

● Amicus election ● top-up fees ● world economy

# SocialistAppeal

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**Labour supporters grow angry**

# Blair must GO



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- **History of British Trade Unionism**

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# The Challenge to Blairism

NOT FOR the first time postal workers in and around London find themselves at the forefront of a struggle against both management and the government. The exclusion of working class children from higher education, through increased fees and the promise of life-long-debt instead of life-long-learning, has brought thousands of students onto the streets in protest.

Strikes, demonstrations, political crises, Britain looks a lot different now than it did when Blair and co came to power. Yet this is only the beginning. Blair has yet to face an economic crisis. With historic levels of personal indebtedness representing a powder keg on the one hand, and the Bank of England preparing to light the fuse by raising interest rates on the other, such a crisis is inevitable - and there is no sign of a recovery in the world market upon which the British economy is utterly dependent. The industrial action of postal workers is no aberration, but is merely a taste of things to come, as Blair persists with his policy of privatising public services. On the industrial front Blair will face one new battle after another, and, through the unions, these struggles will find their way into the Labour Party as well.

Within the Labour Party, we already have the first open splits in the cabinet with the resignations of Cook and Short. The scandal of the expulsion of George Galloway, which all labour movement bodies should immediately protest against, is a sign of the weakness not the strength of the Blairite clique. A kangaroo court of three expelled Galloway for his vocal opposition to the war in Iraq, but a serious campaign taken to

every constituency and above all in the unions, could overturn that decision and deal a devastating blow to Blair. Meanwhile the new left-leaning union leaders have taken another step along the road of organising a serious campaign to reclaim Labour, with the formation of the Labour Representation Committee. In the next period this will become the dominant question in British politics.

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For us the task of the hour is to give active support to workers struggling to defend jobs and services and carry that fight over into the Labour Party, into a fight for socialist policies.

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For now the British media is dominated by the twin soap operas - the crisis in the Tory Party, and the latest revelations of the former royal butler, Paul Burrell. As we have long explained this is not a secondary matter. The Tories remain the main party of big business, but for the last decade have stumbled from one crisis to the next. Hopelessly divided over Europe, their bitter internal disputes accurately reflect a deep-seated crisis within the ruling class over how best to defend their system. For a period they have been able to rest comfortably upon Blair who has faithfully done their bidding. Sooner or later however Blair is finished. He may be chuckling at the present mess facing the Tories, but in the not too distant future a

similar fate awaits him. With IDS gone, the poisoned chalice seems likely to pass to Michael Howard. But which individual leads the Tories will not have a decisive impact on their fortunes. They will attempt to refurbish their image, but for now their only hope of holding on electorally is the growing disillusionment with Blair.

What a tragedy that with the main bosses' party in disarray, their system has been so stonically defended by the leaders of the Labour Party. Indeed, so vociferously and dogmatically have they defended the free market that their attacks on the rights and living standards of workers have forced some workers to question the historic link between Labour and the unions. Whilst it is impossible not to sympathise with workers who question funding a party who in government are attacking them this is not the answer. In the end it would be an impotent gesture, and moreover, one welcomed by Blair and co who were roundly defeated by a united union opposition at this year's Labour Party conference. One only has to pose the following question to see the futility of such frustration. Will breaking the link defeat Royal Mail management or bring the railways back into public ownership?

In the past when we argued for the unions to reclaim the Labour Party, we were told, 'there is no such campaign', 'you can't defeat Blair inside the Labour Party', and so on. A year ago, if one only looked at the surface of events, or at the tops of the movement, this would have been an understandable conclusion. Now it is incomprehensible. The leaders of the main trade unions united

at the party conference - just four unions having forty percent of the vote between them - and defeated Blair. Jackson was defeated in the AEEU. Elections for leaders in the T&G and other unions followed, all resulting in a further shift to the left. Of course the election of one or two left general secretaries does not solve anything in itself. These events must not be seen in isolation however, but as part of a process demonstrating growing militancy, and the inevitable spilling over of that mood from the unions into the Labour Party.

The idea of breaking the link, always backed by the Tories and the Blairites, and supported by some sectarian groups on the fringes for their own short-sighted propaganda purposes, must now be redundant. The struggle is now being joined to defeat Blair inside the Labour Party. We will lend our full support to such a campaign. The launch of the Labour Representation Committee is an important initiative and another stage in the process. It must be taken to every trade unionist and Labour member. For us the task of the hour is to give active support to workers struggling to defend jobs and services and carry that fight over into the Labour Party, into a fight for socialist policies. IDS is not the only Tory leader whose career is finished. Tory Blair can be defeated too, but only by a serious struggle inside the labour movement.

- No to disaffiliation, don't contract out, contract in!
- Build the Labour Representation Committee, trade unions reclaim Labour!
- For militant trade unionism and socialist policies!

## TGWU - Left Unity Needed

By Rachael Webb, Branch Secretary 1/888 (Road Transport Commercials) T&G, Sussex

THE RESULTS of the election for Deputy General Secretary of the T&G, (following Tony Woodley being voted in as General Secretary by a large majority), were:

Jack Dromey	62,422
Graham Stevenson	29,363
Barry Camfield	24,145

As Jack Dromey supports the sort of Blairite policies supported by Harriet Harman and her kind, this election represents a certain setback for the left in the union rank and file.

There were a number of reasons for this result. Firstly, Jack Dromey attempted to dress himself as a left-winger. In the leading statement of his election address, he began by appearing as a supporter of Tony Woodley: "T&G members have had enough. You want change. Jack is asking for your support so together with Tony Woodley they can unite the union and inspire members to win in their workplace."

The media machine nationally made play of him being "on the left" and it is a fact that some ballot papers were spoilt by being marked "all a lot of left wingers."

"Tony Woodley and Jack Dromey are the dream team to lead the T&G. I was a member of Tony's General Secretary campaign team. Thousands of Tony's supporters are now backing Jack", stated Roy Rix, Stockton Convenor. Of course, Dromey doesn't say that he opposed Tony Woodley and lost in the ballot for General Secretary.

It may well be that many T&G members who voted for Jack Dromey did so because they believed that Tony Woodley was supporting him. In fact, Woodley was supported by the same group who supported Graham Stevenson.

Apart from Roy Rix, it is probably hard to find any T&G members who supported both Tony Woodley and Jack Dromey.

Secondly, the left was divided. There are two left organisations in the T&G: a "Morning Star"/ex-CP left who supported Barry Camfield and a left organisation which supported Graham Stevenson. We therefore have to face the facts that a divided left, a hostile media and unscrupulous tactics by the Jack Dromey camp has confused some people and may demoralise many others.

This must not be allowed to happen again. Given this result, it is surely time to unify the left. One clear lesson from this election is that we cannot afford to confuse the membership. We must unify the left on a principled basis of honest debate and discussion. On this basis we can campaign in future elections on a unified left slate.

We still have the NEC elections coming up over the next two months. These together with local, regional and national committee positions will give the left the opportunity to vote in a left majority within the Union. A left NEC and left positions in Regional and National Trade Groups and committees will force Dromey to abide by his election pledges. We must utilize the powerful strength of the T&G to attract fresh layers of workers into our ranks and re-build our union, from the present strength of about 800,000, back to a 1980's strength of over 3 million members.

## Fatigue Kills Campaign

UK T&G TRANSPORT Sector workers joined hundreds of thousands of workers all over the world in a "Fatigue Kills" Day of Action on Monday October the 13th. We gathered to present an ongoing Petition with the following demands:

Limit the working time for all transport workers to a maximum of 48 hours per week, in line with the Working Time Directive.

There should be proper enforcement of working time regulations, and sufficient resources to enforce those regulations.

Amend the European Union's Regulation 3820/85 to control working hours, not just driving time.

Repeal the domestic rules and bring most of the operations within the scope of European Union's Regulation 3820/85.

Proper resting places for long distance drivers, so that drivers have the opportunity to rest in a safe environment, free from criminal attack.

Full pay for all time on duty, with no more unpaid waiting time.

We collected thousands of signatures for these important demands; this will be part of an ongoing campaign centered around them, in order to ensure that trade union action will result in the European Working Time Directive works for our interests rather than work for employers benefit.

The demand to be paid for all time on duty is particularly important for truck drivers. We need to get paid when we are waiting to load at Groupage Warehouses, RDC's and other loading places, not just for driving time. If we are in our trucks or waiting to be allocated a job and available for work we should be paid the right hourly

rate.

Last year 150 lorry drivers were killed at work, fatigue and tiredness might not have been a cause but only proper rest, in accordance with the actual experience of working commercial vehicle drivers will reduce these tragic statistics.

Numbers might not have been what we would have wished this year, next year will see us better organised and growing in numbers, the T&G will continue to fight for truck drivers rights with the International Transport Federation in both Europe and throughout the world.

*Socialist Appeal* supporters are in agreement with the demands on this petition, however we recognise that not all Officers within our union used available resources to mobilise Transport Workers for this demo. We believe some senior officers and lay members might not be in favour of making demands that conflict with the present New Labour leadership.

We will be continuing our campaign within the Labour Party to reclaim it as our party, a party formed by Trades Unionists that will again become representative of Trade Union members interests. We note Graham Stevenson and Ron Webb supported this demonstration. We also identify the election of Tony Woodley as an important shift to the left within our union, we will support any lay and full time Officers who advocate a fighting democratic union in future campaigns, in the forthcoming elections to NEC, National and Regional General and Trade Group Committees and in future elections.

# Why we are launching the Labour Representation Committee

*Socialist Appeal's* deputy editor, **Rob Sewell**, interviewed **Mick Rix**, the former general secretary of ASLEF and instigator of the **new Labour Representation Committee**, about his views and prospects of reclaiming the Labour Party.

**SA:** Given the Blairite grip on the Labour Party, how do you see things developing in the coming period?

**Mick Rix:** I believe we are witnessing the last days of Blairism within the Labour Party. Although the project started by New Labour is not over yet, Blairism is nearly over, whether it is next year or the next few years. I think most people recognise that Tony Blair, as leader of the Party, is becoming a liability. This gives opportunity to those active in the Party, those socialists in the Party, to reclaim the agenda.

I wouldn't claim that the Labour Party was always a socialist party, but certainly it was, and is, a mass party of workers. Of course, there are many movements within the working class structure, whether they believe in a socialist programme or social democratic programme. However, over the last ten years, we have witnessed the complete theft of our organisation by people from the right, who have promoted ideas associated with Thatcherism.

The so-called third way is an attempt to control capitalism. But experience has shown you cannot control capitalism. Capitalism is continually in crisis and feeds on crisis. As socialists we believe in control of the economy, whereby those who produce, that is the majority not the minority, get the benefits so that we can build a more civilised society.

The challenge to those in and outside of the Labour Party who want to see a genuine socialist government is do we accept the transition from Blairism to Brownism or whoever is following the New Labour project, or do we put forward our own programme, involving as many as possible, based on socialist values? Surely we must challenge the status quo that defends their own class interests, based upon power, wealth and heritage.

It is high time we now influenced the agenda and organised the Party in ways it

was set up to accomplish and represent the interests of working people in this country.

**SA:** How do you see this coming about? What is the role of the new Labour Representation Committee?

**Mick:** Firstly, rank-and-file activists in the unions, socialist societies and other bodies need to come together within the Party. At the moment there is a deliberate attempt to keep them apart to prevent dialogue or discussion. New Labour loves moribund Constituency Parties. New Labour wants compliant trade unions. It does not want a powerful national executive committee. They want the Cabinet to determine all policy. To be blunt, we vote for MPs to carry out policy; we don't vote for them to determine policy for the rest of us. Every individual Party member has a right to have an input into policy and should have a vote on the correct way to proceed. That does not happen in the Party. We therefore have to challenge the failed process that has done so much damage to our Party. We need to ditch the policies pursued over the last six years, which a lot of people are fed up with and see as no different to Tory policies, such as involving the private sector in public services.

There is now a growing opportunity for people across the Party to make a difference. We are in power, and it is not a matter of changing that. But why can't we have a different approach, debate and argument? Why can't we choose the MPs we want to represent us in our localities? Why can't we choose the councillors we want? This organisational approach is key to everything.

In the last six years we have seen the Party hierarchy imitate all the worst features of the Liberals and Tories. If you come from a privileged background, that seems to give you an automatic right to get onto the career ladder to become an MP. Yet there are many working class people out there

who can do a far better job than they could ever do. The only difference is, they have not had the privileges that these people have had. We have to challenge the status quo on these matters.

**SA:** You have dealt with the position within the Labour Party, but what about those outside the Party who are at present sadly disillusioned with Blairism?

**Mick:** Our attitude to them is essential. If we are to maintain a party of government, we have to give hope to these disaffected millions. As we saw in 1997, people rejected the notions of Thatcherism. They wanted a fairer and more just society.

Labour must stand out ideologically from the Tory and Liberal parties, which are capitalist parties. We must not only maintain the Labour-trade union link, but strengthen it. We are one and the same body. We must have the input from the socialist societies, so that we are all working in tandem with each other, which is completely foreign to the New Labour agenda.

There are loads of trade unionists who are completely turned off by New Labour, and there are millions of workers, not in trade unions, who do not identify themselves with Labour because they do not believe there is any difference between the parties. So we have a job to do within the Party, and outside to reach out to those millions who are looking for an alternative. So we have a task of completely transforming the political process, as the Labour Party was set up to do in the first place. This has to be based upon working people and socialist aspirations.

We must have no illusions. It is going to be a difficult task and there are going to be some tough battles ahead. We need to create a united approach amongst the different organisations within the Party. We have to convince them the LRC can deliver. If we can achieve some of our objectives, then those outside of the Party will be enthused and encouraged to become involved. In this way we can be confident of victory. □

## **UNITY GAZETTE / MSF LEFT UNITY CANDIDATES FOR THE FORTHCOMING AMICUS EXECUTIVE ELECTIONS**

A VICTORY for this left slate in Amicus will be a big victory for Amicus members, and a step forward for the whole movement. Our union has taken a back seat for too long in our relations with the employers and with the Labour government who are attacking us. A left victory is the next key step in transforming the union into a fighting and campaigning union that will properly represent workers in our relations with the employers. It will also allow us to play a key role in taking our fight into the Labour Party, and reclaiming it as the voice of the working class.

**The Gazette** stands for:

- The return of the union to its democratic traditions.
- Election of all full time officers. No more 'jobs for the boys'

- Return of all branch structures, including funds, to lay control.
- The restoration of District Committee structures.
- Introduction of a democratic rulebook.
- An end to the policies of social partnership - no more 'sweet-heart', no-strike, deals.
- For honest representation of the members interests.
- A campaign against the bosses attacks on jobs, wages and conditions. We must not accept any more closures and redundancies.
- The Labour Government must repeal all anti union legislation, and guarantee our pensions.

