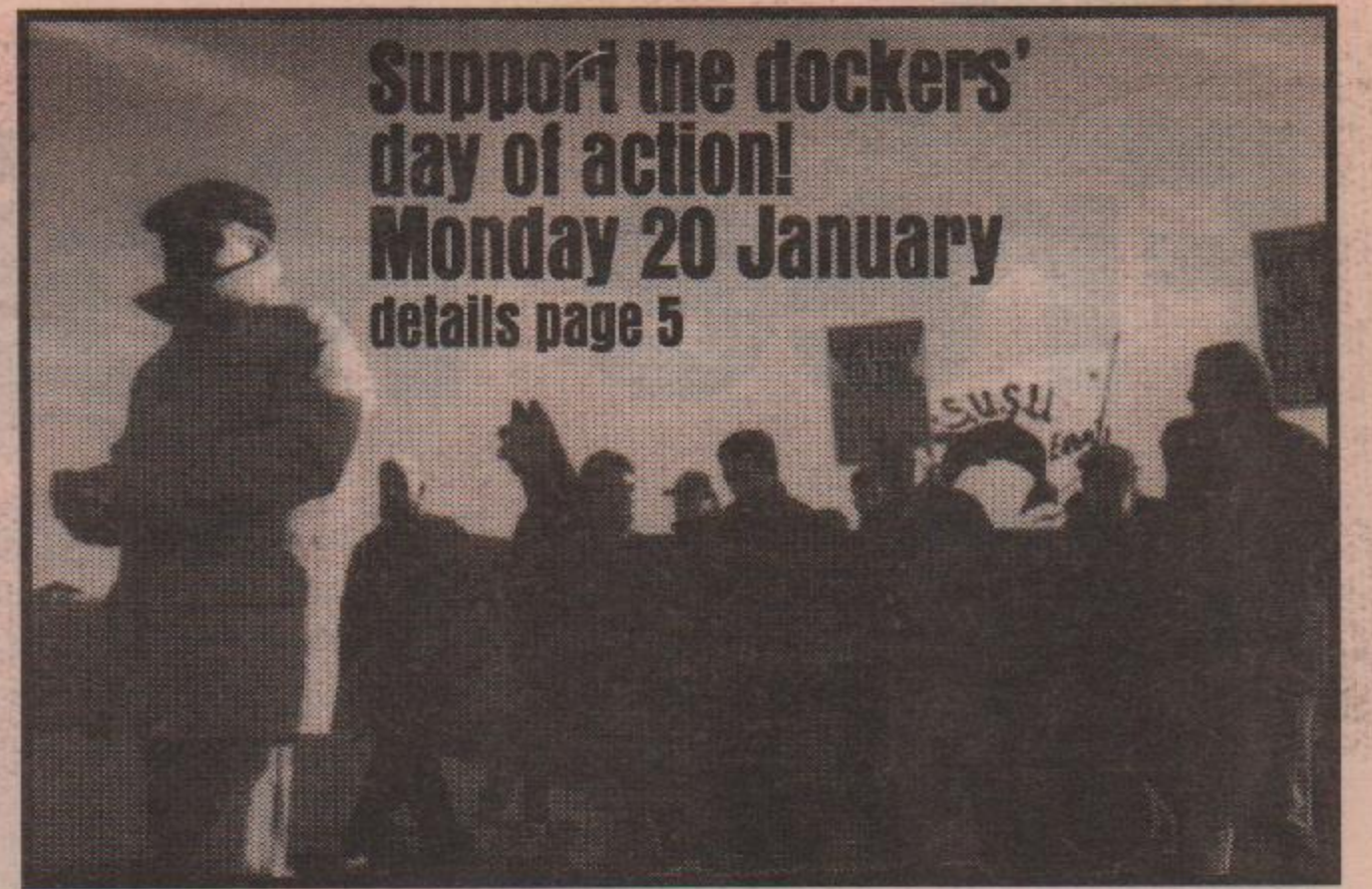


Workers power

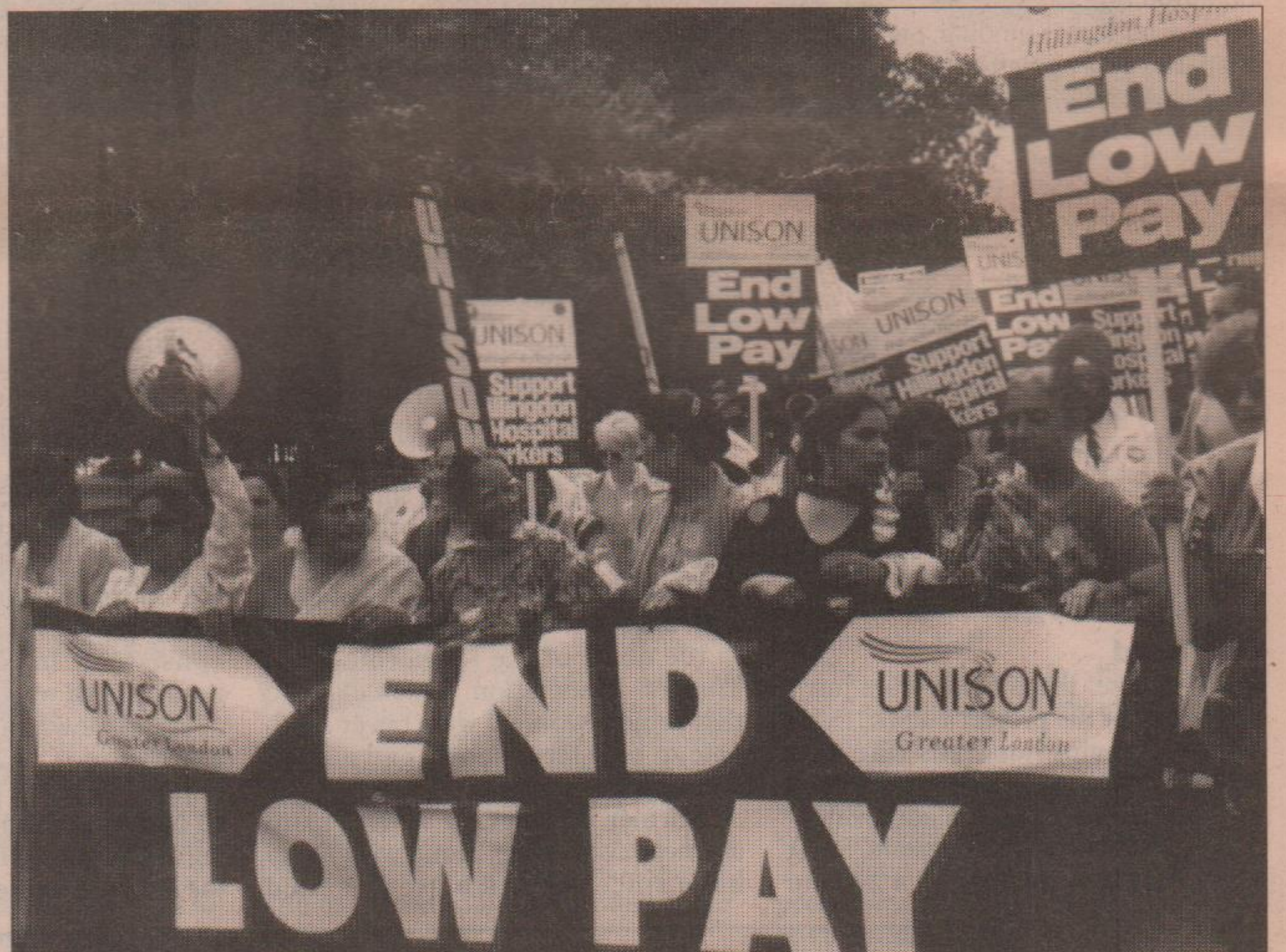
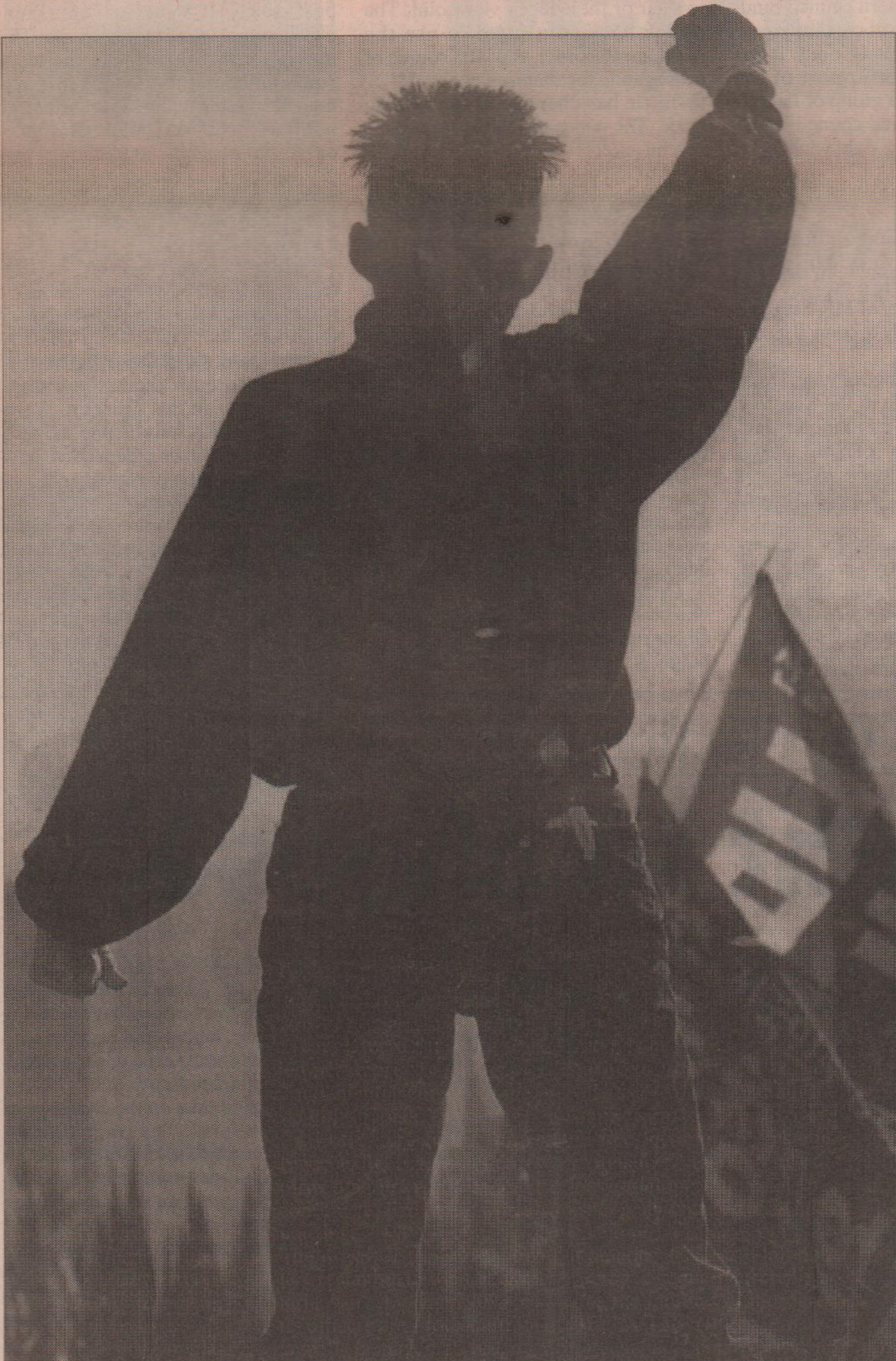
1997

Paper of the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International ■ No 207 January 1997 ★ 50p



Support the dockers' day of action!
Monday 20 January
details page 5

YEAR OF THE FIGHTBACK!



Korea: workers strike against employers' offensive (left). London: Hillingdon Hospital workers on strike for more than a year (Above).

ON THE first day of the new year, the streets of Seoul, South Korea, were filled with tear gas. Throughout the night Korean workers fought the riot police as they demonstrated against the imposition of new labour laws.

South Korea is now gripped by a massive strike wave against these laws.

The new year has begun with a great battle; 1996 ended with great victories. The French lorry drivers caused havoc to European trade, blockading oil and food supplies. They won shorter hours and more union rights. Closer to home the Glacier workers, occupying their factory in Glasgow, won their fight to keep their jobs and defeated

the management's attack on their conditions.

The year also saw the continuation of two key disputes by heroic and determined workers: the Liverpool dockers and the Hillingdon hospital workers have been fighting for over a year.

British bosses often tell us we have much to learn from the highly disciplined workforce in the new Asian Tiger economies.

We do. But the lessons to learn are very different from those our bosses have in mind.

The lesson to learn from the workers of South Korea, and from the French drivers and the workers of Glacier, is that and militant action can win.

The bosses can be beaten!
Action can inflict maximum

damage on the enemy and force them to surrender to the working class. Since they introduced the new laws, on 26 December, the Korean bosses had already lost £640 million by 1 January.

One certain prediction for 1997 is that world-wide the bosses will continue to attack the working class. They want to make us pay for their economic crisis.

But wherever the employers attack, we must follow the example of the Korean workers and bring the bosses to their knees.

■ For full coverage of the Korean general strike, turn to page 10.

■ As election looms - what does Labour offer - page 3.

Support the Euromarch against unemployment - page 11

Free Roisin McAliskey!

A 25 YEAR-OLD woman, suffering an exceptionally difficult pregnancy, lies in Holloway prison, awaiting extradition to Germany. Her name is Roisin McAliskey. She stands accused of being part of an IRA team which carried out a mortar attack against a British army base in Osnabruck, Germany in June 1996.

Her real crimes? Being an Irish republican and being the daughter of Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, the left nationalist MP for Mid-Ulster from 1969-74 and an outspoken critic of the so-called peace process in the six counties.

Castlereagh

The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) first took Roisin in for questioning at Belfast's notorious Castlereagh holding centre on 19 November, where she faced six days of interrogation. The RUC subsequently conducted a raid on her mother's home in County Tyrone on 25 November.

The following day, police transferred

Roisin to Belmarsh prison in south-east London, a facility designed for male prisoners on remand, especially those with alleged IRA connections. Roisin, however, was four months pregnant and suffering repeated bouts of violent vomiting. A doctor certified that her condition bordered on malnutrition and urged her immediate transfer to a centre with appropriate medical facilities.

The authorities finally agreed to transfer her to Holloway women's prison in North London. Initial medical reports suggest, however, that her condition has not improved. Even so, magistrates at Bow Street have repeatedly refused applications for bail by her solicitor, Gareth Pierce. At a hearing on 3 January, the judge remanded Roisin in custody for a further two weeks.

Roisin's maltreatment is a further indictment of the British state's continual harassment of women prisoners. Without even waiting to find her "guilty", McAliskey's medical condition is being used to systematically wear

down her resistance.

There is no evidence to suggest that Roisin was part of the IRA action at Osnabruck, and very good reason to believe that she is the victim of a frame-up. Roisin's family has suffered greatly for its principled stand against British imperialism and Loyalist reaction. Her mother nearly died from bullet wounds after an assassination attempt by Loyalist death squads in 1981.

Release

A number of demonstrations have now taken place outside Bow Street, Holloway prison and the German Embassy, calling for Roisin's release. It is vital in the next few weeks that the extradition proceedings are halted and that Roisin is granted an immediate, unconditional release.

We urge our readers to join future protests for her freedom and to write to the German Ambassador, 23 Belgrave Square, London SW1, demanding that all charges against Roisin be dropped now. ■



Mother and daughter at Republican funeral

NEWHAM MONITORING PROJECT: Funding threatened by Labour council

Defend militant anti-racism

NEWHAM MONITORING Project (NMP) - an East London anti-racist and police monitoring organisation - faces the threat of losing all local authority funding. Set up more than 16 years ago after the murder of Akhtar Ali Baig, NMP received a grant from the Labour council, but maintained its political independence.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, it mounted a series of campaigns exposing police harassment and defending the victims of racist attacks. Building from a strong base in a borough with one of Britain's largest black populations, it rose to national prominence, especially through the Newham 7 and Newham 8 campaigns. These high profile cases were militant fightbacks against police attempts to criminalise local Asian youth and in support of community self-defence.

Suffered

Of course, these fights were just a small part of the project's work. Every year NMP helps hundreds who have suffered at the hands of the police, racist thugs or the immigration authorities - 3,000 cases in the last six years. Since 1983, they have maintained a 24-hour

emergency helpline staffed by volunteers. More recently, they launched an anti-fascist group in order to counter the BNP's activity - a move made all the more necessary by the SWP-led Anti Nazi League's failure to work consistently in the area.

Clearly, such militant activity, especially when funded through the local state, was bound to attract criticism. There have been continuous attacks on NMP from the police, the editor of the *Newham Recorder*, Tom Duncan, and right wing members of the council. What is more surprising is that in recent months these detractors have been joined by previous supporters.

Following an internal argument over NMP's future direction, a small group around Unmesh Desai, the project's former paid worker, have begun to attack the organisation. Initially, this began with articles in the *Newham Recorder* in the name of the Katherine Road Traders' Association, which claimed that Project workers were never available to help local people and alleged financial wrongdoing.

Former members of NMP's management committee, along with Desai have since formed a group called

Newham Unity.

This organisation has clearly been set up in order to inherit council funding from NMP. It will certainly be a much tamer, pro-Labour body. It has already gained the support of the *Newham Recorder*, a group of Labour Party members around council leader Robin Wales and some right wing union leaderships.

Peace

Desai, the one-time radical firebrand, has evidently made his peace with "new" Labour. He is now the election agent for the local MP, Stephen Timms - a political ally of council leader Wales.

In a dramatic change of tune, Desai has written an article in the *Recorder* in which he praises it for its inquiry into the "mismanagement" of NMP. Unlike Desai, at least the *Newham Recorder* is consistent. In NMP's 1985 annual report Desai wrote:

"The *Newham Recorder's* coverage of race . . . shows no signs of improvement. In fact, the situation is so bad, that examples of bad reporting can be quoted from every issue, with the *Recorder* presenting information in

a very selective manner and giving little or no space to those groups opposed to their or the police's viewpoint. The police have continued to use the *Newham Recorder* as a vital source of propaganda for themselves . . ."

Little has changed in the decade since. The paper has failed to publish several letters from NMP supporters in reply to Desai's article.

As we go to press, it seems likely that the council inquiry into NMP will result in the withdrawal of all funding and redundancy for the project workers. There are indications that some money will indeed be redirected to Newham Unity. A Newham Monitoring Project Defence Campaign is fighting this.

Action

This campaign started well as some 60 supporters met in mid-December to work out a plan of action. Since then thousands of leaflets have been distributed, a fact sheet has been produced and sent out with petitions to all affiliated organisations and individuals.

On Wednesday 8 January, there will be a mass lobby of the Council. We urge all our readers to join the defence campaign, in order to ensure continued

no strings funding of this vital service.

The campaign also intends to lay the basis for NMP's survival on a completely voluntary basis, if necessary. This means turning not only to the black community, but to the labour movement in general. Speakers must go out to trade union groups, stewards' organisations and even Labour Party wards, explaining why the fight against racism is a class question and must be politically independent of "New" Labour.

While Workers Power has had differences with NMP, especially over calls to democratise the police, the attack on this organisation comes from the rightward moving careerists who want to build a future for themselves in the Labour Party. In this situation, Workers Power stands fully behind the campaign to maintain an independent anti-racist organisation in Newham. ■

For further information, contact Newham Monitoring Project Defence Campaign, PO Box 275, Forest Gate, London E7 8NW. Affiliation to the campaign costs £10 for organisations, £5 for waged individuals and £2 for the unwaged.

ABORTION: Catholic church gears up for election panic

For a woman's right to choose

ELECTIONS TEND to bring the most reactionary moral forces in society to the surface. Seeing Blair's New Labour ditching every progressive policy in sight, the Catholic Church's hierarchy has decided the time is ripe to weigh in against the party's policy on abortion.

In a co-ordinated move, the leader of the Catholic Church in Scotland, Cardinal Thomas Winning, and Cardinal Hume in England, launched an attack on current abortion rights. Cardinal Winning targeted the Labour Party, claiming that the party "put pressure on MPs opposed to abortion rights". In particular, Winning singled out the trade unions who have dared to demand that union-sponsored MPs should support party policy on the question.

