

# Workers power

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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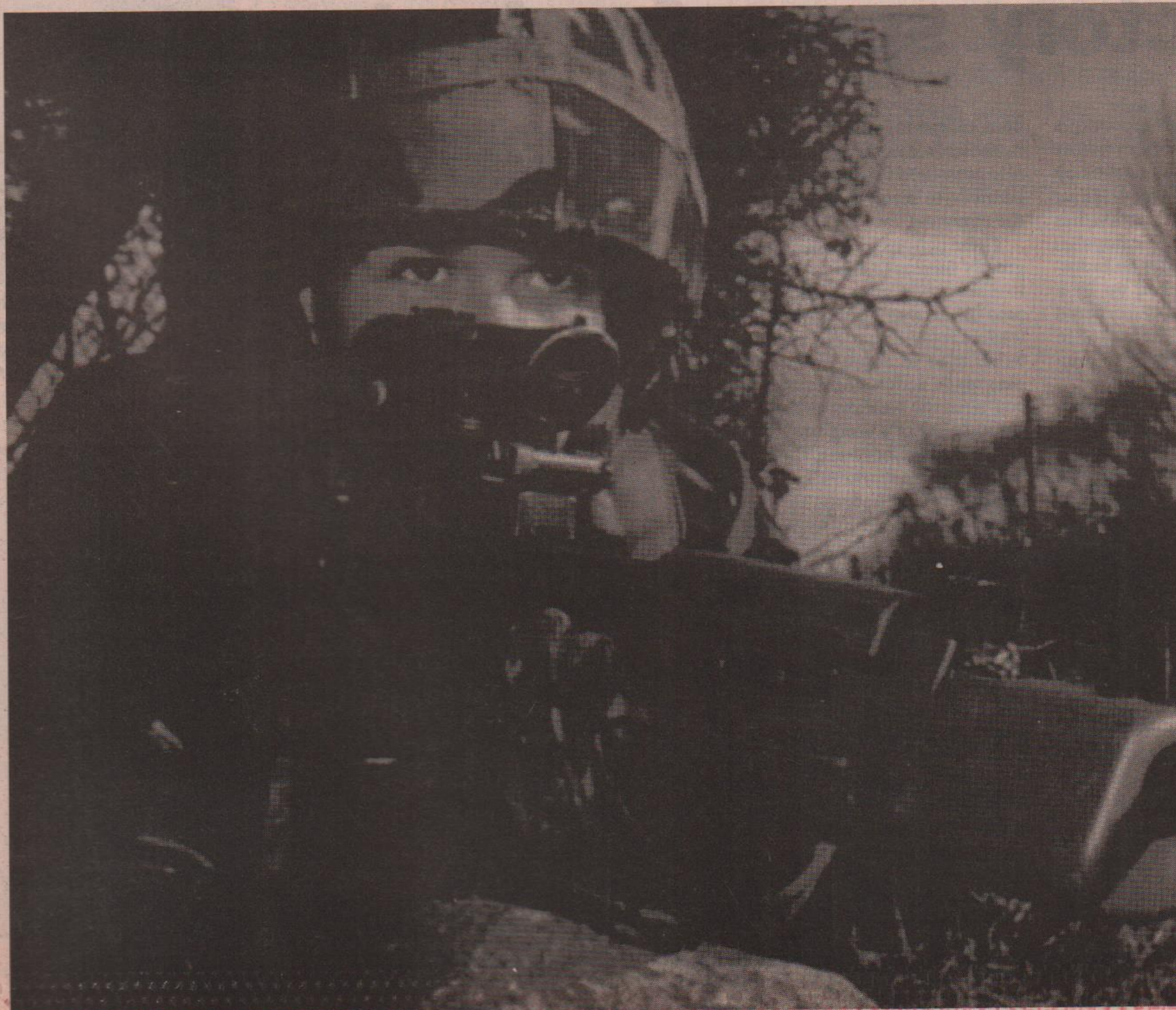
- Will Socialist Alliances work?
- The rise of Pat Buchanan
- Students fight entry fees

No 198 MARCH 1996 ★ Price 50p

Ireland – No to Major's rigged elections

# TROOPS

# OUT NOW!



● For an all-Ireland constituent assembly

● For a 32 county workers' republic

● Self determination for the Irish people

## Activists Diary

### Defend working class militants! Defend Horatio Penario!

Picket of Argentine Embassy  
53 Hans place London SW1  
on Monday 25 March 1996

### Demonstrate: Support Liverpool Dockers!

Saturday 23 March  
Assemble Myrtle Parade at  
12pm for 1.00pm rally at St  
George's Plateau, Liverpool.

### Demonstrate: In support of Rotherham NATFHE

Saturday 9 March 12.30pm  
Assemble: Rotherham college,  
Eastwood Lane, Rotherham.

### Cuba: Picket US Embassy

Monday March 11  
6.00pm to 7.30pm  
Grosvenor Square  
London W1  
Called by the Cuba Solidarity  
Campaign

### Ghana refugee day school

Sunday 10 March  
10.00am to 6.00pm  
at the Lambeth Refugee  
Resource Development centre-  
LARDEC, 365 Brixton Road SW9

### Workers Power Public Meetings

#### Ireland - Where now for the peace process?

Wednesday 6 March  
Club Room, Conway Hall  
Red Lion Square, Holborn at  
8.00pm

#### Ireland - Where now for the peace process?

Wednesday 13 March at 8.00pm  
West Indian club, Spon Street  
Coventry

### Socialists and the fight against social oppression

Sheffield  
Tuesday 12 March  
See sellers for details

## Students

# No Entry fees! For Free Education!

**S**TUDENTS ARE angry. According to a recent poll 96% want education to be free. Instead university and college bosses are threatening to bring in a fixed charge of £300 that every student will have to pay if they want to do a course. And the leaders of both of the main parties are talking about bringing in a new graduate tax that will force former students to pay for their education. For years after qualifying they will have to pay higher taxes from their wages.

Over the last few years the numbers of students in higher education has rocketed by 50%. But the Tories are desperate to hold down state spending and offer tax cuts for the rich to try and win the next election. So funding has not risen to meet the increased demand. Resources are already stretched to breaking point. That is why University bosses are threatening either enormous cuts in courses and sackings, or new top-up fees.

It is working class students who stand to lose most from all of this. Students from well-off middle class families will be cushioned by parental support. If you can't rely on that then the prospect of getting through a 3-year course without benefits, with a pitifully low poverty grant topped up by loans, is already bad enough. An extra lump sum fee or a graduate tax would force many students simply to abandon their plans altogether.

Labour can expect to receive substantial support from students at the next election. But they are making no promises to do anything that would seriously address the education crisis and student poverty. Tony Blair wants Labour to include the graduate tax in its manifesto, but the Tories look set to beat him to it. And when the university vice-chancellors first made their threat to bring in the £300 entry fee, Labour's David Blunkett failed even to attack the idea in



Students let university bosses what they think of entry fees

parliament, and simply agreed to the whole question being referred to the new Dearing Inquiry which, many students fear, will bring forward proposals next year to force them to pay for their courses. Across the colleges, students are getting organised and starting to fight back. The proposal for entry fees spurred emergency general meetings of student unions up and down the country. Last month protesters burst into a meeting

of vice-chancellors and gave them a nasty shock with the message that they can expect a militant campaign if they press ahead with their plans.

But the NUS leaders are tied hand and foot to Blair's whole approach. NUS President Jim Murphy supports the graduate tax, and tried hard to get the NUS conference last year to vote in favour of the tax. He was defeated in the vote—but can students rely on him and

Workers Power students are fighting for a massive extension of free education, funded by taxing the rich and abolishing private education altogether. We demand that Labour, NUS and the education unions commit themselves to the following:

- No entry fees or graduate tax.
- Complete abolition of the loans scheme.
- A living grant for all students over 16 at the level of the average industrial wage.
- Grants to be funded by a tax on unearned wealth and a steeply progressive income tax.
- Cancellation of student debts to the banks, building societies and loan companies.
- Immediate freeze on rents in college accommodation.
- Restore all rights to benefits for students including housing benefit and income support between terms.

his New Labour allies to lead a campaign against the proposals? Can they hell.

Student activists need to organise quorate general meetings now to pass resolutions against the graduate tax and the entry fees. Emergency resolutions need to be immediately sent in for the Easter NUS Conference. NUS should be committed to a nationwide campaign of occupations if any college tries to bring in the fees, or implement any course and staff cuts. Students should only send delegates to the conference who are firmly committed to fight for free education.

In the meantime a campaign needs to be organised on the ground. In every college existing societies and groups such as the Campaign for Free Education, Labour Clubs, SWSS and others need to be brought together into student committees to spread the word and organise action. These committees need to go beyond a handful of student union activists. Every course, academic year and student hall should be asked to send delegates to student committees in every college. They should draw in representatives from lecturers and college workers' unions and prepare united resistance to any cuts or fees. ■

As we went to press, reports came through that Nick DeMarco, President of the students' union at Kingsway College, has been expelled by the college management for his alleged role in an anti-racist protest against Tory Chairman Brian Mawhinney. He is being witch-hunted for doing what every student leader should be doing—fighting back against the Tories. This is an attack on all students and must be resisted.

## J.J. Fast Foods lock out

# Victory spurs fresh struggles

**A** GROUP of immigrant workers have scored an important victory against a hard-nosed sweatshop boss. Mustafa Kamil, manager of JJ Fast Foods in Tottenham, north London, has caved in after a four-month campaign of pickets and boycotts. After an Industrial Tribunal claim backed up by a militant campaign, he has been ordered to reinstate all 45 workers he sacked in early October for the "crime" of joining a union, the TGWU.

The workers won other public commitments from Kamil: to compensate the victimised workers with the equivalent of 17-weeks back pay; to recognise the TGWU and allow all members to be represented on grievances and disciplinary issues; to abide by statutory sick pay provisions and to negotiate on grievance and disciplinary procedures.

There were, however, already signs that the boss was reneging on some of his promises. One of the key activists in the dispute is not returning to work at the distribution centre.

The struggle by the mainly Turkish and Kurdish workers was hard fought. The dispute began as a lock-out. The first picket was attacked by a group of hired thugs who hospitalised four protesters. But the determined effort of the workers and hundreds of supporters paid off in the end. They sustained regular 5.00am pickets in Tottenham and

demonstrations outside other JJ outlets. Activists from a militant support group also pressured Harrow and Southwark councils to scrap their contracts with the company.

These actions hit Kamil's profits and greatly increased the pressure on him to make concessions. In short, militancy paid off. In sharp contrast, the TGWU leaders refused to make the dispute official, tried to argue that the tribunal case made action unnecessary and encouraged the workers to accept the insulting offer of a lump sum of £50,000 to be divided between them. As the bulletin of the workers' support group rightly says, by keeping up the action Kamil was forced to negotiate. "The Tribunal merely recognised what had happened—that the workers had won."

The success at JJ's Fast Foods looks set to spark a wave of resistance and new union organisation among immigrant workers in sweatshops elsewhere in the north and east London. So far, 100 textile workers at the Jenny's factory in Tottenham have staged a lightning walk-out on 19 February after three days of negotiations between the boss and T&G representatives ended in deadlock over illegal £10 deductions from wages, the issue of tea and toilet breaks, and the provision of proper dining and toilet facilities.

They swiftly turned their strike into

a battle involving hundreds of other rag trade workers as they sent flying picket around Tottenham and Hackney. An occupation of the factory premises blocked van drivers coming to collect finished goods.

The Jenny's boss, cornered by the quick and determined action, was only too keen to reopen talks with the TGWU regional official. Within hours, he conceded union recognition, written contracts for all employees, the in-

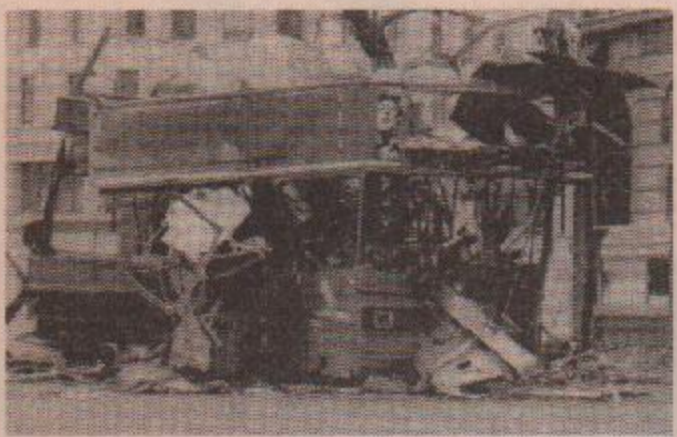
roduction of an agreed disciplinary and grievance procedure, and an end to the practice of pocketing workers' National Insurance payments.

These two examples of working class courage, in the face of both the anti-union laws and the racist immigration regulations, highlight the real possibility of spreading the word that militant action can win and organising some of London's most exploited workers. ■

**OUT NOW!**

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## in this issue



### Ireland

Mark Harrison examines the background to the breakdown of the ceasefire and charts a way forward in the fight for democratic rights and socialism in Ireland.



### The Asylum Bill

Jeremy Dewar looks at the real reasons for the Tories' new racist law and shows how trade unionists can make it unworkable.



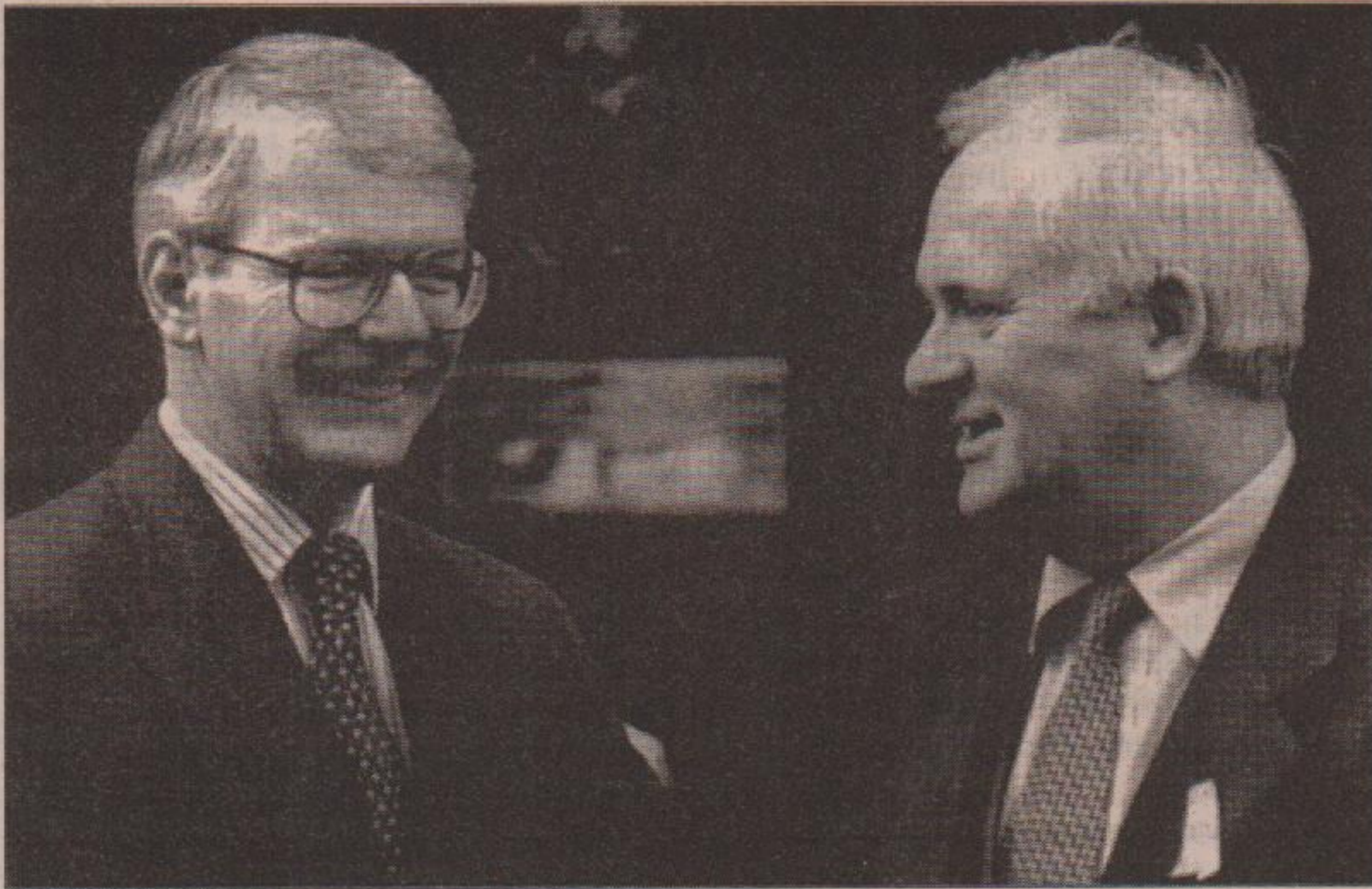
### Australia

After the rout of Paul Keating's Labor Party, Paul Morris and Lloyd Cox write from Melbourne about the prospects for a French-style explosion when the new Coalition attacks the working class.



### Trainspotting

Danny Boyle's film, and the Irvine Welsh novel on which it is based, have come in for a lot of unfair criticism. Richard Brenner responds.



Major and Bruton agree on elections which anti-unionists cannot win

## Irish peace process

# Hypocrisy and democracy

**F**OR ALMOST 18 months the British government, with the full backing of the Labour Party and Ulster's Unionist parties, has been working to get the IRA to surrender. For John Major, this was and is the overriding objective of the "peace process".

On 9 February the IRA let him know that he had not yet succeeded. They announced an end to the ceasefire, and within an hour a huge bomb exploded in Canary Wharf. Other bombs followed.

Major used the bombing, and Sinn Fein's refusal to condemn it, to brand the Republicans as anti-democratic:

"Sinn Fein and the IRA have a choice. Only when they commit themselves unequivocally to peace, and reinstate the ceasefire, can they have a voice and a stake in Northern Ireland's future. But if they reject democratic principles and use violence, they can expect no sympathy and no quarter."

Major and the Unionists are trying to pose as true democrats with their calling of sham elections prior to all-party talks.

The leader of the Ulster Unionists, David Trimble, and his counterpart in the Democratic Unionist Party, Ian Paisley, endorsed Major's line. Because Sinn Fein "rejects democracy" by supporting the IRA, they will not talk to them.

This democratic posturing by Major and the Unionists is nothing but hypocrisy. What they stand for is the maintenance of a statelet that was created by a blatantly undemocratic action. The six counties of Northern Ireland were detached from the rest of the country in 1921 by the British Parliament's Government of Ireland Act.

This followed an election in Ireland in 1918 that voted overwhelmingly for independence. The British ignored that majority vote and went to war on Ireland. When the IRA mark one proved too much for them, they salvaged them-

selves by partitioning Ireland, against the will of the majority.

"Ulster" was created by this abortion of democracy. The province of Ulster consisted of nine counties. Yet the Northern Ireland state was made up of only six. The reason for this was that nine counties would have given the Nationalists a majority in the new statelet. Britain, and its Unionist allies in the North East, wanted a "Protestant state for a Protestant people". And this is what they created in the six counties—a state that right up to today has a built in Protestant majority and that discriminates against Catholics in jobs, housing and basic rights.

