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SocialistAppeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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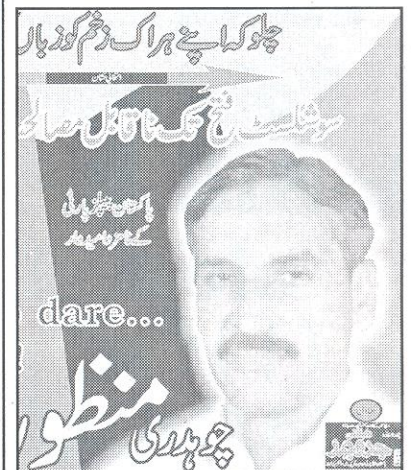
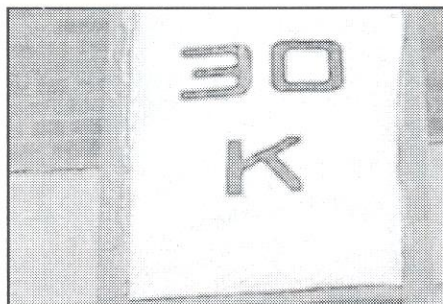
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Victory for the Firefighters!
PAY THEM 30K NOW!



The deadline for articles for issue 107 is November 20th

Firefighters' dispute: The Rebirth of Class struggle

Industrial-militancy is on the increase. It reflects a general mood in the workplace that enough is enough. The Blair government is not only confronting the first national firefighters' strike in 25 years, but is facing action on a number of fronts. This has raised the spectre of another Winter of Discontent similar to the one faced by the Callaghan government in 1978/79.

To begin with, the government took a belligerent approach to the firefighters. Blair scandalously attacked the "Scargillite" FBU as under the control of "politically-motivated" leaders, which was reminiscent of Wilson's attack on the seamen's strike in 1966, led ironically by John poacher-turned-gamekeeper Prescott. There have even been noises about undermining basic democratic rights by banning strikes in essential services.

The government then called upon its crisis committee, Cobra, to deal with the planned walkouts by the firefighters. Shamefully, this LABOUR government even considered using the army to cross picket lines and seize fire-fighting equipment from fire stations. Despite the sop of an "independent" enquiry, Brown announced that there was no money for "inflationary pay settlements" or "quick fixes". "He [Blair] is now preparing for a hard, rocky, even alarming winter", wrote rightwinger John Lloyd in the *Evening Standard*.

But the government has taken fright. They fear the firefighters' action will escalate, resulting in the closure of tube and mainline stations and other workers staging walkouts over safety cover. Already London Underground has announced the shutting of 19 stations on safety grounds. But LU management hopes to run the rest of the network despite the dangers. Rail union leaders are correctly arguing that thousands of staff stop or not report for work if safety is put at risk.

This issue itself is a powder keg as rail bosses threaten to dock pay from absent workers. These tin pot employers - who will be well away from any danger - have even threatened disciplinary action against workers if they fail to turn up to work. This could bring rail unions into direct confrontation with their bosses.

Other sectors could be involved such as nuclear power plants, factories and refineries

and even petrol deliveries. This could lead to shortages and even power cuts. Other unions, including Unison, the TGWU, GMB and Amicus - representing 4.5 million workers - could advise members not to work.

With the government relying upon the old Green Goddesses manned by inexperienced soldiers and with no cutting equipment or breathing apparatus, it is a disaster waiting to happen. Shaken by the stand of the firefighters and the danger of the dispute spreading, the government has stepped in to open negotiations with the FBU. However, bringing forward the Bain Commission and talk of a 16% rise over three years with strings, is an insult. It is little different from the original offer of 4% that was overwhelmingly rejected and led to strike action in the first place.

The full claim - a wage of £30,000 to risk their lives - is a just claim. While firefighters understandably do not wish to take strike action, they have been completely ignored. It was only the threat of militant action that has made the government sit up and listen.

It is therefore the duty of all trade unionists to rally around the firefighters. The TUC has correctly come out in support of the FBU. Their dispute represents a beacon to all those low paid public service workers ready to fight for better wages and conditions. A victory for the firefighter, will be a victory for all those fighting to abolish poverty pay. That is why there exists a high level of public support for these frontline workers.

This firefighters' dispute - whatever the eventual outcome - represents the opening shot in a new stormy period facing Britain.

It represents a fundamental turning point. *Socialist Appeal* has repeatedly explained that we have entered the most turbulent period internationally since the second world war. A series of general strikes have rocked Europe, from Greece, Spain and Italy. France has been shaken by mass demonstrations against privatisation. Now Britain has become affected by this changing mood, reflected by the shift to the left in the trade unions.

The working class has suffered 18 years under the Tories. The Blair government has attempted to continue where they left off in creating the "most deregulated economy in the western world". But enough is enough. Workers have reached their limits in stressed-out Britain, where they have faced attack after attack on their conditions and rights at work. After years of defeats and setbacks, confidence is beginning to return.

The ruling class is alarmed at the situation that is opening up in front of them. Unless a deal with the FBU can be hammered out soon, they fear an all-out confrontation that will spill over to wide layers of workers. This could even reach semi-general strike proportions. Despite their kept press weeping crocodile tears over "our brave firefighters", they are quite prepared to wage a scurulous campaign of slander against the striker when it suits them. But for now the government, fearing an escalation of the dispute, have entered negotiations.

However, the Blair government is caught on the horns of a dilemma. Unless they are prepared to offer a substantial amount, they will not be able to resolve the dispute. But to do so will give inspiration to millions of low-paid workers. Behind the scenes, they are attempting to offer all kinds of partial concessions with strings, but firefighters are determined to stick out for the full claim. Before any agreement is finalised, the rank and file must be fully consulted through a recalled conference and ballot.

This dispute clearly shows that we need to take the struggle into the Labour Party to cleanse it of Tory infiltrators. *Socialist Appeal* gives its unequivocal support to the firefighters in their struggle for the full claim. Their victory is our victory. In the words of the great Irish trade union leader James Larkin, "The great only appear great because we are on our knees. Let us arise!" □





Historic strike in Further Education Colleges

Mike Hogan Branch Secretary Liverpool Community College UNISON

On the 5th November workers in further education colleges are set to become the latest group in the public sector to take strike action on pay. College support staff in UNISON, TGWU and GMB have voted to strike against the paltry 2.3% offer of the Association of Colleges, in UNISON the vote was 65% in favour.

These support staff will join lecturers who are members of NATFHE who have already taken two days of strike action in May angry at the growing gap between their pay and conditions and that of school teachers in particular the gap between starting salaries, £1,800 in Liverpool, and the fact that it takes 12 increments to get to the top of the scale compared to 6 for schools. So for the first time since colleges were taken out of local government control in 1993 there will be a joint national strike of teaching and support staff. It was precisely this prospect of unity across the sector that encouraged many to vote yes.

Further education has seen a general decline in pay ever since 1993. Although national negotiations take place individual colleges decide whether or not to implement the pay rise. In Liverpool Community College this led to two national rises being lost our branch took action against this. We now have a plan to make good these rises but only over 5 years, from 2000. However the 2.3% offer will put us further behind council workers who received 4%. For a college worker on Scale 3 receiving £13,455 the difference is £585, in 1996 we received the same.

Low pay is endemic in FE colleges nationally 60% earn less than £13,000 and 20% earn less than £10,000. The national offer does give a £400 rise to those on the very lowest pay however this does not meet the unions' demand of a minimum starting salary of £11,000.

The pay offer is the lowest in the public sector and serves to underline the neglect suffered by Further Education despite its vital role in training and enhancing the life of working people. The six staff unions have calculated that it would take at least £500 million to put further education pay on an equal footing with schools, re-vamp outdated pay scales and end the casual employment of thousands of part-time staff.

The good old days?

One of the curses of Victorian England (and after) was tuberculosis - a killer disease which afflicted thousands, usually from the poorest sections of society.

Well now thanks to 'poverty and overcrowding' it's back in parts of the East End of London once again.

According to medical report from King's College London, the disease has now hit a 10 year high with over 3000 cases being reported last year in London alone. The report proposes that sanatoriums should be set up where those infected should be 'compulsorily' placed until cured or otherwise. Given that over 400 died from tuberculosis in England last year this doesn't bode well for the future. Evidently according to authorities we are not to panic!



Low Pay, No Way!

Well now it is official. The chairman of the Low Pay Commission - one Adair Turner - has confirmed that the level of the minimum wage (£4.20 per hour) is far too low. Mr Turner has become 'aware that people on the minimum wage are in danger of drifting into 'the margins of society.' Unfortunately for a government determined to defend the current disgracefully low level, Mr Turner is not a left winger but a former Director General of the bosses organisation, the CBI, who originally opposed the minimum wage as being a threat to profits. So if he is being forced to own up to the damaging effects of low pay and poverty then things must be bad indeed. Trade unions such as Unison have responded by demanding an increase in the minimum wage to at least £6 per hour without delay.

Dickensian school dinners

The Tories under Thatcher and Major often argued for a return to so-called "Victorian Values." They were certainly keen in shunting the working class back a hundred years or so into a world of poverty, street begging, workhouses and so on. Sadly it looks like under New Labour the Great Push Backwards is still being attempted.

by Steve Jones

A report produced by the Health Education Board for Scotland shows that school dinners north of the border are becoming less and less nutritious and are leaving thousands of kids hungry due to the ever decreasing portions being doled out to them each day.

The reason for this grand strategy of creating an army of modern day Oliver Twists all waiting to say "Please Sir, can I have some more?" is very clear. Catering in schools has largely

been taken over by private firms who have promised to cut costs in order to win contracts. This they have achieved by the usual magical methods beloved of big business - cutting wages and cutting corners. Important essentials such as potatoes and vegetables have been reduced in order to save money. There is little local authorities can do about it - they legally cannot have a say on the quality and size of meals only the 'delivery of the contract.'

The consequences have

been grim. The report states: 'some pupils are sitting in lessons with sore stomachs because they have not had enough to eat.' The lucky ones are able to supplement their diet (although often with junk food) but many cannot. The report reminds us that for the poorest and most vulnerable kids, the school dinner may be their only proper meal of the day - now the fat cat contractors are downsizing even that. A new report from the Greater Glasgow Health Board indicates

that in Glasgow 1600 deaths a year are directly linked to poverty. Levels of poverty in Scotland are rising not falling - over 30% of Scottish kids now live in low-income households. Thousands are now enduring Dickensian conditions of life - must they now, thanks to privatisation, endure Dickensian meals as well? □



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By Rob Sewell

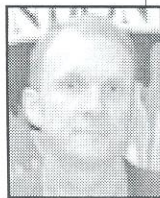
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Mick Shaw FBU: "There is no alternative"

EC member London Region

Socialist Appeal: How have wages and conditions, and the actual job you do changed since the victory of the last national dispute in 1977?

Mick Shaw: The job has changed enormously, the range of incidents we deal with are far more complex, the equipment that we carry and use is far more advanced than it used to be. The whole emphasis of the job has now moved to prevention; rather than simply dealing with fires and other emergencies as they happen. So the range of skills required by a firefighter has changed, and has become far more advanced and technical in nature.

SA: How big a part have these changes played in the origin of the current dispute?

MS: These changes have played a large part in the current dispute. The office of national statistics no longer categorises firefighters as manual workers, but as associate professional and technical, and I think our members feel that our pay and conditions has not changed to take account of the different categorisation of our skills.

SA: How do you respond to the accusations of the government and the rightwing press that the FBU is endangering safety by going on strike?

MS: There are two sides to every dispute; we feel that we have been entirely responsible in our actions during this dispute. We registered our claim with the employers on the 28th of May, hoping to have the matter resolved by the begin-

ning of November when our pay rise was due. We have been available during that time for negotiations, and in fact negotiations did take place throughout the months of June and July. But it was when the government appeared to intervene to block the employers offer of 1.6% that these negotiations broke down. So we do not feel that we have been irresponsible or impatient in any way. We have now reached the stage where the government and the employers are hiding behind this so-called 'independent enquiry', and are refusing to engage in negotiations. Our members see no alternative but to take industrial action in order to persuade the employers to return to negotiations.

SA: What methods will the government employ to try to weaken or break the strike and what will be the response of the FBU leadership?

MS: Well they will obviously be using the army to provide a substitute fire service as they did 25 years ago, and we fully expect them to do that. We would far prefer that the energy and expenditure involved be used to try and resolve our dispute. It would be very problematic for them I think were they to attempt to use our fire engines and equipment, firstly they are not trained to do so, secondly they are not insured, thirdly our members would have a point of view about using that equipment, that had been used by the army to break our strike. With regards to possible bans on industrial action in the emergency services, I hope they don't attempt to go down that road, I think there would only be one

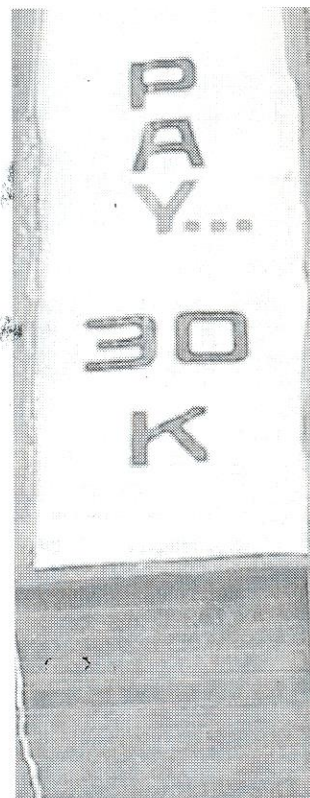
response our members could give to that and that would be to ignore any such ban. Because without the ability to take strike action we have no bargaining power at all, and we would have to accept low pay forever more.

SA: What support have you had from the rest of the trade union movement?

MS: The TUC unanimously passed a motion supporting us which makes a pleasant change from the situation 25 years ago when the TUC refused to support our strike on low pay. At grassroots we have been positively encouraged by the support of trade unionists, from those who wish to make financial contributions to hardship funds, to those trade unionists who are looking seriously at the issue of whether they can continue to work safely in the event of our going on strike. We have got a great deal of moral support from trade unionists, and from the rest of the public as well, public support does appear to be overwhelmingly on our side.

SA: Do you think the government is opposing the pay rise for political or economic reasons?

