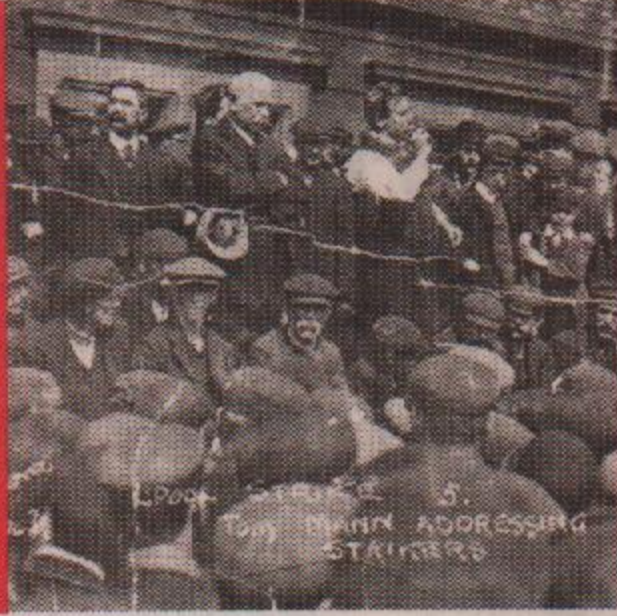


The fight for a new workers party page 5



How the Labour Party was founded pages 8 & 9



Evo Morales of Bolivia: a president for the people? page 12



# STOP THE DEPORTATIONS!

## Repeal section 9

**F**riday 13 January brought good news for Mohammed Arrian, an Afghan refugee detained in an immigration removal centre in Dover. After a vibrant campaign by supporters in Sheffield, where he has lived for nearly 12 years, Immigration Minister Tony McNulty reversed an earlier deportation order and granted Mohammed leave to remain in Britain.

But the apparently happy ending for Mohammed Arrian is only too rare. Since spring 2003 the Government has shipped dozens of other Afghans back to a country still under US-led military occupation. In this so-called "safe country" the elected government's writ barely extends beyond Kabul's suburbs – people are killed all the time by US rockets or Taliban bullets. Among those deported have been promising young students still in their teens.

Between 5,000 and 7,000 Iraqi Kurds face the threat of deportation to northern Iraq, where even the leaders of Kurdish political parties closely allied to the US occupation admit that conditions remain unsafe. These same parties hand out 30-year jail sentences to those with the courage to write articles critical of the US-backed regime. On 1 January in the Kurdish city of Kirkuk, US soldiers shot and killed four demonstrators marching to demand jobs, while wounding nearly 20 others.

An October immigration tribunal ruling may have stopped the Home Office from deporting Zimbabweans, but it has continued to repatriate people to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There, according to a recent



Sheffield protest against the deportation of Mohammed Arrian

study published in the Lancet medical journal, more than four million civilian non-combatants have perished since the civil war commenced in 1997.

The speeding up of forced deportations is the result of a target set by Blair. He promised that the number of deportations month on month would exceed the number of those claiming asylum. In the third quarter last year nearly 4,000 asylum seekers and their dependents were deported but this figure needs to

double if Blair's "promise" is to be kept. Thus the sudden rush to deport without a second thought for the risks to those being deported.

There has been militant resistance to the Home Office. Already supporters of refugee rights, including the Scottish Socialist Party and others, have managed to temporarily halt operations at the Glasgow facility used by snatch squads to conduct pre-dawn raids on refugees' homes. The Sukula Family Campaign,

defending a Congolese family threatened with deportation, has been important in opposing a new part of the government's asylum policies. The stand taken by the family and local government workers has sparked much wider resistance to section 9 of Labour's 2004 immigration legislation. This strips households refused asylum of all benefits and threatens them with homelessness and the removal of children into council care. The success of their campaign has

led to a conference being called against section 9 and the government's asylum policies (see activists' diary page 4). The 28 January conference in Manchester has the opportunity to kick-start a renewed and far more effective campaign of opposition to New Labour's assault on the very right to asylum.

Drawing on the examples of the Glasgow campaigners, and Unison members in Bolton and elsewhere who have refused to implement section 9, the conference can co-ordinate action among social workers, teachers and other trade unionists who refuse to become an agent of a racist and ever more inhuman system of immigration control. It can help create a network of fighters for refugee rights to build campaigns capable of:

- Physical obstruction of snatch squads.
- Demonstrations including civil disobedience at airports.
- Organised protection of communities against state and fascist harassment.

The harsh treatment of refugees and immigrants generally across Europe brings home a contradiction of neoliberal capitalism. Even as big business pushes for fewer restrictions on the movement of capital, the system restricts the freedoms of those who are fleeing from wars and economies wrecked by the drive to impose neoliberalism throughout the world. Therefore the fight to defend refugees is linked to the fight to end immigration controls.

The struggle for refugee rights must become a central part of the struggle to put an end once and for all to imperialist capitalism: a system that inflicts war and economic misery on billions around the globe.

## SCRAP ALL IMMIGRATION CONTROLS!

# Stop the drive to 65 - strike to defend pensions

## Local government

By GR McColl

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott has renewed the government's attack on local authority and other public service workers covered by the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). In December, he announced the government would back the Tory-controlled Local Government Association in scrapping the so-called Rule of 85. This measure had allowed at least the possibility of retirement at age 60 on a full pension if a worker had 25 years continuous employment.

Under the proposals, a worker can still retire at 60 but will face a dramatic reduction of up to a third of benefits. There is no real protection for existing staff beyond a vague reference to protection arrangements at no more cost than what the government offered last year - at best, protection to 2013 - a proposal which Unison members effectively rejected in February 2005. If these proposals are not stopped in their tracks they will go before Parliament on 28 February and will become law on 1 April.

Unison's Local Government Service Group Executive responded the week following the announcement with a call for an industrial action ballot that looks set to start by mid-February - late in the day. Currently, several other public sector unions, including the GMB, Ucat and FBU, are on board. Firefighters are also faced with a major attack on their separate scheme and a real chance exists for co-ordinated action.

This new attack on pensions was entirely predictable when union leaders of public sector workers - PCS, Ami-

cus, NUT, Unison and so on - agreed a separate peace with the government last year. This deal kept existing workers right to retire at 60 (for the moment) but sacrificed new workers who now will have to work on to 65. The deal also left local authority and other workers, like the firefighters, in the lurch. The potential of a massive united response to this attack was sabotaged.

Unison's initial response to the new attack was to lodge a legal challenge and urge members to let MPs and councillors know that this change is unacceptable. But postcard and lobbying campaigns, along with legal manoeuvres, are not going to budge the government and employers.

There is a need for a massive "yes" vote for strikes and a determined campaign of industrial action. In contrast to 2005, activists in Unison and

other unions need to ensure that this year's ballot is clearly around defending the scheme against attack. We must block any attempt to negotiate a two-tier scheme - one for new workers and one for old.

It is essential for Unison activists to establish city and regional committees between public sector trade unions involved in this fight - particularly the FBU and Natfhe - drawing in pensioners' action groups to win decent pensions at 60 for all.

Such committees must reach out to members of the unions who struck a deal last year, especially the new workers whose conditions were sacrificed by their own leaders, and to private sector workers whose pension plans are also under attack.

The immediate aims must be to ensure no more bureaucratic foot-dragging in the organisation of a ballot and to lay the basis for co-ordinated strike action across all the unions involved. Only in this way can we defeat this latest attack on pension rights.

## Lecturers

In the wake of the October Framework Agreement between public sector union tops and the Labour government, the December executive of the biggest lecturers' union, Natfhe, debated four motions on pensions. The executive carried three and rejected one. The one that was lost came with the backing of General Secretary Paul Mackney. It simply said that Natfhe endorsed the framework deal on public sector pensions.

The most important of the three successful motions called for a campaign to fight for the right of all current and future members to retire at 60 on a full pension. It also called on the union to "urge the executives of the PCS and the NUT to reconsider their decision to accept the document, offer practical solidarity to local government unions should they take industrial action and to communicate Natfhe's position to the TUC, the union's membership and the press."

Six weeks later Natfhe has still not released a single press statement on the executive's decision. You will, if you search hard enough, find a mention of it buried deep in the Natfhe website. This hardly suggests that the leadership is about to take any effective action to implement the resolution passed. It will be up to the membership to turn this campaign into reality.

The resolution adopted by the executive demonstrates the dissatisfaction of many members with a deal that was done in their name but without their consent. There is certainly a willingness among many members to fight for the pension rights of future generations. The debate on the day displayed an understanding that we have a responsibility not to sell out the pension rights of those who come into lecturing after we have retired at 60.

The fight for public sector pension rights is far from over. It is both possible and vital to work closely with other unions to build an effective campaign to challenge the government and overturn the decision in favour of the Framework Document.

**With Unison, GMB and the FBU organising ballots for strike action over pensions, Natfhe members should contact branches of these unions to offer solidarity and support**

With Unison, GMB and the FBU organising ballots for strike action over the issue of pensions,

Natfhe members should contact local branches of these unions to offer solidarity and support for their action. If Natfhe branches cannot take strike action at the same time, then there must be branch delegations to picket lines and to any demonstrations called to protest against the government's plans.

While it is important for Natfhe to raise the question of pensions with other teaching unions, it only has a minority position in the Teachers' Pension Fund where the NUT and NASUWT are the main players. Natfhe must be pushing for all unions to consult their members through a ballot before any decisions to change pension rights are made.

### THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME - MYTHS AND REALITY

The government and local authority bosses' propaganda machine has been working to persuade the public of several myths about the LGPS:

- MYTH 1** All local government workers retire at 60.  
**REALITY** The average retirement age for local government staff is 64.5 years. Meanwhile, 22 per cent of local government workers who retire early do so as a result of ill health.
- MYTH 2** All local government workers get fantastic full pensions.  
**REALITY** The average pension is £3,600 per year; for women the average is only £1,500 per year. These figures fall between 46 and 100 times less than a CBI Director's average pension.
- MYTH 3** There is not enough money in the schemes.  
**REALITY** While most schemes are in a healthy condition, some employers' contribution 'holidays' have damaged local funds. They should be made to pay them back.

## London tube strikes

London mayor Ken Livingstone was cheered to the rafters by leading City figures when he turned his January Mansion House speech into a denunciation of transport unions on the London Underground. "Red Ken has become Blue Ken," one of the well-heeled participants told the Evening Standard. Too true!

Livingstone's ire was raised because 4,000 RMT station staff had been balloted and many were involved in two separate days of strike action on New Years Eve and 8 January. Forty stations closed as a result of the second strike and others only remained open by management doing jobs they were not trained for - the Chief Inspector of Railways has launched an investigation following union complaints.

The union is currently fighting re-deployment proposals and new rotas saying that stations will be understaffed and unsafe. Management says these changes were agreed as part of a quid pro quo for a 35-hour week deal signed last year.

Adding to London Underground's (LUL) problems is a growing dispute with Aslef, which organises a majority of drivers. Aslef is balloting 2,200 drivers over the breakdown in industrial relations on the tube. A management offensive has resulted in bullying, ignoring agreements and draconian punishments on drivers for small offences.

On 8 January drivers on the Northern Line walked out on unofficial strike following the sacking of one of their colleagues - thus joining the RMT strike. Ballots for action have already gone out and a result is expected on 13 February.

LUL and Livingstone's offensive at this time is no accident - they need to tame these unions before the preparations for the Olympics get under way. There is already a proposal coming before the London Assembly to put in place a "no strike" deal for the duration of the games. A victory in the current action will strengthen the unions in confronting this threat.

## All out in civil service

By PCS branch secretary

In England, Wales and Scotland, members of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have voted "Yes" for strike action over job cuts. Around 32 per cent of members voted and of those who voted, 60 per cent voted "Yes" for a two day national strike followed by discontinuous action.

The strike will be at the end of January and will cover Jobcentres, benefit offices, pension centres, the Child Support Agency and DWP headquarters.

In Northern Ireland, the public service union NIPSA is balloting its members for indefinite strike action over pay. The government announced they intended to impose a pay deal which 98 per cent of NIPSA members had already rejected in a ballot. The deal gives an increase of just 0.2 per cent. This follows several years of low pay deals which have seen some NIPSA members' pay fall by around 7 per cent in real terms.

In DWP, 15,000 jobs have already gone out of the 30,000 planned cuts. Across the civil service, the target is to cut 70,000 jobs. In December's Pre-Budget Report, Gordon Brown boasted that 25,000 had been axed so far.

Jobcentre Plus plans to cut another

650 jobs in London by the end of March. Managers have so far used a combination of voluntary redundancy, a recruitment freeze and a crackdown on long-term sick absence to get numbers down.

The effects of declining standards on the vulnerable are already apparent. PCS have reported that hundreds of thousands of benefit calls are unanswered and that some benefit claimants have had to wait up to eight weeks to receive benefit payments.

Union activists have called for a national campaign against job cuts and attacks on pensions. The cuts are civil service-wide, yet only DWP members have been balloted for action. The united action of 5 November 2004 and the huge vote against the attacks on pensions last year showed that PCS members were prepared to fight. Yet this potential militancy has been squandered by the hesitancy of the leadership.

The PCS leadership should immediately call a nationwide ballot for strike action against the job cuts. Action should be co-ordinated with NIPSA.

This would send a message to PCS members in DWP and NIPSA members that the union is really serious about fighting job losses and a message to the government that PCS is a real fighting union.

## Royal Mail on the offensive

by a Leeds CWU rep

The new year has started with the opening of the postal market to full competition by the Labour government. Royal Mail has cut jobs and hours and increased casualisation.

In central Leeds alone, an area meeting of Leeds Royal Mail managers announced plans to cut out 5,000 hours a week by the end of the year!

The CWU has tried to negotiate with Royal Mail but the company has proceeded with its plans anyway. The union negotiating team has informed Royal Mail that if management continues with this approach then branches will ballot for industrial action which the union will support. They warn that these may lead to an all out national strike.

We should start the balloting now. Activists should see that their branches flood the union leadership with resolutions for an immediate ballot for a national, indefinite strike. We should oppose the cuts and demand that Labour stops the privatisation of Royal Mail.

• If you would like a model motion on a strike and against privatisation contact 0207 407 2907 or e-mail [workerspowercwu@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:workerspowercwu@yahoo.co.uk)

*Now is the time for a new party*

2006 will be a year of struggle. The pensions revolt, despite two terrible sell-outs last year, is far from over. Firefighters, local authority workers, lecturers and a plethora of private sector workers are preparing strikes. Civil servants, teachers, postal and tube workers are doing likewise over jobs, pay and conditions.

Just as thousands of tenants have combined to stop the sell off of council housing in the country, so too will health workers and patients' families, school students, parents and teachers join together to stop privatisation in the NHS and schools.

Campaigns and defiance can obstruct the government's Asbos, ID cards and deportations of asylum seekers. The deteriorating occupation of Iraq and threats to starve and bomb Iran will motivate thousands upon thousands to demonstrate on 19th March. Students and activists will converge in Athens in May for the fourth European Social Forum.

But 2006 must be more than this. It must be the year that serious steps are made to found a new mass party of the working class. We have a historic opportunity, presented by an unprecedentedly right-wing Labour government, a weak Labour left and major issues to fight over.

Matt Wrack and Bob Crow, leaders of two unions outside Labour's ranks, share a platform this month on the crisis of political representation. Mark Serwotka, another union head, has joined Respect. These three need only put out the call for a new party and thousands of class fighters – who have already politically broken from Labour – will respond.

But if they will not do it – and we should not rely on them – then we will need to launch a campaign from rank and file level, including fringe meetings at union conferences, local meetings, drawing in not only representatives of unions but militants from the campaigns against the attacks of Blair and Brown.

*Labour's new authoritarianism*

"The whole of our system starts from the proposition that its duty is to protect the innocent from being wrongly convicted... But surely our primary duty should be to allow law-abiding people to live in safety." Tony Blair, Labour Party conference 2005

Tony Blair launched his new Respect action plan in January. He is reported to have wanted it to be eye watering, not simply eye catching. It was.

He intends to cut the benefits of or evict problem families from housing – council or private – and dump them in shoddy state "sin bins". There will be on-the-spot fines for youth throwing fireworks and making hoax emergency calls, and a new offence of selling spray paint to under-16s.

These will link with existing policies: police powers to issue Asbos and impose fines without going to court; cuts in legal aid; and limiting the right to trial by jury. Charles Clarke is expected, against expert advice, to upgrade cannabis to a Class B drug.

This is about taking away our rights, and increasing the summary powers of the state. Blair and Clarke are shifting the basis of the justice system.

Never mind Channel Four. Tony Blair is the Big Brother we should be watching.

*The rush to the centre*

David Cameron, the ex-Etonian, new Tory chief, has been hailed as the Conservative's answer to Tony Blair. He is supposed to represent a break with Thatcherism, just as Blair ditched Labour's Clause Four and "socialism".

Cameron's supports the most "radical" elements of Blair's counter-reforms on independent school status, the NHS and the public sector is not simply a demagogic device.

Blair has overseen the privatisation of swathes of the public sector, wars, and has launched a relentless attack on civil liberties. But he has still been limited by his dependence on the Labour Party. Cameron represents Blairism cut free.

Now the Liberal Democrats will follow suit. All three parties have lined up along the neoliberal centre. The democratic deficit in British politics has never been clearer. Nor has the need for a new party to break the mould.

# George Galloway: no respect for his party

*Simon Hardye* switches off from watching the Respect leader's time in the Big Brother household

**T**aking a break from revolutionary politics to watch some mindless TV like Big Brother can be a bit of relaxation from activism. But not any more – Big Brother is the centre of a political storm.

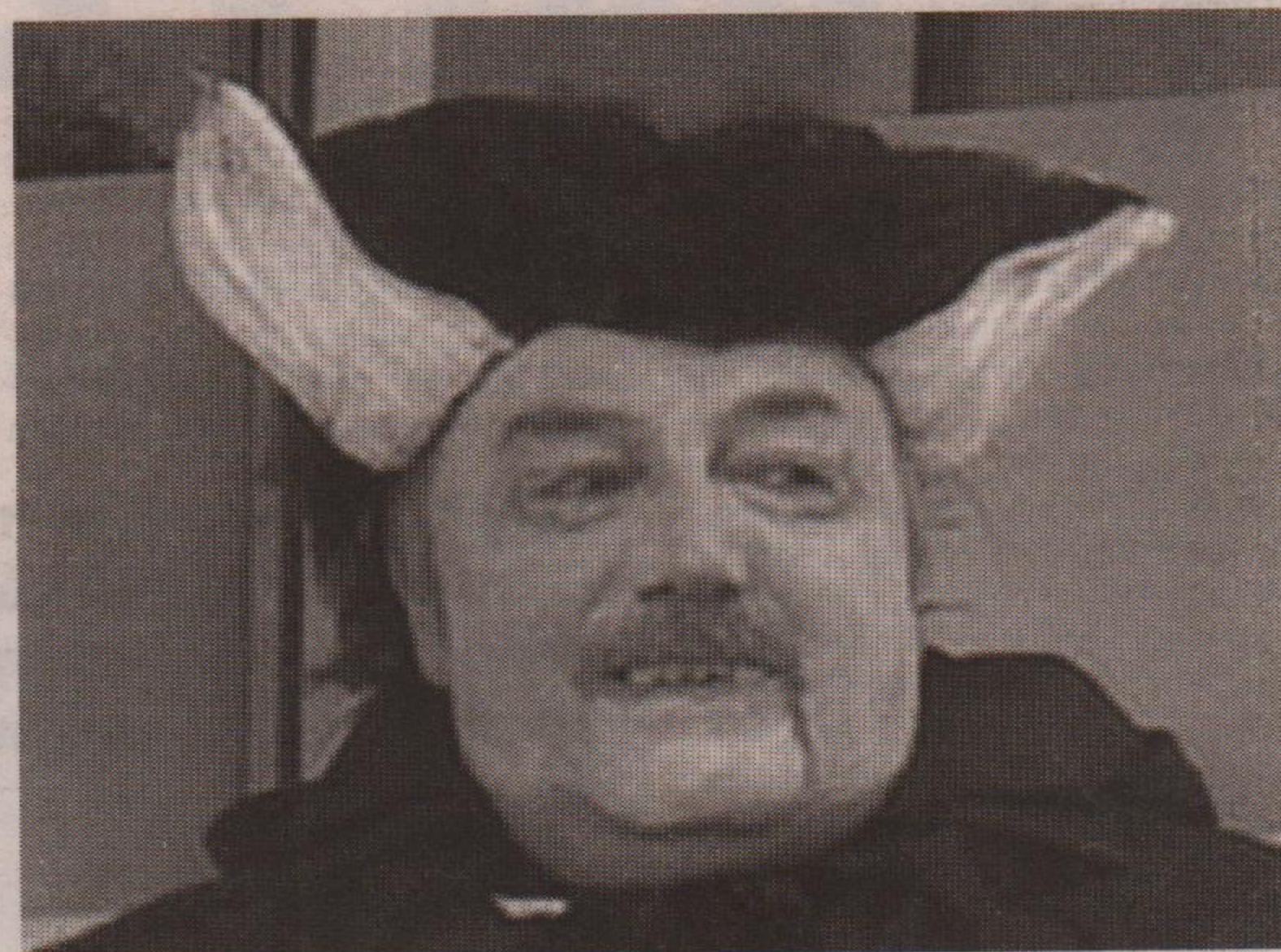
George Galloway's appearance on the TV show has caused a media frenzy: it's front page headline news and in opinion columns; it has even been raised in Parliament. Pop-psychologist Oliver James has been called in to put the contestants on the couch. Jodie Marsh apparently suffers from "histrionic personality disorder", Michael Barrymore from a "schizotypal personality" – and George? He merely suffers from "narcissism – a grandiose sense of self importance" – well who needed a psychologist to tell us that!

