

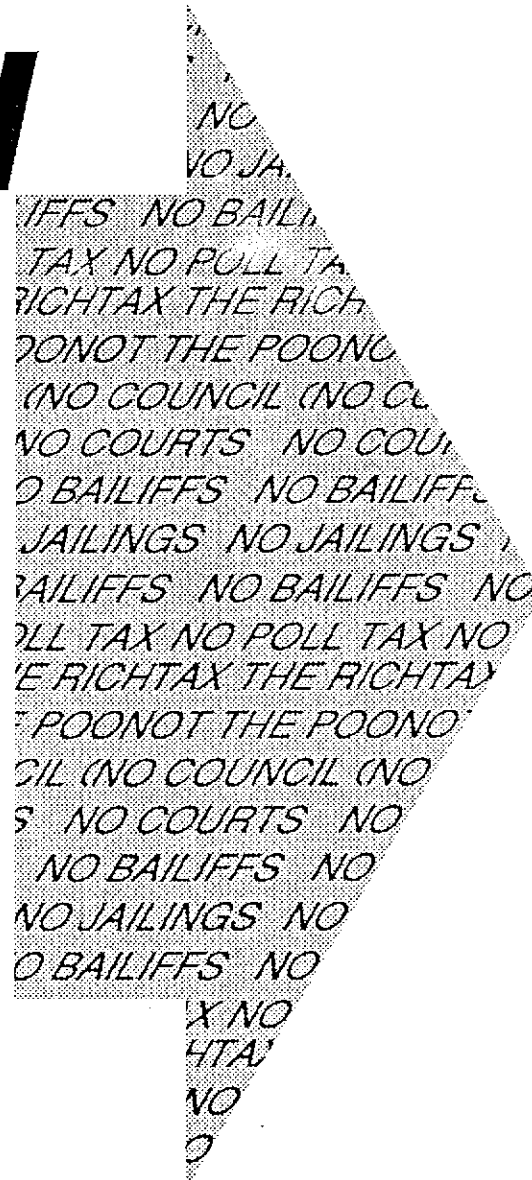
VOICER SOCIALIST

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**FINISH
THE
POLL
TAX
NOW**



**TAX
THE
RICH
NOT
THE
POOR**

THE BEGINNING OF A GREAT VICTORY

THE TORY Government has been compelled to withdraw the Poll Tax. It has been compelled to do so by the great upsurge of protests that have swept the country over the last two years

Certainly, the withdrawal has not resulted from the activities of the Labour Party leaders or of the TUC. They have actively opposed the movements against the Poll Tax. Even now, they are expelling and disciplining Labour councillors who attempted to fight it (see the article on Lambeth). It was only in the past few weeks, after the revolt in the Tory ranks, that Labour leaders have made an 'unequivocal' statement that they stood for its repeal. Neil Kinnock on 14 March, after the Government was compelled into a retreat, wrote to Major, offering to co-operate in immediate legislation to abolish the tax. However, **he has certainly not cooperated with those who have fought to abolish it.**

One of the biggest post war demonstrations, that of March 31 last year, took place against the expressed wishes of these Labour leaders. It is the mass protests which have brought the Tory crisis and their retreat. That is the first lesson from the experience of the Poll Tax; that the force which can move things in favour of the suffering sections of society is the movement of the masses. That is what those anti-Poll Tax campaigners harnessed who consistently went out onto the streets, against the courts, the bailiffs, the jailings, the councils and their cuts in jobs and services.

While the Tory government has been compelled to make a U-turn and Tory ministers made to eat their own words, the fight is not over. Our feet are planted in a better position for hitting back, but what the Poll Tax was meant to do is still being carried out. And, in fact, the Tories are using parliamentary procedure to take two years for the change. Meanwhile, **we cannot allow the attacks on people who can't pay; the attacks by courts, councils and bailiffs and the loss of jobs and services to go on unchallenged.**

The Poll Tax was meant to shift the burden for payment of local government and its services from the shoulders of the rich and make the working class and poorer sections pay more. It was meant to compel Councils to cut jobs and expenditure on education, housing, transport etc.

This 'other' aspect of the Poll Tax is still alive and kicking. Adult education is being strangled in many parts of the country, the Youth Service is being decimated and Social Services are being cut to ribbons. It is wrong

of the anti-Poll Tax movement to just say "we have won". It was also wrong to say that the demonstration on 23 March was simply "a victory parade" - at the very time when all these services are being torn apart by the Poll Tax legislation. How can it be a "victory" per se when; *"low paid income tax payers will be required to fork out billions of pounds in order to lubricate the poll tax's replacement"* ("Observer" 17 March) as VAT increases to 17.5%.

What we can say is that our successes give us a greater chance of unity and of forcing from the Government the money to run our services properly.

The 'new' taxation system is not going to fundamentally change the burden of payment unless the mass movement continues to

"Forty years ago, income tax was levied only on those of average earnings or above. Today, workers on barely one third of average earnings are having to pay tax and national insurance at a starting rate of 34%."

["Observer" - 17 March]

defend the great number of the poorer sections of the population and compels the Government to place the taxation on the extremely rich property owners and businesses.

This really is the great issue - make the rich pay or as sections of the London demonstration said: "Tax the rich - not the poor."

MAKE the rich pay! Now that's a fine phrase that will set whiskey tumblers in the clubs of London shaking and cause the golf clubs to be waved in anger. Under Thatcher, those that had money thought they deserved even more of it at the expense of those that had nothing.

The yuppies and the fast buck business types just carry on as if nothing has changed in Britain. But the more thoughtful Tories are forced to consider how they can make enough adjustments to keep in office. Not only get a chance at the next election but allow themselves the luxury of deciding when

it should be. The Poll Tax cannot continue if they want to contain the movement of ordinary workers against it.

Alongside the anger against the high payments and injustice of the Poll Tax are the council workers and communities moving in defence of jobs.

Some of the leaflets handed out on the London march dealt with the question of the distribution of wealth. One from 'Middlesbrough Against the Poll Tax' said that our minimal demands should be that any new tax : *"...is a tax on wealth, not on people. And that there's an amnesty for all non-payers and Poll Tax prisoners. Until these two demands are satisfied the watchwords must remain DON'T PAY and DON'T CO-OPERATE."*

The fact that the Poll Tax is going to be repealed means there is going to be chaos in the councils and a head on collision against the imposition of the Poll Tax for another two years. The fact that mass campaigning achieves things is a lesson that will not have been lost on thousands upon thousands of workers who have fought the Poll Tax.

Explosions against Tory rule become more likely over the next few months. In April and May many actions against cuts in council services and jobs are being planned.

In some areas the Anti-Poll Tax movement may go into a lull, if councils decide to relax the use of the courts and bailiffs in the run up to the local elections in May. But whether or not this happens the groups should continue to build outwards linking with the struggle against the Poll Tax cuts in services and jobs.

As the North West Anti-Poll Tax Forum says: *"What we have achieved so far has only come about by mass resistance, non-payment and defending all services. We must not let the Government off the hook, continue the pressure and continue the mobilisations until the Poll Tax is truly abolished and not replaced with a Poll Tax mark 2."*

**TAX THE RICH
NOT THE POOR!**

NO POLL TAX! - NO CUTS!

REPEAL THE POLL TAX NOW!

NORTH WEST FORUM PERSPECTIVE

The following is the text of a leaflet distributed to the 23 March anti-Poll Tax demonstration in London by the North West Anti-Poll Tax Forum. The Forum is made up of anti-Poll Tax groups from the Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire area working inside and outside of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation. The leaflet received a very good response on the national demonstration from groups looking for a perspective to carry on the struggle.

AFTER TWELVE months of mass resistance against the Poll Tax in England and Wales, and two years in Scotland, the people of Britain have seen off Mrs Thatcher and forced the Government to bury the Poll Tax and introduce 'son' of Poll Tax.