Is this democracy? Rather than talk about the rights of the Unionists, why does nobody in Britain talk of the rights of the 40% of the population in the North who have been kept prisoner by a state that has made their life hell? Why

chunk of territory—at that time its most industrially developed and profitable part—to preserve its control of Ireland as a whole.

A democratic solution involves reversing this historic injustice and granting to a divided country the basic right to determine its own future. Britain's refusal to allow Ireland to do that is the source of the current conflict, just as it has been the source of conflicts that have tortured Ireland for generations. Ireland has a British problem.

Revolutionary socialists do not welcome the IRA's return to guerrilla war. But we fully understand why it has taken its decision. And we assert that it is fighting on the side of democracy, it is fighting for a democratic goal. It is for this reason that we unconditionally support it in its war against Britain, though we remain sharply critical of its strategy and tactics (see centre pages).

dominated assembly.

Imagine the government of Britain as a whole being determined by a vote in a Tory safe seat. Imagine trying to change the boundaries in such a seat and being blocked from doing so by an occupying army that gives the built-in Tory majority a veto over any change in such a constituency.

Nobody in their right mind would claim that such a set-up was democratic. Yet that is exactly the situation in Northern Ireland. The Nationalists cannot win an election. They remain a minority, ruled over by an armed majority backed by an imperialist army of occupation.

The Major/Bruton proposals will actually confirm this, not challenge it. It will give the Unionists a majority in the all party talks. That is why the forthcoming elections should be boycotted by every democrat in Northern Ireland. To do anything else would be to give credibility to an undemocratic facade.

Revolutionary socialists have an answer to Major and Bruton's "democratic" ploy—one that advances us towards the goal of a united Ireland.

We demand elections to an All-Ireland Constituent Assembly. Only such a call can tear the mantle of democracy from the undeserving hands of Major and Trimble, and expose the unionist veto for the bastion of sectarian privilege and national oppression that it is. It will expose the crime, perpetrated by Britain on Ireland, that has led to new bombings on the streets of London—the maintenance of the right of a tiny minority to hold a whole country to ransom and to imprison an entire community in an artificial state. ■

**Rather than talk about the rights of the Unionists, why does nobody in Britain talk of the rights of the 40% of the population in the North who have been kept prisoner by a state that has made their life hell?**

do we hear so much against the IRA but not a word about the Protestant-dominated RUC that throughout the ceasefire continued to raid Nationalist homes, fire rubber bullets at Nationalist marches and beat up Nationalist activists?

Democracy has nothing to do with it. The fact is that the six counties were created by Britain at the behest of the armed Unionists in the 1920s. From that day to this an enclave, separated from the country to which it actually belongs, has been maintained as a Unionist state courtesy of British money, British troops and British guns. British imperialism knowingly and deliberately cut off a

The Major/Bruton proposals of 28 February do not go anywhere near to resolving the conflict. True, they involve a concession to the Republican movement—a firm date for all party talks (10 June). But these talks are to be preceded by fraudulent elections in the six counties. These will be fundamentally undemocratic. The reason is simple. The elections cannot be won by the Nationalist community. They are a trapped minority cut off from the majority of their country. No matter how many times they vote, (whether for an old-style Stormont legislative body or a new style forum) the result will be the same—a Unionist

See pages 8 & 9 of this Issue for more on where now for the peace process, and the Labour party's infamy on Ireland.

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# Firefighters Wanted - a strategy to win

**F**IREFIGHTERS FACE some of the sharpest ever attacks on their jobs and conditions. Local authorities across Britain have approved proposals to axe jobs, reduce the number of engines and cut back on recruitment and training. Whilst the financial reason given for these drastic cuts is Kenneth Clarke's November 1995 budget, the attacks are part of a sustained offensive against the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). The current attacks come as the bitter dispute between the FBU and the Labour-controlled Merseyside Fire Authority drags into its ninth month.

Events on Merseyside since summer 1995 illustrate that there is a fundamental threat to the strength of the FBU. Talks between FBU representatives and the Fire Authority at the conciliation service ACAS in early February confirmed that the authority's reserves were more than enough to maintain the 20 posts and the previously negotiated annual leave arrangements it has sought to eliminate.

The war of attrition between the authority's boss, Anthony Best, and the region's firefighters has shown that his real agenda is about "management's right to manage". He is more concerned with breaking the FBU, than with short-term financial savings.

## Pay

2 years ago the Tories failed to erode the national pay formula established in the wake of the historic 1977 strike. Now a number of local authorities, many Labour run, have launched attacks that could sap the FBU of much of its still considerable strength. Though the outcome of the battle with Callaghan's Labour government was hardly a resounding victory, it secured an undeniable gain on the pay question and radicalised a layer of FBU activists for a generation to

follow. Successive Tory regimes have recognised the potential of the firefighters' union. They have long had the FBU in their sights.

The union's leadership under General Secretary Ken Cameron has a reputation for being among the most left-wing within the TUC. Cameron is a unique survivor among left-leaning trade union leaders, since he still presides over an organisation with its membership and resources intact, in sharp contrast to Arthur Scargill's decimated NUM. But is Cameron willing and able to lead a fightback on the scale necessary to repel the present round of attacks?

## Concessions

The union has won some concessions in local areas. On Tayside, for example, the local authority originally proposed chopping expenditure by more than £850,000. This would have translated into a hiring freeze and a sharp fall in training provision. Mass meetings of Tayside firefighters voted overwhelmingly (92%) for a ballot on strike action if the authority did not retreat. A majority of the 400-plus FBU members attending wanted an immediate walk-out. In response to this anger, the authority repackaged its cuts budget, reinstating tens of thousands in spending originally due for the chop.

In London, the capital's Fire and Civil Defence Authority unveiled a more severe attack that included the loss of some 600 jobs, the scrapping of 22 engines and the closure of four stations. On 22 February, as more than 1,500 FBU members and supporters protested outside, the Authority withdrew some of the cuts. This followed a sustained public campaign of leafletting and petitioning, twinned with a commitment to an immediate ballot for a series of protest strikes. But the authority still plans to

axe over 300 jobs and take 15 engines out of the service. Station meetings are being organised to discuss a ballot for strike action again.

The danger is that the union leadership appears ready to squander the opportunity to channel widespread anger within the TUC. Cameron is a unique survivor among left-leaning trade union leaders, since he still presides over an organisation with its membership and resources intact, in sharp contrast to Arthur Scargill's decimated NUM. But is Cameron willing and able to lead a fightback on the scale necessary to repel the present round of attacks?

The FBU is undeniably prepared to mobilise its membership around campaigns aimed at communities at risk from service cuts. In addition, the union bureaucracy has been prepared to sanction limited industrial action. But the leadership has steered clear of a head-on confrontation with the Tory government and has made it plain to militants that it will not defy the anti-union laws

and their effective ban on solidarity action.

The conduct of the Merseyside dispute illustrates the failings of the Cameron leadership and its strategy. Merseyside has become a test case, with other bosses in the fire service looking at this protracted battle before launching their own provocative cuts packages. Whilst FBU members on Merseyside are clearly prepared to persist in the one-day actions, there is a real danger that a dispute with no end in sight could erode morale. In the meantime, the management can count on the army conducting its strike-breaking operation indefinitely.

The best chance for a swift and successful resolution of the Merseyside dispute is to fight for an indefinite strike,

with any provision of emergency cover to be under the control of FBU members themselves. There is a strong case for an emergency recall national conference of delegates from all areas, with the purpose of drawing the lessons from the recent and ongoing series of local battles, especially the Merseyside fight.

## Focus

Despite his long-standing tendency to pay limited heed to conference policy, many left activists in the FBU continue to invest a good deal of their trust in Cameron, so that militants committed to the building of a real rank and file movement in the union need to focus specific demands on Cameron and the national executive. First and foremost, these would include a call for industrial solidarity with the Liverpool firefighters by members of other brigades.

FBU members from the various brigades at the sharp end of recent employer attacks need to meet and hammer out a strategy for uniting the so far separate local fights. Such a meeting could begin to lay the basis for a rank and file movement that could maximise pressure on Cameron in the here and now, while mapping out the path to a thoroughgoing transformation of the union.

The alternative to is to continue to rely on Cameron to use the strike weapon as little more than an occasional bargaining chip. However critical Cameron may appear to be of Blair's leadership of the Labour Party, the FBU bureaucracy is not prepared to do anything to rock the boat prior to a general election by staging a national or even indefinite local strike. But FBU members can ill afford to wait for a future Labour government that will do nothing to remedy the current financial shortfalls and union-busting attacks of local employers—unless forced to, from below. ■



FBU members protest against cuts—but more action will be needed to win

## Offshore oil workers Fighting for the union

**T**HE VICIOUS anti-union policies of the multinational operators in North Sea has led to oil giant Shell facing the most serious offshore industrial action since 1990.

The past year has been a public relations nightmare for Royal Dutch/Shell Group. The multinational confronted a barrage of criticism and consumer boycotts for its decision to dispose of the Brent Spar in the North Sea, followed by outrage at its role in Nigeria after the executions of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists.

Despite this bad publicity the company was able to announce record annual earnings of more than £4.4 billion, based largely on higher revenues from increased oil and gas production. But now Shell Expro—the company's North Sea arm—faces industrial action by contract employees on one of its major installations in the Brent field.

## Erosion

Coinciding with Shell's financial report on 15 February, some 200 offshore workers began a work-to-rule in an escalation of their long-running fight over

union recognition and the erosion of terms and conditions. The workers are staging the protest on the Brent Charlie platform, 120 miles to the north-east of Shetland.

Their aim is to force the management of John Wood Group engineering, a key Shell Expro contractor and the platform's main employer, to enter talks with the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC). The OILC was formed in 1992 in the struggle to improve conditions offshore in the aftermath of the Piper Alpha disaster. It has never been recognised by the TUC.

Last year Wood Group employees on the installation voted overwhelmingly in favour of OILC representation. Nearly 96% of 364 eligible employees voted, with 83% supporting the union. But as a platform worker put it, "there has been no move on recognition for ten months".

The Wood Group claimed that its "employees have every right to be represented by a trade union that is affiliated to the TUC. OILC is not affiliated to the TUC". This is a bit rich coming from this particular set of bosses.

As the OILC's General Secretary,

Ronnie McDonald, told *Workers Power*, the Wood Group "participated in the victimisation of 729 workers who fought to win negotiating rights for TUC-affiliated unions in 1990". The Wood Group is clearly using the non-affiliation of the OILC as an excuse. In reality it is not talking to any unions at all.

## Wildcat

The current work-to-rule is unofficial and marks the boldest action in the North Sea since the wave of wildcat strikes and installation occupations involving several thousand workers in July 1990. Ronnie McDonald describes the work-to-rule as "the spontaneous product of genuinely felt grievances which the OILC has tried to articulate over a number of years".

The timing is strategic, however, since the overtime ban and refusal to carry out crucial administrative tasks threaten the timetable for a major revamp of the Brent Charlie platform. Shell Expro had intended to halt oil production from the installation by mid-March. This is part of a £390 million project to convert the platform into a major producer of natu-

## Strike against job losses

**C**OMPULSORY redundancies have been announced at Rotherham College. First reports indicated that 40 lecturers and 50 support staff were under threat. In response the Natfhe branch organised a ballot for indefinite strike action. The ballot resulted in a 55-47 yes vote.

Behind the scenes, college managers have tried to fiddle with the numbers involved in an attempt to head off the action. They've also hinted that they could be getting rid of more middle managers than lecturers. Natfhe members should not be fooled. There is more at stake in this dispute than management incompetence. It is a test of the ability of the Government to pass national budget cuts onto the Further Education (FE) sector.

The dispute at Rotherham is the

first real test since those cuts came into effect. The cuts could lead not only to redundancies but the eventual closure of the college itself.

## Crucial

This makes the fight at Rotherham crucial to fate of the FE sector nationally. Solidarity strike action elsewhere in the sector is the key to defending these and other jobs. Natfhe members in Yorkshire and Humber-side region have already pledged financial support to any strike action.

- Support the national demo in Rotherham: Saturday 9 March 12.30pm. Assemble: Rotherham College, Eastwood Lane, Rotherham.
- Invite Rotherham members to branch meetings.
- Natfhe members must pledge money to sustain any strike action.

ral gas by February 1997.

The oilworkers' action comes against the background of mounting concern about reduced staffing levels and declining safety standards. Since 21 December 1995, five offshore employees have died at work in three separate incidents.

The current action could easily escalate into an all-out, unofficial strike. This would almost certainly trigger a visit to the courts by the Wood Group or Shell

Expro, for an injunction against the action.

The Wood Group has not turned to the courts yet, instead the management has attempted to pressure workers returning from tours offshore into "personal negotiations". But workers from the Charlie and its sister platform, Brent Delta, have stood firm, insisting that "all future negotiations will be with the OILC". ■



## Dockers fight on

SIX MONTHS into the Liverpool dockers' strike, the bosses in the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) have finally agreed to direct talks with a union delegation, including members of the port shop stewards' committee on 6 March.

Speaking to *Workers Power*, shop steward Bobby Morton repeated the same simple yet powerful message that dockers have maintained since the mass sackings on 29 September 1995:

"Nobody will be going back until all 500 men are reinstated. Despite the offers made to our people of severance payments, we are determined to carry on the dispute with the help of comrades nationally and internationally."

Nearly 90% of dockers rejected the company's "final" offer in a postal ballot at the beginning of last month, even though TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris had labelled it "the best possible deal in the circumstances." The strikers' mass meeting on 29 February unanimously mandated the negotiating team to accept nothing less than the reinstatement of all those sacked.

The offer of new talks by the MDHC comes just after the week-long international dockers' conference called by the Liverpool strikers. Forty delegates from 17 countries attended the event. The conference pledged solidarity with the

fight against casualisation and union-busting on Merseyside, passing a resolution for a mass international boycott of freight to and from Liverpool.

Representatives from the stewards' committee also went to the US to attend a conference of the AFL-CIO (the USA's TUC) in February. They gained further promises of both financial and industrial support from the International Longshoremen's Union.

By their own admission, the port bosses have lost £5 million in profits as a result of the dispute, but this is a gross understatement. When the news of the dockers' rejection of the company's offer reached the Stock Exchange, the MDHC share price plummeted, wiping more than £60 million off its total capital. The New Jersey-based Atlantic Container Line, one of the port's major customers, has now renewed its threat to withdraw from Liverpool unless a settlement emerges from the talks.

The government, which still holds a 14% stake in the company, is almost certainly propping up the MDHC. The Tories succeeded in their goal of hammering union organisation in virtually all of Britain's ports through the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989. The key exception was Liverpool, which suffered job losses but retained many of its old strengths.

As Bobby Morton puts it, the dockers "have received magnificent support. Workers have latched on to the strike... and see that it could be the spark to get the rest of the labour movement fighting." The dockers have forged links not only with Liverpool firefighters, but with strikers from J J Fast Foods and Hillingdon Hospital in London.

Not all dockers would yet agree, but the compliance of the TGWU leadership with the Tories' anti-union laws has been the key factor preventing an outright victory for the strikers. The TGWU's failure to offer any real public support and, crucially, the absence of any calls for secondary action have prolonged the dispute. At the same time, however, the TGWU bureaucracy has been more than prepared to negotiate a shabby deal. The strikers should increase the pressure on the TGWU leadership, while seizing this opportunity to build a rank and file opposition within their union as a whole. ■

*Rush cheques/postal orders to: Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards' Committee, c/o Mr J Davies, Secretary/Treasurer, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS.*

### ■ NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION ■ Saturday 23 March

Assemble Myrtle Parade at 12 noon for 1.00pm rally at St George's Plateau.

## Sheffield council

# Sharpening the knives

ON 15 FEBRUARY Sheffield's Labour-controlled council finally released its draft budget to the unions. The following day it sent copies of the HR1 form detailing 1,780 potential redundancies.

The impact of this latest budget will be devastating. The documents identified 370 education posts as 'potential surpluses', along with 530 catering jobs, 150 in the Works Department, 168 in the former social services department and 70 in housing.

Many section managers are warning the council that the required savings would mean an inability to carry out statutory obligations. The cuts could spell the closure of old people's homes, a mental health project, day centres for elderly people and those with learning disabilities and a residential children's unit.

In housing, job cuts would occur in the homeless, private sector housing and housing benefits sections. In education, the plans would axe £350,000 from the youth service, close school kitchens and chop 165 teaching posts.

Along with the inevitable council tax increase (7.7%), there are also proposals to increase or introduce charges for the first time for services, such as day

care for adults with disabilities.

The picture is very similar to previous years: the council has announced a financial crisis, warned of potential compulsory redundancies and 'exemplified' massive cuts in jobs and services throughout the city. In previous years, the council has used the threat of compulsory redundancies to force through the cuts. It releases worst case scenario figures and then the workforce is told that the only solution is to take a pay cut, or an erosion in conditions. Otherwise, services will be chopped to the bone.

The difference this year is that the council has waited as long as possible to announce its plans so that service users and the workers who provide them have precious little time to mount any sort of campaign.

Year after year the council has destroyed jobs and services and year after year the unions have let this happen in the hope of avoiding compulsory redundancies.

The services that we provide to the city's most vulnerable people are being systematically wiped out, and our jobs, pay and conditions are under attack once more. In the same budget that will savage our jobs and services, we are told

that the council intends to spend £78 million on interest payments to the banks.

Various strategies have been tried and failed: creative accounting, "work-sharing", pay-cuts, one-day strikes, departmental negotiations and piecemeal action.

Sheffield Unison members must vote to take all out, indefinite strike action if any redundancy notices are issued. In addition, we must demand that the council finally refuses to pass on the Tory attacks, and sets a budget based on the needs of the people of Sheffield, not on the dictates of the Tories and the banks. If Eurotunnel can decide not to repay its debts this year, then so can the council!

All-out indefinite strike action is not an easy option. It requires tough arguments in every workplace, section and department. But we need a council-wide response to the budget, based on action committees across every department. These committees should immediately forge links with workers in other council unions and take the campaign for bold, united action to other unions and service user groups in the city, with the aim of forcing the council to fight for Sheffield's working people, not to come back with still more attacks. ■



## Poverty pay

Helen Johnson, a nurse and Unison member in Coventry, writes about the response of healthworkers to the recent NHS pay offer.

“Nurses will learn to love local pay...the Government's record on nurses' pay is good...the Government has provided nurses with better living standards and more rewarding jobs.”

These choice quotes come from Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell's attempt to persuade NHS nurses to accept the end of national pay awards.

Last year saw the introduction of local pay bargaining. Nurses received 1% nationally, with a discretionary 2% "top up" from trusts. Some trusts did settle at 3%. But today there are still 14 trusts which have not even coughed up this miserly figure. Stephen Dorrell pointed to East Surrey Healthcare Trust as an example of how local pay should work. On 14 February 1996 East Surrey nurses staged a day-long protest over their 1995 pay award of 2.5%.

This year we are getting 2%, with 4-4.5% being negotiated at trust level. This may be more than last year, but I am still angry, very angry. In fact there are no nurses I know who are happy with this pay offer. Morale in nursing is at an all-time low, even according to the "respectable" RCN. A recent RCN poll showed that out of 1,382 nurses, 14 (!) felt this pay offer was fair. Where did they find the 14?