### **Aerospace & Shipbuilding (3 positions)**

Neil Sheehan AEEU  
Jerry Hicks AEEU  
Tam Mitchell AEEU

### **Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals & Process (2 positions)**

John Oliver AEEU  
Rob Milne AEEU

### **Construction & Contracting (2 positions)**

Billy Speirs AEEU  
Phil Willis AEEU

### **Education, Government Departments & Local Authorities (2 positions)**

Pat McCourt AEEU  
William Gowans AEEU

### **Electronics/telecoms, electrical engineering & IT(2 positions)**

Ian Allinson MSF  
Sergio Requena-Rueda MSF

### **Energy (1 position)**

Mike Gaskell AEEU

### **FPA/CMA (2 positions)**

Colin Walker MSF

### **Finance (3 positions)**

Ebrahim Tavasoli MSF  
Graham Hunt MSF

### **Food, Drink & Tobacco (1 position)**

Jeff Tate AEEU

### **General Industries & Servicing (4 positions)**

Howard Turner AEEU  
Tony Lewis AEEU  
Dean Taylor AEEU  
Peter Taylor AEEU

### **Health Service (3 positions)**

Janet Moir MSF  
Gill George MSF  
Dave Hutchinson MSF

### **Foundry & Metals (2 positions)**

Eddie Grimes AEEU  
Peter Currall AEEU

### **Motor Vehicles & Components (3 positions)**

Harry Copeland AEEU  
Martin McMulkin AEEU  
George Taylor AEEU

### **Transport (1 position)**

Paul Thomas AEEU

### **Voluntary, Not for Profit & Business Services (1 position)**

John Barr MSF

### **Womens seats (4 positions)**

Jane Stewart MSF  
Vi Huddart AEEU  
Sharon Allen MSF  
Pauline Frazer AEEU

### **Regional Seats**

East of England - Mick Longley AEEU  
South East England - Peter Kelly AEEU  
South West England - Ray Bazeley AEEU  
London - Pete Gillard MSF  
West Midlands - Derek Barlow AEEU  
East Midlands - Matt Simmons AEEU  
Yorkshire - Steve Davison AEEU  
North East - Brian Cole AEEU  
North West - Brian Pemberton MSF  
Scotland - David Brockett AEEU  
Wales- Meurig Thomas AEEU  
Ireland - Laurence Galbraith MSF

# Power Workers under the cosh of Privatisation

By Mike Gaskell, shop steward, Scottish Power

ACCORDING TO OFGEM regulation has been a resounding success. The proof they say is the creation of a competitive market in the entire energy industry. Competition means winners and losers with city speculators winning and consumers and workers in the industry losing. Each of the previous regulatory reviews has led to job losses and further contractisation/casualisation of the workforce. Workers in distribution are facing another review announcement next year. Regulation and competition have led to power cuts, in London in September this year, and over large parts of the southern half of Britain last October after the wind blew. This was not due to too much investment in the network and infrastructure!

According to The Guardian, British energy despite its difficulties is likely to pay city spivs £100 million in advisor fees as it attempts to solve its problems. The former Midlands electricity board, currently up for sale, has had nearly every other company in the industry run a slide rule over it to see if "costs" can be squeezed out. Privatisation/Regulation has also led to the failure of companies such as TXU Europe and created a situation in generation where power cuts are being talked about as a serious prospect this winter. Some success!

The response from our union in the past has been the concept of partnership. This is the idea that if we assist the company in achieving maximum profits then their gratitude will ensure that our members' jobs are safe. Partnership allowed the introduction of all kinds of schemes, gimmicks and fads designed to squeeze every last drop of productivity out of us and in my opinion little else. The partnership argument was also used to lower expectations of what the election of a Labour Government could achieve. 'Better to use our influence with the Government and co-operate with, rather than, confront the employer' ran the argument. This approach has failed miserably. Since privatisation jobs have shrunk from 114,219 in 1990 to 71,000 in 2001. This reduction went largely unnoticed with no campaign of



**Vote for a campaigning executive in touch with and accountable to the members**

**For an energy plan in order to end the free market anarchy that is ruining our industry.**

**Common standards of pay, hours of work, pension provision, holidays these should be not less than the best already achieved.**

**A 35 hour week without loss of pay.**

**A massive influx of trainees (apprentices, trainee engineers, clerical and admin) to end the culture of casualisation**

**The right to retire at fifty.**

**The election of full time officials**

opposition organised by the union. In some instances the union supported schemes such as "conversion franchising". This is, in effect, a scheme that allows companies to make workers redundant. Those workers then use their redundancy money to buy their jobs back. The end product is the smashing of organised trade unionism with collective agreements terms and conditions etc and the creation of many small businesses all competing against each other for work. A Tory dream.

The partnership approach, however, has not prevented disputes and in the case of Scottish Power, power systems, led to strike action in 2001. In that dispute partnership proved to be a very poor defence against attacks on our terms and conditions. I am opposed to that approach and believe that we have the industrial strength and ability to stand up to the attacks on us from both the employer and the regulator.

It is now six long years since we elected a Labour government. The massive optimism and expectation that things could only get better have been betrayed. As a socialist I believe that the union exists to represent the members, to defend our current terms and conditions and to improve them. The union should also have ambition on behalf of its membership and should argue and campaign for a better society. What is wrong with calling for full employment on decent wages? The right to a decent affordable home. A health service free and readily accessible to everyone. The right for trade unions to take strike action when needed, free from the interference of the courts. For the ending of the free market anarchy currently ruining our industry.

In my opinion the privatisation experiment has failed and should be ended. We need an energy plan that looks to the future needs of the country and not the short-term need for profit that cares nothing for the wider needs of society. I am a supporter of the calls to reclaim the Labour Party for the Labour movement. Criticism of the Government does not mean we want the Tories back.

## CONSTRUCTION WORKERS NEED A FIGHTING LEAD

By Phil Willis, *Gazette* candidate for Amicus Executive - Construction

WHAT A BREATH of fresh air the election win of Derek Simpson was for all Amicus/AEEU members, especially in my own industry, construction. Derek's win has lifted the construction workers' belief that something meaningful can now be done about our industry for the first time in many years and has raised hopes and aspirations for many other industries that suffered at the hands of Sir Ken Jackson's leadership. Sir Ken was particularly partial to policies that were detrimental to working people's lives. Partnerships with employers and no strike deals were the order of the day, selling workers rights down the river and allowing employers to control workers with a rod of iron. I, myself, and numerous colleagues have paid the heavy price for daring to be elected Shop Stewards and to stand up for the people we were charged to represent. The fear factor for many, was just too strong, afraid to speak out on issues such as Health & Safety or Terms & Conditions, knowing full well that as soon as you did you were a marked man for the rest of your career, and that the Union would give you very little support. The nature of construction is that in the eyes of the employers the workforce is just one big heaving mass of casualised labour to be picked up and then discarded at will. At the end of a contract the employers would simply weed out all those they perceived as 'troublemakers' and these workers would not be transferred onto the next job, simply dumped. To finalise their objectives the employers would then network very effectively amongst themselves to ensure that these troublemakers could not get a job elsewhere. Most



companies if asked will deny the existence of this practice known as 'blacklisting' but I can assure you from personal experience it not only exists but it is very real and very effective at keeping union activists at bay. Last year, having been made 'redundant' and having been given only 24 hours notice of this redundancy, no consultation, no warning, four of my colleagues and I were disposed of by our employers. Most of the lads managed, after a struggle, to find work. I, however, as an ex-Steward could find nothing. We decided to take our previous employer to a tribunal but were very sceptical as to whether the Union would support us. There had been many cases previously where victimised Stewards had been denied representation under Sir Ken Jackson's regime. Fortunately some of them had the confidence, presence and tenacity to represent themselves without any assistance from the union and went on to win their cases, much to Sir Ken's embarrassment. Following Derek Simpson's victory last year, I and my colleagues were fortunate in receiving full support from Derek and Amicus/AEEU and

went on to secure a victory for ourselves. Our employers reinstated us all and we received payment for our loss of earnings during our period of unemployment. I now work on Terminal 5, Heathrow one of the largest construction projects in Europe, and have recently been elected once again to represent

the workforce as their Shop Steward.

### Fundamental lessons

There are some fundamental lessons to be learned from all this. Having campaigned vigorously to get Derek Simpson elected I now feel that things need to be taken one step further. We need to elect an honest, hardworking executive who will be fully accountable to the members they represent and who will work tirelessly for the restoration of democracy within our union. For this reason I have decided to stand on a left wing ticket as a candidate for Construction in the forthcoming NEC election. My goal is to achieve an Amicus Leadership and National Executive Council who will be walking in step with the rank and file members for the first time in many years, a leadership who have both eyes on what the members want, rather than one eye on the government and the other on the employers. There are many ways in which the Union went wrong and let Jackson erode the democratic processes over a number of years. One of the most insidious was the appointing of Full Time

Officers (FTO) rather than electing them. It became totally irrelevant for a FTO to do a good job for members as he was no longer accountable to them for his position. Good service or bad made no difference, the FTO was safe in the knowledge he could not be ousted by dissatisfied members, he could simply ignore their views. This must be changed. We need elected, fully accountable Officers who reflect the view and aspirations of their members. Certainly, within Construction we need FTO's who are born of this industry who understand the industry and who are willing to fight for the people employed within it. Safety is a number one priority in Construction. We have one of the most appalling records for fatalities and injuries, all because employers place more value on the profit of the contract than they do on the value of a mans life. We have been campaigning tirelessly for some time now for the enactment of the Corporate Manslaughter Bill which will send unscrupulous bosses to jail for negligence. If a boss knows his site is dangerous and still sends out a worker, knowing full well the worker may not survive the day, then he deserves to be jailed. If it drives that sort of employer out of Construction then it can only be a good thing.

### 'Subbyville' Culture

Bogus self employment is another massive issue in Construction. The majority of Construction Companies will spend hundreds of thousands of pounds trying to circumnavigate the direct employment system, anything to avoid their responsibilities as employers. They fragment and dismantle apprenticeship structures, subject workers



# Corus: time to renationalise!

to the 'subbyville culture' of take it or leave it and force workers into accepting terms which are much less favourable than those achieved in the National Agreements for each sector. Having tied a worker down to the bare minimum he then subjects him to dangerous working conditions, with no sickness scheme or pension rights and forces him to work excessive overtime. Even the better employers who do pay National Agreement rates are obsessive about overtime, often depriving the unemployed of a chance of work as they seek to keep the head count down on jobs. All these issues need immediate remedial action by unions to redress the balance in favour of the workers.

We have seen our unions disintegrate in the hands of right wing union leaders. This has been a mirror image of the events taking place inside New Labour with the erosion of socialist policies. Working people need a working peoples union and a working peoples party to support. A recent newspaper article quipped 'New Labour is dead but nobody has told the corpse'. We in the Union movement have known this for some time. A progressive phoenix is about to rise from the ashes of a burnt out right wing Amicus Union and that Phoenix carries with it the hopes and aspirations of every trade unionist with socialist values and principles. □

**T**he history of Corus since privatisation has been one of incompetence and under investment on the part of the management.

**By Peter Currall (Convener, Corus Tube Works, Corby and candidate for Amicus EC)**

When steel prices were high in the 1990s the company was raking in money but the workforce never saw any of it. Indeed, we have had years of minimal investment in new plants and methods. However, over the last period the company has suffered a reversal of fortunes, steel prices have declined rapidly and the company cannot now compete on the world market.

At the current time Corus faces major changes. The banks have extended credit for two years on condition that they reduce costs and get back to profitability. The watchwords are now 'restructuring' and 'flexibility', which basically means they are asking more of our members in return for less. As part of the restructuring all the various Corus works in Britain have been given a greater level of autonomy and told that they must compete as individuals within the wider group – if they can't swim they must sink. Teeside plant has said that if it is to operate on the open market as an independent part of the group it will have to reduce production costs by £20/ton. But they have had difficulty enough trying to reduce it by £1/ton.

## Local impact

This raises the question: under the current set-up are plants like Teeside viable in the long-term? Teeside employs 3000 workers, but behind this sit at least 2000 servicing jobs. So any job losses, or in the worst scenario plant closure, would have a devastating effect on that area.

In my workplace, the Corby tube plant, the average wage is £24,000. That is too low for a skilled craftsman, but at the same time it is a high wage by the standards of the town. Apart from a few large employers most of the jobs in the town pay little more than the minimum wage. That is the future we face if

we continue to lose manufacturing jobs hand over fist.

The company is in the second year of a pension holiday, and when we reach the end of the five-year period agreed to by the auditors, I think we are going to find our final salary pension scheme under attack.

In my opinion the pensions issue is a time bomb across the industry, the union must really take up this fight. We need to force the Labour Government to take action to protect pensions, and above all provide good state pensions linked to wages.

At the same time we need the union to take a hard line with employers. Raising productivity should not mean cutting investment, slashing the workforce, and expecting those remaining to work harder. The union must fight our corner.

## For a fighting leadership

The restructuring process in Corus is not only confined to Britain, our brothers in the German, Dutch, and Belgian plants are also faced with attacks on jobs, wages and conditions. But the British workers have borne the brunt; that is because the company has consistently under invested in British plants, and because our union has done nothing to defend us in the face of attacks.

Following recent attempts by bosses to attack a steel plant in Germany the workforce fought like lions to protect their jobs and they were given a fighting lead by the union. That is the kind of struggle our union must lead if we are to save the steel industry here in the long-term and with it our jobs. The privatisation of our industry has been an unmitigated disaster for the members. The only way to save the business and run it efficiently is to take it back into public ownership, and allow the workforce to democratically plan and control all aspects of the industry.

Our union must lead the struggle to force the Labour Government to take action and carry through this policy and others in the interests of working people

## Appeal for New Trotsky Project!

*In Defence of Marxism* and *Wellred Publications* are launching an historic project to republish some of the key writings of Leon Trotsky, many of which have been out of print for some time. The project has the backing of Esteban Volkov (Seva), Leon Trotsky's grandson, and will be carried out with his close collaboration.