The North West Anti-Poll Tax Forum says; don't be fooled - we have only won the first round. The Tories are in turmoil and, as when Thatcher was forced to resign, we now have to go on the offensive to take advantage of their disarray.

The Tory Government proposes:

To increase VAT by 2.5% and reduce some bills by £140 for next year's Poll Tax.

To replace the Poll Tax with a new tax based on property values and the number of individuals in each household.

To delay changes until 1993/1994.

We say:

- Increasing VAT will hit the poorest sections of the communities far harder than the rich. Those on full Poll Tax rebate, that is 80% reduction, will only get £28 reduction in their bills. They will have to pay much more than £28 per year in increased VAT, they will be even worse off than they were under Poll Tax mark 1.

Less than 50% of eligible charge payers will receive the full £140 reduction because many are on Poll Tax transitional relief or full/part rebate.

For example in Rochdale 35,000 people who are on benefit will get only £28 off this year's bill, 80,000 will only get £35 because of transitional relief.

People living in Local Authority areas who receive proportionally lower government grants, such as Lambeth, Edinburgh and Bristol, will still be faced with extremely high bills.

The £140 is only a one off subsidy as an attempt to buy time for the government and is designed to deflate the Anti-Poll Tax movement and the hostility towards the government.

- Will this new tax be based mainly on property values or the number of adults in each household? The government has not come clean ...

If the burden falls on the number of adults in each household rather than the value of the property then nothing has really changed. For example a man in a mansion could still be paying a lot less than a family in a council house.

Therefore the fight is still on. Not only for existing non payers but also to force the government to introduce a new tax based on the ability to pay and to force those that are rich (wealthy individuals and big business) to pay more for local public services.

What we have achieved so far has only come about by mass resistance, non-payment and defending all services. We must not let the Government off the hook, continue the pressure and continue the mobilisations until the Poll Tax is truly abolished and not replaced with a Poll tax mark 2.

- Heseltine said that the new tax would, "enhance the quality of services and put people first." But no extra money has been ear-marked for funding local services. They are being decimated: Derbyshire County Council is cutting £1 million from the Fire Service alone, Salford Council is axing libraries and community centres, Lambeth are imposing £40 million worth of cuts, because of which eight out of ten Old Peoples' Homes may close. The new proposals change nothing, the Tory cuts are literally killing people, the fight against this aspect of the Poll Tax must go on.

In two years of mobilisation we have achieved far more than twelve years of parliamentary wind baggery which succeeded in changing nothing.

It is all very well for the Labour or Trade Union leadership to say now that the Poll Tax should never have been implemented but not once have they assisted the struggle against it. Contrary to its roots of struggle in the working class it has attempted to paralyse the Anti-Poll Tax movement and has willingly collaborated with the Tories.

For example countless Labour authorities are taking people through the courts using bailiffs and attempting to jail people. They are also suspending Labour Councillors who are attempting to fight the Poll Tax.

On Sunday 17 March Joan Twelves, the leader of Lambeth Council, revealed that she and fellow councillors had been threatened by Brian Gould with expulsion from the Labour Party unless they paid their Poll Tax, set a budget and made cuts in accordance with Tory guidelines. Twelves has now paid the Poll Tax but the witch-hunt against those not paying and opposing the cuts is continuing in the press and from the Labour leadership. We ask the readers of this leaflet to support the campaign in Lambeth against the witch-hunt. Stop the Labour leadership making Tory cuts and supporting Tory smears.

WHAT NOW?

The fight against 'son' of Poll Tax must continue. Unless the campaign is stepped up the Tories will continue the attacks on non-payers and council services, and change the Poll Tax in name only.

The Labour and Trade Union movement must unite with the anti-Poll Tax and anti-cuts struggles.

NORTHERN ANTI-POLL TAX FORUM
YORK UNIVERSITY
GOODRICKE COLLEGE
SUNDAY 28TH APRIL
12.00am - 5.00pm
ADMISSION
£1(waged)
50p(unwaged)
FOR DETAILS RING:
0904 634952

STOP THE WITCH HUNTS STOP THE CUTS

DAVE McINTYRE Lambeth Council Worker

LAMBETH COUNCIL have decided to make £40 million worth of cuts in council services and jobs. These cuts will mean closing 8 out of 11 old people's homes, 6 out of 9 childrens homes, consortiumizing all the homes for people with learning difficulties, lopping large numbers of centrally employed staff out of the Town Hall and "redeploying" them to more "front-line" services, and maybe even compulsory redundancies etc. This is just a fraction of what is planned - who knows what comes later!

These cuts are actively opposed by NALGO [the local government workers union] and NATFHE [the further and higher education teachers union].

As council workers oppose the cuts the Labour Party National Executive Committee is instigating a witch hunt against six left wing, anti-cuts, anti-Poll Tax councillors, plus Joan Twelves, the media's hate-figure and Greg Tucker - seen as the Grand-dad of the hard left by such bastions of fair play as the Daily Mail and the London Evening Standard!

The witch hunt is being inspired and led by the Inquisitor General, Councillor Cathy Ashley, a Labour Co-ordinating Committee supporter, who just happens to be employed by the national Labour Party at their Walworth Road headquarters.

In a recent act of solidarity a mass meeting of NALGO called for a one-day strike, which was successful, but also passed a motion condemning the witch hunt and demanding the Labour Party NEC drop its inquiry.

The witch hunt is intended to shut down two out of the three local Lambeth Constituency Labour Party's: Norwood and Vauxhall - leaving only Streatham (which has led the attacks from the right) intact. The NEC Organisation Sub-Committee has called for an investigation into Lambeth Labour Group.

Right wingers are claiming they have had their tyres slashed and front doors daubed in paint with the word 'scab' amongst other things. How much is true and how much is hype is difficult to tell but the "Guardian", as with other papers, is spreading the smears.

Part of the background to attacks on Councillors and others is that the Lambeth Labour Group and the Lambeth Council passed an extensive resolution opposing the Gulf War by 26 votes to 24, part of which we reproduce on this page. Not that this has yet

surfaced. For the Labour leadership opposing an imperialist war is bad enough but when it comes directly to fighting your own ruling class by refusing to pay the Poll Tax or vote for cuts then they move in.

A campaign has been publically launched; "Lambeth Against the Witch hunt".

It is contactable at the following address:

**Lambeth Against the Witch hunt,
c/o Julian Lewis,
Lambeth Town Hall,
Acre Lane,
London. SW2**

Note: Model resolutions and an information pack are available from this address.

The following is part of the resolution adopted by Lambeth Council against the Gulf War:

"This Council is opposed to the war and believes that a collision between one million plus men armed with the most fiendish of modern military equipment will restore neither peace nor security to the Middle East. It condemns the spilling of blood, whether it be that of the people of the Middle East or of a generation of "Allied" service people, for the sake of oil profits. It calls for an immediate ceasefire and end to the war and the withdrawal of British, US and other foreign troops from the area. It supports an Arab solution to the conflict and the right of all people in the Middle East, including Palestinians, to live a peaceful life and to determine their own future."

SOCIALIST VOICE says all those in the Labour movement who are opposed to the witch hunting of Labour activists, the use of the capitalist press and purges must support the campaign "Lambeth Against the Witch hunt."

We urge all those councillors now suspended by Labour Groups or by the Labour Party leadership for fighting the Poll Tax to build the largest possible support for the Lambeth councillors and Labour Party activists being witch hunted and suspended pending 'investigation' and possible expulsion.

Every section of the working class has the responsibility to act in defence of those fighting against the Poll Tax and Tory Government policies. Labour councillors were voted in and are accountable to the programme on which they stood. They should account to the electorate just how they have acted since gaining office.

We know of no councillor who has voted to make the cuts or implement the Poll Tax and who, at the same time, sought a mandate from their electoral wards for the way they acted.

As with the jailing of non-payers some decisions are becoming increasingly clear for people to make: For or against the Poll Tax - For or against the cuts - For or against the witch hunts. There is no middle ground - you have to make up your mind and act. Act - either in defence of the working class and oppressed layers of society OR in defence of the establishment - of British 'law and order' and the Tory Government.