Galloway's entry into the Big Brother household came as a shock not just to the viewing public but also to the Respect coalition itself. Galloway only told John Rees and the other Respect leaders the day before he entered. By all accounts Rees and fellow SWP leaders were not amused.

Anybody with an ounce of political nous would know that an MP, particularly one that has opposed the Iraq war and the government so stridently, would be a prime target for press bloodhounds. Especially as it meant he had to absent himself from parliament and be completely out of touch from his constituents for anything up to three weeks. Every time a parliamentary debate or constituency issue comes up, New Labour shouts, "Where's George Galloway?"

While some of his constituents were protesting outside Parliament against Crossrail what was George doing? He was on his hands and knees pretending to be a cat drinking cream out of actress Rula Lenska's hands! What could be better for discrediting the idea of electing a fighting MP instead of the timeservers that Labour puts in? How is this going to play in the upcoming May elections in Tower Hamlets where Respect hoped to make a breakthrough?

Galloway's justification, put out by his media agent, is that he wanted to reach a new audience, the Gen-X youth who vote in their millions for Big Broth-



"Elder statesman" George Galloway dresses up as Dracula

er but not in elections. This argument might have had some weight, but surely someone as experienced as Galloway knows that Channel 4 censors political debate on the show – and have done so regularly since he arrived? Didn't his well paid media agent check the contract?

And how does the leader of Respect come across before millions of young people? He joins in the pack bullying of Jodie Marsh. He expresses himself shocked by the bad and sexually crude language of young people in the house. He refers condescendingly to the youngest contestant, Chantelle, 22, as "a child". He comes across as prudish and patronising but then confides to Big Brother that he feels he is seen as "a bit of an elder statesman"!

Instead of an argument over Labour's record on housing, war, poverty and so on, the argument has been shifted onto Galloway's personal attitudes, his motivation and his relationship to his constituents. When Rees was interviewed on Radio 4 he used the argument that all publicity is good publicity and Galloway was doing this for his party. But the fact is that the party had no control whatsoever over his actions and that SWP and Respect members are now left to pick up the pieces of the media attacks.

*Socialist Worker* says they think the decision was a mistake, but wash their

hands of it. But the precedent was set in Respect long ago when the SWP backed Galloway in his refusal to take a worker's wage and in his position not to abide by the decisions of the coalition where he disagreed. It is a further and telling argument for the tradition in the revolutionary movement that MPs elected by a workers party are under its direction not their own. But Respect is not a workers party, it is a populist coalition with a prima donna as a leader – that is its problem.

Workers Power does not believe that a single MP elected to fight the government from the left should spend all their time in Parliament. The main role of such an MP should be to expose the government at key moments but spend a lot of time mobilising in the country, speaking at meetings, building a mass party. There is no doubt Galloway speaks at lots of meetings nationally for Respect (although a money making lecture circuit seems to have dominated his time recently). His impressive performance in front of the US Senate committee last year, taking to task the US warmongers, was an excellent political move – one welcomed throughout the country.

But the Big Brother house escapade can only discredit him, Respect and the aim of replacing Labour MPs with anti-war, class fighting representatives.

# Being young is not a crime

By James Roberts

**O**ver the past month Leeds Revolution has been holding stalls and actions at the Corn Exchange in Leeds city centre. The focus of the campaigning has been the draconian dispersal order placed on the area by the council and heavy-handed tactics used by the police to enforce it.

For many years, the area has been used by local youth on weekends and evenings to meet with friends and hang out. In the last few years, the shopping precinct has become very up market and flats, bars and restaurants in the area expensive.

Consequently, in the past six months, the council and police have placed a dispersal order on the area, allowing the police to move people on,

and to arrest them if they refuse. Last month, they started using undercover officers, video vans and street wardens.

We have previously held stalls in front of the corn exchange, and mobilised youth on several antiwar and anticapitalist actions. So, knowing people who hang out there, we both witnessed and heard accounts of the harassment.

At the beginning of December, we distributed a leaflet demanding the rescinding of Asbos and followed it up with a stunt using police tape to cordon off an area in front of the Corn Exchange, and then had Revo members dressed in mock police uniforms to hand out spoof Asbos to anyone wearing a hoodie.

Ten or 15 youth came along to a meeting afterwards, as well as two Connexions workers – who had been sent by the council to work on a documen-

tary, which would then be used to bargain with the police to lift the dispersal order. We, on the other hand, were interested in building a youth led campaign against the criminalisation of young people.

In the New Year, we arrived to do our stall and the youth told us that our organising meeting clashed with another organising meeting around the dispersal order called by local anarchists.

Realising we had a common goal, we merged the two meetings. We planned a practical banner making session (to which 40 youths turned up) and a meeting for a demonstration on 21 January.

We also contacted youth in a similar situation in Wakefield, and have invited them to our demonstration, as well as other youth from around the city. Given the success of the campaign, we believe it could take off in other cities too.

# Still a sectarian state

Ten years of peace has not achieved equality or ended harassment for Catholics, writes *Mark Hoskisson*

**T**he recent frenzy over spies in Stormont, agents in Sinn Fein, disarmament, and Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists blocking any attempts at power-sharing has put the spotlight on whether the Good Friday Agreement can be restarted.

But the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which has seen the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive function for no more than 30 months, has failed to eradicate sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

The reason for this is simple. The Good Friday Agreement was not a resolution of the root cause of the Troubles. It did not advance the just struggle for a united 32-county Ireland by one inch. It was a typical product of a stalemate – a rotten compromise. It sought to contain the conflict by recognising two of its protagonists – the Nationalists and the Unionists – as two distinct religious communities with a shared interest in building a united Northern Ireland.

Each attempt to achieve this pipe dream has been met by the sound of exploding pipe bombs. The Unionists feel betrayed by every concession made to the "Taigs" (their word for the Catholics): the renaming of the murderous Royal Ulster Constabulary, the appointment of Sinn Fein ministers, the permission to fly tricolours above municipal halls controlled by Sinn Fein, the banning of Orange parades through Catholic districts.

Each and every one of these measures represents a step towards the hated objective of a united Ireland by a Unionist population that had its mindset shaped by entrenched opposition to such unity. Each and every concession is met by an increased level of hostility towards the Catholics.

The headline events – like the Loyalists persecuting young catholic girls at Holy Cross school, or the bowler-hatted bigots encamped at Drumcree beating their drums and waving their Orange sashes – alert the world to the deepening hostility that exists between

the communities. But it is the everyday sectarianism that is shocking.

The communities have been separated by so called peace walls. These are not the barricades of old. They are ghetto markers. And according to one survey almost 62 per cent of the people living behind these walls feel that relations with those on the other side have worsened since the peace process began. A survey by the University of Ulster in 2002, reported by the BBC, showed that Protestants had less confidence in the peace process, with 39 per cent believing they were now treated worse than

reflects, entrenches and encourages a confessional political system. Being a Catholic or a Protestant determines everything.

Now while this is partly true, O'Farrell misses an important stage of the argument. His desire to condemn the equal (but opposite) extremes of Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party and Adams' Sinn Fein fails to question the material roots of the rise in sectarianism and which community remains the main victim of it. In other words, it fails to take the unresolved national question as the starting point for understand-

ing why Protestants are getting more spiteful and why Catholics, so to speak, are getting more assertive.

Within the framework of an equal Northern Ireland Protestants will – and have been – suffering badly. Their bastion of privilege in the cities was always their employment prospects in the once-thriving private sector, but according to the equality commission there was a decline in private sector jobs, most notably in manufacturing industry, where Protestants were traditionally strongly represented. In that sector, between 2003 and 2004, a net loss of 4,092 full-time employees occurred, of which 78.3 per cent were Protestants.

This growth in unemployment sparks bitterness against Catholics who are not only perceived to be stealing jobs that rightfully belong to Protestants but who, in the context of an equal Northern Ireland, are more willing to challenge discrimination in the courts and tribunals.

The answer to this is increased sectarianism. The natural political response is to try and defend what was once theirs – a position of privilege. And for the Protestant masses this means turning

to the organisation that seems most willing to defend its ultimate privilege – its political veto over the future of the Six Counties. Paisley's DUP fits the bill. It is the most trenchant defender of the old order, the political wing of Protestant sectarianism.

The only way out of this is not, as Sinn Fein think, to try and co-exist with in this mess for as long as possible in the hope that the national question will resolve itself at some future date. That is a recipe for future pointless conflict. Rather it is to advance a socialist solution to the national question, which can appeal directly to Catholic and Protestant, worker alike.

**"In 1996, 44 per cent of Protestants and 47 per cent of Catholics thought inter-community relationships were better than five years previously. These totals have slumped to 25 per cent and 33 per cent respectively"**

they were six years ago.

Fewer people believed that relations between Protestants and Catholics were better now, the report said.

"In 1996, 44 per cent of Protestants and 47 per cent of Catholics thought inter-community relationships were better than five years previously. These totals have slumped to 25 per cent and 33 per cent respectively."

In every day life this translates into mind-numbing sectarian practice. According to John O'Farrell, writing in the *New Statesman* last November:

"In the Ardoyne district of Belfast, for example, four out of every five Protestant residents will not use the nearest shops because they are located in Catholic streets, and the same proportion of Catholics will not swim in their nearest swimming pool because it is in a Protestant street. Most 18 year olds in Ardoyne, of both religions, have never in their lives had a meaningful conversation (about, say, family or sport) with anybody of their own age from the other side of the 'peace line' that runs along Alliance Avenue."

For O'Farrell, the GFA has constructed a political superstructure that

## History of conflict

Between 1918 and 1923, Britain carved Ireland in two. It kept the industrialised north east for itself and let the Republicans have the rest. To maintain its rule over this province it turned it into an artificial state with a built-in Protestant majority, the Orange State.

For decades, in the field of jobs, housing, welfare and political representation the nationalist minority in the Six Counties suffered discrimination, violence and oppression. Catholics were second-class citizens; their votes counted for less, they were more likely to be unemployed and if they complained they were truncheoned by the Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary and burned out of their homes by Loyalists.

This apartheid was militarily backed by Downing Street. Sectarianism was institutionalised. Protestants enjoyed marginal privileges over Catholics.

But the oppressed fought back. From 1968 to 1997 the fightback took the form of both mass uprisings, especially between 1968 and 1972, and a protracted guerrilla war by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) that the British Army finally accepted it could never crush.

But neither could the IRA drive the British out by means of bombs, however close they got to Downing Street, nor guns, however many bullets ricocheted around the police stations and barracks of Belfast. Stalemate became the step-parent of the Peace Process. In 1994 the IRA called a ceasefire (made final in 1997) and Sinn Fein entered into negotiations with their erstwhile enemies in London and their historic foes in the Unionist and Loyalist political parties of Northern Ireland.

## Activist diary

### LEEDS

**Workers Power meetings**  
contact 07800 596944  
leeds\_workers\_power@  
yahoo.co.uk

**Why is racism growing in the world?**

Thursday 26 January  
7-9pm  
Adelphi Pub, Hunslet Lane

**Unions and the break from Labour: why we need a new workers party**

Thursday 16 February  
7-9pm  
Adelphi Pub, Hunslet Lane

### LEICESTER

**Social Forum**  
**Where now with pensions?**  
**Speakers: Mark Serwotka**  
**General Secretary PCS, Arnie**  
**Gardner Unison (County Hall**  
**Pensions in a personal capacity).**  
**Plus speaker invited from the**  
**National Pensioners Convention.**  
Tuesday 17 January  
7.30pm  
Secular Hall, Humberstone  
Gate, Leicester

### Workers Power meeting

**The situation in Lebanon and the plight of Palestinian refugees**  
An eyewitness account by Simon Hardye  
Thursday 26 January  
7.30pm  
Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester

### LONDON

**RMT conference on the crisis of working class political representation**  
Saturday 21 January  
12 noon  
Friends Meeting House  
Euston Road

**Workers Power meeting**  
**Organise a new workers party**  
Saturday 21 January  
3:30pm (after the RMT conference)  
Prince Arthur pub  
80-82 Eversholt St  
London NW1  
(Next to Euston Station)

**Workers Power meeting**  
**Bolivia: Is Evo Morales a new**  
**Lula or a new Chavez?**  
Wednesday 1 February

### 7:30pm

University of London Union  
Malet Street WC1 (nearest  
tubes: Goudge St, Russell  
Sq, Euston Sq)

**Lobby of parliament to defend council housing**  
Wednesday 8 February  
12-4pm  
Mass rally at Central Hall,  
Westminster

**Hands off Hackney Schools**  
**Public meeting against**  
**academies and the White Paper**  
**on Education.**  
**Speakers include Tony Benn and**  
**Baljeet Ghale (vice president**  
**NUT)**  
Wednesday 8 February  
7.30pm  
Round Chapel, Lower  
Clapton Road, Hackney

### MANCHESTER

**Workers Power meeting**  
Monday 23 January  
**1916 Zimmerwald conference -**  
**on the road to the 3rd**  
**International**  
**next is 1926 General strike**  
6.00pm

Vegetarian café,  
Manchester University

**Fighting the Asylum and**  
**Immigration Acts**  
**A working conference for trade**  
**unionists, anti-deportation**  
**campaigners and anti-racists.**  
**Defy Section 9!**  
Saturday 28 January  
Registration from 11.30am  
12 noon - 5pm  
Methodist Central Hall,  
Oldham Street.

**Fighting racist immigration laws**  
**- No immigration controls!**  
**Sukula Family Must Stay**  
**Campaign**  
Wednesday 1 February  
7.30pm, MR3 Student  
Union, Manchester  
University

### NEWCASTLE

**Workers Power**  
**Tuesday meetings**  
Contact: workerspower@  
bopenworld.com;  
Tel: 020 7407 2907  
Stalls every Saturday from  
11.00 to 1pm at The  
Monument,

### Newcastle upon Tyne

**SHEFFIELD**  
**Workers Power meetings**  
**Marxism and Women's Liberation**  
Wednesday 25 January  
7.30pm  
Rutland Arms, Brown  
Street (near the Showroom  
cinema)

**REVOLUTION (socialist youth**  
**group)**  
**Revolution National Conference**  
25-26 March  
Leeds

**Leeds Revo**  
**Anti-ASBOs demonstration**  
Saturday 21 January  
1.30 pm  
Corn Exchange  
Planning meeting  
afterwards  
Contact leeds@world  
revolution.org.uk

**Leeds Revolution Students**  
**Society**  
**What went wrong in Russia?**  
Thursday 19 January  
4pm meeting room 7, Leeds  
University Student Union

Coming up: series on  
Women and globalisation  
starting in February  
Contact leeds@world  
revolution.org.uk

**Leicester Revo**  
Contact: leicester@world  
revolution.org.uk

**Liverpool**  
Contact: Liverpool@world  
revoltion.org.uk

**London Revo**  
meets every Saturday  
1:00pm, Brixton tube  
For more info phone  
07816-344 140 or e-mail  
london@worldrevolution  
.org.uk

**Manchester Revo**  
Contact manchester@world  
revolution.org.uk

**Newcastle Revo**  
Contact Newcastle@world  
revolution.org.uk

**Sheffield Revo**  
Contact: Sheffield@world  
revolution.org.uk

# For a new mass working class party

The RMT is hosting a conference to debate the crisis of working class representation. Despite the union ruling out the formation of a new party in advance, *Jeremy Dewar* argues that is precisely what is needed

**T**ony Blair faced big problems a year ago. Six million public sector workers prepared to strike to stop the great pensions robbery being planned. Then the government offered the union leaders a suspension of the attacks in return for not embarrassing Labour during the election. Then half of them were told that a deal, which left future workers on worse conditions, was as good as a victory. Local government workers, firefighters and lecturers have been left to fight on alone.

The Gate Gourmet workers struck to save their jobs. Solidarity action across Heathrow decimated British Airways takings at the height of the holiday season. The largely Asian workforce could have won were it not for TGWU officials pressuring BA staff back to work. Instead, the strikers remain locked out and BA has started to victimise union activists.

In July came the London bombings. Labour rushed through yet more repressive measures, including a secret shoot-to-kill policy, which had fatal consequences. Mosques were firebombed and an Afghani refugee murdered. Labour left MPs were silent, union leaders, who graced anti-war platforms in 2003, nowhere to be seen. The Muslim Association of Britain and CND went to ground and the Stop the War demonstration in September was pathetic.

## CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

The price of not having a party willing and able to fight Labour was seen in every one of these struggles. A major part of this crisis is the trade union bureaucracy. The most influential union leaders – Tony Woodley (TGWU), Dave Prentis (Unison), Derek Simpson (Amicus) and Paul Kenny (GMB) – may harshly criticise Labour ministers and denounce their policies, but they are a totally loyal to them.

## FALSE SOLUTIONS

Many Labour supporters know all this yet refuse to break from Labour; rather they want to fight to “reclaim it” for socialism. It would be wrong, they claim, to form a new working class party, because one already exists. A breakaway would divide the working class.

But such an argument is false on every level. First, the Labour Party was never a socialist party but, as we show in this paper (pp10-11), one that was committed to preserving capitalism right from the beginning.

Second, it is now impossible for the left to capture the Labour Party. The left would need 72 MPs’ support to trigger a leadership challenge against Blair, or 45 MPs just to stand when he resigns. Then they would need to win an election where MPs, trade union leaders and constituency parties each hold one-third of the votes. Since the local parties are now either Blairite, as are most MPs, and the big four union leaders will back Brown, then such a



Gate Gourmet workers were let-down by the TGWU leadership and ignored by Labour

challenge is doomed from the start.

Bob Crow – leader of the railworkers’ union RMT – was quite right when he told *Socialist Worker* last year, “It’s gone. It’s finished. And they have adopted a scorched earth policy behind them so there is no democracy left inside the Labour Party.”

This explains why the Labour left today has no strategy other than to hitch its wagon to the old Labour right, tailing the likes of Estelle Morris and Neil Kinnock.

Finally, why is the unity of the Labour Party so preferable to other countries where the working class has two or more parties? Unity in action for working class goals is good. But today, Labour’s unity is for Blair, neoliberalism and war. It denies workers a clear voice opposed to these attacks, it denies a clear political lead in the unions and in mass struggles, it denies them a real choice of anticapitalist policies at elections.

The existence of the Linkspartei in Germany, Rifondazione Comunista in Italy, the French Communist Party whatever their many and grievous faults do not divide fighting effectiveness of the working class. Would things be better if the French Socialist Party, the Italian Democratic Left or the Italian Democrats of the Left had a monopoly? No, the existence of these parties indicates a struggle within the working class. So long as Labour has a monopoly on working class politics, we are deprived of a vehicle to challenge neoliberalism, racism and war on a mass, i.e. an effective, scale.

But, while we can agree with Bob Crow’s estimate of the hopes of “reclaiming” the Labour Party, his alternative is equally misguided. Crow believes that workers – and trade unions – should adopt a pick ‘n’ mix policy, choosing those MPs, parties and candidates that

best represent the unions’ interests on any particular issue. Hence, Plaid Cymru and the Greens, which are out and out capitalist parties, receive RMT backing.

Where such a such a policy can lead is Bob’s revelation that at the general election he himself voted for his local Lib Dem candidate because he had “my union’s policy for London transport.” Never mind the fact that this meant voting for a party that standing on a policy to empower government to outlaw strikes that could damage the national economy!

How will this help RMT members? If played out nationally this would take trade union rights back to where they were before 1900!

