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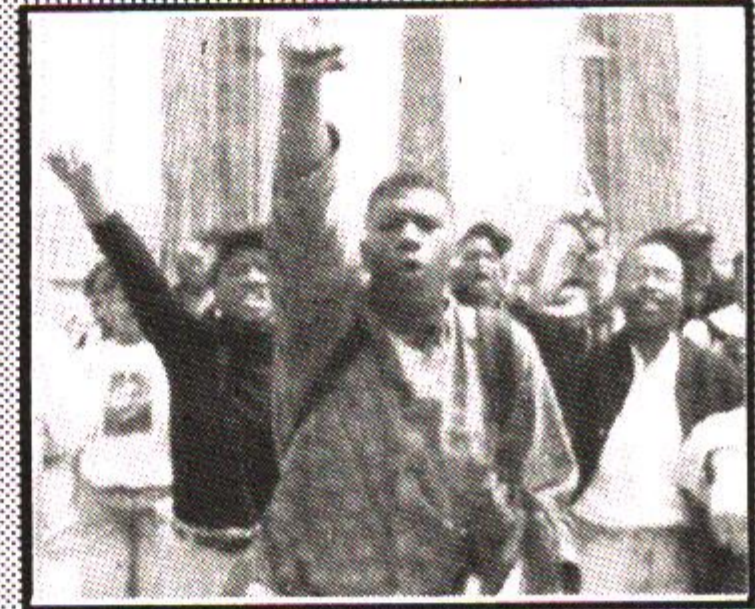
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The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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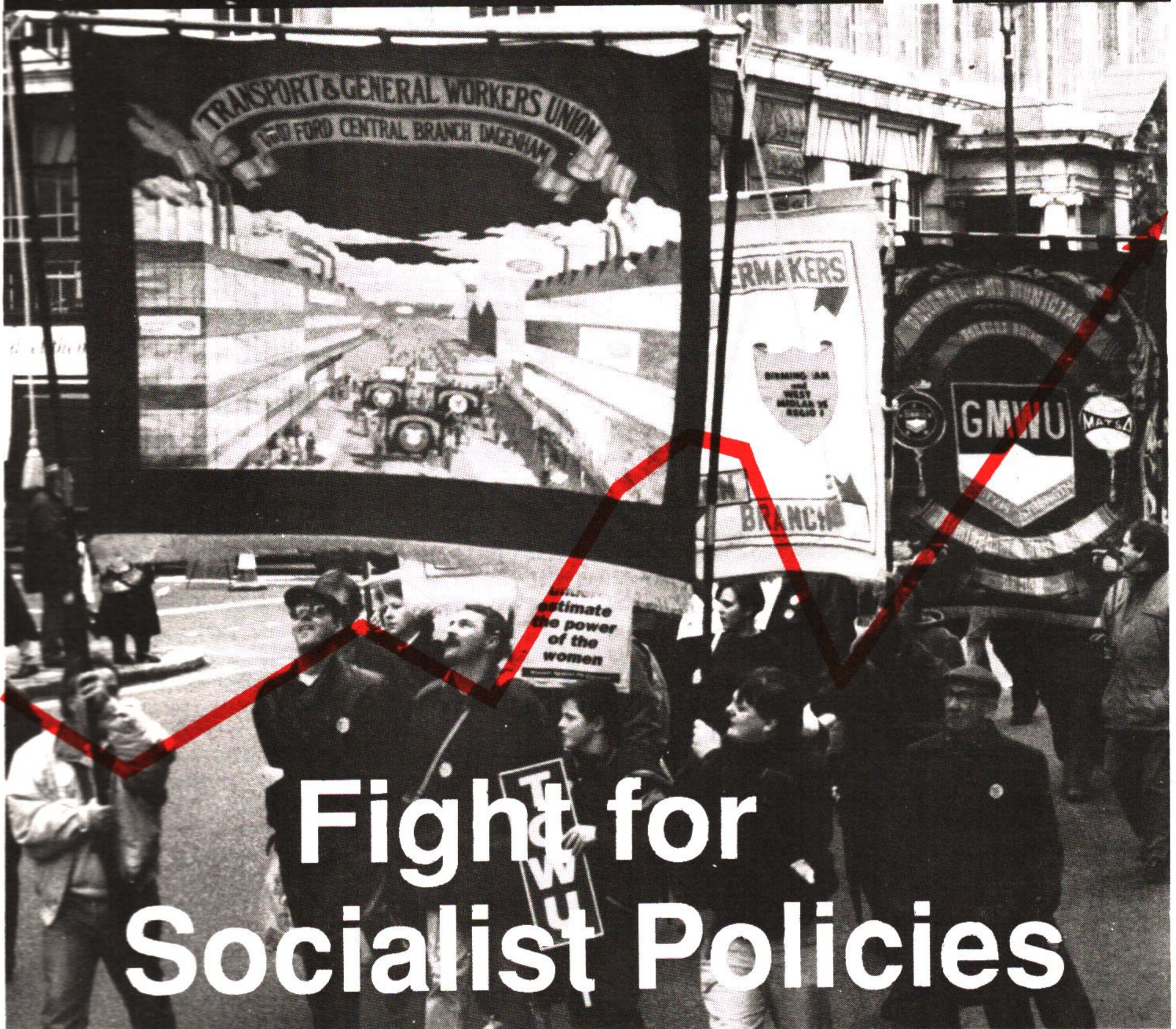
Solidarity Price £2

The Black Revolt, USA



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3,062,065 Reasons to...



Fight for Socialist Policies

**Inside: A Socialist Alternative to
Unemployment - Pakistan - Ireland**

The Spider and the Fly

For four million unemployed this has been a long, hard winter. Life on the dole has blighted lives, causing endless human misery, highlighted in the statistics for marital breakups, creating a fertile breeding ground for a host of social evils - drug and alcohol abuse, crime and mindless violence. The avalanche of factory closures has produced a general mood of uncertainty, bitterness and discontent. This is reflected in a collapse of the government's popularity. The Tory party is split and in crisis. The situation is crying out for a bold lead from Labour.

But for millions of Labour supporters, John Smith's February 7th Bournemouth speech must have been a bitter disappointment. Instead of tackling the burning issues of the day, the Labour leader confined himself to empty generalities. He talked about "the hopes and aspirations of the people and families of this country for a better life" but said nothing about how this was to be attained.

He talked about "the advancement of individual people ... and their capacity to prosper," and gave a nod and a wink to the City of London, with a call for "dynamic markets," "new economics" (whatever they might be!) and "improved competition."

Last, but not least, he made the incredible assertion that "ownership today is largely irrelevant." This must be comforting news for the 200 monopolies which control the British economy. If John Smith imagines that he can appease big business by such speeches, he had better think again. Across the world, in Australia, his Labour counterpart, Paul Keating tried to woo big business with an offer to cut company tax. To no avail.

The Economist (10th February) reports that "the business community has not been impressed by Mr. Keating's bait." Surprise! Surprise!

Here in Britain, the same Tory journal can hardly conceal its glee, as it eggs the Labour leader on, with "friendly" advice: "Mr. Smith," admonishes this Tory rag, "now has to convert his platitudes into solid ideas. That will need a flurry of new thinking. Labour's trade union links should be snapped by the autumn. Mr. Smith has about 19 months to get the party moving - and to steal as many of the Tories' clothes as he can." Why anyone should vote for a Labour Party the policies of which are "stolen" from the Tories, it is difficult to imagine.

Yet this is the allegedly "realistic" view of the Labour right. In an article in the *Guardian* (February 24th), Shadow Cabinet member Jack Straw came out openly for "revising" (i.e. scrapping) Clause IV. Meanwhile, Neil Kinnock, having lost two consecutive elections, and turned the Labour Party into a shambles with his witch-hunts and purges, now considers himself well qualified to advise the Party how to conduct its affairs - mainly to break Labour's link with the unions.

Union Strength

Bill Morris of the TGWU, commenting on this proposal, correctly said on TV "the trade unions represent an enormous source of strength for the Labour Party. The Labour Party would be mad, absolutely mad, to throw this away." The GMB and other unions have already indicated that they will fight the proposal to deny the unions a say in the election of the Party leader and MPs. The union leaders' alarm is fully justified with, according to a leaked report, Labour's fully paid-up membership having dropped to 90,000. If Labour's right gets away with it, they would put the clock back 100 years, with disastrous results.

This must be resisted, but not by words alone. There must be an energetic campaign to recruit trade unionists into the Labour Party, not to opt out, but to opt in, to fight against the attempt to break the unions away from Labour, and to defend the socialist programme, expressed in Clause IV. Pressure must be put on the leaders of the GMB and all other unions to organise this campaign, give it full official backing, and carry it right up to Party Conference, and beyond. The message must be spelt out clearly: **SO FAR, AND NO FURTHER.**

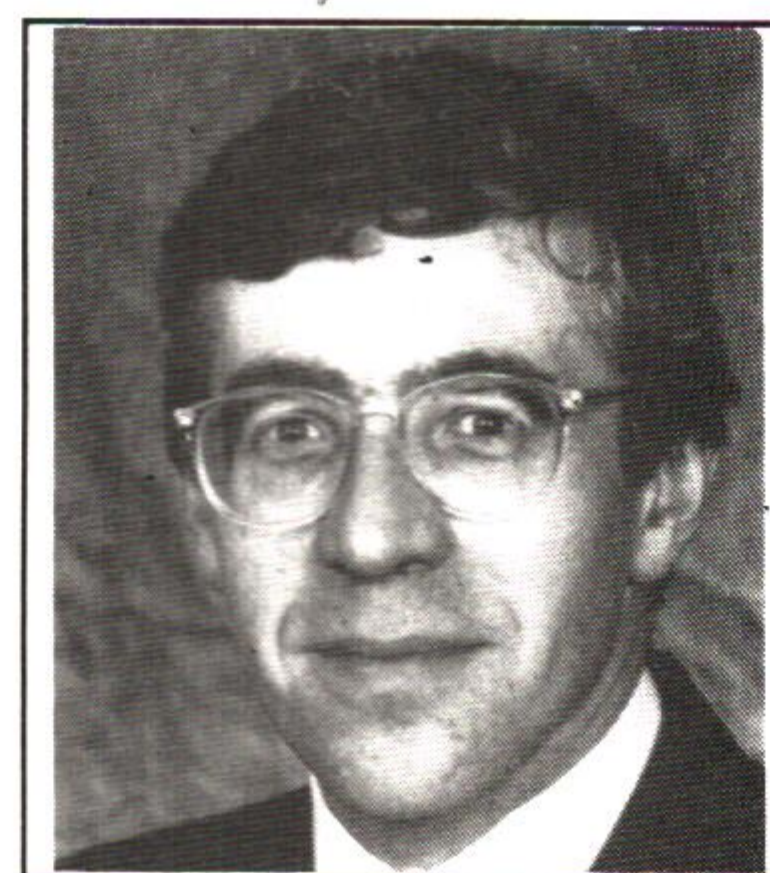
Instead of undermining Labour's links to the unions, John Smith should be exposing the Tory Party's links with big business.

Instead of attacking Clause IV, Labour's leaders should reaffirm unambiguously the party's commitment to socialist policies, starting with a pledge to re-nationalise all the privatised industries and utilities, with compensation on the basis of proven need only. Elsewhere in this issue, we deal with the question of nationalisation and socialist planning - which is the only way we can solve the terrible scourge of mass unemployment.

John Smith and the Shadow Cabinet regard themselves as "modernisers." In reality, they are behind the times.

Capitalist Crisis

The crisis of capitalism, which has now hit the South-East and is causing unemployment and homelessness among sections of the population who thought themselves secure, has caused a profound change of



Jack Straw - for scrapping Clause IV

mood in society, including middle-class former Tory voters.

Even the right-wing *Economist* was forced to admit in an editorial entitled, "After the Market" (14/11/92) that: "A weariness with the economics of the 1980s does appear to have set in," not just in Britain, but throughout the Western world. Yet the Labour leaders continue to look backwards, hypnotised by the alleged "successes" of the "market," precisely at a time when it has revealed its bankruptcy in the most literal sense of the word.

A long time ago, the German socialist leader August Bebel asked himself what he had done wrong, when he read an article in a right-wing newspaper, praising him. The Tory press praises every step Labour's front bench takes to the right. But they always forget to add the punch line: "WON'T YOU COME INTO MY PARLOUR? SAID THE SPIDER TO THE FLY..."

SOCIALIST APPEAL PO BOX 2626, London N1 6DU Tel: 071-354 3164

Fax: 071-354-4381 Editorial: 021-455-9112

Editor: Alan Woods, Manager: Steve Jones

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Labour: Turning the Tide Or All At Sea?

The Scottish Labour Party meets this month at a crucial time in the party's fortunes. Battered by the General Election defeat and buffeted by poor municipal by-election results there are signs that the political course sailed by Labour is being called into question.

Discontent and frustration has surfaced on the agenda of the Scottish Party Conference in the form of resolutions previously brushed under the carpet.

The "keep-the-heads-down" mentality has started to evaporate and a realisation has set in that the drift to the right, personified by Kinnock, has not brought the fruits of electoral success.

In fact in Scotland there are distinct signs that the exact opposite is the case with significant losses to the SNP in last year's District Council elections and several wins by Scottish Militant Labour in Glasgow. There is increasing dissatisfaction within the rank and file.

Water privatisation promises to be a major issue at conference. With public opinion overwhelmingly against Labour's response will be crucial to the party's development.

Resolution 100 from Glasgow Provan CLP correctly raises a danger of "the credibility loss if the party is seen to do nothing practically," highlighting the obviously uncomfortable analogy with the party's poll tax policy which alienated large quantities of youth and low-paid workers.

This same sentiment is echoed by Motherwell North CLP (Resolution 101) which calls for a non-payment campaign in the event of privatisation. With water privatisation taking top billing on the Scottish political agenda it is

imperative the party takes an unequivocal stance. A Labour commitment to renationalise water, with minimum compensation only on the basis of proven need, could lead to a flight of capital making the venture unviable. With the promise of a non-payment campaign and action from workers in the water industry the commercial credibility of the Tories plans would be nil.

Labour needs to take a robust socialist stance on this and other issues to gain support and build membership, which is in a sorry state of affairs. Edinburgh Central (Resolution 53) correctly pinpoints the party's "drift towards the City of London" and calls on Labour to promote a "redistribution of wealth."

With only 15% of 18-25 year olds voting Labour in the last election there are a number of resolutions lamenting the situation. However, only Kilmarnock and Loudon's resolution (29) amended by Glasgow Shettleston pinpoints the need for the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) to be rebuilt and run by the youth themselves.

In 1987, the LPYS in Scotland had approximately 1500 members but with the attacks on its structure from the party hierarchy, a disastrous poll tax policy and an opportunistic left-sounding SNP there is now not one LPYS branch left in Scotland! Restoring the LPYS is increasingly seen as a necessity.

The delegate's meeting in Inverness must put pressure on the leadership. A Mark II SDP will motivate no-one and alienate voters who are looking for an alternative to the Tories, unemployment and the miseries of the market economy.

The question is when will the alternative arrive?
Ian Hogg, delegate, Paisley North CLP.

"Five into Four Musn't Go!"

Workers at a North Tyneside council cleansing depot reacted angrily to management's decision to force them to cram their working week into four shifts and the proposed loss of bonus payment for special collections. But despite the fact that workers defiantly reject the proposals the union is refusing to organise mass meetings to plan for action to stop the changes.

The workers don't intend to accept this lying down. As one told us, "These blokes in the union will have to realise that we pay their wages," after discovering that Nupe's Union Secretary intended to call meetings depot by depot instead of bringing all the workers together in a mass meeting. There is no way these workers will accept cosy deals with one depot being played off against another.

The council's plan comes on the back of a massive "restructuring" predicted several months ago in Socialist Appeal, with the loss of 800 jobs. So far Nalgo members have twice voted for strike ballots and on one occasion had strike action called off by the branch executive. Nupe workers in the Recreation and Amenities section have been out on unofficial strike twice already and teachers are set to ballot for strike action. The mood of council workers represents a clear call to the trade union leaders. "Back our fight! Stop the redundancies! Stop the cuts!"

Terry McPartlan, North Tyneside

Yarrow workers reject latest offer...

The Strings Are Unacceptable

The four-week old strike by 1300 workers at the Yarrow shipyard on the Clyde has taken a decisive new turn following the overwhelming rejection of the company's latest offer.

At a mass meeting on February 23rd management's "improved" offer was rejected by a margin of 3-1 despite the fact that shop stewards had warned workers it "was the best offer they would get."!

Now management are preparing to escalate the dispute by threatening all 1300 with the sack.

The mood at the mass meeting at Govan Town Hall was defiant. Despite the fact that many were suffering financially from the strike there was no way the majority would be bought off.

The workers downed tools four weeks ago over a two-year pay and conditions package which would have meant

- A £300 lump sum payment in lieu of 1992/3 pay rise and 3.78% for the year from July
- Changes in overtime payments
- Cuts in pay when workers are away on sea trials
- Scrapping of tea-break arrangements

Management's "improved offer" simply backdated the 3.78% to when the workers return. They made no concessions on the strings attached to the offer. As one worker told Socialist Appeal: *"For the past few years we've tightened our belts to help see the company through some really rough patches - but no more. The strings on this offer are just unacceptable. With one hand they give us a pay offer of 3.78% but with the other take it back in cuts in pay for sea trials and so on. In the end we're talking about pay cuts."*

"We're determined to see it through as you can tell from the mood of the meeting. The shop stewards have recommended the offer and for the second time in the past month we've overturned them. Now they have to go back to management and say "get rid of the strings." Its no good saying this is the best offer we can get. If we stick together we can get a decent deal."

Following the mass meeting one union official told reporters: *"All we can do now is pray."* That is not all that can be done. Yarrow workers have shown their strength over the past four weeks. Management have already been forced to come up with one "improved" offer. They can be forced to scrap the conditions completely.

Council Cuts

Walsall Fights Back

Strikers and demonstrators besieged Walsall council following the announcement that the Tories' budget would mean 400 catering staff being sacked, the scrapping of free milk in primary schools, the closure of Darlaston and Reedswood baths, a rise in the cost of school dinners and cuts in nursery and playscheme provision. Council workers walked out on protest strike and the same evening hundreds of local Labour Party members, trade unionists and local residents lobbied the council.

Socialist Appeal supporters produced a special leaflet calling for a united response from the Labour Party and the trade unions to fight the cuts and the linking up of the fight in Walsall with other council workers and local authorities facing the brunt of Tory attacks. A public meeting with speakers from the NUM, the trades council, the Labour Party and Women Against Pit Closures has also been called to build links between all those fighting the Tories.

Power Workers

Industry-Wide Action Needed

With the announcement of the pit closure programme, followed by the railway privatisation announcement, UNITE has been given a new lease of life.

UNITE was set up in 1987 to fight electricity privatisation, by bringing together trade unionists from the coal, power and rail industries. At that time it was thought that rail and coal privatisation was imminent, and there was a genuine need for co-ordination action. At the last meeting in Doncaster (which covers Yorkshire, the North East and North Midlands), shop stewards and officials from the nuclear industry (from the North West and Wales) were invited to address the meeting, to firstly build links and find common ground to fight the government on. The stewards in the nuclear industry were in favour of a balanced energy policy, with deep mined coal the central element in this policy, and understood that the pit closure programme was an act of political vengeance.

From their reports, they saw that the "dash for gas" would not only undermine the coal, rail and coal fired power industries, but also threatened themselves - it was an act of pure short sightedness, and when the UK gas supply runs out in a couple of decades or so this country would be held to energy ransom by the multinationals.

Job losses in the nuclear industry were discussed. At Springfield site the workforce has been reduced from 1800 to 1100 - many of these TGWU members. Recently they have just taken on 150-200 contractors to complete an order for abroad, further undermining the workforce there. By 1996 they estimate that 850 people will be employed there. Sellafield has approximately 5000 workers, and about 1 in 7 jobs are about to go as a cost cutting exercise! Most of the workers used to be miners. Sellafield uses 700 local suppliers, and if it closes, without any other real job alternatives being offered, it could mean a total of up to 105,000 jobs going! The local town would become a ghost town.

Important links have been formed, and members of UNITE are going to address workers in the nuclear industry, to put forward the economic arguments to keep open the 31 pits and the need for a national plan for energy. Material produced by UNITE will be distributed in the industry, and hopefully build links right across the energy industry. UNITE is open to all trade unionists in the energy industries. The next meeting takes place on March 8th, 7.30pm in Doncaster Trades and Labour Club.

