been pointing out that, because overtime is taken into account when calculating sick pay, you can get more for a week on the sick than you take home for a flat week actually working. Shocking!

Most trade unionists don't rely on what the law says about sick pay. They have legally-binding contracts which state that they get 100 per cent sick pay anyway.

But many engineering employers are unilaterally cutting sick-pay as 80 per cent of average pay. Union lawyers say this is quite illegal. It is certainly extremely provocative.

In the early part of October, the union arranged for workforces to ask employers if they would stand by the sick-pay arrangements. They also organised petitions and work-place meetings on the question.

Then they moved to 'days of unrest' in the workplaces and on the streets, building up to symbolic pickets on 24 October to commemorate the strike in Schleswig Holstein which established full sick pay forty years ago and big rallies in the northern coastal region.

Regional action will take place over five days, starting on 4 November in Bavaria, followed by Baden-Wuerttemberg, Franconia and Saxony, Brandenburg and the Ruhr, and finally Lower Saxony and the coastal region on 8 November. In a third phase, the DGB (German TUC) Congress on 14 November will focus work for a national day of action by all unions on 16 November.

In fact union members have already organised a day of action by as many as 200,000 engineering workers protesting against the cut in sick pay.

engineering sector and amongst the most important centres for the mining of brown coal.

Since German unification all these sectors have suffered severely. Some 80 per cent of engineering jobs have gone since 1991 as companies have been closed or have cut back their labour forces.

Registered

The area now has the highest unemployment rate of all the east German states. In September almost one in five of the state's labour force was registered as unemployed.

The average level of income in the region is about half that of west Germany and some 3 per cent below that of east Germany as a whole. The population is falling as people have migrated

westwards and the birth rate has dropped. Since unification Sachsen-Anhalt has lost some 5 per cent of its population.

Attempts at 'restructuring' have been thwarted by powerful economic interests in western Germany who are determined that there will be no building of competitors in the east. This is held to be largely responsible for the crisis at SKET.

● GERMAN Chancellor Helmut Kohl has admitted for the first time that his earlier promise to halve unemployment by the year 2000 will not be met. Speaking last week at the annual congress of the Christian Democratic Union he said that he would be happy if unemployment fell to two thirds of its current level by the end of the decade.

The need for a new socialist party

In the run-up to the 'new party' conference on 23 November, we will publish your contributions of 1,000 to 1,500 words. If you wish to take the opportunity to publish in this series, please book your space. Please contact the Editorial Board by letter, fax or e-mail — for details see back page.

On democratic centralism and the Fourth International

By Simon Pirani
Workers Revolutionary Party

I WRITE about questions on 'democratic centralism' and the Fourth International raised by Cliff Slaughter in Workers Press, 5 October.

'DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM'

IN AN earlier letter, I tried to answer a comrade's question about whether 'democratic centralism' would be an organisational principle for the new grouping the WRP proposes to form in November.

Cliff didn't like my warnings against 'top down' parodies of Stalin's 'Bolshevism'.

For him, centralism is 'a co-ordinated and disciplined activity of members and organisations of the party based on a strategy arrived at on the basis of Marxist theory.'

That is abstract. It assumes we have 'the party' and 'a strategy' based on Marxist theory. But these are precisely what we do NOT have.

It is not easy to sum up what a 'party' is, but surely it is a social class, or a section of one, united by strategic political goals.

The WRP is mis-named; it is clearly not a party in that sense. The new organisation formed in November will not be either.

The Bolshevik party WAS a party — a section of the working class in the Russian empire. When examining its experience, we should remember that the new grouping is likely to consist of individuals within workers' organisations, rather than the organisations themselves — if anything, more analogous to the Russian socialist groups of the 1890s than to the post-1905 party in which the idea of 'democratic centralism' took shape.

Cliff's definition is irrelevant to our present level. Now, we need looser organisation.

Through it, we will hopefully merge with workers' organisations which will be capable — in a way that we are not — of 'co-ordinated and disciplined activity'.

As for a 'strategy based on Marxism', that also has far to go. Our understanding of modern-day imperialism, and our answers to the questions posed by the collapse of Stalinism, are no more than sketchy outlines.

Furthermore, a party's 'strategy' is surely expressed in its programme —

which Cliff does not mention. This has been a serious omission not only from his article but from the whole 'new party' discussion.

The Russian Marxists had by 1898 managed to formulate a programme which served them well right up to 1917. Where is OUR discussion on programme? Where is the first draft of a draft?