Parties exist to fight for power. If the working class depends on the parties of other classes to push this issue or that, then it leaves power in the hands of the bosses. Exploitation, oppression and war will remain cornerstones of society forever.

## RESPECT IN THE HOUSE

Respect the Unity Coalition has shown to any who doubted that it is possible to stand on an antiwar, antiprivatisation and anticapitalist ticket – and defeat Labour.

However, Respect was specifically designed by George Galloway and the Socialist Workers Party to be a party that was “not too socialist”, and not explicitly based on the working class. Respect deliberately fudges the question of property ownership, never calling for the expropriation of the banks and big business, nor endorsing workers’ control and the objective of a planned economy.

This represents an opportunist attempt to win the support of sections of the clergy and business class who lead the “Muslim community” and through

them a large chunk of the vote. Hence Galloway is given full rein to air his reactionary social views on abortion, immigration controls, youth and women. But in doing so, he betrays precisely the oppressed and exploited sections of the Muslim community, and blocks the development of Respect into a party of the whole of the working class.

At the last Respect conference, SWP members queued up to denounce a resolution to place Galloway under the democratic control of the party. Praising his role as an inspirational leader, John Rees told the conference, “If you want an MP sitting behind a desk answering emails, get yourself another one.” Since Galloway’s appearance on *Celebrity Big Brother*, many Respect supporters probably wish they could!

## FOR A NEW WORKERS’ PARTY

From this, we can outline some of the essential features of a new workers’ party.

First, we can see that it is necessary. So long as Labour remains in office, it will continue to attack the working class. Millions will in the coming months and years feel the crisis of representation as an immediate concern. We won’t have the luxury of sitting back and waiting for Brown to be replaced by a more left-wing leader.

This means there is a real possibility of forming a new party with tens, if not hundreds of thousands of activists.

Second, such a new party must be the product not just of the left trade union leaders like Bob Crow, Mark Serwotka and the FBU’s Matt Wrack, but of the rank and file militants across the unions. As such, it will mean a struggle against the existing pro-Labour trade union leaders. It must provide the means to take on and defeat the anti-union laws, to provide an alternative

leadership when the bureaucrats sell out. It will, in short, be built alongside a rank and file movement in the unions.

But millions of the most oppressed and downtrodden parts of the working class are outside of the unions. Many of them don’t vote, completely alienated from mainstream politics. But anticapitalist struggles, the fight to defend council housing, and opposition to the war all show that they can be organised. A new workers’ party would reach out to the poor, the youth, the racially oppressed, help to organise them and support their struggles. Co-ordinations to link them to trade unionists will need to be built.

Third, all the main issues in British politics today have their origins in the international situation. Top of the list is the war in Iraq. Troops out now! will remain a crucial slogan, along with Hands off Iran! and Defend civil liberties!

But behind the war lies British imperialism’s global aims to grab the third world’s resources and exploit its cheap workforce in order to boost profits. A new workers’ party would see the fight against British capital as part of a global fight in solidarity with workers across the world.

Fourth, a new workers party must not be built on the same model as Old Labour, dominated by MPs, councillors and a few “union barons” armed with the stolen votes of their members (the block vote). It would be a combat party. It would be the property of the membership, not of the celebrities.

From this flows the programme of the new party. We believe that it should have a revolutionary programme now. The Socialist Party believe that the working class is not yet ready for a socialist programme, that it has to go through the experience of another round of reformism.

True, the great majority of working class militants do not yet agree with the need to overthrow the capitalist state and the build a planned economy. But many already see the need to take militant action and meet the needs of the many at the expense of the wealth, power and privileges of the ruling class. Far from foisting a revolutionary programme on the new party we would seek to win its members to it whilst taking action together. We are confident that in a developing mass struggle the conditions for revolution will develop. The need for it become apparent to more and more of the leading fighters and the possibility of building a revolutionary party materialise.

In any case it is not the duty of revolutionaries to act as advocates of a reformist programme or party. There are enough genuine reformists in the British Labour movement to do that job. No, real revolutionaries must say utterly truthfully what they think. If they do that then workers will respect their courage and integrity and they will know who to turn to when they are convinced that reformism has failed to defend their interests.

# State education under attack

By Kate Ford, NUT member

The cold, dark first months of 2006 are likely to be lit up by fireworks over the House of Commons. Tony Blair is determined to leave a political legacy his successors will find it difficult to dismantle – particularly in education. Whilst the beleaguered Ruth Kelly may nominally be Secretary of State for Education, the person really driving Labour's education policy is Tony Blair.

The proposals in the government's White Paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools For All*, would undermine democratic accountability in education and leave schools subject to the chaos of the market.

All existing primary and secondary schools could become trust schools: self-governing schools outside of local authority control. Effectively a trust school is a private school that is publicly funded. The governors of a trust school would have complete control of the school: they can appoint more governors and they are specifically encouraged to include representatives from the business sector. They can vary the curriculum and will have "freedoms over pay and conditions" for teachers. They will also be able to set their own admissions policies in order to select pupils.

In fact, trust schools will have much the same powers as city academies, but instead of just one sponsor, they will be controlled by a group of people.

A central component to Labour's education strategy is that all new schools will have to be either trusts or academies. Any school deemed to be failing will be put into special measures. If the school has not improved, it will be closed and a competition held to decide who will run the new school – which of course must be a trust or an academy!

There is significant opposition to



Education Secretary Ruth Kelly

the White Paper from within the Labour Party. A large group of Labour MPs, including former Secretary of State for Education Estelle Morris and Neil Kinnock, have spoken out against it. Other former ministers, such as Nick Raynsford, John Denham and Angela Eagle, have issued a document "Shaping the Education Bill" which outlines their opposition.

If you can get beyond the self-congratulatory résumé of the 'achievements' of Labour's education policy to date, the document does include some important criticism of the White Paper. The group point to the fact that neither the establishment of trust

schools nor the undermining of the role of LEAs were included in the Labour manifesto.

The group of MPs correctly identify the lack of any evidence that the proposals in the White Paper will enable schools to improve and that if the proposals on trust schools and the expansion of schools higher up the league tables go ahead, then there is the potential for chaos across the education system.

"In areas where there are surplus places it is possible that all schools could be recognised as good schools, even where some are more popular than others. A change in one school can cause

a whole series of adverse effects in those surrounding it, including good schools. A market driven system will result in a process of destabilisation where there will be arbitrary effects."

This chaos will also be reflected in admissions, with every school able to have their own admissions policy and procedures. Parents – supposedly the great beneficiaries of choice – will face complexity and confusion. And those who have children who are more difficult to place – often those who are the most disadvantaged – will struggle even more.

However, the Labour MPs' opposition document clearly does not repre-

sent a break from the right wing belief in increasing the role of private business in education. They oppose the establishment of trust schools because this "represents an irreversible transfer of public assets into the hands of organisations what will be subject to little public accountability no matter what policies they pursue at any time in the future."

But later in the document they argue: "Government policy should facilitate and encourage voluntary and private partnerships with all types of schools."

Labour's education policy since 1997 has been built around three pillars:

- Establishing a meritocracy based on individual, not collective, achievement
- Tailoring education towards the needs of the employers
- Wholesale privatisation, opening up the state education budget to exploitation by private business.

Unfortunately the opposition to the White Paper from within the Labour Party may want a slightly different design for the education system to Tony Blair, but they want the same foundations.

## Hands Off Hackney Schools

Public meeting against academies and the White Paper on Education

Speakers include Tony Benn and Baljeet Ghale (vice president NUT)  
**Wednesday 8th February**  
**7.30pm**  
 Round Chapel, Lower Clapton Road, Hackney, London

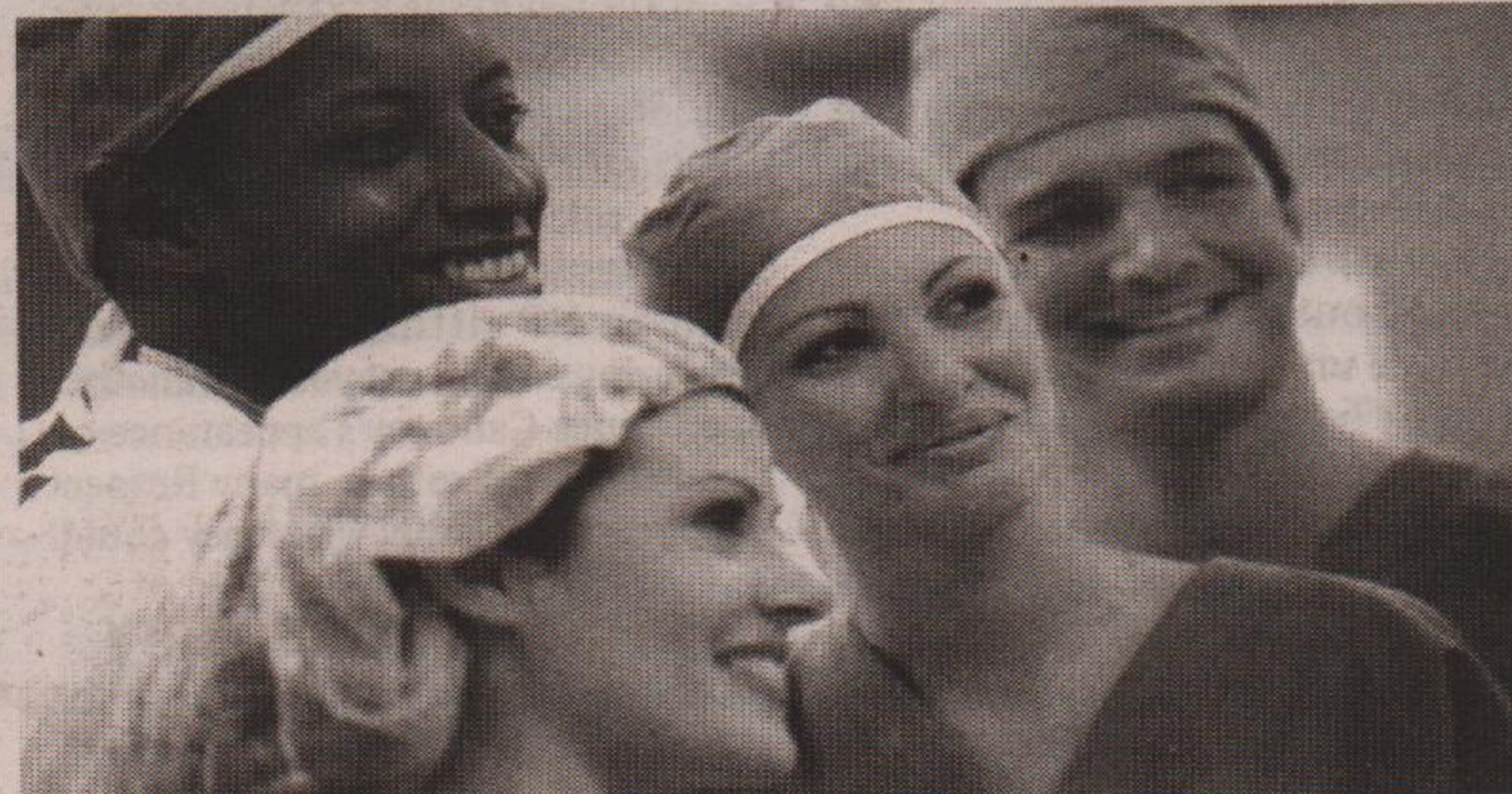
# NHS: where has all the money gone?

By Clare Heath

Spending on the NHS has doubled since 1997. This year alone there has been a more than 10 per cent increase, taking the total to over £74 billion, and by 2007-8 this will reach £92 billion.

So why are almost half of the hospitals in the UK freezing recruitment, a quarter planning redundancies and at least a third cutting services? These hospitals are trying to head off a predicted overspend of around £750 million as the government insists that the books balance each financial year. Two hospital trusts in the South East are at risk of complete bankruptcy and closure, reported the Audit Commission this month, and a new hospital in Woolwich is staring at £100m debt by 2008 due to a crippling Private Finance Initiative contract. The Financial Times describes this as the "famine amid the feast".

So what is going on? According to the King's Fund a large proportion of the increase has been spent on improving pay for NHS staff. Pay and conditions have been changed for NHS staff, with many receiving significant pay increases as a result. This has taken up almost half of the increased funding. A further quarter has been eaten up with a technical change to the pension fund, 5 per cent on negligence claim, etc. After these are taken into account,



Patricia Hewitt's reforms will wipe the smiles of these faces

the Fund estimates the real increase to be closer to 2.5 per cent – just about keeping up with inflation.

For decades, trade unionists, patients and socialists complained about inadequate funding for the NHS, pointing to cuts in services, low pay and health inequalities as evidence of the crisis. What are we to say now? The problem is not simply a lack of money, but the organisation of the health service. Previously the UK has spent relatively little on health care and provided services for the whole population – this efficiency has been put down to the universal, national character of the organisation. In contrast, the USA spends around double, 15 per cent of GDP, on a largely private healthcare system that excludes 45 million uninsured people, including 11 per cent

of children and over a third of Hispanic people.

When Blair came to power, he decided to do something about the NHS in order to impress his supporters. For the traditional voting base in the working class, New Labour promised – and delivered – unprecedented investment in the NHS. New hospitals opened, waiting lists declined and staff were paid more.

But Blair had to impress his other supporters, too. He promised that a substantial part of this investment would be channelled to them, his business cronies. At first this was through continued competitive tendering and the outsourcing of support services such as catering, portering and IT. Then it spread to capital projects through PFI. Labour presented this as a "win-win"

situation with shiny new hospitals without upsetting the public sector borrowing requirement – and guaranteed profits for businesses.

Now Labour is opening up the core functions of the NHS to business. A number of private companies have won contracts to provide walk-in GP services (at major railway stations); UnitedHealth, a US not-for-profit company, has a contract to set up two GP practices in Derbyshire; Boots is providing screening for Chlamydia on behalf of the NHS; and private hospitals are set to take on at least 15 per cent of elective surgery.

To open these services up to competition, Secretary of Health Patricia Hewitt has had to re-introduce the internal market that failed so spectacularly under the Tories. Under the banner of "Creating a Patient-Led NHS", Primary Care Trusts are to be transformed from providers of local health care into contracts managers on behalf of GP commissioners (sound familiar? The Tories called them fund holders). NHS hospitals, foundations or otherwise, will have to bid for contracts against each other and private companies, and will be paid using a newly introduced system called "payment by results". Under PBR, each service, for example a hip replacement, will have a nationally agreed cost. Hospitals will receive money for the actual number of hip operations it does, rather than the current arrangement of being paid

for providing a hip operation service to a population.

This may sound relatively benign and a simple change in accounting, but this is at the heart of shifting the NHS from providing rounded health care to providing commodities (individual items of service) in a market. Some hospitals, or departments at least, will go bankrupt and close, since they will not be able to sell enough, or compete with the private sector that will cherry-pick services. It is dressed up as patient choice, but in the end it will be the investment banks that choose.

It is clear that at the centre of the current financial crisis in the health systems is the instability of the NHS. There is money there, but it is not being effectively spent. To make sure that the extra money meets the health needs of the population you need the opposite of the internal market – you need centralised planning. These are dirty words in Blair's new world, but without it you cannot ensure that you have enough services for the people who need them.

When we used to complain about lack of funding, we always argued that the NHS needs to be put into the hands of the workers and users. Never has that been more essential – otherwise the NHS will be broken up and we will end up with an inefficient market and the extra money will be spent on contracts managers, lawyers and, in the end, big business.

# Muslim communities under pressure

Since the events of 9/11, Muslims all around the world have been thrown into the spotlight. *Rekha Khurana* reviews *Muslim Britain - Communities under pressure* - edited by Tahir Abbas, published by Zed books, 2005, and looks at the challenges facing British Muslims

The first few essays in *Muslim Britain* give the reader a broad picture of the state of South Asian Muslims in Britain today. The picture is one of systematic discrimination and oppression in every area of life.

Ceri Peach uses the 2001 census to show that Muslims are a not homogenous bloc, but come from different ethnic backgrounds, speak almost 100 different languages, and are divided by class.

There are 1.6 million Muslims in Britain today, compared with only 25,000 in 1951. Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indians came to Britain to fill the labour shortages in the industrial cities of London, the Midlands and the former textile towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The Muslim population is still highly concentrated in these areas. Two thirds of Britain's Muslims still come from a South Asian background, while the rest originate from North Africa, East Europe and South East Asia.

The Muslim population is young: one third of them are under 16, compared to one fifth of the population as a whole. However, 40 per cent of Muslim school leavers have no qualifications, showing a hidden bias in the education system.

Pakistanis and Bangladeshis represent one of the poorest and economically marginal populations in Britain. The percentage of Pakistani and Bangladeshi Britons registered as having "never worked or suffering from long term unemployment" is five times higher than that for the population as a whole. Bangladeshi and Pakistani women have the lowest economic participation rates of any ethnic group.

There is now a growing number of Muslims in the service sector, as well as an increasing number, who are starting their own business. Muslims working in the manufacturing industry are mainly manual workers in the fast declining textile and metal industries.

In short, Muslims hold menial jobs, are employed in older industries, have lower incomes and, are vulnera-

ble to unemployment.

In his essay Issues, Policy and Practice, Muhammad Anwar looks at the type and quality of housing Muslims live in. Although Bangladeshi and Pakistanis were both badly off, 70 per cent of Pakistanis own or are in the process of buying a house compared to only 38 per cent of Bangladeshis. However, even when they do own homes, the condition of these houses is often poor.

More Muslims live in terraced houses compared to whites. Houses are also far more likely to be overcrowded (43 per cent compared to 2 per cent of white households). Many lack of toilet facilities and central heating. The overwhelming majority of Muslims live in inner city, rundown areas, where housing problems are endemic.

## Islamophobia and racism

In a matter of weeks after 9/11, the government's terrorism act threatened to outlaw certain Muslim organisations, scrutinised the financial dealings of others, and increased powers to the security forces and the police. Muslims found themselves coming under attack and facing suspicion and hostility.

A few short months later, David Blunkett blamed the Bradford uprising on "self-styled" segregation by Muslims, complained about Muslims not speaking English in the home and of not marrying partners from this country. Blunkett turned reality on its head. Instead of seeing segregation as the result of economic deprivation and racist discrimination in education and housing, he claimed it was self-imposed and the cause of racism.

The language used by the media also reflected the changing attitudes to Muslims. Words such as "extremist", "fundamentalist" and "radical" began to be used in apocalyptic headlines across all sections of the British press.

The British National Party, in particular, seized the opportunity to exploit this climate of fear by producing anti-Muslims propaganda to feed on peoples' prejudices and insecurities. In one publication circulated in Oldham, they

called for whites to boycott local muslim owned businesses, but not those "owned by Chinese or Hindus... only Muslims as its their community we need to pressure".

A BNP campaign leaflet entitled "Islam out of Britain" sought to explain "the threat Islam and Muslims pose to Britain and British society". And in a leaflet entitled The Truth about I.S.L.A.M. it employed I.S.L.A.M. as an acronym for "intolerance, slaughter, looting, arson and molestation of women". Selectively quoting the Qur'an, it painted the most despicable picture of Muslims, claiming that "no one tells the truth about Islam and the way that it threatens our democracy, traditional freedoms and identity".

The essays offer many such important examples and references of how the BNP used the situation after 9/11 and the rise in state racism, but what the authors don't discuss or offer are any tactics or solutions to deal with the rise in Islamophobia and racism. It's important for antiracist groups, trade unionists and socialists to stand in solidarity with Muslim communities, as well as other groups facing racism and oppression to dispel the lies and myths that are spread by the media, politicians and groups such as the BNP.

Where communities are under physical attack, we fully support them forming defence squads made up of workers and youth in the area to protect themselves against police harassment and racist attacks. The trade union movement should offer such elementary measures their full support.

However to really defeat the racists we must combine the fight against racism with the struggle against desperate poverty, crumbling public services and unemployment.

## Multiculturalism

The other major theme of the essays is the debate around multiculturalism and integration. There has been widespread questioning of whether Muslims can be, and are willing to be, integrated in British society and whether they are committed to its core

values of freedom, democracy, sexual equality and secularism.

Since 9/11, and more recently after the 7th July bombings, there has been an explosive attack on the policy of multiculturalism in the right-wing press. Many of the authors in the book discuss these attacks on multiculturalism and correctly criticise the policy of forced integration. But multiculturalism is not a strategy for eradicating racism. Why?

Multiculturalism stresses the need for inter-racial harmony, and declares its aim to be a society that tolerates a diversity of cultures. In this way, multiculturalists believe, racial prejudice can be eradicated through education. Therefore multiculturalism works on the assumption that racism is just a prejudice without any material foundation.

