

workers POWER

INSIDE

Three-page special report on the London elections - where next for left unity?

PAGES 4, 5 AND 6

Straw and Hague's racist rhetoric stirs a far right backlash - page 2

Asylum seekers welcome here!



ZIMBABWE

Zanu-PF clings to power

Unions must organise self-defence against mob rule

INTERNATIONAL PAGE 8

IRAN

Reform clerics win election

But conservatives plot a coup

INTERNATIONAL PAGE 9

CAR INDUSTRY

It's a global auto melt-down

Car workers need cross-border links to resist wave of shutdowns

FIGHTBACK PAGE 3

Get your weekly Workers Power!

Sign up for our weekly e-mail newswire. Turn to page 16

ELECTIONS

Labour gets a bloody nose, now break with Blairism

Working class voters snubbed Tony Blair's New Labour at the 4 May elections, delivering the Tories more than 500 new council seats and electing left-wing rebel Ken Livingstone as London mayor.

The message could not be clearer. Workers are sick of Blair's Tory policies. They are sick of Labour's inaction as industrial jobs are destroyed. They are sick of Labour's hypocrisy in cutting aid to Third World countries. They are sick

of Labour's ballot-rigging in local elections from Wales to London. They are sick of the Chancellor, who has billions to spend but refuses to release money to meet transport, health and education needs.

The message to Labour and trade union activists who hate the Tories but have tolerated - and campaigned for - Blair is also clear: break with Blairism or Labour could lose the next election.

Blair's political strategy is based on anti-working class arrogance: "However badly we betray the Labour heartlands they will vote for us like so many sheep come election day". But the Livingstone result - and the 88,000 who voted for socialist candidates in the London Assembly elections - show that an alternative is possible.

We need a socialist alternative to New Labour. Livingstone himself is not that. But the London Socialist Alliance

campaign showed what could be achieved. Activists linked up with dissident Labour members, trade unionists, council tenants and community groups in a campaign that will not stop after the election.

Blair himself could not care less if Labour's vote is hammered. What he wants, in the end, is a coalition with the liberals and a decisive break from Labour's links to the working class - after all, Blair is on record as saying

Labour should never have been formed as a workers' party.

Labour should be warned. The London campaign shows that the left can take tens of thousands of votes from Labour in its heartlands.

Workers are sick of New Labour. Lets organise a real socialist alternative before Blair brings electoral disaster.

■ For full coverage of the elections and where next for the LSA - turn to pages 4-6.

IN BRIEF

Stop the Unison witch-hunt

In April Unison officially confirmed the expulsion of two long-standing union activists, Candy Udwin and Dave Carr. Candy, Unison branch secretary at University College London Hospital (UCLH), and Dave, the branch chair, had faced internal disciplinary action for leading resistance to the Private Finance Initiative.

Candy and Dave urged UCLH workers to strike against PFI, which union officials claimed would have put them in breach of the law. This gave Unison's bureaucracy the excuse to go for them as part of the witch-hunt of left activists.

The disciplinary hearing was a mockery of justice. The chair of the panel threw them out when they insisted on their right to tape record the proceedings.

A letter from a national Unison official threatened action against any "branch, region or service group" that offered "resources, facilities or monies" to the campaign.

At Unison's national conference in June, all activists committed to union democracy and a real fight against PFI must rally in support of Candy and Dave. This means pushing emergency resolutions through branch committees opposing both the expulsions and the leadership's attempt to stifle all opposition. It also means using the series of planned fringe meetings against the witch-hunt to lay the basis for defiance of the latest edict from Unison HQ, while ensuring that no branch is left to resist alone.

Candy and Dave Defence Campaign, c/o Sandy Nicoll, chair SOAS Unison, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG, tel/fax: 020 7322 1162.

General strike in Norway!

85,000 members of Norway's 300,000-strong LO union federation walked out on strike against private sector bosses on 3 May. The indefinite action came after workers rejected a 3.5 per cent pay offer. The strike has hit the country's newspapers, ferries and, crucially, its oil industry. Oil is Norway's biggest export earner and turning off the supplies from the massive offshore fields would secure a quick victory.

Pay has lagged behind, while company profits have soared. LO members have a great chance to tear up the new Labour government's policy of wage restraint. Militant action to picket out other LO members could also start to shake the cosy relationship between their union leaders and the Stoltenberg government.

Further information from the LO website: <http://www.lo.no>.

CONTENTS

Fightback	2-7
International	8-11
Theory & Practice	12-15
Where We Stand	16

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Fight the racist backlash

IN THE early hours of the Mayday bank holiday a group of three white males set upon a 24-year-old black man in Birmingham's Northfield district. They shouted racist abuse as they doused him with petrol and set him alight, causing serious burns to his face and right arm.

This attack, which the police readily agreed was racially motivated, is just one among hundreds in the past nine months in Britain's second largest city. The Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit (BRAMU) has recorded a doubling in its caseload of racist attacks since August 1999 from 120 to 240.

The surge in racist violence with a clear intent to kill or maim has hardly been confined to Birmingham. From Margate to Merseyside, recent weeks have seen a spate of arson attacks and brutal beatings.

Maxi Hayles, a BRAMU spokesperson, has no doubt that the crucial factor fuelling the dramatic rise in racist violence is the cynical war of words and deeds waged against asylum seekers by the nation's leading politicians.

Hayles told the Guardian that "William Hague trumping up emotive language like 'flooding' and 'bogus' doesn't help". He went on to suggest that the politicians' rhetoric has "given [them - racist thugs] the green light".

Tory leader Hague has seized on the asylum question with zeal, weighing in behind his shadow Home Secretary, Anne Widdecombe. He has gone even further with his repeated call to corral asylum seekers in detention centres in their thousands - concentration camps by any other name.

Hague has dropped his brief and utterly fake pose as a champion of diversity and tolerance within a suddenly enlightened Tory party, in favour of pandering to its racist core. He has signalled that he will not confine playing of the race card to the issue of asylum seekers, but will attack "politically correct race

awareness courses" for the police.

Hague appeared before a live television audience on 30 April, where he raked up chilling memories of Margaret Thatcher's infamous interview when she objected to the "swamping" of British culture by immigrants. Responding to a question from an anxious audience member, Hague said: "We should use words properly with their full meaning and their true meaning. The dictionary definition of a flood is a flow that is out of control."

The Tory leader's calculated attempt to fan the flames of racist hatred might be dismissed as the rantings of a desperate politician under attack in his own party and seemingly incapable of making a dent in New Labour's national opinion poll lead. But this would ignore a crucial fact: Hague is only ploughing more deeply in a furrow opened by New Labour.

Rather than challenging the lies about refugees retailed by the tabloid press, New Labour ministers have repeatedly echoed them. From Mike O'Brien through Lord Bassam and now Barbara Roche, Labour's Home Office ministers with the immigration brief, have used the very same vocabulary as Hague and Widdecombe.

The word "bogus" to modify the phrase "asylum seeker" has time and again passed Jack Straw's lips. The Home Secretary applauded as he watched the immigration service's sniffer dogs seek out desperate men who had stowed away amid the cargo of long-haul lorries.

Government spokespersons positively boast about the draconian regime to deter refugees which became law in November 1999. Appearing on the BBC's election special following the recent local elections, David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, replied to a question about the impact on the results in places like Basildon of the Hague campaign against asylum seekers. His response spoke volumes.

On the one hand, Blunkett rightly

accused the Tories of seeking to deceive pensioners about the benefits received by asylum seekers from the British state. He then went on to state with some relish that Labour had, in fact, taken away virtually all benefits from asylum seekers and placed them on a humiliating voucher scheme that barely affords them subsistence.

In sharp contrast, the same David Blunkett earlier in the week had announced the introduction of a revamped work permit system to expedite entry of certain types of highly trained workers into Britain from south Asia and eastern Europe. The reason behind this move is simple: there are acute skills shortages in certain parts of engineering, information technology and health care in Britain. The government is following the examples already set by the USA and Germany to fill those vacancies.

This measure highlights the fact that the immigration controls of both Britain and all other European Union states are not only racist but contain a deeply ingrained element of class hatred against those with few marketable skills and little money.

While constantly casting doubt on the integrity of people who have often suffered the most hideous physical and psychological torture, both New Labour and the Tories are sending out the message that if you are poor, whether you come from sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America or a Roma ghetto in the Czech republic you are not welcome here.

Of course, the likes of Hague seek to justify their overtly racist remarks by claiming that if the British state does not pursue his remedies for the "problem" the National Front and other fascist organisations will grow. In fact, the behaviour of senior Tories and New Labour ministers has only served to foster an atmosphere where the extreme right could begin to enjoy a much improved prospect for renewed growth.

The 4 May elections showed that

the fascist right has not gone away. Its largest component, the British National Party (BNP) captured over seven per cent of the vote for its top-up list in the City and East constituency for the Greater London Assembly. Another of its council candidates in a ward in the West Midlands town of Sandwell gained nearly a quarter of the vote.

The Liberal Democrats have attacked both the Tories and New Labour over their appalling racist record. But the record of their own councillors, especially in the East London borough of Tower Hamlets, shows that they are only too ready to pander to racist sentiments for electoral advantage.

Socialists must join with anti-racist activists and all genuine democrats in order to rouse the labour movement against state racism. With the recent exception of outgoing TGWU general secretary, Bill Morris, the union tops have been entirely silent on the asylum question. We need to seize on Morris' long overdue criticism of the government to push the TUC into calling a national demonstration in defence of asylum rights.

Meanwhile, at a local level in our workplaces and neighbourhoods, socialists must be countering the lies peddled by the press and politicians alike.

- Mobilise to smash racist and fascist demonstrations off the streets
- Support the right to community self-defence against racist and fascist attacks
- Scrap the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act and all immigration controls.

Rally to Defend Asylum Seekers with speakers including Tony Benn MP, Wednesday 24 May, 7.30 pm, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London WC1 (nearest station: King's Cross).

TEACHERS

Now build for strike action

THE KEY question at the recent National Union of Teachers' (NUT) conference was whether there will be a strike against the government's plans to introduce performance-related pay (PRP).

Last year the leadership were keen to support calls for action. They then went away and "negotiated" with the government, achieved no concessions whatsoever but still refused to call any action. So delegates arrived at Harrogate wanting some answers.

The mood of anger was further stoked by General Secretary Doug McAvoy sending out a letter to all union members on the eve of conference telling them that it was OK to apply for extra PRP!

The executive tried to hijack the conference by bringing five of their own priority resolutions, which pushed motions brought by local associations off the agenda, and by inviting six speakers to



take up more conference time and limit debate.

When the announcement came that

Estelle Morris, New Labour education minister, was about to address the conference, many delegates had finally had enough. A walk-out was organised and 250 delegates left the hall to attend an alternative meeting. The chanting and clapping at this rally was so loud that the microphone had to be turned up for those who stayed to hear Morris' attempt to justify Labour's attacks on teachers and comprehensive education.

Despite the leadership's manoeuvres, an amended motion calling for a one-day strike against PRP was finally debated and carried on a card vote with a

23,000 majority on the last morning of conference. But the drama was not over.

As the count took place and before the result was known, Doug McAvoy stood up to make his closing speech. To gasps and cries of shame, he candidly announced that, whatever the result, he would not support a strike. This blatant contempt for union democracy comes as no surprise from McAvoy, who has consistently ignored conference policy and attempted to restrict the power and frequency of the national conference.

But his statement of intent should serve notice to all NUT militants that we will have to organise and fight hard to secure a "yes" vote in the ballot. We know that the vast majority of teachers oppose PRP and many want effective action against its introduction. But McAvoy will use all his authority and the union machine to argue against a strike. Rank and file activists will need to organise in the schools, calling reps' meetings and ensuring every union member hears the arguments for strike action.

The government is determined to introduce PRP because it knows this will divide teachers, undermine our collective strength and seriously weaken any resistance to Labour's anti-working class education policies. The scale of the government's attack and its determination to carry it through means that strike action is absolutely vital if we are to defeat PRP.

Auto industry in global crisis

THE CRISIS in the auto industry is global and we need a global answer. Some union leaders at BMW colluded with management plans to shut Rover.

Meanwhile union leaders at Rover are colluding with their former bosses in a plan that will "save" Rover at the expense of 3,000 jobs. And in South Korea workers' leaders are looking for national solutions to the jobs threat.

None of these solutions will work. Lining up with our own bosses never does. The starting point for a global

industry in crisis has to be nationalisation of the threatened firms with no compensation, under workers' control.

But globalisation in the car industry means that even that can only be the starting point. Unless we adopt an international strategy, successful struggles in one country will only export the problem to another.

That is why Workers Power is calling for an international conference of car industry militants. Many militants in the auto-workers' unions relate via the

Transnational Information Exchange - an NGO that shadows the multinationals. There are also "combines" in some multinational companies - but where tolerated these are often co-opted by management.

We need an international cross-company rank and file committee to co-ordinate action and draw up a workers' answer to the car industry meltdown. The first step is to get a car union body to issue an official call. To get involved write to the address on page 16 or email auto@workerspower.com.

FORD

THE CLOCK is ticking fast for workers at Ford's Dagenham complex. There are again reports that mass production will stop at Dagenham with the end of the current Fiesta model in 2001. Management were due to announce the plant's fate as we went to press.

So serious is the threat that Tony Blair has already had crisis talks with Jac Nasser, head of Ford's global operations, begging him not to end car assembly at the plant. At the same time other government officials have met leaders of the car unions telling them not to take industrial action over the threat but instead to do everything possible to boost production.

The reason for this potential meltdown in the British car industry is simple, a classic case of overproduction. Virtually all car manufacturers have been involved in a dizzying series of mergers and take-overs in recent years and are now desperate to "rationalise" their capacity - in other words, to close plants and sack workers in their tens of thousands.

Ford has three major continental European plants in Genk, Cologne and Valencia, as well as controlling Volvo and Jaguar. In the meantime it has continued to slash jobs and cut production at Dagenham. Since the heyday of

Fight Dagenham closure

the Cortina in the 1970s and the Sierra in the 1980s, the plant has failed to launch new models and is now left with only the old Fiesta and its light van version.

Despite making £4.5 billion in global profits, in Europe Ford's return was a mere £17 million on a turnover of £18 billion - from the bosses' point of view something drastic had to be done.

In order to maximise profits, plants with low levels of productivity and churning out uncompetitive models must be eliminated. Precisely for this reason Dagenham is in the firing line, regardless of the impact on workers' lives locally and throughout East London and Essex.

Productivity at Dagenham, while substantially higher in recent years, still lags behind its European counterparts. Similarly, while shopfloor conflict between workers and bosses is not as sharp as in the past, there have still been repeated disputes over racism and bullying.

There are several other reasons why

Dagenham is especially at risk. For virtually all of them the blame can be laid at the door of New Labour. The government has done virtually nothing to change the employment laws introduced by the Tories. This means that it is cheaper to employ workers in the UK and they can be sacked at around half the cost of their European counterparts.

Equally, the decisions to transfer control of interest rates to the Bank of England and the failure to join the Euro have maintained a strong pound. The knock-on effect of this is that British models are 20 per cent more expensive and local dealers are facing a de facto consumer boycott.

London's newly elected mayor, Ken Livingstone, has declared that securing the future of car assembly at Dagenham will be his immediate "top priority". But his only answer seems to consist of reducing interest rates to cut the high exchange rate for sterling. There is every possibility that Livingstone will simply become the cheerleader for another cap-

italist's bid to "save" Dagenham.

Given the closure threat, the union response has been worse than useless. Just as at Longbridge, where union officials have channelled all their members' activities into supporting the Phoenix bid for Rover, they have failed to rally the workforce for a fight with management.

For several years the full-time bureaucrats of the TGWU and AEEU have repeatedly acted to undermine shop floor resistance to speed-ups and redundancies.

The bosses' hand has been strengthened in seeking to divide and rule the workforce. Ford will reportedly offer "generous" redundancy payments of up to £55,000 to some workers in the hope of buying off resistance. Management may also dangle the carrot of continued engine production in front of skilled workers at the strategic Dagenham foundry. At the same time, however, Ford have gobbled up diesel engine capacity from the carve-up of Rover.

Union leaders like the GMB's John

Edmonds and the TGWU's Tony Woodley continually complain that they aren't being treated fairly. Edmonds, in particular, makes no bones about the fact that the Germans are helping "their" workers whereas the British government won't intervene.

While it is true that it is British plants that are currently being targeted, any attempt to solve the problem by appealing to nationalist sentiment is doomed to failure. Under the present system if "British" jobs are saved (doubtless on the basis of still more concessions to Ford's bosses), the axe will simply fall elsewhere.

Either way the bosses win and the remaining workers will be told to accept ever worsening conditions so that the same thing doesn't happen to them.

To defeat a global manufacturer, international action is necessary. Any attempt to close a plant or lay off workers should result in an immediate occupation. This should be coupled with the demand for the nationalisation of the company's property, without compensation and placed under workers' control.

Workers in other plants should refuse any attempt to make cars previously manufactured elsewhere. Any victimisations as a result of such a refusal must lead to all out strike action.

ROVER

Nationalise Rover!

UNLESS ROVER workers launch industrial action in the next few weeks, thousands of jobs will be lost. All the alternatives under discussion involve mass redundancies at Longbridge and its suppliers. Jobs at Cowley in Oxford are also under threat.

BMW - now in deep trouble as it battles to keep a position in the cut-throat global car market - is desperate to offload the "English Patient". None of its promises can be believed, as the events around the sale have shown.

Despite early talk of nationalisation, the union leadership, led by the full time official Tony Woodley of the Transport and General Workers Union, has concentrated on the "Phoenix" consortium bid. The union leaders are calling for the Labour government to pump public funds into this bid. Woodley has sat alongside top boss Towers in meetings with the government and BMW repre-

sentatives.

The local leadership has also gone down this road. Together with local "community" historian Carl Chinn, Works Committee members have organised rallies, protests, delegations to BMW at Munich - all to support Towers. Effectively the national and local leaders have acted as outriders for Towers, a man who when boss at Longbridge, dreamed up the job-cutting "Rover Tomorrow" agreement, and who was happy to leave the company with a large pay out.

This reliance on Towers is disastrous. Even if the bid succeeds, there will be thousands of redundancies. Already Towers has modified the original plans, meaning there will be at least 3,000 redundancies and most likely more. Without new models the future is uncertain.

The longer the wait, the more the delay in launching any effective action.

Tony Woodley and the leadership of the Works Committee openly argue that no action should be taken which might frighten off an alternative buyer.

A handful of Rover workers and supporters have continued to argue for action now. Workers Power is working with others in the Rover Action Committee, to fight for occupation and nationalisation.

The only way forward that gives any chance of defending all the jobs is militant resistance, in particular occupation, to stop the sell-off.

Another vital demand is for all the books and accounts to be opened so workers can see what BMW has gained from research and development, and what the truth is about the threat to redundancy pay and pensions.

SOUTH AFRICA

Support sacked strikers

AT THE VW car plant in Uitenhage, South Africa, 1,300 workers remain sacked after a strike last year. The strike was to defend 13 shop stewards who were expelled from the trade union NUMSA after leading unofficial action in defiance of the bureaucracy.

