

# SOCIALIST

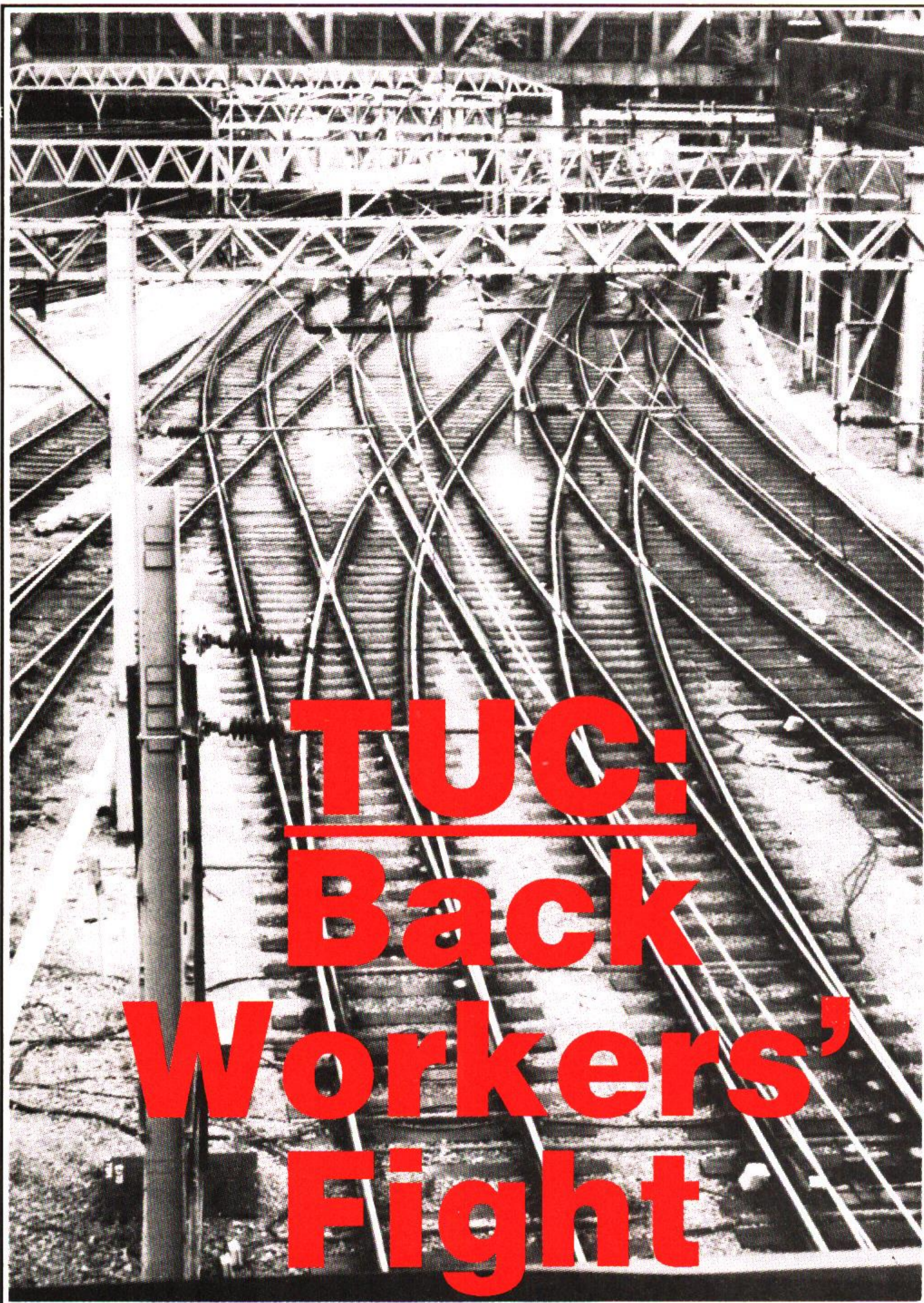
# APPEAL

£1

*The Marxist voice of the labour movement*

Issue No.24 September 1994

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**TUC:  
Back  
Workers'  
Fight**

**South  
Africa:  
Unions  
demand  
jobs  
and  
homes**

.....  
**Tony  
Blair's  
'Socialism'  
Which  
Way  
forward for  
Labour?**

**RMT strike  
Reports,  
round-up  
and  
analysis**

**Labour/TUC: Force the Tories Out**



# End of an era?

**"There is a sense that the period of Conservative rule that began in 1979 is drawing to a close."**  
(Editorial, Financial Times, 16th August 1994).

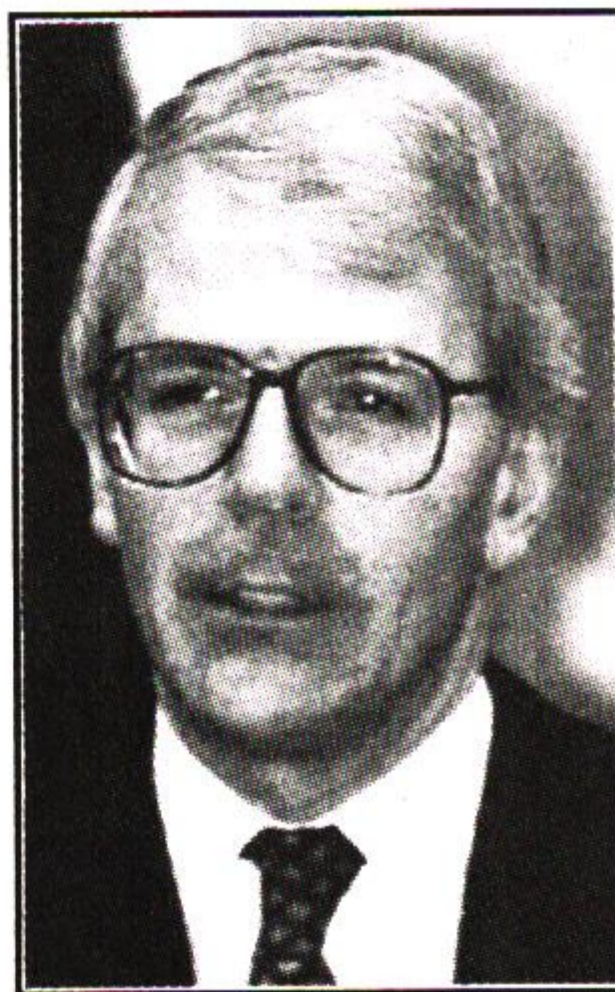
Even the capitalist commentators don't hold out much hope for the Tories. The humiliating blows that have rained down on the Government in the electoral hammering they received in the local elections, Euro-elections, and by-elections, are a pointer to the future. In one opinion poll, Labour has reached 57% of the vote (the highest of any political party ever), while the Tories are trailing on 23%. Hundreds of Tory backbenchers are anxiously applying the arithmetic of 20% swings against their ever so vulnerable seats. If a General Election was called now, the Major Government would face a Canadian type wipe out.

## Mid Term Blues

The crisis of Toryism is no "mid-term blues", but a deep seated malaise. Everything is going wrong. The latest banana-skin was Portillo's hasty announcement that public procurement contracts will now exclude special treatment for disabled workers. They are seen to directly manipulate Railtrack's dealings with the RMT strike. They can't do anything right. This situation reflects the crisis of British capitalism. According to The Observer, "Recent trade figures and warnings from the Confederation of British Industry about underlying lack of competitiveness are contributing to the view, widespread in the City, that we have had the best of the recovery (even if the electorate has not noticed it)." It goes on to explain, "The middle classes in the South escaped the worst of the recession to end all recessions in 1980-81. But the recession that was not

meant to happen in 1990-92 has, via one relation or another, permeated most middle class households - and even some upper class ones..." (12.6.94). With the massive Tory tax rises, the stagnation in the housing market, and the growing insecurity at work, support for the Tories has evaporated.

Major, whose political future still looks bleak, is fighting for his political life. Leaning for support on the Euro-sceptics, he vetoed Dehane as President of the European Commission. He has desperately reshuffled the Cabinet in an attempt to boost his flagging image. In effect, these changes amount to no more than rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. New splits and divisions in the Tory leadership will inevitably open up in the coming period. Although there will



Major: Presiding over a Tory collapse?

be a certain recovery of support for the Tories as we approach the election, the Liberal Democrats will be squeezed in the inevitable class polarisation. It is extremely doubtful that tax cuts will buy the necessary electoral support for a fifth term of office. The most likely outcome is a majority Labour Government. Even

Big Business recognises this fact, with Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's making overtures to Labour. Even Murdoch, the newspaper tycoon, needing to sell more papers, is prepared to back Labour. It is a sign of the times. But it is purely tactical on their behalf. The Tory Party remains the party of capitalism.

With the election of Tony Blair as Labour leader, who represents the domination of the right-wing in the Party, Big Business looks at the prospects of a Labour government in a new light. They recognise the Tories have run out of steam. They are prepared to contemplate a right wing Labour Government as long as it does the bidding of the banks and monopolies. They feel they can work with a Blair Government.

## Pro-Labour Mood

The working class sees it differently. After 15 years of Tory Government, the possibility of a new Labour Government, will be greeted with enthusiasm. As we approach the election, the pro-Labour mood will intensify. There will be enormous expectations generated from those who have suffered under the Tories. According to the UK Department of Social Security report on low-income families, the income of the poorest families fell by 17% since 1979, whilst the richest grew by 62%. There will be great pressure from the working class to rectify this injustice. Pressures will grow in the Labour Party and unions for Labour to take decisive measures in the interests of working people. It is of this that the capitalists are fearful. By the time of a new Labour government, it is likely that the present shallow boom will have given way to a new slump. Faced with a deepening economic crisis, Big

Business will also exert the maximum pressure on the Government to do its bidding.

It will be up to the Labour activists in the unions and Constituencies to counter these pressures by campaigning for the government to break with capitalism and introduce a bold socialist programme to tackle the crisis. Under the present system, the monopolies will demand counter-reforms. Labour must take up the demands of working people for a minimum living wage, a 32 hour week with no loss of pay, a million new council houses, higher pensions and a job for all. Labour must meet head on the sabotage of Big Business by introducing an Enabling Act to give it emergency powers to abolish the Monarchy and House of Lords, take over the 'commanding heights' of the economy, and introduce a socialist plan of production. Only on this road can Labour effectively represent the interests of the working class.

## Trade Union Links

The recent constitutional changes in the Labour Party to weaken the trade union links and dissolve the activists into the mass, will count for nothing as the mass movement takes place. Demands will be raised for a bold socialist programme to deal with the crisis. As Lenin explained, "an ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory". It will be clear that no amount of tinkering with capitalism will solve the problems of the working class. The question of Clause Four will again come to the fore, as well as the accountability of the PLP. On the basis of the events, activists in the wards, constituencies, union branches and shop stewards committees will move to change the Labour Party on socialist lines. The Marxists will play a key role in this. The death knell of the Tory Government is but an episode in the mighty events which impend, that will transform and retransform the mass organisations and prepare the way for the socialist transformation of society.



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**Next months issue:  
Labour Party  
Conference Special**

## Postal workers: *Prepare for action!*

Swindon, Bristol, Liverpool, Milton Keynes, Reading, Northampton and Mount Pleasant - to name only a few - are all offices that have taken 'unofficial' industrial action in the last year. It is an unprecedented situation, and is hardly a sign of a happy and contented workforce! So what are these reasons that have led these offices, many without a history of militancy, to walk out?

In recent years, there has been an increasing casualisation of our industry. In 1985, the Associate Grade (ie. people working a 25 hour week on average) was established in an agreement called 'safe guarding the mail business'. There has also been a massive increase in productivity with the expansion of automation. This has led to increased profits and now the call for privatisation. During this period management have jumped into bed with the whole concept of Total Quality Management. The main point of this idea is the subordination of the workforce through the use of 'teams'. It endeavours to weaken the trade unions and to split up the workers. Instead of postal workers doing various jobs within the sorting offices, they try to functionalise them with workers doing fixed duties i.e. daily delivery of mail, driving, and processing and so on, so that they are easier to team.

Postal workers take home, without overtime, £150 for a six day 41.5 hour week. They therefore rely heavily on overtime—but many of us have seen that disappear whilst our bills remain. So what is our leadership doing? My branch and many others have called for a 35 hour week with no loss of pay. This would increase the opportunities for a 5 day week, it would also create opportunities for Associate Grade staff to be made full time, and would raise our hourly rate.

This position was carried at our 1993 National Conference but instead of our leadership pursuing this, they chased productivity deals instead. This would force us to sell hours and jobs—which has been rejected by the membership. During this time, the management has continually whittled away our hours to increase productivity, despite no agreement on this. At this years Conference we called for action for a 35 hour week. However, this was not carried, and we now face in the Cardiff Mechanised

Letter Office and the delivery offices, proposals to lose 2000 hours of work i.e. 50 jobs or £0.5 million. Throughout the valleys night shift sorting is to be cut, as are second deliveries. In Bridgend, it is intended to get rid of 50% of the drivers' section with the work being spread around the remaining employees. The union will not negotiate away a single job or a single minute!

### Industrial action

In the last few weeks, after a meeting which called for industrial action, branch officers have been visiting offices throughout the branch area; all of whom have said no more backing down. The head office in Cardiff and the surrounding branches are also facing similar cuts and are hopefully looking to join us in our fight. Once we have visited all the members in the small delivery offices, we will ask for ballot papers to be drawn up around a single trade dispute. The prospect of no mail moving in SE Wales is now strong.

But this fight should be a national fight. Postal workers around Britain are on the move. Unfortunately, our leaders are turning their backs on the membership and have even repudiated unofficial action. They have hardly lifted a finger to protect union officials who have been victimised because their branches took strike action.