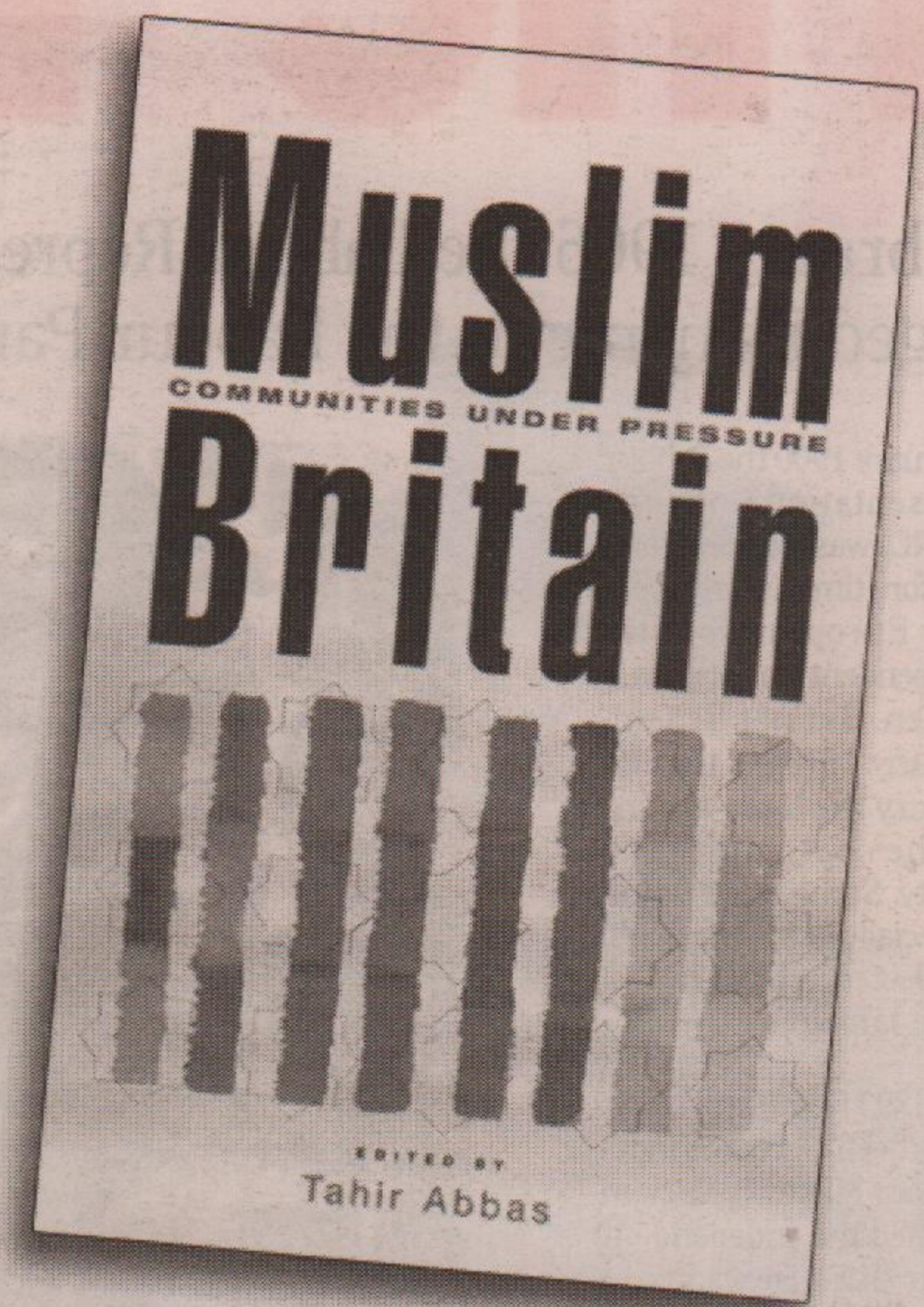
Racism is the ideology used to justify imperialist or advanced capitalist countries' right to superexploit and dominate the nations of the global south: Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. Whether it is the crude genetic pseudoscience of the early twentieth century or the supposedly more sophisticated theories of cultural backwardness of the early twenty-first, this ideology is also used to divide the international working class.

Racism's persistent appeal to work-

ers of the dominant nation - despite its incoherent basis - is due to the fact that white workers gain marginal material privileges in housing, education, job opportunities, etc. from the racial oppression of Muslims and other ethnic minorities. Those, like the Socialist Workers Party, who deny this simply belittle the need for an ideological struggle within the white working class against racism.

The great service Tahir Abbas and the other contributors to *Muslim Britain* have provided is to prove this. The job of antiracists, trade unionists and socialists now is to use this data to fight for full equality for British Muslims. Muslims will of course be in the forefront of this struggle, but they can only win liberation by linking up their struggles with the working class and to come together to fight against capitalism, the system in which the roots of racism, war and exploitation lie.

**Available from Workers Power**  
*Socialism and Black Liberation: the revolutionary struggle against racism*  
*Lesbian and Gay Liberation: a Trotskyist Strategy*  
Both available from Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX £1.50 (p&p) each



# Civil partnerships: progress or not

At the end of last year, lesbian and gay couples were for the first time able to "tie the knot". *Bernard Harper* asks how much of a gain this represents

The first couple to take advantage of the Civil Partnerships Act were Shannon Sickles and Grainne Close in Belfast. While most of the crowd greeting their arrival at the registry office were supporters, a few Presbyterian protesters also came along. Holding banners, declaring "sodomy is a sin", they were clearly confused.

The new legislation enables same-gender couples to register "civil partnerships". But does either marriage or civil partnership really challenge the oppression of lesbians and gay men under capitalism? The new Act has opened up a debate among lesbian and gay activists.

Stonewall's Ben Summerskill

believes that they "offer gay people every single right, and responsibility, invested in marriage", whilst Peter Tatchell of Outrage says: "Civil partnerships are not equality. Only the legislation of same-sex civil marriage will ensure true legal parity for lesbian and gay couples."

Stonewall indicates its views on its website: "The government intends registered civil partnerships to be long term, stable relationships." In other words, same-gender relationships can be accommodated under capitalism as long as they resemble the heterosexual model.

Stonewall finds the idea of settling down together forever breathtakingly exciting and has produced a "get

hitched" guide sponsored by Barclays and replete with pictures of wedding rings, champagne glasses, cake and confetti.

In response to the FAQ-type question "Does this count with the Immigration Office?", the guide responds "Yes, you'll now be in exactly the same boat as straight couples who get married. There may be restrictions about entering the country but no more than there would be for a straight partner." So that's OK then. Lesbians and gay men will have to jump through exactly the same racist hoops to prove that their relationships are "genuine." Equality Stonewall-style!

Tatchell, on the other hand, believes that the government should "mod-

ernise the whole legal basis of relationship recognition and rights". He has stated that the expected norm of "civil partnership" for gays and "marriage" for heterosexuals equates to "sexual apartheid".

**What should the Marxist response be?** Obviously, the civil partnerships are a democratic gain for lesbian and gay couples, who until now have had no way of gaining legal recognition of their relationships. According to the TUC website, however, civil partnerships offer couples most of the benefits of marriage in terms of pension rights, but not all. Therefore we support the struggle for complete equality.

Indeed, the fact that the government has created a new and slightly different legal contract for lesbians and gay men is itself a concession to the bigots in the churches, who continue to regard homosexuality as a sin.

This concession sends out a signal: that gay people are not in fact fully equal and accepted. Quite apart from any legal inequality resulting from the new legislation, this will do nothing to combat the rising tide of vicious homophobic attacks, like those in which David Morley and Jody Dobrowski were killed.

For this reason, the fight for lesbian and gay liberation and against all remaining discrimination must continue.

# The birth of the

In February 1906 the Labour Representation Committee won 29 seats at the general election. It promptly changed its name to the Labour Party. *Dave Stockton* draws the lessons from its founding years

In February 1900 the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was founded - and not before time. Nearly every major European country had an independent working class party by then. But not Britain. From the early 1870s to the end of the century the trade unions hung on the coat tails of the Liberal Party. Some trade union leaders, especially in the coalfields, were even elected as Liberal MPs. These were known as the Lib-Labs.

Then in 1893 Keir Hardie, who had recently been elected as independent labour MP for West Ham South, formed the Independent Labour Party (ILP). He wanted to persuade the unions to break from the Liberals and form exactly what it said on the tin: an independent labour party. In the 1890s various attempts were made to unite the ILP with the various Marxist and Fabian groups that emerged in the 1880s, but the latter parties resisted.

But disillusion of trade unionists with the Liberals and their hatred of the Tory judges attacking the right to strike created a new impetus. The 1899 Trade Union Congress (TUC) narrowly passed a resolution to convene a special congress "to devise ways and means for the securing of an increased number of Labour members in the next parliament."

On 27-28 February 1900 this special congress founded the LRC. Unions with over 250,000 members agreed to affiliate to it. The Marxist influenced Social Democratic Federation (SDF) proposed that the "representatives of the working class movement in the House of Commons shall form there a distinct party based on the recognition of the class war and having for its ultimate object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange."

The ILP opposed this with a resolution "in favour of establishing a distinct Labour Group in Parliament who shall have their own whips and agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to co operate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of Labour."

The ILP motion was carried by 53 votes to 39. The parliamentarism of the ILP's position is obvious with its nod in the direction of the Liberals. "Independence" was considered purely organisational. The SDF's resolution was much more principled, seeking to win Labour to socialism. Their flaw was sectarianism: a tendency to give ultimatums to mass organisations. A year on from this conference they presented the same resolution and when it was again rejected they walked out.

The decision to form the LRC raised a whole series of questions about the nature of the its activities. What sort of organisation



Tom Mann addressing a railway workers meeting in 1907

was needed at local level? Was this organisation to be limited to electioneering? What were the LRC's policies on political questions? What goal would it adopt? In short what was to be the LRC's programme, tactics and organisation?

In fact different parts of the LRC gave different answers to these questions. For the ILP, led by Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald, socialism was a progressive series of reforms: the introduction of unemployment benefit, the eight-hour working day, pensions, free secondary schooling. All of these were essential measures to meet the pressing needs of working class people. But none of them struck at the roots of the power of the capitalist class.

## New unions

An explosion of trade unionism amongst the less skilled workers between 1888-1892 more than doubled the total number of trade unionists. Since the leaders of the new unions were all socialists the ruling class feared the formation of a Marxist party on the continental model, which might lead the working class to challenge the very existence of capitalism.

In response, both Tories and Liberals in the 1890s developed "social reforming" wings. They cultivated close links with trade union leaders, the Fabian Society, and, after 1900, the LRC.

The Fabians, headed by Sidney and Beatrice Webb had a strategy for socialism that sought to "permeate" both capitalist parties with reformist, state interventionist ideas. Thus at precisely the point

when the LRC was formed they were ardently wooing the new Liberals and at the same time a group of Tories, the so-called social imperialists, to form a new party based on "National Efficiency".

Hardie and MacDonald's idea of socialism was fundamentally the same evolutionary model as that of the Webbs, but their methods for achieving it differed. Hardie retained a lifelong emotional hatred of the rich and what they did to working people and their families.

He solidified with the suffragettes, the Irish nationalists and the pre-1914 antiwar movement. But he was an organic opportunist, blithely sacrificing fundamental working class interests for any temporary or minor advantage, particularly a parliamentary one.

For example, shortly after the LRC was founded, he wrote to John Morley, the leading Liberal opponent of the Boer War offering him the leadership of the LRC. He later did the same thing to Lloyd George. Herein lay his fundamental difference with the Webbs - they wholeheartedly supported imperialist Britain against the Boers.

Hardie and MacDonald, unlike the Webbs, did want independent labour representation, because MPs, even working class and trade union ones, who were members of the Liberal Party, repeatedly sold out their union members' interests to the government. The problem was that their gradualist view of piecemeal social reforms somehow piling up till Britain was socialist rendered a "socialist government" neither practical nor even necessary.

Since new Liberals, like Lloyd George, advocated similar reforms

why not trade workers' votes in the great majority of constituencies for a free run from the Liberals in a few dozen others?

Ramsay MacDonald was the most consistent in following through this line. His hostility to the class struggle and Marxism was lifelong. He wrote:

"The best expression of class war is trade unionism. It concerns itself with no opposition except that between capital and Labour no union of interests except the interests of wage earning, no field of activity wider than the factory. It leads nowhere because it has no ideal goal; its only results can be the bondage of one side or the other."

By the last sentence, he clearly meant that the victory of the workers would be as bad as the rule of the employers!

According to MacDonald, the working class was faced not with the task of winning political power, nor was this power essential to building socialism. He often went so far as to deny the working class character of the party of which he was a leader - a regular theme of labour leaders to the present day.

"When we think systematically of the scattered fragments of reform promised by the political parties, we see that they are but the foreshadowing of socialism; when the tendencies begun by scores of experiments, factory laws, public health laws, municipalisation, are followed out, joined together and systematised, Socialism is the result. And the political movement which is to express and ultimately satisfy, this need for the organic unity of society, must be a movement of the whole of society and not one of its sections the working class."

(Socialism and Society, 1908)

MacDonald saw independent Labour representation as an unfortunate necessity, caused by the hard heartedness and class bias of the Liberals. They had rejected people like himself - quite literally, since he had tried to stand as a Liberal candidate in the early 1890s. Their refusal to sponsor the "rise of labour" was, he felt, in contradiction to their own ideals, not the expression of their essential character as a class party of the bourgeoisie.

## Electoral Obstacles

The LRC and the Labour Party faced another obstacle in the grossly undemocratic constitution and electoral system. Even today many people think Britain has been a democracy for centuries. Far from it. After the 1884 Reform Act only 28 per cent of all adults had the vote; women were without the vote altogether, but 44 per cent of men also had no vote.

The size of constituencies was grossly unequal, with industrial cities and towns scandalously under represented. The rural areas, where the great landowners, could intimidate their workers and small tenant farmers into "voting for the squire", were over-represented.

The LRC, the unions and the socialist parties thus had two alternatives. They could rouse the working class, the women and the Irish to fight for their democratic rights, as well as, full-blooded economic and social issues, or they could seek to win a few constituencies by striking sweetheart deals with the Liberals. They could

use parliament as a tribune to preach revolt, or they could follow the Liberals reform programme. They could use their trade unions as an organising basis and the political mass strike as a weapon, as the Chartists had done, or they could confine themselves to purely legislative activity.

The union leaders and the opportunist ILP leaders chose the latter alternative with scarcely a moment's thought. The political party of the working class stood aside from all the great mass movements of the pre-war period: the militant miners and transport strikes of 1910-1913, the great suffragette movement, and the mounting struggle for Irish independence. Indeed, Ramsay MacDonald and the trade unions' man in the leadership, Arthur Henderson, frequently condemned these struggles.

## Labour and the anti-union laws

The new party started life inauspiciously. No sooner had the LRC been formed than it had to fight the 1900 "Khaki Election" held at the height of jingoistic hysteria surrounding the Boer War. The LRC won only two seats, Keir Hardie's at Merthyr and Richard Bell, a trade union leader, at Derby. On entering the Commons, Bell promptly rejoined the Liberals leaving Hardie as the sole Labour representative. Labour might have collapsed into the arms of Liberalism after its first step but for the class animosity of the employers.

The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRC), which



# e Labour Party

had proposed the conference, which founded the LRC, had been engaged in a bitter dispute to gain recognition. The railway companies argued that safety required the railways be run with near military discipline. They imported scabs too to break local strikes.

In one case, in 1901, on the Taff Vale railway the ASRC dissuaded scabs from working. The company took the union to court, where the judges ruled that it was liable for damages. At a stroke all unions found their funds were opened up to wholesale judicial plunder. All the rights won between 1871 and 1875 were abolished overnight.

Anti-union judgements, like anti-union laws today need legislation to firmly and universally abolish them. Even the most craven union leaders recognised this. Thus unions previously hostile the idea of political independence flocked to join the LRC. Whereas at the latter's formation there were only some 250,000 trade unionists affiliated, by 1903 this had risen to nearly one million. In the words of the Labour historian, GDH Cole, "the Taff Vale Case created the Labour Party".

Given the historic role played by the rail union in founding the party it was bitterly ironic that just over a hundred years later it should be unceremoniously bundled out because it agreed to spend part of its political levy on supporting the Scottish Socialist Party candidates, who supported the unions' anti-privatisation campaign.

After the great Liberal landslide of 1906, in which the LRC took 5.9% of the vote and won 29 seats, the newly renamed Labour Party had one real legislative success, largely because union MPs were mandated to reverse the Taff Vale judgement at all costs. The Trades Disputes Act of 1906 did this. True to form the Liberals tried to get away with a much weaker bill but the unions stood their ground. The Liberals eventually caved in and thus the fundamental basis for trade union rights was established until Thatcher's anti-union laws abolished them.

But after this victory the Labour Party tamely followed in the wake of Liberals own reform programme. These were at first quite substantial, like Lloyd George's introduction of non-contributory old age pensions. Labour's own proposals, based as they were on what they deemed possible for the capitalists to grant, did not go beyond those of the social Liberals.

For the Liberals the purpose of the reforms was quite clear. As Winston Churchill (then a Liberal) told the Daily Mail in 1909: "With a 'stake in the country' in the form of insurance against evil days the workers will pay no attention to the vague promises of revolutionary socialism." The Labour Party neither warned the working class of the reasons for the Liberal reforms nor pressed for more radical measures.

The judges, however, soon returned to the attack. With the Osborne judgement of 1909 they ruled that it was illegal for unions to use their funds to support and maintain Labour MPs. The Parliamentary Labour Party and the union leaders - far from rallying the millions of union members to mass action - supinely accepted the "rule of law" and used it as an excuse for even greater degree of dependence on the Liberal Party. The threat of no salaries was enough to make sure that MPs did nothing to antagonise its Liberal masters.

## Party democracy

Closely related to the opportunism of the Labour Party's tactics was its undemocratic constitution particularly on the issue of the MPs' accountability to the Party as a whole.

As early as the 1907 conference a resolution attempted to put the parliamentary party under the discipline and control of the conference. Keir Hardie and Arthur Henderson insisted that conference decisions were "opinions only". When, and even whether, to implement them was the task of MPs alone. This attempt at democratic control of the heroes of the House of Commons was lost by 642,000 to 252,000 votes.

Another test was whether Labour MPs should insist, as their manifesto had pledged them to, on the total and equal enfranchisement of women. Keir Hardie, as usual, thought a bill for limited suffrage for women was fine; it would lead to the full thing in the end. But conference ignored his pleas. The enraged Hardie rushed to the rostrum to threaten that, "if the motion they had carried was intended to limit the action of the Party in the House of Commons, he should have seriously to consider whether he could remain a Member of the Parliamentary Party." Conference caved in. So from the earliest days the MPs faced down democracy within the party setting an evil precedent that has never been reversed.

## The Great Unrest

From 1910 onwards, there was a massive eruption of class struggle. About 1.2 million people went on strike in 1912 alone - three times the number of people striking between 1895 and 1909.

In South Wales in September 1910, 300,000 miners went on strike, waging pitched battles with the police. Liberal Home Secretary Winston Churchill sent troops into the Rhonda Valley. One striker was killed in Tony-pandy and many injured. The miners were not forced back to work till August 1911.

But the miners' defeat was not the end but the beginning of a wave of militancy in the mines and beyond. The national sea-

**THE RAILWAY CRISIS.**

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE  
EAST END BRANCHES OF THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

—A—

**MASS MEETING**

ON THE ABOVE QUESTION WILL BE HELD IN  
**VICTORIA PARK,**  
On Sunday Afternoon, November 3, 1907.

Chair to be taken at 2.30 by A. A. WATTS  
(London Society of Compositors).

THE MEETING WILL BE ADDRESSED BY

**WILL THORNE, M.P.,**  
Councillor J. JONES (Gasworkers), Alderman J. H. BANKS (Railway Workers).

W. J. PEARCE (Sec. Mile End S.D.F.), B. EDELSTEIN (Whitechapel S.D.F.), W. WINDSOR (Sec. Bethnal Green S.D.F.),  
JOHN SCURR (Shop Assistants), E. CRUSE (Toolmakers), W. J. REEVES (Mile End S.D.F.).

Fellow Workers! This Meeting is called by Social-Democrats to express sympathy with the Railway Workers in their present struggle, and to lay before you the Socialist view of the whole system of exploitation by the Railway Companies of the country.

**Stand by Your Class!**

W. J. PEARCE, Secretary to the Committee, 100, Mile End Road.

Printed by Twentieth Century Press, Ltd. (T. U. A. of 1907), 374, Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C.