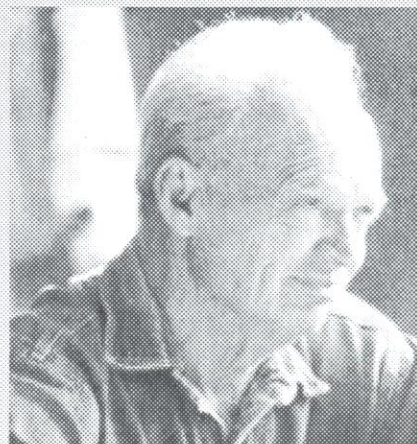
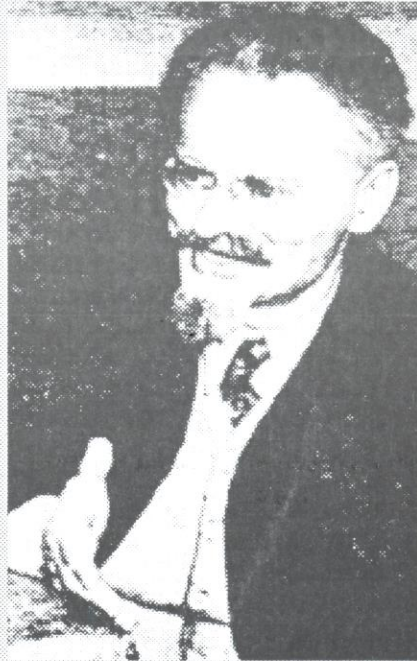
We believe that the task of making the writings of Leon Trotsky available to today's youth and labour movement activists is becoming increasingly urgent given the disintegration of Stalinism which has led to a growing interest in Trotskyism.

The project will be launched in the spring of 2004 with the publication of Leon Trotsky's *My Life*, with a new introduction, and a foreword by Esteban Volkov. We also hope to include a preface by Pierre Broué, the celebrated French Trotskyist historian, who has also expressed a keen interest in the project.

Other titles agreed so far for publication in English include *1905*, *Permanent Revolution*, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (in three volumes), *The Revolution Betrayed*, *The Case of Leon Trotsky* (in two volumes), and other key works.

A major task we have set ourselves is the publication, for the first time, of Trotsky's last book *Stalin* in a complete and unabridged form. This important work was left unfinished when Trotsky was assassinated. The translator Charles Malamuth issued a version that was heavily edited and included his own comments that did not reflect Trotsky's own opinions. We have obtained new material that was omitted from the book and the new edition will be thoroughly re-edited and will contain this material never previously published.

Other titles will be included as the project develops. However, the success of the project depends upon finance. The frequency of publication will depend on the finances generated from sales. The project will be non-profit making. Its sole objective is to ensure the maximum distribution of the writings of Leon Trotsky to



workers and youth. All monies from sales will be used to print new titles. But in order to commence publication we urgently need donations from supporters and well-wishers.

We estimate that each title will cost between £5,000 and £10,000. As we have no wealthy backers, the only way of raising funds for the printing of these important works is by appealing to our comrades, readers and friends for help.

We appeal to all well-wishers who want to see this project succeed, to help us raise the necessary funds. For those who have the means, we would urge you to consider sponsoring the publication of a title. All other donations - big and small - will be welcome, and all will be duly acknowledged.

Contributions can be made on-line at [marxist.com](http://marxist.com) by using the "donate" option, or sent to Wellred Publications, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ (cheques payable to Wellred). If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to email us at

[socappeal@easynet.co.uk](mailto:socappeal@easynet.co.uk)

We look forward to your help in this historic project!

Alan Woods,

on behalf of *In Defence of Marxism* and the Trotsky publication project

**"I am very enthusiastic about this project. It could not have come at a more appropriate time. Many of these books of Leon Trotsky have not been available for years. And it is to the new generation that we look to carry through the liberation of mankind. They must be made aware of Trotsky's writings, which will open up an enormous vista of Marxist ideas for them, and arm them for the tasks that lie ahead."**



**Esteban Volkov**

# Pierre Broué and the Trotsky Project

"The youth must rediscover the writings of Trotsky"

Interview by Alan Woods

Pierre Broué is internationally renowned for his tireless work as a historian of the international revolutionary movement. His histories of the Bolshevik Party, the Communist International, the Spanish Revolution, and above all his recent *Life of Trotsky* have been widely admired. His latest book on the Left Opposition is yet another major contribution by this outstanding Trotskyist writer, who has dedicated his life to the fight for international socialism. Already as a young man, Pierre joined the French Resistance in the dark days of the Nazi occupation of France. He later became a militant of the Fourth International and remains a dedicated Trotskyist to this day. Unfortunately, recently he has not been in the best of health, and is convalescing in the picturesque foothills of the French Alps. I found him lively and alert, with a sharp and very Gallic sense of humour. His revolutionary spirit shines through in every sentence.

I first asked him about the forthcoming Trotsky Project, with which he intends to collaborate.

**AW: What do you think about our project to republish the works of Leon Trotsky?**

**PB:** The decision taken by In Defence of Marxism to republish the writings of Trotsky is therefore an excellent initiative, to which I give my wholehearted support. The youth must rediscover the extraordinary revolutionary traditions of the past. The publication of *My Life* would be a good way to start the project. It explains a great deal about Trotsky himself, about his ideas, and about the great

events he lived through.

**AW:** I understand that you will be writing a Preface to the new edition of *My Life*.

**PB:** Of course! I will start work on it just as soon as I get back to my books.

**AW:** Your latest book is on the Left Opposition. Would you like to say something about that?

**PB:** This is a very important subject, and I believe that not enough attention is paid to it. It is very important that the young people in particular should know about it.

**AW:** I am afraid that this book has not been translated into English. In general not many of your books have been made available in English, and that is a great shame. I believe that in future we should publish them.

**PB:** That would be extraordinary.

**AW:** Yes, I am thinking particularly of your biography of Trotsky, which is a very good antidote to the rubbish of Deutscher.

(Pierre gives an ironic gesture, rather like a man brushing aside a fly. I then asked him how he came into contact with our tendency.) He replied:

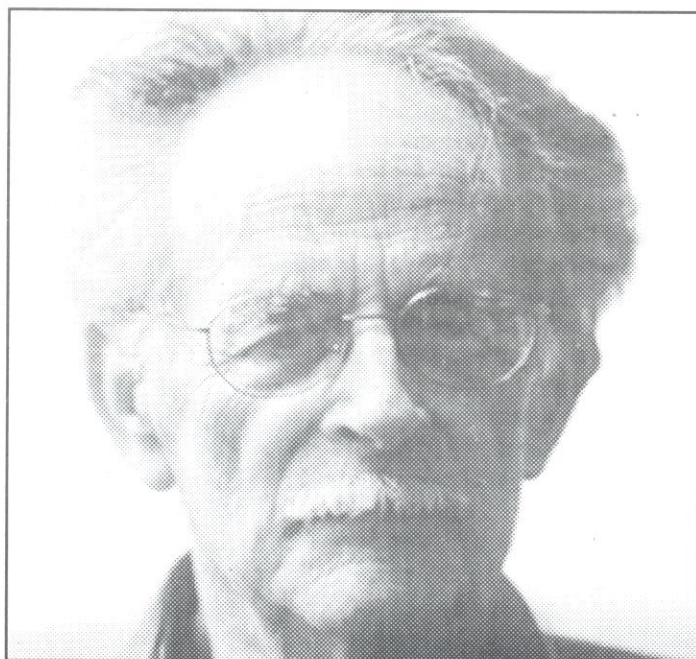
**PB:** When I read your material on the In Defence of Marxism website, and on the website of La Riposte, I realised that we should have been in contact and that we should have been working together for a long time. I believe we are on the same wavelength politically. In terms of political analysis and theory, your tendency stands way above all the others. Unfortunately, now that we are finally meeting, I am rather ill, as you can see. I must get well as soon as I can. This is a new beginning for me in many ways.

**AW:** As you know, Ted Grant has just celebrated his ninetieth birthday. I wonder if you would like to say a few words to him?

**PB:** Certainly! Ted Grant is known to me for many years, of course. As we say in France, he seems to have been around since the days of Clovis! Unfortunately, I do not believe we have ever met, but we had a mutual friend in Raoul, who was a longstanding militant in the Trotskyist movement in France. He often spoke to me of Ted, and held him in very high esteem. However, for some reason, perhaps for fear of being accused of "factionalism" or whatever - that's the way things happen in the organisation to which we both belonged at that time - he never showed me any of Ted's written material. Regrettably, I didn't make the effort to get in touch with him at the time. Only in the last few years I have been reading his material, which I found very interesting. Anyway, I am now very much looking forward to working together with your tendency. We must discuss politics, and methods of work, of course, and try to arrive at the fullest agreement. I believe this is quite possible.

To Ted himself, I would like to say:

"Ted, you were always a fighter. You have been struggling for many years. You have always defended revolutionary ideas. This was very important work, and you accomplished a great deal. At ninety years old, you are not a young man any more, but I think I might yet be attending your 100th birthday party!"



# Scrap top-up fees now!

AFTER THE magnificent demonstration on Sunday 26 student activists will be wondering what now is the way to defeat the Blairite plans to introduce top-up fees and stop the re-introduction of a two-tier education system?

Thousands of students from all over the country came to London to demonstrate their refusal to the Government plans to increase the amount of fees that students have to pay.

The white paper that they are trying to push through will increase fees to a new level of £ 3,000 a year (up from the £ 1,125 that students have to pay at present). It also includes a proposal to introduce grants for all those with an income of less than £10,000 a year.

The mood at the demo was very militant and this is a clear indication that there is a need for a nationwide campaign to stop Government's plans.

It is clear to all students that the danger of these proposed 'reforms' is that they push students further into heavy debt - which in most cases they will never be able to clear - and plays into the hands of big business, not least by widening the gap between rich and poor universities. This will leave the "good" ones with the "profitable" degrees and the rest...?. Big business will be able to take an even stronger grip on our education system since money talks and the cash hungry universities will have to listen.

Of course, the right-wing Blairite clique in power argues that they are going to introduce some grants. But only to those "who really need it". A required total income of £10,000 a year is a ludicrous level to set. In London this figure is even more ridiculous - very few parents in work will be able to qualify. In

By Pablo Sanchez



any case, the number of working class students reaching university is extremely limited. This situation can become still worse with New Labour is talking about 'reforming' the school system and boosting the fee-paying schools.

The facts speak for themselves. In 1992 only a third of students owed money whereas now, more than 90% do. And the scrapping of grants means that those in a lower income bracket are being "persuaded" not to go to university, thereby reducing the number of working class students.

At the end of the demo the crowds were addressed by

Frank Dobson, the Labour MP that is leading the bankbench revolt, some trade union leaders, like the General Secretary of NATFHE and the NUS President, Mandy Telford. All the speeches sounded more or less the same. They promised more action to stop the introduction of fees, the need to lobby MP's and the need to increase the campaign to introduce a living grant.

In reality the mood at the demo was such that if the leaders would have called for further action they would have had a marvellous response. In the past years the NUS has organised several demonstrations at

a national and regional level. But it has never organised a serious campaign to engage the majority of students to consciously fight against fees.

The lack of a decisive organised campaign to stop these plans is giving the Government a breathing space to win over some sceptics by vaguely promising some minor reforms that will go into the current white paper. The idea is that the final proposals should not look very similar to the American-style system but still close enough in reality to satisfy the desires of big business and their lackeys in Government.

This demonstration was a step forward but is not enough. The NUS has been too passive and complacent in the struggle against top-up fees. We need a militant campaign to fight for our right to have living grants and the scrapping of top-up fees. We must demand massive investment in education to give students the maximum chance to go to university.

Only such a campaign will mobilise the hundreds of thousands needed to stop the Government plans. We need to remind these people that they pledged "Education, Education, Education" and they are delivering "Cuts, Cuts, Cuts".

Labour must reintroduce a living grant for all students, scrap top-up fees and start investing in the future of society rather than pouring money into the pockets of big business. □

## NUS School Student Survey

Over a third of 14 and 15 year olds questioned by an NUS survey of students from schools based in the poorer areas of the country have said that they would reconsider going to university if fees were pushed up to £2000 a year - £1000 less than the government proposals. Over 85% said that they would be put off by the prospect of accumulating £20,000 of debt by being a student - again a likely prospect for most students reliant on student loans. More clear evidence of the way in which working class kids are now being discouraged from becoming students as against the opportunity of being a source of cheap labour stuck in dead-end jobs.

# Postal workers take action!

By a CWU member

THE POSTAL STRIKE is escalating. Following a series of unofficial walkouts in London and the South-East involving some 20,000 postal workers, strikes have spread throughout the rest of the country. This action has been provoked by management attacks, hell-bent on imposing new terms and conditions on workers following the official London Weighting strikes.

Postwatch, the postal service watchdog body, is talking of a "winter of discontent" with CWU sources predicting a "national unofficial strike" if things continue as they are.

The unofficial action started following a series of official one-day strikes on a London Weighting claim. The response of management, bolstered by the defeat of the previous national ballot on action, was to become more belligerent, looking to provoke workers on various sites using one issue or another, trying to impose new working conditions. This tactic was first tried at Dartford, with follow ups in West London, Southend, Maidstone and elsewhere. The management hope to isolate the workers, demoralising them so that they can push through further attacks at a later stage. However the postal bosses have miscalculated the response of workers. In London and elsewhere postal workers have acted with firm resolve.

"It looks to me that they are trying to sort the union out once and for all", states Presley Antione from the West End Delivery Centre. "But our strike is solid. Our members don't cross picket lines and we are determined to resist these attacks come what may."

Dave Ward, deputy general secretary of the CWU, accused Royal Mail of "declaring war" on postal workers. He said local managers were "attacking, humiliating and belittling" union members who took official strike action two weeks ago over London pay.

At Dartford, management suspended a postal worker who refused to go along with a scam whereby work was being diverted to another site to be done by casual labour. Management then refused to negotiate and when workers staged a sit-down in the can-

teen, the bosses ordered them out. National agreements are being ignored as management seek to impose their new 'hard line approach', claiming that all local agreement no longer apply. But two can play at this game and the workers have stayed out on strike refusing to accept these victimisations, with other sites coming out in support.

Other petty provocations tried by management have included, on one London site, refusing to let workers use alternative toilets after a rat was found in the male workers toilet. Needless to say you could have imagined what the reaction of the bosses would have been if the said rat had turned up in the executive toilets - assuming they would have noticed, of course.

Elsewhere at Greenford, PO Chairman Alain Leighton turned up to lecture workers back to work - he was sent away with a flea in his ear by the workers on the picket line. "Suddenly out of the gloom stepped a leather-clad figure who said, 'Hi, I'm Allan Leighton, what's it all about?'" said a union official. "Everyone started telling him how the managers were treating them like dirt so he says, 'Well, why don't we go back to work and talk to them?'"

"This is unofficial and unlawful. They're cajoling postmen and women in London to strike - and they're threatening to do the same to their colleagues across the UK, who have voted against industrial action. Royal Mail won't be blackmailed", said postal boss Crozier.

But the consequences of the strikes are already becoming all too clear. A huge backlog of mail is building up which will take days to clear even if no further walkouts were to take place. With over a third of all mail going through London the effect on the national post service has been dramatic. Management hoped that their new approach would crush the workforce - they have been proved badly wrong.

The CWU needs to mobilise the whole union to beat back the bosses on this. Post Office management must be made to understand that the workforce will not be cowed



by bully-boy tactics. Ignoring established agreements will not be allowed to continue and the union must insist that all guidelines are honoured by management. There can be no delay in ensuring that postal workers receive proper pay linked to decent terms and conditions of employment, a right which bosses are trying to erode.