MS: We believe it is not true to say they cannot afford it, they clearly can. We had a study done for us by a leading firm of accountants that showed that the cost of resolving the dispute was a matter of 40 pence per week per household, we think that that is definitely affordable. The government doesn't seem to think that a 40% increase on ministers salaries last year was unaffordable, and it is clearly the case that our claim is not either. I think they are motivated by the



determination to try and ensure that there is not an explosion from low paid workers in the public sector who would be encouraged were we to be successful in our claim. In my opinion that is their motivation for intervening in the dispute, and for trying to make sure that the employers don't make us a substantial offer.

SA: Given that the unions are being forced more and more into conflict with the Labour government, how do you respond to people who say that the unions should break their links with Labour?

MS: I think it would be a big mistake to walk away from the Labour Party. Firstly there are many individual members and members of parliament in the Labour Party who are very supportive of trade unionists, and cases such as ours. I think that our task should be to remain in the party to retain a political voice, and to ensure that trade unions have a proper independent political strategy putting forward policies that support working people. □

For the full 30 K now!

As we go to press, the FBU leadership has entered negotiations with the government, and the first wave of strike action has been called off. The government has taken a step back. This is a critical point in the dispute; it is imperative that the union holds its ground, and steps up the pressure to have the demands met in full.

by Kris Lawrie

At a recent meeting called by the London Public Sector Alliance in support of the firefighters, Andy Gilchrist, the General Secretary of the FBU spoke about the firefighters' dispute.

He pointed out that from the beginning the union has been willing to enter negotiations, but that these had broken down when the government blocked the employers' offer of 16% increase and no new offer was on the table. "We are going on strike", he told the meeting, "and the government have got seven days to make us a serious offer."

Just days before the first strike was due to take place, the government invited FBU leaders into negotiations. They obviously realised that if they continued to provoke the firefighters, they were going to cause an explosion. As a result, the FBU leadership called off the first wave of strikes pending these negotiations. However, firefighters are determined to achieve a just victory.

The wages and conditions of firefighters have declined since the historic victory of 1977. Since then the workload has increased by at least 80%, and funding and recruitment has not increased to keep pace with this.

The firefighters put their lives on the line every day. The level of work related injury claims from accidents and stress is one of the highest for any profession. A fully qualified firefighter with years of experience earns about £21,000, 11% of which is deducted immediately for the pension. The money is even worse for control room staff who receive only 92% of the

wages of a normal firefighter; and part-time (retained) staff who are paid a scandalous £36.40 a week and a much lower hourly rate than the regular firefighters.

With house prices rocketing - most public sector workers, especially in the South East, cannot afford to live near their job. There are disturbing stories about people sleeping on station floors, or travelling two hours to and from home. Many of these workers are forced to take extra jobs to get by, these are usually menial jobs; like driving mini cabs, painting and decorating, and window cleaning. So the firefighters certainly need the money, and their work justifies at least £30,000.

The press have been trying to whip up hysteria among the public with a campaign of lies. This has not been very successful, but they are clearly trying to build up for a showdown between the firefighters and the government, and it is obvious whom they would side with. They have said: FBU activists have been intimidating 'honest' members into strike action; the union

is undemocratic; the union is putting life at risk for its own political agenda; the firefighters are greedy! To this we reply that 90% of FBU members voted in secret ballot for action, not because of intimidation by colleagues, but because of the intimidation and disdain shown towards them by the government. The FBU has no political agenda other than to further the interests of its members, who are quite the opposite of greedy, but rather not greedy enough!

The employers and the government on the other hand are jeopardising public safety to keep public sector wages low, they have a political agenda in protecting the profits of business, they are terrified that a victory for the FBU will encourage all public sector workers to demand decent wages and back the demands up with strike action if necessary.

The government is now taking cover behind the 'independent' Bain Commission, which is far from independent. The FBU has no input into the Commission. They might offer an increase, under the aegis of

the hurriedly completed 'independent review', but they will certainly try to tie it to changes in working practises, which is something the firefighters will not accept. In any case, there is already a joint negotiating committee to decide on working practises, why should these decisions be put into the hands of government-appointed 'independent experts' who know nothing about how the industry works?

It is difficult to see how the negotiations will find a 'balance' between the interests of the firefighters and the employers. The FBU are negotiating at the moment from a position of strength. The strikes have been postponed but the government negotiators will be aware they have the threat of action hanging over their heads. The union should play that to their advantage, if the employers are on the run they should push for the full 30K and not accept any strings; above all a deal should only be accepted on the basis of a ballot of the whole membership. At the end of the day if the government will not deliver through negotiation then they will have to listen to action.

The firefighters have enormous public support, and the full support of the trade union movement. They must step up the campaign to win the hearts and minds of all workers. The firefighters are fighting today, but they are leading the struggle for us all. The struggle for better wages and conditions, to rebuild the confidence and the power of organised labour and the trade union movement in Britain. A victory for them is a victory for all workers! □



15,000 march in Glasgow anti-war march!

Following on from the successful anti-war demo in London protesters came from all over Scotland to Glasgow to protest against the coming war in Iraq on Saturday 19 October.

by Tom Rollings

Three marches from different parts of the city converged on George Square where we then walked round the city centre with the usual chants including "Who let the bombs out? Bush, Bush and Blair", "George Bush we know you, daddy was a killer too!" and "No justice, no peace". There was also a short sit down before returning for speeches. A common pattern in speeches was to point out the hypocrisy in attacking Iraq for not fulfilling UN resolutions but not Israel and for having weapons of mass destruction which other states have without being threatened over them.

Although the demonstration was effective in rallying together the opposition to a war against Iraq it did not offer any serious explanation as to why the US intends to do this or how this can be avoided. The main call from the platform was for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and for international law to govern the tyrannical diktats of US foreign policy. This is not a solution though and serves to spread among the anti war movement the "liberal" opposition of such capitalist newspapers as *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. Marxists explain that any law needs an enforcer to make it binding. In

practise therefore law depends not on some impartial, abstract notion of justice but on power and force, for the country (or class) that has power will make laws to suit its interests. It is pointless to appeal to the UN to control the US since this does not challenge the root cause of America's unilateralism - its status as the sole super-power.

In conversations on the march not all of those I spoke to agreed with this argument. The reasoning here goes that we should oppose all wars, including war against US imperialism, since then we lose our moral high ground (even if we gain the world!). It is incapable of distinguishing between reactionary and progressive sides in a conflict,

which is the difference between the ruling class and the working class or between a country oppressed by imperialism and an imperialism power. Youth and students who I spoke to who initially repeated the pacifist slogans of the organisers reconsidered their position and accepted that if there will continue to be imperialist wars for as long as there is capitalism then perhaps it really is necessary to fight a war against imperialism to end all wars.

The foreign policy of the capitalists is a continuation of their home policy of exploiting workers to extract the maximum of profits. For those against such a foreign policy the best way of combating it is to link this opposition to the struggle against their policies in Britain. Such a strategy was not outlined by any of the speakers.

Young people should be at the forefront of the anti-war movement as well as driving

forward the industrial militancy that is becoming more and more heated. For this it is necessary to be conscious of the way that political radicalisation takes place in Britain in which workers do not come to universities asking us for guidance but turn to their own organisations, especially the trade unions but also the Labour party, which was created by the unions to defend their interests. However, there is a danger that these organisations do not figure in the minds of many youth because they were passive in the 1990s and do not seem to represent militant struggle. Therefore it is necessary to avoid isolating the youth movement from the trade union movement, as has generally so far been the case in the anti-globalisation protests, and instead to direct our energies and hunger for change to these organisations, which are now very receptive to our influence. The leaders of the movement have a responsibility to offer youth, as well as workers, direction through a sustained campaign by the unions to counter the counter-attacks on working people, the unemployed, students etc.

There were 15 or so *Socialist Appeal* sellers present and overall over £100 worth of journals, pamphlets and books (including both our copies of *Reason in Revolt*) were sold. An enthusiastic hunger for an explanation for the instability in the world and a vision of a socialist alternative was especially noticeable among youth and students that approached our stall. □



Blairism, Labour and the unions

*"Now is the winter of discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York."*

After the overwhelming rejection of the notorious Private Finance Initiative by last month's Labour Party conference, Blair, Brown and the rest of the Cabinet Ministers cynically declared that the vote

"The radical decision is usually the right one", Blair told delegates, exhorting them to shed their defence of the present welfare state. "The right decision is usually the hardest one. And the hardest decisions are often the least popular at the time."

For many in the rank and file, especially the trade unionists, Blair's defence of "the hardest decision" provoked a growing realisation that only a "regime change" would stop this rogue menace. The Blairite junta controlling the Labour Party, together with its ideology of mass destruction, poses a global threat to the policies and principles on which the labour movement was founded.

The revolt over PFI, as well as the 40% vote against the war with Iraq, certainly constituted a major challenge to the Blair leadership. Even in the largely sanitised Labour conference, the honeymoon with the Leader is well and truly over, particularly in the unions.

"Mr Blair now seems to accept that his pact with the Labour Party is becoming increasingly frayed", stated *The Economist*. "The party no longer believes that he is essential to remaining in power. Whereas a second landslide victory should, in the normal course of events, have reinforced Mr Blair's dominance, it may, paradoxically, have weakened him."

But is not "the normal course of events". There is a fundamental mood change taking place within the labour movement and society as a whole. Blair's

Thatcherite attack on the fire-fighters as "Scargillite" is an indication of the new radicalised situation developing in Britain. Of course, Blair is more determined than ever to defy the rank and file and continue with his Tory agenda at home. Abroad, he is the lapdog of American imperialism. But the government's actions are placing them on a collision course with the ranks of the labour movement and broad sections of the working class.

Next year, the government is determined to push through a new so-called "reform" in the NHS with the introduction of Foundation hospitals. According to Liam Fox, the Tory Health spokesman, "The concept of foundation hospitals goes clearly in a direction with which a future Conservative government would be comfortable. It is a concept we would want to dramatically expand."

The continuation of Tory poli-

made no difference whatsoever. The government, they maintained, would not only continue as before, but promised even more privatisation. "We have to put country before party", was their refrain.

by Rob Sewell

cies by the Blair government has stirred up a groundswell of opposition. In Labour heartlands there is widespread disillusionment with the government. Apathy is combined with growing anger towards Blairism. Despite Labour's second term, little has changed for the mass of ordinary working class people who hoped for change after 18 years of Toryism. Unfortunately, Blair has sought to appease the demands of big business, while spurning those of the trade union and labour movement. In reality, he is an articulate mouthpiece of big business within the Labour Party and has attempted to carry through a "counter-revolution" to turn the party into a version of the American Democrats. The fact that Bill Clinton, an ex-President of the United States and consummate political representative of American capitalism, was invited to address the Labour conference reveals the

real intentions of Blair.

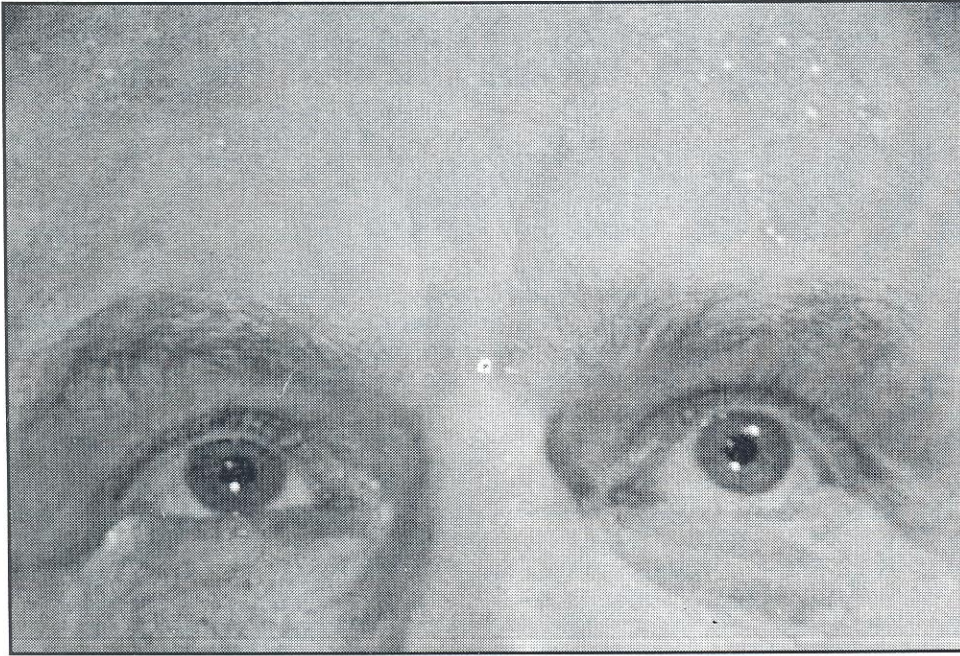
In this, they have sought to reduce the money from the trade unions and replace it with money from big business. However, while the proportion of union money used to finance the Labour Party has fallen, it is still considerable. Since February 2001, the unions represented eight of the party's largest 10 donors and together gave £9.87m. In the latest financial crisis affecting the party, the leadership through Charles Clarke has been forced to go cap in hand to the unions for help.

There is a lot of talk again of the state funding of political parties, which could serve to cut the party from the unions. The most recent plans for state funding were produced by the leading Blairite thinktank, the Institute of Public Policy Research, which proposed to "cap" union money and introduce public subsidies for political parties.

"Funding reform would require a change in the financial relationship between affiliated unions and the Labour Party", says the IPPR. After proposing severing the century-old link, it goes on to state: "It is not our place to stipulate how this should work. Individual trade unionists could be encouraged to join Labour directly, with this facilitated through their trade union." They are totally aware that this already takes place, but want to destroy the affiliation of unions to the Labour Party.

They reveal the real reason for stopping this union finance. "Removing the perception that





money buys influence is important and will benefit Labour and the unions." The unions will not be able to exert undue pressure on the Labour Party - a party they created in the first place!

Correctly, the trade unions swiftly rejected the idea. "Those who want to break the historic link between the unions and the party should come clean and have the courage of their convictions", stated a spokesman for the GMB. AEEU Amicus and UNISON reacted in the same way.