**RALLY AGAINST
THE POLL TAX
2pm, 6TH APRIL
WE WILL NOT PAY IN 1991
UNTIL
OUR ABILITY TO PAY IS TAKEN
INTO ACCOUNT
THE COUNCIL CALLS OFF THE
BA!LIFFS
THE POLL TAX IS FINALLY BURIED
NO MORE POLL TAX MARK 2
WARRINGTON
TOWN HALL**

Emergency Resolution for Lambeth Against the Poll Tax

1 Lambeth Against the Poll Tax welcomes the call from NATFHE, London region, for a one day London wide strike on May 1st.

2 LAPT recognises that this is a part of the widening of the struggle against the Poll Tax and the cuts.

3 We resolve to support this initiative against the cuts instigated as a result of the Poll Tax in the following ways:

A To notify NATFHE branches, particularly those which have yet to vote on the action, of our support for this and all other action against cuts in jobs and services provided by local councils.

B To inform all APTU affiliates and contacts of this proposed action.

C To encourage workers in other trades unions to physically support this proposed action.

D To pass this motion up to the next delegates meeting of the All London Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

LIBERATION 91

NATIONAL PROTEST AGAINST PARAGRAPH 16

&

CLAUSE 25

MANCHESTER

SATURDAY 13th APRIL
CARNIVAL MARCH
ASSEMBLE 12 noon
WHITWORTH PARK, OXFORD
RD.,
OPEN AIR PARTY
3pm ALBERT SQUARE
CRECHE & GOOD DISABLED
FACILITIES. MORE INFO
TEL 061 274 3814

FIGHT THE TRAINING CUTS OPPOSE PRIVATISATION NO TO TEC's

JOHN OWEN

THE DEPARTMENT of Employment has announced a massive reduction in funding for E.T. [Employment Training] throughout the country. In Merseyside alone it will mean the end of 3,000 places.

Trainees at NACRO [National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders] have called a meeting of representatives from all schemes on Merseyside to discuss what tactics we need to resist closures and redundancies.

The reduced training budget for Merseyside, from £17 million to £13 million, has meant that sites are now trying to "manage down", (management slang for education cuts), training places to fit the budget.

The campaign to save NACRO alone has received widespread support from rank and file trade unionists. Most of the MP's from Merseyside have supported the efforts to save the training schemes including 11 Labour MP's. The cuts are in preparation for the privatisation of training provision as a whole throughout the country.

The situation to date is that most sites have a freeze on recruitment. This will make the transfer of trainees to other sites virtually impossible.

The situation nationally is that 1/3 of the funding for E.T. is to be cut; £150 million and £80 million from Youth Training. There are approximately 200,000 workers on ET and many more on the compulsory Youth Training Scheme.

The new masters will be the Training and Enterprise Councils (TEC's). These will be responsible for controlling more than £2 billion of public money next year. They are composed of unelected employers.

What rights and conditions trainees will have is mentioned nowhere.

The only way to guarantee rights is to get organised. Only through an alliance of schemeworkers can places be saved, conditions improved and wages increased.

**BUILD A SCHEMEWORKERS ALLIANCE.
FORM AN ACTION COMMITTEE ON YOUR SITE.
SOLIDARITY IS STRENGTH.**

**TO GET YOUR COPY OF SOCIALIST VOICE
OR FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE
INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE
WRITE TO: PO BOX 9, ECCLES SO, ECCLES, M30 7HL.
Four issues, including postage, for £2.00**

**THIS ISSUE WAS PRODUCED BY
SUE GWYER
PETER MONEY
MARTIN RALPH**

IN MANCHESTER and other towns, immediately following the end of the Gulf War, members of the "Committee to Stop the War in the Gulf" met together and solemnly dissolved.

Now, we are certainly not for maintaining committees which have brought various tendencies together, after the situation which brought them into a united front has ended. However, while leaders of the CND and some pacifist figures were solely concerned with stopping the war and substituting sanctions for it, this was not the position of the majority of those who marched under its banners including rank and file members of the CND and the majority of those who formed the national and regional committees. It was not certainly, the expressed propaganda position of SWP representatives who, however, found themselves in an alliance with the sanctioneers, and were enthusiastically in favour of ending the committees once the war was over.

The overwhelming demands of the anti-war demonstrations was: "Stop the war - withdraw the troops!" There was, of course, a division in the anti-war movement, a very fundamental division; it was a division between *nationalism and internationalism*. That is what was revealed in the way these committees ended. *British* life was no longer under extreme threat, the urgency had gone; the war had stopped and "withdraw the troops" could be dropped - that was really their, purely nationalist conclusions.

But the "new order" which brought about the war and brought the troops into the Middle East is now pursuing its aims by other means - using the inhuman, pitiless destruction and its military occupation now to enforce its will in the Middle East. And that ruthless destruction was also calculated to leave Saddam Hussein some means to suppress his own population.

Imperialism does not want a mass democratic movement taking over Iraq. It was the population that was terrorised; the populations of the city and the conscripts on the Basra road. The cease-fire agreement with Saddam was secret. Under the heading: "Does the United States want Saddam after all?" Elie Kedourie, in a feature article in the "Daily Telegraph", commented:

"The Baghdad regime has been using the forces it has been allowed to retain in order to destroy its rebellious subjects. Given the disparity in weapons between the regime and the rebels, this can easily be achieved.

"We remain, however, in the dark as to why this has been allowed to happen. Was this sudden halting of the coalition offensive

AFTER THE WAR...

MARTIN RALPH

the result of a calculation that allowing Saddam to survive was better than any other outcome?"

The "Economist" - 16 March declares that: "Some governments say 'anybody but Saddam'. Others, including America's, are starting to toy with the thought that, at least for a bit, they might stick with the devil they know especially now that his horns and tail

"Although President Bush has said he wants to bring home American ground forces as soon as possible, US and Arab officials are exploring the idea of extensive military exercises that would mean stationing thousands of US troops in Saudi Arabia for months at a time" wrote Mark Tran in the "Guardian" of the 4 March. He later quoted James Baker, US Secretary of State, in a television interview: "It is not unwise to talk about an enhanced naval presence, if it ever became necessary to do this again it should be easier in the future."

So Mr. Baker wants to be prepared to repeat again the *Gulf slaughter*.

Any spark of internationalism or any sympathy with the sufferings of the peoples of the Middle East, particularly the Palestinians and the Kurds, must fuel the desire to bring about the withdrawal of troops immediately.

It is in this light that the policy of the SWP has to be judged. The war was over, and it headed out of the "Stop the War Committees" to the Poll Tax struggle. The SWP, of course, is a propagandist organisation that has made impressionistic swings from one "single issue" to another throughout its existence. Its justification for this one is that our main struggle is against our own ruling class and to weaken British Imperialism is to assist those suffering under imperialism in the world; that a central question for British workers and one around which they are struggling is the Poll Tax and the cuts in services which are connected with it. Of course, these are important questions and every revolutionary socialist should seek to participate and develop their ideas within them. Inside the Anti-Poll Tax movement we argued that we should partici-

pate in the Anti-war movement and on a number of occasions we got overwhelming support to participate as Anti-Poll Tax groups in the anti-war demonstrations.

At the end of the war with all the imperialist propaganda seeking to get the working class and the middle class opponents of the war to heave a sigh of relief and turn away from the Middle East, it is important to hammer away at the conclusion that we have an international enemy and the international movement against it is *our* movement.



The result of a previous US "liberation" - in Panama

have been lopped."

Certainly the US Imperialists will work again with Saddam, as they worked with him before, if that is the best way for them to protect their interests. Their talk of freedom and democracy is strictly for the birds or for foolish people. Whether they have Saddam or some other military dictator; whether they allow Iraq to be split into several weak governments will be dictated solely by their economic and financial interests. And they intend to ensure those by a military as well as a political domination in the Middle East.