The ongoing strategy of privatisation by stealth carried out by the Blair government must be stopped once and for all. The CWU must link up with other left unions to rid the Labour Party of Blairism. The present board that runs Royal Mail on big business lines must be given the sack and replaced with genuine workers' management and control of the service. Only then will the post office be run as a public service, accountable and run for the benefit of all.

- Full support to the strikers, one out-all out! Spread the action!
- No victimisation of postal workers!
- Sack the Royal Mail management!
- Place the postal service under democratic workers' control and management!

# In the Cause of Labour

## A History of British Trade Unionism

Publication Date: November 2003

Price: £14.99

480 pages

ISBN: 1 9000 07 14 2

By Rob Sewell

THE PURPOSE of this history of British trade unionism is not only to recite the wrongs inflicted on working people, Shelley's "heroes of unwritten story", or simply to describe their heroic struggles. It is an attempt to draw out the lessons of the events that helped shape the Labour movement, and made it what it is.

A study of the history of trade unions is particularly relevant at the present time. After a long period of stagnation, the fresh winds of the class struggle are beginning to blow. We see growing industrial militancy in many countries, heralding a fundamental change in the situation. In Britain there is ferment in the trade unions, characterised by a sharp turn to the left in one union after another. New forces are emerging in the trade union and Labour movement, which are beginning to challenge the dead hand of the old right-wing leaderships.

### A proud tradition

The British organised Labour movement is the oldest in the world. More than two hundred years ago, the pioneers of the movement created illegal revolutionary trade unions in the face of the most terrible violence and repression. A little later they established the first workers' party in history, the Chartist Association. Afterwards they participated in the founding of the First International, the International Working Men's Association, in which Karl Marx played a leading role.

In the course of the nineteenth century they built trade unions of the downtrodden unskilled workers - those with "blistered hands and the unshorn chins," as the Chartist Feargus

O'Connor called them. Finally, they established a mass party of Labour based on the trade unions, breaking the monopoly of the Tories and Liberals. In the stormy years following the Russian Revolution they engaged in ferocious class battles, culminating in the General Strike of 1926.

Nor did the achievements of the British trade union movement cease with the Depression and the Second World War. The post-war upswing served to strengthen the working class and heal the scars of the inter-war period. By the time of the industrial tidal wave of the early 1970s, they drove a Tory government from power, after turning Edward Heath's anti-trade union laws into a dead letter. Those years saw the massive demonstrations against the Industrial Relations Act - the biggest workers' protests since the days of the Chartists. Later, the miners, the traditional vanguard of the British working class, waged an epic year-long struggle in 1984-85 against the juggernaut of Thatcherism. They could have succeeded, had the right-wing Labour and trade union leaders not abandoned them and left them isolated. But though it was defeated, the miners' strike, which at times had the hallmarks of a semi-insurrection, showed the world the colossal potential that exists in the British working class. It would require a whole book to deal with the lessons of this strike alone.

The working class sometimes needs the whip of counter-revolution to push it into action, stated Marx. The period after "Black Friday" in March 1921, for instance, right through to the 1926 General Strike constituted a series of defensive rear-

guard battles, which were of an extremely militant and even revolutionary character. On the other hand, the defeat in 1984-5 had a profound impact, set against the context of a boom and the lamentable role of the union leaders. The defeat of the miners, and later the dockers and print workers in the late 1980s, struck a serious blow against the trade unions.

Defeats must be paid for. It took a long time to recover from these setbacks. However, the low level of struggle in the subsequent period did not mean the end of class struggle, any more than the collapse of the Soviet Union meant the end of history. The working class needs to catch its breath and digest the lessons of the past before again being forced into struggle by the crisis of capitalism. But now the situation is changing for the better. There has been an upturn on the industrial front in Britain and internationally. There is also a reawakening in the ranks of the unions, heralding a dramatic swing to the Left.

The working class of different countries has different traditions, reflecting the peculiarities of the historical development of each nation. When compared with the workers of southern Europe, who have a tradition of spontaneous uprisings, the British workers tend to be generally slower to move. But once they are on the move, they are unstoppable.

The right wing represents all that is most negative in the traditions of British Labour - all which is servile, cowardly and ignorant. They constantly undermine the struggle for advancement under capitalism, never mind the fight to change society. The Blair government, with the enthusias-

tic endorsement of the right-wing trade union leaders, is carrying out a policy of counter-reforms that would do credit to any Tory administration.

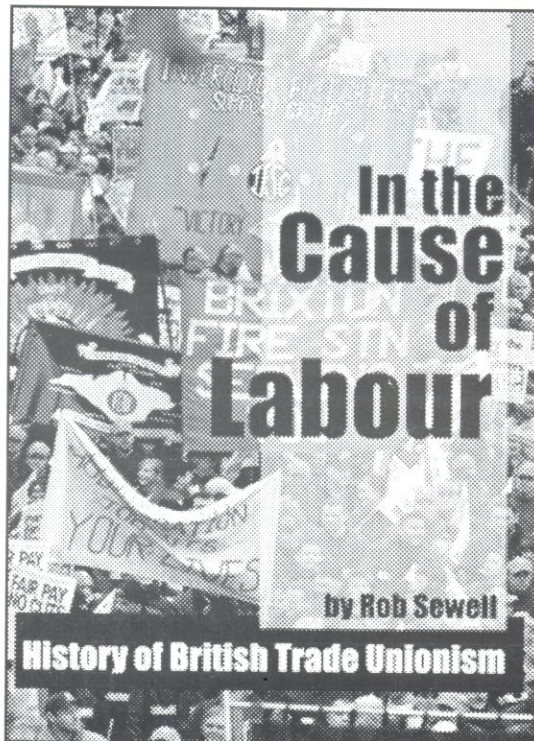
Prime Minister Tony Blair proudly boasts that Britain has the least regulated economy with the lowest corporation tax and the most flexible (i.e. insecure and stressful) workplaces of any advanced capitalist country. Yet at this moment in time, British workers work longer hours than workers in Europe and the US. They have the least holidays. They have the least rights at work. Stress levels and job insecurity have gone through the roof. An estimated 6.7 million working days a year are being lost due to ill health caused by stress alone. One in four British workers does regular or occasional night work, the highest in Europe. Two-thirds of British manufacturing workers do shift-work - another European record. Only Britain and Italy have no statutory paid holidays. Despite two Labour governments, the majority are realising things are not getting better, but worse.

What does all this show? That unless there is a fundamental change in society, all the gains made by the movement can only have a temporary, partial and incomplete character. The struggle of the working class to improve its lot under capitalism is like the labours of Sisyphus, described in ancient Greek mythology, who was condemned for all eternity to push a heavy boulder uphill, only to see it roll back again.

### Need to change society

The history of the British trade unions does not constitute a straight line. On the contrary, it unfolds in an uneven fashion with various contradictory shifts in one direction or another. It is constantly characterised by the struggle between two traditions and two tendencies. A revolutionary one, reflecting the unconscious will of the working class to change society, and a subservient one, reflecting the pressures of the ruling class on the upper stratum, that then attempts to block the movement to change society and lead it instead like a lamb into "safe" channels.

In "normal" periods, the consciousness of the workers is affected by the dead weight of tradition and routine. In such times, most people are prepared to accept the leadership of the "professionals" - bourgeois and reformist politicians, Members of Parliament, councillors and trade union leaders. But there are periods of crises and upheavals, when the working class is shak-



en out of the old apathy and begins to take action, demanding solutions, asking questions. Being close to the class, the unions reflect this changed mood very early on. We see this process in Britain at the present time. And what happens in the unions today will be expressed in the Labour Party tomorrow.

The working class has within its ranks a tremendous strength and resilience. Even when it suffers a terrible and crushing defeat, it recovers and again reasserts itself. It is like the Greek god Antaeus of ancient mythology, who when thrown to the ground, drew strength from his mother the earth. Whatever obstacles lay in its path, the objective conditions of life force it to continually struggle against the system of capitalist exploitation. Those who argue that the class struggle is out of date are obviously out of touch with the reality of Britain in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

After years of privatisation, temporary contracts, outsourcing, deskilling, multi-skilling, part-time work, "zero-hour" contracts, casual work and other forms of lean production and labour flexibility, workers are saying loud and clear: enough is enough. The election of a string of left-wing general secretaries and officials in the British trade unions is symptomatic of a deep-seated frustration and anger within the union rank and file and the working class generally.

The working class needs powerful militant and democratic trade unions. But above all, we need to forge a leadership that will measure up to the tasks posed by history. The mighty revolutionary events across the globe will provide the working class with many opportunities. We have a responsibility on our shoulders to finish the job that generations before us began. In order to live up to that responsibility it is necessary to go beyond the limits of narrow trade unionism and pose the question of changing society. And in order to conduct a serious and consistent struggle to change society a scientific world outlook is necessary. Marxism provides such an outlook.

We hope that the present book will stimulate those who read it to study not only the history of the workers' movement in Britain and internationally, but also the great treasure-house of Marxist theory, which is the best and most comprehensive guide to action. As the young Marx wrote: "Philosophers have interpreted the world in different ways. The point however is to change it." A study of history is essential, but it is making history that counts. □

# Britain in 2003

## Part Two

By Phil Mitchinson

FOR SOME years now we have charted the devastation of British manufacturing. This continues apace as the investment and output figures provided in part one testify. Alongside this development we have charted also the degeneration of the British ruling class, from a class that saw centuries ahead, to the current degenerates who cannot see past their bank balances. The crisis of the three Cs of the establishment, the Crown, the Church and the Conservative Party are not mere sideshows but accurately reflect the profound crisis within the ruling class who increasingly lack any confidence in the long term future of their system.

The royals have failed to recover any support as a constant drip of stories undermines each attempt to restore their authority. After his grandmother's death Prince Charles, despite being one of the biggest landowners in Britain, decided to move into her now empty house. However, he felt that a few million pounds needed to be spent on redecoration, new wiring etc. The taxpayer footed the bill.

The crisis in the Church of England continues to deepen. The 'troublesome priest', Archbishop Rowan Williams has been barred from conducting communion in 350 Church of England parishes because of his support for women priests. Like the previous struggle over homosexuality, this is a serious crisis reflecting a split between those who fear any further undermining of the church's authority by adopting more modern, liberal attitudes, and those who believe that their authority will continue to decline unless they adopt such changes.

The Tory Party has failed to make any serious recovery despite the unprecedented crisis facing Blair. They secured a victory in the English local elections earlier in the year, but again this was due more to the col-

lapse in turnout by Labour voters than any real recovery for the Tories.

Incidentally, as we predicted in January, while the Tories benefited from disillusionment with Blair in England in the sense of a low turnout, in Scotland and Wales there was a certain rise in support for those to the left of Blair. In Scotland both the SSP of Sheridan and the Greens (who are perceived as being to the left whatever the reality may be) picked up a handful of seats. Meanwhile in Wales the opposition to Blair came from Labour itself. By adopting a handful of minor reforms, most notably the abolition of prescription charges, Labour was able to gain an overall majority in the Welsh Assembly, in which they previously shared power with the Liberals.

### Degeneration of Ruling Class

To return to the degeneration of the ruling class however, one example of the philistine nature of our current rulers is provided by the television show Restoration. Here, with an eye to the popularity of Big Brother and Pop Idol, the more cultured BBC2 gives viewers the opportunity to vote by phone on which one of three historic buildings to save and restore. At one time, a century and more ago, the ruling class used to spend their own money on such projects with an eye on history, heritage and culture. Today's pygmies have no such long view. Not only are they not prepared to protect art and culture, except as a hedge investment, they are even undermining the very infrastructure of the country and the economy in the pursuit of a quick profit.

A doom-laden report by the Institution of Civil Engineers, a much respected 200 year old body, claims that Britain could face serious power cuts regularly by the year 2020. By then 80 percent of the gas used to

fuel Britain's power stations and domestic central heating will have to be piped in "from politically unstable countries thousands of miles away."

The ICE's report concludes "A return to the blackouts that marked the three-day week and the country grinding to a halt are very real possibilities in less than twenty years time." This is not mere scaremongering. Simon Skilling, head of UK strategy at electricity generator Powergen, admitted, "It is feasible that by 2020 the lights could go out."

When this report was published it gained little attention in the media. Short term, fast buck, asset stripping means we didn't have to wait 17 years to find out just what an appalling state Britain's infrastructure is now in.

The astonishing sight of a quarter of a million people having to be evacuated from the London Underground on September 2, traffic lights out and trains stopped short in mid journey with passengers being led to safety along railway lines by workers carrying torches is perhaps the most graphic example of the descent of Britain. These are scenes one might expect to see in Nigeria or India, not a so-called advanced western economy which claims to be the fourth richest in the world. Yet this astonishing result of privatisation, asset stripping and under investment came only weeks after a devastating power cut in the United States. At that time The National Grid went on record as saying that that sort of thing could never happen here.

Professor Ian Fells, an adviser to the World Energy Council said the London power cut "proves that the system is frail and needs more investment... Since we privatised our electricity companies it's become extremely difficult to get investment in the infrastructure." He added that extra funding was urgently needed before an even bigger blackout became inevitable. "I predicted that this might



happen in winter but not in the middle of summer. The fact that this could happen now is a very bad sign for the industry. It should act as a warning. If we don't heed these warnings we could slide down to become a third world country... The policy is to leave energy to the free market but it needs political incentive. The industry is there for profit. If they get away with power cuts like this they will never improve the system."

## Privatisation Catastrophe

London Mayor Ken Livingstone has called for an inquiry. He should call for the nationalisation of the entire energy sector, production and distribution, under workers' control and management. Just as the catastrophe of railway privatisation has made the idea of nationalisation widely popular for transport, no doubt power cuts like this will lead to widespread calls for public ownership of energy. At the same time each new disaster of this kind makes the idea of privatisation in general more and more unpalatable, preparing major battles against Blair's attempts to extend privateering into public services.

Until last year the Underground transport system received electricity from its own independent power station at Lots Road in Fulham, south London. This enabled the system to continue operating even during the Blitz. What German bombers failed to destroy however, was simply switched off by a Labour government last October.

At a ceremony held to turn the tube's own power station off, Paul Godier, London Underground's managing director praised Seaboard Powerlink, the firm behind a private finance initiative (PFI) project to replace the generator. Vincent de Rivaz, Seaboard's chairman, hailed the "culmination of an exciting project

that has been delivered by the private sector in close cooperation with London Underground". His company, he promised, would "contrive to work with London Underground to provide a safe, reliable power system for the remaining 26 years of our 30-year contract". They could not even keep the power on for one year.