Gary Gabbitas, Doncaster

Our Future Up For Sale

The following advert was sent in to the National Communications Union London Postal Engineering magazine following the government's announcement that they were to privatise the Post Office. For Sale: Four large buildings in Central London. Good canteen facilities, fully centrally heated. Millions of pounds spent on improvements in the last few years. Would be ideal as sorting offices for a firm willing to run an expanding postal business in the capital (present owners not prepared to expand). Genuine reason for sale - a quick profit is required to make the owners look like a good buy in forthcoming sale of company. Other properties may soon become available throughout the country."

Linking Up to Take On the Tories

"I have a dream - I go to the TUC headquarters and outside there are hundreds of press and photographers, I'm walking towards the door and Norman Willis and the others are walking towards me, then they are shaking my hand and patting me on the back. "Nice to see you Arthur," they say - unfortunately, it's only a dream."

This comment by Arthur Scargill was greeted with much amusement by the 150-plus who attended a recent public meeting at Redhills, the Durham Area NUM headquarters. Sharing the platform were Jimmy Knapp, RMT general secretary and Dave Hopper, the NUM Area secretary.

The rail unions face the prospect of privatisation. As Jimmy Knapp pointed out, management had "...asked for 5,000 redundancies, they got 7,000 - and will definitely be looking for a further 20,000. Compulsory redundancies are definitely ahead."

And he added that in the current battles the RMT and the NUM were "closer together as two unions than we've ever been."

Scargill, in turn, paid compliments to the RMT for their support now and in the past. He said that he had been asked about his recent popularity and replied: "I'd quite happily sell all that to save jobs. I'm not interested in popularity - I'm interested in saving jobs."

He added: "Who'd have thought in October that come February '93, we'd still be in a

position to keep all threatened pits open." There was plenty of optimism at the meeting. Drawing a comparison with the poll tax battle he urged those present to continue the fight. "I'm prepared to do all that I can - there comes a time when the rank and file must do their bit.." Dave Hopper spoke of how he was "sick and tired of going to meetings, rallies and marches with other trade union leaders who promise us this and promise us that - but where are they now?"

And he saw more than just his own battle against the Tories - "teachers and local authority workers are also under attack. We're all in this together." His opinion of the Tories was blunt and to the point: "It's about time we got the bastards out!"

The railworkers and miners face a Tory government bent on the destruction of their industry, the destruction of jobs, conditions and the erosion of safety standards - but they are facing it together. The Tories won't amount to much when faced with the most powerful weapon of all - workers' unity.

By a railworker.



Scargill at the head of the miners demo

Is That Legal?

"What we've got to aim for is a co-ordinated struggle - it will involve sacrifices, any form of struggle involves sacrifices. If you lie down and give up you'll have nothing left to sacrifice," said Durham Area NUM secretary Dave Hopper at an RMT meeting on February 28th. The theme of the meeting was the need to build links between not just the railworkers and miners but all workers. RMT speaker Derek England showed the meeting the ballot paper for the forthcoming joint ballot and explained that following the success of the union's earlier 24-hour strikes, the Tories had introduced a new restriction preventing the words "24-hours" appearing on the ballot. They are also not allowed to append any documents to the ballot paper. Derek also explained another little government trick - you are not allowed to strike unless you are in dispute with the management. So all BR has done is to write to the RMT saying "we are not in dispute with you" and bingo, the strike is illegal. What the meeting revealed is that virtually any kind of strike is illegal whereas throwing thousands of workers on the dole is legal! The TUC need to stand up against the Tories and their anti-union laws.

Civil Service Strike Ballot

Half a million civil servants will vote later this month on staging a one-day protest strike as part of the unions' battle against privatisation and the Tories' 1.5% pay ceiling.

The Council of Civil Service Unions is calling the ballot to "highlight the problems of low pay and the deterioration in services and job losses which have resulted and will result from privatisation proposals."

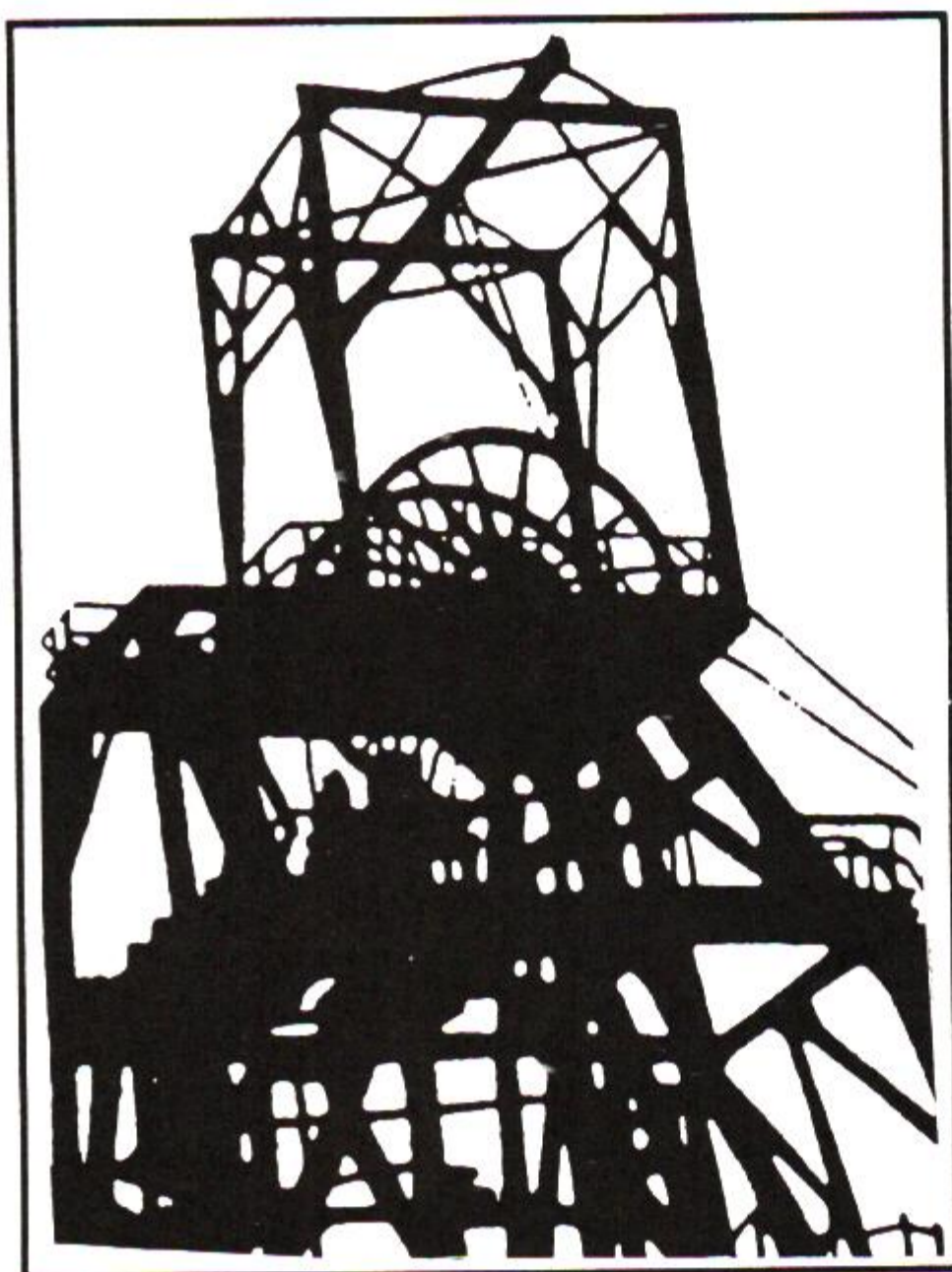
Timex

Stop the Scabs Stealing Jobs!

Bosses at the strike-bound Timex plant in Dundee are busing in scabs to try and break the six-week long dispute.

Pickets have continued to besiege the Timex factory in Dundee following the company's sacking of its entire production workforce.

Timex sacked 320 workers and replaced them with an entirely new workforce following a 20-day dispute over lay-offs, a pay freeze, a 10% cut in benefits and the introduction of a profit-sharing scheme. Mass meetings of the workers, had twice rejected the proposals before the company axed all 320 workers - the largest mass dismissals since the News International dispute at Wapping in 1986. Hundreds of pickets and supporters have demonstrated outside the plant and two AEEU officials now face jail or fines in the High Court after "breaking the laws" on picketing. The AEEU, and local trade unionists must urgently take up the fight against Timex and demand the acquittal of the union officials. We must ensure Wapping cannot be repeated in Dundee.



Prior to the 1984-5 miners' strike there were 10,000 miners working in the Northumberland and Durham coalfields. Following the 1988 amalgamation of the two areas there has been a 65% cut in the workforce.

Now production has been stopped at Vane Tempest and other pits in the area are under threat from the Tories' closure plans.

Alan Mardghum, NUM Lodge Secretary at Monkwearmouth Pit talked to Caron Walker about the miners' fight and the industrial situation in Britain.

Fight Tory Pit Closures

What is the current state of play regarding the fight against the pit closures?

"Probably the best place to start will be from the NUM Special Delegate Conference on February 4th in Sheffield. Delegates from each pit from every coalfield brought reports from their area. What we decided at that is to go for a synchronised ballot with the rail workers and NACODS - a joint ballot to get some action against what the Tories have got in store for both the coal and rail industries. We've had the situation where the Tories backed down on two or three occasions, or U-turned but they obviously haven't come up with the goods. As far as the coal industry is concerned, they're talking about a reprieve rather than a pardon! In my view what they're going to try and do is reprieve the pits for a period of 3, 4 or possibly five years at the outside, then come back to close whatever's left. They'll close those pits, I'm convinced of that. I'm convinced that they're trying to get the industry down to an acceptable level for them to privatise - which will be something in the region of twelve pits. I don't believe there would be any pits left in the North-East. What the union claimed some years ago, that the Tories were planning to get rid of the peripheral coalfields - Kent, Scotland, Wales and the North-East - I think that's still on the agenda. They want rid of these coalfields. In the North-East in particular, the traditional market for the pits in Durham is the Thames power stations. Now we're losing them due to coal imports from all over the world. Ellington is in a situation where they provide coal to Alcan which is right next to them. Alcan's had problems so if they decide to pull out of the area, Ellington would face a similar fate to ourselves, Westoe, Easington and Vane Tempest. We've got to maximise the campaign. I think we have gone as far as we can with marches and rallies. We can keep dragging people out every weekend marching through the streets of Britain but the Tories have taken no notice of that. As a last resort we're going to be left with a ballot to see if we can get the men on industrial action. I'm confident that we can and that it will only be if necessary - we'll take industrial action if it's necessary.

What would be the plan for industrial action. Have you got a date in mind?

The ballot will be on March 5th. Then we'll see what the result is, go back to the government and ask them if they've rethought their strategy. If they haven't, we'll call a one-day strike. Hopefully, we can get it on a rolling basis so it's one a week or one a month or whatever - a series of one-day strikes to try and bring them to their senses. The Tories have lost all the arguments. You know, they've never won an argument on either economic grounds, social grounds or moral grounds. Every argument that we've put forward, they haven't been able to answer. So my firm view is that we've got to take, if necessary, industrial action.

What support have you had from other unions?

In any action we've taken, the NUR - now RMT - and ASLEF have been absolutely brilliant. Not only throughout this dispute but in past disputes. I mean there's a direct link, particularly for rail workers in this area and places like Yorkshire, between the coal industry and the rail industry. The argument that we've had on numerous occasions is if they close the coal industry, obviously the freight line will be hit. The freight line is the most profitable part of British Rail and subsidises other lines. It's all part of British Rail's strategy that when they talk about privatising certain lines, it means doing away with others. They can't run the freight line without coal. So the support has been absolutely brilliant. I think it's a case of mutual support. We're going to have to maximise the pressure on the government to save both industries. Everybody's under threat, everybody is under the hammer. It goes wider than the coal and rail industries. It's the teaching profession, the health service and local government. I believe that if we carry our ballot and the rail workers carry their ballot, you're on the verge of something that's going to be a lot bigger. It's obvious that the TUC leadership aren't going to call any action. It's going to be left to us to say to people, we're out, join us. Take ballots if necessary. The miners will be out and hopefully the rail workers will be out and we can say to the others come out behind

Pits battle..2

us and we'll take their case on board. Then the government are not faced with the agenda of either rail or pit closures, they're faced with an agenda where teachers' conditions will have to be met before we're prepared to talk. Cuts in councils and a whole host of issues need resolving and there's never been a better time than now.

What's the mood of the lads like at places like this?

At Seaham and Vane Tempest alot have put in for their redundancy. At Wearmouth, we're left with something like 830 men at the pit. There's a few left the industry because they've been absolutely fed up. They didn't see any future, particularly after the announcement in October. They've been under the cosh since 1984-5 and they can't see any light at the end of the tunnel. Morale has been very, very low. It's our job now as branch officials to get round and try and maximise the support we can get. It's not going to be easy, we've never said it would be. But, then again, taking industrial action is never easy. It's never been a simple task to get men to support industrial action, but I'm convinced we'll get their support for the action.

You've been involved with the Northern Trades Union Alliance. How do you see that developing?

We've seen these kinds of movements built up in the past and as soon as a particular dispute is over they tend to fade away. However, they are filling the shoes of the TUC leadership at the moment who have been absolutely deplorable. I'm talking about people like Willis, not the ordinary trade unionists. The TUC called a day of action on February 18th but we had about three different dates. I don't know if there is someone deliberately trying to scupper the action. They are saying we should have lunch time meetings, which are absolutely stupid. It's the same as a few years ago - take quarter of an hour off work to protest! You cannot come from a pit or rail schedule just for quarter of an hour. It's crackers! They don't understand how workplaces actually work. They've been down in Congress House that many years, they've lost touch. The demonstration against the cuts in Newcastle was excellent. It was an excellent turnout but it could have been a lot bigger if they had stuck to January 19th as the day and said, "right, today's the day." Nobody really knew what was happening because it was on, it was off and then on again. Despite that it was a massive turnout.

Do you think the lads were surprised by the support of the public because it was instantaneous?

I was surprised and I'm one of the union

activists! I couldn't believe it, I couldn't believe the support that was there. For the first time I can ever remember, it wasn't a case of us ringing round to see what support we could get - people were phoning us here, at our regional offices and at home saying, "I voted Tory on three or four occasions and I'll never do it again." People said it was totally wrong what the Tories were doing. We'll need to build on that kind of support and the disillusionment of Tory voters. We need to do that to win the next election. That's not to say we'll do nothing in the meantime. The Tories have a load of troubles and we have to build on those troubles to get rid of them. It's quite clearly now a case of working people against the government, despite what the government try to say. It's nothing to do with individual employers, they're directing them. It's them against us and it's as simple as that.

The Tories have a load of troubles and we have to build on those to get rid of them. It's quite clearly a case of working people against the government

What did you think of the Tory backbenchers, like Churchill, who were going to rebel against the government?

Anybody who puts faith in people like Churchill deserves to be disappointed. People have said it was disappointing when they backed down but you expect that from them. They use maximum publicity for themselves and support themselves.

If you were Scargill, what do you think would be the best way forward to win your fight?

The government aren't going to listen to logical argument, because if they did we would have won by now. I think we're going to have to put on the pressure as much as we can industrially. After the 1984-5 strike it was obvious that industrially we hadn't a chance so we put all our efforts into the political arena. Despite that, we've seen U-turns by the Labour Party. I'm a member of the Labour Party and we go there arguing our case, but we lost the political argument

there. They were more content in having jamborees in Sheffield, presidential-style jamborees, rather than explaining the real issues to people. That's why we lost the election. So we've got to use our industrial muscle to influence the political scene. I see that as the way forward. I might be in the minority but hopefully once this campaign's finished I'll not be. Dennis Skinner summed it up. He said you had to be a cross between a university professor and Einstein to understand the message on the Labour Party election posters. We've got to get back to the "old-fashioned", traditional ideas of going out and talking to people and arguing our case.

I think, in April last year was the lowest I've ever been. I just couldn't believe that the Tories had got back in. Not that we were expecting a great deal from the Labour administration. But you do expect a little bit more from them than the Tories. Then to get beaten, it was devastating. I knew we were in for a kicking after that and then in October when they announced the closures it was unbelievable.

We've got it all to fight for. That applies to working people in general. Working people have certainly got the power to be able to change the situation. It's convincing them. I think after the miners' strike they were quite low because we didn't get what we wanted out of the strike. People thought that if they could beat the miners, they could beat anyone. Linking up with other trade unionists so you're not alone is important. Probably the biggest fear the men at the pit have is that they might be standing on their own like in 1984-5, apart from the support we received from the rail workers and individuals. We need to get the backing of other unions and the lads need to know they've got the backing of other people.

If it hadn't been for the fight back we'd be on 12 weeks notice, ready to finish in March. What we have to get across to other people and our own lads, is that it's not just the case of the miners or railway workers. It's professional people, council workers, teachers and bank workers. Who would have thought, I would never have dreamt in my wildest dreams, that you would have bank workers putting up picket lines. You can push people so far and then they'll fight back - and that seems to be happening now.

What support have you had from the power workers?

They have been under attack by management and they have been keeping their heads down a great deal. It's a case of getting in and talking to the workers there and trying to encourage a fight back. They're going to lose 17 coal fired power stations. So if we can get the power station workers, miners and rail workers out, we'll be on our way to beating the Tories.

Since they were elected in 1979 the Tory government has waged a relentless attack on local authorities, particularly Labour authorities, and the services they provide.

The financial background is simple. Local authorities are financed by central government grants (Rate Support Grant) and local rates/poll tax. According to the Labour Party NEC, between 1979 and 1990 the Tories have taken, by cutting the RSG, £23 billion from local government in England and Wales. In 1979, 67% of council funds came from central government - by 1990 this had fallen to 46%. Furthermore there has been a shift of funding away from the Metropolitan areas, towards the mainly Tory-controlled shire areas. The attempts by many councils to overcome the financial shortfall by increases in local rates was soon ended by the introduction of central government capping, giving the government the power to tell each and every council the maximum rate/poll tax it could levy.

Poll Tax Injustice

The injustice of the poll tax, which demanded the same sum from a low paid worker and a millionaire did not matter to the Tories. The fact that this "simple tax" cost £19 billion to implement, equivalent to £400 from every man, woman and child in the country did not matter either. What did matter was that the poll tax encapsulated the Tory party's philosophy; it was based on the crudest of their class war principles - rob the poor and needy, give to the rich and greedy. But the Tories were brought down to earth with a bump. Even they had to realise that such an "ideal tax" was of little use when millions refused to pay it.

While the Tories stole and squandered billions of pounds, which should have been spent on council services, these services suffered drastic decline.

The abolition of the Metropolitan Counties meant that local public transport was removed from local authority control, this together with deregulation has resulted in most areas suffering both drastic cuts in services and substantial fare increases.

The introduction of the Tory Education Reform laws has greatly reduced the responsibility of local councils for the educational needs in its area. Previously councils were responsible for employing teaching, catering, administrative, cleaning staff and so on. Now each school has its own budget, determined by pupil numbers and controlled by the head teacher and the school's governors. Schools are therefore forced to compete with one another for pupils. The outcome will be that many inner city schools will be starved of resources and will face decline and closure.

The introduction of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) for council services has resulted in the loss of jobs on a massive scale. As

Major Continues Attacks on Local Government...

Tory Butchery Must Be Stopped

a general rule, even when the council's tender has been successful, this has only been achieved by cuts in wages, conditions and jobs. As a result these council workers are employed on similar conditions to workers in the competing private companies which at best have weak trade union organisation. The Tories are now pressing ahead with CCT in white collar areas such as housing, finance and management.

Private Sector

Councils no longer apply for government grants to fund capital works - they have to compete with each other for these funds through schemes such as "City Challenge" In addition Housing Associations and the private sector are increasingly allotted both funds and properties to carry out major works on council estates, thereby taking large numbers of dwellings and land out of council control.

The same process is also taking place in areas such as social services. As a result of increased financial pressure councils are abandoning the provision of old people's homes, sheltered housing, meals on wheels and home helps.

Tory legislation is transforming local councils from providers of services, to the regulator of services, which will be purchased from the lowest bidder in the "independent sector". The workers in these areas will be faced with attacks on their wages and conditions as the "independent sector" strives to maximise profit.

Given this 14 year onslaught, what has been the response of the Labour and trade union leaders?