This Blair "project", as it became known, to destroy the Labour Party went quite far, but has now run into the sand. The plan to transform the party into an openly capitalist party has failed. *Socialist Appeal* predicted this well in advance given the deep roots of the Labour Party in the working class. The union link remains and the unions still have a potentially decisive say within the party. They only have used that strength, which will be the next stage.

The failure of the Blair government and the widespread mood of disappointment in the working class have recently served to push the trade unions towards the left. This was reflected in the

election of a string of left union general secretaries from the PCS to the RMT. All the Blairite candidates in these union elections, epitomised by the likes of Sir Ken Jackson of the AEEU Amicus, were defeated. Those who stood on a radical left alternative were successful. This reflects a sea change in the trade unions, which have been under the domination of the right wing for some 20 years or more, and will have dramatic implications for the evolution of the Labour Party in the future.

As can be expected, this dissatisfaction with the Blair government had in some quarters spilled over into a questioning of the trade union-Labour link. Why should the trade unions finance or support the Labour Party when the Blair government is backing big business and attacking trade unionists? At the present time UNISON is reviewing its links with the party. "Is the link value for money?" asked Dave Prentice recently. Similar questions have also been raised in the FBU, CWU and other unions. This has led to the reduction of union donations to the Labour Party, although not to disaffiliation. While such a

view is an inevitable reaction to Blairism, the actual weakening or breaking of the union-Labour link is no solution or way forward. This has now become increasing recognised as such on the trade union left. All those newly-elected left general secretaries, apart from Mark Serwotka from the non-affiliated PCS, have come out strongly in favour of maintaining the trade union links.

"Modernise"

Traditionally, since the days of Gaitskell, it has in fact been the right wing that wanted to sever the links between the Labour Party and the trade unions. It is the Blairites who have sought to "modernise" the party by attempting to break the union link. Blair openly stated that the Labour Party should not have been created in the first place. These bourgeois carpetbaggers are repelled by socialist or working class policies. The trade union "interest", which ultimately tends to reflect the aspirations of the working class, created the Labour Party as its political representative and mouth-piece. This represents an anathema to the Blairites,

who faithfully reflect the outlook and interests of the ruling class instead.

Some small sects on the fringes of the labour movement state that the Labour Party under Blair has become a capitalist party, no different from the Tory Party. They argue that given the constitutional changes in the party and the iron grip of Blairism, it is impossible to change the Labour Party as in the past. For them, the Blairite regime constitutes a qualitative change in the class character of the party. The Blairites have won! Although founded by the trade unions a century ago, the party has been changed into its opposite. It is, for them, a situation that cannot be reversed. All that the working class can do is to simply turn its back on the Labour Party and start afresh by creating a new workers' party. In doing so, the unions should disaffiliate from the Labour Party.

This is a pessimistic and superficial view that simply plays into Blair's hands. It is to give up without a fight. We should simply hand over the Labour Party lock, stock and barrel to the right wing! These pessimists are only able to see the surface of events and not the processes unfolding below. They are utterly blinded by Blairism, which is regarded as others regarded Thatcherism in the past, as invincible. For them, Blairism is totally victorious, and all we can do is accept that the clock has been turned back a 100 years. As *Socialist Appeal* has explained many times, this is a completely false picture, a one-sided view, which throws out the baby with the bathwater.

No one can dispute that Blairism represents an openly capitalist tendency within the Labour Party. Without doubt, the party has been pushed very far to the right. Clause Four has been abolished, trade union represen-

tation reduced, the annual conference downgraded, without control over policy, and party democracy has been undermined. Meanwhile, the Blairites are busy stealing the discredited anti-working class policies from the Tories and show their utter contempt for the working class. This ingrained contempt was summed up by the ex-Stalinist and now Minister for Northern Ireland, John Reid. He stated, "I used to look up at the Imperial Hotel, now I stay at the Imperial Hotel. It's nice to see the working class doing well, isn't it?" This reminds one of the description of the right wing by the old ILP MP, John McGovern, who said they were "in favour of the emancipation of the working class, one by one, beginning with themselves."

While these are essential characteristics of the right wing, activists cannot look at the Labour Party in isolation or view its past with rose coloured spectacles. The Labour Party for the overwhelming bulk of its existence has been in the hands of pro-capitalist right wing elements. The Labour leadership, while paying lip service to "socialism", always supported the capitalist Establishment.

For us, the class character of the Labour Party is determined by its roots in the working class and its origins within the trade union movement. We must recall that socialism was never the aim of the party until 1918 and the adoption of Clause Four. Nevertheless, it was still regarded as a trade union-based workers' party prior to that date. The union base guarantees its roots into the organised working class. That incidentally is the reason why the Blairites want to destroy these links as the first step to destroying the Labour Party as a workers' party.

Those who so lightly write off the Labour Party have failed to understand its history and how the party is always transformed by the movement of the working class. When the workers are not involved, the Labour Party tends to swing to the right and fall directly under the grip of capitalist ideas. When the working class moves into action in revives the unions and the Labour Party in

the process. There is nowhere else it can go. There is no mass alternative to the trade unions or the Labour Party. All such attempts to artificially create such "alternatives" have ended in disaster. Even the ILP, which split from the Labour Party will 100,000 members, ended in failure. Those on the fringes today have not a snowballs hell in chance!

It was not so long ago that many sectarians wrote off the right wing trade unions as "impossible to change". The Electricians' union was a case in point. The EEPTU was a company union that barred Communists from office and possession an authoritarian internal regime. The left group around Flashlight stated the union was "unchangeable" and broke away from the union to form the miniscule EPIU. This was a disaster and was soon swallowed up by the TGWU. When the EEPTU amalgamated with the AEEU, it created a right wing bastion in the TUC. Many held their hands in the air, saying the new union could not be changed. Now, with the stunning victory of Derek Simpson, the whole union is in turmoil and shifting to the left.

If right wing unions can change, with all their bureaucratic rules and regulations, so can the Labour Party. There is no caste iron constitution to prevent this development. It is amazing that the sectarians, who say the working class should change society, find it impossible that the working class cannot change the

Labour Party. Surely this must be a far easier possibility? Socialist Appeal have always recognised that such changes depend on the class struggle and the mood in society. As night follows day, as the unions shift to the left, so this will inevitably impact on the Labour Party. And this is what is happening, as witnessed by the decision over PFI at Labour Party conference.

Our task is to strengthen this process. Rather than contract out or leave the Labour Party, we need to contract in! We need to organise an effective campaign to break the grip of Blairism. The Labour Party must be reclaimed for the working class. In such a struggle Blair is likely to go over to the Tories and Liberals, as was the case with Ramsay MacDonald.

Rotten boroughs

In the 1950s and early 1960s the right wing ruled the roost and were supported by the right wing trade union leaders such as Deakin (from the TGWU), Carron (AEU) and Lawther (NUM). Local Labour Parties were corrupt dominated by rotten boroughs. In Liverpool, for example, the Braddock regime forbid new recruits stating the party was "full up". By the 1970s, under the impact of events outside, the grip of the right wing was broken. This ushered a swing to the left.

Today, the pendulum is beginning to swing back to the left. The days of the Blair regime are numbered. As the unions

swing to the left, it is time to reclaim the Labour Party. Already Billy Hayes, general secretary of the CWU, has written to branches urging them to join the Labour Party and fight for the union position. This is a harbinger of the future where trade unions will take up the struggle within the Labour Party for working class policies. The process is in its early stages, but it has begun!

Not only do the working class need to reclaim the Labour Party. They have to turn the Labour Party and trade unions into weapons of struggle. This means a rejection of the policies of class collaboration and so-called "partnership". It means a fight for a real alternative - a socialist programme that can solve the problems of the working class. This must include a programme to take over the monopolies, banks and insurance companies under workers control and management. Only then can we offer a clear alternative to the market economy and all its sins.

A socialist planned economy will galvanise the productive resources inherited from capitalism and ensure that a harmonious and plentiful future for all. The drive for profit under capitalism has led to gross inequality, poverty, stress and insecurity for the majority of the population. The socialist reorganisation of society will embrace the talents and potential of all for the benefit of a tiny handful of profit-seeking parasites, but for the overwhelming majority. A socialist Britain will be a beacon to the European working class and the oppressed internationally. It will be a step towards a Socialist United States of Europe, leading to a world federation of socialist states. Such a development, dreamed of by our fore fathers, will usher in a new phase in the development of humankind. It would constitute the end of our pre-history, and be the beginning of a new revolution in culture, science and society.

In the words of the revolutionary poet Shelly, "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" □





For the fourth time in its short existence the Northern Ireland assembly has been suspended. The whole process has been like a perverse game of snakes and ladders, played out on a board dominated by snakes down whose backs the workers hopes are constantly sent sliding back to square one.

by *Phil Mitchinson*

As we have consistently explained, the Good Friday Agreement, and the institutions of devolution associated with it, could never begin to solve the problems facing ordinary working people from whatever background. It was a cruel deception which promised peace to the communities of Catholic and Protestant workers, but was unable to deliver. It was a lie. There has been no peace. Sectarian beatings and killings have continued. Communities have become increasingly divided.

Temporary agreements between sectarian politicians to share ministerial responsibilities at Stormont cannot begin to solve the underlying cause of this crisis. That has now been proven. Sectarian politicians and government officials from Ireland and Britain have tried to create a better environment for big business to make money in, a better environment in which to exploit Catholic and Protestant workers alike. What none of them can do, because of the limits imposed by the profit system, is build houses, hospitals and schools, create jobs or eradi-

cate poverty pay. These social conditions, which are an inevitable fact of life in capitalist society, serve to fuel sectarian division, fear and hate.

Whether any new agreement can be cobbled together in the present impasse is a moot point. It seems unlikely. What is certain is that no such agreement can ever meet the aspirations of the nationalist community for a united Ireland, nor assuage the fears of Protestants, stirred up by the sectarian parties. Such agreements assume the continuation of a sectarian divide, in fact they rest upon that division. At the same time the national and social questions are inextricably bound together.

Capitalism can no more offer decent housing or healthcare to the people of Ireland than it can in Britain or anywhere else. None of these problems can be resolved on the basis of capitalism.

The cue for the present suspension, which may well prove to be the last, was the police raid on Sinn Fein's offices at Stormont amid allegations of a spy ring and Provisional IRA intelligence gathering.

Paisley's Democratic

Stormont Suspended

Unionist ministers then walked out of Stormont demanding the disbanding of the Provisional IRA before they would agree to return. First Minister Trimble and the Ulster Unionist Party threatened to walk unless Sinn Fein were excluded.

No mention was made of course of the spying of the British state who have admitted bugging Gerry Adams car during earlier negotiations. No mention either of the revelations of a recent BBC Panorama documentary - which we have commented on previously - detailing the collusion between the RUC, the British army and loyalist paramilitaries in the murder of lawyer Pat Finucane and many others.

The police raid on Sinn Fein made a mockery of so-called devolved government. In reality London had been in charge all along, and the Unionist veto remains intact. The assembly has staggered from one crisis to the next, while 'democracy' has been switched on and off like a tap.

Whilst placing the blame for the division of Ireland squarely where it belongs, at the door of British imperialism, and roundly condemning the reactionary bigots in the loyalist paramilitary forces, we have never been willing to play the role of cheerleaders for the Provisional IRA which many on the left in Britain have. The Provos have played a criminal role. Their actions over thirty years have served

to widen the divide between Catholic and Protestant workers. After thirty years of so-called armed struggle, in reality what Marxists define as acts of individual terror, shootings and bombings carried out by small secret groups, they were forced to admit defeat. The tactic did not work. Such actions would not defeat the British state in 300 years, all they could achieve and did succeed in doing is driving a wedge between workers from different backgrounds and communities.

The Provisional IRA has not achieved a single one of its objectives. They vowed to stay in existence until they secured the withdrawal of British imperialism. Now they fight for the reform of the RUC. In reality the establishment of the devolved body itself represented a capitulation by the Provisional IRA. It wasn't even a gesture towards Irish unity. It amounts to an acceptance of British rule and an acceptance of partition. In the face of the current impasse will they disband? Will the three Ds, 'defence, defiance and dissent', become instead, 'defeat, decommissioning and disbandment'? That seems unlikely. Such an announcement would undoubtedly lead to new splits, and the bolstering of other splinter groups, Continuity IRA etc.

Look at what's happening in the Real IRA. With many of its members still in jail the response of the Real IRA to

the suspension of Stormont was to announce their disbandment. In a statement from 41 prisoners in British and Irish jails, those who continued with the name of the Real IRA were described as a criminal element lining their own pockets. This caused an immediate storm with other sections vowing to remain operational and threatening to deal with those who had announced their demise "People are spitting blood", quotes *The Guardian* (October 21, 2002). "They think these guys have sold them down the river to get out of jail early and if they do, they will find themselves on the receiving end from their former colleagues." The new impasse will mean new splits within the republican movement. Remember the Provisional IRA itself was born out of just such a split.

We have also consistently condemned the actions of the Loyalist bigots. The increase in their paramilitary activity, their attacks on children at the Holy Cross school, their death threats against Catholic workers and the brutal murder of postal worker Daniel McColligan, are designed to provoke tit-for-tat attacks, to undermine a peace agreement they cannot accept. This despite the fact that the agreement represented little in the way of compromise other than cosmetic exercises. Just imagine the response of these reactionary bigots if there were even a single step towards uniting Ireland in any of these documents.

So, is there any reason to mourn the suspension, or even the passing of Stormont? Well no doubt the ministers losing their juicy salaries may be upset. No doubt those workers involved in the running of the place will be concerned about their futures. As a solution to the problems of Northern Ireland however, it never had that potential

within it. Many people's hopes have been dashed by the failures of the Assembly, and now by its suspension.

A majority voted for the creation of the assembly. That is not a surprise, it was sold as peace to a population weary of sectarian killing. After the horrors of the last three decades, the majority of people in the North want peace. Of course! Who does not want peace? But the question is: how do we get it? How is a genuine and lasting peace to be achieved? The only way to get peace is by dealing with the real problems facing the people in their everyday lives. This is the only way to tackle the social roots of sectarianism.

Whether the spying allegations are true or fabricated provocation, the attack on Sinn Fein's offices was not the real cause of the current suspension. From the beginning Paisley's DUP was opposed to the agreement, and wanted the whole thing renegotiated out of existence. They wanted devolution - in the form of a Protestant Parliament - but direct rule is second best for them.