Among the big companies in the PFI scheme are the heroes of rail maintenance, Balfour Beatty; and a property company called Circadian which will shortly, in exchange for relatively small payments to London Underground, be developing the area round the power station with luxury flats worth some £500m.

It is events which transform the outlook of the working class, and indeed all classes. By events we don't just mean strikes, demonstrations or economic crises. War, for example, is a decisive event affecting the outlook of society. So too, sometimes, are 'accidents' like the death of Dr. Kelly. Power cuts like the one that gripped London on September 2 can also have a dramatic effect.

On the day when every newspaper should have carried headlines about the massive power failure caused by privatisation, the king of spin managed to grab the headlines for himself, by resigning. It was widely known that Alastair Campbell was going anyway and has his memoirs ready for publication when he runs short of cash. One cannot help thinking the timing might have something to do with what his old friend Jo Moore called a good way to bury bad news. No doubt his main concern was exoneration by the Hutton inquiry from the charges of rewriting the dossier which was used as an excuse for British troops being sent to war in Iraq.

Very few people had ever believed the claims of Bush and Blair about Iraq's possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Given the level

of opposition to war in Britain, Blair and co found it necessary to push the boat out a little further and claim that those weapons could be used in 45 minutes flat. Iraq therefore represented a clear and present danger. This was never very convincing, and with each passing day that these mysterious weapons were not found the opinion spread that Blair and co were liars. Nevertheless, they might have got away with it if it were not for their obsession with spin and the silencing of criticism. Their shameful bullying of the BBC and above all of weapons expert Dr. David Kelly has only served to create a new crisis, and bring the whole question into sharp focus. Ironically, Dr. Kelly supported war with Iraq, but it seems that because he was not happy with having to distort intelligence documents for propaganda purposes he was hounded to the very edge of reason, and beyond to take his own life. The impact of his death has been one of shock and awe. It has resulted in the Hutton inquiry, which in turn has resulted in startling revelations, each more shocking than the last, exposing Blair and his coterie of advisers as a veritable nest of vipers.

## The Hutton Inquiry - a serious crisis for Blair

The lies and falsifications exposed by Hutton represent a severe crisis for Blair, the most serious he has faced to date. Several careers are on the line. Campbell has already gone. Hoon, the Secretary of State for Defence, will no doubt follow. Ultimately even Blair himself may have to pay with his job.

Some journalists have written that this is all a diversion. The Hutton inquiry is only serving to draw attention away from the lies that led Britain into war, and to pass the buck from Blair to lower ranking officials. This is no doubt the usual purpose of an

# British perspectives

inquiry of this kind, to act as a distraction, to give the impression that the matter is being dealt with, to exonerate those at the top and scapegoat others. While this is undoubtedly the formal purpose of the Hutton inquiry, the repercussions are far more important. To dismiss it as a mere episode is to completely fail to understand the role such accidents as this play in politics. What these people fail to comprehend as they pore over the meaning of each word spoken and each sigh uttered is that not much of this detail means anything. It is they who are being distracted. Meanwhile, for the majority, all that matters is the smell of corruption, someone is lying, someone is covering up and Blair is in it up to his neck.

It is almost unprecedented that a Prime Minister be dragged before such an inquiry to account for his actions. The only previous example was the Scott inquiry when Tory Prime Minister John Major was forced to answer questions about, ironically, Britain's sale of arms to Iraq.

Not that Hutton will finally, after the inquiry has dragged on a few months longer, call on Blair to resign. The formal outcome is quite predictable and not that important. The real result, which is already becoming evident, is that Blair is widely seen as a liar. His image as Mr. Honest lies in ruins.

Predictably, the evidence, including Geoff Hoon's attempt to pass the buck directly to Blair and Campbell, has not yet placed Blair himself at many meetings that discussed the Iraq dossier, Andrew Gilligan's broadcasts or what to do about Dr. Kelly. Blair himself has not left much of a paper

trail. The inquiry will not turn up a handwritten note from Blair instructing officials to rewrite the dossier, nor a tape of Blair calling for 'extreme prejudice' to be executed in relation to Dr. Kelly. That is not what is meant by describing the present scandal as Blair's Watergate. He will, in all likelihood be personally exonerated by Hutton. However, unlike in previous scandals involving Blair's government, this time he will not escape innocent in the eyes of the majority of the population.

When attempting to pin down Blair's own role in his government's more dubious episodes in the past - the Ecclestone donation, the Hinduja passport affair and so on - one is reminded of TS Eliot's *Macavity* the Mystery Cat.

*His powers of levitation  
Would make a fakir stare,  
And when you reach scene of  
crime -  
Macavity's not there!*

For all his buck stops here rhetoric Blair was clearly attempting to distance himself from any scandal. The inquiry will eventually distribute the blame around fairly evenly and leave Blair out of it. When we said that this affair could cost Blair his job we did not mean he would be forced to resign by the findings of the inquiry. Instead, the real judgement will be delivered by the labour movement and by the electorate. The shine has well and truly worn off Blair. An election is due in two years time. If it were any further away Blair would no doubt face a challenge from within. Cook and others are waiting in the wings. They may yet challenge for the leadership. At this moment it seems more likely that

they would wait until after the next election. A Labour win with a very much reduced majority would soon prompt a challenge. Defeat, which is now a serious possibility, if not the most likely outcome, would see the knives out everywhere. Sooner or later Blair is finished. All the conditions which laid

the basis for Blair and so-called Blairism are being transformed into their opposite.

In the meantime Blair will undoubtedly scapegoat Hoon. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his friends for his life. Unlike his predecessors Mandelson, Byers and co, however, Hoon was not so willing to fall on his own sword. His willingness to pass the buck during his evidence before Hutton has earned him the nickname Secretary of State for Self-Defence. The details of the Hutton inquiry have been dealt with in other articles, so we will not dwell on them here.

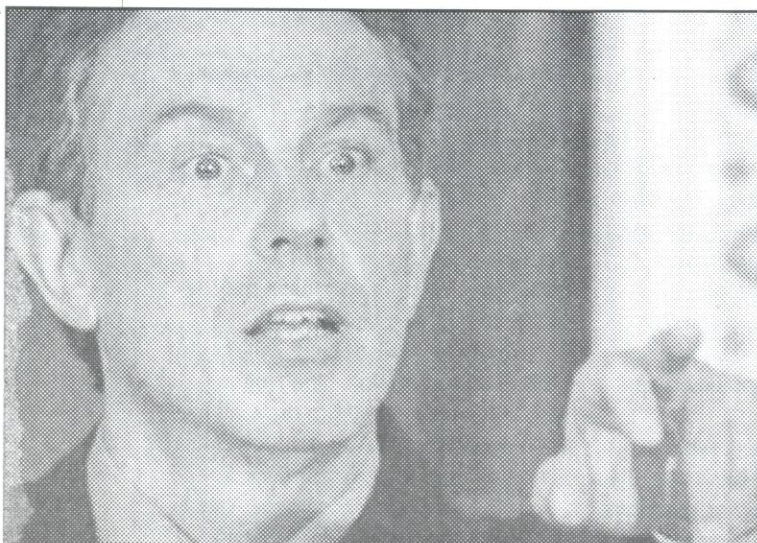
Except to note that this whole affair is very unfortunate for the ruling class. Blair is their man, but they would not be that bothered if all that was at stake here was the career of one or two politicians. More worrying for them, the veil has been partially lifted on the workings of the British state, releasing a stench of corruption and intrigue in the corridors of power. It is important for the ruling class to maintain the myth that what democracy means is the rule of the will of the majority. In reality under capitalism ultimately it is the banks and the monopolies who decide. Blair and co do their bidding in the interests of their system, with little concern for the desires and aspirations of the majority.

It was certainly not the will of the people to go to war. To sway public opinion Blair and co resorted to lying, falsifying documents and persecuting a scientist so maniacally that they drove him to suicide. They partially and temporarily succeeded in their aim. At the outbreak of war, opposition became somewhat muted.

However, their propaganda success has been short-lived. The scenes of bullying and clumsy intimidation of the press and of Dr. Kelly has stunned and shocked the nation. This is not what they intended by a policy of 'shock and awe'.

This whole affair tells us a great deal about the sham of bourgeois democracy and the facade of parliamentary rule.

We have commented previously on the anti-democratic behaviour of Blair and co. The dependence of the Blair government on an unelected coterie of spin doctors and special advisers has been further exposed by the revelations of the Hutton inquiry.



*The Guardian* was quite right in commenting "this episode casts light on something larger than one administration or several careers. It exposes the way we are governed.

"In other words, it should not surprise us that things keep going wrong, whether it's arms to Iraq, BSE, foot and mouth, or now this. The machine is broken. The centre of government has become too powerful, the rest of the body politic has grown too weak and the latter has no ability to hold the former in check. Sacking the driver might feel therapeutic, but we need to do more than that: we need to change the machine."

Indeed it is the entire system which needs to be replaced. However, *The Guardian* has in mind changing the machinery of parliament to make it work better, changing the majorities on select committees etc, in other words, reforming the machinery of government to make it more democratic. What they fail to grasp is that the machinery of government is constructed and reformed in the image required by the rule of capital. They dream of a fair, open, democratic state resting on the present economic system. This is utterly utopian.

Marxists do not have any illusions in bourgeois parliaments. Bourgeois democracy is extremely restricted. In reality, all the important decisions are taken by the monopolies and the banks. We do however, defend those democratic rights and conditions which have been conquered in struggle by the working class. It stands to reason that democracy, however restricted, is a better system for the working class to develop its organisations and struggles within than open dictatorship. In the present epoch those democratic rights that have been won by the working class are constantly in danger. Democratic rights, including the rights and powers of parliaments, are being undermined because they do not coincide with the needs of the capitalists.

Under Blair the government's powers have increasingly been passed

from Parliament to the cabinet and, in turn, from the cabinet to the Prime Ministers office and a clique of unelected advisers. This has now been exposed for all to see.

As a result Campbell had to go, and hurried announcements were made about the abandonment of spin, and the return of government communications responsibilities to civil servants. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, an increasingly isolated Blair has begun to organise a new "kitchen cabinet", in reality a kind of kitchen junta, to bring back his most trusted aides, including the twice disgraced Peter Mandelson, and Stephen Byers. This demonstrates just how narrow is Blair's base of support inside even the Parliamentary Labour Party and for that matter the cabinet. Blair is utterly dependent on a close circle of unelected advisers. In the late Victorian masterpiece *Trilby* the heroine needs her Svengali because without his magical powers of ventriloquism she sang horribly flat. Blair needs not one but a whole plethora of such figures to sell his policies which are increasingly out of tune with the population.

### Blair rests on spin doctors

For all the claims that spin had been abandoned as a result of Hutton, at the TUC Blair's speech at a dinner for union leaders on 'fairness and listening to everyone', was immediately translated to the reporters waiting outside as a strongly worded attack on the left, and in particular new T&G General Secretary Tony Woodley's appeal for a shift to the left at the top of the Labour Party to stop the Tories getting back in. The spin doctors cannot be dispensed with because they are all Blair has left to rest upon.

As we predicted the war in Iraq opened up new divisions at all levels in the Labour Party, even inside the cabinet, leading to the resignations of Cook and Short. Cook in particular is preparing his challenge for the Labour leadership. He is about to publish a

new book *Point of Departure* on his principles and beliefs. Its subtitle should be *Vote Cook for Leader*. Whether Blair faces a challenge before or after the next election is impossible to predict at this stage, it depends on unfolding events.

For the moment Blair is attempting to regroup and retrench. He is now skating on very thin ice. We maintain our previous position sooner or later Blair and Blairism is now finished. He and his bourgeois tendency within the labour movement represent yesterday's conditions. They represented a long period of electoral and industrial defeats, and a lack of activity in the movement which allowed the right wing to gain a stranglehold inside the unions and the Labour Party. That grip has already been broken in the unions. In the next period it will be broken inside the Labour Party too.

There has been no qualitative change in the nature of the Labour Party. As our tendency, and our tendency alone, has explained Labour remains firmly wedded to the unions and it is changes there that herald changes in the party to come.

The development of a new left inside the Labour Party following developments in the unions and reflecting changes in society in general is inevitable. The next period will see a left-right polarisation inside the Labour Party, in which the unions will play a key role. On the basis of events new splits inside Labour can even reach similar proportions to those in the 1930s. The timing and personalities involved cannot be accurately predicted. The Blairites will leave in droves when to stay will no longer enhance their careers. Blairism will be vomited out of the party and the ruling class will turn the venom of their media on the Labour movement once more. They will turn back to their more stable base, the Tories, which despite their woes and crises remains the main party of the British ruling class. □

# Euphoria and the bursting bubble

By Michael Roberts

AS YOU read this, the papers are probably full of the news that the US economy is growing at the fantastic rate of over 6% a year. No wonder the stock markets of the world have been booming. US share prices are up 25% this year in anticipation that the dark nights of economic recession or slump have been banished from America and, as the US recovers from the terrible year of 2001, it will sweep up the rest of the world (Europe and Japan) in a new economic boom.

US President Bush has been having a hard time of it recently. He thought that his adventurist attack on Iraq and Saddam would win him a landslide re-election victory in 2004, as Americans patriotically flocked to his support - just as some gullible Britons did to Thatcher after the Falklands. But unlike the Falklands war, which merely left a small contingent of the British army to look after the sheep in the fields, the Iraq war did not end last May when Bush declared hostilities over. Since then, Iraq has become a killing field for American troops and for Iraqi civilians in larger numbers than the American military invasion produced.

And the cost of the occupation is also mounting. Bush has already had to ask the US Congress to stump up \$150bn to finance the Iraqi and Afghan occupations. He's trying to raise some funds from the other imperialist powers, but the response of Germany and France has been to hold their noses. So Americans are worried and Bush has slumped in the polls just as his British poodle, Blair, has done back in London.

As always, everything now depends on delivering a successful economy that keeps sufficient numbers of Americans with enough in their pay packets each week. So the Bush gang is spinning euphoria about the success of their economic policies. The Republican National Committee

views the state of the US economy through rosy spectacles:

"Last month this economy exceeded expectations and added new jobs.

Inflation is low. After-tax incomes are rising. Home ownership is at record highs. Productivity is high. Factory orders, particularly for high-tech equipment, have risen over the last several months. Our strategy has set the stage for sustained growth. By reducing taxes we kept a promise, and we did the right thing at the right time for the American economy."

But growth and investment is one thing. Without jobs, Bush won't win this time next year. That's why the Bush gang is now rattling on about jobs. Treasury Secretary John Snow puts his name on the mast: "I would stake my reputation on employment growth happening before Christmas. Everything we know about economics indicates that the sort of economic growth expected for the next year, 3-4%, will translate into two million new jobs from the third quarter of this year to the third quarter of next year," Mr. Snow elaborated. "That's an average of about 200,000 new jobs a month." That's an ambitious forecast, considering that job numbers have been falling for eight consecutive quarters and only in September was there a rise of just 50,000.