For a brief period in 1984/5 some twenty Labour councils were supposed to be committed to a policy of not setting a rate until the government abandoned cuts in the RSG. It was assumed that this action would pressurise the financial institutions in the City of London, who in turn would pressure the government. With the exception of Liverpool and Lambeth all the other councils caved in. At the 1985 Labour Conference Neil Kinnock made his now notorious attack on Liverpool City Council (they had issued redundancy notices for tactical reasons but had no intention of implementing them.) The way was thus left clear for the Tories to surcharge and debar the Labour councillors in both these areas. Now with 100,000 council workers facing real redundancy all is silence.

The union leaders have no strategy to defend these jobs, any more than they have a strategy to combat the Tories anti-trade union laws which act as a fetter to workers taking action, particularly against a national attack. The truth is that the trade union leaders have gone out of their way to impress upon their members these legal restraints.

Labour Party Leaders

The national and local Labour Party leaderships have been no better. The poll tax presented them with a golden opportunity to get rid of the Tories. Given a massive campaign of civil disobedience and one of the largest demonstrations ever, the Labour leadership could only advise compliance with the law. To enforce their point they embarked on a witch-hunt of anti-poll tax activists.

Manchester Council's Labour leadership is typical in their response to the cuts. In June 1992, the *Manchester Evening News* reported: "Labour leaders are ready to ditch their job-for-life pledge to the city council's 30,000 staff." (i.e. compulsory redundancies were now acceptable.) In October 1992 the *Evening News* reported that the council was "to quicken the pace of its job cuts." This despite the fact that they have shed 20 jobs a week for the last four years!

The recent mass demonstrations in support of the miners has again demonstrated a basic law of our time - when the official labour movement raises its little finger it can mobilise hundreds of thousands of workers.

The track record of the present Labour and union leadership in defending workers has been abysmal. But there are no short cut solutions to tackling this problem. The task ahead is one of campaigning within the party and unions for a determined fight-back against the Tories. We need national action to defend council jobs and services. We need a leadership prepared to fight for this policy.

One thing is certain. As long as the Tories are in power, council services will be attacked. As a first step, we should demand a national conference of both Labour councils and local authority trade unions to plan the defence of jobs and services.

**John Byrne,
Labour Councillor, Manchester**

The Cost of the Tories

"If unemployment is the price that has to be paid for getting down inflation then it is a price worth paying."

So said Chancellor Norman Lamont last year, confirming that the government's policy was to make the jobless pay for the crisis of British capitalism.

Since then the government has squandered the workers' money and the nation's resources in a desperate and ultimately worthless attempt to lower inflation by keeping the pound sterling at a fixed rate in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism. At one time John Major claimed that British capitalism was so strong that eventually the pound could replace the German mark as the strong currency of Europe and that the government would achieve zero inflation! What a sad joke that now seems after Black Wednesday, last September when the government and Bank of England threw over £30 billion at the foreign exchange markets in a forlorn attempt to maintain the value of the pound.

Sterling Devalued

Major and Lamont eventually had to face reality and devalue sterling and take it out of the ERM. Since then the value of sterling has fallen over 20% against the mark, which means that the workers lost over £5 billion on that one day. That money could have paid for dozens of hospitals and schools. It could have subsidised the coal industry for nearly ten years and saved all the pits. It could have allowed British Rail to freeze prices and boost investment for three years - just one day's loss on the exchange markets! If any Labour council, or for that matter any big corporation, had to tell people that its leaders had lost £5 billion in one day, they would have to resign and perhaps even face criminal charges. But not Major and Lamont - not only do they soldier on, but they now have the cheek to justify their U-turn on policy as a brilliant move designed to boost growth.

It is true that devaluation has made British exports cheaper and allowed the government

to lower interest rates quite sharply. That paves the way, as in the US, for a slight upturn in the economy.

The UK recession, from the summer of 1990 to today, has been the longest downturn in the British economy since 1937, although it has not been the deepest. Now we can expect a rise in national output in 1993, particularly in the second half, so that production should grow by perhaps 1.5% this year. This will be faster than the rest of Europe, still locked into recession by high German interest rates and the grip of the ERM.

But such growth will not stop the inexorable rise in unemployment during this year and probably next. It is already officially over 3 million, but with government fiddling of the figures the real level is more like 4 million jobless, with over one million out of work for over a year, and the highest rate of increase among young people.

These figures reveal one clear fact - there can never again be full employment under capitalism. Even if there is an economic recovery over the next few years in the UK, unemployment is likely to stay around 3

million - and then we could enter another downturn even more severe than this one. And unemployment poses a major problem for the Tory government as Lamont presents his budget this month: how to pay for the jobless. Social Security and unemployment benefit levels are among the lowest in Europe, yet such are the high levels of unemployment that the government is running a huge deficit to pay out benefits. By the end of this year it may be spending £50 billion more than it receives in taxes. Now the government could borrow the money to cover this deficit by issuing interest-paying bonds to be bought by financial institutions in Britain and abroad. In the short-term it will do this, but unless it eventually closes the deficit by increased tax revenues or cuts in public spending, then interest rates will be forced up again to attract bond buyers, so choking off recovery. Also, if the government wishes to meet the criteria laid down by the Maastricht treaty, to which Major is committed, then it will be forced to reduce the budget deficit sharply over the next three years.

Government Spending

If there is a growth in the economy during 1993, that will help to increase tax revenues, as businesses will pay more VAT and workers will pay more income tax. But it will not be enough.

That is why the Tories are trying yet again to reduce government spending by making more cuts in services and benefits, increasing charges (like the massive increase in prescription charges), holding down public sector pay to 1.5% this year and trying to



Norman Lamont - Presiding over four million unemployed - his budget will do nothing to get people back to work

off more government-owned industries like shares in BT, British Rail and eventually coal.

However, all indications are that even these measures will not be enough to reduce the deficit sufficiently. So Lamont may have to grasp the nettle and raise taxes. Of course this will not be tax increases on the rich, the banks and big business, but on the poor, the old and the working class. Probably, if not in this budget, then in the december budget) the government will raise VAT and other spending taxes, while lowering benefits (at least in real terms).

So those who have suffered from the recession will be expected to pay for it!

Whether you have a job or not, if you go into a shop to buy the necessities, the government will make you pay more.

Decay and Decline

Lamont will no doubt argue that we must all pull in our belts and save on wasteful government spending. That will be rich coming from a man who got tens of thousands of pounds of government money (in secret) to pay for his legal bills to evict his tenant.

But none of these measures can greatly alter the general picture of decay and decline of

British capitalism. Devaluation may provide some limited growth but will also begin to drive up inflation again next year as a flood of more expensive imports come into the country. As British industry is now so weak after the ravages of Tory policy, it cannot replace these imports. The balance of trade is already in deficit in a recession, in a small boom it will balloon to new heights. That will put further pressure on an already devalued pound and force the government to raise interest rates and taxes, so choking off growth before it has hardly started. This may not happen until 1994, but it is the prospect ahead.

Meanwhile, this month's budget will continue to pile on the misery for working people in Britain, and the unions and wider labour movement will have to respond.

Michael Roberts

**A Socialist
Alternative to
Unemployment
see page 16**

Europe: Steel Jobs Threat

The sacking of 60 steelworkers in Wales and the call by the European Community for Britain to cut its steel production represent the first shots in a major war on steel jobs.

Up to 50,000 jobs are to go in the EC steel industry over the next three years including jobs in South Wales, Teeside and Scunthorpe. British Steel has already cut its workforce from 250,000 in the 1970s to just 45,000 at present following the closure of Ravenscraig with the loss of 7,000 jobs in 1992.

EC officials claim the steel industry faces its worst situation since the war because of overcapacity, a trade war with America and the "dumping" of cheaper Eastern European steel. Now plans have been drawn up to cut production by millions of tons a year.

Germany is likely to bear the brunt of the "restructuring" where 40,000 steel jobs are at risk. Already Krupp Stahl has announced the closure of its Siegen and Hagen plants in the Ruhr with the loss of 4,000 jobs and Hoesch Stahl has announced the temporary closure of one blast furnace and a reduction in capacity from 700,000 to 550,000 tonnes, which would lead to the closure of either its Dortmund or Duisburg plant.

But the moves have prompted an angry reaction from German steelworkers. Dozens of marches have taken place against the EC's plans and leaders of the IG Metall union have called for "mass protests" throughout Germany and Europe against the "decimation of the steel industry."

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**Fight Jobs massacre!
- Back Page**

Northern Ireland: For A Socialist Solution

RESPONSIBILITY for the past decades of murder, violence and despair lie squarely at the feet of British Imperialism. It is they who sowed the wind, and have since reaped the whirlwind.

For 600 years the rulers of Britain exploited Ireland. It was Britain's first colony, and had been used from the Middle Ages onwards as a 'milch cow' for British society. As British capitalism developed, and with it its imperialist ambitions, it became clear at a very early stage that the real wealth of Ireland lay in the North. Its deep lochs were ideal harbours and its fertile land was suitable for the growth of the textile industry. It was also an ideal military base from which to defend Britain's western flanks.

To protect its interests, the fledgling British capitalism implemented a policy of plantation - forcibly moving Scottish Presbyterian crofters into the Northern areas, to act as a bulwark against the mutinous Catholic homogeneous population. The British rulers had a rude awakening however with the United Irishmen revolt of 1798, when the rising petit bourgeois of Catholic and Protestant merchants - inspired by the American and French revolutions - rose up against the new British ruling class under the leadership of the Protestant Wolfe Tone. The uprising failed but it sent shock waves through the ruling class. They instigated the establishment of the Orange Order, perpetrating the myth of 'Protestant Ascendancy' and sectarianism. It was in Ireland that the British ruling class perfected their weapon of divide and rule, used so effectively throughout the rest of the British Empire, in India, Sri Lanka and the rest of the colonies, the repercussions of which the world is still suffering.

With the industrialisation of British capitalism, so heavy industry developed in the North, with heavy engineering and ship building developing around Belfast. But this brought with it trade unionism and the growing ideas of Socialism. To protect the interests of the profit system, so the ruling class strengthened sectarianism with discrimination against Catholic workers. With the struggle for independence, the British Imperialists divided Ireland, implementing partition in 1922. This had four roles:

- to keep the real 'loot' of Ireland - the prof-



The question of Northern Ireland has perplexed socialists for the past 23 years of the Troubles. Various false ideas have emanated from the labour movement, from capitulation to nationalism and the tactics of terrorism by the ultra left, to the bi-partisan approach of the Labour leaders.

It is only the Marxists who have consistently put forward an independent class position. BOB WHATERS and MAUREEN O'MAGHONEY put forward a Marxist analysis.

itable textile and heavy industries of the North - in the hands of British imperialism;

- to undermine any potential threat to British markets that could have arisen from any future Irish capitalist state;

- to keep a military presence;

- and lastly, but most importantly, it was a move to cut off the head of the social revolution that was accompanying the struggle for independence in the South; the new Northern Ireland Statelet was to act as a buffer against the spread of revolutionary ideas.

But if that was the aims of Imperialism in the first half of the century, in the post war era British capitalism had a new agenda. Militarily, there was no longer a threat from the west, with all of its nuclear hardware pointed at the Soviet Union. More importantly, the new Irish state had proved itself a reliable capitalist nation, which Britain could economically exploit through domination of the market. It wanted a united capitalist

Ireland, offloading its expensive social responsibilities onto Dublin.

But their past tactics of divide and rule came back to haunt them. The sectarian beast they created exploded into fury in the events of 1969 and British capitalism was forced to intervene.

By the late 1960s, the first fissures were beginning to appear in world capitalism, following the unprecedented boom after World War II. The resultant social explosions saw black workers struggle for civil rights in the USA, French capitalism had been rocked by the 1968 General Strike, Czech workers fought the tanks of Stalinist oppression in the same year, while throughout the West a new radicalism gripped the student movement.

In Northern Ireland in 1969, students and workers began the fight for Civil Rights for Catholics, who faced discrimination in employment and housing. The sectarian Loyalist Statelet created by British imperial-

ism reacted with vicious repression, battering down those who dared to question their right to rule. They unleashed their auxiliaries, the B Specials and the Loyalist terror gangs, initiating a near pogrom against Catholic communities. This met with fierce resistance, and as the Statelet staggered towards civil war, so British capitalism intervened.

This was presented as 'defending the Catholics' and 'restoring law and order'. But in reality British capitalism had less altruistic and more pressing motives; there was an immediate need to defend their economic interests which were in danger of going up in flames, but more urgently, they wished to put the lid on the possible social revolution that was developing, fearing it could spread to cities throughout Britain.

Despite the reaction and sectarianism there were many progressive features in the events in Northern Ireland from 1969 to 1970, which the ruling class feared could inspire workers throughout the British Isles. The stoutest defenders of the Bogside against the attacks by the B Specials was the Young Socialists, youth wing of the Derry Labour Party. The Bogside itself was under the control of the local community, who organised its defence and every aspect of its daily life, running everything from First Aid posts to its own radio station.

There were the beginnings of united action by Protestant and Catholic workers in defiance of the sectarian conflagration engulfing the North. In the Ardoyne area of Belfast Protestant and Catholic workers set up Joint Defence patrols to combat sectarianism taking a grip in their communities. At a mass meeting of trade unionists at the predominantly Protestant Harland and Wolff shipyard, 9,000 declared their opposition to the threat to the Catholic minority. In the 1970 General Election, the Northern Ireland Labour Party, despite its betrayals and sectarian leadership, won 100,000 votes, reflecting the left shift of Northern Irish society.

A taste of how the events in Northern Ireland could rapidly turn to class action infecting workers throughout the British Isles followed the murderous events of Bloody Sunday in 1972, when British Paratroops opened fire on unarmed demonstrators, killing 14. The following Sunday 70,000 marched through Newry in protest, and there was a three day general strike in Derry, Newry and Strabane which was joined by some Protestant workers. The mainly Protestant students of Coleraine University joined the strike, with 400 of them attending a debate between leading Marxist Ted Grant and a Unionist MP.

But class solidarity knows no borders - Dublin was closed by a General Strike with 60,000 demonstrating and burning down the British Embassy, while in London building

Marxism Opposes Individual Terrorism

WORKERS will have been repulsed by the recent Provisional IRA bombings of the Warrington Gas Works and Camden High Street. These follow a series of bombings and shootings in London and the Midlands; if the Provisionals continue this tactic, it is only a matter of time before there is another atrocity like the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings. The Provisionals attempt to justify these actions by declaring that their targets are 'economic'. But it is ordinary workers who pay the price; the actions of the Provisionals are clearly sectarian - they do not see the English working class as potential allies against British capitalism, but as the enemy, as part and parcel of British Imperialism.

The Marxists in the labour movement, have consistently opposed the tactics and methods of the Provisionals. We warned that far from bringing the British State to its knees, their actions gave the ruling class the excuse to bolster their repressive apparatus. At the same time, the powerful British labour movement has stepped back from taking major initiatives on Northern Ireland, being alienated by the tactics and methods of the Provisionals.

Since the inception of Marxist ideas, there has been total opposition to the concept that a powerful capitalist state could be bombed into defeat by a handful of individuals.

Trotsky, in the paper of the Austrian Social Democratic Party in the early 1900s, put the case against terrorism in a polemic against the Russian Anarchists (who at least were aiming their terror at the Russian Monarchy and government, as opposed to the indiscriminate bombings of the IRA). He wrote:

"Whether a terrorist attempt, even a 'successful' one, throws the ruling class into confusion depends on the concrete political circumstances. In any case the confusion can only be short-lived; the capitalist state does not base itself on government ministers and cannot be eliminated with them. The classes it serves will always find new people; the mech-

anism remains intact and continues to function. But the disarray introduced into the ranks of the working masses themselves by a terrorist attempt is much deeper. If it is enough to arm oneself with a pistol in order to achieve one's goal, why the efforts of the class struggle? If a thimbleful of gunpowder and a little chunk of lead is enough to shoot the enemy through the neck, what need is there for a class organisation? Why meetings, mass agitation, and elections if one can so easily take aim at the ministerial bench from the gallery of parliament?"

To this we could add if all it takes to force British imperialism from Northern Ireland is bombs and assassinations, after over 20 years why hasn't British Imperialism been long gone? Trotsky continues:

"In our eyes, individual terror is inadmissible precisely because it belittles the role of the masses in their own consciousness, reconciles them to their powerlessness, and turns their eyes and hopes towards a great avenger and liberator who some day will come and accomplish his missions. The anarchist prophets of the 'propaganda of the deed' can argue all they want about the elevating and stimulating influence of terrorist acts on the masses. Theoretical considerations and political experience prove otherwise. The more 'effective' the terrorist acts, the greater their impact, the more they reduce the interest of the masses in self-organisation and self education. But the smoke from the confusion clears away, the panic disappears, the successor of the murdered minister makes his appearance, life again settles into the old rut, the wheel of capitalist exploitation turns as before; only the police repression grows more savage and brazen. And as a result, in place of the kindled hopes and artificially aroused excitement come disillusionment and apathy. The efforts of reaction to put an end to strikes and to the mass workers movement in general have always, everywhere,

sites were closed down as construction workers struck in protest.

The tragedy of Northern Ireland is that the British and Irish labour movement did not intervene in the early period of the 'Troubles'. This created a vacuum which the Provisional IRA filled in the Catholic areas. But British capitalism must bear the bulk of the responsibility for the growth of the IRA in the early 1970s. It was their actions of repression - internment, brutal house searches and raids, and Bloody Sunday that drove many

young Catholic workers down the road of individual terrorism.

The Southern Irish capitalist class must also take a proportion of the blame. Like their British counterparts, they too feared a social revolution in the North which would have spread like wildfire through the South. The IRA during this period, although small and moribund, was beginning to embrace 'Marxist' ideas, albeit along Stalinist lines. The Irish ruling class feared that the 'left wing' IRA would be pushed to the head of

ended in failure.

Its experience in Northern Ireland has left British capitalist state 'much richer' in terms of strengthening its repressive state apparatus. Of course, the capitalist state has always had the resources to bring in repressive measures. But their ability to do so is always finely balanced against the strength of the labour movement. Yet a terrorist atrocity creates the atmosphere of reaction in which repressive measures can be pushed through. With every terrorist atrocity, so British capitalism adds another weapon to its arsenal.

The **Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)** was introduced after the Birmingham pub bombings. It gave the police special powers to arrest, question and detain and remove the legal rights of anybody they suspect of having "information about political violence", and gave the State the power to exclude British citizens from any part of the country they see fit - there is no right of appeal for any individual facing PTA Exclusion Orders.

Before its demise the Greater London Council, in a document on the effects of the PTA on London's Irish population, estimated that 45,000 people had been stopped and detained under the Act. Yet a decade after its introduction, only just over a hundred people had been convicted following detention under the PTA, and of them only 25 or so faced more than a year's sentence. That is, it has caught very few 'terrorists', while thousands including many trade unionists have been harassed by the State through this Act.

In Northern Ireland there is also the **Emergency Provisions Act**. The RUC can arrest and detain people on "suspicion of terrorism" for 72 hours, while the Army can hold people for four hours (i.e until the RUC arrive!). Once again, while there are high numbers detained, its ratio to subsequent convictions is very low. In addition in Northern Ireland there are the infamous **Diplock Courts**. One Judge presides, there is no jury, and prosecution witnesses can give evidence anonymously without cross examination. Not surprisingly, Diplock Courts in 1986 could boast a 95% conviction rate. It is a conveyor belt of injustice and not surprisingly, the main source of 'evidence' in 90% of successful convictions are through confessions! More

recently the Tories' moved to end the right to remain silent, in effect ending the age old right of being innocent until proved guilty. And then there's the **Northern Ireland Broadcasting Ban**, which has censored interviews with Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein personnel, and recently has been extended to Loyalist paramilitary groups.

The Marxists opposed every new piece of repressive legislation, explaining to workers that our opposition was not out of any sympathy for the perpetrators of acts of terrorism, but because these measures would be used against the labour movement at a later stage. And we were proved correct. The paramilitary Police tactics used to break up picket lines during the miners strike and at Wapping, or to bludgeon youth into submission during the riots, the surveillance, the stop and search powers, the 'exclusion orders' and restrictions of movement on miners during the 1984/85 strike - all these were methods perfected in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, and unleashed on the British labour movement during Thatcher's reign in the 1980s.

Workers should always be on their guard against new measures of state repression. For example, to many workers the Northern Ireland Broadcasting Ban appears ridiculous as television companies dub actors' voices over the offending clips. But it is still a dangerous piece of legislation - already Bernadette McAlisky the former left wing Derry MP has been caught by the Act, even though she is not a member of the IRA or Sinn Fein. The ruling class is quite capable of extending this blatant censorship to other 'enemies of the state', including the labour movement during times of heightened class struggle. It must be remembered that during the Miners' strike Thatcher referred to the NUM as the "enemy within", while Anderton, the Manchester Police Chief went as far as accusing the miners of "political terrorism".

