

Workers power

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 30p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

- US elections: no choice for workers
- Dump Kinnock!
- The plight of the Kurds
- After Tuffin's sell out

DEFIANCE NOT COMPLIANCE

AXE THE POLL TAX!



THE TORIES remain on course for the introduction of the Poll Tax in Scotland next year. They plan to push on with it
Opinion polls repeatedly show that the majority of people oppose this reactionary tax. But the Tories have been able to press ahead because the weak-kneed leaders of the labour movement have refused to head a campaign of defiance.

The Poll Tax or community charge as the Tories prefer to call it—will be a disaster for working class families. It will be levied on every adult, at a flat rate, regardless of income. In real terms this means that 60% of two adult households with an income of under £200 per week will be much worse off.

Pensioners

The Tories have claimed that the new tax will be more fair to single and elderly people. But 90% of all single parents are women whose income support will not fully cover Poll Tax payments. Manchester Council's research has revealed that pensioners with an income of more than £71 per week, hardly living in the lap of luxury, will get no rebate at all.

The introduction of the tax

will increase the powers of the state. Fines for non-registration start at £50, subsequent ones are £200. A whole army of snoopers will be employed to track down non-payers. Already the "cost cutting" tax is estimated to have cost each person in Scotland £5 to implement—the price of the new technology installed.

At the other end of the scale the story is different. Pensioners Dennis and Margaret Thatcher, when they retire to their Dulwich dream home, would pay £61.75 a month in rates at present levels. Under the Poll Tax they will be paying £17! This is a tax on the poor to pay the rich.

The Tories are trying to push through the tax in Scotland first. Massive working class campaigns against it have been built in the last six months. Support grew for "non-payment" of the tax.

Even some Scottish Labour MPs declared they would not pay. But Kinnock and his Scottish henchmen, like Donald Dewar, carefully avoided campaigning for non-payment. They were happy with the Scottish Trade Union Congress' (STUC) "Stop It" Campaign which called on voters to write letters to their MP, go on a few rallies, but little else.

Matters came to a head at the Scottish Labour Party (SLP) Conference in September. The majority of constituency delegates were committed to non-payment. But the block votes of some key unions were delivered in favour of the total surrender policy of the leadership. Brian Wilson MP, chair of the "Stop It" campaign had already anticipated the result in an article in the *Glasgow Evening Times* the week before the Conference. It was called "Why You Must Pay"!

Nonsense

These characters, and their friends south of the border, argue that we must all obey the law of the land. The argument from Kinnock and Dewar runs—if we obey "bad" laws now, then they (the Tories) will have to obey "good" laws when Labour is

in power. This argument is nonsense.

Laws exist to enforce certain rules. These rules are in the interest of the dominant class. In this case, obeying the law on Poll Tax means giving in to the Tories and bosses and handing over money that we simply cannot spare. It is not a game of cricket in which we can win all back when, or if, Labour gets its turn at an innings. Households will be ravaged in the here and now if we give in.

Encouraged

The Tories only apply the "rule of law" when it suits them. Their friends in the City regularly and publicly break the law. The Tories let them get away with 90% of it. Moreover they have often encouraged people to illegally withhold rates in Labour boroughs. They are fighting this battle according to their, class, rules. We must break these rules if we are to defend our livelihoods.

What Kinnock and Dewar are really frightened of is that a mass movement against the Poll Tax will successfully challenge Thatcher in the here and now. If it does their hold on the labour movement could, along with the Poll Tax itself, be broken. The SLP

Conference left the way open to individual action and some of the SLP MPs have declared their intentions as individuals to withhold the tax. But without an effective working class campaign to destroy it individual action could end up being isolated. Non-payment left unorganised will not stop the tax.

It is still possible to reverse the setbacks in Scotland. But the campaign must focus not just on non-payment but on winning support for the working class to act in the workplaces. Local government workers are naturally fearful for their jobs if they refuse to implement the tax. This allowed the NUPE leadership in Scotland to vote against a campaign of non-payment. Yet workers' collective action is essential and can, if it is organised, prevent victimisation of individuals. Local government workers must be assured of strike action in their support from other sectors in the event of victimisations.

The lessons of the Scottish experience must be learnt by working class militants in England and Wales. This year's Labour Party Conference will take motions calling for campaigns of non-payment. These must of course be supported and

Kinnock's Scottish betrayal and legal strategy for England and Wales must be opposed! But where local campaigns against the Poll Tax are starting up, it is essential that they are directed towards the trade unions at rank and file level, and towards the building of fighting working class tenants and community organisations.

Leaders

At the same time, socialists must now be seeking to win support for a defiance policy throughout the movement. This time we must not let the leaders get away with fine rhetoric which disguises their intention to run away at the first sign of trouble.

- Sink Thatcher's Poll Tax flagship!
- Carry on the fight in Scotland!
- Organise to smash the Poll Tax now!
- No compliance with the Poll Tax legislation!
- Strike action to defend workers victimised for non-compliance
- For a non-registration/non-payment campaign!
- For a one day General Strike when imposed in Scotland!
- For a wealth tax not a Poll Tax!

Gibraltar inquest cover up: see page 10

ILEA sacks 400

BY KATE FORD

TEACHERS RETURNED to work in inner London last month to find nearly 400 supply teachers had been sacked. Most of those sacked were only informed as they returned to work after the holidays.

This action by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) represents not only an attack on jobs but will also severely affect the working conditions of all teachers in inner London. With the present budget, secondary schools can only afford to hire one or two supply teachers. When somebody is absent, teachers will be required to cover. The subsequent decrease in time to prepare lessons and mark work will lead to extra stress being put on classroom teachers and a vicious circle of more absences, and therefore more cover, will begin.

Those looking for immediate support from the main teaching union, the NUT, have been disappointed. The Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA), representing members in inner London, has called for official support for strike action and a refusal to cover any lessons. The national union's Action Committee has agreed "in principle" to sanction some form of action. It is likely that, if anything, they will only allow a half or full day strike.

Why then given the justified anger of NUT members is so little being done? Firstly the national Executive are so desperate to regain some limited power in negotiating pay that they do not want to "rock the boat" with Baker.

As for ILTA, the memory of their officers being suspended over unofficial action last year has turned caution into paralysis. They are waiting for the blessing of the National Executive rather than mobilising for action. The danger is that the reinstatement of 150 jobs will lead to a compromise.

The Executive will act against ILTA officers if they support unofficial action. ILEA will threaten more sackings if we take any form of action. They have already victimised ILTA leader, Dick North. But the best defence will be a membership which is mobilised and takes effective action, not one waiting for the edicts of an Executive in which they have little trust.

Effective action means immediate "no cover" and strike action until all sacked teachers are reinstated. ■

Pay as you learn

BY SALADIN MECKLED

THE CRUNCH is coming for the National Union of Students (NUS). The new Education Act is the most severe attack on education since the war. Polytechnics are to become "independent" on 1 April 1989: so preparations have begun for a massive shake-up to adapt higher education to the dictates of business. Further education colleges will remain under local authority control but with greater "financial autonomy".

The pressure is on for management to run their colleges for profit. "Uneconomic" courses will be chopped, the intake of students restricted and services such as catering and cleaning parcelled out to private business. The prospect is one of cuts in staff, courses and services.

At the same time, Tory hatchetman, Kenneth Baker, has signalled the introduction of a "pay as you learn" scheme in higher education.

TOWER HAMLETS Council was slammed for its racist housing policy last month, in a report published by the Commission for Racial Equality.

The report revealed massive discrimination between the treatment of white and Bangladeshi council tenants and homeless people.

- The Ullah family, burned out in a racist arson attack waited seven months to be rehoused, while white families were rehoused within days of an asbestos discovery.
- White tenants were twice as likely to be offered permanent accommodation.
- Families split by immigration laws were refused re-housing.
- Black people accounted for 86% of the borough's homeless, but only 26% of its council housing list.

Tower Hamlets' SLD Council grovelled before the CRE and promised to put things right. But it has been battling all this year to implement the eviction of Bangladeshi families it claims were "intentionally homeless" because they left their

Racist councils scandal

homes in Bangladesh. The floods, disease and looming famine in Bangladesh that have dominated TV screens doubly underline the SLD's sickening hypocrisy.

But as the CRE commissioner pointed out:

"In many councils throughout the country you can see estates and tower blocks divided into white

only and those which are almost exclusively occupied by black people. Very often where there is a concentration of black people they tend to be in the poorest part of the neighbourhood."

This is no news to black council tenants who have been herded into slum dwellings by Tory, Labour and Liberal councils alike.

As Tower Hamlets Liberals have been keen to explain, racist housing practices were operating long before they ousted Labour in 1986. Labour's half-hearted attempts to "equalise" distribution of housing—without a massive building and renovation project—merely sent Bangladeshi families into a rat's nest of organised racism to face inevitable racist attack and harassment.

We need labour movement organised tenants' groups, exercising day to day control of housing, backed by a massive programme of house building in defiance of government cash limits. But the bleeding hearts of Labour's "anti-racist" councils have all backed off from the confrontation with the Tory government that such a policy would mean.

Against racist attacks, bad housing and racist allocations, working class action is the key. Workers' defence squads and labour movement support for black self defence must be organised now! They can never be defeated by Labour's municipal socialism from above. ■



Families "made themselves homeless" says Liberal council

But for the majority of NUS officials, their position is just a way of filling a blank space on their CV. They will run a mile from any display of militancy. Action committees must be formed giving all students a say in the running of the campaign. This was proved to be essential in the wave of occupations in many London colleges last summer. The inactivity of the NUS leaderships in the face of the cuts made it necessary for the rank and file to organise—and at the Polytechnic of North London direct action led to victory.

But on their own students do not have the power to hit the Tories and their business backers where it hurts—in their pockets. We need to link up with the organised workers who have the power to force the government to back down. The overwhelming majority of working class people will suffer from the current changes which will restrict access to education for those who can't afford to pay.

Trade unionists, starting of course with those working in education, have a direct interest in opposing the Education Act and "pay as you learn". If students show a determined and fighting lead it will be possible to win solidarity strikes such as were seen in France in the winter of 1986/87. Then a huge wave of student revolt won substantial working class support and forced education minister

Pasqua to withdraw a package of attacks. The bureaucratic clique who control NUS (supporters of the misnamed "Democratic Left", i.e. Kinno supporters) now face a clear choice. Fight the attacks or see the way cleared for the destruction of student unionism in Britain.

If resistance to the current onslaught is defeated, the Tories will proceed to the dismantling of NUS through further legal restrictions on affiliation and political activity. The stakes are high. Workers Power supporters in the colleges will be in the forefront of calls for a massive campaign of resistance from rank and file students—with our NUS officials if possible, and against them if necessary. ■

Lambeth hoses homeless

BY MIKE BURTON

IN LONDON, homeless people sleeping rough are routinely harassed by the police. Now, Lambeth Council has joined in.

On 17 August, Lambeth Council employees and the police swooped on a group of homeless people living in the walkways beneath the roundabout at the south end of Waterloo Bridge. The whole area was hosed down without warning. Sleeping bags and cardboard shacks were drenched or thrown into skips.

About fifty people had been sleeping rough in the area. The reasons behind the attack are described in a letter from Public Service Committee Chair, Councillor Kingsley Smith, to the Lambeth Labour Group. He talks of: "... the cleansing problem that exists as a result of overnight sleeping by itinerants" and goes on to say that the problem "... does nothing for this council's image."

The Lambeth Labour Group has since voted to censure Smith but the problems faced by those forced to sleep rough will not go away so easily. As long as the council is pursuing its policy of implementing Tory cuts homelessness is going to be on the increase. More and more people will have no alternative to sleeping rough. The fight to force Labour councils to massively extend council house building is the way to ensure that homelessness is eradicated as a problem. ■

The UDM and Margam

BY MARK HOSKISSON

THE SOUTH WALES NUM has rejected British Coal's proposed six day week at Margam. Lynk the Fink, the UDM's chief scab, immediately told the bosses that the UDM will work 300 days a year instead of 233!

But while the South Wales NUM's rejection is good news, their leadership is still backing off from a fight. Des Dutfield and his friends have not called for the

blacking of work in Margam until the NUM is recognised and until the existing working agreements are honoured by British Coal. They will let the pit open on a six day basis and then try and recruit to the NUM.

This is no good at all. The UDM must not get a foot in the door. Militants must take up the fight to keep Margam closed until the necessary guarantees are given to the NUM. ■

EDITORIAL

Dump Kinnock!

AT THE Scottish Labour Party conference one hack harranged the delegates: "The only way to get rid of the Poll Tax is to elect a Labour Government". He was, according to the *Guardian*, "greeted with incredulity".

That single exchange sums up the problem facing the Labour leaders. Their strategy of fighting the Tories by copying Thatcherite policies in the hope of electoral victory in 1992 has been called "new realism". But those who swallowed it in the past are beginning to understand that it is less realistic than ever.

Thatcher's economic plans are seriously off course. The Poll Tax has aroused fury in Scotland. Tory health ministers blunder aimlessly, faced with deteriorating services and simmering anger over pay. The SDP-Liberal alliance has crumbled. Even Thatcher's loyal press is grumbling about the economy and her attitude to the EEC. Even the *Sun* has promised to "spoil Christmas" for Kenneth Clark if the nurses are not paid in full.

Despite all this Kinnock has not reduced Thatcher's lead in the opinion polls. The reason is simple. No one with an ounce of sense believes in Kinnock's project. Put in power as a coalition of the Labour right and soft left, the Kinnock leadership was designed to make Labour a party fit to run British capitalism again following its turmoil in the early 1980s. No matter how annoyed the bosses get with Thatcher they will never trust Labour until it has proved itself not only a solid capitalist party but also a capable one.

But this summer Kinnock managed to do the opposite. In a fortnight that left his team of handlers "depressed", he first rejected Labour's unilateral dis-armament policy, then accepted it again, losing his exasperated defence spokesman in the process.

Then he stood up to plead with the TUC to join in Fowler's "work for dole" scheme and was snubbed by the very unions whose block vote keep him in power.

Kinnock took over the leadership, like Foot, because neither right nor left could win control, and he

has ended up—like Foot—alienating left and right alike.

Is the centre-right coalition splitting up? There are signs in both the Labour Party and the unions that the right wing are on the offensive; grooming John Smith as Kinnock's replacement in the PLP and organising to oust the Kinnockite leadership of the TGWU.

In the TGWU the right are continuing their offensive on Todd and company even though the centre-left leadership tried to prove its "responsibility" following the right wingers' walk-out from an executive meeting by endorsing a block vote for Kinnock and Hattersley. Kinnock's supporters will never break their truce with the right even when the right plays it rough.

The meaning of Kinnock's strategy has been: do not fight, do not break the law, wait for Labour. This continues to cause havoc in local government. Kinnock himself does not have an ounce of political power in parliament. But his loyal councillors are busy wrecking the lives of workers in the inner cities.

From left wing Brent to right wing Birmingham they are cutting services dramatically, attacking union rights and sacking council workers.

All the while, the same union leaders who will not fight Kinnock in the party refuse to fight his councillors and their hard line managers, bailiffs and redundancy notices.

In the conference the bloc vote will deliver Kinnock's goods. The leadership is set to press home the expulsion of *Militant* supporters in Glasgow even as they play a leading role in fighting the Poll Tax.

It will enforce the presence of EETPU scabs on the conference floor. It will cement its authority with new rules against future leadership elections and the selection of bye-election candidates. It will smash the organised voice of black people in the party.

But there is an alternative. As the NHS, education and housing crumble; as inflation and the Poll Tax eat into living standards workers must organ-



ise to fight.

The howls of disbelief of the Scottish Labour delegates told "to wait for Labour" reflect a mood that will grow as Thatcher's third term offensive starts to take effect. That mood must either be transformed into action or dissolve into cynicism. And while action must be focused in the factories, offices, schools and council estates it must include the fight at Blackpool to dump Kinnock and Hattersley and vote for Benn and Heffer. ■

● See page 7 for more on Labour

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Another oil rig disaster

AFTER THE tragedy at *Piper Alpha*, a second rig, the *Ocean Odyssey* exploded in September. The rig was declared safe by a government inspector seven days before the explosion.

This proves that the bosses and Tories put profit before safety. The bosses knew that there was a dangerous gas level when this inspection took place. They did nothing. Sixty-six men escaped from the rig. Sixty-six could easily have died.

The radio operator tragically died after staying on board to continue his Mayday messages. He died for the bosses' profits. These disasters must be stopped—by workers' control of safety throughout the oil industry. ■

Eleuterio Gutierrez

MRCI DELEGATES on a recent trip to Latin America were appraised of the latest situation regarding the Bolivian miner framed on theft charges during the general strike of 1985. Eleuterio Gutierrez having been found guilty in the local court has appealed to the high court at Sucre. Having been imprisoned for three years before his case was "decided" he now has to languish in jail for a further period waiting for his appeal.

An added problem for Eleuterio is his health. He is now suffering from a tumour on his neck which needs urgent medical attention. Over two thousand US dollars, collected in the British and Euro-

pean labour movement was handed over to aid the defence of this class war prisoner. The MRCI was asked to convey the campaign's heartfelt thanks for this effort.

A recent report by Amnesty International on the case entitled "Bolivia: miners' right to a fair trial denied" declared:

"Amnesty International is concerned about a number of aspects of the case, such as the allegations of the ill-treatment and coercion of a witness, and by reports that Mr Eleuterio Gutierrez Marcani, although charged with a common crime, has been detained as a result of his lawful political and trade union activities".

Copies of the report can be obtained from:

Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 8DJ

Free Eleuterio Gutierrez
Campaign
BCM Box 7750
London WC1N 3XX

MAYEKISO TRIAL

MOSES MAYEKISO is a black trade union leader in South Africa. His union, the metalworkers' union NUMSA, has played a heroic role in a number of struggles against the racist apartheid state. He is now on trial. The regime is out to silence the voice of the working class.

Moses' testimony at his trial was an inspiration to workers everywhere. He used the dock as a platform to explain why the black working class had to fight apartheid.

He made clear that the unions had to fight for working class interests even against a black dominated

government, so long as it remained tied to capitalism.

Such testimony was not designed to prove his "innocence". After all he pleads guilty to being an intransigent fighter for the working class, but this is no crime. It is a brave stand against one of the most vile and repressive governments in the world.

Every worker must support Moses and the other workers on trial with him. We must demand the release of every prisoner incarcerated for fighting the racist state.

- Free Moses Mayekiso!
- Free all political prisoners!

Benefit Concert

for

Campaign
Against
Repression in
Iran

Classical Guitarist:
Sirus Malakooty

Saturday 1 October
Old Theatre, LSE
Admission £3

The nations' sickness

EDWINA CURRIE, the Tory minister for health (or should it be sickness) gave us more of her words of wisdom last month. Old people should knit now to stay warm.

Her advice came just before the publication of *The Nation's Health*, a survey paid for by the government itself. It revealed that Tory policies are leading to thousands of needless deaths. Unemployment is a major factor in lowering health standards and subsequent deaths. The poor cannot afford decent diets. Disease is the result.