There is a simple message for our leaders and for management as well. Postal workers have had enough and will not accept any more job losses. We demand a 35 hour, 5 day week and no short term temporary contracts in the Post Office. Full time employment in the Post Office is obtainable and we call on the national leadership to fight with us. We must generalise the struggle to involve all postal workers, not just individual sections, in the fight to protect our jobs and pay. Overtime bans or one-day strikes will achieve little as management will use casuals to clear the mail. Solidarity—where all mail is blacked—can be effectively built with all out industrial action. That is a key lesson we must learn.

Charlie Balch

Royal Mail Letters Section Secretary,  
Cardiff UCW (personal cap)

## We've Moved

Socialist Appeal has moved into its new offices - and that means a new phone number. Our phone number is:

**071-251-1094**

fax number:

**071-251-1095**

The address is the same: PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

Editor: Alan Woods



# Reject employers derisory wage offer... Time to make a stand

## Unison

Manual and white collar council workers have received a derisory offer from the employers in response to this years national wage claim. The offer is spread over almost two years with a 1.7% plus £75 lump sum to run from July and September of this year for manual and clerical workers respectively this year to be followed with a further 1.4% plus £75 lump sum for both groups from July 1995 to last until April 1996.

The Service Group Executive of the main union involved, UNISON, has recommended to its membership that the offer be rejected and that members support a series of one day strikes. In

conjunction with this members are being asked to discuss the most effective forms of selective action e.g. pulling out groups such as Finance, telephonists, Post Room etc.

There is a lengthy consultative period up to 21 September owing to the school holidays, however this time is being used to build up maximum support for rejection of the offer and industrial action.

A special conference will be held in the event of rejection to discuss the tactics followed by the formal ballot for action. Whilst this procedure could be viewed as unnecessarily cumbersome and there could be legitimate criticism of this and the fact that our claim for a 'substantive rise' was not specific enough, it should be recognised that the main task now is building on the basis of

a united front to maximise backing for the service group executives recommendation.

Council workers have faced massive attacks on jobs, wages and conditions through cuts and privatisation throughout the Eighties and into the Nineties. Our wage rises have been eroded year in and year out as inflation has eaten away at the paltry wage increases we have been given. In effect we are being asked to directly pay for the Tories' crisis. This year it is time to make a stand. How can we be expected to accept a two year deal which would this year in no way meet the cost of things such as the VAT on fuel and the increased NI let alone next year when forecasts indicate a 4% - 5% increase in inflation.

Every effort should be made to support the Service Group Executives recommendation as the first step in launching a serious campaign to establish a decent wage rise for council workers this year.

**South London UNISON activist**

## Picket at Congress House

On the 5th of July a mass picket called by Camden Trades Council was held outside TUC headquarters. They were there to protest at John Monks decision to invite David Hunt, the then Tory Employment minister, and Howard Davies, Director General of the CBI, to address a TUC conference on full employment being held that morning.

Over 350 pickets heard speakers, including Arthur Scargill and Dennis Skinner, condemn the class collaborationist policies of the TUC leadership and warn the future leader of the Labour Party not to follow the same self destructive path.

The picket was more than just a vocal protest - with several

delegations, including the GMB, refusing to cross the line and enter the conference. Other unions such as the TGWU simply stayed away all together.

The conference itself was a disaster, with over 78% of the delegates not even being trade unionists! It was a vivid illustration of how ineffective the TUC has become under the present leadership and it's embrace of 'new realism'. By inviting the Tories to speak at the TUC, Monks hoped to gain the 'respectability' that he so desperately craves, winning fair weather friends in the City and in big business, all be it at the expense of the respect of millions of trade unionists. After the picket an alternative conference on Full Employment called by the Greater London Association of Trades Councils, was held in Conway Hall. The unmistakable mood of that conference was that a Labour Government committed to socialist policies, including the public ownership of the commanding heights of the economy, would be needed if full employment was to be achieved.

**Paul Nowak**

**Wirral Trades Council Delegate**

# Unions Must Organise Now!

According to figures from the latest Employment Gazette, union membership has fallen to its lowest level since 1946. With the unionisation of white collar sections, the high point of union membership was 13.3 million in 1979, 55% of the workforce. With the recession, it has today fallen to nine million or

31% of workers. This means a drop of 4.3 million since the Tories were in power.

Thirty eight per cent of men are in unions compared with 31% of women. While 63% of public sector workers are unionised, the figure is only 23% in the private sector. The WIRS 1990 survey found "no evidence of an

overall decline in either union membership, or recognition, or collective bargaining in workplaces employing over 200 employees - the larger workplaces." However, the number of such workplaces fell due to the closure of manufacturing industry. But, by the late 1980s only 30% of newly established workplaces recognised trade

unions. This shows the need for a concerted unionisation drive. There has never been a better time. According to the Policy Studies Institute, the present situation represents "a reversion towards the type of economy that gave rise to the birth of trade unionism in the last century."



# Britain's Housing Crisis Worsens

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News**

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## Youth back fight against privatisation

Delegates at the Scottish TUC's youth conference have committed themselves to fighting the proposed privatisation of the Post Office.

UCW delegate Kevin O'Neil was applauded when he said: "We showed the Tories what we could do when they tried to sell off our water. Let us do it again with postal privatisation."

Figures from the union show that many rural areas will be left isolated if the post is sold off. The UCW predicts that under privatisation not only are jobs and conditions under threat but the 150-year tradition of a single letters tariff maintained by cross-subsidy will face the axe. The second delivery to 22 million homes is also under threat

as private operators will seek to cut costs and so boost profits.

And to please the financial institutions who will control the business through the share price, the "internal market" bits of the Post Office such as SSL, RoMEC and Quadrant will be hived off or face decimation under competitive tendering rules. In opinion polls over 80% of people have consistently opposed privatisation of the postal services. The UCW must use the massive public support and the willingness of members to fight to defend their jobs and conditions to build on the campaign of public rallies and demonstrations for industrial action to halt privatisation in its tracks.

More people face being made homeless, thousands of homes are in a poor state of repair and landlords are growing rich at the expense of the taxpayer according to three new reports published this month. The first report commissioned by the Labour Party shows that government attempts to boost the private rented sector have led to a £3 billion increase in the housing benefit bill. The public subsidy to private landlords has shot up by nearly 300% since the Tories abolished rent controls in 1989. The report highlights the inequality in rents between the council and private sector. In one instance rent on a private house with no improvements was twice that of the council property next door which though originally identical had had double glazing, central heating and other improvements carried out. The Tories had hoped to boost the private rented sector when they deregulated private rents in 1989 and forced up council rents but the private sector has only increased by 0.7% whilst the housing benefit bill has virtually doubled in the same period.

The second report highlights government plans to tighten the rules by which the homeless can apply for council housing. Single mothers and young people will lose their automatic right to permanent council housing and tighter controls are to be introduced to check people have not made themselves "intentionally" homeless.

The third report reveals that more than one in three new homes being offered for rent by housing associations do not even have enough space for the occupants to sit down for a meal together and six out of seven homes for four or more people did not have a separate lavatory. The report's authors warn that housing association homes are in danger of becoming "poor homes for poor people".

With so many construction workers on the dole and with a desperate need for affordable housing that the Tories are creating more homeless while their friends in the private sector reap the rewards of spiralling rents is a disgrace.

## Miners' strike reaches crucial stage

As we went to press Romania's miners' strike appeared to be intensifying with the threat of a "mass march on the government".

Around 100,000 coal miners have been on strike since late July and solidarity stoppages have been held by up to 30,000 copper miners in support of a substantial pay rise.

The miners have rejected a

government offer of a 7 per cent pay rise demanding instead at least 30 per cent.

Already miners have held protest vigils, underground sit-ins and around 25 miners are on hunger strike. Now union leaders are threatening to arch on the capital if their demands are not met or if any of the hunger strikers dies. One of the union leaders, Miron Cosma also threatened to call a

general strike if the government did not meet the miners' aspirations.

The strike began when 15,000 miners in the Rovinari lignite mines which fuel Romania's power plants downed tools. They were quickly joined by miners from other regions and copper miners began legal proceedings to join the strike a few days later.

● The Tories hoped that by forcing those people who paid their union subs by check-off to sign up every three years to have their subs deducted from their wages they would decimate union membership. However, the NCU and UCW appear to have proved the Tories wrong. As the deadline approached to collect signatures for the new mandate the UCW reported that they had recruited 5,000 new members in the process of resigning their existing members and sister union the NCU expected to recruit around 1,000 extra members.

● Socialist Appeal's Editorial Board urges all our readers and supporters to back the Campaign Group slate for Labour's NEC elections.

The slate is:  
Constituency Section - Diane Abbott, Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone, Ailce Mahon, Dawn Primarolo, Alan Simpson, Dennis Skinner  
Women's Section - Christine Shawcross  
Conference Arrangements Committee - Doreen Cameron, Pete Willsman  
National Constitutional Committee - Claudia Slee



# LESSONS OF THE MERSEYSIDE POSTAL STRIKE

In April, 2,500 postal workers on Merseyside took industrial action in defiance of the law. The issue concerned the disciplining of a UCW member who suffered from a speech impediment and, under extreme provocation, allegedly struck a supervisor. The strike was a spontaneous reaction to heavy handed management intent on victimising a union member. The postal worker was sorting mail on the night shift. Returning from his break with a cup of tea in his hand, he was confronted by a supervisor, who held a long-standing grudge against him. He demanded an explanation for the tea in a work area, but the worker suffering from a stutter, attempted to get the words out, but with great difficulty. The supervisor pressed him and the extra pressure and stress worsened his impediment. It took him 10 to 15 minutes to get out the explanation. He was then told to leave the office and to appear before the supervisor a few days later on a disciplinary charge. The workers stutter got increasingly worse; the supervisor then laughed and humiliated him. He then accused the worker of striking him.

## Suspension

The worker was then taken to the late-shift manager and proceedings were initiated to suspend him. The union reps argued against his suspension. But the management ignored them and carried through the suspension. At 1.am in the morning the shift walked out in disgust. The next day we attempted to carry out negotiations to resolve the question and get our member reinstated. But Royal Mail management weren't interested, and simply told the strikers that they were in breach of the law. The strike affected other shifts. At mid-day the Royal Mail went to the High Court for an injunction. A mass meeting of members

condemned the heavy handed provocative actions of the management, and agreed to stay out, legal or not, until the suspension was lifted. The Management said they would break the strike by diverting mail to other offices. But other offices refused to handle this 'scab' mail. On the second day of the dispute, one main sorting office and 32 satellite offices were out on strike.

## Mass Meeting

The dispute started to spread. At the invitation of the branch, Alan Johnson, UCW General Secretary, rushed up to Liverpool to address over 2,000 strikers, urging them to return to work as the strike was illegal. But the mass meeting decided to back the strike committee and not to return to work. The whole of the Merseyside area was solid. In the middle of the strike members joined a national demonstration of firefighters in Liverpool, demonstrating against the

suspension of their national contracts. Over the weekend management transferred some work to Manchester but through picketing the Manchester office we were able to stop

it being done. However, by the Sunday morning the strike committee realised that the Royal Mail bosses were going for broke. It was said that management intended to dismiss several senior officials without the right to industrial tribunals. The union had 12 lawsuits against it, with the RM demanding £200,000 damages. However, if we returned to work, it would be letting the members down. It would be seen as a weakness, and encourage management to put in the boot. Nevertheless, the decision to return to work was followed by the lifting of the suspension, but the member still faced a disciplinary. The management gave him a two-year suspended dismissal, with the national union leaders arguing they would get it down to acceptable levels.

What took place in Merseyside amongst postal workers was the longest ever illegal strike since the introduction of the current anti-union laws. The fact that

the grass roots membership - which effectively led this dispute - stayed out against the threats of the High Court, is a tremendous testimony to their determination and solidarity.

## Defiance

Furthermore, the strike took place in defiance of the national union leadership. It demonstrates when workers are convinced of the justice of their case no power, be it the judges and laws of the land, will prevent them from taking action. Our members saw that the law had gone too far. Any action can now be deemed as 'illegal', particularly when it is spontaneous and over an issue of victimisation.

The postal strike was a spontaneous movement from below. It reflects the deep frustrations that have built up on the shop floor at the attacks of management. If the national trade union leadership, instead of acting as a fire hose on potential action, put themselves at the head of this movement, the Tory laws and the Tory government itself could be swept away. It is a lesson the TUC should draw.

**JOHN IRELAND**  
(Secretary, UCW Merseyside,  
personal capacity)

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## National campaign to resist CCT needed

**Workers for Islington Council have become the latest group to see the 'benefits' of competitive tendering. Under the Tories CCT (Compulsory Competitive Tendering) legislation the contract had to go out to the cheapest bid. The council's own department bid £8 million and won the contract. Islington's Labour council leader, Alan Clinton, visited the council Refuse Department to "congratulate" them on winning the refuse contract in the London borough.**

But less than 24 hours later the council announced that 60 refuse workers will be sacked in order to cut costs and finance the bid. The reduced workforce will then have to carry out the same work as before without any increase in pay!

Working conditions and the service itself will suffer. One young worker said, "We were all cheering when we won the contract and Alan Clinton visited us to congratulate us. He certainly didn't say anything about jobs going. When he left they must have typed up all the letters. It was a real shock to us." CCT is nothing to do with efficiency, it is an attack on jobs and services. The situation in Islington is not unique. The trade unions nationally should launch a campaign, including industrial action, to resist these attacks. On the political front, the Labour Party must give an unequivocal commitment, as John Prescott did in his campaign in Labour's leadership elections, to immediately abolish CCT when it comes to power.