Most nurses are overworked and under increasing stress. Literally all of the nurses on my ward are looking for another job. Every shift suffers a staffing crisis.

We regularly work with two trained nurses, three auxiliaries and two untrained agency nurses for 30 patients, with fewer still for the evening and night shifts. One in five nurses in the NHS believe staffing levels are dangerously low.

Over the past two years, junior doctors' hours have been cut from 120 to 80 hours a week. Instead of employing more doctors, trained nurses are taking on more of the doctors' work. Now auxiliary nurses are taking on more of the trained nurses' work. Of course, no one receives proper training.

With performance-related pay looming, some nurses think that taking on additional tasks will mean better pay and recognition. This is a sorry self-delusion. In practice, trusts across the country have been downgrading nurses, not giving better pay.

With hours of unpaid overtime, job insecurity, nurses on temporary and fixed-term contracts it's no surprise that there is a shortage of trained nurses. One hospital recently produced an expensive video package and sought recruits in Ireland and Holland, offering incentives for nurses to come and work in their hospital. There were no takers.

Under the government's nurse training programme, Project 2000, student nurses receive about £4,000 a year to survive on. They have to spend a minimum number of hours

on "rostered" duty at the end of their training. That means they work on the wards and are counted in nursing numbers. For this they get paid £6 a day! Debt forces most Project 2000 nurses to work as agency nurses for which they get about £2.80 an hour after tax.

This year the Tories introduced the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). The government has earmarked billions for private companies, which will bid to provide NHS services. We were told that this wouldn't include nursing services. Another government lie!

In Stonehaven, near Aberdeen, Grampian Health Trust is rebuilding its hospital based on PFI. Nursing services, along with the rest, will be run by private companies. One of the bidders for nursing services, Westminster Healthcare, pays no unsocial or weekend rates to staff in their nursing homes. Their nursing auxiliaries get £3.40 per hour and trained nurses £7.36.

Westminster Healthcare has recently had to pay out £379 million after a three-year fraud investigation. Meanwhile, the Grampian chief executive, Jeremy Taylor, got a 29.3% pay rise to £101,000 a year.

Nurses in the NHS are fed up with poverty pay, Tory lies and bureaucrats lining their pockets. As a colleague said,

"This pay offer is crap, we're doing more work, taking on more responsibility, having to write more instead of spending time with patients doing what we were trained to do, our pay starts at a much lower level than other workers like teachers and social workers - and we have no money".

The Labour Party is staying silent. Tony Blair has commented that:

"We are not in a position to say what the Labour Party would or would not do".

Cold comfort for healthworkers.

And the unions? The RCN scrapped its no-strike clause, but it still offers no alternative. It argued that 3% in 1995 was a victory, whether the money came from national or local pay bargaining. My union, Unison, argued for 8%, but sold us out with a last-minute pay settlement that agreed to local pay bargaining and 3%.

Nurses need to get organised at the rank and file level alongside other NHS workers. Together we all need to fight every attempt at contracting out and its consequences, taking a lead from struggles like the Hillingdon Hospital strike. We need to win agency nurses to the union, and break trained nurses from the RCN, which historically has only represented management.

To win a real improvement in our pay and conditions will demand strike action, under the control of nurses. Only then will we stop the creeping privatisation of the NHS, with all its dire consequences for us and other healthworkers. ■

Write to: BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX

**I**N BRITAIN today, there are about 800 immigrants behind bars. Yet they have committed no crime. In fact, the vast majority are themselves victims twice over. Not only have they had to flee repressive regimes, they now find themselves at the sharp end of Britain's racist justice system.

Britain has for years carefully promoted an image of itself as a bastion of civilised liberal values. This partly explains why immigrants seek refuge here. They are led to believe they will get a sympathetic response; they have been cruelly deceived.

### Benefits

It now takes, on average, 18 months for asylum seekers to push through their claims for the right to live here. During that time, they are not allowed to work. In 1986 a junior minister called John Major ruled that such refugees should live on just 90% of ordinary benefits. The new Social Security rulings, which Peter Lilley introduced on 5 February 1996, will now cut this entitlement to zero for the appeals period (i.e. the last 10 months of the process). Already 13,000 families are destitute because of this. As more and more asylum seekers reach the appeals stage of their applications, this will grow to about 40,000 by the end of the year.

At the same time, asylum seekers who fail to register their claims as soon as they enter Britain will be denied benefits from the outset. To make matters worse, there is a Catch 22: anyone who claims asylum as soon as they enter will be instantly deported to the last country they passed through en route, unless they arrive directly from their country of origin.

As almost all immigrants fleeing repression have to take circuitous routes to escape (their oppressors rarely give them visas!) the only ones under the new Asylum Bill laws entitled to benefits will be here for a few hours at most. No wonder, refugees are so fearful of going up to the immigration officers and applying for asylum!

The racist nature of the new Bill is further exposed by the so-called "white list of safe countries" from which all refugees will be put on a fast-track procedure without right of appeal. The proposed list includes India where Kashmiris and Sikhs are regularly

# Asylum Bill

## Workers can stop this racist Bill!

gunned down by the army and Pakistan where blasphemy is a capital punishment. This list is bound to expand.

### Nigeria

Anybody would think there is a worldwide conspiracy among peasants and workers to flock to Britain's dole queues. The very opposite is the case.

Take Nigeria for example. After Britain's crocodile tears following Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution last November, Nigeria was taken off the proposed white list. But it is bound to re-appear as soon as Abacha's brutal regime leaves the headlines. In the first ten months of 1995 5,100 Nigerians applied for asylum in Britain. Only two were allowed to stay. Why? Because the Home Office advised its own Asylum Division that "there is no evidence that Ogonis face persecution from the Nigerian authorities for membership of MOSOP [Saro-Wiwa's anti-Shell organisation]". In other words, lies and discrimination will provide the pretext for yet more racist rules.

In fact, a secret pilot scheme which

### By Jeremy Dewar

has been in operation since May 1995 shows just how the white list system will mushroom. The "Short Procedures Pilot" for in-country claimants from seven targeted ex-Stalinist and Third World countries meant summary deportations after a minimal and meaningless hearing. It produced a 100% rate of refusal. So it was extended to 35 countries in November.

Of course, the Tories and other racists claim that the asylum procedures are meant to flush out "bogus" claims so that the "real" oppressed can get justice. Two glaring facts alone can nail this lie.

The most obvious is the case of Mohammed al-Masar'i. A prominent (bourgeois!) opponent of the vicious Saudi regime, al-Masar'i is being deported to Dominica, a Caribbean island surrounded by regimes in hock to... Saudi Arabia! Why? Because in 1985, Thatcher signed the biggest ever arms deal in history with Saudi's absolutist

monarchy. Profits, not human rights, dictate Britain's immigration policies.

Less well-known, but even more damning, is the unofficial quota system Britain has operated since 1993. Up until then, there was a wide fluctuation in the number of successful asylum applications. Since then, there has been a strict limit of 4% allowed to stay and a further 16% granted Extraordinary Leave to Remain. Bosnia, Sudan, Algeria, Nigeria, Somalia... all count for nothing on the British scales of "justice". The quota, designed to underline racist fears, is everything.

### Labour

Trade unionists can and must stop this Bill. We cannot rely on the Labour Party to defeat it, let alone repeal it once in office, unless we force them to. Blair's party is committed to supporting British and European capitalism and this Bill is the product of that capitalist bloc.

Every dot and comma of the Asylum Bill was worked out secretly by Howard and the other EU Home Secretaries.

Despite Howard's claim to the delight of the Tory faithful in October 1995 that "Immigration policy will be decided here in Britain, not in Brussels", he signed a secret treaty in Luxembourg in July 1995 to harmonise the immigration policies across Fortress Europe.

As conference season approaches, trade unionists must strain every sinew to pass motions calling for active opposition to the Bill, for the next Labour government to repeal the Act and all immigration controls and, most importantly, for trade union backing for non-compliance with the Act. Home Office and Benefits Agency staff in the CPSA and PTC can refuse to enforce its measures. Union members in Housing Benefits offices can continue to issue payments. Hospital, School and College workers can refuse to be used as untrained immigration narks.

Workers, unlike the bosses, have nothing to gain from increasing racist divisions nor from building up Fortress Europe. It will not deter the bosses coming back for yet more productivity drives so we can compete with the workers of the Phillipines, sweating under the watchful glare of armed guards.

On the contrary, it will help the bosses if they have already succeeded in creating an us-and-them mentality in the workplace.

Under pressure from the rank and file, Unison's General Secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe has claimed to support non-compliance. As the moment of truth approaches, Bickerstaffe and other fellow bureaucrats will attempt to wriggle out of such commitments fearful of the anti-union legislation which outlaws political industrial action. Labour's fixers will threaten him and others with arguments about not rocking the boat.

### Action

But if we can score one or two clear and notable victories against the Asylum Act, we can make this vicious law a dead letter before the ink has even dried. To do so, we must be clear. Non-compliance is the only way. It means winning workers to overtly political boycott action, backed up with strike action should anyone be victimised or scabs brought in. Britain's immigrants may then see that this may not be the "mother of democracies", but it is a place where workers fight for justice! ■

## Divorce Law

# Why can't divorce be quick and easy?

**T**ORY PEERS Lord Tebbit and Baroness Young voted for the right of a divorced woman to half of her husband's pension. As a result the government was roundly trounced in the House of Lords.

Welcome as this limited measure is, the intention of the Lords' vote was not to extend women's rights. It is part of a series of measures to ensure that women remain ultimately financially dependent on men. Confirming the right to part of your ex-husband's pension also confirms the idea that men's duty is to go out to work and women's responsibility is running the home.

This outlook is as out-of-date and out-of-touch with reality as "their lordship's house" itself. For the majority of working class women, getting a paid job is not an optional extra. Most couples simply cannot afford to live and bring up a family on just one wage. Yet married women do not have a right to benefits. Half their husband's pension will not guarantee them a decent retirement.

Most working class women have to find a job outside the home, no matter

how low paid, temporary or part time. Some 46% of women work in part time jobs, compared to 7% of men. The bosses use this huge potential labour force to exert a downward pressure on wages. Some Tories, especially the more Thatcherite of them, are keen to protect the "right" of working class women to be so easily exploited. If Tebbit and his friends are so keen on protecting the economic rights of women, they may like to take a look at the findings of a recent Equal Opportunities Commission report on women's pay. Women enter the workforce in their twenties earning less than men and the gap gets wider as they get older. This is largely due to the time lost from continuous employment for maternity leave and childcare.

If they were really concerned about women's pensions, the Tory Lords and Ladies would turn their attention to level of state pensions themselves—which are pitifully low after years of the Tories refusing to raise them in line with wages.

In fact the government's defeat in House of Lords was part of a general Tory right wing rebellion against divorce



Baroness Young

### By Kate Foster

reforms contained within the Family Law Bill. According to these bigots, the Bill will make it much too easy to get a divorce and, even worse, "no fault divorce" will undermine Christian morality. To Baroness Young and her cronies, society will surely fall apart if people who cannot get on with one another are al-

lowed to legally separate without proving fault.

*The Daily Mail*, that well known voice of human reason, claims that "any divorce damages the children". Of course this can be true. But being locked into a family based on a feuding relationship can damage them even more. Such damage starts with the rows and tension between two incompatible people. How would endless delays in divorce and a legal compulsion to prove fault make life better for these children?

But the *Mail* is not worried about this kind of damage to children. It is worried that kids might learn that deciding to live with someone is not the same as agreeing to remain with them for the rest of your life, that people can fall in love and later stop loving each other, that relationships can be ended without endless bitterness, especially if one party does not face destitution as a result. Young women might also learn that it is possible to live lives which are fulfilling and happy without necessarily wearing a wedding ring.

Already a series of measures prop up

the institution of marriage. Nearly all involve discrimination against women. If you are a married man you get an extra tax allowance, if you are a married woman you don't. Only married people have the right to their spouse's pension. Even if you live with someone for most of their working life, you have no right to their pension after their death. If you remarry you lose your right to your previous spouse's pension. Married couples automatically inherit the property of their spouse on death; unmarried couples do not.

The law acts not to protect women but to bribe, dupe and frighten them into marriage.

We say:

- Divorce should be immediately available on the simple request of one party to the marriage.
- The labour movement must fight for real equality in jobs, pay and pensions for women.
- Pensions should be fixed at the rate of the average industrial wage and under the control and management of workers themselves.

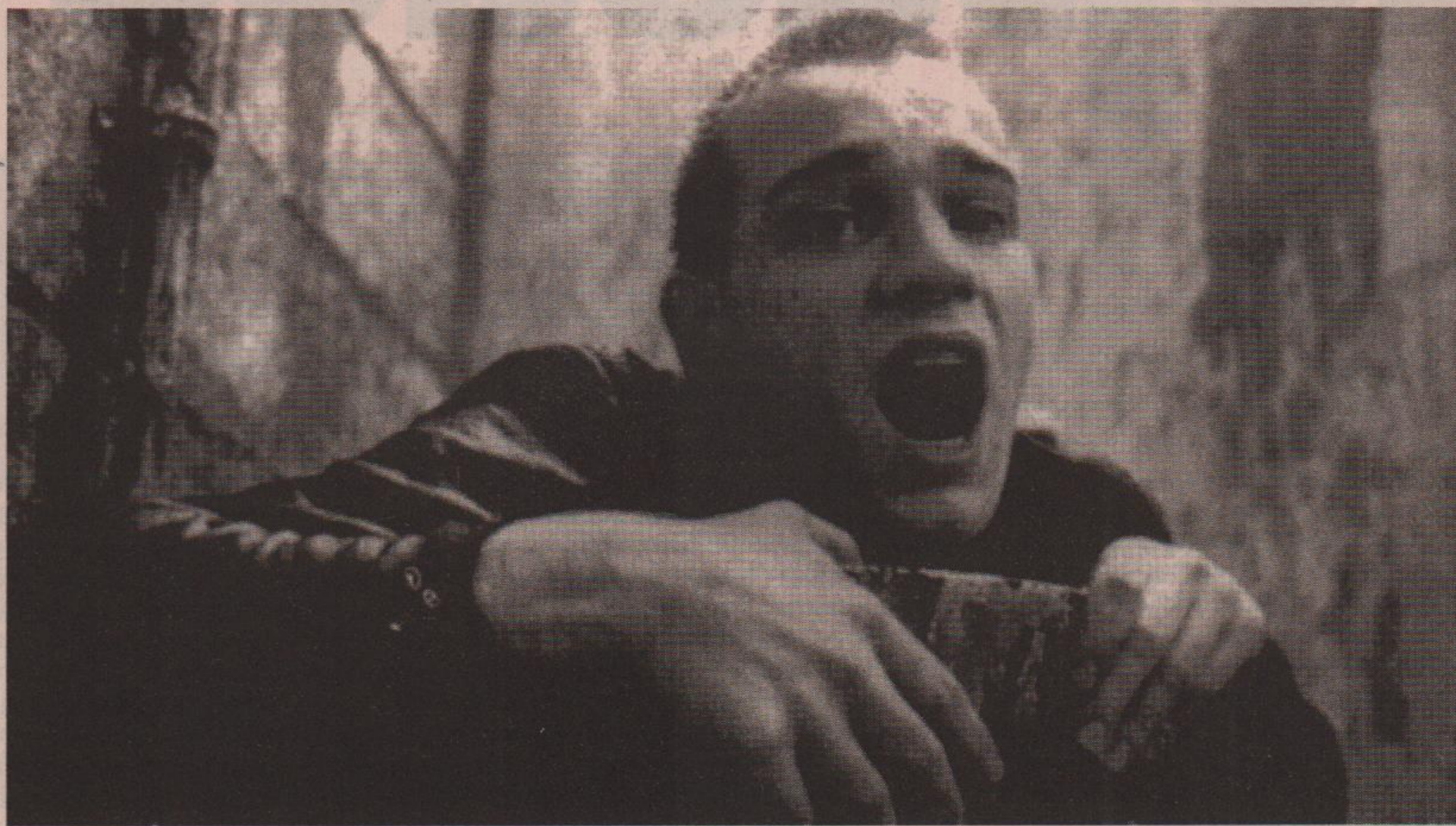
# Trainspotting

IT'S NOT as good as the book. But *Trainspotting* is still an excellent film that is far from deserving the tirade of ignorant and prudish criticism to which it has been subjected.

Irvine Welsh's savage novel of alienation, heroin and violence in 1980s Edinburgh has been adapted for the cinema by Danny Boyle, director of *Shallow Grave*. Vast swathes of the original narrative are left out, which may disappoint scores of thousands of Welsh aficionados. Yet the very nature of the novel—an expansive free-form montage of loosely related events in the lives of a group of young friends—made this an inevitable course for any film adaptation to follow. By choosing pace and drama over absolute fidelity to the text, Boyle has managed to remain faithful both to the book's morbid humour and its ability to look squarely at the squalor, excitement and ethos of hard drug abuse.

At times the production values, soundtrack and general feeling of stylishness seem to undermine the stark picture achieved by Welsh. Ewan Mac Gregor is excellent as the film's protagonist, Mark Renton, but I couldn't help thinking that he managed to look cool and basically healthy even after months of supposedly mainlining smack.

Barry Norman—and even Will Self, who ought to know better—frankly made idiots of themselves with sanctimonious attacks on this film's "amoral" approach to drugs. It is false to say that the film glamourises heroin—unless you find the prospect of nightmarish withdrawal symptoms, open sores, desper-



Richard Brenner reviews *Trainspotting*, on general release

ate cravings, AIDS and babies dying through neglect appealing. What neither the book nor the film do, however, is lie about drugs. No attempt is made to deny why the characters are shooting up heroin—because it is physically pleasurable, because it numbs boredom, because it is easier to worry about one thing only (getting more gear) than handling

the myriad of petty concerns that constitute "normal life". These things are sadly true—which is why mainstream commentators will never forgive *Trainspotting* for pointing them out.

What of the argument that the film is sexist? Certainly many of the characters continually express the vilest attitudes towards women. If anything, the cinema

version suppresses much of this—but only by cutting out almost all of the book's female characters. This is a real defect of the film.

But it is not good enough for critics such as *Socialist Worker's* Charlie Kimber to tell us that:

"Welsh's writing about women in *Trainspotting* is dreadful. Women are

rarely anything except the objects of violence and sexual fantasies".

Welsh is trying to give an honest account of what is going through the minds of these deeply alienated men living in a state of thoroughgoing degradation on some of the worst housing schemes in Edinburgh. They desire, fear and hate women. If Kimber were honest he would know that these attitudes, rightly repressed as they must be, are present in a variety of forms even in the minds of "enlightened" socialists.

Does this mean Welsh endorses these views? Not at all. But he is an honest enough novelist to want to plumb the depths of the male psyche and confront what he finds there.

When women characters take over the narrative voice a different picture emerges. Diane is a woman who may be underage but is in control of her sexuality. Kelly and Alison find confidence, strength and solidarity when they stand up to sexual harassment in the street. And even Mark Renton is forced to admit to himself that the men laughing uproariously at a cruel sexist joke aimed at Kelly are not engaged in harmless fun but "lynch mob laughter". None of these episodes appear in the film—but Welsh can hardly be blamed for that.