With the Tories pressing ahead with their plans to smash up the NHS and make sure the poor get an even worse health service the nation's health will decline even more. By accident the Tories have given us further proof that the health workers' fight to defend the NHS is in the interests of the whole working class. ■

● see letter on page 15

Shooting to kill

WHILE EVIDENCE has been destroyed and witnesses defamed by an MI5 smear campaign in the Gibraltar inquest into SAS assassination of three unarmed Irish Republicans, British "justice" has not been idle in Northern Ireland. The British soldier who shot in the back the unarmed Aidan McAnespie at a border crossing has been let off a charge of manslaughter. The judge ruled that there was "insufficient evidence". There may be no death penalty but for the British state the "shoot-to-kill" policy is a handy substitute.

● For the duration of the Gibraltar hearings there is a picket of the Army Careers Office in the Strand in London, Mondays 6.00pm to 7.30pm to protest against the SAS's "official" murders. We urge all London readers to support it. ■

We would like to point out that last month's front page photo caption was written by our editorial staff, not Andrew Moore or Reflex.

"Death from above"

LAST MONTH the British Army proudly unveiled its new "Air Cavalry" regiment. Helicopter borne soldiers backed by helicopter gunships demonstrated how they would "help stop a Soviet tank attack".

Not that much help however since Soviet tanks attack in waves of several thousand and the 500 man regiment has already complained about inadequate weapons.

Watchers of Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now* will know that Air Cavalry has a much more specialised role, namely dispensing "death from above" against insurgent peasant villages.

It can equally well be used against densely populated working class areas. Derry and Armagh watch out today; Brixton and Armthorpe tomorrow. ■

EVEN BY Tuffin and the UCW leadership's standards it was quite an achievement. The 31 August national strike which they were forced to call was absolutely solid. Within a week every major office was on strike against management's attempts to crack down with dismissals, bussing in more casuals and diverting mail from striking areas. Yet despite the fighting spirit of the postal workers, Tuffin and the UCW accepted a deal that conceded everything that the management wanted.

Tuffin was not so fulsome in his praise of this particular sell out deal as he has been of his handiwork in the past. This time the man who called the Shorter Working Week Agreement a magnificent achievement admitted that what he had got "was not a victory for the arguments we have been making". He had good reason to confess as much. Nearly every postal worker knew that Tuffin had sold them short. They would not believe anything the officials said to the contrary.

On every issue in dispute the UCW signed on the dotted line for the bosses' terms. The one day strike was against the Difficult Recruitment Areas Supplement (DRAS). Management want to introduce this as their first shot in the campaign to break up the national pay agreement and introduce merit payments at management's discretion. The deal now struck agrees to negotiations aimed at finding "alternative arrangements for new recruits in problem areas". Tuffin has clearly stated: "We are not opposed to the payments, but to the way they were imposed on us".

If only the Post Office would talk nicely to the officials like they used to then Tuffin will agree to DRAS by another name!

In the name of speeding the clearance of the backlog Tuffin agreed to all the staffing methods that the membership were locked in a battle against. The agreement accepts that there will be "no reliance on, or exclusion of, any single staffing method". This is a green light to management to press on with casualisation, to use contract drivers and to divert mail between offices.

Postal workers have found this out to their cost since they returned to work. Management have been setting strict limits on overtime while trampling on local agreements to limit casuals. They have been insisting on handling mail diverted from offices still in dispute.

In order to make all this easier for the bosses the agreement left it up to local branches to find their



Tuffin with the pickets, and dead against them!

John Harris / IFL

Tuffin's sell out

BY DAVE HUGHES

own settlement terms with management in isolation from each other and with no official backing. Even worse Tuffin agreed to the branches only having three days to reach a deal and get back to work!

While many offices fought rear-guard battles they were faced with other difficulties besides the sabotage of Tuffin. They primarily focused on their own local issues and there was no force capable of linking them together around a national, generalised set of demands. What was needed was a delegate meeting of all striking offices to agree to a set of national demands, pull out the returned offices behind them and strike against management while the iron was still hot. Instead they were left to be picked off one by one.

Management have survived this explosion of anger in the post offices courtesy of Mr Tuffin. But the battle is not over by any means. Management are cracking the whip even harder and resistance will continue. A third of the workforce in Liverpool and Manchester opposed the eventual return to work. Many offices have passed resolutions of no confidence in Tuffin. The will that exists amongst the rank and file to build a union that fights to win was shown at Leeds. The very same mass meeting that voted to return to work also vote unani-

mously for no confidence in Tuffin.

What is needed now is a rank and file movement that builds on the militancy of the strike while learning the lessons of its failures. It must fight to boot Tuffin and co out and to make sure that all officials are recallable by the workers they represent. November's rules revision conference must be a focus for this.

A new leadership must be built around a programme that can unite all postal workers against the Post Office bosses. That programme must include:

- Kick out the traitorous leadership. For a democratic union that fights.
- Scrap DRAS and all merit payments. For a minimum wage for all Post Office workers

equivalent to the average industrial wage.

- Scrap the Shorter Working Week Agreement. For a shorter working week with no strings.
- No to casualisation. Every worker to have a full time permanent contract.
- Scrap all privatisation plans and plans to end the letter monopoly.
- An end to the slave driving regime in the offices. For trade union control of the conditions of work.

Faced with a resolute management and a determined workforce Tuffin and co tried to save their own bacon by doing the bosses' dirty work. Now is the time to sweep them aside and prepare for the battles ahead. ■

TRAVELLERS ON London Underground's Northern Line will not need reminding of the constant refrain: "Trains cancelled due to staff shortages". The fact that passengers are given this announcement to cover for other reasons—lack of trains for instance—is another story. The Northern Line is chronically understaffed. At the Morden depot alone there are some forty vacancies for drivers, let alone guards.

The reasons are clear. Despite London Underground Limited's (LUL) record profits last year, its workers still remain one of the lowest paid groups of industrial workers in London. Before this year's wage agreement (5.2% or 0.5% below inflation!) is brought in, train drivers earn a mere £3.80 an hour, with guards getting a pathetic £2.96!

Coupled with low wages, train crews, and particularly drivers, have to cope with working conditions that cause considerable stress. Management's lust for profit has meant that safety has gone out of the window, as the Kings Cross fire tragically revealed.

Management responded to Kings Cross by announcing its biggest ever budget. However only a paltry 13% was to be spent on stock and maintenance! Passengers groan at yet another signal failure, but is it surprising when the equipment is sixty years old?

In order to fill some of the vacancies management has proposed bringing drivers who "travelled" to other lines, but were able (under the "clause 9" agreement) to keep their home depots, back to their Northern and Central Line depots. And as incentive to these drivers they will retain their OPO (One Person Operated) rate of pay (a minimum of £40 over the drivers' weekly rate). This means that drivers will be working alongside the clause 9 drivers doing exactly the same job, but with the lower drivers' rate of pay.

Tube strike vote

BY A LONDON UNDERGROUND WORKER

Feelings ran so high that crews at Morden, who held an emergency meeting, threatened to stop work without warning. This action was averted by ASLEF's LUL flunky, "Bomber" Harris, who deferred action until a further meeting of the entire line was held on 21 September.

Tempers rose at that meeting when ASLEF officials, including "Bomber" Harris and Stan Godwin, squirmed as crews got an opportunity to grill them for their yellow record. Two reps from the Central Line Leytonstone depot were dismissed as "revolutionists" and "rabble rousers" for their pertinent attacks on the platform.

Forced into a corner, the platform was obliged to put forward a proposal. They said:

1. OPO rate for all drivers when the first clause 9 drivers arrive on the line.

We pointed out that drivers from the Victoria line were already at Edgware and being paid OPO rate and that we wanted:

OPO rate now!
2. They proposed that Guard/Motormen should get the OPO rate after they had completed 217 driving days. We said:

Guard/Motormen to get the rate as soon as they cover a driver's duties.
3. For Guards they argued that instead of £2 per week (OPO related payment) proposed by management, it should be negotiated to bring it nearer to £10. We said:

£10 for Guards now!
Our proposals stuck and it was unanimously agreed to take industrial action on 6 October to realise

Lessons of Maudsley strike

Workers at the Maudsley hospital in South London went on indefinite strike action from 5 September. The strike lasted 12 days. It did not win its main demand which was for the government "to fully fund and guarantee fair and proper implementation of the nurses' regrading". But on returning to work the strikers are continuing to push for the settlement of local grievances over the regrading issue.

This strike holds vital lessons for all NHS workers. On the plus side it showed that health workers can take indefinite action. As long as emergency cover was not under real workers' control there were problems of ensuring the full effectiveness of the action. Nevertheless workers inside and outside the hospital generally respected the picket line and morale was high. If that could be achieved locally and sustained for twelve days how much more could be done on a national basis.

But, the strike failed because it was not spread. Beyond several hospitals holding one hour solidarity actions the Maudsley remained isolated. The reason for this isolation was that COHSE refused to make the strike official. They were terrified that official recognition would lead to the action spreading. A rolling indefinite strike would have blown apart their plans—for a continued united front with the RCN. This rotten front is maintained on the RCN's no-strike terms and is based purely on negotiations backed by "public opinion" to settle the regrading issue.

The most sickening thing after the strike ended was that COHSE retrospectively made it official. This was a cynical manoeuvre to get the bureaucracy the goodwill of the strikers and save the credentials of the local "left" official, Pete Marshall.

The Tories will try throughout the autumn to cheat the nurses. The only thing that can stop them is indefinite strike action in every hospital. The Maudsley shows that strong organisation can deliver that action. It also shows that the rank and file have to organise to break the paralysing grip of the union bureaucracy if that action is to win. ■

The post strike in Birmingham

BY BIRMINGHAM WORKERS POWER

WORKERS AT Birmingham's main sorting office returned to work after the 31 August strike to find management spilling for a fight. They walked out when management tried to suspend a fellow worker who refused to handle scab mail sent from strike bound Coventry.

The local branch officials did everything they could to accommodate to Tuffin and dampen down the action. They limited the action to the local issue of handling scab mail rather than linking it to an all out national struggle against DRAS and the use of casuals.

The mass of the members were denied any real involvement in the strike. There were only two mass meetings during it. One was in the first few days in order to ratify the

strike. The other one was, as one Birmingham postal worker put it, "a back to work rally".

The local officials showed their true colours in the way that they handled the disputes. They refused point blank to call the clerical staff out. On a number of occasions they removed successful flying pickets from district offices leaving scabs to go in unhindered.

Workers Power supporters produced a regular bulletin for Birmingham postal workers. We stepped up production in the dispute. On the picket lines there was widespread hostility to Tuffin as well as to local officials. That hostility must be turned into action to boot the lot of them out and replace them with leaders who will fight and be directly answerable to rank and file postal workers. ■

- Don't waste this chance!
- All out on 6 October!

At 3-00 am on Thursday 22 September a handful of occupiers were rudely awakened at three libraries in Hackney. Squads of police and private contractors accompanied by a posse of high court sheriffs waving warrants took possession of the buildings on behalf of Hackney Council.

The libraries at Goldsmiths Row, Howard Road and Somerford Grove were all earmarked for closure back in March as part of a cost cutting exercise by the ruling Labour Group on the council. They were the only services left in some of the most run down estates in Britain's poorest inner-city borough. Despite the efforts of librarians and other council trade unionists together with members of the community in each area Tommy Sheppard, head of Leisure Services, announced a closure date of 12 March.

The response of the campaigners was to go into occupation. Round the clock rotas were set up to guard the buildings and maintain the lending service.

Bennite council leader, Andrew Puddephatt, had won initial support for his "dented shield" policy of a cuts budget in the local Labour Parties. But in the wake of the library occupations a majority of Party delegates backed a compromise resolution to restore funding to them. The council leadership manoeuvred swiftly to reconvene the meeting and overturn the decision, playing on the fears of DLO construction workers facing job losses to organise a threatening lobby backing the council.

Hackney libraries fight on

BY JOHN STUTTLE

Workers Power supporters who were involved from the outset of the occupation consistently argued that although the occupation was essential to maintain the campaign the key to winning was strike action by librarians and other council workers. This has not proved easy to get as librarians so far have only been redeployed. But the council is overspending on its cuts budget already so redundancies are sure to follow soon. Jobs have already gone in the laundrettes and public toilets.

The campaign is now coming to ahead. On Friday 9 September the bailiffs moved in at 7-45 am to find more than thirty occupiers in each library and the doors locked. They went away for "an hour", not returning till Thursday 22 September. Within hours of the evictions, however, the Goldsmiths Row site was re-occupied. The following afternoon library workers and occupiers were joined by dozens of Hackney teachers in a spontaneous demonstration on the Town Hall steps.

Tommy Sheppard's timing of the evictions was a serious misjudgment. On Thursday evening both Hackney North and South Labour Party GCs were due to meet. Both passed resolutions in support of

the occupations. The traditionally pro-cuts South GC added a clause supporting the re-occupation of Goldsmiths Row. This wipes out any pretense to a mandate by the council. But it won't stop them sending in the police again.

The reoccupation of the other two libraries must go ahead. Our possession of the buildings and books is a big factor in the success of the campaign. The council will only listen to militant direct action. Paper resolutions are useless unless transformed into real physical support for the occupations.

But the key remains strike action. If necessary the council will simply bring in 400 Special Police thugs as they did when evicting squatters in Stamford Hill earlier this year. Library staff must walk out in response to the inevitable return by the police to the reoccupied libraries and against any attempts to move the books and equipment in them. Town Hall staff must refuse to do work for any councillor who voted for or implements any cuts.

Social services are coming out for a day on Thursday 29 September in protest at cuts. Links must be forged with them. On 30 April Nicolas Ridley announced that he was closing the DLO next year by central government diktat eliminating up to 600 council jobs in one swoop. The argument must be won with the DLO workers. Private contractors were used to board the libraries up because they wouldn't touch them. This is an excellent start. But protest action must be taken against the use of private contractors and more fundamentally to force the council to defy Ridley's closure order.

An emergency joint shop stewards meeting must be convened to agree on action and coordinate a campaign to win the whole workforce to indefinite strike action against all the councils intended cuts.

- Defend the library reoccupations, hands off our books!
- Strike to save the libraries and all other council services!
- No cuts in jobs and services, no rent and rate rises!
- For a budget based on need not Tory spending limits!

Area Housing Office. Council workers have a direct interest then, in supporting the occupation. Besides, two housing workers in NUPE have been suspended for "collecting, conniving and conspiring" to help the tenants during the occupation. These charges are designed to intimidate housing workers and prevent unity being built between workers and tenants against cuts and privatisation.

NUPE have not led a walk-out against these suspensions. They are allowing them to go through the disciplinary procedures. This will make maintaining the mood for strike action more difficult and it has let the NALGO housing branch off the hook. And on the occupation NALGO has declared that they support its aims but not the action itself!

The Labour council's support for Tory cuts makes a mockery of their official slogan of "defending jobs and improving services". At the outset of their vicious cuts campaign they set an initial target of 3,750 job cuts through a recruitment freeze. Nearly a year later it is estimated that their enthusiasm for cuts has led to 6-7,000 job losses. Only rank and file fighting unity between council workers and tenants can stop the cuts, defend jobs, improve services and put paid to the Tories' plans to set up a NAT.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE economy

Labouring over Lawson's difficulties

ONE YEAR ago this month the world's stockmarkets crashed. Critics and cheerleaders for capitalism alike anticipated recession.

That it hasn't happened yet is partly due to the co-ordinated response of the major imperialist economies to loosen and cheapen the flow of money, keeping businesses solvent and trade flowing. Britain along with the rest of the OECD lowered interest rates. In the six months or so after the October crash Lawson cut rates by over 3%.

Together with the steady rise in real earnings and a tax-cutting budget in March, the lower interest rates combined to fuel a huge spending boom. So huge in fact that Britain's industry could not cope with it. Manufacturing output was growing at half the rate of demand.

As a consequence the trade gap has mushroomed. Lawson's budget projection of a £4 billion deficit by the end of the year looks a sick joke. It was £2 billion last month alone and its on target for an annual £13 billion. Lawson was forced to act over the summer. The prospect of a runaway deficit would drain reserves and eventually threaten a run on the pound. This happened repeatedly in the 1960s and 1970s, as investors dumped sterling by the truckload.

For the moment there is no great panic from them because the last few years has seen the British bosses make some headway in restoring output levels, profits and productivity. But confidence cannot be maintained if there is no action to reduce the deficit.

So Lawson has pushed up interest rates by 5% in a few months. Mortgages have rocketed and these increased costs have more than wiped out the tax handouts in the spring. Home owners—the main source of the demand explosion—have no more spare money to dish out on imports.

The Labour Party's response has been to crow over Lawson's difficulties. It claims credit for predicting the consequences of the last budget. It hopes to capitalise on the political fall-out as the Tories hit many of their supporters. But if the opinion polls are any guide—at all the Labour front bench's alternative prescription for the economy has failed to light the imagination.

On the trade deficit Labour have a short term and medium term answer. The first is to renounce interest rate rises and slap on credit controls. They say these would not push prices up and would penalise only future, not present, borrowing.

Yet Labour know full well this would not work in the context of their overall economic policy. Since 1979 there has been a revolution in the range of credit instruments and a massive internationalisation of borrowing. This has been at the heart of the City's growth.

Domestic credit controls would be subverted. To the degree they had an effect it would lead to borrowing abroad. To stop that would mean reimposing the exchange controls the Tories abolished in 1979. But Hattersley made crystal clear in 1986 to US fund managers that Labour would not do this.

As to the medium term strategy for dealing with the trade gap, the latest *Labour Party News* quotes the NEC's Productive and Competitive Economy Review Group to the effect that:

"Britain's ability to compete is

severely handicapped by the loss of so much of its manufacturing industry and by the failure to invest in new skills and new technology, new plant and processes."

Labour dreams of emulating the state-industry investment strategy of Japan. But it fails to own up to the fact that Japan's success was also based on a severely defeated labour movement, low wages and non-existent social welfare.

The CBI are unimpressed by Labour's plans because their present rate of investment corresponds to the opportunities for profitable returns. If investment is to be undertaken for other reasons (i.e. job creation) they fear it will have to be paid for out of a tax on profits. Timid as it is the Review Group contemplates such (unspecified) taxes on capital. But for the working class Labour Party policy is worse. The abandonment of any serious plans to restrict the operation of the market offers nothing to workers. Labour envisage a role for public ownership of the utilities (gas, water etc), some state provision of housing and benefits and an extension of "social ownership".

Since the latter amounts to little more than the promise to the workforce of a few shares (10-15%) in the business, workers' fates are tied even more to the ups and downs of the market. Since it accepts that North Sea oil money is running out and renounces a major reversal of Thatcher's tax handouts to the rich, Labour's whole strategy for boosting benefits and investment entirely lacks credibility.

Labour has been converted to the idea that industry is best run by private business, even if the latter need a little direction over investment. This is grotesque when there are still well over two million on the dole. That is the cost of Labour's surrender to the idea, expressed in the Policy Review, that the "market is a valuable spur to competition".

Labour economic policy envisages no role for the working class and no attempts to control the operations of the bosses whose only god is profit. The Policy Review argues that under Labour: "Government agencies and local authorities [will] work in partnership with firms, the CBI, trade associations and chambers of commerce."

The trade unions, the workforce? No thank you. They will get a few crumbs from share dividends if they work hard enough (and no doubt renounce "excessive wages").

Labour Party members and supporters must fight this drift at the start of the Policy Review exercise. Delegates at Blackpool have an opportunity to do this by voting for resolution 89 from Chesterfield CLP. It recognises two important principles.