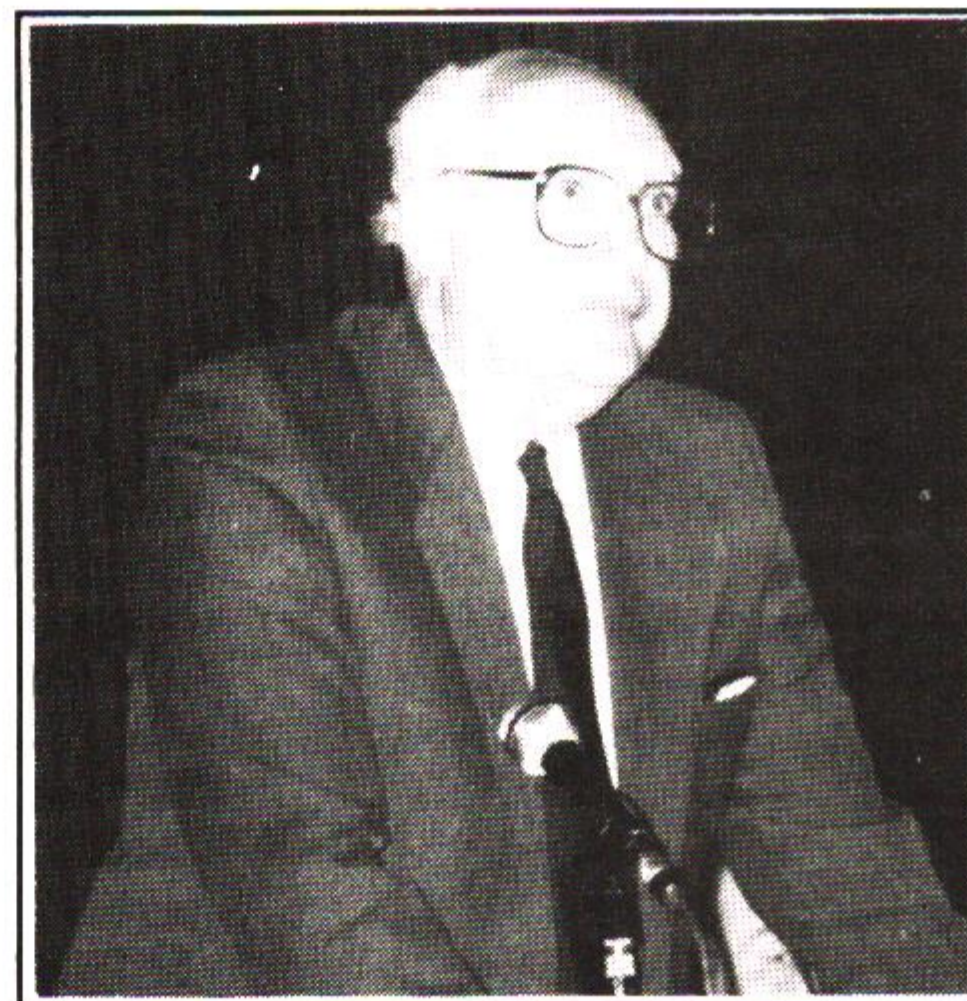
# RMT Strike deepens

The latest 48 hour strike has remained solid. This was a crucial test after the result of the supervisors ballot, but there is a general feeling now that Railtrack and the Government are digging in for a long battle. How can they bear the cost of it? It has already cost more than we are demanding.

The feeling amongst activists and members generally is that there is a need to spread the strike to the rest of the union. We cannot afford to lose this struggle. A defeat would have enormous consequences for trade unionism on the railways. It may well be that in order to spread this strike it would become necessary to break the law—well so be it. We have to move now to stop those trains

that are running. The tube workers are balloting now and if they come out it would be a big boost to our morale and increase the pressure on the government. We are looking to the rest of the movement too. We have called on the TUC to organise a national demo. The interference of the Government has made this strike a political strike; such a demo would be a political demo, a focal point for peoples discontent with the Tories. It could also help to spread the strike. A defeat could have serious repercussions but a victory, the 5.7% that was originally offered on top of the annual rise of 2.5%, would be a turning point, giving confidence to other groups of workers to take on the Tories.

A Bristol RMT official



Jimmy Knapp

**All messages of support and donations to RMT, Unity House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BL. Cheques should be made payable to "RMT Strike Fund."**

## TUC MUST ACT!

The TUC must come out and back the stand taken by the Signal workers. In fact they should be campaigning for, and supporting, all workers struggling for better conditions. They should start by calling a national demo in London. The next Labour government must repeal all the anti-trade union laws. If the labour leaders do not believe unions are popular then look at the public support we've got and the massive response we got in our ballot. They should make Railtrack and Horton pay for the consequences they have had for railway workers. The dispute itself is becoming a regular feature now

and although we've got public support, that needs to be developed into an escalation of the action. That is the vital next step in order for the signalmen to win, which would be an enormous boost to all workers struggling for a decent standard of living and against the humiliation of employers constantly throwing in your face the millions of unemployed willing to do your job for half your already low wages!

**Steve Jones**  
RMT Swansea No 1 Branch Secretary

## Delegates call for action

With the background of the RMT dispute with Railtrack over the Signalmen's claim, the unions national conference took place at the end of June in Liverpool.

### RMT Conference

The conference's hardest decisions were based around the union's finances. The RMT has had financial difficulties for a few years now and this year things had come to a head. We were told by Jimmy Knapp that

if we wanted the union to survive then some hard decisions would have to be taken. This involved either raising the subscription to £2.08 a week or putting a levy on claims won by the union for accidents at work, unfair dismissal, assault cases and so on. The union left favoured raising the subs as the levy would be seen as a tax on those who were already disadvantaged. However on the vote the levy was agreed. A resolution calling for the elected fulltime officers of the RMT to earn no more than the

average wage of the members they represent was narrowly defeated after Jimmy Knapp said that cutting wages in the RMT would sell out our negotiating position with the signalmen (which gives some idea of the pay our full time officers receive!). The resolution from London transport District Council which urged the RMT and the wider movement to refuse to cooperate with laws which are designed to render ineffective the rule books, constitution and democratic rights of members was passed by 56 to 25 despite an impassioned plea from the platform about sequestration. The leadership

was also overturned in their decision to accept defeat in the panel dispute and told to keep fighting.

Conference voted for the renationalisation of the nations infrastructure and recognise that to get the unemployed back to work a future Labour government would need to control the commanding heights of the economy. However, nationalisation without compensation was defeated this year. A resolution to expel fascist John Morse from the union was passed unanimously. Although the conference was a small one of only 87 people, 15 copies of Socialist Appeal were sold which went down very well with the left activists.

**Rick Grogan, London Transport District Council Delegate**



# Labour in power... New challenge for unions

## Bexley Council

**In the May council elections the Conservative Party received a humiliating defeat nationally. In London they only managed to retain control in a few authorities. In Bromley where the Tories held on by the skin of their teeth, there has already been strike action locally against Tory plans to place Council workers outside of national conditions. But how are things shaping up in areas where the Tories lost overall control?**

In the London Borough of Bexley, next door to Bromley, the Tories lost control of the council for the first time in 20 years. The new council now consists of 24 Labour, 24 Tory and 14 Liberal. Labour has taken the chair of all committees

with the approval of the Liberals and the Mayors position. Initially there have been some welcome developments. For example, the Home Help service was under threat of privatisation under the Tories. This threat has now been lifted. Like Bromley, the Tories in Bexley were looking to push council workers out of national conditions—this threat is also receding. There is a commitment on the part of the new council to take legal action to close down the BNP headquarters in Welling and £20,000 has been donated to the Bexley Unemployed Group which provides an invaluable service and was under threat of closure.

All of these moves are to be welcomed. However, there are certain developments that are causing some concern amongst local trade unionists and would certainly cause concern

amongst Labour Party members and members of the general public if they knew what was going on. Despite an alleged commitment to equal opportunities, Labour is not supporting an in-house bid being tendered for school and office cleaning. This contract has been operated by a private firm MITIE for the last few years with part time women workers (many who previously worked for the council) working for pitiful wages and conditions. Catering workers in schools and civic buildings have had wages and conditions cut to win a contract under the previous Tory administration. UNISON, the union organising the exclusively female part time female workforce, is being forced to take legal advice with a view to bringing a sex discrimination case against the council in view of the lack of any serious commitment on the part of the new administration to rectify this position.

A horticultural nursery is also being put out to the private sector with no in-house bid being allowed, jeopardising the pension rights of 4 long serving

council workers. All 4 are UNISON members and once again the union is being forced to look at legal remedies. Whilst there are clearly financial restraints with the funds stolen from local authorities by the Tory government over the last 15 years, this is not an excuse to side step the sort of fundamental issues the Labour Party was set up to address. Neither is it good enough to consistently blame the Liberals and hide behind the excuse that we must not upset the 'delicate balance of forces'. The union does not want a fight on these issues—it sees the need to work together to rectify the damage caused by the Tories—but if forced then fight it will. The local press, legal action and even industrial action would be used if appropriate. However, if the Labour leaders and all levels will not stand up for ordinary workers then the party itself will be transformed from top to bottom by the very workers whose interests are not being properly represented. This will aptly not only to Bexley but to all Labour councils who fail to stand up for the class that elected them.

**Steve McKenzie  
Sec., Bexley Unison,**

Late and inadequate profit making controls of a price increase level of 1.5% above inflation have been announced by OFFWAT on the privatised water services. This comes after it has been revealed that the water authorities have already made a massive profit of 77% since privatisation. Their profits have risen on average by 20% per year since 1989 with profit margins rising from 28.7% to 35.6%. However operating costs have only risen by 6.4% a year, itself much higher than the original target of 3% . The water authorities maintain that such huge increases in prices are necessary as much of the money is ploughed back due to a lack of investment during the time when the service was publicly owned. However, this in no way explains the massive increases in bills due to rate increases and also the introduction of meters.

The effect of water metering can be seen in the Lower Grange Estate in Bradford where, after a long campaign by local residents, new houses have been built and old ones refurbished but Yorkshire Water have installed meters. The estate houses a large number of families who are in low paid work or on benefit due to the high rate of unemployment in the area. Here water bills have increased by two to three times—one

resident reported a increase from £95 to £400. This compares to the national figure of 67% since privatisation. Families have resorted to bath sharing, flushing the toilet only "when absolutely necessary" and even restricting the washing of hands to cut costs. In reality every flush is necessary especially where children are involved, such enforced cost cutting can only increase dangers to health.

In Birmingham a swipe card system has been introduced to pay for water as it is used, the card having to be recharged at a local post office. Trent and Avon Water have stated that this system was voluntarily adopted by users but another survey claimed that most people were pressurised into it. Many were threatened with disconnection and therefore seemed to have little to use by agreeing to use a swipe card, others had massive arrears and were promised a reduction if they took the meter and swipe card. Clearly there was little choice here.

This does lead to the question: is this not disconnection by other means? Certainly the number of disconnections have increased from 5,000 to 20,000 and the water authorities admit that metering does cause

## Water disaster

severe hardship for some families but says that Social Security should help out. Yet this is a privatised industry—why should the state contribute to subsidise it?

Water is not a luxury, it is a primary necessity for all life and it's provision must be freely available to all especially children, the sick and the elderly and their carers who are at risk from contagious diseases etc. which require regular washing to reduce such threats. These people suffer once again at the frontline of government attacks. Labour needs to outline the measures it will take to protect these people. At present Labour needs to build on the huge lead it has in the opinion polls by indicated that it will renationalise the sold off industries including water with compensation on the basis of proven need only and ensure that water is freely available to all as a right.

**Ruth Fallon, Halifax CLP**



## 'New Realism'

### The Blind Alley

**"There is only one language the present governing class understand. It is only power they will yield to, and that is the power of organised labour in its economic capacity."**

You are wrong. These words were not uttered by Brother Monks, TUC General Secretary, in any capacity. They are the words of the young Ernest Bevin, still affected by the heat of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Brother Monks, no doubt, takes a dim view of such 'crude' talk.

Since his arrival in his new job, just twelve months ago, John Monks has championed the cause of class collaboration and harmony between the classes. He has pioneered, with the bulk of the right wing General Council, the cause of the 'modernisers' in the trade union field. In the teeth of the most vicious Tory Government in history, the right wing union barons are busy fawning on Tory Ministers.

#### Think Tank

In July, the TUC and the Employment Policy Institute (a so-called independent think tank), hosted a conference with speakers from all parties, the CBI, and David Hunt from the Government, that well-known standard bearer for the unemployed! After Hunt's Tory speech (what else could he say?), he was gently cautioned by Bro. Monks (there has been a "strong suspicion in trade union circles that mass unemployment had been a deliberate act of policy"). This was followed up by a very reassuring speech by Captain of Industry Howard Davies, director general of the CBI: "if a government with a

*policy commitment to full employment were elected we would not take our bat home."* The Mountain had laboured and produced a kick in the teeth for the unemployed. And what was the reply of the TUC? Not to be outdone, Brother Monks has offered his two-penny worth. "In Britain, we do have some highly competitive companies. Almost invariably they pay well, train well and have good industrial relations based on an established relationship with trade unions. Some, like Rover, have turned themselves round in recent years with the help of the workforce." This shows how far Monks is completely out of touch from "the workforce" on the factory floor. The Rover management have put the boot into their workforce "in recent years", with their 'Company Plan' and redundancies. He should ask the carworkers if Rover pays well. Rover has squeezed its workers mercilessly over pay and conditions; and the Company always want its 'pound of flesh' in the bargain.