Since the mass sackings, workers remaining at the factory have refused to train strike-breakers brought in to replace the sacked workers.

The dispute started after NUMSA officials negotiated a deal with VW bringing back a six day working week, cutting breaks by half an hour.

Binisile Mzeku, one of the sacked workers, described conditions while on a solidarity trip to German unions:

"It is not allowed for more than three to stand together, otherwise it is regarded as an illicit meeting. Three young workers have already been sacked by VW for this reason. Two workers [from other car plants] in the leadership of the VW workers Solidarity Committee were also immediately sacked."

"Taken as a whole, working conditions are worse now than they were under the apartheid regime," said Mzeku.

80,000 marched last month to save Rover - but faith in rival capitalists is misplaced



SOUTH KOREA

ACROSS SOUTH Korea's four big auto manufacturers 80,000 workers launched a wave of strikes last month, including two one day strikes and a mass rally in Seoul.

The strikes were called in protest at plans to sell car giant Daewoo to a foreign buyer - either General Motors or Ford. Workers fear that tens of thousands of jobs will be lost if the sale goes through. The militant union federation KCTU is calling for a government commission to be set up to investigate alternatives to the sell off.

In response the government cracked down hard. On 25 April more than one

hundred battle-dressed police raided the office of the Daewoo Motors Workers' Union arresting 20 union leaders and activists who had set up a 24-hour strike co-ordination in the building.

Seven remain in prison and will be charged with a variety of public order offences.

KCTU is planning a general strike of all its affiliates for May 31, 2000 - for higher wages, shorter working hours, trade union rights for public servants, a social welfare system, ending the conglomerate (chaebol) company system, and consultation with the unions over any restructuring.

New Labour's su

IN LONDON the dust has settled on the hypersensitive computers and the final curtain has fallen on the political career of New Labour's sacrificial goat, Frank Dobson.

Ken Livingstone scored a clear victory in the contest to become London's first directly elected mayor. The much longed for bloody nose for Blair was duly delivered on the morning of 5 May.

Livingstone managed his victory without a party machine and in the teeth of increasingly vicious opposition from every daily tabloid. The traditional Labour paper, the *Mirror*, threw its weight behind the Tories' Steve Norris in

its sorry attempt to upset the Livingstone bandwagon.

Dobson, the Labour candidate by virtue of a cynical selection fix, slumped to third in the 11-strong field, with barely 13 per cent of the poll. This is a very welcome outcome. No one should fall for the "poor Dobbo" line the media have been spinning. The man is a former axeman in the NHS (as Secretary for Health) closing Guys hospital's A&E department despite promising to keep it open.

He doesn't have a shred of honour. He stood despite the clear opposition of the overwhelming majority of London's

Labour Party members and affiliated trade unionists voting against him. He was a militant Blairite, not a hapless victim of political chicanery.

The stitch-up alienated both Labour Party activists, who boycotted the London campaign, and hundreds of thousands of historic Labour voters who cast their votes for Ken. In Dobson's own Holborn and St Pancras parliamentary constituency, one Labour Party branch chair was seen on his way to vote wearing a "Livingstone for London" badge.

Elsewhere across England, the contests for 3,300 seats in 152 councils

attracted few voters and revealed a dramatic erosion in support for New Labour. The overall turnout in England fell well below 30 per cent and was barely a third in the capital, even with the high-profile mayoral race. Meanwhile, Labour's estimated share of the vote plunged to 29 per cent as working class voters in their droves felt that the buoyant economy in some regions was no reason to give thanks to Blair at the polls.

There was decisive evidence that the supposed Blairite spell over the electorate had been broken. The 4 May results do not prove that Tony Blair will

LSA Socialist campaign links with

LONDON SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

THE LONDON Socialist Alliance (LSA) started with zero per cent. It ended the campaign with 46,530 votes in the constituencies and 27,073 for its all-London list.

This was a tremendous achievement. It is living proof that thousands of workers are searching for an alternative to Blairism. It meant that instead of staying at home workers, especially in London's Labour heartlands, felt that they could endorse a radical challenge to capitalism in London.

The LSA stood candidates in all 14 GLA constituencies and a top-up list of 11 more. Workers Power played a very active and enthusiastic role throughout the LSA's campaign. Kate Ford, a supporter of Workers Power, stood as one of the list candidates.

Ken Livingstone's decision to stand as an independent after Labour's rigged selection buoyed morale and offered the possibility of a significant electoral breakthrough to the left of Labour. In the eyes of many workers here was somebody finally prepared to stand up to Blair's control freakery and defend their interests against the fat cat bosses, the racist police and the bureaucratic council, school and hospital bosses.

Livingstone himself, foolishly and in a way that definitely reduced the size of his majority, placed the greatest possible distance between himself and the LSA. He savagely attacked the LSA itself on a Newsnight programme at the beginning of the campaign. He then went on to abusively lambast senior figures in the Labour Party who indicated to him that they were prepared to leave it and publicly back both him and the LSA.

Despite Livingstone's own sectarian (motivated by an opportunist desire to paint himself as a "Londoner" candidate rather than as a socialist candidate)



LSA candidates out campaigning

behaviour, the LSA retained its position of calling for a vote for Livingstone. But we did not tie our own campaign to Ken's. Instead we launched a lively, imaginative and energetic campaign. There were the traditional election tasks of leafleting and canvassing to be done, but the LSA went beyond these and showed what a real fighting, working class election campaign can achieve.

At every opportunity the LSA placed itself alongside workers in struggle: inviting strikers to address election meetings, visiting picket lines and raising support in other unions. Firefighters, car workers, train drivers saw the importance of solidarity from the LSA. One excellent example was the support given by the LSA to victimised train drivers' safety representative, Sarah Friday.

Bureaucratic obstacles made it difficult to win official trade union support for the LSA. Although some key sections

of workers including postal workers, firefighters and teachers voted to support the LSA. The campaign also highlighted to many activists the deeply undemocratic character of the existing union political funds and the need to change the rule that only allows the political fund to go to Labour.

MSF London members were debarred from voting in the selection of the Labour Party candidate for mayor. But that didn't stop their officials giving Dobson the right to use MSF offices across London during the campaign.

In Unison wholly unaccountable officials decided to donate £5,000 to Dobson's doomed campaign - even after members paying into Unison's political fund had voted more than two to one for Livingstone.

Labour's GLA candidates, backed by Unison, included several who were directly responsible for attacks on jobs,

terms and conditions of Unison members. In one instance the local LSA candidate and long-standing Unison militant, Candy Udwin, faced the personnel manager from her workplace. In London North East Cecilia Prosper stood against Islington councillor, Meg Hillier, who was a key member of an administration that sacked her. A subsequent tribunal found that Cecilia had been the victim of both race and sex discrimination.

The LSA campaign included protests outside the Labour Party's £600 a plate centenary dinner and at Sainsbury's supermarkets in two areas over the chain's role in the "no change" voucher scheme for asylum seekers. There was also a demonstration outside the headquarters of Alchemy, the asset strippers who then looked poised to drive the final nails into Rover's coffin.

The LSA brought together tenants' association activists, campaigners against

police murders, nursery campaigners and many more, who shared their experiences of struggle. Kate Ford speaking about the meetings she addressed all over London said:

"Everyone who spoke told us about their experience of fighting against New Labour. But you didn't hear demoralisation or disappointment in their voices, only the commitment and enthusiasm to carry on the fight. At one meeting a pensioner held up her bus pass and said 'Here's my weapon against New Labour. I'm going to use this to get to every street, every estate I can to make sure people hear about the LSA'. For me, that summed up the spirit of the campaign."

While the other parties seemed to be staying at home, the LSA's double-decker battle bus rolled through London streets on four consecutive weekends. An old vehicle was used to deliver a new message to voters - that there is a socialist alternative to New Labour. The response was quite amazing. One LSA campaigner commented:

"When they saw the battle bus, people took leaflets and wanted to know what all the fuss was about. When they heard about LSA's policies like no privatisation of hospitals, schools and the tube, their faces lit up. It was as if finally someone was standing up for all the things that they believed in."

The new-born LSA's electoral performance (see table) was a real achievement. Indeed, in two constituencies, the Alliance saved its deposits, scoring an impressive 8,269 votes in the London North East constituency and 6,231 in Lambeth and Southwark.

The two candidates who chalked up the LSA's highest scores were both young, dynamic black women, fighting an election amidst a vile racist campaign against asylum seekers waged by New

THE LSA'S ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE

Constituency	Number of Votes	Percentage (of votes cast)
Barnet and Camden	3,488	2.8%
Bexley and Bromley	1,403	1.0%
Brent and Harrow	2,546	2.6%
City and East	3,908	4.0%
Croydon and Sutton	1,823	1.5%
Ealing and Hillingdon	2,977	2.5%
Enfield and Haringey	3,671	3.4%
Greenwich and Lewisham	3,981	4.2%
Havering and Redbridge	1,744	1.6%
Lambeth and Southwark	6,231	6.2%
Merton and Wandsworth	1,450	1.3%
North East	8,269	7.0%
South West	2,319	1.7%
West Central	2,720	2.6%

Total vote: 46,530; London-wide percentage in constituencies: 3.0%; List vote: 27,073, 1.6%.

Learning the les

At one stage of the campaign the LSA had serious hopes of winning a GLA seat. Despite a virtual media blackout about the GLA election in general and our campaign in particular, the dedication and energy of its supporters ensured that the LSA had the most visible campaign of any organisation fighting the election.

London was awash with LSA posters, leaflets, stickers and balloons.

The failure to capture an assembly platform for socialist ideas and the building of resistance to both Blairism and

Livingstone's impending betrayals is a real disappointment. This partly stemmed from widespread confusion and ignorance about a new electoral system among voters steeped in the tradition of first past the post.

The identification of the Greens as a radical alternative to the three main capitalist parties with a real shot of winning seats spurred more than a tenth of the electorate London-wide to opt for their GLA candidates. They also benefited from the endorsement "Red" Ken, a man who claimed to have been in emotional tur-

ppport collapses

be a one-term prime minister, but they did drop a strong hint that the New Labour government could be suffering from something much more severe than a bout of the "mid-term blues".

They showed a growing distrust of New Labour among the working class, an as yet passive political shift away from Blairism. But this distrust can be turned into organised opposition in the years ahead, opposition that can lay the basis for a real socialist alternative to Blair and Labour.

Long-standing Labour bastions such as Burnley, Oldham and Hartlepool fell. Symbolically important councils

including Basildon (Essex) and Worcester are also no longer under Labour control. Major cities such as Liverpool and Sheffield saw the Liberal Democrats strengthen their control over the local authorities, even as the Tories captured Solihull in the West Midlands. This marked the Tories' first council-wide victory in a metropolitan authority since 1995.

In the capital, Labour - after winning some 49 per cent of the poll at the May 1997 general election - saw its share drop to just over 30 per cent. This tally barely exceeded the Tories' and Labour nearly failed to gain parity with the

Conservatives in seats on the Greater London Assembly (GLA).

All these results taken together should serve as a wake-up call to the trade union bureaucracy as a whole, which has maintained an effective non-aggression pact with New Labour. This has been a major factor in underpinning the prolonged lull in industrial class struggle since May 1997.

Now, however, the party the unions help to bankroll to the tune of millions a year is vulnerable to its left and could even fail to secure a second term.

The genuine crisis in the Greater London Labour Party, with national

repercussions, that arose from the Millbank apparatus' tireless efforts to block a Livingstone candidacy helped create a much enlarged space to New Labour's left. The Blairites' nakedly pro-boss policies, social authoritarianism and promotion of popular racism are incensing a wide swathe of Labour's core electorate.

The task now is to build on that and ensure that Blair's defeat doesn't turn into a renaissance for either the Tories or the fascists, but rather a starting point for building the fightback against New Labour in the run-up to the next general election.

LIVINGSTONE IN OFFICE

Whatever the deficiencies of the LSA's programme, which *Workers Power* has previously detailed, it was vital for the LSA to secure a substantial vote on 4 May - not least because Ken Livingstone became London mayor. Livingstone's performance both during the campaign and in the brief time since his election as mayor has brought home how vital a coherent, well-organised opposition will be in the coming period. He may have peppered interviews with *The Face* and *New Musical Express* with radical remarks about barring the World Trade Organisation from meeting in London and the murderous record of the International Monetary Fund, but at the end of the day he bent over backwards to lower workers' expectations of him and to placate the City's bankers.

During the campaign, Livingstone not only endorsed the Greens' slate, but offered the transport portfolio in his administration to Steven Norris, a supporter of tube privatisation. Ken looks determined to build a new version of the cross-party, popular front for the good of London's "common interests".

But what are these "common interests"? In terms of wealth London is now one of the most polarised cities in the western world between extremes of conspicuous consumption and dire poverty. Writing in the *Evening Standard* on the day after his election victory, Livingstone notes that "London contains Europe's financial centre and some of the UK's poorest boroughs. The job of the mayor is to represent all London".

This is a circle that cannot be squared. Ironically, when Livingstone writes in *The Guardian* that he and New Labour "share common goals" even if they differ "on some issues on how to

RACIST POLITICIANS FUEL FASCIST VOTE

The local elections provided a timely warning to the left that the cynicism and despair among sections of the unemployed and "socially excluded" can be channelled in other directions than towards a socialist alternative to New Labour.

The performance of the British National Party (BNP) in the City and East constituency, where it captured 7.1 per cent of the vote for its top-up list, was a sharp reminder that the fascist right hasn't disappeared from the scene.

The offensive against asylum seekers waged by New Labour and the Tories alike is creating an atmosphere in which the appeal of fascist scum like the BNP could grow - especially in the context of the threat to close to Ford's Dagenham complex and throw thousands of workers on to the scrap heap.

While the BNP were invisible in most areas throughout the campaign, their share of the top-up vote was significant. In the West Midlands two fascist candidates gained more than 15 per cent of the poll, with a BNPer chalking up nearly a quarter of the votes in Sandwell's Tipton Green ward.

This means that the struggle to build the socialist alternative must also become a struggle to smash the fascists (the BNP and the National Front) with militant action. No platform for fascists must be turned from a slogan into a reality every time they try to meet, march or sell.

workers' struggles



LSA election battlebus



Candy Udwin: Personnel manager from her workplace was rival Labour candidate

Labour and the Tories alike. We can take pride in this and in the fact that only the LSA candidates among all the lists standing began to reflect the ethnic diversity of London's working class.

In addition, the LSA was the sole consistent and unambiguous voice across London that spoke out for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers and against the racism of New Labour's Home Office and immigration controls generally.

Certainly, the widespread perception, reinforced by Livingstone, of the Greens as a "left of Labour" alternative, along with the plethora of candidates on the ballot for top-up lists (see box) squeezed our list vote. But for an organisation that had only been in existence for a few months to gain seven per cent of the vote in some areas is impressive and shows the potential for a left alternative to New Labour.

The North East result left BBC anchor

David Dimbleby incredulous. Informed that "others", including the Greens, had gained a quarter of the constituency poll he exclaimed that there must be a mistake and so threw away the result.

We must also remember that hundreds of thousands of people who would ordinarily form the heart of an audience for a socialist election campaign did not even have a vote in the recent elections. Time and again, refugees and immigrant workers, and young people under 18 came up to us expressing their support, but explaining that they were disenfranchised by a grossly discriminatory electoral system.

In the coming period the LSA should mount a sustained campaign, not just in opposition to immigration controls but for voting and other citizenship rights for refugees and immigrants, as well as championing a reduction in the voting age to 16.

Tens of thousands more potential LSA voters and fighters for socialism had already been entitled to vote, but have either dropped off the electoral register, or become so cynical about the prospects for real change after the Tories and now three years of Blair that they abstain from voting altogether.

The LSA's fight around the GLA election was a welcome and long overdue intervention by the far left in the electoral arena from which it has been almost entirely absent for more than a generation. It showed that it was entirely possible for socialists from different and often conflicting traditions to work together in an honest and sustained fashion. But more importantly it began to give some kind of voice to the marginalised and dispossessed, along with those in the organised working class who are heartily fed up with the reality of New Labour in government.

sons of the list system

moil over his decision to choose expulsion from the Labour Party after 32 years. This too cost the LSA votes.

But in no small measure we did not capture a seat through the top-up list because of the incurable egotism and sectarianism of waning figures on the left of the union bureaucracy.

Tubeworkers' representative, Patrick Sikorski, a former member of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party (SLP), insisted on standing a list of candidates on the single issue of tube privatisation - the Campaign Against Tube

Privatisation (CATP). The LSA repeatedly sought an agreement for a joint slate with the CATP but to no avail. The CATP shamefully took a decision to reject any reference to socialism in their election material.

Scargill's SLP, though reduced to a bizarre personality cult, also stood a top-up list to further confuse matters, while veteran gay activist Peter Tatchell spurned the offer of standing with the LSA in favour of an eccentric one-man campaign.

As a result of the name recognition

factor and sympathy with his record of struggle, Tatchell captured nearly one and a half per cent of the vote. Less significant was the tired Stalinist Communist Party of Britain (Morning Star). But combined, this motley assortment of forces captured 3.7 per cent of the top-up vote.

There are, of course, times when it is absolutely essential to put principle above the call for unity on the left. But this was no such occasion. The self-indulgence of a very few cost the largest socialist bloc, with the most developed

programme, the chance of gaining at least one voice for the working class in the London Assembly.

One final element, though, that the LSA itself must learn from is the question of all-London campaigning. Early on the LSA adopted a ward structure to ensure that leafleting and canvassing was carried through efficiently. This electoralist method was important in getting the message across. But it was not enough - particularly given the media oriented campaigns of the other parties.

In fact we needed a far sharper London-wide profile with more stunts, demos and actions to put the LSA on the map - rather the telly. This would have had the advantage as well of

attracting people to the campaign who could then have been deployed to help out with the less glamorous side of campaigning.

In short, we need to remember that for socialists elections are a means to an end - getting the socialist message across and organising workers against the bosses and the capitalist system. In the next month it will be vital to discuss these, and other lessons, in borough meetings of the LSA that can take stock of the campaign, keep the activists mobilised and prepare for future struggles.

Now turn to page 6:
Where next for the LSA?

Where now for the LSA?

THE LONDON Socialist Alliance (LSA) showed how a coalition of far left groups, trade unionists, community activists and dissident Labour Party members can work together to challenge Labour at the polls.

Not surprisingly, this has provoked a discussion about left unity. It raises the question: what do we do with the LSA now?

To answer this we need an assessment of its political programme, the political projects of the participating groups, and the forces mobilised.

Programme: The LSA's programme was centrist. Workers Power put a draft of a revolutionary action programme to an early meeting, which was gutted of key transitional demands. During the campaign, as the Socialist Party went into crisis, and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) made the running, the demands were shortened to a list of radical reforms. What this meant was that the opportunity to take to a mass audience (more than 2 million leaflets were distributed door-to-door) the case for a government based on workers' councils was lost.

Workers Power did not walk away. We stayed inside the LSA convinced that we could gain a hearing for revolutionary politics, that we could take our own ideas to the mass audience, and that we could learn from the experience of working with militants in the unions, council estates and community groups who joined us in the campaign. All of this we did.

