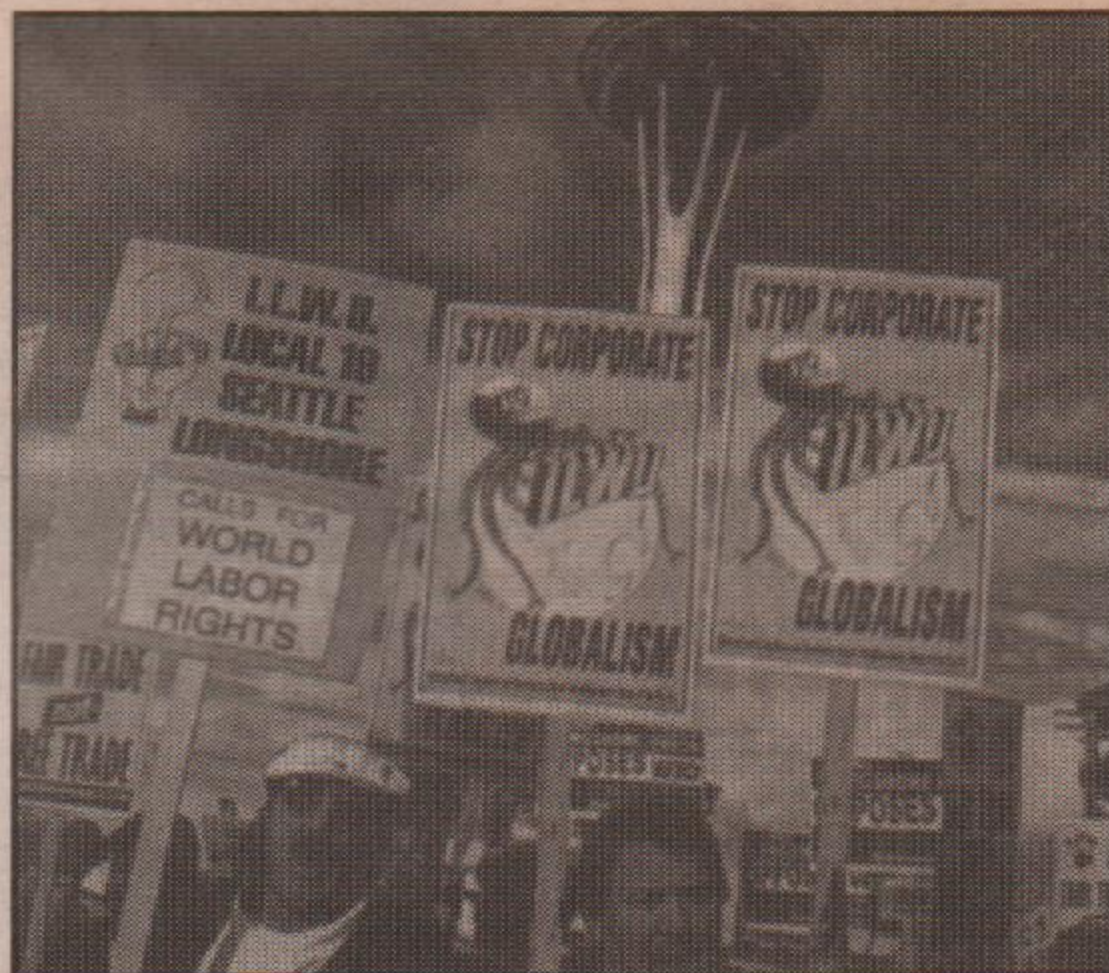


workers POWER

September 2000: IMF to meet in Czech Republic: We'll be there – make sure you are

Turn Prague into Seattle



IN SEPTEMBER in Prague the world's financial top dogs will try to hold a summit. They will gather to discuss how they can increase profits for the multinationals and the super-rich by inflicting poverty and misery on millions across the globe.

This time we will not let them get away with their plans without a fight. We are going to Prague, along with thousands of anti-capitalists from around the world. The size of our protest must match the scale of our contempt for them and their project.

In November 1999 the glorious battle of Seattle took place. Thousands of demonstrators managed to prevent the World Trade Organisation (WTO) from meeting. What made Seattle shine like a flaming beacon to anti-capitalist protesters across the world was the dynamic combination of young activists and militant trade unionists.

Members of environmentalist organisations, activists around NGOs were joined by steelworkers, teamsters and

longshoremen. And when the forces of the US state attacked the demonstration, the forces of organised labour defended it. An impregnable unity was forged in the struggle.

On 23 September Czech trade unionists have called for a workers' demonstration against the IMF/World Bank. We urge trade unionists in Britain to support this call and build for this workers' demonstration. This is a vital means of winning Czech workers themselves to support mass action on 26 September to

protest at the start of the IMF/World Bank summit.

In Prague, as in Seattle, the forces of organised capital must be met by the forces of the international working class. Trade unionists, youth, students, environmentalists, anti-capitalists, revolutionaries will be there, making both demos huge protests against international capital. Make sure, whatever you do this summer, you are too!
 ■ Turn Prague into Seattle
 ■ Stop the IMF and World Bank

INSIDE

★ **Special on the politics of the SWP**

★ **Party, class and Cliff**

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● **Trade unionists contact Prague Trade Union Solidarity for more info: BCM Box 7750 London WC1N 3XX**

● **More about the IMF on pages 13, 14, 15 and 16**

IN BRIEF

A union formed among prisoners in the US state of Missouri's penal system has called for a consumer boycott of Colgate Palmolive products.

The multinational manufacturer of a wide range of household goods has reaped some of its billions from exploiting captive labour. The Missouri Prisoners Labour Union (MPLU) issued the call for Colgate bosses failed to endorse three MPLU objectives.

The union demands the payment of the federal minimum wage to prisoners, the abolition of forced labour in Missouri prisons and that Colgate Palmolive actively campaign for a moratorium on the death penalty in Missouri – one of 37 US states which has retained capital punishment.

Since its birth in 1998 MPLU members have campaigned against the death penalty and for better conditions behind bars. The prison authorities have meted out harsher repression to try and break the movement. MPLU president Jerome White-Bey spent nearly two years in solitary confinement prior to his recent release as punishment for his activism.

More evidence that the Lawrence Inquiry has done nothing to change the Metropolitan Police's methods has come to light. An African-Caribbean woman working in Camden Council's Housing Benefits section left her workplace in the King's Cross area of London with a white colleague to go to lunch on a mid-June afternoon. She had barely gone 30 yards when a group of three uniformed officers grabbed her from behind and pinned her against a pane of glass.

A WPC repeatedly shouted "don't swallow" while applying a chokehold. The police only desisted after her co-worker frantically waved her work ID card. The cops' excuse? They had mistaken the woman for a suspected crack dealer! The victim, a Camden Union member, has her union's full support in demanding a formal apology and in seeking damages from the Metropolitan Police. Union activists have leafleted and petitioned among Town Hall staff in response to the assault.

FREE KULDIP BAJWA

Class fighter Kuldip Bajwa is still behind bars at Suffolk's Highpoint prison, where he is serving a 21 month sentence for defending last year's J18 anti-capitalist demonstration in the City of London. Kuldip remains in good spirits, buoyed by reading material and letters from friends and comrades. Kuldip urges our readers to keep up the fight over the summer and to be part of the mobilisation against the IMF in Prague in late September. We urge you to write to him:

Kuldip Bajwa, DN 7230, HMP/YOI Highpoint, Stradishall, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 9YG

Kuldip is also receiving support from the Workers Power Welfare Fund. Cheques payable to: Workers Power Welfare Fund, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX.

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DNA BREAKTHROUGH

Letting the Genome out of the bottle

Emile Gallet looks at the implications of the latest scientific advance

WITH THE announcement of the completion of the first stage of the Human Genome Project, science took a massive step towards understanding an important part of what makes us human: our genes.

Although this discovery opens up new horizons for biology and medicine, it also raises major political problems, related to the distribution of wealth and the commercial and social exploitation of genetic data. These will have massive repercussions in the current century.

A century ago three separate studies rediscovered what the Moravian monk Gregor Mendel had found in the mid-nineteenth century: many physical characteristics are directly controlled by what we now call "genes". Between 1900 and 1920, genetics developed as a science and revealed that genes are strung like pearls on a necklace of chromosomes. They are present in every cell of every organism on the planet. What made up these genes and how they functioned remained mysteries.

The decisive breakthrough came in 1953, when James Watson and Francis Crick showed that the so-called double helix structure of deoxyribose nucleic acid (DNA) could carry the information necessary both to produce proteins and to transmit genes across generations.

Genetic differences between individuals can lead to differences in proteins, some obvious but with no great effect (e.g. differences in eye – or skin-colour). Or they may have massive effects (e.g. Huntington's chorea which leads to the breakdown of the brain and killed the radical folksinger Woody Guthrie). Despite the media hype, there are no genes "for" complex behaviours such as human sexuality, aggression or intelligence.

By the 1990s developments in computer technology and molecular biology made it possible to envisage sequencing not just the odd gene, but a whole genome. Scientists began with "small-scale" projects – sequencing bacteria, viruses, and two "model" organisms, a worm and a fly. But the "holy grail" of sequencing was the human genome.

Two conflicting approaches were adopted: one public, the other private. The publicly-funded group – the Human Genome Project, set up in 1990 and involving scientists from the US, Britain, France, Germany, Japan and China – decided to proceed systematically, sequencing huge stretches of DNA.

The private company Celera, set up in 1995 by Craig Venter, the wannabe Bill Gates of biotech, moved to sequence millions of DNA bits and then used computers to see how they bits went together. His simple and unabashed aim was to swiftly make big bucks from the genome.

After a series of copyright disputes – the material produced by the public laboratories is freely available, whereas Venter wanted to make people pay to view the Celera sequences – a temporary truce was agreed. The June announcement arose from that truce.

Together, the two projects have sequenced around 90 per cent of the human genome, composed of some 3.5 billion "letters"! On the other hand, 10



Crick and Watson with a model of DNA structure

per cent of the genome has yet to be sequenced, they have no idea how the millions of pieces fit together and, even more important, we still have no idea how many genes there are.

Scientists involved in the genome project have opened a sweepstake on the exact figure – bets range from 25,000 to 130,000. We already know that 95 per cent of the genome is not composed of genes at all, but "junk DNA" which, for the moment, has no discernible function.

We apparently have most of the pieces of a jigsaw without knowing how many pieces there are, how they fit together or even what picture they make up. Furthermore, the vast majority of the pieces are irrelevant.

Simply reading the gene sequence will not tell us what a given organism looks like or how it functions. If you could "read" all the genes in an egg, would you know that a cockerel went "cock-a-doodle-doo"?

Genes interact with each other and with the environment throughout the life of the organism. Some genes produce more than one protein, depending on circumstances, while most genes have multiple functions. Genes are not destiny, but they are fundamental to all life, and human life in particular.

The main promise from politicians, journalists and the less scrupulous scientists is that following the sequencing of the genome, new medicines will come on stream which will make a major contribution to public health. This is naively optimistic, at best.

Numerous genetic disorders are "purely" the result of gene defects (although the precise effects can depend on environmental factors). It should be possible to cure many of these disorders, once a safe and effective way of replacing the defective genes or the proteins

hope to turn DNA into dollars: by creating new drugs, by patenting genes, and by developing diagnostic tests.

The gravest danger comes from the capitalists' desire to be able to patent genes. Initially supported by both the US and European governments, the capitalists and greedy public sector scientists, hoping to imitate their private sector colleagues, think they should be able to patent any particular gene sequence – even without knowing what it does!

In 1998 the French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin opposed gene patents, and was recently followed by Clinton and Blair. In June the G8 research ministers declared that only gene sequences with identifiable functions should be patented.

But this half-hearted position has little chance of being put into practice not only because there is no sign that any of the major imperialist governments are prepared to stand against the biotech companies, but also because the concept of a gene "function" is a very vague one. Genes have different functions in different circumstances – a patent could presumably be given simply on the basis of the protein coded by a gene, something a reasonably sharp sixth former could work out.

Not only do the capitalists intend to make us pay for using products developed from the common heritage of our genes, they are also launching a programme that could lead to a "Brave New World", marked by discrimination on a scale unseen since Hitler's Germany.

By peddling the lie that genes are destiny, and by emphasising the possibility that genes may affect health, the biotech companies are hoping to make vast sums of money through diagnostic kits that detect the presence of certain genes.

Insurance companies could change their premiums depending on which genes were present in a given client, employers could choose between job candidates depending on their genetic make-up, health services might charge patients more if their treatment was complicated by genetic factors.

These are not the nightmares of science fiction. The very real possibility of discrimination exists, affecting a more disparate population that would find it more difficult to organise and fight back. The world labour movement must oppose all attempts to patent genes or their products by fighting for nationalisation and workers' control over the pharmaceutical and biotech industries.

We must mobilise against attempts to impose genetic testing and we must assert against the current wave of genetic determinism that we are not simply our genes: our environment and our history play a fundamental role in making us human.

Like all major scientific advances, the sequencing of the human genome presents both enormous possibilities and terrible dangers. Ensuring the realisation of its progressive potential and the avoidance of the dangers cannot be left in the hands of governments: our genes are too important for that. Only the world working class can ensure that this knowledge is safely applied for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

The sequencing of the genome raises two interlinked menaces: the hunt for profits, leading to exploitation and discrimination.

Profit has been at the heart of the genome project from the outset. There are three ways companies like Venter's and the major pharmaceutical groups

COPELAND

London Nazi nail bomber gets life

DAVID COPELAND, Nazi, homophobe and racist started six life sentences after a court in London found him guilty of three nail bomb attacks and three deaths during April 1999.

After setting off a nail bomb in Brixton, south London – heart of the Afro-Caribbean community – he followed it up with another bomb in Brick Lane, centre of the London's East End Asian community.

These two attacks maimed and injured several dozen people. Then on 30 April he finally killed three people drinking in a gay pub in Soho, including a pregnant woman. Copeland was a member of the fascist British National Party (BNP).

When he left the BNP, after only four months, denounced them for failing to carry out a "paramilitary struggle". He then later joined the more overtly Hitlerite National Socialist Movement, becoming its local organiser in Hampshire. These fascist groups moulded his outlook and helped him find the means to kill.

A couple of weeks before he set off the first bomb he was appointed a "unit leader". In his bedroom police found walls plastered with Nazi banners, por-

traits of Hitler and other Nazis. During interrogation by the police he expressed his hatred of gays and black people in Britain.

He confessed in letters written while awaiting trial:

"This was a political act. I wanted to

start a race war in Britain."

The British state were uncomfortable with Copeland's overt fascist views. It decided to treat him as a maniac to try and remove the political dimension to his trial.

Copeland was pumped full of anti-

psychotic drugs and moved to Broadmoor secure unit and classed as mentally ill.

This is more preferable to our rulers who like to pretend that fascism is "foreign" and deny that fascists and violent racists can thrive as a normal part

of British life. But Britain's racist society made David Copeland.

Ultimately the jury rejected Copeland's lawyers' attempts to defend him by pleading insanity. The judge in sentencing Copeland to three life sentences said:

"The evidence shows you were motivated by virulent hatred and pitiless contempt for other people."

Such hatred and Copeland's actions can only be explained by understanding that in Britain, black people and immigrants are constantly being targeted by the press as being worthy of blame for all kinds of social ills. Gays and lesbians are sneered at for suggesting they can be loving parents.

Jack Straw and his Tory predecessors as Home Secretary have legitimised racism and anti-gay bigotry in the eyes of many like Copeland by forever tightening laws aimed at restricting their civil rights.

Black and Asian people and the gay community reacted militantly and defiantly to the nail bombs of Copeland. They need to organise themselves constantly against the dangers of attacks from neo-Nazis and racists but also against the daily harassment and attacks meted out by the police.

SCRAP SECTION 28

"Cracking down on crime and the causes of crime, on the spot fines for lager louts" – thus runs the populist rhetoric of Tony Blair as he competes with the "hang'em and flog'em" brigade of the Tory right. "Clamp down on aggressive beggars, all praise to the heterosexual two parent family" echoes his Home Secretary, Jack (Boot) Straw in his pathetic attempt to be heard above the ravings of Ann Widdecombe.

Harmless rantings? Next time they feel the need to attack black people/lesbians/gays/single mothers (select as appropriate or convenient) in their pitiful search for a vote, let's hope they remember the case of David Copeland. One of the survivors of the Soho bomb, Gary Reid, told the Guardian newspaper:

"The fear, loathing, hatred and ignorance culminating in the bombings is a warning to

society and the world as a whole that racism, prejudice and homophobia – and the fear of difference – is out there. We should all be aware of this and challenge it at every opportunity."

New Labour has refused to make time in parliament to honour its pre-election pledge to repeal the anti-gay and lesbian legislation – Section 28. Next time they try to justify their sell out, let's remind them of the words of Martin Moore the brother of one of Copeland's victims:

"This case clearly illustrates the harm that may be done by the failure to recognise, accept and nurture the sexuality of our offspring. It can, at best, cause misery and personality disorder, and at worst turn a child into a murderer. We must learn from it."

**DEMONSTRATION AGAINST SECTION 28
Manchester, Saturday 15 July**

REFUGEES

Defend asylum seekers

THOUSANDS OF marchers took to the streets of central London on 24 June to voice their outrage at the racist scapegoating of refugees by the British

media and both Tory and Labour politicians.

The loud and clear message was: "Jack Straw – we don't want your racist

laws" in the same week that the Home Secretary had announced his intention to undermine the 1951 Geneva convention on refugee rights.

The demonstration was called by a coalition of organisations including the National Civil Rights Movement, National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns and the Europe Roma Organisation. These bodies, along with the Socialist Workers Party, Workers Power and other left organisations have come together to form the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers. We are fighting to scrap the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999, for the abolition of detention centres and for the right of asylum seekers to work and claim all social welfare benefits.

The college lecturers' union, Natfhe, sponsored the protest, which also attracted the support of dozens of union branches across England and Wales. Postal workers from Bradford joined with Unison members from local councils in London.

A mixture of anger and horror at the deaths of 58 Chinese immigrants the previous Sunday added a sense of urgency to the march. Hundreds of Kurdish and Turkish demonstrators calling for the release of jailed Kurdish nationalist leader, Abdullah Ocalan, joined the final rally which heard speeches from the likes of retiring Labour MP Tony Benn and Jabez Lam, a Chinese com-

munity activist.

Lam gave a bitter account of the attempts by Kent Police to criminalise the relatives of the 58 dead. He said:

"The police are desperate to arrest someone to meet the politicians' and the media's hunger."

The Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers will carry on its work over the course of the summer, with the focus shifting to the humiliating voucher scheme, which forces asylum seekers into separate queues in supermarkets where they cannot even receive change.

Already supporters of Workers Power and the socialist youth group, Revolution, have been key in staging demonstrations at Sainsburys outlets in East and South London. We call on all our readers to support and extend this campaign and join the fight back against New Labour's new racism.

For further information about the campaign contact the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, c/o NUJ London Magazine Branch, Acorn House, 314-320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP, tel: 0958 478628; e-mail: alangibson10@hotmail.com.



Photo: Bamidele Raheem

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY
(Vol. 7, no. 3)

'The Hidden Pearl of the Caribbean – Trotskyism in Cuba'

An account of Cuban Trotskyism from the late 1920s onwards

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TEACHERS

Support Indro Sen

TEACHERS AT Kingsland School in Hackney took unofficial strike action on 16 June to defend their union representative. National Union of Teachers (NUT) members at the school walked out for a day after one of their reps, Indro Sen, was threatened with capability proceedings.