Cardinal Hume used a television interview to declare abortion "a great

evil in our society", and called for "political intervention" in opposition to abortion. This was music to the ears of the so-called Pro-Life Alliance which is also trying to shift the major parties' policy by threatening to stand 50 candidates at the general election.

Labour's response, far from defending party policy, which is committed to defending the provisions of the 1967 Act, retreated behind its "conscience clause".

Supposedly pro-choice Clare Short was wheeled out to defend the indefensible:

"Tony Blair has steadfastly protected the rights of individual MPs, irrespective of what any conference or individual says - to vote according to their conscience. That is the right way to deal with it."

Is it really?

This will surprise the remaining lefts MPs who have just seen a new disciplinary procedure forced on the parliamentary party. Will they have the right to vote against cuts in vital services on the grounds of "conscience" when a Blair government demands their votes on a three-line whip? Of course they won't.

The abortion conscience clause for MPs is so much hypocrisy. MPs are selected by their constituency parties and elected on a manifesto. Trade unions and constituency members have every right to demand that their MP votes in line with the democratically decided policy on abortion. If their "conscience", i.e. religious belief, prevents them from supporting this key right for women, then they should either not stand or resign and give way to a somebody who will represent party poli-

icy on this question.

Every Labour Party member and trade unionist should demand that their MP goes on record as supporting party policy on the question. We should demand an end to the "conscience" get-out clause.

But we should not just be defensive. It is well known that access to abortion varies. Anti-abortion consultants still have great scope to interpret the 1967 Act, while cuts in the NHS mean that abortion is limited or not available at all in some areas. The 1967 Act itself remains one of the most restrictive abortion measures in Europe.

We should openly campaign against the Catholic hierarchy's attempts to use the law to restrict women's rights. If they had their way they would ban not only all abortion but contraception as well. The cardinals and their politi-

cal arm in the "pro-Life" movement have little care for the effect of the policies on the lives of ordinary working class women, who would be faced with either an unwanted child or a life-threatening backstreet abortion.

We should take up the challenge of the "pro-lifers". The trade unions, women's organisations and the Labour Party should make abortion and contraception rights an important issue in the coming election. We should campaign for an extension of existing rights:

- Free access to contraception and abortion advisory services, regardless of age. Free abortion on demand.
- An end to the 24-week limit on termination of pregnancy.
- The removal of doctors who obstruct access to abortion from this area of NHS work. ■

EDITORIAL

WORKERS POWER 207 JANUARY 1997



Blair prepares for office

Getting the betrayals in first

HARDLY A WEEK has gone by in recent months without the Labour Party leadership unilaterally ditching some element of party policy or seeking to distance itself from the trade unions who fund the party. The holiday period proved no exception.

Stephen Byers – New Labour’s employment spokesman – rejected out of hand a modest plea from John Edmonds, a leading centre-right union bureaucrat. Edmonds, General Secretary of the GMB, dared to suggest a revival of a tripartite framework for discussion of key economic policies, including issues such as the European Union’s Social Chapter and poverty pay.

Byers, no doubt with the blessing of Blair, derided Edmonds’ proposals as “turning the clock back” to the so-called corporatism of the 1970s.

An unidentified senior Labour source told the *Guardian* that the Tories’ four-year long freeze on public sector pay would continue under a Blair government.

The source went on to throw down the gauntlet to public sector workers and their unions suggesting that it might “be as well for them to test the will of the government early on so there is no misunderstanding for the remainder of the administration.”

There was also a kick in the teeth for TUC General Secretary, John Monks, who has repeatedly tried to sell much of the Blairite agenda to the trade union bureaucracy.

Monks was accused of “clutching at straws and whistling in the wind” simply for voicing the hope that New Labour and the unions had moved towards a better understanding since the Blairite modernisers provoked the bitter quarrel over union links at last

September’s TUC conference.

Blair and his allies have made every conceivable effort to reassure Britain’s big bosses and the middle class electorate that they have absolutely nothing to fear from a Labour government and that the unions will stay shut out of all government policy making.

The “Iron Chancellor” Gordon Brown will be a model of tax restraint with “an explicit target for low inflation, strict rules on public spending” and virtually no scope for tax increases. Blair appears to have vetoed Brown’s proposal in the shadow cabinet for increasing the basic tax rate for those earning over £100,000.

Blair’s aspirations go far beyond presenting a manifesto that will offer almost nothing to Labour’s traditional working class base. Blair wants to divorce the party he leads from this base once and for all.

There have been calculated leaks to the Sunday broadsheets offering further evidence that Blair’s ultimate project is the creation of a new, openly pro-capitalist political party. Leading figures in New Labour and the Liberal Democrats have been staging secret talks, ostensibly around a package of constitutional reforms and the possible introduction of a system of proportional representation at parliamentary elections.

There can be little doubt, however, that talks involving the likes of senior shadow cabinet members Robin Cook and Jack Straw are also about establishing the framework for a Lib-Lab coalition in the event of a narrow Labour victory at the general election.

In the words of one Labour backbencher:

“The leadership spend more time consulting with the Liberals than they

do with us.”

In fact the only kind of consultation the Blairites are prepared to entertain is in the form of plebiscites, as around the “Road to the Manifesto”. On 3 January Labour staged a photo opportunity outside the Houses of Parliament to highlight its announcement of an increase in individual membership of the party to 400,000. At the same time, the inner circle around Blair has been polishing its plans for an utterly passive body of New Labour members, completely subordinated to leadership dictat.

The blueprint for the modernisers’ plans to gut what remains of Labour Party democracy appeared in a pamphlet published by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC), entitled *New Labour: a stakeholder’s party*. As confirmed in the Independent in late December, the LCC’s position coincides with that outlined in an internal Labour party document.

The LCC publication urges the Blairites to:

“decide in principle that the party programme should be voted on by a one member, one vote, postal ballot of party members”.

It goes on to call for the elimination of “the intermediary policy role of delegates acting on behalf of local branches”.

The annual Party conference would become even more stage-managed as nothing more than a showcase for “key selected policy themes in Labour’s programme”. The LCC and its co-thinkers in Peter Mandelson’s so-called Millbank Tendency want to ensure that “there is no potential for the National Executive Committee to become a focus for opposition to a Labour government.”

In short, the vision entertained by

the modernisers is of a party completely independent of the trade unions and of a mass membership whose sole function is to rubber stamp policies determined by a tiny clique around the leadership.

But it is far from guaranteed that the Blairites will realise their vision.

The influential journalist, Will Hutton, who had been publicly identified as an intellectual cheerleader for the modernisers, has recently written a series of distinctly “Old Labour” editorials about the need to increase state welfare spending and increase taxation on the rich.

This suggests a wider disquiet with New Labour even among middle class professionals.

The Blairites are not blind to the possibility of this disquiet leading to outright divisions and conflict once Labour is in office. Millions of working class people are likely to vote for a Labour government in the hope that it will make a real difference in their lives.

The prospect of millions of organised workers coming into conflict with that government early in its life is very real as workers come up against Blair’s refusal to act in their interests.

That is why, in the run up to the election, we need to mobilise workers to place demands on the Labour Party that meet their needs and to organise action to fight for those demands, both now and when Labour gets into office.

This is the best means of relating to the real hopes of change from Labour by millions of workers and preparing those workers for the conflicts that will come when Labour betrays those hopes; conflicts that will lay the basis for the breaking workers from labour and building a revolutionary alternative to it. ■

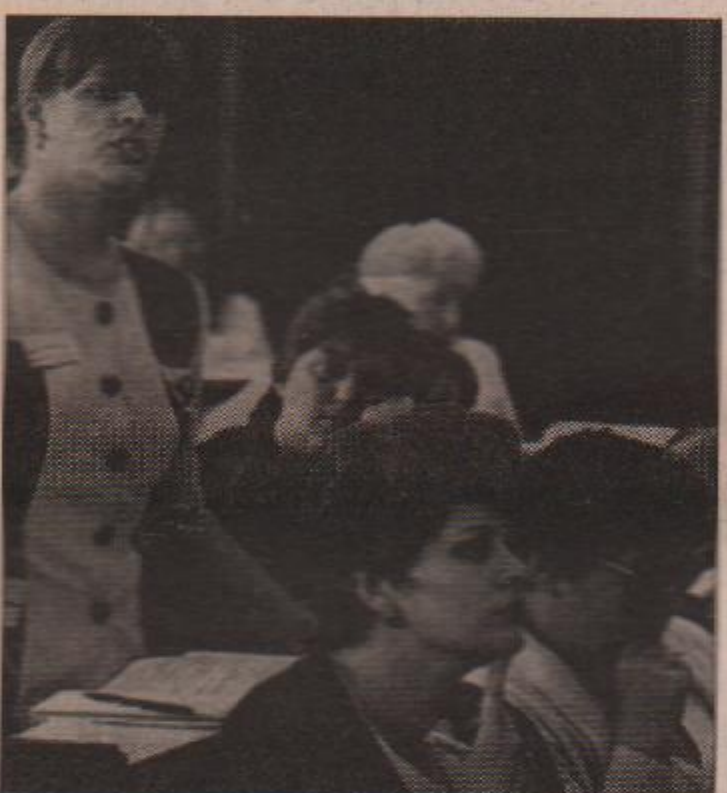
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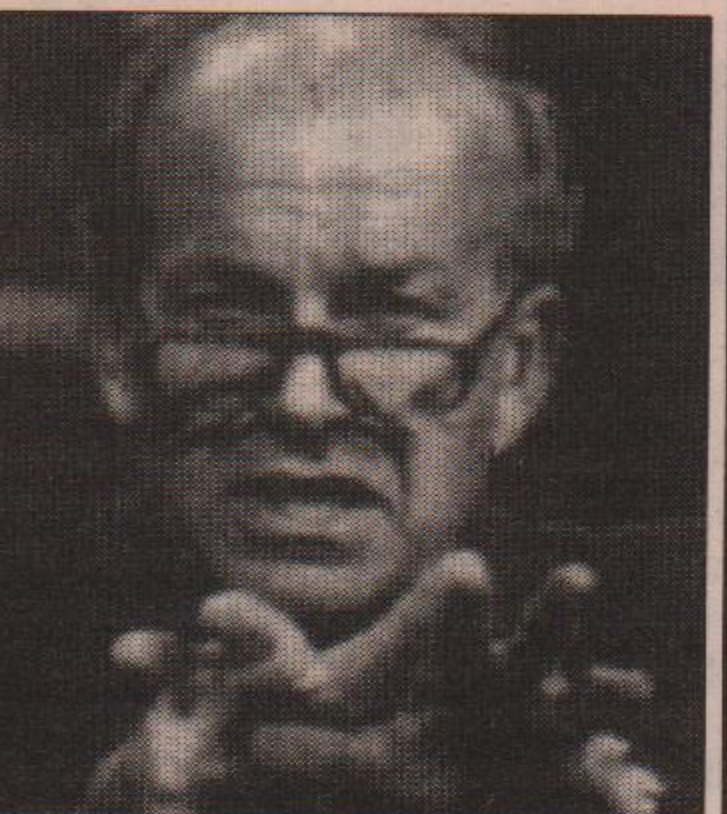
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Transform the unions
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GLACIER: Occupation forces management climbdown

Victory for workers!

ONE GROUP of determined Scottish workers had special cause for celebration as 1997 arrived. After 54 days and nights occupying their factory, AEEU members at Glacier had won back their jobs, with no significant strings attached. According to Bernie Kilkie, the workers' trade union convenor:

"We have pulled off a stunning victory. We have lost a lot of money, but we have gained a lot of pride."

On 7 November, management at the Glacier RPB engineering plant in Polmadie, Glasgow sacked all 103 of the factory's AEEU members after the workforce refused to swallow the imposition of a range of new, potentially deadly working practices. Rather than walk out and wait for their redundancy notices—and a ballot for official action—the workers swiftly occupied the plant.

The immediate trigger for the dispute came as management disciplined 21-year-old Joe Welsh, a recent recruit who had refused to perform two tasks at once: a practice which would have contravened the plant's established safety rules. The action against Joe was the culmination of a recent offensive by the factory's new management to erode hard won terms and conditions.

Flexibility

Glacier's local bosses had tried to bypass the established negotiating machinery in order to scrap existing agreements with the AEEU on issues ranging from redundancy policy and sick pay, through to mandatory overtime and "total" flexibility between tasks.

Shop stewards' concerns about the introduction of unsafe working prac-

tices were conveniently ignored.

After management had dismissed the whole of the manual workforce, union members soon established control over the shopfloor. With particular help from the local Fire Brigades Union, they also launched a vigorous campaign to attract support from other trade unionists and workers generally. On 15 December, 1,500 demonstrators marched through the streets of Glasgow, while hundreds more joined weekly pickets outside the plant.

In the words of shop steward Ray Kennedy, addressing a rally in Glasgow's George Square:

"What is at stake is trade unionism and our right to organise and negotiate

collectively. It's become an important dispute for all organised workers."

In the face of such determination and support, Glacier backed away from threats of legal action against the occupation.

The dramatic turning-point came on 23 December as management reversed its previous position of refusing to open talks until the occupiers had withdrawn from the plant. Eight days later, the 103 sacked workers met to ratify a reinstatement agreement.

Bonus

The deal negotiated by AEEU full-time official, Danny Carrigan, means that the workforce will return under

virtually all of its previous terms and conditions. Management appears to have conceded a more favourable bonus scheme, while the union agreed to the introduction of monthly as opposed to weekly pay and limited changes in shopfloor flexibility.

Undoubtedly, more could have been wrung from the bosses if the AEEU bureaucracy had declared the dispute official and acted to involve its members at other Glacier plants, but this makes the Glasgow workers' achievement all the more remarkable.

The Glasgow factory is one of four Glacier facilities, which form part of the multinational Turner & Newall (T&N) empire. The events at the Pol-

madie plant marked the second time in 1996 when T&N got caught showing brazen contempt for the health and safety of working class people.

The multinational had gained notoriety earlier in the year for its protracted court battle against the victims of asbestos-related cancers and their families, who eventually won compensation from T&N for gross negligence.

Dumped

For decades, one of the company's factories in west Yorkshire had dumped surplus asbestos onto open waste ground where children regularly played, yet the corporation had continued to wash its hands of all responsibility.

The original sackings by Glacier bosses typify a style of "macho" management much in evidence in recent years, from the Liverpool dockers to Magnet Southern in Darlington and Project Aerospace in Coventry. Mass sackings and lockouts have become a preferred option for managers emboldened by the Tories' successive rounds of anti-union legislation and the timid compliance of the union bureaucracies.

The Glacier workers are an inspiration to every worker threatened with closures, redundancies or a management offensive on conditions. They showed how to win, even against steep odds. Their struggle revealed the value of the occupation tactic: denying access to any scab labour, stopping the bosses from maintaining production at a highly profitable plant, and holding the bosses' property to ransom.

They have shown what class struggle and solidarity can achieve. Their victory carries a timely new year message—militant action brings results. ■



Guarding the occupied plant

CFDU: Conference debates future of Unison left

Preparing for Labour

THE CAMPAIGN for a Fighting and Democratic Unison (CFDU) held its third annual conference in Leeds on 7 December.

In 1996 CFDU candidates chalked up good votes against supporters of the Bickerstaffe leadership in section executive elections in a number of regions. At the Unison annual conference CFDU supporters also mounted a strong fight around non-compliance with the Asylum and Immigration Act.

The Leeds event did not reflect these successes. The number of delegates from union branches and local or regional CFDU bodies had not increased from the previous year, even though the theme of the conference was preparing for a Labour government.

The composition of conference also indicated that the CFDU's base remains largely in the old Nalco local government branches. The CFDU has yet to make major inroads among Unison activists in the NHS, despite playing a prominent role in rallying support for the Hillingdon Hospital strikers.

For the first time, debates around resolutions dominated a CFDU conference. The discussion was generally open and democratic, whilst serving to underline some sharp political differences within the organisation.

The delegates also agreed a series of demands on a future Labour govern-

ment for which the CFDU is now committed to mobilising Unison members to fight. Workers Power supporters sought to amend this motion, with a call for a critical vote for Labour and the affiliation of the whole of Unison to the Labour Party on the basis of a democratised bloc vote. Delegates rejected this amendment.

Militant Labour is still the single largest organised force in the CFDU. Their leaflet to delegates claimed that: "Even if you wrap [a Labour vote] up with a series of left demands we would be guilty of creating illusions."

The result of the debate was to leave the CFDU with no specific position on the forthcoming general election, while leaving the door open to support for a variety of "left of Labour" and anti-cuts candidates at future local authority elections.

Mistake

In opting for this position the CFDU has made a big mistake. The illusions of activists have been shattered by Blair's offensive on them. This is partly why Militant Labour has flipped from a long standing adaptation to Labour to an apparently "left" rejection of calling for a Labour vote.

Labour, whether we like it or not, retains the mass support of the overwhelming majority of the working class. Voting for Labour alongside these

workers, in Unison and elsewhere, and fighting to impose working class demands on Labour, is the best means of relating to the mass of the rank and file. It is the best means of putting Labour to the test of office.

We know, and openly say, they will fail this test. But millions of workers don't believe us. They believe Labour. The point is to break them from this belief, not pretend that it doesn't exist. The CFDU's refusal to recognise this means that it risks cutting itself off from the majority of the Unison membership.

Another amendment from a Workers Power supporter sparked the day's second major debate. An original motion reaffirmed the CFDU's correct and long-standing support for the so-called "Liverpool 4", activists who had led industrial action against racism at a residential centre on Merseyside. For their principled stand, the Unison members have faced ongoing disciplinary action from their own supposedly left union bureaucracy. This eventually led one of the four to resign from the union.

Earlier in their campaign against this witch-hunt by the Unison bureaucracy, the Liverpool activists had taken money from the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members (CROTUM), a post specifically created by the Tories to assist scabs in attacking union leaderships which seek to discipline

strike breaking members.

The Workers Power amendment registered opposition to the recourse to CROTUM. It also stated that the CFDU should make clear that this did not form part of its strategy for resisting bureaucratic witch-hunting. The ensuing debate was emotionally charged, but obscured the real issues at stake.

That issue is devastatingly simple, and is ABC for most trade union activists - namely, we stand by the principle of no capitalist state interference in the affairs of the unions. The working class, not officials of the capitalist state, should control those affairs.

Price

Even if the capitalist state occasionally rules in favour of the left, it always exacts a price that will undermine the left. It establishes its right to interfere in the unions and compromise their independence. This is why CROTUM exists.

Once again, Militant Labour supporters lined up against the Workers Power amendment which defended this elementary trade union principle. Their position was in line with Militant's historic attempts to use the bosses' courts to oppose witch-hunts of its supporters in the Labour Party.

In voting down the amendment, delegates have left the field open for the witch-hunting bureaucrats to under-

mine support for the Liverpool 4 through their hypocritical use of the argument against taking money from CROTUM.

Bluster

While the debates and votes at Leeds revealed important differences within the CFDU, Workers Power supporters in Unison will continue to try and win branch affiliations to it and to build geographically-based groups in the months ahead.

Despite its shortcomings, the CFDU remains the best-placed left opposition to the rhetorical bluster of Rodney Bickerstaffe and his supporters on Unison's national executive.

It has a long way to go before it can claim to be a real rank and file movement. It needs to embrace a far wider range of militant activists. It needs to prove itself to be a force capable of leading real struggles against the bosses and the bureaucrats. It needs to turn its back on the legacy of broad leftism in Unison—left electoral machines that seek to win votes instead of seeking to transform the union from top to bottom.

Workers Power will seek to build the CFDU in a way that meets these needs; in a way that builds it as a fighting rank and file movement. ■

Rank & File or Broad Left: pages 8-9

BP in Colombia

Blood on their hands

"ASASINOS! ASASINOS!" These words echoed around Finsbury Circus in central London on 10 December as several dozen demonstrators braved the cold to protest outside British Petroleum's (BP) headquarters.

The Coalition Against BP in Colombia was protesting against BP's role in fingering oil workers and environmental campaigners in the Casanare region to the Colombian military. A few have died at the hands of the military as a result and many more have been locked up, harassed, intimidated or driven off their land.

BP fully deserved the designation "assassin" for its role in handing over photos and video tapes of activists to the death squads. BP has paid £375,000 as a "war tax" to the 16th Brigade, a unit specially set up to work with BP since 1991.

The Coalition protest attracted a lot of interest from local office workers and the media. A film crew making a TV documentary and Colombian national TV news were on hand to see Reclaim the Streets supporters outwit the police and scale the front of Britannic House from where BP plans its world-wide exploitation of natural resources and cheap labour.

