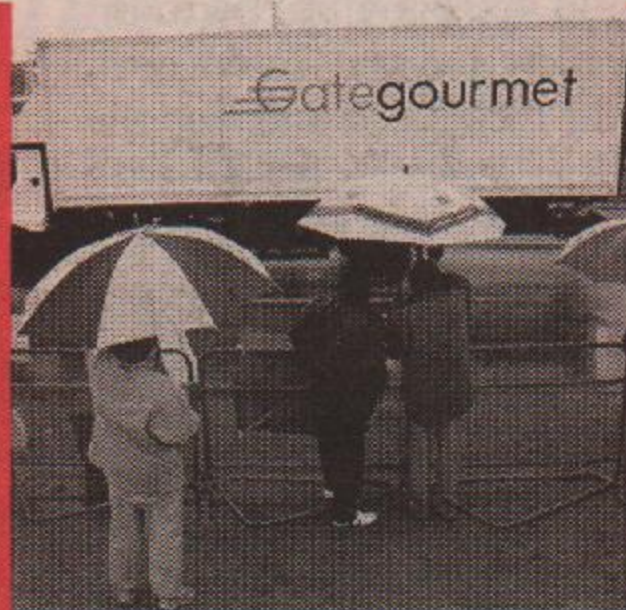
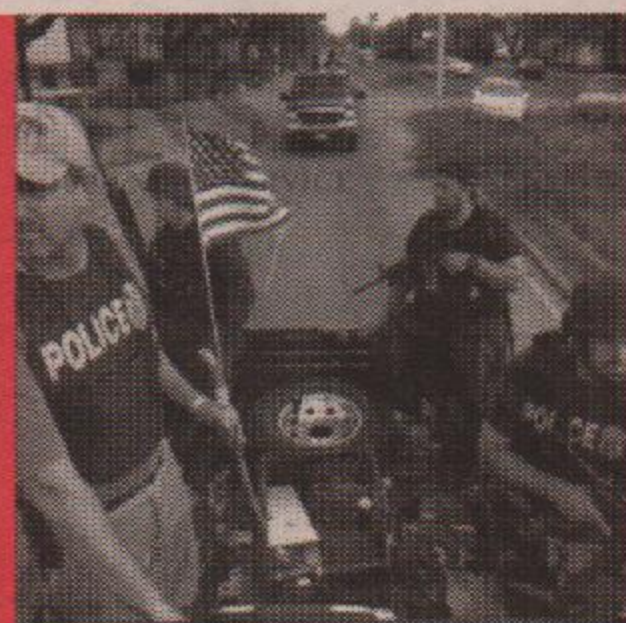


TUC: Action not words can smash the anti-union laws page 5



New Orleans: Tragedy compounded by racism and poverty page 7



History: 25 years since the founding of Solidarnosc page 14



Demonstrate London 24th September

- Troops out now
- Stop the racist backlash
- Defend democratic rights

The bombings in London in July have placed Iraq and the "war on terror" back at the top of the political agenda.

After a short-lived popularity for playing the strong but compassionate leader of the nation in times of trouble, a groundswell of anger is growing against Tony Blair and his lies.

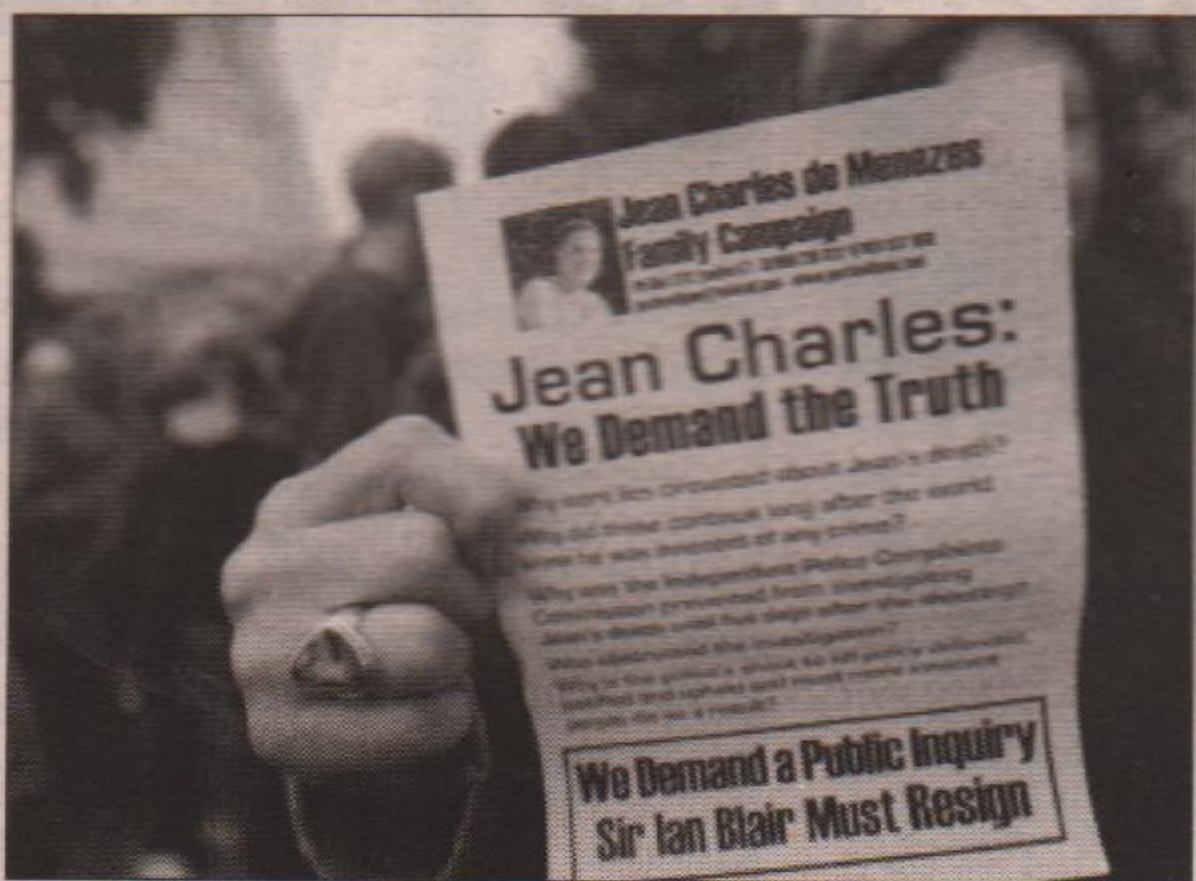
- LIES that the bombings have nothing to do with the war in Iraq when two thirds know different
- LIES about the brutal execution of Jean Charles de Menezes by the police
- LIES orchestrated in the media about Muslims' refusal to integrate, forcing leaders to declare their allegiance to Britain, and finger disaffected youth to the police
- LIES to justify another series of laws which massively undermine our civil liberties
- LIES that the G8 would make poverty history whilst they let Niger and Mali slide into famine.

And then the undeniable truth – a mounting insurgency in Iraq and the unravelling of the imperialist occupation.

It is plain that the human suffering, the lives lost, the billions spent at home and abroad were all for nothing – nothing that benefits ordinary British or ordinary Iraqi people. We all get the pain, so that oil giants Halliburton and BP get the gain.

Tony Blair and Gordon Brown boost America as the land of enterprise, the can-do society, the place Europe should model itself on. But the New Orleans tragedy shows that the richest capitalisation on earth is a place of grinding poverty and racism.

It is a place where killing people to protect private property comes before saving the lives of refugees, where there



is five billion dollars a month for a war to seize Iraq's oil, but where the same amount cannot be found to strengthen New Orleans flood defences.

Over the summer too, we have witnessed the inspiring struggle of the Asian women workers of Gate Gourmet against a union busting management. Inspiring too the spontaneous support of airline baggage handlers and transport drivers. Less inspiring was the union leadership that talks of an "honourable compromise" and job losses

which are acceptable on "purely economic grounds".

Workers and youth need to make sure over September and October that all those in struggle against racism, war and injustice get maximum support. In workplaces, schools and colleges we need to debate out strategies for victory and mobilise solidarity action.

We need to expose the unravelling lies of the G8 that they would "make poverty history" and demand the cancellation of the entire third world debt.



Closely allied to the war and the assault on civil liberties is the ongoing wave of deportations: including the first 38 of a planned 7,000 Iraqis back to their war-ravaged country. No deportations! Abolish all immigration controls! Support the demonstration called by anti-deportation campaigns for 1 October.

In the trade unions the need for active solidarity with locked-out Gate Gourmet workers and victimised Amicus militant Jerry Hicks poses the question of organising a rank and file move-

ment, since in both cases the union leaders are utterly untrustworthy.

Both these struggles have highlighted to tens of thousands of unionists the real nature of the anti-union laws – the most restrictive in Europe according to Blair, though he meant this as a boast not an apology. These offer employers impunity to sack their workers at will and place enormous obstacles in the way of getting justice.

If the TUC calls on Labour to modify these laws, then we should demand action to get rid of them altogether.

Tens of thousands of activists agree with the need for unity in action: on the war, on the unions, on racism. Many, if not most of them realise that capitalism lies at the root of all these evils.

Yet no party exists, which can give voice to these views – no mass party based on and loyal to the working class. Yet militants have made steps. In unions like the RMT and the FBU, there has been a break from Labour and debates about what the political alternative should be. Respect won one seat and got strong votes in several inner city constituencies.

But these left unions hesitate about forming a new party. Respect dares not even call itself socialist or a working class party. If the leaders are weak and hesitant on all these struggles, then it is vital that revolutionaries take the initiative and call on the rank and file to lead the "leaders", or replace them with ones who will fight.

We need a new working class party. We believe it must be armed with a revolutionary anticapitalist programme.

If we are to maximise our chances of victory in all the struggles facing us, then this is not simply something to talk about in between demonstrations and picket lines. It is something to fight for on every demonstration and picket line.

FOR A NEW WORKERS PARTY

Gate Gourmet: spread the strikes to win!

By Jeremy Dewar

“Since the beginning of the year we have had a contingency plan in place. It took eight months to trigger it. It's really the militants finally getting called on to step up and take responsibility for their continued illegal behaviour.”

Gate Gourmet chair David Siegel has revealed what 670 locked out workers at Heathrow have known all along. The dispute was a carefully planned and executed offensive by a multi-billion dollar corporation against low paid, largely Asian women, workers.

The dispute started after the bosses brought in 130 replacement agency workers. Harinder Atwal, a senior shop steward, explained:

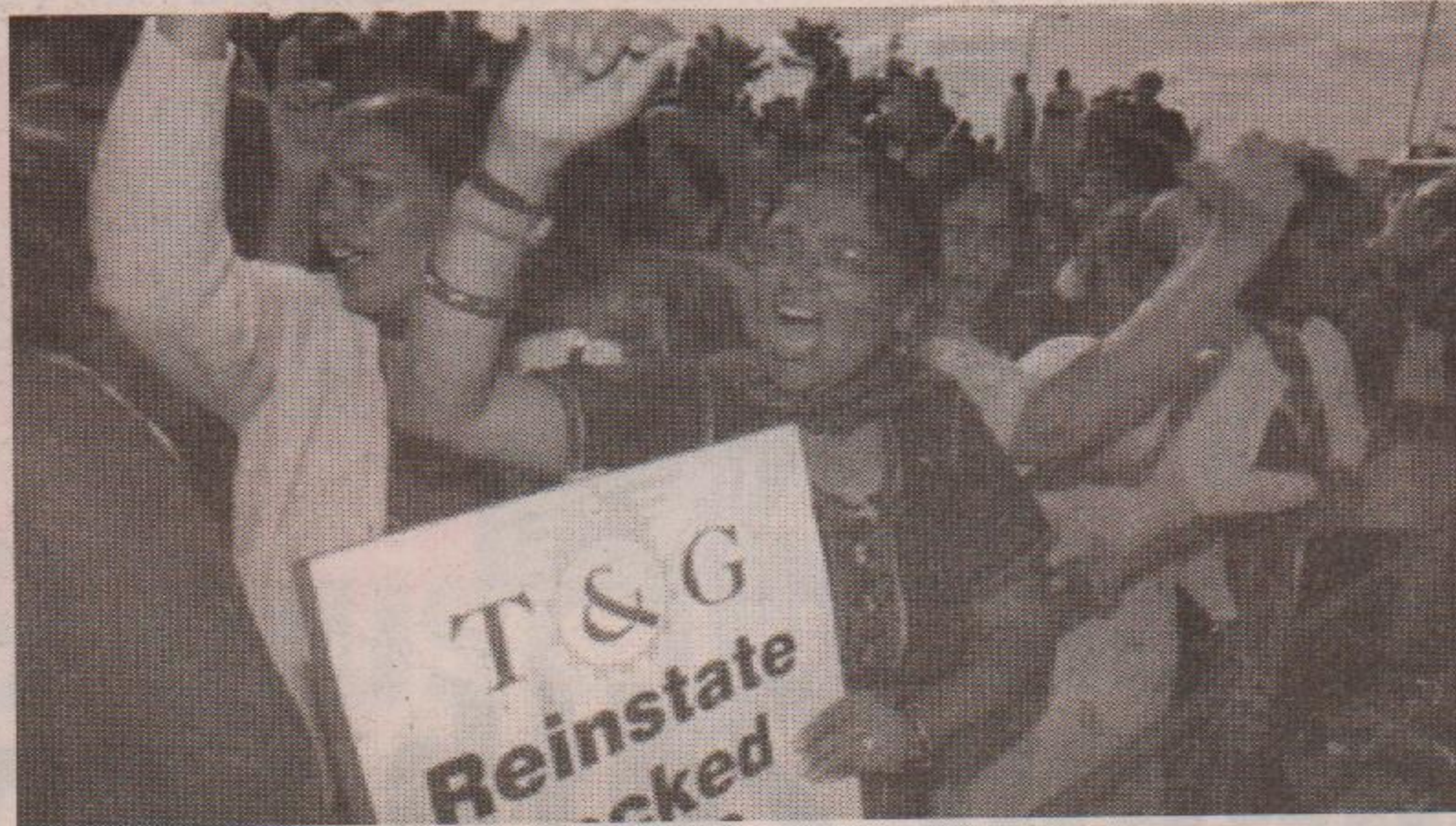
“On 10 August there was a big meeting in the cafeteria to discuss this. We had no intention of going on strike. We met in the canteen just as the shifts were changing. Then the management locked us in. We were willing to go back to work, but...we were locked in for over five hours and they wouldn't let us go to the toilet – even a very pregnant woman. After five hours we were still waiting for the union representatives but they weren't allowed in. Then the police and private security pushed us out, dragged a few workers.”

The workers were then sacked – by megaphone. This disgusting bullying brought spontaneous solidarity strike action the following day from around 1,000 British Airways (BA) baggage and cargo handlers, and bus drivers, causing all long haul flights to be cancelled and costing the giant airline up to £40 million.

All the locked out workers belong to the Transport & General Workers Union (TGWU). But the first thing their union officials did was negotiate a return to work at BA.

UNION BUSTERS

Gate Gourmet employs 22,000 workers globally, preparing half a million airline meals a day, including for BA, one of the UK's most prestigious and profitable companies. Gate Gourmet enjoys a turnover of £1 billion a year. However, the company has not



declared a profit since 2000 and claims to have lost £25 million in Britain last year. It blames increased competition among the major airlines, which are passing on cost cutting measures to catering suppliers.

Gate Gourmet is owned by private equity firm Texas Pacific, whose sole interest in any company is to buy cheap, restructure (i.e. sack workers), sell and move on. For its Heathrow workforce this had already meant:

- 675 redundancies.
- Work rate increased and shifts reorganised.
- Sick pay allowance cut from 25 to five days a year.
- Pay rates cut, drivers going from £8 an hour to £6.35.
- Overtime rates abolished; zero per cent annual pay rise; no end of year bonus.

DIVIDE AND RULE

The fight waged by the Gate Gourmet workers has been inspirational. Pickets are active and lively. There is solid support from West London's Sikh community and donations have begun to pour in from other trade unionists. Most impressively, there has been no sign of weakening in the face of the bosses' divide and rule tactics.

Siegel has offered to take back “up to 400” of the workers, so long as he can pick and choose which ones. But T&G shop steward, Mr H Singh, told Workers Power, “The redundancy offers from the company are part of a tactic of dividing and ruling the sacked workforce. They will not succeed in doing that. We

are still fighting for reinstatement in our old jobs, not redundancy money.”

RANK AND FILE CONTROL

But there are serious problems with the dispute that stem mainly from the TGWU leadership.

Full time union official, Brendan Gold, in brokering a return to work among BA staff, threw away a trump card and left the Gate Gourmet workers isolated. Bowing before the anti-union laws has significantly weakened the impact of the lock out. Worse, it has allowed BA to go on the offensive and threaten union activists with the sack.

Since then Gold, his boss Tony Woodley, and TUC head Brendan Barber have done nothing to spread the dispute. BA flights have returned to normal, the rest of the 1,400 Gate Gourmet workers at the site have kept production running.

Although TGWU leaders have said that redundancy money is not the basis for a deal and rejected management's “right” to victimise around 270 “troublemakers”, they look desperate for a way out of the dispute.

Woodley's handling of the Rover crisis in Birmingham hardly instils confidence. There he backed a capitalist takeover with “limited” job cuts. The new owners stripped the company – and pension fund – to the bone. Woodley again refused to fight. In the end, every worker lost their job and pension.

Rank and file Gate Gourmet workers need to elect their own *strike committee* to run the dispute. The first

thing it could do is go directly to BA baggage handlers and say, “You're next. Join us on the picket line and stop the union busting assault. Let's bring Heathrow to a halt until every job and every union activist is safe.”

By establishing a democratic and accountable leadership for the dispute, solidarity can be spread faster, negotiations brought out into the open, and the bosses' lies and manoeuvres answered immediately. If successful, it could and should be the start of a rank and file movement across Heathrow and the entire TGWU.

SPREAD STRIKES TO WIN

Important as it is to maintain daily demonstrations, the sacked workers need to regain the momentum. When BA was losing £40 million a day and Heathrow was in chaos, everyone in the land knew about the dispute.

Solidarity will put the dispute back on the front pages where it belongs. BA clearly engineered the dispute and have set up a “hotline” to try and sack “troublemakers”. All 70,000 workers at Heathrow now know that the bosses are out to tame the unions, so they can attack wages and conditions.

This dispute has now become one

for all trade unionists at Heathrow to win. If the TGWU, with more than 20,000 members at Heathrow, manages to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory, then the bosses will consider it open season. If our side wins, we can go on to establish union rates and conditions across the giant complex.

On Thursday 11 August, we saw a glimpse of the power that can bring these greedy capitalists to their knees. 70,000 workers at Heathrow can end this cut-throat competition through solidarity action, starting with the fight to reinstate all the Gate Gourmet workers.

- Reinstate all Gate Gourmet workers – no victimisations!
- Resume the solidarity strikes by BA and other Heathrow workers – smash the anti-union laws!
- No redundancies – reverse the pay cuts and changes in conditions!

Send donations and messages of support to:

Mr E McDermott
TGWU

218 Green Lanes
N4 2HB

tgwu@tgwu.org.uk

Make cheques payable to “TGWU” marked “Gate Gourmet” on the back.

Can't pay - nationalise!

Gate Gourmet is claiming financial hardship. Workers should demand that they open up their financial records to inspection. Press leaks have already revealed that Gate Gourmet bosses awarded themselves inflation busting pay increases while demanding pay cuts from the workers.

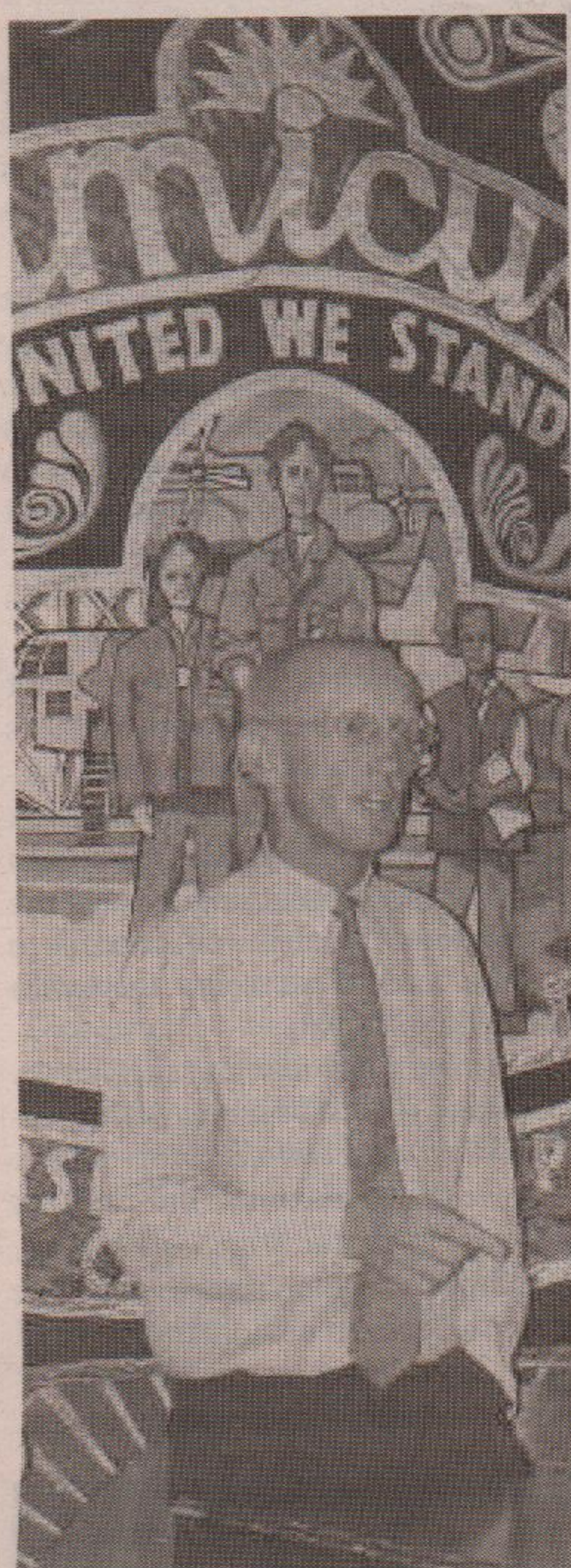
But if the company doesn't have the money, what then? Nationalise the firm with no compensation whatsoever to Texas Pacific!