The DUP has painted itself as the defender of the union in the face of creeping moves towards Irish unity and too many concessions to republicanism. In reality there were never many concessions made and there was certainly no suggestion of a single step in the direction of reuniting Ireland. Nevertheless the assembly has become increasingly unpopular thanks to its inability to solve any of the basic problems facing ordinary working people. A majority of Protestants, 67% in a recent BBC poll, are now opposed to power sharing. 58% are even opposed to sharing power with the SDLP. No doubt what they are really opposed to is a powerless toothless assembly which cannot tackle their problems no matter which



parties sit in it. The consequence of this growing opposition has been to bolster the hardliners inside Trimble's UUP. If he had not acted he would no doubt have been removed. He may still be.

Bertie Ahern made clear that there was no place in any Southern coalition for Sinn Fein, bringing mocking cries of derision from Unionist leaders 'we are supposed to share power with these people, yet the government in the south want nothing to do with them'. This follows the earlier drop-

to be shot of the £4 billion a year subsidy. Their problem is that the result would be a bloodbath, the Catholics of West Belfast and Derry would face a massacre and the violence would not be confined to Ireland. Sectarianism, fostered by British imperialism as part of its divide and rule tactic, has become an uncontrollable monster.

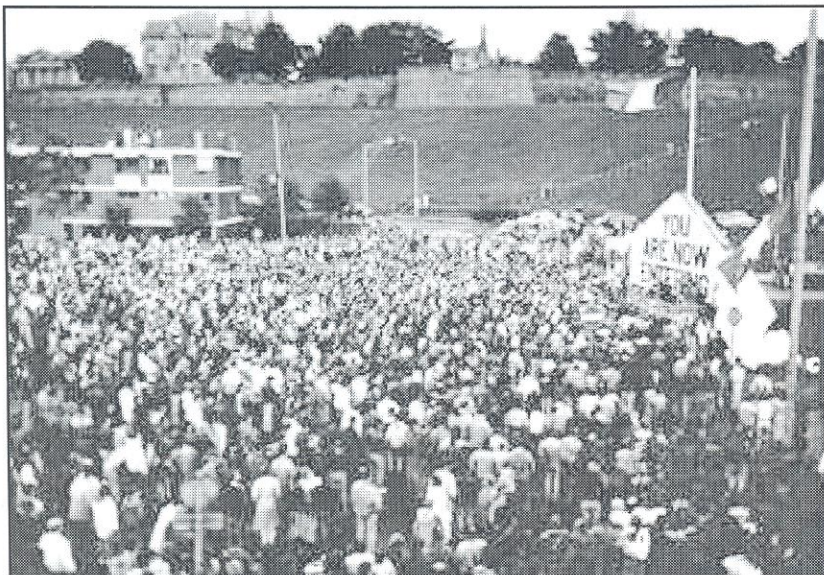
John Reid (the now ex-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland) hoped that planned elections to the assembly next May will still go ahead. It is hard to see

Of course! Who does not want peace? But the question is: how do we get it? How is a genuine and lasting peace to be achieved? The only way to get peace is by dealing with the real problems facing the people in their everyday lives.

ping of the South's constitutional claim on a united Ireland. The Irish bourgeois have no interest in uniting with the north, which they see as poverty stricken and politically explosive.

The Unionists meanwhile will never accept any real step towards uniting with the south on the basis of the current system, as their opposition to the current agreement demonstrates. So British imperialism is stuck with the north, whether they like it or not. The irony is that Britain would now like to withdraw. They would like

how you can hold elections for institutions that don't exist! If elections were held in the present climate, no doubt there would be a further polarisation, with growing support for the Democratic Unionists and Sinn Fein at the expense of the UUP and the SDLP. Even then new temporary agreements are always possible, though far less likely, yet as we have always explained, temporary agreement or not, none of the daily problems of ordinary Catholic and Protestant workers would be addressed.



The sectarian politicians will not negotiate themselves out of existence. The workers of all backgrounds cannot wait for new negotiations to drag out and slither back to square one again, while sectarian killing fills the vacuum. The working class and its organisations,

beginning with the trade unions must intervene to take matters into their own hands.

There is only one force capable of securing a lasting peace, only one force capable of defeating sectarianism and protecting all communities from attack. There is only one

force capable of taking on and defeating the source of all these problems, the capitalist system and that is the united action of the working class.

We saw a glimpse of that power on January 18th this year. In a remarkable demonstration of the potential for united working class struggle, thousands upon thousands of workers, Catholic and Protestant, staged a half-day general strike against sectarian attacks and killings. With 50,000 to 80,000 workers on the streets of Belfast this was the biggest such trade union organised event in decades. Perhaps 100,000 in total participated in marches and rallies. This from a population of around one and a half million!

What a demonstration of the power of the united working class, and what an answer to the cynics

who deny the "practicality" of a united workers struggle! The "practical" solutions of these ladies and gentlemen have brought us to the current impasse. To believe that Blair's school playground diplomacy and pious speeches can solve the problem is utterly utopian.

January 18 was a reminder of the great traditions of united working class struggle in Ireland. Tragically, the trade union leaders failed to build upon it.

The workers organisations must now mobilise to defend communities from sectarian attack. They must mobilise too to fight against the attacks of the government and the bosses. United in struggle the working class of Ireland can sweep away the filth and poison of sectarianism once and for all. □

Successful Edinburgh school on The history of British Trotskyism

On Sunday 13 October 20 workers and students gathered in the social club of the CWU building in Edinburgh for a meeting on the relevance of the ideas of Leon Trotsky today. Rob Sewell came up from London to introduce the subject. He focused on the international impact of the October revolution and the reasons for its degeneration, which were rooted in its backwardness and isolation, and which prepared the way for the emergence of a bureaucracy that backed Stalin in suppressing the political rights of the working class and instituting a totalitarian state to guard their privileges. This process of revolution and political counter-revolution created a unique and unusual position in the labour movement internationally with the need to counter capitalist ideas and influences as well as Stalinist ones, which prepared the way for defeat in Spain in the 1930s and on many other occasions. Rob emphasised that defeats in revolutionary situations since 1917 were not due to the lack of initiative and desire of the workers for socialism but due to the mistakes of their leaders, who have often consciously betrayed them. He concluded that today's global economy is more advanced than it was in 1917 and has created the preconditions for a smoother transition from capitalism to socialism in the future, such that a successful socialist revolution in any strategic country

today would easily spread with the help of modern means of communication, with workers having a much shorter working week allowing them the time to plan and manage society and the state.

Many questions were asked, ranging from the prospect of deflation in the world economy to the nature of the anti-globalisation movement, the reality of the transition towards capitalism in Russia and the plan that socialists need to work out to build the movement in the future - the final question being the reason to read about the history of the movement so as to learn about what was achieved in the past, which is an indicator of the possibilities ahead of us now. The presence of 4 students from St Andrews university and 3 from Edinburgh university added a new perspective into the discussion. The mood of the meeting was optimistic. A collection that was held to cover the cost of the room and to go towards the fighting fund of the Appeal, raising over £325 in cash (with £45 from the St Andrews students and £40 from students in Edinburgh), IOUs and cheques, including one for £50. As a result of the meeting some workers who have received the Appeal regularly over the years decided to come to the demo in Glasgow held the following week, which further boosted the profile and sales of the Appeal.

Beware!

Spies in our movement

A startling new set of revelations contained in a current BBC TV series has confirmed what many socialists have been warning about for years, namely that the police and MI5 have been systematically infiltrating and spying on left wing and campaigning groups, trade unions and so on.

by Steve Jones

In addition the police have also long been cultivating and using trade union officials as super-grasses in order to gain information about the movement.

According to the programme, *True Spies* (BBC2), a special ultra-secret section of the Special Branch was set up after 1968 in order to get into and obtain information about various anti-establishment groups, in order to undermine their work and forewarn the state. Police agents from this section would disguise themselves as potential activists, wearing shabby clothes and growing their hair - hence the section's nickname of 'the hairies' - and, hiding their true identities, work their way into

various groups and organisations in search of important information. They even worked with MI5 who, as was revealed by Cathy Massiter in the 1980s, were also busy spying on various Labour and trade union organisations - one police spy even passed sets of keys belonging to the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign onto MI5 so that they could then burgle them in search of names and addresses. So much for Neighbourhood Watch!

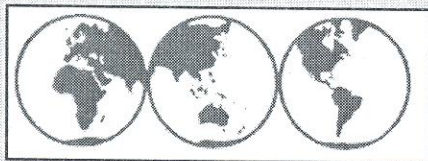
The programme also reveals what many have long suspected in that a number of senior right wing officials in the trade union movement have been all too happy over the years to 'cooperate' with the police in passing on information about strikes and

leftwing activists in the unions. For example, the programme alleges that former NUM leader Joe Gormley (later to become Lord Gormley) regularly passed on information about union militants on the grounds of 'patriotism', which presumably sounded a lot better to him than simple self-preservation against pressure from the ranks below. When Thatcher called the left in the NUM (and elsewhere) the "enemy within", the likes of Lord Gormley clearly agreed with that! During the 1970s and 80s up to 23 senior officials in the trade union movement were also acting as informers, according to police sources.

Given that it was perfectly legal to join and belong to many of these infiltrated organi-

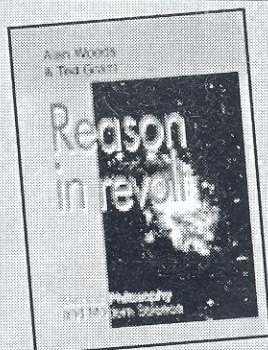
sations, such as Stop The 70 Tour Campaign and Troops Out Now, the police involvement in such covert operations must raise many questions about why the state has chosen to act in such an undemocratic and secretive way. It confirms once again that the police and the secret service are there not to 'defend democracy', as they like to put it, but rather to defend the interests of the state and the ruling class against the people at large and against anything which challenges their position of privilege and power.

□ In a future issue of *Socialist Appeal* we will look in detail at the history of the police and secret service, both in this country and abroad, in spying on and covertly undermining the Labour and trade movement and its campaigns - and asks what does that tell us about the role of the state?



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Deflation and depression

The capitalist forecasters have got renewed optimism about the global economy and the value of their investments on the stock market. After huge falls in stock prices during September, the last two weeks have seen a significant rally in world financial market prices - up 15%.

by Michael Roberts

Of course, the world's stock markets are still down 15-20% on the year, which if maintained, would make it the third year in a row that they have fallen. That would not have happened since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

But optimism reigns, because in the third quarter of this year, US and European corporations announced better profits than they achieved in the third quarter of 2001 and better than the expert forecasters had predicted. After so much bad news over the last year, capitalist investors breathed a sigh of relief and launched a buying spree. But is their renewed optimism justified?

Well, even on the evidence of the profit figures of the big US companies, it is not. First, the increase in profits overall is just 6% more than last year, which was a period of very low profitability for American companies. Second, profit growth in the current fourth quarter could be even less. That means US (and European) companies have made little recovery from the depths they descended to last year. And that's despite cutting nearly 2.2m jobs in the private sector in the US in the last 18 months.

That's how even this small improvement in profits has been achieved - by sacking workers and by stopping new investment in plant and technology. The costs of production have been lowered. But there has been

hardly any rise in sales and no prospect of much improvement ahead. Unless there is a dramatic rise in sales for most companies, another round of job cuts and plant closures will ensue over the next year.

And the company pension problem is now becoming a crisis. Merrill Lynch, the US investment bank, reported that 98% of the 346 companies in the S&P 500 that offer defined benefit pension plans will find their plans are underfunded by the end of this year. The pension-funding gap for US auto employers alone will rise to more than \$30 billion at the year's end, from \$13.9 billion at the start of the year, with no immediate remedy in sight. It will take them many years of lower earnings to make up that \$30 billion.

Of course, the capitalist forecasters remain confident that growth will start to accelerate worldwide over the next year and their politi-

cal masters in the G7 governments echo that optimism. Of 51 'expert' forecasters who gave their opinions on likely economic growth in the US next year, the average forecast was 3.5%, with some as high as 4%.

But this is wild optimism based on little evidence. As stock markets rose during October, the economic news that came in continued to worsen.

Prices and profits

US industrial output fell for the second month in a row. Capacity utilization in manufacturing is down to 75.9%. Experts normally say that when capacity utilization is below 80% companies are unable to increase prices or profits. Honeywell, Sun, Motorola and scores of tech companies announced layoffs, as they have too much capacity.

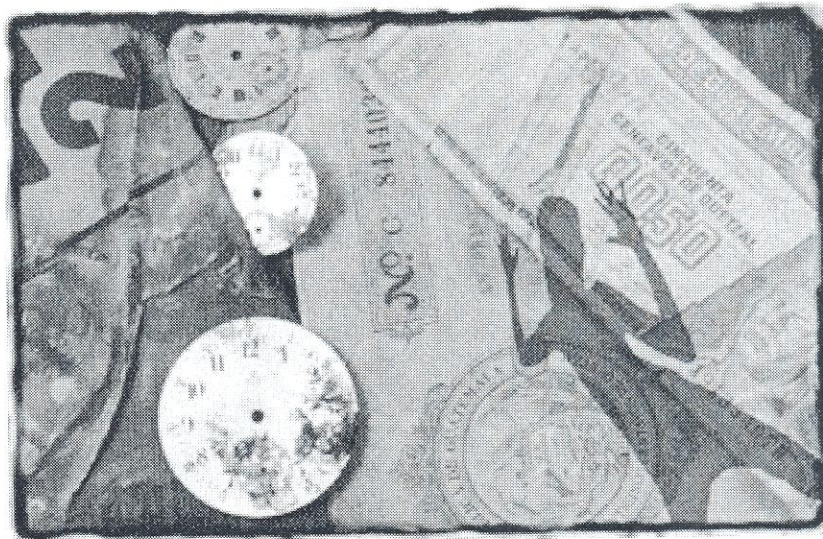
Growth comes from (among other things) busi-

ness investment and new jobs. But there is little (or no) growth in business investment and no (or negative) growth in jobs. The US economy will probably grow less than 1% this quarter, barring some resurgence in business investing that is not now on the horizon.