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Cliff objected to my argument that the WRP launched into the 'new party' discussion without clarifying its relationship to previous work to rebuild the Fourth International.

He says: 'the new party the working class needs must be international and internationalist'.

This is so general as to be meaningless. Like Cliff, I have been convinced of the need for such a party for a long time. That is why, like him, I consider myself to be part of the FI, and why I long thought that the struggle for internationalism was conducted ONLY through the FI. Does that still apply?

Cliff answers: 'The definitive reckoning with that experience (of the collapse of Stalinism and the bankruptcy of social democracy) is neither more nor less than the necessity expressed in the programme of the FI — it is necessary to raise the banner of the world socialist revolution and form a party around it.'

But the 1938 programme

of the FI did NOT say that. It specified that the task was NOT to raise a banner. That had already been done in the long struggle against Stalinism. 'The FI has no need of being "proclaimed", the programme boomed at its 'sceptical' opponents. 'It exists and fights.' Hence the real, refreshing, practical problem that Cliff, myself and others face now.

We spent our lives fighting NOT for an internationalist party in general, but for the FI that 'exists and fights' in particular.

We saw ourselves as 'defenders' of the 1938 programme. We fought against those who wanted to water it down in the face of Stalinist pressure.

In 1990, when the Stalinist monolith was already beginning to crack, we formed the Workers International to Rebuild the FI, the name of which summed up what we saw as our strategic task.

Then history took a big turn. The Stalinist monolith, the main enemy against which the FI fought, disintegrated. New forces were unleashed, although they did not come directly to the FI in the way we thought they might.

ASYLUM SEEKER FACES IMPRISONMENT IN GHANA

Jackie Vance met Kwame Adofo Sampong

KWAME Adofo Sampong, from Ghana in west Africa, is a socialist and one of three leading members of the African Liberation Support Campaign whose deportation procedures have been speeded up by the British state.

The Tories are trying to remove those asylum seekers who are political activists in preparation for an onslaught on all refugees and migrants.

His appeal against refusal of asylum rights in Britain was heard by an immigration adjudicator this week. If he is deported to Ghana he faces certain imprisonment by a regime he has consistently opposed for its attacks on the Ghanaian workers and peasants.

Since his school days Kwame has been a radical political activist challenging the sell-out of his country to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

He was a member of the Student Movement for African Unity and the Pan-African Youth Movement. He became a leading activist among the grassroots forces in the People's Defence Committees that engaged in various actions of popular resistance to the imposition of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).

The Jerry Rawlings regime has been shored up with IMF money on condition that the schools and hospitals are run down and thousands are left jobless and impoverished. The gold and diamond mines have been sold to private owners and the unchecked mining is causing great environmental damage.

In 1983 Kwame was sent by the Ghanaian regime to the Soviet Union to study finance and credit at the National Institute of Economic Planning at Odessa. After finishing there in 1988 he came to Britain because he feared that if he returned to Ghana he would be imprisoned and possibly executed.

At that time the SAPs were being implemented with vicious repression against all who opposed them. Most of Kwame's political comrades were in exile and he still does not know what happened to many who disappeared.

He is on the steering committee of the Kwame Nkrumah Convention People's Party (KNCP) which is banned in Ghana. It is an anti-imperialist party campaigning for revolutionary pan-Africanism and socialism. Because it is illegal the KNCP has to organise secretly but has members in other African countries and in Europe.

'Our main activities, says Kwame, 'are publicising the

disastrous effects of the re-colonisation of Africa and organising the clandestine sending of material to Ghana'.

Kwame's other political involvement in Britain includes being organising secretary of the Ghanakwambo Refugees and Migrants Community Action Group and being on the management committee of the Lam-beth Refugee Resource and Development Centre and the Brixton Community Law Centre.

Since coming to Britain he has been studying for the Chartered Institute of Management Accounting and is scheduled to complete the course in 1997.

Despite the record of the Rawlings' regime in imprisoning without trial anyone with left-wing political views Ghana is on the Tories' 'white-list' of countries and there is now a 100 per cent refusal rate for asylum seekers from there.

The Pan-African Freedom Fighters' Asylum Campaign has been started to stop the deportation of Kwame Sampong and his comrades.

It will be a political campaign explaining that the repressive African regimes are being shored up by the western powers who are dictating the economic policies and the ensuing devastation.

For information on the campaign telephone: 0171 924 9033.

In the spirit of the Communist Manifesto

By Bob Myers
Workers Revolutionary Party

IN THE 'Communist Manifesto' Marx wrote: 'The communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.'