First take back, without paying a penny in compensation, those industries that the Tories gave away at bargain prices to their friends; secondly, place those industries in the hands of the workers who work in them so that the power of capital can be challenged where it counts—at the point of production.

This is the answer to the discredited experience of nationalised industries which Labour championed and now wishes to abandon.

There is an alternative to bailing out the bosses and appointing a vast bureaucracy to run industries on a diet of low wages and drastic job cuts. It is to expropriate them once and for all and begin to plan production for the needs of the many and not the profits of a few.



Manchester tenants take on council

BY A MANCHESTER HOUSING WORKER

COUNCIL TENANTS in Hulme, an inner-city Manchester estate, have occupied the Hulme Project office. The Labour council's Hulme Project is responsible for the future redevelopment of council housing in Hulme.

However, the council are determined to wind down the Project and redeploy staff to other offices. The tenants' protest action is against these cuts. Hulme is almost certainly earmarked by the Tory government for a Housing Action Trust (HAT). The Tories plan to take Hulme out of council ownership altogether. A HAT will be set up under the direct control of Thatcher's Secretary of State. Hulme tenants will have no right to vote against it.

A HAT in Hulme would enable financiers and private builders to make huge profits out of valuable city-centre land. The cost of this redevelopment would be passed on

as high market rents. When the Tories hand over HAT property to private landlords, tenants will lose their security of tenure. They will face massive rent increases from modern-day Rachmans. The unemployed, the low paid, the students and the OAPs who form the majority of Hulme's tenants would be hammered.

If the Labour council sees no future for the Hulme Project it must mean they see no future for Hulme as a council estate. Bootle MP Allen Roberts' declaration on behalf of the Labour leadership in the "respectable" journal *Inside Housing*, has set the tone for Labour's "opposition" to HATS. He indicated that Labour would not break the law and would, if HATs are set up, cooperate with them. Manchester Council have taken their cue from this advance notice of surrender.

The question mark over the future of Hulme and the Project also applies to the Moss Side and Hulme

Liberation: not on The Black Agenda

Laura Williams and Colin Lloyd review the Black Sections policy document

SINCE ITS conference in April the Labour Party Black Sections have been facing a crisis of direction. It abandoned the fight to establish official Black Sections in favour of "exploring the option" of a Black Socialist Society, as proposed by Bill Morris of the TGWU. In return Kinnock has pressed home his attack on Black Sections. Even the "Labour Listens" exercise managed to ignore Black Sections.

In an attempt to put anti-racism back on the Labour agenda, Black Sections have produced a policy document for this month's Labour Party Conference.

A collection of positions passed by Black Sections over the past five years, *The Black Agenda* is both inadequate and contradictory. It reflects rather than answers the crisis of direction facing black militants in the Labour Party.

Pressure

The document is a product of conflicting class pressures. On the one hand there is the pressure of fighting black workers, women and youth. On the other hand there is the pressure of local government reformism—itsself at a dead end faced with Thatcher's curbs on spending. Looming behind all of this is the Thatcherite project of creating a Tory-voting black middle class, a black "enterprise culture" modelled on the USA.

Nowhere are the conflicting pressures more evident than in the document's attitude to the police and black self defence. "The police are the coercive arm of the state, charged with upholding the law by force", it begins. Since the law and the state in question are racist and imperialist it is no accident that the police harass and brutalise black people systematically. Responding to the anger and resistance of black youth, *The Black Agenda* calls for black people to refuse to enter or co-operate with the police force. It calls for Labour to support black self-defence against racist attack.

Blind alley

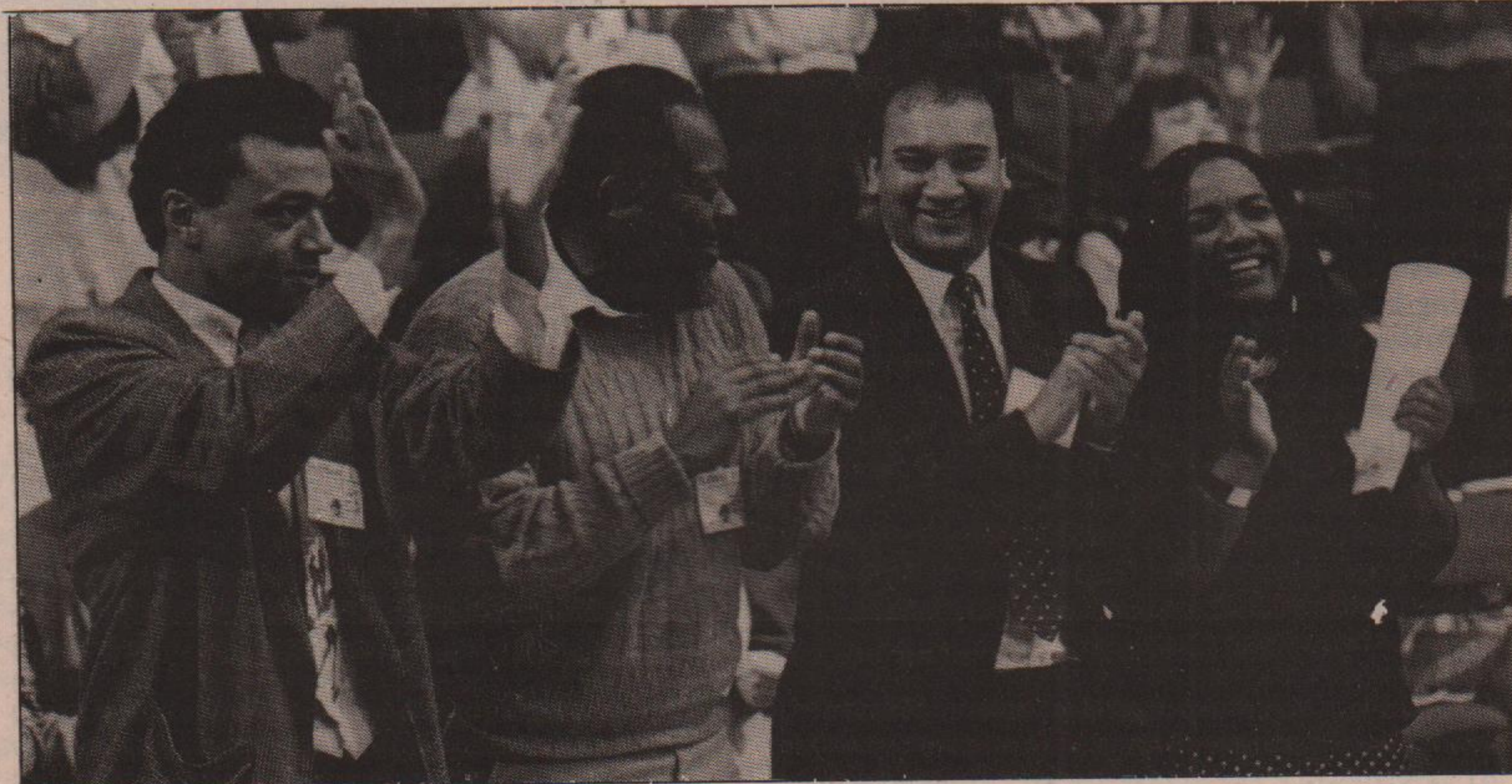
But these arguments lie alongside a completely different set of answers to police racism in the document. These revolve around the idea of transforming the police force "from being a coercive force to a peace keeping one, subject to vigorous scrutiny and control by all the people." It is a blind alley for black and white workers alike.

The police are racist because capitalism is racist. Institutionalised racism and all-pervasive racist attitudes are hallmarks of every capitalist nation. The state, of which the police are a key component, exists to defend capitalism; whether it is crushing black revolt in Handsworth today or Kenya in the 1950s. No matter how many elected police committees, "race awareness courses" and black coppers are introduced the law remains racist.

Collaboration

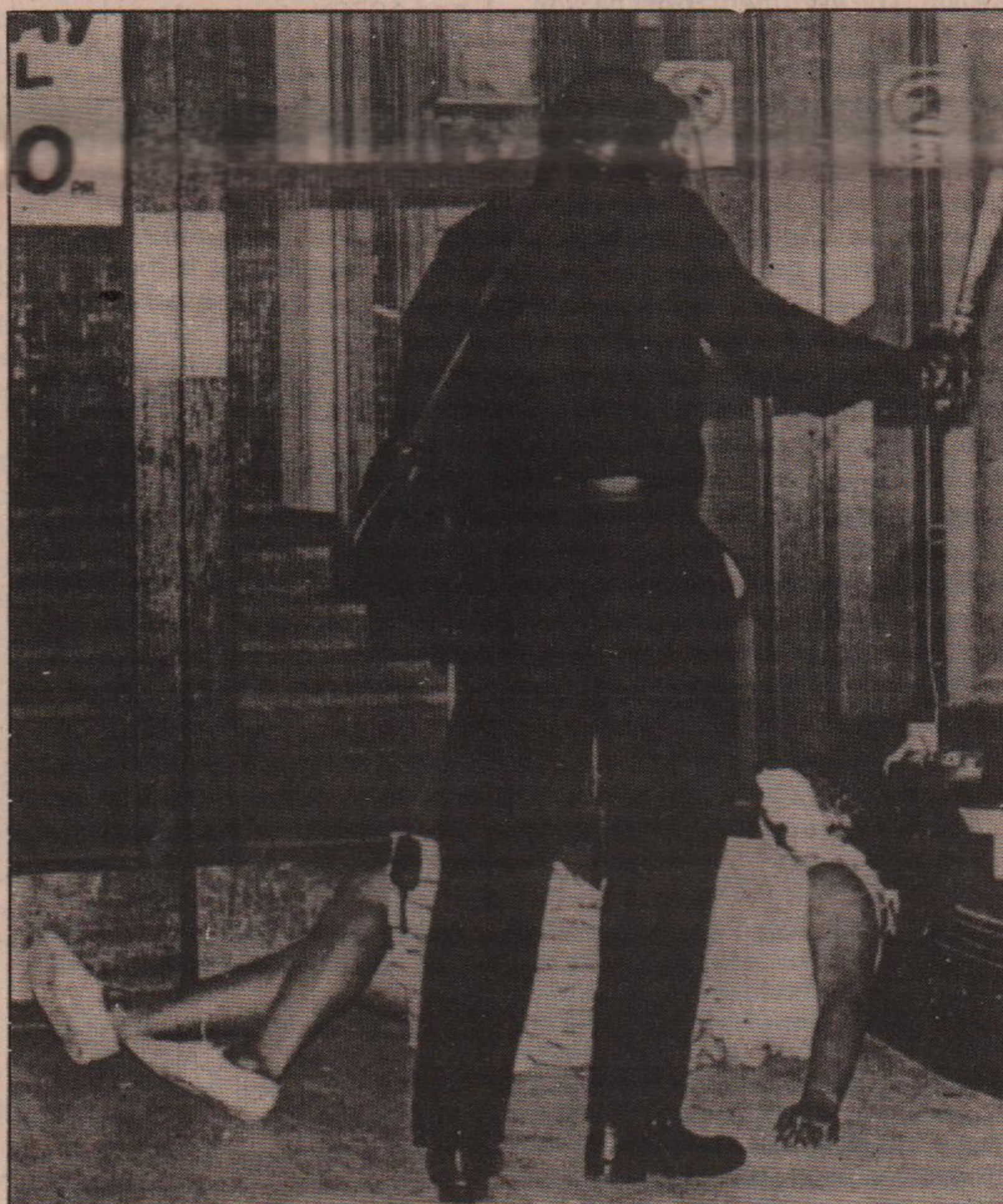
This strategy, centring on "locally elected police committees" is of course a product of resistance but of the systematic collaboration with the police by black councillors and "community leaders". Essentially it says black youth have a right to resist the police by force, but that the problem of police harassment will really only be resolved in parliament and the council chambers.

The contradictions within this are laid bare when the document tries to give a political answer to the problem of police in schools. It calls for a "policy enter school on all sorts of from road safety, to re-



Above: Labour's black MPs, Below: Brixton 1985

John Harris/IFL



cruitment to straightforward propaganda exercises. Their aim is to undermine black youth's justified hostility. At the same time they lurk at the gates of many inner city schools spying on and harassing the youth. Socialists should be in favour of police out of schools full stop!

But the authors of *The Black Agenda* say, "we oppose police in schools, except in the execution of their legally defined duties". These "duties" involve the arrest of black youth who have organised the defence of their communities, the arrest of those in possession of drugs, the arrest of those "suspected" of handling stolen property.

In short all the "legally defined" exercises the police have used to trawl black areas after every outbreak of resistance, are being

sanctioned by the document.

On immigration, *The Black Agenda* suffers the same split personality. It rightly defines all immigration controls as racist, rooted in the imperialism of the British state. It calls on Labour to break with the Tories on immigration control. Yet, realising there is not a hope of this happening, or of Labour gaining office in the foreseeable future, it puts forward a short term alternative to abolishing all immigration controls.

This series of ten demands amounts to the democratisation of immigration controls, not their abolition. It would humanise the process of entry for families of those already here, but do nothing to dismantle the array of racist laws that keep black workers from Britain's former colonies out of this country.

Added to this the document embraces the most passive and desperate strategy for fighting deportation now: the use of "sanctuary" and an alliance with the churches. Instead of class action and a trade union campaign, the trail blazed by Muhammad Idrish who forced NALGO to defend him, we are told to rely on the churches, the white churches who were pioneers of colonialism and the black churches who are today the bastions of reaction and collaboration in the inner cities.

Dilemma

These are just two examples of the dilemma facing black reformism. The reforms are to be implemented under capitalism. But capitalism is bent on extracting a high price from the black community: its stratification and the buying off of a careerist middle class at the expense of millions of black workers. This is the nature of the US reforms designed to buy off the black church leaders and businessmen who were embroiled in the revolts of the late 1960s. Heavyweight boxer Larry Holmes' comment "I was black once, when I was poor" reflects the cynical attitude the Tories want to foster in Britain's black communities.

The *Black Agenda* denounces "the creation of a black elite", however its reformist strategy leads directly to this end. Capitalism cannot reform itself. As long as imperialism grows fat on the labour of workers and peasants in its semi colonies; as long as it uses those workers as a reserve army of cheap labour in its own country, without rights or dignity, there will be systematic state racism.

But capitalism can tolerate, even encourage, an elite of black employers, professionals and policemen. *The Black Agenda* denounces the "enterprise culture", yet in the next sentence it complains that black businesses face "a depressed economy with a lack of development capital and a dearth of support services to help with market-

ing, accounting and management".

The inability of Labour's Black Sections to decisively reject a reformed capitalism as the answer to racism means it has no real retort to those who want to desert the workers' movement.

The widely understood failure of Black Sections has already led to the launch of a "non-aligned" National Black Caucus (NBC). This is modelled on the NAACP—a cross class black pressure group in the USA.

Paul Boateng, Brent South MP, has already aligned himself with the aims of the group. These were outlined by secretary Lee Jasper in an interview in *The Voice* newspaper (30.8.88) as "getting the best possible deal for our members—black British people—and we don't care who is in charge, Tory or Labour. We are only interested if they can deliver for the black people". NBC is clearly setting its sights on displacing Black Sections as the black political voice.

Black Sections cannot hope to combat the NBC without a clear class analysis of Labour itself. Yet this is nowhere to be found in *The Black Agenda*. At several points the documents reveal the real experience of black people:

"Electoral action has so often seemed a fruitless exercise when the main parties' unwritten consensus on race has led many black people to feel they must choose between different evils at the polls."

But as a whole it rests on the argument "Labour is still the best party for black people when it comes to national and local government".

Why? The answer can only be that Black Sections will transform Labour into an anti-racist party. This is a utopia, as Labour remains committed to upholding capitalism and imperialism. In fact it is not "Labour" but millions of white working class men and women who can and must be won to anti-racist action.

Divided

The working class is divided by racism, but thrown together everyday by the struggle in the factories, the unions, the tenants' and community organisations. That fight's unity will be the basis of the anti-racist struggles and it must result in the creation of a revolutionary workers' party.

Revolutionary socialists do not ignore the struggle for immediate demands and reforms. Nor do we make black resistance conditional on winning the white workers first. But we seek to organise the fight around demands that can transform today's defensive and isolated struggles into the struggle for black liberation and workers' power. As the Labour conference delivers its habitual insult to Black Sections by ignoring *The Black Agenda* militants in and outside of Black Sections should renew the fight for a revolutionary alternative. ■



Benn's socialism—an opiate for his supporters

John Harris/IFL

Where now for Labour's left?

The Benn/Heffer challenge for leadership has ended with a whimper rather than a bang. David Taylor explains the choices now facing left reformism in the light of Kinnock's continued domination.

"FROM TIME to time every movement has to rebuild itself. If it doesn't it dies. And we're at this stage now." (Eric Heffer, *Socialist Organiser* 17.9.88).

After a leadership election that never seriously threatened Kinnock, the Labour left is being forced to ask itself, where next?

Benn and Heffer were right to stand against the leadership. Their campaign opened the possibility of focusing the energy of workers in struggle against the new realist leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions.

But their defeat also represents an opportunity. An opportunity to dispel the illusion that Benn/Heffer's series of meetings, conferences and picket line appearances actually constituted a fight against Kinnock and his supporters.

For months CLP and union activists have been mesmerised by the sight of Benn and Heffer going through the motions. A look at the alternatives offered to the minority who have supported them shows how little they have learned.

Sanctuary

Benn himself has a clear project for the "Chesterfield movement" that has come together in two conferences to support his campaign. He sees it as a sanctuary for socialist ideas under attack in the Party at large.

The Socialist Conference can nurture the leaders, the intellectuals, the economists, the ideas the Labour left needs to renew itself when happier times materialise. At the same time it can provide a network of moral and financial support for those in struggle.

This recipe is little more than a

consolation for left reformism's dwindling base of support. It is a soul in the soulless world of Kinnock's Labour Party, and an opiate for Benn's followers.

It is at one with Benn's record of placing unity with the right above fighting them at key moments in the past ten years.

At Bishop's Stortford in 1982 he helped "peace break out" in the Party prior to the election. Throughout the miners' strike he refused to challenge Kinnock for leadership, even as every class conscious worker recognised Kinnock as a scab.

In the 1987 election he declared "the left must be the most loyal" while Hattersley and the right wing ditched party policy to prove their loyalty to the bosses.

Following this course the left will, as it has at two Chesterfield Conferences, inevitably reach a dead end. The workshops, which provide a talking shop for a few yuppie economists and Hampstead 'Sunday Socialists', have provided no new answers for the problems confronting workers in the struggles they have undertaken against the Tories and the bosses.

"We are the ones who are the future. They want to go back to old policies, which haven't and cannot work" says Heffer. He has obviously failed to hear the Socialist Conference debates, chewing over the finer points of old-hat Keynesian policies.

Nor will the projected "disputes support network" provide the kind of organisations that fighting workers need. The Labour left has developed a morbid obsession with the paraphernalia of betrayed disputes.

From the miners, the printers

through to P&O, the left Labour supporters of the disputes have amassed a growing collection of badges, mugs and plates. But they have not been able nor willing to lift a finger to organise real solidarity, i.e. strike action with these heroic groups of workers and their families.

Workers on strike need food and money, yes. That is elementary as any militant knows. But ranged against the anti-union laws, the police and the union bureaucracy workers need solidarity action and militant rank and file organisations if they are going to win—if they are going to stop the Tories' merciless destruction of jobs, livelihoods and trade union rights.