The nationalised concern should be run under workers' control, with every management decision - over job levels, pay, conditions, hiring and firing - subject to veto by the workers' representatives. They know better than anyone how to run an efficient, high quality and safe catering service.

BA likes to claim that it is the victim of a dispute not of its making. Not true. It outsourced its catering suppliers in 1997 precisely in order to increase competition among suppliers to a cut-throat level.

Both BA and Heathrow were privatised in the 1980s. Both have become hugely profitable concerns, but only through sacking thousands of workers, and forcing supply companies to attack their workers.

To Gate Gourmet, British Airways, BAA plc and any other company that threatens jobs, wages or conditions on the grounds of rising competition and falling profit margins, we should call for nationalisation, with no compensation, and for the companies to be run under workers' control!



Reinstate Jerry Hicks!

By Pat Spackman

Bristol RMT in a personal capacity

Ninety-six engineers from the Rolls Royce plant in Bristol have been on strike since 22 August in defence of their sacked convenor.

On 2 September the strikers were joined by workers from Rolls Royce plants across Britain and hundreds of other trade unionists, including a delegation from Gate Gourmet, to demand the reinstatement of Jerry (Jer) Hicks. Bristol hasn't seen such a demonstration in years.

Jer was sacked for carrying out his duties as deputy Amicus convenor for the Test Area at Rolls Royce. He has held this position for 15 of the 30 years he has worked at the aircraft manufacturer. In that time he has earned the respect of the plant's workforce, not only as a committed trade unionist, but as an honourable and decent human being. Indeed, Jer is well known throughout the entire Bristol labour movement. When solidarity is called for, Jer is the first to offer support, whether it's striking fire-fighters or asylum seekers.

In early June two fitters were called before management, charged with gross misconduct, for allegedly sleeping on the night shift. Jer described the meeting as “a sham of a hearing, it was a kangaroo of a court and it was followed by the sack”.

Jer called a meeting in defence of the sacked men. Having heard the facts, the other fitters walked out in solidarity. After three days, the two men were reinstated in their jobs.

Five weeks later, Jer himself was called before management. He was accused of orchestrating unofficial action, of attempting to influence the panel and of obstructing change. Management suspended Jerry and the Test Area walked out with Jon Locke, Jer's fellow steward, saying, “If management get away with sacking Jerry, it will be open season on every steward across Rolls Royce.”

Rolls Royce management responded to an emergency ruling in his favour by an Employment Tribunal not by reinstating Jerry but by offering him a £50,000 pay off (since increased to £100,000) to shut up and go away! This shocking admission of guilt was met

with the derision it deserved and gave rise to the slogan: The Union is Not for Sale, Jerry Can't be Bought!

Jer embarked on a tour of Rolls Royce plants: East Kilbride, Barnoldswick, Coventry and Sunderland culminating in the mass rally of over 400 people at the Council House in Bristol. Twenty-two banners festooned the walls from Amicus, the NUT, Unison, TGWU, CWU, NUJ, RMT, FBU and PCS.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow addressed the rally. He reflected on the 1970s, when trade union membership stood at 13 million and 82 per cent of workers were covered by collective agreements. Today, membership is at 6.8 million and collective agreements cover just one third of the workforce. Bob was clear on the reason for the decline: “You don't go into a video shop if it doesn't sell videos.” People join trade unions to protect them against the bosses, not for credit cards and insurance.

He also took a pop at the TUC general secretary for managing to attend the Durham Miners' Gala and the Tolpuddle remembrance but being notably absent from the Gate Gourmet picket at Heathrow. If the two disputes

remain unresolved, he urged every Amicus and T&G member to get to Brighton on 12 September and demand the TUC fight for reinstatement for both Jer and for the Gate Gourmet workers.

But it is vital to spread the action across the plant. The anti-union laws, however, are blocking progress. After Amicus have negotiated all the legal hurdles, it will be 9 September before a further 800 workers are even balloted. Attacking the anti-union laws at the Bristol rally, Bob Crow said he didn't care if strikes were official or unofficial. Fine words, and certainly better than you would hear from most union leaders, but what we really need is a fight to get rid of the anti-union laws. It's time that we fought against the victimisation of trade unionists without one hand tied behind our backs.

Rush your messages of support to: jw1610@blueyonder.co.uk and copy them to: derek_simpson@amicustheunion.org
Bombard Rolls Royce with protest: Rolls Royce International, 65 Buckingham Gate, London, SW1 6AT

workers power 5

A colossus with feet of clay

"The US has the largest and most technologically powerful economy in the world, with a per capita GDP of \$40,100. In this market oriented economy, private individuals and business firms make most of the decisions, and the federal and state governments buy needed goods and services predominantly in the private marketplace." *CIA World Fact Book*

The catastrophic inability of United States capitalism to respond to a major natural disaster has lowered the prestige of the world's only superstate. With three days warning the city, state and federal authorities were unable to mobilise trains and buses to carry out the evacuation, which they themselves had called for. To do so would have required directing and, if need be, requisitioning transport and doing the same for hotels and the mansions of the rich to accommodate the refugees.

George Bush and his administration have proved that they have no concern whatsoever for the poor and working class of New Orleans. As tens of thousands were left to rot, Bush was more interested in attending Republican Party fundraising events and denouncing anti-war activists camped outside his holiday ranch.

Worse, the racist obsession with "black looters" meant that the state troopers actually obstructed the largely black inner city communities from organising their own relief effort.

But the mayor of New Orleans, Ray Nagin, is a black Democrat. He too has refused funding to public housing projects, and pursued a business oriented development policy for the city. He too did not want to open the Superdome or Convention centre, in case the poor vandalised them.

Thus events in Louisiana and Mississippi are an indictment not only of the Bush administration, but the entire US ruling class and their social and economic system - capitalism. And that system - no matter how many black mayors, judges and generals are appointed - remains inherently racist.

Only days before Hurricane Katrina hit, new census data revealed that 37 million Americans are living in poverty, up from 31.6 million in 2000. A shocking figure for the country with the fourth highest GDP per head in the world. But even more shocking is that African Americans are twice as likely - one in four of them - to be living in poverty as whites.

A mass movement on the scale of the civil rights movement of the 1960s needs to be launched to demand an end to poverty and inequality for America's black population, particularly in the South and the inner cities. Like the great movement of the 1960s, it needs to link the fight against the devastation wreaked by capitalism and racism at home to resistance to imperialism abroad.

Only this time, the movement needs to ensure radical and permanent change is achieved.

The US labour movement needs not only to support the fight against racism, but to launch a great organising drive and a political campaign to force the repeal of Taft Hartley and all the anti union laws. Only ten per cent of the US workforce is now organised in trade unions. Real wages and living standards for most workers are lower than they were in 1980, despite huge profits for the US multinationals.

A campaign like the one which created the CIO is long overdue. A split in the AFL-CIO has just taken place because of the failure of the top bureaucrats to organise. But what America needs is a huge social explosion like those before the First World War, during the depression or the 1960s - with the workers, the racially oppressed and the young at its core.

A fight on the issues of poverty and racism can help to end the occupation of Iraq. The long summer anti-war camp outside George Bush's ranch, led by Cindy Sheehan, has inspired millions of Americans, who now, in their majority, want US troops to get out of Iraq.

On 24th September, the US and British anti-war movements will be out on the streets again. Not only should these demonstrations be massive, they should mark a broadening of the movement, to take on the fight against the system that causes war, racism and poverty: imperialist capitalism.

Poverty and racism are the feet of clay of the colossus of US imperialism. When the American masses begin to move and unite against these evils then the colossus will begin to totter. Together with the workers and oppressed peoples of the world we can bring it crashing down. What a great day for human liberation that will be.

TGWU calls for troops out now!

By Richard Belbin (TGWU personal capacity)

The final ever TGWU Conference saw the union take the most principled stand of any trade union against the war and occupation of Iraq by calling for troops out now!

The main debate, however, was over the proposed merger with Amicus and the GMB. An Executive Statement replaced the submitted motions, which set out the practical case for merger, and how it would lead to there being a single union in engineering, civil aviation, car manufacture and a number of other industries.

Although the statement's support for the democratic values and structures of the union was strong on rhetoric, it was very weak on specifics. In particular, there were no references to a recalled conference to discuss the final rulebook, nor to retention of any of the "lay" structures. The TGWU, unlike its merger partners, has an executive committee made up of ordinary members, not dominated by paid officials. This, in theory at least, keeps the leadership closer to the rank and file.

Speaker after speaker criticised the statement's vagueness, insisting that those lay structures were vital if a new union was to be supportable. The question of whether a merger was a good idea in its own right was never even raised. Tony Woodley recognised the strength of feeling and agreed to add to

the statement a commitment to a recalled conference to approve any final decisions. That was enough for most delegates, although there were still a fair few votes against the statement.

The only close vote of the conference was over one of the two motions on the war in Iraq. Both called for continued support for the Stop the War Coalition, but differed in calling for a "hasty" or an "immediate" withdrawal. In supporting the main motion, Woodley explained that "hasty" would mean "by Christmas", as laid out in the existing United Nations mandate, and some speakers referred to clearing up the mess we had made.

The supporters of immediate withdrawal pointed out how the war was always illegal anyway, so it couldn't become more illegal after Christmas. Other delegates noted that another six months would mean culpability for thousands more dead, and that there were a number of Iraqi unions (such as the strategically important General Union of Oil Employees) who also called for the immediate withdrawal of occupying troops. Very narrowly, both motions were carried.

Other motions passed marked a slight shift to the left, strengthening and expanding upon existing union policy rather than forging new ground. A commitment was given to take action to defend members' interests on public sector and private pensions. Margaret Manning from Manchester spoke staunchly, defending the rights of asylum seekers, opposing Section 9 of

the new act and demanding full employment rights for all migrant workers, as well as full rights of residence, employment and benefits for asylum seekers.

Tony Woodley spoke very much to the left during the week, condemning the whole notion of New Labour and harking back to old Labour values. With Gordon Brown sitting behind him he spoke out in demand of substantial investment in manufacturing (though it took a delegate from the floor, Rob Williams from Swansea, to point out how the union had failed to call for the nationalisation of Rover).

Woodley also made several references to fighting the anti-union laws, including looking at "innovative ways of delivering secondary action in support of striking workers", and, confidently, that the law would be changed to allow workplace ballots for strike action.

Unfortunately, there was no opportunity to discuss the political strategy being followed to achieve the unions' goals, as the motion on the Labour Party was allowed to drop off the agenda.

No doubt, when Woodley and his fellow bureaucrats attend Labour's conference in Brighton at the end of the month, they'll also "forget" the rest of the TGWU agenda. Despite their occasional rhetorical spat with Tony Blair, Woodley and co. are as responsible as anyone for repeatedly letting Blair and Brown off the hook and agreeing to a backroom deal so that conference can be turned into one long media circus.

Back to school, back to class struggle

By Kate Ford (President Hackney NUT, personal capacity)

Teachers return to work this month faced with New Labour's ongoing drive to reshape education for the bosses.

- Lord Andrew Adonis is to continue to drive through the privatisation of education, through PFI schemes and more academies.

- By December every school in England and Wales will have to introduce a new pay structure for teachers, paying them for added responsibilities at school rather than the old system of allowances.

The government estimates that the new pay structure can save £49 million a year. The money saved, the Department for Education and Science argues, will be used to employ cheaper classroom assistants, who will be able to take classes instead of qualified teachers. Although existing pay rates will be safeguarded for the first three years - in theory - teachers could, over time, see their pay cut by more than £10,000.

The pay structure is part of the government's plan to remodel the work-

force, with more classroom assistants teaching, while teachers spend more time preparing lessons - all part of the New Labour mantra of a flexible workforce. In order to achieve this, the government has actually ruled that primary school teachers can have 10 per cent of their time free from classroom responsibilities - to prepare for lessons and assess pupils.

But all the teaching unions bar the National Union of Teachers have signed up to the new system! They were actually part of the Reward and Incentives Group, which came up with the plan as part of remodelling the workforce.

The NUT's opposition has been principled, but their strategy to fight remodelling is weak. It plans to fight any attempt to cut teachers' pay, but on a case-by-case basis rather than as a national struggle. This could pit teacher against teacher and school against school. Individual members could become isolated, reduced to defending their own jobs.

Rank and file NUT members must organise for action now. NUT teachers must fight for the union to ballot for action against the attacks, up to and including all out strike action. If no ballot is called, then we will need to pre-

pare to take action unofficially.

Teachers must also set up committees in their schools to defend their pay and working conditions. These committees should include members of other teachers' unions. While the other unions may have signed up to the pay deal, individual members will face pay cuts. Unity in action against pay cuts can pave the way for unity against PFI, academies and the abuse of classroom assistants.

Finally, teachers must go back on the offensive over defending their pensions. Some local associations, including Bolton and Greenwich, have called for a rank and file activists' conference to organise the campaign to defend pensions. We must link up with other public sector workers on pensions and form local committees, which can pull in private sector workers and pensioners to defend existing provision and fight for a decent state pension.

5 October
Greater London Public Sector Unions Rally on Pensions
8 October
Anti-Academies Conference Birmingham
(Venues to be announced)

Labour's lining up to privatise the post

Rumours are rife in the media about the impending privatisation of Royal Mail. A Communication Workers Union activist gives the post workers' viewpoint on how to fight the sell off

Part of the Warwick agreement between Labour and the unions stated that there were "no plans" to privatise Royal Mail. But these public assurances don't match up to what Labour is doing behind the scenes.

Labour appointed as chairman Allan Leighton, who has been campaigning non-stop to sell-off 51 per cent of the shares to employees in Royal Mail. The shares would be held in a trust fund and employees would be paid dividends. Of course the trust fund will not be under the union's control, but, at best, a board dominated by management.

Blair also promoted Alan Johnston, retired General Secretary of the CWU, to Trade and Industry Secretary, in order to use his credibility to soften up resistance. Johnston repeatedly says he is against privatisation but also proposes giving employees a "stake" in the business with an employee share scheme.

This is yet another plan which would be one long slide towards outright privatisation. Presumably employees would be able to sell their shares and other employees could buy them, which would inevitably mean shares accumulating in the hands of a few big management players.

This is what happened with Stagecoach, with its manager turned millionaire owner Brian Souter, and in countries like Russia, where workers sold their shares on the market to big capitalists. This is how Roman Abramovich got his billions, though your average post-worker isn't going to be able to buy up Chelsea through this scheme!

PAY CUTS AND REDUNDANCIES

Labour created PostComm to oversee the break-up of Royal Mail's monopoly and introduce competition into the £4.5 billion a year postal market. It has now moved the date for full competition forward from 2007 to 1 January 2006, accelerating the drive towards privatisation.

PostComm commissioned a study, which concluded that, to be competitive,

Royal Mail will have to slash wages (evidently we posties are 25 per cent over-paid!), lose up to 40,000 jobs, turn full time jobs into part time jobs, and scrap seniority rights protecting workers from management manipulation and favouritism.

But just in case PostComm missed a trick, Alan Johnston has set up his own commission led by Sir George Bain. Remember him? He wrote the report that cut the fire service to ribbons in 2002.

And all this at a time when workload and mail volumes are rising! There is only one possible conclusion: Labour is going to privatise the post.

PREPARE FOR AN ALL OUT STRIKE

The CWU has organised a rally in London for 7 September, calling on the government to give guarantees that there will be no privatisation.

The rally will be very important in getting the message out about what is at stake. Such rallies should be rolled out across the country, followed by open organising meetings to bring together every activist and CWU member who wants to fight privatisation.

We have to get the message out that this attack will not go away without a serious hard fought strike. The National Executive should immediately set the date for an all out strike: 1 November. This gives us enough time to organise, while challenging the marketisation plans before the state monopoly ends on 1 January, and hitting business where it hurts, in the run up to Christmas.

But so far the NEC has simply started a lobbying campaign among Labour MPs. This is not enough. They didn't stop university top-up fees or even the hugely unpopular attack on Iraq, and they won't save the post.

The union leadership has vaguely promised a strike ballot. London Region passed a motion for the 2005 conference, demanding a deadline of 1 November for Labour to give a clear guarantee of keeping Royal Mail as a wholly public owned company or



trigger a strike ballot, along with immediately suspending all CWU contributions to Labour and using the money for an anti-privatisation campaign.

Terrified of the threat to the link with Labour, the CWU leadership tried to block the motion, then wrote their own, dropping the bit about suspending contributions to Labour, while keeping a strike ballot (but without a date). It promised to "review" the union's relationship to Labour in 2006!

If we are to get that ballot and a successful strike against privatisation we must keep up the pressure on the leadership, with local organising committees established to ensure rank and file control of the campaign.

Hundreds of thousands of other public sector employees in the fire service, BBC, education and the NHS are facing the same cuts in the name of marketisation. We should agitate for other groups of workers to ballot for action alongside us and synchronise strikes to hit the government from every direction.

Winning the argument with the public about the threat to their service will be key. Marketisation will create a

two tiered service, with businesses and rich neighbourhoods at the top and standards suffering in working class communities. These workers, along with the youthful protesters of the anti-globalisation movement, are our natural allies, and we should seek to organise them into support groups now, ready for the struggle.

BREAK FROM LABOUR

CWU leaders like Billy Hayes and Dave Ward have argued for the last three years that there is no alternative to Labour, or at least not at the moment. Meanwhile, they have done little over the same period to stop the government from slashing 30,000 jobs.

A strike could well open up a struggle for the CWU disaffiliating from Labour. CWU militants should then join ranks with railworkers' union the RMT, firefighters' union, the FBU, and millions of ex-Labour voters, and campaign for a new, mass working class party. Our goal should not be just to walk away and abandon the political struggle but to form a new party that can fight Labour on the picket lines, on the streets and in the elections.

Bristol Postal Strike

As we went to press, postal workers in Bristol were due to hold a third day of strike action in a dispute about overtime.

Communication Workers' Union (CWU) members took action on 15 and 26 August after contractual overtime was cut at the Easton depot. Royal Mail said it could not justify the normal scheduled overtime as there was less post over the summer.

Managers have been brought in to cover during the walkouts, and have organised scab labour from as far away as Gloucester.

All messages of solidarity, and for further information, contact the CWU at www.cwu.org

Workers Power says:

- No privatisation of Royal Mail
- Organise rallies and meetings in every workplace, branch and region
- Restore the 1 November deadline for an all out national strike against privatisation
- Build an alliance with the other public sector unions, the social movements, student and working class communities
- Unions break from Labour - Organise a new workers party!

Fighting racism after the London bombings

Communities under attack need solidarity not lessons on multiculturalism or tolerance, argues *Simon Hardy*

The number of race hate crimes shot up by over 600 per cent in July: 269 were reported, compared with 40 in July 2004. The biggest increases were in the West Midlands and Yorkshire. Nationally the attacks increased by a quarter over the previous month. The attacks ranged from racist name calling to damage to property and physical attacks.

Racists have undoubtedly been emboldened because they feel politicians and the media, spreading chauvinist and racist ideas in the wake of the London bombings, have given them license to hate.

The Daily Express has a new motto: "Britain defiant". Its front pages regularly launch brutal attacks on asylum seekers. "All bombers were sponging asylum seekers," screamed one headline. "Every refugee and immigrant is a suspect" was the subtext.

The Islamic Human Rights Commission received 320 complaints of attacks on Muslims after the London bombings, a dramatic increase on the usual five a month they receive. The Institute of Race Relations has claimed that some people suffer as many as 35

incidents of "low level" abuse (spitting, verbal abuse and so on) before reporting it to the police or other bodies. In other words the real extent of racist abuse is far wider and more pervasive than the figures suggest.

The response of the liberal establishment, and figures like Mayor Ken Livingstone, has been to rush to praise multiculturalism as the sticking plaster that holds our society together. Of course the Tories and right wing journalists, who are attacking multiculturalism, are in fact suggesting heavy pressure to integrate into a supposed English or British national identity replete with the Union Jack, the Queen, support for our boys in Iraq.

"What is Britishness?" the liberal papers keep asking, in a rather neurotic manner. They come up with a bizarre amalgam of characteristics, ranging from "tolerance" to "tidiness". Really? Why not rebelliousness, heavy drinking, class solidarity, bad food, trade unionism? Take your pick.

But multiculturalism is an anaemic, liberal blend. It suggests "celebrating" diversity. If this dreadful phrase means that people originating from Ireland, the Caribbean, the Indian sub-

continent, Africa and the Muslim world should be able to continue to practice their faiths, their culture, their languages openly, visibly without being subjected to hostility - then absolutely they should. These cultures are equally valid to that of the "official" British nations'. They should not be forced or conned into proclaiming their allegiance to a reactionary monarchy, its flags and anthems, its culture or its religions. The suggestion that, for example, mosques and their imams should be licensed is an impertinent assault on the freedom of religion and freedom of association.

The problem, however, with multiculturalism is that it suggests there is a series of multi-class communities and identities that you have to belong to, and then these are combined into Britishness.

This whole system is a fraudulent attempt to cover over class identity and internationalism. It privileges the British super nationality, to which every other culture needs to be compatible, and it treats all cultures as if there were no contradictions, clashes or class struggle within them. Indeed, multiculturalism often takes the most con-

servative and privileged ideas of any culture and promotes them to the level of representative of everyone from that background.

The reactionary nature of many leaders in the black and Asian community has been shown by the way they forced Bradford youth, who fought to drive out fascists and racist police in 2001, to turn themselves into the police. Perhaps the cops suggested to the elders that their punishments would be lenient.

The subsequent severity of their sentences forced the "leaders" to mount impotent defence campaigns. But by then the damage had already been done. "Peace Marches" that have taken place in potentially volatile areas after the London bombings have been called under the slogan of "peace and unity in our community" - no mention of the war, police racism, or the threat of the fascists.

How should socialists and anti-racists respond to the attacks on Asian and Black communities? First, it is important to stand in solidarity with the oppressed, to argue against the media lies and the inevitable repression. We support communities defend-

ing themselves through democratic forums, drawing in the workers and youth of the area. Wherever Workers Power supporters and others have raised the idea of forming defence squads against police harassment and racist attack, youth have taken it up enthusiastically.

We should also rebuild the anti-war movement as a vibrant and militant force in British society. We must show that we have complete solidarity with those Iraqis fighting the occupation forces, and that we will do our bit to defeat the war on terror, not by buying into Blair's racist attacks at home, but by making it our goal to bring down Blair.

In the end, racism is founded on the notion that Britain has the right to invade and occupy countries, torture and kill any resistance, and super-exploit their workers and resources. By making the anti-war and anticapitalist movements explicitly anti-imperialist, by siding with Iraqi resistance fighters and Chinese sweatshop workers, we can win workers and youth, black and white, to the global battle to rid the planet of war, exploitation and racism.