Stephen Roach of Morgan Stanley points out that the US consumer was responsible for 64% of the growth in the world's economy from 1995-2001, roughly twice what our share of world output was during the same period.

The world economy is dependent upon the US consumer. As the US economy has slowed down, the world is slowing even more.

The problem is that there is no other engine for growth. Germany, the third largest economy, is on the brink of a recession and is close to deflation. Europe may slip into recession before the US. South America is in shambles. The



world's second largest economy - Japan - is severely hurting the rest of the world and creating deflationary forces that are causing major problems in Asia. China and India are years away from being a major force for growth in the world economy.

There are only two areas of the world capitalist economy that is keeping it from slipping back into an even deeper recession than that experienced in the middle of 2001 - the worldwide property boom and consumer spending stimulated by rising house prices and the very cheap cost of borrowing.

That tells you what will be the trigger for a slump. If jobs are cut back across the US and Europe as corporations try to restore profit margins, workers' incomes will fall back. Even though interest rates may be low, property prices will become too high for many to afford to buy.

The property market will tail off and turn down - just as it did in Japan about two years after the Japanese stock market began to slump in 1989. In the last decade, the stock market in Japan has collapsed to new lows in 2002 and house prices have tumbled along with the Japanese economy.

If the American mortgage refinancing boom ends before a new investment boom begins, consumer spending will fall away before investment rejuvenation has begun and the US global economic locomotive will grind to a halt. As jobs and wages decline, consumers would end their ability to incur debt and thus spend less. Unemployment would rise as businesses increase lay-offs in an effort to increase earnings. That scenario looks like panning out over the next year.

Instead of world capitalist economic recovery, the prospect is for a worldwide recession by this time next year.

And behind this prediction is the terrible spectre of global deflation.

Those of us who remember the 1970s and 1980s used to think that the Achilles heel of capitalism was rampant inflation of prices in the shops that forced capitalist authorities to raise taxes and interest rates and stem an 'overheated' economy, thus creating a boom and bust cycle.

But deflation is a much bigger danger to world capitalism. If prices don't rise, then capitalist companies cannot make a profit without cutting the cost of production. That means investing in new technology (itself an extra cost) to increase productivity and so lower costs per unit of production, or reduce the labour force to cut wage costs. But reducing the labour force means less production. And it means that workers have less to spend on the goods and services produced. So sales do not grow and prices have to fall further. It's a vicious circle of falling sales, jobs and prices - in other words an economic depression (far worse than a recession in the boom-bust cycle).

This is a real danger. Prices of goods at the factory gate in the US are falling at a nearly 1% a year rate. It's only in the services sector that prices are still rising moderately. And globally, world price rises have never been lower.

One of the key drivers of deflation is China. This huge country has become a major industrial powerhouse. With a seemingly endless supply of cheap labour and substantial flows of capital coming in from abroad, Chinese

industrial production and exports are rocketing. Chinese factory prices are continually falling and they are sucking up bigger and bigger shares of world

trade in all sorts of products. China has increased its share of Asian exports by 50% in just the last year. Chinese exports are putting downward pressure on prices not just for US businesses, but for all businesses worldwide.

But it is not just China. Japan is clearly creating a deflationary wind across the world. Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and much of the rest of Asia is in deflation. Deflation forces country after country to devalue their currency against the dollar, so that they can compete for sales to the American consumer. This keeps the dollar strong, just at a time when it would be convenient for it to weaken. This puts more pressure on American business, which must cut costs in order to remain profitable. If the rest of the world continues to devalue their currency to keep attracting the American consumer, then we are in for deflation in the US.

And deflation is really bad news for capitalism. America's private sector debt loads are currently at their post-World War II highs. The household debt-to-GDP ratio currently stands at 76%, compared to 63% back in 1992. Corporate debt has now climbed to 69% of GDP, higher than in the year of the last major crash in stock markets in 1987. The US is now copying Japan in the 1980s. Japanese corporate sector debt reached 175% of GDP by 1993; rocketing to

But the repayment of debt becomes onerous when prices start to fall because in real terms that debt is worth more while the value of houses or land may be falling.



235% by 2001. Household debt rose from just 61% in the early 1980s to 74% in 1989 and then increased to 77% in 2001.

Inflation is always great for borrowers. That's because what they borrow now is worth much less in real terms after ten years of inflation, especially if they've used the money to buy a house where prices have risen even faster than the average rate of inflation. That's why bankers (lenders) don't like inflation and demand interest rates rise to curb it.

But the repayment of debt becomes onerous when prices start to fall because in real terms that debt is worth more while the value of houses or land may be falling. Household wealth is destroyed, as it has been in Japan. Bankers may like deflation, but the rest of the capitalist economy loathes it.

If global deflation sets in, it will express just how weak capitalist economic growth has become. It will cause countries to try and escape depression by devaluing their currencies to steal a march on their rivals. That will just intensify the deflation. And deflation means that the real cost of debt rises and borrowers will go bust in a big way, intensifying depression. That's the prospect for capitalism over the next year or two. □

COSATU's 48-hour general strike

A marathonian march marked the first day of the 2-day general strike called by COSATU in South Africa on October 1 and 2. The strike has been called to protest against privatisation plans by the ANC government, against job losses and poverty, aggravated by the recent increases in the prices of staple foods.

By Jorge Martin from Johannesburg

Tens of thousands of workers filled the main streets of Johannesburg. COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi gave the figure of 70,000 demonstrators, but the massive march might have numbered up to 100,000 people. It was reported that more than 30 marches had taken place around the country, the smallest of which had at least 5,000 people.

The demonstration went to the buildings of a number of state-owned companies that are threatened with privatisation and memoradums were handed to the managers. The mood of the trade unionists was angry at the different rallies outside the transport company Spoornet, electricity parastatal Eskom and the telecommunications parastatal Telkom. In 1997, the ANC government privatised 30% of Telkom. Since then, according to official statistics there have been 2.7 million new phone lines connected, but of those 80% have been cut off for lack of payment! Meanwhile 17,000 workers have been made redundant by Telkom. Now the government is preparing to privatise 30% of electricity parastatal Eskom. Already in preparation for privatisation hundreds of thousands of households have had electricity supply

cut off because they could not afford to pay. It is against these electricity cut-offs that the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (part of the Anti-Privatisation Forum) was created, fighting disconnections by illegally reconnecting households.

Finally after more than five hours of marching and singing, the demonstration arrived at its final destination where a rally took place. COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi handed a memorandum to Gauteng premier Shilowa.

Vavi in his speech explained the reasons why the federation is fundamentally opposed to privatisation. However, he insisted that they were not against the ANC or the ANC government. He even affirmed that they were "not questioning the good intentions of government and its aim of building a better life for all." "We do not doubt the bona fide of the government," he insisted, "but when we disagree on some policies we must be able to say it and there is nothing counter-revolutionary in that." This shows clearly that the COSATU leaders still think it is just a question of minor differences on concrete policies. In fact, the ANC government has been committed since the very beginning to pro-capitalist

policies. It is true that there has been some (limited) delivery in certain fields, but this has been rapidly undermined by increased poverty and rising unemployment. The policies applied by the ANC government under the name of GEAR have been those of privatisation, the lowering of tariff barriers, repayment of the apartheid debts, creation of Free Trade Zones, "fiscal prudence", all in the name of "economic stability" and "attracting foreign investment". The result of these policies is clear for everyone to see: one million jobs destroyed, increased casualisation of labour, doubling of the official unemployment rate, water and electricity cut-offs, etc.

This is not a question of one or two wrong policy choices, but rather of a government policy which is in fundamental contradiction with the interests of those who elected it, the masses of working people and the poor.

In fact, while COSATU leaders try to minimise their "disagreements" with the ANC government, the ANC leaders launched an all-out attack against the government. On Friday, September 27, Thabo Mbeki, speaking at the ANC Policy Conference, made it very clear that "the ANC is not a vehicle for achieving socialism" and he added that those who disagreed were free to leave the organisation. He then spoke of a conspiracy of international and national ultra-left elements who wanted to infiltrate the ranks of the movement, and who saw the government as the enemy, having adopted a neo-liberal policy. This ultra-left, he said, plays the same role as the right-wing opposition to the government, since both see it as their enemy. To this attack Zwelinzima Vavi replied that "if it protesting against electricity cut-offs in Soweto is to be an ultra-left, then we are ultra-left, if protesting against 1 million job losses is to be an ultra-left then we are bound to be ultra-left," and he added "then we are ultra-left, but as shown today, there are many of us."

Finally, after having to listen to all the speeches, the Premier of Gauteng Mbhazima Shilowa, a former general secretary of COSATU who has now abandoned his previous radical language, was handed a memorandum and invited to speak. He started badly, when he attacked students' organisation COSAS for incidents which had taken



place at a students' protest earlier in the year. At this point he was interrupted by loud booing and hissing on the part of the thousands of workers present who were in no mood to accept any provocation from Shilowa. They were shouting "you traitor", "uMbeki ukuthengile" ("Mbeki has bought you"), "shut up capitalist stooge" and "asikufuni" ("we don't need you"). This reflects the real attitude of the workers towards the ANC government at different levels, which is one of increasing anger at seeing the people they elected, many coming from the trade union movement itself, applying policies which are in direct contradiction to the interests of workers. This was also reflected in the new songs against ANC leaders, including Mbeki himself, that have emerged and are sung at mass demonstrations. A strongly-worded song was sung at the demo by one of the NUMSA branches which said "Mbeki's testicles we are going to grab them and throw them out of the window"! Some of the placards, official and hand-made, were also quite clear. One said "Privatisation is born again apartheid", while an older COSATU one read "We did not fight for liberation so that we can sell the assets we won to the highest bidder."

The widespread support for the two-day general strike and the massive turnout at the demonstrations proves once again that the workers in South Africa are not prepared to give the ANC government they elected any more breathing space, and this has been the case already for some time. This strike after all is not the first that COSATU have organised under the ANC government. Until now, after every general strike the COSATU leaders have met with ANC and SACP leaders and have come up with a resolution saying that intra-Alliance differences had been smoothed out and that everything was OK. The patience of the workers however is coming to an end, and at the same time, the belligerent attitude of the ANC government leaves COSATU leaders with very little room for manoeuvre to reach a compromise. What is clear is that the deteriorating conditions of the working class and the poor (for which the ANC government policies are largely to blame) are going to push them into action. A period of heightened class struggle has opened in South Africa. □

ANC right wing launches attack

As was to be predicted the ANC government and the employers made a combined effort to discredit COSATU's two-day general on October 1 and 2. The employers' federation SACOB "estimated" the number of workers participating in COSATU's action against privatisation at 15%. The government went even further and declared that only 5% of workers in the public sector had participated. Public Enterprises Minister Jeff Radebe forgot to say that many workers in the public sector were not allowed to participate anyway since they work in sectors which are considered essential (including electricity, water, hospitals, etc).

However COSATU had a different view: "We believe the stay-away has been supported by at least 60% of the workers in the formal sector." This would mean that 3 million participated, well beyond COSATU's 1.8 million members - roughly the same level of participation as in the general strike in August last year. The following of the strike was stronger in the Free State, Mpumalanga and Gauteng, where strike levels even reached 80 and 90%. One of COSATU's largest affiliates, the mine workers' union NUM, reported that between 60 and 80% of their members in the mining, energy and construction industries supported the strike. Participation in the motor manufacturing plants was also solid with five of the seven companies having their production severely disrupted. 90% of workers in the tyre manufacturing plants followed the strike. Durban harbour was one of the worst affected by the strike with 92% of workers in the afternoon shift going on strike.

The strike has opened the doors for an all-out attack against COSATU on the part of the right wing of the ANC. On Wednesday, October 2, on the second day of the strike, five senior members of the government gave a press conference and reaffirmed the government's commitment to privatisation policies, which Jeff Radebe said would be accelerated "because of its benefits". The significant thing about this statement is that the five ministers signing it, Water Affairs and Forestry Minister Ronnie Kasrils, Public Enterprises Minister Jeff Radebe, Trade and Industry Minister Alec Erwin, Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad and Minister of Provincial and Local Government Sydney Mafumado, are all prominent members of the South African Communist Party, an organization which officially supported the strike. Although some of the ministers were recently removed from the Central Committee of the SACP by angry delegates at its 11th National Congress in

July, they remain party members and one of them, Ronnie Kasrils said he was speaking both in his capacity as a ANC NEC member and also as a member of the SACP Politburo!

It was inevitable that the pro-capitalist policies of the ANC government would result in a backlash on the part of the labour movement and many of those who voted for the ANC in poor and working class communities up and down the country.

But while the ANC right wing has made its positions and its commitment to capitalism crystal clear, the leaders of COSATU and the SACP continue to give confused messages to their own members and supporters. While the SACP supports the general strike against privatisation, its ministers in government promise to accelerate privatisation policies. COSATU leaders insist that they are not against the ANC government, but just that they disagree with some of its policies. And as always, weakness invites aggression.

One of the main reasons for this confusion is the SACP leaders' commitment to the strategy of the so-called National Democratic Revolution. According to this, the "deepening and strengthening of the NDR" will eventually lead to socialism. This frankly does not make any sense, since the ANC government is pursuing an openly pro-capitalist policy - all they want is the creation of a black capitalist class. How the "deepening and strengthening" of these policies can lead to socialism is a mystery. In fact this is clearly not a communist policy and it represents the adoption of a reformist social-democratic policy.

A genuine socialist policy on the part of the SACP and COSATU would be to explain clearly that under capitalism (even a democratic one) the pressing demands of the masses of working class people for jobs, houses, food and land cannot be fulfilled in any meaningful way, as has been proven by the record of the ANC government. The way forward is the struggle for socialism. The nationalization under workers' control of the handful of monopoly groups in industry, finance and mining which control the bulk of the South African economy, and the democratic planning of these in the benefit of the interests of the majority of society would be the only way to release the necessary resources to provide a better life for all. If the SACP and COSATU were to take firmly the course of the struggle for socialism they would certainly win the support of the majority of the ANC rank and file members and supporters, who fought for liberation in order to achieve not merely formal political rights but a better life for all. □



Bali bomb blast horror

On October 12, two bombs ripped through a packed discotheque on the Indonesian holiday island of Bali, killing more than 200 people and injuring some 300. Most of those who died were young people, many of them Australians. A car bomb outside a nightclub in the popular resort of Kuta caused this carnage. The Sari nightclub was completely destroyed by the blast, which created a large crater and also damaged nearby restaurants and a hotel. Many of those who were killed died in the fires that followed. Many others suffered horrific injuries and burns.

by Alan Woods

Although no group has claimed responsibility for the attacks, suspicions immediately fell on Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorist network, or some local radical Islamic group with links to it. This is quite possible. There have recently been persistent reports that this organisation had been intensifying its efforts to establish a foothold in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation. However, there is no proof yet that it was al-Qaeda. It could also be the work of other militant groups operating in South-East Asia, some of which have links to al-Qaeda.