Betrayal

Why won't the Labour left set itself such tasks? Why will its leaders float around the P&O picket lines, but say not a word about the McCluskey's sell-out—still less about Tuffin's more rapid betrayal of the Post strike?

The central weakness of the Labour left is that it will not draw the conclusions in action from its break with the ideas and policies of the Labour centre and right.

When Kinnock says obey the law the Bennites say "defy". But where is the organisation they have ever built to carry this through? When Kinnock says "parliament is the only way" Heffer points to Chile, to Allende, to the unelected state machine.

But where is the organisation he has called for, let alone used his influence to build, to prepare the working class to struggle for socialism outside parliament?

The only lasting organisation the

Labour left has built is the Campaign Group in Parliament. Even this managed to fall apart over the rights and wrongs of standing against Kinnock. And it has so far skillfully wriggled out of every attempt by the centrist groups to provide it with a rank and file, an organisational base, or a democratic structure.

It remains a coalition of committed activists like MPs Corbyn and Nellist with many more committed windbags. Campaign Group News (CGN) remains little more than a news and discussion bulletin for this milieu. In CGN the helpful suggestions of clapped out "Trotskyists" sit alongside the thoughts of witch-hunter Jim Mortimer and ACTT bureaucrat Alan Sapper—the man who left the TV AM technicians to fight a losing battle.

Vision

Heffer's vision of Labour's history is one where the "socialist trend of Hardie, Lansbury and Nye Bevan" is locked in battle with "trimmers like Snowden, MacDonald and Gaitskell". In reality the Campaign Group has seen some of the fastest transitions from "socialist" to "trimmer" in the history of the Party amongst those on its slates and in its ranks.

Without a clearly defined commitment to action, around concrete goals, history will continue to repeat itself. Faced with the prospect of building a loyal opposition to Kinnock's majority in Walworth Road, what should the Labour left do?

It must begin by organising itself for action. In the Labour Groups which are pushing through the local council cuts there sit groups of "anti-cuts" councillors who can effectively do nothing. Organised by the Campaign Group, *Briefing* or *Socialist Action* they have found winning selection battles easier and more profitable than winning the argument for direct action with council tenants and trade unions.

In the Benn/Heffer union conference rallies, militant rank and file members sat side by side with the small time local and regional bureaucrats who have helped derail their struggles.

Programme

A clear programme of action committing the Labour left to organise defiance of the Poll Tax, the anti-union laws, the council cuts; organising picket lines and black self-defence against police attacks; organising to stop the sell-outs in the unions by the bureaucrats, and forge fighting unity in the docks, the post, the councils—this would at least sort out the wheat from the chaff in the unions and CLPs.

But in addition to unity in action the left needs new answers, new politics to combat Kinnock; not a relaunch of the programme Labour used to restructure capitalism in 1945.

The revolutionary socialism of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky embodies the only consistent source of the politics and fighters to stand against the stream of Labour traitors in this century, in this decade.

The Labour Party itself cannot be transformed into a party that can fight for these policies. It has to be replaced with a revolutionary combat party. Neither the "Chesterfield movement" nor the acres of back-slapping newsprint produced by *Socialist Organiser* and *Briefing* can lead the way to such a party.

Those on the Labour left who want such a party should join Workers Power's fight to make it a reality. ■

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party and the LPYS, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

The misnamed Communist Parties are really Stalinist parties—reformist, like the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR, or other degenerate workers' states. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class world-wide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions and councils of action.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The MRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

THE CAMPAIGN for the US Presidency began on "Labor Day", 5 September. It is hard to think of a more inappropriate day to launch the campaign. Labor—the working class—has no interest whatsoever in voting for either of the major candidates.

George Bush, of the Republican Party and the Democrats' Michael Dukakis, are both open candidates of the bosses. Both of their parties are open bosses' parties. The organised working class in the USA does not at present have any political alternative to these parties.

It is not hard to establish the bourgeois credentials of George Bush and the Republican Party. The party has long represented big capitalism in the USA. In par-

ticular it has represented the finance capitalists of the North East and oil magnates like Nelson Rockefeller.

The triumph of Reagan and his right wing coterie inside the party has, to a limited extent, undermined the dominance of the Eastern establishment. However Reagan's supporters amongst the Californian Sun Belt capitalists, who own the new technology industries, and the Texan oil barons are every bit as anti-working class as the Eastern old guard.

The principal policies being pushed by Bush and the Republicans are, in all essentials, a continuation of Reaganism. Bush's promises that there will be "No New Taxes" mean that the mas-

sive programme of cuts in welfare spending launched by Reagan will be carried to even more savage lengths.

Bush might be trying to appear a peace-loving guy by extolling the virtues of arms negotiations. But he remains firmly committed to Reagan's Star Wars project.

Under Bush blacks and other ethnic groups will face intensified racist attacks. Bush made a well publicised and illuminating gaffe

when he declared he stood for "anti-bigotry, anti-semitism and anti-racism". His speech writers had meant him to say that he was against anti-semitism.

Obviously Bush was trained in the Reagan School of verbal howlers. However his speech came pretty close to the mark. During the early days of his campaign it was revealed that one of his leading aides had close links with the viciously anti-semitic and anti-

black US Nazis. And Frederic Malek was obliged to resign as Deputy Chairman of the Republican National Committee when it was discovered that he had been the orchestrator of anti-semitic purges during the Nixon years.

Whatever Bush may claim, the Republican Party is a cesspool of racism. And on every other social issue, from abortion to AIDs the Republicans, with fulsome support from the Bible thumpers of the Moral Majority, support deeply reactionary policies.

It is no surprise that Bush was jeered by workers at a shipyard in Portland, Oregon, as a union-buster. Nor is it any wonder that no unions are sponsoring Bush's campaign. The same is not true, however, of the workers' and unions' stand on Dukakis.

The US union federation the American Federation of Labour—Congress of Industrial Unions (AFL-CIO) is giving the Dukakis campaign its whole-hearted support. And that means a lot of money.

On "Labor Day" the car workers'

The battle for the top job in the election offers US workers no

Bosses' parties it out

THE STATE OF THE UNION

GEORGE BUSH is busy telling everybody that under Reagan Americans have never had it so good. He promises more of the same. Certain aspects of the US economy would appear to back up his claims. This explains why Dukakis, unlike Mondale in 1984, is not rubbishing the Reagan record.

The US economy is enjoying its 69th month of growth. Unemployment stands at 5.4%, its lowest figure for 14 years. A turnaround has occurred in a number of industries, notably in motor manufacturing. There has been an expansion of orders and the taking on of new labour. Inflation is hovering at 5% but is as yet causing little alarm in ruling circles.

But on the horizon of this clear sky loom a number of very dark clouds. The candidates may choose to ignore them right now, but a day of reckoning is inevitable once the election is over.

Deficit

For a start the rates of growth in the US economy are significantly lower than in previous boom periods. Unemployment figures in August rose by almost a quarter of a million. The major storm clouds, though, are the budget and trade deficits. The budget deficit has been massive for the past seven years. It was running at 156 billion dollars in 1987 and turning the US into a debtor nation.

Every bourgeois economic commentator is pleading for the future President to face up to this problem by cutting even deeper into welfare spending. The need to raise taxes is not on the agenda now—it might have to be in a year. The trade deficit, though slightly lower in the last period, is, by any criteria, frighteningly high from US capitalism's point of view.

The import and credit boom of the Reagan years has been matched by a dramatic decline in the overall competitiveness of US industry. Growth in productivity between 1970 and 1986 was less than half that of Japan.

As a consequence imports dominate the domestic market. In the car industry the share of imports in the US market has risen from 4.1% in 1960 to 22% in 1984. Even more dramatic, in machine tools the rise during the same period

was from 3.2% to 42%. In 1983 the overall volume of imports grew by 28%. Failure to deal with these structural problems ensures that once the limits of Japan's post-1986 reflation binge are reached—a binge that has eased the US trade deficit—the underlying weakness of US capitalism will make itself felt once more.

The October crash of a year ago was a reminder that the boom was frail. The US bosses are living in daily fear that a Nightmare on Wall Street Part Two will be showing any day now. They are all too aware of the structural weakness that lurks just below the surface of the Reagan boom.

They also believe, in their majority, that the devil they know—Bush carrying on where Reagan has left off—is a far safer bet than the Dukakis they don't. An abiding worry is that Dukakis may succumb to protectionist pressures in the face of a resurgent trade deficit and thus precipitate a deeper and more protracted world recession.

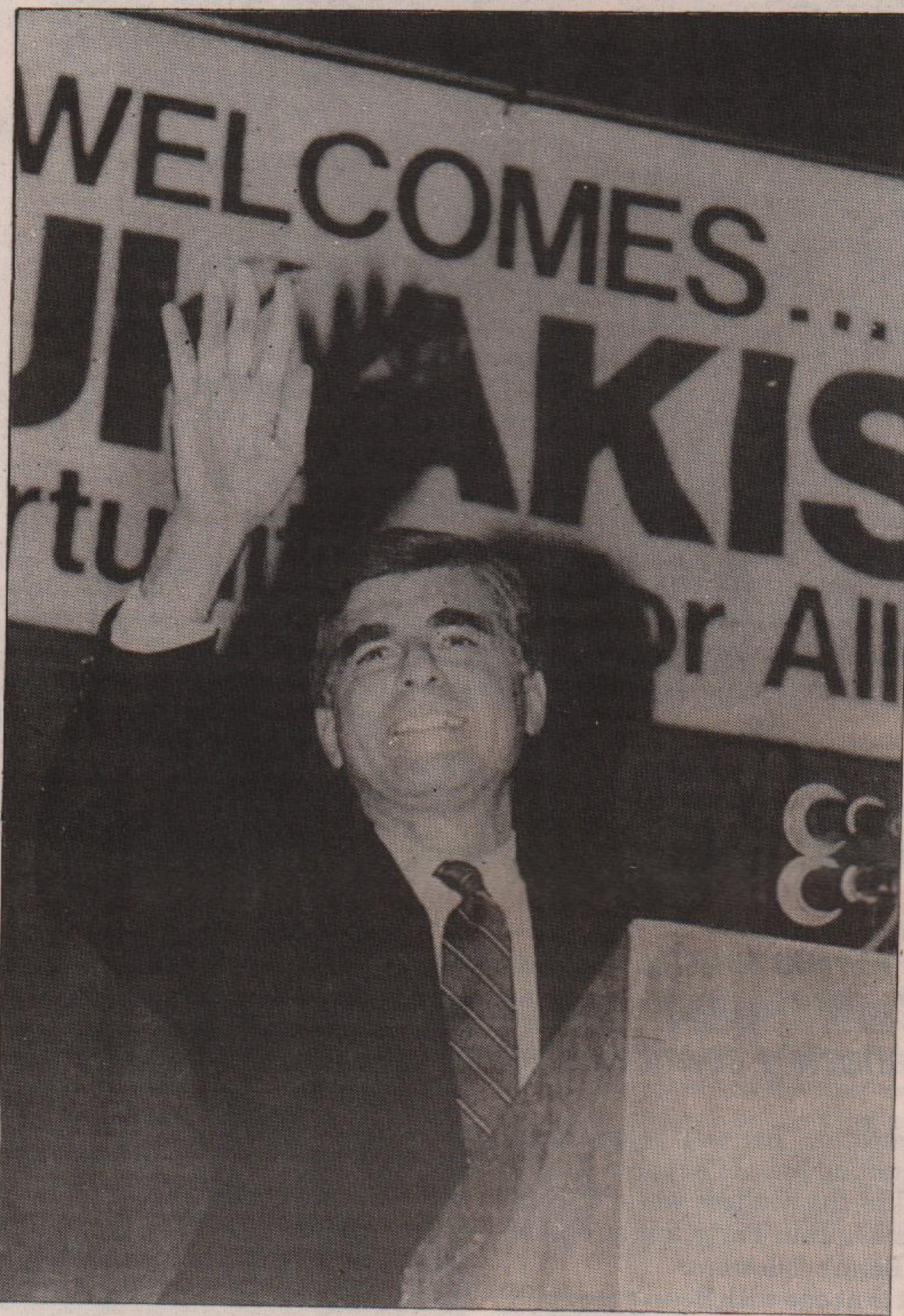
The US bosses are counting on Bush to carry on the attacks on the working class that have, to a large extent, made the economic recovery possible. Under Reagan, even during the boom, working class living standards have dropped.

In 1970 US wages were 4.5% higher, on average, than Japan's. In October 1987 they were a meagre 1.1% higher. Between 1972 and 1984 real earnings across the class fell by 14% in real terms. The minimum wage in the US of \$3.35 an hour was frozen by Reagan in 1980. Its real value has been depreciated by 25% since then.

The onslaught on wages was carried through by two methods. These were begun under Carter and extended under Reagan. First came the "give-back". This entailed the unions negotiating massive wage cuts in exchange for keeping factories open.

Chrysler led the way with a billion dollar give-back in 1979. By the first half of 1982 60% of all unions had followed suit and negotiated either wage freezes or actual cuts. Such was the scale of the operation that a quarter of all unionised factories were operating give-backs.

The other method of slashing living standards was the introduction of two tier wage structures.



Dukakis (above) and Bush supporters (right)

This involved companies paying longer serving workers one rate and newer workers a much lower rate for the same job. Union contracts were ripped up and national centralised collective bargaining was superseded by the imposition of local and plant level agreements. This is what Thatcher hopes is the shape of things to come in Britain. However, from the vantage point of the US bosses, more has to be done if US capitalism is to overcome its competitive weakness. One journal has argued:

"The clear implication is that the United States needs to cut its wages by an additional 4 to 5 percentage points per year". (*Science* 15 July 1988)

Living hell

The Reaganite onslaught on living standards has effected more than just wages. For millions the American dream is a living hell as a result of the cuts in welfare spending.

During Reagan's first term health programmes were axed by 25% while unemployment compensation payments were cut by 31 billion dollars. In human terms this doesn't only mean poverty for millions. It also means that the US has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the industrialised world. Infants born into poor families are dying in their hundreds in

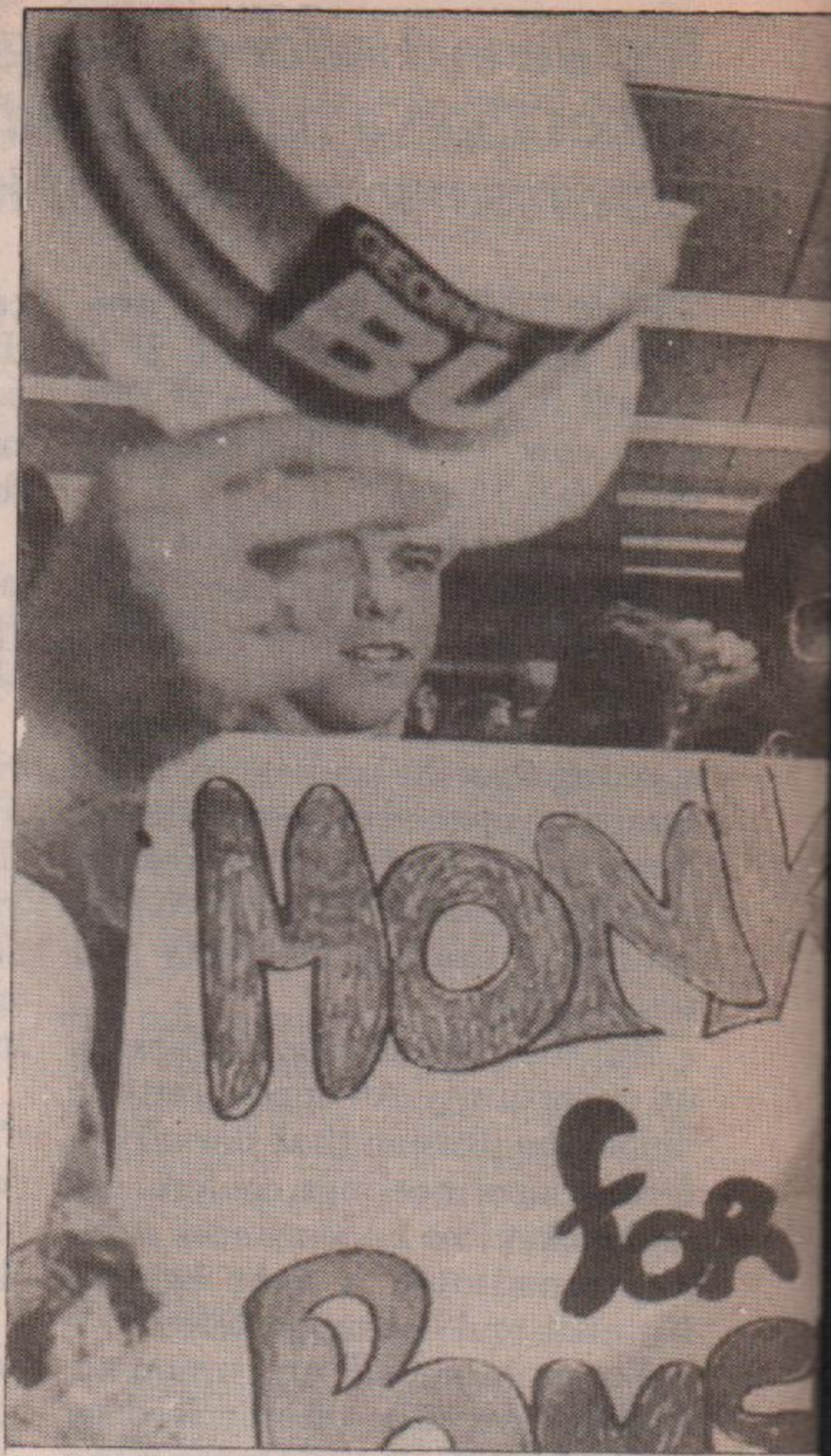
the land of opportunity.

All of these attacks will deepen as either Bush or Dukakis wrestle with the problem of the budget and trade deficits. The AFL-CIO, far from being in a fit state to lead resistance, is at its weakest for decades.

The AFL-CIO still unionises less than 20% of the working population. Its high point in 1954 was 34.7%. Its low point was 1982 with 17.9%. However, under Lane Kirkland, the AFL-CIO president, the unions have just about stemmed the tide and held on to members. But they have done so not through fighting but through business unionism with a vengeance. The ideas of union credit cards and financial services, now being touted by British union leaders, were all pioneered by Kirkland and his cronies.

Offering financial services during the Reagan onslaught on the labor movement really was fiddling while Rome burned. Reagan began by stuffing the National Labour Relations Board (NLRB) with trusted reactionaries. Union representation in government bodies was virtually ended. In particular the unions were driven out of their cherished positions in the Labor Department.

Alongside these institutional attacks unions were hammered in the workplaces. The scene was set with the air traffic controllers un-



ion, PATCO, when 11,400 workers were sacked and the union smashed. Then in the post the union was gutted by the imposition of a 23% wage cut.

Taking their cue from Reagan bosses in factories all over the country embarked on a massive campaign of union busting. The favoured tactic—given legal backing in 1984—was to register as bankrupt and then re-open plants that only employed non-union labour.