Resisting the attempts of BP management to rip the banner from their hands, Reclaim the Streets unfurled their banner proclaiming BP's guilt. Colombian refugees joined with supporters of REVOLUTION!, Reclaim the Streets, 90% Proof, Workers Power and other solidarity activists to make this protest a public embarrassment for "Britain's number one

company". BP reluctantly accepted a letter of protest from the Coalition while avoiding the glare of camera lights.

The protest followed on from a successful public meeting in East London organised by the Colombian Committee for Human Rights, at which Labour MEP Richard Howitt and journalist Michael Gillard outlined BP's role in Casanare. In September last year Howitt headed a European Parliament delegation to Colombia and substantiated the claims of repression and collusion.

Since the campaign was launched BP has been trying to discredit the reports and put pressure on Howitt to shut up. It has, together with the Colombian government, made it more difficult for journalists and others to visit the Casanare region. It has put its best spin on BP's role in the oil field.

The Coalition plans more actions in the new year. As a tax dodge, BP puts its money about the UK sponsoring schools, museums, art galleries and exhibitions. The next protest will be bigger, noisier and more visible; it will make people aware of where BP's sponsorship money comes from.

We aim to carry on gathering names for the petition already launched. We hope to bring over activists from the oil workers' union and campaigners from Casanare. And we will build upon the support of the Oil Industry Offshore Liaison Committee (OILC) which organises 2,000 platform workers in the North Sea, including hundreds on BP installations, to take this campaign into the British trade union movement.



Colombian death squad

The Coalition's work will not be done until we achieve justice for Casanare:

- Bring the killers to justice! Punishment for those in the military, government and BP proven to be implicated in Casanare killings!
- End BP's links with 16th Brigade: no more war tax!
- Permanent contracts with full trade union rights for BP workers in Colombia!
- Compensation to the Casanare community paid by BP, at a level to be determined by community action committees, for the environmental damage done by BP since 1991!■

NHS Victimisation

Defend Yunus Bakhsh!

ON 21 DECEMBER hundreds of workers in Newcastle marched in defence of Yunus Bakhsh, a victimised health worker. Management have derecognised him as a union representative and suspended him on a charge of "gross misconduct".

Yunus is a staff nurse and the joint branch secretary of his Unison branch at Newcastle General Hospital. He is also one of the most effective militants in Unison. Last year Yunus won 5% of the vote in the election for General Secretary, standing as an open supporter of Socialist Worker. In October, he led a campaign of strike action against the imposition of a 2.7% local pay offer. Only a court injunction prevented an escalation of the action, forcing a re-ballot which was narrowly lost. Even so, Newcastle City Health Trust were forced to up their award to 3%.

Yunus has been victimised purely because of his actions as an elected trade union representative, as hundreds of his fellow workers have recognised by signing a petition calling for his reinstatement and the dropping of all charges.

The national leadership of Unison are, so far, backing Yunus' case. A ballot for strike action is due to commence on 6 January. Unison has sent a letter calling for support to all its NHS branches. Yunus is also supported by other unions in the hospital.

We urge all our readers to support his campaign. Bosses throughout the NHS and beyond will be looking to see if an effective trade unionist can be dismissed. If they succeed, further attacks and victimisations will follow.

The first step is to win a massive "Yes" vote in the ballot, then building

effective strike action, allowing emergency cover only under workers' control. Official support makes this easier and is to be welcomed. But the lesson of October's pay campaign is that the action must not lose momentum. Whether there are court injunctions or not, the action must quickly be escalated to an all-out, indefinite strike unless and until Yunus is reinstated, recognised as a legitimate union representative and all charges dropped.

- Reinstatement Yunus Bakhsh!
- Drop the charges!
- Hands off Unison!

Messages of support to: Newcastle City Health Unison, Westgate Road, Newcastle, NE4 6BE or fax 0191 256 3216. Fax protests to Lionel Joyce, Chief Executive, Newcastle General Hospital on 0191 273 2340.■

Liverpool dockers

Build the picket!

WITH PRIDE and a strong sense of solidarity, 500 Liverpool dockers enter 1997 still fighting to save the jobs the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) stole from them in September 1995.

In December over 2,000 workers – dockers and their supporters – marched in London. Unfortunately militant speeches by left Labour MPs were not followed up by any action from the official labour movement, which continues to ignore the dockers' courageous fight.

The media blackout was, however, broken by an excellent article by John Pilger in the Guardian and by Ken Loach's TV documentary, Flickering Flame. These helped activists across the country collect record donations for the dockers and their families during the holiday period.

Finally, at a mass meeting, the dockers voted to reject the MDHC's "final offer" of a £28,000 pay-off.

The international campaign continues with the latest solidarity actions coming from Canada, Australia and across Europe. Under pressure from the Port Shop Stewards Committee, the International Transport Workers' Federation has called a world-wide day of action on 20 January.

In Britain, the focus for this action is to be a mass picket of the Liverpool docks. Workers Power urges all our readers get their unions to support and build the picket.

Contact: Jimmy Davis, Secretary, Liverpool Port Shop Stewards Committee, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS, or telephone 0151 207 3388 for more details.■



Dockers confront police



Value for money

A number of unions are discussing "reforms" which they claim increase democracy but which, in reality, restrict rank and file control. **Jeremy Dewar**, a branch secretary in the PTC, reports on recent developments in his union.

MANY CPSA and PTC members received an early Christmas present this year. Ballot papers from the two civil service union executives, seeking endorsement for their plans for a new merged union, had been sent out early.

This was no mistake or new style efficiency on the executives' part. Despite telling branch activists that the ballot papers would start going out from 2 January onwards, the NECs deliberately delivered them early to wrong-foot shop stewards and encourage members to vote before a democratic debate could be organised.

Like many other branch secretaries, I spent my first day back at work writing and printing leaflets and posters outlining the real nature of what was being put forward and urging members not to vote until after a branch meeting where we could discuss the proposals.

The ballot seeks a mandate from the membership for a series of rules and principles should the two unions agree to merge later in the year. Such decisions are usually taken by the sovereign body of the unions: their annual delegate conferences. But the proposals are so outrageous that the two NECs know the conferences will vote them down.

So, in true Blairite fashion, the bureaucracy plans to pre-empt and nullify conference decisions with this supposedly "democratic" ballot. Just how democratic this is was shown by members being asked to agree to a document called "Aims and Values", even though this paper has not even been distributed to them!

Instead, a glossy leaflet summarises the proposals in the vaguest terms and gives you the impression that if you support members' rights and democracy you will automatically vote "Yes".

Here are the proposals in detail:

Widespread use of postal ballots

Posing as the defenders of members who cannot attend union meetings because of work or domestic arrangements, the NECs want individual, postal ballots to cover everything from the election of shop stewards through to pay and conditions. Yet, when it comes to breaking constitutions, selling members out and annulling elections, both NECs have a record as long as an orang-utang's arm.

The real motive behind all this is to destroy the role of the mass meeting in union democracy. Mass meetings – the traditional forum for deciding policy, settling or not settling disputes and electing representatives – have the annoying capacity to overturn leaderships and call them to account. Every member can put a motion for voting on. Everyone can speak in defence of their views or criticise candidates. The mass meeting is informed and living democracy, which is why workers' organisations all over the world have used them for the last 150 years.

Postal ballots encourage individualistic and isolated responses. Postal ballots – or plebiscites – give one question, explain one point of view. They are the preferred method of dictators across the globe... and labour movement bureaucrats!

Poorly attended meetings and meetings held outside of work time without creche facilities are problems. The way to address them is to turn the unions into fighting organisations, ones which can force the employers to release members from work to attend meetings.

Biennial conferences and elections

The NECs' proposals suggest restricting expensive conferences and elections. They argue that they are only interested in getting value for money for the membership.

The additional argument is that, since the unions have lost the right to civil service-wide bargaining, conference and the NEC will need two-year mandates to deal with "strategic" issues. Saving money and only meeting when strictly necessary may persuade some members to back this proposal.

But the strategic issues these time-servers are really concerned with are not how to fight racism, how to force a Labour government to deliver or how to eradicate unemployment. Against the backdrop of a falling membership, they are concerned that our money should be spent "strategically" on their wages and expense accounts.

Annual conferences and regular elections are crucial. Why? Because members judge leaders on how they perform and on what the tasks are facing them at any given time. Value for money from any union official can only be guaranteed by regular elections and recallability of representatives who are not up to the job. Conference is the way in which the members, not the bureaucrats, can decide the policy of the union – which is exactly why the bureaucrats hate them.

The right of the General Secretary and President to veto the conference agenda

This is the most brazen anti-democratic proposal. It clearly comes from Barry Reamsbottom and Marilyn Chambers, the respective incumbents within the CPSA. They have used an effective veto to carve out any motions from CPSA branches that threaten to force them to fight the employers.

By enshrining this veto in the constitution, they hope the new leadership would finally be rid of all irritants emanating from an increasingly disenchanted membership.

Winning the argument against the NECs' proposals is the immediate task facing civil service militants in January. The break from traditional norms of trade union democracy (inadequate though these may be) that these proposals represent should be enough to persuade all rank and file activists to vote them down.

PTC and CPSA members face corrupt and self-serving cliques in charge of both our unions. And, not even defeat in the ballot may be enough to prevent them from bringing in some of these practices anyway.

We must use the balloting period (up to 27 January) to alert members to the nature of our bureaucratic leaderships and hammer home the message that a vigilant and active mass membership is the only true defender of union democracy.■

NORTHERN IRELAND: Roots of the conflict

Orange state - bastion of sectarianism

"I HAVE ALWAYS said that I am an Orangeman first and a politician and a member of this parliament afterwards... All I boast is that we have a Protestant parliament and a Protestant state."

These words, spoken by James Craig, founding Prime Minister and architect of the Northern Ireland statelet, in 1934 sum up the intrinsic link between Orangeism and Northern Ireland. These and similar words have been used throughout Northern Ireland's history to justify acts of naked discrimination and brutality largely against Catholics and nationalists, but at times against any workers who challenged the ideology of Loyalism.

The recently stalled "peace process" has been accompanied by talk about the "two traditions of Ulster" and the need for reconciliation and understanding on both sides. Billy Hutchinson, a leading member of the Progressive Unionist Party which sponsors Loyalist death squads, has even been courted by left wingers like Militant Labour and the Alliance for Workers Liberty.

It is therefore vital for socialists to be clear about the nature of Orangeism and Loyalism, its history and role in the north of Ireland. Only on this basis, argues John Weaver, can we understand why a complete break with the ideology and tradition of Orangeism is necessary for real progress in Ireland.

THE ORANGE Order has its roots in the opposition to Ireland's first struggle for national independence from Britain. Under the impact of the American and French revolutions a section of the northern Irish industrial Presbyterian bourgeoisie developed a revolutionary movement, the United Irishman, led by Wolfe Tone in the 1790s.

The movement attempted to break the English stranglehold over Irish trade; a mercantile policy which deliberately discriminated against Irish products to restrict competition. It championed the cause of the oppressed peasant masses and Catholic petit bourgeoisie throughout the country in its proclamation of the equality of Catholic, Anglican Protestant and Dissenter (Presbyterian). Both Catholics and Presbyterians suffered political and social discrimination, although to differing degrees, because of their religion.

The Orange Order, founded in 1795, entered the fray on the side of the Anglican and pro-British landlords. It quickly became a mass movement in the north based on Protestant (Anglican) landowners and "cottier weavers", tenants and artisans opposed to the bourgeois nationalism of Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen. The rising of the United Irishmen was crushed by English force of arms in 1798, weakened as it was in the more developed North by the split brought about by the Orange Order.

One result of the failure of 1798 was the full integration of Ireland into the United Kingdom and the abolition of its parliament. After the 1800 Act of Union, the North East of Ireland, around Belfast, was rapidly industrialised: first with the linen and later engineering and ship-building industries. This was in stark contrast to the rest of Ireland which remained an agriculturally based economy.

The North East was to form an industrial triangle with Liverpool and Glasgow, while the rest of the colony was to provide cheap food and labour for the British Empire. As a result, the Presbyterian manufacturing bosses increasingly withdrew from the cause of Irish



Loyalist protesters versus the policemen of the sectarian state: two faces of sectarian thuggery.

nationalism and became part of the Orange bloc as we know it today.

Roots of Orangeism

The nineteenth century saw the birth of the modern Irish working class. Belfast mushroomed from a population of 20,000 to 350,000. But, in the same period the proportion of Catholics in the urban centres shrank from around a third to a quarter. The explanation is found in the role of Orangeism. Now acting as an ideology cementing Protestant workers to their bosses, the Orange Order ensured that a large stratum of relatively well-paid, skilled workers were overwhelmingly Protestant and that the majority of jobs in industry went to Protestant workers at the expense of the Catholics.

As Belfast prospered as a centre of engineering and ship building, key industries for Britain's imperial expansion, so the skilled workers benefited from the super-profits of empire, through job security and large pay differentials with the semi and unskilled workers. Loyalism and Orangeism became synonymous with support for empire.

There existed within the Protestant working class a distinct and concentrated labour aristocracy which dominated the working class communities, trade unions and many of the Orange Lodges. Systematic privileges, in terms of jobs, training, housing, at the expense of the Catholics, provided the material basis for the reactionary bloc of bosses, landlords and the Protestant masses of town and country which dominated the north.

Irish nationalism, which was by now primarily Catholic in terms of its mass support and some of its ideology, was anathema to the Protestant workers and bosses alike. It served as the ever-present threat that would bind the Orange bloc together. Virulent anti-Catholicism was, from 1857 onwards, periodically used to bludgeon the persecuted Catholic minority into submission by means of triumphalist marches, pogroms and forced evictions. The scene was set for the Irish war of independence and the partition.

Of course the Orange bloc, made up of bosses and workers, was full of contradictions, especially when the workers struggled for their own demands

when they felt their conditions or jobs were under threat.

The period after the First World War saw this alliance under real strain. Sacrifices made during the war in terms of hours and conditions were intolerable in peacetime. The example of the Russian revolution and the revolutions that swept Europe influenced not only the growing nationalist movement in the south but the north of Ireland as well.

The powerful and militant Belfast shipyard strike of 1919 mobilised both Protestant and Catholic workers in a united struggle. Over 100,000 workers marched in Belfast on Mayday. Socialist organisation grew in influence within the trade unions, threatening the hegemony of the Orange organisations.

But as the struggle for independence, led by Sinn Fein, turned into the war of independence the Orange bloc managed to repeat its reactionary success of the 1790s. They had already prepared an armed revolt. Edward Carson, a Tory MP was the figurehead and organiser of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) formed before the war in response to the Liberal government's promise of some form of home rule for Ireland. Massive illegal arms shipments created a formidable Protestant military organisation at the ready.

Birth of the Orange state

Choosing their moment carefully, the post war recession was producing widespread unemployment adding to the thousands of soldiers unemployed after returning to the front, the Orange Lodges whipped up anti-Catholic violence. In July 1920 a prominent Unionist and Orangeman addressed shipyard workers and called for a "holy war" to drive the Catholics out. In the next months 5,000 Catholic workers were driven from their jobs to be replaced by Protestant workers.

Further terror was unleashed on the Catholic community by the B Specials, a sectarian police force recruited directly from the UVF. Mass evictions and the burning down of Catholic homes, pogroms and assassinations and more Catholic workers driven from work were all the order of the day. For the next fifty years, the Specials, forged from the private army at the heart of the Orange Order, constituted a terror organisa-

tion of around 10,000 - 30,000 heavily armed and easily mobilised Protestant supremacists.

By 1921 the new Orange state allied to imperial Britain was born out of this carnival of reaction. Six counties, two of which had Catholic and nationalist majorities, were split away from Ireland and handed over to the Ulster statelet which was given virtual autonomy as far as laws dealing with its own population were concerned. The Ulster parliament at Stormont entrenched the Protestant ascendancy through massive intimidation and discrimination against the Catholic minority.

Systematic oppression

Proportional representation, which had been the method of election laid down for the new statelet, was ditched in 1929 to ensure a massive and rigged Protestant majority in Stormont. Cities like Derry with huge Catholic majorities were gerrymandered to ensure Protestant majority representation. As a result the vast majority of councils came under the control of the Orange bloc.

The councils in turn controlled the issuing of contracts and allocation of public sector jobs. Even in the counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone, where Catholics formed over half the population, Protestants enjoyed 90% of the council jobs. Councils also allocated housing, ensuring that Protestants not only got the lion's share but also that the electoral consequences meant even greater Unionist majorities.

Ministers and MPs also toured the Orange Lodges urging employers to do their duty and only employ "loyal" men and women. Many of them boasted of having never employed a Catholic, some even claiming that every Catholic was a "traitor". As a result, Catholics bore the brunt of unemployment, with rates twice as high as Protestant workers, as well as being trapped in the lowest paid occupations and grades. Emigration was rife: 60% of it from the minority community. Undoubtedly, this too aided the electoral supremacy.

Finally, standing above all of this, was the huge paramilitary apparatus and the battery of repressive legislation. The draconian Special Powers Act, which enshrined the right of internment without trial, was later supplemented by

the Public Order Act. Northern Ireland has throughout its history lived in a constant state of emergency.

Furthermore, all these powers were used by a thoroughly Protestant and Loyalist police force, the RUC and B Specials. Orange outrages were (and continue to be) overlooked or while the most minor nationalist - or even Catholic - public events were banned. Catholic sports days would be banned and the next day an Orange parade through a Catholic town allowed.

Recent events have shown how little has changed in the north of Ireland. Orange Lodges parade their supremacy by marching through any Catholic community at will, with only token resistance by blessing of "their" police force. Where this intimidation is challenged Catholic schools and churches are fire-bombed and mobbed, Catholic homes in Protestant areas attacked.

The purpose of this is simple. The Orange state is an affront to democracy. It is artificial, created against the will of the majority of Ireland and sustained only by the power of British imperialism and its army. Orangeism, the ideology of Protestant supremacy, of a Protestant state for a Protestant people, binds the classes together in order to provide a popular base for this state in the Protestant community.

Which way forward?

How can this Protestant supremacy be broken? How can the Protestant workers be broken from the Orange Bloc? One, wrong, response has been to try and avoid the national question as one which "divides the workers". Both Militant Labour's and the Socialist Workers Party's sister organisations in Ireland have tried variants of this tactic.

Militant goes furthest having dropped its 1980s slogan "for a socialist united Ireland" because, "Protestant workers see in this only the 'united' not the 'socialist' ". That is, the slogan would offend workers still influenced by Loyalism and Orangeism. The SWP of Ireland maintains its formal commitment to a Workers' Republic but only sees the way to overcoming sectarian division as lying in economic struggles:

"If we can get Protestant and Catholic workers to unite around issues of cuts and job losses" they suppose "workers unity on other issues will follow."

Unfortunately it does not. Northern Irish history is littered with episodic united actions, which, while being a very important starting point for a struggle for a united revolutionary movement, in no sense guarantees it. The problem is that the struggle for socialism and the fight for a Workers' Republic in Ireland cannot be separated from a struggle to break Loyalist workers from the all class Unionist bloc and the influence of the Orange order.

Certainly that struggle is made easier for revolutionaries who, unlike the nationalists, make clear they are also fighting to overthrow the reactionary Catholic Irish State. But it cannot avoid tackling head on the deeply held prejudices of the Protestant workers, which are rooted in the privileges they still retain over Catholic workers within the framework of the sectarian statelet.

Only the Trotskyist strategy, the strategy of permanent revolution, can provide the basis for destroying the Orange bloc and going forward to a 32 County Workers' Republic of Ireland. And this can only be achieved by fighting to put the working class at the head of the struggle for national unity and independence as part of the struggle for workers' revolution. ■

Evita: How a right-wing dictator built mass support

Argentina's Madonna

Evita

(135 mins, PG)

Directed by Alan Parker

Starring Madonna, Jonathan Pryce and Antonio Banderas

On general release

Reviewed by **Keith Harvey**

IT IS PRETTY clear what attracted Andrew Lloyd Webber to the story of Eva Perón's life and death. For someone steeped in classical music he could recognise the same ingredients that made Verdi's *La Traviata* so popular in the 19th century.

Just like Verdi's heroine, Violetta, Eva Duarte is a poor working class girl from the countryside; she goes to the big city where she becomes a prostitute and moves up the social ladder, ending up (in Eva's case) as a small time actress. Both Violetta and Eva are despised and resented by their "betters" for marrying into the upper class; finally both heroines fall ill and die young.