HOW many times in the post-war period have you explained to new readers the modern relevance of the *Manifesto* with the exception of the above passage?

But is the spirit of the *Manifesto* wrong?

Of course much has changed since 1847. European colonial plunder allowed the construction of social democratic parties as part of capital's overall system of social control.

The inability of the Russian revolutionaries to go beyond the political revolution along the path of the social revolution, the elimination, not just of the capitalists, but of capital's domination of people, led to the development of a global counter-revolutionary 'communist' party.

So it seemed for many years that it was entirely necessary for the communists to organise separately from the 'mass' Stalinist and reformist parties. These were not parties of the working class; in no sense did they express the interests of workers, either in their immediate or long-term needs and above all they were not under the control of workers.

Things are now changing rapidly. The vast apparatus of social control organised from Moscow has collapsed. Immediately the social democratic 'reformists' who for a long time have been for 'un-reform' were left naked as their old left cover evapo-

So where does that leave the FI? Which aspects of its long struggle, of its programme, do we need to maintain or develop? Which need to be chucked out?

Does Cliff imagine that there has been sufficient discussion of these issues in the WRP?

It is not good enough to say, as comrade Geoff Pilling does, that the WRP is 'a barrier', and move on to next business, so to speak. That is frivolous.

Cliff says, 'It is not a matter only of words, names'. Of course not. But it IS a matter of the continuity of Marxism, which we insisted lived through the FI, in whatever distorted and upside-down forms.

When I wrote in my earlier letter that we had made little progress in rebuilding the FI, I had in mind, particularly, progress in developing an international discussion on these issues.

Cliff says, we had a campaign on Bosnia. Yes, it was vital.

But we needed theoretical discussion alongside, and that was sadly lacking. He says we agreed a resolution at a congress — that is of little consequence.

As a small group of experienced comrades in Britain, relatively free of constraints of state terror and extreme poverty facing most revolutionaries, we should have done more to facilitate international discussion. We should have thought more, listened more to comrades internationally, and published more. Let's do so now.

PS It is difficult to answer Charlie Pottins' ludicrous fabrication in Workers Press, 12 October, that for 'years' I have been 'protesting any de-traction from "vanguardism".'

Like Cliff Slaughter's allegation that I was 'sceptical' about 'revolutionary practice' in Bosnia, Charlie's fairy tale is told without its author feeling any obligation to back it up with any reference to anything I did, wrote or said.

Even bourgeois writers occasionally try to rustle up a little evidence to underpin their fanciful assertions. Don't these comrades think they need to bother? Are these the methods of 'discussion' they propose for the new organisation?

ism in the Fourth International? There are certainly people inside and outside the WRP who conclude that our decision to 'wind up' the WRP is an admission that the ideas we held are being 'wound up'. They are very wrong.

We are going into this new emerging movement with our history - the theoretical and practical fight for a Marxist understanding of the world we live in, which in this century could only be developed through opposition to Stalinism.

We are 'winding up' the barriers that exist between our ideas and actions and the new movement in the class.

Dockers, Reclaim the Streets' supporters and others all bring into the movement their own pasts. Our work inside the Marxist movement - for a development of theory, particularly in relation to the break-up of Stalinism, in the conception of rebuilding international revolutionary leadership through the rebuilding of the workers' movement by the class itself and against sectarian dogma - has to strengthen the new movement not be some recruiting manifesto for a group outside of it.

WRP members will work in the movement as the *Communist Manifesto* outlines, with all the modern implications.

'The communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only:

1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of different countries they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality;

2. In the various stages of development which the struggles of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.'

LEBED STALKS YELTSIN

THE crisis in Russia has entered a new stage as attempts by the dying Yeltsin to head off a challenge from General Lebed collide with a forthcoming general strike.

BY DANIEL ROBERTSON

ration for General Pinochet's fascist dictatorship in Chile.

Not surprisingly 'leftist' groups have remained suspicious of his overtures, as he is seen as working to his own agenda. Recently he has adopted a more favourable attitude towards capitalist reforms, but tinged with a strongly anti-Western nationalism. (He has threatened a third world war if NATO moves into Eastern Europe).

His most recent moves have been to join Yeltsin as security chief, only to be removed by rivals suspicious of his ambitions.