Management have now instructed all the strikers to attend formal disciplinary proceedings which could result in their dismissal.

Kingsland is one of the few mixed schools in Hackney. It has been con-

sistently underfunded. It has recently been put onto special measures after failing an Ofsted inspection. The school management is desperate to find someone to take the blame.

Kingsland is also one of the most militant schools in the area. Union members there led the campaign against the local Education Action Zone (EAZ). Pupils at the school backed the campaign and walked out in protest. The pupils are again supporting their teachers in the current battle with the management. Year 11 pupils, the only pupils

in school on the day of the strike, pelted the Head teacher with eggs in protest at her attempt to victimise their teacher.

Clearly the attack on Indro Sen and the NUT members who have supported him is an attack on union militancy and political opposition to the EAZ which embarrassed the local education authority.

A demonstration outside the school has been called to coincide with the disciplinary hearings on Monday 10 July. Please fax messages of support to Kingsland School NUT on 020 7690 4611.

REMEMBER MICKEY FENN

East End stevedore, rank & file trade unionist, militant anti-fascist and working class revolutionary

Friday 21 July, 8.30pm

East Ham Working Men's Social Club

£10 (all proceeds towards book on Mickey's life)

Tickets from Jim Kelly, 105 Gladesmore Road, London N5

Cheques payable to Mickey Fenn Commemorative Committee

Cracks in the alliance?

In the aftermath of this year's round of union conferences, *GR McColl* assesses the extent of discontent with New Labour among union members and the strength of the links between the unions and the Labour Party

In its annual report on strike figures published in early June, the Office for National Statistics recorded that – aside from 1997 – there had been fewer strikes and fewer days lost to the bosses through industrial action last year than in any year, since the compilation of records first began. Significantly, however, TUC records show that the number of ballots for strike action almost doubled for the period from June 1999 to May this year, from fewer than 500 in the preceding year to 983.

The TUC also reported that 1999 saw the first real growth in the total membership of TUC-affiliated unions in a decade and the largest gain in 20 years. Total membership grew by 100,000 last year to seven million workers. Most commentators agreed that the modest reforms of the Employment Rights Act would serve to boost both union membership and recognition by employers in industries such as printing and publishing.

On balance, after the first 30 months of New Labour in government, the top union bureaucrats could heave a sigh of relief: more subscription revenue flowing into their coffers while actual struggles remain few and far between. The influence of the union barons might seem diminished in the context of New Labour, but the government has done just about enough for union leaderships to pacify battered memberships with reduced expectations.

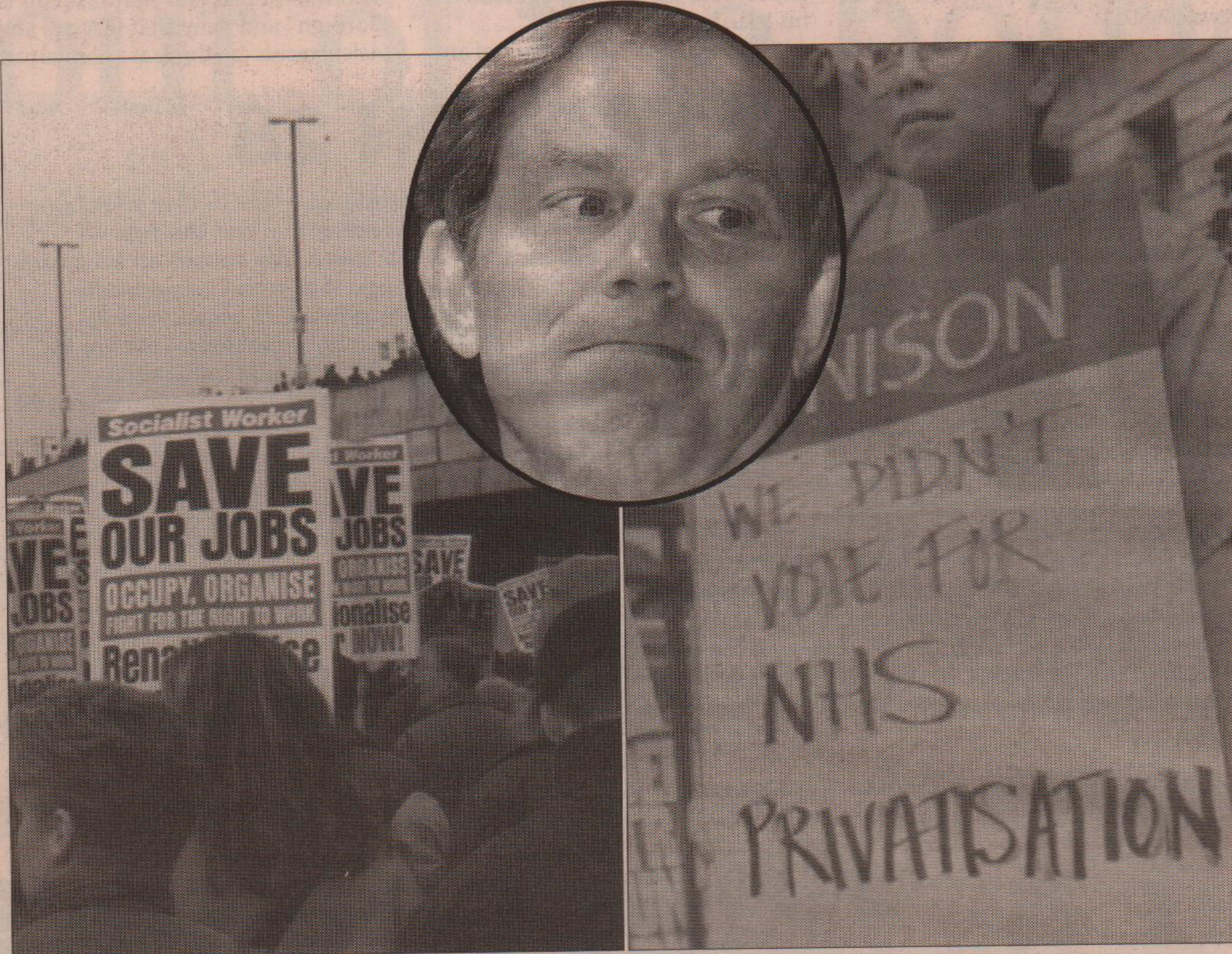
So is everything rosy in the union bureaucrats' garden? Not quite. There have been signs of simmering discontent since late last year and the first six months of the new century may prove to be the start of a serious fracturing of the relationship between the Labour government and a number of the major unions. The very relationship between organised labour and "its" party is beginning to be called into question.

Last autumn the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) leader, at the time, Ken Cameron, hinted at the possibility of the FBU disaffiliating from Labour. But the immediate catalyst for conflict between the Labour Party hierarchy and its union affiliates came in February this year with the fiasco of Millbank's rigged selection process for the London mayoral candidate. The votes of trade union members were marginalised in the electoral college and four major unions were entirely excluded from the voting.

Blairite loyalist Sir Ken Jackson ensured that the AEEU's votes went for Millbank's hapless stooge, Frank Dobson, without even bothering to consult his members. MSF general secretary Roger Lyons put the union's facilities at the disposal of the Dobson campaign, this despite the fact that the MSF were not allowed to vote since the Labour Party claimed they were behind with their subs and, had they been able to vote, the London members supported Livingstone.

In the AEEU and MSF, as elsewhere, there was considerable anger among tens of thousands of members at New Labour's cynical manipulation. Despite massive votes for Livingstone from those union members allowed to vote and from London Labour Party members, the system was rigged to ensure Dobson was selected.

By mid-March the threat by BMW bosses to shut the giant Longbridge plant in Birmingham hit the front pages, supposedly taking the arch-Blairite Stephen Byers by surprise. It has now been



Rover demonstrators and Unison workers protesting at the Private Finance Initiative are the beginnings of a campaign against the policies of Tony Blair and New Labour

revealed that the TGWU's Tony Woodley had warned the government of a hit list of potential closures which included Longbridge and Dagenham. But the government refused to heed the warning.

The threat to Longbridge triggered the biggest union-organised demonstration of the New Labour years: more than 80,000 took to the streets on 1 April – many were members of the TGWU and the AEEU. The latter's leadership under Jackson has long been a crucial pillar of the most right-wing business unionism but even it felt obliged to mobilise members across the West Midlands.

There may have been widespread confusion as to the identity of the real enemy among car workers midst the Rover crisis, but there was also unmistakable anger at the government's ongoing love affair with the market.

Though the vast majority of Rover workers eventually fell in behind the Phoenix bid for the Longbridge complex, the picture at Ford Dagenham is different as it is faced with the threat to close the key assembly plant. A militant lobby of Ford's UK head office on 22 June revealed that there is a widespread appetite for a fight. A strike at Ford will cause a major headache for the government and could trigger more open conflict between New Labour and the union bureaucracy.

Just as the Rover crisis unfolded in April a high-profile union top, Bill Morris, soon to retire as the TGWU's general secretary, uttered the union bureaucracy's first public attack against New Labour's racist offensive on asylum seekers. A number of major union leaders across the spectrum of the TUC bureaucracy have since felt obliged to join him in less publicised protests around the issue.

Meanwhile, in London several union branches joined the rebellion against Millbank and gave their backing to the Livingstone mayoral campaign and, in

some important instances, to the London Socialist Alliance (LSA) as well. The most significant of these was the London north/northwest branch of the Communication Workers Union (CWU). The branch, made up of Royal Mail sorting office workers, donated £200 in funds to both the Livingstone and LSA campaigns. This provoked the wrath of the union's top brass, in particular the CWU's treasurer, Derek Norman.

The row between the London branch and Norman was an important issue at the CWU conference in the first week of June. The CWU, the TUC's sixth biggest affiliate, has long harboured a contradiction between enduring rank and file militancy in defence of terms and conditions in the post and a right-wing national bureaucracy.

In recent years CWU members in the Royal Mail have accounted for nearly half of all officially recorded industrial disputes: 84 out of a national total of 195 strikes involved CWU members last year. At the same time the previous CWU general secretary, Alan Johnson, gained a safe Labour seat at the 1997 general election and has since become a cabinet minister on the strength of his long-standing record as a Blairite loyalist.

Johnson's successor, Derek Hodgson, is of a similar political ilk, but like his predecessor, Hodgson has been obliged by pressure from below to draw a line over the issue of Royal Mail privatisation. A few weeks before the June conference Hodgson wrote to Trade and Industry Secretary Stephen Byers warning him of the damage to the relationship between the union and the Labour Party that might arise if Labour made further moves towards a sell-off of the Royal Mail.

By a majority of nearly three-to-two, CWU delegates confirmed their general secretary's fears and defied him in supporting a resolution that called for the withdrawal of "all financial and moral support for the Labour Party" if it privatises any part of the post.

Hodgson was rebuffed again as he urged members to contribute to the New Labour when delegates voted decisively against the leadership's call for a

two pence a week rise in the political levy. In addition the conference censured CWU treasurer Norman for the action he took against the London branch over its support for the Livingstone and LSA campaigns.

The CWU conference was not unique in voicing frustration and anger with the Blair government. It did, however, go further than any other major union gathering this spring in threatening to sever its historic ties to Labour. That threat has to be taken seriously by the Blairites, whose project of uncoupling the party from any degree of union influence relies on attracting far more in donations from corporations and rich individuals than has materialised since the last election.

The main rail unions also met in June, with ASLEF rejecting a resolution calling for disaffiliation from Labour. Ironically, the union's general secretary, Dave Rix, previously associated with Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, argued vehemently against such a move. At the RMT delegate conference there was a sharply polarised debate which ended in a narrow vote against calling a special conference to decide the future of the union's links to Labour.

The largest union, Unison, assembled in Bournemouth a week after the CWU for its annual conference. Unison members have faced the brunt of New Labour's attacks on the public sector in the guise of Best Value and the Private Finance Initiative. While delegates heard a good deal of rhetorical criticism of the government's record from the top table, the conference as a whole underlined that key sections of the bureaucracy are not only content with their relationship with Blair but are prepared to purge their union of any left wingers who might threaten this relationship.

The majority on Unison's national executive committee (NEC) stage managed debates and several speakers indulged in vitriolic attacks on left activists. There was no evidence that the NEC will stop its long-term witch-hunt

of organised socialists in the union.

The witch-hunt has, however, fuelled a drive to left unity, evident in a 400-strong rally at the conference. But the week revealed that on most key issues the dominant faction of the bureaucracy are fully in command. The combined forces of the Campaign for Fighting and Democratic Unison (CFDU) and SWP could rarely muster more than a third of the vote. Time and again, whether the issue was the level of the minimum wage or the threat posed by PFI in the NHS, conference repeatedly rejected any calls for action.

Crucially, on the final day, conference rejected any modification of its link to Labour. A vaguely-worded motion, whose authors were trying to skirt Unison's effective ban on any discussion of its Affiliated Political Fund (APF) at the national conference, went down to defeat by a substantial margin.

The mere fact that debate of any kind about the APF took place might be seen as encouraging by some, but the outcome showed that illusions in Labourism (if not Blair) persist and the bonds between the unions and the party are still a real factor in working class politics. The political fund will remain under the control of a handful of unaccountable bureaucrats who can treat Unison's national conference decisions with contempt.

At present, siren calls to break the link to Labour are still premature in the absence of an alternative at a national level.

But there is a resonance within union memberships and the working class as a whole, for greater democratic accountability. Union militants should demand that votes at Labour Party conferences and in policy forums are cast only after debate and votes by rank and file members. Positions supported by union leaders have to reflect their members' views.

The prevailing situation where bureaucrats repeatedly throw their weight behind the Blairite machine and vote against their own unions' democratically agreed policies must be ended once and for all. This democratisation must be twinned with a constant call for the union leaders to take on New Labour's anti-working class policies on a wide range of fronts.

In the run-up to the next election, socialists in the unions will have to wage an unstinting fight to democratise political funds and subject spending to real scrutiny. This does not mean a call for disaffiliation from Labour. Indeed some on the right may well support disaffiliation as a means of silencing any political voice within the unions.

But it will involve a battle for changes that will enable branches and other union bodies to support candidates who are prepared to defend and fight for the demands of union members and for the working class as a whole. Unions should have the right to politically and financially support other working class parties, such as the LSA, similar socialist alliances and class struggle candidates across the country. Labour's monopoly of support and funding should be broken.

The battle to democratise the unions will be an essential part in the building of a rank and file movement within and across the unions; a rank and file movement which will effectively challenge a bureaucracy which, by its very nature, is incapable of leading the fight against the capitalist system which New Labour defends tooth and nail.



Strike back, occupy, keep Dagenham open

HUNDREDS OF angry Ford workers gathered on 22 June outside the company's Bayswater headquarters. It was a show of defiance against the Ford bosses' plans to end car production at the Dagenham plant and axe some 3,400 jobs. The lobby effectively shut down the paint, trim and assembly (PTA) and body plants for the day.

Trade unionists from Dagenham were joined by fellow workers from other Ford plants, the Jaguar plant on Merseyside and a component company. Their militant lobby, dominated by chants of "The workers united will never be defeated", came as management and union negotiators met to discuss union proposals to secure the factory's future.

After Ford's bosses predictably rejected these, Tony Woodley, the top car industry official for the TGWU, emerged to announce plans to ballot for strike action to loud cheers.

Ford's May announcement that it was terminating Fiesta production at Dagenham from October 2001 came as no surprise. It partly reflects a global crisis in the car manufacturing sector. The international car market is saturated and car companies have sought to cut costs and excess capacity through slashing jobs, closing plants, merging with and buying out competitors.

Ford is not immune to this international downturn, with its European operations gaining profits of only £17 million on a turnover of £18 billion. So it too is slashing jobs to increase its profits. Dagenham has been targeted for several reasons.

Britain's failure to join the Euro and the Bank of England's use of high interest rates to control inflation, has maintained a high exchange rate, making goods produced in Britain more expensive. In addition, Dagenham's reported productivity is lower (due to under-investment by the bosses), despite recent increases, than at Ford's three other European plants, and it has a relatively recent history of shop floor militancy. But most importantly the erosion of workers' rights under the Tories means that workers in Britain are much cheaper to sack than their European counterparts.

The ending of car production at

Dagenham will cost 1,900 jobs in addition to the 1,500 redundancies already announced earlier this year. These cuts will have a massive impact on the local economy and beyond with an estimated 13,000 jobs at stake in the car components industry alone.

The size and anger of the June lobby highlighted the potential for a fight against Ford's threat to thousands of jobs and communities across East London and Essex. Workers called for Ford boss Jac Nasser's head on a plate in response to the company's string of broken promises about the plant's supposedly secure future. But in spite of the obvious mood for action, Dagenham workers have to size up the real obstacles they will have to overcome, both from the bosses and their own

week, explaining what Ford bosses are up to and what needs to be done to stop them.

Ford's bosses are playing a classic game of divide and rule. At the same time as they declared the death of the PTA, they announced new investment in the diesel engine plant. In part, their calculation is that such a move will buy off skilled workers from the engine plant whose jobs appear safe. Currently, the unions appear to be going along with this, announcing a ballot only for those directly affected by closure.

This is a mistake. The engine plant has the power to shut down the whole of Ford's European operation in the context of "just in time" production. This is a powerful weapon in any strike.

To win this fight, a strike must unite workers across the plants. The unions must be forced to ballot the entire workforce and militants need to work flat out for a rock solid "yes" vote.

Solidarity must be built with other car workers across Europe. The crisis in the car industry is not unique to Britain, jobs saved in this country must not be at the expense of workers elsewhere. Workers in other plants must refuse to touch any work transferred from elsewhere. To ensure that the strike is not sold out workers need to wrest control of the action from the union full-timers through a democratically and fully accountable strike committee.

Unlike Rover's Longbridge plant, there is not even the illusion of a "white knight" riding to Dagenham's rescue. If Ford does not give in, the fight must turn to forcing the government to nationalise the Dagenham plant and other Ford complexes, with no compensation to the multinational's bosses, and under the control of the men and women who work there.

Strike action alone may not be enough to keep the plant open, and workers must be prepared to occupy the factory, even in advance of an official strike ballot if the management try to start moving machinery out.

The bosses will use any available means to defeat a strike against closure since it poses a fundamental challenge to their control over "their" property. The removal of key machinery from the plant would ensure there were no jobs to return to. Any attempt to dismantle the PTA must be met by an immediate occupation, and action should continue until every job is guaranteed.

To win this fight, a strike must unite workers across the plants. The unions must be forced to ballot the entire workforce and militants need to work flat out for a rock solid "yes" vote

union leaders.

Tony Woodley is not wrong to wait until the second half of July before balloting for a strike. This will be after the departure of the 1,500 who have already accepted voluntary redundancy packages. It is quite right that these people should not determine the outcome of a strike ballot. It is, however, crucial for militants to ensure that the momentum is not lost in the coming weeks – regular section and plant meetings should be held to prepare for the ballot; a pro-strike newsletter should go out every

workers POWER

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COMMENT

Challenging the racists today

After the grim discovery of the corpses of 58 Chinese immigrants in the back of a lorry at Dover docks, politicians rushed to denounce the "evil" trade plied by those who smuggle people into Britain and elsewhere in the European Union. British Journalists trekked to villages in south-east China to search out the so-called gangsters, who have made fortunes from this trade.