The rank and file did not sit back in the face of this onslaught. Hard fought strikes were staged throughout the 1980s. Several involved workforces battling against the bosses and bureaucrats in a determined but tragically isolated

slug

union, the UAW, organised a 30,000 strong rally in Detroit to kick off the Dukakis bid for the Presidency. His refrain, which has been monotonously repeated in every speech since, is "good jobs at good wages". He is making a direct appeal to union members who have suffered wage cuts under Reagan. Dukakis knows full well that if he is to win he has to get back the votes of the "Reagan-Democrats", many of whom were amongst the 40% of the unions' membership who voted Republican in 1984. The AFL-CIO leaders are out to help him. They are desperate to get a Democrat back in the White House.

Yet there is nothing in either Dukakis' policies—vague in the extreme—nor in the history of the Democrats to warrant working class support for this party.

Capitalist

The Democratic Party is based on capitalist backed big city party machines, largely in the North, and on the so called "ancien regime" in the South (the direct descendants of the big slave owners). It also relies on support from various "special interest" groups, the AFL-CIO amongst them.

This coalition, which dates back to the 1930s and the Roosevelt

"New Deal" era is falling apart. But it is not being replaced by either an AFL-CIO monopoly of influence nor by a new "left" coalition around Jackson. Both the AFL-CIO and Jackson, as their support for Dukakis shows, subserviently support the Democratic Party as it is now. They are constituent elements of a thoroughly capitalist party. Union influence inside the party does not make it a workers' party.

On the contrary the Democrats, when they control states or Congress, have always stood firm against conceding anything significant to the working class. Reaganomics was born under Carter. In 1978 it was a Democratic controlled Congress that voted to freeze social spending and deregulate transport. Carter used the Taft-Hartley anti-union laws (introduced by the Democrats in the 1940s) against the coalminers' strike. Despite repeated promises to the AFL-CIO the Democrats have never made a move to repeal these laws.

Dukakis himself is making the slogan "competence not ideology" the touchstone of his campaign to prove his commitment to careful financial management. His record as governor of Massachusetts is cited as an example of how the nation would be run by him.

Over the last period Massachusetts has enjoyed a period of economic boom. But this has been more to do with the general economic situation and lucrative contracts courtesy of Reagan's arms budget, than with Dukakis' re-

forms. And now, as manufacturing jobs are beginning to disappear and as growth rates slow down, even the pro-Democrat *Boston Globe* has been prompted to write: "The miracle is looking awfully ordinary".

As the economic difficulties mount Dukakis has been more than willing to slash state spending on care for the mentally ill, the old and so on. His managerial competence is at the service of the bosses not the workers and the poor.

Confusion

On other issues too Dukakis is clearly a custodian of US imperialism's interests. He may have made a concession to Jackson by branding South Africa a "terrorist state", but his foreign policy is of a piece with Reagan's. After some early confusion he has come out clearly for Israel and against the Palestinians. He told a Jewish audience in Baltimore that he would "never recognise a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state or government in exile".

On arms he is vacillating over Star Wars. In this he is reflecting the worries of sections of US capitalism about its costs. However he is stridently for maintaining and expanding both the nuclear and conventional military arsenal. He thumped out his patriotic message after a joy ride in an M1 tank:

"I want to see our country get respect from our allies... We're going to keep America strong!"

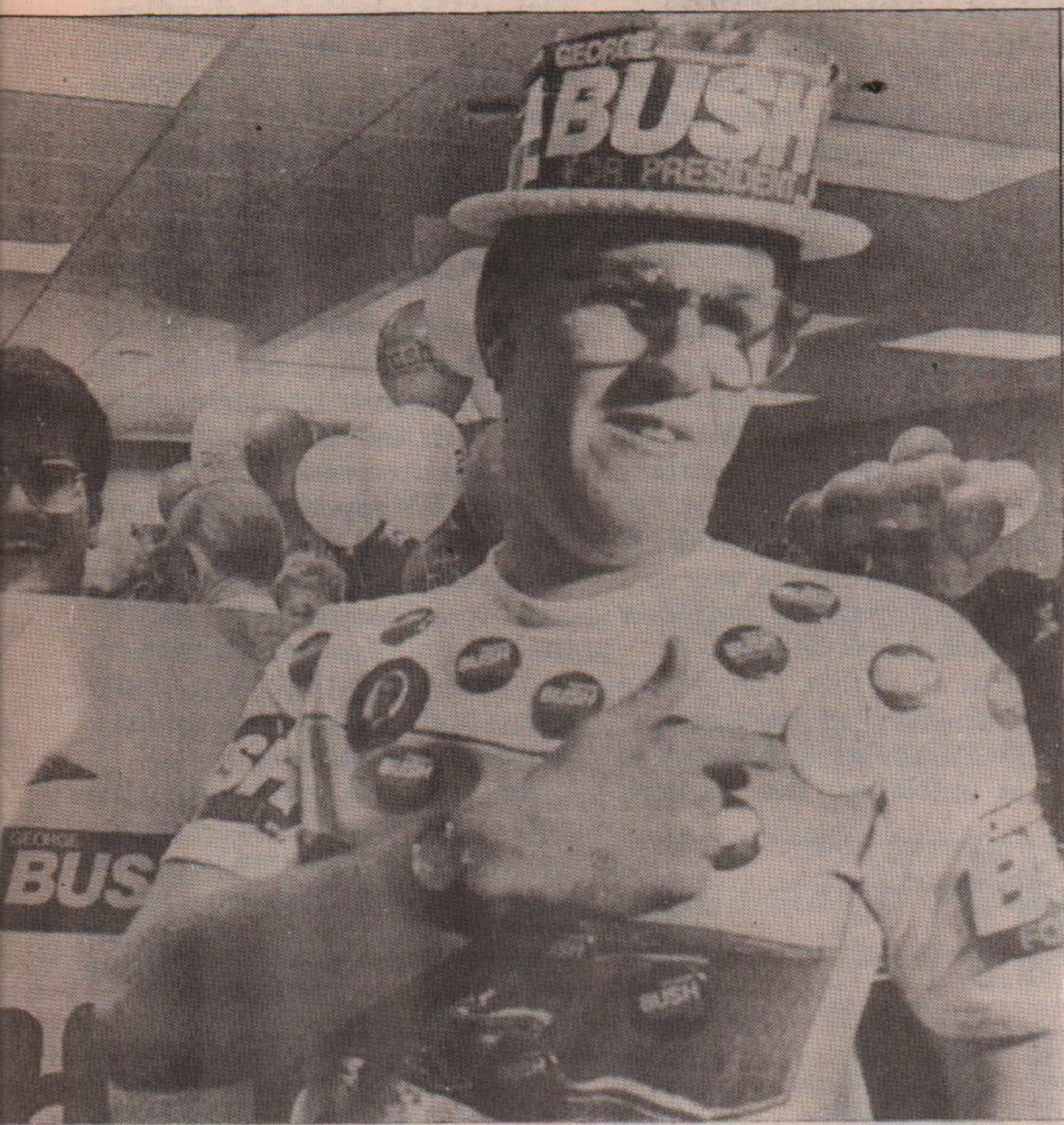
Despite the fact that anti-abortionists have hounded his meetings with pickets and hecklers, Dukakis has refused to make support for abortion rights an issue in his campaign.

For US workers it doesn't matter whether Dukakis or Bush win. Both will remain the representatives of bourgeois political parties. But it does matter that the unions are busy telling workers to vote Dukakis. True enough, many workers will take no notice. Only around half the electorate will bother to vote. Many of the poorest sections of society, including millions of blacks, will remain alienated from the entire political process.

To abstain in the elections is right. But to abstain from politics, which is what many of the workers and poor do, is wrong. The key task, not just around the election but also in the years ahead, is to fight for the political independence of the working class and its unions from the bosses' parties. Propaganda for this, for the building of a workers' party based on the unions, is vitally necessary.

At present it can only be addressed to a small number of workers. But that is no excuse for passivity. It is a task that must be undertaken if the unions are to be broken from their current steadfast loyalty to the open political agents of the class enemy. ■

the imperialist world is well underway. But as Bush takes the Presidency, Arthur Merton argues that the choice is at all.



fashion. The meat packers of Hormel and the Mexican labourers in the frozen food industry in Watsonville are heroic examples.

In other instances whole industries have fought back. For example steel was shutdown in 1986. These struggles reveal that the battling spirit of US workers is still alive. But they did not break the power of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy or stop the bosses' offensive.

In the 1990s that offensive will be stepped up. By going all out to get Dukakis elected the bureaucrats are doing their best to get a "polite" rather than a brash Reaganite version of that offensive. With Dukakis in they hope to be in a better position to police the unions in the face of an offensive.

This is not what the US workers need.

The struggle for a workers' party is one element of what they do need, but that party must be equipped with a revolutionary programme for the coming period.

Key immediate demands in that programme will be the fight against wage and job cuts and for increased social spending and a state health service. They will be for a fight for unionisation, especially in the 'open shop' states of the South as well as against the pervasive racism of US society (against blacks and, increasingly against Latinos and other ethnic groups). Such a programme must include demands for an end to the US dirty war in Nicaragua and its military inter-

vention world-wide, for free abortion on demand and for an end to the persecution of lesbians and gay men (which has been stepped up as a result of AIDS).

These demands must be fought for by a rank and file organised to defeat the bureaucrats of the AFL-CIO and to impose workers' control in the workplace. It must be organised to defend itself against the US state and the bosses' pistol-packing squads.

Armed with these policies the US working class will at last be able to assert its political independence. And that will be a vital step towards the revolutionary seizure of power by the workers in imperialism's most important stronghold. ■

In defence of Marxism



Building a workers' party

IN THE 1987 election Workers Power called on British workers to vote Labour. We did this because Labour, despite having a pro-capitalist programme and leadership, has the support of millions of workers and is tied to the organised working class directly through the trade unions.

In the election we did not support Labour's policy and leadership one bit. But we were prepared to unite with millions of workers in voting to keep the open party of the bosses, the Tories, out, and to put Labour to the test of office. In the election in the United States of America no such possibility for a united vote exists. There is no workers' party even of the reformist Labour type. The potential for exploding the contradiction between a bourgeois reformist leadership and a mass working class base, through the test of government, simply does not exist.

Expression

The USA is not alone in having a trade union movement but no significant workers' party of any type. The same situation exists in countries as different as Argentina, Pakistan and South Africa. In these countries the political weight of the labour movement has no organised expression, except through alliances with bourgeois parties whose programmes are hostile to the interests of the working class.

The working class needs its own political party. A party is needed to reflect—and fight for—the interests of the whole working class at a society-wide, governmental level. The party generalises the interests of the whole class into a programme. Unions cannot play this role since they necessarily reflect the interests of their particular section of workers. The formation of the unions is a vital, elementary step by the working class. The formation of a political party is, likewise, a vital step forward.

In the absence of a workers' party the union leaders end up making deals with open bourgeois parties. In the USA the leaders of the AFL-CIO operate as lobbyists mainly of the Democratic Party, but also, and not infrequently, of the Republican Party. In Argentina the unions have been tied to the nationalist Peronist movement. In return for the promise of reforms the unions leaders use working class organisations to get votes, or mobilise mass support, for openly bourgeois parties. The working class are tied to these parties by the union bureaucrats.

The value of calling for a workers' party in this situation is that it is a challenge to these bureaucrats. It is a demand of the workers on their leaders to break from the bourgeoisie.

Bureaucrats

By fighting for class independence of the unions at a political level the working class can take an enormous step forward. It can advance its own political consciousness and strength and it can challenge the reactionary bureaucrats and their class collaborationist politics. But for this possibility to be realised there has to be a real mass movement for a workers' party inside the class.

In South Africa the black workers have no independent political party. The major political formation, the ANC, is a petit-bourgeois

nationalist party. During the revolutionary struggles mass trade unions have been built by the militant black workers, but on their own, even as a federation like COSATU, they cannot generalise a political programme for the whole class. The workers in these unions require a political voice to lead their struggle to a successful conclusion. Many have realised this and called for a party. In this situation revolutionary communists must join in this call and argue for the unions to create such an independent party.

The issue then becomes, what kind of party will best represent the interests of the working class. Many fear that in calling on the unions to create a party it will inevitably become a reformist party like the British Labour Party. Where the unions are led by reformist bureaucrats this will certainly be what they wish to see. But to those who either fear or favour this outcome we can only repeat the words of Leon Trotsky about this possibility:

"Are we in favour of the creation of a reformist labor party? No. Are we in favour of a policy which can give to the trade unions the possibility to put its weight upon the balance of forces? Yes. It can become a reformist party—it depends upon the development. Here the question of programme comes in."

A reformist outcome is neither inevitable nor desirable—merely possible. We do everything to stop it happening. We build upon the progressive mood of the workers for political class independence. We do this through fighting to equip the party with an openly revolutionary programme and with the structure of a combat party. In other words we aim to create a revolutionary workers' party.

Progressive

Any other policy will guarantee that when masses of workers do push for their unions to break from the bosses' parties the reformists will have a free field and will twist the progressive mood to suit capitalism's interests. Just as bad, if we entered a workers' party movement and helped build it but refused to fight for the revolutionary programme we would be helping to build a roadblock to socialism.

In the USA a mass movement for a workers' party does not exist. This does not mean though, that we stay quiet until the masses decide they are for it. We have to argue for it now, utilising every opportunity—especially around elections—to explain why class independence is vital. We just make sure that we don't mistake our slogan for an actually existing movement for a workers' party.

Our call for the workers' party in the USA—a call addressed today to only a handful of workers—is a call for a revolutionary party. We do not pose this as an ultimatum. If the workers want to fight for a party but leave the question of its programme open we will still unite with them. But in every available forum we will say what we think the party's policies should be. And in every decision-making body we will fight for revolutionary policies. This way we can fight reformism at the moment of a workers' party's birth. As such we can help it to grow as an organisation committed to the revolutionary destruction of capitalism not as one committed to propping it up at the expense of the working class. ■



The longest war

TRUTH: THE FIRST CASUALTY

THE SAS is a well known terrorist organisation, the armed wing of MI5/MI6. These are related and shadowy political organisations committed to the maintenance of British imperialism's interests across the globe.

Formed in the Second World War the SAS has operated in Northern Ireland since Labour sent them there in 1976. Their purpose? In the words of one soldier at the time, "to do what the army has so far failed to do—kill terrorists". To paraphrase the novelist John Le Carré they "have the courage of the thug put to political use". Since then they have assassinated over thirty people in the Six Counties; they virtually never arrest anyone.

So when they slaughtered the unarmed Sean Savage, Mairead Farrell and Danny McCann last March on Gibraltar's streets they were, doing what came naturally. But whereas it took seconds to riddle the three IRA members with 27 bullets it has taken months for the political wing of the SAS to manufacture the soldiers' evidence and organise a smear campaign to discredit witnesses who may contradict them.

We do not know whether the Tories will get the "open verdict" they have been playing for from the sympathetic coroner but it is highly likely. The ground has been well prepared; the terms and conditions of the inquiry were set by the Tories and they would not let the pathologist get a proper examination of the bodies.

Still, the weeks of evidence have failed to prevent the threadbare nature of the SAS's testimony being revealed to anyone who does not use a *Sun* editorial as a substitute for thinking.

They shouted a warning but admitted it was inaudible. They feared a car bomb may be detonated if they hesitated to shoot, but prior surveillance had convinced the police there was no bomb nor did they make an attempt to clear the public if there was. And so it continued.

Smokescreen

But why go through all the bother of an elaborate smokescreen when, as one commentator in the *Guardian* put it, "the army and the SAS... accept that the Troubles, like the [Malayan] Emergency and the confrontations before, are a war". And in a war legal niceties go out of the window. The reason the politicians go to so much trouble to, in the words of the historian of the SAS, "deodorise the conflict", is that they cannot admit openly that they are waging a war. Indeed their job is to deny it and brand those fighting Britain as criminals.

To admit that the conflict is a war would be a recognition that Britain's enemy is a whole subject population, not a few fringe madmen who can by and large be dealt with by police methods and by operating roughly within the "rule of law". This the politicians will never do.

Unfortunately, only a very small minority within the British working

class can see through the veil of lies and half truths as yet. All too often we are faced with hostility from workers, even workers in struggle, when we raise the issue of Ireland and argue for Troops Out. But many workers are uncertain and doubtful about the situation in Northern Ireland, even though they currently disagree with our demands.

The SAS shootings have increased those doubts. We must increase them further by energetically campaigning for a labour movement enquiry into the events in Gibraltar. A coroner's enquiry with no brief to discover the truth, or even a "public enquiry" such as the Troops Out Movement call for—which will be staffed by past or present members of the Tory judiciary with the result in their pocket before they start—would be of no use in exposing the SAS's murderous roles.

Enquiry

Only a labour movement enquiry, with local or regional trade unions taking the lead, could be able to begin to lift the scales from the eyes of British workers. It would have to examine the whole historical and political context in which the self-sacrifice of freedom fighters like Savage, Farrell and McCann would be understood.

British workers could begin to see the terrible injustices done to the likes of the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six whose only crime was that they were Irish and in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In time British workers would come to burn with hatred for what Britain has done to Ireland and understand and support the fight of those who have taken up arms against the British army. In short they may come to agree with the judgement of the SAS—if from the other side of the conflict—that there is a war in Northern Ireland.

And if there is a war and we can force this unpalatable truth out into the open we have a chance too of making the Tories and Labour recognise the Irish republican and socialist prisoners for the political prisoners of war they are and for which they were once reluctantly designated as "special category" prisoners.

As it stands the official inquest will be a whitewash. The SAS's licence to kill will still be valid. Their murder squads will take heart from the events on the Rock and concoct plans for their next series of assassinations. Liberal horror at the ferocity of the SAS, which is all that is likely to be provoked by the inquest, will not change this. After all the SAS exist precisely to carry out British capitalism's "dirty wars".

Only by campaigning for the withdrawal of all British forces from Ireland, only by supporting the right of the Irish people as a whole to self-determination and only by building working class support for those in Ireland fighting for these objectives, will the SAS's bloody escapades be halted once and for all. ■

PINOCHET'S PLEBISCITE

BY DIEGO MOCAR

FIFTEEN YEARS ago a military coup plunged Chile into a nightmare of murder, torture and repression. In 1973 the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende was overthrown and replaced by a military junta led by General Augusto Pinochet.

The military dictatorship has ruled Chile with an iron fist. The masses have been deprived of all political and trade union rights. They have been forced to pay dearly in blood and sweat the costs of Chilean capitalism's survival.

Now they are being given a "democratic" choice about the future of the dictatorship through a plebiscite. Pinochet called this vote in order to legitimise his dictatorship. If he wins it, it will remove the pressures from the US imperialists and from sections of Chilean capitalists for real political reform. It will give him the presidency until 1997.

If the vote were really free his chances of winning would be slim. But he will use his terror machine and vote-rigging to increase those chances. And his imperialist backers, who know full well that he is the best man to maintain super-exploitation in Chile, will continue to support him.

Faced with the chance to say "No!" to Pinochet the masses have created the possibility for the explosion of a revolutionary crisis. Over six million people have registered to vote in the referendum. This far exceeds the numbers Pinochet was expecting. It reveals the thirst the masses have for political freedom.

Crisis

If Pinochet is returned the masses will know it was a fix. Most people will have voted against him. If he is voted out, it will provoke a major political crisis in the ranks of the Chilean bourgeoisie. Either way, the potential for a revolutionary crisis exists.