The film will do well not because of its defects, but because, like the book, it does something that popular culture has rarely managed to do—speak openly and honestly, in the language of real life, about experiences that have been central to the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people. ■

## Obituary: Michel Pablo (1911-1996)

MICHEL PABLO, for many years the *bête noire* of "orthodox Trotskyism", died in Athens on 17 February, aged 85.

Born Michel Raptis in Egypt in 1911, "Pablo"—as he was later to be universally known—moved to Greece in 1918. At the age of 17, he joined the "archeomaxist" group, then rapidly became interested in the ideas of the Trotskyist Left Opposition, setting up his own group in 1934.

In 1936, he was arrested by the Metaxas dictatorship and exiled to France. In 1938, he was the Greek delegate to the founding conference of the Fourth International. With his death, we have lost the last surviving member of this historic meeting.

For the first few years of the war, Pablo was hospitalised in a French sanatorium. As soon as he was well enough, however, he took on a leading role in recreating an international leadership in Europe.

In 1943, Pablo joined the Provisional European Secretariat. In the difficult years of reconstructing the International during and after the war, Pablo played a key role (see page 11). More than anyone else at this time, he understood the need to centralise the activity of the International, to create a solid leadership and to prepare the sections for the revolutionary upheavals that everyone agreed were inevitable.

However, there was a political flaw at the heart of Pablo's excellent work in this period, a flaw that was eventually to destroy the International and send Pablo himself on an increasingly right-wing trajectory.

During the post-war years, the whole FI leadership was convinced that Trotsky's pre-war perspectives would rapidly come to pass and that the International would soon play a leading role in the international working class.

It was this conviction that spurred Pablo both to his selfless devotion to the International, and also to occasionally hasty manoeuvres (such as the setting up of an Italian section with distinctly

non-Trotskyist elements).

However, as it became clear that the International would not quickly find itself at the head of the revolutionary masses, the impatience and confidence that drove Pablo to rebuild the International pushed him towards an increasingly centrist schema.

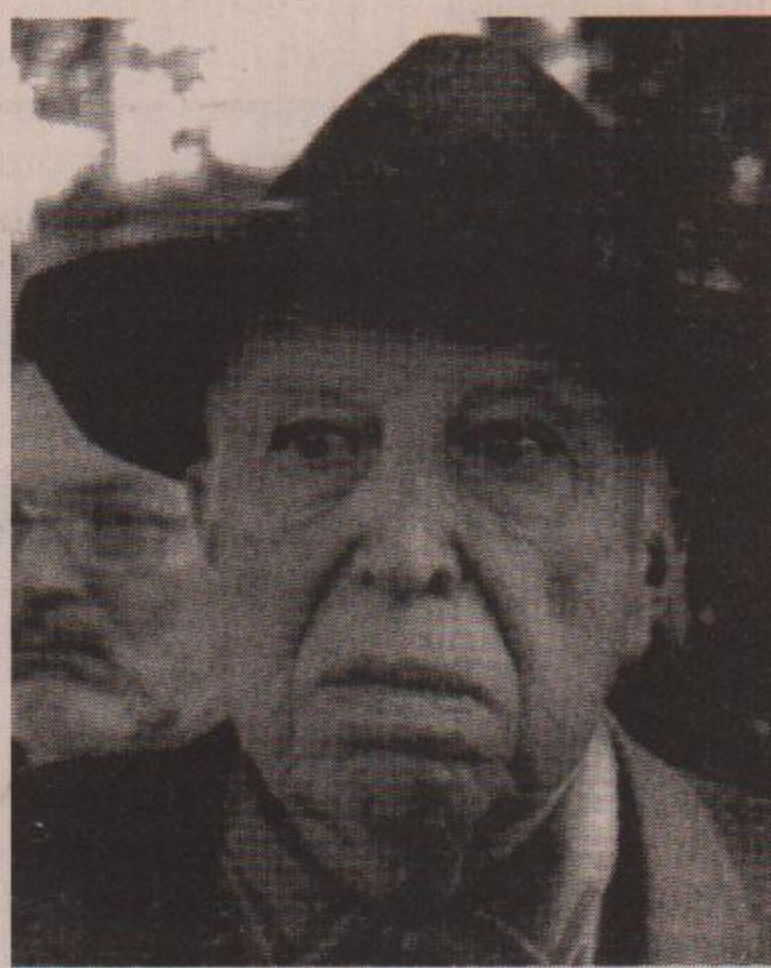
The key moment came in 1948, when the Moscow Stalinists broke with Yugoslavia, and denounced Tito as a "Trotskyist". Pablo understood this as a confirmation of his perspectives. After discussions with Yugoslav leaders, he concluded that the Yugoslav CP was "generally based on Leninism; they have even reconstructed by themselves certain fragments of Trotskyism on important questions... It is a form of left centrism which has broken with Stalinism and which is trying to return to Leninism."

For Pablo, this opened up the prospect of a major change in the Stalinist parties around the world and the winning of huge sections to revolutionary politics. In fact, it was the International that was going over to the Yugoslav CP's policies!

Having covered over the essentially Stalinist nature of the YCP, the International went on to suggest that there would be a virtually inevitable process of Stalinist collapse into the so-called "left centrism" of the Yugoslavs.

It was this idea of a revolutionary process that became characteristic of the centrism of the Fourth International. Such a schema essentially removed any need for the International as a leadership and opened the way to opportunist support of non-Trotskyist parties around the world.

When the Korean war broke out, Pablo concluded that the key line of division in the world would now be between the two "camps" of imperialism and "socialism". Convinced that a nuclear war was imminent, Pablo's processism led him to argue that the form of the "world revolution" had changed and that there would be "an international civil war" that would elide into interna-



Pablo at Mandel's funeral in 1995

By Emile Gallet

tional revolution.

When the International accepted this nonsense, together with the whole processist analysis of Yugoslavia, at its Third Congress in 1951, it marked the decisive passage of the International into centrism.

Over the next two years, Pablo argued for a decisive turn towards entry into the Communist Parties. Pablo and the International Secretariat pushed the French section to carry out the leadership line, expelling those who refused to obey.

Because of his age and experience, Pablo was held in awe by allies and opponents alike. I recently asked Bleibtreu, one of his key opponents in the French section, why Pablo held such sway. "We were frightened of him" was the simple reply.

At this point the myth of "Pabloite liquidationism" was born. The demonisation of Pablo was largely the work of the American SWP after its leaders decided to split the International in 1953.

Subsequently taken up by both the French (Lambertist) and British (Healyite) sections of the "International

Committee", "anti-Pabloism" came to be the hall-mark of a particularly sectarian and one-sided reading of history. Its purpose was to cover up the centrism that had affected the whole of the International and, in particular, the support that Pablo had received for many years from all the leaders of the "anti-Pabloite" groups.

During the 1950s, Pablo made a new turn. With the outbreak of the Algerian and Vietnamese insurrections against French imperialism, Pablo argued that the "colonial revolution" was the key question.

He threw himself into solidarity work with the Algerian FLN. The low point of this period came in 1960, when, together with fellow IS member Sal Santen, he was arrested in Amsterdam and charged with forging millions of French francs in order to destabilise French imperialism. He spent the next two years in jail.

From this point on, Pablo moved ever further rightwards. By the time of the 1963 reunification of the International, he was a spent force. Arguing that the International should move its centre to Algiers and that it should support Moscow in the Moscow-Peking split, Pablo was in a small minority. Within two years, he had been expelled for publishing his own journal in the name of a fictitious "African Commission of the Fourth International".

Over the next 20 years, Pablo's tiny "Revolutionary Marxist Tendency" followed every twist and turn of the "world revolution", acting as left advisors to petit-bourgeois nationalist and left reformist movements. Finally, in 1994, Pablo threw in the towel and rejoined the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

His last years were spent in Greece where he played an important role as a left voice of "conscience", having never wavered for one instant in his opposition to the military dictatorship that finally fell in 1974.

Partly because of this stand, and his lifelong friendship with the Greek ex-Premier Papandreu, Pablo was given a state funeral. Because of his pro-Serb line over the collapse of Yugoslavia, the Milosevic government sent a wreath. A sad but fitting end to a life that was largely devoted to tailing supposed "left" forces.

Despite over four decades as a key figure in centrism, Pablo should also be remembered for the sterling and courageous work he carried out between 1943 and 1948. Without his determination, the Fourth International would not have been reconstructed and important lessons would have been lost. We salute this invaluable work, despite the major and decisive errors which he made in subsequent years. ■

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# Peace

Albert Reynolds, the former Irish prime minister, pointed to the "strong sense of betrayal" that this announcement meant for the IRA and concluded that Major "has given in totally to Unionist demands."

Mindful of this, the IRA told the Sinn Féin paper, *An Phoblacht*:

hEireann [IRA] will continue to assert national rights in the face of British denial for as long as is necessary."

Major had the chance to negotiate. He spurned it. His reason was to maintain the support of the Unionists in Westminster. The fact that he has since risked that support (as the Scott vote showed) and

elections. He clearly calculated that any loss of Unionist support would only be temporary and could be repaired in future.

Of course the move does involve one concession to the republicans. The all party talks now no longer have the precondition of arms decommissioning. But if elections are agreed, Major could regain the initiative. An elected forum would give an appearance of renewed legitimacy to the inevitable Unionist majority and allow them to push for the disarming of the IRA with renewed vigour.

Because of the inbuilt Unionist majority, the result of talks is almost bound to be some form of continued Unionist domination of Northern Ireland with little prospect of reunification. Having entered the talks, it would be enormously difficult for Sinn Féin to remobilise against such an outcome. At the very least, the prospect of serious splits within the republican movement would emerge. The struggle for national unity would suffer a severe setback. ■

In the early 1990s, both Britain and the Republicans had come to a similar conclusion—Britain could not defeat the IRA and the IRA could not drive Britain out of Ireland. The stalemate produced the "peace process". Part of that process was a promise by the British state to the IRA that if it announced a ceasefire all party talks would follow.

"From all of this we could only finally conclude that the surrender or political defeat of Irish republicans was the actual agenda for the tactical engagement by the British government in the Irish peace initiative . . . We in Oglaiha na

made the concession of all party talks, does not alter his fundamental game plan. He was only willing to risk losing Unionist support (and the Scott vote) on the basis of having got the SDLP and Dublin, in the intervening period, to accept



Major is to blame for the end of the ceasefire

TONY BLAIR has supported every single act of treachery that John Major has come up with during the peace process. So desperate is Labour to prove its credentials to the bosses that it puts itself to the right of Tory journals like *The Economist*. It has changed its policy of opposing the renewal of the repressive Prevention of Terrorism Act. It will now loyally support the Tories, voting for the maintenance of this denial of even elementary bourgeois justice.

Labour's bipartisanship on Ireland is the clearest indication of its thoroughly pro-capitalist character. What is scandalous is that the left inside the labour movement have never mounted an effective opposition to Labour's support for British imperialism. The need to end bipartisanship is clear. Even Labour's former front bench spokesperson on Ireland, Kevin McNamara (sacked by Blair) has attacked it.

The reason for this failure is not hard to find. To mount an effective campaign to break Labour from its support for the Tories and the Unionists, you have to have a clear position of solidarity with the Irish struggle. You have to be clear that Britain is the problem and that getting British troops out now is the paramount goal and the primary task of British workers.

## Branded with infamy

Instead of this, Britain's main socialist organisations dodge the question. Militant Labour and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) both showed great cowardice in the aftermath of the IRA's renewed bombing campaign.

Both condemned the IRA—Militant Labour openly, the SWP more evasively. Militant Labour placed all the blame on the IRA—somehow forgetting that British imperialism and its current government occupy the North with 17,000 troops and thousands more armed RUC thugs, all there to attack the nationalists. The SWP uncritically hailed the "peace" and demanded that it be maintained. They blamed Major for wreck-

ing the "peace" but, like Militant Labour, forgot to add that it was peace without justice, peace on the basis of the maintenance of the Unionist veto, the British occupation and the attempt to force the IRA to surrender.

These peaceniks even failed to raise the one elementary democratic demand that should be at the forefront of socialist agitation—British Troops Out Now!

Leon Trotsky once remarked that British socialists who fail to support the struggle of the Irish people for independence should be "branded with infamy if not with a bullet". Perhaps this would be going a little far. Infamy will be quite sufficient. ■



## The A-Z of Marxism

# J is for Justice

by Keith Harvey

WAS O.J. Simpson guilty? No. Did he get away with murder? That's a different question. Having gone through the "due process of law" O.J. was cleared. Many US women's groups doubted the fairness of the verdict.

Closer to home, how many times have we heard the cry "No justice, no peace" from black communities protesting against police violence?

In these examples, people are appealing to a sense of justice or "fairness" against the law, to a "natural law" that is thought to be higher than the man-made laws of judges and parliament. As an idea, natural law dates back to St. Thomas Aquinas, a theologian and philosopher of the Middle Ages. He argued that such law derived from God and its content was revealed to certain earthly representatives. Later philosophers, such as John Locke, replaced God with the idea that pure reason could identify a concept of justice and a set of moral principles by which to judge all human behaviour across the ages.

Marxists reject this unhistorical approach. Rather, we recognise that ideas of justice and law have changed over time with the development of class society.

In early forms of class society (slave society, feudalism) laws were rarely more than the codification of established traditions, which reflected the dominant patterns of power and wealth. They made no attempt to conceal their bias, but openly enshrined the authority of the ruling class and demanded the unquestioning submission of the lower orders.

Under capitalism, there is still deep seated bias; judges and law makers overwhelmingly come from the public schools; they are born into the ruling class and share its prejudices and values when drawing up or enforcing the law. As a result, there are often outrageous examples of vindictiveness and bias against the working class and oppressed.

But that does not get to the heart of the matter. It is not difficult to find examples in which the law has recognised workers' rights against an employer, such as the decision of the Industrial tribunal in the J. J. Fast Foods case. This leads many to a reformist conclusion; change the people who administer justice and things will work out fine. But the problem has deeper roots than that.

Under capitalism, something of a transformation occurred to notions of law and justice which partly explains the respect many working class people have for the law as a system supposedly above, and separate from, classes. As Engels once noted, under capitalism;

"... it rarely happens that a code of law is the blunt, unmitigated, unadulterated expression of the domination of a class—this in itself would offend the "conception of right".

Engels has in mind here that in most capitalist societies, unlike feudalism or slavery, all people, of whatever class, are formally equal before the law and have the same rights as citizens. While this is not the whole story, nor is it just a myth or a simple charade.

The idea of such equal rights stems

from the fact that we live in a society dominated by generalised commodity production—a system where everyone produces for exchange (see "C is for Capitalism", WP 192).

Even workers have to sell the only thing they have—their labour power. The most basic branches of law—contract and property—developed originally to regulate the behaviour of commodity owners. Contracts had to be entered into freely and the rights of both sides had to be protected by an outside force—the state.

All perfectly logical. Except that society is not simply a collection of isolated individuals, each producing on their own and exchanging products in the market place; in reality, individuals are themselves part of social classes. The working class sells its ability to work to a class of capitalists and, once the latter have bought it, they want to use it as they see fit, without interference. So, throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the courts and parliament banned trade unions and enforced the bosses' right to exploit their property (labour power) anyway they saw fit.

When workers resisted, they did so in the name of enforcing their rights—the right in contract law to negotiate the best terms and conditions possible for selling their labour power. How to solve the competing claims? By struggle. As Marx said, "when right meets right, might decides".

Struggle constantly shapes and reshapes the balance of forces in society between the classes, and laws reflect this balance. That is why laws on trade unions, the right to strike and so on, have shifted back and forth over the centuries. When the bosses are strong, the law outlaws strikes and unions altogether as an abuse of bosses' property enjoyment. When the working class is strong, it forces the ruling class to accept fairly wide-ranging "rights" of workers to organise and act for themselves and their class brothers and sisters. Thus up to 1980, British unions had immunity from claims for civil damages.

But, so long as we live under capitalism, all law will reflect property rights and be biased against the working class. Even with the right to strike for better wages or working conditions, the worker is still exploited and the bosses have the right to use labour power as they see fit.

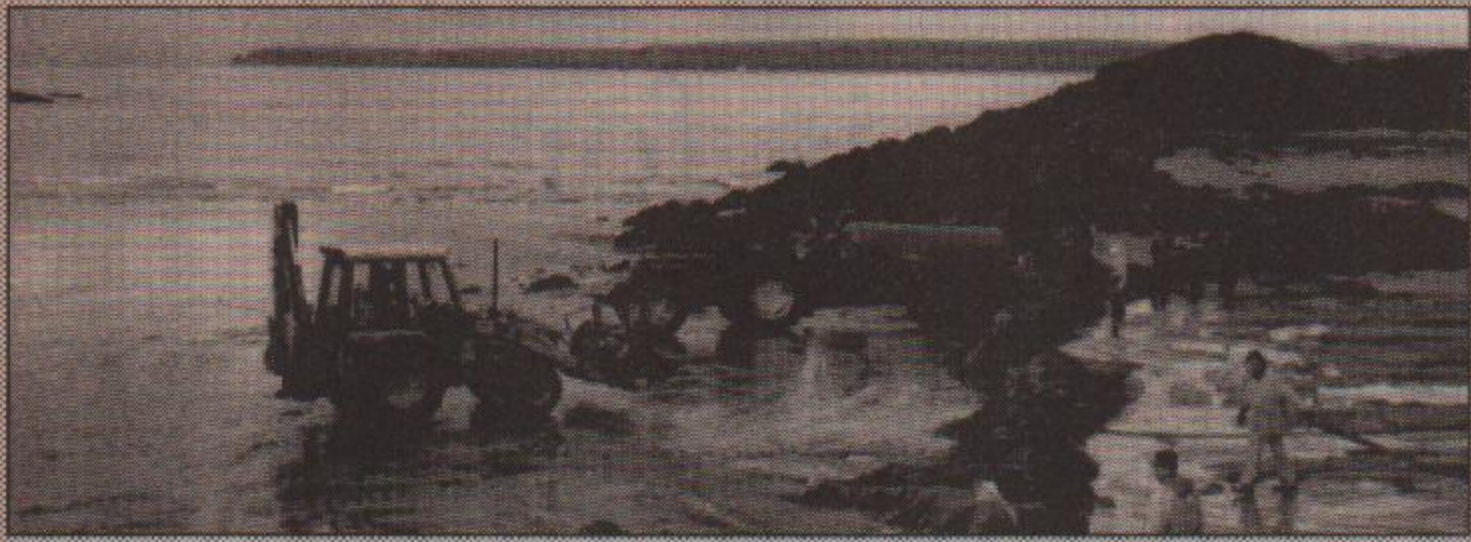
Once we grasp the origin and nature of law in capitalist society, we can see that workers and oppressed are not wrong to appeal to a sense of justice against this law—class justice against class law. Law under a capitalist state, even "fairly" applied, must reflect the power of the exploiting class because it reflects their social power. Or, as the poet William Blake once put it; "one law for both the lion and the ox is oppression".