In the past Indonesian officials have denied that terrorists with links to bin Laden are active in the country. However, this cannot be excluded. The bombing came on the second anniversary of the attack led by al-Qaeda on the USS Cole in the Yemeni port of Aden, and follows attacks on a French oil tanker in the Persian Gulf and US troops in Kuwait. A statement purporting to be from bin Laden has praised these attacks, though without mentioning the Bali attack. On October 14th Abu Hamza al-Masri, a Muslim cleric with suspected links to al-Qaeda, said that the group had played a role in the Bali bombing and was planning to carry out further attacks.

Indonesians traditionally practice a moderate form of Islam, and leaving aside separatist violence in certain parts of the vast archipelago, for the most part foreigners have not been targets.

The attack in Bali marks a radical departure from that. Washington, is now pressing Indonesia to take action against Islamic activists, in particular Abu Bakar Bashir's Jemaah Islamiyah. This group has been linked to an al-Qaeda operative who was recently seized in Indonesia and turned over to America's CIA. He is accused of plotting attacks against American targets. In Malaysia and Singapore dozens of people have been arrested in a crackdown on what it says is a South East Asian terror network.

America sees South-East Asia as a crucial front in its war against terrorism, and is now likely to focus even more closely on the region. The United States is slowly but inexorably increasing its direct military presence in South-East Asia. US forces are participating in anti-insurgency operations in the Philippines. The bomb attacks in Bali came just hours after a hand-made bomb went off near the Philippine consulate in Manado, a port north-east of Jakarta. American forces have been helping to train Filipino soldiers to fight Muslim guerrillas. Washington immediately denounced the bombings as a "despicable act of terror", and so it was. No civilized person can condone such acts of barbarism. But when the likes of George W Bush and Tony Blair pontificate about the evils of terror, some serious questions must be asked.

In the first place, how does one explain the fact that after the US invasion of Afghanistan, which was trumpeted

ed as a decisive victory against terrorism, it seems that terrorism is alive and well and spreading all the time? How does it come that al-Qaeda, which was supposed to have been defeated and in retreat, is capable of organizing new atrocities with apparent ease? And how does it happen that Bush and Blair are concentrating all their energies on preparations for war on Iraq, which nobody has been able to link convincingly with either al-Qaeda or September 11, while the forces of al-Qaeda are clearly active elsewhere?

The declarations of Bush and Blair are full of the most disgusting hypocrisy. They are taking cynical advantage of the grief and anger at the latest terrorist atrocity for the purpose of drumming up support for their plans for war. John Howard, Australia's prime minister, described the bombing as a "huge national tragedy", which it is, while in the same breath insisting that "the war against terrorism must go on with unrelenting vigour and with unconditional commitment."

This is a sly way of associating Australia even more closely with George W Bush's expansionist plans in the Pacific. Even before this, the Australian government has been among the most fervent supporters of President George Bush's so-called war on terrorism. Australian troops were sent to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Americans. This has made Australia a prime target for every terrorist madman in the region. Howard's bluster about

fighting terrorism overlooks the self-evident fact that the so-called "war on terror" has so far achieved nothing except to strengthen the hand of the terrorist fanatics everywhere, as the Bali atrocity cruelly revealed.

Despite all the bold talk of Bush, Blair and Howard, the "war against terror" is a myth. It is a convenient fiction designed to fool people into believing that aggressive military actions like the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq will somehow lessen the threat of terrorism and make them safer. In fact, the exact opposite is the case. The world is far less safe now than before the invasion of Afghanistan. It is more unstable and more prone to insane terrorist atrocities like Bali.

The fear now is that there will be a spate of attacks across the region, launched either by al-Qaeda or by groups with similar aims. "This is just the beginning of what we have seen so many times in other Muslim countries in the Middle East," said one Asian security expert, quoted by *The Economist*, which concluded gloomily that "the bombs in Bali appear to have opened up a bloody new front in the war on terror."

Marxism versus terrorism

The root causes of terrorism are the profound social, economic and political problems in the so-called developing world. The super-exploitation of the masses by the big multinational companies, the ever increasing military presence of the USA that underlines its aim of dominating Asia and the Pacific, the complete disregard for the interests, beliefs and culture of the peoples of the region - all these things have combined to create an explosive mixture of hostility and resentment that cannot be eliminated by military means, no matter how many bombs are dropped or marines dispatched.



In a period of capitalist decay, elements from the petty bourgeoisie, especially the frustrated unemployed university youth, tend to become unbalanced. In despair, they resort to lunatic tactics like individual terrorism. Marxism has always fought against these tactics because they are futile and counterproductive. That was the position of Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks 100 years ago, and it remains our position today.

However, there is a difference. The old Russian terrorists were idealists who used mistaken methods. They only assassinated known torturers, oppressive officials and tsars. But the modern breed of fanatic who is prepared to slaughter innocent men, women and children play a purely counterrevolutionary role. Their activities do nothing but harm to the revolutionary movement, while actually helping the forces of reaction. Such actions, apart from their inhuman and barbarous character, do not harm imperialism but strengthen it. They must be condemned without any palliatives.

The main responsibility for the rise of so-called Islamic fundamentalism has been the abject failure of the reformist and Stalinist leaders in the past to offer a way out on a genuinely revolutionary, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist basis. The support for the so-called two-stage theo-

ry in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East by the Stalinists in the past led to one defeat after another. The support for the "progressive bourgeoisie" has been a complete catastrophe for countries like Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Algeria and Indonesia. The price we have had to pay is the rise of the fundamentalist reaction, which tries to conceal its reactionary essence by wrapping itself in the flag of a hypocritical "anti-imperialism". In reality, these supposedly antagonistic forces (the imperialists and the terrorists) have always helped each other.

The imperialists have no answer to terrorism. As a matter of fact, by their actions they constantly aid and encourage it. Similarly the actions of the terrorists do not strike a blow against the real power of imperialism but merely provide it with the excuse it needs to increase its military might and intensify its aggressive policy, while silencing its domestic critics. Thus, terrorism and imperialism are not antipodes but twins. They feed off each other and help each other. After all, where would George W Bush be now without the inestimable services of al-Qaeda?

The real way to eradicate the cancer of terrorism is by eliminating its root causes. It is only one of the more repulsive symptoms of a system that is diseased and rotten to

the core. The capitalist system means exploitation and oppression on a global scale to maintain the super-profits and obscene luxury of a small number of people in the USA, Europe, Japan and Australia. It means growing inequality between rich and poor both within the advanced capitalist countries and on a world scale.

The global crisis of this senile and degenerate system is reflected in the stagnation of the productive forces, increasing unemployment, social and political instability everywhere. It is also reflected in increasing tensions between nations, trade disputes and wars. If anyone ever doubted the proposition that capitalism means war, let them open their eyes and look around them.

The real alternative to terrorism is the development of a broad front of struggle against imperialism and capitalism on a world scale. It is imperative that the working class and the labour movement should play the leading role in this struggle. To the degree that the labour movement abdicates its historical role of fighting for the revolutionary transformation of society, the way is left open for all kinds of alien elements to push their way to the fore with disastrous results.

Lenin once remarked that capitalism is horror without end. The only way to put an end to these horrors is to tackle the problem by the roots. Wars and terrorism are only the surface manifestation of the fact that the capitalist system is in a blind alley on a world scale. It is time that all the genuine forces of Marxism in the world came together, capable of uniting the proletariat, beginning with its most conscious element, in a single powerful movement to overthrow capitalism and replace this monstrous system of oppression and wars with a real new world order under socialism. □

Bush Declares War on West Coast Dockworkers

On Tuesday, Oct. 8th, Federal District Judge William Aslup issued a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) ending an 11 day employer lockout of 10,500 ILWU longshore workers in 29 West Coast Ports. According to the TRO, the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) must lift its lockout immediately, with longshore workers returning to work as quickly as possible. A permanent 80 day "cooling off" injunction will, in all likelihood, be issued at hearing scheduled for next week.

**By Roland Sheppard
from US Socialist Appeal**

The judge included, as part of the injunction there would be "no slowdowns" by the ILWU workers. He said he fully concurred with President Bush's request for the injunction, that the "health and safety of the nation" was imperiled by the current contract dispute and that work on the docks must resume, as Bush insisted in his press statement, at "a normal pace."

He did not include that the "normal pace" of the past several years has led to workers being injured and even killed by the pace the employers desire. (Since March of this year six workers have been killed on the job.) From the viewpoint of the PMA, casualties and death are collateral damage in the drive to increase productivity and profits.

Besides wages, etc., one of the key issues, in the negotiations, is the insistence by the PMA to introduce the use of new technology at the expense of the ILWU and its membership. Although the ILWU has agreed to the new technology, at the elimination of at least 600 union jobs, the union has asked to retain the right to organize the new jobs as they are created. On paper, it appears to be a "jurisdictional dispute," but the fact is that unless the ILWU retains and gains control over these jobs, the new nonunion jobs created through the new

technology will be used to "outsource" the work of unionized workers to non union workers.

The stated goals of the PMA are the replacement of the union hiring hall and to speed up production.

The union hiring hall was a key demand that was won as the result the ILWU lead "illegal" general strike in San Francisco in 1934. The dignity that was won by that strike is what the PMA wants to take away to develop a docile workforce. In essence, the very existence of the union and unalienable rights rights of its membership to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is what is fundamentally at stake.

How did "things get to this point?" Let's check the recent history of the "negotiations."

Background to the Injunction

Prior to the July 1, 2002 expiration date of the contract between the ILWU and the PMA, the PMA organized to take decisive action to "modernize" the ports. They had rallied the support of the government to support their "just cause" to improve profitability and efficiency the West Coast ports. As the deadline approached, the Bush administration, in an effort to intimidate the ILWU leadership, threatened the the ILWU with government action and even the threat of troops if there was a work stoppage. It

is clearly evident, that, prior to the expiration of the contract, the PMA mobilized support from both the legislative and executive branches of the government, explaining their position as being beneficial to the capitalist class as a whole. Is it any wonder that the judicial branch has fallen into place?

Contract Demands

In April, 2001, Joseph Miniace, the president of the

PMA made a speech to Seattle/Tacoma Transportation Clubs, explaining the goals of the PMA for the new contract negotiations in 2002. In his opening statement, Miniace explained that the rest of the world had double the productivity as the west coast ports and the need to speed up imports and exports. In the course of his speech, the PMA outlined a course of action to improve productivity: "The PMA is looking to implement technology and work process changes with the ILWU and we have not approached this situation lightly. We have spent a considerable amount of time and money to study viable alternatives.

1. Instituting an appointment system with truckers and



terminals.

2. Integrating the systems with full use of EDI (Electronic Data Interface).

3. Developing a steady labor team - something just done at the Port of Houston

4. Automating the dispatch process.

5. Create more flexibility in off-peak start times for the workforce.

"We know we aren't the only ones looking at ways to maximize existing terminals. Dick Steinke, the newly elected President of the AAPA, recently presented some ideas for solving congestion and addressing growth projections. He suggested utilizing companies such as eModal to improve communication, and he agreed with the concept of an Appointment System. He also suggested a port-wide ID system for truckers which would facilitate paperless transactions, speed up gate operations and increase port security." (In exchange the PMA is offering to "sweeten the deal:")

"We are sensitive to the Union and what the kind of changes the PMA is proposing means to them. Therefore I have offered large number of job security measures for them in exchange for agreeing to our technology proposal. We have offered the following:

- The guarantee of all currently registered workers the opportunity to work.

- Provided for training to ILWU clerks, foremen and longshore workers to successfully utilize the technology as it is introduced to the industry.

- A mutually (between the employers and the ILWU) developed 401K program in addition to what currently exists to share in the economic benefit that is derived from the full implementation of technology.

- Reviewed and adjusted skill rates as necessary for jobs which require increased skills due to the introduction of new technology.

- An agreement to develop additional retirement benefits should it be necessary to

offer early retirement to registered workers.

A commitment to the preservation of ILWU jurisdiction within the current scope of the Agreement where such jurisdiction does not prevent the implementation of new technology and work process." For the past 18 months the PMA has had a declared position to wipe out the gains of the past 80 years in exchange for keeping the dues flowing in. On June 6, 2002, the PMA had U. S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta speak to their Board of Directors dinner/rally. (Mineta, President Clinton's commerce secretary, was the token Democrat Cabinet appointment by President Bush.)

In his remarks at the dinner, Mineta made it clear that the government would support the PMA's goals in its negotiations with the ILWU. In the course of his remarks he couldn't help but express his comradeship with "Joe" Miniace, the PMA president.

The opening of Mineta's prepared remarks stated: "The MTS Report to the Congress and the MTS National Advisory Council's (MTSNAC) White Paper are clear on the necessity of seeking affordable and innovative solutions to ensuring that our nation's ports remain vibrant and competitive in the 21st century.

"In a recent speech, your President, Joe Miniace, stated that the two major challenges for our nation's marine transportation system are: A shortage of port capacity and infrastructure; and A lack of public understanding about how important ports and intermodal operations are to the economy and their quality of life. "Joe also pointed to the need to 'maximize; our existing space and infrastructure by incorporating new technologies and work processes.' I wholeheartedly agree.

"Meeting these and other challenges won't happen if we work alone -- it must be a collaborative effort of all maritime stakeholders -- labor,



management, system users, and federal, state and local government officials and agencies -- satisfy the growing demands of the global economy.

"I am optimistic that we can work together to increase port capacity and efficiency. And, to accomplish our goals, some resources will be needed. But, how much and what are the priorities? It's too early to say right now, but it is not too soon to begin laying the foundation for the coming fiscal year."