STOP THE TORTURE IN KUWAIT

SUPPORT THE INTIFADA

THE PALESTINIANS have been amongst the worst sufferers of the victory of US Imperialism.

Those popular dailies which printed and made headlines out of every allegation of torture under Iraqi occupation are now silent about the brutal treatment of Palestinians and other immigrant workers by the al-Sabah forces in Kuwait.

Prior to the war there were 400,000 Palestinians in Kuwait. Now there are 170,000.

When the Gulf crisis began, the majority of Palestinians, particularly those from the Israeli occupied territories, had little option but to stay. They have no travel papers - they have no state. They were provided with papers by the Egyptian Government for the purpose of being used as immigrant labour by countries such as Kuwait - but these papers give them no right of residence in Egypt. 100,000 of those left in Kuwait are from the Gaza Strip. The Kuwaiti government has said it now wants to reduce the Palestinian population down to 50,000. Where are they to go?

The New York based human rights organisation "Middle East Watch" sent a fact-finding team to Kuwait recently. It believes that 2,000 Palestinians and other foreign Arab nationals are being detained and frequently tortured by vigilantes and officers of the Kuwaiti army. Some acts of torture have been carried out in the presence of American military officers, according to prisoners recently released. US military officials operate in every police station. Methods of torture, says the human rights team, were similar to those used by the Iraqis.

Those who launched the terror on Baghdad and on the Basra road accuse the PLO of terrorism. Under their control in Kuwait the torture and killing of Palestinians goes on.

The Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem has issued a report which declares that in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; *"The escalation of human rights abuses, the excessive use of force by the Israel Defence Forces and the blowing up of houses all continue."* The 23 hour curfew imposed in the occupied territories at the beginning of the Gulf War has been re-instated.

Israel has been greatly strengthened by the victory of imperialism. It is an enclave of imperialism in that area and the greatest

danger for freedom and national liberation in the Middle East. After Baker's recent visit the Israeli government became more belligerent and repressive. In the last week of March they expelled four Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and sent them into exile. At the same time, Ariel Sharon, the Housing Minister, promised to build 13,000 new homes in the occupied West Bank. The American Government is on record as being against both policies.

We believe firmly that a solution can only come about through a movement of the united Arab masses, defeating the Israeli state, regaining the Palestine land and setting up a secular Palestine.

We believe there will be no end to the sharp conflicts in the Middle East until that is achieved. In the meantime our task as British socialists and internationalists is to campaign to defend the Palestinians in the Middle East. The duty for socialists, internationalists and the anti-war movement is to demand that the Palestinians must be allowed to choose their own representatives. We should campaign in the organisations of the

British labour movement for the recognition of the PLO. Neither Israel nor Imperialism can be given any right to determine who should be the representatives of the Arab people.

Full support for the demands of the Palestine people; for the withdrawal of the repressive occupying forces from the West Bank and Gaza.

End the torture of Palestinians in Kuwait.



THE MYTH OF THE 'WAR AGAINST REAL ESTATE' IS EXPOSED

Paul Rogers, professor at the Department of Peace Studies, Bradford University, writing in "War Report":

"One of the enduring myths of the Gulf War is that it was a war against objects rather than people..."

"In truth it is now evident that the "war against real estate" was a myth, necessary to maintain public support. In reality it allowed the coalition forces to use the most sophisticated range of anti-personnel weapons yet developed.

"The extent of human casualties is evidence of the revolution in conventional warfare which started with Vietnam and has now produced a generation of air-impact munitions - bombs, missiles and other devices whose function is to spread destruction as widely as possible. This is the unseen revolution of modern warfare, light-years away from those laser-guided precision bombs, and it will have huge implications for the future conduct of war..."

"...future conflicts will be fought with far more lethal anti-personnel weapons, leading to much greater suffering."

BRITISH WORKERS - THE SOVIET

IN HIS desperate effort to preserve himself through the recent referendum in the Soviet Union, Gorbachov, appealed to the old Russian nationalism or what was contemptuously called by Lenin "Great Russian chauvinism". Gorbachov appealed to his audience on Soviet television to uphold a state "two hundred thousand years old."

In point of historical fact, the Soviet state is a few months more than seventy three years old. The state of the old Czarist empire, which was reviled by liberals and the world labour movement as the "prisonhouse of peoples" was smashed in 1917 by the Russian Revolution. The leaders of that revolution had the aim of creating a state in which the nationalities were able to develop together in cultural autonomy and with the rights of self determination. And undoubtedly, that Russian Revolution opened up for the nationalities of the Soviet Union a road out of feudal backwardness that was impossible under Czarist tyranny. The arch bureaucrat continues to appeal to this Russian chauvinism in his desperate attempts to subdue the grave conflicts in the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, in this referendum, the population was asked a loaded, ambiguous and vague question: "Do you consider it essential to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics, in which human rights and freedoms are guaranteed for people of any nationality?"

The majority of the population could surely agree on "human rights and freedoms being guaranteed" with different ideas of what this worthy phrase meant. However, there is increasing economic crisis and hardships for the mass of the population, amid corruption and profiteering. The real questions of the moment are those dealing with the way out of the catastrophic situation to which bureaucratic rule has brought the Soviet economy and which now threatens to disintegrate it.

The Soviet Union has reached the position where goods and food have been available but enormous quantities are not able to be moved or disappear into hands of speculators. "Hardly anyone believes that the shortages are genuine" reported John Rettie in "From the USSR" in the "Guardian" of 11 March.

Corruption, speculation, bureaucratic mis-

management, self-seeking, arrogance, complacency and the bureaucratic mafia bring catastrophe to the Soviet people. It is a situation which Lenin wrote about in September 1917! To meet the threatening catastrophe then he called for the immediate introduction of; "workers' control of production and distribution on a nationwide scale. Experience since 6 May has shown that in the absence of such control all the promises of reforms and attempts to introduce them are powerless."

Both Gorbachov and Yeltsin (who are featured by our press, as the alternatives in the Soviet Union) are products of the "nomenklatura"; the bureaucratic Stalinist ruling strata whose domination of the economy and of the nationalities brought about the present catastrophe. Both have in common the cynical paternalistic bureaucratic attitude to the masses. The mass of the population has grown more disillusioned in Gorbachov's perestroika, in which living conditions have worsened below those under Brezhnev.

The real choice for the Soviet masses is not Yeltsin or Gorbachov. The real alternative is for the mass movement, which shook the bureaucracy's monopoly of politics in 1989/90, to take up the road it began then and impose its own direct organs of power.

Yeltsin and the "radicals" want to move faster along the road of the free market which is already producing a deepening of hardships in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union. Their past woolly perspectives of mixed economy or "humane capitalism" are fading fast. Their cloudy "democratic" and demagogic phrases are growing more and more threadbare. That shows clearly in Poland, Czechoslovakia and other Eastern European countries. Yeltsin and his associates, themselves, have for some time talked about the need for strong measures. It has been the "radical reformists" such as Sobchak, the mayor of Leningrad, and an associate of Yeltsin, who called for a state of emergency. It was Sobchak who declared that; "Without a strong Executive Power, democracy could go into chaos."



Protests in Moscow, January 16th. "No to dictatorship and no to the tanks. Yes to democracy and equality."

Their form of democracy was that form of parliamentary democracy which ensured their election. The real democracy and control of the mass of the population which could bring a way out of the chaos and disorganisation can only be expressed through workers' committees and committees among the population, in the traditions of the Soviets which came up and became a power in the land in the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, with the delegates paid workers' wages and subject to recall. It is only by building on these traditions that the population of the Soviet Union will find its way out of the chaos. The Soviet working class is having to re-learn old lessons out of its history.