The left groups' strategies: Two broad strategies are clear within the groups involved in the LSA. The first sees the LSA as a small step in the fight for a new mass reformist workers' party – a rerun of Old Labour. This is backed by the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL). The AWL saw the LSA as a short term necessity to avoid isolation. It is likely that some of the ex-Labour activists involved see a mass reformist party as the goal too.

This idea is also being advanced by the Socialist Party, but during the course of the campaign this group went into crisis – split on whether or not to support the LSA list. Its leadership around Peter Taaffe was dead set against having anything to do with the LSA because of the presence of the SWP within it. Sections of its members opposed this line in practice. The organisation is in decline and on the verge of further splits.

The second strategy on offer was to build a permanent alliance in the shape of a federal party. Those Socialist Party members who back Tommy Sheridan's Scottish Socialist Party adhere to this line. So does Socialist Outlook (the British section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International). The Communist Party of Great Britain (Weekly Worker) holds to a version of this with their idea of a "rapprochement" of the left.

The SWP has yet to outline its own alternative. It is clear that many of their members – enthused by the LSA and the spirit of collaboration that dominated the campaign – want to unite the left on a more permanent basis through the LSA.

It is equally clear that some members and leaders of the SWP retain their long-standing sectarian instincts. They are deeply suspicious of opening the organisation up and had to be cajoled by the leadership majority into taking the election work seriously. The cajoling included the suspension of branch meetings for the duration of the campaign.

This tension in the SWP is not merely a matter of personal differences at



the top. It reflects a real debate about what to do next. At the moment the SWP has adopted an ambivalent holding position. It was spelled out by Chris Bambery:

"What we are witnessing is a realignment of the existing left accompanied by the emergence of a new left. The Socialist Workers Party would be happy to be a smaller goldfish in a much bigger bowl...But the Rover crisis also demonstrates that we need a party which can move quickly, as one, in building the 1 April demonstration...We have to place ourselves at the heart of a debate going on in the labour movement about whether to break with Labour or not."

What does this really mean? Being a smaller fish in a bigger bowl could mean pushing for an SSP-type federation along with various other groups and forces. But this is not what the SWP – despite being offered tendency rights within the SSP – is doing in Scotland. Rather it is maintaining its position that the SWP is "the party" capable of acting "as one".

In practice the SWP could well regard the LSA (and other alliances) as an electoral equivalent of the Anti-Nazi League. Just as that organisation gets wheeled on and off the political stage when deemed necessary by the central committee, so too could the LSA be brought out for elections but kept on ice between them. In the meantime the SWP could carry on building the party as normal. But that would be the wrong option. It would mean losing a valuable opportunity to break out now and intersect with the anti-Blair mood in the Labour heartlands demonstrated in the 4 May elections.

The forces mobilised: The LSA acted as a powerful pole of attraction for many reformist dissidents and leftists who ached to give Blair a bloody nose. But the paper support won by the LSA (almost 3,000 signed up to its supporters' list) did not generally translate into active members.

The bulk of the work was carried through by members of the left groups and the most committed Labour dissidents. Non-aligned individuals also played a key role, but there were tens of them rather than hundreds.

The LSA contains enormous potential – but that has not yet been transformed into the nucleus of a sizeable alternative party to Labour.

Part of the reason is timescale: the LSA was only launched two months ago.

But workers cannot join an "alliance" that has no membership structure.

Another reason for the LSA's failure to gain active recruits was its failure to seriously orient to youth. For many of the centrist groups and ex-Labour individuals, the huge task of election work proved the excuse to limit their activity to the treadmill of canvassing and leafletting. Only Workers Power and the SWP attempted a revolutionary intervention into the anarchist-led Mayday 2000 conference and the subsequent Mayday demo.

Despite the lack of mass active involvement, the LSA clearly found a resonance – on the doorsteps, in union branches and particularly among ethnic minority voters. It also received a warm reception at workplace meetings in for example the rail, bus and fire services and the colleges.

So what is the way forward? Do we want a new revolutionary party, an old style reformist party, a centrist fudge, a federation or a permanent "alliance"?

The task of the day is to build a revolutionary party. The reason for this is clear from the failure of reformism to take the working class one step forward over the last thirty years (never mind the last 100 years).

Reformism was incapable of defending past gains – the welfare state, union rights, jobs, wages and conditions – let alone extending them. All brands of reformism are flawed by one fundamental principle: the belief that capitalism itself is the framework within which the working class can advance towards social justice. It isn't. It is the principal obstacle to such advance and needs to be overthrown by revolution.

Secondly a mass reformist party would inevitably be built on the basis of winning elections. Workers want a party that can change things: and if you peddle the reformist solution you are inevitably on the road to tailoring your activity and your arguments to what wins votes.

A revolutionary party has to be prepared to stand against the stream: not just on asylum seekers but on all the issues that will be used by the tabloids to encourage electoral slaughter of the left once we mount a serious challenge.

But if fighting for a rerun of Old Labour is a dead end, so is the solution put forward by *Socialist Outlook*. The latest issue of *Outlook* attacks Workers

Power's fight for a revolutionary programme within the LSA. Alan Thornett writes: "To pretend that a revolutionary party can spring fully formed from the LSA as the next stage of development (with or without some discussions) is left propagandism." The article goes on to accuse us of "a sectarian attitude to those forces breaking from new Labour at the present time".

For Thornett, the key to the LSA's resonance among ordinary workers was that it was not revolutionary:

"We say that it was correct that the LSA did not adopt a revolutionary programme. Had it done it would not be the success it is today. It adopted the key elements of an action programme and it can develop through the experience of implementing this in practice."

Thornett writes: "What is most likely to emerge, after a period of preparation, is not a new revolutionary party, but a new centrist party. This would nevertheless represent an important gain for the working class. It would not be what we advocate or prefer, but we would welcome it and seek to be part of it."

This is a profoundly confused and centrist view of party building. It places onto the shoulders of something called the "objective situation", the "process" etc the tasks of real human beings: the building of a revolutionary party. It accepts that workers cannot at present understand or respond to revolutionary answers, but that only a half-baked mish-mash of revolution and reform is needed.

This is wrong. The hundreds of workers who were canvassed by Workers Power paper sellers did not stop to ask us, when we raised asylum, poverty or the housing crisis whether we were centrists or revolutionaries. They bought our newspaper which spelled out the need for a revolutionary workers' government based on workers' councils.

Many will reject that answer – but at least they have the chance to consider it, many of them for the first time.

In other words, when the question of forming a party is raised and the question of its programme is under debate, we advocate a revolutionary programme for a revolutionary party.

But what if we don't win? Contrary to what Thornett writes we are neither ultimatists nor sectarians. If sizeable numbers take a real step to the left – even if they stop short of agreeing to our programme – we will not walk away from

them. The resonance we gained in the election convinces us that, it is worth being "a small fish in a bigger pond" providing two conditions are met: no ban on independent propaganda and activity, and that the LSA continues to attract militant workers in struggle.

The campaign has proved to be a significant pole of attraction to sections of the working class looking for an alternative to Blair. It therefore has the potential to become more than the sum of its parts. It can lay the foundations for a mass revolutionary party: that is, not a group of two or three thousand (the maximum paper membership of all the groups involved in London) but an organisation with roots in every estate, every trade union, every school and college.

In order for that to happen it has to prove itself in more than just the electoral field. It has to turn out to workers in struggle. It should become a properly constituted membership organisation, with branches in every borough, governed by a conference of delegates from such branches and from sponsoring organisations.

In the course of the next year – the run up to the general election and the crucial Tottenham by-election – the LSA should seek to win union sponsorships, rally more Labour members fed up with Blair and recruit workers in struggle. A massive campaign around the threat to Ford Dagenham is an obvious starting point for its campaigning activities, along with the fight against the racist scapegoating of asylum seekers and the continued fight against council housing transfers to private landlords.

In a campaign around Dagenham, for example, we would seek to show reformist or centrist comrades, why a consistent revolutionary line of workers' control, nationalisation without compensation, an occupation to defend jobs and so on, are not "totemic formulations" but the only solution that can win.

If we win such an argument then there is no reason to accept that a centrist party is the best available outcome. More and more people could be won to seeing the relevance of a revolutionary programme.

If we lose, then we will have gained more adherents for revolutionary politics and trained revolutionary cadres in the kind of mass work (electoral, community and industrial) that a small fighting propaganda group cannot sustain alone. And we will maintain a fruitful dialogue with serious activists who do not yet agree with us.

We have a tremendous window of opportunity. With dissident Labour members looking for an alternative we have a chance to provide one, a chance to really build a revolutionary party. We will not scorn that opportunity for the sake of a schema that sees the building of a revolutionary party as either a series of stages in which a centrist party is inevitable (Socialist Outlook) or as the simple numerical expansion of the biggest component of the alliance (the SWP).

But the key question is programme. The programmatic debate within the LSA is only just beginning. The SWP in particular has to confront the question of programme: it sidelined its own action programme, produced last year and touted around union conferences. But electoral work – like all mass work – demands detailed answers.

Faced with real new forces and the possibility of a step forward, Workers Power would not insist that a new party adopted every dot and comma of our international programme: we would insist on fighting for our revolutionary action programme – and (if we lost) our right to continue to argue for it within any party created.

Where next for anti-capitalist protest?

Mayday erupted into violence in London. The police were to blame – but the events were a set-back for the anti-capitalist movement that has come together since the J18 demo in the City of London. *Andy Stroud* explains the choice facing the anti-capitalist movement: turn to the working class or fall apart under the weight of repression and directionless activity.

THE MEDIA went into a frenzy over the riot in Whitehall on Mayday. Tony Blair made an appeal to “name and shame the thugs” caught on camera defacing Churchill’s statue, smashing in a McDonalds, or fighting the cops. The real thugs were the police who attacked them. But the violence has set off a sharp debate within the anti-capitalist movement.

We need to be clear: self-defence against police attack is legitimate. Organised self-defence is best because it allows us to:

- control the fight
- provide a link between those on the front line and the demonstrators we are defending
- stop mindless and counter-productive acts.

Reclaim the Streets (RTS) called the “guerrilla gardening” protest. In line with their theory of “disorganisation” it had no aim. That was a big mistake because it meant that thousands of youth who wanted to fight capitalism had nothing to do once the grass was dug up and Churchill had been given a mohican.

In contrast Workers Power, Revo and other socialists at the anarchist-inspired Mayday 2000 conference on 29-30 April argued for Parliament Square protesters to link up with the trade union Mayday demo due at Trafalgar Square at 3pm (see box). That is what thousands of youth were trying to do when 20 people took it on themselves to trash a McDonalds, terrifying the workers inside, and giving the police an excuse to wade in and seal off Whitehall.

Meanwhile, the union demo was also sealed behind a wall of riot police. Some determined demonstrators forced their way through on both sides – but the Stalinist organisers took the first opportunity to lead the Rover delegation off the



Police “under attack by demonstrators”

union march and it petered out.

We need to nail the media lies about these events so that they fail in the attempt to isolate the anti-capitalist movement from ordinary workers who only saw it on TV or in the papers.

First of all, the police sat by as the gardeners in Parliament Square dug up the turf and did nothing, not even verbally caution anyone but actually smiled and waved. The next day they said they intended to use all the photo evidence they’d taken to charge the same people for criminal damage. In short, anyone who gets charged for damage has been set up by the Met.

Secondly, it’s clear the Met were just waiting for an excuse to shut Trafalgar Square before the workers’ demo arrived – and with it the “danger” of the two protests merging into something too strong for the police to control. The

mood for unity on both demos was tangible at Trafalgar Square.

Once they’d been given the excuse to intervene, the police encircled the protesters in order to repeat their tactics at the N30 anti-WTO action at London’s Euston station.

But at both Parliament Square and Trafalgar Square protesters massed and pushed through the police lines to escape the trap, causing the battle scenes that many witnessed on TV.

The Churchill graffiti was not mindless vandalism but rather a political act against a hated target. Churchill admired Mussolini and Hitler, ordered machine guns into Tonyandy against striking miners, dropped chemical weapons on the Kurds in 1924 to destroy their independence movement, organised the military attack on an anarchist HQ in London and dreamed up the

invasion of Turkey at Gallipoli in 1915 that led to thousands of Anzac soldiers getting slaughtered.

But one three-year-old girl was reportedly hit by a flying bottle from our side. And the workers from McDonalds and a nearby coffee bar were terrified by the violence.

What was missing from the anti-capitalist demo was organisation. After the event, the e-mail lists of the anarcho-greens are full of recriminations about the violence. But in a “disorganisation” there is no way to control and direct self-defence – and to stop counterproductive acts.

The idea that everyone should be allowed to do their own thing misses the point: a mass action needs an aim, and that means winning the mass of people involved to that goal and convincing them to focus on that and avoid diverting from it to another, less important goal.

It is inevitable – after J18, Seattle, N30 and now Mayday – that anti-capitalist protests will face police surveillance and repression.

In short, we need organised self-defence and workers’ democracy within campaigns so that an elected leadership can organise resistance and stamp on stupidity. That should never involve collaboration with the police – but it does mean stopping drunks, racists (there were some on the Trafalgar Square plinth abusing Turkish demonstrators!) and agents provocateurs.

This organisation is vital if we are to move from a situation where shops and cars are trashed and looted by the crowd, but no more than a handful of demonstrators actually attack the police while the rest look on.

On both sides of the split demo in Whitehall only a minority tried to break

through to the other side, while the rest were spectators. In that sense Mayday was completely unlike the 1990 Poll Tax demo, where 250,000 demonstrators were attacked by police. Thousands took part in the fighting – including whole contingents of miners and other workers – and the police were held at bay for hours.

Looking at the bigger picture, the huge potential of Mayday was missed. It was a step backward from J18 – an anti-capitalist action in the City of London aimed at occupying the Liffe futures exchange last June.

A link up with the workers’ demo could have re-created the unity and power of the Social Justice March of May 1997 where dockers and ravers marched together. Links between anti-capitalist youth and trade unionists were crucial at Seattle in November 1999: that is what rocked the US establishment to its foundations.

The anti-capitalist movement is under more pressure than ever. The police have sussed out how to deal with our actions and are getting better every time at controlling, even manipulating, our protests to fit the state’s agenda.

New Labour is determined to get through an anti-terrorism bill that will criminalise protest, aimed precisely at organisations like RTS, and at the workers’ movement.

We’ve got to turn the anti-capitalist protest movement out to the working class, both to boost the power of our protest, and also to give youth fighting back the protection of a mass movement.

The Tories are howling for blood and pressuring Blair to outlaw an anti-capitalist demo next May – that should just make us redouble our efforts to regain lost ground and shake London with J18 – the sequel: faster, harder, meaner.

DEBATING THE WAY AHEAD

Mayday was preceded by a two-day conference of discussions and workshops. It was billed as an anti-capitalist conference to “embrace the diversity of our movement” from “anarchists, ecologists and communists.” Unfortunately this was a bit of spin-doctoring since real communists, such as Workers Power and Revolution, were banned by the anarchist organisers (fluffy RTS included) from attending as organisations because we were the wrong kind of anti-capitalists (we attended as “individuals” instead).

The organisers’ real fear was that they wouldn’t be able to monopolise the movement with their ideas.

They were right. In all the sessions we participated in the majority of the audience were open to Marxist ideas on war, the environment, state repression, Seattle and lots of other issues.

Two themes constantly recurred throughout all the sessions: how do we fight against the system and what do we want instead of capitalism?

The anarchists and radical greens offer individual protests – like road site occupations. These are at best “propaganda of the deed”, but inevitably go down to glorious defeat. But we want to win: the way to do that is with numbers and effective mass protest. The only force that can deliver that is the working class.

That doesn’t mean dropping direct action in favour of petitioning or door-knocking: it does mean turning to the issues and campaigns, like those against the privatisation of council housing or jobs crises in Rover and Dagenham, that could begin to draw in workers and win them to direct action.

The anarcho-greens want a localised, de-industrialised utopia. We want a global planned economy run by the workers. Only a democratically planned economy can strike the right balance between economic development and the environment, and take the best advantage of technology.

PRESS WITCH-HUNT

Defend the Turkish Left

EVERY MAYDAY London’s trade union demo is dominated by thousands of workers and youth from the Turkish and Kurdish communities organised in various Stalinist, Maoist and centrist parties. As nearly all of them are banned in their homeland, these are refugees

Two days after the Mayday riot the London *Evening Standard* ran an

“exposure” of the fact that the Turkish youth took a lead in breaking away from the union demo and joined in the defence of the anti-capitalist demo.

This was a massive step forward. Not only did they add their considerable courage and defensive ability, but it was a real lesson for the anarcho-greens in what working class self-organisation can bring to the task of

defending a demo. It was also a step forward for the youth to get involved in the British class struggle: many of their leaders are keen to keep them focused exclusively on the politics of their homelands.

Now the press is baying for the blood of the Turkish/Kurdish left. It is calling on Blair to make the Turkish groups the first target of the new anti-terrorism bill.

The whole of the workers’ movement should defend them, unconditionally.

CLASS WAR PRISONER

Free Kuldip Bajwa!

One comrade who knows about the sort of repression the police mete out after demos is Kuldip Bajwa – serving 21 months in prison for defending the J18 protest.

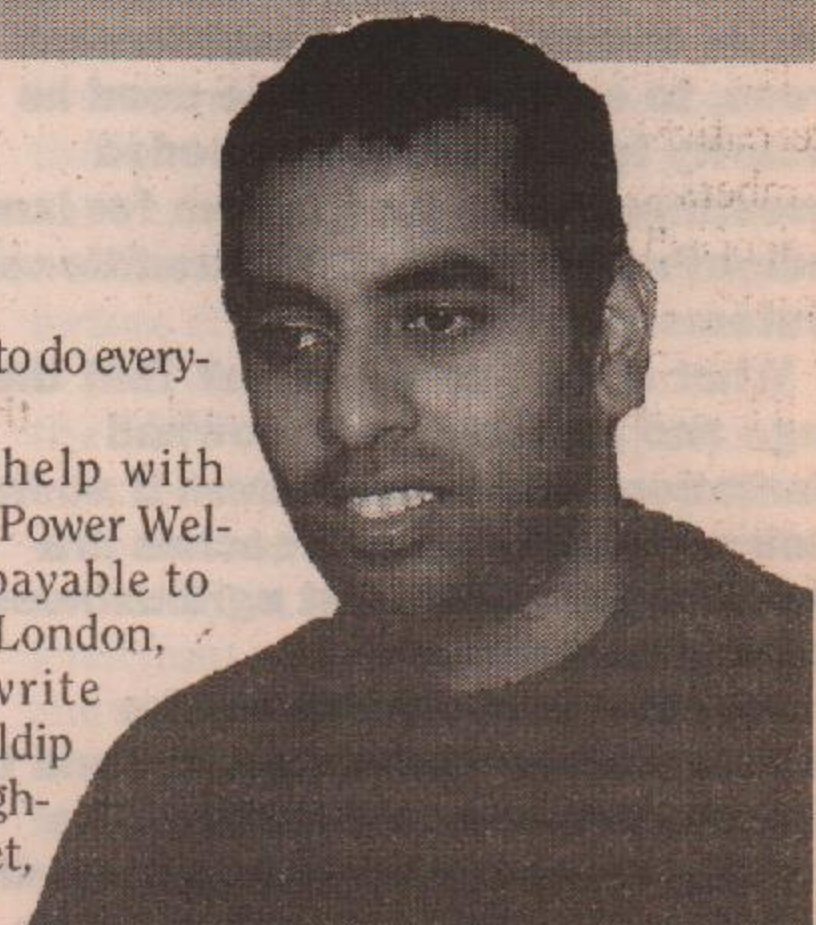
Kuldip wrote to us that he spent the day listening to radio bulletins on Mayday, following the events. The next day many of the prisoners got into a lively discussion about Winston Churchill’s real role in history – an imperialist butcher.