#### Rover

"Ten years ago many of its plants were riven with bitter unofficial disruption. Now many of them are showplaces for enterprise unionism", states Robert Taylor, labour correspondent of the Financial Times. Rover signed a deal with the unions in April 1992, known as the 'New Deal'. The company introduced a number of cosmetic reforms (introduced single status catering facilities, everyone to wear the same company workwear, etc) in exchange Rover workers were expected to cooperate with managers in

introducing flexible working practices. The agreement says: "The company must continually improve its performance and competitive position through the elimination of waste, increased levels of efficiency and reduced levels of manpower - working smarter than harder." The agreement virtually rules out the use of strikes, with disputes referred to binding arbitration. In a workforce ballot, the deal was accepted by the narrowest of margins: 11,961 votes for, 11,793 against.

#### Monopolies

So much for John Monks' shining example of capitalist enterprise! It would make Rover workers ill to hear Monks continue: "The first task then is to learn from these companies, to spread best practice in terms of training, industrial relations and the high standards of health and safety which also characterises the best companies." What a disgraceful comment about predatory monopolies that are only interested in their workers,

so long as they keep bringing in the profits. In fact, the less workers and the less costs, the better for them!

John Monks deliberately ignores the class character of society, where the working class is struggling to get a larger share of the surplus value it has created. Simultaneously, the bosses are constantly driving to push up the size of this surplus, ie. the profits. It is this that drives ALL capitalist firms. Barclays and British Telecom have just announced further mass redundancies. This has nothing to do with their morality - no doubt the Directors all go to church on Sundays - it is about the maximisation of profits. And as profits come from the unpaid labour of the working class, they are forced to squeeze out more unpaid labour through speed-up, new shifts, longer hours, pay cuts, etc. This is the law of capitalism. This is precisely what Rover has been doing.

#### Class Collaboration

The 'New Realism' of Monks and the right wing trade union leaders is nothing new. 'New Realism', or class collaboration, was termed Mondism in the late 1920's, when the TUC, after the defeat of the 1926 General Strike, entered into discussions with a group of employers aimed at a working "partnership" between capital and labour. It can also be traced to earlier periods in trade union history, where an ebb in the class struggle saw the emergence of these alien class ideas. In effect, they reflect the pressures of Big Business inside the



TUC general secretary John Monks





RMT members vote for action against the Tory pay policy

workers' movement. Given the privileged position of the trade union officialdom, who are largely divorced from the rank and file, and the way they are groomed by the ruling class, the union leaders increasingly take on the outlook of capitalism. They see their function not to fight consistently in the class interests of the workers, but as "mediators" in the class struggle, attempting to constantly reach a compromise with Big Business. The 1980s boom largely emptied the mass organisations and resulted in a shift to the right in the leadership. It was the period of 'New Realism'. This outlook led to retreat and even capitulation. The example of the British miners' strike is a clear example. The refusal of the TUC to back the miners with action, led to their eventual isolation and defeat.

### Dirty Washing

Just as they hang out the dirty washing of 'New Realism', new struggles appear on the industrial front. Recently, the Financial Times, the organ of finance capital, stated: "*The signalling dispute is turning into one of the most serious industrial conflicts for a long time.*" (3.8.94) It represents one of the longest disputes since the miner's strike. The ruling class realise the action could rapidly escalate, as Railtrack discusses whether to carry out wholesale sackings and re-deploy those sacked on individual contracts. Such a lock-out was used by Ronald Reagan to break the air

traffic controllers in 1981. Railtrack is already recruiting unemployed for rapid training as signal staff. Such an action would raise the stakes considerably. The RMT would have no alternative: either accept defeat or call a national rail stoppage. It would be the duty of the TUC to give its full backing.

### Anti-Union Laws

This, of course, would mean defying Tory anti-union laws. This is no theoretical argument, but one that goes to the very heart of trade unionism. Despite the lowest level of strikes for a century, the 'counter-revolution' on the shop floor over the last 10 years has created enormous embitterment and frustration

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amongst the working class. The recent spate of unofficial strike action in the post office, as well as the official action on the railways, is symptomatic of the situation bubbling away under the surface generally. As the bosses put the boot in, the trade union leaders have sought to offer sweet-heart deals or

hidden behind the battery of anti-trade union laws. There is no doubt that these laws are draconian - the worst restrictions on organised labour in the advanced capitalist countries. The recent Court ruling in the Natfhe dispute, where the action was deemed unlawful as the union had not provided the bosses with the names of potential strikers, is a recipe for union busting. The union laws are so complex and cumbersome that it is almost impossible to pursue effective industrial action. In a disgraceful act, Sefton Council on Merseyside, which has a Labour majority, took the UNISON branch secretary and branch chairman to court for organising a one-day unofficial strike against privatisation. The Manchester High Court fined them £1,250 for ignoring a court injunction against the strike, and ordered them to pay a quarter of the costs. In addition, UNISON was fined £5,000 and costs of up to £50,000 after the High Court judge decided that it did not do enough to distance itself from the strike!

### Weakness

The union, which is the biggest in the country, should refuse to pay the fine and fight the attack. Unfortunately, there are rumours that the branch officials could face disciplinary action by the union's executive! It is a crass example of where the retreat of the trade union leadership has ended up. "Why bother with the law? We'll discipline our members ourselves!" seems to

be their attitude, but no amount of grovelling before Tory judges will appease them, on the contrary, weakness invites aggression. But the trade union right wing are determined to work within the law and within the capitalist system. They will do everything to maintain this framework (i.e. straight-jacket).

In regard to the TUC's initiative on Full Employment, they play pat handies with the Tories. John Monks, writing in the Financial Times, explained: "*None of us (he is referring also to the Tories and the CBI - ed) underestimates the scale of the task. And I am sure all will acknowledge that full employment is unlikely to be achieved in one country alone, not least one as dependent on international trade as the UK. But there are some things which can be done to set us in the right direction.*" He then goes on to say: "*there is some more room for discretionary management of demand*" and the need to create "*successful competitive companies*". The Government's Workstart scheme "*deserves to be given a better chance.*" What a radical programme to bring about Full Employment! Is John Monks referring to Barclays as a "*successful competitive company*"? After all, it "successfully" boosted its half-year profits to a record pre-tax £1.04 billion. However, it made these profits at the expense of its workforce, with a further 2,500 jobs losses, on top of the 18,500 already gone. Or maybe the highly profitable BT, which has announced the shedding of a further one-third of the workforce - in addition to the 90,000 jobs that have already been cut? Or is Monks referring to BP which made a second-quarter bonanza of £335 million profit, up more than 40%? Their success has been put down to "increased productivity", "lower costs" and "volume growth", although perhaps derecognition of the trade unions and attacks on the workforce have something to do with it? Mass unemployment is not some adjustment problem, but arises from the crisis of capitalism. Even the bourgeois strategists have a far clearer understanding of the problem that the General Council of the TUC. According to the Financial Times, "*Unemployment in the industrialised west is now clearly endemic and not cyclical as in the past. No reversal appears in prospect. At best the next few years will bring a minor rise in employment, at worse a further fall.*" (29.4.94) No amount of tinkering with the capitalist system will alter this fact of life. Only with a planned economy, envisaged by the Labour Party's



Clause Four, based on the nationalisation of the "commanding heights" of the economy, can unemployment be eradicated. While the levers of economic power rest in the hands of the giant monopolies, banks and insurance companies, then the economy will be driven by the needs of the profit motive, which is now incompatible with full employment and the welfare state.

### Wage Freeze

At a time when the public sector is experiencing a three year wage freeze, and when the gap between the incomes of rich and poor is greater than at any time this century, the question of a national minimum wage is a burning issue for millions of workers. The present industrial action of rail signal staff illustrates the terribly low rates of pay earned by many workers, with a basic wage starting at £146 per week. At the same time bosses' pay rises last year averaged 25%. The bosses of privatised monopolies have awarded themselves colossal rises and perks. As one City utilities expert put it, "many of the privatised company executives have gone from being moderately comfortable engineers to quite wealthy

businessmen in three or four years." For example, the chairman of North West Water,

such a demand. If passed, it will be a step forward. The key question will be to fight for its

workers. The schemes of participation or class collaboration, could be seen as relatively acceptable by workers in times of economic expansion as in the 1950s, but in periods of capitalist crisis they can be seen clearly for what they are. Ironically, it is at this moment that these ideas are revived, dusted down, and presented to the union movement as some kind of panacea.

### Rule of Capital

The trade unions were created as a barrier to the untrammelled exploitation of capitalism. They are the first line of defence for the working class as a class. But they are more than this. They are an attempt of the workers to establish some control over the arbitrary rule of capital. From weapons of defence, they have become weapons of struggle. Through the shop stewards movement, in particular, they have sought to limit the "rights of management to manage". During the post war period, up to the 1980s, there was a powerful move towards workers' control in the factories and workplaces. In the struggles that took place, the need for workers' management and ownership was continually posed. The employers' offensive and the "counter revolution" on the factory floor during the 1980s has set this movement back but the British trade unions still remain potentially the mightiest force in Britain. A new period is opening up where pent-up frustrations will rise to the surface. A new generation of activists is beginning to change the unions. In this process, the ideas of 'New Realism' will be discarded, and the unions will seek the path of changing society lock, stock and barrel. Part and parcel of this struggle will be the transformation of the Labour Party. A new Labour Government will give rise to new opportunities. But any failure to transform society on socialist lines will lead to bitter struggles in which the trade unions will play their role in defending the interests of the working class. As part of this struggle, the Labour Party will be taken back as the political expression of the trade unions.

## As one City utilities expert put it, "many of the privatised company executives have gone from being moderately comfortable engineers to quite wealthy businessmen in three or four years."

Sir Desmond Pitcher, has gone up from £47,000 a year to £338,000 now. John Bellak, ex-chairman of Seven Trent Water got £512,626 compensation for early retirement; £404,829 for early termination of service contract and £107,797 for future pension payments. His salary was £230,300. As is known, Railtrack chairman, Bob Horton, gets a "basic" £121,800 for a three-day week.

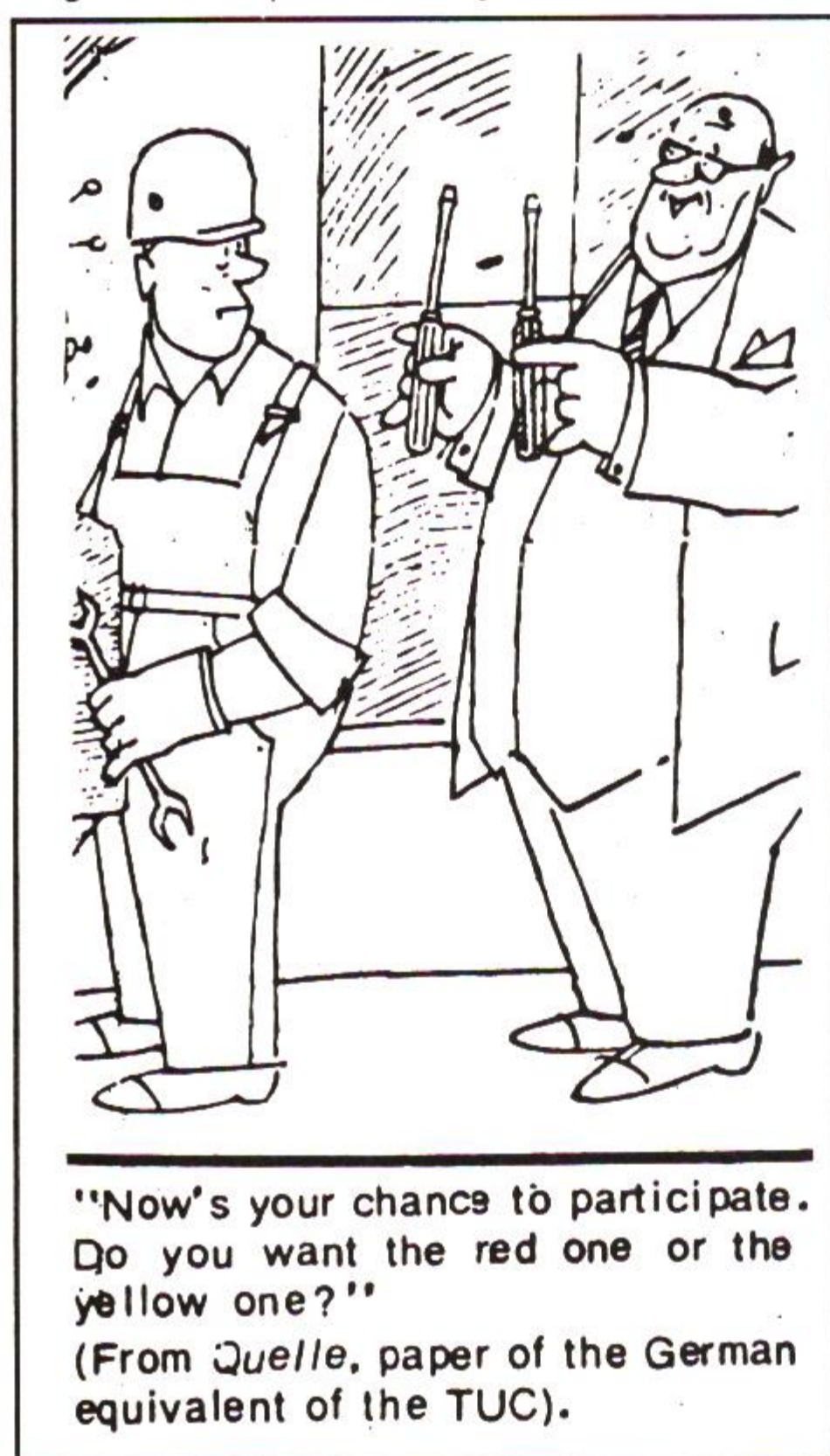
### Millionaires

These gentlemen also received options on share in the company, which raked in hundreds of thousands of pounds. According to a senior fund manager: "These companies were privatised on the cheap as the merchant banks did a good job of

persuading the government how little they were worth. They were then given an extremely relaxed regulatory regime as privatised monopolies. The directors were given a wedge of share options and the ability to sack people, so they got large increase in their share prices. So everyone's a millionaire." (Financial Times, 16.7.94).