The miners and other sections of the working class are now coming back into struggle. They are against the bureaucratic centre but their struggle has reached the level of all Soviet organisation. Their next step is to pass from struggles which come from appalling conditions in their own industries to struggles to link together all Soviet workers to exert a mass will throughout the Soviet Union. The Soviet working class is the only force that can link together all the nationalities in a common struggle to destroy the new bureaucratic repression or the dictatorship of capitalism. With a leadership that brings out its common interests, it is the only force that can now prevent the Soviet Union from disintegrating and which can build a real cooperation of sovereign nationalities, freely associating.

SUPPORT MINERS

LIFE FORCED US TO BE THE VANGUARD, WE DIDN'T CHOOSE IT. OUR STRENGTH IS THAT WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE ANYMORE
Viktor Filimonov, Soviet Miner

RESOLUTION FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Since March 1st, when a 24 hour strike began in all the mining regions of the USSR, there has been considerable unrest including 100,000 miners striking in the Ukraine. Many mines have voted for an indefinite strike. The miners are demanding an all Soviet agreement on wages. They want a single national collective bargaining contract for all miners in the USSR. They are the first section of workers to organise themselves on the scale of the whole USSR. These demands were formulated at the Second Congress of the Independent Miners' Union (the independent union was formed in November 1990.) The miners are also calling for autonomy or independence within their own republics.

The government has refused to negotiate and it is using the army to try and intimidate the miners in the Kuzbas region.

The struggle of the miners is receiving wide support from the Soviet populations; Cars laden with food have been sent from Lithuania, Moscow and many other areas. Telegrams and money is being sent from all over the world.

The miners are asking for help and solidarity inside the Soviet Union and from the Labour movement worldwide. They want telegrams to be sent to Gorbachev and the miners organisations centrally and throughout the Soviet Union. They have suggested that the following text be sent. What text is sent is, of course, up to the organisations sending the message.

Suggested text:

"We support the mobilisation of the Soviet Miners organised through their independent trade union. Also, we believe that the government should apply the salary increase, scale and conditions as approved by the Second Congress of the miners of the USSR"

All telegrams should be sent to:

PRESIDENT GORBACHEV, KREMLIN, MOSCOW, USSR

Main Miners headquarters is:

ISPOLNITELNOE BIURO NPG, PER. SIBTSEB BRAJEK 24/2, MOSCOW, USSR

All money should be sent to:

EXTERNAL BANK OF THE USSR (VNECHICONOM BANK)

NO 69084 362/001 282, 245/MOSCOW

SUPPORT FUND FOR MINERS INDEPENDENT UNION OF THE USSR

(POSHERTHOBANIE HEZABUSIMOMU PROFSIOIUZ GORNIAKOF USSR)

REGIONAL ADDRESSES:

- 1 SAJALINSKAIA OBL, UGLEGORSKIY RAION POS. TELNOBCK, SHAXTA TELNOBSKAIA STK ERMKOBUBLADIMIRU. (ISLE OF SAJALIN)
- 2 KEMEROBO OBLISPOLKOM SOBETU RABOCHIX KOMITETOB KUSBASHA (REPUBLIC OF RUSSIA)
- 3 DONETSK, ARTEMA 63 STACHKOMDLIA RSSKD (REPUBLIC OF UKRAINE)
- 4 BORKUTA, STACHECHNIY KOMITET KOLESNIKOBUBLADIMIRU (REPUBLIC OF KOMI)
- 5 KARAGANDSA, STACHECHNIY KOMITET, TERKOM UGLEPROFSOIOSA (REPUBLIC OF KAZAJSTAN)
- 6 ROSTOBEKAIA OBL. BELAIA KALITBA POS. BOSTOCHNO-GORNIATSKIY SHU GORNIATSKDE STACHKOMU SHOLOXOBKOGO UGOLNOGO RAIONA (UKRAINE)
- 7 PABLOGRAD DNEPROPETROBSKOI UL. LENINA 74 STACHKOM (UKRAINE)
- 8 MEXDURECHENSK KEMEROBSKOI GORISPOLKOM RABOCHEMU KOMITETU (RUSSIA)

The following document is part of the resolution of a joint Session of the Council of Representatives of the Independent Miners Union (NPG), of the Labour Federation (CT), and of the Workers Committees of the mining regions.

The political, social and economic situation is worsening in the USSR.

Social tension is worsening in our country because of the actions of the Soviet Union authorities and because the demands of the 1st Miners Congress have not been implemented.

These demands were for a government trusted by the people with new duties taking into account State sovereignty of the republics.

(The government) does not want to have a single document, which is the same for the entire USSR, where the real concept of wages is included. This is important, especially at the time of transition to a market economy.

Considering the above, the councils of Representatives of the Independent Miners Union (NPG), of the Labour Federation (CT), and of the Workers Committees of the mining regions decided in a joint session on February 11th:

1 To propose to the President, to the supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union and of the Republics, to bring the legislation into conformity with ILO conventions, guaranteeing the right of workers to defend their interests.

(We) denounce the lies and strike-breaking activities of the employees of the apparatus of the Central Council of the Coal Trade Union, together with the actions of the Coal Production Minister to put down the workers movement and stifle the nascent organisation of the NPG...

2 ...In explaining to all workers the miners' position for the defence of their interests, it is important to understand that a positive result of their struggle will help workers become conscious of their rights and interests.

BRAZILIAN COUNCILLORS JAILED FOR HELPING HOMELESS

Below we re-print a letter we received from Brazil asking for international assistance to gain the release of councillors jailed for helping the homeless around Sao Paulo. We are asking that support be raised in the labour movement in Britain in the form of letters of concern sent to the addresses shown below.

**Valerio Arcary - National Executive Member - Workers' Party of Brazil
Director of the paper of Convergencia S. Socialista [Socialist Convergence]**

Dear Comrades,

I am writing to you because we need your help for our campaign to free our comrade, Romildo Raposo, who has been in jail for almost three months since 28th December.

Romildo Raposo is a Workers' Party councillor to the city council in Diadema, near Sao Paulo city. He is accused of inciting violence against the police. This is because he was, in the name of the city-council, supporting about 300 families who had occupied an empty piece of land in September 1990 and had built their homes there. They called it "Vila Socialista".

The owner of the land obtained a law injunction to destroy the houses and expel the occupiers. This was done by state police forces on 11th December. It was a very violent action as 2 people were killed, 8 are still 'missing' and more than 100 were injured. 46 people were arrested, including 4 councillors, the President of the Building Workers' Union of Sao Bernardo and the Vice President of the State Workers' Union of Diadema. All of these were soon released on bail.

On 29th December Romildo and another councillor, Manoal Boni (Manoal Boni does not belong to the Workers' Party) were re-arrested and bail was rejected. They are both still in jail. Prison conditions are very bad. Romildo is a common-law prisoner. There is nobody else in the same cell, as his situation is considered as requiring "maximum security". He is in a cell without windows and visits are allowed only once a week for two hours.

His arbitrary imprisonment prevents him from carrying out his responsibilities as an elected councillor. This is an attack on democratic rights as a consequence of his support for homeless workers who were attacked by the police. Raposo and Boni are in fact political prisoners. They are innocent of

the charges against them. They did not incite violence against the police. They were besides the homeless workers trying to negotiate with the owner's lawyer when the police repression took place. They are in jail only because of their political opinions. We have taken legal measures and we have asked four times for "Habeas Corpus" which was denied.

We are engaged in a national campaign of telegrams addressed to the Judge of Diadema who is responsible for the imprisonment order and to the Governor of the state of Sao Paulo who ordered the police action.

We have had public meetings and support from members of Parliament and union leaders. We need international solidarity.

We suggest sending telegrams along the following lines:

"We express our concern with the imprisonment of Romildo Raposo and Manoal Boni, who are members of the city council of Diadema/Sao Paulo. Their imprisonment is an attack on democratic rights. We ask you to take the necessary measures in order that they be released."