Kuldip is doing everything he can to continue the struggle against capitalism

from inside his cell.

We appeal to all our readers to do everything they can to help him.

Please send money to help with Kuldip’s welfare, to Workers Power Welfare Fund (make cheques payable to this name), BCM Box 7750, London, WC1N 3XX. Also please write letters, send books etc to: Kuldip Bajwa, DN 7320, HMP/YOI, Highpoint, Stradishall, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 9YG



ZIMBABWE

Mugabe clings to power

President Robert Mugabe has unleashed a reign of terror in a bid to retain control of Zimbabwe, a country he has turned into his fiefdom since independence 20 years ago. *Jeremy Dewar* looks at the growing crisis.

SO FAR 18 people, including two white farmers, have been murdered and over 1,200 farms squatted in Zimbabwe. Thugs from the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU-PF) have attacked pro-democracy rallies. There is now clear evidence that the Central Intelligence Office (CIO – Mugabe's secret police) and sections of the army have been at the heart of the organised violence.

Mugabe has delayed setting a date for parliamentary elections that were due to be held this month.

Behind the scenes Mugabe is plotting a coup if the current reign of terror against oppositionists proves insufficient to deliver an election victory.

The white farmers have instigated a devastating "strike" by refusing to bring to market this year's tobacco crop. Not only does tobacco constitute two-thirds of Zimbabwe's exports (and hence a valuable source of foreign currency), but the farmers have also failed to sow the winter wheat crop, the staple diet for city-dwellers.

With an estimated unemployment rate of 50 per cent and inflation running at 60 per cent, food price rises and subsequent hardship will then hit the already beleaguered working class. With Zimbabwe's economy already shrinking by ten per cent in the first quarter of 2000, this would be a further devastating blow. And it will be the workers who will bear the brunt of it.

On top of this, the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) has been embroiled in a bloody and costly war in the Congo for the past two years. The Congo campaign was itself widely seen as an attempt to divert attention from Zimbabwe's domestic problems. But the policy backfired leading to mutinies and strikes.

Nevertheless, the crisis in Zimbabwe, which is now filling front pages and news bulletins almost daily, is not new. The only thing that is new in the current situation is that 4,500 white farmers who collectively own the most fertile 40 per cent of the arable land and control the

economy have now been targeted.

Suddenly, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and his henchman Peter Hain have discovered that Britain supplies the Zimbabwean regime with arms and have decided to halt the sales. Cook told parliament,

"In the present circumstances of spreading violence, we have resolved that from today Britain will refuse all new export licence applications for arms and military equipment to Zimbabwe. This will include all licences for spare parts in connection with previous contracts such as Hawk aircraft."

What Cook characteristically forgot to mention is that this was a policy U-turn. Last year, under pressure from peace groups and Zimbabwe's opposition to cancel the arms exports, Cook claimed that Britain was legally obliged to continue to supply spare parts and complete orders that were guaranteed by the previous Tory administration.

No doubt, if the troubles continue, Jack Straw will find a way to ensure that white Zimbabweans are allowed to circumvent the asylum laws and enter Britain with full citizenship rights. Strange how the deaths of two white capitalist farmers can soften the New Labour's hearts where the deaths of hundreds of black workers and peasants could not.

But Mugabe is not motivated by Britain's neo-colonial arrogance and racism. Nor by the fact that the white farmers, who pay their two million workers and their families a mere US\$25 a month and exercise almost feudal control over their housing, education and welfare, still enjoy the spoils of Britain's "scramble for Africa" over a hundred years ago.

No. Most worrying for Mugabe and his cronies in the ZANU-PF is the growing strength of the Zimbabwean working class. A series of strikes and general strikes organised by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) over the past year has rocked the regime. Last October, miners' leader and General-Sec-



Mugabe at the launch of Zanu-PF election campaign

retary of the ZCTU, Morgan Tsvangirai, who himself was the victim of a brutal beating a few years back, upped the stakes by forming the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Fearing a defeat at the polls Mugabe

attempted to accumulate even more power into his hands through a Yeltsin-style constitution that would have given the president powers to rule by decree and dissolve parliament at will. But the MDC successfully won the referen-

dum in February. It was, significantly, at that moment that the land squatters' movement took off.

How should socialists react to the squatters' movement?

The land question is the key to the political situation in Zimbabwe. The 4,500 white capitalist farmers own 11 million hectares of the best land, while a million black peasants are forced to subsist on 16 million hectares of drought-prone land. Even bourgeois economists agree that reform is necessary. But for 20 years, Mugabe has done nothing except redistribute a few plots to his own ministers! That's how cynical his sudden conversion to direct action and egalitarianism is.

The land invasions have also been organised by the Zimbabwe National War Veterans' Association, led by Chenjerai "Hitler" Hunzvi. While the squatters are absolutely right not to wait for legal reforms and to insist that the capitalist farmers have received compensation many times over for their land and deserve not a penny more, the leaders of their movement are pushing it in a reactionary direction.

Hunzvi himself is a very shady character. At the moment he is being charged with embezzling funds from the war veterans. Whether or not he is guilty of that, he and his thugs are certainly guilty of beating up and killing the labourers on the commercial farms. Some workers have had their houses burnt down, their possessions looted and those who have visibly shown their support for the MDC "re-educated".

These workers are among the most downtrodden and poorest sections of Zimbabwean society. Many of them are immigrants from Malawi and Mozambique with few legal rights. That's why the white farmers prefer to employ them over Zimbabweans in the first place. A progressive land rights movement would ensure that the existing workforce are given rights to the land as well and are incorporated into the movement.

Workers' action can bring down Zanu-PF

THE MDC T-SHIRTS say "Land to the people, not the politicians". But the MDC's political answer to the land crisis is not enough.

Its manifesto talks of "acquiring" 6-7 million hectares of "under-utilised, derelict and multiple owned land, land already identified and designated for the purpose and corruptly acquired land". The MDC will also "introduce freehold title in communal and resettlement areas, to enable land to be used as security to attract much needed investment". The mechanism for land redistribution will be the "traditional" systems.

What does this all mean? That the huge and powerful white-owned plantations will remain, even if some of their under-utilised outreaches are redistributed. Capitalist agribusiness will not be touched.

Also the land-owners will be handsomely compensated for land that they are not even cultivating. The working class will have to pay for the redistribution through higher taxes and welfare cuts, not the farmers or Britain. The MDC is opposed to the land

seizures. Instead, "traditional" systems will be used. This means that the undemocratic rule of the traditional leaders will be bolstered. Not only will this disenfranchise the existing labourers but it may open up the prospect of inter-ethnic violence as the leaders seek to enrich themselves at the expense of other ethnic groups.

Finally, the land will be transferred into small privately owned plots. The new land-owner will survive only until the next flood or drought. Then the bank or commercial lender will re-possess the land and the labourer, through no fault of their own, will become landless again.

The farm workers and MDC workers should demand that the land is nationalised with no compensation to the white "owners" who themselves stole the land.

Once the land is owned by the state, it can then be distributed according to need and worked according to a democratic plan of agricultural production. The question of whether to break up the large farms or collectivise them could then be democratically decided by those who work the land.

The leaders of the MDC will not go this far because they want to be seen as responsible leaders by Britain, the International Monetary Fund and the Zimbabwean ruling class. Their policies are all clipped to ensure that wherever there is a clash the needs of international capitalism come first and the people a distant second.

This is why the MDC's policies include privatisation, increasing the national debt to the IMF and holding down wages through a social contract. That is why Tsvangirai has responded to the crisis by calling off rallies and demos and turning to Britain as a guarantor of the rule of law and order.

When the MDC was formed in October 1999, Workers Power warned that, despite its mass working class base, "there will be other pressures on the new party; business leaders and international investors who would like to see a more 'modern' democratic system which will ensure stability and keep the profits rolling."

The MDC is becoming a cross-class party, which binds the working class to a bosses' programme through ensuring

that "traditional leaders", white farmers, bankers and industrialists have the decisive say.

The MDC has imposed bourgeois candidates for the forthcoming elections in many constituencies. Where MDC members have been allowed to choose their own candidates, however, they have chosen trade unionists and socialists.

It is vital that between now and the elections, MDC members demand the right to select their candidates. They should only vote and campaign for worker candidates in the elections, as well as demanding the right to review and change the manifesto. The Zimbabwean unions took a step forward in launching the MDC – but they must fight now for a revolutionary workers' party – not a pro-IMF cross class alliance.

It is urgent that the unions form self defence squads to prepare for the coming trial of strength with Zanu-PF and launch a general strike to force Mugabe to convene elections, stop the repression of the MDC and deliver a workers' answer to the land crisis.

Stop the clerics' creeping coup

The widening split in the Iranian ruling class between reformists and conservatives offers the working class an opportunity to stop the conservative clampdown and challenge the reformists' hold on workers

ON 5 MAY the second round of Iran's rigged election took place. The result was a victory for the reform wing of the Islamic regime: but its triumph could be short-lived.

Since the "reformist" wing of the Islamic ruling elite won a majority in the first round, there has been a creeping coup by the state forces loyal to the conservative faction. Key reformist journalists have been jailed, 17 newspapers closed, 1,500 media workers sacked and the reactionary paramilitary forces have terrorised many campaigners from the reform wing.

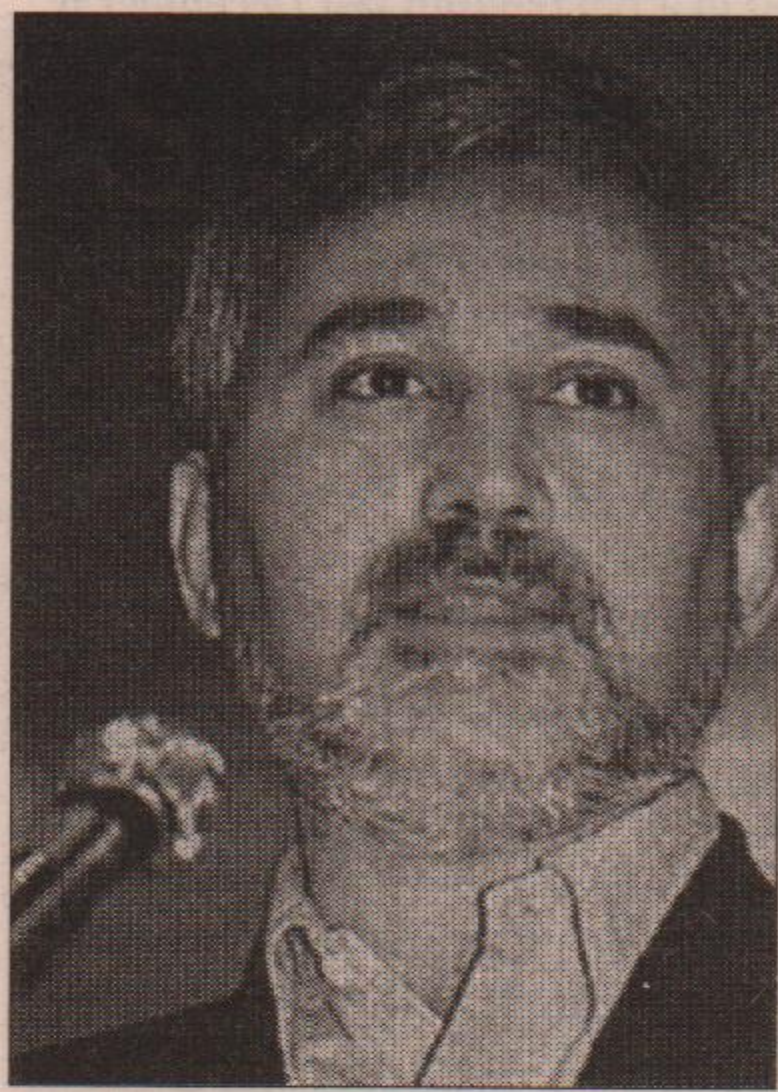
One coup plotter was recorded saying: "One option is to sit and watch, the other is create a strong executive headquarters. In the first phase, we weaken the other side. In the second, we stop them from advancing and in the third phase we remove them from the scene." By that reckoning, phase three will begin as soon as the dust settles on the 5 May elections.

The attack on the press was launched after reform candidates, allied to President Mohamad Khatami, won an overwhelming victory in February's poll. Khatami himself was elected in May 1997 and has since posed as a beleaguered reform politician, hampered by the conservative majority in parliament.

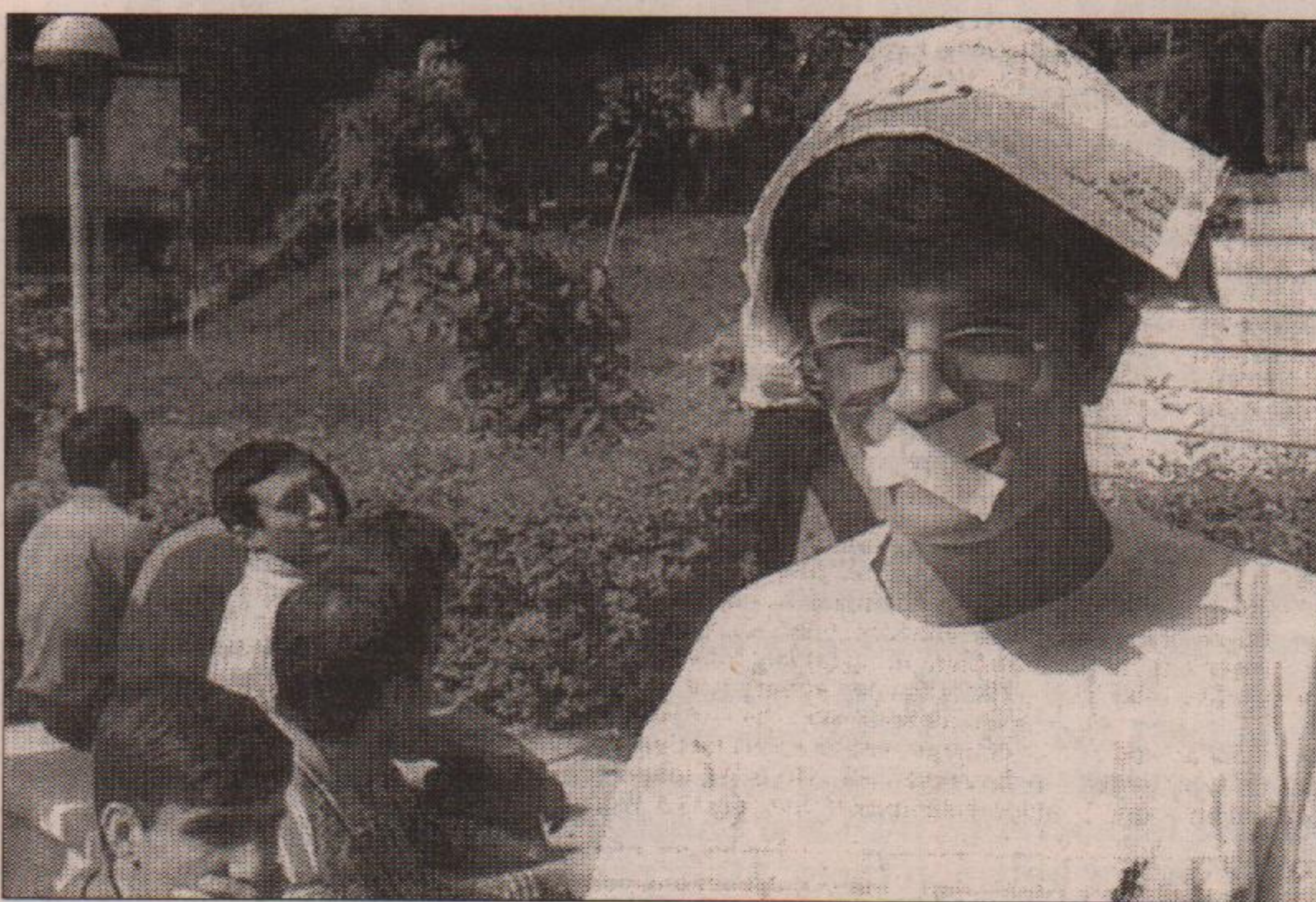
The right-wing clerics have fought back, annulling many of the results where the reformists won – especially in Tehran, which has seen a wave of attacks on and the murder of opposition politicians, and a new set of anti-working class laws. Rather than rely on the now dissolved parliament they are relying on their base within the state machine. The power centre is the Guardian Council (which can veto candidates and cancel election results), and the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij (reactionary paramilitaries).

Twenty thousand workers from the official (pro-reform) trade unions took to the streets of Tehran on May Day in protest at a new labour law passed by the outgoing Islamic parliament. Earlier, thousands of students marched in protest at the shutdown of the pro-reform newspapers and the arrest of journalists.

But the whole of the left and all genuine workers' parties remain banned in Iran – victims of the Islamic Republic that consolidated power in the three years after the Iranian revolution of 1979.



Khatami (left) has done little to defend his supporters who have protested against the arrests (right)



Until now the crisis has been a split within the Islamic regime itself. But with the opening of dual power between the two factions, the opportunity is ripe for an independent working class answer.

Khatami himself is running scared of the conservative faction. It has real reactionary mass forces to mobilise: as well as the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij, it has always rested on the poor middle classes of the traditional economy and on unemployed youth mobilised by the mosques. The figurehead of the reactionary forces is Shia Islam leader Ayatollah Khamenei. But ex-president Rafsanjani has also come to the fore of the reactionary coup. He was seen by some as a mediator between the two factions, but since his election defeat has thrown his lot in with the conservatives.

When thousands of students demonstrated against police raids on the pro-reform universities last summer, several were shot dead in the street. Khamenei then urged calm and the reform movement retreated to wait for the election.

With key election results annulled, the press was the next target and April saw a concerted attack on the pro-Khatami newspapers. Khatami again urged calm – and the Basij promptly stepped up the arrests, beatings and stabbings of pro-reform campaigners.

A parallel process now operates in the factories. One of the last acts of the conservative majority in parliament (Majlis) was to strip labour law pro-

tection from 2.8 million workers in small enterprises.

In larger enterprises the Islamic reign of terror has been unleashed during the election period. A factory worker in Alborz told the paper *Kar va Kargar* (16 January 2000): "I was attacked because when I held a responsibility in the shora (workers' council), I defended the labour legislation and I wouldn't back down. For this reason the factory's security section, the factory's Islamic Basij (a paramilitary militia) and the management told me off and put so much pressure on me that eventually I lost my immunity so that I couldn't be elected to the Islamic shora. This time they tried to beat me up to get me out of the scene all together."