Marxists stand unequivocally for the repeal of the PTA, EPA and the Broadcasting Ban and all repressive measures, not only because they are in and of themselves unjust, but primarily because they can be used - as recent history has shown - against the labour movement to protect the class interests of British capitalism, rather than to 'prevent terrorism'.



The result of a terrorist attack

We oppose the methods of individual terrorism, we are opposed to the tactics, methods and policies of the Provisional IRA. This is not just because of their callous disregard for the lives of ordinary workers, or that their actions provoke reactionary measures from the State which can be used against the labour movement. Individual terrorism reduces the working class to little more than onlookers, kept to the sidelines while the State and the small bands of armed men carry out a deadly game of cat and mouse.

And the labour movement will remain on the sidelines while the actions of the Provisionals continue to alienate workers in Britain and Ireland. The rank and file of the British and Irish labour movements both a proud record against social injustice not only at home but around the world, from Latin America to South Africa. But on Northern Ireland it remains silent - not just because of the appalling inaction of the labour leaders on the issue, but also because they find the methods of individual terrorism repugnant.

Peace can only be achieved in Northern Ireland through an Ireland united on a socialist basis. And this can only be achieved by a united working class - Catholics and Protestants, Irish and British - fighting together on class issues. The tactics of the Provisional IRA has handed the British state the opportunity to bedevil such a movement with new weapons of repression. ■

this movement, particularly in the South where, previous to the Troubles, there was enormous traditional sympathy and support for the IRA given their role in fighting British Imperialism in the 1920s. A section of the Irish bourgeois, grouped around Charles Haughey, collected money and arms for the old-style nationalist wing of the IRA, fermenting a split within their ranks. The recent BBC2 programme *Timewatch* detailed this process, which resulted in the split in the IRA into Official and Provisional wings.

Today, British capitalism finds itself in a morass from which it cannot extract itself. Their despair was mirrored by the Economist who in 1988 wrote: "Most political problems have solutions. A few do not. Northern Ireland is one of them."

It is this impasse that many on the Left today cannot or refuse to understand - that British capitalism wants to withdraw from Northern Ireland but fears the consequences. Imperialism is the direct control and economic exploitation of a colony. But in Northern

Ireland this equation has been turned on its head. Northern Ireland, far from being a colonial boon, is a massive drain on the resources of British capitalism. The Army presence, the subsidies to industry, social security etc cost Britain millions in the 1970s, rising to £1.5 billion a year in the 1980s, and rising to £2 billion a year at present. They want to withdraw, hence all their 'initiatives', from Sunningdale to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, as they search in vain for a peaceful solution.

The British ruling class understand that if

they pull out, Protestant resistance would lead to civil war, with the expulsion of the Catholic population from much of the present Northern Ireland state. Southern Ireland could not accommodate a massive influx of refugees so camps would be set up along the border areas which would be fertile recruiting grounds for the paramilitaries. The civil war would intensify resulting in the repartition of the country. A civil war would be calamitous for the British ruling class. Given the large first and second generation Irish populations living in Britain's cities, they would be drawn in. Britain would have a Bosnia on its very own doorstep.

Internationally it could unleash a wave of reprisals against Britain, particularly in view of the Clinton administration's guarded opposition to Britain's record in Northern Ireland; there could even be a trade embargo against Britain in the US.

It is the Marxists who have understood this. Other tendencies within the labour movement have either put forward false ideas or remained deathly quiet. The reformists have adopted a bipartisan approach supporting British rule in Northern Ireland, with the more radical left reformists occasionally mooting the idea of United Nations troops replacing the British Army, coupled with some vague notion of a 'negotiated settlement'. They appear to forget that the United Nations has failed to resolve any of the crises around the world - why would Northern Ireland be any different?

The ultra-lefts - because they have misunderstood Lenin's writings on self-determination - act as cheerleaders for the Republican paramilitaries after this or that limited success, and as their apologists after their numerous atrocities. Although quoting Lenin, they actually ape the 'Stages Theory' of Stalin, arguing that nothing can be resolved "until the border is removed" - that is, 'first unite Ireland, then we can have socialism'. They do not understand that *only* socialism can unite Ireland on a peaceful basis.

Marxists fully support the call for the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. When the troops went in in 1969, while other groups on the left equivocated, the Marxists - along with the Derry Labour Party - were alone in putting forward a clear demand that the troops should withdraw, adding: "The call for the entry of the British Army will turn to vinegar in the mouths of some of the Civil Rights leaders. The troops have been sent in to impose a solution in the interests of British and Ulster big business."

But we have always linked the demand to withdraw the troops to calls for class unity around socialist policies, urging workers to organise their own defence through the traditional workers' organisations against possible attacks, either from the British state or the Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries. We have understood that if Britain withdraws and the labour movement does not intervene in the subsequent vacuum that is left, a sectarian

holocaust could follow.

Ireland can only be united on a socialist basis. The million Protestant workers in the North will be won over - or bombed into a capitalist united Ireland.

Even though the social 'benefits' of the British State are under fierce attack by the Tories, the health service, social security, abortion rights, the right to divorce etc, do not exist in the South and would not be given up freely by workers in the North.

But more to the point, Protestant workers know that a capitalist Ireland would be even weaker economically than crisis ridden Britain: there would be increased mass unemployment and as the Protestants would become the minority, it is they who fear discrimination in the struggle for jobs. The Protestant reaction to the first attempts to implement the Anglo-Irish Agreement gave a glimpse of what could be in store if any steps towards reunification on a capitalist basis were taken. On the other hand Protestant workers *could* be won to a socialist republic within the context of a socialist federation of Britain and Ireland in a socialist Europe.

Protestant and Catholic workers can be - and have been - united through the mass organisations of the working class by bringing class demands and class issues to the fore. An essential precursor to achieving socialism in a united Ireland is the formation of an independent party of labour in the North.

Party of Labour

But a genuine workers' party cannot be imposed by either the British or Irish Labour Parties artificially setting up branches in the North. That would be a bureaucratic method that was doomed to failure, as it would fall prey to sectarianism. In 1981 the Labour Party (before it shifted to the right and returned to its current bi-partisan approach) put forward a policy which outlined the need "for a party to unite the working class is believed to be self evident, and an essential pre-condition for a united Ireland. Such a party, it is suggested, would have fraternal links with both the British and Irish Labour Parties.. We recognise the need for a class based party of Labour in Northern Ireland, in order to give a clear political lead on the social and economic issues which unite Catholic and Protestant workers. The formation of such a party must be rooted in the trade unions.

Such an independent party based on a programme of socialist demands would draw behind it the massive latent strength of the Irish labour movement - 700,000 workers are organised in the all-Ireland ITUC; such a force, once on the move would be unstoppable either by the British or Irish capitalist states, or by the forces of sectarianism.

Socialism and workers unity around class demands is not just some alternative solution for Northern Ireland or some long term dream - it is the *only* peaceful solution open to it.

A PROUD RECORD

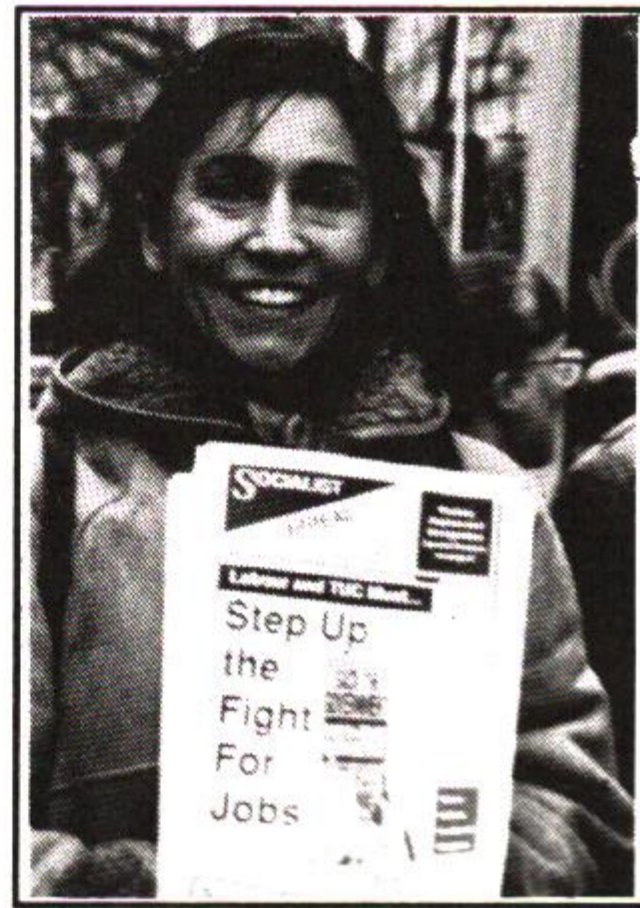
DESPITE the overbearing weight of sectarian conflict, the workers' organisations of Northern Ireland have not been broken. Often they have been in advance of the British and Irish labour movements in defending workers' interests across the sectarian divide:

- 1907: trade unionism arrives in Belfast with a strike wave led by the great Irish trade union leader, Jim Larkin.
- 1919: a General Strike rocks the North with Belfast engineers leading the action. 40,000 workers join the strike.
- May Day, 1919: the biggest demonstration in Irish history - 100,000 workers join the May Day parade in Belfast.
- 1932: Unemployed Catholics and Protestants join forces to fight against the dole. There are riots in the Shankhill and the Falls, not directed against each other but against the British State.

In the recent period, Northern Ireland trade unionists have continued this non-sectarian tradition, despite the 'Troubles':

- 1976: in the absence of an independent labour organisation, the workers rebuild the Trades Council movement. At the beginning of the year there were only four barely functioning bodies. But by the end of the year 16 active Trades Councils have been formed.
- 1977: workers break Paisley's attempt to enforce a 'Loyalist' strike.
- 1979: the first regional General Strike against the newly elected Thatcher government. 30,000 take strike action on the May 14th TUC Day of Action.
- 1982: this is the most militant area during national action by health service workers.
- Late 1980s: there have been numerous strike movements by bus-workers, seafarers, Fords workers, shop workers, Post Office staff and health workers.

Selling Socialist Appeal



Sellers in the North-East took the fight for jobs to North Shields Council Cleansing Depot and the local Metro station and were rewarded for setting out at

6.30am with 9 sales and a number of donations for the Press Fund. Sellers in every area should take up the initiative of workplace sales or catch workers going to or leaving work at local bus or railway stations. Or why not follow the example of sellers in Southampton who are planning a regular Saturday public sale.

Our sellers in Scotland had a highly successful day at the anti-water privatisation demonstration in Glasgow. One seller, Dave Cartwright sold 30 journals alone and a further 10 were sold at a demonstration in Bradford and 10 at Labour Youth Conference in Bournemouth for which our sellers had produced a special leaflet.

Two Cohse members contacted our offices this month to ask for a bulk order of journals to sell at work, supporters in Birkenhead have taken an extra 20 copies a month to sell in the area and a comrade in the NUM increased his order of journals, showing the respect *Socialist Appeal* has rapidly gained in the labour movement.

Make sure you ask your regular readers to take the next step and become sellers of *Socialist Appeal*. That way we can spread the ideas of Marxism ever further.

Subscription Rate To Change!

Unfortunately, due to increasing costs *Socialist Appeal* is being forced to increase its subscription rate from next month - but all is not doom and gloom. You can still benefit from the current subscription rate by subscribing before April 8th. Those renewing their subscriptions need not worry about losing out on this offer - if you resubscribe before April 8th, you too can take up the offer and your renewed subscription will take effect as soon as your current one runs out.

The current rate of £12 will be increased to the new rate of £15 for 12 issues.

International rates will change to: Europe £18 and Rest of the World £20.

Build the Press Fund

Another excellent response has greeted our latest Press Fund appeal - £3000 by April 9th. We are already well on the way with over £800 having come in already and many more pledges made. Make sure all the money reaches us by April 9th.

Many people commented on the technical improvements in *Socialist Appeal* following the purchase of new equipment and with your help we can continue to improve the journal. Remember you can still help by filling in the regular donation form on page 10, which ensures we have a steady income with which to produce and expand *Socialist Appeal* and the ideas of Marxism.

Thanks to supporters in Birkenhead, Hull, and readers who attended our industrial meeting for their donations and all those others who donated during the past month.

A Socialist Appeal to Workers!

I want to subscribe to *Socialist Appeal*. I enclose a cheque/ postal order for £12 made out to *Socialist Appeal*.

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Send to: SA, PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU.

For just £12 you can receive a year's supply of *Socialist Appeal*, the Marxist monthly for the labour movement. It will be delivered to your home every month post-free.

Socialist Appeal explains events in society and the labour movement from a Marxist viewpoint. Marxism is not dead, as the establishment circles, both West and East would like to claim. On the contrary, it is living in the struggles of working people worldwide and in the ideas of socialists and trade unionists everywhere. And Marxism still provides the best explanation of modern class society and the most effective guide to action in changing it.

Each month *Socialist Appeal* will analyse the trends in modern capitalist society, comment on recent events in the class struggle, and provide the latest news from the labour movement, from correspondents in Britain and internationally - people who are not just commentators but are personally participating in the struggle for socialism.

Socialist Appeal is written by members of the Labour Party and trade unionists. Why not do more than just subscribe? Why not join our fight for socialism? Fill in the coupon to find out how you can help. *Socialist Appeal* is the essential journal for the activist in the labour movement - you cannot afford to be without it.



Questions
for
Socialists
No.3

How to Put Britain Back to Work? A Socialist Alternative to Unemployment

As John Major prepares to celebrate his first year in Downing Street, the people of Britain are facing a nightmare of economic and social collapse.

The frightful decline of British capitalism, which the Marxists have charted for decades, was masked by the general upswing of world capitalism.

During the temporary boom of the 1980s, the pundits of big business - and the Labour right - trumpeted the alleged triumph of "market economics."

The collapse of the bureaucratic, totalitarian Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe added grist to the mill of the defenders of capitalism, who claimed that theirs was the only viable economic system. Everything, it appeared, was for the best in the best of all capitalist worlds.

Ideological Offensive

The massive and unprecedented ideological offensive of capital was not answered by the Labour leaders. How could it be? The Labour right had long ago abandoned the ideas of socialism. And, in reality, the left reformists and Stalinists offered no alternative to the right wing.

In a period of boom, when capitalism is able to give certain concessions to a layer of the working class, the illusion inevitably grows that it is possible for individuals to solve their needs and aspirations within the framework of capitalism, by "working hard", that is by undermining their health and family life by working long hours, overtime, weekend working, and the rest.

In the last period, it was possible for a certain section of the class to acquire some of the little "luxuries" that make life worth living: TVs, videos, dishwashers, computers, holidays abroad, a second-hand car, even a house. This fact inevitably had an effect on how people saw society and politics.

However, even at that time, far from diminishing, exploitation and social inequalities steadily increased. For those at work, wage increases were bought by a colossal increase in productivity, intolerable pressure and strain on



Miners demonstrate in defence of jobs

nerves and muscles, speed-ups and productivity deals.

This is reflected in the number of workplace accidents, which cost thirty times the days lost through strikes. Last year, 550 people were killed at work and 30,000 seriously injured. 30 million working days were lost. Commenting on this, the *Independent* (9/12/92) writes: "Industry has been under great cost pressure, and safety has been partially side-lined"

On the one hand, we have seen a colossal increase in wealth and luxury, squeezed from the labour of the working class. On the other extreme, there has been a sharp increase in poverty and homelessness.

Even during the boom, we have seen a whole layer of the population pushed down into a state of absolute misery and degradation, reminiscent of Victorian times.

A recent report by the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, dealing with the problem of juvenile crime, stated that young offenders are "invariably poor, often destitute, and ... barely able to muster significant resources to subsist." (*Independent*, 16/2/93).

A report of the Scottish office clearly indicates the rapid growth of a sub-class of young, destitute homeless, precisely in the boom period:

"Between 1980-91, Scottish office figures show

a rise of 124% in the number of homeless families seeking help - a 101% increase in the numbers actually assessed as homeless in the same period. The 1991 figure shows 34,000, of which 44% (14,900) were single. With 7,780 under 25 years of age. The under-18 figure is about 3,000."

Similar figures could be found in London, and the other big cities of Britain.

By contrast, one city dealer boasted that he "earned" £10 million in a single day by simply picking up a phone during the sterling crisis last September.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Norman Lamont, has a salary of £63,000 a year. His son goes to King's School, Canterbury, which charges a modest fee of £11,000 a year, and throws parties for a mere £5,000 a time, and paid £23,700 to a solicitor to evict an inconvenient tenant, with a little help from his friends at the Treasury. Thus a grateful nation rewards the man who lost £11 billion in foreign reserves during the September crisis - a faithful image of the class he represents.

Now all the dreams of prosperity and personal advancement on the basis of "freedom" and "the market" have turned to ashes. The world boom of the '80s has turned into the world crisis of the '90s. British capitalism has been particularly hard hit.

Under Thatcher, 25% of manufacturing industry was destroyed. The former "workshop of the world" now produces fewer ships than Denmark, one third of the cars produced by France, and less steel than Italy. Hopelessly outgunned by Germany, the USA and Japan, Britain has been reduced to an unimportant, third-rate capitalist power, off the shores of Europe. The real relationship of forces was shown during the crisis of the EMS, when the German capitalists contemptuously threw sterling to the wolves.

As a result of the destruction of Britain's manufacturing base, even when the long-delayed recovery takes place, it will not be long-lasting. Even during the present recession, when the home market is depressed, there has been a steady increase of the balance of trade deficit. In the event of an upswing, the British market will suck in imports, causing a new crisis and a run on the pound.

Steven Steiner, chairman of the Eland Group, said at a conference on the economy last December:

"Our industry has been so depressed that demand will be overwhelmingly met by imports. The problem we have is that it isn't possible for a nation of 55 million people to survive on the basis of services. The Thatcherite nonsense that manufacturing doesn't matter is just that - nonsense." (Independent, 9/12/92).

Investment

Under the Tories, the £100 billion revenue from North Sea Oil, and the receipts from the sell-off of nationalised industries and utilities, guaranteed a budget surplus. But instead of investing this in retooling and modernising industry, or improving the infrastructure, it was frittered away mainly on unemployment benefit.

The Tory idea that Britain, as a low-wage economy could compete with the mighty industries of Japan, Germany, or even France, was sheer madness. All history shows that an economy based on cheap labour can never compete with one based on mechanisation and technology.

The new generation of Tory parvenus, linked to the City, based all their calculations on the chase after a "fast buck"



Selling-off the family silver: NCU cartoon showing the prospect after rail and mail privatisation

The Tories looked on complacently while industry was destroyed. They believed that Britain could base itself on services, banking, tourism, and the rest. But it is industry, not services, which produces real wealth. Services depend upon industry, not vice-versa. More far-sighted Conservative leaders, like MacMillan warned of the folly of "selling off the family silver." But the new generation of Tory parvenus, closely linked to the City, based all their calculations on the Market, that is, on the chase after a "fast buck."

Speaking at the same conference, Roger Bootle of the *Sunday Independent*, asked the \$64,000 question:

"But given the switch from manufacturing to (mainly non-traded) services were freely chosen by business pursuing profit opportunities. How can it have been against our national interests in principle? Do free markets not work?" (Sunday Independent, 6/12/92).

The answer to this question was given a long time ago, not by Karl Marx, but by the father of capitalist economics, Adam Smith:

"The particular interest of the dealers in any particular branch of trade or manufactures is always in some respects different from, and frequently even in sharp opposition to, that of the public. To widen the market and to narrow the sellers' competition is always the interest of the dealer ... This is a class of people whose interest is never exactly the same as that of society, a class of people who have generally an interest to deceive and to oppress the public". Adam Smith, "Wealth of Nations", Vol. I, pp.231-32.

We saw this class of people "who deceive and oppress the public" at work undermining their own currency during the crisis of the ERM. The mysterious "speculators" were not ma-

fioso-types with dark glasses and suitcases, but the respectable City gents, the members of the boards of directors of the monopolies and banks, who cheerfully sold billions of pounds to bring about a devaluation of sterling.

In the period of its senile decline capitalism on a world scale has an increasingly parasitic character. The bourgeois is no longer interested in investing in productive industry, when easy fortunes can be made, speculating on the money markets. Every day, about \$100 billion change hands on the foreign exchange markets. Yet only 5-7% of this represents real production and trade deals. The rest is used for massive speculative activity.