This euphoria is hogwash. Let's make a prediction that's more likely to come true. Having watched 2.6m jobs vanish since he took office, Bush will likely soon be the first president since Depression-era leader Herbert Hoover to preside over a net loss of jobs in his first term.

The reality is that the economic growth that the US is now enjoying is an illusion. It is based on three things. The first is massive spending by the government. The Republicans are supposed to believe in the 'free market' and oppose the whole idea of a state that interferes in the free rein

of capitalism. But when needs must, ideology goes out of the window. Just like Reagan did before him back in the 1980s, Bush is trying to replace the failure of capitalists to invest and spend by getting the government to do it. Defence and "homeland security" spending is at record levels. The free market has been replaced by Keynesian-style pump-priming of the capitalist economic cycle.

Second, along with spending, Bush has introduced huge cuts in the taxation of companies. For example, small businesses can buy a Lincoln Navigator, Cadillac Escalade, Lexus, Chevrolet, or Ford and deduct the entire cost from their 2003 taxes! The government is paying for business cars! And the new Bush tax stimulus package allows small businesses to deduct up to \$100,000 of capital business expenditures immediately per year. Also, there are tax cuts for shareholders' dividends and in incomes, particularly for the better off. Although much of this largesse will not reach the unemployed and the low-paid because they are so poor they don't pay much tax, middle-class America is getting a temporary boost to their pay packets. And they are spending it.

And finally, Mr Bush's pal in the Federal Reserve Bank, septuagenarian Alan Greenspan, is helping to keep the spending spree going by keeping interest rates at all-time low of 1%. So Americans continue to borrow like there was no tomorrow, particularly to buy houses and cars. The house price bubble goes on expanding and expanding, while the army of the jobless goes on growing.

Spending and unemployment are hand in hand in a merry dance of economic death because Americans are not buying goods made in the US. The US now consumes nearly 90% of the world's capital, but produces less than half the manufactured items it

○ This spending and borrowing bubble is set to burst next year. Interest rates cannot be lowered any more, Bush cannot borrow any more or cut taxes any more.

consumes. In September, the number of jobs in manufacturing declined for the 38th month in a row and weekly earnings went down for the first time in 14 years.

So how is all this spending being paid for? First, Bush is borrowing to pay for the government's tax cuts, Iraq and arms spending. Second, Americans are borrowing to buy foreign cars and products. And Americans can do this because the dollar is the main currency of trade and investment. As a result, the American government just prints more greenbacks and foreigners are paid in these dollars.

But if you run a huge debt up with the rest of the world, the risk is that your creditors will start to demand more interest or they will stop taking your dollars. America is keeping interest rates down, so the fall guy is the dollar. Its value has slumped by 15% since the beginning of this year. So the US will have to keep printing more and more dollars to pay its debts.

And there is no such thing as a free lunch. The government may be cutting taxes to persuade people to spend, but companies are cutting their workforces and also reducing the benefits to those still working. In the US, employers still pay the bulk of their workers' health care bills, but their contribution has slipped over the last five years to 70% of total health care costs from 75%.

And more workers are going without insurance, even at large companies. Around 10m workers and family members at companies with more than 500 employees did not have employer-provided health coverage in 2001. The number of Americans without insurance has, meanwhile, grown to 43.6m, the highest since 1998.

"I'm having to beg for my insulin," said Cathy Barkovich, 33, a diabetes patient in Harmony, Pa. She said her husband's health plan stopped paying

for her brand-name prescriptions in July and the American Diabetes Association says that no generic equivalent exists. When she applied to a manufacturer's free insulin program, she was told that only uninsured patients were eligible. Her husband, a \$40,000-a-year interstate bus driver, is considering dropping their coverage so she can get the drug, Ms. Barkovich said. One in 20 self-employed workers dropped their coverage last year.

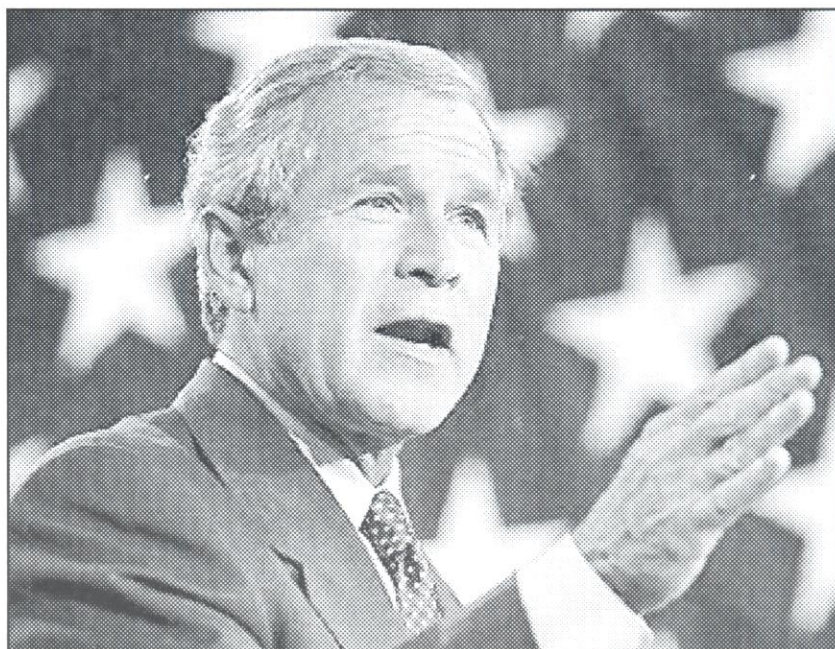
And in Southern California 70,000 supermarket workers have been on strike. The companies want to freeze wages for two years and they want them to pay some of their own medical insurance premiums.

This spending and borrowing bubble is set to burst next year. Interest rates cannot be lowered any more, Bush cannot borrow any more or cut taxes any more. Sure, US companies have improved their profitability by cutting jobs and reducing benefits, but they cannot raise their prices because of huge competition from abroad. China and other Asian producers are

riding through world trading markets like the Horses from the Apocalypse, destroying all before them. American manufacturers are trapped between a lack of pricing power and a too costly workforce.

Bush is trying to help them out through tax cuts and letting the dollar slide in world markets. But there is little sign that American capitalists are prepared to keep their side of the bargain by raising investment and employing more unemployed. Instead they are keeping their cash in the banks and 'outsourcing' their operations abroad to Mexico, India and China.

In the meantime, the debts mount for the US government and for American households and when the tax cheques run out early next year and there are still no jobs, a great squeaking sound may be heard as the debt and housing bubble bursts, along with the dollar. It will be the sound that spells the end of this fake boom and the end of Bush's hopes for re-election. □



## Bolivia: The key to the Andean revolution

By Alan Woods and Jorge Martin

THE ESSENCE of a revolution is the direct intervention of the masses in the political life of the nation. It represents a radical break with the normal routine of existence, where the masses leave the key decisions affecting their lives in the hands of the powers that be. Such a break only occurs at a point when the majority draw the conclusion that the existing order is incompatible with their very existence. A revolution is a situation where the masses take their destiny into their own hands.

That is precisely what we are witnessing before our very eyes in Bolivia. On Friday, October 17, after days of violent clashes in which more than 70 people died, and with the capital, La Paz, under siege from tens of thousands of protesting workers, miners and peasants, the President, Sanchez de Lozada was driven from power. The demonstrators blockaded La Paz and other cities. Soviets were formed in El Alto. Bolivia, South America's poorest and most unstable country, had been paralysed since mid-September by anti-government protests.

Faced with this tremendous movement of the masses, Lozada tried to buy time by offering concessions, including putting the controversial gas project to a referendum and rewriting an unpopular energy law. But the armed forces' harsh repression of the protests only made their leaders more determined that the president must go. Marx explained that sometimes the revolution needs the whip of the counter-revolution to advance. The massacre of El Alto on October 12th transformed the whole situation. In the moment of truth Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada was left suspended in mid-air. The apparently formidable state apparatus was powerless to save him.

Lozada protested that his over-

throw was a blow for democracy in Bolivia and Latin America. This is ironic, considering that he was elected with only 22% of the vote. Democracy in Bolivia has always been a flimsy fig-leaf concealing the dictatorship of a wealthy oligarchy, which in turn was only a local agency for the domination of US imperialism. After the 1952 revolution, in which the workers really had power but lacked a leadership, there was a military coup (with US encouragement) shortly thereafter. Twenty years of military dictatorship finally led to the revolutionary upsurge of the 80s, when there were five presidents in a single day. A potentially wealthy country was reduced to a state of abject poverty by the imperialist looting carried out by their local agents in the Bolivian oligarchy, known as la Rosca.

The masses celebrated in the streets on hearing of their success in overthrowing the president. But his successor faces the same problems that toppled Lozada, while facing growing opposition from the masses, whose problems cannot be solved on the basis of capitalism. The masses will be patient for a little while, but their patience is not infinite. The overthrow of Lozada was the first great success of the Bolivian revolution. But it is too early to shout victory. The most important tasks of the revolution have not been achieved. Its most important battles lie in the future.

On Saturday 18th October, Lozada's vice-president, Carlos Mesa, took over, promising early elections. This is the usual trick of the ruling class when faced with overthrow. When repression failed, they were compelled to resort to concessions and manoeuvres. Promises are made of the most extravagant kind. But promises are cheap. The problem, however, is how to lift the country out

of its grinding poverty. To this question Mesa has no answer.

For the time being, the country is calm. This, however, does not reflect massive support for the new president, as some have tried to assert. The mood of the masses is generally watchful and suspicious. They hope that the new administration will do something, but past experience makes them suspicious. The present situation is only a temporary lull before the next storm. Being all things to all men, Mesa will end up being detested by everyone. For the present he is balancing uneasily between the classes, like a tightrope walker in a circus, trying hard not to fall off.

After being sworn in Mesa pleaded for time ("Give us some space, some time to work"). But the masses are not generally impressed by legal chicanery and smart talk. They demand action, not words!

There are, of course, some illusions in the new President. These are strongest among the well-to-do middle classes and professional people in La Paz. Marcelo Callao, an export consultant for small businesses, said: "Mr Sanchez de Lozada never listened to anyone but a tiny group of aides and ministers. Mr Mesa appears to be a man of the people."

Even some of the people who led the insurrection are willing to extend a certain amount of good will to the new President. On Saturday Mesa was apparently warmly received at a rally in El Alto, one of the epicentres of the revolutionary movement of the last few days, where troops and police shot and killed at least 30 people in the area a week ago in an episode which provided the final catalyst for Lozada's resignation. But among the poor, the hopes in Mesa are tempered with vigilance. There is a keen edge to them. They may be prepared to wait and



see for a little, but they will not wait forever.

These illusions are being carefully encouraged by left opposition parties. Evo Morales, leader of the Movement Toward Socialism and runner-up in last year's election, hastened to give the new President a helping hand: "I think it is important to give him a grace period," Mr. Morales told a television network.

Morales is clearly in no hurry to push Mesa off his tightrope. But the coca growers whom he nominally leads vowed to continue with blockades of roads, while the country's other powerful peasant leader, Felipe Quispe, indicated that he would offer no truce at all. As the leader of the peasants' federation which played a key role in the nationwide road blockades that helped bring down Sanchez de Lozada down, Quispe continued to demand that the government meet all 72 of his group's demands and added a new one: that Mesa not serve out the remainder of his original five-year term but call new elections as soon as possible.

Mesa agreed to that demand in his inaugural speech, but Quispe said: "In any case, we are going to continue with the blockades." And he added, "We are not going to be with the executive, we are always going to be opposition." This shows that there is a deep undercurrent of mistrust and anger among the masses that is reflected in the intransigence of their natural leaders.

### The economy and imperialism

For the time being, the Bolivian bourgeois has been compelled to retreat and abandon repression for manoeuvres and intrigues. Despite this cosmetic change, there is no real difference between Mesa and Lozada. It is like a tactical retreat in war. Since the

first line of defence has been swept aside by the masses, Mesa is forced to retreat to a second line of defence, to address the masses, and to promise - above all to promise, anything and everything - the sun, the moon and the stars - with one condition: that the masses leave the streets and go home, that "normality" be restored, that "law and order" should reign. Once the movement has died down, the oligarchy can go onto the offensive and take back all the concessions.

This message, however, will not be easily accepted by the masses, who have been aroused to action and have had occasion to see the power that lies in the hands of the working class, once it is mobilised and united. The miners have seen the power of dynamite. But far more powerful than dynamite is the power of working class unity. Mesa therefore has no alternative but to ride the tiger. Unfortunately, as the old Indian proverb has it: a man on the back of a tiger finds it difficult to dismount. The workers and peasants will not be easily satisfied with fine words and promises. They have already heard quite enough of these! They will want concrete results.

Mesa will stand or fall on his record on the economy. Despite low inflation and several years of GDP growth, the country's export sector is stagnant and domestic demand weak. More than 60 per cent of its mainly indigenous population lives on \$2 or less a day. With no access to international financial markets, the country relies on multilateral credits and donations from the US, Europe and Japan to finance a 9 per cent fiscal deficit, about half of which is accounted for by state sector pension arrears.

To make matters worse, tourism and trade have been adversely affected by the crisis. Mesa's solution is to

go cap in hand to the imperialists. Government officials say the new government will immediately seek about \$140m in fresh aid. But aid will only be given at a price and that will be to give the USA and others free access to Bolivia's rich mineral reserves. Without this, foreign investors are unlikely to rush back into the country. But the masses are fiercely opposed to private sector plans to export the country's abundant natural gas reserves to the US and Mexico. The new government is therefore immediately trapped between two mutually incompatible forces.

The new government will find itself crushed between two millstones. The masses will demand an immediate improvement in their living standards, while the IMF demands more liberalisation - that is, they demand that the new government carry out the same policies as the old one. This fact is not lost on the people of Bolivia, who are well aware of the real meaning of this "liberalisation".

### The problem of leadership

The Bolivian revolution appears to have a purely spontaneous character. But this is not quite true. Firstly, it did not fall like a thunderbolt from a clear blue sky, but was rooted in the previous period. Secondly, it was led by the natural leaders of the working class, the class-conscious militants of the COB. Thirdly, these militants did not drop from the clouds, but were trained on the basis of ideas that have circulated in the Bolivian trade union and workers movement for decades - the ideas of Trotskyism.

In Russia before 1917, tens of thousands of worker activists had been educated for two decades in the spirit of Bolshevik propaganda. In Bolivia the ideas and programme of Trotskyism have been familiar to work-

er activists for even longer. The Pulacayo Theses of 1946, adopted by the miners' federation, are nothing more than Trotsky's Transitional Programme translated into the concrete conditions of Bolivia. They basically point out the need for the workers to take power in an alliance with the peasants and then proceed towards socialism. They must form the basis on which the movement can now advance to its natural goal: the goal of workers' power.