Action not words can smash anti-union laws

By Mark Hoskisson

With the Gate Gourmet dispute raging, with Rolls Royce workers striking over the sacking of their Amicus convenor at the Bristol plant, and with Barbados Blair setting out his plans for further attacks on the public sector this month's TUC should be interesting.

Should being the operative word! As usual the TUC congress will be bland. It will decide very little. But will it organise any action to defend workers in struggle, like those at Gate Gourmet or Rolls Royce? No.

Those workers, and other like them, have shown how to fight back. When the bosses hit you, you strike. You hit them back where they feel it most - in their profit margins.

The job of a Trades Union Congress is to back such workers, to spread solidarity, to co-ordinate struggle. That should be ABC. But the TUC doesn't use the same alphabet as the workers it claims to represent.

Years of defeat under the Tories turned the TUC into a congress of cowards. It accepted the notion that militant struggle was to be avoided and it preached the virtues of "partnership" with the bosses. A cornerstone of this partnership was an acceptance that the rules of industrial relations had been changed forever by the series of anti-union laws introduced by the various Tory governments of the 1980s and early 1990s.

These laws are the most draconian in the western world. Tony Blair has kept each and every one of them intact. At their core lies a series of measures that outlaw effective trade unionism. They are designed to stop workers winning.

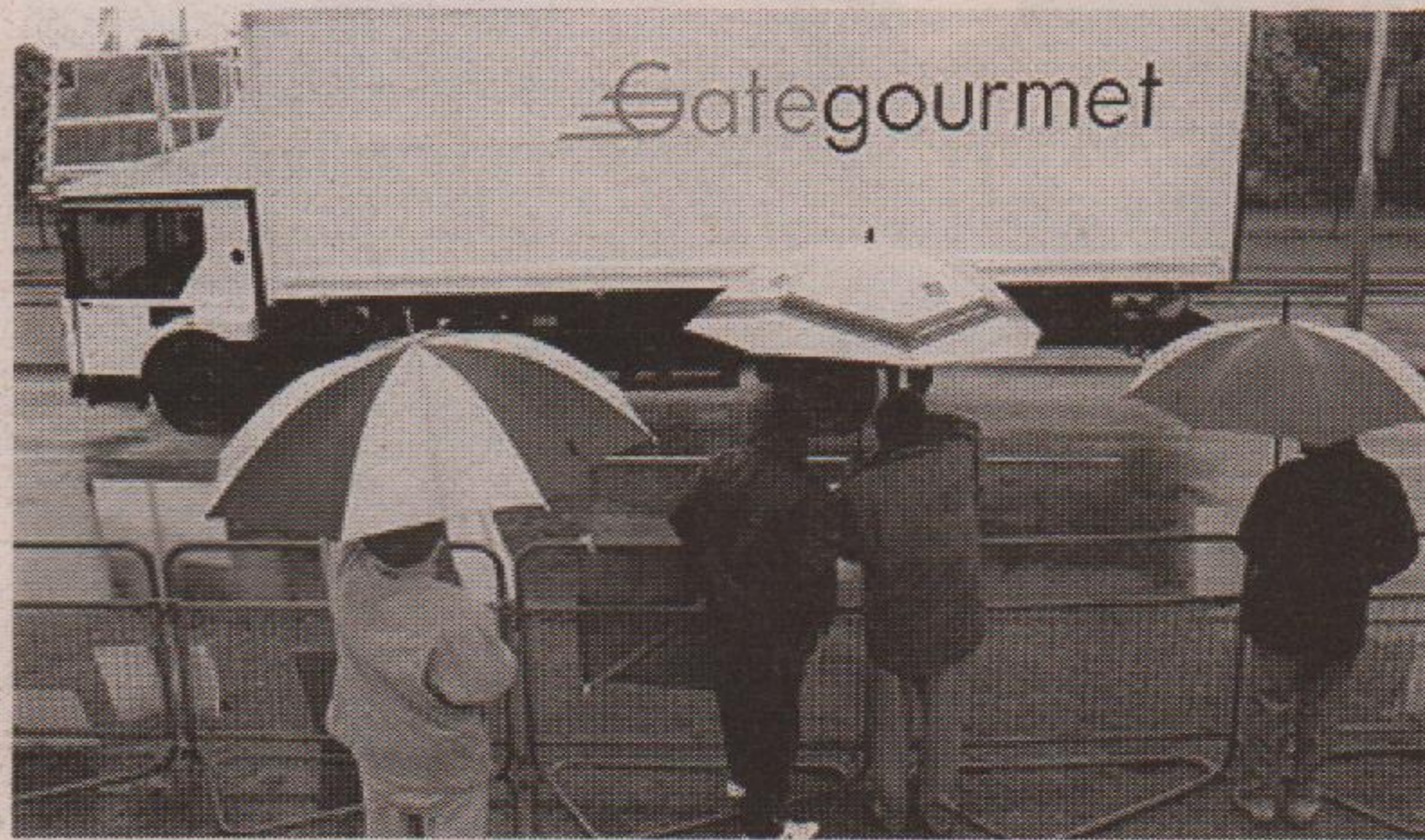
Take the law requiring postal ballots, for example. Faced with attacks, instead of being able to strike, unions are forced to undergo time consuming, expensive and not particularly democratic ballots. This prevents workers collectively discussing and deciding on action at mass meetings and it gives the bosses time to recruit scabs, build up stocks, wage a propaganda campaign, intimidate individual workers, and so on.

Another key anti-union law outlaws "secondary action". What this really means is that it outlaws solidarity action and the right of workers on strike to appeal for it. So, for example, if Rolls Royce workers on strike went along to a components factory and asked the workers there to refuse to handle any Rolls Royce orders, they would be breaking the law.

Even worse, the judges make it up as they go along. Last month Mr Justice Fulford ruled that Gate Gourmet pickets "should not be permitted to approach or attempt to engage in conversation employees on their way to and from their place of work". But that's what pickets do - there is no other way to picket! But a judge, who has probably never seen a picket line, let alone been locked out, can outlaw picketing.

The advantages to the bosses of such laws are obvious. The union bureaucrats also like them - they can use these laws to contain the rank and file and to isolate and defeat militants. They have more direct control over when strikes can and cannot take place.

But the laws are a disaster for the working class. The biggest single factor holding back the willingness of their members to act is the laws. Bureaucrats are forever issuing warnings of the dire consequences of breaking them - loss of union funds, imprisonment, etc.



Anti-union laws prevented effective solidarity with sacked workers

The Gate Gourmet strike, however, shows that these laws can be defeated. One day of illegal solidarity action by the baggage handlers plunged British Airways into crisis and had the bosses squealing for mercy. Neither the TGWU nor a single representative faced either a fine or prison.

Action in defiance of the laws - on a huge scale - can make them unworkable and can give a huge impetus to the political campaign to force Labour to repeal each and everyone of them.

This is one of the key lessons of the Gate Gourmet strike. The TUC should be meeting under a huge banner saying "Defy the anti-union laws". A second banner should read "Labour - repeal the anti-union laws".

Instead, the TUC is debating motions from the TGWU, which do call for the repeal of the laws, but do not outline a single action that can be taken by workers to enforce this. The resolution merely says:

"Congress recognises it must build a long term campaign, building on the TUC charter Modern Rights for Mod-

ern Workplaces and the IER Workers' Charter, to ensure our members are fully aware of the facts and to take the arguments to a wider audience. This should combine a broad range of trade unionists, sympathetic lawyers, academics and politicians into a common cause"

Tony Woodley argued: "It surprises me that a Labour government, our government, is not supporting this type of legislation. But I believe that even a cautious Labour government can see injustices like we've had over the past couple of weeks - and if you oppose Gate Gourmet's actions, you must legislate to help workers. Why can it be wrong that a union and workers can't seek solidarity support when they've been mistreated? Unfortunately, democracy isn't what it used to be in the Labour Party, but from my point of view the abuses by Gate Gourmet show clearly how indefensible the current laws are."

What he should have added is - "The baggage handlers were 100 per cent right and I call on them to resume their action and will fight for sympathy

strikes to be called by the TUC." But he didn't. He worked behind the scenes to get the baggage handlers back to work. He put obedience of the law above support for his members.

Moreover, it is quite clear that Labour has not got the slightest intention of repealing the laws. Whatever resolutions are passed by the TUC will count for nothing, as one of Blair's senior aides admitted:

"The unions always raise this whenever they find an issue that can be a vehicle for it. For trade unions it is their raison d'être. But secondary strike action is going to remain unlawful. Tony will defend the Thatcher reforms. He will not concede on this."

As for Woodley himself he immediately moved to reassure both Blair and the bosses that he was really only looking for some tweaking of the laws. He argued: "We're not looking to go back to the lunacy of the 1970s but to move on from the 1990s when unions were totally emasculated."

Lunacy? Perhaps he is referring to the fact that mass strikes, in defiance of the first set of anti-union laws by the 1970-74 Tory government prompted the TUC to call a general strike, freed imprisoned dockers and routed the government's entire offensive. That mass defiance ensured that each and every one of those laws was repealed.

The fact that Woodley refers to this tremendous achievement as "lunacy" shows that he has no intention of waging a serious fight against the anti-union laws. But the baggage handlers showed that the rank and file could wage such a fight. Their action can consign these laws to the dustbin - and signal the end for time servers like Woodley. Smash the anti-union laws by direct action. That alone will force their repeal.

Railworkers back conference on working class representation

By Pat Spackman

Bristol RMT in a personal capacity

For the second successive year the RMT passed the following resolution, proposed by the Bristol branch, at its national Annual General Meeting in Exeter:

"The AGM reaffirms its decision of 2004, which rightly characterised;

The Labour Party, under its current leadership, as the party of privatisation and neoliberalism, support for the imperialist wars of the extreme right Bush administration, attacks on civil liberties and trade union rights and freedoms.

It is more important than ever that our union takes up the task of developing political representation of the working class. The last year has seen no relenting of these policies, indeed the run up to the general election was characterised by a wholesale attack

on workers' pensions, housing and health. The AGM instructs the Council of Executives to:

- Build a National Conference of trade unions and organisations of working class communities and political organisations to discuss the crisis of political representation of the working class.
- Continue the work already begun by the union, in the European Social Forum, to develop a high profile for the debate internationally on the question of trade unions and political representation."

This year the resolution must not be left gathering dust on the table. It must be implemented now.

The Labour Party has moved closer to the bosses and stepped up its attacks on the working class. At the same time increasing numbers of workers are looking for alternatives to this warmongering, anti-union and racist party. The limited electoral successes of organisations like Respect and the Scottish

Socialist Party and the drop in the traditional Labour vote in its working class heartlands illustrate this.

It was just over one hundred years ago that the trade unions came together to form the Labour Party. The time has come for the unions and all working class organisations to combine again and form a new workers' party.

Workers Power believes it should be a socialist party, a revolutionary party - a party that is committed to ridding us of this hideous exploitative system once and for all. It must fight capitalism not just here in the UK but throughout the entire world.

How much poverty and exploitation can we take? How many Africans must be condemned to starvation? How many more Iraqs, Afghanistans and Kosovos must be endured for the sake of the international capitalists' greed?

We know that our views are currently not shared by a majority in the labour movement. Many workers still believe capitalism can be reformed in their

favour. But if a new workers' party is built on the foundation of real workers' democracy, and not the bureaucratic diktat that plagued Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, there is no reason why a wide selection of views cannot be voiced. Indeed if an effective party is to be built it must not only allow internal debate, it must encourage it.

What needs to be done now, is to build the campaign for such a party. Workers should use the RMT resolution to get similar ones passed in their own unions. RMT members should use their branches to put pressure on the Council of Executives to do their job and convene a conference in the spring of next year. The campaign must be open to all working class organisations. The Scottish Socialist Party, Respect, Social Forums, anti-racist groups, community organisations and all socialist tendencies should be invited to build this conference.

However, despite Bob Crow's verbal

endorsement of the resolution, the experience of the last year should lead us to take independent steps to kick-start this initiative. Bristol RMT branch is well placed to call an initial conference to discuss the issues and plan the campaign.

In the past year, Bristol's trade unions have come together to plan for the European Social Forum, launch a local social forum and organise solidarity for the fight to reinstate local Amicus activist Jerry Hicks. The local CWU is currently on strike to win the reinstatement of another local activist in the post. These struggles would form a magnificent backdrop for a national gathering of all those union branches and left groupings in the unions who are sick to death of Labour's betrayals.

Every union branch should discuss the RMT's resolution and start co-ordinating their own efforts towards a similar aim. The working class needs a new party - let's form one!

Following the weapons trail

There are a quarter of a million child soldiers involved in armed conflicts from Afghanistan and Burma to Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Joy MacReady* looks at who arms them

Although the conflicts may sound distinct, the photographs are the same: a young child, a boy or, more recently, a girl, aged eight to 16-years-old, staring directly into the camera with a chilling expression and an assault rifle or grenade launcher sitting jauntily on his/her hip. The question that begs an answer is how did that weapon end up in those hands?

Government and the arms industry try to make the legal arms trade sound respectable, and to focus concern instead on the "black" market deals. But it is a myth that the unofficial market only involves recycling second-hand weapons, or that arms companies follow an "ethical code". You can't have an illegal trade if you don't have the legal manufacturing and distribution.

UK and the arms trade

Heckler and Koch, a German subsidiary of UK's BAE Systems (fourth largest arms producer in the world), licensed the production of its rifles to 14 countries, including Turkey, Burma and Pakistan - all under scrutiny for human rights violations. Reportedly, 500 H&K submachine guns were shipped to Indonesia in September 1999 during an arms embargo. Licensed production meant that arms designed and overseen by a British company went to a country that Britain was officially refusing to arm. This is how the arms trade works.

But it goes beyond just renegade private companies making a profit out of war or individuals like Mark Thatcher



Protestors scuffle with Police out side DSEi 2003

trying to overthrow a government for personal gain. The UK government is deeply involved in the arms trade for two important reasons: to maintain Britain's military might, and to achieve political and economic aims in different regions through the use of force. Most arms exports don't have the veil of the "ethical foreign policy" touted by the Labour government when it came to power.

Since 1997, the UK has exported arms to 18 other countries engaged in serious external and internal conflict, including Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Colombia, Israel, Kenya, and the Philippines. UK arms sales to Indonesia (the second highest recipient of UK overseas aid) rose from £2m in 2000 to £40m in 2002, despite the documented repression Indonesia was inflicting

in East Timor and Aceh. In 2000, Tony Blair pushed through licences for Hawk fighter jet spare parts to Zimbabwe to refit Hawks that were being used in the bloody conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Amnesty International has exposed the fact that large quantities of weapons and ammunition from eastern Europe were flown by UK-based companies into parts of Africa's Great Lakes region devastated by conflict and human rights abuses in 2002. When questioned, Intavia, which flies cargo for the Ministry of Defence, said that the Foreign Office and Customs had given it clearance.

Capitalist militarism

Armaments are big business. Military spending and the arms trade amount-

ed to over a trillion dollars in 2004. The value of the combined arms sales of the top 100 companies in the world rose by 25 per cent in 2003. Overall arms sales were concentrated in France, Germany, Russia, UK and US - making up 81 per cent of all deliveries in 2000-4. Four of the five are permanent members of the UN Security Council, and all five are in the G8: that's how central weapons are to the world's leaders.

And they use their standing in the "international community" to good effect. In 2002, when tensions were rising between India and Pakistan, the Financial Times reported that Jack Straw lobbied for a £1 billion deal to supply BAE Systems Hawk jets to India: "Industry officials were unabashed in admitting that the current regional tension between the nuclear armed neighbours is a unique selling opportunity."

The dealers in death feel no shame when it comes to business profits. On 11 September 2001, 800 protesters were attempting to shut down the Europe's biggest arms fair, DSEi, hosted by the UK arms industry and championed by the UK government. When the Twin Towers fell, the world was shocked, everything shut down - but the arms fair kept its doors open and continued to do business. It is reported that shares in American Lockheed Martin, the biggest arms dealer in the world, went up 30 per cent within a fortnight.

DSEi will again this year play host to more than 1,100 companies, around 70 official military delegations, and 20,000 "visitors" from around the globe between 13 and 16 September. Among this year's exhibitors are Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, General Dynamics and

BAE Systems. Official military delegations are expected from Colombia, Israel, and Russia.

And all of the above is underwritten by our taxes. All established arms selling countries run insurance schemes to ensure the corporations get their money, even if the purchasing country defaults on payments. These "export credits" create debt in the global south, arming dictators and starving the people of revenue for generations to come.

But to effectively put an end to the arms trade, first we must realise what underpins the conflicts. Wars do not happen in isolation - they are overseen and fuelled by the world's most powerful nations, first arming one side and then the other. The poor countries are playing out the proxy wars of the imperialist nations, jostling for control over resources and for geopolitical power.

The strategy of pressuring the United Nations or the imperialist countries that benefit from the trade in arms and the wars is not going to solve the problem.

Capitalist competition drives nation states to war. In order to end the exploitation of children as soldiers, we need to fight against capitalist militarism. We should demand that not a single penny of our taxes is spent on defence. We should confiscate the profits and factories of the arms producers without a penny in compensation. We need to lay bare the secret treaties between nations and expose the "legal" arms trade for what it is - lies. And we need to take over the industry and put it under workers control to decide what needs to be produced.

Labour sells off education

Despite one of the biggest ever Labour backbench revolts and opposition from students nationwide the government passed its Higher Education Act last summer. One year on, *Luke Cooper* argues for militant action from workers and students to halt Labour's neoliberal drive

The Russell Group of Universities - the 19 top universities in the country that together account for more than 60 per cent of research grants - have successfully lobbied governments since the 1990s to effectively privatise higher education in the UK.

This group has two important aims

- Higher education should be based upon the needs of the economy for a productive workforce.
- Market competition between the universities themselves should increase.

This is all intended to create a sliding scale of institutions catering for students "with different needs", i.e. from different class backgrounds. At the top end will be elite research based institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge, at the other the former polytechnics and further education colleges.

Central to this was the Russell Group's desire to charge expensive tuition fees. The American system was cited as the model to follow, where the Ivy League universities charge upwards of \$12,000 a year for courses.

Meanwhile, the capitalist class wants to slash public spending on higher education. State funding has fallen by 37 per cent since 1980!

From free education to fees

In 1998 Labour's Teaching and Higher Education Act marked the end of the student grant, the beginnings of the student loan and the introduction of student fees at a flat rate of just over

£1,000. It broke the principle, introduced by Labour in the 1960s, of universal free education for all.

The 2004 Higher Education Act reneged on Labour's 2001 manifesto promise not to introduce top up fees (i.e. on top of existing tuition fees). Universities were now to be allowed to charge up to £3,000. It also called for greater university autonomy: "Institutions need real freedom - including the freedom to raise their own funding, independent of government"

In reality this freedom is the freedom to compete with one another in the market for scarce funding. Universities are encouraged to enter "corporate partnerships" with big business that the government predicts will give the top universities an extra £600 million pounds a year.

The government may even "match" any private cash universities earn with public money.

Labour has also introduced the "Research Assessment Exercise" to determine the funding departments receive on the basis of how much research they carry out. Departments that concentrate on teaching alone - the less renowned universities - have seen their funding reduced.

The funding squeeze, coupled with the fact that no university wanted to be seen as offering "cheap" courses, means that nine out of 10 universities have opted to charge the full fees of £3,000. Obviously, this has now led to the richest universities demanding the right to raise their fees even fur-

ther: Imperial College wants the "freedom" to charge fees of up to £11,000 a year.

The government has been forced to make some minimal "concessions". A pitifully small grant of £1,000 was re-introduced - but only for those from households with a combined income of £15,200 (one and a half minimum wages). Graduates will no longer have to pay the fees up front, but "only" when their annual income passes £15,000 a year.

Finally, Labour wants universities to provide £500 bursaries, again nowhere near enough to tackle student debts, set to average £30,000 after three years.

Class divide

All this has badly affected the ability of working class youth to go to university. A Higher Education Funding Council study showed that youth from middle class families had a better than 50-50 chance of going to college, while those from the poorest areas had a less than one in 10 chance.

Although the government claims that it wants to put half of all school leavers into post-16 education by 2010, working class students are being channelled into "work-orientated" and "work-placed" (that is big business controlled) programmes, or foundation degrees orientated to a particular job.

Labour has abandoned the idea that higher education should be free and open to all, that it performs a social function in the pursuit of knowledge, that it

should raise the cultural level of the whole of society. Instead, Blair wants higher education to provide "a modern workforce allowing Britain to compete internationally in the 21st century".

Alternative education

It is not workers and students that benefit from this "competitiveness" but the rich and the corporations. The corporations and rich must be taxed to pay for higher education.

We do not need elitist universities but free access to well funded universities across the country. We do not need stressed out lecturers, but decent pay for all education workers, regardless of "academic status".

We need creative education, premised on learning about the world around us, not how much money it will make the rich? education under the democratic control of lecturers and students, not imposed by corporate interests.

Lecturers, students and other staff should unite to fight for this. Last year the AUT and NUS co-ordinated a one-day strike. This was a good first step, but on its own not enough. We need to build for indefinite strikes and militant occupations.

The Higher Education Act was only passed with a slender five vote majority. Militant action can force the government to overturn the fees and marketisation reforms - or face a revolt stretching across every campus in the land.

New Orleans: another Bush victim

The tragedy of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was both a huge natural disaster, and a product of poverty, racism and imperialism. The answer, argues *Sean Murray*, is a new American revolution

Around the world people gazed in astonishment. At first it was at the force of nature. But then something even more incredible became clear. The world's richest and most powerful state had been unable to evacuate the population of New Orleans, or to come to their rescue. People were told to go to the Superdome, but they found no food, no water, no sanitation.

Broadcasters described scenes "like something in the Third world". One American reporter said: "a foreign dictator would have responded better". Cuba, a tiny and poor country by comparison, was hit by category five Hurricane Ivan last year but 1.3 million people were evacuated with no loss of life. In the United States ten thousand people may have lost their lives. How was this possible?

The answer is class and race: and behind them both – capitalism.

New Orleans is a city with a population of 500,000 of which 67 per cent are black and 30 per cent live below the poverty line. The 100,000 residents trapped in the city were almost entirely African Americans, who had no way of leaving.

The government and the authorities called on people to leave but then left it to those with cars to do so. The bus station was closed. They could have used the rail system and the school buses to evacuate the poor. In fact, it took five days for any serious supplies to arrive in the city and transport sufficient to start moving out survivors.