Musically and dramatically, of course, there is a huge gap between the power of *La Traviata* and the derivative pap of Andrew Lloyd Webber's modern musicals. *Don't cry for me Argentina* and *Another Suitcase in Another Hall* are no doubt instantly recognised by millions, but the art of the musical drama is not reducible to penning a few memorable melodies.

The musical undoubtedly benefits from being transferred from stage to big screen by director Alan Parker. Parker has enormous empathy for the "poor girl makes good" story line, but he most definitely did not go to the same school as Andrew Lloyd Webber. While Webber will sit on the Tory benches in the Lords, Parker's sympathies are, in British terms, old Labour.

The idea of overcoming the social handicaps of a "deprived upbringing" links with another of Parker's films, *The Commitments*. But in *Evita*, Parker has more to work with; its central political thrust.

Born and bred into a North London working class community Parker is rich but he hates the Tories. He is of that generation of old reformist socialists who were brought up under, and valued, the welfare state.

The best scenes in the film are those in which the Argentine workers are on the streets in their thousands with their union and political banners, determined on a better life. The clashes between the army and crowds are really convincing.

Parker likes *Evita* because she was a one-woman welfare state in early post-war Argentina, or rather a substitute for one. The Eva Perón Foundation built schools, orphanages, clinics, old peoples' homes; it distributed food, money and medicine. Funded by a compulsory levy on trade union members (3 days pay each), a national lottery and enforced gifts from big business, the Foundation did affect the lives of millions.

This personally-controlled patronage was neither universal, nor accessible by right, but it did help bind millions to the Perón regime. Eva also lined her own pocket along the way. Up to \$700 million of the "voluntary contributions" were put into overseas accounts. "Fame and fortune I have not invited" go the lyrics, but she amassed a lot of the former as well as the latter.

No doubt Webber felt unease with the saint-like reputation of Eva Perón. Hence they insisted on the presence of a ubiquitous commentator-cum-chorus, Ché (played in the film by Antonio Banderas). His job, while moving the plot along, is to pull back the audience from over sympathising with Eva by constant cynical asides on her scheming: she always knew what she wanted; manipulated a series of people on her way up to the top; she was the power behind the throne and stiffened Perón's resolve when he weakened in the face of opposition, and so on.

Perónism

Eva takes hold of Colonel Perón's career and steers him to the Presidency and then uses her working class origins and her charisma to win and sustain mass support for (the now General) Perón. Perhaps this is why Madonna plays Eva as Hilary Clinton with attitude. But she pulls it off extremely well.

The years between Perón and Eva's first meeting in January 1944 and her death in July 1952, were the years of classical Peronism; she built its reputation among the masses and died just in time to avoid being too closely associated with its open attacks on working class living standards. Perón was Minister of Labour after a



Madonna plays Eva Perón as Hilary Clinton with attitude

military coup brought a junta to power in 1943. Perón faced a union movement dominated by the Communist Party and a growing number of strikes as the workers took advantage of the increased demand for Argentine goods abroad during the war. To break this influence Perón contemplated relying on repression and deception alone. But, inspired by the example of Mussolini in Italy, he reasoned that it was good for the state:

"to have organic forces it can control and direct, rather than inorganic ones that escape its direction and control."

During the war Argentina exported half its GDP. This would not continue after the war, so Perón reasoned it had to revert to the home market:

"There will be no solution other than to increase consumption. And consumption . . . can only be increased by raising wages and salaries."

Hence Perón cultivated his social base in the unions while repressing the Communist Party and disbanding unions that would not comply.

The film shows, for example, the meat packing strike of April 1945 when Perón ordered the reinstatement of the laid-off workers against the wishes of the boss-

es. This attitude of incorporating the workers into the state, rather than smashing them, earned Perón the distrust and enmity of the Argentine ranching bourgeoisie and landowners, who had him arrested in 1945.

Eva helped organise the big battalions of the unions to demonstrate for his release; this was done and he went on to achieve a landslide victory as President in February 1946. The next three years were the years in which *Evita* worked her charm.

In the film Parker captures the magic that Eva worked on the masses. Her job was to bind the masses' hearts to General Perón while preventing them from organising themselves independently.

Given the predominant Catholic faith in Argentina and the tendency to revere the cult of the Virgin Mary, it was easy for the regime to promote her as variously, Our Lady of Hope, Martyr of Labour, Champion of the Poor; even Saint *Evita*.

The years 1946 to 1949 marked the Foundation's main achievements, the years when wages rose by a third. But Perón's bourgeois strategy for Argentina failed. He refused to expropriate the

wealth of the major capitalists and refused to make any serious land reform; yet he enraged large sections of the bosses. Profits were eroded, productivity collapsed, inflation rocketed. Foreign investment tailed off and the balance of payments deficit expanded massively.

In February 1949 the stock market crashed and this proved a watershed. After that Perón's economic measures were more and more anti-working class; under the banner of "inflexible austerity in consumption and a decided effort in production".

Eva and Juan clawed back the reforms. Spending was slashed by 20% in the early 1950s to help restore the balance of payments, halt inflation and attract foreign investment. Now lack of political and union independence proved fatal for the working class. Real wages declined by 32% between 1949 and 1953.

If you cannot stomach Lloyd Webber musicals under any guise then this film is not for you. But if you can, then *Evita* is worth seeing for the way it captures something of the real material reforms that lay behind the sway Eva Perón held over the post-war Argentine labour movement. ■

Trotskyist International: New issue out now!

Think Globally – Act Globally

THE NEW ISSUE of *Trotskyist International* is now available, packed with articles which address major issues facing the working class internationally and reporting on key struggles.

- In the lead article Lesley Day examines changes within the world economy which have led to theories of the globalisation of capital. But is globalisation a myth or reality? Day argues that the internationalisation of capital is a very real force within the world economy, but one which faces:

"countervailing tendencies within the system: continued state intervention, inter-imperialist rivalry".

Indeed it is the demands of the expansion of national capital which lead to the greater internationalisation of capital: "It was not some disembodied process of capital accumulation at work here but a policy of nation-states and real nation-

ally based capitalists working in tandem to break down obstacles to their further growth."

Day goes on to argue that revolutionaries have nothing to fear from the internationalisation of capital since:

"it creates an Achilles heel for the profit system wherever serious workers' resistance obstructs the implementation of internationally decreed austerity measures."

- You can start the election year by reading Mark Harrison's article on the likely prospects for Blair's New Labour. Harrison looks beyond the apparent unity of New Labour, arguing that "appearances can be deceptive" and that clear battle lines are already being drawn. Blair has signalled his intention to restrict party democracy even further, to continue with the Tory anti-union laws and ultimately break the union link.

Therefore, Harrison argues, in the first year of a Labour government conflict with the unions and elements within his own cabinet is likely:

"The centrality of eliminating potential opposition to the government by the labour movement is tied to Blair's real programme for a Labour Government."

This is vital since Blair knows that union leaders, under pressure from a union membership more confident about fighting for higher pay and against cuts, will find it difficult to avoid a showdown with Blair.

- For those who watched the masses on the streets of Seoul and found inspiration in the December strikes, an article by Michael Pobsting provides a timely and useful background to the economic problems facing the Asian tigers of South Korea and Taiwan.
- Post-modernism has, in the late twen-

tieth century, come to be seen as a fundamental intellectual challenge to Marxism. In a wide ranging and closely argued article, Colin Lloyd characterises this currently popular trend of thought in academic circles as "the ideology of dying capitalism".

- The LRCI is engaged in discussions with the Argentinian Trotskyist group, the PTS. This issue of *Trotskyist International* includes an article on the PTS, tracing their break with Morenoism and examining the development of their own programme for the working class in Argentina.

- The journal also includes articles on New Zealand's Alliance Party in the wake of the October elections, Castro's market reforms in Cuba and the new programme of the USFI in Ireland.

Trotskyist International has plenty to inform and inspire. Buy it, read it, sell it. ■



Price £2 inc p&p from Workers Power

The blind alley of br

ONE OF the workshops at the forthcoming conference is called "Building 'broad lefts'. The inverted commas suggest a certain queasiness among the organisers at this term - and so there should be. The last thing workers struggling to create a militant leadership need is a new "broad left".

The term broad left was coined at the height of the Communist Party's (CP) industrial influence in the 1960s and 1970s. The CP thought it had a strategy for achieving "left advance in the unions". It organised loose groupings of key party militants and sympathisers, local and regional office holders and "progressive" full-time officials to campaign for "left policies" in the unions.

The key task of these broad lefts was either to stand their own candidates in trade union elections or, just as often, to mobilise support for "left" candidates for key national offices.

Many of these candidates kept a formal distance from the broad lefts but were happy to accept their supply of footsoldiers to turn out the vote. At the same time, they were not bound by any discipline to carry out broad left policies.

Two classic examples of such broad left-supported general secretaries were Jack Jones of the TGWU and Hugh Scanlon of the old AUEW. While the general militancy and rank and file combativity of the 1970s appeared to give this strategy success, with union after union falling under the influence of broad left leaderships, this "left advance" turned out to be built on sand.

Scanlon and Jones, despite their left talk, remained tied to the 1974-79 Wilson-Callaghan Labour government. Predictably, they contained and sold out

Saturday 1 February sees a conference of "trade union left organisations". The avowed aim of the conference is to "share experiences" and "strengthen a militant trade union response" to a Blair-led government. This is a laudable aim. The question is: are the organisations participating committed any way to produce the movement we need in the trade unions? **John McKee** looks at some of the problems facing those who want to rebuilding rank and file organisation in the unions.

struggles against the wage cutting "social contract" of the Callaghan government.

The CP-influenced broad lefts were tied hand and foot to such leaders, who were never criticised. Indeed, when the first Thatcher government proceeded to legally shackle the trade unions, the CP played a criminal role in heading off any real struggle against the anti-union laws.

This was done largely through its Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU), a campaign that linked the broad lefts nationally.

To stop the anti-union laws would have demanded mass strike action in a period when the trade union movement was strong enough to mobilise it. A general strike could have destroyed the laws and Thatcher's government with it.

The LCDTU had no such perspective. Its overwhelming priority was to maintain the broad left alliance, keeping the "progressive leaders" on board at any cost. Not one word of criticism of these leaders' policies was allowed within the broad lefts or the LCDTU. The "left" leaders were allowed to fritter away the opposition to the anti-union laws in a series of demonstrations, parliamentary lobbies and special TUC conferences at Wembley Arena.

In some unions, such as the AUEW, the leaders' treachery paved the way for right wing takeovers. In others, such as

MSF and NATFHE, the broad left became an entrenched leadership; happy to pass "progressive" international resolutions supporting the ANC, while being indistinguishable from the majority of the TUC in their hostility to any militant action which threatened to bring them into conflict with the anti-union laws.

Broad leftism as a supposed method of socialist advance in the unions did not disappear with the decline and disintegration of the Communist Party. In the mid-1980s a "new" broad left appeared. Influential in unions such as the then POEU in British Telecom (now part of the CWU) and the CPSA, the new broad lefts found their most enthusiastic advocates in Militant and other left groups in the Labour Party such as Socialist Organiser and Labour Briefing.

The method remained fundamentally the same. The new broad lefts aimed at building left alliances within the national union. The methods they used mirrored their campaigns to transform the Labour Party.

The new broad lefts focused around mobilising for conferences and winning elections to the national leaderships. This was not combined with any serious campaign to build a fighting rank and file organisation at the base which could hold their leaders to account, so their conference and electoral victories remained hollow. Their "left majorities" on national leaderships regularly crum-

bled at the first serious tests of struggle. The defectors and vacillators, their former allies, were only denounced after the event by the "hard left".

The most dramatic example of such a collapse came in January 1987 and 1988, when the Broad Left-dominated national executive of the CPSA undermined a wave of unofficial walkouts against restructuring and redundancies in government jobcentres. The national executive instructed strikers to return to work and wait for an official ballot. The ballot never materialised. Even though the CPSA Broad Left had thousands of individual members, they were never mobilised to hold the leadership to account.

The witch-hunts and defeats in the Labour Party for the Bennite left contributed to the decline of these broad lefts. The major force within them, Militant, shrunk and many of its former allies, seeing which way the wind was blowing, jumped ship to join the witch-hunters.

The real danger for the February conference is that it will just lay the foundation for yet another round of broad left failures. Fred LePlat, writing in *Socialist Outlook* as a CFDU member, sees it differently:

"Organising a union left wing across the whole of the movement is not a new idea. But in the recent past such organisations have been seen as the property of a particular political organisation rather than a genuine attempt to bring

together militants with different traditions. This maybe one reason that such efforts have rapidly foundered in the past."

There is no doubt that various parties have seen broad lefts as "their" front organisations and bureaucratically manipulated them, so contributing to the failure of such organisations. The CP's Broad Lefts, the SWP's rank and file conferences, the Militant's Broad Left Organising Committee, have all suffered from this. Genuine debate and democracy, the taking and carrying out of clear decisions, an accountable leadership, are essential components of a healthy rank and file organisation.

But this is not the main danger facing the February conference. While there may be no single dominant political organisation, there is certainly a dominant political strategy within the left trade union organisations invited: that is "broad leftism".

This should come as no surprise as many of the political organisations involved - the Militant, Socialist Outlook, Labour Left Briefing, the CPB and other fragments of Stalinism - are wedded to such a strategy for "left advance" in the unions.

The Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), one of the main supporters of the conference, is a typical example. The STA, which has built itself along classic broad left lines within the NUT, is now within striking distance of leading the union. The president and vice-

TRANSFORM THE

For a revolutionary rank and

AFTER 15 MONTHS on strike the Liverpool dockers have still not received any official support from the mighty TGWU. At an October rally, after the T&G leadership denounced the involvement of youth activists in occupying dock buildings, Jimmy Davis, Secretary of the Port Shop Stewards' Committee, replied sharply:

"We did see the banners of Reclaim the Future fluttering over the occupied docks. We did not see the T&G whose officers should have been there. We ask our officials 'Where were you?' Now we know who our friends are; we welcome these young people's support and idealism."

This story could be repeated in struggle after struggle where union leaderships retreat before the anti-union laws, leaving their members to struggle alone or suffer wage or job cuts.

Revolutionaries working in the trade unions have an advantage: we know who our friends and enemies will be when we enter into such struggles. Bill Morris and the T&G leadership act as they do not out of wickedness or ignorance, but because they are part of a privileged layer committed to working within capitalism.

Trade unionism, pure and simple, is about bargaining with the bosses to get better pay and conditions. It has to accept the boundaries set by the capitalist system. By doing this, pure trade unionism cannot consistently defend the interests of the working class.

Conflict

Time and time again, those interests come into conflict with the needs of the capitalist drive for profit. This results in a contradiction at the heart of trade union organisations between the different needs and interests of the rank and file and the bureaucracy.

Rank and file workers within the unions are compelled to defend themselves against the capitalists. But the leaders of the unions - the bureaucracy - are driven to compromise with the bosses and betray the interests of their members.

Of course rank and file workers are not always straining at the leash, only being held back by treacherous leaders. But whenever serious attacks are launched, it is in their interests to fight back in the most militant and effective way possible, and it is then that they clash with their leaders.

This clash creates the possibility of building a rank and file movement, based on the most militant sections of the trade unions, with the clear aim of transforming the unions into real fighting organisations of the working class. For revolutionaries, the aim is not merely to replace one set of trade union leaders with another "more left" set.

To succeed such a movement will have to take on and defeat the whole caste that is the trade union bureaucracy. This is a caste not only with a reformist outlook, but with its own distinct interests that are rooted in the material benefits it gains through controlling the trade union apparatus: its high salaries, official cars, expense accounts and plush offices. Look at almost any union's accounts and you will see the massive disparity between the huge amounts spent on salaries and administration, compared to the tiny proportions spent on strike pay and members' benefits.

This is why any rank and file movement has to have as part of its programme the ending of these privileges for all officials. Concretely, this means putting them on the same average wages as their members, subjecting



Postal workers picket line 1996

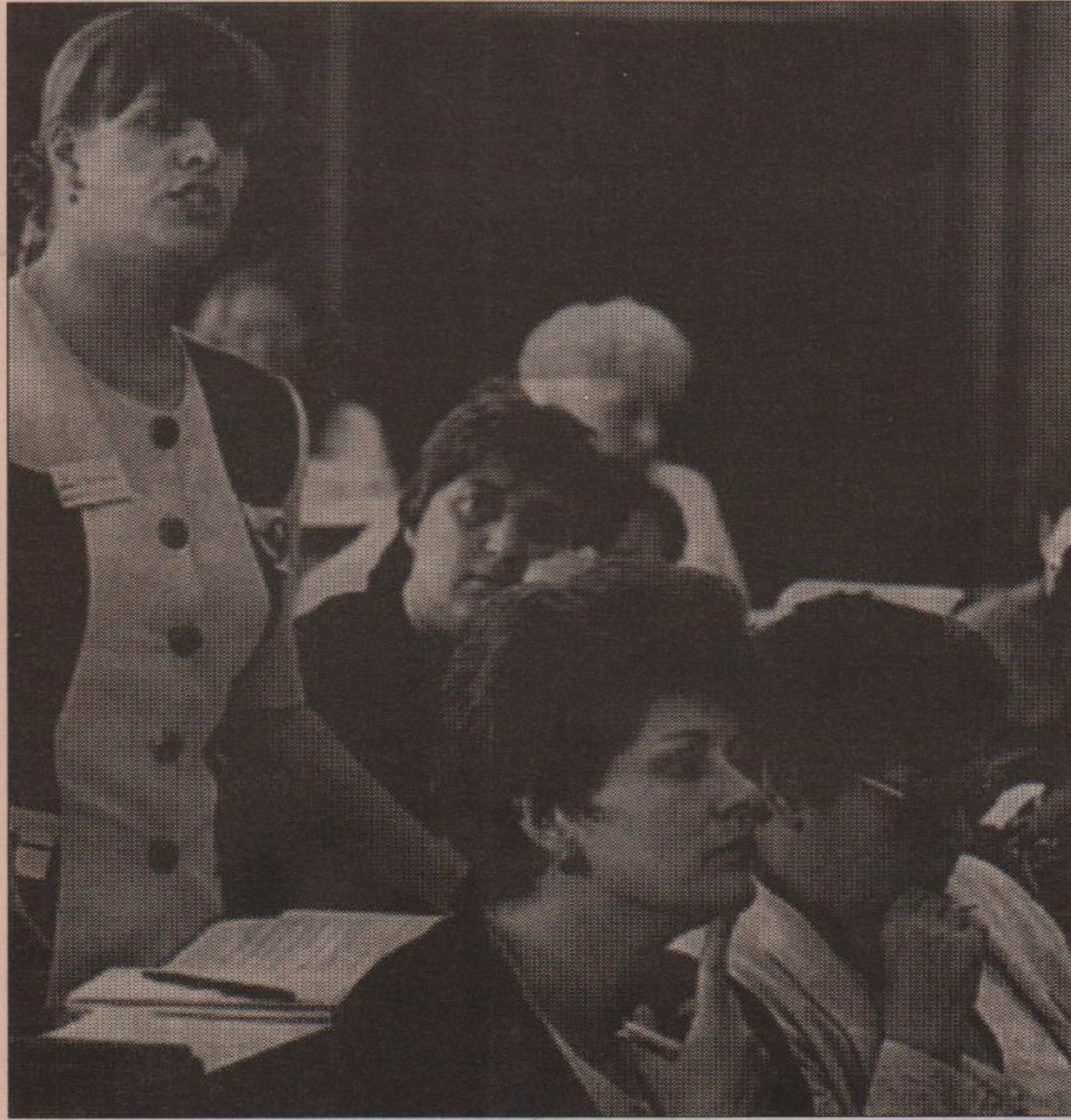
them to regular elections and making them accountable to the membership for every action and for the expenditure of members' contributions.

To transform the unions a rank and file organisation has to be built from the base. It is not sufficient to win conference resolutions or to elect fighting militants to regional and national office. Without a militant base such officers increasingly become prisoners of the

entrenched bureaucracy, using the passivity of the membership as an excuse for their own concessions.

Fighting at a national level has to be tied to rebuilding shop floor and workplace organisation by increasing the numbers of shop stewards, building workplace branches or shops, producing fighting newsletters and propaganda to organise and keep the members informed.

oad-leftism



Union women's conference: fighting within the bureaucratic structures is not enough

president of the NUT are members of the STA, and it is just short of a majority on the executive.