The official opposition to Pinochet—a coalition of 16 parties called the "Concertacion Por El No" led by the bourgeois Christian Democrats—will do its best to defuse any revolutionary crisis. They will attempt to demobilise the mass movement that is developing and compromise with the dictatorship, or at least sections of it.

Ricardo Layers, the leader of the Party for Democracy (an ad-hoc

Down with the dictatorship!

body created for the plebiscite), has given advance notice that the opposition will enter negotiations with the military on the very night of the plebiscite, 5 October. The only protest action they are sanctioning is the banging of pots and pans in the evening.

The major workers' parties are either in the coalition (the Socialist Party-Nunez) or giving it full political support (the Communist Party and the Socialist Party-Almeyda). In supporting this attempt to reconstruct a popular front they are repeating the errors that paved the way for the dictatorship.

Popular front

Allende's government was a popular front of workers' and openly bourgeois parties. Despite the reforms it enacted it sought to placate the bourgeois majority in parliament, and the military, by subordinating the interests of the masses to the needs of Chilean capitalism and world imperialism. Allende refused to break bourgeois control of the state and pursued a policy of appeasement towards the army.

In carrying through this strategy socialism was relegated to a distant future. Yet, faced by mass mobilisations, the bourgeoisie remained unconvinced of Allende's good intentions towards them. The Popular Unity was smashed and workers died in their thousands as the counter-revolution was unleashed in 1973.

The propaganda of the opposition today is even less radical than that of the Popular Unity government. Allende's widow has returned and called on the masses to forget the past and look forward to a happy future. The legal TV broadcasts have been all about how moderate the opposition is. By supporting all of this the workers' parties are clearing the way to a new round of treachery and a new wave of counter-revolution.

Against all of this, though, the masses themselves are asserting their own interests in the struggle that is unfolding. The workers'

movement is regrouping, as shown by the 1,000 strong conference in August that re-established the Chilean TUC (the CUT). Strikes have occurred in a number of industries. Youth have fought pitched battles with the police—leading to three demonstrators being murdered by the state in September. Those who cannot forget the past—the mothers and wives whose sons and husbands were "disappeared" by the regime—have repeatedly taken to the streets in protest against Pinochet's brutality.

All of these protests culminated in a 300,000 strong demonstration against Pinochet in early September in Santiago, the capital. This demonstration displayed the power that exists to defeat the plans of Pinochet and the popular-front-in-waiting. But it is a power that has to be organised and led by a revolutionary party if victory is to be won.

That party must set clear goals in the coming months. When the plebiscite was first announced we argued for a boycott. The reason, and it was a valid one, was that Pinochet was then trying to restrict participation in the vote. It was set to be a rigged election from the outset. Divisions in the bourgeoisie have changed the situation.

Instead of a tiny vote by a selected electorate a mass vote against Pinochet by the six million plus who have registered is now something that can create serious problems for the Junta. This opportunity must be seized by calling for a "No" vote.

Advantage

But, unlike the opposition who hope that such a No vote will strengthen their hand in negotiations with the military, workers must fight to press home the advantage. We oppose all deals with the regime and call for the immediate convocation of a sovereign constituent assembly. We call for the building of councils of workers and peasants in the cities, shanty towns and countryside, and for a militia based on them.

Not only are such bodies the only ones that will fight for consistent democracy against bourgeois double-dealing. They are also the most effective means of combating the dictatorship and laying the basis for a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government.

We must fuse the fight for democracy with the demands necessary to satisfy the immediate social needs of the masses:

- Repudiate the foreign debt
- Break up the big latifundia and expropriate the agribusinesses
- Reverse Pinochet's privatisations
- For workers control of production
- Nationalise the multinationals and key industries with no compensation
- For a programme of public works to make the shanty towns fit for human habitation and to combat unemployment, poor health care and bad education.

With these demands the working class can ensure that the revolution which begins as a struggle for political democracy ends with the destruction of Latin America's most savage dictatorship and the creation of a workers' state. ■



"The CNI [secret police] tortures"—demonstration in Santiago

Julio Eichart/Reflex

BY SUE THOMAS

"HOWE PROMISES more cash to Mozambique", "Bangladesh appeals for more aid"—such headlines add to the picture of the western world dipping into its pockets to give handouts to poor and helpless countries. But the real picture is very different. The capitalist nations hand over only tiny amounts for relief and development projects—Britain fails to meet even the UN "target" of 0.8% of GNP.

More importantly, this "aid" is given, not from any altruistic motives, but out of self-interest, the projects benefitting the donor more than the receiver. Finally, the media picture hides the fact that imperialist exploitation in the past and present is frequently the actual cause of the distress and misery.

Devastating

The recent disasters in Bangladesh are a case in point. Regular partial flooding is vital to the area, bringing rich soil to the Ganges Delta. The increasing number of devastating floods is related to the massive deforestation in the Himalayan foothills where lumber companies are cutting huge swathes of timber without replanting. Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest nations, can't afford the sort of projects and flood control necessary.

Its poverty is rooted in its past. British colonialism wrecked the indigenous East Bengal textile industry in the early nineteenth century. Then a hundred years ago, British imperialism encouraged a big switch over from production and trading in indigo to jute, for British carpet manufacturers. Much of the area which is now Bangladesh was turned over to commercial jute farming. When synthetics replaced it in the late 1960s, exports slumped. Imperialism lost interest in the area.

Meanwhile, the post war partition of India, itself resulting from the divide and rule policies of the Raj, created "East Pakistan" in the delta, severing it from the major port, Calcutta, to the detriment of both. Only a costly civil war allowed Bangladesh to throw off the yoke of Pakistan in 1971. To sur-

AID Stealing from the poor



Filipino sugar workers—80% were laid off when commodity prices fell

vive, it had to go cap in hand to the World Bank and its debt service repayments are now around 20% of export earnings.

About one quarter of Bangladesh's foreign aid comes in the form of food. The USA is the leading donor, spending approximately \$200 million a year on subsidies. Altruism? Not quite since this allows the USA to offload surplus wheat from its grain reserves! The Bangladesh regime then buys continued internal support with the grain and other foods donated. About 50% of the total goes to the urban middle class. Only 22% of rationed food goes to the rural poor. They lose out twice, the artificially low grain prices hitting their income.

Elsewhere, aid often benefits donor rather than recipient because it goes alongside commer-

cial loans, and foreign firms make the profits. For instance, for the Mahaveli Irrigation Programme in Sri Lanka, the finance from Britain, Sweden and West Germany came in grants and loans. As the budget spiralled to \$14 billion, the Sri Lankan government had to raise taxes and cut food subsidies. The large construction contracts went to companies from the donor countries and most of the newly irrigated land was leased to foreign firms. One and a half million Sri Lankans were "re-settled" 90 kilometres away.

Tory opponents of overseas aid often point to the corruption rife in "third world" countries—these people can't be trusted, it seems, with our money. But corruption, like charity, begins at home. When US pharmaceutical companies made "voluntary disclosures" of

their payments in the mid-1970s, they were each laying aside \$1 million annually for sweeteners.

The World Bank, the biggest international development agency, is supposedly free of such pressures from private companies. About \$10 billion passes through its hands each year. Whereas the parallel organisation the IMF deals in short term readjustment programmes (for which read austerity packages) the World Bank arranges funds for long term projects. But it too acts for the imperialist governments and multinationals.

For instance, its Gezira Agricultural Project in the Sudan was designed to modernise cotton production. It lent \$50 million to finance the purchase of pesticide and herbicides. These contracts went of course to the multinational chemical companies. Imprecise spraying of pesticides ended up contributing to the growth of DDT resistant strains of malaria carriers.

In fact the World Bank's own researches estimate that between one third and one half of its projects in Africa have failed, like the disastrous introduction of monocropping which lead to severe soil erosion.

Restructuring

The World Bank invariably sets terms and conditions for its loans. Its 1988 World Development Report insists that "developing countries need to persevere in restructuring their domestic economic policies in order to gain creditworthiness and growth".

For Senegal this restructuring of the sugar industry turned out to be dependent on a privatisation

programme! The USA, which holds a 19% vote in the Bank, blocked a loan to Costa Rica unless it stopped its subsidy to small producers of the staples corn, rice and beans.

At every turn "aid" from the west locks the imperialised nations into further dependence and debt. Parallel to official development assistance and grants go loans at commercial interest rates, whether from the agencies or through bank lending. The total of these loans is greater than the official development assistance.

For the World Bank's "highly indebted countries", that is those who need grants most and loans least, the ratio of commercial loans to grants in 1987 was 8:1. What's more the interest charges mean that as a result of past borrowing, the "third world" now pays back more than it gets in aid and new loans combined. As a result the United Nations calculated that during 1986 there was a net transfer of resources of \$26 billion from the developing countries to imperialism.

Commodities

Imperialism's long hold on these countries means that their economies are often geared to producing just a few commodities. What happens when the man from Del Monte says "No"? This is precisely what faced many countries when commodity prices fell on the world markets in the early 1980s. Foreign exchange earnings were slashed. A country like Zambia earns 90% of its foreign exchange from one commodity, copper. When there are no foreign earnings coming in, these countries can no longer service their debts. In steps the World Bank's more notorious sister, the IMF—imperialism's short term moneylender. Its "adjustment packages" include terms which make workers and peasants pay for the crisis that imperialism has created in the first place.

Are the poorer countries of the world doomed, then, to slide even further into poverty and dependence?

Radicals in the development business argue for a strategy concentrating on small-scale production and self-sufficiency. But how can small countries win the freedom to operate measures such as co-operatives, inter-cropping and irrigation for food production, when they are pitted against the multinationals? The giant company Phillip Morris, for instance, had sales of tobacco, coffee and tea in 1985 totalling \$16 billion, larger than the GDP of Kenya! Only socialist revolution, spread internationally, can destroy power like that.

Planning

Nor can the "small is beautiful" prescription tackle some of the great and necessary projects. Reversing deforestation, controlling the Ganges, balancing seemingly contradictory interests of irrigation, flood control and electricity production—such projects need planning on a huge scale.

This should not be bureaucratic planning imposed from above, nor motivated by the demands of profit, but planning based on need, under the control of the working class and reflecting the needs of small scale producers as expressed through peasant committees and co-operatives.

Only revolutionary communism can chart a course to make such planning a real possibility, by mobilising workers and peasants in the third world, and the working class in the imperialist heartlands to overthrow the rule of the international capitalist class. ■

Kanaky (New Caledonia) is France's Northern Ireland. One of the last French colonies, this collection of islands in a strategic position in the South Pacific has been the scene of bloody confrontations between the indigenous Kanaks and French imperialism. Oppressed and deprived of their land, the Kanaks are faced with a massive and murderous army and police presence.

Over the last twenty years French imperialism has encouraged not only whites from France (many of them ex-settlers from Algeria), but also Vietnamese boat people and other groups in the region, to emigrate to Kanaky. Virtually all of them are hostile both to all talk of independence and to the Kanaks. The Kanaks are now a minority in their own land.

In 1984 the colony exploded as the Kanaks rebelled against the grip of imperialism. The land was occupied, Kanak workers in the big nickel plant went on strike and road blocks defended by armed groups were set up. Led by the FLNKS, the Kanaks have organised a series of rebellions, boycotts and protests in their struggle for independence. Over the last four years, the Kanak question has been a thorn in the side of President Mitterrand and

Kanaky compromise

France will soon be voting in a referendum on the future of Kanaky. Emile Gallet explains why French and Kanak militants should oppose the government's proposals

his governments, both "socialist" and conservative.

Both governments changed the colony's status, the Socialist Party (PS) to try and buy off the Kanak revolt, the Chirac government to appease the white settlers. Neither "reform" changed the situation, and the rebellion went on, with the state becoming increasingly vicious. The repression culminated in the notorious massacre of Ouvéa in May, where 19 Kanaks were killed when the French army stormed a cave where they were holding hostage some gendarmes. This cynical bit of imperialist savagery was launched by Chirac just days before the Presidential election, in a vain attempt to win votes.

In August, "socialist" Prime Minister Rocard announced that an agreement had been made be-

tween the government, the FLNKS and the local conservatives which would assure the colony's future. This agreement is going to be put to the whole French electorate in a referendum in November. Despite Rocard's trumpeting, the agreement changes nothing for the Kanaks, and is simply an attempt to brush the problem under the carpet. The tragedy is that the FLNKS has gone along with this classic piece of imperialist trickery.

The agreement will change the local government system again, and increase state aid. The future of the colony will be decided by a Kanaky-wide referendum in 10 years time! The electorate will be limited to those who have lived in Kanaky over those ten years: the PS whisper that, what with differential birth-rates and emi-

gration by demoralised whites, this will mean a built-in Kanak majority in 1998. For this the FLNKS leadership has effectively agreed to stop their struggle for independence.

The FLNKS backed down because the imperialists clearly indicated that the massacre of Ouvéa would be repeated if the struggle continued. The FLNKS leadership has always been torn between the classic "weapons" of petit bourgeois nationalists: "public opinion" and the armed struggle. Links with the proletariat in the South Pacific, especially in Australia and New Zealand, have never been the centre of the FLNKS's activity. Solidarity has never been seriously fought for within the French labour movement.

Never having tried to win their only true allies, the FLNKS were faced with the bankruptcy of their methods, and took the only way out: an ignominious compromise.

In the referendum, *Pouvoir Ouvrier* will be arguing for a vote against the agreement, by voting "No". French and Kanak militants must make clear their total opposition to this pro-imperialist sell-out, and the need for a completely different strategy in order to beat French imperialist power in the South Pacific. ■

the MRCI

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

MRCI CONFERENCE

Nuclear power and Middle East resolutions agreed

IN SEPTEMBER a three day delegate meeting attended by all the sections of the MRCI adopted two major documents. The "Theses on Zionism, Israel, Palestine and Arab Nationalism" deals with the origins and nature of Zionism, Marxism and the Jewish question, the position of the Palestinian Arabs and the impact of the establishment of the Zionist state of Israel on the Palestinians and the Middle East.

It proceeds to analyse the nature of the Israeli state in terms of its origins as a colonial settler state, a state which continues even now to play a vital role for US imperialism in the region. The theses deal extensively with Israel's economic development since 1948 and examine the nature of the Histadrut and Israeli Labour Party.

The theses also tackle the question of Arab nationalism and develop a Marxist critique of the PLO. Finally it applies the perspective and programme of Permanent Revolution in seeking a genuinely revolutionary socialist solution to the oppression of the Palestinian Arabs enshrined in the Zionist state of Israel.

The resolution adopted on Nuclear Power marked an important step forward in the development of the MRCI. This question led to differing positions within nearly all the sections of the MRCI. After a long period of debate going back two years the question was resolved by agreement in a democratic centralist manner with minority positions being represented across our international tendency.

The successful resolution of this question, the first to be debated and decided in our tendency on the basis of democratic centralism rather than by the unanimous agreement of the sections, shows that the MRCI is on course to establish itself as a democratic centralist international tendency at its congress planned for the summer of 1989.

As part of this process the delegate meeting approved a set of proposals for the setting up of a programme commission drawn from all sections of the MRCI whose task is to produce a draft programmatic manifesto. This draft will be submitted to the sections for discussion and amendment to be adopted at next year's congress. This international programme will be the basis of our international tendency and arm our national sections in their intervention into the class struggle. ■

LATIN AMERICA

MRCI discusses with fraternal groups

DURING AUGUST and September delegates from the MRCI held a series of discussions with the groups with whom the MRCI has fraternal relations—Poder Obrero (Peru) and Guia Obrera (Bolivia)—aimed at enabling these groups to affiliate to the MRCI. Discussions with GO centred around the nature of the period following the serious defeats suffered by the mining industry vanguard of the Bolivian working class in late 1985 and '86.

In particular we explored the issue of how revolutionaries should intervene in the attempts to form a new alliance of parties—including the Bolivian CP and left reformist parties—who in turn try to form a bloc with various left nationalist and non-workers parties. The aim of the various blocs being to challenge the MNR, ADN and MIR in the Presidential elections of 1989. A set of Bolivian Theses which deals with these questions is in the process of being adopted by GO in collaboration with PO of Peru and the MRCI.

Discussion with PO (who have indicated their willingness to become a section of the MRCI) took place within the context of the growing political and economic crisis in Peru. They necessarily centred around how a fighting propaganda group could develop a solid analysis of the situation to enable it to intervene in the growing class struggle. Of particular importance is the intervention within the "United Left" (IU), a 13,000 strong front of parties and individuals which claims to put forward a socialist and even a "Marxist" alternative to the "left nationalists" of the APRA.

The growing economic crisis in the country and consequent attacks on the living standards of the masses by the APRA government, together with the growing militancy of the workers, poses the need for a clear revolutionary alternative to the false leftism of the Barrantes led IU. It is to the building of such an alternative that both PO and the MRCI committed.

These discussions examined not only the situation in Bolivia and Peru but also involved exchanges on the developments in the USSR under Gorbachev, the situation in Panama and perspectives in the struggle to refound a new revolutionary international. We look forward to 1989 in the hope and expectation that the rich experience of Latin American struggle will be represented within the MRCI for the first time as an official section. ■

The Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

The MRCI
Arbeiterstandpunkt (Austria)
Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany)
Irish Workers Group
Pouvoir Ouvrier (France)
Workers Power Group (Britain)

Fraternal groups:
Poder Obrero (Peru)
Guia Obrera (Bolivia)
These groups are in the process of discussions with the MRCI with the aim of becoming affiliated sections.

KURDISTAN

Stop the genocide

BY PAUL MASON

ONLY WEEKS after its ceasefire with Iran, the Iraqi regime has launched a war of extermination against the Kurds who make up a quarter of the country's population.

Having used poison gas to try and defeat Iran on two fronts earlier this year, Saddam Hussein has made chemical annihilation his final solution to the Kurdish resistance.

Beginning on 27 August Iraq pitted its elite forces, armed with napalm and cluster bombs as well as nerve and mustard gas, against the entire Kurdish population. It has wiped out whole villages and driven up to 100,000 refugees into Turkey. The remaining Kurds are being herded into concentration camps.

The immediate background to this genocide against the Kurdish people is the ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war. But Saddam's offensive is just the latest and most brutal episode in a Kurdish national struggle that has lasted decades.

Nation

The Kurds are a nation of sixteen million whose languages and culture have dominated the Zagros mountain region for over a thousand years. Kurdistan, however, is divided between Iran, Iraq and Turkey with a smaller Kurdish population in Syria and the USSR. The process of creating modern semi-colonial capitalist states in these countries reduced the Kurds to the status of a persecuted and oppressed national minority in each country.

It was Mustafa Kemal, the founder of modern capitalist Turkey, who institutionalised oppression of the Kurdish nation. In 1924 he banned the Kurdish language, schools, publications and political associations. The precedent has been followed by every Turkish regime ever since, and backed up with habitual repression and brutality. The word Kurd does not officially appear in the Turkish language.

Likewise in Iran since the fall of a short lived Mahabad Kurdish republic in 1946 all expressions of

Kurdish national identity were banned. Though Kurdish guerrillas played an active part in overthrowing the Shah, they were amongst the first victims of Islamic counter-revolution. In 1979 Khomeini launched a murderous military assault on the Kurds, executing hundreds of guerrillas and civilians alike.

In Iraq, Kurdish nationalism suffered a more varied, if equally bloody history. In 1968 the British-backed monarchy was overthrown by the Ba'athist movement, a military regime covering itself with anti-imperialist rhetoric. The bourgeois Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) led by the Barzani family entered into negotiations on limited autonomy within Iraq.