All actions which strengthen the collectivity and consciousness of the working class and the oppressed in their fight to overthrow exploitation and oppression are just, even if illegal. All laws which criminalise the poor, uphold tyranny in the name of impartiality and punish resistance, are unjust. ■

Next month: K is for Kollantai

## personal view

Pete Ashbury



### "This is about money"

WATCHED THE television coverage with horror as tons of oil poured from the disintegrating hull of the tanker off the Pembrokeshire coast. As a frequent holiday-maker in the area, drawn by its beauty and diverse marine life, I was angry, especially as it became obvious that the grounding of the *Sea Empress* off St Ann's Head, Milford Haven, was entirely avoidable.

Following the 1993 *Braer* disaster off Shetland, the Donaldson Enquiry recommended that all tankers have double hulls and that all UK ports have sufficient salvage capacity. The *Sea Empress* had only a single hull, and Milford Haven lacked adequate equipment for salvage. As one local resident put it:

"Everyone is disgusted by the way the whole disaster has been handled, it's been on the cards for years but nobody would listen. This is not about tides, the weather or failed sailors—this is about money."

And this points to the real cause of the disaster:

- Milford Haven is notoriously difficult to navigate even at high tide, yet the vessel came into Milford Haven on a dangerously low tide.

- Despite this, the (hourly-paid) pilot had been on board for only 15 minutes when the ship ran aground.

- Astoundingly, cutbacks at the port meant that the harbour's radar system was shut down at the time of the catastrophe.

- Finally, only last October another tanker, the *Borga*, also ran aground, but due to its (more expensive) double hull, no spillage occurred.

The multinational salvage consortium's main concern was to save the vessel rather than the crew, local people or the environment. The Lloyd's of London salvage contract was based on a "no cure, no pay" principle—no money would be paid out unless the ship itself was saved.

The consortium refused offers of help from local companies with more powerful tugs, since this would have cut its share of the profits. Smug consortium representatives made wildly optimistic predictions to the media. In fact, the whole salvage operation was something of a farce. A super-tug finally arrived, with a Chinese crew. The consortium had no interpreter, until a worker from a local Chinese restaurant was drafted in to help.

Sheer luck probably stopped the ship from losing all of its 140,000 ton cargo. But the avoidable loss of over 70,000 tons of North Sea crude oil has had a devastating environmental impact. The oil has now spread along 180 miles of some of the most ecologically sensitive, varied and, in my eyes, most beautiful British coastline.

In summer, the Pembrokeshire coastline and islands are home to over one million breeding seabirds including important colonies on Skomer and Skokholm. The area also hosts dolphin, porpoise and seal populations. The seabed is a marine nature reserve, with many rare spe-

cies. So far, over 3,000 birds have been affected, while many more will die at sea, unrecorded. Many beaches lie covered in thick oil, and may become ecological deserts for a generation.

Two weeks after the grounding I visited the area. Oil still came onshore with every tide, the clean-up operation was constant, with the sight and smell of oil everywhere. To make matters worse, other vessels are using the slicks to hide the illegal cleaning of their tanks and dumping of more oil at sea.

The local community has also suffered. An indefinite ban on fishing has been agreed due to contamination of fish stocks. Farmers fear that oil vapour could affect their crops and livestock. The tourist industry faces cancelled bookings, with job cuts likely to follow. Residents had to evacuate their homes on two occasions for fears of the tanker exploding. All are seeking compensation, but who will pay?

The *Sea Empress* is owned by a Norwegian company and managed by the Glasgow-based Acomarit UK. It was carrying a US-owned cargo for a French charter firm, was registered under a Liberian "flag of convenience" to cut safety and wage costs, and had a Russian crew. For all the complex subterfuge, the owners are theoretically still responsible for the clean-up bill. The total compensation figure could exceed £100 million, but this will most probably come from a fund financed by a levy on oil imports. So ordinary consumers will pick up the tab.

The Government's initial response was to send the hapless, hopelessly (and incidentally, unelected) Shipping Minister, Lord Goschen, to cover-up for the inept salvage operation. Predictably, the Tories refused to declare the incident a national disaster or devote any additional resources to the clean-up. They have now set up their own internal white-wash inquiry through the Maritime Accident Investigation Branch. Meanwhile, the Labour Party, Plaid Cymru and the local councils have demanded a full public enquiry. Labour is also calling for an end to the cuts in the marine safety agency, double hulls for all oil tankers and stiffer penalties for transgressors.

While all these demands are progressive and supportable, they will not stop similar disasters happening in the future. What's really needed is a full workers' enquiry into all aspects of the disaster. The enquiry must be based in the labour movement, involving all the maritime and oil industry unions, and the local community. It should summon scientific and engineering experts as well as conservation groups to investigate the safety of the oil-shipping industry—at local, national and international levels.

The *Sea Empress* disaster has shown yet again capitalism's disregard for the safety of both people and the environment in its constant search for more profits. ■

## Buchanan

# White knight of US reaction

As Pat Buchanan scores initial successes in his campaign for the Republican nomination for this year's Presidential elections, G R McColl explains why he has struck such a reactionary chord amongst voters in the United States.

SOMETHING NASTY is haunting the sleep of many liberal—and not so liberal—commentators in the USA. It is the nightmarish image of Pat Buchanan in the White House.

Few see Buchanan capturing the Republican Party nomination and fewer still expect him to defeat Bill Clinton in November's general election. But his string of successes, culminating in victory in the New Hampshire state primary, has already confounded expectations. Journalists and politicians across the USA are struggling to explain the Buchanan phenomenon.

Buchanan is no political novice. His campaign is undoubtedly benefiting from intense media exposure. More significant is that Buchanan has become the voice of two important constituencies. The first is the well-organised fundamentalist Christian Coalition, which wields considerable influence within many state Republican Parties. The second is made up of less religious layers of the middle class and white working class who have become painfully aware of their own economic insecurity.

### Anticipated

Many of the latter group now supporting Buchanan voted for Ross Perot in 1992. Perot's rhetoric anticipated the current campaign's themes of protectionism and isolationism. In a sense, Pat Buchanan is but the latest in a long line of "America first" demagogues.

But much of his reactionary agenda is already dominating the mainstream of bourgeois politics.

While Buchanan may call for "an electrified fence" across the US-Mexico border, the Clinton administration has already embarked on an £8.8 million programme to halt "illegal" Latino immigrants crossing the border. In 1995 alone, guards "repatriated" some 1.2 million Mexicans and central Americans seeking to escape from grinding poverty.

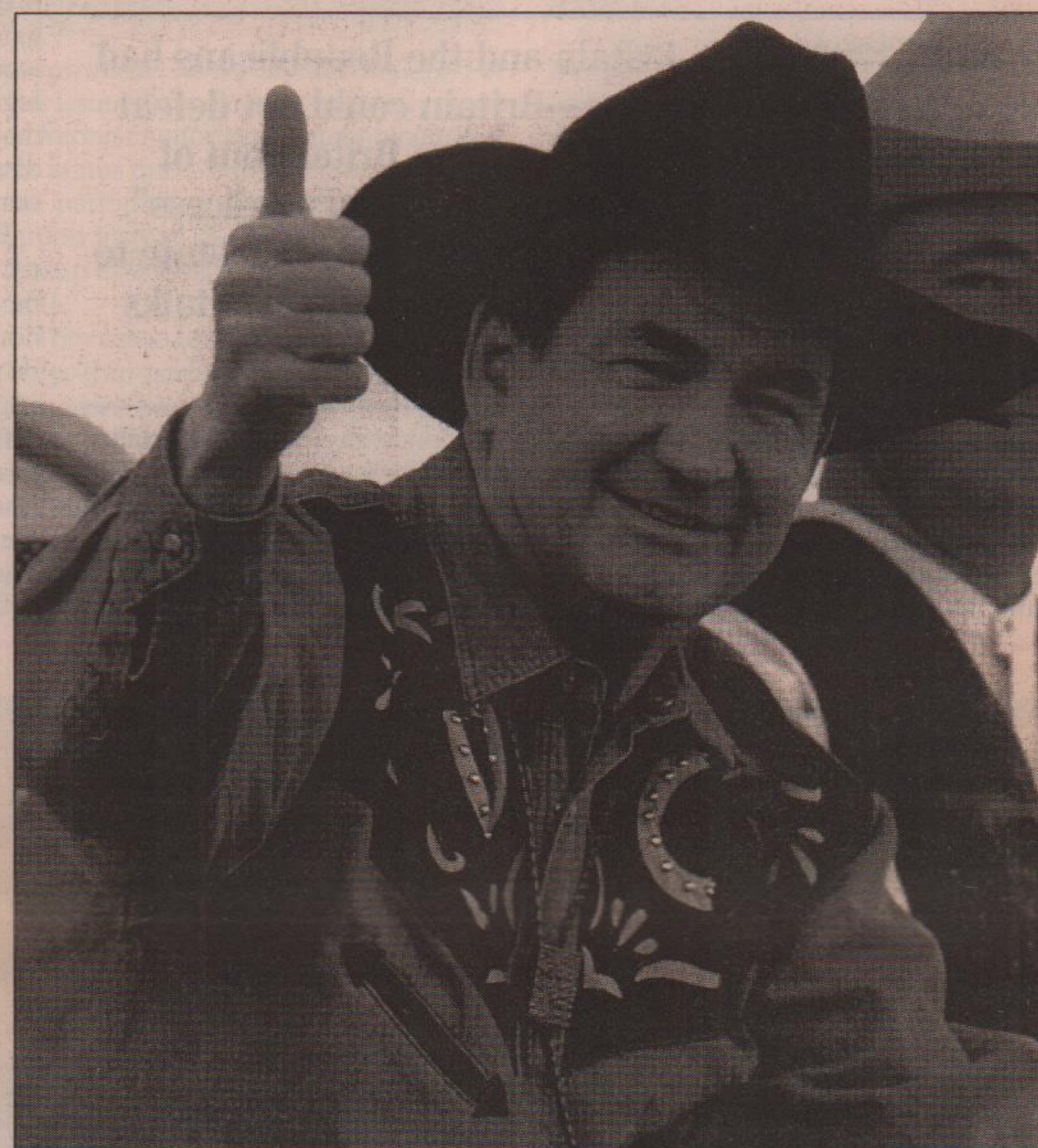
But unlike Clinton, Buchanan wears his xenophobia like a badge of honour. He attacks immigrants who "are not English-speaking white people from western Europe". Buchanan is well-poised to mobilise the racist vote that approved California's Proposition 187 in 1994, which tried to deny state edu-

**Buchanan's message is of unbridled social reaction. He champions rejection of the theory of evolution and advocates the teaching of creationism in schools. His fire and brimstone speeches have depicted gay men as "literally hell-bent on Satanism and suicide".**

national and health services to immigrants branded illegal.

The foot soldiers of the far-right Christian Coalition were decisive in delivering the winning margin to Buchanan in the Louisiana primary. He also enjoyed the endorsement of the (supposedly) ex-Klansman and US Nazi Party member, David Duke. Buchanan's anti-abortion stance and his general call for a "cultural war" against America's "moral degeneration" killed-off the once serious candidacy of arch conservative rival Senator Phil Gramm.

Buchanan's message is of unbridled social reaction. He champions rejection of the theory of evolution and advocates the teaching of creationism in schools. His fire and brimstone speeches have depicted gay men as "literally hell-bent on Satanism and suicide". He has characterised Martin Luther King, once the



Pat Buchanan: anti-abortion, anti-gay, anti-immigrant—and alarmingly popular

acceptable face of black American protest, as "one of the most divisive men in contemporary history".

He has not even made a public apology for the presence of Larry Pratt at the centre of his campaign team. Pratt is currently on leave from the campaign "to clear his name" after the release of damning video evidence of him sharing platforms—and opinions—with Nazi and white supremacist groups.

Does this mean that Buchanan wants to win the Republican Party for fascism? Despite his far right ideology, the answer is no. He is not building a street-fighting army behind the scenes. Despite a carefully cultivated image as an anti-establishment outsider, he is a consummate Washington insider. He was a leading

country. In New Hampshire, the jobless figure has fallen to 3.3%. Compared to most of the EU, the USA looks like a job-generating machine.

But try marketing these statistics to the 40,000 workers facing redundancy at the telecommunications giant AT&T, to the blue collar workers who have suffered a drop in their living standards for the past 20 years, or to redundant white collar workers, returning to a labour market where their salaries will be reduced by an average of 20%.

### Champion

That Buchanan should have emerged as the champion of the "little person" is especially ironic since he was a loyal servant of the Reagan administration which presided over the largest upward redistribution of wealth in US history.

Yet Buchanan's success worries the Republican Party leadership and most of big capital. The Republican top brass still view him as an unelectable crank, who could even cost the Party its recently-gained majority in the House of Representatives if he were to gain the nomination.

The representatives of most major US corporations strongly advocate the NAFTA and GATT treaties Buchanan rails against. Still, his campaign has profited from the support of the Milliken textile empire for his protectionist stance imports, and gained big contributions from the burgeoning Domino pizza chain, whose chief executive is an anti-abortion fanatic.

Buchanan may well fall short of the Republican nomination. But he will leave an indelible print on the rest of the 1996 campaign. His success to date must sound an alarm bell for socialists in the US, who face the twin tasks of combating the bigoted, chauvinist lies peddled by Buchanan and fighting to break organised labour from its deadly relationship with a Democratic Party that has paved the way for Buchanan's emergence as a serious politician. ■



**PART 2**

# World War Two: the FI's heroic survival

Our series on the history of the Fourth International continues with an account of how the Trotskyists struggled to survive and keep the banner of revolution flying during World War Two.

**F**IFTY YEARS ago this month, some 30 delegates from various sections of the Fourth International (FI) assembled in Paris. A police raid and arrests on the third day forced proceedings to move to a jail, but the disruption could not prevent the conference registering its fundamental achievement: the FI had survived the war.

This was the first time since 1939 that a representative international meeting had taken place. The delegates, from the USA, Britain, France, Holland, Vietnam, Spain, Greece, Ireland and Switzerland, voted to constitute themselves as a "World Conference" and elected new leadership bodies until a full Congress could meet.

Looking back on the war years, the delegates had reason to be proud of what Trotsky had dubbed "the only revolutionary force on the planet worthy of the name". They had taken many blows. The murderous hostility of the Stalinists had been unremitting. In the Soviet Union itself, several thousand Trotskyists were brutally killed between 1938 and 41. Defiant to the end, they faced the firing squads with the *Internationale* on their lips. Internationally, Stalin's GPU had murdered dozens of key FI leaders, including Trotsky himself.

Outside the Soviet Union, the Socialist Workers Party of the United States (SWP(US)) was the strongest section, with perhaps 1,500 members. In 1940, it suffered a severe crisis and lost some 40% of its membership. The Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, the division of Poland, the invasion of Finland, and the seizure of the Baltic states convinced the student and middle-class minority in the SWP(US) that Russia was no longer a workers' state and they rejected the majority's continued defence of the USSR.

This split was doubly wounding for the FI. In September 1939, with the outbreak of war in Europe, the international leadership had been transferred to New York. But all four resident members of the International Secretariat supported the SWP(US) minority. Consequently, an emergency conference was convened in New York in May 1940 to elect a new leadership and to lay down the basic guidelines for the FI sections in the war.

Despite errors of perspective (see WP 197) the conference document, *The Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution*, mapped out a revolutionary strategy, rejecting "both the defence of the fatherland and the struggle for democracy". The FI committed itself to defending the USSR by revolutionary methods while calling for the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Soon after, Jean van Heijenoort became head of the secretariat in New York, a post he occupied until the end of the war. Van Heijenoort had almost a decade of experience as one of Trotsky's secretaries. Together with Bert Cochran and Sam Gordon of the SWP, he struggled to follow the course of the war, to draft documents and to maintain contacts with the sections in Nazi-occupied Europe. They did this for a considerable period. As one leader, Rodolphe Prager, recalls:

"The "maritime fraction" of the party grew considerably during the war, and included between a 100 and 150 militants, who . . . transferred information and documents to their comrades in India, Australia, South Africa, the Antilles, Cuba, Great Britain, France and Italy." Seven comrades were killed on these

voyages but this sacrifice kept the FI headquarters in communication with the French Trotskyists, and, via them, with the other sections in occupied Europe, until the end of 1942. From then until well into 1944, however, contact with Europe was almost non-existent and the focus shifted to monitoring and guiding the sections in Latin America and Britain.

The international leadership under van Heijenoort managed to remain true to the positions adopted under Trotsky's guidance and even to develop them. This was of central importance to the fate of the FI. As a small, persecuted international of propaganda groups, its foremost strength lay in its programme, and its most important task was to defend it and win small layers of the vanguard to it, thus preparing the nuclei for future mass struggles.

In November 1940, the FI issued a manifesto, *France Under Hitler and Pétain*, in which the cowardly betrayals of the French bourgeoisie in the face of Hitler were laid bare and denounced. But the FI refused to follow the Stalinists and "patriotic" capitalists in calling for the restoration of bourgeois democracy in France. Instead, they raised the call for, "the United Soviet States of Europe, a free federation of peoples with a socialised economy. . . . To emerge from servitude, oppression and misery, there is only one way, to establish a workers' and peasants' government."

Crucially, when the long-predicted Nazi attack on the USSR finally came, in June 1941, the FI stood firm and issued a renewed call for its defence. It denounced Stalin's latest turn to an alliance with Britain and the USA, and for fighting the war under the banner of Russian nationalism instead of the world revolution. It stated that:

"in spite of all the crimes of the bureaucracy, the revolution of October, which led all of the peoples of Russia to a new life, is not yet dead. . . . the Fourth International has not ceased to proclaim: For the unconditional defence of the Soviet Union! We defend the USSR independently of the betrayals of the bureaucracy and in spite of its betrayals. We do not insist, as a condition of our support, on such and such a concession on the part of the Stalinist bureaucracy. . . . The imperialist allies of the Kremlin are not our allies. We continue the revolutionary combat, including that in the "democratic camp"."

The largest European section, the French, entered the war in a state of crisis. It had already suffered one split and, when war broke out, the majority of the leaders of the "official" section deserted the organisation and, indeed, left politics altogether. Then, between April and June 1940, the Hitler war machine overran Europe and the Trotskyists in Norway, Denmark, France, Holland and Belgium were driven underground.

LA VERITE, Tract, août 1944

## Pour que la défaite de Hitler soit la victoire des travailleurs

La machine d'oppression des nazis s'effondre partout. L'heure est à la classe ouvrière. La vraie libération ne peut venir que des travailleurs des villes et des champs, des ménagères et des soldats, UNIS DANS L'ACTION. Nous, Communistes-Internationales («trotskyistes»), nous vous disons :

**Ouvrez les prisons et les camps !  
Armez-vous** en profitant des événements et gardez vos armes !  
**Formez vos Milices Ouvrières d'entreprises et de quartiers !  
Occupez les entreprises !**  
**Elisez vos délégués comme en Juin 36 !**

ils constitueront des COMITÉS D'ENTREPRISES qui contrôleront la production et feront tourner les usines pour les besoins du peuple et non plus pour la guerre.  
Dans les quartiers ouvriers, prenez vous-mêmes en mains le ravitaillement. Logez les sinistrés dans les maisons des riches. Pour cela, élisez dans les maisons ouvrières et les quartiers vos délégués aux COMITÉS DE QUARTIERS.