RACISM AND PRIVATE PROPERTY

Two days after the hurricane, the press was filled with stories of looting. "Forget survivors, shoot the looters" the *Daily Express* headlined it. Fifteen hundred police were re-directed from rescue operations to anti-looting. Private property was more important than the lives of tens of thou-

sands of poor Americans.

Images were repeated over and over of young black people, emerging from flood-damaged stores, goods in hand. Did it not occur to them that these people "looting" were often getting food and water? Where else should they find them?

The hysteria whipped up by the media served to stigmatise the victims of the disaster as somehow undeserving, thus covering the Bush administration's woefully inadequate response.

Unsurprisingly, many poor black people, with no water and no food, armed themselves before setting out to find some. To the racist white police force any black person in an abandoned shop would automatically be deemed a looter and shot. An unknown number were.

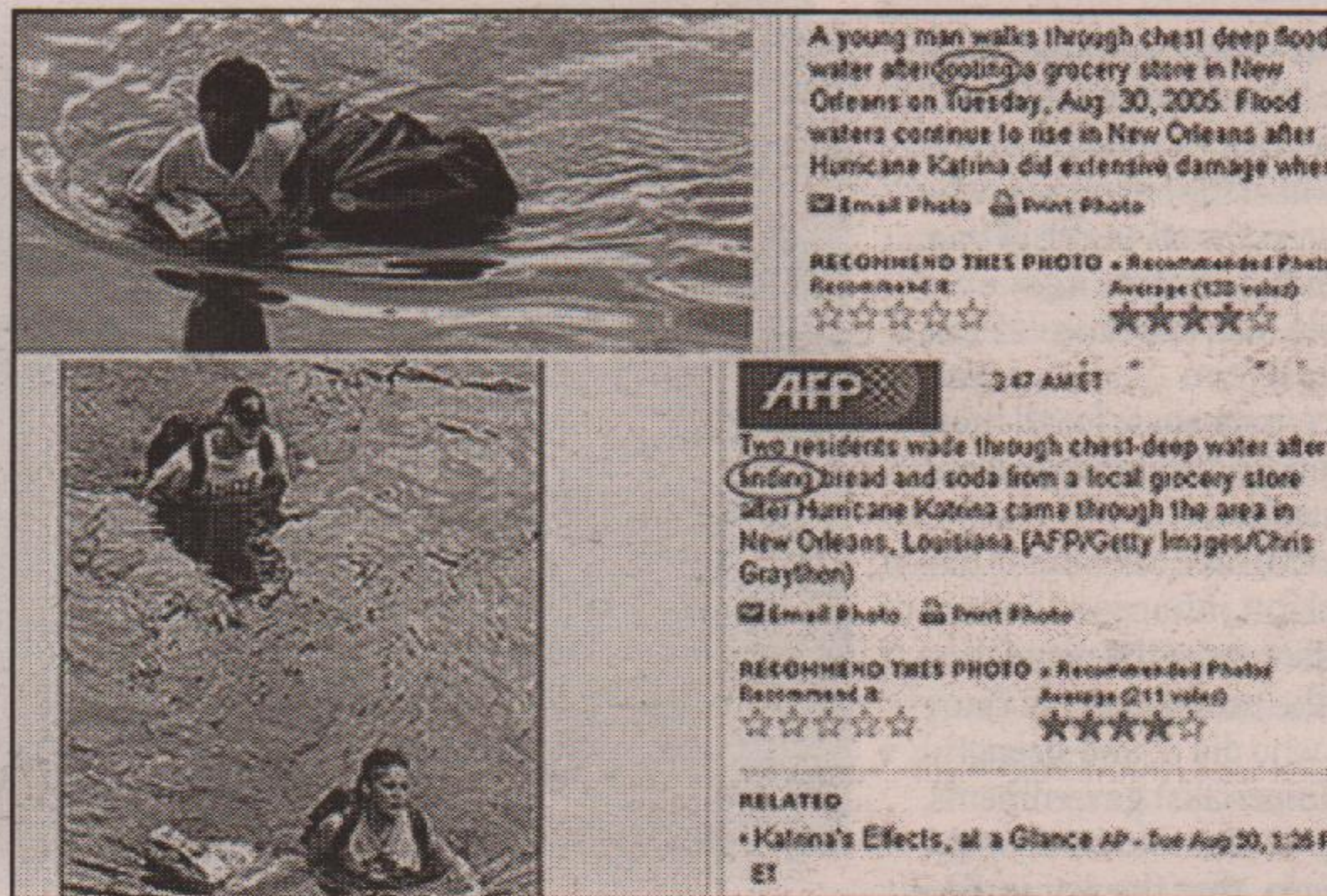
WAR ON IRAQ

Plans have been drawn up to strengthen the defences of the New Orleans and the Gulf coast since Hurricane Betsy struck in 1965. But successive governments refused to spend the money required.

A hurricane of similar strength to Katrina had been expected for the past three years. In 2004, the army, which maintains the flood defences, requested \$11 million for hurricane protection in the New Orleans area. It was allotted \$5.5 million. In 2005, it requested \$22.5 million, and received \$5.7 million. For 2006, the Bush administration offered just \$2.9 million.

Walter Maestri, emergency management chief for Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, said in June 2004: "It appears that the money has been moved in the president's budget to handle homeland security and the war in Iraq."

Meanwhile, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has been systematically downgraded, and resources shifted to the "war on terrorism". The security of Americans in their own homeland was sacrificed to robbing



Two pictures showing people with food in New Orleans. But media labels black people as "looting" and white people as "finding" the food

Iraqis of any security in theirs.

Congress has promised \$10.5 billion, but this only covers emergency relief. There is nothing for the rebuilding of any of the storm-devastated region, an area larger than Britain. The US meanwhile spends on average \$5.4 billion a month on the war in Iraq.

GLOBAL WARMING

A special posting on *Time* magazine website just before the arrival of the hurricane said the following:

"From 1995 to 1999, a record 33 hurricanes struck the Atlantic basin... One especially sobering study from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that hurricane wind speeds have increased about 50 per cent in the past 50 years. And since warm oceans are such a critical ingredient in hurricane formation, anything that gets the water warming more could get the storms growing worse. Global warming, in theory at least, would be more than sufficient to do that. While the people of New Orleans may not see another hurri-

cane for years, the next one they do see could make even Katrina look mild."

In fact the BBC reports that it will take eight months to fully restore the levees in New Orleans and other cities and two further hurricanes are very possible within the next four months.

George Bush is not only the president who slashed state spending on flood defences, not only the man who is spending billions on Iraq, he is also the man who refused to ratify the Kyoto agreement to cut carbon emissions, and vetoed any serious discussion of it at the G8 in Gleneagles

REBUILDING

As the scale of the disaster became clear, the stock prices of some of the US's biggest construction companies jumped massively in anticipation of the large and lucrative reconstruction contracts.

A massive programme of public works must be undertaken to rebuild New Orleans and all the other towns and cities destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. This

must be paid for by a punishing tax on corporate America and by the savings that can be made by the immediate and total withdrawal of all US troops from Iraq, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.

In the cities affected a public works programme must be placed under the control of residents' committees from all the destroyed localities. The massive construction companies must be nationalised and their resources, equipment and technical know how planned to meet the specifications set by these residents' committees.

In the meantime adequate housing, clothing and food must be provided to all those left homeless by the disaster and resources to help them relocate if they so choose.

An armed residents' and poor people's militia must replace the racist police. They can tell the difference between those legitimately confiscating food, medicine, clothes and the criminal elements.

GETTING RID OF BUSH AND CAPITALISM

George Bush and the billionaire class that put him in power are a danger not only to the people of the Middle East, but to the workers, the black population and the poor of America itself. His discredit over the war, over Katrina, over the economy, which will grow over the next few years, present the possibility of a huge mass movement of revolt. But the Democrats would be no better.

The time is ripe to create a new party that fights for the interest of this majority. The American working people have time and again in history shown themselves capable of rising up against their oppressors. They can and will do so again. But no one should imagine for a minute that this ruling class will go quietly or peacefully.

It will have to be a party of the American socialist revolution.

Union split is no answer for workers

GR McColl looks at the politics behind the break in the USA's main trade union confederation, the AFL-CIO

A long threatened split in US unions finally took place in late July. After 50 years of unity, the SEIU (Service Employees International Union – the biggest in the US), the Teamsters and UFCW (United Food & Commercial Workers union) left the AFL-CIO. Four other unions, including Unite Here, may now join the breakaway.

BUREAUCRATS FALL OUT

At one level the current split marks a falling out between union careerists. Unlike the CIO split from the AFL in 1938, the breakaway unions are neither involved in a strike wave nor willing to concede democratic rights to their members. The "Change to Win" platform, which the breakaways control, has emerged from unions with established bureaucracies that are advocating a further centralisation of power.

This is not to say that there are no differences. SEIU chief Andy Stern lays the emphasis for union recovery on "recruitment, recruitment, recruitment", a strategy which has doubled the union's membership over the past decade. The same, however, cannot be said of the Teamsters or UFCW.

Stern also raises the question of "global unionism" and has pushed for

links with the TGWU around First Bus, the UK based union busting transport giant. Teamsters and Unite Here officials have threatened industrial action in solidarity with the Gate Gourmet workers.

But Stern, James Hoffa of the Teamsters, and the others are not about democratising the unions. The decision to split from the AFL-CIO took place with precious little debate in union locals or even at national conventions. As left academic and long-time activist, Stanley Aronowitz, remarked: "Stern, Hoffa... and the two leaders of Unite Here, Bruce Raynor and John Wilhelm, are not bereft of tactical imagination and significant resources with which to co-ordinate an aggressive organising campaign. But in most other respects they are in the old mould of top-down bureaucratic unionism."

The reaction to the current strike by mechanics and maintenance crews at Northwest Airlines, launched by the militant, 18,000-strong Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA), illustrates the point. The small union is fighting against the company's attempt to push through 25 per cent wage and pension cuts, and changes in working practices. The other industry unions,

DECLINE IN UNION DENSITY

The background to this split is stagnation in membership and decline in workers' pay and conditions.

Trade union density – union members as a percentage of the entire workforce – has plummeted over the course of the AFL-CIO's 50-year history from 34 per cent to 12.5 per cent, and to just 8 per cent in the private sector. In North Carolina, which has seen a rise in employment since the 1970s, union density totals a mere 3 per cent.

While America's unionised workers still enjoy higher wages, on average, some analysts have argued that real wages in unionised workplaces are simply declining at a slower rate than in the economy as a whole. Overall, there has been an almost uninterrupted decline in real wages for most workers since the mid-1970s.

the breakaway Teamsters and the AFL-CIO loyal International Association of Machinists, have both scabbed on AMFA.

POLITICS

The current split is certainly not about the formation of a workers party. In the words of former AFL-CIO employee Bill Fletcher: "Even the more 'militant' of the oppositionists conceptualize a special relationship with the enlightened wing of capital rather than any serious vision of working class power."

Hoffa has rightly attacked the AFL-

CIO for "throwing money at the Democrats". The SEIU is regarded as one of the most left unions in the US. However, the SEIU itself gave the Democrats \$65 million for the 2004 election campaign, and both unions have made donations to Republican bodies. Neither has an alternative to tailing the two bosses' parties.

By way of illustration, the new coalition is completely silent on the key political issue of the day: the Iraq war and occupation doesn't even get a mention in their "founding document". Ironically, the AFL-CIO passed a resolution calling for the withdrawal of US troops.

Local activists and rank and file union

members – in the AFL-CIO unions, in the breakaway unions, and across the divide – need to come together. The members must ensure that the split does not hamper unity on the ground. By forming cross-union committees, they can prevent scabbing operations and start to clear the way for a fight with the bosses. But they also need to start a long overdue and urgent debate about the future of the movement.

Within such a debate socialists need to argue for an end to the unions' "barren marriage" with the Democrats. What needs to emerge is a workers' party, unequivocally opposed to racism and imperialist war, that harnesses the creativity of the forces that brought about the 1999 protests in Seattle, and is clear that capitalism itself, and not simply the Bush administration or a particular employer, is the enemy. In short, it needs to be a revolutionary socialist party, part of a new, Fifth International.

- For a mass unionisation drive using class struggle methods!
- For a rank and file movement in and across all the unions!
- For a mass working class party, based on the unions and won to a revolutionary programme!

Mass action, not suicide bombers can end the occupation of Iraq

By Dave Stockton

The taped statement of Mohammed Siddique Khan, one of the London suicide bombers, blames the entire population of Britain for atrocities committed against Muslims in Iraq, Palestine and elsewhere by British and US forces:

"Your democratically elected governments continue to commit atrocities against my people over the world. Their support makes you directly responsible just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim bothers and sisters."

The atrocities he refers to are real. But the implied conclusion - that the population of Britain, including its 1.5 million Muslims, is collectively responsible for the government's actions - is not true.

Except for a month or two after the invasion of Iraq, the majority of the population has always opposed the war and millions have protested on the streets against it. To believe otherwise is to accept the lie that Britain's democracy is "the rule of the people". It is not; it

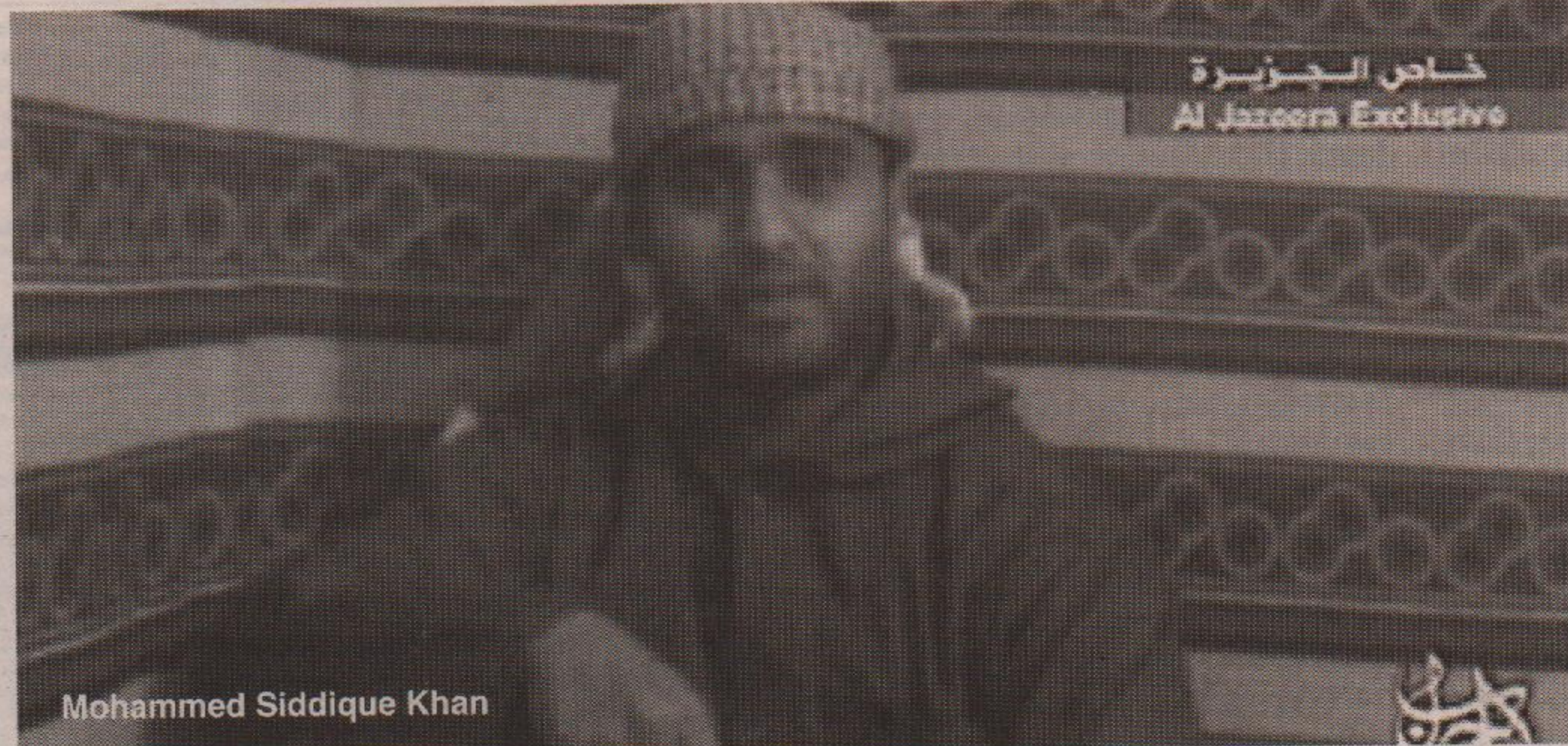
is a system of force and fraud which stops the "people's representatives" (parliament) or elections obstructing the will of the billionaires who want to seize the oil wealth of Iraq.

Terrorist bombings only strengthen Blair and Bush - at least in the short term - and have reactionary consequences for all those struggling against imperialist war and occupation.

In fact, in nine cases out of ten, an attack on innocent civilians directs the rage of the population against the people and the cause of those who did it, and strengthens the imperialist governments. The very act seems to confirm the propaganda, that the war in Iraq and the actions of the Zionist state of Israel are a defensive struggle against "terrorism", and against attacks on "our values".

Horrible as the results of the London bombings are, we do not have to believe that the bombers were evil monsters. According to their school friends, workmates and families, they were in all other respects well integrated, normal, young British Muslims.

What reversed this integration, what made them turn to terrorism,



was the war in Iraq and the imperialist oppression and exploitation of other peoples in the Islamic world. The "explanation" given to them for this exploitation and oppression was deeply distorted and wrong - that the motives of the USA and Britain are a Christian and Jewish crusade to destroy Islam.

Tony Blair and George Bush, for all their occasional invocations of God, are no more concerned with spreading Christianity than King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and

Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are with converting the world to Islam. Blair and Bush are only interested in carving up the world for corporations and banks, which are, in the main, not owned by Jews or born-again Christians.

Far from being simple personifications of absolute evil, the bombers were idealistic, to the extent of sacrificing their own lives, to end British and US atrocities in the Middle East. This idealism

found a horrifically wrong strategy for achieving this and their lives were thrown away as well as those of their victims.

Tony Blair and Hazel Blears (Minister of State for Policing, Security and Community Safety) are working overtime to find ways to get Muslim youth to "reject the preachers of hate", integrate into the British national identity and support "our boys" and the atrocities in Iraq. There is no way Muslim youth in Britain will ever

support the plunder of Iraq.

That makes it doubly imperative that the anti-war movement is not cowed by the lies of Blair and his ministers, by the hysterical campaign of the right wing media. It must fight to re-launch a mass anti-war and anti-occupation movement and to demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of every single British and US soldier from Iraq and the entire Middle East.

In doing so, we can and should reach out to alienated British Muslims, and offer them another, more effective way of defending Muslims against imperialist attack. We can offer them another culture to "integrate" into: the culture of international solidarity. We can offer them other weapons with which to fight: instead of individual terrorism, mass demonstrations and strike action.

We must deepen and extend this fight into one against the system that creates war, economic competition, occupation, rigged trade rules, debt, exploitation and the desperation that leads to indiscriminate terrorism - global capitalism.

Halt the attacks on civil liberties

By James Roberts

Just before he jetted off to Barbados to the holiday home of one of his millionaire friends, Tony Blair took the opportunity to indicate that "the rules of the game are changing" - i.e. that the country's civil liberties were coming under attack, not from foreign terrorists but from his own Labour government.

The already draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, rushed through parliament on 11 March, after only 17 days debate, is to be strengthened with twelve new measures.

The new measures go well beyond anything since the 9/11 attacks, giving the Home Secretary, and the unelected judiciary extended powers in the fields of deportation and control orders. The new laws contravene several sections of the European Charter for Human Rights, and passing them will actually entail repealing sections of this law.

The new bill allows Charles Clarke to immediately deport any foreign national, for as little as viewing websites deemed to be "unsuitable". This law will also extend to being able to deport those frequenting bookshops, mosques or community centres, which are deemed to be linked to extremism by the government.

The new laws will enable the home secretary to order such places to be shut down by the police. Centres, websites and bookshops can now be deemed as "extremist" for various reasons, one being "the justification or glorification of terrorism anywhere". This effectively criminalises anybody speaking up for the Pales-

tinian, Iraqi or Chechen resistance movements. It would of course have meant putting Margaret Thatcher behind bars for glorifying the Mujahedin in Afghanistan during the 1980s.

If the present proposal succeeds, then it will become a crime to raise support for groups at home or abroad taking up arms against the British state. Whilst we are told that this is directly aimed at "homegrown" terror cells, the reality stretches far beyond this. The law could effectively criminalise calling for victory to the Iraqi resistance.

Its aim is not only to persecute the Asian and Muslim communi-

ties, but also to prevent a re-mobilisation of the anti-war movement under the only slogan that can unite a movement capable of defeating imperialism in the Middle East.

While the new bill gives state authorities completely new powers, it also extends powers they already have. One example is the length of time the police are allowed to detain terror suspects without charge or trial. The new laws will see this go up to three months, effectively creating a policy of internment without trial aimed at the Muslim community in the UK.

Since almost all experts agree

that no reliable new information can be extracted during the extended period, the aim can only be to inflict psychological damage on the detainee. Indeed, this has invariably been the outcome for those detained and later released from Belmarsh and Guantanamo Bay.

Another assault on freedom of speech, and indeed religion, gives the Home Secretary power to decide whether certain preachers should or shouldn't be allowed to reside or speak in this country. Despite already severe laws on incitement, the government is to be further armed with powers to deport those it does not like -

or rather those the Sun or the Daily Mail set up a moral panic about.

Blair's speech can be summed up in his own words; he closed his speech by telling the gathered press "the rules of the game have changed" as a result of the 7 July attacks. This is an outright lie. These measures are the continuation of a policy stretching back over four years, during which we have seen the greatest extension of state power since the miners' strike of 1984.

Already we have seen yet another raft of additions to anti-terror laws being proposed. This time, not only are the basic civil rights of trial by jury and justification of arrest being attacked, but now freedom of speech against the state.

The last month has also seen the state bring visibly armed police into public places and onto the streets of London, putting undercover armed police on the tube network disguised as staff. All of this without union permission, without government announcement and without parliamentary debate.

The execution of Jean Charles de Menezes in Stockwell tube station marked a turning point in the "war on terror" for many people - in the UK and around the world. The state has refused to back down over the case, clearly signaling its intent to continue the policy of shoot-to-kill on the streets of London. If ever an argument against trusting the police was needed, this is it.