By the end of June, English and Dutch police had arrested and charged nine people in connection with the deaths. Most of those detained are themselves Chinese immigrants.

But those who are really to blame for these horrific deaths will not find themselves in the dock charged with conspiracy or murder. They are the politicians, both in Britain and across the European Union (EU), who have established and ruthlessly defended "Fortress Europe". This complex array of treaties, laws and physical barriers to immigration has arisen in order to regulate the flow of labour into the EU, particularly from the so-called Third World and the decimated economies of the former Stalinist states of Eastern Europe.

The criminalisation of immigrants and refugees across EU states, intensified in Britain by New Labour's Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, has helped drive tens of thousands into the hands of the traffickers in human misery.

The three years since New Labour came into office have seen important shifts in the brutal but complex character of the British state's racism. Those with memories long enough to recall the broken promises of an earlier generation of Old Labour politicians – who pledged the repeal of various anti-immigrant measures only to introduce virginity tests for Asian women seeking to join husbands resident in the UK – were not shocked by Jack Straw's decision to leave the Tories' 1996 Act in place.

But many Labour Party members and supporters have been appalled in recent months by the regime of detention, dispersal and supermarket vouchers that Straw has introduced. Many cannot stomach the vicious language used both by the Home Secretary and his deputy Barbara Roche in attacking East European Roma. Meanwhile, the one-time anti-apartheid activist turned junior minister, Peter Hain, says that affluent white farmers from Zimbabwe and Kenya, faced with losing "their" land, are welcome in Britain.

This, however, has not been the whole story under New Labour. The Prime Minister talks the language of "diversity" and "tolerance". The Home Office itself has confessed to being "institutionally racist" in the wake of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Jack Straw enthusiastically embraced the findings and recommendations of the Macpherson report in the very same month that he introduced the current asylum and immigration legislation.

The cynics at Millbank have made a rather transparent calculation. The Lawrence Inquiry confirmed that the levels of racism in British society were dysfunctional for the key elements of British capital and damaged the legitimacy of its state in the eyes of a large proportion of the population.

As a result, certain measures were necessary to placate the existing African-Caribbean and Asian communities to ensure greater social cohesion and stability. By extending the scope of anti-discrimination laws and encouraging the growth of a black middle class, the government could not only maintain the support of a key section of Labour's electorate, but engender renewed loyalty to the British state. A not so subliminal message has gone out from New Labour: we will work to ensure equality of opportunity and listen seriously to the concerns of existing black communities, but new immigrants are not welcome here (unless skills shortages dictate otherwise).

Of course, none of this has made the slightest difference to the thousands of unemployed young black people in Britain's inner cities. Indeed, the poisonous atmosphere that New Labour has fuelled against asylum seekers has contributed to the rise in racist attacks across the country. Scotland Yard reports a doubling in the number of race hate crimes between May 1999 and April 2000. Between 1 January and early June 2000, the West Midlands police had recorded 1,500 incidents, compared to 1,000 in the whole of 1999.

And while asylum seekers have figured among the casualties of some of the most vicious incidents, the victims of such violence are still people from established African-Caribbean and Asian communities.

But so far those communities have been largely absent from the emerging campaign to defend refugees. This reflects the sharp decline of the radical community-based organisations that grew up in response to the murderous racism of the 1970s. Permanent mass unemployment among youth in many inner city areas has left thousands alienated from politics.

Even the TGWU's Bill Morris and the handful of other union leaders who have criticised Jack Straw, have refused to mobilise the large numbers of black trade unionists onto the streets.

Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn was absolutely correct when, speaking before the start of the 24 June demonstration, he pointed to capitalism itself, an "economic system which impoverishes people and then criminalises them for seeking refuge and the chance of a better life – there is no distinction between economic migrants and political refugees. All are victims of global capitalism."

Of course, Labour, whether "Old" or New, has no response to global capitalism. Socialists must provide immediate answers:

- Physically smash all fascist and organised racist demonstrations
- Oppose all forms of racism and national chauvinism, including all immigration controls
- Support organised community self-defence against racist attacks from whatever source, including the police.

Above all, socialists must advance a programme to mobilise the working class, black and white, to smash the racist capitalist state.

Tate Modern – not quite a people's palace

Warren Gropper casts a critical eye over the power station turned gallery by the Thames that's getting more visitors than the Dome

THE COMMERCIAL success of "Young British Artists" (YBA's), such as Damien Hirst, has transformed London into a major player in the international market for contemporary art. Yet it was not until the May 2000 opening of the Tate Modern at Bankside that London finally gained a public gallery devoted solely to the display of modern and contemporary art.

At the "old" Tate on Millbank (now rebranded "Tate Britain") twentieth century art had to jostle with British art of the past and had only limited display space. The new site at Bankside to showcase the full range of the Tate's impressive collection is a welcome new cultural resource.

The 63-year-old red brick power station, designed by Gilbert Scott, has been transformed by the Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron into an eight-storey gallery with nearly 12,500 square metres of exhibition space. The sheer scale of the place hits you as you enter the huge Turbine Hall which runs the length of the building from top to bottom.

In one sense the Tate Modern represents the latest example of the marketing industry's glorification of high culture. Its publicists confidently reiterate the fact that it is the "largest art gallery on the planet", far surpassing rival institutions abroad. These "rivals" include Bilbao's Guggenheim, the Pompidou and d'Orsay in Paris and, crucially, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York. Since its inauspiciously timed opening in 1929 (within weeks of the stock market crash) MOMA has dominated the international art world in its conventions of classification and display.

Devised by Alfred H. Barr, curator of MOMA from its opening through to the 1940s, this classification system empha-



sises the inherent value of abstract over figurative art. Equating abstraction with artistic individualism, Barr's narrative begins with the post-impressionists such as Van Gogh, develops through fauvism and cubism, and then on to Russian constructivism, German dada, and French surrealism.

A focus on formal similarity displaces any concern with the relationship between social and historical events, and the artists' creative output. Consequently, the fact that the Russian avant-garde found their inspiration in the momentous events of the Bolshevik Revolution, and the German dadaists used their "anti-art" as part of a general assault on the bourgeoisie responsible for the carnage of the First World War, barely gets a mention. So art is safely returned to its ivory tower, stripped of political significance and divorced from the social realities that were central to its development.

After the Second World War abstract expressionism, exemplified in the later painting of Jackson Pollock, was hailed as the greatest manifestation yet of

abstract art. The centre of the art world moved from Paris to New York, and American cultural power began to approach the dizzy heights of the nation's military, economic, and political hegemony.

Abstract art came to be equated with bourgeois individualism and liberal democracy, as MOMA chauvinistically promoted Pollock and his associates abroad. Pollock became the model of artistic freedom and a valuable ideological weapon during the Cold War, long after the Russian avant-garde had been killed or exiled by Stalin.

Despite the overtly ideological nature of Barr's system, it was uncritically adopted by the public and private institutions of the art establishment the world over. The novelty of the new Tate is that the curators have at last broken with Barr's old model to develop a new way of presenting modern art. An important question is whether this new approach offers us any substantial insights into the relationship between art and society?

Despite the odd noteworthy excep-

tion, the answer is "no". Having dispensed with the MOMA method the curators at the Tate have decided to divide the collection into the four genres of Still Life/Object/Real Life; Landscape/Matter/Environment; Nude/Action/Body; and History/Memory/Society.

These categories were developed during the eighteenth century Enlightenment by the French philosopher and art critic Denis Diderot. While his hierarchy of genres may have been sufficient to organise the painting of the time, it is clearly unable to account for the diversity of the last century's art, much of which is non-figurative or conceptual. We simply move from a system of display based upon formal similarity to one based upon formal juxtaposition.

The exceptions to this general rule include the room named after Picasso's Weeping Woman of 1936. Alongside this work, painted in protest against Franco's fascist insurrection, are Miro's agitational poster *Aidez L'Espagne*, Dali's politically ambiguous *Autumn Cannibalism*, and various pamphlets, leaflets, and propaganda images from the Spanish Civil War. By placing the paintings alongside other artefacts from the 1930s the curators have successfully dramatised the conflict between Spanish Republicanism and the forces of fascism.

Likewise, the room entitled "Manifestos" successfully communicates the extent to which early twentieth century artists often attempted to link their art to radical politics that actively sought to change the world. The numerous pages from Dada and Surrealist manifestos, blown-up and pasted on the walls alongside the paintings in this room, are an invaluable aid in understanding the historical significance of the works.

Yet such examples are rare and the Tate's new "radical" rehang is not that

radical after all. This comes as no great surprise. In a period where governments of every hue continue to squeeze the funding of public galleries, such institutions are largely dependent on corporate sponsorship to fund major exhibitions and rehangs. The end result will always be compromised, whatever the intentions of the elite who calls the shots. Art remains almost hermetically sealed off from most people's lives. For a minority it serves as a spiritual haven from the material realities of the everyday world.

Nevertheless, in terms of visitor numbers the new Tate has been a resounding success. Over a million people have already been to the new gallery and lengthy queues along the Embankment are commonplace. This is in stark contrast to the Millennium Dome which lurches from one crisis to another. This partly reflects the fact that the Dome is far from a cheap day out, whereas the Tate Modern is still free; although Culture Secretary Chris Smith has reneged on his former commitment to guarantee free entry in the long-term.

Yet their respective contents must be a greater factor in the contrasting public response to these two institutions. Corporate sponsorship may play an insidious part in the presentation of high art, yet the works of art themselves, more often than not, transcend the cynical pound and pence pragmatism of their big business sponsors.

When the exhibition space itself becomes the plaything of corporate sponsors, the woefully low horizons of their cultural vision become painfully apparent. The Dome is an awful illustration of this. For all its shortcomings, the triumph of the Tate Modern is the partial integration of form and content that defies the circumstances of its birth.

Slaughter of the innocents

AS THE USA and Britain continue and intensify their aerial bombardment of Iraq, with barely a word printed in the mainstream media, the publication of this book is timely. *Iraq Under Siege* is a staggering indictment of real "war crimes" committed against the Iraqi people in general and the country's impoverished masses in particular.

The campaign of sanctions, begun nearly a decade ago in response to Saddam Hussein's August 1990 invasion of its semi-feudal neighbour Kuwait, has exacted a far higher toll in death and human suffering than the brutal six-week war of early 1991. Though both the war and the ongoing sanctions were unleashed with the United Nations' (UN) blessing, the key architects of the sanctions' campaign are in Washington and London.

Each month, according to the UN's analysis, 4,500 Iraqi children under five years of age die as a direct result of the sanctions' regime, which has severely restricted access to vital medicines and foodstuffs. Prior to 1990 infant mortality in Iraq was falling to a level similar to that recorded across the European Union. A decade later infant and childhood mortality rates have soared and are now comparable to those of the most

Rachel Thomas reviews *Iraq Under Siege*, edited by Anthony Arnove (Pluto Press, £10.95)

poverty-stricken states of sub-Saharan Africa.

The sanctions have effectively barred Iraq – its infrastructure in ruins since the 1991 war – from importing a wide range of pesticides and fertilisers. Chlorine, essential to cleanse water supplies contaminated with raw sewage after the destruction of the country's water treatment plants, is banned because of its potential military application. As a result, cholera, dysentery and typhoid have returned and reached epidemic proportions.

In an interview with New York Times' journalist, Stephen Kinzer, the then deputy director of the UN's humanitarian aid programme, Farid Zarif, revealed both the absurd and vicious character of the sanctions:

"We are told that pencils are forbidden because carbon could be extracted from them that might be used to coat airplanes and make them invisible to radar. I am not a military expert, but I find it very disturbing that because of this objection, we cannot give pencils to Iraqi schoolchildren."

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, responds to criticism by declaring: "We think the price is worth it!"

In the words of such left intellectuals as Noam Chomsky and Edward Said, who were signatories to a statement that appeared in the New York Times in March 1999:

"This is not foreign policy – it is state-sanctioned mass murder."

The book as a whole painstakingly documents the truth of this assertion.

Iraq Under Siege avoids rhetorical excess and it is a broadly accessible text, even if the academic tone of some chapters occasionally blunts the impact of the overall message. One of the simplest yet most powerful contributions comes from retired Boston University professor, Howard Zinn, who, though now in his eighties, has lost none of his moral passion against injustice.

Having related the tragic story of Dr Mohammed Al-Obaidi, a refugee from Saddam's regime whose mother, sister-in-law and her three children all died in a December 1998 cruise missile attack,

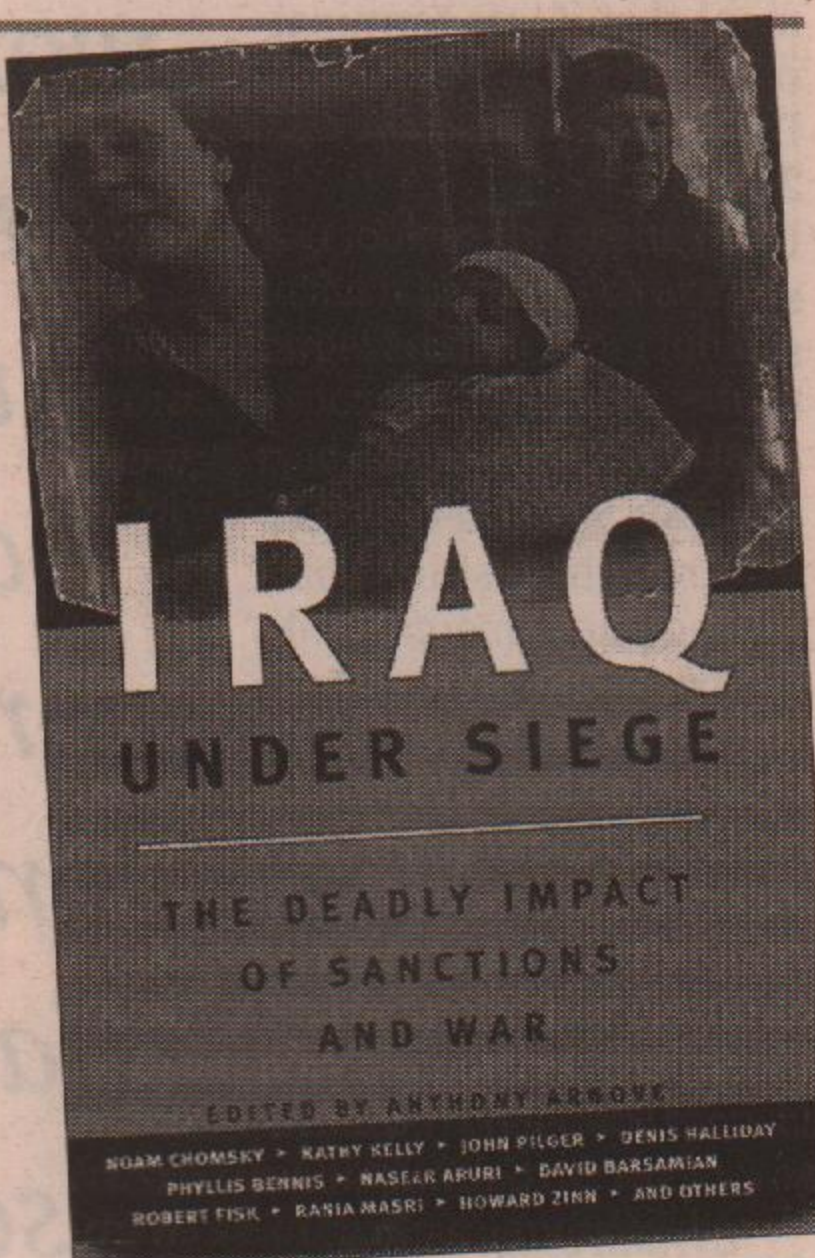
Zinn contrasts the unlimited pool of resources for waging war in the Persian Gulf to the US government's response to Hurricane Mitch which left a trail of devastation across Central America in autumn 1998:

"Mexico supplied 16 helicopters to [storm-ravaged] Honduras. The United States supplied twelve. At the same time, the Pentagon dispatched a huge armada – helicopters, transport planes, B-52s – to the Middle East."

He goes on to note that the US Defence Department had cancelled the distribution of surplus blankets to programmes for homeless people:

"... our weapons kill people abroad, while in this country homeless people freeze ... Are not our government's moral priorities absurdly distorted?"

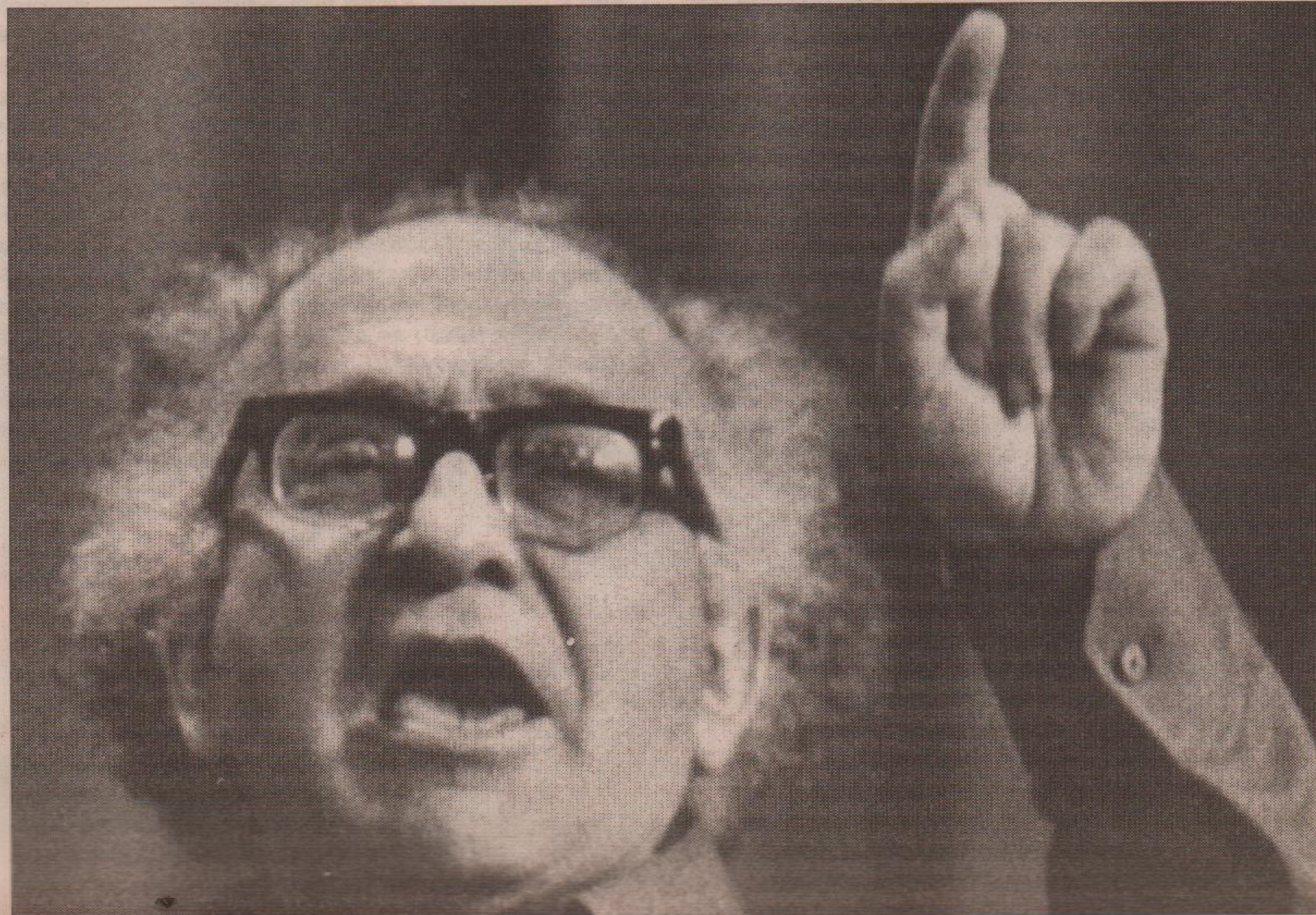
There is a substantial degree of repetition in the book and some howlers, such as twice naming the current Nato secretary general (and former UK defence minister) as "George Robinson" (instead of Robertson). In addition, given that the editor and some contributors to the book belong to the International



al Socialist Organisation (until very recently the US sister organisation of the British SWP) it is disappointing that there is no discussion of how to take the fight against the sanctions regime into the organised working class.