The shopworkers' union USDAW has submitted a resolution to the TUC calling for the introduction of a national minimum wage at half of male median earnings - about 4 per hour. TGWU general secretary Bill Morris has also put forward

implementation. It will not be granted on a plate by the employers. On the contrary, they will fight against it tooth and nail. Recent ideas canvassed by the TUC leaders argue for the "new" initiative of works councils and workers' participation. According to Bill Jordan, the unions are now "a positive force for change" in making UK industry globally competitive. But, he added, workers needed workplace representation as in Germany and Japan if we are to "achieve a new partnership between capital and labour." But this is nothing new. Such schemes have had a long history in Europe and have served to snare the union movement in the decisions of the employers. In Germany and Scandinavia various schemes of workers' participation have existed since after the war. This *Mitbestimmung* (codetermination) was introduced with the reorganisation of the German trade unions, and was seen as a means of drawing in the unions into management structures to increase the productivity of labour. They were to be used to buy off the leaders and promote industrial peace - at the workers' expense. For instance in 1975 Volkswagen got its worker directors to agree to mass lay-offs and a relocation of plant to the USA! However, these schemes have not prevented the working class taking action in the recent period. The recent strikes over pay by IG Metal in Germany and the struggle against the Bildt government in Sweden show the limits of the so-called participation schemes. A new period of class struggle is opening in Europe. The British workers must learn the lessons of these schemes - they are a trap for the unions and the



"Now's your chance to participate. Do you want the red one or the yellow one?"  
(From *Quelle*, paper of the German equivalent of the TUC).

Cartoon showing the real results of trusting in the bosses to deliver the goods for workers

Rob Sewell



# Tony Blair's 'Socialism'

by Ted Grant

With the election of Tony Blair as leader of the Labour Party has come an attempt, once again, to refute Marxism and provide a theoretical justification for right-wing reformism. Blair has issued a Fabian pamphlet entitled 'Socialism' which attempts—although in an extremely shallow fashion—to redefine reformism as "ethical socialism".

To begin with, the whole thrust of Blair's argument is nothing new. It is but a pale shadow of Crosland and the Fabian writers of yesteryear. Although it attempts to demolish Marxism—which he falsely equates with economic determinism and Stalinism—he is, nevertheless, forced to recognise the influence of Marxist ideas in the development of the British Labour movement.

Blair's 'Socialism' is little more than a justification of 20th century capitalism dressed up in a few erudite phrases. It represents the harking back to petty bourgeois liberalism, a denial of the class struggle, and the need to base our future on a 'fine tuning' of the market economy.

Blair begins his analysis with a description of three so-called phases of political development. In the first phase, "capitalism and the market were regarded as having failed. The majority lived in poverty and ignorance. So the great institutions of collective power were created and developed to give the majority access to opportunities previously denied—proper housing and sanitation, universal education; insurance against unemployment; national health service free at the point

of need; public ownership of essential industries and services; and a trade union movement with the legal freedom to advance the interests of its membership at work. Government and state became repositories of great power and public expenditure." Blair then goes on to describe a second phase, where "the majority became more prosperous and began paying taxes and there was a reaction, not against the institutions themselves but against the manner in which their power was exercised, which came under attack in the name of the individual."

## Reforms

First of all, Blair is incapable of understanding that the reforms conquered by the working class arose from the economic upswing of capitalism in the post war period. This in turn was brought about by the development of the world market and the enormous increase in world trade. This phenomenon enabled capitalism to temporarily and

partially overcome the basic crisis of capitalism; the conflict between the development of the productive forces, private property and the nation state.

In the past, this crisis produced two world wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions. The rise of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco was an expression of this crisis. Blair goes on to explain that "now we are entering on a third phase. The limitations of Thatcherism are clear. The claims of an economic miracle have evaporated. Society is divided. The people are insecure. The public is once again ready to listen to notions associated with the left - social justice, cohesion, equality of opportunity and community. They do not want to go back; they want to move on. The left can lead this new popular mood but only if it understands its nature and presents a clear vision of the country's future that is both radical and modern. In turn, this cannot be achieved unless it continues to regain the intellectual high ground, starting with clarity, its true identity and historical mission. In doing so it

must show how this is not a break with its past or its traditions but, on the contrary, a rediscovery of its true meaning."

## Rhetoric

Despite the rhetoric, Blair fails to understand that the basis of Thatcherism was the 'boom' of the 1980's and the failure of the Labour leaders to offer a Socialist alternative. In this period, the Labour leadership shifted dramatically to the right, adopting similar policies to the Tories. In essence, Blair represents this trend. However with the economic recession of 1990/92 the material basis that buoyed up the Tory government evaporated. This particularly affected the middle class—the traditional political basis of Toryism. Blair wishes to capitalise on this anti-Tory swing by offering something 'new', but in all essentials it is the old failed right-wing ideas of reformism dressed up in new phrases.

Blair goes on to attack "a quasi-scientific view of socialism that is based on a notion of economic determinism and a particular view of class. This is usually associated with Marxism and other parts of the Left grouped around a narrow view of class interests."

## Crude Attempt

Echoing the views of the bourgeois, Tony Blair says "The socialism of Marx, of centralised control of state industry and production, is dead." This is a crude attempt to equate Marx's Socialism with the Stalinist dictatorships of Russia and Eastern Europe. Paraphrasing Marx, Trotsky said that socialism is a society based upon the harmonious production of goods for the satisfaction of human wants.

A step towards this goal is the carrying out of Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution; the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. This measure although a vital step towards socialism is not socialism itself—it would be a workers state, which would be based upon the control and management of industry and the state by the working class through elected committees set up in every industry, factory and office, including the civil service.





The very existence of the state as an instrument of coercion proves that it is not yet socialism.

Blair sneers at Marxism and points to the "collapse of communism" in Russia as showing that Marxism doesn't work. To begin with, the collapse of Stalinism was predicted, using the methods of Marxism, fifty years ago by Leon Trotsky. The bourgeoisie saw the stability of Stalinism as eternal. Unfortunately, the left reformists regarded Russia and Eastern Europe as examples of genuine socialism. However, the only thing these regimes had in common was, not socialism, but the nationalisation of the means of production. They were, in Marxist terms, deformed workers states. They had taken the first steps towards socialism but were ruled by massive bureaucracies. Nevertheless, because of their planned economies they were superior to capitalist regimes, despite being deformed, authoritarian states.

Blair goes on in relation to Marxism and says "it fails to recognise that the state and public sector can become a vested interest capable of oppression as much as the vested interests of wealth and capital". This is completely false. The state, according to the writings of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky was always seen as an instrument of oppression.

### State Capitalism

Marxists always considered the nationalisations in capitalist countries as state capitalism which functioned in the interests of the capitalists. They were managed by the same people who formerly managed and owned them. There was no control by the workers who worked in the industry or by the workers in society as a whole.

The masses became alienated from these huge institutions which they could not control or influence. The capitalists were paid inflated compensation. These industries such as coal, steel, electricity and gas were ruined when they were private monopolies. It required massive expenditure to modernise them. In the Thatcherite "reaction",

which Tony Blair refers to, big business forced the government to privatise the state industries. The state capitalist monopolies were replaced by private monopolies. Tony Blair is clearly ignorant of some of the basic ideas of Marxism.

### Marxism

Marxism is not in favour of a massive powerful state. On the contrary when the working class comes to power in a modern industrial country, the state will immediately begin, in the words

5% between 1947 and 1973. Now the increase is only two and a half per cent. This is in a period of 'boom'—in periods of slump not even these figures can be achieved.

With the massive development of productive forces in the previous period it was possible for the capitalists to concede reforms. The "welfare state" was created in the industrially developed economies. Health care, social services, pensions, unemployment pay and other reforms were granted. Sweden was the model for left and right

**"Blair's picture of modern society is a utopian view. He is still living in the period of the 1982-1990 boom and the upswing of 1947 to 1973. But the situation has changed completely on a world scale. Capitalism has entered a new period of crisis."**

of Marx, to "wither away". It cannot be abolished immediately. A centralised plan of production is necessary in the first instance for the management of industry and the state by the working class. Money is not abolished but begins to wither away as productivity is enormously increased. When computers and information technology is harnessed and controlled by the organisations of the working class, the distribution of goods would reach such a level that money would gradually lose its function. The state would then be superseded by the free cooperation of the population. The class divisions in society—previously the division between mental and physical labour—would gradually disappear. Only then could we even speak of the beginning of socialism.

### Utopian

Blair's picture of modern society is a utopian one. He is still living in the period of the 1982-1990 boom and the upswing of 1947 to 1973. But the situation has changed completely on a world scale. Capitalism has entered a new period of crisis. The world economy developed at a rate of

reformists. Now everywhere the "welfare state" is under attack. In Sweden the reforms have been undermined. From reforms the capitalist states are passing to counter reforms. This has had a corresponding effect on the workers and middle classes. In an opinion poll in Britain a majority said that Socialism was the best system in society but the right wing generally tend to see the backside of history rather than current or future trends.

Blair criticises a "time-limited view of class...Society or the economy changes and the disciples of the ideology are left trying to fix the world to the ideology, not the ideology of the world." That is precisely what Blair and the right wing are guilty of! The relationship between the working class and their exploiters has not changed since the time of Marx. Marx predicted the concentration and centralisation of capital. This has been confirmed by present day trends. Two hundred or so monopolies own the bulk of the economy in Britain.

Marx explained that the profits of the capitalist is the unpaid labour of the working class. The struggle for this surplus value is

the class struggle. This has been raised to a new intensity. The capitalist are caught on the horns of a dilemma. If they increase their share, they cut the market but if the workers increase their share there is less of a surplus to invest. Everywhere the ruling class tries to cut down on the 'social wage' i.e. the welfare state. In the wealthiest country in the world there has not been an increase in living standards for the working class generally for over 20 years. Everywhere the capitalists are trying to cut down on budget deficits and state expenditure and everywhere they are failing to succeed in lowering the deficit to any great extent. Mass unemployment is eating into the vitals of capitalism.

The crises of capitalism is global, precisely because of the interdependence of the world economy. Thus Blair's comment that the "economy is global" is ABC to Marxists. This was pointed out by Marx, who explained that the creation of the world market was the historical mission of capitalism. Socialism therefore has to be international.

### Knowledge

A "premium on knowledge and education" is referred to. Also "It is the amount of value they can add to what they produce that is the key to overcoming competition from low wage or low skill competitors." But Britain spends less on research than her competitors. The big monopolies are more interested in dividends than in investment in training, education and new industry.

Blair talks of the "structural weakness of British industry". This is quite simply due to the degeneracy of the British ruling class. It is due to a chronic lack of investment in industry. 35% of the profits of British industry are reinvested as against 53% in the US and 70% in Germany. That is a policy of ruin and bankruptcy. But how can it be changed? The government cannot in a capitalist society force the owners of industry to act against their wishes.

Blair continues and talks about "international co-operation at macro economic level to coordinate measures for stable



and sustainable growth." This shows the utopian premises on which right wing ideas are based. "Practical" points without theory always results in an impasse. Blair should ask himself the obvious question: why has this not been done by the current capitalist governments? The Tories do not wish to lose the next election, so why have they not taken these economic measures to abolish unemployment? They look helplessly at the boom and slump cycle which is a law of

strategists of capital are profoundly worried. "There is good reason to doubt that capitalism's victory is total...its security as a system of economic organisation is not guaranteed anywhere in the world." (Financial Times, 9.8.94) It is in the light of this situation that one must read with incredulity Blair's position when he says "In all these respects, society, through government but in many other ways, is acting to promote the public good. In other words, we are not trying to run a Tory government with a bit

privilege, property, profit, and its prestige against the exploited masses. That is the economic law of history which no amount of prayers can change. Blair speaks of the battle of ideas, of the "neo-conservatism" of the left wing of the Labour Party. What he means by this is the battle between public ownership and the market economy. The abandonment of nationalisation, means that Blair is left with the policies of "enlightened" Toryism, of "helping the poor", of the caring (or more to the point non-caring) policies of the American Democratic Party.

### Socialist Party

The policies of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, of accepting the present division of society as eternal is what is being offered. This is the so-called "radical route to electability". Election for what? The swing against the Tories is caused by the crisis in capitalist society. The French socialist party came to power and operated on the "modernising" basis of the right wing. They were massacred at the last election. Electability, according to Blair, is the acceptance of the present economy—with reforms which they will not be able to carry out. It is the acceptance of a divine right of the multinationals to rule the economy. No government can force or cajole the monopolies to invest in industry if there is no market or they cannot increase their profits. They will take subsidies on offer and act they intended anyway. The "acceptance" of the Labour Party as "electable" by such media tycoons as Murdoch and monopolies such as Marks and Spencer speaks for itself. The CBI and the City of London only support the positions and policies which they regard as acting in their class interests. What is the "economic public interest" which must be "upheld"? This clumsy formulation does not mean anything. The public interest, if it means anything, means the interest of the "economy". But that, under capitalism, means the interest of the owners of industry i.e. the ruling class. "In social terms, we act to modernise our welfare state and eliminate poverty, to reduce levels of crime and to improve

our environment and quality of life." This seems laudable. But how?. "Modernise" the welfare state is usually a formula for cuts. Everybody is in favour of a reduction in the level of crime. Even police chiefs accept that unemployment is a factor in the rate of crime. To improve the environment is something every Labour Party member would accept. But how will these aims be achieved? They would require massive sums of money. If the present crisis of capitalism is accepted as a basis to work from then it is utopian to believe that any fundamental change can be achieved.