On the one hand the pressure of the Kurdish masses, on the other secret service plotting by Israel, Iran and the USA aborted Saddam's attempt to buy off the Kurdish leadership. In 1974, backed by both the USA and the Shah, Barzani led 100,000 regular and irregular *peshmergas* (those facing death) against the Ba'athist army.

At the height of the conflict Iran's immediate grievance against Iraq (the border dispute over Shat-el-Arab waterway) was resolved. Iran withdrew all support for the *peshmergas* enabling Saddam's regime to crush the resistance, forcibly evicting thousands, executing hundreds and installing permanent repression in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The re-emergence of conflict, as imperialism armed Iraq against Khomeini's Iran, renewed the Kurdish national uprising in Iraq. By 1983 the Kurds were involved in military conflict with all three oppressor nations. (Turkish troops were assisting Iraqi repression.)

The struggle of the Kurdish people for an independent state is a just one. But their fight for national self determination is intolerable to imperialism and the USSR. And it is a struggle the Kurdish landlords and bourgeoisie are incapable of leading.

Every phase of the Kurdish national struggle is evidence of this. In the 1930s Britain ignored the systematic oppression of Kurds by its puppet government in Iraq



in return for security in the Kurdish oilfields. In 1946 the USSR abandoned the Mahabad Democratic Republic in Kurdish Iran by agreement with imperialism. Today neither the USA nor the USSR is prepared to use even the toothless mechanisms of the United Nations to censure Iraq. They recognise that keeping Saddam's ruthless regime strong and stable is crucial for them in establishing a peace on imperialism's terms in the area.

Always keener on its own local power than on national liberation the Kurdish landlord class has made one agreement after another with their oppressors. Even today there is a loyal Kurdish bourgeois party in Iraq, while some of those now fighting Saddam were negotiating an electoral pact with him as late as 1983. At the same time the anti-Ba'athist leadership in Iraq have once again been implicated in deals with Khomeini.

Struggle

Only the Kurdish workers and poor peasants can lead the struggle against national oppression. In the oilfields of Kirkuk and the major towns of Kurdistan there is a working class which has the power to seize and hold the property of the oppressors. Armed and allied with the peasantry, with an internationalist programme that links its struggles with those of the masses in Iran, Turkey and Iraq, this force can and must liberate Kurdistan.

But it can only do so if it breaks politically with both bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism. At present both are united around the strategy of appeals to the UN to stop Saddam's genocide. It is a strategy doomed to failure given the interests of both imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy in the region.

This is a crucial moment for the Kurdish resistance. Whilst the *peshmergas* were able to survive after 1974, the whole Kurdish population of Iraq is now "facing death". Not imperialism and Stalinism's United Nations but the active solidarity of the working class in every country is what is urgently needed to help save them from that fate. ■



Chemical warfare

BURMA'S MILITARY coup confirms the impossibility of a "peaceful" transition from the rule of the bureaucratic military regime of the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) to a democratic government. The military, still clearly in league with the BSPP leader Ne Win, have been smashing barricades, firing into demonstrations and rounding up oppositionists. The new strong man Saw Maung is now Prime Minister, Defence Minister and head of the armed forces.

Opposition leaders are at an impasse. The road to smashing the military's grip clearly lies in continuing the strikes and mass mobilisations. Armed struggle against the military cannot, on its own, win. Mass actions combined with defensive armed struggle can, however, weaken the resolve of the soldiers and help break up the unity of the army. It can help win sections of the army to the side of the mass movement. Such developments will give further confidence to the working class and radical students. The liberal opposition and its imperialist backers recoil in terror from that prospect.

Imperialism was quite happy to see the disturbances in Burma during July and August. It hoped that the breaking of the BSPP's monopoly of power would open the door to a massive increase in foreign trade and investment. "This is why the riots that have erupted almost every day since mid-July are so encouraging" crowed *The Economist*, anticipating new mar-

BURMA AFTER THE COUP

Opposition at a crossroads

The continuing crisis in Burma has led to clear differences emerging within the opposition movement, as Joan Mayer describes

kets and profits.

UN official Tyn Myin-U spelled out the programme in August; an interim government of national reconciliation, development through private enterprise, "prudent" monetary policy and tax reform (make the workers and peasants pay), foreign investment and a federal constitution. (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 25.7.88)

Some sections of the opposition thought it possible that the military could be persuaded to smooth the path to such a transition. The Democracy and Peace (Interim) League, formed on 29 August, called initially for an alternative government with military support while others, including Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of a former national hero, and ex-general Aung Gyi, maintained the demand of an interim government.

The military coup on 18 Septem-

ber threw both elements of the opposition together, with Aung San Suu Kyi and Aung Gyi joining former chief of staff Tin Oo in a new party. But these leaders still have no strategy for toppling the regime. Indeed Aung San Suu Kyi has made clear she wishes to avoid a break-up within the armed forces:

"My father, General Aung San, created the Burmese Army under extremely difficult circumstances. Unity must be maintained within the army." (*Guardian*, 20.9.88)

These leaders hope to use the army themselves to maintain state power, if they succeed in ousting the BSPP's leading clique. Their problem is that the army will not come over wholesale to them, giving up previous privileges. They have no alternative, then, but to demobilise, at least temporarily, the mass movement and if they are allowed to remain leaders, they

will derail the movement altogether.

Prior to the open military take over of 18 September workers and students were showing ever increasing and determined opposition to the regime. The general strike was total with transport and public administration paralysed. Agent provocateur attempts to split radical students from workers had failed. Cracks had appeared in the inner ranks of the forces although the discipline in, and privileges accruing to, the 170,000 strong army mean that mutiny does not spread easily.

In the wake of the coup students and workers reacted with great steadfastness. Demonstrators held off the army for as long as possible, using home made weapons such as jinglees (sharpened bicycle spokes). Workers stayed on strike, with civil servants defying the direct orders of Saw Maung to return to their posts.

Student leader Min Ko Mang went underground with many of his comrades, and issued a call to arms—the insurgents took weapons from the disaffected military in early September or had succeeded in capturing stockpiles.

Leadership

Despite this heroism unless the workers and students develop their own political leadership and demands, they will be doomed to fall in behind the bourgeois democratic opposition. Already Buddhist leaders have called for both sides to talk.

Even if this gets brushed aside at present, we can be sure that the Pagoda hierarchy will be trying to rein in the young monks who have sided with the masses, and to use them to police the insurgents.

Already a coalition of monks and popular committees runs Mandalay on a day to day basis, with the Pagodas as the centres of administration. And some co-operation with the military has been sanctioned by these committees.

An opposition built as a clear alternative to the bourgeois democrats and Buddhists would first need to stand against all ideas of retreat or collaboration with the old regime. But a "call to arms" in itself cannot provide an alternative. Burma's national minorities have been locked in a gruelling guerrilla war for years. If students or radical workers now take the road of rural armed struggle they too could end up in such a stalemate.

Armed struggle must be linked to the strikes by workers which have bought the crisis to a head. A workers' militia is necessary, not only to split and defeat the army, but to allow workers, students and peasants' committees to impose their democracy. In that way they can prevent the fake democrats of the bourgeois opposition imposing their sort of parliament and multi-party system which leaves power and wealth in the hands of business and the bureaucracy.

At the same time, workers, stu-

dents and peasants must build committees which are independent of the Pagodas and can organise the struggle to smash the dictatorship and act as the organs of a new power in Burma.

The working class can win the support of the peasantry and the national minorities by calling for the immediate convocation of a sovereign constituent assembly elected by free and universal suffrage. This would allow full democratic deliberation and debate on the country's future and not leave that future to be decided by the self appointed "interim government" beloved of the bourgeois opposition. The mass movement must give no support to any bourgeois interim government, should one emerge.

These measures on their own cannot solve the economic problems besetting the nation and facing workers and peasants daily. Returning industries to private hands would lead to deepening exploitation.

Against the bourgeois programme of denationalisation, we call for workers' control to replace bureaucratic planning and control. The "free market" might undermine the black marketeers that feed on the misery of the masses—but it would replace them with "legitimate" pirates and profiteers. "Free" trade with imperialism would deepen the foreign debt—a debt which should be repudiated now.

Living standards

Nor is the "free market" a satisfactory solution to the problem of production and distribution of food. Prices would rise sharply, cutting workers' living standards. Farmers with the biggest landholdings (the land is nationalised, but still passed on through inheritance) would benefit. The poor would become progressively worse off and landlessness would be the end result.

Instead, workers' and peasants' committees should jointly agree and fix prices, demand state subsidies for urban workers, take over distribution, severely punish hoarders and seize the wealth of the black marketeers. A fight for a programme of public works to build a decent infrastructure for the economy is an urgent task. It will be a means of uniting the interests of workers and poor peasants.

The working class can ensure these measures are in the interests of the peasantry by directing state aid and credits to the countryside and in particular, machinery to co-operatives, which must be encouraged in the countryside.

These are the sorts of measures which an independent revolutionary workers' party in Burma should fight for. The current fissures and class differentiation in the Burmese opposition means that radical students and workers will seek out new ideas and solutions.

We have to show that a real socialist programme expresses the needs of the masses and can organise them in struggle. It has nothing in common with the stultifying "Burmese Way of Socialism" which has wrecked the country over the last twenty years.

It does have the potential of directing the mass movement towards the struggle for a workers' and peasants' government based on the councils and militia, a workers' state that can introduce socialist planning in the interests of the masses.

Last, but not least, the fight for such a programme must be internationalist. It must seek to direct the Burmese revolution towards the goal of a Socialist Federation of South East Asia. ■

Will Haiti's new broom sweep clean?



General Prosper Avril (centre) with troops after the coup

POPULAR ANGER in Haiti at the rotten and vicious regime of General Namphy finally exploded in mid-September. Young non-commissioned officers ousted Namphy in the coup of 18 September, kicking out army chiefs and corrupt officials.

The Haitian masses meanwhile hunted down the old regime's death squads and the collaborators who had worked with that regime. In a wave of "dechokaj"—uprooting—which was literally more devastating than the hurricane that preceded it, the hated Tonton Macoute, the Duvaliers' gangster army, were hunted down and Namphy's house was dismantled brick by brick.

The immediate trigger for the coup and dechokaj was the massacre by the Tonton Macoute of congregation members in the church of a radical priest. But Namphy's regime had never had popular support. After Baby Doc Duvalier fled the island in 1986, the majority of Haitians wanted free elections. They wanted an end to rule by the Tonton Macoute and the protection rackets they ran. Neither Namphy's military regime, nor the brief attempt at

civilian rule, had succeeded in doing this.

The island's economy is in tatters. Most businesses pulled out in 1986 and, seeing no prospect for stability and growth, have not returned. Tourism has halted. Hurricane Gilbert has wreaked further havoc on land already suffering severe soil erosion. The mass of Haitians live in poverty, in contrast to the luxurious life styles of the twelve families who control the economy.

Tears

Faced with such problems, it wasn't surprising that the leader of the young officers, Sergeant Joseph Heubreux, burst into tears when his colleagues asked him to take the reins. Instead, they have put General Prosper Avril in place as the head of government. But it would be foolish to consider Avril a mere puppet. A multi-millionaire, Avril was the Duvaliers' Finance Minister and is known to have friends in the US administration and CIA.

With no clear leadership for the

mass movement, characters like Avril could well halt the Haitian revolution just as in 1986. Another danger comes from Jean-Claude Paul leader of the privileged Presidential Guard, the Dessalines Battalion. Some of the younger army officers are tied to Paul, who is wanted for drug smuggling in the USA and who has ensured the battalion and other sections of the army live in relative luxury.

Undoubtedly many of the radical officers genuinely want to build democracy in Haiti. But their experience of corruption and gangsterism in the last elections, combined with factors such as high illiteracy have made them nervous. General Avril told Christian Democrat leaders there would be no elections for two years.

Whatever the good intentions of the army radicals the masses should not rely on them to usher in democracy. Real democracy can only be guaranteed in Haiti by the rule of the workers and poor peasants themselves. The masses must organise themselves to embark on the struggle for that goal. ■

How the royals rule

*The Enchanted Glass:
Britain and its Monarchy*
by Tom Nairn
(Radius £8.95)

BY DAVID GREEN

THERE IS no shortage of books on the theme of the British monarchy. Most are merely reverent accounts of our "noble heritage" or photographic studies of the Windsor family's expensive clothing, bald patches and pampered children.

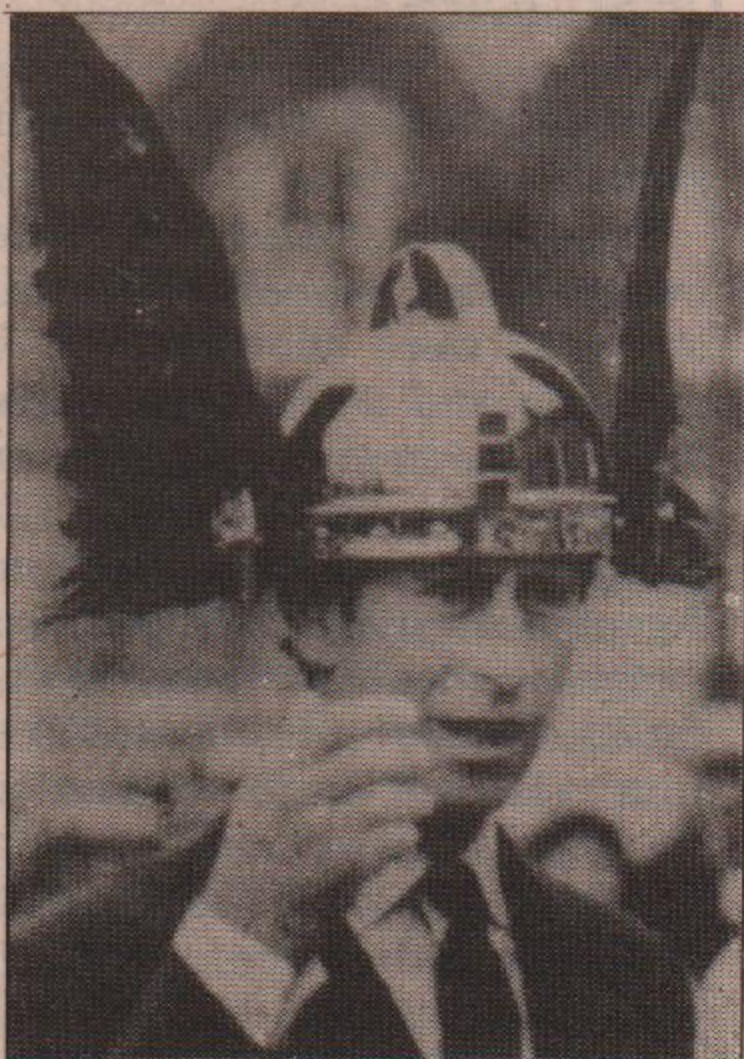
In this book, Tom Nairn sets out to examine the political and social phenomena of Royal Family and constitutional monarchy. He seeks to expose the bankruptcy not merely of the monarchy's right wing apologists but also of a left that has in the main avoided the demand for abolition in favour of a supposed concentration on "broader social issues".

Nairn is able to show that the existence of the monarchy is no mere cosmetic question for the British ruling class. He reveals the efforts of the Victorian ruling class to rout republican tendencies, and reminds us of the extent of anti-monarchist feeling in nineteenth century Britain, spurred by revolutions on the continent and reaching its zenith in the Chartist period. In particular, Nairn identifies the policy decision of the ruling class to wage an ideological struggle for the elimination of republican thought as a feature of national life. Labourite evasion, together with a general theoretical silence have contributed to the success of this venture. Expressions of republicanism are largely confined to the far left and a handful of eccentrics.

Abolition

The political thrust of Nairn's argument is that the monarchy is the core of the British state, and that its abolition should be one of the key aims of the left. This is based on a theory advanced by himself and Perry Anderson (in his *Origins of the Present Crisis*). The "Nairn-Anderson thesis", as it has become known, argues that Britain's economic and political decline is rooted in the incomplete nature of the English bourgeois revolution. Unlike France, Britain saw no thoroughgoing political overthrow of the ancient landowning class. Late feudal institutions were incorporated into the state apparatus of the rising capitalist class. For Nairn the monarchy is therefore a prime example of British capitalism's "specific backwardness".

But the rise of a modern capitalist nation state does not demand a bourgeois revolution strictly adhering to the model of France in 1789. The existence of the monarchy and the House of Lords has not materially contributed to British capitalism's relative decline and Nairn is unable to show any evidence that it has. He ends up advancing the wholly idealist notion that "republicanism is a proposed revolution of



Charles: Wing nut?

national identity, as a precondition of any imaginable set of feasible programmes or socio-economic policies". A second bourgeois revolution is required to bring "modernity" to British capitalism, and the abolition of the monarchy is essential to this goal. Just to underline the fact that Nairn's conception of democracy corresponds only to his abstract

model of a pure, capitalist republic and not to the interests of the working class, we are informed that it was Arthur Scargill's "travesty of democracy" that lost the Great Strike of 1984-5. Where have we heard that one before?

Despite its lack of mobilising potential the demand for the abolition of the monarchy should be raised in the workers' movement today. The Queen retains powers to dissolve Parliament, appoint Prime Ministers, veto legislation and declare war. In times of crisis the monarchy could be used to impose the will of the capitalist class without the "formalities" of democratic approval. But there is no concrete programme, no focused strategy or tactics advanced by Nairn in this respect.

Despite being a long overdue counter to the mounds of trash produced on this subject, *The Enchanted Glass* will be useful to socialists only in so far as it exposes the obscenity of the monarchy. Its overthrow will be accomplished by the very class struggle that Nairn dismisses. ■

The human cost of Stalinism

Children of the Arbat
by Anatoli Rybakov
(Hutchinson £12.95)

BY JOHN HUNT

FOR A book to have a waiting list running into thousands in Soviet libraries automatically makes it remarkable. For that book to be a novel centred on the rise to power of Stalin and climax with the assassination of Kirov makes it even more so. Banned for twenty years, Anatoli Rybakov's recently translated *Children of the Arbat* is one of the most interesting products of the current relaxation of literary censorship in the USSR.

The book is of epic proportions. It charts the fortunes of a group of Soviet youth on the eve of Kirov's assassination. All are friends. All are inhabitants of apartment blocks in Moscow's Arbat area.

In many ways the book brilliantly captures this moment in the development of Stalin's terror regime. From Siberia to Leningrad Rybakov shows the secret police (NKVD) supplanting the party organisations as the real holders of power. In Politburo meetings and private leadership meetings Stalin's ascendancy over those who had supported him is vividly portrayed. And interwoven with the machinations of the regime at the highest level is the evocation of their effects on society as seen through the eyes of Arbat's youth. Here is a world where genuine enthusiasts still exist. Where young people believe in building a classless society. But here also is a world of tragic naivety, where arrests and exile of the innocent are still seen as mistakes that will soon

be rectified.

More than anything Rybakov's youth teach us one thing. It was those who stood up for their mates in a fight, who resisted petty despotism and injustice, who were to be the first victims of the terror. Such is the book's principal character Sasha Pankratov. And it was the most cynical and corrupt who provide some of the first informers and footsoldiers of the terror machine.