A Social Democratic Federation leaflet from 1907

men's union struck in June 1911, and the government sent 3,000 troops and hundreds of police to occupy Liverpool. Police and troops savagely attacked a peaceful demonstration of 80,000 people on 13 August. Troops shot two strikers dead.

Another mighty miners' strike broke out in March 1912. In June dockers and other transport workers struck and huge demonstrations - 100,000 strong - marched from the East End to central London. Again police shots were fired. Ben Tillett, the dockers' leader went so far as to say, "We must use other power - the means we have to use are violence and physical power." In 1913 in Dublin, James Larkin led a huge and prolonged lockout strike in which five strikers were killed.

These major struggles inspired many other groups to take direct action. School student strikes broke out in working class areas in 1911. Women workers in the sweated garment trade struck in the same year.

Union membership soared from 2,477,000 at the end of 1909 to 4,135,000 at the end of 1913.

Above all the "Great Unrest", as it came to be called, was an explosion of militancy at the rank and file level. Many workers were becoming clearer about whose interests the Labour Party really upheld. Signalling this disenchantment, dockers' leader Ben Tillett wrote a pamphlet entitled *Is the Parliamentary Labour Party a Failure?*

While the leaders of the ILP and Labour Party were increasingly to be found in the pockets of the Liberal Party, socialism was

making more headway amongst the working class. Symptomatic of this was the success of a 25-year old socialist Victor Grayson at the Colne Valley by-election in 1907. Grayson fought the seat as a socialist against MacDonald and Henderson's instruction and won a resounding victory over a Liberal and a Tory.

The Labour Party and its leaders condemned the syndicalist trade union fighters like Tom Mann, who were in the forefront of the mass strikes, from a purely parliamentary and reformist perspective. Arthur Henderson, chairman of the PLP actually put forward a motion in the Commons, which proposed that strikes should be declared illegal unless 30 days advance warning (to the employers!) was given.

Yet, it was because of the class collaborationist policies of the Labour Party and the trade union leaders that the Great Unrest took the form it did. Politics was construed by both by the syndicalist militants and by Labour and union leaders as parliamentary politics. The syndicalists rejected it out of hand as of no use: the MPs and bureaucrats as the only realistic policy. But Tom Mann, Ben Tillett and Jim Larkin were unable to develop an alternative political strategy based on class struggle.

Labour's attitude to the strikes of 1910-14 was a prelude to an even greater betrayal of the working class. In 1914, along with most other parties of the Second International, the party dutifully placed itself at the service of the warmongers as the First World War erupted. In place of international solidarity came



Keir Hardie

shameful chauvinism. Labour gave its blessing to the worst slaughter the world had hitherto witnessed in the pursuit of profit and world domination.

## Marxism and reformism

The SDF proved unable to take the fight into the heart of the new party - even though, had they done so, an all-out war and a future split with MacDonald and Hardie was a near certainty. Even when the great workers' upheavals - in 1889-1891 and 1910-1913 - presented Marxists with massive opportunities, they bungled it.

The answer to the problem was neither staying in the Labour Party at the price of submission to its leaders' discipline, nor ultimatums and walking out. What was needed was a struggle for an operative Marxist programme inside the party.

Affiliation by socialist parties and the near-autonomy of the few dozen constituency based LRCs and then Labour Parties made this quite possible. As it was, the SDF did attend Labour Party conferences as delegates of their unions and local trades councils.

If such a struggle had led to expulsion, then the marxists would have fought to rally the maximum number of workers and socialist to a new revolutionary party.

But a more serious weakness on the left was the inadequate idea of what a revolutionary party should be - i.e. a party engaging seamlessly in all spheres of the

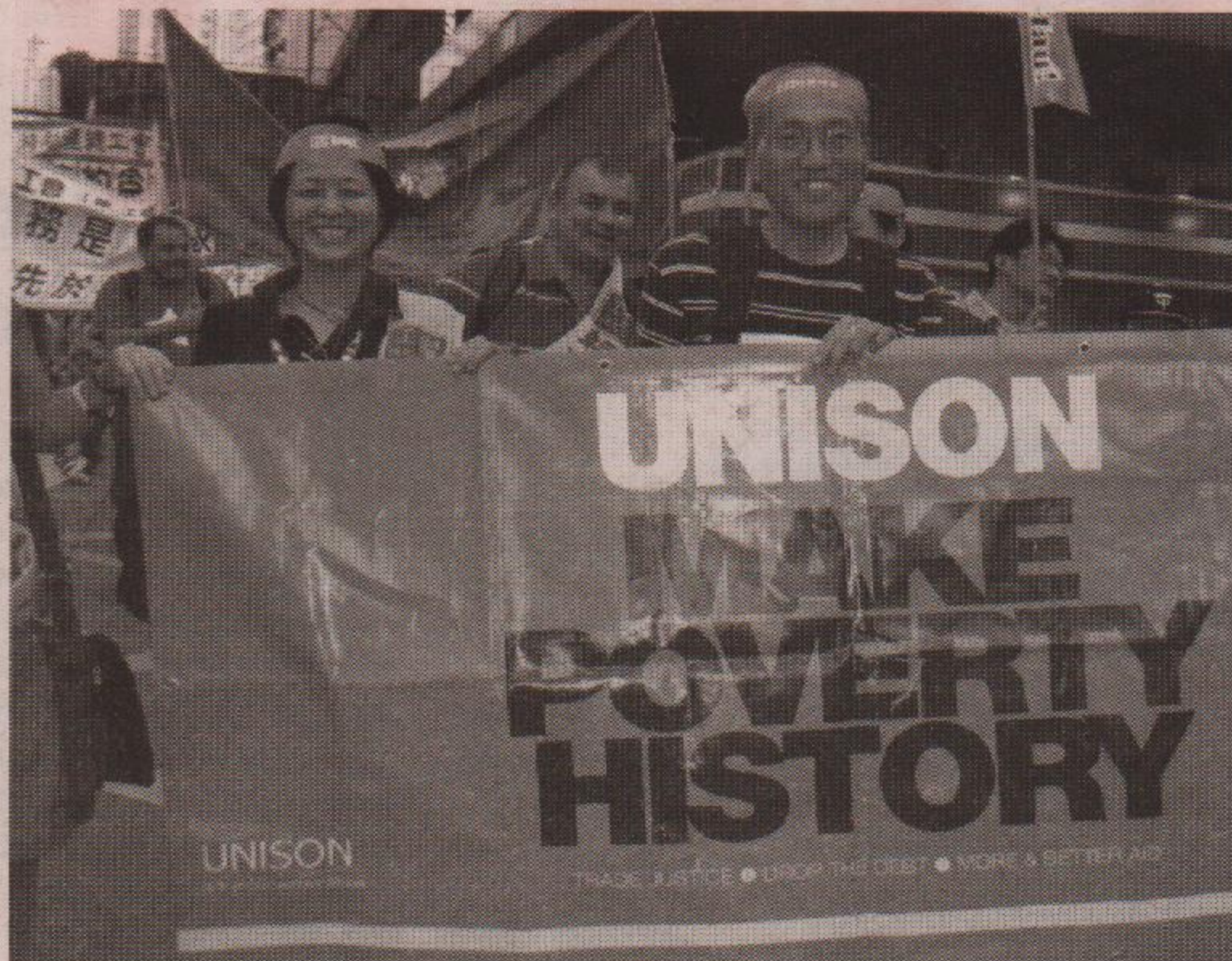
class struggle, developing and fighting for a strategy for power, a revolutionary programme. However, outside of Russia none of the parties of the Second International had yet developed such a model. Once that model had been established, then the election-focused model was an outdated obstacle - whether it be either Labour's opportunist one, or the "orthodox Marxism" of German Social Democracy.

The superiority of the German party lay only in this that it educated hundreds of thousands of workers in a spirit of class consciousness and intransigence, whereas Labour did not. The result can be seen in the emergence after the First World War of a revolutionary communist party in Germany with hundreds of thousands of members, whereas in Britain the communist party had but a few thousand.

The future development of a new and revolutionary workers' party in Britain lies in learning the lessons of history. These include the fact that avoiding the struggle for a revolutionary programme strengthens reformism; the pursuit of immediate, practical reforms alone leads to class collaboration; creating a party dominated by trade union bureaucrats and MPs is a blind alley; and subordinating the direct action of the masses to electoral gains won by manoeuvres and compromises with alien class forces leads to disaster.

At a time when sections of workers and the oppressed are looking for a political alternative to Blair and are being offered Respect or a re-run of Old Labour these lessons are vital ones

# Thousands march at WTO



Tens of thousands demonstrated at the World Trade Organisation ministerial meeting in Hong Kong last month, reports *Din Wong*. Finally four weeks after the conclusion of the meeting, the last of the 14 detained anti-WTO international protestors were released on 11 January - 11 without charge and three bailed to return to their homeland until their cases come to court in Hong Kong. A total of more than 900, mainly Korean protestors were arrested the night before the final day of the conference when there was a serious and very nearly successful attempt to break through the police line. The WTO delegates had to be locked-in in the Conference centre till early morning. Eventually the protestors were beaten back by tear gas and 900 were penned in a road for the whole night before being arrested. The arrests were greeted by immediate demonstrations outside the Chinese Embassies in various Asian capital cities and hunger strikes in Hong Kong until their release.

# Protests against corruption

Chinese media is beginning to publicise the state attacks on workers and peasants. *Peter Main* reports

**M**ore than 100 journalists at the *Beijing News* walked out in protest at the sacking of their editor in chief, Yang Bin, and his two deputies on 28 December. Strikers reported that the authorities had clamped down because the paper had given too much coverage to reports of rural unrest and accusations of official corruption.

Although strikes are rare, discontent has been rising at many of China's municipal daily papers. Because of a reduction in state subsidies, editors are keen to raise circulation by dealing with issues that reflect public concern, especially about corruption among party and government officials. This brings them into immediate conflict with the Communist Party's constitutional dictatorship. The likely trigger for the sacking of Yang was his coverage of the police killing of demonstrators in the village of Dongzhou on the coast of the southern province of Guangdong.

Although still categorised as a village, Dongzhou has grown fast in recent years as "immigrants" from more rural areas have streamed into the area looking for work in factories. The population now stands at some 30,000. Industrial development has brought conflict between local businessmen, eager to build factories as fast as possible to cash in on China's boom, and local people dependent on farming and fishing.

When private farming was reintroduced after 1978, farmers were given the right to use land which they leased from state authorities. However, the authorities continue to own the land itself and have the legal power change land use. In practice, this means that the local party officials, who are very often businessmen themselves, can decide how the land is used.

Especially in the coastal provinces, this has been a lucrative source of income as officials do deals with local businessmen or foreign corporations. In Dongzhou, they allocated land for the building of a power station, forcing

300 farmers off their land which also contains 60 family burial plots. In addition, local fishermen believe the plant will pollute the coastal waters from which they make their living. The £424m project has been partly financed by a £28m loan from the World Bank. Despite these enormous sums of money, local officials offered compensation of just £1.40 per head.

After months of campaigning for more compensation had brought nothing, protesters began to demonstrate at the site. When police arrested their leaders on 6 December, they were joined by supporters from adjoining towns and the demonstration turned into an armed confrontation with the paramilitary militia. Local fishermen fought back against teargas grenades with the detonators they use for fishing before the militia opened fire with live ammunition.

Locals reported as many as 20 dead with dozens more injured. The authorities moved to suppress all information about the shootings, offering money to villagers on condition they kept silent, and surrounding the area with police cordons and roadblocks. Ironically, the very economic development they have promoted made it impossible to conceal what had happened. Within hours, news of the massacre had spread as far as the capital and was being carried on web sites around the world. In Beijing, prominent intellectuals and academics circulated an open letter calling on the government to reveal who was responsible for the massacre and likening it to the killings in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

The authorities were forced to act. They announced that three local men had died during the confrontation and the commander of the paramilitary unit was arrested. This was clearly a climbdown but it was also part of a more general change of strategy in response to mounting unrest throughout the country.

What happened in Dongzhou has been repeated in hundreds of places across China. According to the government's own figures, there were some

74,000 "mass incidents" involving as many as 3.6 million people in China last year.

Unrest on such a scale is a real threat to political stability and, despite its encouragement of private enterprise and capitalist development, rampant corruption and fraud by government and party officials is counterproductive for Beijing. For the first time in years, the government has admitted that corruption reaches into the very heart of the regime.

The same day that the journalists walked out at the *Beijing News*, a former cabinet minister, Tian Fengshan, was jailed for life for taking bribes of more than 4 million yuan (£300,000) while he was a provincial governor. His crimes laid bare the centrality of party corruption at the heart of China's investment boom.

The government of President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao has taken a calculated risk, hoping that a display of government prosecution of corruption and injustice will deflect widespread anger away from the regime itself. This may work in the short-term but the lasting effect will be to strengthen calls for greater transparency and accountability of the administration. In other words, for the dismantling of the one-party dictatorship.

Whatever the immediate political effects of recent events, a more fundamental factor is driving China towards political instability. This is the economic boom itself. Growth rates of some 9 per cent point to sustained investment in fixed capital, that is, in factories and machinery and in the transport and energy infrastructure.

As in any capitalist boom, speculative investors have fallen over themselves to get a slice of the action. Chinese figures suggest that fixed capital investment is the equivalent of 47 per cent of GDP, a proportion that cannot be sustained permanently. In today's globalised economy, the funds for such investment are not generated solely out of the local economy but are sucked into China from around the world.

This is what fuels the frenetic pace of economic growth, and the corruption that goes with it. In the past two decades, some 200 million people have left the countryside for the cities. Under China's hukou system of registration, which divides the population between urban and rural dwellers, most have no legal right to live away from their villages. As illegal workers they can be forced to work for the lowest wages in the worst conditions but the economy has become dependent upon them.

Even though new immigrants continue to flow into the cities, this new working-class is establishing itself and stabilising. As the economy develops, skilled workers are more in demand and better able to insist not just on better pay and decent living conditions for themselves and their families but on equality of rights with the registered urban workers, adding their weight to demands for the democratisation of society.

While the timescale is impossible to predict, and much depends on economic developments on a global scale, the dynamics of Chinese society are pressing relentlessly towards the overthrow of the one-party state. Within the movement for democratic rights and freedoms, there will be no shortage of voices, many financed from abroad, who will call for China to follow the path of the multicoloured "revolutions" of former Soviet bloc countries such as Ukraine and Georgia. They will urge China's workers and peasants to back one speculator or another as the figurehead of a new regime but then to leave the streets and return to their factories and farms to ensure "social stability" and further economic development.

The workers and peasants of China should reject all such calls. As Dongzhou shows, unrest will continue to grow in the countryside but the crucial clash with the regime will come in the major cities, as it has in all modern revolutions. The urban working class, both old and new, must organise itself, as it began to around the

Tiananmen protests, to take control of its cities through workers' councils and its own militia. It must demand the dismantling of the dictatorship, appealing to the rank and file of the army to join it in the overthrow of the party state.

The workers' organisations should call on the peasants to form their own councils at local level to kick out the whole corrupt party regime and together they should convoke a Constituent Assembly for the whole of China at which, for the first time ever, a democratic debate can take place over the future government of the country. Within that debate, the workers' organisations should call for recognition of the workers' and peasants' councils as the new form of the state and propose a national government responsible to them and committed to a programme of economic and social development based on democratic planning and socialisation of all production.

No working-class, certainly not one composed of hundreds of millions spread across one of the biggest countries on earth, can achieve its interests without the formation of a political party.

The building of such a party, committed to the overthrow not only of the existing state, but also of capitalism, is the highest priority for working-class activists throughout China. Nor can such developments be limited to China. Given the essential role that Chinese production now plays in the entire global economy, any political or economic crisis will have immediate ramifications around the world.

Both to support the Chinese workers and to protect their own interests, the workers of all countries will need to collaborate and co-ordinate their actions, taking advantage of any such crisis to overthrow their own rulers and to establish their own international rule. For that, however, international political leadership will be necessary, a leadership that could only take the form of a new revolutionary international, the Fifth International.

# Israel after Sharon

Sharon's stroke and the impending elections in Israel and Palestine have thrown US plans for an imposed settlement into doubt once again. *Marcus Chamoun* looks at the developing crisis

The decision of Israel's two most prominent politicians – Ariel Sharon and Shimon Peres – to desert their own parties and set up a new one was not all that surprising. Since the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada in 2000, the leaderships of Labour and Likud have had broadly the same policy towards the Palestinians and Israel's domestic economic problems. However, they had been prevented from implementing this consensus by opposition from within their own parties, the Peace Now wing of Labour and the pro-settler wing of Likud.

The old ideological differences between Labour and Likud, which go back to the Labour Zionism of David Ben-Gurion and the Revisionist Zionism of Zeev Jabotinsky, have become increasingly irrelevant. Labour pursued neoliberal policies in government, and Likud accepted the US plan for an end to Israeli expansionism as quid pro quo for a disarmed, miniature Palestinian state.

For Israel's ruling class, the idea of a shack up between the war criminal turned peacemaker, Ariel Sharon, and the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Shimon Peres, must have seemed a masterstroke to break the paralysis of official Israeli politics.

However, Sharon's stroke and paralysis are a physical symbol for the entire process. The defection of the top party leaders (finance minister Ehud Olmert and defence minister Shaul Mofaz on the

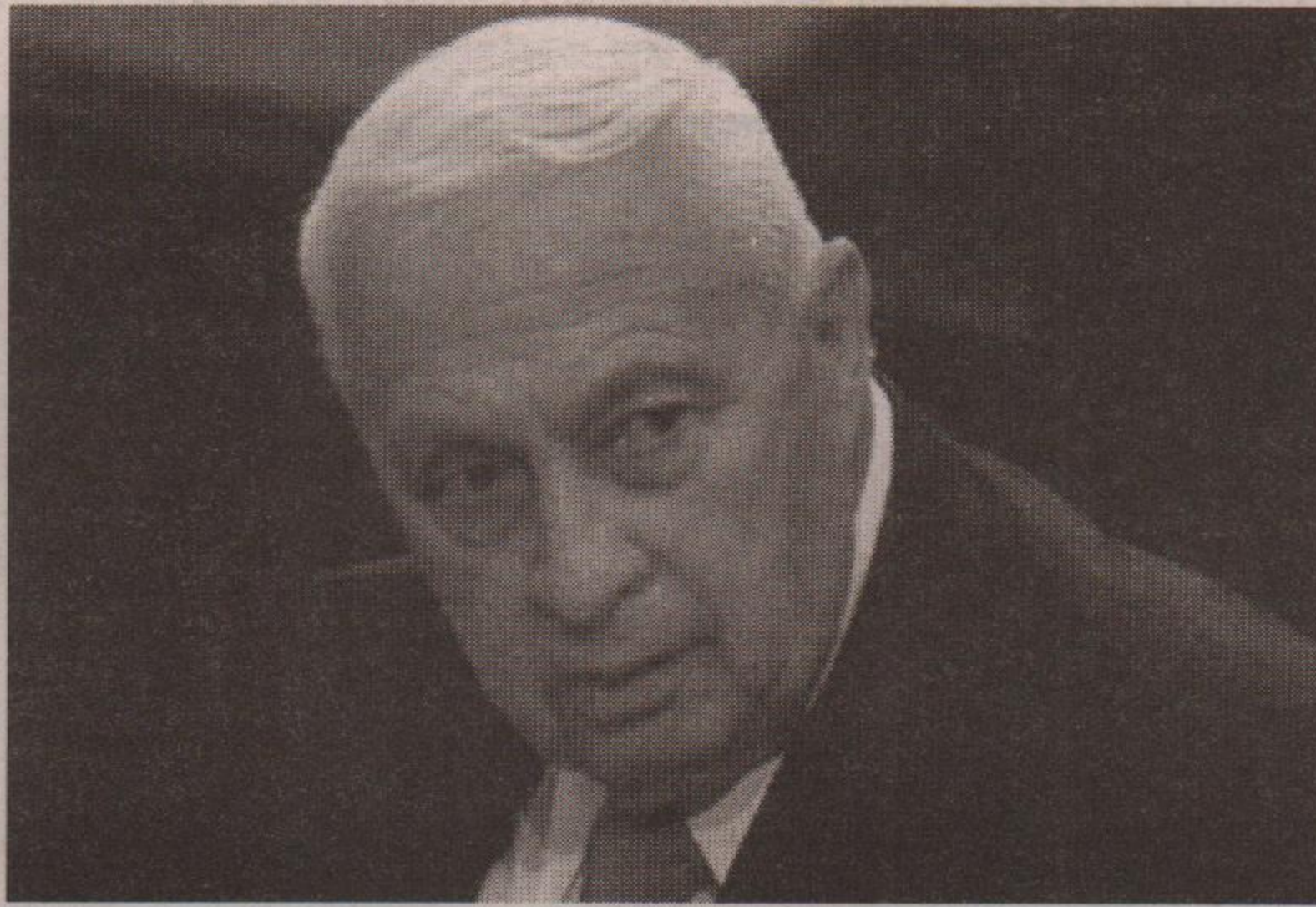
Likud side, and former ministers Haim Ramon and Dalia Itzik from Labour) did not bring about the sea change in Israeli politics, that the pro-US and EU media was trumpeting.