Whilst Beeston, the area of Leeds that the bombers came from, has not seen such extreme police brutality, the cops continue to harass Asian residents of the community. One young

woman was seized from her house by armed police and questioned without the option of representation, or recording. Elsewhere in the community, houses are constantly being raided and searched without any evidence of connections to 7 July. And, in the wake of de Menezes death, the people of Beeston are justifiably worried by the presence of police firearms officers on their streets.

Politically, 7 July represented two things. First, the crisis of alienation following the failure of the anti-war movement to prevent the invasion of Iraq, and, second, the signal for the government to put the structure of repressive legislation built up over the last four years into full effect. The state has made it very clear that they will grip society by the throat and choke the life out of it when it comes under threat. We must call for communities to defend themselves from the thuggery of the police in the wake of 7 July, and not to be crushed between the millstones of state brutality and reaction in the media.

In the wake of the government's new offensive in the "war on terror" Tony Blair must be forced to realise that he is not the only person who can change the rules. Now the anti-war and anti-racist movements must change the rules of their game too.

- Self-defence is no offence
- Organise to defend communities from the thugs of the police and the fascists
- Non co-operation with repressive and racist legislation
- Call for strike action to bring imperialist troops out of the Middle East!

Blair's 'Dirty Dozen'

1. Deportation to regimes with a record of human rights violations, based upon "memoranda of understanding", amending the Human Rights Act to allow breach of Article 3 (prohibition on torture)
2. A new offence of "condoning, glorifying or justifying terrorism" anywhere in the world, which would open up people who defend the Palestinians or the Chechens to prosecution
3. Anyone who has participated in "terrorism" anywhere in the world will be refused asylum
4. Extended powers to strip people of citizenship thus making them "stateless"
5. Speeding up summary extradition
6. New inquisitorial court procedures, whereby defendants are not notified of the charges against them, and the effective creation of an administrative detention policy, by extending pre-charge remand by anything from one to three months
7. Extensive use of control orders such as house arrest which amount to punishment without trial
8. More money for an increase in "special judges" - judges with a security clearance to hear evidence withheld from the prisoner
9. Extending powers to proscribe organisations, i.e. to ban political parties and groups deemed "extreme" even when they are not involved in violence or its incitement
10. Promoting allegiance to the Queen, speaking in the English language and setting up a Commission for Integration
11. Closing down places of worship or removing Imams or Preachers deemed to be extreme, which amounts to a determination to produce a state-approved "Mosque of England"
12. The further tightening of border controls.

It's the war, stupid

By Dave Stockton

Tony Blair's spin machine has been working overtime to spread the lie that the London bombings had nothing to do with the occupation of Iraq. In an interview with the Sunday Times he said: "September 11 happened before Iraq, before Afghanistan, before any of these issues and that was the worst terrorist atrocity of all."

Of course 11 September happened before the Iraq war of 2003. But it did not happen before the Iraq war of 1991. Blair banks on his audience either not knowing or having forgotten a few basic facts.

• How in 1991 US and British planes unloaded bombs on Iraq's cities with the explosive force of seven Hiroshima bombs.

• How they killed thousands of civilians, destroying the country's electricity grid, its water and sewage systems, its bridges and road infrastructure and wreaking havoc with industry, housing and hospitals.

• How one of their "smart weapons", a laser guided bunker buster missile, found its way through the ventilation system of an underground bomb shelter in Baghdad incinerating 400 civilians. How on the Kuwait to Basra "highway of death" young Iraqi conscript soldiers, flee-

ing Kuwait, their vehicles flying white flags, were strafed and firebombed by US warplanes for hours without resistance.

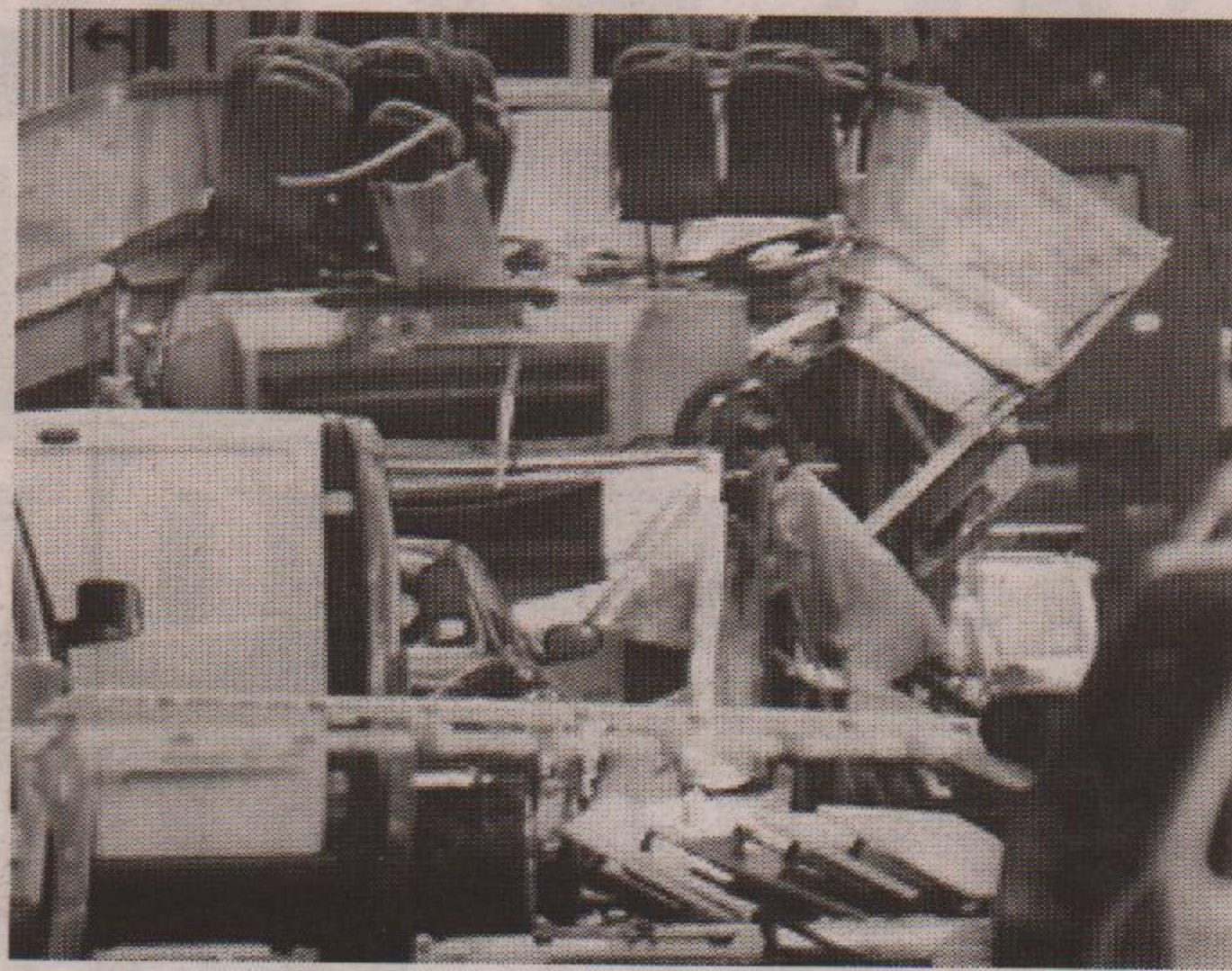
Then came the UN sanctions, killing 7,000 children every month. By 1999 UNICEF found that 500,000 children under the age of five had died of acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea and other causes as a direct result of the sanctions.

Blair thinks the British people are stupid or rather that the Sun, the Mail and the Express can keep them stupefied. But the anti-war movement and the Muslim community knows these facts, to which has to be added the long and truly horrific suffering of the Palestinian people.

Blair, of course, wants to turn people's attention from the toll of death and misery he and George Bush Jnr have added to the work of their predecessors - Bush Snr, Bill Clinton, and John Major.

In October 2004, Lancet medical journal reported that at least 100,000 more Iraqis have died since the invasion than would otherwise have been expected. Now a new study by Iraq Body Count authoritatively details 25,000 civilians murdered in the two years since March 2003, nearly 10,000 of these by US and British troops.

In April 2004 US armed forces besieged and assaulted the city of Fallujah, killing over 600. In November, when the Americans finally captured the city, a BBC



reporter put the death toll at 2,000. Baghdad-based human rights groups claim many of these were unarmed civilians.

WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

Material human interests, or more precisely class interests, have to be looked at to explain major events and struggle.

Marxists are correct to ask what political and economic interests are being pursued by the occupation of Iraq. Liberal sceptics and post-modernist academics will raise their hands in horror at the crudeness of such Marxist explanations. But if you want an explanation that points you in the right direction these are the issues you have to tackle first.

Iraq has the world's second

largest proven oil reserves. According to oil industry experts, they are high grade crude, extraordinarily cheap to produce. If they can be got at, there will be a "gold rush" for international oil corporations.

In addition the entire Middle East and central Asian oilfields will have a powerful strategic value in the century ahead. The USA has already identified the economic rivals and powers, which separately or together might challenge its absolute hegemony. They are the European Union, Russia, China and even India. All of these countries have either no, low or dwindling oil reserves. Just like the USA itself.

Bush and his administration want to ensure that the USA

keeps a tight grip on the oil taps in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Iraq and, as soon as possible, Iran. They also want to control the pipeline routes and exploration rights of central Asia and the Caspian. It just so happens that all these states are Muslim states.

The USA needs to preserve its strategic military ally, Israel, because it acts as a wedge dividing the Arab and Muslim world into rival petty states. But this implicates it to the hilt in Israel's historic and ongoing grab of Palestinian land.

The US has to set some limits to Israel's expansion, however, for another vital strategic reason. It needs Arab and Muslim client regimes too. It already has some long standing client regimes in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, and Pakistan. The wars of 2001-05 have brought it highly unstable control of Afghanistan and Iraq. But this brazen aggression, looting and plundering have not won it any friends.

The vast majority of the Arab masses and a minority of the ruling classes see the domination, exploitation and oppression of their whole region as something that must be fought against. On the other hand, the masses are still heavily repressed by the pro-US gendarme regimes. That is how a space opened up for Islamist terrorism, franchised under the name Al Qa'ida by a son of a Saudi millionaire, Osama Bin Laden.

IMPERIALISM

Imperialist wars, such as in Iraq or Afghanistan, and terrorist attacks in the aggressors' homelands are inevitable, as long as global capitalism itself survives. The reformist wing of the anti-war and anti-globalisation movements like to suggest that what is wrong is neo-imperialism or neoliberalism as military and economic policies.

But this "evil policies" theory is only a variant of the "evil men" theory. Both the Bushes and the Bin Ladens of this world use it to dupe the masses. In fact the "war on terror" is the necessary military expression of the ceaseless search to divide up and exploit the whole globe. It is not a "bad policy" but the internal dynamics of capitalism that forces imperialist powers to grab whole regions. The "war on terror" will only end with the revolutionary overthrow of the whole system.

Thus the most important lesson of these bombings is the urgent need for militants on all the different fronts of struggle - resistance in Iraq, resistance in Britain and the USA, resistance to corporate power and third world debt, resistance to attacks on workers' wages, jobs, social gains, resistance to attacks on civil liberties - to co-ordinate their actions internationally. We need to do so permanently, and on an organised basis, with the goal of the revolutionary overthrow of this system before it returns humanity to a state of barbarism.

Expose the police murder of Jean Charles de Menezes

By Stuart King

Several officers from SO19, a unit of plainclothes armed police officers, pursued a young Brazilian electrician onto a tube train at Stockwell station. He was forcibly restrained and then was shot even times in the head from point blank range. One witness described the shooting as "an execution".

Jean Charles was a victim of the official hysteria and racism that has been stoked up since the London tube bombings on 7 July. Almost immediately after his shooting a stream of police-fueled media lies was unleashed.

The BBC helpfully explained that the police had "done their best to resuscitate the man". One witness claimed the victim had an "Asian appearance." Another said that he was wearing a "bomb belt with wires coming out." Members of the public claimed they vaulted over the ticket gates and ran down the escalator hotly pursued by the police. The police stated that the man had been wearing an unusually bulky jacket for the hot weather. The Metropolitan Police commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, said in his first statement "the man was challenged and refused to obey police

instructions."

Thanks to a leaked report to ITV, all of this has been shown to be a lie.

CCTV footage revealed that he had not been wearing a bulky top or coat, but a denim jacket; that he entered the station walking, stopped to pick up a copy of the Metro newspaper and used his travelcard to get through the ticket gates as normal. He had not run down the escalator and only picked up speed because a train was entering the station. In short, his behaviour was entirely normal.

The Sunday Times later reported that all the misleading information was given to journalists in unofficial police briefings immediately following the shooting. The police tried for hours to continue the pretence that he was a bomber, yet they must have known as soon as they searched his body that he was not.

Even when they made the admission, they tried to keep up the lies. Jean Charles had been "acting suspiciously" they claimed and the officers had no choice but to shoot. London Mayor Ken Livingstone was certain, before any investigation had taken place, that the police had acted to "protect the lives of the public".

The press gushed with sympathy for... the officer who killed Jean Charles: how terrible must he feel? Independent columnist Bruce Anderson said he was "the author of his own misfortune". The Guardian thought the problem was not to have desensitised the public in advance to seeing a young man shot in the head seven times:

"Even when Mr Menezes was thought to be a bomber, witnesses were shocked by the ferocity with which he was killed. More should have been done to prepare the public for the forceful response needed to protect them." Better one or two or more dead it seemed than risk another 7 July.

The tabloids of course thought the shoot to kill policy was excellent. They made much ado about whether Jean Charles was an illegal immigrant or not - for the tabloids that would have made it doubly OK to have shot him. The killing revealed that the police were following a new "shoot to kill" policy, part of "Operation Kratos" to deal with suspected suicide bombers. Kratos was the Greek god of strength. This policy was of course never put to parliament, nor it seems were most ministers notified about it.

Under "Operation Kratos" an armed officer can shoot a suspect in the head if the intelligence sug-

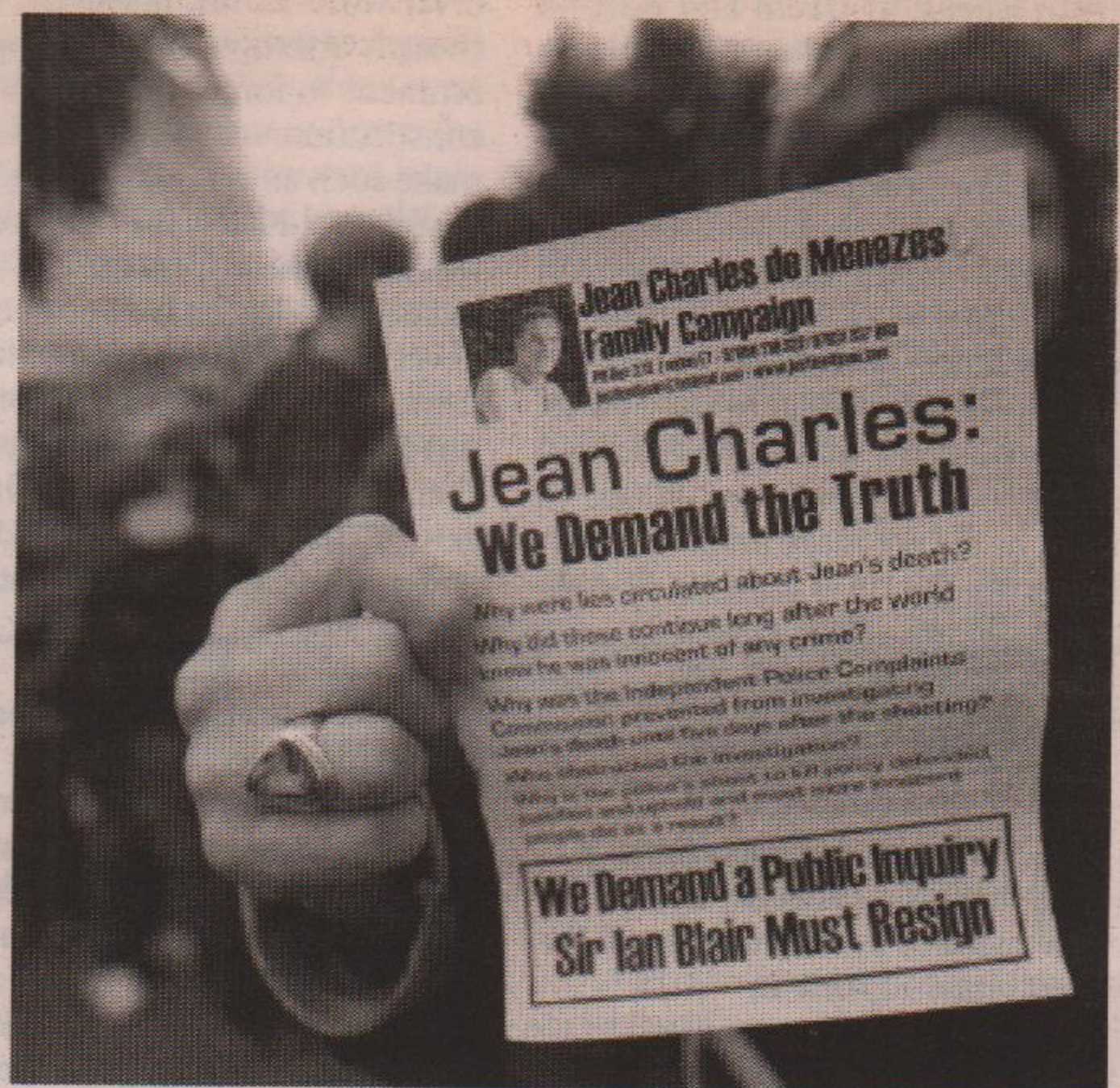
gests that he is a suicide bomber, who poses an imminent danger to the public or police. This is to avoid setting off any explosives that might be attached to his body. Five shots are deemed necessary to render a terrorist incapable of detonating his bomb.

Since the terrorists now know this policy - a simple "dead hand device" (i.e. you release your finger from the button rather than press it) will entirely undermine this brilliant policy. Something every movie scriptwriter has known for years.

Yet even "liberal" journalists have responded to the killing of this totally innocent man with the attitude that it was the price "we" have to pay for security.

Perhaps if you are white, and a little intellectually or imaginatively challenged you might feel more secure; if you have a darker than average skin you might feel quite the opposite.

No wonder in Brazil radical mass movements like the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) have mounted demonstrations outside the British embassy to protest against this brutal killing of a young worker. The British anti-war movement too has mobilised pickets of several hundreds at Stockwell Underground station to protest at the killing.



The de Menezes family has demanded a public enquiry. That is an elementary democratic right. It is the only way to bring all the evidence to light. Courageous employees in the new police complaints authority, the IPCC, on the London underground, in the media and in the police service too must ensure, by leaking if need be, that all the evidence comes into the light of day. If such a killing is allowed to pass without a public investigation then we will be one step closer to the day when the police can be judge, jury and executioner.

We must demand an immediate end to the shoot to kill policy, the bringing to justice not only of Jean Charles' killer, but the commanding officers, including

Ian Blair, and the ministers, including Tony Blair, who allowed "license to murder" to become official policy.

Neither should we wait for another tragedy like this to happen before demanding the complete disarming of the police, and the closing down of all its special units, like SO19.

Indeed, the police have been shown to be completely useless in guarding the public against terrorism for a simple reason: they are outsiders, foisted on working class communities by the capitalists in order to defend the rule of private property. And if the most liberal-minded police officer we can hope for is Ian Blair, then they are irreformable and it's time to replace them completely with community defence guards.

The final deadline for Iraq's transitional government to agree a draft constitution passed without agreement. It will now go directly to the electorate on 15 October. *Jeremy Dewar* argues the constitution is a pro-imperialist stitch-up and for what is needed in Iraq – a working class alternative

George Bush's attempt to get agreement on a constitution between Sunni and Shi'a factions is Iraq ended in breakdown. Leading Sunni representative, Soha Allawi, said, "We will campaign among Sunnis and Shi'as to reject the constitution which has elements that will lead to the break-up of Iraq and civil war". Meanwhile his Shi'a opposite number, Jalal al-Din Sagheer, rejoined, "The only possible change now is that the Sunnis become federalist."

George Bush, from the safety of his Texas ranch gave the Sunnis an ultimatum: "The Sunnis have a choice: do they want to live in a society that is free or do they want to live in violence?"

Having rejected "freedom" in the form of the constitution Bush is preparing more violence. He is boosting American troop numbers in Iraq from 138,000 to 160,000, replacing the battle-torn National Guard (42 killed in the first three weeks of August alone) with the infamous 101st Airborne Division.

US forces have resumed the besieging and bombing cities in central and western Iraq. Reports from Tel Affar, a sprawling city of 500,000, say that the US has bombed schools and hospitals, and that the people, who have not already fled are too scared to venture out. Just as Fallujah was razed to the ground in preparation for democracy US-style last November, so now other cities are being softened up for the vote on the constitution.

These attacks follow a pattern. Last June in Operation Spear 1,000 marines, backed up by fighter-bombers, attacked al-Qaem and Karbala. Then the insurgents started openly recruiting, running basic social services, even collecting taxes in nearby Haditha, Heet and Ramadi. The UK and US switched their forces to attack the insurgents there. Within weeks, al-Qaem and Karbala were back under resistance control.

The tactics of the resistance have been effective. Marines have been killed in the province of Anbar at the rate of one a day in August. Constant US losses - helping turn the American public against the war - continue to demoralise the occupation forces.

Back in July, US general George Casey predicted a substantial reduction in US troops by summer 2006. Of course, he did not mean total withdrawal. After all, the US is building 14 mili-

IRAQ: NO TO THE IMPERIALIST SWINDLE - FOR A REVOLUTIONARY CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY!

tary bases, including its biggest overseas facility, and four airfields in Iraq.

Now General Peter Schoomaker estimates troop levels of 100,000 will remain in Iraq for at least four more years.

Contrary to pro-occupation reports the country's slide to inter-communal civil war - is far from inevitable, though attempts by the puppet government to force through the federal constitution with imperialist support make such an outcome more likely.

Salam al-Maliki, the transport minister closely linked to Moqtada al-Sadr, the radical Shi'a leader, has become the first government minister to publicly condemn US troops. He said: "corruption, terror... and occupation are taking their daily toll on the life of Iraqi citizens." The US, he added, had divided power in Iraq along religious, ethnic and

sectarian lines and "this division has been a factor leading to its destruction."