By this means, individuals obtain instant fortunes, while whole nations are brought to their knees, factories are closed like matchboxes, and millions of people find themselves thrown out of work, their lives and hopes shattered by the "free play of market forces."

Scourge of Unemployment

Unemployment is nothing new. However, over the past period, it has risen inexorably. In the period of capitalist upswing in the 1950s and '60s, unemployment was almost negligible - around the half a million mark. Workers made redundant in one industry could find employment in another.

Now all that is finished. Unemployment has continued to rise throughout the 1970s and '80s. Even in the boom of 1982-90, there was a wave of factory closures, affecting steel, coal, chemicals and textiles. The argument was that these were "old" industries, which needed to be replaced by more modern branches, such as computers and information technology. It was merely a process of necessary regeneration. The *Economist* magazine

spoke approvingly of the "creative destruction of capital."

The reappearance of chronic mass unemployment, which was said to be a thing of the past by bourgeois economists and their admirers in the Labour Party, is a condemnation of the capitalist class and its system. In the words of Marx:

"It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him."

The cynical attempt to justify the wholesale closure of industries on the grounds of "creative destruction of capital" is false to the core. People need steel as much as ever. It is a necessary component for basic manufacturing. It is needed to produce cars, ships, planes, houses, and all kinds of capital and consumer goods. The real explanation for the wholesale butchering of the manufacturing sector (especially in Britain, but not only here), was explained over 150 years ago by Marx and Engels:

"In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity - the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented."

These lines from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* are as true today as when they were first written in 1847. **The phenomenon of over-production, or "over-capacity" as it has been expressed in the post-war period, represents the fundamental Achilles' heel of the capitalist system.**

At a time when millions starve in Somalia, we have the obscene lunacy of the "food mountains" in the Common Market. Agricultural over-production has existed for a long time. Farmers are paid not to produce.

But now over-production has become general. Too many cars, too many lorries, too many bricks, too many factories - too many workers. And the "new" branches of production? They are in the same position. Too many computers, also.

The days of half a million unemployed have become a dim and distant memory. In the

Faced with an explosion of unemployment the Tories "solution" is to attack the appallingly low benefits of the unemployed, forcing them to accept low-paid jobs, or onto workfare

1970s, politicians spoke of one million as the absolute limit of "acceptable" unemployment. Later, it became one and a half million. Then 2 million. Now they claim there are three and a half million. In fact, the real figure is nearer 4 million, and still rising.

Like some dreadful epidemic, unemployment strikes all layers of society. None are spared. Men and women who thought their jobs were safe till retirement, now find themselves thrown on the scrapheap at 40. Even 35 is considered "too old."

In the ruthless search after profits, wages are cut, hours are lengthened. That minority of young people who find work, are employed at subsistence wages. An increasing number will never work at all.

Faced with an explosion of unemployment, the Tories "solution" is to attack the appallingly low benefits of the unemployed, forcing them to accept low-paid jobs, or onto "workfare." In the period of economic upswing, the capitalists could afford to give some concessions, including the "welfare state." Now, in condi-

tions of capitalist crisis, all the gains of the past are being wiped out. The working class faces a frightening future.

In the last recession of 1979-82, unemployment in Britain affected mainly the North and Midlands. This time, London and the South have been hit harder. The service sector built up during the Thatcher period has collapsed like a pack of cards.

Whereas unemployment in the North has increased by one-half, in the South, it has gone up by a staggering 300% and now stands at 10.5%. Even in the 1930s, the South was not hit so hard.

According to the Unemployment Unit, the true level of unemployment stands at 4.1 million, and is still rising. According to Phillips and Drew, it will continue rising until at least 1995. 37,000 jobs were lost in December 1992 alone. **This is not the "normal" cyclical unemployment as the Tories would have us believe. It is not the "reserve army of unemployed" which Marx wrote about. It contains a hard core of long-term unemployed - possibly as much as 1.5 million - who will never find work. This is chronic unemployment - an ulcer growing at the bowels of society.**

Unemployment not only hits the manufacturing sector, but also the white collar jobs in services and banking. Over the last three years, 75,000 jobs have been lost in banking, with a further 25,000 to go this year. 20,000 face the sack at Lloyd's alone.

Debt Crisis

For the first time since the 1930s, big sections of the middle class are faced with the prospect of ruin. Tens of thousands of small businesses have gone bankrupt. (These were supposed to be the power-house of a "market-led recovery.") Having burnt their fingers in the speculative orgy of the 1980s, the big banks now turn a ruthless face towards small borrowers, forcing small businesses to close and depriving thousands of families of the roof over their head.

In the past, the British middle class was accustomed to see their home as a guarantee of stability and a storehouse of value - "as safe as houses," as the saying goes. Not any more.

People in the South East who bought homes with a 5% deposit twelve months ago have lost every penny of their savings. Nearly 2 million are caught in the "debt trap," with mortgages greater than the value of their homes. Thus, "home ownership" has become a cruel trap for millions. Repossessions proceed apace. The scourge of homelessness grows. All this at the behest of "market forces."

Increasingly, the representatives of capital are becoming worried about this phenomenon. Jacques Delors has stated that: *"We are entering into a new period because it is not possible to live with nearly 3 million in each*



Thousands of small businesses have gone bust at the hands of the Tories

country unemployed." (*Sunday Independent*, 21/2/93).

Liberal leader Paddy Ashdown impotently wrings his hands, horrified at the spectre of increased class polarisation: "Our country is in danger of drifting apart," he wails, "divided by the scourge of unemployment, discrimination, low opportunities and neglect." (*ibid*).

For his part, John Smith correctly denounces the "economic madness of unemployment" which is costing £27 billion and 780 million working days a year in lost wealth and production.

To solve the problem of unemployment is the burning task of the day. But what solution do the Labour right offer?

Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, speaks of the need for a "full employment society." "Our aspiration," he says, "now must be more than helping people to find work regardless of its quality or prospects, but ensuring full and fulfilling employment by expanding employment and training opportunities for all."

It is true that Britain has a shameful record on training and education in comparison to her main rivals. Marxists will support every real reform aimed at improving education and training. But with 4 million unemployed, you cannot begin to solve the problem by means of better training alone. What is the good of training people for jobs which do not exist?

"The real challenge," says Brown, "is to increase the capacity of the economy for high levels of sustainable growth." Not a single person would disagree with this.

The problem is: how is it to be done while the commanding heights of the economy are in the hands of a handful of bankers and monopolists who operate purely on the basis of greed and short-term gain?

In reality, the Labour leaders have no answer to the problem of unemployment, and cannot have, because they share the basic premise of the Tories (and Liberals) - the continuation of the capitalist system.

Labour Leaders

Smith, Brown, Blair and co. have swallowed the "free market" propaganda hook, line and sinker. They wish to appear as "statesmanlike" and "responsible" in the hope of winning over the "middle ground."

But, in reality, their programme can never win over the mass of discontented middle-class Tory voters, who are being mercilessly hammered by the very "market forces" which the Labour leaders have so enthusiastically espoused.

Despite all the demagoguery about "small is beautiful," the facts show that small and medium businesses are being systematically destroyed. During the first quarter of 1992, at one point 1,200 small businesses were going to the wall every week.

Throughout the period of boom, there has been a relentless trend towards the concentration of wealth and power into a few hands. This is an international phenomenon. But in Britain it has reached an extreme form. Britain is one of the most monopolised economies in the world. A mere 0.5% of all companies are responsible

for 60% of output. (Quoted by Derek Stout of the London Business School, *Independent*, 9/12/92).

As long as the key economic decisions are taken by a handful of wealthy directors, the situation will not vary substantially, no matter which government is in "power." A Labour government which did not act decisively to break the power of big business would inevitably find itself the plaything of the big banks and monopolies. Yet despite all the facts, John Smith in his Bournemouth speech of February 7th asserted that "ownership today is largely irrelevant."

Monopolies Decide

The Church had a saying: "*Man proposes, God disposes.*" The history of Labour governments proves conclusively that governments may propose, but **under capitalism it is the "market" that decides. In other words, the interests of a tiny group of wealthy bankers and monopolists count for everything; the aspirations of millions of voters count for nothing. And this is supposed to be "democracy"!**

In the past period there has been a frenzied campaign against the alleged evils of "nationalisation." This was made easier by the way in which successive Labour governments carried out the policy of "public ownership." This can be summed up as nationalising the losses and privatising the profits.

Invariably it was the bankrupt industries which were taken over, those sectors like rail, coal, and steel which had been run down in private hands, which required huge amounts of investment to modernise them, but which were necessary for the private sector. Lavish over-compensation was paid to the former owners, and the state paid out vast sums to bring them up to date, providing the private sector with cheap coal, steel, rail freight, electricity, etc. Moreover, control of the nationalised industries was placed in the hands of bureaucratic structures. The workers had no say in the running of these industries, which was conducted along capitalist lines. In many cases, the former bosses were kept on as members of the boards of directors of nationalised industries.

This kind of nationalisation had nothing in common with socialist nationalisation. It represents a variety of "state capitalism." The key monopolies and banks remained in private hands, and dominated the economy as a whole. The nationalised industries served as an auxiliary for the private sector.

Far from being "irrelevant," as John Smith imagines, ownership of the means of production is a decisive question. Only a socialist plan of production can overcome the frightful crisis of the British economy. But you cannot plan what you do not control, and you cannot control what you do not own.

In the long period of economic upswing from 1948-73, sections of the ruling class, and all the reformist leaders, including the Lefts, had the delusion that they could control the economy by means of state intervention. In this way, they alleged, crises and mass unemployment would become things of the past. Marxism was out of date and "managed capitalism" would guarantee a future of prosperity for all. Not one stone upon another remains of these pipe-dreams today. With mass unemployment in all the main capitalist countries, the ruling class have blamed state intervention - yesterday's panacea - for all their ills. In all countries they are busy privatising, dismantling the welfare state, slashing public expenditure. Harold MacMillan compared the policy of privatisation to "*selling the family silver*." This far-sighted representative of capital understood that by undermining the state sector, the Tories were preparing a catastrophe for the future. His dire warnings were shown to be correct. However, the threat of hyper-inflation in the 1970s showed the limits of the Keynesian policies carried out by MacMillan and co in the previous period. The policy of looting the state carried out by Thatcher merely reflected the recognition of this fact.

Capitalist Decline

The capitalists and their government are trapped. They have tried all imaginable means of getting out of the crisis, but have failed. Keynesian deficit financing and state intervention have failed, but so has monetarism. After a decade of Thatcherism, they are in a worse mess than before.

Unless drastic measures are taken, British capitalism faces an abyss. The "slow, inglorious decline" of decades will be transformed into an absolute catastrophe. Already we are witnessing the unmistakable symptoms of social collapse. Mass unemployment, a crumbling infrastructure, the destruction of the gains of the past in health, education, culture, an epidemic of drugs, vandalism, and mindless crime. **Although the measures of nationalisation, state intervention and the welfare state had nothing in common with socialism, in a way they gave us a glimpse of what would be possible in a rationally planned society.**

The gains - only made possible by the struggles of the working class - though modest, were real enough. For the first time the workers of the advanced capitalist countries saw what it was to have a measure of job security, access to education and free medicine, decent and affordable housing, and the other things which are the basic conditions for a civilised existence.

Now all this is under threat. Under conditions of capitalist crisis, the bourgeois can no longer "afford" even these things. Unless the organised Labour Movement shows a way out, the

future of Britain will be a return to the barbaric conditions of the past.

In the midst of this frightening collapse, John Smith, Gordon Brown and the others seem to be on another planet. Far from being "realistic," their policies spell disaster for Labour. Incapable of understanding society, and lacking a socialist perspective, they are trying to woo the "middle class" by aping the very policies which are destroying the middle class.

Privatisation Racket

The general decline of British capitalism is reflected in the person of its political representatives. The insane policy of looting the state has been carried out with fanatical insistence - even to the point of selling off utilities like gas and water, which were state-owned even in the last century.

The illusions fostered by Thatcher in privatisation have largely been dissipated. A recent opinion poll shows that 64% are against the privatisation of the post office.

The experience of Telecom, gas and electricity shows that the reality of privatisation is not to stimulate "free market forces" but to create gigantic private monopolies, which use their position to increase prices, and frequently cut back services as well.

Britain's deep-mine coal is the most efficiently produced in the world. Coal is the main strategic fuel resource in Britain. German capitalism subsidises its coal as a strategic reserve. No matter. The Tories announce the closure of the bulk of the industry, alleging the categorical imperative of "market forces."

Britain's postal services are the cheapest in Europe and probably the most efficient. 90% of first class letters are delivered the next day, as opposed to 75% in Germany and 69% in France. No matter. The post office must be sold off to private investors, who will increase the

prices and ruin the service, all in the name of "efficiency."

In the field of public transport, Britain has some of the worst and most expensive services in Europe. Even Spain has better public transport. All other EC countries regard public transport as a necessary public service, and subsidise it accordingly. But not here. Subsidies have been slashed. The result? Deteriorating services, soaring fares, and roads choked by private cars and articulated lorries.

The answer is, as always, to privatise the railways. This will inevitably lead to a worsening of an already intolerable situation. The argument that privatisation will lead to greater competition and, therefore, efficiency is nonsense. A leaked document of the Department of Transport says that franchising "*appears to offer the benefit of competition without the effect of its actual practice. However, experience shows that much of this promise is illusory.*" (Independent on Sunday, 21/2/93).

The government want to scrap rail freight. This would force 150 million tonnes onto already overcrowded roads. It would also mean increased passenger fares and 16,000 redundancies. This, in turn, will mean fewer rail passengers, leading to further cuts in "unprofitable" services, in a vicious downward spiral.

And things will not stop here. The Thatcherite Adam Smith Institute has proposed the privatisation of state benefits: that is, unemployment benefit, maternity benefit, and residential care for the old. Millions of unemployed people and old age pensioners, who have contributed all their lives to state "benefits" will be handed over to the tender mercy of private agencies, run for profit. The shadow of Robert Maxwell thus hangs over the entire population. But then, wasn't he a paragon of "free market" virtue?

Socialist Plan

The case for socialist planning is absolutely unanswerable. It is not a result of "dogma" but flows from the real necessities of working people. Let us consider just two examples.

1) The disaster of coal. The threat to close down the coal industry is a clear example of industrial Luddism. What is required is an integrated energy policy, linking coal, oil, gas and electricity in the interest of all. The prior condition for this is therefore nationalisation of gas and electricity, and the nationalisation of the big oil and private electrical monopolies.

2) Transport. The proposal to break up British Rail is absolute insanity. What is required is an integrated national transport system, involving railways, road and air transport.

Is it necessary to mention cases such as water and British Telecom? It is a scandal that these utilities should have been sold off to start with. As soon as Major entered Number Ten, BT announced 25,000 redundancies, while making huge profits at the consumer's expense,

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charging for directory enquiries and even posing a threat to 999 calls.

The first act of a Labour Government must be to re-nationalise all the privatised industries and utilities with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need only. However, this, in and of itself, is not enough. In order to control and plan the economy, it is necessary to nationalise the banks, insurance companies, and the big monopolies which dominate the economy.

City Sabotage

From the outset, a Labour government will face the sabotage of the City of London. It must take immediate action to end, once and for all, the stranglehold of a bunch of wealthy spivs and speculators over the lives of the people. John Smith and co. imagine that they can curry favour with big business. But the bankers and monopolists will never be reconciled to a Labour government. Instead, they will seek, as in the past, to use and discredit a Labour government, to carry out the dirty work of cuts, and attacks on living standards, preparing the way for the return of an even more vicious Tory government later on. That is the lesson of past Labour governments.

There are only two choices: either to serve the interests of the wealthy and powerful, or to serve the interests of the millions of working people, the unemployed, the homeless, the old, and also the middle class who face ruin under this unjust and outmoded system. There is no third option.

Real socialist nationalisation has nothing in common with the bureaucratic caricature of state capitalism. The nationalised industries would be run on the basis of democratic workers' control and management. The boards of directors would be elected, one third by the workers in each industry, one third by the trade unions, and one third by the government. They would be democratically elected, receive a wage no higher than that of a skilled worker, and be subject to the right of recall at any time. **On this basis, it would be possible for the first time to plan the productive forces, drawing in the scientists, the technicians, and every layer of the population to discuss the resources and priorities. There would be full participation both in drawing up a plan, and putting it into practice.**

By these means, it would be possible to mobilise all the human and material resources of Britain to solve the pressing needs of society. One of the biggest scandals of all is the problem of homelessness. A crash building programme of one million new dwellings would not only give work to building workers, but also to industry. Unemployment could be liquidated virtually overnight. New hope could be given to millions. Under a democratic socialist plan of production, a rate of growth of ten per cent per annum would be an extremely modest target to start

with. This would mean doubling the wealth of society in ten years. Moreover, this output could be achieved while steadily lowering the hours of work.

It is a further sign of the madness of capitalism that, with four million out of work, those who remain in industry are working longer hours than ever before. According to Patricia Hewitt, deputy director of Public Policy Research, only one in three in Britain now work a nine-to-five, eight hour day:

"The rest are already working shifts, flexitime or part time. A fifth - mainly men - pile on overtime and work more than 50 hours a week (British male working hours are the longest in Europe)." (Daily Telegraph, 4/2/93).

On the other hand millions of women and youth are compelled to take part-time jobs in all kinds of dead-end, low paid jobs.

A socialist plan of production would guarantee, not only a job for all, but a real job with a decent living wage, and a general reduction in the working day. A legal maximum of 35 hours a week could be introduced immediately, and steadily reduced thereafter. A reduction in the working day is a prior condition for the participation of the majority of the population in the task of running the state, industry and society. It would enable us to tap the talents, skills and resourcefulness of people who are today condemned to a humiliating existence of enforced idleness.

The example of a socialist Britain would send shock-waves throughout Europe and the world. The impasse of capitalism is shown by the phenomenon of mass unemployment throughout the industrialised world, without including the nightmare of suffering of the

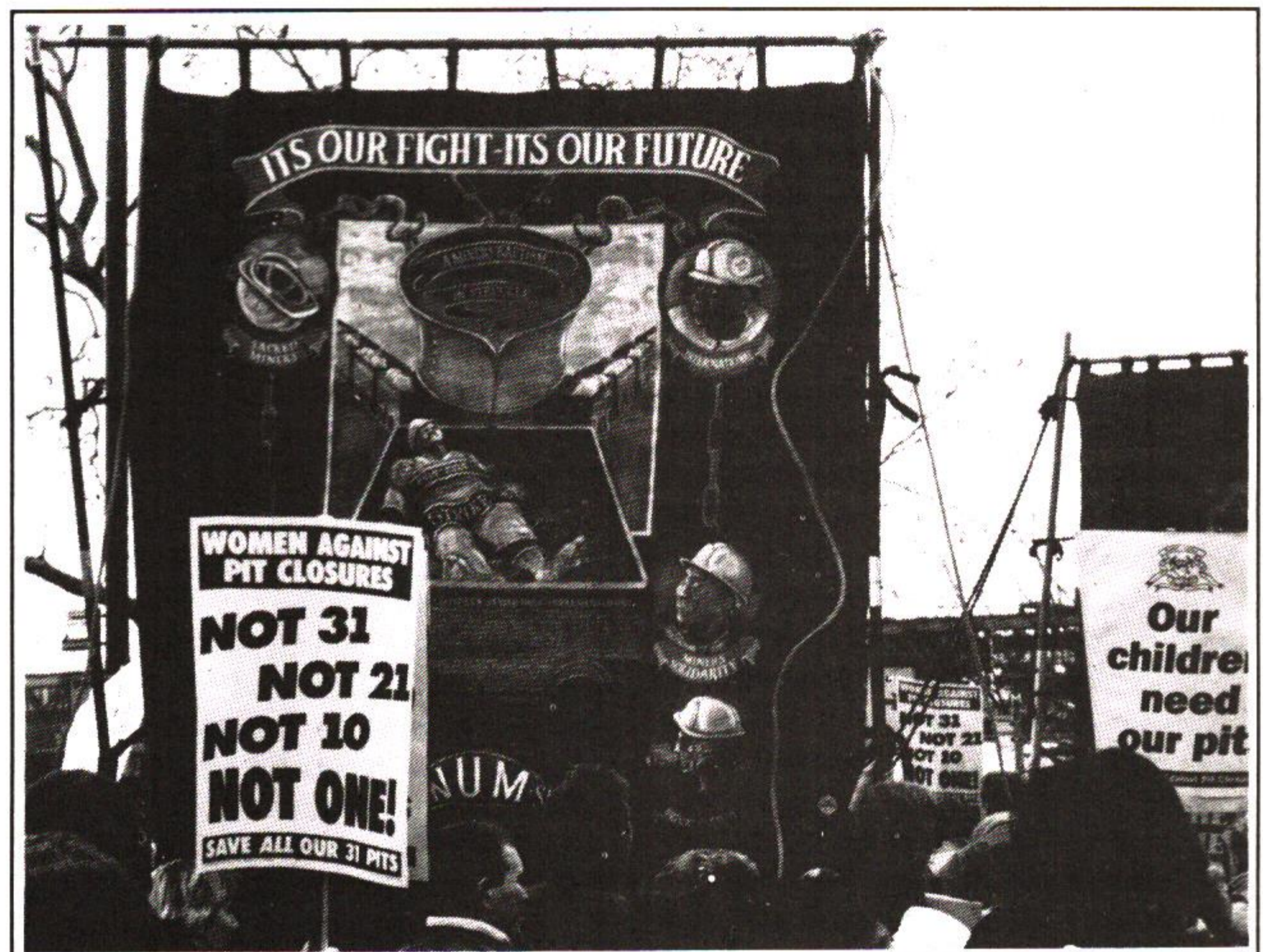
masses in Africa, Asia and Latin America. For decades, the capitalists of Western Europe have talked about a "United Europe." The collapse of the EMS and the shambles over Maastricht shows that this process has reached its limits. Each national capitalist class jealously guards its own interests against the others. In any event, as Lenin explained, the idea of a united Europe on a capitalist basis is both reactionary and utopian.