Khatami's own social base is loosely organised in a movement that brings together a section of the Iranian bourgeoisie keen to defrost relations with the USA in order to open up Iran for super-profitable investment, together with young intellectuals and especially women who are sick of the social repression meted out by the Islamic regime.

The starting point for a revolutionary strategy in this situation is to recognise the Khatami movement for what it is: a reactionary bourgeois opposition to an archaic regime. Khatami still wants an Islamic Republic, and defends the use of repression and torture against all democratic politicians as well as the independent workers' movement.

However, the split in the ruling class

– and Khatami's chronic failure to curb the brutal repression – poses socialists with the task of an independent intervention to split workers and progressive youth from Khatami.

There can be no question of voting for Khatami – or of taking part in the reform movement's institutions: these are hostile to any socialist argument. But workers can and must defend an unfettered press, fight against the additional restrictions on voting that the conservatives have introduced and support all reforms aimed at improving conditions for women.

The key in all this is mobilising the working class on its own programme. During the 1990s there were more than 500 major strikes. These were organised by clandestine committees of young workers. Together with sections of the students and women fighting oppression, such committees could form the basis of a real anti-capitalist opposition.

The position of the working class is dire. There is 25 per cent unemployment and 24 per cent inflation. More than half the population lives below the poverty line.

Over the past decade workers have shown their willingness to fight for economic reforms – using protestations of loyalty to the Islamic regime as a cover.

Now the working class has begun tentatively to ally its economic demands – in particular over the labour laws – to the Khatami wing's political fight.

This presents both an opportunity and a grave danger: the opportunity is to transform the economic struggle into a political one for power. The danger is to tie the workers to Khatami's movement, in which even their basic economic demands will be forced onto the back burner by the capitalists who lead it. Khatami – like Rafsanjani before him – sees the state-owned oil industry and the backward bazaar economy as so many obstacles to a neo-liberal ban-feast, with themselves at the head of the table. So they are no allies of workers.

Unfortunately, there is no shortage of left-wing forces to mislead the working class into propping up Khatami. The Tudeh Party – the official Stalinist party which collaborated with Ayatollah Khomeini in the first stage of murdering the anti-imperialist revolution of 1979 – has come forward to demand that workers actively vote for Khatami. It warns that the pro-Khatami list is not radical enough and that the movement will not win simply by voting – but refrains from spelling out what is necessary.

Instead, it has hitched itself to the Khatami movement – even though its economic programme is pro-imperialist.

However, there are already reports of disillusionment among the masses with Khatami. Agence France Presse reported that in the industrial suburb of Karaj, there was a low turnout and much scepticism about the reform candidates, even among a crowd of young women who had turned out to campaign.

The most likely outcome now – if the Khatami movement scores another poll victory – will see the conservative faction implement stage three of its coup plan. Wider round-ups of pro-reform intellectuals and clerics could be followed by the arrest of key leaders around Khatami himself.

Only mass action can stop that, and Khatami refuses to call for it, fearful of bringing an independent working class dynamic to the struggles for democracy, freedom of the press, rights for women and an end to Islamic repression.

Mass strikes, tied to the formation of revolutionary workers' councils (shoras), are the only alternative to the bloody rule of the torturers, rapists and murderers of the conservative clergy.

What happened in the 1979 revolution?

THE MEDIA paint the 1979 revolution as simply an "Islamic" uprising predestined to become a semi-medieval regime. In fact, it was a mass popular revolution against imperialism, hijacked by clerics and cruelly misled by the Stalinist parties.

Ayatollah Khomeini – and his successor Khamenei – were not the products of the 1979 revolution, but the counter-revolution that followed.

The Shah ruled Iran on behalf of the Western imperialists. He acted as the USA's gendarme in the Persian Gulf, and his vast army and bureaucracy were maintained at the masses' expense. He brutally repressed national minorities who make up half of Iran's population. But the Shah's social base was weak beyond the large caste of civil servants. In particular, the working class,

created by his industrialisation programme, hated him.

In 1977 there were 2.5 million industrial workers in Iran, with about one-third concentrated in large plants. Price rises and growing poverty fuelled 60 major strikes between 1975 and 1977, which faced brutal repression.

In 1978 a rolling general strike took place, kicked off by Abadan's oil workers. One and half million workers were on strike by late 1978 and stayed out until the Shah's overthrow.

The workers formed strike committees. The key influence at this stage came not from Islamic clerics but the Stalinist Tudeh Party. The strike committees grew into workers' councils – shoras – that could have formed the basis for working class power.

But alongside the organised work-

ers another force was crucial to the revolution: the urban poor. Land reform had driven thousands of peasants into the cities, where they often lived as shanty-dwellers. The Shi'ite Muslim clerics had mass support among this layer because the mosques distributed aid to the poor and posed as their "defenders".

As the strikes and mass demonstrations reached a climax, other forces appeared: two guerrilla movements, the Mojahedin and Fedayeen. The Mojahedin were middle-class nationalists, blending Islam with "socialist" measures – while the Fedayeen were left Stalinists.

The Stalinist stages theory – which says that an anti-imperialist revolution must include and be led by the "progressive" bourgeoisie – meant that the

Tudeh, the Mojahedin and Fedayeen all harboured the fatal illusion that the workers' advance could co-exist with Khomeini's rule. None of them forewarned the workers of the dangers of Islamic reaction.

From March to August 1979, the left failed to develop the shoras into an independent workers' government. They were themselves armed – but failed to arm the workers and build independent workers' militias.

Khomeini seized the initiative. The first targets were the shoras, and then the Fedayeen. Then Khomeini moved against the "liberal bourgeoisie", represented by prime minister Bapi Sadr, who eventually gained the Mojahedin's support. The Tudeh clung to Khomeini until the bitter end, somehow hoping to "give a scientific framework to

Khomeini's thoughts", as Tudeh leader Sadegh told *Marxism Today*.

Between June 1981 and mid-1982 Khomeini launched a full-scale war on the left, the Mojahedin and Kurdish nationalists. Along with some 20,000 executions, show trials, and the rape and torture of prisoners became the norm.

The workers and urban poor made the 1979 revolution. The mullahs hijacked it because the left was politically disarmed by the "stages theory" and an elitist guerrilla strategy. It suffered from a fatal inability to recognise and resist the real project of the Islamic republic. By 1982 the counter-revolution was complete – but it had not been inevitable.

■ For full coverage of the aftermath of the Iranian elections go to: www.workerspower.com

VENEZUELA

Chavez: populist president runs into growing opposition

On 28 May President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela is seeking a second term in office, this time for six years. His actions since his initial victory in December 1998 were largely designed to facilitate this outcome.

He launched a clearout of the judiciary, disbanded the Congress and called a constituent assembly in its place. Finally, there was a referendum in December last year to adopt a new constitution that extends and entrenches his powers.

Chavez came to power on a wave of popular support after two decades of virtually uninterrupted economic decline and after ten years in which the ruling parties lost all credibility with the masses.

The rise of Chavez is a result of the crisis of capitalism in the country, a crisis that has roots in its dependent condition and failure of the national bourgeoisie to break politically or economically with the foreign multinationals.

In 1989 President Perez, of the bourgeois party AD (see box), was elected on a ferocious and demagogic anti-IMF platform which he immediately jettisoned on taking office. Under IMF instructions he privatised more state assets and let prices rip.

This provoked the now famous Caracas rebellion – Caracazo – on 27 February 1989 – an uprising of the people against austerity, deception and corruption. Over four days the people took to the streets in protest: it took one week and 3,000 deaths before the army crushed the movement. But it left a bitter legacy and opened up a decade of crisis, mass electoral abstention and rifts within the army.

It was during this crisis that junior officers around Chavez sought to seize power with the object of restoring faith in the military by cleaning out the corrupt regime. Chavez launched his coup attempt on 4 February 1992 but, having little support, it was a fiasco: he ended up in jail.

The crisis of the regime sharpened and eventually in 1993, Perez was accused of corruption and sacrificed to try to quell mass discontent. Perez was succeeded by Calderas but again the crisis deepened: he suspended certain constitutional guarantees and in 1996 signed a further reactionary agreement

WEALTH SQUANDERED IN A CENTURY OF WASTE

From being a backward and predominantly agrarian country at the start of the last century, by 1928 Venezuela was the second largest producer of crude oil. The industry was owned by oil giants Shell, Gulf and Standard: military dictatorships in the first half of the century protected their assets.

Despite the fact that the bulk of revenues were sent back as profits to the US, the oil revenues that accrued to the Venezuelan state accounted for 80 per cent of all its income.

For a decade after the Second World War these revenues helped finance a feverish industrial development of oil and related industries. The process transformed the country into an urban one with a large working class.

For several decades Venezuela enjoyed the highest per-capita GDP in Latin America. But the failure to develop other industries meant the country was totally dependent on oil exports for its wealth and imported all its other goods.

In 1961 the suffocating rule of the military was overthrown and a system was installed whereby two bourgeois parties, Accion Democratica (AD) and Christian Democracy, agreed to share power between them. AD in particular controlled the organised working class in the state industries via the trade union federation, the CVO, whose bureaucracy was effectively a wing of the state and which policed the working class on behalf of the regime.

This regime was renowned for corruption and waste of the national resources of the country. Oil revenues kept the country solvent, if dependent, but in the 1980s the country lurched from crisis to crisis as a result of the debt repayments debacle that engulfed the whole continent when interest rates ballooned in 1980-82.

with the IMF – a \$1.4 bn loan was forthcoming in exchange for further privatisations of state assets to foreign multinationals.

Meanwhile, the masses got more prices rises, including a 70 per cent increase in electricity charges. A general strike in August 1997 threw the Calderas regime back onto the defensive.

Worse was to follow. In the summer of 1997 the Asian economies crashed. The crisis spread to Russia in August 1998 and by December 1998 was knocking at Brazil's door. One after another countries in Latin America were hit during 1997-98.

The crisis exposed the vulnerability of the whole of Latin America to external economic shocks. The region was hit by a massive slump in commodity prices: the price of oil halved as demand in the once booming East Asian tigers fell away. Venezuela was especially hard hit by its dependency on oil revenues.

IMF help was sought and an agreement to prop up currencies against spec-

ulation was signed by Calderas. But the price for this support was more privatisation of state assets and cuts in health and education budgets and a further worsening in public sector workers' pay.

Resentment against the government finally found an outlet in the December 1998 elections which brought Chavez to power.

In these elections Chavez received the biggest mandate in the country's history – 54 per cent of the popular vote. It was obvious why people voted for him: Venezuela had 15 per cent officially unemployed, but 50 per cent under-employment and 80 per cent of the population living in poverty – including 40 per cent in extreme poverty.

He promised a "peaceful revolution" to clear out corrupt government parties that had ruled Venezuela since the 1950s. However, his supporters only had one-third of the seats in Congress so he dispersed it and held elections for a Constituent Assembly. The pro-Chavez Movement for the Fifth Republic (MVR)

got 90 per cent of the vote and the bulk of the seats. In turn the Constituent Assembly drew up a new constitution and in a referendum last December it was approved overwhelmingly.

Chavez is a populist: the masses have great illusions and confidence in him – but he is more likely to raise expectations than satisfy them. His new regime early in its first year passed some reforms: over 1,000 political prisoners were released, free legal advice for the poor was instituted. Over 200 judges were dismissed. The new constitution decreed a 40-hour week and the right to abortion.

Chavez set up the "Bolivar 2000" labour-intensive job creation programme, which aimed to absorb 170,000 unemployed in public works, building hospitals and roads.

These reforms were both a reflection of the pressure of the masses who voted for Chavez for major changes and an indication of the limits of his willingness to confront the real centres of power and wealth in Venezuela.

His populism is not anti-imperialist but rather anti-ruling elite, or at least a part of it. Nor is he a pro-imperialist populist such as that of Albert Fujimori in Peru. He is in-between.

This explains why he can pass reforms and at the same time avoid a confrontation with the USA or IMF. On taking office, he confirmed previous privatisations and reassured the IMF. To court the national business community he introduced a sales tax and abolished some taxes on business. Moreover, he appointed key figures from past administrations to his cabinet.

Chavez is both an expression of the mass discontent with capitalism and the old corrupt two-party system, and a form of "preventive bonapartism" to head off Venezuela going the way of Ecuador where the masses' action got out of the army's control.

Chavez's aim is to bit by bit regain the confidence of the masses for bourgeois institutions, especially the army which was widely hated in the wake of its repressive role in the 1989 uprisings.

Chavez has had the good fortune to come to power at a time when the oil price collapse was bottoming out. During most of last year and this, oil revenues have risen sharply, allowing his regime more room for manoeuvre in

financing concessions to business and the people who voted for him.

However, the timidity of his social programme together with the appearance of cracks within his own movement, caused by revelations of corruption in his government, means that on 28 May his election is not guaranteed.

His main rival is Francisco Arias, a co-coup plotter in 1992 and former ally. Addressing a workers' Mayday rally Arias accused Chavez of heading a corrupt administration, and is running a close second in opinion polls.

Chavez is destined to disappoint. If he attempted more radical social measures to improve the life of the masses he would soon find himself cut off from access to international financial markets and the national bosses.

If he gave the latter everything they clamour for he would lose his social base and fall back entirely upon that segment of the army that backs him for now.

What is urgently needed is a mass revolutionary workers' party, made up of hundreds of thousands of organised workers, who are presently trapped inside the corrupt CVO, and the urban and rural poor.

And they need a strategy that aims at taking power into their own hands and not one that relies on the goodwill of a section of the armed forces.

A revolutionary party would concentrate the tremendous energy and self-sacrifice shown by the Venezuelan people over the last two decades and focus it upon achieving the following demands:

- Elect popular committees in the shanty towns and workers' committees in the offices and factories to draw up lists of grievances and demands
- Reverse all privatisations, put them back in state hands under workers' control; no compensation to the bosses
- Halt all debt repayments to the IMF and banks; take over the assets of the banks and finance houses
- Use the resources to raise health and education spending, and finance a massive programme of job creation
- Build workers' defence squads to protect marches and occupations from attack by the police and army.

COLOMBIA



Trade union leader seized

Freddy Pulecio, representative in Europe of the Colombian oil workers union USO, was arrested and detained on his arrival in Colombia to see his family in the first days of May. He left Colombia three years ago on the advice of his union after several attempts were made on his life by right-wing death squads with links to the state security forces.

Freddy has been an oil worker since 1981 in Barrancabermeja and a member of USO since 1986. He joined its national leadership two years later. He fought hard against abuses of human rights and labour rights, and this earned him the hatred of the employers and the security forces.

In 1994 he was arrested twice on trumped-up charges of causing a

"rebellion", and on the second occasion he was detained without trial for nine months.

Freddy first came to London in 1997 and immediately set to work to help the Coalition against BP in Colombia expose the abuse of human rights by the oil multinational in Casanare.

Many oil workers and locals had protested against the intimidation of the local community by the company and their hired armed thugs, and against the destruction of their environment. Several deaths of activists were linked to the local paramilitary forces.

In 1998 he moved to Spain and finally Belgium where he has continued to build international links between USO and trade unions abroad, includ-

ing valuable help he has received on several occasions from the oilworkers' union, the OILC in Scotland.

Freddy is a marked man. Assassinations of trade union and human rights activists are routine in Colombia, a country with the highest murder rate for trade unionists in the world. Given the links between the state security services and right-wing death squads, even if he is released he is very vulnerable to being attacked.

We ask all those who have worked with Freddy in the past to protest to the Colombian embassy and demand his immediate release and guarantee his safety while in Colombia. A prompt protest from around the world is the best protection we can offer Freddy in his hour of need.

Chile after Pinochet's return

Diego Mocar has just returned from Chile. He spoke to Workers Power about the impact of Pinochet's detention and return on the political situation in Chile.

WP: What was the impact of the arrest and detention of Pinochet on the situation in Chile?

DM: At first it was shock. No one could believe that Pinochet could be arrested in London. Immediately people went onto the streets to celebrate. It had the effect of liberating political activity in Chile, as people realised the so-called "transition to democracy", which had given immunity to murderers and torturers like Pinochet, was unfinished business. There was an important demonstration demanding justice and resolution of the problem of the 30,000 "disappeared".

Other sections of society, such as the Mapuche Indians, also felt able to protest, having been deprived of their lands. Students protested the lack of grants and cutbacks in education, leading to one student being killed. The dockers struck against the privatisation of the docks and were involved in clashes with the police, a struggle that continued for several months.

So the arrest of Pinochet seemed to be a catalyst that liberated forces that were sleeping or dormant before.

WP: Was there a general feeling that it opened up the possibility of settling accounts with the military again?

DM: Yes, and at the same time many organisations, like the Committee for Disappeared People, as well as individuals, started lodging charges against Pinochet in the high court. Mainly around the illegal killings of a travelling military court nicknamed "the caravan of death" which moved around the country shortly after the coup meting out summary justice and executions

against the left and democratic forces wherever it went. Many of these graves have yet to be found and Pinochet was directly responsible for establishing this court. Today there are 95 formal charges registered against Pinochet in court.

WP: What was the government's response? How did it affect the Presidential election?

DM: The "Concertacion Democratica", the governing coalition of Christian Democrats and the Socialist Party which has been in power since Pinochet resigned as head of state, had elected a Socialist Party member, Ricardo Lagos, as its candidate. This reflected the fact that people felt more confident with Pinochet in jail, able to protest on the streets etc.

Of course, Lagos is no radical, he is part of a "renovating" faction, something like Blair's New Labour over here. He was standing against a right wing populist, Jorge Lavín, backed by the two large rightist parties, the UDI and RN.

WP: And how did Lagos do?

DM: Although he won the election in the second round, the coalition did much worse than in the last presidential elections. Lagos scraped home with just over 51 per cent of the votes. One reason was that despite ten years in power this coalition had failed to resolve any of the demands of the people for justice, to deal with the military torturers, to tackle the problem of the disappeared etc. They had not changed the constitution inherited from Pinochet where he was Senator for life, and him and other non-elected Senators had a blocking position on change.

They retained Pinochet's anti-trade union laws. Another factor was the support given to the right-wing candidate, especially from US imperialism. Lavín spent something like \$55 million dollars on the campaign, a phenomenal sum in Chile.



Reactionary supporters of Pinochet protest against the beginning of legal action against him

WP: Did the left make gains?

DM: No: quite the opposite. The Communist Party, which has always been a major factor in Chilean politics, got its worst ever results. It achieved a mere 1.6 per cent in the first round. It ran a totally legalist campaign failing to capitalise on the protests in the streets, arguing that Pinochet could be tried in Spain and justice would take its course.

Then it called on the workers to cast a blank vote in the second round which caused deep divisions amongst its supporters. There was enormous pressure on trade unionists not to let the hard right into the Presidency and many, like the large Communist-led teachers' union, broke ranks with the party, throwing it into further crisis.

WP: What was the response when Pinochet was returned

from Britain?

DM: The anti-Pinochet forces in Chile felt extremely frustrated and betrayed that Pinochet was sent back to Chile because everyone knew it was a manoeuvre cooked up between the Chilean government, and the British and Spanish governments to avoid a public trial in Europe. I went to a demonstration the day after Pinochet arrived. There were about 5,000, mostly young people who felt very bitter at seeing Pinochet swept into the protective arms of the Chilean military again.