So, what has changed in the past month? Sunni representatives, along with those closest, to al-Sadr, have refused to accept assurances that the draft constitution will not lead to Iraq's eventual break-up.

Western commentators have reported the disagreement over the constitution as Sunni Arabs not wanting to give up their power and privileges, of Shi'a and Kurds being united against them. They have not bothered to scratch the surface.

Ninety-eight percent of all Sunnis had no power or privilege under Saddam. They were brutally oppressed. Why is there so much inter-marriage between the two main Muslim sects, why do many tribes have Sunni and Shi'a strands within them, if the

Sunni have been lording over the Shi'a for 30-odd years?

Nor is it true that most Shi'a want federalism. Far from Moqtada al-Sadr being an isolated maverick, it is al-Sistani's Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (Sciri) and the Dawa party that have become converts to federalism, threatened by US officials and bribed by the prospect of a share in the oil wealth. On 27 August at least 100,000 Shi'a from the impoverished slums of Sadr City responded to Moqtada al-Sadr's call to demonstrate against the constitution. In central Iraq, and especially poor areas like Sadr City, federalism is seen for what it is: a trick to cheat most Iraqis out of the oil and give it to the American and European oil companies.

Even the Kurds are not getting what they want. The draft constitution does

not guarantee the right to secession for any of the country's ethnic groups. Article 107 states: "Federal authorities should preserve Iraq's unity, security, independence and sovereignty and its democratic federal system."

The constitution is no step forward for the oppressed people of Iraqi Kurdistan. First, their democratic right to self-determination is again to be denied, not least because this would incur the wrath of US ally and Kurdish oppressor, Turkey. Second, their autonomous status will, in practice, be dependent on an unprincipled alliance with US imperialism. This is a trap, which the Kurdish nationalist leaders have willingly fashioned. The alliance will last only so long as Kurdish oil reserves serve US and British interests.

Kurdish workers and farmers must break from their leaders and seek an alliance with the anti-imperialist Iraqi resistance if they are to achieve real self-determination. The occupation's defeat is actually a pre-condition for any national group in Iraq attaining freedom.

Similarly, the Iraqi resistance is playing into the occupiers' hands if it fails to give clear support to the Kurdish right to independence. By showing that Kurdish workers and peasants have nothing to fear and everything to gain from joining the anti-imperialist struggle, it can remove one of the supports in Iraq for the US/UK-led occupation.

Federalism is a classic piece of "divide and rule" politics, and based on similar constitutional settlements that have been foisted on Bosnia and Northern Ireland in recent years.

By treating Sunni and Shi'a Arabs, and the Kurds as three separate political entities, the occupation forces can constantly play off one against the other, while remaining the ultimate arbiter, controlling the outcome in each dispute.

Meanwhile, the most corrupt and reactionary forces within each community - like the Badr brigades, who tortured and killed thousands of Iraqi soldiers when they fought alongside Iran in the 1990-98 Gulf war, and the Kurdish Peshmerga militia - become the official armed forces of whole regions. Federalism is thus a bulwark against the emergence of any revolutionary working class, or even radical nationalist, politics.

Workers, youth and women of Iraq must completely reject this swindle.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND RELIGION

US concerns for democratic rights are cosmetic, as is revealed by its promotion of the constitution's Article 2:

2.1. Islam is a main source for legislation.

a. No law may contradict Islamic standards.

b. No law may contradict democratic standards.

c. No law may contradict the essential rights and freedoms mentioned in this constitution.

Liberal commentators and some women's rights activists in Iraq have made much of the fact that this waters down Islam's role from "the main source" to "a main source" and that there is a guarantee that at least 25 per cent of the parliament's deputies would be women. But this is mere window-dressing; on the streets, the constitution, if established, will be an enormous blow to Iraqi women.

In July, it was reported that the British army stood by while the reactionary Badr brigade, loyal to al-Sistani's Sciri and closely linked to the Iraqi police and army, marched onto

the Basra university campus and assaulted women not dressed according to their repressive code.

In Baghdad, more women have taken to wearing the veil, not from religious conviction, but because going uncovered makes them a target for rapists, or round ups by the Badr brigade on the charge of not being "honourable", for which the punishment can be death. The resistance could tap a rich well of support among Iraqi women if it unequivocally stood for the complete separation of the mosque and state.

Most Iraqis want to keep their newly found freedom to worship, evident in the huge numbers rallying to the holy sites on religious holidays, most recently on 31 August in northern Baghdad.

But the tragedy that unfolded that day, when rumours of a Sunni suicide bomber led to panic and the deaths of 1,000 pilgrims, underlines the dangers when religious divisions become the basis for establishing political power, economic wealth and social privileges.

Only a secular state that enshrines equal rights for all religions and privileges for none can remove such dangers.

For a revolutionary workers' party

Many still support the constitution, however flawed. The only alternative, they say, is the imposition of sharia (Islamic) law, undemocratic rule by militia and a civil war. They point to towns like Haditha, where sharia law is imposed, to argue that the armed resistance will never support women's rights or the separation of mosque from state.

But this simply shows that the working class has not yet come to the head of the resistance to the occupation. Despite huge obstacles - unemployment running at 70 per cent, privatisation of large parts of the economy, privileges for yellow pro-imperialist unions like the IFTU - the working class has begun to organise real unions and oppose the occupation. The Iraqi working class must take the opportunity to rise to the head of the resistance and form its own party, using its methods of struggle.

Against the fake constitution, it needs to fight for the convening of a constituent assembly,

independent of the occupiers and their allies in the Iraqi state forces. Everyone over 15 years old should have the right to vote for assembly delegates and to recall and replace those delegates, should they fail to represent the views of their constituents.

Such an assembly should work out a national plan for the reconstruction of the country, through establishing social ownership and working class control of the oil industry, infrastructure and banks. All contracts signed under previous regimes should be annulled and privatised enterprises nationalised with no compensation. Full democratic rights should be granted to women and gays, to Shia, Sunni and Christian, to Arab, Kurd, Turkman and Assyrian.

A campaign for such an assembly should start now. The danger, otherwise, is that people vote for the constitution, seeing no alternative, or reject it leading to another round of fake US-

controlled elections in December. In the longer term sectarian civil war, led by reactionary clerical forces in a grab for the oil, remains a real possibility.

Unions, like the General Union of Oil Employees, which have already achieved much in the fight for wages and against privatisation, need to enter the field of politics. The workers' economic demands can only be secured today in Iraq through a political struggle for power.

The general strike to oust the government and the workers' militia to expel the occupiers and impose revolutionary order are key tactics in the next stage of the struggle. The stakes are high. Either the imperialists control the oil, with a new local ruling class under its thumb, or the Iraqi working class will. There is no third way.

- Down with the fake constitution!
- For a revolutionary constituent assembly!
- Troops out now! Victory to the Iraqi resistance!

Crumbs from Sharon's table

Sharon's Gaza withdrawal allows Israel to tighten its grip on the West Bank, argues *Simon Hardy*

The Gaza pull out of Israeli citizens and the dismantling of four settlements in the West Bank has been hailed as a victory for the Palestinians by many Middle East commentators. Even Hamas said it was a step forward. But the facts behind the recent events in Gaza paint a darker picture for the future of the Palestinians.

The sight of unarmed Israeli soldiers crying as they removed Zionist fanatics from their homes was beamed across the world, designed to show that Israel was making the most sacrifices. The hypocrisy of the soldiers who shed tears as they dismantle the illegal settlements is evidence of the inherent racism of the Israeli state and its forces. No soldiers cry when Palestinians are shot by the IDF or when Palestinian homes are demolished by Caterpillar-built armoured JCBs.

So why is Israel finally leaving the Gaza strip? The disengagement plan represents a change in policy of sections of the Israeli ruling class. The well organised and militant Hamas led guerrilla movement in the Gaza strip and the cost of maintaining control of the area for so little gain meant that a withdrawal of settlers is, in the long term, a political manoeuvre that could reap huge rewards. In exchange for pulling out 9,000 Zionist settlers in the Gaza strip the Israeli state can proceed to expand and consolidate the massive settlement programme in the West Bank, a place with far more resources and of greater strategic importance.

But Sharon's strategy has irked many hard-line Zionists in Israel and in the Knesset, especially in his own party Likud. Binyamin Netanyahu has thrown his hat into the ring to fight Sharon for the leadership. Based on current election polls he is much less popular than Sharon, but among Likud party activists he leads by a considerable margin. Both he and Sharon will play to the right now, Netanyahu because he hopes to win the support of Likud and expose the "sell out" that Sharon has engineered, and Sharon because he hopes to regain the confidence of the rank and



Israeli soldiers watch a bulldozer destroy a house in the former Jewish settlement of Netzer Hazani

file. Netanyahu represents the hard-line Zionist tendency that does not want to give an inch of ground to the Arabs, and is willing to bring down the government that it sees as discredited with compromise. Sharon will have to show incredible nerve in order not to flinch, but he will more than make up for any loss of support in Gaza by a brutal repressive policy in the West Bank. Sharon, not usually a man associated with pro Palestinian feelings or motives, is willing to see the long-term strategy, to give the crumbs from the table of a handful of dismantled settlements.

But in exchange for what? His adviser Dov Weisglass said: "The disengagement is actually formaldehyde. It supplies the amount of formaldehyde that's necessary so that there will not be a political process with the Palestinians". In other words the Zionists

want to preserve the existing set-up and avoid having to negotiate the questions that really matter such as free movement between the Gaza strip and the West Bank, the return status of millions of Palestinian refugees around the region and so on. An article in the International Herald Tribune in 2004 points out that "Gaza will remain dependent on Israel for water, sewerage, electricity, telephone access, trade and currency, which will remain the Israeli shekel."

The Israeli military will also have full control over any goods and people that go in and out of the Gaza strip, further confirming who holds the reigns of power even in the "liberated" areas of Palestine. Only a few months ago the IDF was demolishing thousands of Palestinian homes along the border with Egypt in order to create a buffer zone and prevent signifi-

cant economic of social ties with Egypt from being developed by the Arabs in Gaza. Many of the Israelis moved from the Gaza strip will be placed in areas like Negev, where they will most likely displace the local Arab Israelis, helping to deal with the thorny internal problem Israeli faces of a growing non-Jewish electorate.

The shape of a future Palestine is now becoming clearer. The Zionists have effectively created an open-air prison in the Gaza strip. They maintain control of air, sea and land borders, there is no freedom for Palestinians to leave the Gaza strip and travel to the west bank. The West Bank wall will be completed, the settlements greatly expanded, some of them so much that they will create a massive corridor linking Jerusalem to the occupied west bank. These will effectively mean the ends of Palestinian

hopes that Jerusalem will be their capital in a two state solution. The limits of the two-state solution can be seen by the entire world. The Israeli state will not give up its military domination over the Palestinians nor will it all them anything bearing the resemblance of a state. The Israeli state is the biggest barrier to peace in the region and it must be smashed. Real freedom is never given it is taken, and the Palestinian resistance and national liberation movement must not be blinded by these supposed victories.

The premiership of Mahmoud Abbas represents the ascension of a conservative and conciliationist wing of the PLO. Arafat at least talked the talk even if he did prove to be an ineffective political leader; Abbas is unashamedly committed to negotiations with the Israeli government. As long as he remains in power in Palestine, the intifada will be effectively demobilised, replaced instead with dialogue with the Israelis. This creates even more room for the Zionists to carry on with their plans unfettered by mass resistance by the Palestinians.

We can play our part in the UK by linking the anti-war movement much more clearly with the Palestinian cause. The fate of the Palestinians is bound up with the fate of the Iraqis who are currently waging their own intifada against the Imperialist occupation forces. A renewed mass anti-war movement that has solidarity with the Iraqis and Palestinians and makes it clear that as the new Iraq constitution is an attempt to legitimise the occupation, so the road maps for peace and the Gaza strip disengagement is a smoke screen to what is really happening. Only a mass, militant, armed resistance in Palestine, which seeks at every avenue to make links with Israeli workers and youth and to break them from their Zionist reactionary leadership, can carry out the necessary tasks to create a real peace for the people living there. A bi-national, socialist state can be built out of the struggle for freedom that is a struggle that will not be satisfied with crumbs from Sharon's table.

Masses force Mubarek to the polls

Social and political tensions are on the rise in Egypt as it enters an election period, writes *Michael Gatter*

In the next few months two important elections will take place in Egypt. On 7 September the country will hold its first multi-candidate presidential vote. In November parliamentary elections will take place.

President Hosni Mubarak, 77, has been in power for 24 years. His regime is a loyal servant of imperialism in the Middle East, particularly the US from which it receives nearly \$2 billion a year. It is, along with Jordan and Mauritania, the only Arab state that has formal diplomatic ties with Israel.

The huge majority of the nearly 70 million people in Egypt live in poverty. Per capita income is at just \$1,200 and while official unemployment stands at around 10 per cent, it is widely believed to be twice that.

Against this background, there is a rise in mass opposition against the regime and growing discontent among layers of Egypt's bourgeoisie and middle strata. Given the decades of dictatorship and the terrible betrayal of Egypt's strongest work-

ing class party – the Stalinist Communist Party – mass protest sentiments are often channelled into various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois movements.

This is particularly true for the Muslim Brotherhood – a conservative Islamist movement founded in 1928. It was bloodily suppressed under the Nasser regime in the 1950s and has been banned since then.

Today it claims to have an active membership of two million and support from another three million in Egypt. It has offices across the country and 15 members in parliament, who stood as independents.

The Muslim Brotherhood has become a conservative, populist mass force similar to the Islamist forces in Turkey in the 1990s (before they came into government). It refrains from organising violent opposition to the government and while the regime regularly arrests some of its activists it has by and large a semi-legal existence. At the same time, more radical and partly terrorist Islamist organisations are growing in the huge

slum areas of Cairo and Upper Egypt.

But there are also a number of progressive parties whose influence is growing. Several of them have formed the Egyptian Movement for Change, which is popularly known as the Kifaya (Enough) movement. It has organised a number of street protests this year and gained significant publicity.

Of course this rising activity is met by selective regime repression. Late January this year three members of the Socialist Studies Centre were arrested when they promoted a book titled *A Socialist Vision for Change in Egypt*. They were accused of distributing material inciting hatred against the government.

Also various bourgeois-liberal parties have increased their activity and some of them will stand candidates for the presidential elections. The most prominent of them are the New Wafd Party and the newly formed Al-Ghad or Tomorrow Party.

The presidential election offers the opportunity to challenge Mubarak. Indeed the regime even organised a popular referendum on 25 May to implement constitutional change to allow alternative candidates to Mubarak standing for president.

But in fact the elections are not free at all. Only candidates who are no challenge for the regime are allowed to stand against Mubarak. The strongest party – the Muslim Brotherhood who would probably become the strongest force in free elections – cannot stand a candidate.

Another example of the regimes policy is the fact that – according to Aljazeera's correspondent in Cairo – "the election oversight committee decided to exclude 1,700 judges from observing the presidential election on the grounds that they had not submitted their names in the lists issued. (Aljazeera's) sources said the excluded judges had adopted anti-government positions..."

Therefore many opposition forces are calling for a boycott of the elections.

While the rigged elections will not lead to any different outcome than the confirmation of the Mubarak regime the growing opposition activity around it

demonstrate the changed political and social conditions. While the economy is booming – GDP is expected to rise by 6 per cent this year – inequality and unemployment are on the rise too. In May this year the regime reintroduced food vouchers in the face of rapidly increasing inflation. Mubarak had to promise during the election campaign to create 700,000 new jobs every year to avoid rising unemployment given the vastly growing population.

The Bush government fully supports its lackey in Cairo. But at the same time they fear a coming political and social explosion in the biggest Arab country. It is trying to pressurise Mubarak to change his policy and integrate sectors of the bourgeois opposition.

Whatever the outcome – and it is almost a certainty to be a Mubarak victory – socialists and the working class must continue to protest against the worsening economic situation and demand greater political freedom such as the right to organise and for free and fair elections.

Workers challenge union alliance with ANC

Rising resistance from the unions and the townships puts the ANC – Cosatu alliance under strain. *Lesley Day* looks at the prospects of a new direction for the South African working class

The three-way coalition between the African National Congress (ANC), the trade union federation (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) has ruled South Africa since the fall of apartheid. The ANC itself has deep roots within the masses and extensive patronage has allowed it to retain support. The flawed policy of the Cosatu leadership and the pro-bourgeois policy of the majority leadership of the SACP have allowed the partnership to continue.

These factors have meant that the Alliance has survived in power since the ANC won its first election. The mass of the working class has stayed loyal, expecting improvements, receiving some and hoping for more. These hopes and the lack of any available alternative helped the ANC receive nearly 70 per cent of the popular vote in last year's elections

But the coalition has been rocked by grassroots anti-privatisation campaigns, extensive strikes in the past few months including a general strike, and the row over the dismissal of ANC deputy Jacob Zuma.

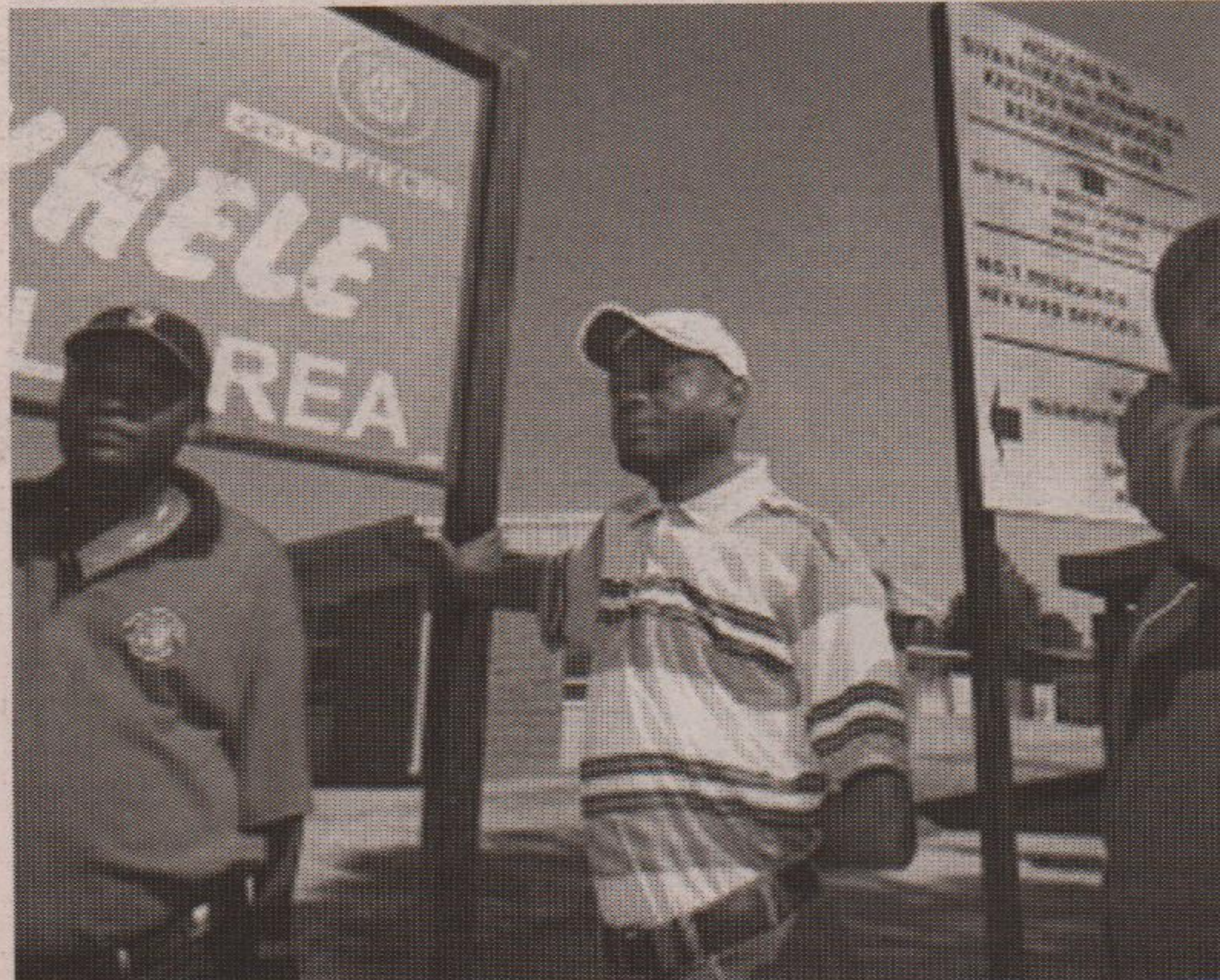
NEOLIBERAL TROUBLES

Underlying this instability are economic difficulties. Under globalisation, South Africa faces competition for its manufactured goods, for example in textiles. Gold can no longer cushion the economy, and other mining interests face a profit squeeze. De Beers has just announced the closure of its historic Kimberley diamond mine.