Reluctantly the right wing have accepted Full employment and a minimum wage but have not specified what levels they intend. Full employment was a temporary achievement of the 1950's and 1960's based on the post war upswing. The expansion of world trade allowed massive investment and development—but this period has come to an end.

### Unemployment

Everywhere unemployment is increasing with a background of recession and shaky booms. How is Blair going to alter this? It cannot be achieved under capitalism.

He wishes to "give every citizen the chance to develop their potential to the full". In present day class society this is an empty dream. The homelessness, the decrepit state of our infrastructure, the inner city decay, and so on, shows the graphic horror of capitalism and the sickness of society. Thus Blair's hope to present "a new coalition of support based on a broad national appeal that transcends traditional electoral divisions" is futile. The middle ground is being squeezed. The situation is such that a campaign based on socialist ideas could gain support of the overwhelming majority of the population. "Seizing advance by individual achievement"—a "reconstructed left of centre" is a chimera which will be disastrous for a Labour Government. Only bold socialist policies can serve the interests of the working and middle classes. Blair's 'socialism' offers nothing for working people or the labour movement. ●



Tony Blair's ideas of class collaboration cannot solve the fundamental problems facing society such as the housing crisis.

capitalism explained by Marx. They do not dictate to the economy, the economy dictates to them. That was the way the reformist governments of Sweden, France, and Spain had to act; cutting the Welfare State and accepting increases in unemployment. If you support "the market" economy, the economic laws of capitalism — of the market—decides. Tony Blair cannot wave a magic wand and convince governments of mysterious ways to get full employment.

### Labour Government

The idea that Tony Blair and a Labour Government could solve the problems of capitalism and the market is ludicrous. What new solutions does Tony Blair offer? If there was a way out then the government would have taken it without waiting for the Labour Government! Instead they are cutting the welfare state and stoking the fires of the class struggle. It is significant at the present time that the only people confident of the future of capitalism are the right wing reformists. The international

of Social compassion but acting to ensure the economic public interest is upheld." There is neither a "Tory" or a "Labour" but a capitalist economy in which the laws of capitalism function. What is the "economic public interest"? The monopolies decide. They make or break governments. While they exist they are subject to the laws of capitalism. They will sabotage or break any government which does not act in their interests. They will use the media to hound the government if it does not obey their dictates. The only way to confront them will be to mobilise the workers and middle class to win support for nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy.

### Fundamental

"Society" is being split increasingly into fundamental forces—the working class and the boss class. Blair speaks knowingly of the "nature of power" and the way it is abused. But he gives no explanation. Every ruling class and caste in history has defended its ruling position. It defends power,



## LAWSON'S BOOM AND SLUMP

In a heated exchange between Lord (Nigel) Lawson, the past Tory Chancellor, and the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke over the boom/bust cycle of capitalism, Lawson confirms what Marxism has long explained. This has created scowls of disapproval not unsurprisingly from the economic witch doctors at the Treasury. Clarke maintained that the government would not steer Britain's economic recovery into a new boom or bust cycle. This is economic gibberish. As we recently explained: "Capitalism always moves through booms and slumps. It is like breathing in and out. It accompanies capitalism from the cradle to the grave. However, the vigorous respiration of a healthy child is not the same as the painful wheezing of senile decrepitude. The capitalist system is sick, and the sickness is terminal." (Marxism in Our Time, page 36). Although less clearly, Lawson confirms: "The plain fact is that the economic cycle is endemic - which means that all the talk of no returns to boom and bust is somewhat premature, to say the least." He had no sympathy for the "notion that the objective of macroeconomic policy should be to iron out the business cycle." All attempts to steer economies "along an impossibly straight line" by macroeconomic policy had failed. (Financial Times, 21.6.94).

Socialist Appeal's economics correspondent **Michael Roberts** explains the prospects for capitalist recovery...

# Another cycle of Boom and Slump

The world economy is now well on the way to recovery after the longest post-war recession since the war, lasting from the summer of 1990 for the US and the Anglo-Saxon (Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) and Scandinavian economies up to the summer of 1992 before industrial production and investment stopped falling. For the rest of Europe and Japan the recession began a year later and lasted until summer 1993 for Europe, and Japan is only just on the turn now in the summer of 1994. The South-East Asian tiger economies of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Hong Kong, had little or no perceptible slowdown in output. On the other hand, many 'developing' capitalist economies of Latin America and Africa suffered severely - for them there never has been any 'recovery'. Throughout this period, China has led the world in output, investment and export growth, as the Stalinist regime there has opened up parts of the economy to capitalist exploitation and foreign investment and trade, and investors from Taiwan, Hong Kong, the US and Europe flooded in greedily to take advantage of China's huge, skillful, and above all, cheap labour force. Economic growth is now picking up worldwide and on average the rich OECD economies of the "west" can expect to grow by around 3% over each of the next two or three years. This is a sharp improvement, but it will still make the coming boom the weakest since 1933 for Europe, the US and Japan. That means that living standards for the average family with somebody working in the household will only marginally improve over the next few years. This weak growth also means that

there will only be a limited fall in the 50m unemployed now in the advanced capitalist states. Full employment is now an impossible dream for capitalism. On the contrary, capitalism generates unemployment. In eastern Europe, as the pro-capitalist governments exercising power there dismantle the state-owned centrally planned economies and replace them with markets, privatised companies and stock markets, unemployment has risen dramatically and will continue to rise, as long as these policies are implemented. After three years of dramatically falling output that surpasses anything experienced in the great slump of the 1930s, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech republic and some of the Baltic states are experiencing a small rise in output from 2-4% - but that's after a fall of anything between 15-50%. In other states like Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania, there still appears to be no bottom to the chasm of misery.

### Growth

But now, at last, there is growth. That does mean an eventual end to rising unemployment in Europe and Japan. In the Scandinavian economies, Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US, there is already a fall in unemployment. But along with the rise in output and investment, interest rates are rising too. Capitalists only invest if there is a profit to be made in building new plant, buying new machinery, training new staff and employing more labour. That profit is only possible if the cost of investment, both new costs and past costs, is outweighed by increased profits from the labour power of the workforce employed. That means higher productivity, either from

workers working harder or by using new technology.

### Profits

Productivity is rising from both methods and so profits, and profits in relation to the costs of investment, the rate of profit, have risen in these countries. But although the rate of profit has risen, the gains for the manufacturing capitalist will be eaten away if much of this profit has to go to the moneylenders, the big banks and financial institutions from whom the manufacturers have borrowed to make investments. If rates of interest rise, then the real rate of profit, after interest and inflation, will eventually be reduced, and the boom will come to an end. That is the danger that investors in stock markets fear at the moment



For many 'developing' economies there has been no recovery.



and explains the volatility of these markets.

Why are interest rates rising? Partly because the demand for money is being driven up by manufacturing capitalists beginning to invest. But also because of the huge past borrowing of governments to finance benefits for the unemployed during the recession, and because of falling tax receipts because workers have no jobs and companies no profits during the recession to pay taxes.

Now governments, particularly in Europe, are broke and by borrowing more they are forcing up demand for money and so interest rates, as money lenders make a killing (witness the huge profits that banks throughout

Europe are recording this year). It is early days yet, and rising profits should outstrip rising interest rates for the next few years, and there will be a boom in the world economy. But eventually, profit increases will slow, and the gap between profit rates and interest rates will narrow to the point where capitalists will decide that it is not worth the candle and will stop investing and employing and a new recession or slump will begin. Exactly when that may happen will be difficult to judge.

Past post-war upturns in the capitalist investment cycle have generally lasted five years (1969-73, 1975-79), but the upturn of the 1980s was prolonged (1982-90). So the

best guess is that from 1997 onwards, we can expect another downturn.

Each successive recession or slump has cleared out old investments (closed factories and services), 'slimmed down' the workforce (sacked workers) and allowed new and more profitable investment to follow. But the conditions for a sustained upturn in output, investment and employment that capitalism in the West experienced from 1948-73 does not exist. Then there was war ravaged Europe with a cheap but skilled labour supply - China and South East Asia are not sufficient substitutes. There is no one dominant economic power that can set the rules for trade, currencies and

investment like the US in 1944 - instead there are competitive trading blocs vying for the available capital and labour power: Europe under German leadership and its potential hinterland, central Europe; the US and its budding trading bloc, NAFTA, and its own exploited backyard, Latin America; and Japan and its disparate neighbouring Asian region. This is a recipe not for global capitalist cooperation but fierce rivalry.

As capitalism comes out of its current recession, it is already laying the groundwork for another cycle of boom and slump for another generation of workers. That is the nature of this system of social organisation.

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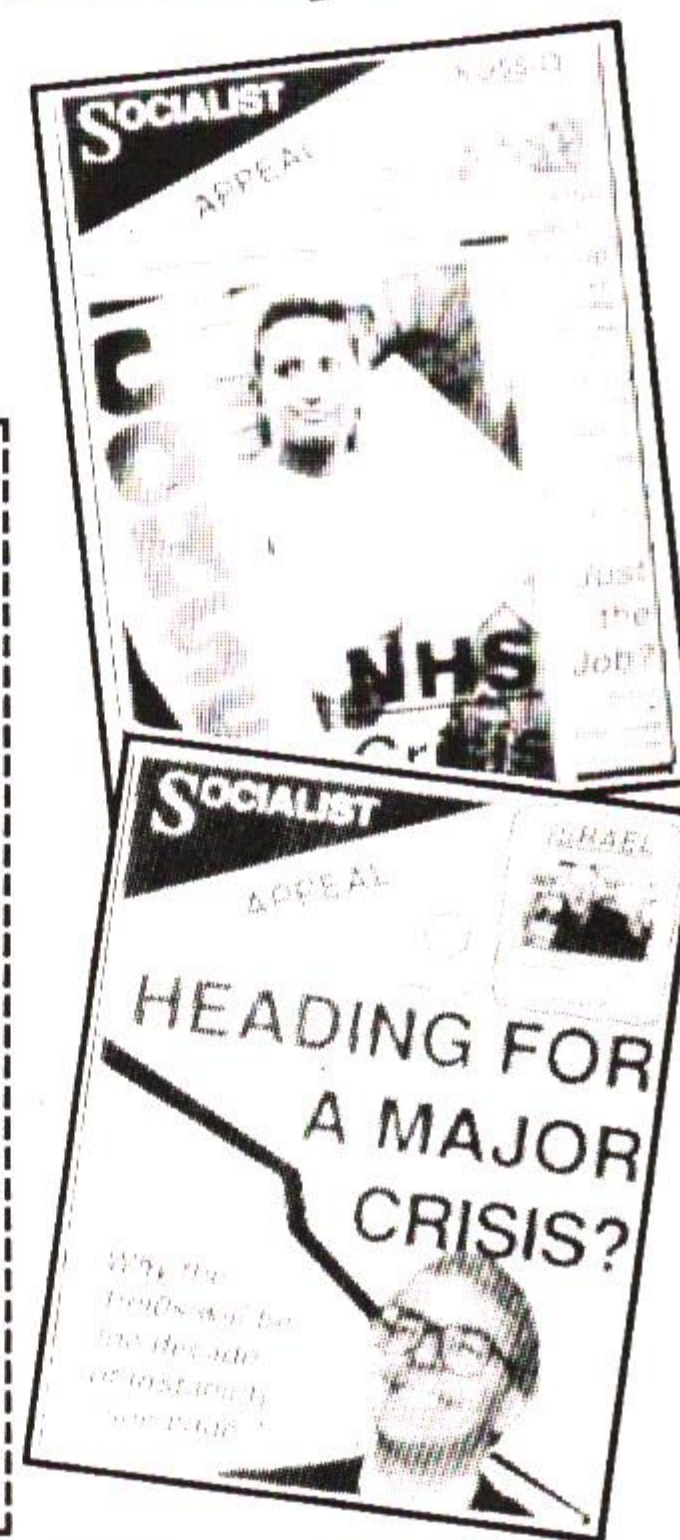
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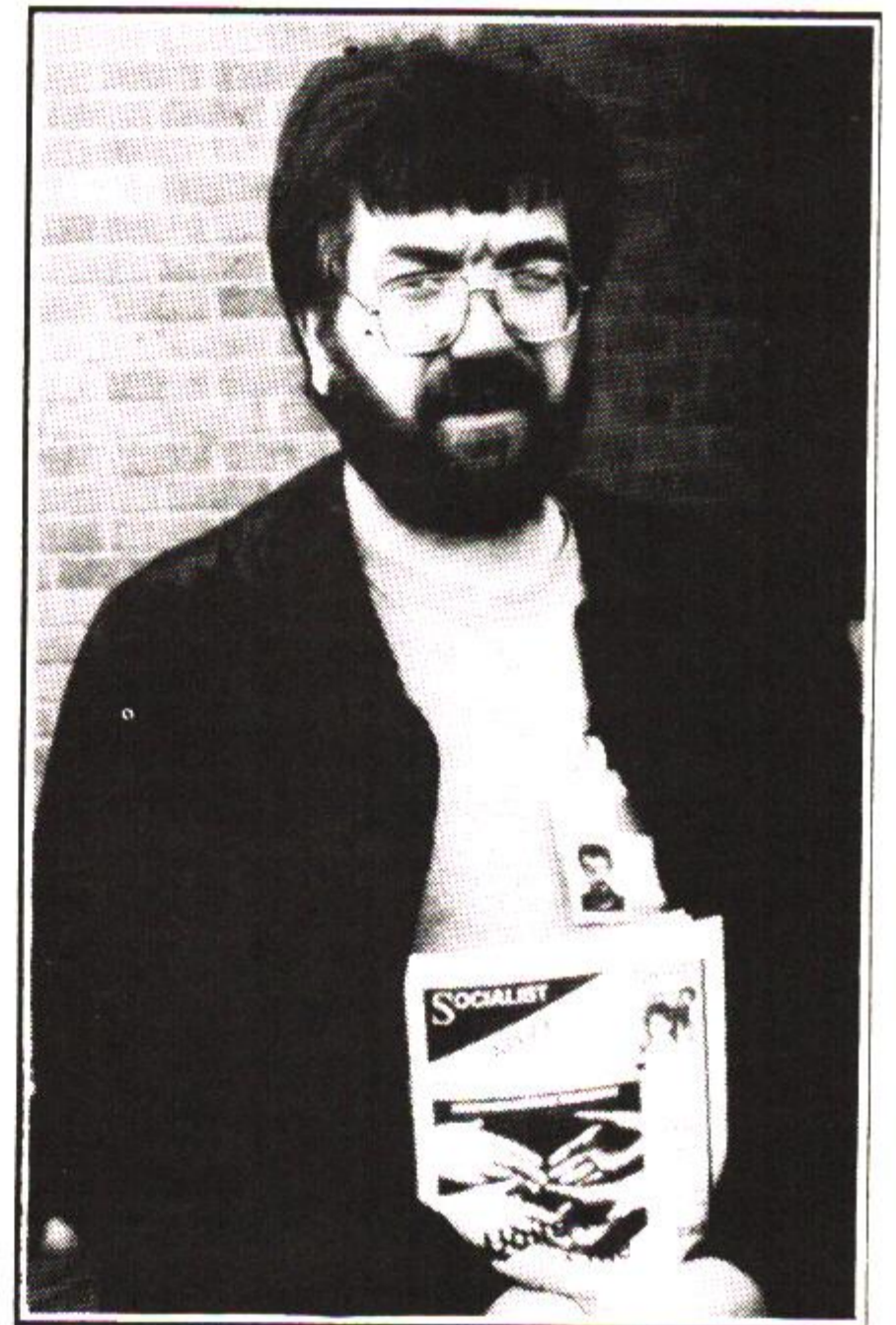
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**Steve Jones**  
Journal Manager