Sharon's launch of the Kadima party has not precipitated any serious split in the mass base of the other two parties, or their memberships. Peres' own caution towards this formation, leaving Labour and supporting Kadima "from the outside", underlines its lack of credibility.

Its published programme has nothing, so far, to say on domestic issues or the economy. It restricts itself to a recognition in principle of the Jewish state's right to "the whole Land of Israel" (that is, the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza), while drawing attention to the fact that Israel's Jewish-majority character can be maintained only by territorial concessions to the Palestinians. It names the US backed "Road Map for Peace" as the framework for these concessions.

Kadima hopes to free the hands of Israel's rulers to focus on imposing a settlement on the Palestinians, combining land-grabbing and apartheid with minor territorial concessions and the empty trappings of Palestinian statehood. But far from creating a national consensus around this, Kadima will merely add to the confusion.

Sharon's removal at this critical juncture emphasises his role in the attempt of the Zionist state to inflict a historic defeat on Palestinian national



Sharon before his stroke

aspirations. Only an ultra-reactionary like Sharon could have pulled off a move like the "disengagement" from Gaza, ignoring the cries of rage and betrayal from the settlers. The butcher of Sabra and Shatila has, over the last year or so, been presented by the White House as a latter day Charles de Gaulle, a right-winger who came to power on an "Algeria is French" platform only to abandon the colony.

Sharon is supposed to have finally recognised the futility of occupying another people's land against its will and the world's disapproval. It is this myth

that allows liberal journalists like Jonathan Freedland and former Peace Now favourites like Shimon Peres to disguise their own shift to the right, by hailing Sharon's miraculous transmutation into a man of peace.

This is total nonsense – indeed cynical nonsense. Sharon's outspoken adviser Dov Weisglass hit the nail on the head when he described the disengagement from Gaza and the Road Map as a means of putting the peace process "on ice" and a Palestinian state "in formaldehyde".

For all the virulent hatred Sharon has inspired on the Israeli right for pulling

a handful of settlers from Gaza – outnumbered two-to-one by the soldiers sent there to guard them and more than two hundred-to-one by the surrounding Palestinians – it is clear that this was a mere surgical operation, designed to allow Israel's settlement expansion to proceed into more easily protected areas around Jerusalem, and other strategic points in the West Bank.

The building of a huge wall around the West Bank and the ongoing land grabs around Jerusalem make it clear that only the most minor strategic withdrawals are intended in the real Sharon-Bush plan, and that these will be imposed unilaterally. Sharon's two most likely successors as premier – Kadima's acting prime minister Ehud Olmert and Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu – will be even less inclined to make concessions than Sharon did.

The Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas has joined the hand wringing over Sharon's stroke. Ordinary Palestinians in the street, however, expressed their well justified joy – "Go Sharon, go" proving particularly popular.

Whether the next Israeli government will be more or less harsh towards the Palestinians, one thing can be said with certainty. Abbas and co. are about as capitulationist as it is possible to get. Hamas would be a disaster for the Palestinian workers and women. Whoever wins the elections, the Palestinian people need a new and fighting leadership.

# Attack on Iran one step closer

The decision to resume nuclear research makes an attack on Iran more likely, argues *Sean Murray*

The ending of Iran's two-year suspension of nuclear research brought immediate condemnation from the European Union and the US, who accuse Iran of pursuing a secret nuclear weapons programme. Yet every consistent democrat must agree: Iran's right to a nuclear power programme or to acquire nuclear weapons is a question for the Iranian people – not for the imperialists who possess both.

Israel has nuclear weapons and would use them the moment it suffered any conventional military reverse. It is widely believed to have 200 nuclear warheads. Israel views Iran as its main security threat in the Middle East. It has repeatedly issued threats against Iran's nuclear programme, if diplomatic efforts fail to halt the programme.

It is also buying 500 "bunker buster" bombs from the US that could be used to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities. And it has done such things before. In 1981 Israeli warplanes were used to destroy the half complete Osirak reactor, 18 miles south of Baghdad.

When Pakistan, another faithful US ally, developed nuclear weapons, this was, if not exactly approved of, tolerated by Washington. But the world's only superpower cannot tolerate any state acquiring nuclear weapons, which might use them to resist its ultimatums and intimidation. So, for George Bush and his Downing Street poodle, the oil-rich states and those adjacent to Israel must be prevented from gaining weapons of mass destruction.

Likewise, Syria's complicity in the death of Lebanese ex-premier Rafic Hariri

has been used to put the country back on the terrorist state hit list. The US claims that it is supporting the resistance in Iraq. Thus all the old lies, which justified the attack on Iraq itself, are being rolled out again.

EU foreign ministers immediately called for Iran to be referred to the United Nations Security Council, where it could face economic sanctions. The US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Iran had crossed an "important threshold".

Embarrassingly the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which can refer Iran to the UN Security Council, has found no evidence that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons. China, which depends on Iran for substantial supplies of natural gas, and Russia are less likely to support UN sanctions on Iran.

This is just the latest incident in a tit for tat diplomatic war that began when Iran's secret nuclear facilities were exposed in August 2002. Since that time Iran has been forced to open its facilities for inspection by the IAEA. In October 2003, it agreed to suspend its attempts to enrich uranium in return for negotiation with the EU over sanctions and an end to Iran's enforced global isolation by the US.

But instead of receiving a reward for its efforts, the ruling theocracy of Iran received an escalation of American and British threats. Doubtless it will soon be arraigned before the Security Council and may well find itself on the receiving end of a bunker-busting bomb from a US stealth bomber or an Israeli war-plane.

George Bush is facing a growing crisis at home and abroad. Corruption scandals are dogging his administration. Key Bush adviser, Lewis "Scooter" Libby was forced to resign after being charged with perjury during an investigation into the unmasking of a covert CIA agent. Bush's campaign strategist, Karl Rove, is under investigation for perverting the cause of justice. And Congress Republican leader, Tom DeLay, has been forced to resign over laundering corporate contributions to Republican campaigns in Texas.

Opinion polls show that the majority of the US public are now against the continued occupation of Iraq and are in favour of a speedy withdrawal. The insurgency in Iraq shows no sign of abating and it will certainly increase the closer the US gets to withdrawing troops.

The only exit strategy available to Bush will be a messy and bloody affair that will cost the lives of many more US troops and Iraqi civilians – just as was the case in the Vietnam war. To cap it all Sharon's stroke has thrown US policy on Palestine into confusion.

A confrontation with Iran, in particular, has long been on the cards. Three years before the invasion of Iraq, the Project for the New American Century asserted that Iran "may well prove as large a threat to US interests in the Gulf as Iraq has". The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad instead of the US and EU preferred candidate Rafsanjani sent them into a spin. The new president's antisemitic ramblings have played into Washington's hands when it comes to the propaganda war

But the real motivations to cut Iran down to size are military-strategic and economic, not ideological. Growing Iranian influence over an increasingly Shi'ite dominated Iraq and the necessity to save face over a failed occupation policy may prove the decisive factors.

For all this a US or Israel attack on Iran would indeed be a desperate act.

Nevertheless the drumbeats for a

future attack on Iran or Syria must be a signal for the antiwar movement to start campaigning to get hundreds of thousands on the streets once again. The international day of action on 18 March, called for by the US antiwar movement and endorsed by both the International Peace Conference in London and the European Social Forum Preparatory Assembly in Vienna, is none too soon for this purpose.

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# Evo Morales: a president for the masses or for the bosses?

The election of the leader of the Movement towards Socialism, Evo Morales, as president shows the overwhelming desire of the Bolivian people for radical change. *Dave Ellis* looks at the implications

The margin of the electoral victory in the Bolivian elections in December, with Evo Morales winning 54 per cent compared to 29 per cent for his closest opponent Jorge Quiroga, was unprecedented. Morales' party, the MAS (Movement towards Socialism), has won a majority in the House of Representatives and almost reached a majority in the Senate.

This victory was obtained even though the Electoral Council eliminated almost a million voters from the register, most of whom were, of course, indigenous supporters of Morales. This victory was also won in the teeth of opposition, not only from a hostile US state department, but also from the ruling white elite in Bolivia, who had at their disposal all the means of communication.

The masses have voted for Morales and the MAS in the hope that he will deliver on their demands. They are expecting the new government to reverse 20 years of neoliberal policy carried out by previous presidents. They expect him to end a situation where a minority live in luxury while the majority are forced to live in terrible poverty.

Chief among the demands of the people is the nationalisation of the massive gas deposits (its estimated worth is put at \$150 billion). Currently major energy multinationals have contracts with the Bolivian government, which mean they distribute and process the gas and pay a nominal 18 per cent tax on their profits. As a result, little of this huge natural source of wealth will ever be seen by the Bolivian people.

Twice now, in October 2003 and again in May-June 2005, the Bolivian workers, peasants and urban poor took direct action. They mobilised in demonstrations, blockades and general strikes to force the government to nationalise the gas; on both occasions the revolutionary action of the masses forced presidents who resisted to resign.

Linked to this demand is the defence of other natural resources, in particular water, where previous governments have privatised services. This led to major struggles in the cities of Cochabamba and El Alto, where subsidiaries of US and French companies were forced out.

Morales will also be expected to realise the demands of his closest

Supporters welcome Morales in Al Alto airport, La Paz



supporters. He was originally the leader of the cocaleros: farmers who grow coca leaf and who will expect him to end the repression and criminalisation they face. They will expect him to expel the US Drug Enforcement Agency's officers, who train and arm the military and run bases and surveillance throughout the country. Alongside this, the indigenous peasants will expect to get land and to see greater political rights for their people.

All these demands are linked to the question of the convening of a new constituent assembly. The masses view this as a tool to radically transform the Bolivian state, sweep away the undemocratic and corrupt system of government, and fulfil their economic and political demands.

The problem facing the people is that the government of Morales will in fact be an alliance with the bourgeoisie not a break from it. The MAS vice president Garcia Linera said openly after the election: "We should admit that Bolivia will still be capitalist in the next 50 to 100 years." Morales and his party certainly won't be moving anywhere near socialism!

Nor will the government take significant steps to fulfil the demands of the workers and peasants. Morales has talked of a symbolic nationalisation of the gas deposits. He would like to renegotiate the contracts with the

multinationals, but has promised that any nationalisation does not mean confiscation or expropriation. He promised as much to business leaders on his recent tour of Spain.

The kind of nationalisation Morales has in mind is where the gas is the property of the state when it is underground, but as soon as it is above Bolivian soil then it is freely available for the energy corporations to transport, refine, process and, of course, to make huge profits from.

Yet at an election rally in Cochabamba Morales declared: "We're very close to recovering the land and all the natural resources... to nationalising all of the natural resources." Morales knows this is a swindle. He is a classic left talker, saying one thing to the people, and something quite different in the boardrooms of the multinationals.

Similarly, Morales is not about to take the land from the big landowners, the latifundistas. He may introduce some moderate reforms that allow for the transfer of unused land to peasant farmers, but he is not about to hand over the great estates to the scores of thousands of landless peasants.

Nor is there any chance that Morales is about to reverse the neoliberal policies that have blighted Bolivia and caused such terrible poverty for large swathes of the nation. Before the election, Morales told one newspaper,

"If I'm elected president, unfortunately it will be my duty to respect those neoliberal laws. Some changes we will be able to make by decree, others through the legislature, but immediately there aren't going to be great changes because these are 20 years of neoliberal laws. That can't be erased in one swipe."

Morales has promised to convene a constituent assembly in June 2006, but it will be organised by the same electoral commission that even recently was able to disenfranchise large numbers of rural indigenous voters.

A small but important section of the militants, in both the workers' and peasants' organisations, know that Morales will not deliver any far reaching and fundamental changes in Bolivian society. Just before the election, the organisations that led the May-June protests met again in El Alto. They declared that: "None of the candidates who have a chance of winning power will dare reclaim our natural resources" and called an end to the truce which followed the general strike.

But despite calling for the nationalisation of oil and gas without compensation and calling for "a political instrument of the workers", the First Workers' and Popular Summit did little to mobilise the masses for independent activity in the elections, leaving them to follow Morales.

wield power by forming its own workers' and peasants' militia. Most importantly it must aim to create a workers' government based on the power of the councils and militia. Such a government will really carry out the will of the masses and deliver on their demands.

That some sections of the organised workers recognise the limitations of the election of a left president is a start, but it is only the beginning. Worker militants who understand the key objective - the need for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system - must form a revolutionary workers' party. They must also develop the strategy and tactics to enable them to win the poor to such a perspective. Critically,

## Should revolutionaries have voted for Evo Morales?

For many on the left, the idea of critically voting for Morales seemed a good idea. Some argued that even if Morales and the MAS were not about to carry out a radical transformation of Bolivian society, his election would demonstrate in practice that the politics of the MAS would not resolve the situation in the interests of the majority of the population.

Others argued that, as the masses, especially the indigenous masses, wanted Morales to win, and because imperialism and the Bolivian elite were totally hostile to his election, then it was necessary for revolutionaries to join the camp of the oppressed in the election booths.

Both of these arguments are flawed. Key to the situation in Bolivia is that the organised working class take power with the support of other sectors of the nation, the peasants and urban poor. This means a conflict with the capitalist class, both domestic and foreign. Above all it means the workers must at all times maintain their political independence.

The MAS is not a workers' organisation. It aims to create an alliance of all the main classes in Bolivia. To do this means subordinating the working class itself to the bourgeoisie - that is, limiting its demands to what is acceptable to the ruling class. The most advanced workers recognised this but failed to overcome their syndicalist prejudices, which prevented the formation of an independent workers' party.

Revolutionaries should not have called for a critical vote to Morales. Now it is absolutely vital that the workers' organisations make sure the nose of their leaders enter the government.

revolutionary workers must know how to use such tactics to expose Morales, to demonstrate that he will ultimately defend the capitalist system and private property, and to break his supporters from him and to a revolutionary policy.

At the moment the majority of workers and peasants are waiting to see if their demands can be realised under the government of Morales. Their expectations will be quickly dashed - they must be mobilised for power.

**PUBLIC MEETING**  
BOLIVIA: IS EVO MORALES A NEW LULA OR A NEW CHAVEZ?  
Wednesday 1 February, 7:30pm  
University of London Union  
Malet Street WC1 (nearest tubes: Godege St, Russell Sq, Euston Sq)

www.workerspower.com

## Mobilise the masses for power

Revolutionaries in Bolivia must organise the workers to force Morales to carry out his promises and the demands of those who raised him to the presidency.

The gas deposits, pipelines and installations must be nationalised without any compensation and placed under the control of the workers - the multinationals have already taken enough wealth out of Bolivia. So must all the natural resources and mines that have been privatised. Similarly the great landed estates should be taken out of the hands of the latifundistas and handed over to the peasant communities and organisations.

Mass mobilisations and direct action must enforce these policies.

The demand for the constituent assembly must be realised in order to really destroy the old regime of the elite and their imperialist masters. But the convening of the assembly must be done via the revolutionary mobilisations of the masses, fighting for the nationalisation of the hydrocarbons and for land. Any attempts to dilute its powers or deprive the poor of their votes must be met with mass street demonstrations and protests, aimed at removing those responsible.

According to MAS policy, "the assembly should also recover national effective control over its natural resources and guarantee that they are at the service of the population's welfare." Revolutionaries should demand that the MAS be held to this promise. If the constituent assembly does not carry this out, then the organised workers' and peasants' movement must implement the policy anyway.

It must be a revolutionary constituent assembly. It should base itself on councils of workers, poor peasants, the urban poor and rank and file soldiers. It must

# Cuba: island of revolution

Stuart King reviews *Cuba: A New History* by Richard Gott, Yale Note Bene 2005, £9.99

Part I - From Spanish Colony to US semi-colony

Richard Gott's new history of Cuba has now appeared in paperback. In less than four hundred pages, he takes us from the first Spanish attempts to conquer the island in 1511 up to Castro's Cuba in the early years of this decade. Gott's book is an accessible starting point for anyone wanting to understand the Caribbean island's turbulent history.

*Cuba: a new history* emphasises the role of black people and their struggles in Cuban history, an important corrective to those who viewed revolutionary developments in the country as a largely Spanish or Latin American affair. As Gott points out, for much of Cuban history blacks made up the majority of the population (up to 60 per cent) and the great majority were slaves. This only began to change in the latter half of the 19th century when the Spanish colonial masters deliberately set out to "whiten" the population through mass Spanish immigration.

## BEGINNINGS OF REBELLION

The slave revolt on nearby Saint-Domingue in 1791 (which ultimately created the black republic of Haiti) cast a long shadow over the anti-colonial struggle in Cuba. The fear of a similar slave revolt in Cuba often divided the struggle against the Spanish along racial lines. When Bolivar defeated Spain's continental armies in Peru in 1824, so liberating Latin America from their yoke, some expected him to liberate Cuba too. But he thought this was "too much work" for a small island, fearing "another Republic of Haiti".

However much the Cuban landowners and small merchants, who were overwhelmingly white and of Spanish and European descent, chafed under Spanish rule, they feared the largely enslaved blacks more. As a Spanish minister put it in 1830, surveying the prospects of another revolt on the island: "The fear of negroes is worth an army of 100,000 men." (Gott, page 52).

Even so, revolts recurred throughout the 19th century. Ironically, it was a century of prosperity for Cuba with cattle ranching and tobacco being supplemented by the sugar and coffee industries - sugar would, of course, later dominate the island's export trade. The population grew, especially that of the black slaves, but also "free people of colour". The 1841 census listed 436,000 slaves and 153,000 free blacks out of a population of one million.

All the black revolts that swept the island sought to abolish slavery. Aponte's rising in 1812 was betrayed and he was hanged with many others. A large-scale rebellion, La Escalera in 1843-44, spread to the sugar plantations and caused panic among the white elite. It was crushed with the utmost brutality with thousands of blacks being slaughtered.

## THE 10 YEAR WAR

In 1868 an even more serious revolt swept the country, which would last for a decade. Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, a lawyer and landowner, raised the independence standard. He drew behind him not only other landowners and merchants, fed up with the heavy taxes extracted by Spain, but much of the black population as well - Antonio Maceo, for example, would become an outstanding black guerrilla



Antonio Maceo, black guerrilla general

general. In Gott's words: "The 10 Year War was both a civil war and a race war. On the one side were a handful of determined white settlers, joined by their black slaves and by free blacks. On the other were the Spanish armies joined by groups of racist white settlers, many recent immigrants from Spain" (page 72).

By 1878 both sides had fought to a standstill but with no sign of Spanish capitulation, the rebels laid down their arms. All slaves who had fought with the army were freed; concessions

only of the Caribbean sea routes, and therefore trade, but also those of the Pacific. Cuba was the stepping-stone, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines the prizes.

An explosion on board the battleship *Maine* and its sinking in Havana harbour was the signal for war under the battle cry "Remember the *Maine*". Never mind that it later turned out that an accidental fire had set off the ship's magazine; like the mythical weapons of mass destruction, it was sufficient pretext.

An American fleet defeated the Spanish off the Philippines in May 1898. In June another fleet landed an American force on Cuba. After initial resistance, Spain capitulated and sailed away from Cuba and its other colonies leaving them to the USA.

The Cubans, who had been fighting the independence war for three years, now found themselves pushed aside by what was effectively a military dictatorship. The Spanish captain-general was replaced by a US general who governed the island from 1898 to 1902.

This section of the book is worth reading if only for highlighting the striking and repeated similarities with today's occupation of Iraq. The rebel army of 33,000 was disbanded and paid \$75 if they handed in their weapons. The US

**President McKinley told the US Congress at the end of 1898 that the military would stay in Cuba "until there is complete tranquillity in the island and a stable government is inaugurated"**

were made on discrimination against blacks in public places, schools and public employment. But slavery was only finally abolished in 1886.

Jose Marti took up the struggle for independence once again in the 1880s and even though he died at the very start of the Cuban campaign in 1895, the new revolt gained strength under the leadership of Maceo and other generals. Of the 30,000-strong rebel army mobilised by the end of the first year, 80 per cent were black. The old racist Winston Churchill, writing for a US magazine at the time, declared them an "undisciplined rabble" whose triumph, would make Cuba "a black republic".