Response of ILWU and AFL-CIO

In the context of these events, the ILWU and the rest of the AFL-CIO leadership have waged a campaign for peaceful collective bargaining, at the same time, trying to embarrass the Bush Administration and looking to the Democrats to protect them.

The ILWU officialdom, at no time, prior to and during the negotiations, has prepared the membership for the current battle, even though the PMA has been publicizing their positions on their website. They had not even taken a strike vote, if the contract expired, and never took the position of "no contract - no work."

In their press statements, the ILWU officials make it appear like this a "jurisdictional dispute" for unionized jobs.

At the rally in opposition to the Taft-Hartley injunction, the "militant" speeches called for voting in November to

solve the problem. Under these circumstances, the contract deadline had no meaning. The ILWU just kept extending the deadline from day to day. The employers had no objection, for they knew that if job action was taken, their government would move in to defend them. They had no reason not to negotiate and to remain at "impasse" for they knew they had the bipartisan support of the government and its capitalist rulers.

Eventually, after several months, the ILWU leadership decided to enforce the safety protection guaranteed under the contract. In response to "working safe," the PMA complained about the loss in productivity and locked out the dockworkers.

Democratic United States Senator Dianne Feinstein of San Francisco, whose husband, Dick Blum, is head of BLUM Capital Partners, L.P., with extensive investments with Asian trade, demanded that President Bush invoke the Taft-Hartley Act to end the lookout and impose the injunction. (I wonder if the ILWU officialdom still considers Feinstein to be a "friend of labor.")

In reality, the employers set the timing, so that a Taft-Hartley 80 day "cooling off" period would be imposed to keep the docks open during the peak period. Actually, this is busiest time in the history of West Coast shipping. (Annually, over \$300 billion worth of goods are imported or exported each year through

The entire working class has to be made aware of what is at stake. That the employing class and its government have declared war and are moving to implement the world standard of labor upon the entire working class.

the west coast docks. An important component of this trade is Agri-Business, which is centralized in California. If the docks were closed, at this peak harvest time, Agri-Business would have enormous losses totaling many billions of dollars.)

Basically, the PMA went on strike to get the Taft-Hartley injunction and put the ILWU to work without a contract. Dockworkers are now in a "no contract - work situation."

The ILWU leadership has declared that they will continue to require that the work be done in a safe manner. If dockworkers refuse to work under unsafe conditions they must be defended by any means necessary. The health and lives of workers should supersede the health of the employer's profits. In response to the injunction, said ILWU International President James Spinosa stated: "We fully expect PMA to



use all the anti-union provisions of the Taft-Hartley injunction. These 80 days will not be a 'cooling off period,' 'PMA will start alleging 'slowdowns' by Thursday and will continue that. Taft-Hartley gives them 80 days of free shots at the union and we expect the employers will be dragging us to court daily, trying to bankrupt the union and throw our leaders in jail."

The Current Situation

With the deepening decline in the U.S. and world economy, the United States capitalist class has been forced to begin a class battle to housebreak the dockworkers and the industrial unions - something they had not dared tried

to do since 1948. They have "rung the bell" of class warfare and all workers need to be educated that the bell tolls for all of us.

Worldwide, from Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Korea, the docks are being privatized and/or their labor casualized. The worldwide union-busting project against longshore unions has now come to capitalism's heartland. This cannot be viewed as only an assault on individual unions but a direct challenge to workers' power and the small measures of economic democracy that flows from that power. The capitalist class will not be satisfied until the docks of the world, perhaps the most critical point of distribution in a globalized economy, are fully under their exclusive control.

The imposition of the Taft-Hartley injunction has made the battle not just economic, but political. It is now necessary to oppose and expose the government for what it is - an employers government established to defend employers and maintain their class rule. In this country, the working class has no party of its own to politically defend itself. The ruling class owns the political arena, and it is the beginning of wisdom to explain this reality and for the entire labor movement to withdraw all support to capitalist politicians and initiate the building of a party of the

working class.

At the current moment, it is a one sided class war. But one must never underestimate the power of dockworkers when they act collectively. They have demonstrated their power to shut down \$300 billion dollars worth of trade. Now is the time for the ILWU and the entire labor movement to begin to act as the leadership of the class instead of labor statesmen for the ruling class. And take a lesson from the employers and respond to this attack in a collective manner.

The entire working class has to be made aware of what is at stake. That the employing class and its government have declared war and are moving to implement the world standard of labor upon the entire working class. (The "Globalization of Wages.")

The entire labor movement must be mobilized in order to defeat this frontal attack. To begin with, Labor and Trade Councils throughout the country should use the full power of the AFL-CIO to hold mass meetings throughout the nation to explain the stakes that are involved and to begin to organize the political and economic power of the entire class - the majority of this country - against this assault. To give real meaning to the slogan: "an injury to one is an injury to all." □



Pakistani Marxist MP speaks out

Interview with Mansoor Ahmed, Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan

Interview by Jonathan Clyne

JC: What will your role be in parliament?

MA: My duty is to raise the problems of the working class on the floor of the parliament. There are so many problems. Since partition the ruling class has not solved any problems. The rate of unemployment is very high. We have the problems of the peasants, health, education and foreign policy. Poverty has increased during the 54 years since partition. Basically this parliament is the parliament of the ruling class. I'm a representative of the working class in this parliament, so I will raise all these issues there. However, my role outside the parliament is more important. My election is a good chance to organize every peasant, every worker, every youth.

JC: What is the main solution to the problems faced by the workers and peasants?

MA: The only solution is a socialist revolution. Nothing less than that. These days there is no room in the economy for any reforms at all. The system must be transformed, it cannot be reformed. We will struggle for the socialist policies inside and outside parliament. Nowadays many people are saying we need a revolution. They don't believe in the system. Everybody is suffering from the miseries of the system. They don't know how a revolution can be achieved, but they want change. Our task is to provide the leadership, to provide the party. This will take time. It won't happen within days or months. However, within the next period there will be revolutionary and counter-revolutionary movements. A revolutionary movement can erupt abruptly and then we can change the whole of society.

JC: If there was a revolution what would be the most important things to do?

MA: We must eliminate feudalism, fundamentalism and nationalise the commanding heights of the economy and expropriate imperialist assets. There is a marvellous potential productive capacity in Pakistan. But due to the crisis of capi-

talism and the policies of the IMF more than 7000 factories have been closed over the last decade. In the past we have had nationalisation, even big nationalisations in the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto era in the seventies. The problem was under bureaucratic control. Now we must have it under the democratic control of the proletariat. This will lead to an enormous increase in production.

JC: There have been several wars with India and now at this very moment millions of troops are massed on either side of the border; don't you think that after a socialist revolution India would try to attack Pakistan?

MA: Yes, but the Indian working class is the largest working class in South Asia. It is our biggest ally. They can play a role in stopping the war of the Indian ruling class against a Socialist Pakistan. We in Pakistan can never stop them by ourselves, but the Indian working class can. The Indian working class has a marvellous tradition of struggle. I think that the Indian and Pakistani revolutions are not two separate things. If we are to carry through the Pakistani revolution we must carry through the revolution in the whole sub-continent. After the socialist revolution partition can be ended through a socialist federation. It's a beautiful sub-continent. The working class is very hard working and artistic. The history of the last 5000 years is full of rich culture and civilisations. It is the ruling class in the sub-continent that is responsible for all the poverty and miseries that has marred this society.

JC: In this election the fundamentalists have received their highest votes ever. They got 16% of the seats in parliament, in the past they have only achieved 5%. Why is this?

MA: It's very simple. A key issue in the Pakistani elections has been the mood against American imperialism. The fundamentalists have used this issue, above all in the provinces that border with Afghanistan. No party, no single candidate of any other party (including even most candidates of the PPP) came

out against American imperialism. American imperialism has played a very bad, a very dirty role, not least in Afghanistan. They bombed civilians. Originally, in the past, American imperialism used fundamentalism, now they have withdrawn their money and the fundamentalists have turned against the US. The PPP must take a stand against imperialism. It is an open secret that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged in 1979 by the military Government on behalf of US imperialism. I took a clear stand against imperialism and as a result the fundamentalists in my constituency received less than 1% of the vote.

JC: There are also enormous national, religious and ethnic conflicts in Pakistan. How can these be overcome?

MA: Everybody is killing one another. In the Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and North West Frontier, everywhere there is a constant turmoil and conflagration. A movement of the working class would cut across all this. At the moment the working class, especially in Pakistan, is not active. It is waiting, observing. There are only some small movements now, but ultimately there will be a massive upsurge.

JC: What is the position of women in Pakistan today?

MA: The position of women is very bad. They are doubly exploited. Once by the system and then by the males. Millions of working class women are working more than 16 hours a day. They also look after the children, cook the food and work hard in the home. They are not treated like human beings. There is also the tradition of Karo Kari (honour killing). In some areas women are never allowed out of the house and are not even allowed to speak. They are the most oppressed in Pakistan. They are 48% of the population, a fact which shows that there is a generalised neglect in the care of female babies. There is no solution to this within this system. The basic problem is an economic problem. Women's work is not counted by the system and the money they earn they have to give directly to



the men. How can you change things when the education and health system is at such a low level? Only 1.2% of the state budget is spent on education. It is shameful. Only 0.7% of the budget is spent on health. NGOs are supposed to be working for women, but what have they achieved? Nothing. The conditions for working class women are worse than before. Improving things for women is interlinked with the socialist revolution. In some layers of society, such as among the ruling class, the position of women is more advanced, but among other layers slavery still exists. This has to be changed with a leap not with reforms.

JC: What was the role of women in your campaign?

MA: It was very good. For the first time in the history of Kasur we had big public meetings with women. In one meeting we had more than 500 women. I addressed that meeting. It was marvellous. They were very happy and very enthused. In the coming period we shall try to accelerate women's participation. Women played a key role in my campaign. Before entering parliament I want to arrange a big meeting with women to listen to their problems and ask them to guide me in my work and I will raise their problems from the floor of the parliament.

JC: What has been the role of the trade unions in your constituency?

MA: I have had big support from all the trade unions. The unions are not large, but their support has been very important, especially the Power-Loom

Workers' Union, the Rickshaw Drivers' Union, the Bank Workers' and the Water and Power Workers' Union. I have also had the support of the Journalists Union and Postal Workers' Union. The Sanitary workers, who are Christians, have given me their full support. I worked with the unions not just during the election, but also before the elections and now I will hold meetings with them to discuss what I can do as an MP for them. The essence of my campaign has been that everybody has not been campaigning for Mansoor but for themselves. This has been the decisive reason for my victory.

JC: What were the main activities of your election campaign?

MA: There were two main things. Firstly, there was the man-to-man, woman-to-woman and door-to-door campaigning that involved many people. Secondly, there were the public meetings that I spoke at. There were marvellous public meetings. It has been like a dream to speak during the course of one day at 15 public meetings. You can see that I still have a problem with my throat a week after the election. I must have spoken at more than 200 public meetings during the whole campaign. In every public meeting there were no less than 1000 people and in some areas the meetings were of more than 10,000. We didn't organise them by advertising on buses, because the Government did not allow us to arrange big public meetings, unlike all the other candidates. This was because we were really against the Government.

The candidates standing against me were very rich. During the campaign I challenged my opponent candidates to drink a sip of ordinary Kasur water which I was drinking in front of thousands of people. But they are not used to this and they didn't dare drink it, as they would have got sick if they had. They didn't accept the challenge. One of them, Nelufar Qasim Mehdi, is from the classical bourgeoisie. Her family is one of the ten richest families in Pakistan. Nelufar spent almost 50 million rupees on her campaign. That is a big amount in Pakistan. Khursid Kasuri, another wealthy candidate, spent 35 million rupees. For my whole campaign my expenses did not even touch the figure of one million. It is very interesting that people have given me money, published my posters, my stickers. We do not even know who printed one of the stickers that supported me. People have supplied my campaign with cars. People helped spontaneously. These things have inspired me. When I came down from the stage to meet people hundreds of them would gather around me, one man came to me daily and gave me 100 rupees (probably most of his daily wage). Another time I found a piece of paper in my pockets when I got home. It was a cheque for 10,000 rupees from a person I don't know. They have given me a lot of love, a lot of everything. I defeated the rich candidates thanks to the working class, the peasants and the youth.

JC: The way your campaign was organised and the ideas you stand for are very different from

most of the PPP candidates and in particular from the leadership. Has it been an advantage or a disadvantage for you to be a PPP candidate?

MA: I was campaigning on the basic manifesto of the PPP. In 1968 and 1969 there was a big movement. It was a marvellous revolutionary movement, that changed the mood of the masses. The PPP is a product of that movement, and explains why the PPP is the most popular political party among the working class. That movement produced the best manifesto ever in the history of Pakistan and even in the history of the whole sub-continent. It contains the ultimate goal of the PPP - to build a classless society through the socialist revolution. Even the manifestos of the Communist Parties in the past have not had the agenda of the socialist revolution so clearly stated; instead they have stood for a national-democratic revolution. It has been easy to be part of the PPP and put forward a socialist programme. I am not defying the basic manifesto and character of the PPP. The leadership is.

JC: What has inspired you in your struggle?

MA: The ideas of Marxism have inspired me. After Marx and Engels, I have been inspired by Lenin and Trotsky, and then by the ideas developed by Ted Grant and the international Marxist movement gathered around the In Defence of Marxism web site, and specially the idea that Marxists should fight for their ideas within the framework of the mass organisations in order to reach the working class. □



Bowling For Columbine (Dir: Michael Moore, 2002)

As these words are being written, a serial sniper killer in America is stalking Washington, shooting seemingly random targets on a near daily basis. This drama will undoubtedly be uppermost in peoples minds when seeing the new documentary from Michael Moore, who previously directed 'Roger and Me' as well as writing the best seller 'Stupid White Men' (reviewed below). Using the event where 13 people were shot dead at Columbine High School by two pupils in April 1999 as a focal point, Moore sets out to ask some very uncomfortable questions about American society and guns. Is the issue simply about the sheer volume of guns to be found in America? Evidently not - Canada has the same proportionate degree of gun ownership as the USA yet the figures quoted show that last year only 165 deaths from gun shootings occurred in Canada as against a staggering 11,127 - deaths in the States.