TO:

**Ministro da Justica Jarbas Passarinho
Esplanada dos Ministerios
Brasilia - DF - Brasil**

**Governador do Estado Sao Paulo
Palacio dos Bandeirantes
Sao Paulo - SP - Brasil**

**Forum da Comarca de Correa
Av. Sete de Setembro, 2740 - Centro
Diadema - Sao Paulo - Brasil**

Please send copies of any telegrams
sent to Valerio Arcary
Fax number 010 55 11 571 0962



Romildo Raposo and Manoal Boni

UNION SUPPORT TGWU/ACTSS 1/477 HACKNEY COMMUNITY SECTOR BRANCH

As a British Trade Union organisation we are concerned to hear of the imprisonment of Romildo Raposo and Manoal Boni who, we understand, are democratically elected councillors for Diadema City Council.

Their imprisonment leaves thousands of ordinary people without representation and this cannot be right. Furthermore, we are given to understand the conditions in which they are both being held can only be described as humiliating, with little opportunities for recreation, education or to meet family and friends. We must protest at this and demand improvements.

Further more, we understand that whilst both councillors have been charged they have not been given a trial date and again this cannot be right. We would suggest that if you do decide to proceed with the trial (and we implore you not to) that both Romildo Raposo and Manoal Boni are released until the trial date.

We would urge you to consider our request and drop the charges against both men and release them immediately. We look forward to hearing from you.

Mark Metcalf
on behalf of Hackney TGWU/ACTSS 1/
477 branch.

ARGENTINE RAILWORKERS STRIKE

ARGENTINIAN workers are preparing for big struggles in 1991: from the escalating mobilisations of the people of Catamarca over the cover-up and complicity of the government, who refuse to take action against the son of the MP of Catamarca - who is accused of the murder of teenager Maria Soledad Morales - to the picketing of the Ministry of Labour by old age pensioners now in its 18th day.

Plaza de Mayo, the central square in Buenos Aires, the Argentine capital, has not seen an uneventful day.

Poor conditions accentuated by low wages, have led to protest actions by workers in the textile, meat, mechanical and paper industries.

The strike proposed by teachers this autumn (spring time in Britain), if there is not a guaranteed pay increase before the resumption of classes, seems imminent.

Socialist Voice recently received the following interview from comrades of the MAS [Movement towards Socialism], Argentine section of the International Workers' League, conducted with striking railway workers.

MAS: "The big strike by railway workers has entered its third week and has continued to be the focus of attention and hints of military intervention by the government has not halted the strike. What actions do you suppose the unions will take considering the Ministry of Labour refuses to meet with a delegation of workers until the indefinite strike is abandoned?"

STRIKER: "A mass meeting of workers representing all sections remained resolute - they will not abandon the strike until their demand for increased wages is met together with the reinstatement of sacked workers."

MAS: "The strike has been termed indefinite until the demand for a basic wage of 2 million Australes has been realised, what are the other demands?"

STRIKER: "You must remember that there is a division in the union, the bureaucracy are negotiating a compromise which will abandon the strike. Experience has shown us that once a strike is broken it is very difficult to re-start. We have to keep the momentum going. This is why the pressure for a Workers' Party, which will truly reflect ours and other workers' interests is so vital.

The economic plan of this government is unstable - we have to defeat it but the bureaucracy is defending the government positions. This means we have to fight for an alternative leadership."

MAS: "With representation of the left, workers, sympathisers and students all involved in the strike what proportion of MAS representation is evident?"

STRIKER: "The marches have demon-

strated the support we have from a wide sector. All the positions we have adopted in all mass meetings have come from the MAS propositions, it has also revealed a new leadership willing to challenge the present bureaucracy in the unions."

MAS: "While recognising that women workers in the railways are in the minority their role up until now has been reflected only in terms of supporting their partners causes, fund raising and solidarity. Are there any forums within the union structures for women to be part of the negotiating process or the alternative leadership?"

STRIKER: "Simply through public support, donations fund raising efforts, food parcels etc. Political parties of the left have lent their support in every way. We have had pledges of support from Brazil and as far as Spain and France. As to how we will sustain it - organise, struggle and keep the struggle going."

MAS: "Another sector of workers engaged in the transportation sector are the bus drivers. Faced with the same problems of exploitation and low wages why have they not come out in support - is it another case of compromise between the union leaders and the government?"

STRIKER: "You have to ask yourself the question: why do the bureaucracy try to stop a strike which is fair? The indications are such that they are part of the government plan which offers them privileges. The union bosses in the bus drivers union are part of that same plan and privilege. They are traitors of the working class. The bus drivers, like us, will have to develop their own representatives and leadership."

MAS: "What message do you have for workers outside of the

railways?"

STRIKER: "Greetings to our fellow comrades. We need your support and pledges of solidarity - The struggle continues."

**SENALEROS
ALEM 945,
MORON 1708,
BUENOS AIRES.**



No negotiations. We want a living wage

STRIKER: "Unfortunately the under-representation of women in our society has filtered through and we are guilty of not making consistent efforts to incorporate women. However, women lately have come to the forefront and pressed for their right to join in the representation. A comrade has organised the partners of the strikers."

MAS: "How have you been able to sustain the strike and what pledges of support and solidarity have you had from other sectors of workers?"

NO FRIENDS OF THE KURDS: THE IMF AND MULTI-NATIONALS

ONE OF the reasons given to justify the war was because of Iraq's treatment of the Kurdish people. Along with the statements that they were concerned about the plight of the Palestinians this was perhaps the most cynical of all the lies used to support the war. The truth is exactly the opposite.

The Kurdish people have been struggling for nearly 70 years against the most extreme brutality and degrading treatment and no Western country ever did a thing to help them although their suffering has been as a direct result of imperialism's interference and domination of the Middle East throughout that period.

The following are extracts from an interview we printed in June 1989 with Ishan Dadiè, Coordinator of the Kurdish Workers Association in Britain:

"I would remind the British Government of its historical responsibilities - Britain and France divided Kurdistan at Lausanne in 1923.

"In March 1988, after the bombing of Halabja, a town in the Kurdistan area of Iraq, the British press was full of stories about the atrocities on the Kurds. But a £400 million credit was granted to Iraq by the British Government and British firms went with enthusiasm to a trade exhibition in Baghdad. The British labour movement should not be part of this hypocrisy. It should denounce it.

"For thousands of years, Kurds of various religions have lived together in peace. There are Christian Kurds and Muslim Kurds. There are Kurds who are Zoroastrianists - one of the oldest religions in the world, which goes back to the seventh century BC. There are also Jewish Kurds."

Ishan continued: *"There are fifteen million Kurds, but officially they do not exist. In Turkey they are officially referred to as Eastern Turks or Mountain Turks. Kurdish associations are forbidden. With its aim to destroy the Kurdish nation, the Turkish Government has now raised all villages to the ground which are within ten miles of the Iraqi border. Iraq has followed the same policy seeking to separate the Kurds in Turkey from the Kurds in Iraq."*

Ishan accused the Turkish Government of de-populating the Kurdish areas. He spoke of the South East Anatolian project which aims to create a huge artificial lake in the Urfa region of Turkey. With irrigation, it can be a very rich agricultural area, with a harvest three or four times a year.

"The dams for the lake", declared Ishan, "are being built with money from the IMF, the World Bank and the multinational banks. Japanese, British, American and German representatives are in the area. At least fifty two villages will go under water as well as two towns. One town - Samsat - has a history of six or seven thousand years. The Government is not offering homes for displaced Kurdish people in Kurdish areas. Their policy is to split up and disperse the Kurds. There are now two million Kurds outside Turkish Kurdistan - one million of them are in Istanbul. There are 400,000 in Germany.

"The Government has been implementing a de-forestation plan for a large area where the Kurdish guerrillas have bases. Troops have been clearing the Kurdish inhabitants from the area. Those in the villages who refuse to move are arrested and tortured as guerilla collaborators. To terrorise other villagers the military then take them round as an example."

Ishan talked of the multinationals benefiting from the atrocities of the Turkish Government against the Kurds.