Nonetheless, this book is an invaluable resource for activists seeking to push the labour movement internationally, but especially in Britain and the USA, to organise sanctions' busting operations and, ultimately to challenge the system of imperialist capitalism which is responsible for the deaths of so many innocents, in Iraq and around the globe.

Party, programme, class and Cliff



Mark Harrison reviews *A World to Win, Life of a Revolutionary*, by Tony Cliff, Bookmarks Publications, £11.99

JUST BEFORE he died, earlier this year, Cliff completed his autobiography. In the preface he writes: "Readers may be shocked by the narrowness of my own life story outside politics, and they will be absolutely right. I so concentrated on the political side of life that I neglected wider emotional and cultural elements." (p3)

His life story is the story of the political organisations he was a member of – Zionist youth organisations, the Communist Party and the Fourth International (in Palestine, Britain and Ireland) and finally the organisation he led to the end of his days, the International Socialists/Socialist Workers Party (IS/SWP) in Britain.

In part the book is dedicated to defending the theories that led him to break from Trotskyism in the late 1940s. But in essence the book is a partisan history of the IS/SWP tradition and politics, principally in Britain. Cliff founded the Socialist Review Group in 1951, with 33 members. In 1962 this became the International Socialists, reaching 200 members by 1964. In 1977 it changed its name to the Socialist Workers Party. Today the SWP claims to have around 5,000 members.

Despite its numerical growth it is clear that the SWP is far weaker today in terms of working class implantation than it was in the early 1970s. In its entire history it has never achieved the significance or influence within the wider working class movement that the British Communist Party (one of the weakest in the world Stalinist movement) enjoyed.

Cliff never built a real party. By real party we mean one that represents a serious (albeit minority) fraction of the

working class numbering tens of thousands, is firmly rooted in the working class and able to lead mass struggles on more than just an episodic basis. A real party, as the Bolsheviks showed, is capable of reaching out to the working class with a range of publications, including a daily paper. It is able to operate not only through its membership, but through the network of contacts that its membership has throughout the class.

Cliff built a large propaganda group, but not a party. Some of the reasons for this are undoubtedly objective. But the most important ones flow from Cliff's wrong politics. The SWP failed to take the opportunity to become such a party – particularly in the 1970s and mid 1980s – because its politics failed the test of the real world.

Why did Cliff fail? Because of his consistent economism and tailism.

By economism we mean a belief that the economic struggles of the working class will, in and of themselves, generate a socialist consciousness and break workers from reformism. Activity is sufficient. The party, according to this method, exists, not to lead struggles by advancing a revolutionary programme, but simply to act as an organiser of those struggles bringing their participants together under one roof. Cliff gave a clear expression of this when he wrote in the 1960s:

"Reformism can never be defeated by programmes. It can only be defeated by deeds."

Either this is a trite truism – programme without practice is useless – or it is a downgrading of programme in favour of everyday practice. That it is the latter is testified to by the fact that Cliff

never wrote a single programme as far as we know. The SWP was unique in being a party without a programme. Thus Cliff's remark is the equivalent of Eduard Bernstein's "the movement is everything: the goal nothing".

The error of this argument was demonstrated beyond dispute in 1974 when the heroic deeds of the working class led Cliff to argue that reformism was finished at the very point when a Labour government came to power and used its political control over the working class to demobilise it, weaken its organisations and make it ripe for the onslaught of Thatcher.

The truth was that the IS/SWP failed to win workers to a programmatic alternative to Labourism and no amount of self activity could blind you this. The IS/SWP went into a serious crisis. It suffered major splits (one of which led to the formation of Workers Power when the entire Left Faction of IS was expelled), desertions and, by Cliff's own admission, three years of disorientation and disarray.

However, instead of assessing his own political errors in the lead up to 1974 Cliff blames everything on the objective situation – the downturn. He uses this term as though it is a natural phenomenon, like the weather, rather than the product of the political failure of the IS/SWP leadership to arm and prepare their organisation for a battle with reformism.

Today the SWP's economism is not as clear as it was in the 1970s. The reason is the low level of economic struggle. Yet it remains lodged in the SWP's thinking.

Cliff's thesis, just before he died, is that the economic struggle will soon return to centre stage and when that

happens we will be able to relive past glories. Until then we should wage the ideological class struggle. But, just as in the economic struggle there is no bridge between the day to day and the ultimate goal so in the preaching of socialism there is no plan of action about how we get there. Action is for small things (reforms), discussion is for big ideas. Karl Kautsky and the German Social Democrats had this idea too. It was called the maximum/minimum programme. It failed – only on a really big scale!

"Ideological agitation tries to connect the struggle for reforms here and now, however small, with general socialist ideas. Over the last few years we managed to increase our influence in the working class through being the best 'fighters for reform' ... We managed to root ourselves ideologically by agitating over ideas, and not just campaigning around issues – through public debates ranging from economics and the Labour Party to postmodernism." (p199/200)

The consequence of this rigid separation of day to day struggles and socialist ideas leads to what Lenin called tailism – you accept that the basis of your agitation is the pre-existing demands and consciousness of those workers you wish to relate too rather than the tasks posed by the objective situation and its most likely development. Cliff likes to quote Lenin on agitation, on the need to locate and seize the "key link in the chain" or pose "the next step". He fails to realise that Lenin did not think that these were to be found in workers' existing consciousness or their present objectives of struggle.

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THE POLITICS OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

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Why? Simply because this consciousness, even those demands that workers think are "realistic" and "possible", are not determined solely by the spontaneous class instinct or by struggle but by the pressure of everyday life under capitalism, by the limits of local, sectional, national experience as well as by bourgeois head-fixing and the restraints imposed by the political and trade union bureaucracies.

The task of revolutionaries is to make an objective assessment of the next steps. It must be as free as possible from the above pressures and limits and then set out to win workers to it. This does not at all mean that workers' existing consciousness can be left out of the equation. Still less does it mean that spontaneous militancy and class instinct are not a creative and essential component of strategy and tactics. Only that revolutionaries have to help workers to overcome the obstacles and turn that spontaneity into conscious class strategy and tactics.

Cliff's views were a product of the post war degeneration of the Fourth International. The principal characteristic of the centrist fragments that emerged from this degeneration was adaptation: to Stalinism, to Social Democracy or to petit bourgeois nationalism. Cliff's emphasis on "socialism from below" meant that there was always a strong

anti-bureaucratic content to his politics. Nevertheless, his break with Trotskyism took the form of an adaptation to militant trade unionism.

He stressed the rank and file and he denounced the bureaucracy. But he adapted his politics to the spontaneous, militant, but nevertheless reformist trade unionism that was evident in the 1950s and then prevalent in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He was never able to show how it was possible to overthrow and destroy this bureaucracy only to try to circumvent it. This was the consciousness of the shop floor militant generation of the years 1958-76 - a kind of truncated syndicalism. It was an adaptation that led to economism and tailism.

Cliff defines the economism as follows: "If one relates to the workers' resistance to the bosses without making a basic criticism of capitalism, one is trapped in 'economism' and opportunism." (p225)

This definition does sum up the SWP's approach to the economic struggle. The party relates vigorously to workers' economic struggles but does not go further than the demands spontaneously raised by the workers themselves. The struggle is left at the level it starts at, namely a trade union struggle for trade union demands. At the same time the SWP sell Socialist Worker to strikers and explain the importance of socialism at meetings or at Marxism.

The problem is that this method does not make a living connection between the day to day struggle and the final goal. There is a yawning gap. The SWP make a practical adaptation to the existing demands of the struggle (trade union) while salving their conscience by making abstract propaganda for socialism.

This adapts politics to the economic struggle and then tails that struggle. Propaganda for socialism is dislocated from the sphere of action. As Cliff says: "Propaganda is putting a number of ideas before a few people, while agitation is putting one or two ideas before a number of workers, leading to action." (p143)

This distinction - agitation as a call to action and propaganda to be simply to do with "ideas" - is a long way from Lenin's definition. Lenin argued that such a distinction was the hallmark of economism, since it neatly hived propaganda off from the day to day struggle. He wrote against Martynov, a leader of the Russian economist trend:

"To single out a third sphere, or third function, of practical activity, and to include in this function, 'the call upon the masses to undertake definite concrete actions', is sheer nonsense, because the 'call', as a single act, either naturally and inevitably supplements the theoretical treatise, propagandist pamphlet and agitational speech, or represents a purely executive function."

The SWP's propaganda for socialism remains separate from the action being undertaken by workers. And agitation, for the SWP, becomes agitation solely for the existing demands in a strike or campaign. In Socialist Worker, at the height of the working class offensive in the early 1970s, this method was given a chemically pure expression when it answered the question "how can we stop rising prices and attacks on wages?":

"Only one thing could do that - a workers' onslaught on the present system, to take economic power from the ruling minority and to re-organise the economy on a rational basis ... until we reach that point, there is still only one answer to rising prices - to step up the fight for higher wages." (SW 426)

For the IS/SWP there is no connection between the final onslaught and the existing struggle. There doesn't need to be one, according to Cliff, because the struggle of the workers themselves will deal with the problem. The workers themselves will spontaneously generate a socialist consciousness capable of smashing aside all obstacles in the way of the final goal. Throughout Cliff's life story there are examples of this method at work, but it was given its clearest expression during the upsurge of working class militancy from 1969 to 1974 and in the "downturn" that followed.

Economism in the Upturn

KEY STRUGGLES illustrate why this method is wrong and why it prevented IS from becoming a real revolutionary party in the period. At the height of the working class offensive (1972) five London dockers' were imprisoned under the Tories' Industrial Relations Act. They were leading a strike and had engaged in "illegal" secondary picketing. Workers' responded in a magnificent display of militancy.

Thousands struck unofficially, in the print industry, in engineering and throughout the docks. A crisis opened up for both the government and the trade union bureaucracy. The government faced a direct challenge to its "rule of law". The TUC faced the prospect of an unofficial general strike that would threaten its own control of the unions.

Faced with such a development revolutionary Marxists need two things: an indefatigable involvement in the struggle itself and political slogans and demands that could take the struggle forward towards ever more sharp and ever more revolutionary conflicts with the bosses and the state. The IS/SWP certainly got stuck in, but their economism prevented them from even seeking to wrest the leadership of the strike movement from the grip of the reformists (the TUC, backed by the Labour party in parliament) who were able to use their control to contain the militancy.

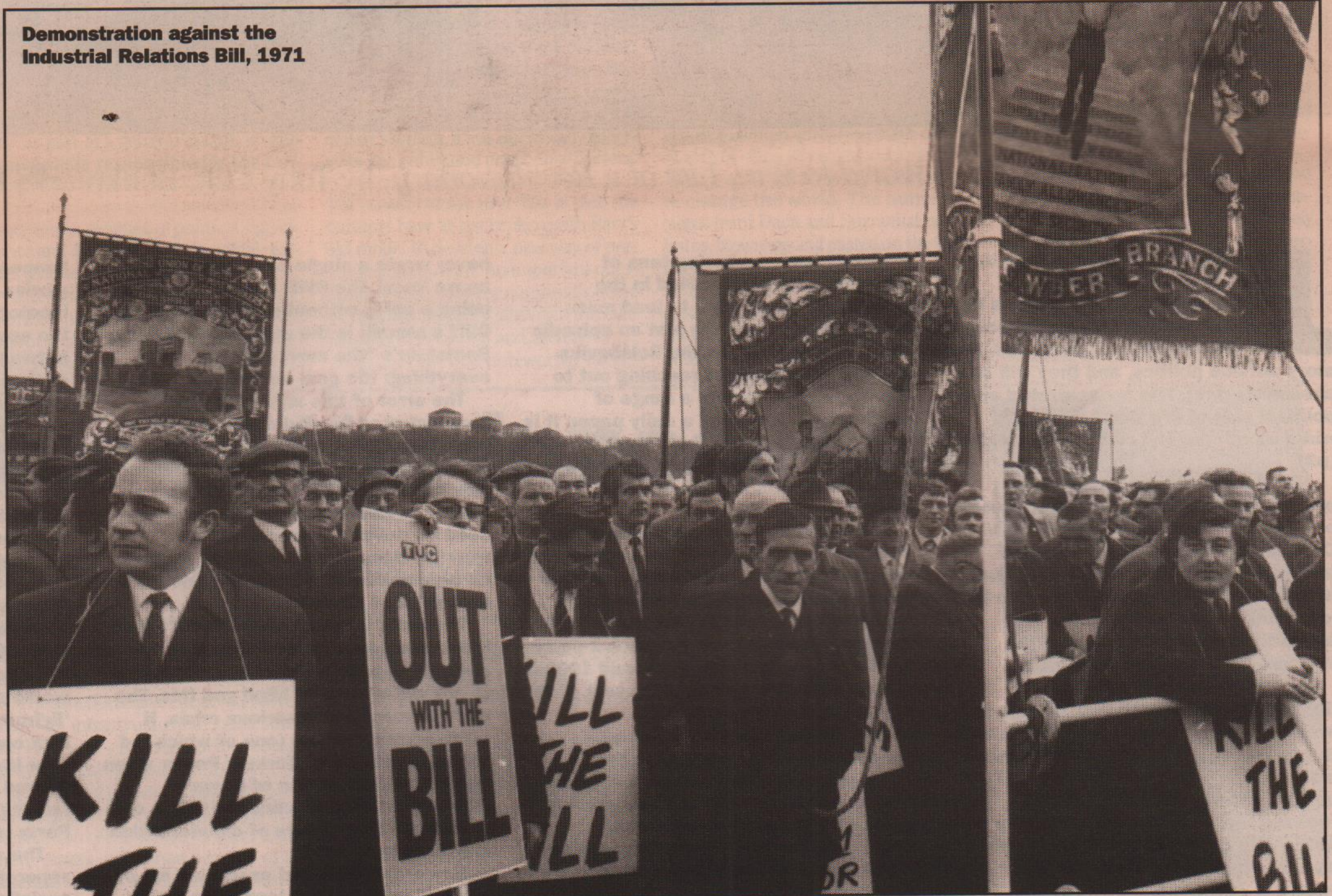
The leadership of IS refused to raise the key revolutionary demands in this crisis:

- The need for a general strike to free the dockers and smash the Industrial Relations Act.

- The need for councils of action to build solidarity, establish rank and file control of the strike and create new leaders. Indeed, they were outflanked by the TUC which itself called a general strike (only to call it off when the government panicked and freed the dockers).

The reason IS didn't raise such slogans was because their economism had imprinted on their practice the belief that the struggle itself would provide the solution. As Cliff puts it:

"A generalised attack by the government has led to a broadened defence by workers in which economics and poli-



Demonstration against the Industrial Relations Bill, 1971

tics fused. Workers themselves moved to generalise, to think in class terms rather than sectional terms." (p106)

Cliff does not mention what slogans the IS put forward in this struggle. He simply records that the IS printshop printed posters for the dockers (because the CP printshop didn't work at weekends!) and that he spoke on a dockers' platform and recruited dockers to IS.

This moment of struggle was one of the best ever opportunities in recent history for the British workers to make a serious break from reformism (Labour and Stalinist), to score a strategic victory over the bosses and to rally thou-

sands to a revolutionary alternative. That opportunity was lost.

Despite the tremendous victory scored by the dockers the Industrial Relations Act was retained intact (and used again by the Tories in the years that followed). The TUC strengthened its position vis a vis the rank and file by advancing the general strike call. It did not face a challenge to its authority from hundreds of well rooted, delegate based action councils that could have been built in this period.

Workers Power, which was then the Left Faction within IS, argued at the time in favour of the slogans, "General Strike

to Smash the Act" and "Build Councils of Action". We wrote:

"They could be taken up and argued for by militants throughout industry. Furthermore, they steered the struggle onto a track which would have led to a sharpening of conflict between workers and the state. At the same time these slogans could act as vehicles on which our political ideas could enter the vanguard and hence the mass of workers. They logically bridge the gap between our general theory and the struggle of the class. The abstract notion of the class state could have been made concrete and relevant ... Instead IS kept its politics out

of the agitational slogans which were simply reflections of what was happening." (Platform of the Left Faction of the International Socialists)

Developments after 1974 demonstrated how right we were. What Cliff came to describe as the downturn was a product of the political limits of the trade union militancy he adapted his politics to. The problem for Cliff was the "bureaucratisation" of the rank and file (full-time convenors and so on) rather than the politics that remained in their heads even when they were engaged in major strikes against the bosses or the government.

Economism in the downturn

CLIFF'S EXCUSE for his economism, for his tailing of the accomplished fact at the expense of advancing slogans that can create new facts by taking the working class forward, is that revolutionaries must always advance slogans "that fit the situation" (p224). Warning against raising slogans that are too advanced for the situation, Cliff writes:

"If I wanted to buy a car I would have to calculate how much money I could raise for this purpose, and I would probably find that I could afford nothing better than a clapped out 1970s Ford. If I just wanted to daydream about a car, I certainly would not say to myself, 'I wish I had a clapped out 1970s Ford', I would say, 'I wish I had a gold plated Rolls Royce'. The more isolated revolutionaries are from the working class, the less their positions can be corrected by workers in struggle and the greater the attraction of extreme, hollow sloganising." (p131/2)

This classic Cliff rebuttal of putting forward slogans that are "too advanced" or that "don't fit" sounds like good, realistic common sense. But the only grain of truth it contains is the need to ensure that you test and correct your slogans in the sphere of activity, amongst workers in struggle. The rest of the analogy is twaddle which obscures the problem of how revolutionaries advance slogans and why. It counterposes the possible to the necessary. It adopts the least line of resistance when, on certain occasions, the bold fight for advanced slogans is necessary to take the class struggle forward. And it assumes, in classic economist fashion, that the workers will always be right as against the revolutionaries.

The danger of this approach was revealed in the "downturn". Cliff himself was the architect of this "theory". It claimed that the arrival of the Labour government in 1974 demobilised workers' struggles to such an extent that, objectively, generalised political class struggle was effectively off the agenda. The SWP had to wind up all of its auxiliary organisations – the Rank and File movement in the unions, Women's Voice and later the Anti-Nazi League – put the shutters up and wait until the class struggle started to move forward again.