## ● Press Fund

# The next step...

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We can be more reactive to events—producing broadsheets and specials whenever necessary. We could also enhance our pamphlet and booklet production. Last but not least we can move to a more regular production of *Socialist Appeal*.

In addition to the press, we will need platemaking equipment and a scanner. We also needed to move to larger premises where we can print and store the journal—and this we have now done! This issue has been prepared from our new offices, an achievement that would not have been possible without your efforts: keep it up! Why not organise a fund raising event for the press fund or ask other readers to make a donation. Simply complete the form on this page and send what you can. Remember we have no big-business backers to fund us, only the support of ordinary men and women like yourselves. Thanks to Siobhan from Dorset (£30), Tyneside readers (£15), New Zealand subscriber (£10), Woolwich (£3) and many other individual donations from subscribers

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# Argentina rocked by general strike

## Nigerian Oil Workers Defy Ban

Nigeria's military regime is in desperate straits. A year ago strikes and civil unrest brought down General Babangida, bringing to power an interim civilian government. The new presidential elections were won by Moshood Ablola, but he was blocked by the military coup of General Abacha. In protest, Nigeria's oil workers have been on strike for more than two months, cutting vital oil exports by at nearly a third and undermining the country's foreign earnings. Ablola has now been put on trial for treason. The Nigeria Labour Congress, a federation embracing

more than 40 unions, has threatened a number of general strikes to drive out the military and reinstate Ablola. The whole situation has come to a head with the military cracking down on organised labour. Police cordoned off the headquarters of the two main oil unions, Nupeng and Pengassan, as well as the NLC in an attempt to break the strike and end the crisis. The regime has dismissed the leaders of the unions and put in administrators accountable to the government. In response, Warlebi Agamene, president of the blue-collar Nupeng,

said: "We are going underground to continue with the strike...The strike has not been called off." Pengassan said it will not go underground and "we are still forging ahead with our strike..." The workers should go further than the reinstatement of Ablola, who has no programme to solve the workers' problems. They should use this struggle to overthrow the regime in favour of a socialist government which can unite the country and plan the resources in the interests of the masses. It would be a beacon for a socialist Africa.

Workers in Argentina brought much of the country to a standstill as a one-day strike called by opposition parties and the union took effect. The strike, in protest at the government's free market economic policies which have brought poverty and unemployment to tens of thousands, was declared illegal by the government allowing employers to sack any workers who took part. Union leaders warned that if sackings took place as a result of industrial action there would be an "angry and immediate response". Victor de Gennaro, leader of the public sector union, ATE said the strike was a warning to the government. He said: "It is a warning over falling wages, the crisis of regional economies and the plague of unemployment." In the industrial city of Rosario most schools, shops, banks and factories were closed and in Buenos Aires and the interior of the country much of the transport network and other sectors were severely disrupted. And in Cordoba, the centre of Argentina's car-making industry workers many members of the Metalworkers Union stayed away from work despite the fact that their union leaders had decided not to support the stoppage. The one-day general strike follows a heightened period of activity among workers in Argentina. In early July over 100,000 people took to the streets of Buenos Aires to protest against stagnant wages and rising unemployment

### World Bank Slated

The World Bank is impoverishing the Third World by forcing countries to accept free-market policies in return for loans and investment according to two of the UK's largest charities. Oxfam and Christian Aid criticised the World Bank's reliance on the "dominant role of the market" and said the bank's Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes imposed "unacceptable" conditions for loans and "unnecessary social costs on the poor". Unfortunately both organisations intend to appeal to the better nature of those in charge to "modify" their ways. But for the leaders of the World Bank and the richer nations it is simply a question of profit and no appeals to their better nature will succeed. The conclusion that should be drawn is that in order to sweep away poverty and want we first have to sweep away the market system that breeds it.

## US unions on the march

Union membership in the United States increased last year for the first time in over a decade according to a new American labour market survey. And the report concludes that US unions are also showing themselves more prepared to use their industrial strength to win improvements in pay and conditions.. The report states that after more than a decade of retreat total union membership rose for the first time in 14 years and during the first four months of 1994 more than three times

as many workers took strike action as during the same period last year. A shift was also detected in the reason behind disputes with more strikes and industrial action for offensive rather than simply defensive reasons. The cause of an increase in union action is believed to be an improvement in the general economic conditions and falling unemployment. Unions are now trying to win substantial wage increases and benefits as well as win back conditions conceded over the past decade.



The United States may invade Haiti very soon. But this mighty imperialist power looks on this task with trepidation. This Superpower resembles a man hesitating to jump into a river of very icy water. The US is still alarmed at the possible consequences. Despite being armed with a UN Security Council resolution empowering the use of "all necessary means" to restore democracy to Haiti, US imperialism is still dithering with an open split between the State Department and the Pentagon. Nevertheless, after months of hesitation, events could develop very quickly.

The people of Haiti have been under some kind of military dictatorship for something like two hundred years. It is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. The current military regime of Lt Gen Raoul Cedras is a continuation of the brutal regimes of the past. Then, these dictatorships were all supported by American imperialism to keep the masses in check. Ever since the US withdrawal from Haiti in 1934, there was a series of military-backed governments beholden to the Americans. Then in 1957 began the longest period of political "stability" with the 29-year old reign of terror under Francois 'Papa Doc' Duvalier and his army of tom-tom macoutes murderers. From 1971 and 1986 saw the brutal rule of his

# HAITI

## US POISED TO INVADE

son Jean-Claude or 'Baby Doc' Duvalier.

The ousting of 'Baby Doc' opened the way for the coming to power by Jean Bertrand Aristide radicalised the political situation and increased the expectations of the masses. This, however, was cut across as the army seized power. They unleashed a campaign of torture and murder against Aristide's supporters, whose mutilated bodies are dumped in the main streets as a warning to others.

### Imperialism

The attitude of US imperialism has changed somewhat in the recent period. Their experience with the Marcos regime in the Philippines, Noriega in Panama, and the fear that the generals in Thailand and Suharto in Indonesia are heading in the same direction, has pushed them to prefer "democracy" - or to put it more accurately, weak 'democratic' regimes in order to exercise their domination more easily. This can change in the future, but for the time being they prefer a 'democratic' regime in Haiti. They have put pressure, through sanctions, on the military, but to no avail. To the annoyance of Aristide, they

have taken their time. They have been very hesitant of taking further steps that would inevitably end in invasion. Firstly, they have not been sure of Aristide. The CIA attempted to discredit him by reporting he was a manic-depressive, prone to violence, and had undergone psychological treatment in Canada.

Secondly, although the marines could take the country, it may prove difficult getting out. The last time they invaded it took them nearly 20 years to disengage. They also look at Beirut and Somalia. "It is the prospect of a prolonged presence in Haiti that most worries the Pentagon.... He (Daniel Goure - deputy director for political-military studies at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington) said there is significant risk that Haitians, who harbour strong anti-colonial sentiments, would turn against their US 'liberators', as happened in Somalia." (Financial Times, 16.7.94). Thirdly, Bill Clinton's ratings have never been so low and two-thirds of Americans reject the idea of invasion. Congress has voted against it. In fact, Senator Robert Dole has got the Senate to pass unanimously a non-binding resolution requiring Clinton to seek the approval of Congress before troops are dispatched. This, however, is not decisive as it is not constitutionally binding.

### Refugees

There are, nevertheless, strong pressures building up. The flood of refugees from Haiti - estimated at 1,000 a day - are causing serious problems. Such numbers were overwhelming the processing centres established in Guantanamo Bay and off Jamaica. Pressure is also being exerted by the Democrat's Black Caucus, which can make a decisive difference in Congress votes. These factors have propelled

the Administration towards intervention. The question is: for how long can they hold off? For Socialists, our view of American foreign policy is not determined by its "propaganda", but its class interests. The invasion of Haiti will not be undertaken for the benefit of the Haitian masses - who have long lived in poverty under the heel of repressive regimes back by US imperialism. The invasion will not serve to liberate the masses of Haiti, and must be opposed. If Aristide is restored to power, he will be forced to do the bidding of the Pentagon. Only the masses themselves, taking a Socialist path as part of the struggle for a Socialist Caribbean and Latin America, can break out of this grip of misery and poverty.

### Invasion

Although the invasion will be cloaked in the garb of the United Nations, this will not conceal its class interests. The so-called United Nations is a fig leaf for imperialist foreign policy. The Security Council simply gives authorisation to member states to carry out actions in its name: in Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Georgia, and now Haiti. As the Financial Times commented: "The permanent members of the Security Council, scalded by their experience in Bosnia and Somalia, are increasingly reluctant to deploy their forces under UN command. Instead each is willing to act only where it conceives its national interest or prestige to be at stake, and then looks to its colleagues on the Council for a UN rubber stamp." The leader article urges the imperialists to put their forces at the disposal of the UN "rather than using the UN to ratify their division of the world into spheres of influence." (8.8.94) It is a naive hope. It will not change the US intention of maintaining its "sphere of influence" in Haiti, or the policies and actions of the other imperialist powers.

**Dave Simms**



Police marshall demonstrators demanding the return of Aristide



# Yemen aftermath of civil war

**The recent surrender of the southern Yemeni city of Aden undoubtedly averted a human tragedy potentially as devastating as that of Sarajevo. Besieged by northern forces loyal to President Saleh, short of food and water in the blistering heat, the capitulation of the Socialist Party led forces marked the end of a two month long civil war in which the southern ex-Stalinists attempted to undo the 1990 union forced on them by the collapse of the Soviet Union.**

The outcome of the war is yet another graphic demonstration of the progress of the colonial revolution that only the Marxists have explained since the end of the second world war. The northern Yemeni state formed in 1962 remained firmly under the influence of imperialism. It's weak central government is only as strong as the army it can afford to maintain and while the monarchy has been abolished the influence of tribal feudalism and Islam remain brakes on the development of society. While the north has been destabilised by coups and tribal conflict, often encouraged by it's larger neighbour Saudi Arabia, the South developed in the direction of socialism albeit on the distorted model of the Soviet Union and China.

The southern coastal region of the Yemen was of strategic importance to British imperialism who found in the port of Aden an ideal staging post between Suez and India. Their direct rule influenced the development of a working class in small scale industry, transport and civil service. The developing class consciousness of the Aden workers was reflected in the formation of trade unions and the influence of socialist ideas in the growing National Liberation Front. The NLF was an uneasy coalition of Arab nationalists influenced by Nasser, Baathists and petty bourgeois opportunists as well as trade unionists and the small Stalinist People's Democratic Union. Following the withdrawal of British

troops in 1967 the NLF, influenced by the example of the Soviet Union, declared a People's Democracy and began to secularise society cutting across the traditional influence of religion and tribe. They recognised the impossibility of taking society forward on the basis of capitalism and their first hand experience of imperialism encouraged them to support liberation struggles in the northern state as well as in Oman.

## Revolution

Within the NLF the struggle between Arab nationalists and the left was resolved by the revolution of October 1971 when the left leaning leadership mobilised the workers and peasants to takeover industry and the land. The enthusiasm of the workers for a socialist future was demonstrated by the formation of worker's councils, but in the absence of a genuine Marxist party power was consolidated by the existing leadership of the state and the NLF.