British socialists should inscribe on their banner the slogan of the UNITED SOCIALIST STATES OF EUROPE.

The pooling of the vast resources of Europe on the basis of a common plan of production, would make it possible to achieve undreamed of rates of economic growth - more than enough to transform the lives of the people in a few years. The abolition of outmoded national frontiers would give a powerful stimulus to growth and permit the uniting of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals and beyond. Such a power would rapidly outstrip both Japan and the United States in every field. It would prove to be an irresistible magnet for the workers of every continent, preparing the way for the overthrow of landlordism and capitalism on a world scale, and the establishment of the SOCIALIST WORLD FEDERATION.

Such a perspective is no utopia. It is the only realistic perspective for the working class of Britain, Europe and the world. The fiddling and fussing of the reformists of all stripes offer no way out. Only a bold socialist programme, on the lines outlined here, can inspire working people with an aim, a cause and a banner worthy of the future.

Alan Woods



In defending jobs the labour movement must fight for an end to the misery and madness of the market.

New Pakistan Crisis Demands Response From PPP

Lal Khan, Editorial Board, *The Struggle* (The voice of socialism in the PPP and the labour movement.)

The acceptance of the post of Chairperson of the Foreign Relations Committee by Benazir Bhutto created an unprecedented uproar in the Pakistan Peoples Party. It came as a shock to most party activists especially because it came just a few weeks after the call for a "Long March" to overthrow the IJI government.

Although the post is more symbolic rather than having any real control on Pakistan's foreign policy, nevertheless it represented a compromise; in fact more so, a capitulation. Most party activists especially in Sindh felt humiliated and betrayed. Although the Long March did not achieve its ultimate objective of overthrowing the IJI government, it did shake the regime and exposed the weakness and lack of confidence of the Nawaz Sharif government.

Long March

The Long March fizzled out (as explained in previous articles in Socialist Appeal) mainly due to the relatively weak response of the masses to participation in it. This was mainly due to a difficult objective situation, an enormous amount of corruption and drug/"black market" money circulating in society, and the lack of a clear revolutionary programme on the part of the leadership. **Instead of a programme linked to the fundamental needs of the masses, the leadership's policy for mobilisation for the Long March was based on a quick assumption of power through the actions of the military or the President to dissolve assemblies;** precisely the issue which the PPP had agitated against (Benazir's government was overthrown in August 1990 through the President using the 8th amendment).

Another illusion spread within the party was that due to Clinton's victory in the US, the Americans would also try to bring Benazir back into power. The only incentive given to the party workers were the perks and privileges of power. The attacks on the IJI government's corruption, scandals, and exploitative policies were vague. No clear alternative was presented to rally a mass mobilisation. Ironically, the main leader accompanying Ms Benazir on her pajero, (jeep) during the Long March in Rawalpindi was Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, the ex-caretaker Prime Minister, under whom the rigged elections had taken place in 1990 to defeat the PPP. His association and subservi-



"This dance will perhaps get us some aid!" - Nawaz Sharif (left), Benazir Bhutto (centre) and President Ismail Khan play out the IJI/PPP compromise

ence to Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the incumbent President, is an open secret.

In spite of all these odds, the masses would have come into the fray had the Long March been sustained and the objective situation and subjective organisation developed. But the destructive blow to the movement was inflicted by the destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya, India. This brutal act by the Hindu fundamentalists unleashed a huge wave of retaliation amongst the Muslim population in India, Pakistan and elsewhere.

Counter-Demonstrations

The shaky IJI government couldn't have had a better gift. The fundamentalists and the IJI ministers organised counter demonstrations on the issue of the Babri mosque. The PPP capitulated to the enormous pressure of this Islamic backlash and in some instances there were joint rallies of the PPP, IJI, and the fundamentalists, e.g., in front of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad.

But in spite of this backlash, the basis and foundations of the PPP were anti-establishment and against the ruling class. As the decision to call the Long March lacked any programmatic and real grass roots preparation, so followed the quick demoralisation and apathy of the leadership. In this frustration of a retreat, the PPP leadership without any consultation or discussion in the party took a desperate leap to accept the offer of this parliamentary post by the dithering Nawaz Sharif government. The ingenuous theory behind this move was the formation of a "grand democratic alliance"

with political forces against the President, bureaucracy, the military and fundamentalism.

Party Activists

The party activists in spite of being further demoralised by this capitulation refused to accept it. Even the middle order leaders who normally base all their politics on personal sycophancy towards the leadership, had to "express their reservations" on this decision. However, in private gatherings they showed their "disapproval" and "anger" at the capitulation. Benazir's appointment was seconded by Shahbaz Sharif, the hated notorious brother of the Prime Minister. The leadership's excuse for accepting this post in the greater national interest, also failed to convince the party rank and file.

After Benazir's departure to London, the top party leadership was forced to rescind their decision to compromise with the IJI government. Benazir also issued a statement from London to that effect. She described the "compromise" as propaganda of the regime's disinformation unit. But still the damage done to the party by this act has not been salvaged. **The reaction was such that perhaps for the first time since Benazir's return to Pakistan in 1986, there was opposition and open differences in the party's hand-picked central executive committee.** Ironically, some of the right-wingers opposed this decision. This was mainly due to their connections with the different warring factions of the ruling class and those within the state itself.

On the question of the Presidential candidate

for the Presidential election (to be held in November 1993) there is open conflict between different leaders of the party. The crisis within the party is intense and the conflicts have now come into the open. One tendency is trying to promote Benazir's brother, Murtaza, who is in exile in Syria, to be the party's new leader. Other right-wingers are playing with various sorts of compromises with different factions of the ruling class and the state. But in spite of the leadership's deviation and capitulation, it has been unable to make the party cross the line of demarcation set by the 1968-69 revolution and the assassination of party founding Chairman, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto by the state in 1979.

The PPP is still the only movement on which the masses of all nationalities and ethnic groups could unite on a class basis. Its demise without the development of a revolutionary force from its ranks and the labour movement, would mark the end of Pakistan. The hopes and illusions, although diminished at the moment, still persist with the PPP. A severe test will come for the party in the explosive events ahead, especially if the PPP comes to power. The fate of Pakistan and its people will be decided more or less in that stormy period. The IJI regime is in tatters. It has split more

than once in the last year. Even at this stage there are constant rows within its different factions. Ideologically its spectrum still ranges from extreme Islamic fundamentalism to bourgeois liberalism. **An utterly corrupt and pathetic ruling class is trying desperately to loot the state.** The economy is in a shambles. The foreign debt has soared to US\$ 22.3 billion while the domestic borrowing has exceeded \$ 24.6 billion. The budget deficit has gone beyond Rs.70 billion this year, but by June 30th, when it has to be presented, it will pass Rs.115 billion. This would be around 10% of the GNP.

IMF Conditions

The IMF is putting stringent conditions for further allocation of the loan. Inflation is around 30% and rising further. The price hike in the last 6 months has been 12.9%. One million are added yearly to the huge mass of unemployed, which according to official statistics is 10 million. The trade deficit has exceeded \$3.2 billion this year. On top of this economic mess, Nawaz Sharif is continuing rampant borrowing and is on a spending spree to pacify the masses and to gain support through mass corruption.

This situation is a recipe for disaster. Sind is in the total control of the army, and the military is

increasingly being called out to curb mass unrest in different areas. The idea that the army can solve the problems in Sind is already being shown as false. Martial law would be counter-productive for the ruling class, both internally and externally. The Americans want military spending to be cut down from its present 42% of the budget, while they want to continue their own loot of the about 47% spent on debt servicing. This has created new tensions between the military and the Pentagon.

The fundamentalists, now that they are of no use to the Americans, are now harping on an anti-imperialist rhetoric. The formation of a "grand democratic alliance" between Benazir, Nawaz Sharif, and the "liberal" elements of the IJI, with the blessings of US imperialism, would give a new lease of life to the fundamentalists. They will exploit the strong anti-imperialist sentiment in society and try to become a force. If they do so, then they will ravage the country, as they have done in Afghanistan.

US Imperialism

In the event of a PPP government in a coalition of the "grand democratic alliance", it will be forced to pursue the policies of American imperialism. If Benazir tries to cut military expenditure, the army will retaliate. It could also precipitate an alliance between the fundamentalists and the military. If the Benazir government doesn't carry through reforms (which have become impossible within the present rotten capitalist system) then the military-fundamentalist alliance can gain mass support, especially amongst the more backward layers of society.

The national question can come back with a vengeance with the defeat of a class movement around the PPP. In Sind, Baluchistan, and North West Frontier Province, the bloodshed through national conflict could reach unprecedented proportions. The military could strike and kick out a Benazir government, to install perhaps the first ever "anti-imperialist" martial law dictatorship. This will be the recipe for wars and civil wars, and the conflict will spill beyond the borders of Pakistan. It would be a horror without end.

The only way forward is still through the class struggle of the working class. Traditionally it has always rallied around the PPP whenever it has entered the arena of politics and erupted into mass movements. **An independent class policy of socialist transformation, (opposing both American imperialism and a military-fundamentalist alliance), from within the PPP, corresponding to the founding manifesto of the party is necessary. Only such a policy can cut across the prejudices of religion, race, nationality, ethnicity and communalism, and unite the toiling masses in a struggle to overthrow the present decaying system. This is the only road to emancipation.**

INDIA

Workers Fight Communal Violence



Workers demonstrate last December in New Delhi against communal violence.

Seventy thousand police and paramilitary forces were used by the government on 25th February, to clamp down on a demonstration by the right-wing Hindu fundamentalist BJP, in the capital. Thousands of arrests were made before, and during, the rally, in a vain attempt to shore up the position of the Narasimha Rao government.

Over 1700 people were killed in December, in clashes over the destruction of the Babri mosque (see article in *Socialist Appeal* issue No.8). In early January, there were renewed communal clashes in Bombay and Ahmedabad. Official figures say 600 people were killed in Bombay, over the nine days of rioting from January 6th - in reality many more died. Thousands were injured. Reactionary Hindu communalist organisations, right-wing politicians and criminals organised gangs to go on a spree of vicious killings, stabbings, burning and looting.

A campaign by the workers' parties and left trade unions is needed to oppose divisions, whether based on religion, language, or nationality. A movement around socialist policies could cut across the reactionary developments seen particularly over the last two months.

The Black Revolt, USA

The release of Spike Lee's film, *Malcolm X* has caused many to question and discuss the historical and present day struggles of blacks, especially in America. In the first of a two-part article on the struggles of black workers in the United States, Kevin Fernandes looks at the history, causes and lessons of the movements of US blacks from the Civil War to the First World War.

Last May, the wealthiest city, of the world's richest nation was engulfed in an explosion of black anger. Anger, rooted in years of racism, police harassment, and in the social conditions facing blacks and Latinos, erupted in Los Angeles, and later in a dozen other US cities. They were the worst riots seen in the US this century; 53 people were killed, and nearly \$1 billion worth of damage caused.

Twenty five years after Martin Luther King's assassination, his "dream" of an end to racism and poverty remains a distant prospect for the black population of the United States.

As recently as New Year's day this year, a black man, Christopher Wilson, was attacked in what the Tampa chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) described as a "lynching by fire". He was kidnapped by three white men, robbed, doused with petrol and set alight; he suffered second and third-degree burns. Wilson's girlfriend stated that the attackers had used racial taunts.

In Los Angeles, the four policemen whose beating of a black motorist, Rodney King, sparked off the riots, are now facing a federal prosecution, charged with violating his civil rights. The acquittal of the four could cause a tragic re-run of last year's events. The LA police, are preparing for this possibility, with the entire force taking anti-riot training, and the police commission approving plans to spend \$1 billion on riot equipment, including rubber

bullets and tear-gas. Willie Williams has replaced Daryl Gates, to become the city's first black police chief.

The contrast between the super-rich and the super-poor in Los Angeles is as sharp as in any ex-colonial country. Half of the adult population of South Central LA (mainly blacks and Latinos) are unemployed. In the US, blacks earn only 58% of whites' earnings. Black infant mortality is twice that of whites; 45% of black children live below the poverty line, compared with 16% of white children; black college graduates earn almost exactly the same as whites with a high school education. Between 1973 and 1990, the average yearly income of black high school graduates declined in real terms by 44%; and for Latinos this figure was 35%. Unemployment amongst blacks is twice the rate for whites. The median family income of blacks is \$22,000 per annum, compared to \$38,000 for white families; this proportion has hardly changed in 25 years.

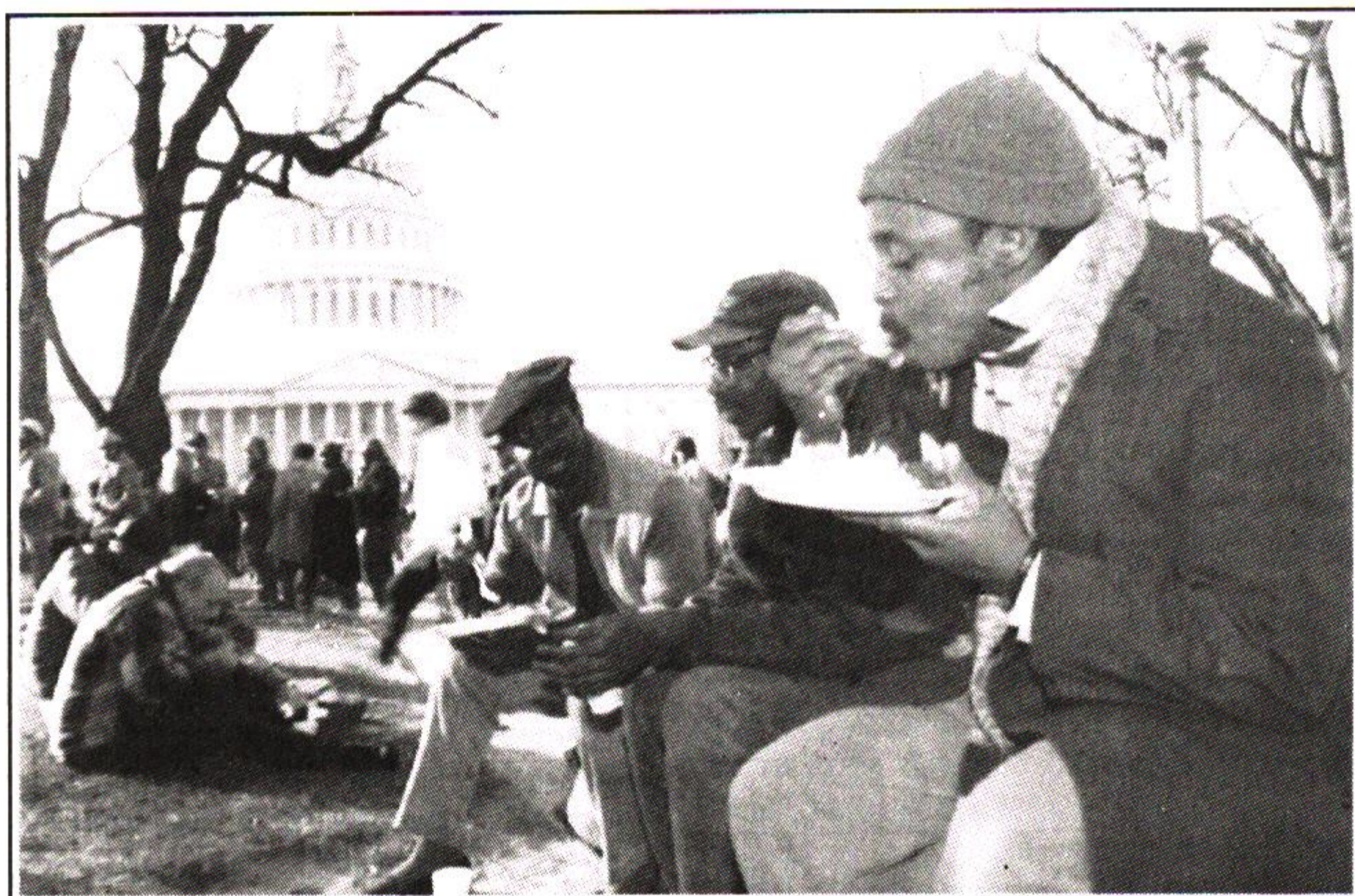
Material Conditions

The renewed interest amongst a layer of black youth in the ideas and lives of US black leaders of the past, has as its root the material conditions faced by the majority of blacks, taken together with the absence of a trade union based workers party in the US itself, independent of the Democrats and Republicans, which could campaign on a socialist programme to defeat racism. The question is, what did the black revolt of the 1950s and 60s represent, and what is its relevance today?

The black revolt in the US, was from the outset on a collision course with the ruling elite. A quarter of the black population is estimated to have participated in the civil rights marches. Wave after wave of protests, "sit-ins", "freedom rides", and demonstrations, took place, in the face of the batons, dogs and guns of the racists, and of the police/state agencies. The racial oppression facing US blacks was carried out through the domination of society by the multinationals, monopolies, banks, and aided by their hired politicians, media, gangsters, corrupt officials, racist police, "Jim Crow" (discriminatory) laws, and racist thugs. In other words, US capitalism. And these forces were ranged against the anti-racist movement.

How were the Jim Crow laws defeated, and by whom? After the abolition of discriminatory laws, how can the continuing racism and poverty faced by blacks, Latinos and the other minorities be ended?

The struggle of blacks against their violent oppression in the US, is not simply a phenomena of the 1950s and 60s. It has been a consist-



Homeless blacks eat a soup kitchen meal in the shadow of the Capitol following a "Hunger in the land of plenty" demonstration.

ent feature ever since slavery. From armed resistance to the foreign invaders in Africa, to uprisings on the slave ships, to the heroic revolts on the plantations, blacks have been active participants in the struggle. They have not been the passive recipients of "emancipation" by white liberals, as has been claimed by some historians.

Racism has been a constant feature of US society. The ruling class of any society have a favourable opportunity to carry on their exploitation if they are able to divide the working people along racial, national or religious lines. Such has been the case in the US. US capitalism, defeated the Southern slave owners in the Civil War (1861-65), and once they had consolidated their position, denied blacks equal rights. They were afraid of the building of unity amongst all of the oppressed, which started with sympathies between the blacks, the white indentured servants and the native Americans.

Civil War

The Civil War was a struggle for the supremacy of the Northern industrial capitalists over the landowners and slave-system in the South. The slave system was a rapacious one which continually required ever-increasing territory into which it could expand and survive. This expansionist policy brought the South into conflict with the industrialists of the North. Having played a crucial role in the early development of US capitalism, slavery gradually became a hindrance to capitalism's further development. This was the root cause of the War - not the rights of blacks.

After the 1776 Revolution, slavery was abolished in the North, not because of the benevolence of the industrialists, but entirely for economic reasons. This loss in the North to the bloc of slaveowners-merchants-bankers was more than compensated by the continuance of slavery in the South, where cotton production for the textile industry increased massively. New York's bourgeois made 40% of its profit before the Civil War on the sale of cotton grown in the South.