Confirmation comes from the "Transnationals Information Centre". Their Bulletin No. 4 for December 1987 to February 1988 was devoted to the powerful Unilever company which is the world's largest tea buyer and distributor.

Unilever has built an exceptionally large factory in Turkey. The bulletin declared: *"The Turkish Government has passed a law which will enable it to evacuate up to 9.3 million people living in the highlands of eastern Turkey. The plan is to cut down vast areas of forest, encourage agricultural settlers, and replant with commercial forests. The Kurdish community is a particular target of these evictions as the Government aims to break up Kurdish cultural and political organisations..."*

Publications about the
Middle East :

International
Courier - Special
Edition on the
Gulf War - £1.50

This pamphlet is written by our International. It brings together articles written in Argentina, Spain and the USA together with items on the Anti-War movement around the world.

Rami. G. Khouri, a well-known columnist of the Jordanian press, in an article reproduced in the magazine, writes:

"From a military point of view, the United States are right: the war may last several months, and it is very likely that Iraq will finally be defeated.

"However, from a political point of view, the war against Iraq is the mother of all Vietnams. Because, when the shooting ends, it will not be George Bush's coalition that will determine the political tendencies of the region. It will be the profound feeling of bitterness and resentment of hundreds of millions of Arabs that will."

"After the War,
Comes the Brutal
Peace."

Printed and published
by the ISL - a Socialist
Voice special - 30p

Read our pamphlet, published just a few days after the US military victory. The struggle in support of the Palestinians, the Kurds, the people of Iraq and the whole of the Middle East must go on. The US troops are overseeing the torture of Palestinians in Kuwait. Everything we said in that pamphlet is coming true, the tragedy is that the reality is worse than the written word.

MAKE THE WEALTHY PAY

THOUSANDS FACE THE BUDGET AXE

By Ralph Palladino - Chief Steward of AFSCME Local 1549 and a member of the Bellevue Coalition Against Health Care Cuts.

This article was re-produced from the March edition of Labor Notes. Address of Labor Notes: 7435 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48210. *sive viewpoint.*"



A fire station in Manhattan closed permanently on January 3rd, it had been open for 100 years

Public workers and their unions are organizing in New York against deep cutbacks announced by federal, state and city governments. And they're doing something they've never done before — working together and reaching out to the community.

More than 20,000 state workers demonstrated February 5th at the Albany State Capitol and at Governor Mario Cuomo's home. Cuomo's new budget calls for service cuts of \$4.5 billion and layoffs of 7,750 workers.

Called by a coalition of unions representing state workers, "this demonstration," as a staffer for the Public Employees Federation (PEF) commented, "marked the first time that the major unions worked together."

The state coalition has joined with virtually every other public service union in different cities and throughout the state to form the Fiscal Policy Institute. Its purpose is to educate the public and counter the big business and banker controlled Citizens Budget Commission, which has called for severe cuts.

"Until now, business interests called the tune," said AFSCME District Council 37 Executive Director Stanley Hill. "Their way of balancing a Budget is to cut services. Now, however, a number of groups in the state have joined together to press their progres-

MAKE THE RICH PAY

The demands of the Fiscal Policy Institute are those first advocated by Communication Workers of America Local 1180 in New York City. They include:

- Making the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes.
- Ending corporate tax avoidance and loopholes.
- Increasing the sales tax on luxury items and services to the wealthy.
- Stopping real estate tax abatements for wealthy landlords.
- No cuts in needed services.

Tax cuts for the wealthy by the Reagan and Bush administrations have meant a loss of \$20 billion in aid to New York City over the last decade. A bloated military budget has contributed to this loss and any dream of a "peace dividend" is rapidly disappearing in the desert sands of the Persian Gulf.

Adding to the problem were the same tax cuts instituted by Governor Cuomo in 1986. Because of these giveaways, the state has lost \$7 billion and is cutting \$400 million from the city budget.

City workers are made to pay for these gifts to the rich. Many have settled for contracts with wage deferral schemes, layoffs, and wage increases below the cost of living. Teachers got 5.5%, while Teamsters and AFSCME District Council 37 workers received 4.5%. Under pressure from the Governor and Citizens Budget Commission, the city plans to lay off 35,000 workers.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

City-wide coalitions have formed around different sectors targeted for budget cuts. For example, the teachers union, working with some community groups, organized a demonstration of 30,000 at City Hall to protest education cuts.

Childcare workers in AFSCME District Council 1707 joined with parents to hold a series of demonstrations protesting city cuts. Firefighters and librarians have done the same.

In November, AFSCME District Council 37 and Teamsters Local 237 organized a demonstration of 10,000 at City Hall to protest the lack of progress in contract negotiations. The Communications Workers targeted Wall Street, calling for the wealthy to pay their fair share.

Workers from many unions at Bellevue Hospital are working with local community boards, patients and other groups to fight cuts in health care. They are leafletting, petitioning and have organized a letter-writing campaign to demand, "No cuts! Make the rich pay!"

This rank-and-file group wants to link up with the newly emerging citywide coalition to Fight Budget Cuts. "We can't successfully fight cutbacks piecemeal," said Margo Nikitas of Bellevue. "We must join with others. In unity, there is strength."

The various coalitions all plan to use the media by calling radio and TV talk shows, and by placing ads. The involvement of rank and file workers and the community will be critical.



British firefighters facing similar cuts and closures

HOSPITAL TRUSTS CUTS BEDS AND PAY

RAE HUNTER

THE SCHEME for the creation of Self-Governing Hospitals which was passed when Thatcher was Prime Minister comes into operation on April 1st. An important aspect of these hospitals is that they are free to determine the pay and conditions of their own staff, subject to their contractual obligations.

The aim of these self-governing hospitals is not to give a better and more caring service to the patient. The aim is to save the hospital money and, if possible, to make a profit out of health care.

To be able to determine what hospital employees are paid will not only undermine hard fought for national wage rates it will erode the strength of the trade union movement. In areas of high unemployment wages and consequently standards can be drastically cut.

To give an example here is a quote from the Guardian of 13/3/91. *"Lincolnshire ambulance service has become the first self-governing health service trust to declare a pay cut, ... temporary staff were offered re-employment on a weekly wage £46 below the current rate. The service which becomes the first of 57 trusts on April 1st confirmed that the lower rate could apply to new staff on emergency duties."*

Strike action has already taken place in some areas over the employment of non-trained staff for duties that will endanger patient care because it is cheaper to employ such staff. According to the Guardian 14th January, *"The National and Local Government Officers Association, which represents most NHS office staff, said the main cause of recruitment problems was low pay. Basic secretarial grade pay £143 to £167 a week and the lowest clerical rate is £105. The union is claiming a rise of £25 a week plus 5 per cent."*

According to the Guardian 22nd March William Waldegrave, the Health Secretary, has acknowledged that the shake-up of the NHS on April 1st will force recognition that it *"cannot meet all health demands."* His comments came as a British Medical Association survey suggests that 3,250 NHS beds were permanently taken out of use last year in England and Wales for **financial reasons**, meaning loss of treatment for 340,000 patients. *"In January and February this year, almost 500 operating and out patient sessions were cancelled each week on cost grounds."*

The situation at Christie's Hospital in Manchester shows that the treatment available will be tied to ability to pay either as an individual or as a health authority. Twenty six health authorities are expected to contribute money towards opening a closed ward and if they do so patients from their area will be able to jump the queue. Of course this can be avoided if you go private.

Health care is a right and when placed in the capitalist market economy all those who depend on the NHS are to receive worsening or non-existent health services. A fight is being taken up by doctors, nurses, ambulance workers and those connected to the NHS but this fight must be taken up by the Labour movement and in particular by all Trade Unions.

JUSTICE FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD

Richard McIlkenny, one of the Birmingham Six, spoke to "Labour Briefing" on his release from seventeen years imprisonment. We re-print here part of that text:

"...there is an old saying: "There is always someone worse off than yourself." And bad though our position was, this proved very true...