The most striking aspect of the movement in Bolivia is its purely proletarian character. The revolutionary experience of the Bolivian working class and particularly the miners, is probably greater than any other proletariat in Latin America - not only the 1952 revolution, but the revolutionary opportunities in 1971, the revolutionary upsurge of 1982-85, and more recently the victory of the Cochabamba uprising against water privatisation in April 2000, the nationwide peasant protests in January this year and also the insurrectionary movement of February this year. They based themselves on past experience and traditions to launch the marvellous movement of the past week that swept away the Lozada regime as easily as a man swatting a fly.

The tradition of the Bolivian working class includes the creation of armed militias like in 1952 when nearly 100,000 men were organised in trade union led militias. Also in this occasion there was a call by the leaders of the COB to form self-defence committees and the miners arrived in La Paz with dynamite sticks.

The state apparatus was on the verge of collapsing with an openly rebellious mood amongst the police troops, which already mutinied during the February insurrection, and many soldiers who refused to fire on the people and turned their caps backwards (a sign of mutiny). Now, the bodies of eight soldiers shot dead by their officers for refusing to fire have been found in the city of El Alto.

The magnificent Bolivian working class has placed itself at the head of the nation as the leader and spokesman of the peasantry, the Indians and all other exploited and oppressed layers of the population. This is a most important fact, and one that is fundamental for the outcome of the Bolivian revolution!

The COB leadership displayed great courage and determination in the general strike. But what is needed is a clear plan, strategy and policy. What is needed is a perspective for the taking of power. This is what seems to be lacking, and the lack of it can shipwreck the revolution. COB general secretary Solares has paid a visit to the new president. And apparently adopted the position of conditional support, that is, we will support him as long as he fights against corruption, creates more jobs and gives workers decent wages, etc. This is a bad mistake. The bourgeois government of Mesa will be just as corrupt as the Lozada government. It cannot provide jobs and decent wages, because its hands are tied by the IMF and the World Bank. It is the government of the oligarchy and must represent its interests. To demand of such a government that it defends the interests of the workers and peasants is like asking pears from an elm tree.

The bourgeoisie has just suffered a serious defeat. They cannot use force, and are compelled to stage a tactical retreat, to appear conciliatory, to make promises, in the hope of pacifying the masses, until such time as they are ready to launch a counter-offensive.

People learn fast in the course of a revolution. There is sometimes enough time to learn from one's mistakes and rectify them. In fact the trade union leaders have already made a self-criticism and drawn some correct conclusions:

"After having been the actors in a massive social explosion, which tragically resulted in nearly 70 deaths and more than 500 wounded, the country's workers, in the last National Enlarged Meeting of the Bolivian Workers' Union, drew one main conclusion: *the workers, peasants, oppressed nations and impoverished middle classes, did not wrest power from the 'ruling class' because they still 'haven't got' a 'revolutionary party'.*" (*Econoticiasbolivia.com*, October 19, our emphasis).

That is the main point! The workers responded magnificently to the call to action. They succeeded in overthrowing the President, but then they allowed the power to slip through their fingers. How many times have we seen this happen? And what it boils down to in every case is a question of

leadership. The problem is that, because events move very fast in a revolution, there is no time to learn by trial and error. That is why a revolutionary Marxist party is needed. If the POR had maintained a genuine Trotskyist position, it would now be in a position to play the role that was played by the Bolshevik Party in 1917. But the false policies of the POR over decades have condemned it to impotence. The forces for a new revolutionary party can only come from the ranks of the workers, peasants and youth that have been aroused to struggle and are seeking a way out on the revolutionary path.

Below the leaders of the COB are a numerous layer of what one can call the natural leaders of the working class. They are the local leaders who have won the confidence of the workers and peasants by their honesty, courage and militancy. They will play a crucial role in the revolution. They stand close to the masses and therefore reflect their revolutionary spirit. If they were united in a revolutionary party, the future of the revolution would be guaranteed.

Roberto de La Cruz, the leader of the El Alto Workers' Union, stands to the left of Solares. But the workers and peasants stand far to the left of any of the leaders. Instinctively, they understand that the new government is just like the old one but with a new facade. They do not trust the bourgeois. Maybe they do not yet know exactly what they want, but they know perfectly well what they do not want. They do not want a continuation of government of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. They do not want their country to be bled white by imperialism. They do not want poverty and unemployment.

The leaders of the COB have now called off the general strike. Hostilities have been temporarily halted. Very well. But the army of the proletariat must not be stood down. The war is not over. It has only just begun! In order to guarantee that the most pressing demands of the people will be met, it is necessary to prepare for another general strike - one that will place on the order of the day, not the overthrow of a President, but the overthrow of the corrupt and reactionary Bolivian oligarchy that is blocking the way to progress.

Above all, there must be no trust



in the so-called "progressive" and "liberal" sections of the Bolivian bourgeoisie. These will now undoubtedly hold the centre stage, trying to fool the people with false promises. They are just the left boot of the oligarchy and imperialism, as Lozada was the right boot.

The workers and peasants are sceptical of the bourgeois. They are quite right! The La Paz peasants decided to maintain their protests. That is the correct tactic! If the battle has not yet been won, why should the army be demobilised?

After the dramatic events of the past week, there will probably be a lull in the movement as the workers analyse the situation and assess what is to be done next. The most conscious and militant elements will be drawing revolutionary conclusions.

### The Russian revolution

The situation in Bolivia today is strongly reminiscent of that in Russia in February 1917. The workers and peasants overthrew the old regime and set up soviets (workers and soldiers councils). In effect, power was in the hands of the Russian working class in February. They had the power, but they did not know they had the power.

The workers of Bolivia could and should have taken power last Friday. That they did not do so when the possibility existed will create new complications and problems in the future. The bourgeoisie will have time to rally its shattered forces and erect new obstacles in the path of the workers and peasants.

In Russia the failure of the workers to press home their victory and take power into their hands in February led directly to the abortion of dual power. The bourgeois regrouped around the "democratic" Provisional Government, while the workers and peasants regrouped around the soviets. There was a period in which the two sides struggled to get the upper hand, until finally, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, the soviets overthrew the Provisional Government and took power in October (November according to the new calendar).

The decisive factor here was the leadership of the Bolshevik Party under Lenin and Trotsky. This is what is lacking in Bolivia. The leaders of the COB have played a very positive role. They have shown great personal integrity and courage in leading the struggle against Lozada. But now something more than integrity and courage is required: what is needed is a clear perspective for taking power and a programme and tactics adequate to this perspective. On this basis, the victory of the revolution would be assured.

The most pressing need is to establish the juntas everywhere, elected and responsible to the workers and peasants, to link them up on a local, regional and national basis, to sink roots in every factory, mine, office, village, and local neighbourhood. The COB should convene a national congress of the juntas to discuss the way forward. The workers' and peasants' juntas should take over the running of their areas, control the distribution of food, fuel and other basic necessities. They should control prices and take over the security of the areas, creating a militia for this purpose, and arming against the danger of reaction and the threat posed by criminal elements. The bourgeois want order. We should give them order: the revolutionary

order of the working class and the soviets!

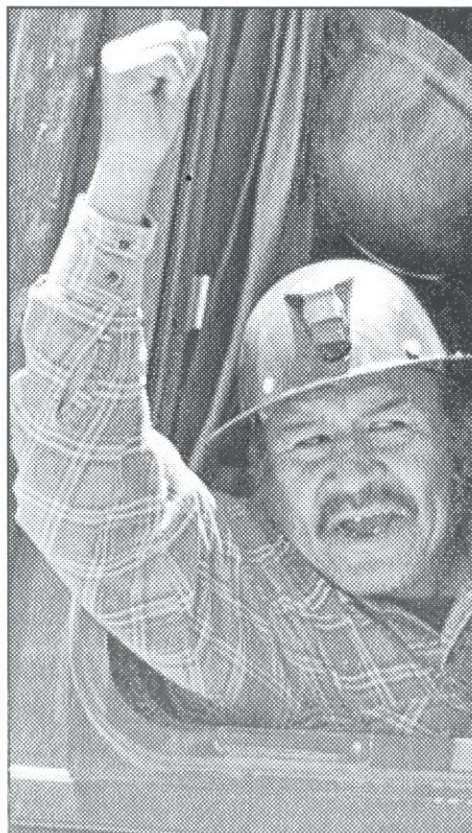
### The "Opposition" of Morales

The workers and peasants have shown tremendous elan and initiative. What more could one ask of them? Yet the leaders of the parliamentary opposition do not reflect the courage of the masses. Evo Morales is waiting for the power to drop into his lap, like an overripe fruit. He knows that, once he takes office, he will be under the pressure of the masses to take decisive measures on their behalf. That is why he prefers the relative comfort of the opposition benches. That is why he is constantly asking the people to give Mesa time. That is also why he has embraced the slogan of the Constituent Assembly, which some simple-minded people have put forward in the mistaken belief that it represents a "revolutionary" demand. In fact, it is not revolutionary at all, but merely an attempt to delay and prevaricate, to avoid raising the question of power.

### The Constituent Assembly slogan

The old state power, undermined, shaken and bruised, still remains in control. The revolution can only succeed by overthrowing it and replacing it with a new, proletarian power. The fall of Lozada will be followed in the not-to-distant future by the fall of Mesa. Already the bourgeoisie will be looking for an alternative candidate, who will have to come, not from the right but the left. In its dealings with the masses, the ruling class only has two weapons: violence or deceit. But violence has already shown itself to be inadequate to deal with a movement of such dimensions. The use of the army, far from intimidating the people, had the opposite effect - provoking the masses to move with even greater determination and energy.

The stage is therefore set for deception. But in order to deceive the people, to get them to leave the streets, mines and factories and leave the initiative in the hands of the professional politicians, it is necessary to offer them something they can believe in. The old, discredited bourgeois politicians are useless for this purpose. New faces must be put



forward, and a new script written. In order to ensure that the masses do not lay their hands on the real power, they must be offered the semblance of power - a shadow instead of the substance.

Conscious of their weakness, the bourgeoisie will try to lean on the leaders of the working class in order to regain control of the situation and pacify the working class. In this context, the slogan of the "Constituent Assembly" that has been advanced by some groups on the left is playing a negative and counterrevolutionary role. The bourgeoisie - in the person of its "liberal" and "democratic" wing - will try to deceive the people by an empty discussion of constitutional niceties, while the real issues of work, land and bread are postponed indefinitely.

Instead of concentrating on the central question of power, the workers' and peasants' attention will be distracted by lawyers' tricks and demagoguery. The energies of the revolution will be fruitlessly dissipated. No wonder the bourgeois parties have enthusiastically embraced this demand! The whole thing is a gigantic swindle. Worse still, it is dangerous. Behind the facade of the "Constituent Assembly", the forces of reaction will be mobilising. Behind the scenes, the American imperialists will be carrying on their usual intrigues.

It is necessary to educate the masses to believe only in themselves, their power and self-organisation. It must be explained that under capitalism parliament is only a hollow shell with no real power. The only power that exists is, on the one side, the power of the bankers, landowners and capitalists - the old reactionary power that must be overthrown - and on the other, the power of the working masses.

The worst thing one can do in a revolution is to waste time. Throughout history many revolutions have been ruined by endless debates and speeches and the pursuit of phantoms and shadows instead of the substance of power. Marx pointed this out as early as 1848-9, and Lenin often repeated this warning in 1917.

Those who advocate the Constituent Assembly in the present situation in Bolivia have abandoned the standpoint of the proletariat and adopted that of vulgar petty bourgeois



democrats and parliamentary cretinism.

The first condition must be: absolute independence of the workers' organisations from the bourgeoisie: no pacts, alliances, coalitions or any other entanglements with the so-called progressive wing of the Bolivian bourgeois.

The elements of workers' power already exist in Bolivia: in the trade unions, the juntas vecinales, cabildos, and other organs of struggle. It is necessary to develop and extend these and link them up. Only in this way can an alternative power be created, ready to lead the nation.

### Internationalism - the only road

There are reports claiming that local leaders are forming armed factions to challenge the government and its armed forces, formulating the grievances of the poor into a "powerfully nationalist, anti-foreign message" (The Guardian). The nationalism of the Bolivian worker and peasant is really an anti-imperialist sentiment that is

only the outer shell of an immature Bolshevism. However, the aspiration of the masses to eliminate foreign domination and win control over their own destiny can only be achieved by the expropriation of the oligarchy. That, however, will immediately bring Bolivia into conflict with US imperialism, which will attempt to use neighbouring states to intervene. The fate of the Bolivian revolution will therefore be determined by its ability to rouse the workers and peasants of Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Ecuador and Chile in its support.

The revolution can, and very likely will, begin in Bolivia, but if it remains isolated in one small Latin American country, it cannot succeed in the long run. The victory of the Bolivian revolution must therefore be the first step in the Andean and Latin American revolution, the conditions for which are now completely mature. The Bolivian revolution will triumph under the banner of proletarian internationalism, or it will not triumph at all.

The Bolivian revolution can take place before other countries. But it can only be consolidated if it goes beyond the narrow limits of the nation state and spreads to the neighbouring countries. Such a perspective is not at all utopian. It is entirely possible, especially if the revolution is headed by a far-sighted and courageous leadership.

Everywhere one looks one sees that revolution is on the order of the day. The whole Andean region is like a prairie after a long drought, where a single spark can cause a conflagration. All that is required is one courageous example. If the workers of Bolivia or Venezuela would take power, the whole situation would swiftly be transformed. But it is necessary to make a start!

- Long live the Bolivian revolution!
- No trust in the bourgeoisie and its parties!
- For a Workers' and Peasants' Government!
- For a Socialist Bolivia in a Socialist United States of Latin America!

# John Maclean - agitator, organiser, educator

By Margaret McIntyre

**This month marks the 80th anniversary of the death of John Maclean. Maclean was an outstanding figure. He was Britain's most famous Marxist propagandist and revolutionary organiser. At great personal cost, he hailed the Bolshevik Revolution and fought hard to promote the world socialist revolution. The following article gives a glimpse of his life, commitment and contribution to the workers' movement.**

"NO HUMAN being on the face of the earth, no government is going to take away from me my right to speak, my right to protest against wrong. I am not here, then, as the accused; I am here as the accuser of capitalism dripping with blood from head to foot."

This was the challenge issued by John MacLean, the great Scottish revolutionary, as he stood in the dock at Edinburgh High Court in May 1918, charged with sedition.

MacLean's real crime in the eyes of British imperialism was urging workers to follow the Russian example and go forward to a socialist revolution. Such was the standing of MacLean that the ruling class was forced to imprison him on no fewer than five occasions.