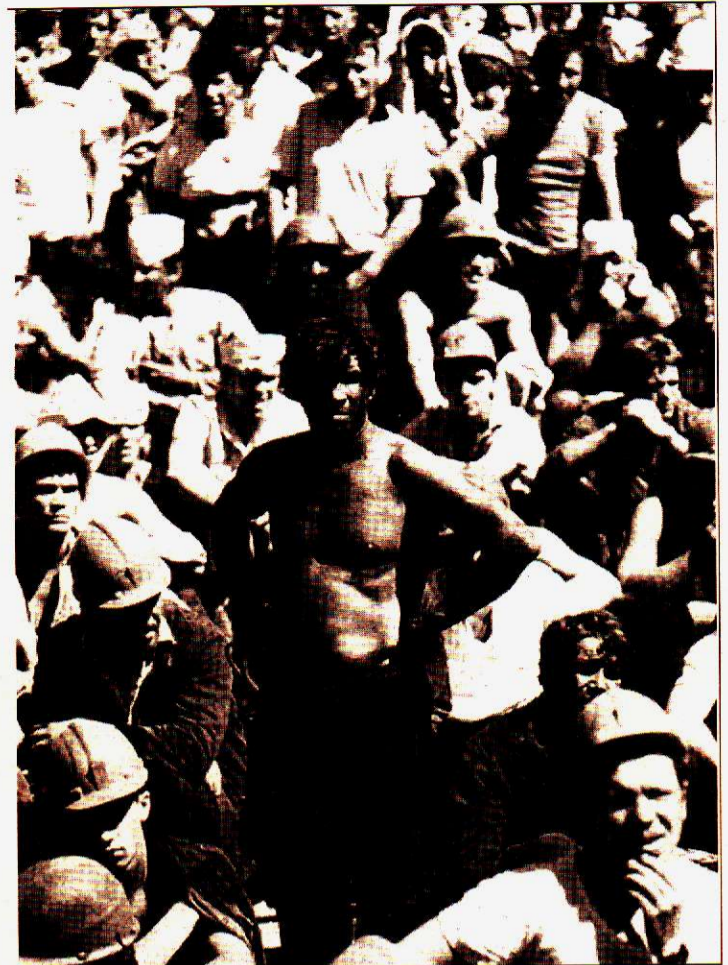
He now threatens to lead a campaign against corruption and in support of Russia's increasingly rebellious soldiers, many of whom have not been paid for months despite repeated promises from Yeltsin.

The situation in the Russian armed forces is critical, with the possibility of disintegration into warlord-led rival armies, perhaps leading to a Yugoslavia situation. But these armies, unlike those of Serbia and Croatia are armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons.

Crime, suicide, and black market sale of weapons are rife. One soldier is quoted as saying: 'They treat us like so much discarded trash here. We joined the army to defend Russia but now find that we are defenceless ourselves. If they don't let me go, I'll grab a rifle and try to kill as many officers as I can'.

The retreat from Chechnya has had an impact reminiscent of World War I, with Lebed getting the credit for ending the war. Any attempt to relaunch the war now that Lebed has been removed from power will play into his hands.

Lebed is playing a clever game.



Striking Russian miners 1989 — how will Lebed deal with them?



Russian troops at Croatian border

Some thoughts of Alexander Lebed:

'I'm not one to praise Pinochet... but he saved the state from total collapse... The loudmouths were forced, and forced in a brutal manner, to shut their mouths.'

'First we act, then we explain'

'He who shoots first laughs last.'

'I was a born winner. Sooner or later, victory will be mine.'

The social crisis in Russia is approaching an explosive situation and he hopes to pick up the pieces. But a new force is coming onto the stage.

Starting on 5 November strikes have been called across Russia. Miners, whose pay is three to six months in arrears, will be joined by other workers and middle class groups such as scientists.

They have also received no pay for months and have seen their laboratories fall into disuse. This movement will act as a focus for the growing unrest already spreading across the country in the form of waves of actions. Strikes will continue until back wages have been paid. This is a demand that the Russian state can clearly not concede, and which thus has a revolutionary character.

How will Lebed deal with striking workers? It seems likely that he may try to divert them by offering support, much as he has to the mutinous army, only to use it as a platform to promote himself as the saviour that can defend Russian workers.

However he has no grassroots working-class organisations under his control. To achieve this he may have to ally with the Stalinists who still have strong working class support.

Or, given their hostility, will he find other forces to ally with? Or will he use the army to impose his rule?

The death of Yeltsin would give him the chance to take power through the ballot box. Whatever his moves the Russian working class are faced with great dangers.

Some Western governments have shown sympathy for Lebed, notwithstanding Western media

concerns. Kohl, during a recently leaked confidential discussion with Yeltsin, warned him sharply not to antagonise Lebed, who is seen as the only man who can restore discipline in the Russian army, and make Russia 'safe for Capitalism'.