We have suffered at the hands of the police and on entering prison on our first day were brutally beaten by prison officers. We have endured long years in prison but we are alive and because of the strong love of our families and our friends we have overcome the degrading and dehumanising conditions of our imprisonment.

Our sufferings were bad but are not to be compared to the horrific treatment the Nicaraguans endured at the hands of the Contras.

In places like El Salvador the terrorising of the people comes from the armies and secret police of ruthless dictators who, in their lust for power, would appear to have lost all traces of humanity, if they ever had any.

We have survived, but in South Africa under a brutal totalitarian apartheid system of government great numbers of people have died and are still dying daily. Why? Because they are black, treated as something less than human because of the colour of their skins. Our sufferings do not compare with the sufferings the people of South Africa have endured for generations.

In this world of ours something has gone drastically wrong over quite a long number of years and today the concept of justice has been swept aside and in many ways has been twisted and perverted to suit certain regimes and certain people for their own reasons and benefits.

Even in the so-called civilised world injustice and privations are dealt out to the poor and the helpless. The handicapped, mentally and physically, are treated with contempt and as not fit to live among the "normal people" of society.

Being in prison did not indeed allow me much scope for "doing" things but I have prayed and I do pray that justice may not be only a word but something that can be seen and enjoyed by all the peoples of the world."

FREE THE OTHERS, NOW!

(Continued from the back page)



Still campaigning: George Silcott, Sharon Raghip, Bernie Grant MP, William Silcott and George Braithwaite

Despite all the talk in the House of Commons, the problem is not just a few corrupt coppers or one corrupt Lord Chief Justice. It's the Prevention of Terrorism Act, it's the prison system, it's the bias of Appeal Courts, it's judges whose only job is to defend the establishment - it's the whole system of class justice.

The profound questions surrounding the case of the Birmingham Six will not go away. An enormous amount of people have learned something about what Paddy Hill and Billy Power were telling us as they came out of the Old Bailey free men - that if your Irish or black, then justice is not impartial.

Walking from the Old Bailey Paddy Hill pointed to that centre of 'justice' and declared: "Justice? I don't think those people in there have the intelligence or the honesty to spell the word, let alone dispense it.

"For sixteen and a half years we've been used as political scapegoats for the people in there to hide behind.

"The police told us from the start that they knew we hadn't done it; we were selected; they were going to frame us."

Billy Power added:

"First I would like to know why - why is it that Judith Ward is still in prison and we are released? There are many more people, both

Irish and English, still wrongfully behind bars, including the Tottenham Three and the Bridgewater Four."

The basis of British justice is a class society, it is a justice which upholds that society. Those who administer it are impregnated with the prejudices and ideology of that society; as most immigrants know. The Birmingham Six were not only working men but they were Irish and, falsely accused, they had the whole legal battery turned against them.

"A number of police officers who weaved a web of deceit in the Birmingham Six case went on to play prominent roles in the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad, now disbanded after widespread corruption, brutality and the fabrication of evidence were revealed. West Yorkshire Police are currently investigating 90 further complaints against the former squad... And these ninety cases relate just to those who have dared to come forward in one small part of the country. We can but wonder what the national figure might be as we do not suppose that something is put in the water in Birmingham to make local police officers uniqueley and uncommonly wicked!" [Caribbean Times, 19

March 1991]

The Tottenham Three were jailed for life in 1987, scapegoats for the death of PC Keith Blakelock in the Broadwater Farm disturbances two years before. They were convicted solely on the basis of self-contradictory statements made to the police without benefit of legal advice and after long periods of isolation in custody. These "confessions" were all repudiated by the men who had made them and were uncorroborated by any forensic evidence.

Monday 18th March marked the fourth anniversary of the convictions of the Tottenham Three - Mark Braithwaite, Engin Raghip and Winston Silcott. Mary Silcott, Winston's mother was quoted in the Caribbean Times as saying: "Now that the Birmingham Six have been released the eyes of the whole world are focussed on British justice. I hope that our family and the family of Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghip do not have to spend another ten years before the injustice of these convictions is put right. People should now be adamant that uncorroborated confessions are no longer a safe basis for convictions."

Contact the Tottenham Three Families Campaign, 247a West Green Road, London, N15 5ED.

FREE THE OTHERS, NOW!

SUE GWYER

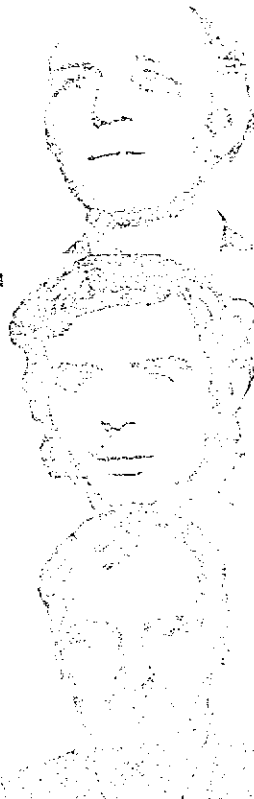
"It must now surely be conceded that the prisons, borstals, detention centres and mental 'hospitals' of Britain are full of innocent men, women and youths; victims of brutal and corrupt police, victims of biased and ignorant judges. Amongst these innocents, far too many are African, Asian, Carribean and Irish people." [Carribean Times, 19 March 1991]

THE BRITISH judiciary has been thrown into crisis over the Birmingham Six case. Following quick on the heels of the Guildford Four and Maguire cases 'learned' judges and legal experts tell us that there is nothing wrong with the appeal judges - we just need a new "system". By that they mean a tinkering with procedures.

Nearly two thousand years of traditions, prejudices and ideologies of ruling classes, with modifications only won in struggle - the judiciary and the state forces which enforce the law are certainly not unbiassed but reflect the class nature of society and its worst prejudices and backwardness.

What sort of a system is it that can promote and maintain, for fifteen years, a Chief of Police with the ideas of Anderton - who thinks he is a direct mouthpiece for God?... "I have to accept that I may well be used by God" he said. This man, in charge of Britain's biggest regional police force, was also notorious for declaring: "I would have people flogged until they begged for mercy" - that homosexuals, prostitutes and drug addicts were "swirling around in a cesspit of their own making."

This is the filth in the mind of one of Britain's foremost policemen. No wonder it took a long and hard campaign to get the Birmingham Six 'justice'. And the senior policeman fits well with the senior judge - Lord Denning - whose thoughts about the appeal of the Birmingham Six were not to get them justice but to protect the police and judicial system. As Master of the Rolls, in 1980, he blocked the bid by the Six to bring a civil action against the police for assault, with the memorable words: "If the six men win, it will mean... that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence and that the convictions were erroneous. That is such an appalling vista



A continuous history of repression and injustice. British troops use a travelling gallows against rebels in 1798



that every sensible person in the land would say: It cannot be right these actions should go any further."

On 16 August 1990 Lord Denning's view of the six innocent Irish men had not changed. Speaking out in favour of capital punishment and the protection of the state and judiciary above all else, he said of the Birmingham Six: "If they had been hanged they would have been forgotten."

A bunch of conspiring coppers were backed by forensic experts, fixers in the judicial machine and the highest of judges to frame the six innocent Irish men. The government, in response to the complete exposure of the reality of British 'justice', have brought into play that old parliamentary instrument for postponing and wearing down the sharpness of issues - the Royal Commission.

The establishment, Tory and Labour alike, will target expendables as scapegoats to ensure the protection of the system as a whole.

Speaking in favour of the resignation of Lord Lane (the Lord Chief Justice who so arrogantly dismissed the men's appeal three years ago) Labour's Shadow Northern Ireland Minister, Kevin McNamara, said that: "...in any other job he would have been out by now." [Carribean Times, Tuesday 19 March 1991]

The same MP, speaking in the commons on 7 March 1983, referring to the role of the judiciary in the Birmingham Six case, was quoted in Hansard as saying: "...ordinary decent coppers using ordinary decent police methods apprehended those responsible for the Birmingham outrages."

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