But the STA leadership has a poor record when it comes to supporting militant action to defend jobs and conditions of classroom teachers.

A few recent examples show the danger of relying on such leaders to rebuild union strength and reverse the defeats inflicted by the Tories. When teachers were up in arms over the imposed external testing of pupils

(SATs) and the extra workload involved, they received little leadership from the STA executive members.

The executive refused to back a boycott, and the STA leaders would not put themselves at the head of an unofficial boycott campaign. They called instead for members to bombard the NUT head office with resolutions demanding an officially sanctioned boycott. Fortunately, classroom teachers took matters into their own hands and refused to mark the tests forcing

the government into a temporary retreat.

At a local level STA leaders are similarly unwilling to back unofficial action even if it is the only way of defending jobs. In Tower Hamlets, for example, the withdrawal of funding for Section 11 teachers threatened 150 jobs. Again, the STA, which controls the local committee, was only willing to back officially sanctioned action which ended up as a totally inadequate half-day protest strike. As a result many jobs were cut. A fighting leadership would not have cringed before the executive, but led a militant resistance even if it meant unofficial and so illegal action to defend jobs.

Broad leftism has proved itself a dead-end for militant trade unionists. Apparent election victories and "left advances" turn to ashes when these leaders confront the Tory anti-union laws. These same leaders, who have garnered rank and file votes on the basis of platform rhetoric against Tory attacks, become dead-weights on the militant action of workers when it threatens to take the unions outside the law.

The unions cannot simply be transformed by capturing their existing bureaucratic machines for supposedly left candidates. It is precisely this perspective that has to be fought tooth and nail, not just at the February conference but in all the organisations that claim to be preparing a fightback in the unions.

In the place of all variants of broad leftism, we need a perspective which focuses on the root and branch democratisation of the unions and the abolition of the bureaucratic privileges that buy off so many "left" officials with good intentions. In short, we need a rank and file movement. ■

UNIONS!

rank and file movement

The rank and file organisation also needs a clear strategy to win in trade union struggles. At the level of organisation this requires fighting for stewards to be accountable to section meetings, for strike committees to be elected from mass meetings and for strikes to be under the control of regular mass meetings.

Laws

Above all, in the context of Britain in the 1990s, it means a rank and file movement fighting to commit the union at all levels to taking on the anti-union laws. Only by asserting the right to fight the bosses without our hands tied behind our backs can we reverse the defeats suffered in the last period.

We need to fight for a return to basic trade union solidarity: respecting picket lines, not handling scab products and using "secondary action" to up the pressure on the bosses wherever we can. We need a trade union leadership that is committed to forcing a Labour government to repeal every piece of anti-union legislation, not just in words but by mobilising the membership through protests, strikes and solidarity actions, to make the legislation unworkable.

A rank and file organisation has to have its own discipline. It needs conferences to debate out and agree strategies. Its leaders, especially those elected to local, regional or national office, must be bound by the policy and decisions of the organisation. If they refuse such discipline, they should immediately forfeit the support of the movement in any future elections.

Only in this way can the pressure of the rank and file be kept on leaders countering all the rival pressures of trade union national office. The bureaucracy is a past master at "co-opting" former militants into the bureaucratic caste.

Isolated

Those in favour of "broad alliances of the left" will cry: "Your 'rank and file' would be just a tiny, pure revolutionary caucus which would leave us isolated". Not at all. We are always in favour of joint action with all left forces in the unions.

A rank and file caucus or organisation would fight alongside the officials and national officers of a union wherever possible, but would be ready to fight against them whenever necessary.

Above all, we would not hide from the members the record of these people and their likely vacillation or even treachery at a key point in the struggle.

In the current period, where workers have suffered numerous defeats over many years, a rank and file organisation worthy of the name might be relatively small. It could take the form of a caucus in many unions, without representation on national bodies. Although weak in certain areas, such a rank and file grouping would fight to build a larger and more effective organisation.

With an upsurge in struggle such organisations will be priceless. They will be able to attract fighting militants on the basis of their record, and a resulting trust in their organisations. In contrast, the bigger "broad lefts" will discredit themselves and squander the efforts of countless good trade union militants.

The rank and file movement or a repeat of broad leftism: this is the clear choice facing not only the February conference, but trade union militants throughout Britain in the coming period. ■

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The A to Z of Marxism

is for Stalinism

BY BILL JENKINS

In 1989 the collapse of Stalinism began. The bosses celebrated the defeat of what they called communism. Revolutionaries, however, knew that these regimes were a world away from the revolutionary ideas of Marx and Lenin.

Stalinism emerged out of the isolation and degeneration of the world's first workers' state created by the Russian revolution of 1917.

Stalinism was not the inevitable outcome of the revolution, as both liberals and anarchists claim. It was an enemy of the 1917 revolution, destroying its greatest conquest – working class political power exercised through democratic workers' councils and defended by a democratic workers' militia.

Stalinism's growth, its suffocation of workers' democracy and its usurpation of political power, were the consequences of the Russian revolution's terrible isolation. Its eventual triumph, was not a victory for the world working class, but a major defeat.

In 1917 Russia was an extremely backward country, already exhausted by war. Unless revolution could be spread across Europe, and the rest of the world, the danger was always that the workers' state would not survive. The internationalists in the Bolshevik Party which had led the revolution, especially Lenin and Trotsky, always recognised this.

The young soviet state faced the physical destruction and economic wreckage of the first world war and was soon to face attacks from counter revolutionaries at home and abroad. The cost of survival was heavy. The Russian working class was decimated, its best fighters killed in the civil war, the soviets had collapsed and starvation was rife.

By 1921 Russia was far from being a socialist society. Lenin described it as a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations: a state being strangled by poverty and a newly developing bureaucratic caste.

Stalin rose to become the leader of this caste, using bureaucratic terror to defeat his enemies. Trotsky, who formed the Left Opposition to fight Stalinism, was subjected to an unprecedented campaign of lies and slander. He was expelled from the party and sent into exile.

Trotsky and the Left Opposition's "crime" was to tell the truth about Stalinism, to advocate a revolutionary course for the workers of Russia and to fight the growing domination of the state by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

In the 1930s the Stalinist bureaucracy consolidated its triumph over the working class through its regime of terror, its purges and its policy of bureaucratic self defence. It was in this period that its key characteristics emerged.

Stalinism is anti-internationalist. As early as 1925, following the defeat of the German revolution in 1923, Stalin announced that "Leninists" now believed that socialism could be built in one country alone. The internationalisation of the revolution was no longer necessary.

This was a complete break with revolutionary communism. Its practical result was to subordinate the world revolution to the needs of the Soviet bureaucracy and turn the parties of the Communist International into instruments of that bureaucracy's will. The initial effects of this nationalism included the terrible defeat of the Chinese revolution.

Other defeats followed. Socialism in one country led to ever greater abom-

inations in the name of "socialism" – including the horror of Cambodia in the 1970s – and steeped the world's communist parties in nationalism as each followed their "national" road to socialism.

Stalinism is a parasite on the workers' state. In 1928 the Stalinists faced a new crisis. The bureaucracy had to balance between the bourgeoisie and the working class. Their privileged position was based on their monopoly of power within the workers' state.

The kulaks, rich farmers who had grown richer under NEP, sought to extend their economic and political power by refusing to supply grain to the cities. They wanted capitalism restored which would have meant the end for the Stalinists. Thus, the latter smashed the kulaks and physically terrorised the peasantry.

The economic regime Stalinism created was based on the property relations of a workers' state, but distorted and plundered by them in order to sustain their existence as a privileged caste.

Stalinism is counter-revolutionary. The battle with the kulaks prompted Stalinism to take an ultra left turn at the end of the 1920s embodied in a new international policy, the Third Period. In Germany this disastrous leftism meant the Stalinists refused to unite the working class parties against the Nazis. As a result, Hitler seized power without a fight in 1933.

Immediately after the German events Stalinism shifted rightwards again. In France and Spain the Communist Parties proposed Popular Fronts with the bourgeoisie, which led directly to the workers' defeats, while torturing and murdering any opposition wherever it appeared in the world's workers' movement: the POUM in Spain, the old Bolshevik Party in the USSR and, in 1940, Trotsky himself.

The Stalinists had led a political counter revolution in the Soviet Union, and thereafter became a pillar of counter-revolution on the world stage. Every revolution has faced the threat of Stalinism either politically – in the shape of its subordination of the working class to bourgeois allies in the popular front – or physically, when its forces have broken the independent organisations of the working class and murdered those fighting for real revolution.

Stalinism was doomed to collapse. The heroism of the Soviet masses, and the existence of planned property relations saved Stalinism after the Nazis invaded in 1940. But as Stalinism expanded into Eastern Europe and beyond in the post war years it did not change or resolve its contradictions. It remained a force for reaction, an obstacle to socialism and an enemy of the working class.

Though it expropriated capitalism in Eastern Europe, it did so to save its own skin and only after it had destroyed the independent workers' organisations. Its survival and expansion proved short lived in historical terms.

Less than fifty years after its greatest "triumphs" the fundamental contradiction of the states it presided over – workers' states in terms of property relations, but ones in which the working class were denied any element of political power – exploded.

The illegitimacy of Stalinism, its inability to harness the planned property relations in the interests of the working class, its desperate desire for a rapprochement with imperialism – in short its historical bankruptcy – stood exposed by the rapidity of its collapse after 1989. ■

personal view

COLIN LLOYD

Russian bonds from IBM?

FANCY A bet on the survival of capitalism? How long until it collapses? In 1980, when I became a Marxist, I remember giving it ten years maximum. Obviously what Antonio Gramsci called "optimism of the will" had triumphed over "pessimism of the intellect".

However, even the "oldest and wisest" in the labour movement – i.e. the most cynical – might hesitate before betting on capitalism still being here in 2097. And yet that is what capitalists in the USA are doing – to the tune of billions of dollars.

On 12 December the *Financial Times* reported:

"International Business Machines has launched \$850 million in 100-year bonds, the largest 'century bond' issue ever."

Effectively, US capitalists have lent IBM \$850 million for 100 years. IBM joins a select club of just 26 companies and institutions with a solid enough brand name to support a 100-year bond. Others include Coca Cola, Disney, Yale University and the Chinese government. Over the last 12 months more than \$4.3 billion has been sunk into such century bonds.

There are advantages to both lenders and borrowers in century bond transactions. The 7% interest IBM will pay investors is tax deductible, so the loan will cost IBM only 5% at the end of the 100 years. By contrast, if you go to your bank manager and ask for a meagre £1,000 over just three years, the interest rate will be closer to 15%.

The IBM bond buyers include insurance companies who actually hold policies on certain key assets (bridges, skyscrapers etc.) stretching well into the 21st century. A 100-year stake in IBM, apparently, is a good way of matching these long-term liabilities.

Now you might think that the capitalists could easily renege on this deal. After all, Robert Maxwell and his family were able to destroy the Mirror Group pension fund with impunity. And capitalist governments have repeatedly torn up supposedly sacred deals with the working class – the recent scrapping of contributory unemployment benefits being just one example.

But you would be mistaken. The same issue of the *Financial Times* carried the story of a very different set of bonds.

Last month Russia and France signed a pact for the repayment of £230 million worth of "Tsarist bonds" issued by the Russian government to French investors between 1850 and 1913. These bonds were used to finance the industrialisation of Tsarist Russia, in the process creating a new working class. The workers overthrew the Tsar in 1917 and scrapped all commitments to honour the property rights of French capitalist bondholders. "Russian bonds" passed into French slang as the word for a bum deal.

Now, with capitalist restoration under way in Russia, the Yeltsin government is preparing to pay £230 million back to the descendants of the French capitalists who bought the bonds. This is happening while mil-

lions of Russian workers and soldiers have not been paid for six months.

Big business pursues its enemies with the tenacity of Terminator II: not just across national borders but across entire historical epochs. So it is certain that, if capitalism still exists in 2097, there will be somebody, somewhere, kicking up trouble if they can't cash in their bonds with IBM.

IBM's century bond is, then, not so much a gamble on the survival of IBM as on the survival of capitalism itself. In the next 100 years the bonds themselves will feature on the "secondary" markets – the sick system whereby millions are made by trading pieces of paper.

My advice to the secondary bond dealers, however, is DO NOT BUY. Because it is 99% certain that neither IBM nor the capitalist system will exist in 2097.

The very process of technological development which has transformed IBM from a maker of cash registers into the household word for personal computers will confront humanity with a choice: socialism or barbarism.

Competition spurs the capitalists constantly to revolutionise techniques of production. Technological progress drives labour out of the production process. Fewer workers, and fewer working hours are needed to produce life's necessities.

But it is only from the workers that real profit can be made. The whole system of computer-driven share dealing and bond trading is, ultimately, buying and selling a stake in the exploitation of the working class. The bosses can still make profits; in some cases, like IBM, they can make billions. But the expulsion of living labour from the production process progressively reduces the source of their profits – wage labour. In short, the social system that produces technological progress is also undermined by it. The system begins to rot.

At first we see it only at the edges – for example in parts of Africa, which the capitalists have all but written off. It happens in the big cities too, where people sleep rough in sub-zero temperatures; where whole generations grow up and die without ever having a real job; where crime and punishment are more important than exploitation.

These are enclaves of the barbarism that capitalism has in store if we allow it to survive.

At some point in the next century humanity will have to choose: do we want technological progress to mean starvation and poverty for millions, while a few live luxury lifestyles protected by security cameras and electrified fences? Or should we harness the power of technological advance to plan production to meet human need?

The choice is not one between a humane, progressive capitalism and a socialist system that would be an improvement on it. It is a choice between barbaric collapse and a revolution that can save humanity from the effects of that collapse. The right choice will turn the IBM bonds into "Russian bonds" for good. ■



SOUTH KOREA: Mass strikes against new laws

Workers grab tiger by its tail

Whatever the outcome of the present mass strike in South Korea one thing is clear: this battle is the biggest in the country's history and the most important since the "Great Workers' Struggle" in 1987 which overthrew the dictatorship of Roh Tae Woo. It will be a decisive battle for the future of the South Korean workers' movement, writes **Michael Glatter**.

HUNDREDS OF thousands of workers launched a mass strike on 26 December. This was an immediate response to a vote for a new code of labour law. The vote was held in a secret session of parliament to which only the MPs of President Kim Young Sam's New Korea Party were invited. There was no discussion. The meeting lasted six minutes!

The new law is designed to destroy all protection for workers in South Korea's big capitalist firms (the chaebols). Under the new law:

- workers can be sacked on the spot with no severance pay – previously no worker could be dismissed without legitimate cause and, if dismissed, they were entitled to redundancy pay;
- the 44-hour working week and the 12-hour a week limit on overtime are to be scrapped and replaced with complete flexibility of working time;
- paid annual holiday as a legal entitlement, and the right of women to one day's "menstrual leave" each month are to be abolished;
- "surplus" workers can be laid off without pay and temporary contracts can be introduced;
- bosses will have the right to hire scabs to replace strikers.

Alongside these proposals, a new bill restoring broad powers to the state intelligence service – the Agency for National Security Planning – was rammed through. The state plan to back up the new law with brute force.

Response

The response not just of the Chonnodae – the independent and effectively illegal Korean Confederation of Trade Unions – but also of the "official" Korean Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU), which is recognised by the government, is hardly surprising. Every worker understands that the new law represents a strategic attack against the industrial core and most militant sections of the South Korean working class.

One of the main reasons for the "Korean economic miracle" was the super-exploitation of the working class. Even in the 1980s, South Korean workers endured one of the longest working weeks (54 hours) in the world, combined with appalling working conditions. In 1990 2,336 people died in accidents at work and 132,893 were badly injured.

An increasing labour shortage and the growing strength of the core industrial sections of the working class forced the chaebols into a kind of exchange – they granted virtual job security as a trade-off for the awful working conditions.

Today the bosses are facing a different problem – the challenge of the world market. The increasing competition South Korea faces from the "second generation of the Asian tigers", and US and Japanese multinationals, the slump of computer chip prices in the past two years and the pressure of imperialist countries to liberalise the home market as part of the price of admission to the OECD – all have forced the chaebols to introduce new working practices and to slash labour costs.

Combativity

Labour costs reveal the second major problem facing the bosses – the organised working class. Labour costs rose dramatically after 1987 because of the increasing combativity of the South Korean working class. In a series of strikes, the workers in the chaebols won massive wage increases – an annual average of 12%-19%. They have successfully fought for the rights the British working class has been robbed of in the past 18 years.

This strength is reflected in the growth of an independent trade union movement which is the driving force behind the present mass strike. The only official trade union – the KFTU – has 1.2 million members but is close to the government. While not a scab union, it is passive and reacts only to massive pressure from the rank and file.

The militant Chonnodae is still not recognised by the government. Not surprisingly, it has fewer members – half a million. But some unions in heavy industries, like the car and shipbuilding sectors, recently left the KFTU and joined the Confederation. The vanguard sectors of the South Korean working class are in the Chonnodae.

The reaction of the bosses and the government has been brutally clear. There are more trade union activists and representatives imprisoned in South Korea than anywhere else in the world. The leader of Chonnodae, Kwon Yong Kil, is wanted by the government and is in hiding.

But such repression has not stemmed the growth of the movement.

The independent workers' movement is linked with those left student organisations which are not blinded by the Stalinism of North Korea's *juche* (self-reliance) ideology. One result of the co-operation between the independent workers' and students' movements is the growing popularity amongst the unions of the call to form a Workers Party.

At the moment there are legal restrictions which forbid unions "interfering" in politics. Despite this, the Chonnodae demands that President Kim Young Sam stands down. And there are clear signs that in the present strike wave workers are raising a range of political demands. One British Tory MP who has close links with South Korea moaned that the strikes were "more about politics than economics".

The current battle is of strategic significance. The workers' action has forced the KFTU to call a general strike on 11 January if the government does not withdraw the new law. Between now and then other sections of workers are scheduled to join the action already underway across the car, shipbuilding and engineering industries. The workers have not been fooled by Kim Young Sam's offer to phase in the provisions of the new law rather than introduce them immediately.

Region

The South Korean working class has demonstrated its leading role in East Asia. Its success or failure in the coming years will have important consequences not just for the country but for the whole region. To win this battle it must go forward, strengthening its independent union organisations and establishing its political class independence by forging a Workers Party.

Such a party could help break the working class from its political alliance with bourgeois democrats like Kim Dae Jung, who limits anti-government opposition to democratic reforms.

Built on the basis of a clear revolutionary action programme, a Workers Party could spearhead the fight for a genuine socialist revolution, which could spark the overthrow of capitalism throughout East Asia. It could also inspire its North Korean, Vietnamese and Chinese brothers and sisters to political revolution against their Stalinist overlords. ■

EUROPE: Bosses austerity drive demands united response

For a socialist Europe!

IN THE next two years the workers of Europe must launch a united fight against a co-ordinated ruling class offensive, if they are not to pay the price of monetary union.

European capitalism is stagnating. It can only solve its crisis by ripping up the social gains won by European workers since 1945. The full-time core of the European working class has the shortest hours, longest holidays, highest pay and highest social benefits in the OECD.

The bosses plan to make us pay for the creation of the single currency through austerity. We have to say – in many languages but with one voice – enough is enough.

Build workers' unity across Europe

The bosses have one big advantage over the workers' movement: they meet regularly at the highest level – at EU summits, finance ministers' banquets, and in UNISC (the EU employers federation) – to co-ordinate and plan their attack.

The labour movement is always one step behind, reacting spontaneously to each blow as it is delivered.

The official European-wide trade union organisation – the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) – is not a fighting organisation of the working class but an ultra-bureaucratic machine devoted to lobbying the European Commission.

It represents 47 million workers, gathered in 45 national trade union confederations in 22 European countries – 95% of Europe's unionised workers. But its "programme" is the one drawn up by the ruling class – the Social Charter.

The Social Charter's function for the bosses is to establish a minimum level of labour conditions; to prevent EU countries outbidding each other for capital investment by offering labour conditions far below their neighbours.

The trade union bureaucracy sees the Social Charter as a social democratic guarantee that workers' living standards will be protected, that working conditions will be levelled up to the best existing standards across the continent.

It is a reformist utopia.