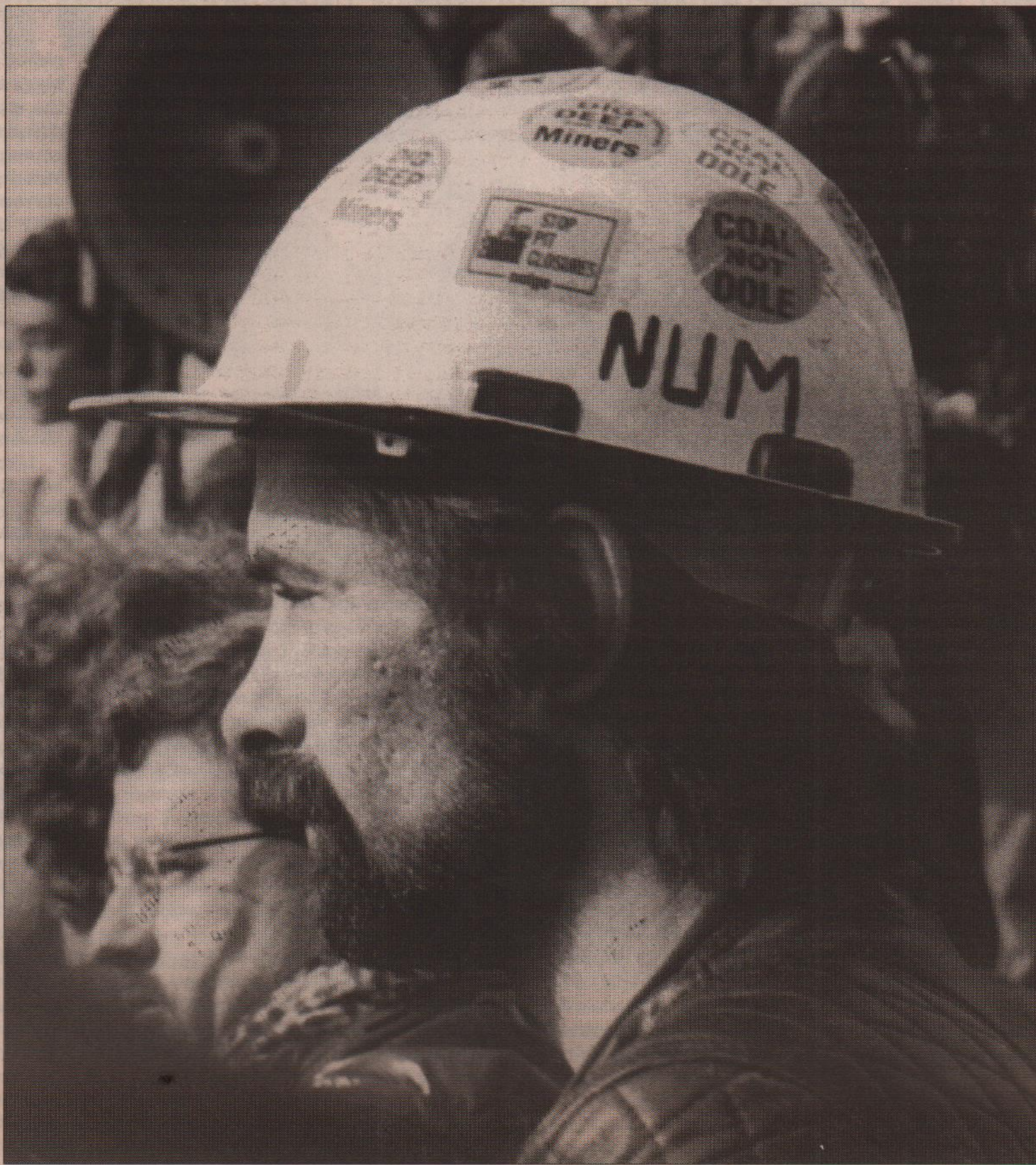
Cliff's one self criticism is that he did not fight soon enough or hard enough to get this perspective adopted, with the result that in the late 1970s the organisation was seriously demoralised, crisis ridden and disoriented. However, once he won the organisation to his viewpoint (in 1979) it "had hardened cadres who in future could go against the stream, survive the hard years of the 1980s, and be ready to take advantage of the upturn that is bound to come." (p172)

Leaving aside all of the tactical issues that arose as a result of this downturn perspective, the main thing to note is that it did not alter Cliff's method one jot. The result was that the second great opportunity to build a revolutionary party in Britain – during the 1984/85 miners' strike – passed Cliff and the SWP by. Of course the party did a lot of work around the strike, sustaining solidarity and keeping it going. But the downturn meant that all that could be expected was a clapped out Ford despite the fact that the struggle was in the league of a gold plated Rolls Royce. Indeed, Cliff gives the impression in his book that it was a strike doomed from the very outset to lose:

"Alas, the long period of downturn, of declining militancy, led to the final defeat of the strike." (p191)

The consequence of this was, as Cliff notes, that the SWP devoted much of its time and energy to fundraising which was "clearly not enough to win it."

Cliff's view of history is somewhat distorted. It is perfectly true that the



The miners' strike: mass pickets on their own were not enough to defeat Thatcher

1984/85 strike was not part of a wave of generalised militancy. This was because the Tories, under Thatcher, had learnt from the 1970s and, instead of taking on workers in a generalised assault, chose to pick them off section by section – steelworkers, miners, printers, seafarers, dockers.

NEVERTHELESS, the 1984/85 strike had a class wide significance. Most sections of workers understood that the fate of the working class as a whole was at stake. Moreover, the strike attained levels of militancy and organisation that were unprecedented in the entire post war period – weekly demonstrations, support committees drawing in nearly all sections of workers, widespread (though often unpublicised) solidarity action, defence teams against riot police who laid siege to whole communities.

It coincided with a crisis in the struggles over rate-capping in local government, and two national dock strikes occurred during the miners' struggle. Thatcher herself called it Arthur Scargill's "insurrection". The ruling class knew very well that they were fighting for the survival of "their" government – the one that was solving urgent problems for them.

If revolutionaries cannot offer a strategy for victory in such a struggle and combine a fight for that course with all the necessary fundraising and solidarity, then they ought to pack up and go home. They are not revolutionaries but hopeless schematists who mistake the consciousness of their own political impotence for the reality of the class struggle. The "theory of the downturn" was sheer defeatist nonsense in

such conditions

The SWP failed this test completely. They argued ceaselessly for mass pickets. But there were plenty of mass pickets. Thousands gathered at Orgreave to try and stop scab coal. They failed for several reasons, and none of them were to do with the "downturn".

First, they failed to secure solidarity action on the scale of the 1972 and 1974 strikes. Was this due to the downturn? Obviously the fact that it did not come with the speed of 1972 or 1974 i.e. "spontaneously" was due in no small measure to the erosion of militancy and organisation due to the defeats of the previous seven years. The question was, was it impossible to get it? Our answer was no. But first you had to ask for it and then you had to fight for it. Here Scargill's role was profoundly negative. For the first six months of the strike, he refused to even ask workers in other unions for action.

Partly he wanted to keep the TUC out. He was rightly suspicious of their treacherous intentions. But partly he believed, wrongly, that the miners could go it alone. Because he was a bureaucrat himself he would not sanction his own rank and file going directly to workers and asking for solidarity strike action. This was disastrous in every respect. It made winning action from other workers very difficult. The task of revolutionaries was to criticise Scargill openly and hard for this and to seek to persuade miners to do it themselves. Did the SWP do either? No it did not.

Second, the nature of picketing had changed. The fact is, and the SWP remained wilfully blind to this because of their economism, the biggest picket imaginable would have had difficulty stopping scab coal at Orgreave. Police

tactics had changed. Pickets were now confronted with a riot gear-clad, military force assembled from all over the country. The state had learnt how to cope with pickets, but pickets hadn't learnt how to cope with the paramilitarised police. What was needed was to transform the spontaneous fighting spirit of the mass pickets into disciplined defence squads capable of resisting the state forces. Those squads needed also needed to arm themselves with weapons to match the truncheons and shields of the police.

Thirdly, from the early summer, when the courts started to move against the miners' funds, a general strike against the Tories anti-union laws and in solidarity with the miners was urgently needed.

THE OBJECTIVE necessity of such a slogan was clear. It fitted the situation perfectly. A class wide assault needed a class wide response. The practical possibility of such a slogan was clear: miners in their thousands responded to the slogan and began to take it up on every demo. A small but influential group – which became a short lived rank and file movement – took up the slogan with vigour. Even more important the dockers came out twice in the summer. On both occasions their intent was clear. To generalise the action.

And when they did come out Thatcher famously broke down in tears fearing a repeat of 1972. The only reason they did not stay out was because Scargill – following his isolationist strategy – let the TGWU leader, Ron Todd, off the hook supporting Todd's description of the dockers' dispute as a "sectional" matter. Even after this, when Scargill changed tack and handed over the control of all

solidarity to the TUC, a general strike was necessary to win. Yet still the SWP insisted it was impossible.

A general strike was necessary, possible and had revolutionaries beyond our own limited number, fought for these slogans we could have won and smashed Thatcher. That isn't daydreaming. Yet Cliff insists that such slogans do not fit, that all the miners wanted was sustenance and that the SWP rightly dug into a defensive fundraising trench and refused to raise slogans that could have helped win a victory. This was fatalist nonsense.

Economism in the upturn, economism in the downturn, and on both occasions resulting from Cliff's fundamental method – a rejection of the method of the transitional programme, of building a party based on a revolutionary programme.

Without this approach struggles will come and go but the revolutionary party will not be built. If we adapt to the "actual level of struggle" we rob ourselves of the means of extending the actual level of struggle. If we fail to prove to workers the value of revolutionary Marxism as a weapon of struggle and merely cheer on their struggles and echo their existing demands, we neither learn very much or teach very much. If we simply tack on phrases about a beautiful socialist future we are guilty of abstract propagandism.

Cliff's tragedy is that he is guilty of precisely these errors, which is why he only succeeded in building a large group and not a party. His adaptation to trade union militancy was insufficient even when such militancy was at its height. His refusal to re-elaborate the transitional programme on the basis of Trotsky's method, left him without a compass. That his why his ship – the SWP – can only veer away from the rocks when it is already scraping them. Captain Cliff could never see that it was his method that was wrong.

He only blamed the crew for trying to persist on the old course he had charted when the current had clearly changed. But Cliff's famous perspectives: "upturn", "downturn", "recovery", "the thirties in slow motion" are each only a "zig" away from a previously disastrous "zag". They lack the coherence of thought, the clarity of slogans and the cohesion of action in pursuit of a common goal that all flow from a programme. Cliff only saw a programme as so much dogma standing in the way of relating to workers.

The opposite is the case. The revolutionary programme is the basis for the revolutionary party. The fight for the programme in the class enables the party to test, correct and develop its programme, while winning ever more adherents to it through proving its value to the day to day class struggle.

For Cliff this fusion of the fight for socialism, via the transitional programme, with relating to the struggles of workers was – as a result of the particular brand of economic centrism that characterised his break from Trotskyism – never possible. He wrote of the SWP today:

"What is needed is to carry on the ideological battle against the market, against capitalism, to sharpen the arguments in defence of revolutionary change as against the failure of the reformists who capitulate to capitalism at every turn. But we have to walk on both legs, projecting the big picture in the ideological battle. And to relate to every workers' struggle, however small." (p225)

But what links the big to the small? How do we transform the small viewpoint into the big one first for thousands and then millions? Cliff had no answer beyond "build the party". But as we have shown, running round in the hamster wheel of small struggles, while preaching an abstract socialism, will not reach this goal.

Building the International

Dave Stockton looks at recent developments in the International Socialist Tendency

“It is with regret that we have to report that Sharon Smith has told us that she will no longer be contributing her column to *Socialist Review*. When told Lindsey German asked her to continue but to no avail. Similarly after John Rees had replied accordingly to an initial request from ISO comrades to be allocated particular meetings at Marxism 2000 the reply came back that no one would be coming from the USA. We have asked the comrades to re-consider this decision. Neither Bookmarks or the National Office are now receiving copies of the American *Socialist Worker* or other publications.”

Thus the 5 June SWP Party Notes announced the walk out from the International Socialist Tendency (IST) by its long time US affiliate, the International Socialist Organisation (ISO). We described the political differences and the actions and reactions of the ISO and the SWP in the last issue of *Workers Power* and will not repeat them here.

To date no public explanation of this rift has appeared in the publications or the websites of the two organisations. Silence. This is not surprising from a tendency, whose “leading organisation” believes that debate over political differences is mere “sectarianism” – a diversion from the class struggle.

Beyond a special Internal Bulletin, in both groups neither leadership has tried to win over the membership of the other. Apart from one letter remonstrating with the ISO from the central committee of the Greek section, *Socialistiko Ergatiko Komma (SEK)* no attempt has been made to conduct a democratic debate within the international tendency.

Because the IST makes no pretence to democratic centralism, holds no decision making conferences or congresses and does not elect an international leadership, this dispute has simply been a bi-lateral slugging match between the ISO and the SWP leaderships. It is clear that in the IST, since there is no mechanism for minorities to address and convince majorities, even a large organisation like the ISO sees no purpose in taking their fight into the IST and its sections.

Whilst the IST justifies this lack of structure to make decisions or hold sections to account on grounds it is “not an international” (as if only an international could have such structures) this does not mean that each and every organisation in the IST respects equally the autonomy of the others. Some are clearly more equal than others – or rather one is. The SWP appears to have a remit to intervene whenever it sees fit.

The ISO claims that the deterioration of relations began after ISO leader Ahmed Shawki asked for a report on the IST’s international work – particularly on “a faction fight which had toppled the leadership of the French organisation” and about the disappearance, without explanation of IST organisations in South Africa and Eastern Europe – organisations for which the ISO had raised money. Alex Callinicos of the SWP – they say – told Shawki that the tendency was not an international and the leadership of one section could not expect to know all the business of another.

The ISO’s reply to this was half-hearted and weak:

“To be sure the IS tendency has always, and rightly, opposed the pretension of being an international, as the orthodox Trotskyists have pretended to be....Nevertheless, we believe that the Tendency should have some means to assess our international work.”

The experience of the ISO is, of course, not an isolated one.

In Germany a whole new organisation –



Linksruck supporters on demonstration

Linksruck – was built up, behind the back of the existing section the Sozialistische Arbeitergruppe (SAG) and its leadership. Cliff decided that by the end of the 1980s the SAG – which had hitherto stolidly carried out the tactics dictated by the “theory of the “downturn”, mandatory for all IST groups, “was a small passive sectarian group.”

In his autobiography Cliff explains: “Having lost all faith in the old SAG leadership, I sought an alternative and found it in Ahmed Shah, who joined the SWP in the early 1980s and moved to Germany in 1988. As he had recently become a member of the SAG’s national leadership I saw the chance to build a new leadership around him. Ahmed and another four young SAG members joined the Jusos (the SPD young socialists) in the summer of 1993 and started to set up organisational structures independent of the SAG. I was in very close contact with Ahmed.”

Certainly Linksruck grew at a rapid pace – just as the SWP did in the 1992-95 period. But it did so on the basis of exaggerated perspectives – proclaiming that Germany was in a pre-revolutionary situation in 1993! Within the Jusos it did not present itself as an open revolutionary opposition – but as a trade unionist and left reformist current. It recruited on a minimalist basis and cadreised only a small proportion of its membership. Like all the surges forward of IST sections this lack of cadreisation and consolidation can only mean that when the growth stops a crisis will ensue and the gains will be lost.

IF THE more developed cadres have the courage to criticise the originators of this policy (i.e. the SWP) then they will receive short shrift. They will be subjected to demagoguery of the worst sort: accused of conservatism, sectarianism, disloyalty and if they cannot be demoralised, chucked out.

As in the history of the SWP itself, the loyal exponents of one perspective are unceremoniously put to the sword when a new turn is needed, if they do not correct their mistakes. The fact that these “mistakes” were all too often dictated by Cliff and the SWP is at best not mentioned. Cliff used to call these zig-zags in policy “bending the stick” in fact the stick was bent and broken across the backs of his hapless former disciples.

In France in 1997 *Socialisme Internationale* seemed to be doing fine – implementing the “Upturn line” of mass agitation. With a claimed 150 members and a popular fortnightly paper, it was feverishly active with a dynamic leading cadre. Yet suddenly they were rung up by Alex Callinicos and told to enter the Socialist Party. Some 40 per cent of the organisation refused, asking for the

decision to be delayed and to maintain their paper until after the forthcoming election campaign. But Callinicos would brook no delay and a split ensued.

The majority entered the SP and attached itself to the young socialists and the “Manifeste contre le Front National” an anti-racist group, both run by an ex-Lambertist Cambadélis – number two in the party to Lionel Jospin. A new paper emerged named *Socialisme par en bas* (Socialism from below) which is as guarded in its criticism of the SP bureaucracy as Linksruck was within the SPD.

South Africa provides another example. During the revolutionary upsurge of the mid-1980s the SWP advanced the view that the International Socialists of South Africa (ISSA) faced the task of the “primitive accumulation of cadre” – on the university campuses.

Why? Not because this was suited to the current conditions but because this was the SWP’s line in Britain – due to its downturn theory. After some years doing as they were told, SWP leader Julie Waterston arrived from London and “discovered” that they were led by a conservative leadership and were passive propagandists. On her instructions branches were to be divided up into tiny nuclei and ordered into mass street agitation. Those who resisted this change were vilified and left in 1994 to form the ISM.

The SWP overshot the mark in analysing the upturn just as it did the downturn of the late 1970s.

In 1998 there appears to have been another turn. The South African *Socialist Worker* suddenly disappeared and was replaced by a journal called *Keep Left*, produced by Communist Young Lions. At this point ISSA disappeared from the listings of IST sections. Was this a split, was it a miserable collapse or was it more likely an entry tactic like Linksruck or *Socialisme par en bas*? Certainly the paper had the same soft line on the South African Communist Party leadership.

Strange turns indeed when one considers that throughout the upheavals in the British Labour Party between 1979 and 1983 the SWP resolutely refused to send as much as a fraction of its membership into this political ferment.

In fact the entrism the IST has carried out in Europe and beyond in the late 1990s is effectively the same as the “entrism sui generis” of Pablo and Gerry Healy in the 1950s and by Ted Grant’s followers to this day. It was not the entrism advocated by Trotsky in the 1930s, confirming our view that all the Trotskyist groups originating from the centrist Fourth International of 1948-51 are rooted in the same mistaken politics and practice.

The IST has started to issue common

public statements – signed only by the biggest sections and/or those closest to the crisis concerned. In reality this is a defensive mechanism rather than an attempt to give the IST a real independent existence as an international current. It indicates a concern by the SWP that the other sections toe the line on major international events. Thus last year the European sections – with the exception of the Greek – had to be persuaded to drop defence of the national rights of the Kosovars as incompatible with opposition to the Nato bombing. Why? Because the British and the Greeks wanted a united front with the pro-Milosevic Stalinists at home.

Likewise in the wake of the dispute with the ISO, the European sections have been rallied to a joint public declaration on the IMF meeting in Prague on September 26-7 – no doubt to underline that the IST is not going to “fail the test of Prague”.

IF THE SWP were to follow up the LSA bloc with a more serious attempt at “left unity” in Britain and if it were to find some equivalent of this tactic for all the countries where the IST is present, then the IST might see itself as playing an important part in a realignment in the international labour movement.

However developments in their sections indicate a ruthless centralism behind all the modesty and denial of the possibility of democratic centralism. It is clear that what the ISO thinks is impossible and unrealistic is the democracy, not the centralism.

What it has created in the IST is undemocratic centralism: the sections and their leaderships follow the perspective and the tactical or organisational line dictated by the leadership of the SWP. Such a regime is incapable of allowing for political, programmatic development and self-correction.