His revolutionary socialism was recognised by Lenin and Trotsky, who made him an Honorary President of the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets, along with other giants of the international socialist movement such as Karl Liebknecht in Germany.

MacLean is probably best remembered for his leading role in the war-time upheavals that gave Glasgow and the surrounding area the nickname "Red Clydeside". In addition there was his pioneering work in the field of working class education. He explained the teachings of Marx in language the workers could understand.

At one point in 1919 there

were 43 classes with a roll of over 2,000 regular worker students. In addition, open-air meetings in Bath Street in the centre of Glasgow attracted hundreds and often thousands of workers, who stood every Sunday night for two or three hours, to listen to MacLean and other speakers explain the need for socialism.

### Melting pot

John MacLean was born in Pollokshaws near Glasgow on 24 August 1879. At that time Glasgow was a melting pot of Irish and Scottish victims of the Highland Clearances, (as MacLean's parents were), who had been driven from their land by English landlords to make way for sheep.

These dispossessed elements provided the high concentration of workers in the "heavy" industries of engineering, ship-building and mining on

the Clyde. These factors, together with seeing his mother struggle to support a family of six children, after his father's death of silicosis at the age of forty-three, led MacLean to become a socialist while still a young man. In 1903, at the age of twenty-four, he joined the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), a Marxist organisation. When MacLean joined, the SDF had just disaffiliated from the Labour Representation Committee, because the latter had refused to accept socialist principles.

MacLean did not consider this a wise decision and campaigned throughout the years to get the party to re-affiliate. He saw the need to orientate towards working class organisations even if their programme was a little confused.

He threw himself into the work of building up the SDF in the Glasgow area with an energy and self-sacrifice which was

to become legendary. He organised demonstrations of the unemployed, so that by 1908 the town council in Pollokshaws were forced to give work to over a quarter of the town's unemployed.

And he began his educational work. Along with his evening and weekend classes, MacLean spent his six week summer holiday (until he was dismissed from his job as a school teacher), touring Scotland on a kind of propaganda tour. His pioneering work even took him as far afield as Lerwick in the Shetland Isles-hardly a hotbed of revolution!

A tribute published at the time in *Justice*, the paper of the SDF, claimed that "MacLean does the work of three men" and "Our Mac is a bonnie fechter!" but warned of the danger to his health if he kept up such a workload.

MacLean was not discouraged and worked on. He even utilised the 1908 Liberal Education Bill for his workers' education classes. As provided by the Bill, he got twenty of the young members of Pollokshaws SDF to request the local school board for a continuation class in economics. When this was granted, MacLean was appointed as official tutor.

In the years leading up to the war, with prices rising and living standards falling, industrial unrest grew rapidly and Marxist ideas sympathetically received. One incident which illustrates this, was a strike by women textile workers near the mining village of Nitshill on the Clyde.

### Thousands walk-out

The factory employed thou-



sands of local girls on piece-work rates. Two girls were daughters of socialist miners and led the demands for better prices. When these were refused the whole workforce walked out. Completely inexperienced in how to organise a dispute or trade union, John MacLean had proved to a whole layer of raw working class youth that Marxism was not for the academics, but a guide to action in the day to day battles to improve living standards.

The greatest service MacLean did to the international labour movement in this period was his active opposition to First World War. He was not a pacifist but saw the war as an imperialist conflict between Britain and Germany in the interests of capital and not the working class of either country. MacLean had been horrified when, as war broke out, so-called "Marxists" in every country each supported their governments and voted for war credits. This included Hyndman and Blatchford leaders of his party, the British Socialist Party (the BSP), had been formed mainly from the SDF in 1911). The real Internationalists, maintaining class opposition to the war, were reduced to a small core: Lenin and Trotsky in Russia, Liebknecht and Luxemburg in Germany, Adler in Austria, Connolly in Ireland and MacLean in Britain.

MacLean began his anti-war propaganda on the Clyde with his small band of followers. The majority of the BSP in Glasgow supported his stance.

Because of his differences with the BSP Executive, his final contribution to the party paper Justice appeared at this time.

The article makes

MacLean position clear:

"Let the propertied class, old and young, go out and defend their blessed property. When they have been disposed of, we of the working class will have something to defend and we shall do it."

At first he received a hostile reception but, because of its composition, the working class of Glasgow was never as fervently patriotic as the rest of the country. They soon grew weary of the war and the stringent measures taken by the government. They started to listen to Marxists like MacLean. Action to protect their living standards soon followed and Britain's symbol of revolt, "Red Clydeside", was born.

One of the first and greatest battles was the Glasgow rent strike of 1915. Thousands of munition workers had flooded into Glasgow and, with housing scarce, landlords pushed up rents. Although munition workers were relatively well paid, many tenants were the wives and families of servicemen fighting overseas and could not afford to keep paying the increases.

The tenants, notably women assisted by anti-war socialists like MacLean, organised and refused to pay further increases. When one landlord's agent came round and attempted to col-

lect the increases, the woman were roused by the banging of dustbin lids "and plastered the poor man with flour and pease-meal and by the time the police arrived he looked like a grain store in disorder!"

## Industrial muscle

Large demonstrations were organised all over the city, banners flying. One read "My father is fighting in France; we are fighting Huns at home."

However demonstrations were not enough they had to be backed up by industrial muscle. On 18 November, when eighteen workers were summoned to appear in court for non-payment of rent, ten thousand local shipyard workers and housewives marched to the Sheriff's Court.

One contingent stopped off at Lome Street School where John MacLean was teaching under notice of dismissal. They carried him shoulder high to the Court to address the crowd. That was MacLean's last day as a school teacher.

He was instructed by the workers to send the following resolution to Prime Minister Asquith:

"That this meeting of Clyde Munitions workers requests the Government to definitely state, not later than Saturday first, that it forbids any increases of

rent during the period of the war; and that, this failing, a general strike will be declared on Monday 22nd November."

MacLean never received a reply to his letter, but within a short period the Rent Restriction Act was introduced, keeping rents to their pre-war level. The workers of the Clyde were on the march!

The coming months saw increased action against the Munitions of War and Conscription Act which took away all the hard won freedoms like the right to organise and the right to strike. Time and again the Government was forced to step down when workers refused to co-operate.

The reason for this success was their level of organisation. Under the guidance of MacLean, shop stewards in the munitions factories and shipyards formed the Clyde Workers' Committee, probably one of the first Shop stewards' combines ever. Many members were revolutionary socialists who had learned their Marxism at MacLean's Sunday afternoon classes and applied their ideas in the struggle against the government and the war.

At the end of 1915, Lloyd George, then Minister of Munitions, decided it was time to come up to Glasgow and 'sort out' the wild men of the Clyde. He was due to address them in St. Andrew's Hall on Christmas Day.

Unfortunately for him the Clyde Workers' Committee commandeered the distribution of the tickets and packed the hall. When Lloyd George arrived he was greeted with this massive audience standing up, as one man, singing verse after verse of the Red Flag as he attempted, without success, to speak.

By this time MacLean's



Sunday afternoon economics class was regularly attracting about five hundred workers and his Bath Street meetings many thousands. The ruling class decided that something had to be done.

On 6 February, on his way home from a Bath Street meeting, he was seized by the police, taken to Edinburgh Castle as a prisoner of war and charged with sedition. Despite massive protests from workers on the Clyde and many witnesses who spoke in his defence, MacLean was found guilty and sentenced to three years' hard labour. Protests were made but it was not until the events of February 1917 in Russia rekindled the revolutionary fervour on the Clyde that they began to take effect.

## Form Soviets!

Mayday 1917 saw eighty thousand workers on the march in Glasgow with a quarter of a million more lining the streets calling for MacLean's release. A meeting a few days later of many thousands even called on the workers of the Clyde to follow the example of their Russian comrades and form Soviets. Terrified of the consequences if they detained him any longer, the government released MacLean at the end of June.

When the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia, MacLean became their Consul in Glasgow. He addressed many "Hands off Russia" rallies, but recognised that the best way to consolidate the socialist revolution in Russia was by spreading it.

He called for the 1918 Mayday demonstrations to take place, not on the first

Sunday of May as were customary, but as a one day general strike in Glasgow on the first of May. The response was magnificent. One hundred thousand workers downed tools to march through the packed streets. Glasgow was on fire with red banners, ribbons, and rosettes.

Unfortunately MacLean was not present to witness the spectacle. He had been arrested in April as the ruling class sought to stem the revolutionary tide.

MacLean was to be twice more imprisoned but it was this court appearance when he proudly claimed the title "Accuser of Capitalism, dripping with blood from head to foot" which was to go down in the history books. MacLean's complete distrust of the capitalists courts was summed up when he used his right to reject any member of the jury by saying, "I object to the whole of them!"

A week later he stood as official Labour candidate for the Gorbals in the General Election (the BSP was now affiliated to the Labour Party.) Although he did not win he received an excellent 7,436 votes for an uncompromising revolutionary programme.

The next months saw the last great struggles of the workers on the Clyde for a forty-hour week resulting in pitched battle with the police in George Square at the centre of Glasgow. The forces of the state were used to the full as tanks were brought into the streets of Glasgow and troops brought in from all

over the country. The soldiers in the nearby Maryhill barracks were not used in case they were won over by the strikers.

## Outmanoeuvred

However the workers were out-manoeuvred and the movement was smashed.

It was during these last years of his life that MacLean became mistaken in the tactics he employed. With the subsequent downturn in the working class movement he thought that the best strategy was to fight for socialism in Scotland, and then spread the ideas to what he considered the less advanced layers in England and Wales. Consequently he set up the Scottish Workers' Republican Party (SWRP) in 1922 and concentrated his efforts over the next two years in building up its membership and influence.

Although the pace of events slowed down, MacLean worked as hard as ever, particularly in the educational field and was still considered dangerous enough by the state to be imprisoned on two further occasions before his death.

He had intended to stand as SWRP candidate in the 1924 General Election. In fact his last election address, dated 30 November 1923-the day he died-was written only ten days previously.

There are enormous lessons to be learned for workers today from MacLean and the struggles in which he participated. He showed that Marxist

ideas can take root among the working class in a period of crisis if they are properly explained and that a determined leadership can win massive support in day-to-day battles against a reactionary government.

But probably the most important lesson of all, because it did not succeed, is the need to link up industrial struggles with the political struggle to change society. The Marxists in Britain today have a duty to work conscientiously in both wings of the Labour movement, so that an organised Marxist leadership is forged, able to lead the working class to victory.

Finally, the words of John MacLean as he summed up in his speech from the dock in 1918 can only serve as an inspiration to Marxists today as they continue the work to which he devoted his life:

"My appeal is to the working class I appeal to them exclusively, because they, and only they, can bring about the time when the whole world will be one brotherhood, on a sound economic foundation.

That, and that alone, can be the means of bringing about a reorganisation of society. That can only be obtained when the people of the world get the world and retain the world." □



"My appeal is to the working class. I appeal to them exclusively, because they, and only they, can bring about the time when the whole world will be one brotherhood, on a sound economic foundation."

# fighting fund Have you given yet?

IN OUR last issue we launched our Autumn/Xmas Fighting Fund appeal to raise £7000 in donations by the start of 2004 - a Magnificent 7K so to speak. Well in September we raised a tremendous £990, only £10 short of our target for the first month of the drive - well done! However we still have £6010 to go and only just over 3 months left to do it. This month, as we are about to go to press, only £552 has come in towards this - so unless in the next few days a lot of cheques come flying into our office we will be behind in our target going into November.

We are now entering the time of the year where the most cash is raised in donations by all manner of groups and organisations. So lets get back on target - it can be done. The task now is to raise the shortfall on our October target figure of £1000 plus November's target of £2000. If we do that we will be well over half way to our £7000 figure with Xmas to go. We can do it if every reader and seller gets stuck in. Have you donated yet? Now is the time to send something in. Sellers should be drawing up lists of sympathetic people in the movement to systematically approach and ask outright for a donation. If you explain that whereas the bosses can call on the huge resources of the City of London and the big banks to fund their lies and propaganda, we are reliant just on the support of ordinary men and women to mount the case for socialism, then you will get a

response.

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Steve Jones

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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.

✚ **A national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.** £8.00 an hour as a step toward this goal, with no exemptions.

✚ **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.

✚ **Action to protect our environment.** Only public ownership of the land, and major industries, petro-chemical enterprises, food companies, energy and transport, can form the basis of a genuine socialist approach to the environment.

✚ **A fully funded and fully comprehensive education system under local democratic control.** Keep big business out of our schools and colleges. Free access for all to further and higher education. Scrap tuition fees. No to student loans. For a living grant for all over 16 in education or training.

✚ **The outlawing of all forms of discrimination.** Equal pay for equal work. Invest in quality childcare facilities available to all. Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls. Abolish the Criminal Justice Act.

✚ **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.

✚ **Socialist internationalism.** No to the bosses European Union. Yes to a socialist united states of Europe, as part of a world socialist federation.



# Socialist Appeal

Marxist voice of the labour movement

## Amicus: vote Unity Gazette



The coming EC elections are decisive for the future of Amicus and the future of our movement.

For a long time the constituent unions of Amicus have been in the apparently vice like grip of the right. The leadership has been dominated by a rightwing bureaucracy, who drastically curtailed democracy, and consistently adopted the policies of social partnership, ie class collaboration, in their relations with the bosses. For many years Socialist Appeal argued that this domination of the right could not last indefinitely, it would inevitably reach its limits, in the face of the huge discontent being stoked up by the 'counter-revolution' that has been taking place on the shop floor.

The election of Derek Simpson as General Secretary, the defeat of Sir Ken Jackson, was a huge victory for Amicus members

and represents a decisive change in our union. The constant attacks on workers; the decline of our wages and conditions, and the seemingly never ending stream of redundancies in manufacturing industry are beginning to provoke a reaction. Workers in many industries are beginning to look for a way out of the crisis. An essential part of this process is the regeneration of our own organisation, the election of a new leadership, and the adoption of a more militant approach. It is now essential that we have a left EC that will faithfully represent the interests of the members, putting itself at the forefront of reclaiming our movements fighting democratic heritage, and leading the fight to defend an improve members' standard of living.

The new EC will also have to take up a political struggle on behalf of the membership.

The right wing leaders of AEEU and its forerunners provided an important trade

union base for the Blairites in the Labour Party.

In the future our union must fight to reclaim the Labour Party as a party of the working class – it is our party and it should be putting forward our interests not the interests of our class enemies.

### Vote for the Gazette slate!

We need a democratic, fighting union, with strong branches and the restoration of District Committees. We need the election of all full-time officials.

A new left EC must consign the policies of 'partnership' with the bosses to the dustbin – and begin a fight to defend jobs wages and conditions. We must fight to win back control of the Labour Party – it is our party and it must defend our interests. For democratic, militant trade unionism and socialist policies.

For the full slate of candidates see page 6.

## For a left leadership!

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