The Charter was not even made a binding part of the Maastricht Treaty: it must be acted out in the form of specific directives on each member country. Only its most minimal provisions have been enacted. Most – on youth protection, sub-contracting, lay-off procedures – have not been implemented. Meanwhile, the issues most sensitive to the bosses throughout the EU – minimum wage levels, benefit levels and union rights – remain outside the terms of the Treaty altogether.

We need a different strategy and different leadership.

The first task is to overcome the national and sectional divisions capitalism imposes on us. We must defend the millions of black and immigrant workers who live in the EU from the daily racism of the member states and from the threat of the growing far right and fascist parties.

There is also the division between workers in the EU and those outside. While Hungarian, Czech, Slovak and Polish workers only get \$350-\$400 a month for skilled work, our bosses will move jobs to these countries. Only if we fight to level up the wages and conditions of East European workers can we stop the bosses dividing us.

We cannot unite our struggles if we leave them in the control of the trade union bureaucrats, who are bound hand and foot to the employers, the state and the EU institutions. We need a rank and file response.

Support the Euromarch!

Cross-border initiatives like the Euromarch and the 14 June demonstration in Amsterdam can do two things.

First, they can help make conscious



what is at present only objectively present in the actions of the French railworkers, the Danish truckers, the Greek farmers, the Italian metalworkers: namely a co-ordinated protest movement against budget cuts and for the protection of wages, jobs and welfare.

Secondly, they can help create new organisations of solidarity and renovate old ones. As the marchers move from town to town, they can spread the message for European-wide co-ordinated action against the bosses and their governments.

What is needed is a conscious project to build rank and file links at every level. In an increasingly pan-European industrial and service sector, such links and rank and file organisations are vital in order to collect information, lift the veil of business secrecy, disrupt the plans of the bosses as they play one plant off against another.

We should fight across Europe for a one-day general strike against unemployment and austerity on Friday 13

June, the day before the Amsterdam summit that will finalise the renewed bosses' offensive. We should build a huge mass demonstration in Amsterdam on 14 June, backed up by local demonstrations.

Is it a fight against the EU?

Throughout this struggle we should be clear: it is not a fight against the EU in favour of a national, capitalist solution.

Workers should reject both the new capitalist Europe which is currently being constructed and the isolated capitalist nation states which currently exist. The Maastricht convergence criteria are the pretext for the current waves of attacks against the workers. But the attacks are a product of something deeper: the world capitalist crisis. They will be launched inside or outside the EU. Anti-working class attacks are underway in Japan, South Korea and the USA. Switzerland, which remains outside the EU, has launched the very same attacks

A workers' answer to the Euro-offensive

THE LRCI will seek to commit the organisations mobilising for the Euromarch to building a pan-European workers' united front to fight around the following demands:

- For a legally enforceable maximum 35-hour week across Europe, with no loss of pay. Threatened redundancies must be met with a division of the available work, with no loss of pay. Where employers attempt closures and sack workers we demand nationalisation under workers' control.
- All workers in the EU, part-time or full-time, and whatever their nationality, should have full employment rights from day one: sick pay, redundancy terms, protection against unfair dismissal, maternity and paternity leave, paid holidays and full state pensions. We demand a legally enforceable minimum wage at 2/3 the average wage or equivalent benefits.
- For workers' control of pensions and social security funds.
- No to lockouts: fight for the immediate occupation of factories, hospitals etc. threatened with closure and redundancy, and call for solidarity strikes and demonstrations from other workers and the unemployed.
- For action committees against unemployment linking the unemployed and other workers – build an unemployed workers' movement and guarantee the right of the unemployed to stay in or join trade unions.

- Equal pay for equal work across the multinational companies.
- Scrap all anti-union laws – for the right to join a trade union and mass campaigns to build the unions. For the right to strike without interference from the state.
- Defend welfare and benefits – no to government austerity budgets! Vote against all austerity budgets and demand a massive expansion in public provision of education, housing, health and social services under the control of workers and users.
- Fight for workers unity! The bosses try to divide the working class by nationality, ethnicity, gender and age. We must unite all workers and unemployed in struggle against austerity.
- For the free movement of workers within and into Europe – no to "Fortress Europe"! Down with TREVI and Schengen police agreements!
- Full entitlement for migrant workers to citizenship, employment rights, benefits and social welfare.
- No to all immigration controls, for the full right to political asylum.
- For a mass working class women's movement to resist the attacks on jobs and services, and to fight for full employment and union rights for women workers.
- For international workers' solidarity – build combine committees in the multinational corporations.

as those demanded by the architects of Maastricht.

There is no national solution to the austerity offensive. We cannot defend our jobs, wages and benefits in a nationalist alliance with our own bosses. That is why, where there are referendums on entry into the EU, or on the single currency, we fight for an active abstention and for the perspective of a Socialist United States of Europe.

The working class must refuse to pay for the creation of a common currency. Faced with the austerity plans and budgets that will implement the convergence criteria, the workers' parties and organisations should fight against them and vote against them in parliament. At the same time we can and should place demands on the transnational institutions, as with national bourgeois governments, for action to meet the immediate needs of workers and small farmers.

To the European ruling class we say – go ahead and create a Euro-currency

if you can – but not at our expense.

We need a united fight to impose working class demands on the EU as well as national governments (see box above) 11. The workers' parties should fight to impose the cuts on the employers' profits, not the workers' living standards: we need to abolish defence spending, impose a massive tax on the unearned income of the rich, end the subsidies to big capital.

We should fight for the full implementation of everything progressive in the Social Charter. At the same time we need a workers' charter: for the right to strike, the right to join a union and for levels of minimum wage and social welfare matching the highest in the EU.

For a Socialist United States of Europe!

A united imperialist Europe would have profoundly reactionary consequences, exploiting semi-colonies, speeding up capitalist exploitation and misery in the east, fomenting economic rivalry and ultimately military confrontation with the USA and Japan.

The bosses can never unify Europe in the interests of its workers and small farmers. Only the working class can build such a federation.

We say: Not a penny for a European police force or a European army. Down with Nato and the Western European Union! All Nato and UN troops out of former Yugoslavia.

Dissolve the powerless European parliament and convene a Europe-wide constituent assembly (organised and defended by the workers' organisations) to tear up the Maastricht treaty and to draw up a new workers' plan for economic and political convergence, designed to meet the needs of the workers, not the ruling class.

Down with the bosses' Europe, down with the national imperialisms. For a Socialist United States of Europe based on workers' councils and defended by workers' militias. It should be a federation of revolutionary workers' states open to all peoples who wish to join it. ■

WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS and unemployed groups from across Europe have called for a mass demonstration in Amsterdam on 14 June, coinciding with the final summit of the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC). Four feeder marches of the unemployed aim to criss-cross Europe in the month before the demo.

The initiative for this march has come from rank and file trade unionists, socialists and anarcho-syndicalists: the militant minority.

It is an excellent initiative, but at present it is weak. It faces the twin obstacles of the indolence of the labour bureaucracy and the outright sabotage of Stalinists wedded to economic nationalism.

We call on all readers and supporters of Workers Power to build the Euromarch. Milestone dates include a national organising meeting on 18 January in Sheffield, a conference in Brussels (21-22 February) to launch the move-

ment and finalise its political platform, and a proposed UK start date for the feeder marches of 10 May.

Trade union branches are being urged to sponsor unemployed marchers at £250 per marcher, to affiliate to the organising committee, and to get organising for 14 June.

Demonstrate! 14 June 1997 Amsterdam

The ability to organise and sustain feeder marches relies on getting official trade union support.

The main emphasis should be on mobilising for a mass demonstration in Amsterdam on 14 June and on the fight for a one-day general strike on the eve of the IGC. The organisers of the Euromarch – many of whom oppose the Maastricht Treaty – have deliberately

refrained from tying it to an overt anti-Maastricht position, in order to build the widest possible unity in action. But at the same time, the existing programme of the march – agreed at a meeting in Florence last year – is a list of plaititudes.

Workers Power and the other European sections of the LRCI will fight to make the Euromarch stand on a firm anti-capitalist action programme (see box). We will fight to prevent the movement being taken over or sabotaged by the economic nationalists of the CP, the SLP or the Labour left.

For full details of the march, latest sponsors, model resolutions and action guidelines contact: Glenn Voris, St Helens TUC Resource Centre, 21-31 Barrow Street, St Helens WA10 1RX. Tel 01744 755889. ■

Information on the Euromarch is on the website:
<http://www.gn.apc.org/labournet>

ITALY: Rifondazione Comunista Congress

A missed opportunity

On 12/13 December 1996 the 3rd Congress of Italy's Rifondazione Comunista (the Party of Communist Refoundation) took place in Rome. Party leader Fausto Bertinotti faced a left-wing challenge to his policy of supporting the Olive Tree coalition government.

Paolo Barbone reports.

RIFONDAZIONE COMUNISTA (RC) started life as a break-away from the Italian Communist Party (PCI) when the latter transformed itself into an openly social democratic party under the new title Party of the Democratic Left (PDS).

Now Rifondazione finds itself propping up a government coalition of the PDS and fragments of the former Christian Democracy. This government, led by Prodi, is attacking the working class to ensure Italy's participation in European Monetary Union.

Rifondazione Comunista is not a member of the so called Olive Tree coalition, but its votes in parliament keep the government in office. It has gained a few minor changes to the government's policies, but at the price of "critical support" for the austerity budget and ceasing to be a party of opposition.

The right, especially the ex-fascist leader Gianfranco Fini, has been handed the mantle of opposition to the unpopular measures taken by Prodi. Rifondazione's role is to shield the government against working class anger in the name of keeping out the right - the classic role of a Stalinist party in cross-class alliances since the 1930s.

At the December congress RC leader Bertinotti - a master at dressing up reformism in Marxist terminology - claimed that Rifondazione has succeeded in becoming a "significant factor" in Italian political life. This was due, he claimed, to RC's role in bringing down the hated caretaker government of former premier Lamberto Dini and its support for the current government.

Bertinotti attacked the trade union leaders for having made a deal in

1993 to abandon wages indexed to inflation (the scala mobile), accusing them of "a deadening and failed practice of agreements that has tied the hands and the initiative of the workers". But he is propping up a government in which the same bourgeois minister who abolished the scala mobile - Ciampi - is finance minister. The massive budget cuts which Ciampi has now proposed can only be passed with Rifondazione's vote.

In the run up to the Congress, a left opposition emerged inside RC, opposed to supporting the government (see below). At the congress the united opposition document got 15% of the votes, compared to Bertinotti's 85%. At local and regional conferences the opposition vote had been as high as 25%.

Bertinotti attacked the left opposition for having called for Rifondazione to pull out of the coalition, saying:

"It would be ridiculous if this congress were to focus on our relationship with the government instead of concentrating on the building of a mass movement."

But what is this "mass movement"? Certainly not one to challenge the government. Rather, it is a plan for the RC to build a mass electoral base, to guarantee its present parliamentary

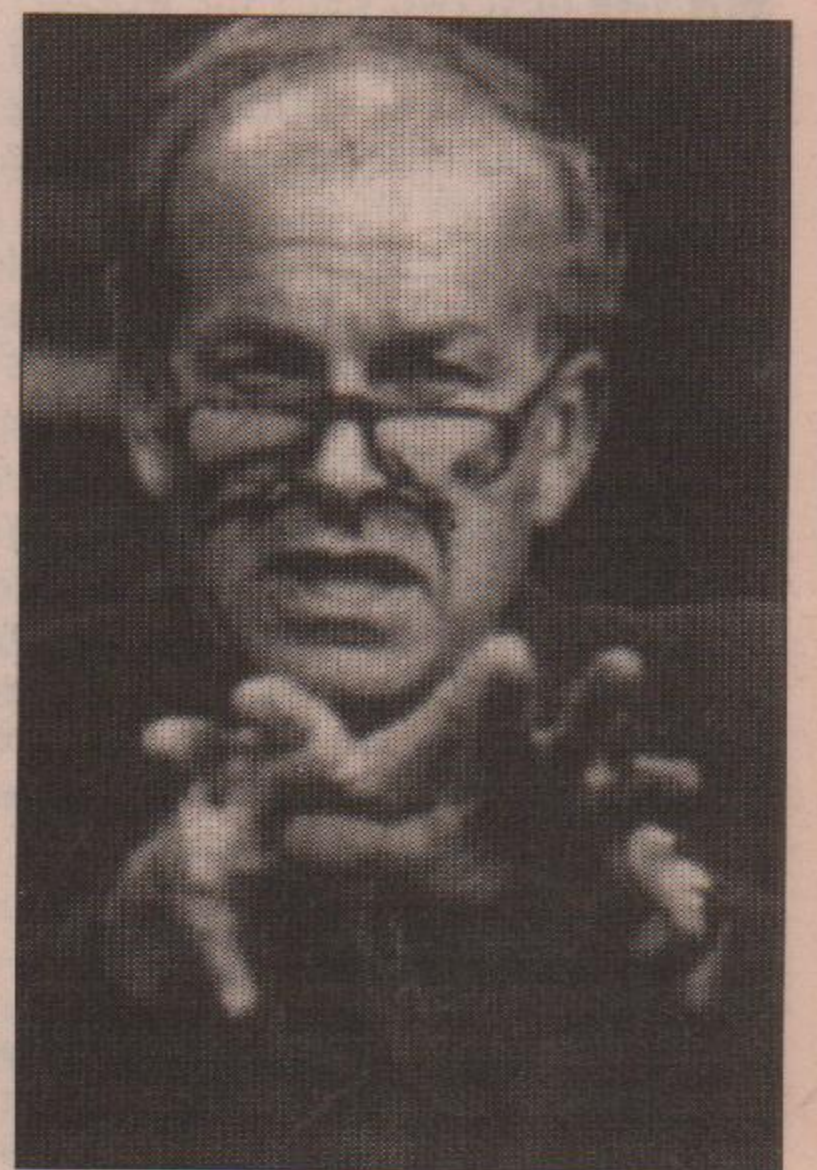
seats and gain more at the expense of the PDS.

At the Congress Bertinotti boasted that he had "saved" the government from an open confrontation with the workers' movement. The same man had the gall to inform the delegates that reformism had run into a structural crisis along with the capitalist system in which it is so heavily enmeshed.

By "reformism" the Rifondazione leader means simply the PDS, the main force in the present government. By the struggle against reformism he means nothing more than a struggle with the PDS for the working class vote, dressed up as a struggle over the heritage of the Stalinist PCI.

Clearly Bertinotti's leadership needs to be fought within the ranks of Rifondazione. The stakes are high. Already the far-right coalition of Berlusconi and ex-fascist Fini has mobilised half a million middle class opponents of the government on the streets. If the Olive Tree coalition succeeds in pushing through a generalised attack on the workers, with RC passively supporting it, only the right will gain.

The whole evolution of Rifondazione holds lessons for the British labour movement. Unlike the British SLP, Rifondazione is a mass party, with



RC leader Bertinotti

real working class support. But because it has refused to break with left-reformism it has ended up supporting an anti-working class government. At the same time it cloaks itself in "anti-reformist" rhetoric. Its self-proclaimed "left opposition" does nothing but compromise and fudge in its fight with the leadership. ■

The left opposition

A fudged fight

THE WHOLE story of the left opposition is a text-book demonstration of the failures of left-Stalinism and "Trotskyist" centrism. Again it has immediate lessons for the left in Britain.

At the Congress, the opposition was made up of a bloc between three different political forces: two consider themselves Trotskyist and the other represents the Stalinist left wing of Rifondazione.

Bandiera Rossa consists of mainstream supporters of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) within Rifondazione, led by Livio Maitan. Proposta Comunista is a centrist group, formerly on the left of the USFI, led by Marco Ferrando and Franco Grisolia. In previous incarnations it has been part of the International Trotskyist Committee (ITC). The third element is the left-Stalinist tendency led by Giovanni Bacciardi.

Bandiera Rossa's standpoint flows from the thoroughly opportunist method of the USFI, most recently articulated in the documents of its 14th World Congress. These spell out the need to "regroup" with those fragments of Stalinism - like Rifondazione, the Spanish CP and the German PDS - which have retained a mass character and a formal opposition to capitalism.

If it were only a question of tactical-orienting to the RC, then revolutionaries would have no quibbles with the USFI. But Maitan, over the last twelve months, has become a "Trotskyist" apologist for the actions of the Rifondazione leadership.

When the RC was faced with the choice of supporting the Olive Tree coalition government or letting in the right, the revolutionary answer should have been clear: to vote only for those measures which benefited the working class, to vote against all austerity budgets, and to refuse any vote of confidence for the government.

But according to Maitan, writing in June 1996:

"The problem now is that if we [RC] place ourselves in opposition to the new government from the start, the cen-

tre-left [i.e. the coalition] will not have a majority and will be obliged to seek alliances on its right... This means that the RC might appear as the gravedigger of a centre left government which had proposed renovation and protection (however illusory)... We risk compromising our real possibilities for future growth."

Opposition impossible

Systematic opposition to the Olive Tree coalition, according to Maitan, is "impossible for a party that now has a large presence in parliament and is, despite its weaknesses and contradictions, perceived by radicalised sectors of Italian society as representing their interests and demands."

Maitan, the "Trotskyist", was only vocalising what Bacciardi - the left Stalinist - was thinking. Both refused to oppose the RC leadership's stance of supporting the government. Only when that government turned around and started to impose the most consistent anti-working class austerity package in post-war history did the opposition begin to contemplate opposing the Bertinotti line.

It was Proposta Comunista who first proposed an opposition bloc in July 1996. An open letter by Ferrando outlined the points on which he believed Proposta, Bacciardi and Maitan should fight. The first involved a "clear and unequivocal" condemnation of the agreement made between Rifondazione and the Prodi government before the general elections of 21 April 1996.

Proposta's second point was to call for Rifondazione to end its present support for the Prodi government and go into opposition. To be linked to these two points were:

- the need to oppose the reformist strategy of Bertinotti with a congress document that will reaffirm the Marxist revolutionary concept of working class power as an alternative and superior form of democracy to bourgeois property and the bourgeois state;

- a relationship between party and masses which will fight for immediate working class demands within a transitional programme that poses the reality of the incompatibility between those demands and the continuance of capitalism;
- an overt definition of the PDS as agents of the bourgeoisie in the workers' movement as distinct from Bertinotti's definition of them as the "moderate left".

In reply Bacciardi and Maitan said that Rifondazione's relationship to the Prodi government only needs to be "reviewed". Rifondazione's original electoral agreement with the Olive Tree coalition and the subsequent vote of confidence in a Prodi government were not - in their view - incorrect at the time. They have only "revealed themselves to be so" following the experience of Prodi's pro-Maastricht budget.

Despite this, both Maitan and Bacciardi ended up supporting an opposition document calling for Rifondazione to end support for the coalition.

Did they suddenly decide to pursue a principled line? Unfortunately not. They simply had no choice, faced with the national secretariat of Rifondazione's dictat that no amendments could be made to the leadership's congress documents. Thus they had to cobble together a bloc with the more critical centrists of Proposta.

The finished document simultaneously calls for an end to the coalition but makes no criticism of the RC's initial vote of confidence, and electoral pact, with the Olive Tree coalition.

In his open letter Ferrando had explicitly called for the linking of immediate working class demands to the need to win power and construct communism as a solution to the present crisis of capitalism. The congress opposition document simply presents this as a "problem for discussion" rather than as an alternative strategy which is needed now to fight Prodi or Berlusconi.

The document does list demands to be made by the Italian workers' move-



Supporters of the "Olive Tree" government

ment, all focusing on opposition to the austerity measures needed to fulfil the Maastricht treaty. But it does not offer a clear characterisation of Bertinotti. Does the RC leadership represent a strategic alternative to the PDS? Or is it, like all Stalinist leaderships, an agent of the bosses in the workers' movement?

Reform vs Revolution

What was Bertinotti doing when he helped install the Olive Tree coalition: attacking the working class or cleverly helping it? Centrism is unable to say what is.

The document states: "The PDS and Rifondazione are not only distinct subjects: the moderate left in dialogue with the combative left. They are the political representatives of alternative strategic projects... Our aim is to dissolve the influence of the PDS on the majority of the working class and, through this, to realise the progressive conquest of the most politically active sections of the working class to a different political project."

The question of reform versus revolution is never clearly asked, let alone answered.

Workers wanted to use RC to fight the corrupt capitalist parties, not prop them up. Certainly they had, and still

retain, enormous illusions in Bertinotti. But it is the task of real revolutionaries to expose Bertinotti's verbal radicalism as a fraud. What better time to do so than when he is propping up a blatantly anti-working class government? How can this possibly be done by saying that Bertinotti is the alternative to the PDS?