The only hope is for the development of forces within the SWP, in the larger European sections and in the semi-colonial sections that demand the transformation of the IST into a properly democratic centralist tendency. With their combined resources it would be perfectly possible to hold international conferences, for these to elect some sort of council representing all the sections, whose decisions all sections, and above all the SWP, would agree to implement, after a free and democratic debate.

But as the foundation for this structure the tendency would have to adopt a programme – not just a list of immediate action demands but a long-term strategy. One that links key demands in every major field of the class struggle, outlines effective tactical methods, the main forms of fighting organisation needed and welds them to the goal of the seizure of power in and to world revolution.

The programme maps the whole road to the socialist revolution. Its view of the years immediately ahead (its perspective) of course can be proved true or false and changed accordingly. New questions, new movements (feminism, ecology, globalisation, changes in the composition of the working class) may demand new programmatic answers. This is what we, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, call the re-elaboration of the programme.

We urge the SWP/IST, despite all our programmatic differences with them to enter into a discussion on programme and the need for a new international with ourselves and other forces that consider themselves to be revolutionary.

For we believe these questions are immediate concerns for the vanguard of working class fighters around the globe.

workersPOWER

Conference discusses way forward for LSA

The London Socialist Alliance (LSA) held its first conference in June, **Kate Ford** reports

THE CONFERENCE was lively and well attended. It discussed the success of the LSA campaign for the Greater London Assembly elections and the way forward for the alliance. Resolutions were adopted on campaigning priorities, the structure of the LSA and guidelines for election work. The ones on campaigning and structure were composite versions of the ones put forward by Workers Power.

The conference agreed to build the LSA as widely as possible in London, campaigning around asylum seekers, opposing tube privatisation and mobilising for the Prague protests. Within the unions, it was agreed to campaign for union democracy, against the witch-hunts and for a democratisation of the political funds. The conference committed the LSA to preparing for the general election, working alongside other socialist alliances.

An open and democratic structure for the LSA was agreed, with care taken that affiliated organisations and individuals were fully represented. It was agreed that the LSA should be built on a borough wide basis, with the borough organisations taking on local campaigning initiatives. A steering committee of 36 was elected.

The widest ranging political debate on the day was one on which no vote was actually taken. This debate revolved around the long term future of the LSA.

Members of the Socialist Party motivated a resolution calling for the LSA to campaign for a new workers' party but they did not want to put it to a vote. A number of speakers opposed this proposal pointing out that the British working class did not need a Labour Party Mark 2. Members of Workers Power, supported by Mark Fischer of the CPGB/Weekly Worker, argued that if the LSA was to become an effective chal-

lenge to New Labour, we would need to transform it not into another reformist workers' party, but into a revolutionary party capable of defending our class and leading it in the overthrow of the system of exploitation and oppression which Labour defends.

We believe that the way to build the LSA in the here and now is by making it an effective, democratic and inclusive alliance. Insofar as it draws in significant new working class forces, beyond the existing far left, it can and should become the vehicle for building such a

revolutionary party – not, as the comrades from the International Socialist Group argued, a “halfway house” centrist party, or, as the Socialist Party made clear, a new mass reformist party. And, for the LSA to be a step towards a revolutionary party it would have to have an

open debate on its programme. In such a debate we would advance a revolutionary programme for a revolutionary party.

The SWP remained agnostic on the future of the LSA – partly because it clearly regards itself as the revolutionary party. However, this will be a vital debate in the months ahead, especially as the general election approaches and the question of a national challenge to Blair is posed.

Disagreement emerged within the conference around the conduct of election work. A resolution was brought by an ex-member of Labour Left Briefing, Mike Marqusee, which included a ban on affiliated organisations distributing their own material whilst canvassing for the LSA. This resolution which was adopted by conference is an unhealthy step within the LSA. Workers, it was argued, would not understand how the person on their doorstep could be a member of the SWP and a member of the LSA, drawing attention to our different organisations would tarnish the LSA with the reputation of the fractious British left.

The first argument is patronising and the second is plain wrong. Workers are more than capable of understanding the concept of an alliance. And part of the strength of the LSA is that it brings together so many different political organisations from the left. Debate and diversity have always been a strength within working class organisation; bans and proscriptions are a sign of weakness.

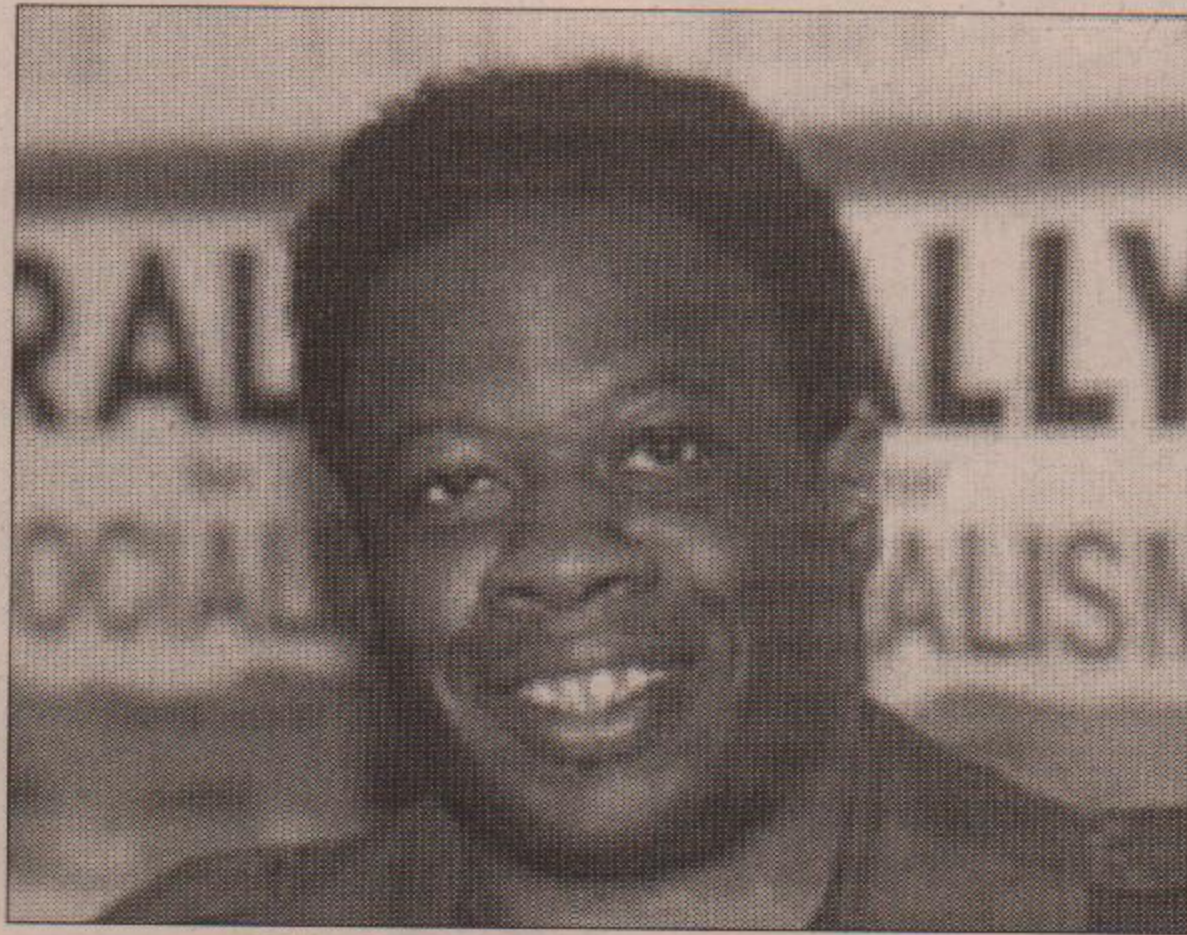
Overall though the conference represented a positive development of the LSA: setting out the priorities for the pre-election period and establishing a broad democratic structure, both of which should enable activists to build the LSA and prepare to take on New Labour in the general election.

Impressive vote for LSA in Tottenham by election

The LSA candidate in the Tottenham by-election, Weyman Bennett (pictured), secured an impressive 5.39 per cent of the vote, saving his deposit and pushing the Greens into fifth place.

The turnout in Tottenham was very low with only a quarter of those eligible to vote actually voting. Significantly, although the New Labour candidate, David Lammy, was elected, his entire vote was smaller than Bernie Grant's majority in the seat in 1997.

The LSA result was exceptionally good, given the fact that, unlike in the GLA elections, Livingstone and Labour's shameful undemocratic selection process was not a factor in securing a left of Labour vote. The LSA campaign also found that the unofficial



strike by Labour supporters which characterised the GLA campaign was over. New Labour piled resources into Tottenham during a deliberately short campaign. Labour-controlled Haringey Council instructed council workers to pull down LSA posters and placards. As Weyman Bennett commented:

“The Labour council pleads

poverty when it comes to cleaning the streets of Haringey and yet they can get to every lamp-post in the borough within hours of our placards going up. I noticed they left all the commercial fly-posting and the New Labour placards. This is one rotten boroughs story which will run and run.” Some Labour voters clearly stuck by the party out of a sense of loyalty to Bernie Grant,

a highly respected local MP. But, campaigning on the streets of Tottenham, it was clear that many working class voters feel disillusioned with New Labour. For some, this disillusionment leads them to abstain from the election. But for others – a small but significant minority – having a socialist alternative is vital in showing their determination to fight back.

LETTERS

Comrades,

Two points about my letter and the “reply”. Your friend “Mike Fisher, Derby” may or may not have a point. His quote from the December/January Workers Liberty (WL) may or may not be out of context, justifiable, stupid, rational – whatever. But what it isn't – doesn't even purport to be – is a reply to my points, namely:

1. It is not true that the AWL sees the LSA as a step towards the new mass reformist party;

2. It is not true that we joined the LSA, short term, to avoid isolation.

Workers Power's problem: you couldn't find any justification for what you wrote could you? So you've attempted to change the subject. And while we're at it: you haven't even acquired enough spine to sign your own stupid letters. Honestly, we're in favour of debate. But not like your comment, which simply screws the political lines up.

Workers Liberty

We reply:

WL can't have it both ways. They accept that Fisher's letter didn't even purport to be a reply to them and then denounce it as though it was a reply. It was not a reply to the Mark Osborne letter. So why is he now in such a tizz about it?

Perhaps because it did prove one

WORKERSPOWER

point, admirably. The AWL's perspective is for the recreation of a mass union based workers' party which they accept in advance will have a reformist character.

Let us make clear to Workers Liberty – famous throughout the left for conducting debates in a civilised manner, famous for their George Washington like honesty in every campaign and famous for the sort of political spine that led them to drop the call “Stop Nato's Bombing” during last year's Balkan war – the letter was a letter, not a reply. It is not our policy to reply to every letter we receive.

However, since you demand a reply to the points you made, here they are:

1. We are absolutely convinced that an organisation whose central perspective for re-arming the British working class is the formation of a Labour Representation Committee, to either reform the existing Labour Party or create a new Labour Party, views the LSA as a step towards this goal. Our proof – Workers Liberty's insistence that the LSA is the means of achieving the “restoration of working class political representation” faced with “Blair's hijack of the labour movement” (Workers Liberty, April 2000). To us, this suggests the AWL is in favour of using the LSA to recreate a pre-Blair, unhijacked Labour Party. That party was a

reformist party – and it is that you appear to favour rebuilding.

2. We cannot prove that this was why you joined the LSA from anything you have written. So you've got us bang to rights there. But the proof is in the pudding – the AWL's refusal to agree to carry out mass leafleting for the LSA in Havering and Redbridge (reported on by an independent at a candidate and agents' meeting); the AWL's rushed and foolish pushing through of a candidate in a Tory ward by-election in East London (with no decision able to be taken by the Steering Committee); the AWL's insistence on “rotation” in the event of any LSA list members getting elected on the grounds of “distrust” (explicitly of the SWP, implicitly of everyone else in the Alliance). All of these examples convince us we are right. Perhaps your future behaviour will prove us wrong.

Football and nationalism

Dear Workers Power,

I agree with much of what Mark Harrison says about football and the growing influence of money (WP244). When

you look at the rising price of a season ticket it becomes clear who are the new target audience for club managements. I spoke to a friend recently who said he paid £450 for his West Ham season ticket, only after he had been forced to downgrade to a worse seat because his previous one was unaffordable.

New style aggressive managements with their eye on the middle class audience backed up by satellite and merchandising money are clearly in vogue. The question is whether these few monster teams will eat the sport alive.

The more they disenfranchise ordinary supporters, the more local teams are driven under; the more playing fields are swallowed up, the more the base for football as a mass audience, participation sport will be torn up.

Football is currently fashionable, when it stops being, will merchandising alone keep it going? In England the effects of this process are probably already being felt. The pitiful performance of England in the recent Euro 2000 competition, in comparison with Portugal and France, both of whom have invested in serious youth policies, has clearly been brought about by this reliance on large amounts of “fast” capital which carries with it no social commitment.

Ultimately, however, football is a sport warped by capitalism, whether you are English or Portuguese. As Mark

points out in the early part of his article nationalism is a significant way in which the sport is used by our rulers to trick workers into believing that we all have something in common.

Why, however, does he not discuss this obvious point later in the article? It's not just the sight of right wing thugs beating up North Africans and Turks that proves that nationalism has its teeth into the game, after all sanctimonious liberals can always claim that theirs is the “wrong” sort of nationalism.

The fact is that every time there is a competition in which the English team can participate we are bombarded from every media with uncritical “we are all in it together” messages. The flags of St. George are flown high, a climate in which to victimise non-whites is created, and even otherwise more sensible people bathe in the glow.

Revolutionaries, particularly those of us who are football fans, have a responsibility to explain the connection between football and nationalism to workers. We should be clear that any attempt to promote a unity in the name of football should be rejected. Surely supporting the national team simply because it is England is to collude with nationalism, rather than challenge it.

**In comradeship
John Grimshaw
Manchester City supporter**

ZIMBABWE

Mugabe wins tainted victory in elections

THE DUST has finally settled on one of the most keenly observed and violent elections in recent years. And with it, President Robert Mugabe has, for the moment, clung onto power.

Zanu-PF, which has ruled Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, won 62 seats against the opposition Movement for Democratic Change's (MDC's) 57. Along with the 20 seats that are appointed by the president and a further 10 which are allocated to traditional leaders, all of which will be taken by Zanu-PF loyalists, Mugabe will at least have a parliament with a comfortable majority, even if for the first time ever there is now an opposition.

This victory, however, is not a true reflection of the democratic wishes of the people. With 32 prominent MDC candidates and supporters murdered by Zanu-PF thugs, the level of violence and intimidation right up to polling day ensured that the balance would be tipped against the fledgling opposition party. The Zimbabwean people have been robbed of their chance to ditch Mugabe and his cronies whose corrupt rule has led to 50 per cent unemployment, 60 per cent inflation, poverty wages and crumbling services.

Nevertheless, there are lessons for the Zimbabwean working class in the results. The MDC won all 27 seats in Harare and Bulawayo, the capital and second cities. This is where the workers had most control over the selection of candidates and the running of the election campaign. The clean sweep reveals that the MDC's core constituency is the Zimbabwean working class in and around the militant Congress of Trade Unions.



Zimbabwe police guard ballot boxes

However, Zanu-PF secured their victory by taking whole swathes of the rural constituencies. As MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, who lost his rural seat, conceded:

"The result was a true reflection of the rural people's views. We didn't have access to them, and the work we did there before the reign of terror was insufficient. We didn't have enough time to

change attitudes."

Tsvangirai is only partially correct. The MDC also failed to make a breakthrough in the countryside because its political programme was based on the needs of the white commercial farmers and the international bankers, rather than the needs of the land-hungry poor.

Mugabe is certainly a sly politician, who cannot be trusted to deliver his

promise of radical land reform. After 20 years of inactivity, he only re-discovered the urgency of land reform when he needed votes to save his own political skin. Nevertheless, Zanu-PF's key demand was that some of the 11 million hectares of rich fertile land owned by 4,500 white capitalist farmers be handed over to some of the one million black peasant farmers currently squeezed onto

16 million hectares of the most drought-prone land. This was enormously popular in the countryside.

The disappointment of working class MDC activists, many of whom were convinced on the basis of their work in the cities that they had won, must not be allowed to lead to passivity. Morgan Tsvangirai and the MDC leadership will want to bide their time, show the Western bankers and multinationals that they can behave as a "responsible" opposition and tell the workers that they should wait for the presidential elections in 2002.

This is not a realistic strategy for millions of Zimbabwean workers. They need to dislodge Mugabe and his cronies now. They can only do this by launching strikes against each and every privatisation, price hike and retrenchment, and ensuring rank and file control of each and every action. And the need to build defence organisations to protect workers from Mugabe's state forces and Zanu-PF thugs remains a task of the hour.

More than this, the workers, through their unions and other grassroots organisations, need to overturn the MDC's land programme and go out into the rural communities in support of land occupations. They must demand that Zanu-PF nationalises the land with no compensation, places it under the control of those who work it, and ensures that the rural masses themselves, workers and poor peasants, decided on whether it is either distributed or collectively worked. Only this way can Mugabe's rural base be prised away from Zanu-PF and the path to a workers' and farmers' government be cleared.

AUSTRIA

Strike action shows the way forward

Our Vienna correspondent reports on a major day of action by Austria's trade unions

EARLIER THIS year Austria was shaken to its foundations by mass protests against the entry of Nazi loving Jorg Haider's Freedom party into a right wing government coalition. Those who thought this was a one-off, in a country famed for its prolonged class peace, got it badly wrong. Austria is no longer a "special case", a model of class harmony.

On 28 June a number of unions in all of the major Austrian cities called a day of action. It was directed against a reactionary pension reform which aimed to delay pension entitlement to older workers for one and a half years. This is a cynical pro-capitalist measure, because at the same time there are 200,000 people looking for jobs while productivity and profits are increasing.

The railway workers' union – a traditionally highly unionised sector – was in the forefront of the protests, supported by other public sector workers. The railway workers staged a one-hour strike and the bus drivers, tram drivers and other municipal workers organisations all took some strike action. The printers union struck for several hours

which meant no evening papers being printed. There were a number of shop floor meetings in a number of other sectors, including in one of the biggest post offices and at the biggest hospital of the country. In both cases the meetings meant brief strikes by the workers involved.

Hundreds of thousands of workers were involved in strike activities. Attempts to break the strike by the management failed because of the solidarity of workers and union discipline.

While such short strikes are not as dramatic as some of the actions that have taken place in Europe over the last few years this development is historic by Austrian standards. It is the first widespread strike activity for 35 years. This fact was reflected in the bosses' press which expressed the fear that the epoch of social partnership – which was characterised by a complete absence of strike action and back-door negotiations and deals by the government and the union tops – has ended and a new period of open class confrontations has begun.

ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (AST) – the Austrian section of the League for a Rev-

olutionary Communist International – participated actively in the strike. In the morning we visited bus and tram driver depots, distributing leaflets, supporting pickets and discussing how to build on the action with the strikers. A number of workers understood the need for further strikes. There was no hostility against "communists" – on the contrary we were invited into the depot to join the strikers for breakfast!

Later we joined a union rally in front of the headquarters of the bosses' federation. The rally was designed as a showcase for the "determination" of the union bureaucrats. However we used the opportunity to debate the leader of the capitalist federation in front of TV cameras.