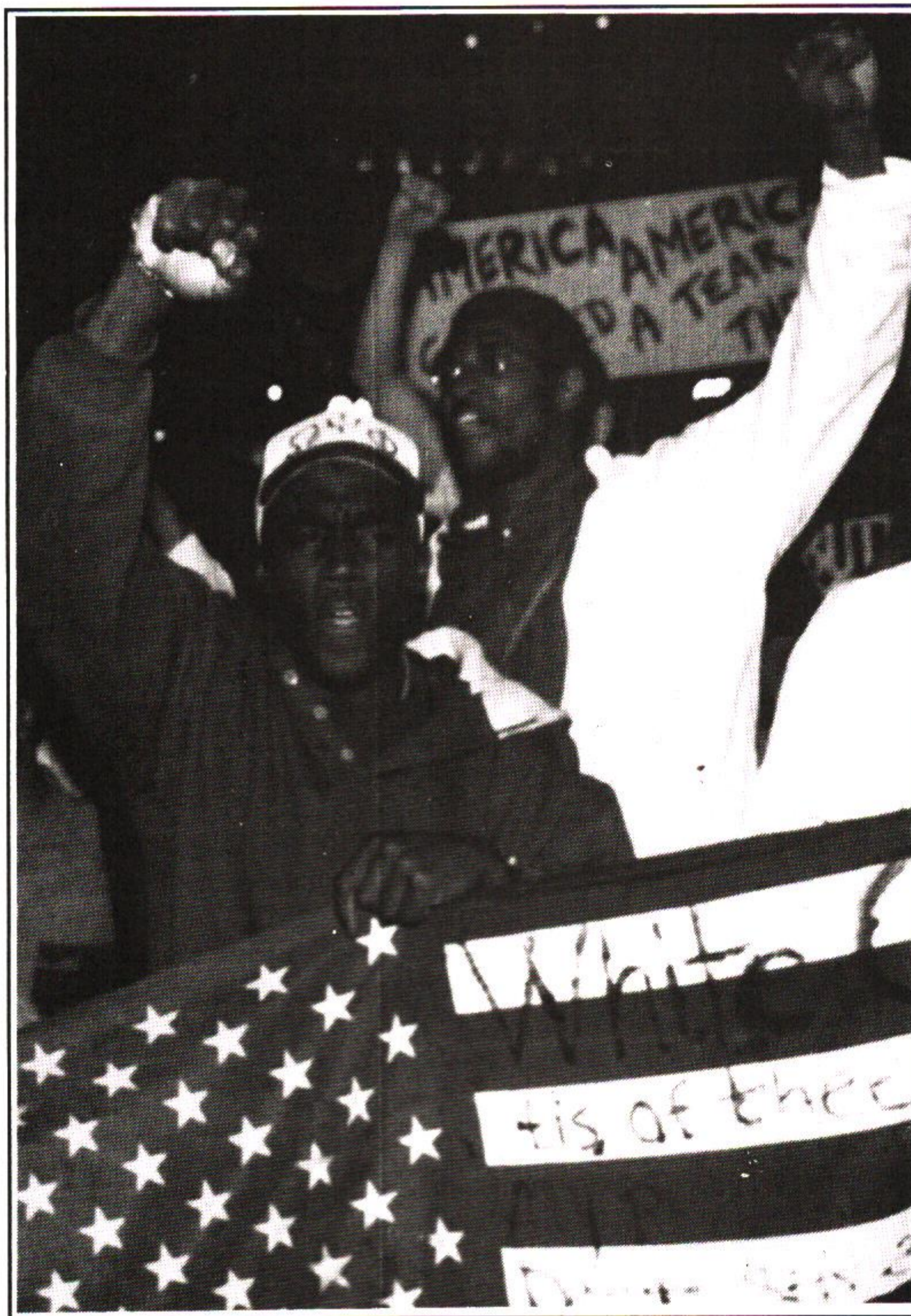
Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 (to end slavery) was made because the Northern capitalists feared a military defeat. This proclamation, as stated by Marx and Engels, changed the balance of forces fundamentally. The Union army was strengthened by a force of 200,000 black troops. The Confederacy needed to use 100,000 troops to guard the slaves. The Southern aristocracy were further weakened by the mass exodus from the plantations (some half a million blacks fled to the North during the War), acts of sabotage, and the taking over of land of fleeing Southern landowners. Thus slavery was abolished through revolutionary, not constitutional, means. Lenin spoke of "the immense world-historic, progressive and revolutionary sig-

nificance of the American Civil War of 1863-65" (*Letter to American Workers*).

The Northern capitalists leant on the blacks to achieve victory. There was then a period during which reaction tried to regain its position. Andrew Johnson (described by Marx as "a dirty tool of the slaveholders") became President with Lincoln's assassination. He tried to re-establish the rights of the slaveocracy. In the winter of 1865 General Grant had recommended the withdrawal of black troops from the South, no doubt because the black regiments were aiding the struggle for black rights. The racist terror organisation, the Ku Klux Klan, was formed in 1865. Murderous attack after attack took place. To throw back the movement of blacks and their white allies, the KKK used hangings and burnings. In May 1866, in Memphis, the local authorities and police themselves carried out a pogrom and killed 46 blacks and 2 whites. The landowners tried to implement "Black Codes" for a compulsory labour system, with restrictions on free movement. However, in reaction to this, there was a further lurch forward of the movement - known as the "radical Reconstruction". Union Leagues (which had a membership of half a

million in the South) had been formed in the War, which involved mainly blacks, but which united blacks and whites. These Leagues had military wings. In many areas blacks took over the land. In South Carolina a radical Convention was organised. The Bourgeois radical Republicans were forced to lean on the blacks to ensure their rule. However, fearing a social revolt they later took back the gains of the Reconstruction period. The key question of the land was never resolved; ie. the expropriation of the Southern aristocracy, and the redistribution of land amongst the ex-slaves. The demand for "Forty acres and a mule" was never acceded to.

Blacks worked as semi-slaves with miserable pay. As Lenin put it, "For the 'emancipated' Negroes the American South is a kind of prison". The Northern bourgeois rested on the Southern landowners, who took back the previously achieved gains from the blacks. In other words, when the interests of the blacks temporarily coincided with those of the Northern industrialists, in the context of a possible military defeat, then concessions were gained. When the conditions changed, the concessions were withdrawn.



The bourgeois feared any unity between the movement of white workers and farmers of the North and West which was taking place at the time, and the black ex-slaves. The Address of the National Labour Congress to the Workingmen of the United States stated that, "capitalists, North and South, would foment discord between the Whites and Blacks, and hurl the one against the other, as interest and occasion might require, to maintain their ascendancy and continue the reign of oppression."

Period of Reaction

After 1870 came a period of reaction with the planters using the weapon of racism. With mass terror against the blacks came the downfall of the Reconstruction governments. In 1876, President Hayes came into office, and agreed to withdraw troops from the three remaining states with the Republicans in power. In April 1877 the planters seized power in these states. The Northern bourgeois following their own class interests betrayed the aspirations of the blacks. Nevertheless, this was not a complete victory for the Southern planters; they were not able to restore slavery. The Southern states were well on the road to capitalist development. The Northern bourgeois had extensive land interests in the South, and the power within the state of the Southern aristocracy was reduced.

Millions of black and white working people had participated in the Civil War and Reconstruction period, and the effect of this could not be forgotten. However, the former slave-owners established a regime of vicious discrimination and segregation, to carry out the super-exploitation of the blacks - which was the economic basis for the well-being of this ruling class. The political and civil rights of blacks were only on paper. In the North the employers used divide and rule.

The US experienced a massive growth in industry (which had been predicted by Engels upon the abolition of slavery). In 1860 the US was the world's fourth industrial power; by 1894 it was the first. Industrial capitalism and the racist planters worked hand in glove in the mass use of racism. The North had massive investments (\$1 billion in 1900) in the Southern states, so they had an economic stake in this. In the South a brutal lynch law was in force; at the end of the 19th Century there were 2000 lynchings over a 13 year period - and this is not including the many beatings, rapes, and arson attacks meted out to blacks. The election system was rigged - with blacks expected to pay a poll tax, and fulfil various educational, residential or other qualifications; segregation and "Jim Crow" were the order of the day.

The conditions of life of the black population have determined their political consciousness; the conditions have been of existence in a murderous, cruel and racist system. This has

forged in the minds of US blacks a racial and class consciousness. There have been two tendencies within the black population - of struggling for unity with sections of the whites to oppose the main urban/rural capitalist enemy, and of struggles of blacks on their own, seeking a way out of their sufferings under the system. When attempts at achieving unity with the poorest whites have failed, then blacks have sought to struggle independently.

First World War

The First World War brought with it the need for workers in the military (and associated) industries. Between 1910 and 1930 over a million blacks moved to the North.

The leaders of the US trade union movement (at the time the American Federation of Labour - AFL) played the role of preventing blacks from joining a united struggle. The right-wing leaders of the AFL took on the outlook of the ruling class, including the ideas of racism.

The position of blacks in the trade unions has changed in different periods, varying with the struggle within the unions between a narrow craft ideology and that of building the unity of the working class as a whole. The Knights of Labour in the 1890's had 600,000 members, of which 10-15% were blacks. The AFL came to the fore at the end of the century as a federation of craft unions. Many AFL unions excluded blacks. In 1902 it had over a million members, of which only 3% were black. The situation was not uniform, however. The International Workers of the World (IWW), operated early this century, and organised blacks and whites, even in the South. The southern Timber Workers maintained black-white unity despite attempts of the employers to split it on racial lines. During WWI, the Chicago Federation of Labour organised 200,000 packing-house workers, of which about 20,000 were black.

Independent unions were formed by blacks after repeated attempts to open up the official unions had failed. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was formed in 1925, and reached a membership of 50,000. The position taken by the Communist International at the time was that it would "*do all it can to force the trade unions to admit black workers wherever admittance is legal, and will insist on a special campaign to achieve this end. If this proves unsuccessful, it will organise blacks into their own unions and then make special use of the united front tactic to force the general unions to admit them.*" (The Black Question, Fourth Congress CI, 1922).

Faced with poverty and discrimination in the cities of the North, and with little assistance from the official movement, blacks looked to organisations such as the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) of Marcus Garvey. The UNIA in 1920 claimed 4 million members. The UNIA called for a movement "*back to Africa*"; in reality it's support came

from blacks looking for a home from home, in the midst of an oppressive system. According to official figures, which would be an underestimate, 219 blacks were lynched between 1914 and 1920. They were burnt, hung, attacked with sulphuric acid and beaten with birches. In Chicago a massive race riot took place in 1919, after the murder of a black worker. Blacks took



Amy Jacques, Garvey's second wife who ran the UNIA whilst he was in jail

up armed resistance to the white inciters of the riot. Official statistics stated there were 380 killed and 520 wounded, after thirteen days of fighting and shooting. Troops and police were brought in to crush black resistance. The mass terror was being used to hold back the demands of the 200,000 black soldiers who had fought in the War, for equal rights.

In 1930 the Nation of Islam (also known as the Black Muslims) was founded, of which Malcolm X was later to be a member. Elijah Mohammed, who was to become its leader, believed that whites were by their nature evil. On the other hand, there was the formation of the NAACP in 1909, by whites and blacks, and the founding of the National Urban League in 1910, whose aim was to help blacks adjust to the harsh life of the North.

In the Czarist Russian empire, the Bolsheviki's attitude to the position of the oppressed nationalities was vital to the success of the socialist revolution. So too, in the US, a sensitive approach of Marxists to the special position of the black population was, and is, essential to the successful victory of socialism.

Bolshevik Attitude

Leon Trotsky (in discussions with his supporters in the 1930's), even raised the possibility of blacks demanding a separate state in the US, under certain conditions (and particularly if fascism gained a foothold in the US). He warned the US Trotskyists against having a dismissive attitude towards the possible taking up of this demand by the black population. Trotsky's prognosis, which did not come to pass, was later misunderstood by the American SWP, in

the 1960's. They took it to mean that Marxists should support black nationalism. In fact the Bolshevik's support for the right of nations to self-determination, was not a support for nationalism; rather it was a demand to oppose the oppressive centralism of the Czarist state, which denied national and linguistic rights.

The Russian Marxists advocated the maximum unity between the workers of all nations, while supporting the right to self-determination, if a nationality had demanded it. Marxism "fully recognises the historical legitimacy of national movements. But to prevent this recognition from becoming an apologia of nationalism, it must be strictly limited to what is progressive in such movements, in order that this recognition may not lead to bourgeois ideology obscuring proletarian consciousness." (Lenin, Critical Remarks on the National Question). What would advance the struggle for socialism, in other words, was the paramount issue.

A "nation" in any case presumes a territory on which to base itself; in 1940 77% of the black population were in the South, and they formed a majority in Mississippi and Alabama, which formed the basis for a potential territory, if it were demanded. In the post-Second World War period, this was no longer the case; there was a migration to the North and West, and from rural areas to the cities. In 1960, Blacks formed an average of 20% of the population of the US's largest cities; it would not have been possible for a number of black "ghettoes" in the inner-cities to link up and form a state. It was necessary not to slavishly repeat Trotsky's words in the 1930's, but to understand the method and approach.

Aristocracy of Labour

Through its emergence as the main world power, US capitalism was able to create an "aristocracy of labour" of skilled workers and the middle class, who had illusions in the system, who could act as a buffer between the ruling class and the worst-off sections of the working class. The deliberate fostering of vicious racist ideas and segregation was a key factor in creating this buffer. The AFL leaders failed to organise blacks and this objectively assisted the ruling class. Only with the formation of the Confederation of Industrial Organisations (CIO) and blue-collar unionism, were blacks able to play their rightful role in the working class organisations.

The movements of the blacks heralded a movement of the working people as a whole. The end of the slump of 1929-33 saw increasing numbers of unskilled industrial workers employed. The CIO was formed by leaders of the unskilled workers, with the failure of the AFL to organise them; this opened the door to black workers.

By 1945 there were 700,000 black trade union members, (from 60,000 in 1930), who involved themselves in the militant struggles of the CIO, and through this began the beating

back of racism in the US labour movement. The most blatant racist practices in the unions were gradual ended in the post-War period, through the increase in the numbers of black workers and under the impact of the civil rights struggles. By 1970, there were 2 million black trade unionists (of a total of 20 million US trade unionists).

The black movement of the 1950's and 60's did not fall from a clear blue sky. It was a product of the experiences in the trade union movement and of black soldiers in the Second World War. By August 1945 there were just over a million blacks in the US armed forces - about 9% of the total number of service person-

nel. Generally, segregated army units were formed for blacks, including regiments and divisions. In line with the US's crude racist ideology, the blood of black troops was separated and could not be used to treat white soldiers. Hundreds of thousands of blacks returned from the front to the same conditions they'd left. They had heard the propaganda of a war "against fascism" and "for democracy" and had faced the bombs and bullets, yet when they came home they experienced the same vile racist system. On average a black worker would be paid half that of a white worker doing the same job, and racial segregation in public places was still allowed in 17 states.

Election Result Masks Future Storms

For the first time since the establishment of the Cypriot republic in 1960, the parties of the capitalist class won the election and formed their own government.

Glafkos Clerides, who gained support from both the right wing parties during the second election round, was elected with a slim majority of 50.3% to 49.7% for George Vassiliou who was supported by the Communist Party of AKEL. Clerides, who during the first round was supported by only one of the right parties (DISI), was able to collect only 36.7% of the votes, which is about the electoral strength of DISI. Vassiliou gained the support of 44% of the voters, which is 11% more than the strength of the CP. The third candidate, who had the support of the Socialist Party and the second right wing party during the first round, got only 18%, 12% less than the sum of the two parties who supported him. Although the right wing parties collaborated during the second round, the Socialist party gave its supporters a free vote, a fact which undoubtedly deprived Vassiliou of victory given the narrow margin of victory and the small number of SP supporters who did not vote for him.

Clerides victory, a result of the collaboration of the right-wing parties signifies the end of a long period of 20 years during which all governments were elected mainly due to the support of the Communist Party AKEL, which of course would always have been engaged in this or that popular front policy. The fact that the newly elected President, Clerides, and his party are directly linked to the military coup of 1974, which took place just before the Turkish invasion, gives a special historical meaning to the elections. It is a kind of forgiveness for the criminal past record of the right wing.

The central issue of the pre-election campaign was the national issue of Cyprus. In reality though, the candidates' position on the national question played some role, but it was not nearly so important in the voters' consciousness as class factors - on the one side the main party of the ruling class, on the other, the capitalist politician Vassiliou, who despite this had the support of the CP. The very small percentage victory of Clerides does not show on its own a movement of the masses to the right, in the same way that a victory for Vassiliou wouldn't mean a leftward movement of the masses, despite the fact it would represent a serious defeat for the right-wing parties.

The election results are a momentary reflection of today's objective conditions combined with the historical traditions of the Cypriot working class movement. The state of the economy during the last 10-15 years (5-6% growth per year) together with the general social conditions (absence of major strikes) were very favourable for a right wing government. The hatred of large sections of the working class for the right wing's record in the recent past was an obstacle for the formation of such a government, even though the electoral support at the last parliamentary election for the two parties was around 60%.

In that sense, the right victory was not unexpected, but had been delayed for specific historical reasons - their role in the coup. The coming period is not expected to be too difficult for the new government given the relatively good shape of the economy, despite a large public deficit and internal wrangles within the new government which creates room for toleration from the masses. What is certain though is that with the first serious problems in the economy the government will be forced to show its real face, attacking the movement. The threat the unions pose to the employers and capitalists will become more intense, since the new government is their own one (without the restrictions all the other governments had because they were based on the CP) Of course an important role in the future scenario will be played by the left leaders, and the powerful labour movement and their stand against the attacks of the right. The CP, which is the main party of the working class in Cyprus, has a basically social democratic programme. They will be unable to provide enthusiasm and aims to the workers when social conditions change. This will be when the labour movement in Cyprus will draw new conclusions concerning its leadership and feel the necessity to move towards a socialist programme.

From the Cypriot Marxist paper, Sosialis Ekfrasi.



It was against the conditions of social deprivation that the unions' began emerging as a force

“The interests of masters and men are as much opposed to each other as light is to darkness. The object of the one is to get as much labour for as little money as possible, and the other just the contrary: hence arises that unanimous feeling on each side to oppose the other.”

Trades Newspaper, 13th November 1825.

The explosive growth of trade union organisation following the repeal of the Combination Acts opened a “revolutionary period” for the infant labour movement. The strike wave of the late 1820’s became a desperate defensive battle against wage-cuts which were being imposed across the board. The economic recession pushed the employers onto the offensive, provoking a determined backlash from the workers. The carpet makers of Kidderminster struck for six months against a 17% wage reduction, but went down to defeat. In Lancashire, miners and textile workers brought their industries to a standstill. The Bradford Woolcomers and Weavers faced cuts in pay after a prolonged strike.

Brutal Conditions

Under brutal conditions many strikes were of a violent character. The government, backing up the masters, became increasingly repressive. In 1831-32, the cavalry was used to break strikes of the Durham miners union, led by the legendary Tommy Hepburn. Government troops were used to assist the Welsh Ironmasters in 1831 against the Union Club led by ‘Dick Penderyn’ - who was later hanged for his involvement in an insurrection. The Union Club was forced underground and took the form of a terrorist organisation, known as the ‘Scotch Cattle’, and used the bull’s head and horns as a symbol to hunt down and deal with “traitors, turn-coats and others” throughout the valleys of South Wales. Similar bodies sprung up elsewhere, such as the secret Glasgow cotton-spinners union who organised the killing of scabs (“knobsticks”).

“Hatred.... of the general oppression by the dominant classes blazes out in the trade union records of the time”, note the Webbs in their *History of Trade Unionism*. It was the hatred bred in a working class becoming conscious of its position in capitalist society, which was forced to organise and to fight against the ruthless exploitation of the masters. According to a unionist at the time: *“The great advantage of a strike is that it increases the enmity between labourer and capitalists, and compels workingmen to reflect and investigate the causes of their suffering.”* (*Poor Man’s Guardian*, 30 August 1834).

Strikes, wrote Frederick Engels, *“are the military school of the workingmen, in which they prepare themselves for the great struggle which cannot be avoided... As schools of war, the unions are*

In the Cause of Labour: The Great Leap Forward

In the second part of his series on the history of the British trade unions, Rob Sewell charts the development of trade unionism from the battles of the 1820s, to the rise of Robert Owen and the struggle for the People's Charter.

unexcelled. In them is developed the peculiar courage of the English." The main lesson from this 'school of war' was the need to organise whole industries and trades. The working class required maximum unity to face the united front of the employers; from trade unions, workers moved towards trades unions.