Meanwhile between those poles some of Rybakov's characters hide their heads in the sand in the shallow world of the superficial opulence of Moscow's artistic clubs and restaurants. It is a world of philistinism blithely ignoring the world outside. And the world outside is a world of expulsions, false charges and arrests. It is a world of rationing and shortages, and of desperate queues outside the jails to find disappeared loved ones.

But the book has very real weaknesses and limits. The Arbat's children are the sons and daughters of high-up party functionaries and intellectuals. In reality Rybakov only introduces us to the trials and tribulations of their narrow social circle. The vast majority of Soviet workers and peasants find no voice in the novel.

Another weakness lies in Rybakov's concentration on individuals alone. He portrays the construction of Stalin's dictatorship as being the result of the bitter and twisted personality of one individual. The roots of the regime are seen as the jealousy, malice and paranoia of Stalin's twisted personality.

The only alternative that Rybakov hints of is a coalition around Kirov and Bukharin that could have kept Stalin in check. Absent is any sense

The left and EETPU

WORKERS POWER is almost alone on the left in calling for the organised destruction of the EETPU and for building the new electricians' union the EPIU. The centrist left has united around the slogan "stay in and fight". But they show no common method except schematism and despair.

Socialist Organiser (SO) consistently opposed expelling the EETPU as scabs. Even the TUC's hamfisted expulsion moves failed to budge them. SO managed to avoid giving workers any guidance on the motion to expel EETPU in September because, if they were honest, they opposed it. They argued that the unitary trade union movement in Britain is a "gain not to be jeopardised". The ability of EETPU to undermine that unity in action at Wapping and in the miners' strike was secondary. SO found curious allies in the RCP who opposed expulsion on the grounds that there is no difference between "new realism" and "scab unionism".

SO and the RCP have combined with *Militant* and *Socialist Worker* to create unprecedented unity around the slogan "stay in and fight". The only thing they omit to tell us is how this can realistically be done, given Hammond's readiness to suspend and expel EETPU militants at will. For *Militant* the position soon pans out to "stay in even if you can't fight", with quotes from Lenin justifying "working in reaction-

ary unions". They are abstaining from the fight to smash a reactionary union which is now outside the mass labour movement.

As whole workplaces and branches have voted to join the EPIU, and as four big unions have recognised it, the chorus of "stay in and fight" has weakened considerably. *Socialist Worker* were reduced to arguing that EETPU militants had to stay in "to stop the AEU merger". Why a fighting electricians union, at war with Hammond's scab in every workplace would not help stop the merger better we are never told.

Socialist Worker suffered another blow when it had to reverse its call to expel EETPU from Stewards Committees. Even as Manchester City Council unions were organising to do just that, *Socialist Worker* discovered its previous call for this had been "a production error". It should have read "we must keep EETPU members on every stewards committee."

It may have been a production error, but it was more politically correct than the current line of the SWP.

We do not write off the EETPU's 330,000 members. But we want to wage a militant and effective fight to destroy the scab outfit and win them to class struggle trade unionism now. That cannot be done in EETPU—a fact hidden from the centrists by a mixture of opportunist sentimentality and ultra-left indifference. ■



Kirov's murder started Stalin's bloodbath

of the development of a social formation—the ruling bureaucracy—who needed the terror, and even Stalin's dictatorship over themselves, in order to usurp power from the Soviet working class—themselves similarly absent from Rybakov's book.

The strength of the novel lies in its ability to capture aspects of a moment in history when Stalin's terror regime was being put in place. It is an interesting read. It stands

both as a testimony to the thirst of Soviet society to uncover its own history and to the political weaknesses of the explanations of Stalinism that are fashionable amongst Soviet intellectuals.

At present *Children of the Arbat* is only available in hardback. A paperback is due soon. Read it and gain some insight, not only into the year 1934, but also to what thousands of Soviet workers are talking and arguing about in 1988. ■

Problems of "market socialism"

Dear Comrades,
John Hunt's article on "market socialism" in Eastern Europe (*Workers Power* 109) raises several important questions. The dangers for the working class arising from the bureaucracy's tendency to embrace the capitalist market "solution" are real ones, yet it is surely necessary to distinguish between adverse effects of the market, on the one hand, and bureaucratic management of the economy in general (i.e. its hampered planning) on the other.

Why has inflation reached 170% in Yugoslavia? If the inflation in that country arises directly from "market socialism", then why are other market economies not suffering from a similar degree of inflation? Or is it that the Yugoslav price inflation has other causes? Likewise, is the "market" responsible for Hungary's level of foreign debt?

What, finally, is *Workers Power's* policy as regards the workers' states' foreign debt? You mention in the same issue 109 that Burma is in debt to the extent of \$3 billion. What should be the policy put forward by revolutionary socialists on this? I look forward to reading your views on the debt crisis worldwide, and on related international economic issues.

Yours fraternally
Chris Gray

We reply:
Comrade Gray raises some interesting questions that would require more serious scientific work in order to produce an entirely satisfactory reply. True there is a tendency to inflation in most centrally command planned economies themselves and we are working to locate the roots of it. It's also the case that "market socialism" has its own particular inflationary pressures, for example the end of subsidies and the bringing of prices in line with the world market have created inflationary tendencies absent in the imperialist market economies. They are an important source of Polish, Hungarian and Yugoslavian inflation.
So too are the massive debt and

interest repayments to the world banks that the regimes have saddled themselves with. And, in the case of Poland in particular, these are not the result of the "market" but of the policies pursued by the bureaucracy itself of borrowing to offset failures in the planned economy. On all these questions further work is necessary and we are undertaking that work.

On the foreign debt question our programme for political revolution includes the demand for the repudiation of all debts to imperialism that the bureaucracy is trying to force the workers to pay for. We do not, by the way, consider Burma to be a workers' state and will be carrying an article next month explaining this more fully.

minister Edwina Currie tells working class people they should eat healthier food. On the pittance unemployed and low waged workers receive, it's impossible.

Yours fraternally
Liverpool health workers

It makes you sick!

Dear Comrades,
A young man recently came onto our ward with food poisoning. He had been eating food that was clearly past its sell-by date because being unemployed he couldn't afford anything else. It is enough to make your blood boil when health

Tight control at TUC



Dear Comrades,
The TUC Congress, to which I was a delegate, was a confirmation of everything your paper says about the trade union bureaucracy. It was one of the most rigidly bureaucratic labour movement events I have ever been to.

The major debates were on the expulsion of the EETPU and on Employment Training (ET). Both resulted in what, on the face of it, appeared to be left victories. But it was made crystal clear by Willis, on behalf of the whole General Council gang, that Hammond was under fire merely because he had broken the TUC's house rules. His role at Wapping was brushed under the carpet.

The non-support for ET was a gesture that the TUC are doing nothing to back up with action against all the Tory training cons. Organising the unemployed is just not on the TUC's agenda.

Control over delegates at the Congress was ensured by the leaders of the unions. Delegation meetings were often a formality, stitched up in advance by the various execu-

tives. Speakers from the Congress floor were carefully selected by the platform to guarantee that real debate was kept to a minimum and that any militant voices were stifled.

If the TUC is ever to be a real "general staff of the labour movement" then it is going to have to be thoroughly overhauled. I suspect that most delegates are selected bureaucratic time-servers—having an extra holiday at whichever seaside resort the TUC opts for.

We can begin to change this, and the General Council's grip on the Congress by fighting for a Congress made up of democratically elected lay delegates and for the casting of block votes in proportion to votes on policy issues as cast at annual union conferences.

We must get a General Council elected by, and accountable to, a lay delegate Congress. Such a leadership would be less removed from the rank and file it claims to represent.

Yours fraternally
NGA delegate to TUC 1988

NEW PAPER A BIG SUCCESS

THE NEW format *Workers Power*, launched last month, is proving a great success. All of our branches have reported increased sales and orders for extra copies of the next issue have been placed.

In Birmingham sales at a Benn/Heffer rally and in the town centre shifted nearly 70 papers in two days. In a major London bookshop the 40 papers put in went over the first weekend and high sales have continued since. The story has been the same in every area.

The paper merits this success. Its sales will increase with each issue. Readers can help by subscribing to the paper (see box) and by placing orders for extra copies to sell. If you agree with what we are saying then why not help us spread our message.

The quicker we build up the sales of the new look monthly, the quicker we will be able to move to a fortnightly paper. With the Tory attacks continuing, with the bureaucrats selling out the class struggle as they did in the past and with the world political situation so crisis wracked it is vital that we reach this goal as rapidly as possible. You can help us do it.

Write to us today.

MEETINGS THIS MONTH

Birmingham:
Marxist Discussion Group
The IRA: terrorists or freedom fighters?
Tuesday 11 October 7-30 *

Cardiff:
Public Meeting
Ireland: the longest war
Tuesday 25 October 7-30
Gower Hotel, Gwennyth St

Chesterfield:
Marxist Discussion Group
The legacy of Trotsky
Tuesday 25 October 7-30 *

Manchester:
Public Meeting
Local government in crisis
Tuesday 4 October 7-30
Gullivers Pub

Public Meeting
Gorbachev: how far can he go?
Tuesday 11 October 7-30
Gullivers Pub

Central London:
Public Meeting
Chile: the end of the dictatorship?
Friday 21 October 7-30
Conway Hall

Leicester:
Marxist Discussion Group
Racism: its roots in imperialism
Thursday 13 October 7-30
Unemployed workers centre,
Charles Street

East London:
Public Meeting
How to stop Tory attacks
Tuesday 4 October 7-30
Manor Park Community Centre
High Street North, Manor Park

Public Meeting
The Russian Revolution
Tuesday 25 October 7-30
Manor Park Community Centre

North London:
Marxist Discussion Group
The USA after Reagan
Wednesday 19 October 7-00 *

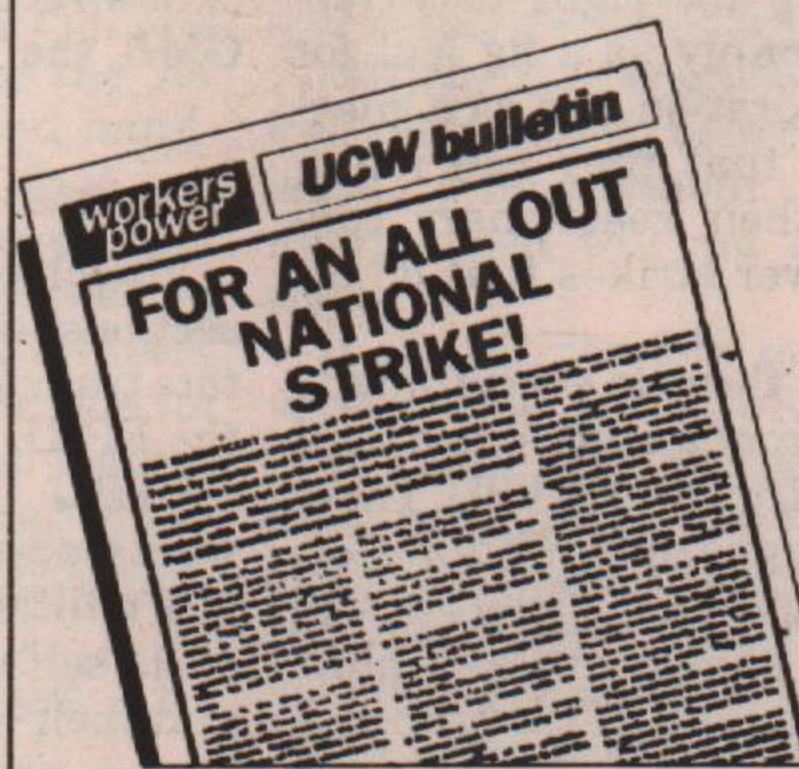
* See seller for venue

FUND DRIVE

This month we raised £155 in our fund drive. A meeting to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Fourth International in London raised £32 in a collection and readers in Cardiff sent in £78. From Coventry supporters we received £35 and from North London £10. Part of the struggle for a revolutionary paper is finance. We rely on our supporters and our readers for funds to keep us going. As we expand so too do our costs. So get the money coming in. Send it to the address listed in the subscriptions box and make cheques payable to Workers Power.

workers power

POST BULLETIN



DURING THE postal strike *Workers Power* supporters fought vigorously to win the dispute and fight the sell out. We produce bulletins for postal workers in a number of areas. These were stepped up during the dispute and were well received on the picket line as was the paper. In addition to this we produced thousands of copies of a national bulletin outlining a strategy to defeat Tuffin and the sell-out merchants and win the dispute.

SUBSCRIBE!

Make sure you get your copy of *Workers Power* each month. Take out a subscription now. Other English language publications of the MRCI are available too.

Class Struggle is the Irish Workers Group's paper, Permanent Revolution *Workers Power's* theoretical journal and Trotskyist International the MRCI's English language journal.

- I would like to subscribe to
- Workers Power** £5 for 12 issues
 - Class Struggle** £8 for 10 issues
 - Permanent Revolution** £6 for 3 issues
 - Trotskyist International** £3 for 3 issues

I would like to know more about the Workers Power Group and the MRCI

Make cheques payable to Workers Power and send to:
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Name:
Address:
.....
..... Trade union

Workers power

INSIDE

- Burma: blood bath on the streets
- Where now for Labour left?
- The Aid con-trick

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

AFTER TUC EXPULSION

Declare war on EETPU!

WITH THE expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC it is urgent that trade unionists step up the fight to destroy the scab union. Having expelled Hammond and co the TUC has sat by for a month giving EETPU members no guide to action.

It has refused to recognise the pro-TUC electricians' union, the EPIU, and called on member unions not to recruit from Hammond's outfit.

Hammond has shown no such indecision. On the day he walked out of the TUC the EETPU signed two more sweetheart deals. Only days later Hammond signed a training agreement with Norman Fowler to supply and discipline an army of cheap labour to London's Docklands. They plan to extend such agreements nationwide.

Collaborating

Hammond's union has been organising scabbing, signing away the right to strike and collaborating with the employers for four years. It defied the TUC call to black scab coal in 1984. It recruited a scab workforce to steal the jobs of 6,000 printworkers at Wapping. This is the record which should have got the EETPU expelled from the TUC long ago.

Instead the EETPU was expelled only for refusing to abide by the rules of the TUC bureaucratic club.

Merger mania

The union leaders have been gripped by merger mania in response to declining membership. With a small number of "general" unions competing in the most diverse industries, the Bridlington Agreement (which "awards" new workplaces to the unions) was vital to stop inter-union bickering. Hammond's flouting of the TUC's arbitration mechanism, not selling away the rights of his members, was what angered Willis and co.

The EETPU has been expelled for the most bureau-

cratic reasons, without a real fight to organise its militant minority. There is nothing to gain if its members simply drift into the TUC general unions. Unions such as MSF, the TGWU, NUPE, the GMB are not scab outfits, but they are busy concluding their own single union deals.

They generally favour retaining the right to strike, but mainly as a fig leaf for collaboration and as a guarantee that they can maintain their reactionary control over strikes that do occur.

But there is everything to gain from an organised fight to destroy the EETPU. Those who argue that militant electricians must "stay in and fight" should explain: how? Two major EETPU branches (Manchester South and Wythenshawe) were suspended in the week following the expulsion simply for asking to stay in the local

TUC bodies. Staying and fighting is simply not a realistic option. Militants in EETPU should organise to leave the union now.

In deciding what to do next they should be guided by the principle of maximum workplace unity in action. In most cases this will mean joining the EPIU. The EPIU is now recognised by NUPE, GMB, the TGWU and MSF.

Beware

They have set up "holding sections" ostensibly to facilitate transfer from EETPU to the EPIU. In fighting to win EETPU branches and workplaces to the EPIU *en bloc* militants should beware of its self appointed leaders and their allies. The EPIU's "three phase plan" is designed to ensure that the transition from EETPU does not disrupt bureaucratic control and the policies of



Organise to leave Hammond's scab outfit

John Harris/IFL

new realism.

Our tactics must be designed to do the opposite. Electricians must ensure that their new union is committed to class struggle action: to defy the anti-union laws, to active solidarity, to smashing the poll tax, to fighting local council cuts, to direct workplace democracy.

The new union must wage a war to oust the EETPU from recognition, from joint stewards' committees, Trades Councils and the CSEU. Jordan of the AEU is fighting to let the EETPU stay in the CSEU—AEU

militants must link this up as part of their fight against the proposed EETPU-AEU merger. In the process the EPIU must replace the corrupt officials with a fighting leadership based on rank and file democracy.

Elsewhere groups of electricians will want to join their workmates in a TUC union such as SOGAT in the print or NUPE in the NHS (both unions previously had to refuse recognition to dissident EETPU members). In such cases we must ensure the transfers help rather than hinder fighting unity in

the workplace.

Either way, the fight is on to convince as many electricians as possible to leave the EETPU now.

The EETPU should be expelled from the Labour Party as well as every stewards' committee and trade union body. This is not writing off EETPU members, it is posing point blank the question of class solidarity.

De-recognised

In Manchester City Council DLO this has already forced the EETPU branch into a move to join the EPIU, and the City Council to consider de-recognising the scab union. All Labour councils and LEAs must be forced to recognise the EPIU and to refuse to recognise the EETPU.

Tory strategy is clear: get behind the EETPU and shove! The EETPU is already in a membership and recognition war with the workers' movement. The TUC should recognise the EPIU now and provide massive backing for a campaign to win EETPU branches and workplaces to a split with the scabs. Every EETPU member who rejects Hammond's pig-trough politics should organise to leave EETPU now!

AEU: fight the merger

BY A BIRMINGHAM AEU MEMBER

AEU MILITANTS have a job on their hands stopping Jordan leading the union into a merger with the EETPU. But, as the scuppering of Jordan's planned sell-out on flexible working showed, thwarting his scabby plans is not impossible.

The *Engineering Gazette*, the paper identified with the Broad Left, might have been thought of as a focus for building the opposition to the merger. If last month's *Gazette* rally in Bilston, Wolverhampton is anything to go by, militants have got a fight on

to make the Broad Left take up a serious fight with Jordan.

Around 150 AEU militants attended the rally. It was chaired by Jimmy Airlie, a Stalinist who actually went along with the right over the proposed and then aborted Ford Dundee plant single union deal. When militants attacked him for this and for the lack of democracy in the Broad Left itself, he went mad.

Brother Airlie, abusing his position as chair, screamed at the meeting:

"We are not a Broad Left, we are the *Engineering Gazette*. We are after the centre ground and if I hear anyone else say we're a Broad Left I'll

hammer them."

What's the betting he doesn't talk to Gavin Laird and Bill Jordan like this!

The *Gazette* editorial board put forward a resolution which contained nothing more than the National Committee's own conditions for a merger. They want to ensure that in any amalgamation the AEU's district, divisional, national and rules' revision committees are retained and that full time officers are subject to election.

Airlie—copying Hammond's style of democracy - refused to take any amendments at the meeting. Alternative resolutions were not allowed

either.

In the AEU's supposed "left" forum this state of affairs is disgraceful. Militants urgently need a rank and file organisation that can fight Jordan and the merger.

Winning *Gazette* influenced militants to such a perspective means winning them to an active campaign against the merger. We should be clear—rules are not the issue, scab unionism is:

- No merger with the scabs!
- Drive out EETPU from the CSEU!
- No single union deals!
- No flexible working deals - for a 35 hour week now with no loss of pay!