Moore argues that the real issue is that of fear and how that fear is used to divert attention from the issues Americans should be shouting about: Corporate greed, government corruption and collusion with big business and so on. This is a fear which is also highly profitable for the gun industry and their well financed mouth-piece/apologists the National Rifle Association (NRA). The NRA hide behind the Second Amendment to the US constitution which guarantees the rights of Americans to bear arms not just to protect themselves but also against the potential tyranny of their own government. This is an important right born out of revolution but it is one which the NRA uses but in reality does not believe in - quite the reverse in fact. The 'right' they stand for is for middle and upper class America to be armed to the teeth to protect itself against an urban and rural poor who they exploit yet also fear and detest. Their attitude is that any poor or black or Hispanic person found carrying a gun is clearly a criminal who should be arrested and locked up without delay - zero tolerance they call it. Young black and Hispanic men know that the usual response of the cops to an incident involving them is to shoot first and ask questions later - so they may as well be armed anyway. Although Moore interviews members of the so-called Michigan Militia, his tendency towards woolly liberalism does rather force him to miss the point - namely that although these groups may be a bit wacky they do have a point in fearing a Federal Government who attitude to anything a bit different is to lay siege with an army of sharpshooters. Because of their right wing stance the Michigan Militia are, quite literally, an easy target but we should note that the state has shown similar armed hostility to strikers and community organisations taking action over the years.

The irony is that the arms industry both plays on fears about guns and yet encourages the very people they are frightened of to buy more and more such weapons, thereby boosting profits for them at a very bloody price. Moore's film shows guns being given away at a bank (!) to new customers and K-Mart selling hand-gun ammunition to supermarket shoppers buying their low cost groceries. But to argue that just banning all guns will somehow solve the problem - apart from try-

ing to close a barn door long after the horse has well and truly bolted - is to avoid facing up to the real question of why all this violence and killing is taking place, which is a problem deeply rooted in the structure of class society. Such laws would not stop this bloodshed but simply be used by the capitalist state to try and disarm the poor or, more to the point, use such legislation as an means to crack down on them still further, emphasising the gap between the have and the have-nots. Ultimately, although well hidden, the revolutionary intentions behind the Second Amendment may be the ones which capitalist America comes to fear most of all.



Stupid White Men

Michael Moore

(Penguin paperback edition) £7.99

Now available in an updated paperback edition, Michael Moore's best selling collection of humorous rants on the twists and turns of America's ruling class has attracted as much interest over its chequered publishing history as for what it actually says. Originally intended to come out in America on September 11th 2001, the book ended being mothballed in a warehouse by a frightened publisher who wanted to just publish feel-good books, which did not attack Bush and corporate America. Stalemate set in when Moore refused to rewrite the book toning down its message. Only after Moore let slip to a group of librarians that the 50,000 books rotting in the warehouse might end up being pulped did a campaign start up to get them out - which in the end under pressure was what happened. More amazingly, despite no publicity being given to the book whatsoever by the publisher, it became an instant best seller - showing that the American readership were not quite as pro-Bush as the publisher had imagined. The book even became - as an import - a best seller in the UK. Now with a change of publisher, away from the Murdoch owned HarperCollins, a UK paperback edition is finally out (check out www.michaelmoore.com for all the real background on this) and in the bookshops. Moore weighs into almost everything and everyone in this often very funny book, which shows just how rotten the Republicans as well as the Democrats actually are. True, his solutions are often just as likely to be trite as effective (where he actually suggests solutions that is) but don't let that put you off getting this highly readable book and in doing so showing up the Murdoch empire once again.

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Reason in Revolt launched at the Frankfurt Book Fair

The Frankfurt Book Fair is the largest book fair in the world.

On Saturday, October 12, Alan Woods participated in the official launch of the German edition of *Reason in Revolt* (*Aufstand der Vernunft*) which has just come out.

The publication has already aroused a lot of interest in left circles in Germany and Austria, where a series of public presentations is being prepared for the next few months.

One of those who attended the book launch put it this way: "It was about time that the Left in Germany began to defend the ideas of Marxism again." An older veteran of the Marxist movement said that *Reason in Revolt* (which he had already read in English) was the best book on Marxist philosophy since *Anti Dühring*.

Perhaps the most significant development was the links that have been forged with the left daily paper *Junge Welt*, which is preparing to publish a long interview with Alan in its Saturday edition, and he will

also participate in a meeting in Berlin organized by *Junge Welt* in January. In addition, a book launch is planned to take place in December in Vienna.

In addition to the book launch in Frankfurt in the evening of Friday, October 11, Alan spoke about the book to a successful meeting of trade unionists and SPD members in Wiesbaden, which showed the tremendous interest and thirst for Marxist ideas that exist in left wing circles in Germany.

As an interesting footnote, among those who attended the book launch in Frankfurt was a woman professor of theoretical physics in Tirana who showed great enthusiasm for the idea of a book about Marxist philosophy and science and expressed an interest in promoting an Albanian edition.

October 16, 2002

Note: *Aufstand der Vernunft* (*Marxistische Philosophie und moderne Wissenschaft*) is published by Promedia (Edition Forschung).



JIMMY DEANE APPEAL

We are paying tribute to comrade Jimmy Deane, who passed away on 21st August, by launching a memorial fund. This will be used to fund a suitable project to honour Jimmy's contribution to the Trotskyist movement and to further the cause he promoted all his life.

Please made all donations payable to the 'Jimmy Deane Memorial Fund', and send to the

**Jimmy Deane Memorial Fund,
c/o Socialist Appeal,
PO Box 2626,
London N1 7SQ.**

Donations can also be made online through the 'In Defence of Marxism' website (www.marxist.com). All donations will be gratefully acknowledged.

Reclaim The Party! Build the forces of Marxism

At this years Labour Party conference Tony Blair talked a lot about how we are all 'individuals' (i.e. there is no such thing as society, remember that) and we are all 'consumers' as against say patients or parents or passengers. In other words we are all sources of money for capitalism and the task of New Labour is to determine how this cash is ripped off us and passed on to the City of London.

This rehashed Toryism did not go down very well with the delegates who had already inflicted a defeat on the government over PFI and produced a strong vote against the pro-war position of Blair. Indeed, as *Socialist Appeal* as constantly argued would be the case, we could clearly see here the potential limitations of the Blairite 'revolution' being exposed to view as the contradictions involved in having to defend a capitalist system which simply cannot produce the goods becomes more and more apparent.

The good sales of *Socialist Appeal* at both the TUC and Labour Party conferences led the way in what has been a splendid few weeks for sales of the journal - so good that, especially with the anti-war demo at the end of September as well, we have actually started to run short of copies of the October issue! This is a shortage we welcome - it means we will have to increase our print run. New opportunities to sell *Socialist Appeal* will now present itself with the firefighters strike so we will surely be able to keep this up. You can help.

Contact us now to set up a bulk order arrangement. Even taking just a few copies of each issue to sell each month can help us boost our sales still further and help spread the ideas of socialism.

You can also help by donating to our fighting fund. We have a modest target of £3000 this autumn. Since August we have raised over £1350 pounds, which needs to be matched over the next few weeks if we are to hit the target. In addition to this figure we have also had collections of £120 in Merseyside and £200 in Edinburgh towards the Jimmy Deane memorial appeal.

We thank all our readers who have donated and ask you all to keep it up. If we all do this then the target will be reached and valuable resources will then be available to help expand the ideas of Marxism as represented in the pages of this journal. We need to print more copies of *Socialist Appeal*, produce more leaflets and pamphlets, improve our websites and generally ensure that more people each month get to hear about the alternative to Blairism and big business and join in the fight to reclaim our party. This can only be done with your help. Please send all donations however small to us at PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ and help keep the red flag flying!

Steve Jones

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History of British Trotskyism

by Ted Grant

This book is a unique contribution to the history of British Trotskyism. Ted Grant joined the Trotskyist Left Opposition in South Africa in the late 1920s. He emigrated to Britain in late 1934 and joined the Trotskyists in the Independent Labour Party and subsequently the Labour Party.

During the war, Grant became the chief theoretician of the Workers' International League, and later the Revolutionary Communist Party. The historic events of the

period are fully covered, including the author's personal recollections, and his role in events.

The book begins with the debate on Trotskyism in the British Communist Party in 1924 and ends with the break-up of the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1949 and the beginning of more than thirty years of work within the Labour Party.

Ted Grant was the founder and political leader of the "Militant Tendency", which haunted the Labour leadership, and was eventually expelled along with the Militant editorial board in 1983. A postscript by Rob Sewell, who was the national organiser for the Militant throughout the 1980s, brings this unique history up to date.

Ted Grant is the longest surviving Trotskyist of any prominence alive today. His contribution has served to preserve the unbroken thread of genuine Trotskyism. This book is a first-hand account of the life of a Trotskyist pioneer, and will be indispensable to students of political history, and above all, an inspiration to all those seeking to change the world.

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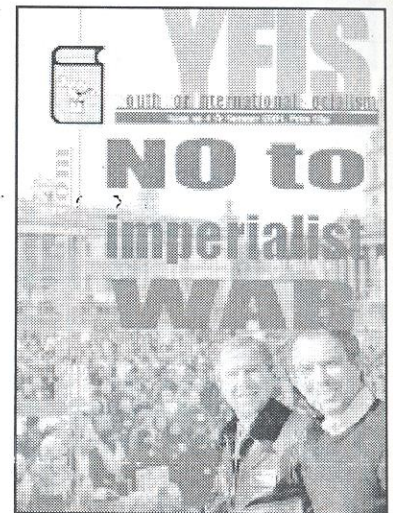
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November 2002



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Socialist Appeal Stands for:

✚ **For a Labour government with a bold socialist programme!** Labour must break with big business and Tory economic policies. Vote Labour and fight to reclaim the party.

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✚ **Full employment!** No redundancies. The right to a job or decent benefits. For a 32 hour week without loss of pay. No compulsory overtime. For voluntary retirement at 55 with a decent full pension for all.

✚ **No more sell offs.** Reverse the Tories privatisation scandal. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities under democratic workers control and management. No compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need.

✚ **The repeal of all Tory anti-union laws.** Full employment rights for all from day one. For the right to strike, the right to union representation and collective bargaining.

Election of all trade union officials with the right of recall. No official to receive more than the wage of a skilled worker.

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er education. Scrap tuition fees. No to student loans. For a living grant for all over 16 in education or training.

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✚ **The reversal of the Tories' cuts in the health service.** Abolish private health care. For a National Health Service, free to all at the point of need, based on the nationalisation of the big drug companies that squeeze their profits out of the health of working people.

✚ **Reclaim the Labour Party!** Defeat Blairism! Fight for Party democracy and socialist policies. For workers' MPs on workers' wages.

✚ **The abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.** Full economic powers for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, enabling them to introduce socialist measures in the interests of working people. ✚ No to sectarianism. For a Socialist United Ireland linked by a voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain.

✚ **Break with the anarchy of the capitalist free market.** Labour to immediately take over the "commanding heights of the economy." Nationalise the big monopolies, banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises to be run under workers control and management and integrated through a democratic socialist plan of production.

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Socialist Appeal

Marxist voice of the labour movement

Victory to the Firefighters! **PAY THEM 30K NOW!**

At the beginning of this month, as the first wave of strikes loomed the government was preparing to square up to the firefighters; "Picket lines might be crossed.... no options are being ruled out" Blair triumphantly proclaimed. This was a blatant threat of attack, such actions would have put the government on a collision course with the unions. It shows how removed from reality Blair is in arrogantly attempting to trample over the concerns of working people.

However they are in for a rude awakening, the discontent of the workers has been bubbling away and is now beginning to boil over - the Blairites can no longer get away with what they used to. Despite claiming that there was 'no money in the pot', and being one of their most vociferous critics, John Prescott called the FBU leadership in for negotiations at the end of last month. That represents a climb-down by the government, who are worried by the support the firefighters are getting from the public and the trade unions, in spite of their campaign of press propaganda.

The firefighters dispute is more than just an isolated strike over pay. It represents a qualitative step forward in the industrial situation. The years of budget cuts, increasing workloads, deterioration of working conditions, and wage restraint, even throughout the period of a boom in the economy, has transferred enormous pressure onto work-

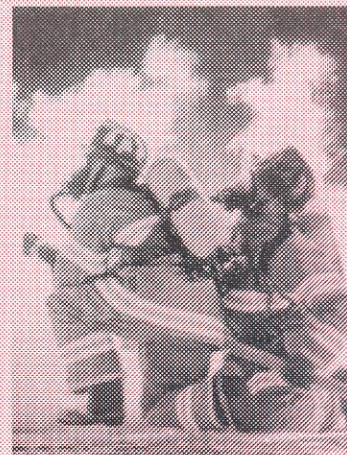
ers. The bosses want to provide public services on the cheap, just as they want workers in industry to be more productive without new investment in plant. These accumulated tensions have led to an unstoppable shift to the left, which is still picking up momentum. Until now the Blairites have been pushing and pushing the unions, now they find themselves on the eve of their first big dispute they have been forced to take a step back to avoid an explosion.

The government is using many arguments to fudge the issue and attempt to make the firefighters look naïve or greedy. But the government can afford to pay all public servants higher wages! The real reason they want to break the dispute is because the Blairites worry that it will open the door to pay claims from low paid workers across the public sector, and lead the unions to challenge more and more the favours for big business agenda of the clique who have hijacked the Labour Party.

It is clear that the government will use the most unscrupulous methods going, to try to intimidate and pressurise the leaders of the union; they will try to outlaw the action, and might even use the army not only to cover the duties, but also to intimidate the workers on the picket lines. Any attack on the firefighters is an attack on all workers; the entire trade union movement must act decisively in solidarity with the firefighters. Every union branch must send

messages of solidarity, donations to strike funds, and give active support to the action.

We must call on the TUC to build up the momentum, and create an active broad based labour movement support around the dispute. Safety must not be compromised at work; the unions should give full backing to any workers who refuse to work on strike days. The struggle of the fire fighters is part of a struggle of the whole movement against attacks on pay, working conditions and living standards, the whole movement must be mobilised to resist attempts to break the strike, and secure victory to the firefighters.



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