WP: What will happen now?

DM: Well the government and other forces are peddling illusions that justice will take its course in Chile. As I said there are 95 charges against him. Currently, the first stage is to lift his immunity as a Senator so that he can face charges. The CP for example argues for this is a

purely legalistic struggle and are doing nothing to mobilise forces on the streets. This is only being done at the moment by the Association of the Families of the Disappeared, and their young worker and student supporters, and some lefts in the Socialist Party.

The people, of course, doubt that Pinochet will ever be punished for his crimes against the masses. What happened in London and with the Spanish government showed how influential the military in Chile still are.

Lagos, just like Straw did before he intervened, has declared it is up to the courts to decide, that it is nothing to do with politicians. He desperately hopes the case will be over quickly as the longer the case takes the more will come out and the more protests there will be. Already there have been clashes between pro- and anti-Pinochet protesters in Santiago.

Workers' resist the drive to capitalism

Striking Chinese miners occupied a town and fought street battles with police for three days in February. The occupation of Yangjiazhangzi, in China's north eastern province of Liaoning, was only brought to an end after detachments of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) forced the 20,000 workers to retreat.

The occupation was sparked by news that the workers were to be laid-off as a result of the privatisation of the molybdenum mine and would receive only a derisory 560 yuan (\$US68) per year of service as compensation. With unemployment now running at over 30 per cent in Liaoning, the workers knew this was a life sentence of poverty.

These high levels of unemployment are now common across China, but especially in the areas of heavy industry such as the north east. They point to the determination of Zhu Rongji's government to force through the capitalist restructuring of the large scale industrial sector which was the core of China's planned economy.

Since 1996, when the government launched the policy, 30 million workers have been sacked from state industry. In its report to the National People's Congress in March, the government identified a further 10 mil-

lion jobs that were to be eliminated this year alone. But the workers have not taken this lying down. Reports monitored in Hong Kong estimate as many as 100,000 demonstrations, strikes and other mass protests in China in 1999.

The onslaught on jobs is not the only evidence of Beijing's commitment to restoration. A recent World Bank survey reported on progress with proposals to break up the planned sector of the economy into "enterprise groups".

These would be run as autonomous corporations, state capitalist trusts in all but name. By 1997, 120 of these were already operating and 66 of them were quoted on the Chinese stock exchange.

Lower down the scale, industrial enterprises which were not required for the trusts have been either closed or privatised.

This has given managers and party officials the opportunity to line their own pockets either by embezzling unpaid wages or by selling the assets to themselves and their families at knockdown prices and then re-opening for business.

However, there is a limit to how many officials can get their snouts into the trough. When the PLA was ordered to divest itself of all its commercial and industrial interests in 1998, for exam-

ple, it lost much of the funding for its own wage bill. This is creating tensions and divisions within the party and state apparatus.

Not surprisingly, amongst both workers and officials there are many who look back to the period when their jobs seemed secure. There are frequent reports of Mao Zedong placards being carried on anti-corruption demonstrations in the areas worst hit by unemployment.

Another expression of growing discontent with the regime is the growth of the Falun Gong. This semi-religious cult has spread spectacularly in recent years.

Last April, 10,000 members besieged government headquarters in Beijing and this year's anniversary of that demonstration saw a week of daily protests on Tiananmen Square.

The government's own condemnation of the cult included a recognition that it had gained support within the Communist Party itself.

The government's first response has been a wave of repression on a scale not seen since the suppression of the Democracy Movement after the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989. However, it has also tried to distract attention by playing the nationalist card.

The recent elections in Taiwan,

which Beijing continues to regard as a rebellious province of the mainland, provided an opportunity for a great deal of rhetoric and military exercises. President Jiang Zemin also announced important budgetary concessions to the PLA to compensate for the loss of its industrial wing.

Nonetheless, no amount of flag-waving or financial largesse can alter the consequences of the government's policies. It is possible that the bureaucratic leaders believe they can maintain an independent role for themselves within a restored capitalist China but, in the long term, that will prove to be impossible.

An inflated and parasitic state bureaucracy was only possible in the past because China's capitalist class had been driven out of the country after the civil war and its working class was held under the political-military dictatorship of the party. Control of the state economy financed this bloated apparatus, but proved unable to develop it beyond the first stages of industrialisation.

Now, as a new capitalist class grows in China and establishes links with those overseas and in Hong Kong, the only viable role for the bureaucracy is as capitalism's instrument for maintaining the exploitation of the working

class. The balance of forces may for some time allow elements of the bureaucracy to survive as the masters of a state capitalist sector, but even this is not guaranteed.

The deal struck with the USA to gain entry to WTO will undermine the cohesiveness of the bureaucracy. Particularly the opening up of the financial sector to international banks and financiers will encourage the break up of the trusts that are being created out of the state sector.

The immediate prospect is continued growth of the capitalist sector and increased attacks on the working class in both state and private industry and of increased resistance by the workers throughout China.

This will undoubtedly create divisions within the state and party apparatus and some currents will attempt to strengthen themselves by relating to the workers' struggles.

However, what the working class needs above all is political independence in the form of its own party. A revolutionary party in China must be built within its day-to-day struggles, drawing not only on the experience of the anti-bureaucratic struggle of the last ten years but also on the lessons of restoration in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

How global warming

Capitalism is turning up the heat around the world, writes *Simon Nielsen*

MARCH 2000 was the fourth warmest March since accurate records began in 1880. The global mean (land and ocean combined) temperature for 1999 was the fifth warmest on record, despite ocean currents being cooled by the cold phase of El Niño (La Niña). Global land temperatures were second only to 1998.

The two warmest years on record were 1998 and 1997, while the top six warmest years have all been in the 1990s. Overall there has been a rise of 0.5°C in mean global temperature since 1880. Recent research has suggested that the 1990s was the warmest decade since at least 1400.

Scientific research suggests that this "warming" of the world's environment is being caused primarily by the greenhouse effect. So what is the greenhouse effect? It is an entirely natural phenomenon. Without it the global mean temperature would be about -18°C, and the earth unable to support life.

Warmth from the sun heats the surface of the Earth, which in turn radiates energy back out to space. Some of this outgoing radiation, which is nearly all in the infrared region of the spectrum, is trapped in the atmosphere by so-called greenhouse gases. The most important natural greenhouse gases are water vapour and carbon dioxide.

The trapped radiation warms the troposphere (the lower part of the atmosphere), which then radiates energy in all directions. Some escapes into space, but some finds its way back to the earth's surface, making it hotter than it would otherwise be.

Current concern relates not to the greenhouse effect itself, but human-induced changes to the concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The most important of these gases is carbon dioxide. Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide remained steady for several thousand years at 280 parts per million by volume (ppmv). Any changes that took place closely matched changes in global temperature.

From about the middle of the 18th century levels of CO₂ began to rise as technological developments during the industrial revolution enabled the use of fossil fuels. Deforestation also causes

the level of carbon dioxide to rise through the burning of forests and the removal of their ability to absorb CO₂ through photosynthesis. Concentrations currently stand at 360 ppmv and are increasing by 1.5 ppmv annually.

Predictions by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggest that concentrations will double to 700 ppmv by 2100 if nothing is done to reduce emissions. This prediction is based on a doubling of population and moderate economic growth – known as the "business as usual scenario".

Less than half the CO₂ released into the atmosphere actually remains there, the rest is absorbed by vegetation or dissolves in the ocean. As these "sinks" become more and more saturated their ability to take up carbon dioxide is reduced. The movement of carbon dioxide between the land and water and the atmosphere is extremely complicated, making it very difficult to predict how future releases will behave.

There is also near maximum absorption of infrared radiation across much of the spectrum in which carbon dioxide absorbs. This means that a large increase in carbon dioxide will cause only a relatively small increase in the amount of radiation absorbed.

It is estimated that carbon dioxide is responsible for 70 per cent of enhanced global warming. The next most important gas is methane, which accounts for 24 per cent. Like carbon dioxide its atmospheric concentration has been rising since the industrial revolution; methane levels have doubled since 1800.

Although methane constitutes an even smaller proportion of the atmosphere than carbon dioxide it is seven and a half times more effective as a greenhouse gas. The main natural source of methane is from wetland areas. Its human sources include leakage from gas pipelines and oil wells, paddy fields, land fill sites, sewage treatment and enteric fermentation in livestock. Although emissions are not expected to rise as rapidly as carbon dioxide, because methane remains in the atmosphere for longer, its concentration is also expected to double by 2100.

The concentration of nitrous dioxide has also increased through human activities (mainly through the use of fertilisers). It is expected to

rise by 70 per cent by 2100. Its long atmospheric lifetime of 120 years will ensure that it accentuates global warming into the next century and beyond.

Increases in methane and nitrous oxide have a greater effect on enhanced global warming than comparative rises in carbon dioxide. This is because they are effective absorbers of infrared radiation in the so-called "atmospheric window". These are wavelengths that are not absorbed by water vapour and carbon dioxide, and would ordinarily escape into space.

New man-made greenhouse gases began to emerge in the 1940s, the CFCs. Although best known for their ozone destroying abilities they are extremely powerful greenhouse gases – about 5-10 thousand times more effective than carbon dioxide. They were banned in industri-

We need to fight for workers' inspection and control of the polluting industries

alised countries but will continue to be used in the Third World until 2006. They have an atmospheric life span of 75-110 years and will thus continue to enhance the greenhouse effect for some time to come. Although their replacements no longer damage the ozone layer, they are very powerful greenhouse gases and persist in the atmosphere for at least a thousand years.

However, not all emissions from human activities contribute to global warming. Particles produced by the burning of fossil fuels (especially coal) absorb radiation from the sun and scatter

it back into space. In certain areas of the Northern Hemisphere, such as Europe and China, where power production is heavily concentrated, they actually counteract the impact of the enhanced greenhouse effect. However as these particles typically last only five days and more stringent controls on their production are being introduced to combat acid rain, their impact on global warming is likely to be reduced.

If atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide double, and nothing else changes, global average surface temperatures will increase by 1.2°C. This is not disputed by scientists. However, this is not a closed system. Climate operates as a complex interaction between a number of factors, a change in any one of these will impact upon others leading to further changes. These changes are known as feedbacks and can either be positive, amplifying their causative factor, or negative, nullifying it.

Projections of large temperature rises caused by the human-enhanced greenhouse effect are dependent on positive feedbacks enhancing the warming. Predictions of the effect of increased levels of carbon dioxide are made using complex computer models.

Modelling the climate is extremely difficult due to the complex nature of the interactions involved. Even in the short term accurate prediction of the weather can only be made five days in advance. With a complete understanding of the climate it would only be possible to predict weather 20 days in advance due to the fact that climate is a partially chaotic system.

The climate system consists of five components: the atmosphere, ocean, land, ice and biosphere (living things). Within this system are a number of feedbacks. The most important one of these in terms of the greenhouse effect is the water vapour feedback.

Rising temperatures lead to greater evaporation and enable the atmosphere to hold a greater volume of water vapour, which is a greenhouse gas. However extra water vapour would also increase the cloud cover. Some types of cloud shroud the earth reflecting heat back into space, other clouds trap heat at low levels.

Disputes about how water vapour and clouds will influence global warming are at the heart

Hot air from international capitalists fails

IN THE 1990s the governments of the world, confronted by mounting and compelling evidence, finally began to discuss what action to take to counteract global warming.

In 1992 the IPCC announced that global warming had started. They concluded that emissions of greenhouse gases would have to be drastically reduced to avoid serious consequences. Eight years on much hot air has been expended in countless discussions and arguments but very little has been achieved to provide a solution.

In 1995 the Conference of the Parties of the Climate Convention agreed to stabilise carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000. Only a handful of countries (including Britain) have fulfilled even this target. The next significant meeting of the Parties of the Climate Convention was in Kyoto, Japan in November 1997. Ostensibly, this agreed to a cut of around five per cent below 1990 levels in the greenhouse gas emissions of industrialised nations to be achieved between 2008 and 2012. Under the accord the US will lower emissions by seven per cent, Japan by six per cent and the EU countries by eight per cent.

Despite these relatively conservative targets, agreement was only reached at the eleventh hour. The US and Japan refused to cut emissions if no limits were placed on Third World countries, and it was only the prospect of trading pollution

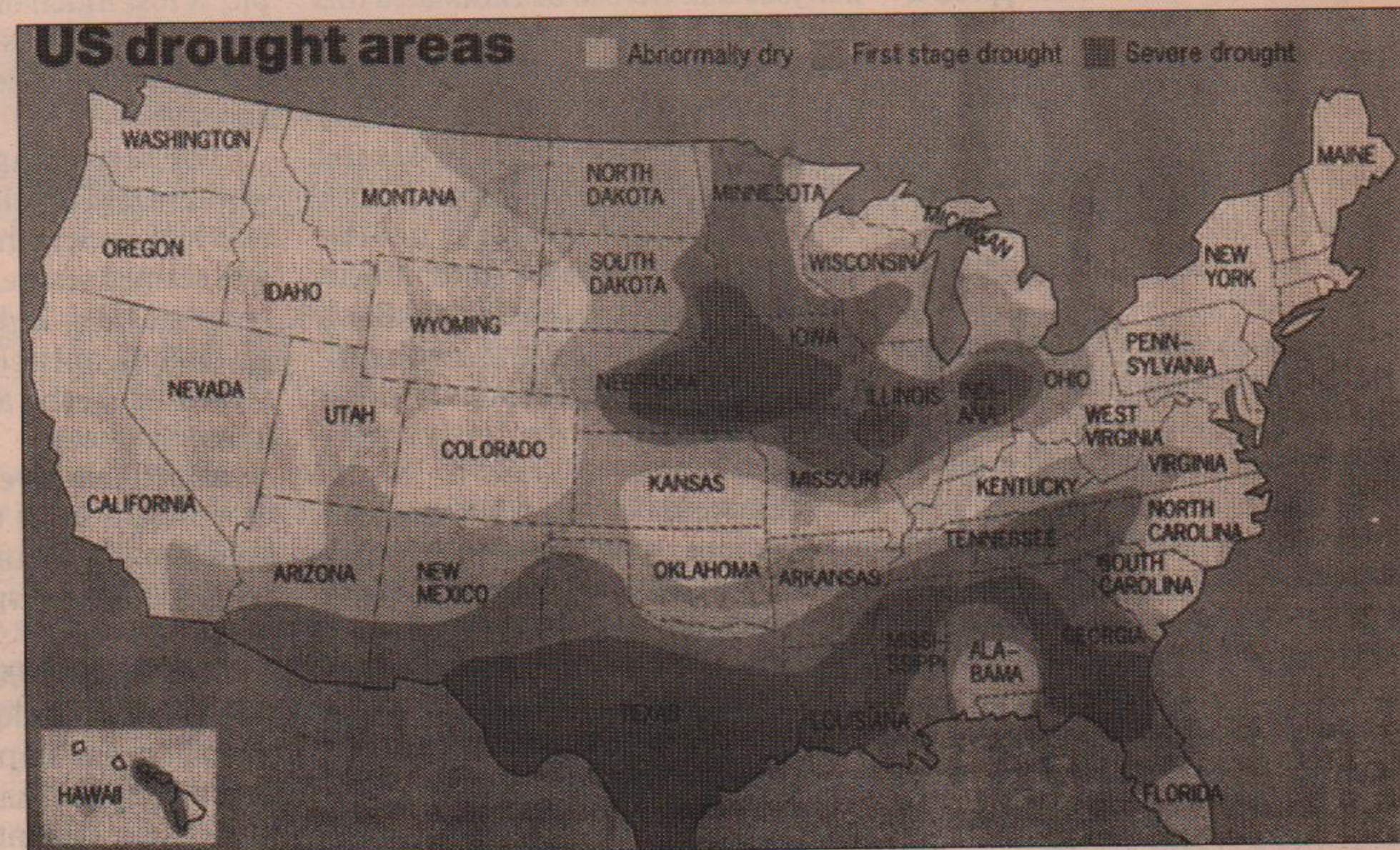
rights that enabled the US to agree.

Yes, international capital will even trade in pollution. Under the Kyoto Protocol, the right to pollute has become a commodity. The US is able to avoid cutting its own emissions by buying the right to pollute from other countries that do not pollute up to their limit!

The agreement maintains the production of greenhouse gases in Russia and Ukraine at 1990 levels. However, as the economies of these countries have been devastated by the restoration of capitalism, current emissions are 30 per cent below 1990 levels. It is very unlikely that they will ever return to these levels, which will allow rich nations, and the US in particular, to trade emissions thereby enabling them to continue producing greenhouse gases at current levels. It also means that although Kyoto commits countries to a five per cent cut in 1990 emissions, it actually represents only a 0.4 per cent cut at 1995 levels.

Currently 84 nations have signed up to the Kyoto Protocol. However, only 22 have ratified it, and none of these include the major polluters (US, Japan and EU). The Protocol still hasn't come into force, and aspects still remain to be finalised.

The latest meeting of Parties of the Climate Convention (COP5) took place in Bonn last November, with Gerhard Schroeder calling for the Protocol to come into force by 2002. The next



meeting (COP6) has been set as the definitive deadline for finalising all aspects of the Kyoto Protocol. However, it was not even possible to decide a date for this meeting. So three years on from Kyoto, agreement still has not been reached and does not look likely in the near future.

This intransigence by the big imperialist powers and the lack of progress is not surprising. It was the capitalist system that created the prob-

lem of global warming in the first place through its drive for profits at any costs. And we should have no illusions in its ability, or willingness, to provide solutions.

The drive to maximise profits ensures the uncontrolled expansion of capital. At the same time wasteful and polluting practices are introduced. Any attempts to make the polluter pay are fought tooth and nail by the big bosses.

threatens the world



of the debate about the magnitude of human induced global warming. Another feedback is the "ice-albedo" effect. As the world warms the ice caps will melt. Ice is a very effective reflector of solar radiation, whereas water and land absorb far more. So the earth's surface will trap more heat increasing warming.

The oceans also influence climate through feedbacks. They are the main source of water vapour. They also possess a larger heat capacity than the atmosphere or land, taking much longer to warm. The entire heat capacity of the atmosphere is equivalent to less than three metres depth of water. The oceans therefore exert a dominant control on the rate at which atmospheric changes occur. Finally the circulation of the oceans redistribute heat throughout the climate system. Without the Gulf Stream, Britain would have a climate similar to that of Greenland.

Overall the view of most scientists is that feed-

backs will amplify warming by 2.5 times. When this is entered into climate prediction models a significant temperature rise is projected. The IPCC predicts a rise of 2°C by 2100 under the "business as usual scenario", with an uncertainty factor of 1.5 - 3.5°C. This does not seem very much but when we consider that the change of temperature from the middle of an ice age to the warm interglacial period is only 5-6°C, 2°C represents the equivalent of a third of an ice age. While the transition from an ice age takes place over many thousands of years, this change would take place in little over 100 years.

The impact of such a temperature rise could be devastating. The most mentioned consequence is a rise in sea level, through thermal expansion (as bodies heat up they expand) and glaciers melting. Interestingly, the net contribution from polar ice sheets is small due to the increase in precipitation caused by a warmer climate.