**Appelez les soldats allemands à former leurs conseils de soldats, à vous donner leurs armes ou à passer à la Révolution. Aidez-les à passer en Allemagne et à y porter la Révolution.**

**Appelez les soldats alliés à fraterniser.**

Avec les Milices Ouvrières, PRENEZ LES MAIRIES et installez-y vos DÉLÉGUÉS ELUS dans les usines, les quartiers ouvriers et les villages.

**UNITÉ D'ACTION !**  
Notre Parti propose L'UNITÉ D'ACTION au Parti Communiste Français, au Parti Socialiste et à toutes les organisations ouvrières pour organiser ensemble les Milices d'Entreprises, les Comités d'Entreprises, les Comités de Quartiers.

**EN AVANT POUR LE PAIN, LA LIBERTÉ ET LA PAIX SOCIALISTE !**  
LE PARTI COMMUNISTE INTERNATIONALE (Section française de la IV<sup>e</sup> Internationale)

**Deutsche Soldaten !**

Solitärer Kampf gegen Hitler, die Nazis, die Gestapo. Solitärer Kampf gegen alle Kapitalisten ! Entwarfelt eure Offiziere. Bildet eure Soldatenräte. Wirft nicht eure Waffen ! Gibi uns eure Waffen. Kampf mit uns, eure Brüder, die französische Arbeiter. Tragt die Revolution in Deutschland und errichtet dort die Herrschaft der Arbeiter und Soldatenräte.

SO LEBE DER VERBANDENUNG DER ARBEITER ALLER LÄNDER ! SO LEBE DIE SOLDATENRÄTIGKEIT ! SO LEBE DER FRIEDEN !

**Allied Soldiers !**

We want to overthrow the capitalism and take the power for the working class. This our struggle is yours too. It's the only way to help English and American workers, to win best wages for them and you. Don't break our struggles. Don't shoot at us !

LONG LIFE TO INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD ! LONG LIFE TO THE SHOP AND SOLDIERS COMMITTEE ! LONG LIFE TO SOCIALIST PEACE !

For two years, there was no contact between the European groups. Only in January 1942 did French and German comrades meet in Belgium. A European Secretariat, led by Marcel Hic, was established in Paris. In summer 1943, a new secretariat was established under Michel Pablo. It began publishing a theoretical organ, *Quatrième Internationale*.

During the war, a number of European sections veered away from a consistent revolutionary line. The exiled German section argued that the victory of the Nazis meant that a "democratic revolution" was necessary before the proletarian revolution could be approached. These comrades exercised a disorienting influence on the French section, convincing them that the Nazi triumph had made revolutionary defeatism incorrect and that it was necessary to concentrate on the struggle for nationalist and democratic demands against the common oppressor of all the European nations.

Under the name of "the French Committee for the Fourth International", led by younger comrades like Hic, the section adopted social-patriotic positions and raised nationalist demands against the German occupation of France. Hic produced *Theses on the National Question* in July 1942, characterising France as an "oppressed nation" and even justifying unity with the "national" section

of the bourgeoisie.

The other main group in France was the Internationalist Communist Committee (CCI). This group held fast against petit-bourgeois nationalism and refused to support the Gaullist section of the French bourgeoisie. It fell, however, into abstract propaganda and took a sectarian attitude towards the French workers' and peasants' struggles which brought them into confrontation with German imperialism's armed forces.

Nonetheless, despite being deprived of international leadership and criticism, the Trotskyists in France did manage to bring out a regular paper, *La Verité*, and to carry on work amongst the French proletariat and German troops, (the paper *Arbeiter und Soldat* edited by Marcel Widelin). Most importantly, though not without internal struggle, they managed to overcome the nationalist deviation in their own ranks.

In February 1944, the European Secretariat organised a conference of the continent's sections. One of its aims was to aid the unification of the two main French groups. The Conference sharply criticised the nationalist deviation of the Hic-led tendency:

"The position taken by the French section on the national question, and the theses produced in the name of the European Secretariat of the FI, exclusively controlled at this time by French comrades, represented a social-patriotic deviation which, once and for all, must be openly condemned and rejected as incompatible with the programme and the general ideology of the FI."

The conference also criticised what it saw as the sectarian attitude of the CCI towards the partisan movement, but in a way which mistakenly implied that the CCI's sectarianism was comparable with

nationalist opportunism. In the context of the war, such opportunism was far worse.

Nevertheless, the achievements of the French Trotskyists were many. These included the preservation and even strengthening of their organisation under the terrible conditions of Pétainist, Nazi and Stalinist repression; their assumption of the role of an international leadership and, ultimately, the reconstruction of the FI's central organs. Their work in Germany amongst deported French workers and German proletarians, even in the concentration camps such as Buchenwald, was also exemplary.

The *Buchenwald Manifesto* of 1944 was a ringing call of genuine revolutionary internationalism—an appeal to the European workers, including the German proletariat, to turn the imperialist war into a civil war to overthrow capitalism and imperialism. This Leninist internationalism contrasted sharply with the patriotism of the official Stalinist and Social democratic parties.

In 1944, several of the European sections of the FI regrouped at a conference held inside Nazi-occupied Europe. They adopted the *Theses on the Liquidation of World War Two and the Revolutionary Upsurge*. The theses, written at a time when anti-German chauvinism and pro-allied sentiments were growing rapidly in Europe, espoused a defeatist position in the war and continued to characterise the USSR as a de-generated workers' state.

Overall, the conference showed that the International contained the forces necessary to reorganise it on a revolutionary basis. Despite the rise in pro-allied pressure, it rejected all compromise with the bourgeois democracies, put forward a defeatist position in the imperialist countries and emphasised the central role of working class self-organisation through the creation of factory committees. Despite its over-estimation of the revolutionary potential in Europe at the time, the conference pointed out that democratic demands:

"such as the demand for immediate elections or the convocation of a constituent assembly, can be a powerful means of concentrating large popular masses around the proletariat."

In the last months of the war, the Trotskyists came under murderous attack from the advancing Soviet armed forces, the GPU and the Stalinist partisan movements. Apart from this physical repression, there was the moral pressure of isolation from the workers. Often, the most militant sectors of the working class, under Stalinist influence, regarded the "Trotskyite-fascists" as Nazi agents. This hatred from precisely those workers who, otherwise, were the most active class fighters, was worse than bourgeois repression.

Nonetheless, by the time of the March 1946 World Conference in Paris, the FI's cadre and sections had weathered the worst of the repression. Sections had certainly made errors in the name of the International but they had also shown the capacity to correct them in the course of collective discussions. The task now was to re-establish the organisation and re-orient the sections in the post-war world. ■

Next month we look at the positions of the SWP(US) and the war.

### TIMELINE

- 1940: SWP(US) splits. New international leadership elected with Jean van Heijenoort at its head
- 1942: French and German comrades meet in Belgium
- 1943: New European Secretariat established under Pablo
- 1944: FI conference held in Nazi-occupied Europe
- 1946: World Conference of FI in Paris

## Australia

# Keating's New Labor pays the price

by Paul Morris and  
Lloyd Cox

**A**FTER 15 YEARS of Australian Labor Party (ALP) attacks on the working class, few were surprised at the right-wing Coalition victory in the elections on 2 March. But the size of the Coalition win, leaving it with some 100 out of 148 seats, has stunned the left. Seven cabinet ministers lost their seats in a 6% swing against Labor, and pundits predict two terms in opposition.

The ruling class, much of which was prepared to stick with Paul Keating's ALP, is now rubbing its hands at the prospect of an all-out attack on Australian workers, finishing the job that Labor started.

At the heart of the Howard government's offensive will be an attack on trade union strength and organisation. The Labor leaders have retired from the scene, promising to take a "long, hard look" at their politics. They can do this from their luxury homes. Meanwhile, ordinary workers will be forced to pay the price for Labor's failure, but those same workers also hold the key to the next three years: a militant, united working class response can stop the right-wing offensive in its tracks.

The reasons for widespread cynicism about Labor are all too obvious. Under the cover of an "Accord" with the ACTU, Australia's union federation, Labor presided over the biggest increase in inequality this century. Supposedly a deal to hold back wages in return for increased welfare benefits, the Accord led to a real wage cut of over 10%. Meanwhile, the ALP government slashed services, abolished free higher education and eroded benefits as youth unemployment soared to 30%.

## Agreements

Labor also introduced "Enterprise Bargaining", where pay rises came only at the cost of job cuts and the break-up of national agreements. The ALP hived off Qantas and the Commonwealth Bank, although workers' resistance stopped the privatisation of the ANL shipping line.

However, for all the dirty work it has done for them, Australia's bosses only tolerate Labor. Since 1983, the open parties of the Australian capitalist class, the Liberals and the National Parties have been weak and divided. The bosses judged Labor, with its mass trade union and working class base, best placed to

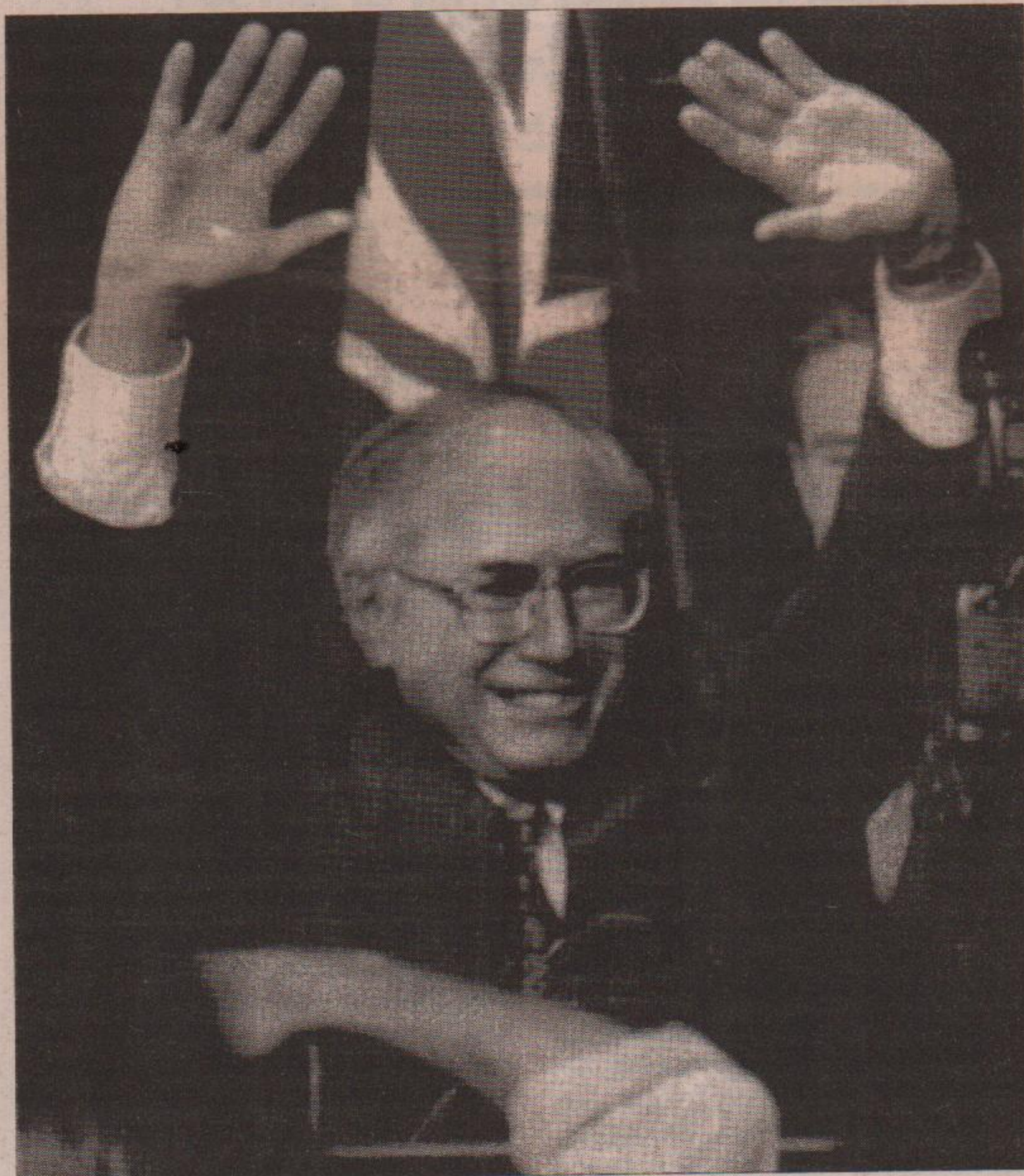
force the workers to pay the price of both economic recession and capitalist recovery.

Even during the campaign, a significant sector of the bosses continued to support Labor. The simple reason is the continued strength of the unions, which mounted a mass strike against the Liberals' anti-union laws in Western Australia last year and, through mass solidarity, forced the union-busting bosses to back down in the long-running Weipa dispute.

John Howard's Coalition of Liberals and the National Party presented itself throughout the campaign as a coalition with few strategic differences from Labor. Howard's big vote-catcher has been a plan to finance a \$1 billion environmental package through privatising one-third of the state telecom company, Telstra. Like Jacques Chirac in the French elections, Howard won by prom-

ising to be moderate, and even to deliver better services and lower unemployment than Labor.

His threat to scrap Australia's laws against unfair dismissal and the Industrial Relations Court—the union bureaucrats' preferred method of conflict resolution—were the anti-working class policies the Coalition dared to reveal. Keating immediately agreed to "review" the unfair dismissal laws. Despite verbally opposing the sell-off of Telstra, Keating's government had been secretly privatising the company through deals with the likes of Rupert Murdoch's Foxtel. These deals have already transferred up to \$6 billion of the telecom company's value into Murdoch's hands.



John Howard: unlikely hitman for Australia's bosses

On immigration and Aboriginal rights, however, significant policy differences did emerge between Labor and the Liberals. Keating tried to cover up his attacks on the working class with progressive posturing on Aboriginal rights and non-white immigration. The Coalition, by contrast, has increasingly played the race card, especially at a local level in rural constituencies. National Party MP Bob Katter accused Labor of appealing to "slanty-eyed ideologues". Another National Party MP referred to Asian immigrants going through "de-wogging" ceremonies. With the Coalition in power, non-white immigrants and Aboriginal people can expect a renewed racist onslaught, co-ordinated at federal level.

Now it is in power, the real face of Howard's Coalition will be revealed. Behind the moderate exterior, it has a viciously anti-working class programme. It has been tried and tested by Liberal state governments in Western Australia, South Australia and the key industrial state of Victoria.

Jeff Kennett's Liberal administration in Victoria came to power after the collapse of a discredited Labor regime, promising that no worker would lose "a single cent" under the Liberals. Within one month, Kennett had abolished workers' holiday leave rights, introduced a \$100 poll tax and raised gas, water, electricity and public transport prices by 10%. He cut health spending by \$278 million, closed 260 schools and sacked 44,000 local government workers.

## Draconian

In Western Australia, Liberal Premier Richard Court has introduced draconian anti-union laws. The Liberals in Tasmania have recently increased the penalty for consenting gay sex to 25 years. Dean Brown's South Australian Liberal administration has sold off hospitals, buses, the water company and the state bank.

Faced with such Liberal state administrations, many trade unions took advantage of Labor being in power federally to transfer wage deals to the national level, avoiding major confrontations over pay and conditions with the likes of Kennett and Court. This was part of the Labor bureaucracy's strategy of avoiding open class struggle against the Liberals at state level, for fear of alienating ruling class support for the Labor government.

Now, with the Liberals in power nationally with a big majority and three years ahead of them, such timidity is no longer an option. Workers throughout Australia face an all-out assault.

High on Howard's hidden agenda are draconian anti-union laws. Across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand, the Employment Contracts Act dramatically weakened trade unionism by forcing through individual contracts, which deny the right to strike and force workers to compete with each other over individual salary levels. An earlier attempt to force these on Australian workers at state level led to the renegotiation of contracts at federal level. Unions will face a "double whammy" from the Liberals at state and federal level. It is possible that some powers will be devolved back to state level to undermine any nationwide fightback.

## Passivity

Despite the years of sell-out and passivity under the Accord, Australia's unions have not suffered a decisive defeat. Labor did inflict severe damage in the 1980s, smashing the airline pilots' organisation and defeating the Building Labourers' Federation after a bitter strike in Victoria. The bureaucracy remained locked in electoral politics, while attacks by Liberal state premiers have highlighted union weaknesses in many areas. Clearly, a dramatic change in union strategy will be vital to repel the forthcoming onslaught from Howard's government.

The French events of November and December 1995 show that this is possible. In France, workers punished Mitterrand's Socialist Party by electing a right-wing President who promised only sweetness and light. Within six months, two million were on the streets as Chirac's government revealed its true nature.

Some Australian union leaders have already threatened "mass resistance" to the Howard government, though mainly as an election ploy to frighten the ruling class into sticking with Labor. To turn the bureaucrats' rhetoric into action, rank and file trade unionists need to organise across the unions for united action against the Liberals' first big attack. Any attempt to pursue a nationwide anti-union offensive must be met with generalised strike action. ■

## Defend student activists

**M**ELBOURNE POLICE have been hunting for activists in student unions and on demos, following an occupation at La Trobe University last July. Already two students have been arrested and charged with offences carrying maximum 10-year jail terms.

This is part of a clear attempt to intimidate students across Melbourne, who are currently struggling against the effects of the Voluntary Student Unionism law, which bans political campaigns and student union newspapers and attacks some vital student union services.

The four editors of La Trobe University's student newspaper, Rabelais, have been arrested and charged with producing an "objectionable publication", after an edition that included a "Guide to Shoplifting".

As a result these student activists face

a maximum penalty of six years imprisonment.

Melbourne's big student population has been hard hit by recent Liberal attacks. Many of them work for appallingly low wages to supplement meagre grants and pay "up front fees".

## Support

Student unions in Britain should send messages of support and donations to the Student Unionism Network, the cross union campaign co-ordinating the fight against the victimisation of the Rabelais editors and the arrested activists.

■ Messages to:  
La Trobe University SRC Defence  
Committee PO Box 146, La Trobe  
University Post Office, Victoria 3083.  
Fax: 00613 9479 3550.

## The left and the election

**B**EYOND THE immediate fightback in the unions, Australian workers need a revolutionary socialist alternative to Labor. Many Labor activists complacently believe that three years in opposition will push Labor to the left. The far more likely scenario is a further shift to the right as, desperate to get their snouts back in the trough, the Labor leaders will promise further attacks on the workers and the weakening of union links.

In the election, a variety of "left-wing" independents and even self-proclaimed revolutionary socialists stood against Labor. Others, like the currently jailed activist, Albert Langer, called for effective abstention by placing Labor and Liberal equal last, in defiance of Australia's compulsory voting laws. Not surprisingly, neither strategy was effective.

Candidates with a class struggle record, like former nurses' strike leader Irene Bolger, gained consid-

erable local support—in part through deals with small middle class independent parties and the Greens. But, despite their left reformist programmes, such independent candidates did not represent a significant working class break with Labor's reformism.

## Demands

The Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) stood 12 candidates in the federal election, posing as a revolutionary socialist alternative. They presented a detailed list of demands and pledges, many of them highly progressive. But nowhere did the DSP explain the need for a workers' revolution through the destruction of the capitalist state machine and its replacement by organisations of working class power, like workers' councils and a workers' militia. They tried to hide the need for working class revolution behind vague phrases:

"It will take a mighty movement of the currently disenfranchised majority to overcome [the bosses'] order. The

emergence of this movement will be a profoundly empowering process."