Proposta Comunista capitulated on every point. Its terms of reference were not the working class base in Rifondazione to whom the truth could be told via a congress document. Instead it focused on maximising the votes of the RC left by tailoring the document to what Bacciardi and Maitan would stomach.

Following his intervention at the congress Proposta's leader, Ferrando told journalists that a challenge to Bertinotti's leadership "has not been considered" by the opposition (Liberazione 13 December 1996).

As always, centrism prefers unprincipled alliances to fighting for alternative leadership in the struggle. It is prepared to hide behind the Stalinist and left reformist leaders, hoping that history will turn them into agents of the objective process. The result is yet another missed opportunity to regroup the vanguard around a genuine revolutionary alternative. ■

Serbia

Marching against Milosevic

There were echoes of 1989 on the streets of Belgrade as Serbia saw in the new year. The Serbian capital has seen repeated demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands marching against the government.

In 1989 when similar demonstrations started across the states of Eastern Europe, the Stalinist governments collapsed like a house of cards. Seven years on, the erstwhile Stalinists of the Serbian government, led by President Slobodan Milosevic, are facing a fundamental challenge. **Kate Foster** examines his chances of survival.

THE WAVE of demonstrations engulfing Serbia's major cities began after the 3 November federal and municipal elections. Opposition parties did far better than had been predicted, especially in Belgrade. The ruling Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) would not accept the results and had them annulled by the courts on the spurious grounds of "fraud". The opposition took to the streets in protest. The opposition alliance, *Zejedno*, has been able to mobilise anything between 50,000 to 300,000 people on the daily protests in Belgrade alone; other demonstrations have taken place in major towns across Serbia.

Zejedno is made up of various political parties, with support from students and the wider population. Its name means "together" but it is a very shaky alliance. The political groupings have made common cause around demands for greater democracy, faster marketisation and a rapid move to restore capitalism. The leadership tries to outdo Milosevic in appealing to Serb nationalism. Despite these shared aims, *Zejedno* has been riven by disputes and splits. Prior to the election the alliance fell to pieces and, apart from the desire to see the elections results confirmed and a general anti-Milosevic feeling, there is little to weld the competing parties and personalities together.

Zejedno is also weak outside of the metropolitan centres. It has been able to mobilise in Belgrade and other large towns but it has failed to dent support for Milosevic in the countryside.

Milosevic has tried to sit things out and wait for the opposition to fall apart. He has had to make some concessions, however. In response to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) report into the election he agreed to accept the results in 9 out of the 16 districts in Belgrade and in three other towns. It is unlikely that this will satisfy the opposition, which is challenging the results in 50 towns and for complete control of Belgrade City Council.

Even if Milosevic were to accept all the disputed results, he knows that the underlying cause for support for the opposition movement will not simply go away.

Serbia has emerged from the bloody dismemberment of Yugoslavia with a war-weary people and a shattered economy. In May 1992, in the wake of the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the United Nations imposed a wide range of sanctions on Serbia, some of the most draconian ever used. These included an oil embargo, a ban on foreign investment, a ban on all Serbian goods and a freeze on all financial assets.

Inflation tore through the Serb economy. By the end of 1993 it was at a higher level than that seen in the Weimar Republic during the 1920s, reaching one million per cent during one month. Real wages fell dramatically and unemployment rocketed. In 1993 wages

were worth less than a fifth of their value in 1990. In 1994 the unemployment rate was over 23% in Serbia.

While the war was a disaster for the Serbian economy, it had one great advantage for Milosevic – it helped to unify the Serbs. Early anti-war demonstrations faded in the face of a surge of nationalism. Milosevic's whole career has depended upon his willingness to manipulate nationalist sentiments amongst the Serbs.

Nationalism

Milosevic began his bid for the presidency and leadership of the Serbian League of Communists in the 1980s. Voicing numerous supposed Serb "grievances", particularly of Serbs in the province of Kosovo where the majority of the population are ethnic Albanians, Milosevic used the Serbian police and army units from the Yugoslav National Army to crush the Albanian opposition and its demands for civil and democratic rights.

Having opened the Pandora's Box of nationalism at the beginning of the war, Milosevic has attempted to close it again in recent years. In the wake of the Dayton peace deal, he purged the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), the "reformed" Stalinist party, of extreme nationalist elements and has attempted to promote the Serb government to the West as one of moderation and market reform. He also broke the political alliance between the SPS and the extreme right wing nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS).

But the opposition is itself steeped in Serb nationalism. One of its leading figures, Zoran Djindjic, the head of the Democratic Party, is an outspoken supporter of the Bosnian Serbs' chauvinist leadership and in particular of the architect of "ethnic cleansing" Radovan Karadzic. Long-standing oppositionist Vuk Draskovic has distanced his party from the actions of the Bosnian Serb leaders but his Serbian Renewal Movement remains, as its name implies, a chauvinist party committed to the same repressive policy in Kosovo as the SPS.

Playing the nationalist card must appear attractive to Milosevic at present. He could undercut support for the opposition and try to distract attention from



Vuk Draskovic opposition leader



Anti Milosevic demonstration

the country's economic problems. Undoubtedly, if cornered, it is a road he is prepared to go down, a road which would once again lead straight to renewed repression in Kosovo.

The province continues to be a major arena of struggle. Since Belgrade revoked the autonomous status of Kosovo in 1989, the Albanian population has established a shadow state, refusing to participate in any elections and boycotting state services such as the education system.

Milosevic and the leader of the ethnic Albanians, Ibrahim Rugova, are currently negotiating on the future of the province. But any deal is unlikely to lead to separation – the basic demand of many of the Kosovo Albanians. Denial of the right of separation may well lead to further acts of resistance, which could then be used as an excuse by Milosevic for further repression.

While this is an option for Milosevic, it is not one he will choose lightly since it could lead to further international isolation and even the re-imposition of sanctions.

Milosevic's survival strategy

Milosevic's preferred option, to let the opposition wear itself out on the streets while using occasional police brutality to discourage the less committed from continuing the protests, seems to be failing. The army do not appear to be entirely loyal to Milosevic. In December an anonymous letter appeared, supposedly from a significant section of army officers who declared they would not accept any violent repression of fellow Serbs.

For the moment Milosevic's support among the police is more important to his survival. Many of their recruits come from the countryside, where support for Milosevic is strongest. They are also regularly paid to ensure their loyalty to the regime. There are around 90,000 police officers in Serbia, outnumbering the professional soldiers. These forces represent Milosevic's front line and are a major obstacle for any opposition.

Given the opposition's demands for greater marketisation, which would mean increasing unemployment and lay offs in the state factories, it is not surprising that the workers of Serbia have largely kept their distance from the protests. Milosevic is aware of the importance of keeping the workers away from the opposition and has been attempting to ensure

back payment of wages, particularly in the industrial centres.

The chaotic state of the Serb economy, however, makes this difficult to maintain. There have been significant strikes over the non-payment of wages in the past year, such as that of 6,000 workers at the Zastava arms factory in September.

Serbian working class

At the end of December several factories struck in Belgrade, largely on the basis of their own demands on pay and conditions. But for the first time organised groups of workers joined the demonstrations against Milosevic. The intervention of the workers against the regime could, if it grows in strength, decisively tip the balance.

Socialists welcome the entry of the workers of Serbia into the struggle against Milosevic, but it is vital that they fight independently of the nationalistic and bourgeois restorationist opposition. All socialists and democrats should support opposition calls for the full implementation of the election results but the nationalism and reactionary programme of the opposition needs to be exposed and fought.

The Serbian working class was active in the anti-war protests in the early part of the war, until the waves of chauvinism and the destruction of the economy atomised the workers' independent organisations. These have to be rebuilt. If the working class is to take the lead in the struggle against Milosevic it must do so on its own programme. Centrally it must demand:

- No to privatisation, unemployment and poverty – defend the nationalised property relations! For workers' control in the factories!
- For a new plan, drawn up by the workers themselves to meet the needs of the masses and repair the economy!
- For a workers' and peasants' government, based on new, genuinely democratic workers' councils and defended by a new workers' militia!
- Down with Serb chauvinism! For the right of Kosovo to self-determination up to and including separation! Down with the Republica Srpska of Karadzic and Mladic!
- For working class unity – link the struggles of Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian workers against attacks on democratic rights; for a Socialist Federation of the Balkans!

a world to win

Russia's wages crisis

THE YEAR in Russia ended with a national miners' strike and the threat of a general strike in the spring.

On 3 December miners across Russia came out on strike, hitting 90% of all Russian mines. Half a million miners took action. They demanded payment of their wages and the resignation of the government. The strike was officially called off on 13 December after the government had promised to pay up, but many miners stayed out, not trusting Yeltsin's regime to actually come up with the money.

The Russian miners alone are owed 2,600 billion roubles in back wages, while total wage arrears across industry are estimated at a staggering 46,400 billion roubles. Teachers, doctors, power and construction workers were all involved in action during the autumn in the country's biggest ever strike wave. Pensioners have also been involved in the protests; 80 managed to block the main St. Petersburg to Moscow railway for over four hours in December.

The strikes are generally not being called by the unions, but have frequently been organised by spontaneous strike committees, often involving enterprise management, who themselves have not been paid.

The chairman of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, Mikhail Shmakov, announced in December that they were preparing a general strike for early spring 1997.

"The process of strikes is bound to gain momentum, as few persons today have faith either in exhortations, or persuasion any longer, and people adopt the most vigorous method of settling disputes." ■

Victory for French lorry drivers

French lorry drivers brought the country to a standstill late last year. For two weeks they blockaded key motorways, preventing the distribution of food and petrol. By the end of the strike, 30% of French petrol stations were closed.

French lorry drivers suffer very low wages and only get paid for the time that they are actually driving. Many drivers work 70 hours a week for less than a £1,000 a month. The strikers were demanding retirement at 55, payment for all hours worked, a basic wage increase, payment for nights spent off the road and real union rights.

Two years before, the private companies had reneged on a negotiated deal. This time when the bosses offered only token concessions, the drivers stepped up the action and sealed off the main food market outside Paris. In all, they mounted 250 blockades across France and forced the shutdown of the country's main car plants. Volkswagen plants in Spain had to close because parts had not arrived by road from Germany.

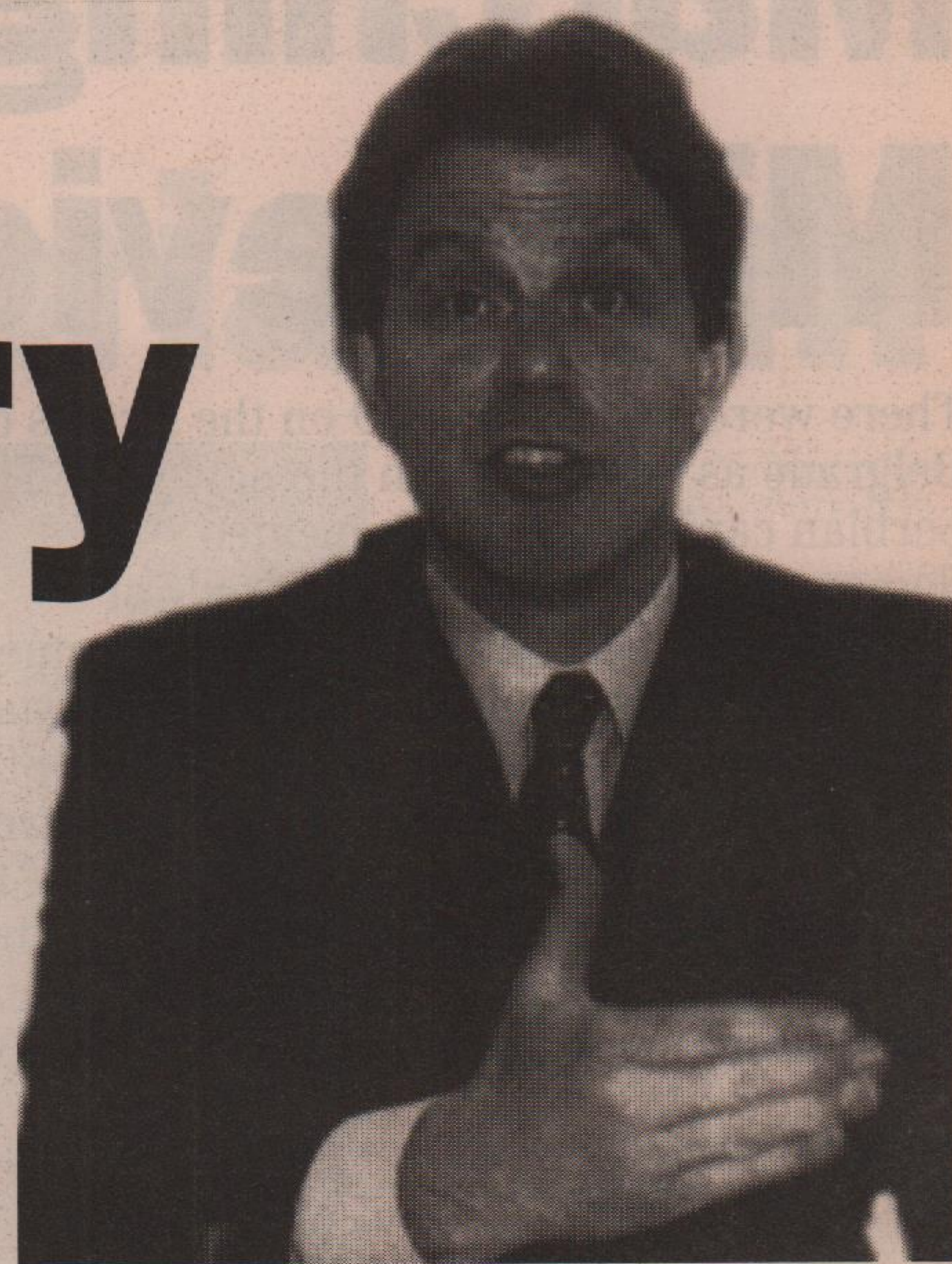
Recognising the importance of winning support from fellow lorry drivers, the French strikers produced leaflets explaining the background to their fight in German, Italian, Spanish and English.

By the end of November, a desperate government threatened legal action against the private companies and forced the bosses to give in. The highly organised strike and blockades were successful in winning virtually all the workers' demands, except for the basic pay increase.

While this was a sectional fight, it attracted enormous sympathy from other workers in France and gave dramatic proof of how vulnerable the bosses' system can be in the face of determined action. ■

ON THE LEFT: Militant launches "socialist party"

We need a revolutionary alternative to Labour!



ONE YEAR ago, Arthur Scargill launched the Socialist Labour Party (SLP). Last month the SLP found itself competing with the "Socialist Equality Party" in the Barnsley by election. Meanwhile Militant Labour has changed its name to the Socialist Party and managed to stand against the SLP in a Leicester council by election.

In the coming general election, workers will be invited to choose not only between these organisations but also the Socialist Party of Great Britain – which has existed since 1903 – and various "Socialist Alliance" candidates.

Suddenly, there are a lot of "socialist parties" about. Unfortunately, not one of them is prepared to offer the working class a revolutionary alternative to Labour. What unites them is the replacement of a political break with reformism by an organisational break with Labour and the fetishisation of electoral opposition to it.

Militant's name change is important, because it signals yet another "turn" by a disoriented and declining centrist organisation.

Parliamentary socialism

For decades, Militant's leaders advocated the schema whereby the radicalised British working class would "inevitably" turn to the Labour Party, enter it in mass numbers, transforming it successively into a left reformist, then a centrist party. The role of Militant was to stay inside Labour at all costs until this happened. And the costs were systematically refusing to fight for revolutionary socialism, and transforming Trotsky's transitional action programme for the working class into a list of literary demands placed on Labour.

In particular, Militant fostered the illusion that socialism could be introduced through a left Labour government introducing:

"an Enabling Bill in Parliament... This would then allow a socialist plan of production to be democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving the trade unions, shop stewards, housewives and small business men and women."

(*What We Stand For*, Militant's programme in their entryist period).

To underline their reformist credentials, Militant emphasised that:

"The cry that Militant would establish a socialist Britain by violence is a red herring... An entirely peaceful transformation of society is possible in Britain." (*What We Stand For*).

None of this means that Militant was a reformist organisation, only that it

consciously adapted to the working class' parliamentary illusions and attempted to build a mass left reformist movement. In this schema, history would finish off the job by blocking the path and forcing the movement to take a revolutionary detour. As a result, Militant's "transitional" demands became a reformist utopia, not a guide to revolutionary action.

Reality bites

In 1988-89, Militant found itself at the head of the poll tax revolt. The masses did not turn to mass membership of the Labour Party. When Militant did try to recruit 150 anti-poll tax activists to Labour in Pollock, Glasgow, they were in any case denied entry. Reality proved the schema wrong. A new leadership, under Peter Taaffe, expelled Militant's founder, Ted Grant, and set about building Militant Labour as an independent organisation.

Between 1992 and early 1996 Militant persevered with this tactic but got nowhere. Despite declaring itself independent, and launching its own youth anti-racist movement as a party front (the YRE), membership declined.

The Taaffe leadership remained wedded to the schema that the workers' consciousness would move in left-reformist and centrist stages and adamantly refused to allow Militant's supporters to call for "revolution". The old line that "socialism can come through parliament, backed up by a mass workers movement" was retained, but without strategic Labour entryism.

The most obvious result of unhinging Militant's politics from its roots in Labour entryism was the centrifugal process it unleashed: in Scotland Militant capitulated to radical Scottish nationalism, renaming itself Scottish Militant Labour. Militant also launched a black-only organisation – Panther – whose leaders capitulated to black separatism, splitting with Militant and launching their own centrist black separatist organisation. Meanwhile the youth organisation found itself mired in the eco-warrior milieu – a million miles from the experience and struggles of working class youth.

The Militant leadership cast around for another tactic, and was elated when Scargill launched the SLP. Militant could "enter" the SLP, run the youth movement and generally get back to business as usual – revolutionaries pretending to be reformists, biding their time until the "masses" flocked to join the party. However, Scargill refused point-blank to allow Militant Labour entry into the SLP.

At this point Militant reverted to Plan B. Alongside the SLP it launched "Socialist Alliances", which were generally alliances between Militant members and local fragments of reformism who for one reason or another found themselves outside the SLP and the Labour Party. Only in Scotland did the Socialist Alliance serve the function of uniting really active elements. Elsewhere the project flopped.

Meanwhile Militant's international organisation, the Committee for a Workers International, had begun to generalise the idea of forming joint mass parties with left reformists and fragments of Stalinism into a world perspective. In Sweden this involved forming a joint list with the old Stalinist party. Likewise in Austria, both with fairly disappointing results.

In this light, Militant's recent "historic decision" to rename itself the Socialist Party represents yet another retreat. Blocked in its attempt to regroup with the SLP, devoid of real reformist partners in the Socialist Alliances, Militant's leadership has remembered its "Bolshevik" training and effectively launched a fight to build itself in opposition to these formations.

The argument within Militant Labour about the name change seems to have revolved around secondary questions. Primarily, all seemed to agree that, since progressive youth no longer spontaneously gravitate to Labourism, there is no need to pose as Labour lefts any more. Instead, because "socialism" has been widely declared dead in the past decade, we have to renew the fight for general socialist principles.

If this meant revolutionary socialism, then Militant's name change might be seen as a step forward. Certainly a small minority (3%) around Phil Hearse, a former USFI full timer who joined Militant in 1994, saw the change as a move away from "regroupment" with Stalinism and left reformism and towards a "sectarian" view of party building.

However, the turn to the socialist party clearly presages two programmatic moves away from the fight for an openly revolutionary alternative.

First of all, in Scotland, Militant has cemented the separation of its organisation with the launch of a new paper *Scottish Socialist Voice*. Second, it is clear from Ireland, where Militant has already founded the Socialist Party, that the programme of the new party will be a straightforward, broad, left-reformist platform.

Immediately, the new party has launched a £50,000 fund drive to

finance the standing of 25 candidates in the general election, underscoring its continued emphasis on electoral politics. No mention is made of standing in order to make propaganda for revolution. Instead, we are told that the Socialist Party will:

"stand for public ownership and a socialist economy and for a democratic government that represents the working class" (*Militant* 6.12.96).