A 50 centimetre rise in sea levels is predicted by 2100, which is estimated to increase the annual number of people flooded from 13 million to 94 million. This will particularly effect countries such as Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, countries which can ill afford to build the necessary flood protection infrastructure. Changes in sea level in the next century will be even greater due to the time taken for the oceans to heat up.

Higher temperatures will see increased rates of evaporation especially in summer. Although globally this will be compensated for by greater precipitation, some areas, especially

continental and arid ones will experience falls in rainfall producing shifts in water supply, a resource already under pressure. Substantial decreases would occur in Australia, India, southern Africa, most of South America and Europe.

Increases are expected in North America, Asia and central eastern Africa. Generally, there will be an increase in severe weather events, with storms, flooding and droughts becoming common place. Disasters such as those in Mozambique, India and the Horn of Africa suggest this process has already begun.

In terms of food production, overall global capacity will not be affected due to adaptability to changes in temperature and rainfall. However there will be significant local impacts. Cereal yields are expected to increase at high and mid-latitudes, such as North America, China, Argentina and much of Europe.

However, yields in Africa, the Middle East and in particular India are expected to decrease. Human health would also be affected, with an increase in the range of tropical diseases such as malaria. Cities in mid latitudes would also have to brace themselves for higher temperatures and the health implications this would have, such as heat stress.

Poorer countries close to the equator are likely to be hit much harder than the richer northern countries. Not only can these countries ill afford the adaptations necessary to respond to climate change, they are the countries which contribute the least to emissions of greenhouse gases.

It is not only humans who will be affected. Natural ecosystems will be hit hard because they are unable to adapt to rapid temperature changes. This is especially true of trees that are sensitive to changes as small as 1°C in annual average temperature. Warming will lead to stress and die-back, especially of tropical forests and grassland in northern South America and central southern Africa, significantly reducing the volume of carbon dioxide absorbed through photosynthesis. This will be partially offset by the increased growth expected from greater concentrations of carbon dioxide in northern latitudes.

to stop pollution

The multinationals responsible for much of the pollution are extremely powerful. They have spent millions lobbying governments to ensure their profits are unaffected. An international solution is needed, but countries are too busy fighting for their "national" interests - that is the interests of the locally-based polluting corporations.

Even if the Kyoto Protocol were enacted, its provisions are woefully inadequate. While emissions of greenhouse gases would be stabilised, their atmospheric concentrations would not be. The volumes of carbon dioxide and other gases would continue to rise requiring even more drastic cuts in the future.

The IPCC estimates that if drastic consequences are to be avoided atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide must be stabilised at around 550 ppmv. Although not preventing significant temperature increases, such measures would delay expected changes by more than 100 years, giving greater time for natural ecosystems to adapt and human societies to introduce necessary changes. The anticipated effects would also be mitigated, with less climatic change, and smaller increases in sea levels.

For such a stabilisation to occur large cuts must be made in emissions now. Significant cuts would require a shift from the use of fossil fuels, massive energy-saving programmes, and a clean

transport system. The response to Kyoto has clearly indicated that international capitalism is not prepared to carry out the necessary changes to ensure even minor cuts in emissions. Any fight to stop global warming must take on this rotten system which pollutes for profits.

But such a fight must not ignore the needs of the less developed countries. They require a huge increase in energy usage to ensure that the whole of humanity has access to the tremendous benefits that industrialisation has brought. Only a rational and planned system could provide for expansion, industrialisation and increased access to technology without further damaging the global environment.

Such a system would have to be based on the needs of the many, not just on profits for the few. World production would have to be controlled by the producers themselves, thereby ensuring the expansion of productive forces was carried out in a rational and sustainable way. Such a system would also ensure that jobs would not be destroyed by the shift away from polluting production.

Human-induced global warming poses a massive threat to humanity and the planet itself. The system whose polluting practices initiated the threat is patently unable to remove it. Global warming is an international problem which requires an international solution. There is only one such solution - socialism.

Planning is the answer

In order to prevent a rapid deterioration of the biosphere, we need to go way beyond the timid targets of Kyoto. We need a major cut of around 60 per cent in the emissions of greenhouse gases.

We demand of all the governments of the world, a short-term emergency plan to reduce to environmentally manageable levels, the greenhouse emissions from power generation, industrial production and road transport. Concentrations of greenhouse gases must be stabilised as soon as possible.

This means both effective filtering of polluting power sources and the speedy replacement of fossil fuel power generation by more climate-benign and renewable sources of energy: wind and tidal power, solar energy, fuel cells, hydroelectric etc. These sources of energy must be massively expanded during such a plan by state funded public works, and the use of grants and subsidies to householders.

At the same time the polluting industries must be made to pay the true costs of counteracting the damage they cause to the environment. Heavy taxation on such industries and massive fines for breaching new environmental protection laws should be the norm. If they cannot pay then their industries should be nationalised without

compensation and placed under the control of the workers.

We need a planned turn from power stations and motor vehicles burning of fossil fuels to combat atmospheric pollution and acid rain.

We need massive diversion of resources to help the underdeveloped countries employ, feed and house their people on the basis of the most modern environmentally clean production

We need a free, clean, fast, efficient and safe public transport system. We oppose "green taxes" on cars, petrol, tolls on motorways and so on, that unload the costs onto the working class while allowing the rich to pay to pollute. We support phased in restrictions on car use tied to the opening of new or extended public transport systems.

To plan local, national and international programmes to organise and enforce these we need to fight for workers' inspection and control of the polluting industries.

To reverse, not merely slow or halt the threat of global warming, it is necessary to restore the forests of the temperate zones as well as the tropical rain forests to reverse desertification, to refill the emptying lakes to cleanse whole seas and oceans. This can only be done by local, national and international planning.

Breaking from Blair

Now that New Labour's honeymoon is over *Lesley Day* asks how can we break the unions from Blairism?

It may have been the longest honeymoon in history, but it is well and truly over. New Labour's anti-working class policies are finally drawing a response both in and outside the party.

In Wales, and now dramatically in London, the Blairites have come up against the limits of their ability to manipulate the party. Discontent is such that old Labour loyalists like MP Peter Kilfoyle and New Labour celebrities like Tony Robinson both feel the necessity to issue public warnings about the party's direction.

Across the country, working class people refused to turn out in the local elections – and party activists refused to turn out for election work.

The winter crisis in the NHS, the threat of a jobs meltdown in the Midlands, the fact that the gap between rich and poor continued to rise in the first two years of this government – these events have stretched the loyalty of many Labour supporters to breaking point. "Whatever the outcome, one thing is sure" commented one Rover steward last month, "I will never work for, or vote for, those bastards again".

And it's not just workers in the fragile manufacturing sectors who are feeling angry. Workers in the public sector are feeling battered too. After a decade and a half of Tory attacks on public services, jobs and wages, workers reasonably expected better from Labour. Instead they've faced a new round of attacks in the guise of the Private Finance Initiative and Best Value.

But despite the anger, despite the feelings of betrayal, the signs of a serious and sustained fightback in the unions against New Labour are still meagre. Understanding the reasons for this is vital. Some of the reasons are transient, others are more deep rooted.

One reason is that not all workers share the same experience. For many sections, continued economic growth means that jobs and living standards seem relatively stable and secure. They may be disappointed at some aspects of Labour's performance but they are willing to stick with the government and hope for improvements.

Labour is still dependent on the continued strength of the economy. Without this, alternative jobs for those forced out of manufacturing will be even more hard to come by and Gordon Brown's work based benefit system will be little help. A sharp change in the economic situation, for instance if continued turbulence in the world economy turns the expected slow down into something worse, would change all this.

However, while a worsening economic situation might make workers more angry, it won't automatically lead to an increased fightback. Even where workers are already facing serious attacks, signs of resistance have been patchy. This is sometimes put down to a "lack of confidence" but at the heart of the matter is the question of politics.

There certainly are problems of confidence and experience. Two decades of retreat have meant that whole layers of workers have little experience of successful trade union action. Many experienced trade unionists are quite simply burnt out and in some cases, for instance in the car industry, have got out. Those who are left may be scarred by past defeats and in some cases have a deep and unnecessary pessimism about the chances of a fightback.

But the raw material for the fightback is there: plenty of polls as well as everyday experience tell us that workers hate their bosses as much as ever and understand that workers and managers have different interests. Interestingly, a recent Cambridge University survey confirmed that these more class conscious attitudes have spread further into white collar occupations as these jobs become more "proletarian" through the loss of traditional privileges.

It is possible to rebuild, as the working class has shown time and time again. The rebuilding is already going on from inside and outside the workplace. "We've been trying to attract new stewards and had little response till this year" reported one union organiser in the health service "But last month we advertised a training session and a whole bunch of women turned up, most of whom took on the job afterwards".

Even the TUC has realised the need to bring in new young workers and fight for recognition in non-union firms. Last year deals were struck in 75 new workplaces. At the start of this year another 136 campaigns were in progress.

But all the Organising Academies and campaigns in the world won't renew the trade union movement if all they do is sign up new recruits. Workers join trade unions in order to get results. So the more successful recruitment campaigns – in some areas of the print, in journalism, in some (but so far only a handful) of call centres – have been where the union is taking on questions of conditions, pay and job security. In the end trade unions must be able to successfully defend their members.

And this is where, even at such a basic level, there is no avoiding the question of politics. The "politics of partnership" espoused by both Blair and John Monks means co-operation with the bosses not conflict. Monks and the trade union leaders would like to use the concessions in trade union law to gain recognition for safe, tame unions where they preserve their role in negotiating for members but things rarely get out of hand.

A number of recent examples show what this means in practice.

When the union leadership works hand in glove with the bosses, union activists are blocked at every turn. This is the situation confronting Unison militants. The Unison leadership does not want to cause trouble for Blair or for local Labour councils and is prepared to witch-hunt its activists to achieve this end. In Birmingham, for example, the local council is pushing through "Best Value". Swaths of services are being privatised or put into the unprotected voluntary sector.

But instead of leading a fightback, the Unison leadership has spent the last year attacking the very people who have been standing up for members and defending services. The branch was suspended and then reorganised. Individual activists were targeted. Shop steward Faith Ryan, was suspended (and then expelled) by Unison on a trumped up charge, then found that the City Council wanted to hive off the welfare benefits advice section where she works. But because of her suspension, the councillors and managers would not meet her as the accredited representative of her group of workers!

Here, the problem is not workers' unwillingness to fight; Faith topped the poll for the Best Value post in the reconstituted branch despite all the slanders and smears from the union leadership and the local press. But the union leadership has so far been able to manoeuvre and bully to get its way, preventing serious resistance developing.

Events at the NUT conference illustrated how Blair's supporters in the union bureaucracy will stoop to any means to give New Labour a smooth ride. At the end of the conference, General Secretary Doug McAvooy brazenly announced that he would disobey any instruction by conference – supposedly the sovereign body of the union – to call for a one day strike against Performance Related Pay. Yet in staff rooms around the country, there is huge anger on this issue. A lead from the top would bring an overwhelming "yes" vote and serious trouble for the government.

The debacle at Rover also shows the way the ties between the union leaders and the government can block resistance. This is not to say that Rover workers have been champing at the bit, eager to barricade themselves into the plants and raise the red flag over Longbridge. But at a number of points in the saga it's been clear that a determined leadership could build action.

The first cross plant stewards meeting at Gaydon, for instance, saw support for Tony Woodley's call for nationalisation and declarations that there would be a fight to keep Rover intact. This was swiftly followed by the 80,000 strong march, where the biggest cheers were reserved for maverick historian Carl Chinn's call to blockade the gates to stop the Mini being moved, and the biggest boos for the hapless local Labour MP.

But since then retreat has followed retreat. It's not just the right wing Sir Ken Jackson of the AEEU who refused to place any demands for nationalisation on Labour. Bill Morris and Tony Woodley, both from the Broad Left inside the TGWU, have concentrated on working with New Labour – Byers and Blair – to cobble together the alternative Phoenix bid.

The message went to the Works Committee at Longbridge, and from the Works Committee to the shop floor, to stop any talk of action that could "jeopardise a future buyer". This is the politics of partnership writ large and not surprisingly it led to a situation where the only cam-

paigning done by the Works Committee has been in support of one capitalist against another.

The lessons from these and other struggles under Labour are that where workers are prepared to fight, the trade union leadership will normally respond by suppressing action or diverting it down safe channels. As workers' confidence further revives, and as they expect more in the run up to the next election, we are guaranteed to see more examples.

None of this means that trade union leaders will never lead struggles. Their jobs depend on being able to recruit and retain members. But they occupy a particular position within the class struggle, balancing between the members and the bosses, trying to extract concessions from the bosses but keeping the members in check.

In this position they both reflect and reinforce the dominant set of ideas in the working class, reformism: improvements can be won for workers within capitalist society. They want to keep Labour in power because they believe that it is easier to do a deal with them than with the Tories. And by keeping the mass of workers passive they can spread the lie that this is the best workers can hope for.

That is why whenever there is a need for a fightback against the bosses or government policies the bureaucracy get worried. Their position becomes threatened. And with New Labour in power this problem will become particularly acute. Blair's type of reformism – extremely right-wing and pro-business – demands more than usual levels of acquiescence.

This fact leads some socialists in the trade unions to suppose that electing rather more left wing leaders who are critical of Blair will solve the problem.

It's certainly no accident that where union leaderships have retained a degree of independence from New Labour, the more effective fightbacks have taken place – on the rail or in the fire brigade. Where left wingers have run recruitment drives – the BT call centres for example – they've been able to link the recruitment to action.

But past experience shows that relying on left leaders is a mistake. In the 1970s, for example, left wingers Hugh Scanlon and Jack Jones led the two largest unions (AUEW and TGWU respectively). But they led the movement into the disastrous "social contract" with the Callaghan Labour government. This meant that unions fought to hold back struggles. Conditions for workers worsened until anger spilled over into the winter of discontent. With no effective political alternative, workers deserted Labour – and let in Margaret Thatcher.

Building a real socialist alternative to Labour will mean challenging Labour's politics on all fronts, in the workplaces, in the unions and in wider society. It will mean challenging the stranglehold of the union bureaucracy. It means fighting to transform the unions at the same time as rebuilding them – building movements of the rank and file that fight for new politics not just new leaders.

Above all it means posing point blank in every union and every workplace the fact that if we want to save jobs and services we need to break from Blair and in affiliated unions use the trade union vote to give him a bloody nose on every major issue. It means replacing his "politics of partnership" with the politics of class struggle.

Without such a political fight, the trade union leaders will be able to go on propping up Labour. There can be no serious break from Labour without taking on this fight.

Such a fight means applying revolutionary politics to the fight in the trade unions and workplaces, showing the weakness of relying on Labour and of various reformist solutions. The fight against privatisation poses the question of what kind of services we need and who should run them. The need to defend jobs poses the question of nationalisation, occupation and workers' control. This is why Workers Power's Action Programme is a programme not just for elections, but for the transformation of the unions and for the struggles ahead.



Rover workers' must fight their reformist leaders as well as the owners

The legacy of Tony Cliff

Tony Cliff, the leader of the Socialist Workers Party, died on 9 April 2000. *Mark Harrison* looks back at the life of one of the most significant leaders of the post-war British left.

TONY CLIFF (Ygael Gluckstein) was born in May 1917 in Palestine. As a youth he rejected Zionism and Stalinism and threw himself into building the Trotskyist Fourth International (FI).

Towards the end of the 1940s Cliff became convinced that Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state was wrong and in a huge internal bulletin elaborated his particular version of the theory of state capitalism.

His adherence to state capitalism led to a break with the FI and the formation of the Socialist Review Group in the 1950s. This was transformed into the International Socialists in the 1960s and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1977 – the biggest left organisation in Britain and possibly in Europe.

Unlike so many leftists of his generation, Cliff stayed loyal to the cause of the working class right up to his death. And unlike other survivors of his generation – notably his main Trotskyist rivals from 1950s Trotskyism, Gerry Healy and Ted Grant – Cliff maintained a sense of proportion, a sense of humour and a sense of reality.

Healy descended into a macabre world of political fantasy and organisational gangsterism and Ted Grant into a world of lifeless schemas that has reduced his old organisation (Militant) to a fragmented series of sects. Cliff's genuine charm and famous ability to make jokes meant that at his funeral there were tributes from political friends and foes.

Workers Power itself was formed after a break with Cliff's organisation in the 1970s. We were the Left Faction of the International Socialists in 1972. We had major political disagreements with Cliff: our determination to fight our corner led to our expulsion from the International Socialists in 1975.

In the first place, we have a major difference over state capitalism itself. This theory, because of its anti-Stalinism, held attractions in a period when post-war Trotskyism was busily capitulating to Stalinists like Tito, and later Castro and Ho Chi Minh. But it was completely flawed as an analysis of the USSR. Like so many of Cliff's theories it was based on a method that owed more to superficial impressionism than to Marxism.

We have dealt at length with this theory elsewhere (Paul Morris, "The crisis of Stalinism and the theory of state capitalism", *Permanent Revolution* 9). Faced with the actual restoration of capitalism in the degenerated workers' states the theory has come apart at the seams.

A long-running debate with Chris Harman over the theory within the SWP ended with Cliff himself conceding in the 1990s that the capitalist "law of value" had been present all along in the USSR – whereas the cornerstone of his original theory was its absence.

Cliff said capitalism was restored in Russia in 1927. The real restoration took place in the 1990s. It involved shock therapy, the re-introduction of market mechanisms, the dismantling of planning agencies. If the Stalinist states had been "state capitalist", the transition would have been relatively smooth. Precisely because the laws of capitalist accumulation had been bureaucratically suppressed in these states, the transition has been cataclysmic, confronted with countless hidden obstacles – and is still not over in Russia itself.

State capitalism, however, was not merely a wrong theory. Because it was based on an impressionist method it led Cliff to a full scale break with every aspect of revolutionary Trotskyism. In the 1950s and early 1960s it caused Cliff to reject Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, Lenin's theory of imperialism, and with it the theory of reformism as a trend in the working class based on a labour aristocracy, and – for nearly decades – the theory and practice of Leninist party-building.