Bitter Strikes

This great leap forward in organisation occurred in late 1820s, when after long and bitter strikes in Manchester the Grand General Union of Operative Spinners of Great Britain and Ireland was formed under the leadership of John Doherty. Doherty, a young Irishman, went even further in 1830 with the establishment of the National Association for the Protection of Labour (NAPL). It enrolled 150 local unions in Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Leicester, and established a weekly journal to cover the trades. Very rapidly it reached an affiliated membership of over 100,000 with its influence spreading to the West Midlands and Wales.

However, with the defeat and break-up of the Spinner's Union in March 1831 which provided the backbone of the NAPL, the Association was seriously weakened and disappeared the following year.

Independently of the NAPL, a new 'General Union' grew up in the building trade, arising from the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners. This 40,000 Operative Builders Union was governed by a 'Builders Parliament' and was deeply influenced by the co-operative ideas of the great utopian socialist Robert Owen. It fought a whole series of strikes "to advance and equalise the price of labour", particularly in London and Lancashire. It met the ferocious resistance of the industrialists who reacted with lock-outs and the notorious "document", requiring men to renounce the union as a condition of employment.

The ideas of Robert Owen established a colossal influence in the trade union movement. A self-made man and manufacturer, Owen came to despise the degradation and exploitation of the Industrial Revolution. Influenced by the French philosophers, he believed that the individual's character was not fixed but determined largely by the environment. For Owen, good working and living conditions, together with decent education could eliminate the ills of capitalist society. He experimented with this revolutionary outlook in his factory in New Lanark, and later in other 'Villages of Co-operation'. He transformed the lives of the workers he employed and advocated that his methods be accepted in society generally. He, however, appealed not to the working class but to the rich and powerful, who for a time even toyed with these ideas. Owen was a utopian socialist as he believed a socialist reorganisation of society was not rooted in the struggle of classes but in moral argument and persuasion.

“ The Grand National Consolidated Trades Union's stated aim was not simply the fight for day to day demands but the transformation of society. ”

But as upper class interest waned in his ideas, Owen became more radical in his attacks on capitalism. While this alienated the liberal-bourgeois philanthropists, it attracted huge support from the radicalised working class. Owenism became a major trend in the labour movement of the time which was experiencing a flowering of socialist ideas. In 1830 Hetherington and Bronterre O'Brien launched *The Poor Man's Guardian* which put forward basic socialist ideas in a simple and vivid form for the first time. In 1825 books and pamphlets appeared, such as John Gray's *Lecture on Human Happiness* and Thomas Hodgskin's *Labour Defended*. A little later came William Thompson's *Labour Rewarded* (1827) and then J.F. Bray's *Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy* (1838-9).

Owen's Return

After Owens' return from America (and the failure of his New Harmony community) he turned his attention to the working class movement. In the Autumn of 1833 he intervened into two major union congresses in Manchester and London. By October, under his influence a new union was established, the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. This was an historic step forward in the development of unionism. It overshadowed all other formations up until that time in size and influence. Its stated aim was not simply the fight for day to day demands but the transformation of society. "The great and ultimate object of it (the union) must be to establish the paramount rights of Industry and Humanity, by... bringing about A DIFFERENT ORDER OF THINGS, in which the really useful and intelligent part of society only shall have the direction of its affairs." (Rule XLV1)

The 'Grand National' experienced an explo-

sive growth reaching 1/2 million members across the trades. Unorganised layers were quickly drawn in, including women workers, who were organised specifically into "Lodges of Industrious Females". In Hull two organisers recruited 1000 members in one evening. In the countryside agricultural workers joined the Union en masse - their first movement since the defeat of the 'Last Labourer' Revolt' of 1831. The potential power of the trade unions was expressed as follows: "Every trade has its internal government in every town; a certain number of towns comprise a district and delegates from the trades in each town form a quarterly district government; delegates from the districts form the Annual Parliament; and the King of England becomes President of the Trades Union!" (*True Sun*, 30th December 1833).

From its inception the GNCTU was thrown into a series of strikes over wages and recognition. Heated strikes took place amongst the hosiers of Leicester, cabinet-makers in Glasgow and tailors in London. In Derby the refusal to leave the union led to a lock-out involving 1,500 men, women and children. Cotton spinners led an uprising in Oldham over demands for the eight-hour day.

These developments led to widespread panic in the ruling class. They met the union with repression. In the Dorset village of Tolpuddle, two brothers George and James Loveless had contacted the Grand National to help establish an agricultural workers' union. Six labourers were arrested on the charge of taking an illegal oath to the union. They appeared before the Assizes and were sentenced to seven years transportation to Botany Bay. This action signalled a general employer's offensive throughout the country. The "Document" was used to smash trade union organisation and institute a series of lock-outs. By the summer, union funds were exhausted and numerous strikes went down to defeat.

The Union instigated a mass campaign to free



Frederick Engels

the Dorchester labourers that culminated in a London demonstration of between 100-200,00. Within two years their sentences were quashed. However, by the end of 1834, with a ferocious employer's offensive, the weak federal structure of the organisation and divisions in the leadership, the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union broke apart.

Throughout the Thirties conditions in the working class were abominable. With the shattering of the unions, the handloom weavers, alongside the agricultural labourers, were especially forced onto starvation wages. The first effective Factory legislation was passed only in 1833; it referred only to children, preventing them from working more than 12 hours a day. Nevertheless, women and children as young as six were employed in the coal mines, hauling trucks and even at the coal face. *"Chained, belted, harnessed like dogs in a go-cart, black, saturated with wet, and more than half naked...incredibly disgusting and unnatural."* (Employment Commission, 1842) Thousands were forced to work under inhumane conditions in the mills. The handloom weavers lived a wretched life attempting hopelessly to keep up with the speed of the power looms. Thousands died from starvation and exhaustion.

Poor Laws

The suffering of the working class increased with the introduction of the new Poor Law in 1834. The main principle of the system was that relief should be made more unpleasant than the most unpleasant means of earning a living outside. Out-door relief was stopped as far as possible and men and women forced to enter the workhouses (which separated them to prevent them breeding). At Andover, to supplement their starvation diet, the workhouse inmates fought over the green horse-bones sent there for crushing.

Nevertheless, with the collapse of revolutionary trade unionism, the working class turned towards the political front. Trade unionists who were blooded in struggle entered the revolutionary political movement of Chartism (1837-48). Although Chartism falls outside the history of trade unionism, it represented a colossal leap in the consciousness of the British working class. For the first time the British workers entered the stage of history as an independent political force. The struggle for the Charter involved all forms of struggle: mass petitions, mass demonstrations, general strikes, and armed uprising. The shock-troops of Chartism were the militant textile factory workers and miners.

The working class had been betrayed by the middle class radicals in the 1832 Reform Act, which failed to give them the vote. The six points of the Charter - (1) universal manhood suffrage (2) annual Parliaments (3) vote by secret ballot (4) payment for MPs (5) abolition

of property qualification for MPs (6) equal electoral districts - were not seen as an end in themselves, but a means to an end. It was, in the words of the Rev. J.R. Stephens, *"a knife and fork question."* The Chartists believed that the six points would give the working class economic equality. But how would they be achieved?

Chartist Agitation

With the break-up of the national unions a whole layer of activists moved towards Chartist agitation. Men like Thomas Hepburn, the miner's leader, took their talents into the movement. By 1840 with the formation of the political party, the National Charter Association, the Chartist movement became overwhelmingly proletarian in composition. Unity was reached on the compromise formula, *"peacefully if we may, forcibly if we must."* The rejection of the first petitions by Parliament in 1839 posed the question bluntly of how the Chartists could secure their demands. The question of a general strike was discussed at the Chartist Convention and a date set for 12 August 1839. An appeal was made to the trade unions to *"co-operate as united bodies with their more distressed brethren in making a grand moral demonstration on the 12th."* However, the lack of preparation and divisions in the leadership led to a debacle and the arrest of 130 Chartist leaders.

The government clamped down. But agitation quickly spread for the organisation of a general insurrection. Arms were acquired and secret conferences held to prepare for a rebellion. In November the uprising began in South Wales, but the rest of the country failed to respond. The bloody encounter in Newport saw the arrest of all the South Wales leadership who were later sentenced to death (later commuted to transportation for life).

Despite these setbacks, the agitation for the Charter was intensified. By 1842, a new Convention met and launched a petition that gained over three million signatures. Its rejection again by Parliament sparked off a new movement which spilled over onto the industrial front. The specific economic demands of the second petition served to bring the trade unions closer to the cause of the Charter. A storm of unrest broke out in the summer of 1842, particularly in the north of England and Scotland, with Lancashire at the centre of the movement. Mass demonstrations of the unemployed were organised in Glasgow. The iron and coal miners of Lancashire, the Potteries and Staffordshire went on strike. They were followed by the Lancashire and Yorkshire textile workers. The movement snowballed into a general strike where the economic demands were combined with those for the Charter.

For over 50 miles around Manchester everything came to a complete standstill. On August 7 a huge workers' Assembly decided not to resume work until, *"the People's Charter becomes the law of the land."* A delegate meeting of Manchester trades put out the call: *"we most solemnly pledge ourselves to persevere in our exertions until we achieve the complete emancipation of our brethren of the working classes from the thralldom of monopoly and class legislation by the legal establishment of the People's Charter. The trades of Great Britain carried the Reform Bill. The trades of Great Britain shall carry the Charter."*

A broader conference of delegates from Manchester, Lancashire and Yorkshire issued the call for a general strike for the Charter throughout the rest of the country. In effect, the leadership of the struggle for the Charter had fallen to the trade unions. The Chartist leadership were taken by surprise and issued the following resolution: *"Whilst the Chartist body did*



Early workers strike meeting

not originate the present cessation from labour, the conference of delegates from various parts of England express their deep sympathy with their constituents, the working men now on strike, and that we strongly approve of the extension and continuance of the present struggle till the People's Charter becomes a legislative enactment..."

A further call was issued to develop the general strike into a "general uprising" but without clear and effective leadership the strike was doomed to defeat. With depleted resources, the strikers drifted gradually back to work. The government stepped in and suppressed the movement - arresting practically all the Chartist leaders. 1500 arrests took place and 54 were sentenced to transportation.

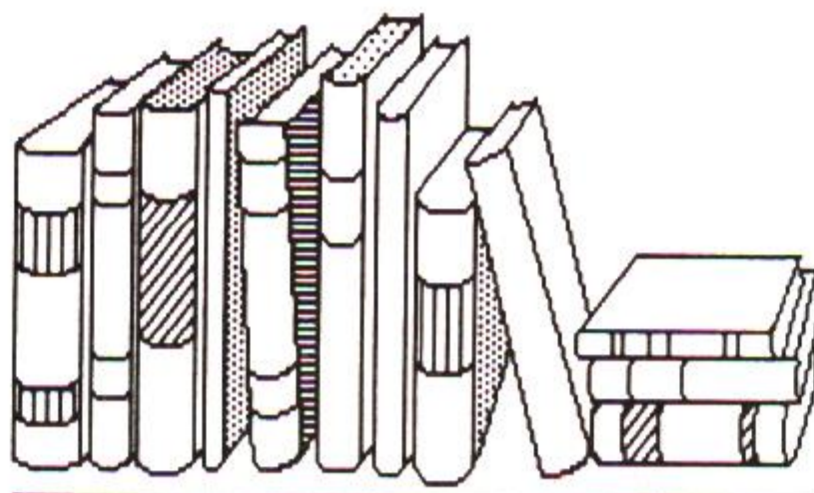
"The agitation of Chartism," commented the *Newcastle Journal*, "brought to the surface of society a great deal of scum that usually putrefies in obscurity below." The defeat of the general strike dealt the Chartist movement a heavy blow. Many activists turned towards trade unionism again. On November 7, 1842, the Miners Association of Great Britain and Ireland was founded, the prototype of modern trade unionism, with an estimated 100,000 members. Chartist leaders - O'Connor and Duncombe - played a prominent role in its founding.

"Chartism provided, through its own activities, a training-ground where most of those who were later to become miners' leaders gained their first knowledge and experience. As a result, it became difficult to find any prominent union member who did not have, at some time or other, Chartist connections." (Challinor and Ripley, *Trade Unions in the Age of the Chartists*.)

New union organisations sprang up in the 1840s - the Potters' Union (1843), the Cotton Spinners Association in the same year, the National Typographical Association (1845). In that year a new general organisation was founded - the National Association of United Trades - which became a focal point for the smaller and less well organised trades. However, in contrast to the Grand National's revolutionary aims, the newly formed Association moved towards class collaboration. The direction of the union movement was now "not to alter the system, but rather to perpetuate it by rendering it more tolerable." Engels, recognising the change stated, "rather than continue the glorious traditions of the Chartists, the 'labour leaders' preferred to deal with their aristocratic friends and be 'respectable'."

The development of industry was bringing about a division in outlook between the skilled and unskilled workers. Whereas Chartism represented a movement of the whole class, the developments after 1850 expressed rather the movement and struggle of sections - the skilled workers.

Next month - the rise of the "New Model" Unions and the aristocracy of labour.



Bookshelf

This month sees the launch of two new books in the For Beginners series - *Pan-Africanism For Beginners* and *African History For Beginners*. For those who haven't come across any of the other titles in the series, which include Mao, Marx, Trotsky, Philosophy, French Revolution and many others, the books, using a combination of cartoon drawings and clear, well-written texts give a brief (although not too simplistic) introduction to their subject. They are highly readable and a useful starting point on any subject.

Pan-Africanism

by Sid Lemelle

In the first pages of his excellent book Sid Lemelle identifies the problem with tackling a subject such as Pan-Africanism - What is it? As the book goes on to show, using a historical chronology of historical struggle and "pan-African" thought the movement is riddled with contradictions from those who believe in ideas of the African personality or African nationalism to those who embrace Negritude, black power or socialism.

But the book's real value lies in its exploration of the historical struggles against colonialism and racism and the material conditions from slavery to imperialism which gave rise to a wide variety of movements and ideas.

Lemelle deals with the ideas of W.E. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and other prominent figures in a clear way as well as covering the failed movement for African Unity and the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa.

For those looking to read more around this subject this book can provide much help as a key reference to the dates, people, places and ideas.

Published by Writers and Readers Publishing - Priced £5.99

African History

by Herb Boyd

An ideal compliment to other titles in the series this book by Herb Boyd covers 42,000 years of African history in just 126 pages - no mean feat. Boyd deals with African History (up to 1695) through the cultural beliefs and activities of the African peoples - their art, literature and music. The book provides a fascinating insight into the region's cultural richness and diversity. But whilst the book is without doubt interesting it does little to really pinpoint the influences and pressures, the material reasons, which gave rise to the varying elements of culture.

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SOCIALIST

APPEAL

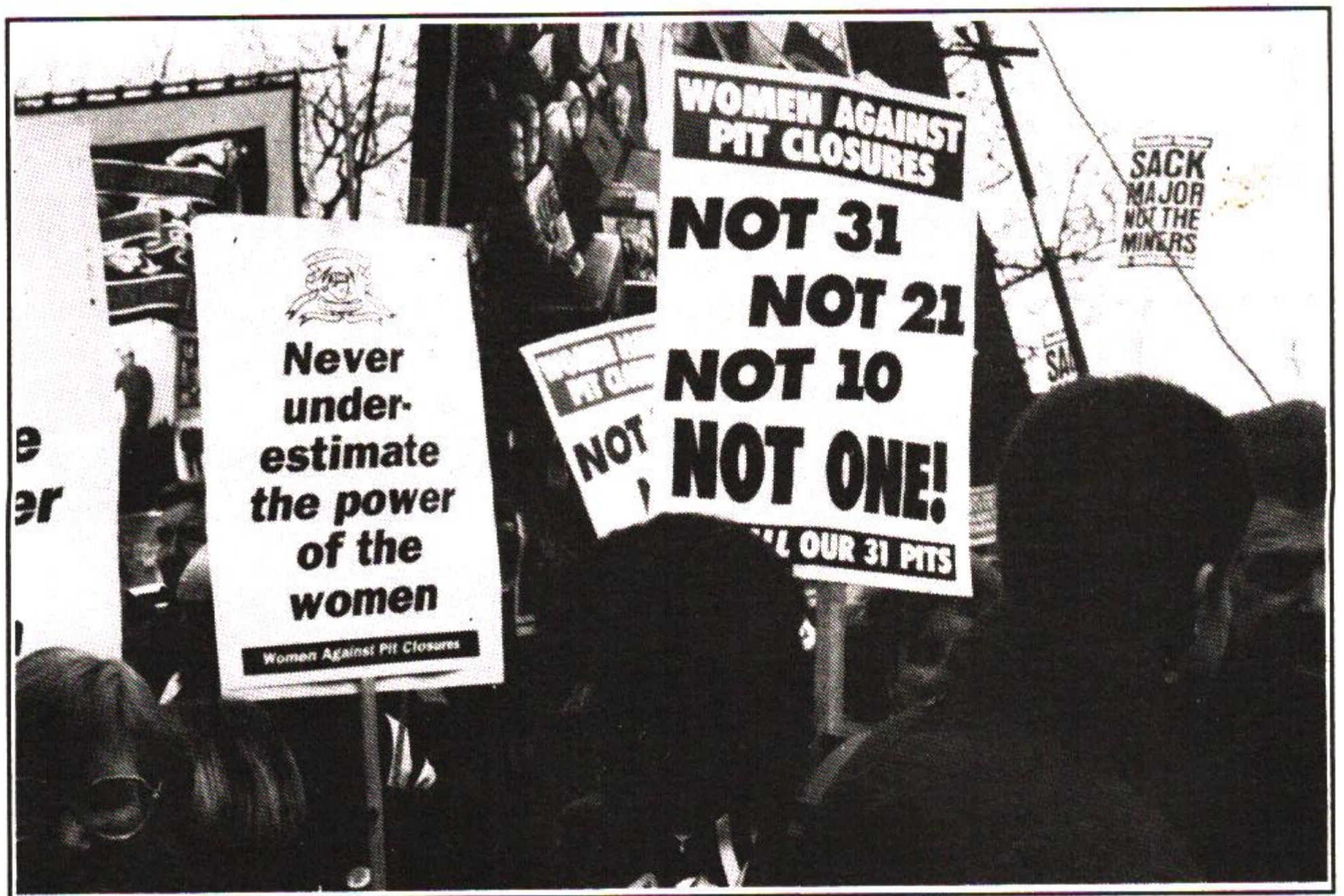
The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Fight Jobs Massacre!

The Tory government is playing cat and mouse with the fate of tens of thousands of jobs in mining, rail and other industries. The "retreat" last October over the closure of the 31 pits has proved to be a complete sham. The "Review" was undertaken to defuse the mass protests that had swept the country. The Tories must not be allowed to get away with this manoeuvre.

The Tories are also behind the proposal of British Rail to sack another 20,000 rail workers in preparation for privatisation. The governments cuts will force 100,000 job losses in local government over the next few years.

With unemployment over 4 million, the TUC must step up the fight for jobs. The demonstration last October of 300,000 showed the potential for struggle. They should follow the lead of the mining and rail unions, putting forward a series of one-day strikes to defend jobs. This action will serve to unite these sections and raise workers' confidence. This is the only language the Tories understand. **As Arthur Scargill has said, the time for merely demonstrating is over, it is now time for action.** Strike action of this new "alliance" must be broadened by the TUC. All the past pleading with the Tory government has come to nothing. The new wave of job losses at ICI and British Gas on top of those at Leyland Daf and others is a warning of what is to come unless the labour movement acts. The bosses have thrown down the gauntlet - wage cuts, speed ups and redundancies are being used to push up profit levels. All the burdens are put on the shoulders of working



people. In Leyland Daf the workers were lined up like lambs to the slaughter. As sacked worker Michael Smyth said, "I've got my shoes, my brew and my tea cup here. That's all after 22 years."

Last month the Burton Group axed 1000 jobs replacing them with part timers. BHS chopped 3000 staff and brought in part-time labour.

The Tories must be driven from office. The TUC must organise a 24-hour general strike as the opening shot of such a campaign. The only lasting solution is a labour government committed to socialist policies that will put an end to this profit system once and for all.

"If Unemployment is the price that has to be paid for getting down inflation then it is a price worth paying."

- Norman Lamont

For a One-Day General Strike - Kick Out the Tories