If Militant cannot fuse with genuine left reformist fragments it must create an ersatz left reformist party itself.

Much the same thinking lies behind the recent transmutation of the International Communist Party (ICP). Since its formation, after the implosion of the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1985, the ICP, led by Dave and Julie Hyland, has been the by-word for eye-rolling craziness on the British left. Its Australian affiliate – the Socialist Labour League – reacted to a genuine left-reformist split from the Labour Party in Melbourne by... picketing the meetings and attempting to disrupt its election campaign.

Now, in Britain and elsewhere, the ICP has become the "Socialist Equality Party" (SEP). Its new-found commitment to socialist equality propelled it to stand against the SLP in the Barnsley by election.

Labour: A bourgeois party?

What the SLP, SP (Militant) and SEP all agree on is that Labour is no longer any kind of workers' party; that workers are set to break from Labour in large numbers, and that a "socialist party" must be built to catch them as they bail out. All are convinced that this socialist party has to be left reformist – explicitly rejecting the idea of a revolutionary break from Labourism. All are equally convinced that it must be "their" socialist party, and not someone else's: hence their electoral campaigns against each other.

These forces have scored occasional successes in local by elections: the SLP gained over 20% in Forest Gate, East London. The SLP and Militant/Socialist Party combined got 21% in Braunstone, Leicester. But in Barnsley East, the SLP scored only 5.3% to Labour's 76%. The SEP got a derisory 89 votes. Everywhere – even with the SLP – the activists in these alternative "socialist parties" consist of significant numbers of long-standing members of the ex-Trotskyist and ex-Stalinist left.

The Barnsley flop should set alarm bells ringing among SLP activists. To narrowly save its deposit in a by elec-

tion (where voters are more likely to cast a protest vote since they are not voting for a government), in the heart of Scargill country, with a candidate from the NUM and with the full resources of the national party at hand, is a disaster.

If Scargill gets his way, the SLP will stand 100 candidates in the general election. Without a mass membership to do the legwork, they would be humiliated, calling into question Scargill's fundamental perspective – an influx of trade union officials and activists during a Blair government. The SLP could find itself high and dry.

Revolutionary alternative

What all this shows is not that there is an absence of opposition to Tony Blair's rightward-moving Labour Party, but that the great majority of workers are not yet prepared to break from Labour. The mass of class conscious workers still harbour real illusions in Labour, which must be put to the test by getting Labour into office, fighting to make Labour act in the workers' interests at the same time as using the election to fight for a real revolutionary alternative to Labour.

All of the new socialist parties are abstaining from this central task. The majority in the SLP refuses critical support for Labour where the SLP is not standing on the grounds that Labour has already become a party similar to the Liberals. Militant/Socialist Party also believes Labour has become an open bourgeois party but, reportedly, is still prepared to vote Labour on the grounds that the "old position" of refusing to vote for bourgeois parties is out-moded.

Against this "socialist party confusion" revolutionaries have to carry out the task of constructing a real revolutionary socialist alternative to Labour. Yes, we need an independent revolutionary organisation and newspaper. But no, we do not need Lilliputian replicas of the old Labour Party constructed separately on the equally Swiftian grounds that they disagree on exactly what kind of reformist socialism is to be served up to the workers.

We need a revolutionary socialist party: a combat party. But we also need united front tactics that can place revolutionaries at the head of the fight for a massive Labour majority in parliament and an active campaign to place working class demands on Labour. That way we will build a movement that can fight Tony Blair from the moment his elegantly shod foot steps across the draft excluders at Number 10. ■

Why the change on Scotland?

Dear Comrades,

I read with great interest the outcome of your conference debates on perspectives in last month's issue of Workers Power (December 1996). In particular the section headed "For a Scottish Assembly!" took my eye.

Leaving aside the rights and wrongs of the conclusions you draw, it struck me that you began the article with an announcement that your previous position on a Scottish Assembly had been wrong.

I have always believed that the most refreshing thing about revolutionary politicians and parties is that when they are wrong they fearlessly admit it and then set about the vital task of explaining the reasons why the mistake was

made in the first place in a desire to educate both themselves and the wider movement.

Unfortunately, not three paragraphs after your bold admission and without any explanation of how or why your previous position had been wrong in itself, we come across the line, "... because history has moved on." This trite and glib negation of the opening sentence is worthy only of mealy-mouthed bourgeois politicians. Yes, we made a mistake but the source of the mistake was in the objective process and not in our subjective reading of it.

You may think my tone is unnecessarily harsh and please believe me that I do not wish to blow this issue out of all proportion. But, as a reader who

has argued your line, sometimes in a fairly hostile environment, I feel I deserve a more thoroughgoing explanation of where you and I went wrong.

I suspect the change of line on Scotland was fully debated amongst the members at your conference to the satisfaction of all. But please try to remember that your responsibilities extend much wider. They include your readers and supporters and the class as a whole.

To rectify the political confusion of at least one of your readers could you please be a bit more elaborate and, when admitting mistakes in the future, please don't compound the error with this less than honest method.

Yours fraternally
Disgruntled of Scotland

WE REPLY

Boiled down to its essential point, comrade Disgruntled's letter takes us to task for not explaining why our previous position on the Scottish Assembly (opposition to it) was wrong and for taking refuge in history to explain our change of position.

The basis of our previous position was that we believed that the will of the Scottish people had not been tested on the question (since 1979). We believed that it was necessary to call for a referendum on the issues of independence and an assembly in order to gauge what the majority of the Scottish people really wanted.

In such referendums we said we would argue against both independence and an assembly since both would be concessions to nationalism and undermine the strategic unity of the British working class.

This position was wrong because it contained a false estimate of the will of the Scottish people. As the resolution goes on to make clear there were sufficient indications that the Scottish people had, in their majority, decided in favour of an assembly (and since the resolution was published a further Gallup poll has found that 75% of the Scottish people want an assembly).

This is what we meant in saying "history has moved on" – the opinions of the Scottish people that we believed needed to be tested had in fact already been expressed in several different ways. We were wrong not to have recognised this sooner.

Since the bedrock of our position is support for the right to self-determination – while opposing separation – it was necessary to apply it. The Scot-

tish people had determined that they wanted an assembly. We had to support their right to have one.

What we do not renounce is our opposition to the use of an assembly as a "highway to independence" as the SNP put it.

Communists now have to use any assembly that emerges under a Labour government to renew the fight against nationalism, renew the fight for the highest possible unity of the British working class against the British bosses and fight, as the resolution says for "a Socialist Republic of Britain". ■

Carl Sagan: He enriched us all

Dear Comrades,

The death of Carl Sagan on 20 December 1996, after a long battle with leukaemia, has deprived the English-speaking world of one of the most talented and principled popularisers of scientific ideas. He was perhaps best known in Britain for his early 1980s television series, *Cosmos*.

But why should his passing matter to socialists and Marxists, in particular? Sagan's final book, *The Demon Haunted World*, sub-titled, "Science as a Candle in the Dark", is a clearly written yet passionate study which demolishes the irrational pseudo-sciences which dominate what now passes for the discussion of science in mainstream popular culture.

Sagan was spurred into action, despite his terminal illness, by the hold that mysticism, astrology and religion – from New Ageism to creationism – have gained in popular culture and amongst otherwise rational people in the United States. He responded with a torrent of articles in American tabloids, reaching an audience of millions.

His literary output included beautifully written, jargon-free books which explained evolution, DNA and the probable origins of the universe in a way that even the most scientifically ignorant

among us could grasp. I write from experience. I have shared something of Sagan's wonder and joy not just at human scientific achievement, but at the universe it seeks to explain.

Sagan's universe held no place for gods. He was probably the most influential avowed atheist in the US. His materialist approach led him to an acquaintance with Marxism. His later works include quotes from Trotsky and even the late USec leader Ernest Mandel. Along with his wife, Ann Druyan, he smuggled copies of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* into the former Soviet Union to be spread among fellow scientists. He was an active opponent of the second Cold War in the 1980s and helped develop the theory of "the nuclear winter", much to the annoyance of the US scientific establishment as the Reagan administration pressed ahead with the "Star Wars" project.

Carl Sagan would not have described himself as a socialist. But his work remains indispensable for anyone who wants to hold an informed, consistently rational and materialist view of the cosmos. I think we are poorer without him.

In comradeship,
Liam Mac Uaid
East London.

We still need your money!

The Christmas "spend, spend, spend" season is over and we realise that many readers will have spent a bit more on food and booze than they usually do. But now it's time to start fund raising again if we are to reach our £20,000 building fund target by the end of May.

Make your new year resolution a financial one – resolve to give us money to help us purchase a new office.

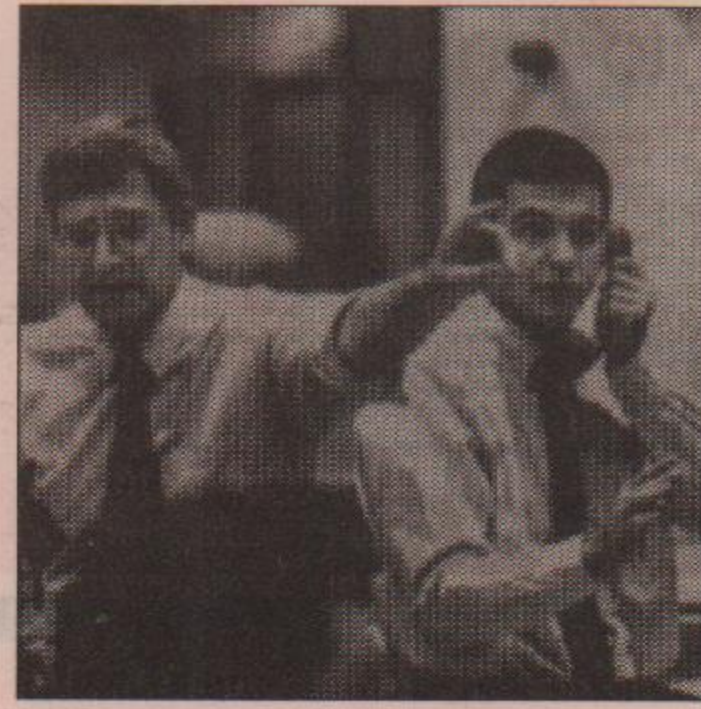
Despite the Christmas lull we did manage to raise £540 this month, taking our overall total to £4,638.50. Our thanks to an Italian tourist who liked our paper so much he gave us £10 for it, to a reader in Teeside who sent us a Christmas card with £30 in it and to our branches and supporters who collectively raised £500 during December.

Keep the money coming in. Start discussing how to organise new fund raising plans and send the cheques and POs etc, payable to Workers Power and marked "Building Fund" on the back, to the postal address below.

WORKERS POWER

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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 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.



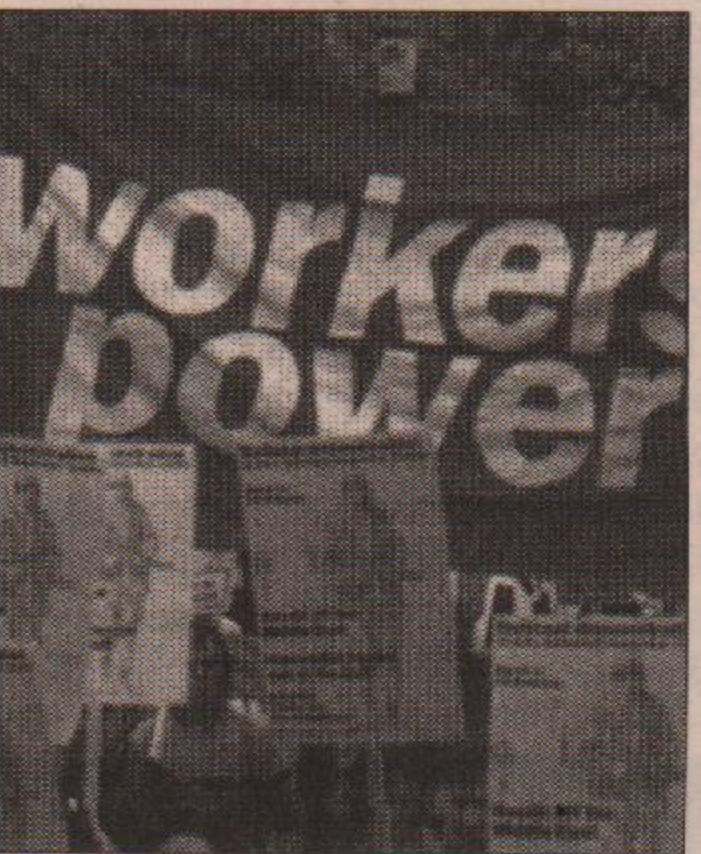
Social Oppression

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 the imperialist 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

**SERBIA:
where next?**
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Socialism, Internationalism, Revolution

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

No 207 January 1997 ★ 50p

Ireland: Remember Bloody Sunday

Troops out now!

THIS MONTH marks the 25th anniversary of a massacre of unarmed civilians by British troops. The history of the British empire is littered with such crimes but this bloodbath took place in a city that the British government still claims as part of the United Kingdom.

On Sunday 30 January 1972, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Derry in the north of Ireland. They had tried to stage a peaceful protest against the denial of basic democratic rights to the Catholic population by the Loyalist Stormont regime in the six counties. Before the day was over, 13 of the marchers lay dead. A fourteenth would die later of bullet wounds suffered that afternoon.

The day became known as Bloody Sunday.

Armed

The march had begun under the watchful eye of heavily armed troops from the elite Parachute Regiment. British troops had entered the six counties under Harold Wilson's Labour government in August 1969, with the supposed mission of shielding the Catholic populations of Belfast and Derry from pogroms by Loyalist mobs. Bloody Sunday provided the most horrific evidence of the real role of the British state in the six counties.

After Bloody Sunday, the

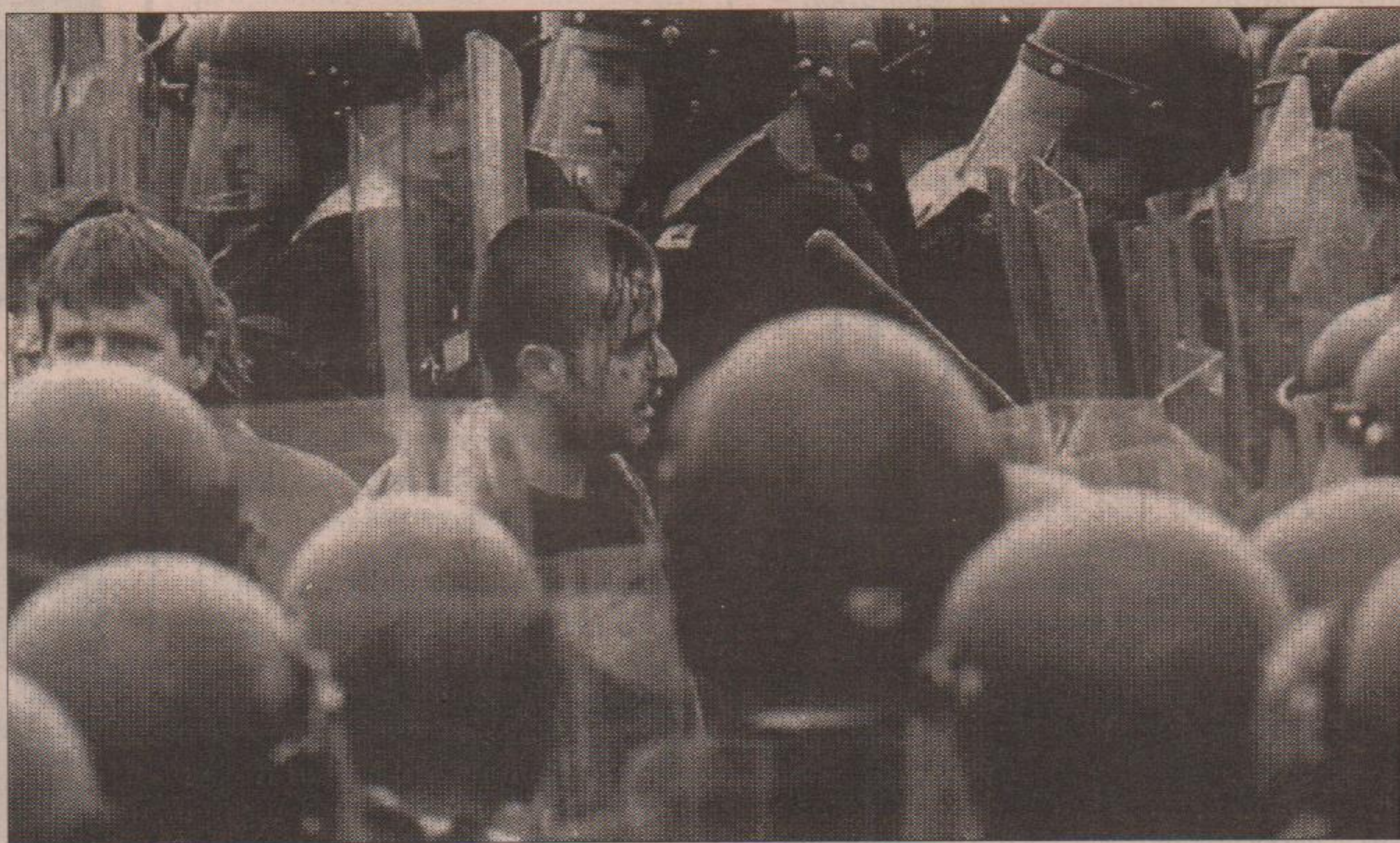
British troops stood exposed not as "neutral" peacekeepers, but as a force of occupation, with a licence to shoot-to-kill. They stood empowered to crush Catholic nationalist resistance to the regime of Loyalist privilege at Stormont and the continuing partition of the six counties from the rest of Ireland.

Turning point

Bloody Sunday marked a turning point in the Irish struggle. For thousands of working class Catholics in the Bogside and West Belfast, the lesson was clear: passive protest could not succeed. Support grew dramatically for the Irish Republican Army as the sole force that appeared committed to defending the nationalist ghettos against both Loyalist reaction and the armed might of the British state.

The British state has consistently sought to cover up the truth of what took place in Derry 25 years ago. None of the soldiers involved in gunning down the demonstrators ever faced prosecution. The Widgery Inquiry's report into the events was nothing more than a whitewash. Subsequent attempts by the relatives of Bloody Sunday's victims to reopen the investigation have been treated with contempt by the Major government.

For 50 years prior to Bloody Sunday, the nationalist population of the north east of Ireland



Drumcree, July 1996: RUC batters opposition to Orange bigots.

had endured the oppression of life under a "Protestant state for a Protestant people". Twenty-five years later, despite the so-called peace process, many of the fundamental facts about the six counties remain the same:

- Catholics are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as Protestants and continue to live in the worst housing.
- The Royal Ulster Constabulary remains a bastion of sectarianism. More than 90% of its officers are Protestant. It is still prepared to batter unarmed nationalist demon-

strators to make way for Orange marchers, as was so clearly shown at Drumcree in July last year.

- Above all, some 18,000 British troops remain in the six counties. The British forces maintain 55 installations in Belfast and its outskirts alone. Their role has not really changed at all in 25 years. The Paras can still practice a shoot-to-kill policy against unarmed civilians, as the families of murdered Belfast joyriders learned when backbench Tories and the British media connived

to secure the release of Private Lee Clegg after his conviction for their killings.

The British labour movement has an abysmal record when it comes to supporting the victims of British imperialism's actions in Ireland. Much of the British left would prefer that the "Irish question" disappeared from

view under the guise of a bogus peace process. The largest organisation on the far left, the Socialist Workers Party, has effectively boycotted the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration in recent years, despite its paper position of "Troops Out Now".

Enough

This is not good enough. While the press still howl about IRA "outrages", the real outrage is that Ireland's right to self-determination remains blocked by the undemocratic veto of the Protestants, a minority in the island of Ireland.

And as the recent events at Ballymena show, the Loyalists are prepared to burn Catholic schools and homes and terrorise Catholic families to maintain their veto.

The country remains divided, part of it occupied by an imperialist army. Until we get the troops out there can be no just peace in Ireland, no just solution to the national question.

We urge all socialists and consistent democrats to join and build for this year's march and rally to mark the 25th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. ■

ASSEMBLE:

**Highbury Fields, Islington, London N5
12 noon, Saturday 25 January**

Nearest tube: Highbury and Islington, Victoria Line.

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