In short, state capitalism was Cliff's fire escape from Trotskyism. What helped propel hundreds of people after him was "orthodox" Trotskyism's grotesque capitulations to Stalinism, nationalism and reformism. We do not argue that the Fourth International after 1951 was more revolutionary than Cliff: the whole revolutionary con-

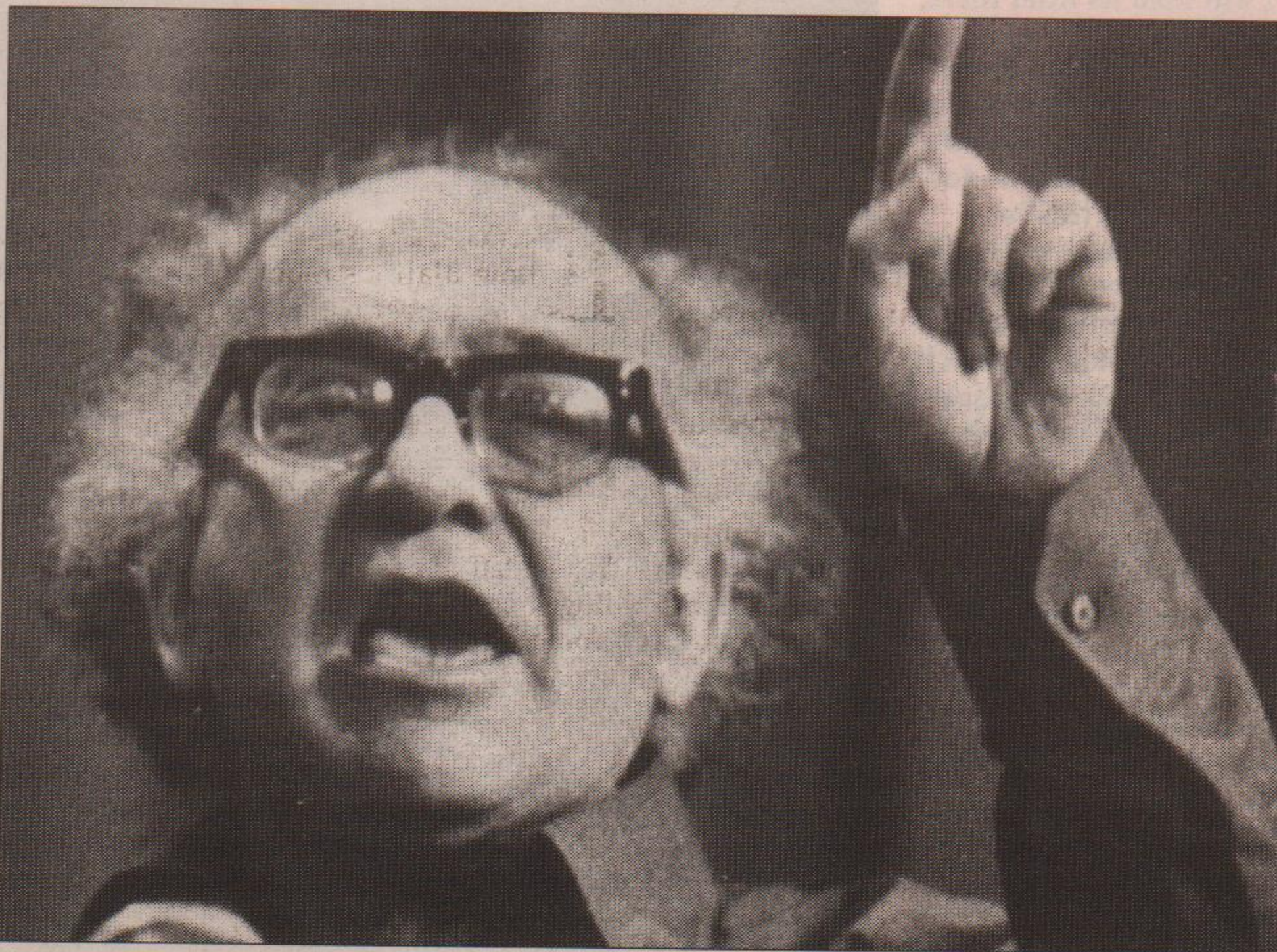


Photo by Andrew Wliard

tinuity was broken.

In the 1950s and 60s, Cliff's libertarian socialism was attractive to those genuinely repelled by "Trotskyists" who turned Trotsky's words into incantations while abandoning his revolutionary method. But Cliff was guilty of abandoning that method too. He did not try to re-elaborate Trotskyism. He broke with it.

The consequences of this break proved decisive in ensuring that, despite his energy, Cliff failed to build a party that could direct the working class from its day-to-day struggles towards the struggle for power. The method of the transitional programme was replaced by another manifestation of Cliff's impressionist method: Economism.

Cliff elevated the economic struggle of the working class to a place of absolute pre-eminence in the general class struggle and then used the party to extend and develop that economic struggle around the immediate slogans and demands raised by the workers themselves. Cliff always opposed trying to fight for demands the workers "were not ready for".

He firmly believed that the struggle itself would spontaneously generate socialist consciousness, absolving the party of its role as a political leader of the class. Though Cliff abandoned his Luxemburgist opposition to the Leninist party in the late 1960s, for him the party was primarily an organisational mechanism rather than the embodiment of a programme and the instrument for translating that programme into action.

This remains a hallmark of SWP politics, a legacy of Cliff that the SWP must re-evaluate and break from. It is summed up by Cliff's oft-repeated phrase attacking Workers Power year-on-year in debates at Marxism: "Workers don't need a blueprint of a machine gun when they are being attacked [the programme], they need the bloody machine gun."

This particular joke falls flat when you give it a moment's serious consideration. After all, if this is true, what need is there for revolutionary theory or a revolutionary party, let alone a programme.

Workers go into struggle with their own version of a programme. Take Rover today. Sadly, thousands of Longbridge workers are campaigning for a capitalist solution to the car crisis. This is because they embrace a reformist programme (a capitalist buy out). The whole purpose of a revolutionary organisation is to break workers from this programme so that they will take action in their own interest.

And their own interest is embodied in a revolutionary programme – which in this case can be very concretely posed around demands for the nationalisation of Rover with no compensation to the bosses, for workers' control over production, for the opening of the management and government's books and accounts.

Such demands do not fall from the sky – and they are certainly not the spontaneous products

of the struggle at Rover. They are component parts of a programme which delineates the revolutionaries from reformism and equips the party to deploy its members not simply as paper sellers and placard distributors but as fighters for an alternative solution.

In the 1960s Cliff wrote: "Reformism can never be defeated by programmes. It can only be defeated by deeds."

This is classic Economism. Of course the defeat of reformism is not a literary exercise. It will only happen in life. But deeds alone will not destroy it. After all, the 1970s saw plenty of deeds – the dock strike, the strikes against the Industrial Relations Act, the two miners' strikes. These were followed in the 1980s by the steel strike, the great miners' strike, the strikes of printers, dockers and seafarers. The poll tax struggle saw deeds aplenty.

In 1997 reformism – refashioned by Labour's extreme right around Blair – came back with a vengeance. All those deeds had failed to vanquish it. The reason was simple. The deeds were separated from the revolutionary programme because revolutionaries were too weak to make the connection.

Where we were strong, important gains were made. Despite being scoffed at by the SWP, Workers Power's call for defence squads in the miners' strike struck a massive chord. Miners were busy building picket defence teams, organised and ready to do battle with the police, while the SWP were claiming that such demands were "too advanced".

The goal of the revolutionary party is to challenge, defeat and replace the reformists in the working class through deeds and through programme.

Cliff was very strong (after 1968) on the need for a party. Many of his writings were geared towards helping build a Bolshevik style party. He was famous for his "party, party, party" speeches. Without a revolutionary programme, however, Cliff's commitment to building a Bolshevik party was undermined by two key political weaknesses.

First, Cliff trained the SWP leadership to tailor the party's demands and policies to existing levels of consciousness and struggle with the objective of maximising recruitment. Because of this the party would always be turned around to "fit" whatever was popular rather than transcend what was popular. The SWP has, variously, adapted itself to the anti-fascist milieu, (the ANL), the women's movement (Women's Voice during its feminist phase), the Irish solidarity movement (Time to Go), the Criminal Justice Bill protests etc., etc. The latest turn to building the London Socialist Alliance was preceded by a short lived turn to the Seattle movement, which may now be resumed.

In each "turn", the SWP adapts to a particular audience, wins recruits and then moves on.

And each time the adaptation involves concessions to the audience it adapts to (soft-peddalling on physical confrontations with fascism during the ANL Mkt, dropping the Troops Out Now slogan in Time to Go, dropping the traditional emphasis on the party during the Seattle-oriented People and Protest turn). While this can result in short term recruitment successes it does not assemble a revolutionary cadre capable of patiently winning the forces in the disparate campaigns, in the unions and so on to a consistent revolutionary strategy. The result is that recruits are lost and the leadership begin the hunt for a new milieu.

This pattern of successive "turns" became the hallmark of Cliff once the golden era of spontaneous working class militancy – which the SWP was built to harness – began to wane from the late 1970s onwards.

The need for repeated sharp tactical turns led to Cliff's least endearing characteristics and to the second key weakness of his party building method: his willingness to use bureaucratic methods to push through his latest turn, to jettison those recruited in a previous turn and to ensure that the leadership is, virtually, self-perpetuating.

Workers Power's experience of Cliff in the 1970s demonstrated that, in the name of Lenin, he was prepared to ban factions, abolish inclusive leading committees and replace them with a self-selected and exclusive central committee (exclusive because it was made up of full timers). He was prepared to deal with dissenters by administrative rather than political means and generally ensure that the party remains pliant when the leadership decrees a new turn.

This is the opposite of democratic centralism. It is no way to build a workers' party in which initiative, drive, imagination and ideas are allowed to flourish and feed the growth of the party. It is no way to convince workers that revolutionaries are also genuine democrats because we are committed to the democracy of the working class. And above all, it is no way to train self-reliant cadres.

The existence of a huge layer of disillusioned ex-members of the SWP is not just a product of the natural wastage that building the party involves: it is a product of the repeated turns and bureaucratic crackdowns.

All centrism relies on schemas. Cliff's brand has survived longest in Britain because it is based on the most enduring schema – the spontaneous militancy of the working class.

But as SWP members use Cliff's death to take stock of their organisation's legacy, one fact becomes blindingly obvious: in 18 years of Toryism and three years of Labour betrayal they have failed to break out of the stage of a small activist group. Likewise, despite decades of attempting to spread the SWP internationally, there have been few breakthroughs.

Cliff himself, we are told in a preview of his soon-to-appear autobiography, was self-critical for his failure to build the international. He also seems to have begun re-evaluating Trotskyism in the light of the collapse of Stalinism.

In his 1999 book, *Trotskyism after Trotsky*, Cliff wrote:

"Understanding the past makes it clear that Trotskyism, as a link in the continuity of Marxism, is coming into its own. Now Stalinism, the great bulwark preventing the advance of Trotskyism, has gone. Capitalism in the advanced countries is no longer expanding and so the words of the 1938 Transitional Programme that 'there can be no discussion of systematic social reforms and the raising of the masses' living standards' fits reality again. The classic theory of permanent revolution, as argued by Trotsky, is back on the agenda, as shown by the Indonesian Revolution of 1998."

Was Cliff embarked on a subjective "return to Trotskyism"? There is not enough evidence to say. What is certain is that this is the path SWP members engaged in a critical re-evaluation of their organisation's history must follow through to the end.

Workers Power sends its condolences to Tony Cliff's family, friends and comrades.

CAPITALISM is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need. Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

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

THE TRADE UNIONS must be transformed by a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production. We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

OCTOBER 1917: The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist.

SOCIAL OPPRESSION is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

IMPERIALISM is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism. In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of 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!

TURN PRAGUE INTO SEATTLE!

THE NEXT stop on the anti-capitalist protest train is Prague. From 26-28 September the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will hold its AGM there, behind a ring of steel.

It will be greeted by angry demonstrations organised by a coalition of socialists, trade unionists, anarchists, environmental groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

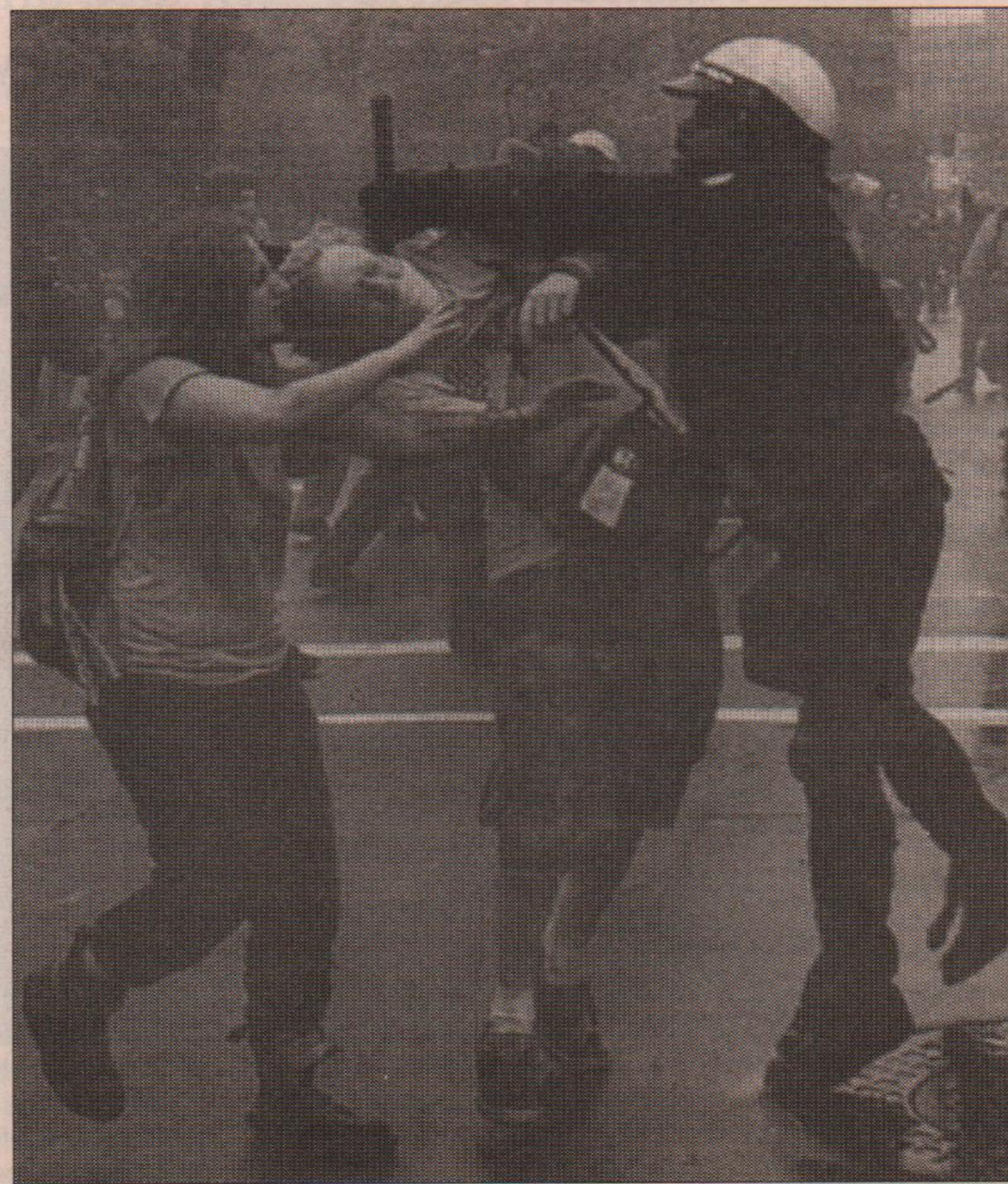
Simply getting to Prague will be difficult: the Czech government has already banned any demonstrations against the IMF. On Mayday Czech police mounted an attack on an anarchist political event and on Sunday 7 May they harassed an anti-IMF demo, organised by Workers Power's Czech sister group, the Socialist Workers Organisation (SOP), the Communist Party youth and the trade unions.

But it is vital that workers and youth in Europe deliver the same kind of blow to the world's financial pirates as the Seattle protest did on 30 November last year.

The Seattle protest turned violent because police attacked non-violent protesters. We are going to Prague to insist on our right to demonstrate against the poverty inflicted on the Third World and Eastern Europe by the IMF and World Bank. We want to see mass, non-violent protests backed by millions of Czech workers – not an aimless run-around with the police or a begging bowl session led by a few tame NGO representatives.

But we are also determined to defend the protests from police attacks.

It is vital that unions and left-wing



parties from all across Europe support the Prague mobilisation. That is the best way to make sure that the anti-capitalist youth and NGO activists who will flock there are not battered and jailed by the Czech police.

What rocked the US establishment

in Seattle was the unprecedented link-up between youth and organised workers. Hundreds of FBI agents are being shipped to Prague even now with the aim of ensuring no protest takes place.

The Prague protests will start on Saturday 23 September with a demo sup-

ported by the SOP, the Communist Party youth, the trade union federation of Bohemia and Moravia, and supported by some anarchists.

Meanwhile, there will be teach-ins organised by the NGOs – in particular Bank Watch – and an alternative arts festival. On 26 September a demo called by the Prague-based INPEG group will attempt to surround the IMF conference. Throughout the three days there will be conferences and teach-in sessions to draw attention to the reactionary role of the IMF/World Bank.

The workers' movements of Third World countries like Bangladesh and Zimbabwe are now actively involved in the anti-IMF campaign. Even the International Congress of Free Trade Unions had to discuss the Prague mobilisation at its conference in South Africa last month.

Prague should be on the agenda of every organisation in the workers' movement.

In Britain, the "September 26 Collective" has been formed to mobilise for Prague. Workers Power supports this initiative and will work to put it on a more permanent footing.

We need a functional structure that allows individual activists to work with delegates from unions and left parties to organise the coaches and minibuses needed to get to Prague and back. A teach-in is planned for London on 2 September.

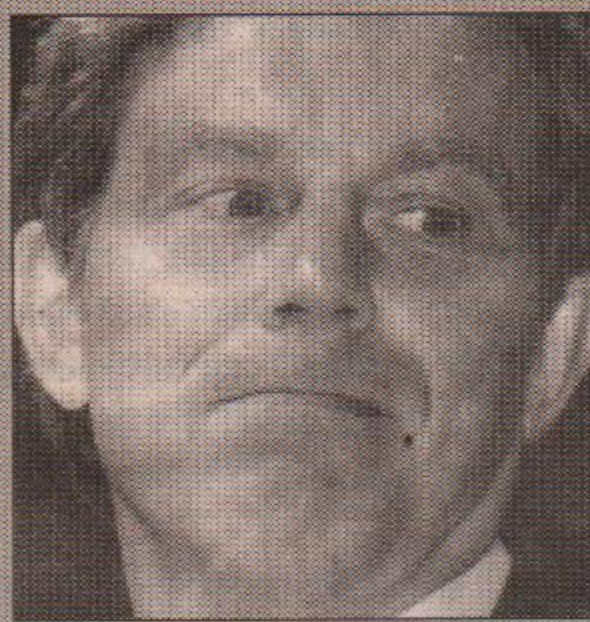
■ **For the latest details on the Prague mobilisation and detailed background on the IMF go to www.workerspower.com.**

TAKING ON THE GLOBAL CAPITALISTS

The 21st century is here and socialism is back on the world agenda. Workers Power is organising a dayschool and rally to debate the way forward

Friday, 19 May at 8.00pm

The crisis in Blair's New Labour



Venue: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.
Nearest tube: Holborn

Saturday, 20 May

10.00am

● After Seattle – the struggle against globalisation

11.45am

● Asylum seekers welcome here
● Nato – policeman for the new world disorder

2.15pm

● The agony of Africa
● The crisis in the car industry and the need for international action

3.45pm

● How do we build a new party and a new international

Venue: Voluntary Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7,
Nearest tube Holloway Road

£5 waged/£3 unwaged. Creche available. Phone 020 8981 0602 for details. (Note change of venue Saturday)

FEEDBACK ■ Contact us on 020 8981 0602

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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