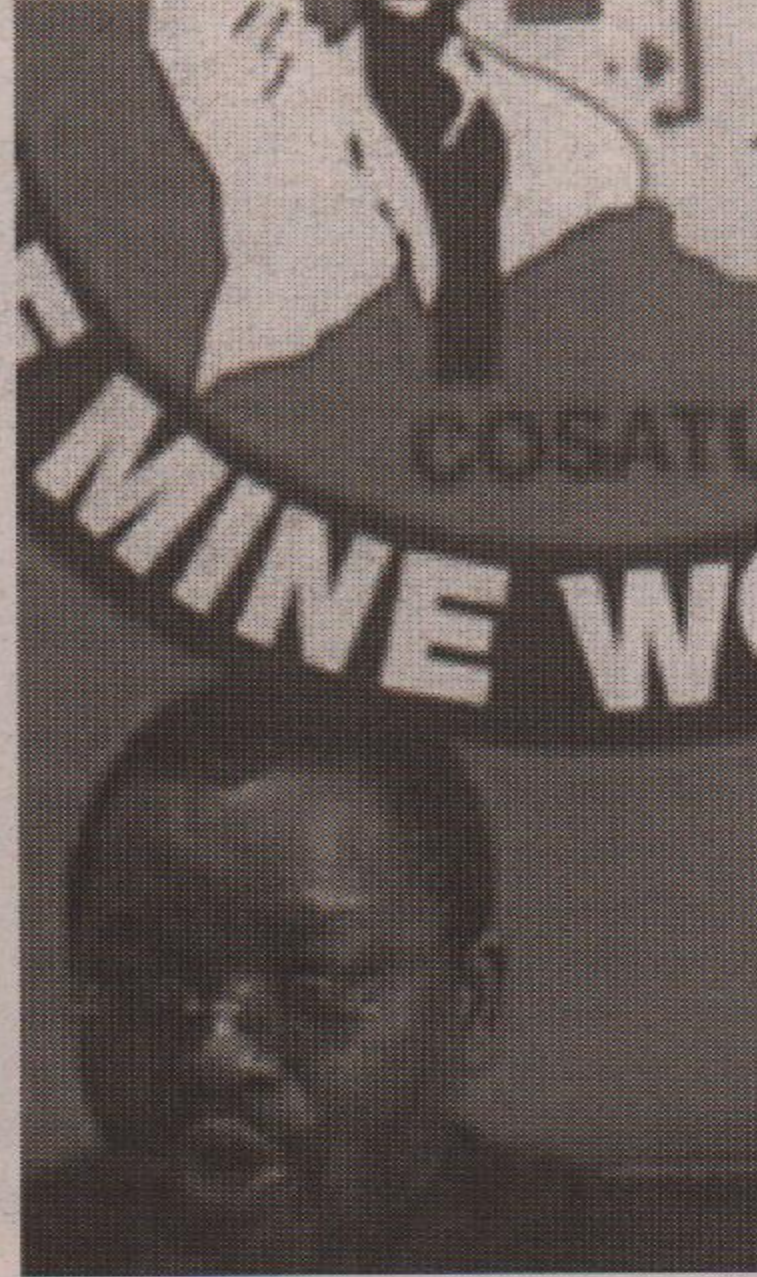
Growth has been running at 3-4 per cent a year – far short of what is needed to tackle the endemic unemployment. The official figures reveal that the racial divide is still strong, with 31 per cent of black Africans unemployed as against 5 per cent of whites – unofficially, unemployment among black Africans runs at 40 per cent. In many cases, where workers have lost jobs in manufacturing, they have joined the growing band of those reliant on casualised labour.

To attract investment South Africa has followed the neoliberal demands of the International Monetary Fund. Yes, there can be housing, water, electricity and so forth, but it will only be done by involving the private sector and levying hefty charges. The same firms, which have been raking in profits from PFI and PPP schemes in Britain and France, have been eagerly signing up for the schemes in South Africa. In the townships, the delivery of utilities has been accompanied by massive charges.

In fact the gap between rich and poor has widened in South Africa. SACP leader Blade Nzimande acknowledged this to the party's special conference: "Economic stabilisation and modest growth over the past decade has brought untold wealth to a privileged few, while the wage gap increases". One estimate suggests that, in 1994, workers' wages accounted for 50 per cent of total income while profits accounted for 27 per cent. Now the figures are: 44 per cent to workers and 33 per cent to profits.



Striking gold miners out on strike in August, and Gwede Mantashe, general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers



All these problems have fuelled the anger and militant protests of the past few years.

Grassroots organisations have grown up in townships in all the major cities and towns, with many gathered together in the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF). In some areas local ANC councillors have sided with protestors and, like APF activist Trevor Ngwane, ended up outside the ANC. In other cases the ANC is able to maintain loyalty, often with promises of career advances.

This year in Durban, residents, furious that a promise of new housing had been abandoned, blockaded roads and then marched to get those arrested released. Residents from another part of the city attempted to deliver a memorandum to President Thabo Mbeki when he was delivering a speech on Freedom Day – only to be confronted by police and arrested!

"We must stop this business of people going into the street to demonstrate about lack of delivery" complained Mbeki "These are the things the youth used to do in the struggle against apartheid." Quite.

This year's strikes have included gold miners, public sector and retail workers, as well as a general strike called by Cosatu. The miners crippled gold production. They won a wage hike, but will have to campaign further for proper accommodation.

The gap between bosses and workers figured in many of this year's strikes. "There is one common thread in these disputes" argued Cosatu's Patrick Craven, "there is a huge gap between people at the top and people at the bottom, and several of the companies hit by the strikes just issued results with huge profits and awarded big increases for the top directors but none for the others".

Workers on strike also had to tackle repression. Security guards with tear gas attacked chrome miners. Local government workers faced stun grenades and rubber bullets on a protest in Cape Town, where they had protested for better pay for dirty jobs by dumping rubbish in the streets!

Cosatu leader are under pressure. They fear that action will spiral out of

control and lead to a break from the ANC government.

The federation has not officially called off the "rolling mass action" for jobs and against poverty but it has postponed strike action due for September. At its August meeting, the Central Committee did not even discuss the strike wave.

Some working class militants have focused their anger on the dismissal of deputy president Jacob Zuma, caught up in a corruption scandal. Cosatu and SACP activists are angry that someone, believed to be pro-worker, has been dumped. Protests grew after anti-corruption agents stormed Zuma's house. There are suspicions that he has been stitched up and will not receive a fair trial. The SACP, previously a backer of Zuma, finds itself embarrassed by his actions but compelled to "salute the role he has played within our movement and in government".

Yet the evidence against Zuma is compelling – he is charged with receiving bribes in exchange for government contracts. It is not in the interests of worker militants to line up behind ANC leaders who have been lining their pockets – especially someone who was a full supporter of the ANC's shift to neoliberalism.

WORKERS PARTY

Workers need independent trade unions and crucially their own political party, separate from the bourgeois ANC.

In the past, those for a new working class party have been a tiny minority. But recently there has been much more discussion – for instance there has been pressure inside the SACP for it to stand candidates independently of the ANC. Activists around the Anti-Privatisation Forum, who called for a boycott of the last election, are discussing standing candidates in the forthcoming local government elections.

A new coalition against poverty is the latest sign of the times. Calling the past decade a "disaster for the poor", Tony Ehrenreich, the Western Cape secretary of Cosatu, launched the coalition against poverty. The Cape Town rally

cheered him when he said: "We never fought to make a few black people wealthy, we fought to enrich all of our people." The coalition involves Cosatu, various grassroots organisations, churches and NGOs.

The coalition has some ANC leaders rattled. President Mbeki used his address to the last Cosatu conference to stress the ties of the ANC to organised labour. This is in tune with most of the Cosatu leadership's view that the unions are best placed to influence the ANC by maintaining the Alliance.

The SACP have been invited to join but its leader Nzimande responded to the coalition by saying he "assumed it would not become a party" – the SACP sees itself as the workers party, despite its ties to the ANC.

This new development can build and strengthen social forums or act as the midwife of a new workers party. Or it could become a trap for the working class, tying it to another popular front and demanding it abandons its own interests for the sake of unity with the churches and progressive bosses.

Cosatu leaders certainly want it to remain a respectable ginger group.

"This coalition would strengthen both the government and the ANC's hand to drive a more radical transformation agenda," argues Cosatu's Ehrenreich. "It is infinitely more desirable to have the political confrontation in the boardroom than in the streets."

The spread of a new working class alliance (not tied to the respectability of the churches and NGOs) could reignite the militant strike action of the past few months and link it to community and trade union campaigns.

The coming local government elections will be an opportunity for working class candidates to stand independently and to debate a political programme for change that doesn't depend on corrupt leaders or manoeuvring in boardrooms.

During the elections and in the campaigns and strikes ahead, socialists should argue for the need for workers to have their own party with unequivocally socialist and revolutionary policies.

Zimbabwe: drive out Mugabe!

While the gap between rich and poor continues to grow inside South Africa, the government prepares to bail out Zimbabwe by paying some of its debts, writes Keith Spencer. Teams from South Africa and the IMF are currently in Zimbabwe, coming up with repayments' deals. Last month, Zimbabwe managed to repay \$120m of its \$300m international debt to the IMF.

In return for paying debts, South Africa will get increased trade and investment opportunities. And along with South African money, there has also been an influx of cash and up to 10,000 businessmen and farmers from China. Most of the money and people have either gone into small-scale companies or tobacco farms – to feed the huge Chinese cigarette market.

And to allow this foreign capital to flourish, Mugabe and Zanu-PF embarked over the summer on Operation Murambatsvina (Drive out trash) to destroy competition. In Harare, the army and police cleared out the shantytowns at gunpoint, destroying houses, shops, a church orphanage, a mosque and a public toilet built with World Bank money, in what Mugabe termed an exercise in urban renewal. A UN report estimated up to 700,000 people lost their homes or livelihoods in the operation, although some critics have said that the numbers are inaccurate.

If it was only part of an urban renewal campaign then why did the local government minister refer to the people displaced as those "who have been making the country ungovernable by their criminal activity"? Or why did the Zimbabwe police commissioner say that the operation was to "clean out the maggots bent on destroying the economy"? The Whitecliff Farm area was cleared to provide land for 10,000 homes. Imagine how many people in a shantytown would have lived on an area that size. If the aim is to build 150,000 homes, as is claimed, then the scale of the clearances can be gauged.

The Movement for Democratic Change claims that it was done to punish its supporters in urban areas. This has some truth: the operation was carried out on the orders of the government-appointed Harare Commission, which has taken over the running of the city from the MDC-led local council.

MPs have also passed laws this month that empower the government to expropriate farms without being legally challenged. They have also given the government powers to take away the passports of those deemed to be security threats, and set up a second, higher chamber, the Senate. It will have 66 deputies, six of whom Mugabe will appoint, plus the 30 MPs he can also appoint.

Mugabe's regime, like the man himself, has entered its dotage. But this only makes him more dangerous. These extra powers, along with Mugabe's habitual use of police, party militia – and now bulldozers – against the working class, make a fightback more urgently needed than ever.

The workers and peasants must follow the recent examples of the strikes that have rocked South Africa and the anti-privatisation struggles in the townships. To do this successfully, they will need to organise their own defence guards, even if this means abandoning the chase for "respectability" that MDC and union leader Morgan Tsvangirai incessantly craves.

Bolivia: where next?

The Bolivian revolution is at a turning point. As the major organisations prepare for the next round of struggles, *Dave Ellis* analyses the situation, after his recent visit to the country

In the past five years the workers and peasants of Bolivia repeatedly rose up to demand that the national resources of their country should not be handed over to foreign multinationals. They insisted that they be used to create jobs, homes, healthcare, and schools for the ordinary people of this desperately poor country.

In June this year the country was on the verge of a social revolution (See page 11, summer edition, *Workers Power*). Strikes, occupations, road blockades paralysed the country. But no political party existed to lead the workers and peasants to power. A lull in the mass mobilisations ensued. But Bolivia is not a land of peace and quiet. Everywhere the militants of the mass struggles are gathering to discuss, debate and argue about the way forward.

The question is, can the most politically experienced activists, the vanguard of the working class, the peasants and the urban poor use this period to thrash out a revolutionary strategy and organise for the conquest of power? Or will the bourgeoisie use the elections to trick the masses once again, demobilise the movement and re-stabilise imperialism's control over Bolivia?

The Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) and its presidential candidate, Evo Morales, have a very good chance of winning the elections in December. For most of the masses this would appear to be a victory for them and their struggles over the past five years. Certainly the US imperialists and the Bolivian ruling class do not want to see Morales win.

One reason is that the main social support of the MAS is among the peasants, particularly the coca growers (cocaleros) of the Chapare region, who have resisted their crop's eradication programmes, forced on successive Bolivian governments by the White House. As well as agreeing that the natural resources of the country should be used to benefit the population, these peasant and indigenous people also wish to see progress on their demands over land and ethnic rights. This is presented as a demand for a new constituent assembly, which would create a new regime, where the needs of this and other sections of society, excluded from power, could be met.

MAS TREACHERY

But during the days of October 2003 and May-June 2005 the MAS played a treacherous role. The demand of the movement was for the nationalisation of the gas. The MAS only wanted to tax the profits of the energy corporations at a higher level. The MAS leadership was prepared to call a halt to the action of its supporters, the moment a new president promised just to look at these demands or call fresh elections.

A government of the MAS, with Evo Morales as president, will not meet the burning needs of the people of Bolivia. Despite its natural wealth, Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in the Americas. Most of the population live on around a dollar a day. There are high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Major cities like El Alto, with a population of 800,000, have many districts with no basic infrastructure, water services or electricity. Huge numbers of peasants are left without any land to cultivate. Meanwhile, US and European corporations continue to suck the country dry.

Without nationalisation of the gas,



Miners on the march

how could a MAS government industrialise, build up the country's infrastructure and provide comprehensive health and education services and decent housing? The MAS has no plans to end the system of the latifundios, where a tiny minority own most of the productive land. Now the MAS is even talking about making a deal with some of the right wing neoliberal parties to delay the convening of the constituent assembly – the main demand of its own supporters!

Yet the majority of the workers, peasants and urban poor will vote for the MAS simply because there is no other alternative to the right wing. This has happened because the organisations that led the rebellions in October 2003 and May-June 2005 have failed to build any political alternative. These organisations are the COB, the COR-El Alto and the Fejuve (see box).

When commenting on the failure of the organisations of the workers and peasants to win their demands and take power in October 2003, the leader of the COB, Jaime Solares, said what was lacking was a revolutionary party. So why hadn't the leadership of the COB organised such a party? In recent months, faced with the coming elections, the COB set up a political commission. A resolution was agreed to form a "political instrument" of the workers' movement.

FIVE YEARS OF RESISTANCE

Bolivia has been in the forefront of resisting the neoliberal policies of consecutive governments.

2000 Water War in the city of Cochabamba, where an explosion of anger greeted the news that the water services would be privatised, with a massive hike in prices. The people from the poorest barrios (districts) invaded the city centre and blockaded it. Despite heavy repression, they won. The private company, part of the Bechtel corporation, was forced to withdraw.

2003 With the discovery of \$150 billion worth of natural gas reserves, the scene was set for a further battle over privatisation. The Gas War of October 2003, with a general strike and road blockades, led to the fall of President Sanchez de Lozada.

2004 In the militant city of El Alto, the workers, peasants and poor continued their fight against neoliberalism. Last year they fought a campaign to kick out the privatised water company, Aguas de Illimani. Once again, a transnational corporation was forced to get out.

2005 Then in May-June the unresolved issue of the gas led to a nationwide uprising for its nationalisation. Another president was forced to resign and a caretaker president, Rodriguez, was put in place to oversee the transitional period until the elections this December.

The resolution reiterated the need for a workers' and popular government to resolve the national crisis. It also underlined that the electoral question was secondary, and that direct action methods, such as general strikes and blockades, were necessary for the workers' movement to impose its will. It argued that the "political instrument" should be formed by the election of representatives from local assemblies of the trade unions and other social movements.

What was totally lacking was what policies this instrument would fight for, and what it should do to achieve them. In short, what was this political instrument – a revolutionary workers' party or yet another co-ordination?

The whole workers' movement is currently embroiled in a debate around this question. The miners' union delegate conference in August discussed this proposal in depth. For some, the COB should remain independent and not get involved in politics. Others, although they agreed that the COB needs a political wing, were fearful that careerist leaders would use it. Others still were completely opposed to participating in the elections at all. One delegate made it clear that he believed that what the movement lacked in June was a political instrument that could take power, a revolutionary command structure. The equivocal character of the term "polit-

ical instrument" hides all these contradictory alternatives.

POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE

The permanent secretary of the miners' union forcefully made the point that the lack of a political party of the working class movement had not just been a failure of the events of the previous uprisings, but had been a failure in the whole history of the Bolivian workers' movement, and that those parties that existed like the POR (Workers Revolutionary Party) and the PCB (Communist Party of Bolivia) had failed to construct such a mass revolutionary party.

Absolutely correct. The absence of a struggle to get the workers' organisations to commit themselves to building

a workers' party, on a revolutionary programme, allowed a whole string of nationalist and populist parties, from the MNR in the 1950s to the MAS today to exploit the workers' and poor peasants' votes, and thwart their most basic aspirations.

These debates show the workers' vanguard have learned much in the past period. But despite this, they have not achieved sufficient clarity to set out to win the full support of the masses. The COB failed to agree even to set up a "political instrument" at its last delegate meeting. This has led to a vacuum. Within a very short space of time this vacuum has been filled. Important sections of the workers' movement and the social movements have agreed to support the electoral alliance of the MAS.

In agreement for candidates, the Fejuve will support the MAS, so too will the coordinadora of Cochabamba. It is also looking like the COR-El Alto will make some agreement to vote for the MAS candidates.

This will only lead to the workers' movement imprisoning itself within an alliance that will limit its demands to those acceptable to all classes present. This will include sections of the capitalist class, as the MAS is in discussions with a bosses federation in La Paz. This is a popular front – a noose around the necks of the workers movement.

In the coming period it will be essential for the political vanguard of the working class to refuse to give any support to such an alliance. The vanguard will need to patiently explain that this is a trap for the working class and that the revolutionary movement needs to have its own strategy and programme, and the organisation to deliver this – a revolutionary party.

MAIN ORGANISATIONS OF STRUGGLE

COB. The COB is the national federation of the trade unions. The main force within the COB is the miners' union (FSTMB). Despite the miners' union only numbering 10,000 it takes a political lead within the COB and is recognised as playing a vanguard and central role in the workers' movement.

Other important unions include the factory workers' union, the urban and rural teachers' unions, the state employees' union and the confederation of transport workers. The COB includes not only salaried workers but also organises impoverished self-employed groups within the so-called informal sector. The main peasants' union is also affiliated to the COB. It is recognised in the statutes of the COB that the proletariat should play the leading role within the organisation.

COR-EL ALTO. There are organisations of the COB in every region called COR. In El Alto the COR is highly organised and played a leading role in the events of May-June. El Alto was the centre of the revolutionary events and the slogan of the movement is "El Alto: always on its feet, never on its knees". As both the COB organisations and El Alto play such a significant role in the country, the COR-El Alto has a national presence even though it only organises in El Alto.

FEJUVE. The Fejuve is the federation of neighbourhood committees in El Alto. In every district of El Alto there are assemblies. These assemblies send delegates to the Fejuve. The Fejuve is not a purely workers' organisation, but there is a very strong connection between the Fejuve and the COR-El Alto. Most of the people who participate in the Fejuve are unemployed workers who survive by working in the informal sector.

The Fejuve was initially organised to demand of the municipal authorities and national government that it provide essential services for the new barrios. For many years the various neoliberal governments used the Fejuve to control the mass movement and prevent mobilisations. Following the successful struggle in Cochabamba the situation in the country changed. The policy and leadership of the Fejuve was transformed, and, in the October 2003 and May-June 2005 events, El Alto was the revolutionary centre of the movement.

ALL SMILES. PDS leader Gysi with Lafontaine at the launch of the Left Party.



Left Party stands, but will it fight?

The coming German elections will see a new left party standing throughout the country. *Martin Suchanek* of Arbeitermacht asks whose party will it be?

With two weeks to go before Germany's snap general election, the mass media, and the established parties have started a slander campaign against the newly formed Left Party.

Although they condemn the new party as a plot by East German Stalinists and failed SPD and union officials from the West to destroy Germany's future, the bosses are well aware that the party's leaders are very far from being such a threat. But why are they ringing the alarm bells and what is the background of this new electoral formation?

The birth and growth of the Left Party are a response to the massive attacks on the German working class and youth, carried out by the Social Democratic-Green Party government of Gerhard Schroeder and Joschka Fischer. Mass demonstrations and important strikes (Opel and Daimler) against government policies were derailed by the trade union bureaucracies but left a legacy of anger among working class people, causing a crisis for the SPD and its relations with the trade union leaders.

The collapse of the SPD's vote in its former stronghold, North-Rhine-Westphalia, was what prompted Schroeder to bring forward the general election in order to pre-empt the consolidation of left wing opposition. The tactic backfired. The PDS and the Electoral Alternative (Wahlalternative) joined in a common campaign, the PDS renamed itself the Left Party and opened its lists to Electoral Alternative candidates.

Initially, opinion polls gave the Left Party 15 per cent. It will certainly enter the Bundestag (German parliament) as a significant force with 8 to 10 per cent of the vote. In East Germany, the PDS heartland, it is registering 30 per cent support and may become the region's strongest party.

THE LEFT PARTY

In the coming elections, the Left Party will be seen by class-conscious workers and many more as the only way to voice their opposition to neo-liberalism and the inevitable attacks by a future Merkel government – be it a Grand Coalition or a conservative-liberal one. Against this background, the German section of the League for the Fifth International, Arbeitermacht, is calling for a critical vote for the Left Party.

The Left Party has attracted many new members from the SPD and the trade union bureaucracy. The PDS and Electoral Alternative leaderships want to fuse the two parties as soon as possible but they do not want to turn it into a fighting party, let alone a revolutionary one. They want a "good old" Keynesian social democratic party whose strategic goal is to make the SPD social democratic again and win over a section of the German employers to Keynesian policies.

So these leaderships have no intention of making the PDS ministers in the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Berlin regional governments resign from their posts or denounce the 10 per cent wage cuts these governments have imposed.

The fused party will have to attract support from shop steward committees, initiatives, alliances against Agenda 2010 and, in particular, from young people

And pressure to adopt such a policy comes not only from the PDS. The "red" Oskar Lafontaine intervened to dilute the PDS-election programme, opposing the demand for a 1,400 Euro/month minimum wage. This was supported by trade union leaders like Bsirske from the main public sector union, ver.di.

Lafontaine's immigration policy is even worse. In his regular column in *Bild* (Germany's equivalent of the *Sun*) he has supported proposals for EU-built camps in North Africa to prevent refugees coming into Europe.

WHAT DIRECTION?

A layer of union officials, and some labour aristocratic workers, want the Left Party to be a united left wing of the union bureaucracy, but the Party's fate will not simply be decided in the backrooms of union offices. Whether the current leaders like it or not, they will come up against the hopes of rank and file workers who need a party to fight against the next government's attacks, many of whom expect the current leaderships to lead that fight.

In spring and summer next year, we can expect a massive attack on Ger-

many's national wage bargaining system and on significant industrial working class strongholds. This will be when the class struggle itself will decide whether the Left Party becomes a tool for working class fight back or just another instrument for a sell-out.

The bosses' offensive will allow little time for the Left Party to oscillate between its more radical promises and concessions to neo-liberalism, imperialist war and racism. How to prevent Lafontaine, ex-PDS leader Gregor Gysi and hundreds more old reformist functionaries leading the Left Party into another blind alley is, therefore, a burning question.

There are two main fronts on which to fight. One is inside the social movements and the trade unions for a programme of co-ordinated action against the bosses' and the government's attacks. Here, demands like the formation of councils of action and a rank and file movement in the unions and workplaces will prove crucial. Conferences, such as the one called by the German Social Forum, committees, and rank and file initiatives must organise to bring their demands into the Left Party and its conferences, while also demanding immediate support for concrete struggles. We must put the deputies and leaders of the Left Party to the test, replacing those who fail with fighting activists.