After this there was a rally of about a thousand municipal workers. At noon we initiated a rally at the biggest railway station in Vienna in solidarity with the strike that was underway. The rally was supported by the Communist Party affiliated fraction in the railway workers' union (which is the second strongest fraction there after the social democrats) and the Austrian supporters of the Committee for a Workers' Interna-

tional (represented in Britain by the Socialist Party).

We were able to address many workers and passengers at this rally. It heard speeches, including one by the leading shop steward at the railway station. It became very clear that only a minority of people opposed the strike, with most expressing solidarity with the workers. Again solidarity between railway workers and AST supporters was good so the union activists invited us after the rally into their canteen to discuss the events of the day and give us some food. There was general agreement that the success of the strike showed that more action was possible and necessary in the future.

In our leaflets we argued for a broadening and intensification of the strikes. We said an indefinite strike of the unions was necessary to defeat the government's pension counter-reform. We also argued for rank and file strike committees to take over the control of the strike from the bureaucrats. And we demanded that any deal agreed by the bureaucrats and the government be put to a vote of all union members. Finally the AST argued for linking this struggle with the

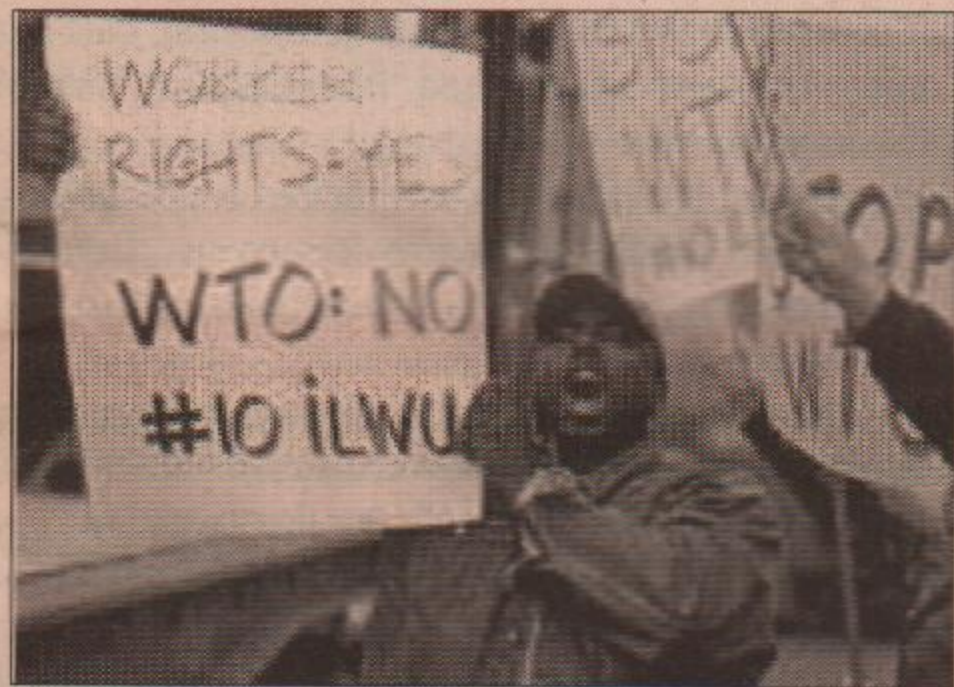
struggle against racism and the right wing government itself. Our strategic orientation remains campaigning for a general strike to bring down the right-wing government and its programme.

However, there is a danger that the union bureaucracy will sell out the struggle. This warning strike – as it was called – will not be enough to stop the government. The bureaucracy is prepared to make many compromises. The government is currently obstructing a rotten deal because it wants to humiliate the unions. The coming days will show if the pressure of the rank and file is strong enough to force the union leadership to call all-out strikes.

Whatever the outcome of this dispute the coming period will see a number of other struggles unfold. Austria is no longer an exceptional case in Europe. Our task is to build the political alternative to the existing reformist leaderships of the workers' movement. Only a new revolutionary party can provide the working class with a programme and a leadership capable of meeting the tasks of the present period. The AST will do its utmost to meet this task.

Winning workers' support for Prague

Last month 70 activists from 11 different countries met in Prague and agreed on a call for international protests against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to coincide with their annual general meeting in September. *Jeremy Dewar* was there



Workers mobilised for Seattle

THE MEETING in Prague was called by INPEG, a coalition of anarchists, environmentalists and the Socialist Solidarity Group (SSG – the SWP's Czech sister organisation). INPEG was formed in September last year and has held several protests already to raise the issue of global capitalism and its effects on people's lives in the Czech republic.

The last two of these demos, on 16 April and May Day, have been brutally repressed by the police. This repression has only served to increase the support for INPEG and the anti-capitalists.

Inspired by previous "Global Days of Action", in particular the mighty confrontations in Seattle on 30 November last year, socialists, anarchists and environmentalists from across Europe and beyond plan to disrupt the IMF and WB's next round of talks aimed at carving up the world for the benefit of global capital. The climax of a week of protests will take place on Tuesday 26 September, the day the IMF/WB summit opens.

The international meeting, to which Workers Power and the Socialist Workers Organisation of the Czech Republic (SOP – Workers Power's sister organisation in the Czech Republic, which has been excluded from INPEG) and Revolution sent representatives, provided a forum for activists from many different backgrounds and traditions to exchange experiences and thrash out a common strategy. While this produced many valuable lessons from, and insights into the anti-capitalist movement in different countries – for example, the heroic actions of a group of anarchists in Bologna, who have taken to dressing up in full, protective riot gear when confronted by the police! – it also inevitably produced tensions.

These tensions surfaced on the first day of the three-day meeting over the question of whether we should support a demonstration against the IMF called by the Communist Party-led Czech trade union federation and supported by the left wing of the Czech Communist Party (CP). The demo, planned for Saturday 23 September, calls for the cancellation of Third World and Eastern European debt, the setting up of a democratically-controlled, international development bank and for an international tax on multinational and speculative capital. The appeal specifically calls on workers' organisations from across Europe to support the demonstration.

Despite the reformist basis of the appeal, this represents a huge step forward for the Czech workers' movement after decades of atomisation and disorientation under the Stalinist dictatorship and capitalist governments which have, since 1990 subjected the Czech workers to the demands of the multinationals and the world's bankers.

While the Czech CP and its trade unions – even its left wing – will undoubtedly sell workers' jobs and conditions to the bosses, they nevertheless represent an important part of the Czech working class which is beginning to recover its fighting strength. For example, the CP-affiliated miners' union recently led a 22-day occupation strike which saved 450 jobs in northern Bohemia. The Czech CP also condemned the police violence against INPEG's May Day demo and called for the charges against the protesters to be dropped.

In other words, the Czech CP and its unions are typical reformists who – because they are out of government – are putting forward their left face. They have called for action against the IMF, have led the occasional militant strike, supported the democratic rights of anti-capitalist protesters and poll around 20 per cent in elections (and far more in working class districts).

Yet, INPEG – and the international meeting, following their advice – refused to support the demo on the 23 September.

The main reason given was that the Com-

munists had ruled over the Czech people with an iron fist for 40 years, and to support their demonstration would frighten off the rest of the Czech people. Secondary reasons were that the appeal is reformist and the demo is called on a Saturday, before the IMF/WB meeting starts and is a possible diversion from the main action on 26 September.

The secondary reasons are a smokescreen. Certainly the appeal is totally inadequate and needs to be criticised. But then, where are the mass revolutionary workers' organisations? They do not exist. If we want to draw the mass of organised workers into united action against multinational capital, (and in the process win more and more of them to a revolutionary alternative) we need to involve their mass reformist organisations, march alongside them and open up a dialogue.

The fact that the demo is called for a Saturday rather than a weekday is, in part, a reflection of the leaders' reformism. But it is also a recognition of the fact that very few workers in the Czech Republic would be able and willing to take strike action on Tuesday and Wednesday to shut down the IMF. In fact, INPEG too recognises this to be the case, which is why they have called a demo on Sunday 24 September to draw in wider forces.

If we want general strike action against the IMF – which we do – then we should help build for the CP-called demo and go on it, in order to agitate for such action, especially on 26 September. To abstain from this struggle is to play into the reformist misleaders' hands and to leave the hundreds of thousands of workers they organise with no alternative perspective.

As for the nature of the Czech Communist Party, it is misleading and insufficient to simply quote their role in the Stalinist dictatorship of Czechoslovakia. Like the Party of Democratic Socialism in Germany and other former ruling Stalinist parties throughout Eastern Europe, the Czech CP has over the last decade transformed itself into a social democratic party, similar in programme and ideology to the British Labour Party or the German SPD. If anything it has enjoyed a bit of a revival recently because, unlike the Czech social democracy which is in government and implementing the IMF's economic plans, it is offering limited resistance to capitalism's attacks on jobs, wages and conditions.

Of course its role during the period of Stalinist dictatorship should be attacked. But if this is all we do then we will, in practice, leave a large section of Czech workers under the influence of the CP. Our job is to actively challenge this influence. We cannot do this while abstaining from a major action that it has called.

This is why Workers Power, the SOP and the other European sections of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) are going all out to build for the workers' demo on 23 September as well as the Global Day of Action on 26 September. They are not counterposed. The one can help rally more people, specifically workers, to support the other.

We want to turn Prague into Seattle. This means we want to direct the anti-capitalist movement towards the working class. It is the only class in society that has the power and the interest to destroy capitalism, and we want the workers to become anti-capitalist. Without the working class, Prague will not be like the Seattle protests where thousands of trade unionists were mobilised; it will be smaller and its impact will be weaker. The youth will face a well armed and well prepared police force without the active support of thousands of workers who could tilt the balance in favour of the demonstrators.

After all, the recent general strikes in Nigeria and Argentina, which tore IMF-inspired auster-

ity measures into pieces, were actions which really frightened the bankers and bureaucrats who will assemble in Prague this September. The sectarianism of the anarchists in INPEG and their co-thinkers across Europe will, unless it is challenged, save these capitalists from their worst nightmare – seeing battalions from the European and world workers' movement lining up, shoulder to shoulder, in opposition to them.

The direct consequence of this turn away from the working class is that the plans for action on 26 September have been diluted, with a move away from any attempt for a mass blockade of the meeting itself. The danger is that the mass of protesters will remain passive onlookers, only called to show their opposition once the capitalists have sat down to business.

While this sectarianism toward the working class is to be expected from anarchists, it is not usually associated with the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and its sister organisations in the International Socialist Tendency. Unfortunately, in their rush to be accepted as part of the anti-capitalist movement the SWP and its co-thinkers have capitulated to the anti-working class position of the anarchists.

In Austria, the anarchists made withdrawing support for the 23 September workers' demo (while supporting all other protests) a principle. When they were outvoted, they and the IST supporters walked out of the Prague mobilising committee. In London, the SWP argued against the S26 Collective supporting the Czech workers' action, again saying that every other protest should be supported.

This would be like dismissing a progressive demonstration against privatisation, factory closures and welfare cuts because it was called by Stalinist-influenced unions. It would be like walking out of the Committee for Peace in the Balkans because Stalinist hacks from the Morning Star and Communist Party of Britain were in it. Far from doing this the SWP worked in a solid block with such people throughout last year's Balkan war.

SO WHY is the SWP and its international tendency so opposed to working with the Czech Communists?

Because they want to appear as similar to the anarchist-influenced anti-capitalists as possible. They want to tail this movement rather than challenge its limitations.

The SWP wants to address the problem that it missed the boat on the 18 June 1999 anti-capitalist demo in the City of London (while our comrades were present in numbers on this demo the SWP were entirely absent), and is seen by many radical youth as authoritarian and old-fashioned. To get accepted by these youth – and make up lost ground – the SWP refuse to challenge any of their ideas or proposals, even when such ideas lead to potentially disastrous mistakes. Therefore, they adapt their politics to fit the new milieu.

Certainly the desire for unity and the turn towards youth struggles by the SWP is correct if long overdue. But the SWP is doing itself and the struggle for revolutionary socialism no favours in the long term by avoiding the fight to turn the anti-capitalists towards the working class. This cannot be done by insisting that there is a better, less tainted section of the working class just around the corner and that we should dismiss the first ones to respond to the anti-capitalist call. The majority of anarchists will simply find another excuse to turn their backs on workers' organisations unless they are anarchist ones.

In reality this means turning their backs on all workers' organisations. If the SWP and their sister parties continue to capitulate to the anarchists, they will simply be joining the anti-capitalist bandwagon just at the point when its wheels are beginning to fall off.

Reforming the IMF

THE IMF is more unpopular now than it has ever been. Its nakedly pro-imperialist character is as clear as it has ever been. The scale of its intervention is so big and so broad that the social consequences cannot be hidden from view.

The tens of thousands at the Seattle protests and those who will be in Prague understand and resent its massive political power which subverts and negates the limited control exercised by national parliaments.

So where do we go from here? We can protest; we can obstruct, delay and even prevent meetings of the IMF taking place. But can we make the IMF operate in a different way? Can the IMF reform itself?

Horst Köhler, the new managing director of the IMF, will convene a meeting of the IMF board in mid-July to discuss a draft "vision state-

ment" for the organisation. Since taking office two months ago Köhler has been making soothing noises: perhaps some of the conditionality agreements have been too strict, perhaps the poorer member countries need to have more representation on the IMF board, perhaps more emphasis needs to be given to policies for growth and not just austerity.

The capacity for the IMF to come up with meaningful reforms was put to the test in 1996 when it launched the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. What is the record after four years? The HIPC is structured in such a way that it provides almost no relief, limits eligibility to fewer than one-quarter of the countries that are severely indebted and will not even take effect in most places until 2004.

Moreover, the paltry \$750 million put into the scheme by the IMF/World Bank goes nowhere

near providing enough money to make a difference. Finally, it makes participation in the initiative fully conditional on the country honouring its commitments under the structural adjustment programmes!

Köhler's charm offensive is a classic "hearts and minds" operation, designed to change the image of the IMF while leaving its fundamental nature intact. Even the most right-wing NGO believes that the IMF won't change as a result of a few internal memorandums. Pressure from without is decisive. What should be the objective of such pressure?

For the right wing of the anti-IMF movement limited reforms such as the Tobin tax, a tax on speculative investment, are important. For others within the "left wing" of the bourgeois anti-IMF movement, no substantial improvement can be brought about without radical debt relief to



Police attack Washington protestors

What is Globalisation?

Is globalisation an entirely new economic system or has nothing really changed since Lenin's 1916 analysis of Imperialism? *Michael Gatter* in Vienna takes up the argument.

IN THE last twenty years there has been a huge increase in world trade, overseas investment and international mergers between companies. This is what lies behind the talk of a new globalised economy.

The question of whether this is a new stage in economic development is not just an academic one for Marxists. If a fundamental change had taken place then we would have to rethink not only our economic analysis but also the political programme for the fight against exploitation and oppression.

However we remain convinced that "globalisation" is taking place within what Lenin called, "the imperialist epoch". Marxism has always emphasised that capitalism is forced to develop beyond the frontiers of the nation-state. As early as 1847, Marx wrote:

"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere."

What Lenin added to this was the recognition that the biggest capitalists were no longer looking overseas just for markets but for profitable sites for investment. At home, they were confronted with developed industries and an increasingly powerful labour movement - but in Africa, India, the Far East, for example, European capitalists could make huge profits.

The driving forces of this "imperialist" capitalism were the difficulties created in the metropolitan countries by the success and growth of the biggest capitalist corporations. The characteristics of the new epoch of imperialism were the results of capitalists' attempts to overcome these problems.

Lenin identified these as: monopolisation, reliance on international trade; export of capital; financial parasitism and rivalry between imperialist powers.

Monopolisation

The last decade has given an impressive confirmation of Lenin's argument on the tendency to monopoly. There has been a wave of mergers and takeovers and their scale has grown



Indonesian 1998: revolt of masses was partly against effects of globalisation

dramatically. In Europe alone, since 1995, the value of firms involved in mergers has risen from US\$300 billion to US\$1,500 billion in 1999. The same process can be seen in Asia where, even in the crisis year of 1998, the value of firms merging was three times higher than it had been in 1990. Globally, the figure for the value of such fusions grew from US\$400bn in 1990 to almost US\$ 2,500bn in 1998 - and no doubt continued to grow since then.

As a consequence of this process, the dominance of the major monopolies has also grown. The Bank for International Settlements reports that in each of nine advanced (i.e. imperialist) economies, the market share of the biggest five banks grew between 1990 and 1997. Even more visible has been the process in the car industry. At the beginning of the last decade, a dozen major concerns controlled 70 per cent of the world market, today just five corporations take the same share.

What is noticeable in all this, however, is that an increasing number of mergers take place internationally. One quarter of all mergers in

1998 were between companies of different national origin. Today, the big monopolies have a conscious strategy of buying up slightly smaller operations in order to get a foothold in a foreign market. For example, Deutsche Bank took over the US Bankers' Trust and Daimler Benz bought Chrysler.

In global terms, 44,000 multinational corporations dominate the world through their 200,000 subsidiaries. But even these figures do not convey the full picture. In the most dynamic, the most mobile and the most technically advanced industries they are most dominant. Similarly, not only do they control most Research and Development but the bulk of world trade is also in their hands. One third of all trade takes place within individual multinational corporations and another third is between them.

What has not changed is that these multinational corporations are still nationally based. On average, two-thirds of their production and labour power remains within their countries of origin. Nor should we forget that this is no globally uniform development: over 85 per cent of the corporations are based in the imperialist countries.

Trade and Capital Export

There has been massive growth in the importance of world trade and the export of capital as a result of globalisation or, more precisely, the internationalisation of capitalist production and circulation.

World trade has grown much faster than production. Since 1950, global gross domestic product (GDP) has grown five fold but world trade is 16 times greater. World trade has never played such an important role as today. The point is worth stressing because some Marxists have argued that "globalisation" is restricted to the sphere of speculative money capital and has not affected trade and production.

Statistics show that in 1870, world commodity exports accounted for some 5 per cent of world GDP. By 1913, in the first phase of the imperialist epoch, this had grown to no more than 9 per cent but today, having dipped to 7 per cent in 1950, it stands at 13 per cent.

The tendency to internationalisation is even clearer with regard to capital export. Between 1970 and 1985 this grew at much the same rate as commodity trade but between 1985 and 1995 it grew six fold whilst trade grew "only" threefold. Since 1980, foreign direct investment (FDI) has grown three times faster than domestic investment and world wide FDI now equals 10 per cent of world GDP, twice what it was in 1980 and higher than its last high point, 9 per cent in 1913.

Growing parasitism

Lack of productive investment opportunities in their home markets drives the monopolies not only to look overseas but also to speculative investments. The grossly inflated stock market values and the ever more sophisticated varieties of financial devices such as futures, options, derivatives and currency speculation all stem from this. In a single day, currency deals are worth US\$1,500bn. By comparison, the value

of goods exported is around US\$25bn.

Clearly it is within this sphere of money capital that "globalisation" is most advanced. This is because the ever growing surplus of capital that cannot be invested profitably in production combines with the achievements of new technology so that a single mouse click can send billions around the globe in seconds.

Imperialist domination

As Lenin noted, the expansion of capitalism was accompanied by the subordination of the colonies and semi-colonies, the Third World as it is often called today. In the last period, this has taken the form of enforced "liberalisation". What this means is the removal of all protection against the power of the imperialist-backed corporations. The IMF's loans, for example, are conditional on removing customs tariffs or state regulation of trade or production.