By 1896 the country had been split in half by the rebels and the Spanish faced defeat. Only a new Spanish captain-general with an army of 200,000 and a scorched earth policy in the countryside, including "concentration camps" and the development of "strategic hamlets" for confining poor peasants, saved the regime.

It was a new military method of combating popular guerrilla wars soon imitated by imperialist armies all over the world - from the British in the Boer War to the USA in the Philippines, and decades later in Vietnam.

## US INTERVENTION

Spain's brutal repression led to an outcry in the United States by the popular press owned by William Randolph Hearst. But the outrage and the calls for intervention in support of Cuban independence were a smoke-screen for a much larger plan.

US imperialism was flexing its muscles, its eyes fixed on the possessions of a weakened Spanish empire. If seized, these would allow the US control not

set up a more reliable "Rural Guard", a relatively weak force because the US intended to retain military control.

To the dismay of the former black fighters, racial segregation was introduced along the lines then existing in the US army. The new officer corps was completely white. The US hardly altered the old Spanish administration or purged its officials. Rather it used them to run the administration under its direction.

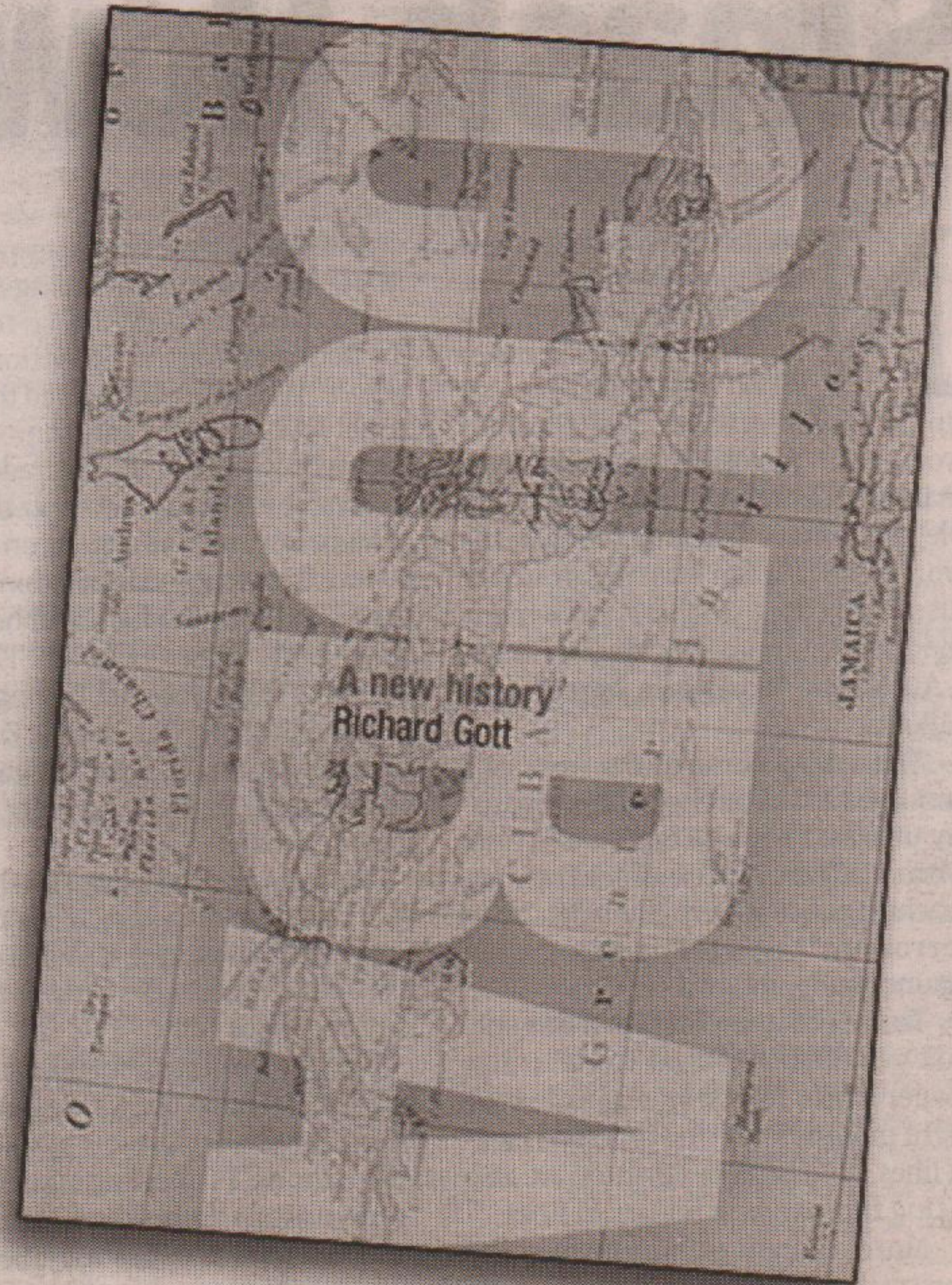
President McKinley told the US Congress at the end of 1898 that the military would stay in Cuba "until there is complete tranquillity in the island and a stable government is inaugurated". Many thought this meant decades of US rule, others envisaged annexation, as happened with Puerto Rico.

## A SEMI-COLONIAL SOLUTION

But the costs of direct imperial rule proved too much - a rebellion in the Philippines was under way and took tens of thousands of troops to crush it. Cuba was costing half a million dollars a month. It was time to put in a trusted semi-colonial government through which the US could govern at arms length.

Elections were planned for December 1900 but on a very restricted franchise. Only males over the age of 20, who were literate and owners of property worth \$250 or more, received the vote (as a concession all who served in the rebel army were allowed to vote even if they did not fulfil these conditions). The poor and most blacks were thus excluded, with a mere 5 per cent of the population enfranchised.

The man put in charge of Cuba, Secretary for War Elihu Root, thought this would pave the way to power for the



most conservative and pro-annexationist wing of the Cuban landowners and businessmen - men with whom Uncle Sam could do business.

In his own words, if the "mass of ignorant and incompetent" people could be kept out, it would be possible to "avoid the kind of control that leads to perpetual revolutions in Central America and other West Indian islands" (page 108).

The election results were not, however, to Uncle Sam's liking - pro-independence parties swept to power. Root now had to plan for a transfer of power and a military withdrawal that left the USA with as much economic control as they could get over a newly independent Cuba. The means was the infamous "Platt Amendment".

## PLATT AMENDMENT

Passed by the US Congress in 1902, Platt's goal was to define relations between the USA and Cuba. The Cuban Constituent Assembly, elected to draft the country's new constitution, was obliged to incorporate the agreement into the constitution as a price for the US handing over control. Gott handily provides the text in an appendix. It is a worked example of how an imperialist power sets up a semi-colonial state and enshrines it in law, anticipating the basic approach used in the Balkans, East Timor and now Iraq.

The first paragraph barred Cuba from making any treaties with foreign powers, or allow any foreign mil-

itary bases on its soil, without US approval. The second ceded the US ultimate control over Cuba's public finances. The third gave the US the right to intervene militarily in Cuba whenever it felt it necessary. And the seventh paragraph gave the US the right to establish permanent military bases on the island.

This last point, of course, led to the establishment of the massive military base at Guantanamo Bay used today by the US government to illegally hold, interrogate and torture people kidnapped as part of its "war on terror".

The Platt Amendment was incorporated into the Cuban Constitution by 15 votes to 14. General Gomez, once one of Marti's disciples and one of the black independence leaders, was among the opponents. The amendment he said "reduced the independence and sovereignty of the Cuban Republic to a myth," (page 111).

Indeed, in the first three decades of the 20th century the US did not hesitate to intervene when it thought its interests or the stability of a virtual puppet government was under threat. US marines intervened in Cuba in 1906-1909, again in 1912 and between 1917-23. A radical government in 1933 eventually repealed the Platt Amendment.

But the US never relinquished its permanent base at Guantanamo, even when Fidel Castro swept out the US' closest ally - the dictator Batista in 1959.

The second part of this review will look at Gott's treatment of those revolutionary years.



US troops fight Spanish over its empire

# Australia

The right-wing Howard government has used the "war on terror" to go on the attack on progressive rights and emboldened conservatives and racists. *Carlene Wilson* looks at the attacks on organised labour, women's reproductive rights and the recent race riots in Sydney

## Smash Howard's anti-union act

New industrial relations laws will come into force in Australia in March 2006. The laws will make access to sites much harder for union representatives, will allow for workers to "negotiate" away holidays, make it easier for employers to fire people and remove access of much of the workforce to a fair hearing in unfair dismissal cases, and will force many more workers onto individual contracts – Australian Workplace Agreements (AWA).

These laws come in the wake of a sustained attack on the building industry unions. They also appear at a time when many are concerned that new far-reaching police powers granted to "fight terrorism" will end up being used against trade unionists.

This is not so far-fetched. It was only last year that militant trade union leader Craig Johnston was jailed for eight months for trying to defend picket lines. Activists like Johnston are also facing thousands of dollars in fines.

More militant unions pushed the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) into campaigning against the laws, but focused on big budget TV ads rather than on the ground organising.

The highlights of the campaign were the two huge national days of action in June and November that showed that a large numbers of workers were willing to defend their rights.

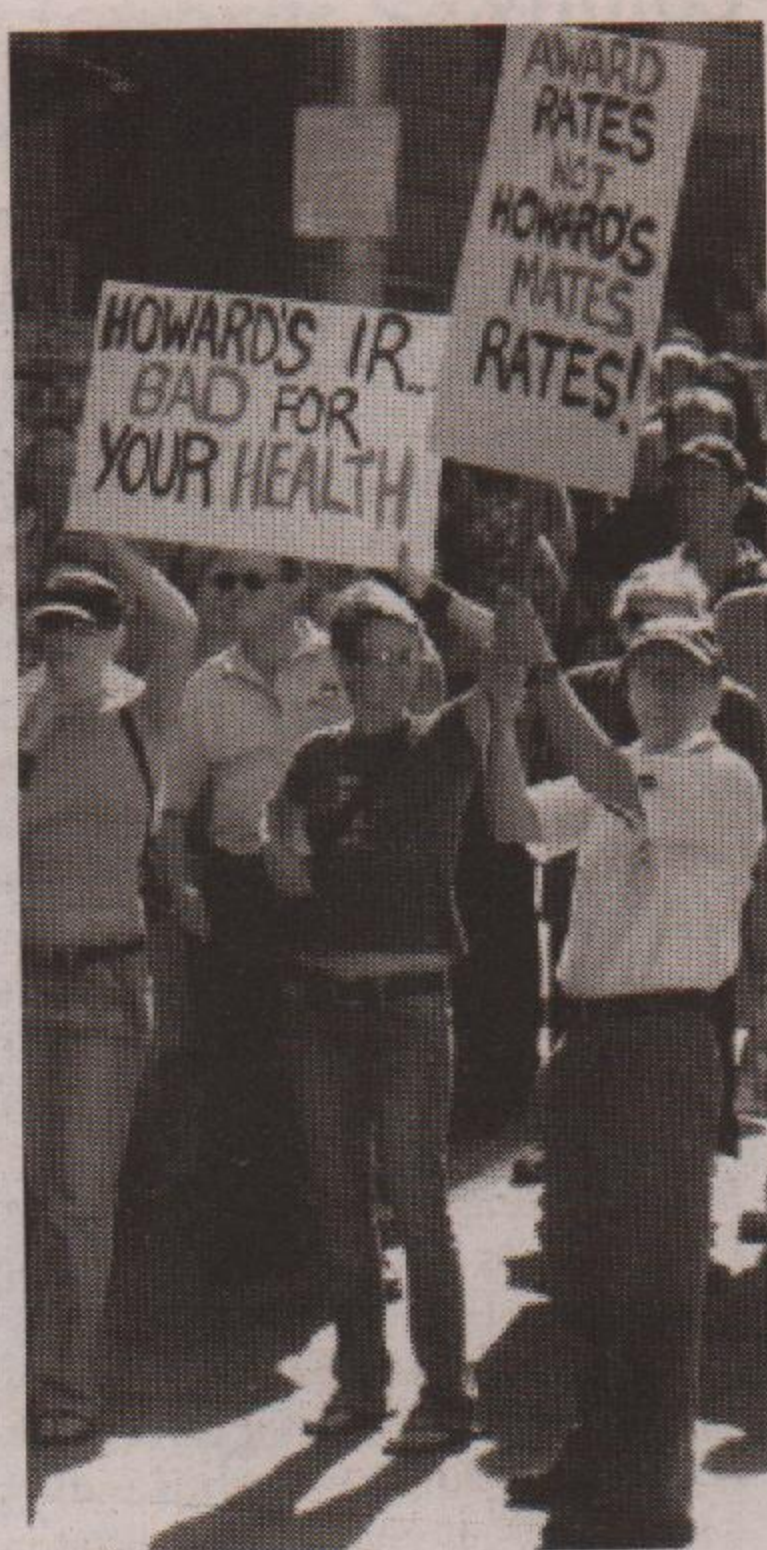
Following the November protests, ACTU focused on convincing Nationals Senator Barnaby Joyce to cross the floor and stop the legislation in the Senate. What they all seemed to forget is that Joyce is a rabid anti-choice Christian right-winger. While the trade union leadership is trying to win over the likes of Joyce or run TV ads, many on the left believe the proposed legislation will be passed but that the fight will be about stopping its implementation. The laws are to be implemented in stages but past experiences, like in New Zealand, show that failure to fight the whole bill can leave the union movement significantly weaker.

There is a push to get a further day of action agreed in March. In Victoria – by far the most militant state – this has been organised with a delegates meeting and a rally.

This is a good start but the campaign must be stepped up. Rallies must be held in cities and towns across Australia; the ACTU must also instruct its trade unions to hold meetings, on or off-site, to mobilise members and non-members to take action in March against the bill.

But one day of action is not enough. To defeat a class-wide attack it is necessary to have a class-wide response to crush the bill and throw Howard and company out – and that response is a general strike.

Where the general strike demand



Protest against the bill

has been raised, it has been met with enthusiasm by the rank and file workers. This shows that even if the union leaderships are not ready for an all-out fight, or want to wait for a Labor Party victory, rank and file workers want to take action.

Among the most militant unions, there is still a focus on getting an Australian Labor Party into government. Even in unions like the Electrical Trades Union, who have had close links to the Greens in the past, there is a belief that there remains a left in the ALP or that the party can still be taken over and used to fulfil workers needs. And while some union leaders look for possible allies in the Greens and others maintain some relationship with the now almost defunct Socialist Alliance, almost all would agree that they think the only way out is an ALP victory.

Australian workers must start organising themselves into rank and file networks and organisations to challenge the lukewarm response of their leaders. These leaders have already made clear that it is the defence of their privileges that they are most worried about. For example, at the Victorian National Tertiary Education Union conference last year delegates were told that it was more important to defend the union than defend their wages, conditions and even their jobs; this was in the face of hundreds of redundancies being forced upon some of their most active unionists.

Union members must take the unions into their own hands and start organising all out strikes and fight for a general strike. Don't wait for Labor – strike now.

### Howard's racist policies spark violence

Race riots hit the Sydney seaside suburb of Cronulla on 11 December. About 5,000 white Australians terrorised anyone of Middle Eastern appearance on the beach or in the shopping mall. They chased, cornered and beat people, and also showered ambulances with bottles, rubbish and their fists.

These riots are a direct result of years of racist policies from the Howard government. Howard has created an atmosphere of fear, panic and racial tension where anyone of Middle Eastern appearance is a potential terrorist.

Anti-racists quickly responded with large demonstrations in Sydney and Melbourne and linked in Howard's war drive, his refugee policies and the anti-terror legislation, plus countered the racist lies being peddled by the Australian media.

The media helped fuel the panic by sensationalising stories of young Lebanese men running riot in the suburb. Two lifeguards on the beach had been allegedly assaulted by a group of Lebanese men the previous week. Sydney talkback radio was filled with people talking about "a community response". The riots on 11 December were the response.

But there were also more sinister forces at work. The Australian First Party and their youth group, the Patriotic Youth League, played a large part in providing the organisational basis for the riots. They provided many of the ringleaders and even bussed people in. Both these organisations claim they are white nationalists and have connections to the British BNP and other openly fascist organisations. In fact, the PYL provides links on its websites to a fascist organising webboard, Stormfront, and to the BNP.

We, as anti-racists, anti-fascists and socialists, need to take action against the fascists of the PYL and Australia First and physically oppose them broadcasting their racist filth – no platform for fascists.

To do that, we need a firm commitment in the movement that self-defence is not an offence and that the Left, particularly the organised trade union movement, must offer help in organising and participating in the self-defence of individuals and communities when the racists and fascists strike again.

## Defend women's right to choose

The right is on the rise in Australian politics. Since Howard's re-election in October 2004, anti-abortion and racist organisations (see box) have become bolder in attacking women's rights and immigrants.

During these elections, Howard campaigned on family values and Family First won its first senator. Family First, based around the Assembly of God Church, found pre-election notoriety when a party-worker in Queensland was quoted as saying that all lesbians are witches who should be burned at the stake and that "Satan must be driven from the suburbs", this time referring to the Islamic community and their non-church-going ways.

Conservative Christians in Howard's cabinet, Health Minister Tony Abbot being the most prominent, opened up a debate about abortion. In most parts of Australia, abortion remains on the criminal code but there are loopholes which make abortion possible under certain circumstances – namely that a woman's mental or physical health will be severely compromised by continuing the pregnancy.

They began with questions about the number of abortions carried out and at what points in the pregnancy, focusing on the spectre of "late term" abortion with opposition directed at abortions carried out in the third trimester. There are potential attacks on the public funding of abortion through Medicare. While the funding will not prevent abortions being carried out, it will make it increasingly difficult for all but the wealthiest women to have them, particularly in regional areas of Australia where substantial travel costs already inhibit a woman's right to choose.

All this focus on the length of term and the access to funding was a diver-

sion away from the real issue – abortion remains criminal and that, even though there is some access in the major cities, most Australian women simply do not have a choice.

To fight these attacks, activists have come together to defend women's reproductive rights. Before the election, the Campaign for Women's Reproductive Rights (CWRR) was formed, initially to lobby ALP politicians to fight for free child care and employer-funded paid maternity leave and, after the election, defend abortion rights.

With its multi-issue approach, CWRR was able to draw in demands for free safe abortion on demand and link them to a range of other demands for

trade unions are afraid to touch the issue because it is still seen as being too volatile – a conscience issue – and many left groups have also been reluctant to participate.

The picket did swell in size after three pro-choice activists were attacked and bashed by two Right to Lifers who barged through the picket in September. The attack highlighted the violence of many in the anti-choice movement.

In the month after the beatings the CWRR counter-picket was large enough to scare off the Helpers and was clear evidence that it is bodies on the pavement that can protect women.

The Australian Democrats are trumpeting a form of bubble legislation. In

### In most parts of Australia, abortion remains on the criminal code but there are loopholes which make abortion possible under certain circumstances

reproductive freedom. It held a number of successful rallies and circulated a petition, which together drew in forces from trade union activists to single parent and child care lobby groups.

But the swing to the right has emboldened other anti-choice activists outside parliament. The international catholic organisation, Helpers of God's Precious Infants, along with Right to Life have begun having a monthly vigil outside the Fertility Control Clinic in Melbourne. This clinic was one of the first opened in Australia and has previously been the target for the anti-choice movement. Only a few years ago, a security guard was shot and killed outside the clinic by a Right to Life fanatic.

CWRR has been organising a monthly counter-picket to keep the Helpers away from the front of the clinic, but

effect it would mean that the when Right to Lifers approach the clinic or its clients within a certain radius (suggested to be 2 meters), they would breach the law. But the Helpers and their ilk will be able to continue to shout and harass women from a slightly greater distance. And the bubble legislation will not make abortion any more legal, accessible or affordable to women whether they live in the city or the country.

CWRR has also pointed out that any such bubble legislation, in a time of attacks on trade unions and civil liberties, is just as likely to be used against the Left to prevent the right to protest. As such legislation targets both pro and anti alike, it would leave the pro-choice movement much less able to physically defend clinics – this has been seen

# Ethiopia: IMF favourite launches brutal crackdown

Jason Travis, who lived and worked in Ethiopia for two years, reports on the current situation of unrest

On 7 October 2004 Tony Blair praised his handpicked Commissioner for Africa, Meles Zenawi the Ethiopian Prime Minister, for "the greater freedom and democracy there is here today."