The other lever is direct intervention in the Left Party. Of course, the leaderships of the Electoral Alternative and PDS will try to stage-manage the launch as much as possible but there will be limits to this. The fused party will have to attract support from shop steward committees, initiatives and alliances against Agenda 2010 and, in particular, from young people.

For Arbeitermacht and Revolution, the call for open conferences to form a new mass working class party beyond the membership of PDS and the Electoral Alternative is a crucial demand. In mid-October, a first, important meeting, a national "open youth conference" (sponsored by Solid, the PDS youth organisation) will take place in Berlin.

Such conferences provide an important arena in which to rally support for a programme of action and the struggle to make the new party a truly working class party, which combines the struggle against the bosses' offensive with the fight for the overthrow of capitalism through socialist revolution.

Mao: the Unknown Story, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, Jonathan Cape, £25.00
Reviewed by **Din Wong**

This political biography of Mao Zedong has received critical acclaim and fawning reviews. Some described its revelations and indictment of Mao's tyranny as bombshells, exposing the true scale of Mao's oppression and genocidal manias, casting new light on every episode in his tumultuous life and re-writing Chinese history.

Chang and Halliday base their work on interviews with Mao's contemporaries and their families as well as foreign sources and an array of Chinese and foreign archives. The result is a chronological narrative cataloguing in great detail a litany of Mao's crimes: his unprincipled manoeuvres and manipulation of Soviet aid to gain control of the Red Army in his bid for power; his predilection for inflicting violence, torture and death on his opponents, including members of the communist party, both before and after the revolution; his penchant for the good life and bureaucratic privilege in contrast to his callous disregard for the welfare of his followers in the Red Bases and his subjects after the revolution; his falsification of important episodes of Communist history such as the Long March; his promiscuity and lack of personal hygiene.

Much of the material is indeed new. If it obliges those who accepted Mao's revolutionary credentials to think again, it is welcome. At the same time, the fact that Mao rose to power over the bodies of his rivals, that he trampled on internal party democracy – and in society as a whole – that, once in power, he launched voluntaristic campaigns that led to the deaths of millions is not at all new. However, putting the historical record straight as regards the Great Helmsman is not, ultimately, what this book is about.

That Mao was a villain is certainly not news to Trotskyists. Among the interviewees quoted are Zheng Chao-lin, listed as one of Mao's "old friends and colleagues", and Wang Fan-xi, a "Top Echelon key witness to historical events". The authors seem unaware that both Zheng and Wang were Trotskyist oppositionists within the CCP and had been since the late 1920s. After 1949, they and their comrades continued to organise within the urban working class until their organisation was suppressed in 1952. Zheng was imprisoned by Mao's regime for 27 years and Wang spent 40 years as a political refugee, unable to return to China because he would not accept the offer of rehabilitation by denouncing his comrades.

This apparent oversight, however, serves a purpose. By writing out of their account not only the political content of the

clashes within the Communist Party, but the entire sequence of mass movements and revolutionary crises that rocked China and created the context in which Mao came to power, Chang and Halliday seek to present the megalomania of Mao Zedong as the sole driving force of the Chinese Revolution.

It is this which makes the book, for all its meticulous research, a shallow and intellectually unsatisfactory work. It is the "bad men" theory of history writ large, and long. The authors cannot explain in more than 800 pages how one man could enforce his will on the most populous country in the world.

Yet such an explanation is not difficult; the degeneration of the CCP into a regime of bureaucratic dictatorship shares many features with the degeneration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Under the regime of War Communism, from 1918-1921, elements of the CPSU and the Soviet state, notably the Cheka and its related bureaucratic institutions, operated virtually autonomously, enforcing often ruthless laws in order to maintain the revolutionary regime. In time this generated a powerful cadre,

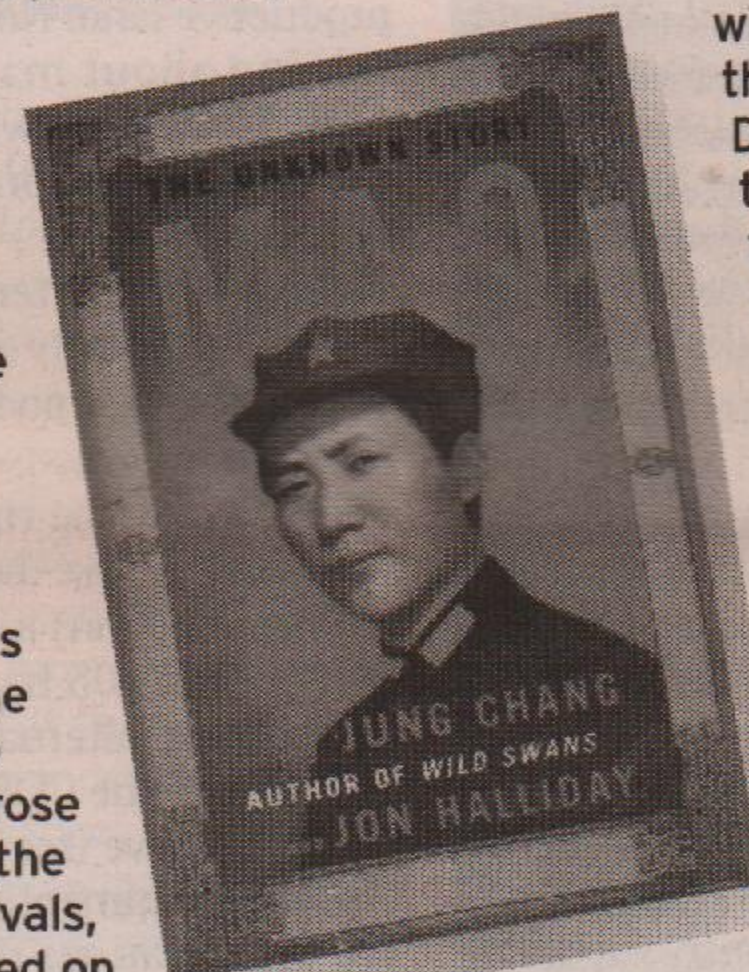
which identified itself with the destiny of the revolution. During the 1920s, this stratum within the Soviet state became the principal base of support for the Stalin faction and, in the course of forcing through collectivisation and industrialisation, it provided both the model of party organisation

and the apparatus of oppression.

In China, despite the obvious differences of circumstances, the evolution of the party organisation in the so-called "soviet base areas" of the late 1920s and 1930s created comparable dynamics; a partly military, partly political and thoroughly hierarchic party regime, sustained in a potentially hostile peasant environment by an elitist political consciousness and a programme of national modernisation and industrialisation. Hierarchies, however, need a source of ultimate authority – and figures like Stalin and Mao fill that role.

By turning reality upside down, seeing the Communist Party as an expression of Mao's personality rather than vice versa, the authors reduce the whole revolutionary movement in China to a consequence of Mao's drive for power. By condemning that drive, they equally condemn the whole movement, and that is the real purpose of this book.

It is, at heart, a polemic against all revolutionary movements – and, by extension, a paean of praise to the restoration of capitalism in China.



Solidarnosc

Twenty-five years ago, Solidarnosc the union was born. The union marked the beginning of the end for the Soviet bloc, but did it inevitably lead to the restoration of capitalism? No, argues *Alison Higgins*, but the lack of a revolutionary party meant the 10 million strong union was defeated in the winter of 1981, and on its broken bones a restorationist movement did later triumph

By 1980 Poland was in an economic crisis: the second most indebted country in the world. The regime tried to make the working class pay through massive price rises in the summer.

It was already difficult to obtain basic foodstuffs in Poland - unless you were a party apparatchik and could spend your higher allowances in "dollar shops". "What do you call a Polish sandwich?" goes a joke of the time, "a meat coupon between two slices of bread".

Corruption was rife throughout the regime. Official and management posts were reserved for party members, and all key appointments were vetted by the ruling party, the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP). Their special rations and big apartments were an ever present aggravation to workers.

Previous crises had led to the development of a layer of experienced militants who were profoundly mistrustful of the official unions, which regulated production, improved productivity and were often used against workers. They also recognised that occupations and inter-factory strike committees were effective tools.

The new mood of militancy was also coloured by illusions in the easy life under western capitalism. In Poland, pro-capitalist sentiment was encouraged by the national oppression workers felt at the hands of the Soviet Union. Not only was Polish capitalism overturned by Moscow, and not by a revolution, Moscow also controlled the PUWP. There was a real threat of Soviet troops invading, as they had in East Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Solidarnosc is born

July 1980 saw the first strikes, in the textile factories of Lublin, but it was in Gdansk that the strikes began to take on a new dimension - an independent union. The strikes in Gdansk were in protest at the sacking of an experienced militant, crane driver Ana Walentynowicz.

A sit down strike was declared at the Lenin Shipyard on 14 August. An inter-factory strike committee was formed two days later representing 20 other coastal shipyards and factories. This committee, or MKZ, drafted 21 demands and led the call for independent trade unions. Two days later another 156 factories had affiliated to the MKZ. In a tactic that should be revived today, loudspeakers relayed negotiations so that the rank and file could hear what was going on!

By the end of August the government had agreed to the 21 demands and Solidarnosc was born.

The demands consisted of:

- Democratic demands (union recognition, the right to strike, freedom of expression, the release of political prisoners).
- Economic demands (pay and an end to Saturday working) and social welfare demands (nursery provision, pensions).
- Demands that expressed the discontent with the corrupt regime: they called for the closing of the special dollar shops and equal benefits and allowances for all.
- Finally, the workers, through their new union, wanted the chance to express opinions regarding major decisions and the economy.

Trotsky's prediction was proved right that the anti-Stalinist revolution will begin "under the banner of the struggle against social inequality and political oppression...freedom of the trade unions and factory committees, the right to assembly and freedom of the press".

Polish workers now set about using occupations, sit down strikes and inter-factory committees in order to ensure the implementation of the demands.

Despite intimidation and press blackouts, a quarter of the population had joined Solidarnosc by October 1980. The PUWP responded with discussion of reforms. But the flood could not be held back: 60 per cent of Solidarnosc members joined while they were still party members and by early February 1981 half a million had given up their party cards.

The government tried to insist that Solidarnosc could only organise on a local basis - the government feared national organisation. Luckily, they had an unexpected ally in Lech Walesa, who won the union to a federal structure at Solidarnosc's first national congress in September. This was to help the state play workers in different regions off against one another.

The congress illustrated the tensions in the new movement. Should Solidarnosc concern itself primarily with purely trade union issues on a local basis? What should its relationship to the party be? Could the economy be reformed in a way that would offer a solution to the current crisis?

The Catholic Church, which enjoyed huge influence in the countryside and over significant sections of workers, was committed to the restoration of capitalism.

The virulently anti-communist Pol-

ish Pope, Jean Paul II's love for the people of Poland was only overshadowed by his fear of the organised working class. The Pope and Cardinal Wyszynski called for restraint during the August strikes and at all the key moments in the following 15 months. At Walesa's audience with the Pope in January 1981, Jean Paul II ensured that Solidarnosc members heard his message of "prudence and moderation" and of national unity "to defend the common good".

Political debate

Solidarnosc was not dominated by ideas of capitalist restoration. In fact, Walesa said that the workers' goal was not to get rid of the social ownership of the means of production but to be the "real masters of the factories". But this contrasted with the recognition by a Silesian miner that "free trade unions are like an opposition party since one doesn't exist in Poland".

To the left of Walesa was Jacek Kuron, one of the key thinkers to influence the young organisation. Kuron and other intellectuals had set up KOR - which defended workers and offered solidarity to their struggles. Kuron thought that political liberalisation would be enough to get workers to accept the austerity measures the regime - and he - believed were necessary: a theory he labelled 'limited revolution'.

The Solidarnosc "radicals", the most working class orientated of the different tendencies within the union, advocated power sharing between the workers, the church and the Stalinists. Some proposed a second chamber of parliament for workers' deputies, which would focus entirely on managing the economy, while the first chamber would concentrate on the politics. Others thought a government of national unity was the answer with power to be shared: 30 per cent to the PUWP, 25 per cent to peasants, 25 per cent to Solidarnosc, and the rest to go to the church and the openly pro-capitalist KPN.

But why did none of the major tendencies in Solidarnosc fight for a democratically planned economy as the solution to the crisis?

Polish workers' experience of Stalinist planning left many workers feeling they could manage their plants better themselves. This belief, combined with a growing distrust of the Solidarnosc leadership led to the formation of the "self-management movement". In April 1981 representatives from 17 key factories met to establish a "network" for self-management.

But decentralisation and local plant-

based initiatives could only lead in one direction - the introduction of the market and foreign trade, as the only way to turn the surplus product into money for re-investment and wages. This inevitably leads to competition between enterprises and the need to depress wages. As with co-operatives in the west, the workers will start to exploit themselves.

Only the small Fourth International grouping argued for a national plan of production, based on workers' control of the factories. Unfortunately, what was missing from their programme was that the workers needed to overthrow the regime through a revolution, for which they needed not only militant trade unions, but also a Bolshevik party.

Year of struggle

The first big test for the union came in October 1980 with the state's attempts to limit Solidarnosc, which provoked national strike threats, and the regime had to back down. A confident mood of militancy opened up. Local strikes broke out and by mid-October strikes had taken place in 4,800 separate enterprises.

In January 1981, the government dropped its agreement to end Saturday working. Workers immediately began to organise local Saturday strikes - against the wishes of the moderates. One miner answered the critics the following way: "You dare to call on people to work their free Saturdays because the government has to be propped up. But who says we have to prop it up?"

There were also other strikes and hunger marches. Prime Minister, Rakowski commented: "A particularly large-scale propaganda attack was conducted by Solidarnosc in 33 provinces against the militia and the security services...I cannot help feeling that an ever growing number of Solidarity groups are being transformed into political parties."

And he was right. The situation was essentially one of dual power and it soon came to a head. In March in Bydgoszcz, negotiators were in talks with the government over recognition for Rural Solidarnosc. After the government reps left 200 armed police stormed the meeting room and proceeded to beat and arrest the negotiators.

Half a million workers took to the streets in a protest strike the next day. Thousands went to defend the local union HQ from police attack. At an emergency meeting, Walesa opposed the call for an immediate general strike. Instead he agreed to a four-hour "general strike" for the release of the pris-

oners, then a four day break to prepare for an all out general strike. The four-hour strike was a success. The preparations began for the general strike but it was called off at the last minute by the Solidarnosc leadership under pressure from the church and the government in exchange for minor concessions. Walesa and his moderate supporters did not want to bring down the regime, while the radicals were disarmed by their confusion.

The coup

Strikes and occupations flared up again in the autumn of 1981 but the momentum had been lost. The second congress of Solidarnosc in September 1981 had noticeably fewer workers in attendance and its policies were more reformist.

The PUWP leadership regrouped. While continuing to meet Walesa, the party head, General Jaruzelski, was quietly moving troops and police into place.

On the night of 12 December, after the leadership of Solidarnosc had met to plan their resistance to new attacks, the army closed down the phone network, sealed off the roads and arrested the national and regional leaders from their beds in a Gdansk hotel. By the next morning the union was illegal and its structures had been broken up. Despite the tanks on the streets, many workers did fight heroic battles against the repression, particularly in Warsaw, Silesia and the Baltic coast. But the general strike and massive street mobilisations that were needed could not now be summoned.

Bujak, a radical factory activist who chaired the Warsaw region of Solidarnosc had been prophetic several months earlier when he spoke against pure trade unionism and concluded: "If we consider ourselves merely as a trade union, as the government expects us to, then we must think of ourselves as a trade union of seamen on a sinking ship."

The lessons from the year of struggle are that: militant action and solidarity can rock even the most powerful of totalitarian dictatorships; that workers' control of production is only the start of socialism, but it needs to go on to replace the market with democratic planning; that workers need their own party so that the most determined workers and revolutionaries can fight for consistent and clear goals; finally that the state - whether it be Stalinist or capitalist - has to be smashed through workers' revolution, or it will smash us.

Stop the deportations

Section 9 must go, the Sukulas must stay

**By Jason Travis,
President Bolton NUT,
Chair, Sukula Family
Campaign (personal
capacity)**

The Sukula family, a woman and her six children, who fled the war torn Congo, are among nearly 100 asylum seeking households, who have been stripped of all state benefits. The family now face eviction from their home in Bolton. The Home Office is literally trying to starve the family into leaving Britain under Section 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004.

The legislation has attracted widespread condemnation. The British Association of Social Workers calls the laws "brutal", "inhumane" and "wholly inappropriate". The Children's Commissioner, Professor Al Aynsley Green, has voiced concerns. Two consortia of local councils have called for a government rethink. And Heather Wakefield, a national official for Unison has called for repeal of Section 9.

Crucially, there is a growing grass-roots campaign to force its repeal and block its implementation. In turn, the fight against Section 9 is proving a catalyst to uniting numerous anti-deportation campaigns.

After several happy months in Bolton, the Sukulas now number among the victims of the government's unceasing war against asylum seekers. "We live constantly in fear," says Daniel, who's just passed five GCSEs including an A in Science. "We can't sleep at night. My younger brother has panic attacks and whenever we see the police we are afraid in case they're going to come to our house and deport us. We were happy before in Britain but now our life is terrible."

Eighteen-year-old Flores Sukula, who wants to train to be a midwife after completing her A-Levels, added: "We thought we were going to be safe in Britain. We'd made a new life. For years we had nightmares about the day when soldiers burst into our house trying to find our dad. He'd already gone into hiding. We were all really scared."

"You don't mess with soldiers in the Congo. If you tried to stop them they'd beat you or kill you. We saw our Mum beaten before our own eyes. They beat her and stabbed her."

The Home Office replied callously that, "The Secretary of State notes that you were only attacked once... and does not consider that one attack... constitutes persecution."

The Sukula family campaign drew over 100 to its first public meeting and has gained support from the National Union of Teachers, Bolton Unison,



The Sukula family

Bolton 6th Form NUS, the Trades Council and the Greater Manchester NUJ. The local newspaper, the Bolton Evening News, has run over 40 articles campaigning for the Sukulas, while more than 2,000 have signed the newspaper's petitions and coupons.

The Sukulas' plight is especially dramatic but hardly unique. The Altaf family in Salford and the Khannali family in Bury, who had their benefits stopped two weeks after the Sukulas, have also set up campaigns. It is vital that we unite the various family campaigns, along with those against the threat to ship Iraqi Kurdish refugees and Zimbabweans back to hell.

We need to draw trade unionists into a fight against Section 9 itself, refusing to implement it through industrial action. But we should go beyond non-implementation and campaign for the right to work for all - including asylum seekers, who have been effectively barred from paid employment since July 2002 - or full benefits.

There is no lack of support: the Manchester Evening News has supported the stance of local councils against the legislation and, in a telephone poll, so did 87 per cent of its readers. Despite

the media myths, much of the wider working class can be won to support asylum seekers. So why is the government so keen to be "tough on asylum seekers"?

Blair, David Blunkett and now Charles Clarke have happily danced to the tune of the Daily Mail and other tabloids, trying to link asylum with crime and terrorism in their readers' minds. Divisions within the working class, based on race and immigration status, are useful to a government trying to cover its own tracks in Iraq and welfare cuts.

At the same time, though, British capitalism desperately needs immigration. Digby Jones, head of the bosses' union, the CBI, says much of British industry would collapse without migrant workers.

A government study, published last month, estimates that up to 611,000 mainly migrant workers harvest and pack produce destined for UK supermarket shelves. It says that "cost pressure" from the likes of Tesco and Sainsbury - in other words the relentless drive for profits - means agricultural and food processing bosses use migrant labour which is "poorer", "more desperate" and

"likely to be more compliant".

The government boasts about falling numbers of asylum applications and claims that its deterrence measures are "working". But ultimately this brutal game isn't about numbers but about exploitation, keeping a pool of insecure labour, afraid to organise, working illegally and in the most barbaric working conditions.

Meanwhile, asylum seekers and immigrants more generally can be conveniently blamed for a host of social ills. Behind the hateful rhetoric of the tabloids lurks the machinery of repression: police, private security guards and immigration officers who detain and deport people in their thousands each year.

Immigration controls, racist in both their conception and implementation, benefit our rulers at the expense of the wider working class. The labour movement needs to recruit undocumented workers, campaign for the right of asylum seekers to work and against all immigration controls.

We shouldn't allow the bosses to play off one section of workers against another. As with Jewish workers in the early 20th century, the undocumented workers of today can be a key part of the backbone of revitalised working class organisations.

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

**REPEAL SECTION 9,
NO DEPORTATIONS**

**12 noon,
Saturday 1 Oct**

**Assemble:
Lever Edge Primary
School, Lever Edge
Lane, Bolton**

WHAT IS SECTION 9?

Section 9 formed part of last year's Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc) Act - the fifth such act in a decade. The aim of the legislation is to drive asylum applicants out of Britain before they have even lodged an appeal by stripping them of all benefits and threatening to take children under 18 into local authority care.

The government authorised a pilot of this scheme in Greater Manchester, Leeds and North London, despite the fact that it may well conflict with local council's responsibilities under the Children Act. By the end of September, up to 116 families could have had their

benefits withdrawn, before the scheme is rolled out nationally.

The Home Office letter to the Sukulas described the measure as a "proportionate response to safeguard Britain's economic interests"! The Sukula Family and other local campaigns have called for a national demonstration on 1 October to march from the children's school to the Town Hall to demand the reinstatement of support for the family, the repeal of Section 9 and the whole of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004, the rejection of the latest immigration Bill and a halt to all deportations. Join us!

Get active, stay active, join Workers Power

Even the onset of war did not stop the global revolt against it.

Across the world the working class is coming together. Globalisation has forced workers and activists from different countries and continents to unite, work and fight together. There have been huge Social Forums of resistance in Europe at Florence and Paris, in Asia at Hyderabad and Mumbai, and in South America at Porto Alegre.

Together with the L51, which is represented on the European Social Forum, Workers Power campaigns to bring these movements together into a New

World Party of Socialist Revolution - the Fifth International.

This is a momentous time, one of those times when the true nature of the world we live in suddenly becomes clear to millions. Capitalism is revealing itself to be a system of war, conquest and global inequality. By taking to the streets against war and capitalism, hundreds of thousands of people are showing that they have seen through the lies.

Take the next step and join Workers Power. Phone us on 020 7820 1363 or email us at workerspower@btopenworld.com

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