This has allowed multinational concerns to gain ever greater control of economies. For example, 20 per cent of Brazil's banking and 40 per cent of both Venezuela's and Argentina's, is now controlled by the imperialists. In the 1990's foreign investment in the so-called "developing countries" grew from 4 per cent to 11 per cent. In Asia, the average is now 9 per cent, in Latin America it is over 11 per cent.

Contradictions and conflicts

If "globalisation" is supposed to mean that the national state has now lost its importance, or that the world economy is now an integrated one based on "world companies", then it is clearly wrong. However, if we mean by globalisation a tendency for the productive forces to outgrow national borders on a greater scale than ever before, allowing the imperialist powers an ever greater role in shaping the economy of the whole world, then it is a useful term to describe today's developments.

Just as "monopoly capitalism" should not be taken to mean that there is only one all powerful capital block, so globalisation does not imply the creation of a single, integrated and stable economy. On the contrary, what we actually see is not only greater imperialist control but also a clear tendency towards regional block building amongst the imperialist powers.

Globalisation inevitably brings with it its own contradictions. Whether this is the instability of the speculative financial flows which precipitated the Asian crisis or the manoeuvring over agricultural additives between the US and EU, the potential for international conflict remains. The impact of "free trade" on weaker economies will stimulate protective measures or the formation of defensive alliances.

At the same time, globalisation underlines the impossibility of combating capitalism in a purely national context and the potential for the creation of a genuinely global economic system. This latest phase of capitalist development has not falsified either the fundamentals of Lenin's analysis or the programme of international revolution which flowed from it. If anything it makes the need for a world party of socialist revolution more apparent to many more of the world's workers and oppressed.

is a pipedream

the poorest countries of the world that have been tortured by IMF policies of structural adjustment.

The Red Cross calls for debt payment of poorer countries to be restricted to 20 per cent of government budgets; the more radical NGOs such as "50 Years is Enough" and Jubilee 2000 call for debt cancellation. Certainly this is key and forms the basis for real unity of action among the diverse elements in the struggle.

But the farce of the debt relief programmes adopted after 1996 indicate the resistance of the IMF to fundamental change. The many Congressional committees that met after the Asian financial crisis of 1997 to draw up a "new financial architecture" eventually resulted in the mildest of reforms that place some obligations upon banks and recipient governments to reveal the nature, size and terms of their lending and borrowing.

Revolutionaries differ from many others in the Seattle movement over whether the IMF can ever be made "accountable to public scrutiny" as the "50 years is Enough" movement call for.

What does this "accountability" mean in practice? Many NGOs simply interpret it as getting an invitation to the top table at world economic forums where they can be treated as equals by the US Trade Secretary or the head of the IMF, and bargain over the scope of debt relief programmes and the detail of loan conditionality.

This is not accountability, this is incorporation. And although some concessions may be won, the IMF will get the greater prize: it will have a veneer of respectability to its programmes and oblige many of these agencies to take responsibility for, or remain silent about, the continued devastating effects of its policies.

So central are the IMF, World Bank and World

Trade Organisation (WTO) to the dominance of the top multinational corporations that no fundamental reform can be countenanced; as long as the banks and IMF insist that loans make a profit, that continued interest repayments must be prioritised above other government spending commitments - in other words as long as global capitalism remains dominant - then the pain will endure. We don't need to reform the IMF, we need to get rid of it.

Only an international strategy aimed at abolishing capitalist exploitation, and getting rid of the bourgeois governments that defend it, can end the terrible role that international finance plays in millions of lives.

Only along such a path can the banks and the factories of the world be taken out of the ownership and control of the capitalists and placed in the hands of those who work in them.

What does the IMF do?

"It defies logic to believe that the small group of 1,000 economists on 19th Street in Washington should dictate the economic conditions of life to 75 developing countries with around 1.4 billion people."

These are the words of Jeffrey Sachs, himself a prominent US economist who in his time has helped to lay down the terms and conditions for how the poor shall suffer.

But such a concentration of power in the hands of a small elite is perfectly logical if we understand what the IMF exists to do.

The IMF loans money to governments throughout the world, but to get that money these governments must agree to the IMF's conditions. The system is set up so that a country that does not reach an agreement with the IMF will not get money from the World Bank, other international financial institutions, foreign governments, or even private lenders.

To qualify for IMF loans the government has to sign up to a structural adjustment programme: these generally require countries to adopt policies such as:

- Reductions in government spending on health and education and on food subsidies. These are deemed necessary to make money available for continued payment of interest payments on loans to the IMF and commercial banks.

- Monetary tightening through high interest rates. These are insisted upon in order to reassure western investors that they should keep their money inside the country. It also helps to bankrupt local companies and make them easy prey for takeover by the big multinationals. High interest rates mean slow economic growth, increasing unemployment and often even cause a recession or slump as in East Asia in 1997-98.

- Privatisation of enterprises previously owned or operated by the government. Privatisation almost always entails layoffs, and much of the time, foreign companies take control of the enterprises.

- Reductions in barriers to trade, as well as to foreign investment and ownership. The IMF pressures countries to produce for export rather than for domestic markets. This can cause a glut of manufactured or agricultural goods on world markets, driving down prices, encouraging "dumping," and putting more downward pressure on wages.

- Deregulation measures. The IMF/World Bank insist on "labour market deregulation" as part of the policy package. This typically includes layoffs of government employees, reductions in the national minimum wage, or the repeal of national labour laws that provide job security for employees.

All this makes the IMF the most powerful financial institution in the world. Its advisers are more important than most government ministers in those 75 countries. The IMF routinely instructs local officials to reveal all details of proposed government budgets to it before releasing them to elected representatives. It did this in May last year in Brazil, scrutinising and approving a speech by President Cardoso to Congress.

Earlier this year the IMF signed a 43 page agreement with the Indonesian government that laid down the law not only on money and tax issues but also on reform of energy, forestry, agriculture and industry. Even IMF officials admitted that "it could be interpreted unfavourably by other Asian borrowers to be a Trojan horse, a way of imposing western values by stealth on members economies".

In fact the "western values" turn out to be the values of the major multinational corporations. IMF policies and conditions are largely formulated by the G7 countries, which make up a large portion of voting and influence at the IMF. Voting power at the IMF is determined by the size of a member's economy, and the G7 dominates the institution.

IMF policies foster the interests of the world's richest countries while under-representing the world's poorest. G7 corporations benefit from the influence they hold with their governments and consequently with the IMF.

One example of the way the IMF directly aids G7 companies can be seen in Haiti. Haiti is the largest market for US rice in the Caribbean. The IMF programme forced Haiti to open up its economy to subsidised rice imports from the US and abolished tariff protections on domestic rice. Early Rice, a US corporation, and its Haitian subsidiary, have been the main beneficiaries of these policies. EarlyRice, which imports 40-50 per cent of the rice consumed in Haiti, holds a virtual monopoly on rice imports in Haiti because of subsidies to US producers and exporters, and because IMF policies prevent the Haitian government from protecting domestic producers.

The Mexican privatisation programme began in the wake of the Mexican debt crisis in 1982 when the IMF conditioned lending on privatisation. The programme was geared to create optimum conditions in Mexico for foreign investors. Since then around 1,000 state-owned enterprises have been sold, many to US-based companies.

All of these cases reveal the logic of the way the IMF works. It is the logic of profit, the logic of global capital, the logic of the imperialist world order.

The IMF: cause of Africa's agony

Sub-Saharan Africa, so rich in human and natural resources, remains the poorest region of the world. Half of its people live in poverty, and in many countries economic conditions have been getting worse for the last 20 years or more.

The greatest barrier to economic recovery is the region's debt burden, which amounts to about \$230 billion. The facts speak for themselves:

- The external debt burden of sub-Saharan Africa has increased by nearly 400 per cent since 1980, when the IMF and World Bank began imposing their "structural adjustment programmes."

- External debt per capita for the region (not including South Africa) is \$365, while GNP per capita is just \$308.

- The external debt for the region (again excluding South Africa), at some \$203 billion in 1996, represents 313 per cent of the annual value of its exports.

- Africa spends four times more on debt-inter-

est payments than on health care.

- Thirty-three of the region's 44 countries are designated heavily indebted poor countries by the World Bank; most of the rest nearly qualify for that ranking. The IMF impose harsh conditions, and investors shy away from countries with unsustainable debts.

Much of the debt accumulated by African countries was built up during the 1970s, a time of reckless lending by banks and international agencies, and was agreed to by undemocratic governments.

In many cases, the population of the borrowing country gained nothing from the loans as the money disappeared in failed infrastructure projects, corrupt schemes, or dodgy investments. The debt has continued to grow since then as governments take out new loans to pay off old ones.

In 1996, sub-Saharan Africa (minus South Africa) paid \$2.5 billion more in debt servicing

than it got in new long-term loans and credits. The IMF alone has transferred over \$3 billion out of Africa since the mid-1980s.

It is the poor people of the indebted countries, those who benefited least, who end up paying the bills through scarce resources diverted to debt servicing, and through the effects of the IMF/World Bank austerity programmes.

Average real wages decreased in 26 out of 28 African countries surveyed during the 1980s. Cuts in health spending have led to an increase in infant mortality; African children account for about 40 per cent of infant deaths worldwide.

Millions of small farmers, especially women, have been devastated by IMF-induced cuts in credit and agricultural services. Some 40 per cent of the population suffers from some degree of malnutrition.

Every IMF programme has failed to revive the economies in Africa. Debt is the scourge of the continent. It must be cancelled now.

IMF STRUCTURE

The IMF has 182 member countries. At the start of 1998 member countries had paid in \$193 billion. Based in Washington DC, it employs 2,600 staff.

Broad policy is set by the annual meeting of the Board of Governors, with one from each member country. The Executive Board, with 24 full-time members in Washington, oversees day-to-day policy. Horst Köhler is the IMF Managing Director.

Voting rights in the IMF are proportional to the amount of money paid in. The USA has 18 per cent of votes for its \$35 billion paid in. This allows it to veto any changes to the IMF Charter, which requires 85 per cent approval. The G8 countries (G& plus Russia) have more than 50 per cent of the votes; 174 countries share the rest.

Socialist planning - a revolutionary alternative

A series of workers' governments in a number of the most developed states in the world could begin to construct an alternative monetary order to that of the IMF. It would be part of a global system of socialist planning, a system dedicated to raising the standard of living of the world's poorest.

Since debts to banks would be abolished with their expropriation a new world monetary order would not seek to direct export earnings to feed the profit lust of the world's financiers or oversee the transfer of a poor nation's wealth to a handful of multinationals.

A democratically controlled socialist international monetary institution would indeed oversee a system of payments at stable rates of exchange between members of a socialist federation so long as different national currencies continued to exist.

But increasingly in a socialist transition in which each country was integrated into a international plan of production and distribution there would be no need for several competing currencies. Abolishing the transaction costs associated with a system of currency exchange would also release further resources for productive use.

Monetary policy would be directed at measuring improvements in labour productivity in and between different countries and thereby signal to other planning institutions how to spread the benefits within the system as a whole. It would be a system completely at odds with the IMF: a popular, democratic financial system at the service of planned economic growth and the reduction of inequality between nations. But a revolution stands between here and there.

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!

Time to stop the IMF

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund (IMF) is the financial hit man for world capitalism. It uses the power of the big western economies to dictate to the world. That is why we should do everything we can to make the protests against it in Prague in September huge, militant and effective.

When the IMF imposes its policies, the result is nearly always the same: lower wages, lay-offs, and, as economies fall into recession and desperation increases, fewer opportunities for workers to organise unions.

A recent study by the Development Group for Alternative Policies (DGAP) looked at 43 countries with IMF

programmes over the period 1978-1995. Thirty-one countries, or 72 per cent, saw unemployment increase while they were receiving IMF loans.

Moreover, those who have jobs in countries under IMF stabilisation/adjustment programmes have seen their wages fall – according to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the real minimum wage is lower today than in 1980 in 17 of the 19 nations with IMF programmes for which it has figures.

In Haiti a 1996 IMF loan required the government to institute a de facto wage cut for government employees. This was to be accomplished by

freezing their wages for three years – a period during which inflation was expected to reach 30 per cent.

The IMF also insisted that the Haitian government eliminated clauses in the country's labour code that required a rise in the minimum wage if inflation exceeds 10 per cent.

In 1991, Zimbabwe entered into a structural adjustment programme with the IMF in exchange for a \$484 million loan. The arrangement required Zimbabwe to dismantle protection for the manufacturing sector and "deregulate" the labour market, lower the minimum wage and eliminate certain

guarantees of employment security. Between 1991-96, formal sector employment in manufacturing fell by 9 per cent and real wages declined by 26 per cent.

These programmes will not "reform" faltering economies or bring stability. They will, however, turn these countries into sources of vast profit for the multinationals and subordinate them to the great powers, such as the USA, UK and so on.

The IMF must be stopped. The power of the working class can stop it. We must mobilise that power.

Now turn to pages 13, 14 and 15

Workers fight back against austerity

Workers have not sat back in the face of the IMF onslaught. They have fought back.

Throughout the past two decades hundreds of thousands of workers, unemployed and poor farmers have taken to the streets, taken strike action and blockaded parliaments in protest at the IMF inspired measures so eagerly implemented by the national rulers.

In Argentina workers held their biggest general strike in 20 years on 9 June to block IMF-engineered austerity policies. Nearly 85 per cent of the 14 million working Argentinians took part in the walk-out.

The strike was sparked by a 29 May announcement of new IMF sponsored spending cuts aimed at bailing out the rich while hitting the workers. Shortly after taking office last December, President De la Rúa pushed through an unpopular tax rise and attacks on union rights.

Then in May the government cut the wages of public workers earning more than \$1,000 a month by 12 to 15 per cent to reduce budget spending by \$590 million. The reductions aim to balance the budget by 2003 and meet IMF deficit targets set under a \$7.2 billion IMF standby loan.

In Buenos Aires, many trains on the three suburban commuter railways were cancelled as rail workers heeded a call from the nation's largest union federation, CGT, for a nation-wide strike.

In Nigeria a five day general strike started on 9 June. President Obasanjo, who came to office a year ago when 15 years of military rule ended decided to end government petrol subsidies amounting to \$1.94 billion a year.

He put up prices at the pumps by 50 per cent. The higher fuel price is part of Obasanjo's economic

policy of deregulation and ending subsidies as demanded by the International Monetary Fund as a condition for a \$1 billion standby loan it has agreed to make to Nigeria.

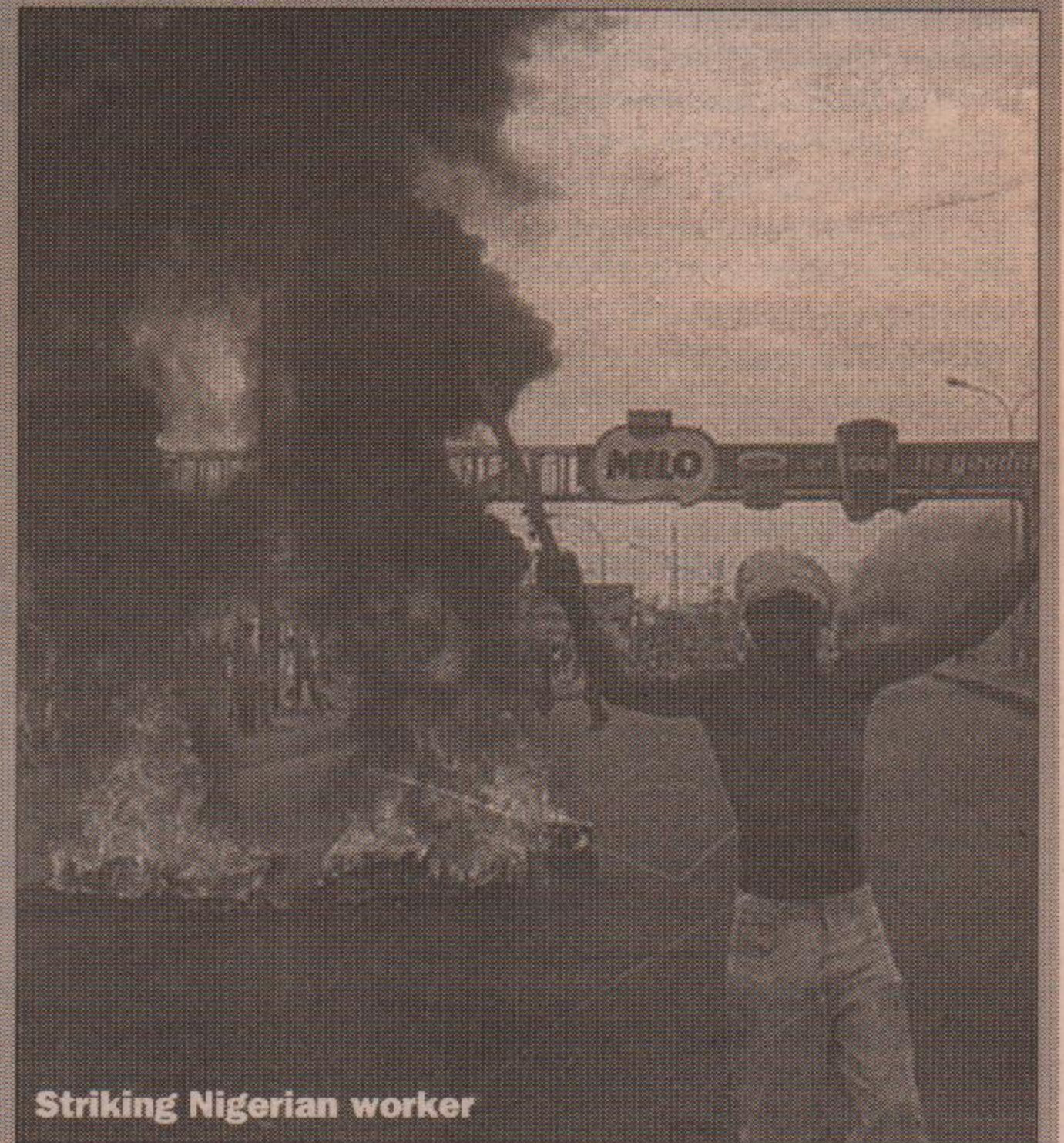
Workers were incensed as they see cheap gasoline and kerosene as the only tangible benefit from governments unable to deliver amenities such as water and electricity.

"We can't afford higher fuel prices" said Adams Oshimole, president of the Nigerian Labor Congress. The NLC, a union federation, called for an indefinite strike to protest at the price hike, which increased the cost of gas from about 76 cents to \$1.15 per gallon.

From day one of the strike protesting youth in Lagos barricaded roads and attacked commuter buses, halting traffic for several hours. Many people abandoned their vehicles and made their way on foot. Traffic was similarly paralysed in the southern cities of Abeokuta, Ibadan and Benin City.

Schools, offices and most banks were closed in major cities across Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation. Airports also shut down. Trade union members barricaded the main office complex in the capital, Abuja, and refused to let people enter.

After five days the government said they were prepared to reduce the cost of gas to 95 cents per gallon: cut the increase in half, but they could not restore



Striking Nigerian worker

it to original levels. Eventually the NLC accepted this concession and the strike was called off.

Both of these examples show what can be done. They must be publicised and pointed to throughout the anti-capitalist movement as examples we must follow throughout the world.

FEEDBACK ■ Contact us on 020 7793 1468

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