Clearly Yeltsin was not inclined to accept this advice, which reminds one of German opportunist fishing in Croatian politics.

The political consequences of restoring capitalism to Russia have thrown many of the old views of the role of Stalinism into chaos. Forces that were previously described as defending socialised property relations in their own way are now becoming openly fascist even though there is a direct continuity with the past.

Lebed comes forward as a strong man with resonances to Stalin — but presiding over the rottenest form of Capitalism. There could be no clearer exposure of what Stalinism was always really about — the defence of bureaucratic power and privilege under a cloak of nationalism, tinged with some left-sounding rhetoric for credibility. The entry of the Russian working class into the picture will open up great possibilities for a settling of accounts. The sharpest possible fight to expose the true history and nature of Stalinism in that country will be critical in aiding the Russian working class in reconstructing its strength and ignoring the siren calls of demagogues like Lebed.

[A large collection of documents and updated news on Lebed can be found on the internet at <http://www.netaxs.com/~bluejack/lebed/> which charmingly describes itself as the Lebed Fan Club page.]

Central

He was formerly (1990) a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but has failed to find a way of working with Zyuganov's 'reformed' Communist group and indeed played a central role in keeping him out of power during the Presidential elections.

For a brief period early this year he joined Popular Power, led by former USSR Prime Minister Ryzhkov.

He has described himself as favouring a left, left-centrist and patriotic grouping, a claim that sits strangely with his open admira-

The lectures to be given by Professor Istvan Meszaros

are important to all socialists.

We are sorry that South Place Ethical Society, the organisers, did not realise the London Support Group for the Liverpool dockers is held each week on a Thursday.

The first of the present series on his book

The Power of Ideology

will take place

on Thursday 31 October at 7 pm

in the library of Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest underground Holborn)

Others in the series will be on Thursdays 7, 21 and 28 November.

French workers erupt again

A THIRD of all public employees in France struck work on Thursday 17 October to defend jobs, public services and purchasing power.

A demonstration of 30,000 workers surged through Paris, and there were other massive marches in Marseilles, Toulouse, Rennes, Nantes, Caen, Bordeaux and many other cities.

Workers in 26 towns across the country fielded demonstrations with 2,000 or more participants.

The left-wing daily 'Liberation' compared the 24-hour action favourably with the run-up to last December's massive social movement against budget cuts and privatisations.

Public support for the action remains high. Many French people outside the public sector are starting to see the public service movement as a focus of their own discontent with the government and their employers.

The day of action was

organised jointly by all the major union confederations: CGT, FO, CFTD, UNSA, FSU, CFTC and CGC.

The government of Jacques Chirac had hoped that the big movement of last December had run its course, so that they could move in with the big public-sector cuts and privatisations they must carry out.

Criteria

In order to meet the criteria to join in European Monetary Union, the French government has to slash its budget deficit and the 'social wage' enjoyed by workers.

But instead of diminishing, the movement seems to be reviving and drawing in the support of more and more of those affected by various aspects of the structural crisis of capitalism.

The Paris demonstration was dominated by the CGT union, linked to the French Communist Party. The Socialist-Party affili-

ated Force Ouvriere union largely turned its back on the march.

Many independent groups of 'SUD (Solidarity, Unity, Democracy) unionists who have left the CFDT union over the last few years marched under their own banners.

Nicole Notat, secretary general of the CFDT, was once again attacked by angry demonstrators at the end of the march.

She had just left the protection of her own CFDT heavies, and CGT stewards had to rush her to a waiting car as furious activists hurled rubbish and abuse at her. One demonstrator nearly landed a blow on Notat.

The windscreen of the car behind hers was smashed as beer-cans and plastic water-bottles flew.

In Marseille CGT and FO representatives marched under the same banner for the first time since the two unions split in 1947. In the same city, two hundred doctors used an 'operation snail' to

block the main road into the city.

At Caen, redundancy-threatened Moulinox staff joined the public sector march. In Lille, one placard read: 'I voted for Chirac but he's knocked me flat'.

Anger

Louis Viannet, secretary general of the CGT, said 'Today is an expression of growing anger'. He hoped the campaign would lead to large-scale strike action in the month of November.

Apparently reading from the same score, FO leader Marc Blondel said: 'today will be a decisive step towards wider action'.

It is clear that Chirac cannot back down from the cuts but neither can the trade union leaders demobilise the growing opposition to them in the working class.

Indeed, the movement is growing and will undoubtedly link up with similar movements against the effects of the convergence criteria in Italy, Spain and Germany.

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