There was a good reason for such praise. Zenawi's government had implemented almost every recommendation the World Bank and IMF put forward for the country. And Zenawi was so keen to support Bush and Blair in their war on Iraq that he offered the use of Ethiopian air bases.

But since June 2005, when Ethiopian soldiers opened fire on demonstrators protesting the fraudulent May election results, the country has been gripped by civil unrest. The past two months have seen an intensification of the struggle with up to 40,000 arrests, a 10-day general strike in Addis Ababa, daily protests being met with beatings and deaths and continuing student strikes around the country.

The June protests, where at least 26 demonstrators were shot dead were over the ruling party's declaration that it had won the May elections, despite the opposition winning a landslide victory in the capital.

Ephraim, a student activist, explains: "Most people hate Meles and his government because of the continuing crisis in the countryside where people every day are being driven off the land because they simply can't survive; because of the lack of political freedom, unemployment, corruption, because of so many things. The votes for the Coalition for Unity and Democracy are a protest against the government."

The official election results were delayed, despite the ruling party claiming victory, until 1 November when mass protests erupted on the streets of Addis Ababa. A 10-day general strike was declared.

"We were determined to support the strike and set up roadblocks with

huge stones and boulders, anything we could get our hands on," says Addisalem, a voluntary worker in the capital. "It was very frightening but also exciting as we closed down the whole city and for a while all the soldiers could do was look on. We felt like the Palestinians. This was our Intifada."

Unrest rapidly spread to other Ethiopian towns: Awassa, Jimma, Dessie, Debre Birhan, and a national student strike was declared. Thousands of people were rounded up by police and taken off to camps.

Tefara, a minibus driver who took part in the strike said: "When the strike was over, I reluctantly went back to work. I didn't want to, but if I didn't work, we couldn't eat. I saw police rounding up anyone in their twenties they could find. I was very scared. They dragged me off the bus and sent me down to Zeway [a town south of Addis]. I was put into the football stadium with thousands of others. It was very hot with no shelter from the sun. They kept me there for a month. I saw lots of people die from beatings or just exhaustion."

There are still protests almost every day. A British doctor, visiting Addis last month, describes the situation:

"I saw a lot of primary school students shouting, 'Release our leaders! Release our leaders!' All of a sudden I heard gunshots and saw soldiers firing indiscriminately. Everyone just started running. I was running too, I was scared for my life. The city's still gripped by these protests."

Ethiopia continues to be wracked by poverty: 85 per cent of the population live in rural areas as small farmers or agricultural labourers. GNP per capita is around US \$110 a year, less than 30 cents a day. Much of the farming is near subsistence with a small surplus sold in the market. Prices for coffee, Ethiopia's main export earner, have crashed in recent years as the multinational cartels have forced prices down. The result

is that many coffee farmers are ripping up their crops and some are joining the mass migrations from countryside to town to swell the ranks of the urban poor, who have little means of making a living beyond begging or prostitution.

Life expectancy is 48 and falling. HIV infection is around 7 per cent and health care statistics are grim with no access for retroviral drugs (except for the very rich). There are only 20,000 doctors (one per 3,500 people). In fact, there are more Ethiopian doctors in Washington, than the whole of Ethiopia. School enrolment rates are amongst the lowest in the world with fewer than 40 per cent in primary school and less than 10 per cent in secondary school.

One of the main questions in Ethiopia is land reform. Small plot size means that if the rains fail, the crop fails. While the opposition might be gathering protest votes, its programme for the country is more IMF recipes. They want to privatise the land leading to even more farmers becoming bankrupt and the probable reintroduction of landlordism and more rural to urban migration.

A socialist solution would be to provide interest free loans, cheap fertilisers and machinery to the peasants; to help farmers invest in irrigation and encourage farmer co-operatives so that crops could be diversified. The few large private farms would be nationalised and run as model farms. There would be an investment in education, particularly for women, and health care. Private factories would be seized and run for local need not the obscene profits of the ruling class. Power would be taken back from the hated police and army, and neighbourhood committees would organise their own militia.

Through the recent months of struggle, Ethiopian workers and students are beginning to realise the power they have, but only a revolutionary workers party can take that power to its revolutionary conclusion.

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

### CAPITALISM

Long ago capitalism developed the material and human resources to end poverty and inequality on a world scale. Yet it will not do this. It cannot because of its fundamental features: private ownership of production and the division of the world into competing nation states. The factories, the land, the mines, oil fields and banks are all owned by a tiny handful of billionaires, whose power and wealth is defended by national armies, police forces and security services.

To liberate humanity from hunger, insecurity, war and disease this tiny ruling class must be overthrown. Only the working class has the strength, the centrality to production and the interest to carry this through. Capitalism must be abolished by a workers' revolution, and a society without class divisions, without bureaucratic, military and police repression, must be created. Only in such a society will the last traces of national and racial oppression, the oppression of women, youth, lesbians and gays finally disappear.

The exploiters will resist this revolution with savage ferocity. But their resistance can be broken by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution, disintegrating the forces of repression, the capitalist state.

The capitalist politicians, top civil servants, judges, the police and army chiefs must be swept away - the army and the police force must be smashed and replaced with a militia of the armed working people.

All power must pass into the hands of democratic councils of delegates from the working class, directly elected by the workers and poor farmers and subject to instant recall by them. This is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

For the exploiters it will certainly seem oppressive, indeed they will lose all their wealth and power. But for the all the formerly exploited classes it will be the most democratic society ever seen. And even this state will only be a transitional form on the road to a completely classless and stateless society: communism.

To achieve this, all large-scale production and distribution must be taken into social ownership and be democratically planned. Under workers' control, we could share the work between all able people and every improvement in productivity could be used to reduce the length of the working week. Poverty, social inequality and the underdevelopment of whole continents could be systematically overcome.

### IMPERIALISM

Imperialism is the highest and most violent stage of capitalism. In the imperialist system a few great capitalist powers and corporations exploit billions in all countries and use their vast military machines to crush anyone who resists them.

For this reasons we support all resistance to their invasions and occupations. We demand an end to the occupation of the Iraq and we support the Iraqi people's armed resistance. We support the Palestinians' struggle to free their homeland of Zionist occupation. We demand the withdrawal of all British troops from abroad including from Northern Ireland. We demand the dissolution of Nato and all other imperialist pacts.

### SOCIAL OPPRESSION

We fight all racism and national oppression and defend refugees and asylum seekers. We demand the opening of the borders, giving all migrants the right to work, social security and full citizenship rights. We fight to deny the fascists any platform for their views and support organised self defence against fascist gangs and racial attacks.

We fight for women's liberation from physical and mental abuse, from bearing the sole or main burden of domestic labour, from suffering sexual exploitation, unequal pay and discrimination at work. Women must have control over their own fertility, including the right to free abortion and contraception on demand.

Lesbians and gay men must be defended against harassment on the streets, at work and in the schools. They must have equal legal rights to marry and bring up children.

We must fight the oppression of young people. We demand an end to the harassment of young people by government, state and press. Young workers should get equal pay and the same rights as other workers. Schools and colleges must be run by the representatives of school students, education workers and local working people. We fight for independent revolutionary youth organisations linked to a revolutionary youth international.

### DEMOCRACY

We must fight for the abolition of all the many undemocratic elements in Britain today: the monarchy, the House of Lords, the unelected judiciary, the state church. There should be no privilege for any one religion. The rights of all faith groups to practice their religion must be protected but all religious schools must be abolished. All blasphemy laws must be abolished and restrictions on the right to criticise religion opposed.

### TRADE UNIONS

We must fight the privileged officials in the trade unions who sell out our struggles. All union officers must be elected, recallable, and removable at short notice and earn the no more than average pay of their members. Rank and file unionists must form a movement in and across all unions to dissolve the trade union bureaucracy.

### REFORM AND REVOLUTION

We oppose reformism and the pro-capitalist actions of the Labour Party in government and in opposition. Labour, for all its organised links to the trade unions, is a capitalist party in its programme, and leadership. It is a bourgeois workers party.

To lead a social revolution the working class needs a new type of party which unites its most conscious and active militants, giving a lead in the trade unions and other mass organisations in their day to day struggles and directing them towards the social revolution. For this purpose an action programme of transitional demands is essential.

### STALINISM

For decades Stalinism was wrongly described as Communism, has betrayed the working class. It established a dictatorship over the working class by a privileged bureaucratic elite. It blocked the road to democratic planning and socialism. This led eventually to the collapse of the USSR and other so-called socialist states.

Where Stalinist states survive - such as Cuba and North Korea - they must still be defended unconditionally against imperialist blockade, attack and the restoration of capitalism. But without a political revolution of the workers and the establishment of workers' council democracy they too will eventually collapse. The theory that you can build 'socialism in one country' has been plainly falsified by collapse of the bureaucratic workers' states.

We must reject the strategic legacy of Stalinism: 'democratic alliances', 'popular fronts' with capitalist parties or a 'democratic stage' which obliges the working class to renounce the struggle for power in the here and now. In every country, the workers must organise independently and fight to come to the head of the struggle. In the age of imperialism and globalisation only an international, global revolution and permanent (i.e. uninterrupted) revolution can consign capitalism to history.

### THE INTERNATIONAL

With the goal of revolution and communism, advancing along the road of the class struggle, we propose the unity of all revolutionary forces in a new Fifth International - a workers' party organised across national boundaries to fight for world revolution.

If you are a class-conscious fighter against capitalism, if you are an internationalist - join us!

## West falls out with Museveni

Uganda's president is trying to hang on to power and alienating his former powerful friends, writes *Keith Sellick*

President Yoweri Museveni was once praised by Bill Clinton as one of the "new breed of African leaders". Museveni came to power in 1986 after a victorious guerrilla war. Despite his Marxist rhetoric, Museveni adopted an IMF economic recovery programme, which stressed liberalisation and an end to subsidised state enterprises. Uganda received large amounts of aid from donors (the UK has contributed about \$800 million over the years) and, in 1998, it became the first country to be declared eligible for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.

Western governments thought highly of Museveni. "These days political pundits across the continent are calling Mr. Museveni an African Bismarck. Some people now refer to him as Africa's 'other statesman' second only to the venerated South African President, Nelson Mandela." (*New York Times* 1997)

Museveni was seen as a bulwark against the Islamic government of Sudan in the north and had covert support for backing the overthrow of Mobutu in Zaire. He was praised for his political stewardship of Uganda, despite

banning political parties.

All that has now changed.

The wake up call was provided when Museveni announced last year that he was going to stand for a third term as president for elections to be held on 23 February, despite it being barred under his own constitution.

The main opposition leader, Kizza Besigye of the Forum for Democratic Change, was then jailed on trumped up charges of treason and rape in November and charged in a military court for terrorism. A high court judge released him on bail in early January to fight the elections.

Last year the International Court of Justice found Museveni guilty of plundering the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The court accused Ugandan troops of "torture and killing", training child soldiers and "inciting ethnic conflict".

As a result several countries have withheld aid including the UK, which has diverted \$26 million to aid agencies in the north of the country and withheld another \$8 million until after the elections. Half of the Ugandan budget was made up of aid, but with the reduc-

tions this now falls to about a third. Clearly the pressure is on.

Despite the favourable status Uganda has had with the IMF and World Bank, like other African countries it is still in the chains of debt. Its foreign debt stands at about \$4 billion and Uganda pays about \$200 million a year just to service it. And this is one of the poorest countries in the world - per capita income is still falling from \$310 in 2001 to a mere \$276 last year.

So what are Museveni's chances of staying in power? He is currently about seven points ahead of Besigye in the polls, although the gap is narrowing. Besigye has benefited from other political parties withdrawing from the race to have one united candidate of opposition.

However, Besigye is also tarnished by his association with Museveni during the years of corruption and neo-liberalism. During his election campaign, he has attacked Museveni but refused to say anything about his own politics. The masses in Uganda cannot support either candidate; whoever wins will continue the IMF inspired neoliberal attacks on their living standards.

# Iraq: occupation in tatters

By Keith Harvey

Iraq stands in danger of breaking up and it is being encouraged to do so by the very thing that drove the US and Britain to war in the first place - oil.

The US/UK imperialist war machine went into Iraq, they claimed, to find weapons of mass destruction (WMD). There were none. So they gave us another reason: to spread democracy. With a new constitution and elections in December, has this objective been achieved? What future is being built in Iraq?

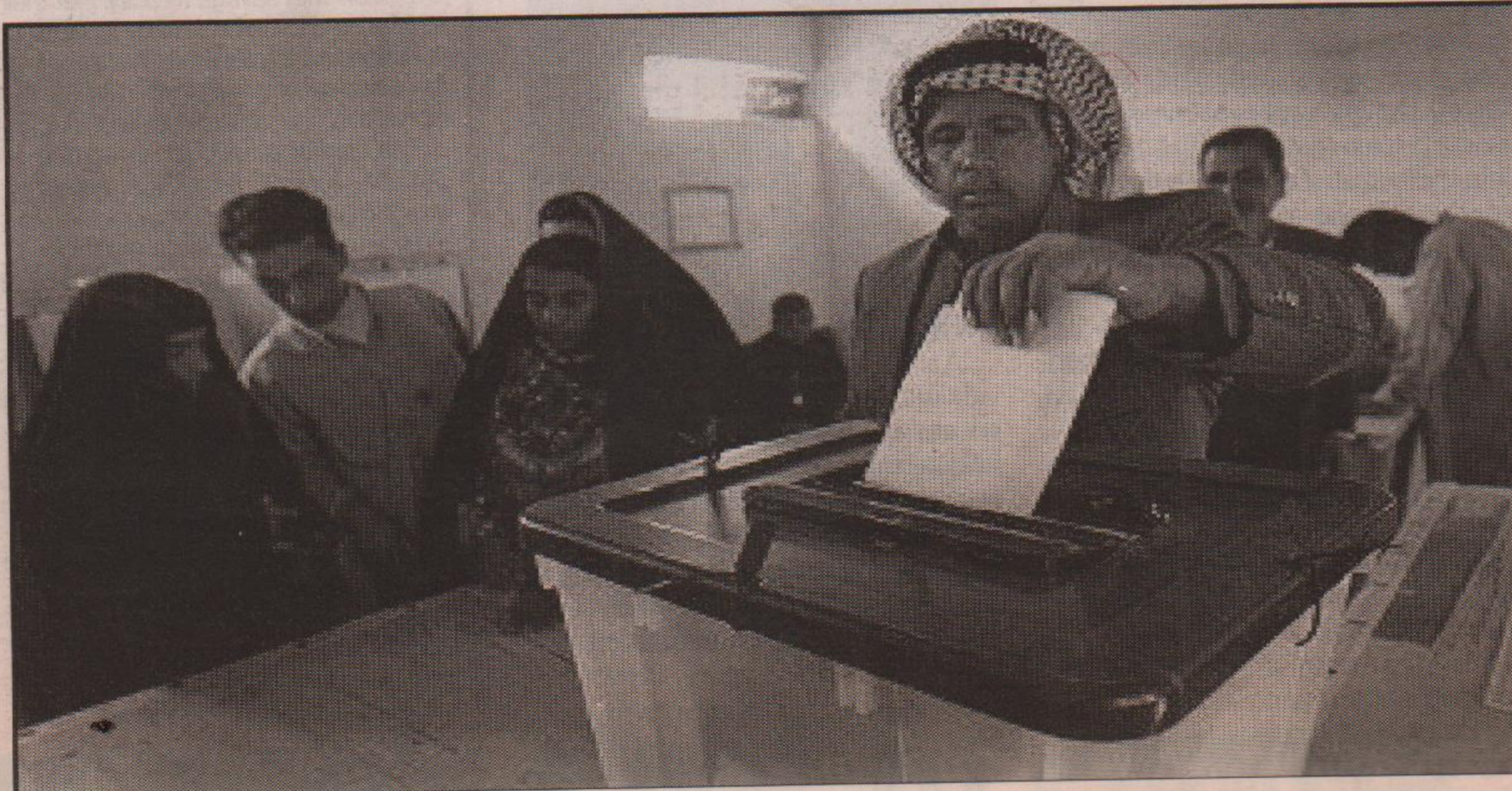
The US/UK invasion ignited a mass resistance movement and has led directly to a political settlement that enshrines particularism, religion and reaction against women.

The exact results of the Iraq elections on 15 December are not yet known. But it is fairly clear who the winners and losers are.

Projections give the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), a coalition of Shia Islamists, at least twice as many votes as anyone else in the 275 seat parliament. The two main Kurdish parties will get about 50 seats, with the Sunni Arab Islamist Iraqi Consensus Front gaining 40 or so.

The process of forming a coalition government is likely to take until at least March. The election result is a blow to all progressive, democratic and secular forces in Iraq since it is clear that the vast majority of Iraqis voted along religious and ethnic lines. Moreover, it brings the break-up of Iraq into three geographical/ethnic blocs that bit nearer.

The constitution approved last October gives Kurds control of the Kurdish regions in the north, including control over the security forces there and ownership of the revenues from any new



Elections bring the break-up of Iraq nearer

oil reserves discovered in that region. It also gives regional autonomy to the nine provinces in the south-east dominated by the Shiite majority - again an oil rich region of the country. This leaves the Sunni 20 per cent of the population, a majority in the west and areas around Baghdad, majority in the resource poor part of the country.

Unlike the election for the government one year ago the turn out from the Sunnis in this elections was high. Not least this was due to conciliatory noises from the leading Shiite clerics.

Before the election US pressure on the main Shiite parties extracted an agreement from Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, that the new constitution could still be amended in the new parliament. This was a way of drawing Sunnis on board the election process since they had most to lose from it.

But on 12 January Hakim announced that further changes are not needed; in particular he defends the current provisions allowing substantial autonomy for the oil-rich Shiite southeast.

Hakim calculates if the UIA can keep the support of their Kurdish allies and pick up a few independents, they may be able to assemble a two-thirds majority without Sunni participation and resist further constitutional changes.

The Sunni were hoping the constitution would guarantee that all oil revenues flow to the central government for fair distribution, that laws discriminating against Sunnis - including prohibitions against former Ba'athists - are eliminated, and that private Shiite militias are disbanded. The secular Sunnis and Shiites too hoped that rights for women would be incorporated. This all looks now like a vain hope, with the religious reactionary parties in the

ascendant.

"Central government could end up being a few buildings in the Green Zone," said one Iraqi minister after the election. The Green Zone is the military protected area surrounding the US embassy.

The election outcome is a blow to the US strategy for Iraq. Washington promoted the main secular Sunni and Shiite parties, who stood most clearly for keeping Iraq intact as a national entity. The fragmentation of Iraq can only lead to a strengthening of Kurdish separatism and hence conflict with Turkey - US ally and home to millions of Kurds; a de facto separate Shiite semi-state in the south would inevitably lean upon Iran for support, a Shiite state in an otherwise Sunni world.

Ayad Allawi and Ahmad Chalabi, the main secular leaders did badly in the election. Allawi was interim prime min-

ister for most of last year and endorsed the US attack on the Shiite shrine of Najaf and the assault against the Sunni stronghold of Fallujah.

Chalabi, a Shiite and the Pentagon's favourite before the 2003 invasion was hated by Shiites because of his corruption and loathed by Sunnis for his campaign against anyone even remotely connected to the old Ba'ath Party.

The USA's "exit strategy" from Iraq is in tatters. The numbers of US soldiers dead or wounded totals more than 17,000. Popular support for the occupation has evaporated and thus Congressional support is under strain. George Bush knows that the resistance movement has mass support and although it can be contained, it cannot be defeated militarily.

The US wants to wind down the number of American troops in combat role and expose more of the Iraqi forces to dealing with the insurgency. However, the sectarian reconstruction of the army and police forces makes this difficult. Out of 115 battalions reportedly only one is mixed. Such forces, given responsibility for dealing with the insurgency, are likely either to launch sectarian slaughter on the Sunni communities or refuse to fight.

The US strategy is to divide the Sunni insurgency between "nationalists" (Iraqi Ba'athists) and "jihadists" (often foreign al-Qa'ida). That is why Washington sought concessions on the constitution from the Shiite clerics and parties and why the election outcome is such a blow to Bush.

The "nationalists" are now demanding a timetable for withdrawal of US forces, something the US will not agree to unless they are routed on the battlefield or forced to by the anti-war movement and a GI rebellion.

The continued presence of US/UK troops is serving only to reinforce division and reaction. Instability and future conflicts are being built into the very foundation of Iraq's reconstruction.

Only the immediate end of the US/UK coalition occupation can end the mass insurgency. The Iraqi people would then be free to negotiate the nature of a constitutional settlement - including ownership of oil wealth - without the arm-twisting self-interest of the US backed oil multinationals and construction companies

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