While revolutionary socialists would be right to use the elections as a platform for revolutionary propaganda, this is not it. It is a vague centrist evasion, mixed up like the rest of the DSP's politics with concessions to middle class feminism, pacifism and ecologism. In contrast, Workers Power (Australia) called for a critical vote for Labor. Its special election bulletin urged workers to "Vote Labor, but organise to fight". It called on the trade unions to pressure "their party" to meet key demands on wages, services and union rights. And it warned that, whoever won, the main arena for defeating the bosses' offensive is the workplace. In the wake of the thumping election victory for Howard's Coalition, the bosses will gear up for a decisive showdown with the unions. Millions of Australian workers must start preparing for this test of class strength. ■

## France

# Chirac the pacifist?

**F**RENCH PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac is trying hard to shake off his warmonger image after the worldwide outcry over nuclear testing in the Pacific. With the tests well out of the way, Chirac has put himself forward as a campaigner for zero-testing. Closer to home, he has presented proposals to reduce the size of the army, closing down entire barracks and ending conscription for French youth.

The reason for Chirac's streamlining of the army is not, however, any humanitarian concern to divert money to more socially useful areas such as hospitals or education. Rather it is due to the changing needs of French imperialism following the end of the Cold War. The new period of instability has already revealed, in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, the need for a more professional and mobile army. In both cases, brigades had to be reorganised to separate unreliable conscripts from the more dependable regulars.

Simply demobilising the 270,000 young men who spend 10 months sweeping floors, getting bored and

learning little more than how to be loyal to the Republic would be a difficult option for Chirac. Conscription at least allows the French bourgeoisie to keep a layer of French youth off the unemployment records.

Chirac has raised the possibility of a sort of compulsory social service, whereby youth would be required to do work of a "socially useful" nature. In other words, the scheme would use youth as a source of cheap labour as well as lowering the employment figures. It could be extended to young women since it is not service of a military nature.

This idea has hit a snag since even some representatives of the right-wing majority in parliament have argued that it smacks too much of forced labour and is probably unconstitutional. However, the most outspoken critic of abolition and the rest of the reorganisation package is the Communist Party (PCF).

For the PCF, always more ready to sing the Marseillaise than the Internationale, the defence and the sovereignty of "the nation" is under

by Christina Duval

attack by Chirac's proposals. In particular,

they defend conscription as a way of maintaining the army as the army of the whole people.

Some sections of the Socialist Party take the same line as the Communist Party, but it is not only the reformists who view conscription with starry eyes. Certain "Trotskyist" groups do not call for its complete abolition. The LCR, the French section of the USEC, prefers to limit itself to a reduction of service to six months, though they now add that perhaps this should be under the control of the "people", i.e. the nation. A similar position is held by the French equivalent of the Militant in Britain.

Both groups seem to think that if you reform a bourgeois conscript army, then somehow it stops being bourgeois. Their justification for maintaining conscription is that youth need a military training. They not only ignore the fact that conscripts are taught nothing of military value except obedience to orders, but they do not even call for

their "progressive" version of conscription to be extended to young women or, indeed, those youth without French citizenship.

In reality, the only principled demand is the old revolutionary slogan "not a penny, not a man" for the bourgeois army. All talk of there being something progressive in the idea of a "popular" army, as opposed to a professional army, is an unprincipled concession to nationalism and the Stalinists' popular front.

Understandably, French youth are all in favour of the ending of conscription. Nonetheless, youth, both male and female, along with workers, do need military training—without it they will be unprepared to resist police repression and make the revolution!. That training should be under the control of the workers' own organisations. In practice, it needs to be developed by building squads to defend each picket and demonstration from attack. That way, youth can get their military training under the comradely discipline of the workers' movement instead of the blind authoritarian discipline of the bourgeoisie.

## International Women's Day

## Chile

# Support women prisoners!

**C**HILEAN WOMEN have a proud record of struggle. Women's organisations were key in bringing down the military regime of General Pinochet. After the military coup of 1973, women came to the fore in the fight for human rights.

Their main demand was for the return of the "disappeared". The women's movement also organised self-help associations, such as soup kitchens and urban family gardens. Local co-ordinating bodies addressed housing issues and organised utility payments strikes.

After the defeat of Pinochet in the plebiscite of 1988, the leaders of the Christian Democrat and reformist parties tried to subordinate these movements to their electoral strategies. La Concertación (the popular front between the Christian Democrat and Socialist parties) showed no political will to deal with the torturers and murderers of the Pinochet era.

Patricio Alwyn and Eduardo Frei, the two presidents since 1989, paid lip service to women. They created a powerless National Commission for the Family.

But after 6 years of democracy, the two consecutive governments of La Concertación have failed to see justice done. In Chile, there are still 136 political prisoners, 23 of them women.

The women are held in 13 small cells in San Miguel prison. Four of the women have their children with them, one of them is only a few



Jailed by "democrats" for fighting dictatorship

months old. They have six sinks to wash the laundry, prepare food, wash utensils and keep themselves and their children clean.

Medical attention is very poor—only one doctor for the whole population of around 900 prisoners. María Cristina San Juan Avila, aged 41, suffers from the chronic disorder lupus erythematosus and from Takayasu's disease (constriction of the blood vessels) and was tortured after her detention in August 1992. Since then, she has had only one medical consultation.

Despite appalling conditions and harassment, these women have organised themselves in a Political Prisoners' Collective. They have produced leaflets, newsletters and poems about their situation and the political, economic and social problems facing the country.

It is a disgrace that while those who murdered and tortured thousands of Chilean workers enjoy absolute immunity, political prisoners are condemned to death or languish in prison and women have to raise their children in jail for having fought against the military dictatorship.

We appeal to our readers to help the women prisoners and support the release of all political prisoners in Chile. Contact your Member of Parliament and Trades Unions to put pressure on the Chilean government to release all political prisoners. ■

### Letters of protest should be sent to:

Señor Eduardo Frei  
Presidente de Chile  
Palacio de la Moneda  
Santiago  
Chile

Señor Chilean Ambassador  
12 Devonshire Street  
London W1

### Letters of solidarity and financial support should be sent to:

Organización Defensa Popular (ODEP)  
Casilla 52406  
Santiago—Chile

For more information contact *Workers Power* at the address on page 3.

## A World to Win

### Argentina

Millions of Argentinians watched the news in horror on 20 February. Scenes of police viciously attacking a student demonstration in La Plata filled the screens. The police had blockaded La Plata university using armoured personnel carriers. The students that managed to break through were fired on by police using tear gas and rubber bullets. Trapped students were beaten with long metal-tipped batons. As they fled into nearby woods plainclothes police were waiting in unmarked cars, beating the students again and again before arresting 237 protesters.

This was not the end of the violence. A delegation that went to the police station to check on the safety of the prisoners were met by a squad of riot police. The protesters were violently expelled from the building, including He Be Bonafini, a leader of the Mothers of the Disappeared human rights group.

The students had organised the demonstration to prevent the La Plata university "assembly"—its management board—from meeting to change the statutes of the university to bring it into line with a new law of higher education.

The new law was introduced in June 1995 by the government of President Carlos Menem. It is designed to strike at the heart of a free and public education system. Drawn up in concert with the IMF and the World Bank it is a plan to attack public spending in general and education in particular.

The IMF insisted that Argentina spend less on education to enable it to pay off more of its national debt. The country currently pays out \$6 billion in interest every year to the banks. The new law consists of three parts. First, it seeks to introduce fees for courses in higher education, thus excluding thousands of working class youth from university. Secondly, it spells the end of university autonomy. On the one hand, this means that management boards have to comply with the directions of the national government and, on the other, it means that student "assemblies" of union bureaucrats will be given even less say than now. Thirdly, the law represents the beginning of the privatisation of the education system. While all the budgets for the universities will be cut back they will be encouraged to look to private firms for sponsorship. Education will be manipulated by industry.

Students mobilised against this law in their thousands last year; at one time they blockaded parliament and prevented congress voting on the law. Since then the student union leaders—led by supporters of the bourgeois opposition Radical Party—have demobilised and 18 out of 33 universities have made the necessary changes to their statutes.

The PTS in Argentina mobilised for the demonstration in La Plata. Their comrades who were arrested were instrumental in organising an assembly of all the students in the police station. They argued against signing statements admitting to their involvement in disturbances. Now they are out the comrades have argued for a second national assembly to plan the next stage of opposition. ■

### Bahrain

"Jobs and parliament" is the call of the Bahraini opposition movement. Over the last weeks they have engaged in violent struggles with the island's state security services which are led by vicious career colonial policeman, Ian Henderson.

Using his force of mercenary soldiers, Henderson has organised the arrest of around 2,000 activists, leading to various beatings and deaths while in custody. Many in the majority Shia population have been forced into exile for simply struggling for basic demands such as a decent livelihood and political representation.

Political and economic power in this island is monopolised by the Sunni Al-Khalifa family who are resisting all attempts by the opposition to reinstate parliament, which was disbanded in 1975 after only two years.

The Al-Khalifa family fear renewed parliamentary representation may threaten their privileges, would incur the wrath of their Saudi neighbours and may lead to more vocal opposition to the US naval base in Bahrain.

Bahrain is a unique Gulf Arab state in that it possesses an indigenous workforce, moreover one that has shown itself in recent weeks willing to brave repression for basic democratic rights. With the economy running out of oil money and the workforce less prone to national divisions than in the other Gulf states, Bahrain may well be the weakest link in the Gulf Arab states. ■

## After Hemsworth...

# Should socialists have voted SLP?

THE HEMSWORTH by-election in February gave voters their first chance to pass judgement on Arthur Scargill's recently formed Socialist Labour Party (SLP). They were not impressed.

Though Scargill and many SLP supporters have put a brave face on the result, 1,193 votes in a former mining area was far lower than they expected. Militant Labour were completely off the wall with their prediction that, "The Tories have all but given up the contest", and "the only serious challenge to this safe Labour seat is coming from the Socialist Labour Party".

In the election the Tories came second, with the SLP behind them in fourth place.

The small SLP vote stood in sharp contrast to the 15,817 votes for New Labour by an overwhelmingly working class electorate, despite the election coming at the end of a week in which the Harriet Harman scandal had graphically exposed Blair's cynicism and the extent of his party's march to the right.

Certainly the 5% vote for the SLP's Brenda Nixon revealed a small layer of workers who already distrust Blair and are prepared to back Scargill's party as a potential left-wing alternative. But it would be quite wrong to imagine that the 72% of the electorate who backed New Labour are all uncritical Blair supporters.

*Socialist Worker* and *Militant*, both of which backed Nixon's campaign, carried strikingly similar accounts of many workers' responses:

"I would have liked to vote SLP; my heart was with you but my head told me

to vote Labour to get the Tories out." (*Militant* 9.2.96).

"... people here are so sick of the Tories, they would do anything to get them out. People will vote for Labour, whatever they think of the suits, ties and posh accents." (*Socialist Worker* 27.1.96).

The Labour vote was largely undented. The reason? After 17 years of Tory rule, most workers continue to see Labour as the best chance of getting rid of this hated government. Despite widespread misgivings about Blair, there is a general feeling that with Labour in office, many of the blows inflicted by the Tories on jobs, services and living standards will be halted, or at the very least cushioned. In a general election we can expect this feeling to be even stronger.

So how should revolutionary socialists mount the most effective challenge to these illusions in the Labour Party? Is joining or voting for the SLP a way of breaking the hold of Labour on the working class?

The SWP was initially critical of the SLP for standing candidates in elections, which they wrongly imply must necessarily run counter to the project of building a revolutionary opposition outside parliament (See WP 196).

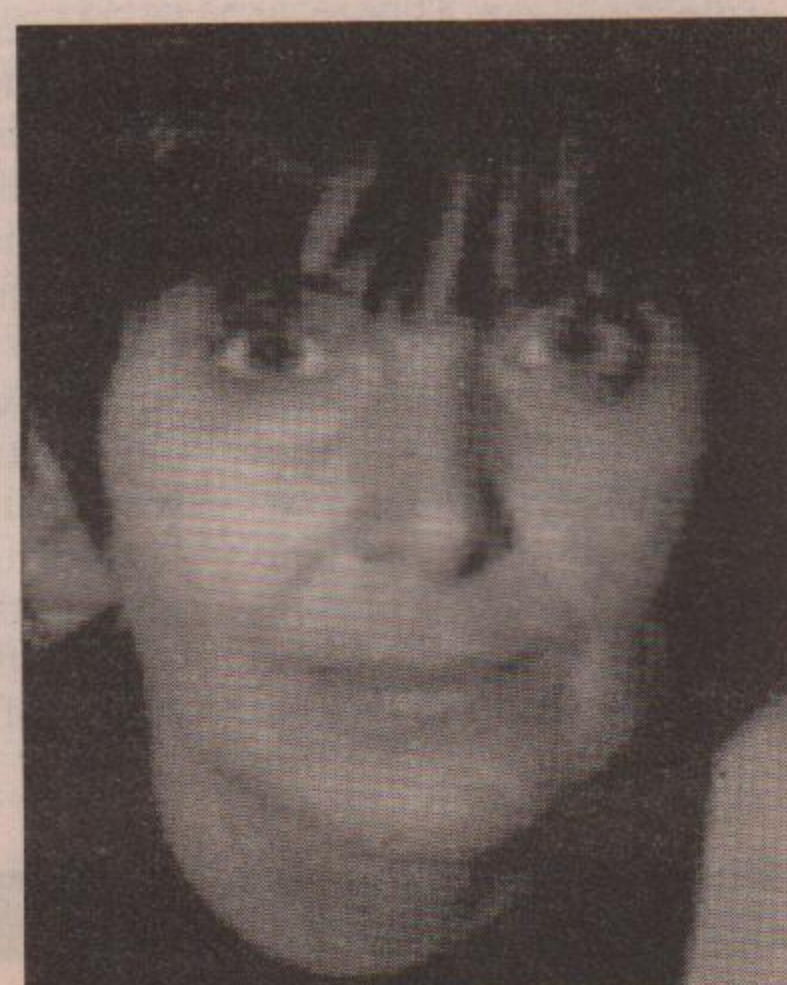
Militant Labour have been slighted by Scargill, who has bureaucratically excluded them from the new party from the outset.

Yet both groups called for a vote for the SLP in Hemsworth.

In a classic 180 degree turn, *Socialist Worker* suddenly rallied to Brenda Nixon's campaign, with few criticisms of her policies. Militant Labour, despite

being excluded from the party and banned from selling their newspaper when canvassing for the SLP, threw themselves into the campaign on the doorstep.

We think they were wrong to call for a vote for the SLP. We think that the revolutionary tactic of critical electoral support for reformist parties, as developed by Lenin and Trotsky, should have been applied to the Labour Party, not



Brenda Dixon, the SLP candidate

the SLP.

The preferred tactic of communists in elections is to stand candidates on a clear revolutionary programme. The programme would take up immediate economic and democratic questions, as well as raising transitional demands, linking the daily needs of millions of workers to the goal of overthrowing the capitalist

system and establishing a democratically planned economy in its place. The priority is to use the elections to carry on broad propaganda for revolutionary socialism.

But where there is no sizeable revolutionary party able to mount such a challenge, the question arises whether to call on workers to vote for the candidates of other, non-revolutionary, working class parties. Why would revolutionaries ever call for support for a reformist party which we know will betray the working class?

Lenin explained to British communists in 1920 why it was necessary to call for a vote for Labour in elections in all constituencies where communists were unable to stand themselves:

"... we must help the majority of the working class to be convinced by their own experience that we are right, i.e. that the Hendersons and Snowdens [Labour leaders] are absolutely good for nothing, that they are petit-bourgeois and treacherous by nature, and that their bankruptcy is inevitable; ... we must bring closer the moment when on the basis of the disappointment of most of the workers in the Hendersons, it will be possible, with serious chance of success, to overthrow the Hendersons at once."

Lenin was not arguing for support because of the programme of the reformist party, or because it was a "lesser evil". It was a recognition that mass illusions in reformism will not be undermined through propaganda alone, but in the struggle of the organised working class for its basic needs against a government that will betray its trust.

So why not vote for the SLP? The problem is that the SLP lacked any serious support in the working class movement. As we explained in the last issue of *Workers Power*, this situation was made all but inevitable by the failure of the Labour left in Hemsworth to defy Blair's refusal to shortlist their preferred candidate, and in particular the failure of Scargill to use the launch of his party to attempt to rally significant forces from within the movement to a genuinely open and democratic alternative. In short, there were no illusions in the SLP that revolutionaries needed to dispel by putting Brenda Nixon to the test of office.

For this reason, *Workers Power* called for a critical vote for Labour at the Hemsworth by-election. Some on the left have objected that in doing so we somehow "supported Blair". Not at all. We endorsed the programme of neither New Labour nor the SLP. We preferred to attempt to undermine the illusions of over 15,000 workers in Hemsworth and millions across the country in the Labour Party. The alternative was to actively build illusions in an SLP that had no such support, but still advocates a reformist parliamentary road to socialism.

Militant Labour and the SWP both explained their support for the SLP on the grounds that the new party had "shifted the debate to the left". In practice they merely ended up lending weight to an exercise in electoral propaganda by Britain's newest reformist sect. Reformism itself, and the danger it represents for the working class, remains unchallenged by such tactics. ■

WHEN ARTHUR Scargill refused to let Militant Labour into his new Socialist Labour Party (SLP), he frustrated their plans.

Militant Labour see the SLP as an excellent opportunity to put into practice their favourite tactic of working as a loyal left wing opposition within a reformist party, until such time as objective process pushes the working class and its parties to the left.

Rather than waiting around for Scargill, they have now turned to building Socialist Forums and Socialist Alliances around the country. But they have not given up. Their aim is to use these forums to pressure the SLP locally and nationally into admitting them.

In the long term, they see these forums—and in particular the newly formed Scottish Socialist Alliance—as constituting a

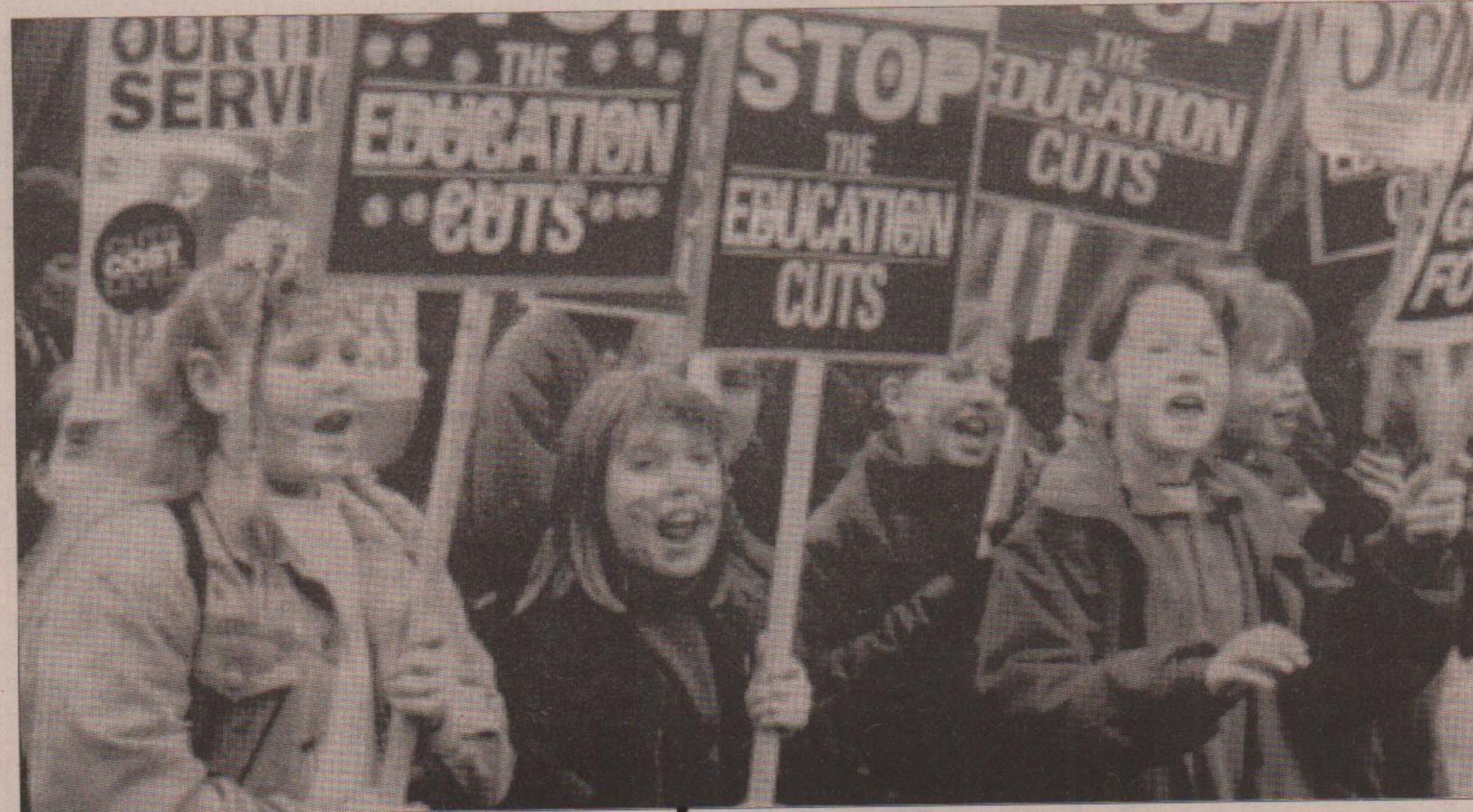
"vital preparatory groundwork for the formation of a new party of the left capable of gaining mass support for socialism." (*Socialism Today*, February 1996).

Militant Labour make one thing quite plain: these alliances and the future new party should not adopt openly revolutionary programmes or a disciplined democratic centralist structure. Instead they speak of the need for "pluralism" on the model of the Italian reformist party Rifondazione Comunista. They favour a "common, broad socialist programme", a "broad, democratic socialist party on the basis of an agreed platform" and an "electoral alliance on a broad socialist platform".

From the programme drafts discussed by the Scottish Socialist Alliance at its February founding conference and the similar document submitted to the Manchester Socialist Alliance, it is clear that they want these Alliances to adopt a programme which contains some excellent reforms, but is devoid of revolutionary content. The overall goal of a future socialist society is set out, but without

## Socialist alliances

# Agreeing to differ?



Socialist alliance politics will offer nothing to the fight against education cuts

the faintest hint of how it is to be achieved.

Socialist Forums that have been set up in Brent, Hackney, Hertfordshire and Lewisham through an alliance of Militant Labour and the minuscule left Stalinist sect the "CPGB Provisional Central Committee".

In Manchester, a Socialist Alliance has been formed which includes Militant Labour and John Nicholson, former

deputy leader of the city council. They have already circulated their draft programme—a thoroughly reformist document.

In Coventry, a pre-existing Socialist Alliance has met with Militant Labour and seems set to stand Dave Nellist for the council elections.

In Scotland the process is most advanced, involving more substantial forces. The Scottish Socialist Alliance

held a founding conference in February. Its steering committee is composed of members of Militant Labour, the Scottish Socialist Movement, the Communist Party of Scotland, the TGWU, RMT, GPMU, Irvine Trades Council, plus an anti-roads campaigner and an animal rights activist.

It has adopted a federalist draft constitution and a draft programme which is reformist, but which commits it to

discussing a more detailed "Charter for Socialist Change", which is to be "a programme of specific economic, social and environmental policies relevant to the people of Scotland".

Scottish Militant Labour clearly want it to be a new party capable of standing in elections, including to the Scottish Assembly. Indeed, the unifying slogan of the recent conference was "For Scottish Self-Government". This goes well beyond a principled defence of the right of the Scottish people to secede from the UK—if it means anything at all it effectively advocates independence, though in a typically mealy-mouthed way.

How this can possibly aid the building of a united working class fight against British capitalism is not explained. It is simply another way of adapting their ideas to the prevailing prejudices of the SNP left.

Workers Power opposes attempts by centrists such as Militant Labour to launch some new form of left reformist party or organisation. We reject in principle the adoption of programmes based on the lowest common denominator between Stalinist, reformist, centrist, nationalist and middle class environmentalist groups.

In the unlikely event that they were successful, it would only result in the creation of further obstacles to the building of a revolutionary party.

To those who accuse us of sabotaging "unity", we have a straightforward response. There are many tasks on which the existing left can collaborate and unite in action—the building of a campaign for mass non-compliance with the Asylum Bill and the new DSS Regulations, or building solidarity with the Liverpool Dockers. Such collaboration should go alongside an open exchange of views and criticism. But no special new political organisation is needed for this, just practical agreements on what to do and when. ■

# LETTERS

WORKERS POWER 198 MARCH 1996



## Racist business

Dear Editor,

I found a copy of your last paper on the tube train last week and read the article "Why Brixton Burned" with interest.

Your writer (no by-line) asserts that the rioters were "settling scores with racist businesses". What racist businesses? Seven-Eleven, Morleys, Pizza Hut, Allied Carpets, the little barber shop, hairdressers and cafe on Tulse Hill—the list could go on. Where is the evidence that any of these businesses were attacked because they were racist? They are certainly not on a local level as they all employ and are managed by people of all racial origin, and certainly reflect the local population. Were the parked cars that were burned owned by racists?

The fact is that no-one would know.

The first wave of damage done on the 13 December was done by people in a state of rage. The idea that there was any kind of battle plan and targeting simply doesn't fit the profile of events that night. Unless your writer knows something that the rest of us don't.

Emerson Webster of Panther UK is quoted as asking what the brothers have got from the £4 million renovation of the cinema. For a start, sneering at the employment it offers local people in any capacity seems odd. And what's wrong with re-building and expanding a popular local cinema that was falling down in the middle of town? I would genuinely like to understand what the real beef behind this complaint is.

Yours faithfully,  
James Castle  
Brixton

## Blanket ban?

Dear Workers Power,

I got a copy of your green leaflet entitled "Non-Compliance can beat the Asylum Bill" during the rally on 24 Feb. I appreciated the information and thought it was the most informative of all (the many) leaflets I looked through. But I do have one question.

Under the heading of "Barring the victims of persecution" you wrote:

"The Tories' new "White List" is a blanket ban on asylum from countries that the Tories claim as safe". I don't think that is accurate. From what I understand refugees on the "White List" will automatically be on the "fast track" appeal mechanism.

This is bad enough and I am on the same side as you. But it's important to get the facts right, so for your information I suggest you look into this discrepancy.

Respectfully yours,  
Sarah Adlerstein  
London

*We reply: Thanks for pointing this out. You are quite right. As we understand it, refugees from "White List" countries will be dealt with under the new procedure. This will mean fast track hearings without right of appeal, so there is a real danger of a de facto blanket ban, but we take your point nevertheless.*

## The politics of the market

Dear comrades,

Last Saturday I was one of a group of comrades selling Workers Power in Deptford market. We were approached by two market inspectors who told us we needed a street vendors licence to sell. They said we would not get one as we were political. Apparently local street traders regard sellers of political papers as bad for business, maybe leading to a confrontation with the BNP.

They said that the local Labour council had been petitioned by the traders and had passed a law forbidding the dissemination of political ideas via the written word within the market. So although the left has sold here for years,

we are now only allowed to sell outside. They told us that democracy meant the will of the majority—Lewisham Council—and we had to accept or we were "like the IRA" in refusing to abide by the rule of democracy.

This council "which embodies the will of the majority" is the same one which is ruthlessly cutting back in education, hiking up rents for its tenants, sacking its staff, and dragging me and many others through the courts when we could not pay the council tax. Some democracy.

In comradeship,  
Roberta Fleming  
London

## Just say no?

Dear WP,

Richard Brenner (see WP 197) seems to think that religion (whatever that is) can be proved right or wrong by science, philosophy and political democracy.

Firstly, scientific enquiry can be used to show that all kinds of peoples' ideas accord with reality as no doubt practitioners of IQ tests or eugenics point to the "scientific validity of their ideas."

Science has also brought us the capability to blow the world up, to use chemical warfare and so on. Of course theology has never succeeded in proving the existence of God—it takes that for granted (also there is the question of what you mean by the existence of God—what kind of existence?).

As for philosophy and political democracy having undermined all of religion's central claims, I ask what are religion's central claims? Philosophy has been around longer than some religions, some religions such as Christianity and Islam, have even incorporated elements of Hellenistic philosophy—has this undermined those religions?

Useless idealist prejudices? Of course religion is utilised by bigoted people but then so has the terminology of Marxism—is this useless? You also do not take into account the incidents where religion has been the main motivating force against oppression but no doubt these people are full of idealist prejudices so its best not to go into that.

Yes, religion provides comfort (although it also provides a lot of pain for many people), but so does TV, and dare I say it politics (there is also something fundamentalist in quoting Marx' heart of a heartless world when this is not a piece of political analysis but a sweeping opinion). However if science can prove reality please prove that religion is merely the "soul of soulless conditions"—I doubt you could as religion isn't working at that level of discourse.

Meanwhile Richard, you should put yourself in a position to judge this rationally and with detachment—except as I've tried to show this is impossible.

Just Say No to Dogmatic Political Generalisations!

Yours for the revolution,  
Steve Davis

## Where We Stand



### 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, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.



### The Trade Unions

must be transformed by 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, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.



### October 1917

The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The parasitic bureaucratic

caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist.



### Social oppression

is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of 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 fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.



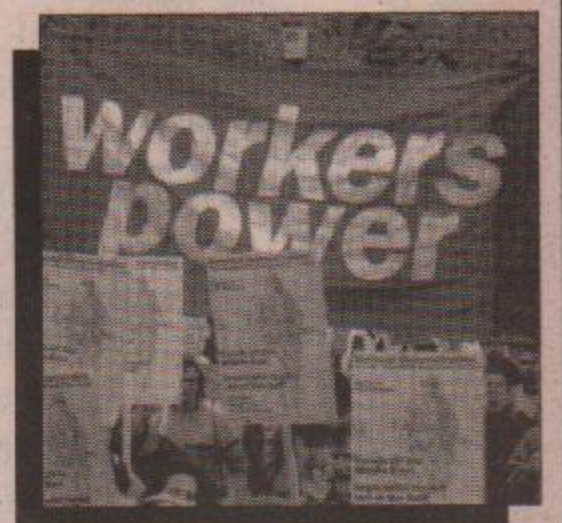
### Imperialism

is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. 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. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism 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 a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third International and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51. The LRCI 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. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!★



# WORKERS power

**INSIDE**

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No 198 MARCH 1996 ★ Price 50p

# Hands off

# Cuba!

**T**HE CLINTON administration has tightened its blockade against Cuba. The USA has retaliated for the downing of two planes that violated Cuban airspace. The aircraft belonged to a Miami-based organisation, "Brothers to the Rescue", run by virulently anti-communist exiles.

Last year Clinton began to relax the 35-year-old embargo against Cuba, in the hope of paving a peaceful road to the restoration of capitalism on the island. But now Washington has reverted to sabre-rattling. US Secretary of State Warren Christopher uttered ominous threats of a military attack on Cuba, while Ambassador Madeleine Albright denounced the Castro regime at the United Nations in terms worthy of the most hawkish Cold Warrior. She went on to extract a resolution from the UN security council condemning the Cuban action against the Cessna aircraft.

Bill Clinton is now supporting the so-called Libertad Bill, a piece of legislation co-sponsored by far-right Senator Jesse Helms. This measure will all but bar foreign companies investing in Cuba by enabling Cuban exiles and US capitalists to sue any overseas firm that purchases or improves land that had been expropriated by the Cuban state since 1959. Clinton has already restored a ban on charter flights from the US to Havana, expanded the operations of the anti-Castro propaganda station, *Radio Marti*, and revoked travel permits for Cuban diplomats.

In a presidential election year, Clinton is courting the vote of Florida's rich and influential Cuban exile community. He does not want to be outflanked to the right by his Republican Party opponent in November. Organisations such as Brothers to the Rescue are likely contributors to the likes of Buchanan or Dole.

The shadowy Brothers to the Rescue outfit is:

"the product of the extreme right-wing... who love political control. They want a war against Fidel and, while they customise their organisation for humanitarian reasons, in reality they seek confrontation".

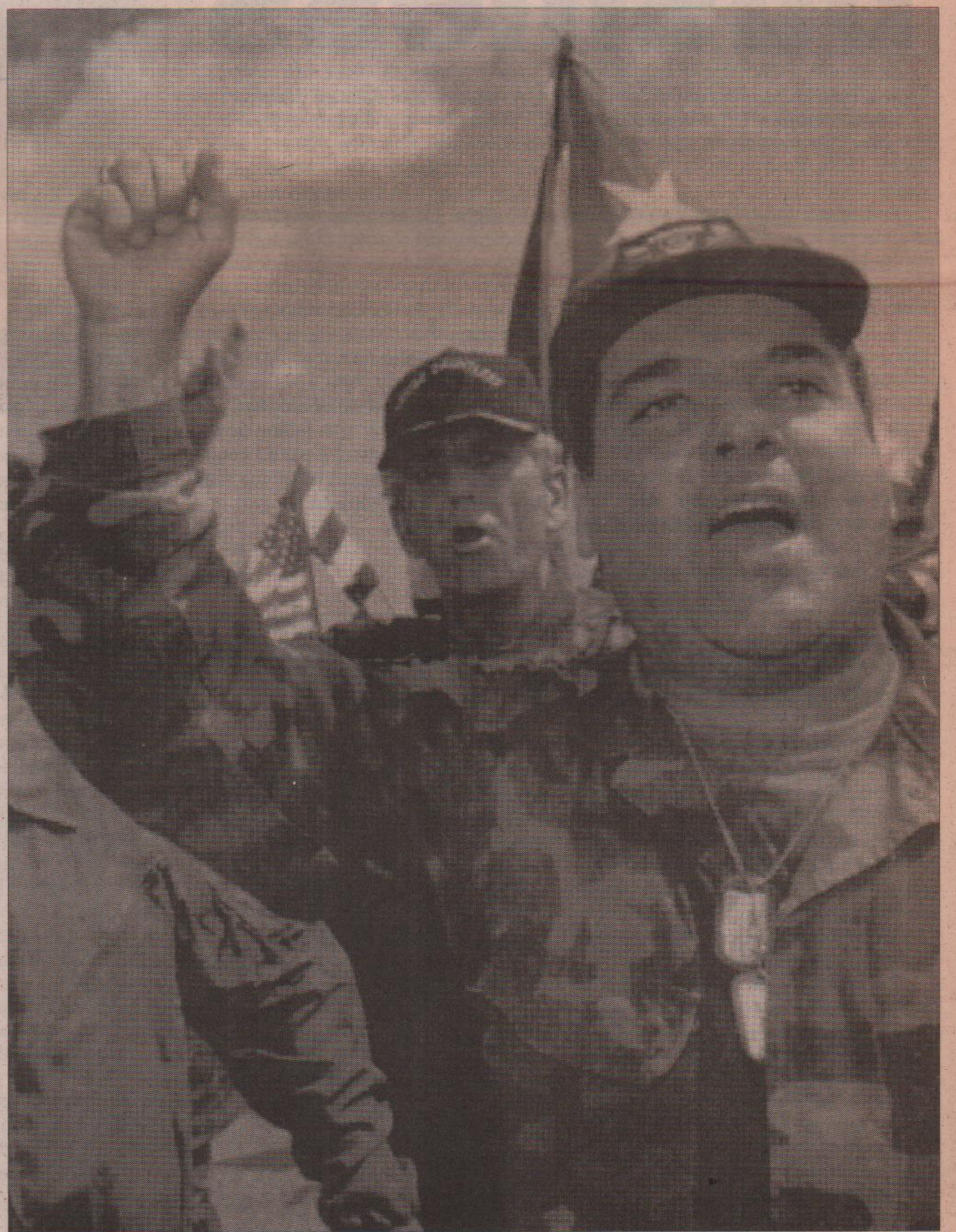
These words come not from the Cuban foreign ministry, but from Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, a die-hard opponent of Castro who lives in Miami and has previously led a CIA-linked paramilitary group, Alpha 66.

The 24 February attack by Cuban Air Force fighter jets on the aircraft was a legitimate act of self-defence, after repeated warnings, against an intrusion into Cuban territory. Brothers to the Rescue has cynically exploited the desperation of boat people fleeing from an island where living standards have plunged in the

wake of the collapse of Castro's East European Stalinist allies. Whether the violation of Cuban airspace was a wilful provocation, involving the CIA remains unknown. But it is entirely probable. The USA has an unbroken record of hostility to the Castro regime, dating back to the overthrow of the brutally corrupt Batista dictatorship in 1959.

In addition to the economic blockade, the Kennedy administration bankrolled and equipped the farcical Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and the CIA tried repeatedly to assassinate Castro in the 1960s. Successive US administrations have funded a bewildering array of Cuban exile groups united only by their aim to bring capitalism back to Cuba. It is little wonder that Castro can still mobilise enthusiastic crowds in the streets of Havana against Yankee imperialism, even as living standards for the island's masses deteriorate.

Cuba is no workers' paradise, but it remains a bureaucratically degenerate workers' state, in which the capitalist class have lost their property. It has achieved substantial real gains in the fields of education and health care for the masses. That is why Cuba is continu-



Exile paramilitaries want war to bring capitalism back to Cuba

ally threatened by the world's most powerful imperialist only 90 miles off its coastline.

The privileged bureaucracy headed by Fidel Castro wields a repressive apparatus against the masses. The regime is incapable of defending and developing the gains of the revolution. But that is a revolutionary task that must fall to the Cuban workers—not the imperialist plunderers of Miami and Washington.

Against US aggression—

actual and threatened—workers in Britain and around the world must unconditionally defend Cuba.

- Stop the Libertad (Helms-Burton) Bill
- Down with the economic embargo on Cuba
- Lift all sanctions now
- Only the workers themselves can prevent capitalist restoration—defend and extend the gains of 1959 through political revolution!

## PICKET!

**We urge all our readers to join the picket of the US Embassy in London on Monday 11 March at 6.00pm, called by the Cuban Solidarity Campaign.**  
**Nearest tube station: Bond Street, Central and Jubilee lines**