The state that developed in south Yemen increasingly took the form of proletarian bonapartism, that is, it grew into a one party military-police dictatorship based on the expropriation of the

regime - advances not made by their northern cousins. The legacy of British rule was grinding poverty, illiteracy and a life expectancy of only 46. Although the Soviet bloc invested heavily in the country, for every Cuban doctor or agricultural expert there was an east German training the secret police.

The strategic importance of the Yemen to the Soviets was highlighted following the revolution in Ethiopia in 1975. At one stage the Soviet plan was to form a union of south Yemen, Ethiopia and Somalia, until Castro was unable to prevent Somalia going to war with the Ethiopian Stalinist regime. But ultimately it was the collapse of the Soviet Union itself that sounded the death knell for the Yemeni Stalinist regime. Warning signs of a 'new realism' including better relations with their larger northern neighbour began to cause deep divisions within the Socialist Party bureaucracy that led to a short but bloody civil war in 1985. In some respects it was irrelevant which faction gained the upper hand as the country was devastated and there was no longer Soviet bloc aid to rely on. The union of the two Yemens in May 1990 came as a surprise to the west whose experts likened it to the unification of Germany, but despite welcoming it the west gave it no aid. The northern regime wanted the Stalinist military to quell internal dissent, particularly of Saudi backed tribes and Islamic militants. The bankrupt southern Stalinists needed the economic strength of the more populous north which

Iraq invaded Kuwait and threatened Saudi Arabia. The Yemen could neither support the western response nor condemn the Iraqis who were traditional allies. The price they paid for their position was heavy. Overnight nearly a million Yemeni workers were expelled from Saudi Arabia. The population rose by nearly ten percent and the loss of foreign earnings led to rocketing inflation and the collapse of the dinnar. The expelled workers and their families were denied aid by the government which then brutally dispersed the ensuing food riots. The damage done to Yemeni society was compounded by international isolation and increased Saudi interference. For more than three years there existed a state of undeclared war between the forces of President Saleh and his ex-Stalinist vice-president al-Baidh with the Socialist Party getting the worst of the assassinations and bombings. In May this year al-Baidh encouraged by Saudi promises of support mobilised the Socialist Party controlled armed forces to re-establish the southern state and dissolve the union. The resulting civil war proved that the northern forces were prepared for the attempted secession and despite weaker air power successfully split the southern region in two, decisively defeating the ex-Stalinists. Promises of aid, if ever intended, never arrived to supply the southern forces. The northern army was able to concentrate on Aden, ignore UN ceasefire calls, and cut off it's water supply.

## New World Order

The civil war has demonstrated the hollowness of the 'New World Order' proclaimed by Bush. Far from achieving peace and stability in the middle east the region has entered a period of conflict that will have world wide implications. Not only is the Yemen severely damaged by the war, the human suffering and misery cannot be calculated, but the defeat of the southern forces has severely weakened the ruling feudal class in Saudi Arabia. The increase in defections of Saudi diplomats indicates the divisions at the top of society. Only a socialist revolution from Aden to Baghdad can free the masses of the parasitic hand of their corrupt ruling class, ensuring the peaceful and beneficial development of the region on the basis of a Democratic Socialist Federation.

**Matthew Gregory**

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**“Just as the two separate states were unstable and temporary arrangements, so too would the new unified state prove incapable of resolving the contradictions of capitalism with a planned economy, secularism with Islam and semi-feudalism with an embryonic welfare state.”**

capitalists and landowners. Soviet influence grew with it's largely military aid and the transformation of the NLF into the Yemeni Socialist Party, following the purge of a pro-Chinese wing, cemented the alliance of the south to the Soviet sphere of influence. Nevertheless, the two and a half million Yemenis remained the poorest people in the middle east despite the advances in housing, health care and education made by the

had recently discovered oil. Just as the two separate states were unstable and temporary arrangements, so too would the new unified state prove incapable of resolving the contradictions of capitalism with a planned economy, secularism with Islam and semi-feudalism with an embryonic welfare state. In the event the supposed integration of the two states was limited and the Socialist Party retained control of their army and state apparatus. Within four months of unification



After 100 days of ANC rule..

# South African Strike Wave Grows

*"Central Johannesburg has been echoing to military slogans and the tramp of marching feet as workers seek the material benefits of the ANC election victory"* Daily Telegraph 22/7/94.

With the ANC led coalition government of 'National Unity' struggling to carry out its programme of social and economic reforms and therefore consequently failing to realise the aspirations and expectations of the masses, the South African workers have been forced once again onto the road of struggle.

Thousands of farm labourers in Eastern Transvaal along with thousands of civil servants in the former Kwa Zulu homeland have gone on strike over pay and conditions. Interpreters in Johannesburg magistrates courts have gone on strike accusing the ANC appointed Justice Minister of failing to meet his initial promises.

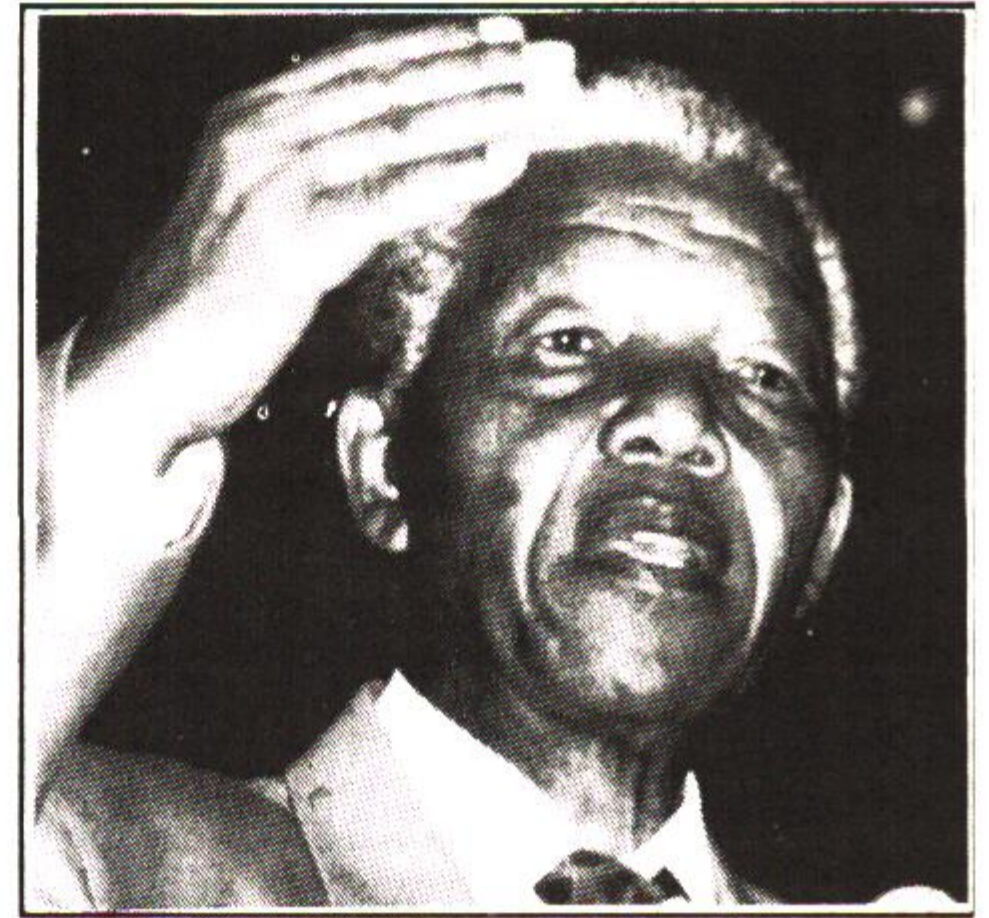
A series of strikes have developed in sectors of the economy as diverse as catering, paper, confectionery and local government leading to a reported increase of 70% in the number of days lost to strikes compared with the same period the previous year. Now with workers in the metal, mining, telecom, chemical and car

industries threatening strike action, the crisis looks like deepening in the coming period, prompting Mr. Langa Zita, COSATU regional secretary for Johannesburg, to warn of "protests on an unprecedented scale".

The most violent clashes have occurred in a strike involving 15,000 workers employed by 'Pic 'n' Pay' which is one of South Africa's largest supermarket chains. This was a strike over pay and conditions involving \$50 a week black store clerks. The government showed little hesitation in using the police to break up picket lines and disperse the strikers with the use of rubber bullets injuring some 200 people in the process.

## Strikes

President Mandela has gone so far as to warn publicly that the strikes could damage the promise of desperately needed foreign investment. He has already demonstrated the lengths to which he seems prepared to go in order to appease the white ruling class and the international bankers. No wonder an article in the International Herald Tribune was moved to state: "The white business establishment was relieved at the show of force, it was almost as if the new government had passed an initiation test." (28/7/94).



Nelson Mandela

However Mr. Sam Shilowa, General secretary of COSATU, in a warning to the ANC said "Our workers are saying that no one declared a honeymoon with the government, it must come to an end. We have sacrificed our leaders to the ANC (The COSATU delegates who became MPs-Ed) and it is time to repay the debt."

Although, at this stage, the pressure from the workers involved in the struggle hasn't forced the COSATU leadership into direct opposition with the ANC led government, it is becoming a distinct prospect. In the coming period the COSATU leadership will face mounting pressure from the strikers not to be cajoled or muzzled in the interests of the government or 'national unity'.

Already COSATU has given warning that it is poised to call a general strike escalating the strikes to involve some 400,000 workers. The failure of the ANC led coalition government to seemingly even begin to realise the expectations of the masses will force the heroic South African working class increasingly into new conflicts with the bosses and therefore the government.

Steve Forrest

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We are taking this opportunity to reprint an article which originally appeared in Issue 1 of the Australian Marxist journal "Socialist Appeal" earlier this year. Although the article and the demands contained within it were intended primarily for an Australian readership we believe that this material will prove to be of equal interest to readers of our journal. The question of the relationships between the West and governments such as that of Indonesia is one British trade unionists should take note of. Governments who are quite happy to complain about abuses of human rights when it suits them are equally quite happy to support such regimes when their financial and political interests are at stake.

Growing social and industrial unrest, the persisting repercussions of the Dili Massacre in East Timor, the United States, under pressure from its own trade unions' concerns over competing cheap labour, threatening to revoke tariff benefits if the Suharto Government does not improve its labour and human rights record, all indicate that profound changes are taking place within Indonesian society today.

Indonesia regards itself as a 'dragon' in the making based on rapid economic development. Abundant cheap labour makes Indonesia attractive to foreign investors, but running alongside industrialisation has been a growth of contradictory pressures on the once stable political and military machine of the government.

The 'new openness' is recognition of the need to change the existing political balance of forces in an attempt to avoid frustrations getting out of hand.

However growing unrest, especially over the unequal distribution of wealth and the lack of democratic rights has pushed the government to seek new points of support within an

# Indonesia

## The Rise of Labour

## Signals The End For Suharto

increasingly polarised society. The regime, marked by a political and business culture permeated with corruption, is facing hostile criticism from workers organisations, Non Government Organisations (NGO's) and small business circles over the way wealth is concentrated into so few hands, a problem exacerbated by giant state monopolies that dominate the economy feeding profits straight in the pockets of Suharto's family and cronies. Suharto's three sons and three daughters control lucrative

commercial interests in transport and communications that draw in billions of dollars a year.

Uncertainty exists that Suharto is incapable of managing change without further encouraging the growing opposition. At present the regime is performing a delicate balancing act of divide and rule, playing off diverse groups against each other.

In a move to lessen direct dependence on the military, civilians have been appointed to key government positions.

Even so, although the military, some 280,000 strong, no longer holds the chair of the ruling party GOLKAR it is still the most powerful political force in the country.

GOLKAR was formed in 1973 to contest elections on behalf of the regime. Its function is to coerce, intimidate and offer patronage. It has control over parliamentary elections and power of veto over candidates.

It is able to ban, and to determine the structure of all legal political parties.

The military, while it lost many provincial governorships and cabinet positions, continues to dominate top local government jobs and determines who sits on the Peoples Consultative committees - the supreme policy making body which elects the president.

Looking for a populist road out of the ruling classes' crisis Suharto is nurturing a resurgence of Islam to counter any backlash from the military, to the point where it was forced to succumb to pressure from fundamentalists and close the state lottery because it was regarded as stealing from the poor.

Farmers faced with the loss of land and livelihood also won a temporary ban of the construction of new golf courses.

The Muslim middle class, marginalised by the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, has fuelled the growth of Islamic fundamentalism and nationalism. Consequently



Police clash with protestors in Jakarta demonstrating against the lack of democratic rights.



there has been a rise in anti-Chinese sentiment. Historically the Chinese have been prominent capitalists with links throughout the region. Foreign investment has led to an increase of their weight in the economy at the expense of the Indonesian petty bourgeoisie.

The 1970's and 1980's saw spectacular growth of Chinese business groups. One estimate is that 30% of national wealth belongs to thirty Chinese families.

Indonesia is regarded as a model third world growth and prosperity. The World Bank states that 'abject poverty has come down from 60% to 15% in two decades'. Since the mid-1980's there has been an average of 6% growth, creating millions of new jobs and a 60% rise in living standards over the last 12 years. Electricity demand has grown on average 15% per year over the past 20 years with an increase expected to average 12% until the year 2000, with plans to double the power grid in the next 5 years. Currently the state power authority PLN can only supply 50% of current requirements, forcing many businesses to rely on private diesel generators.

Although investment and jobs have been largely concentrated on the main islands of Java, Sumatra, and Bali, development has brought with it fundamental economic, social and political change.

Indonesia's Achilles heel is its over-dependence on oil, producing 1.5 million barrels

per day and making up 30% of its export revenue. The slump in oil prices has underlined the need for diversification within the economy. Deregulation and the promise of cheap labour is the carrot for manufacturing investment.

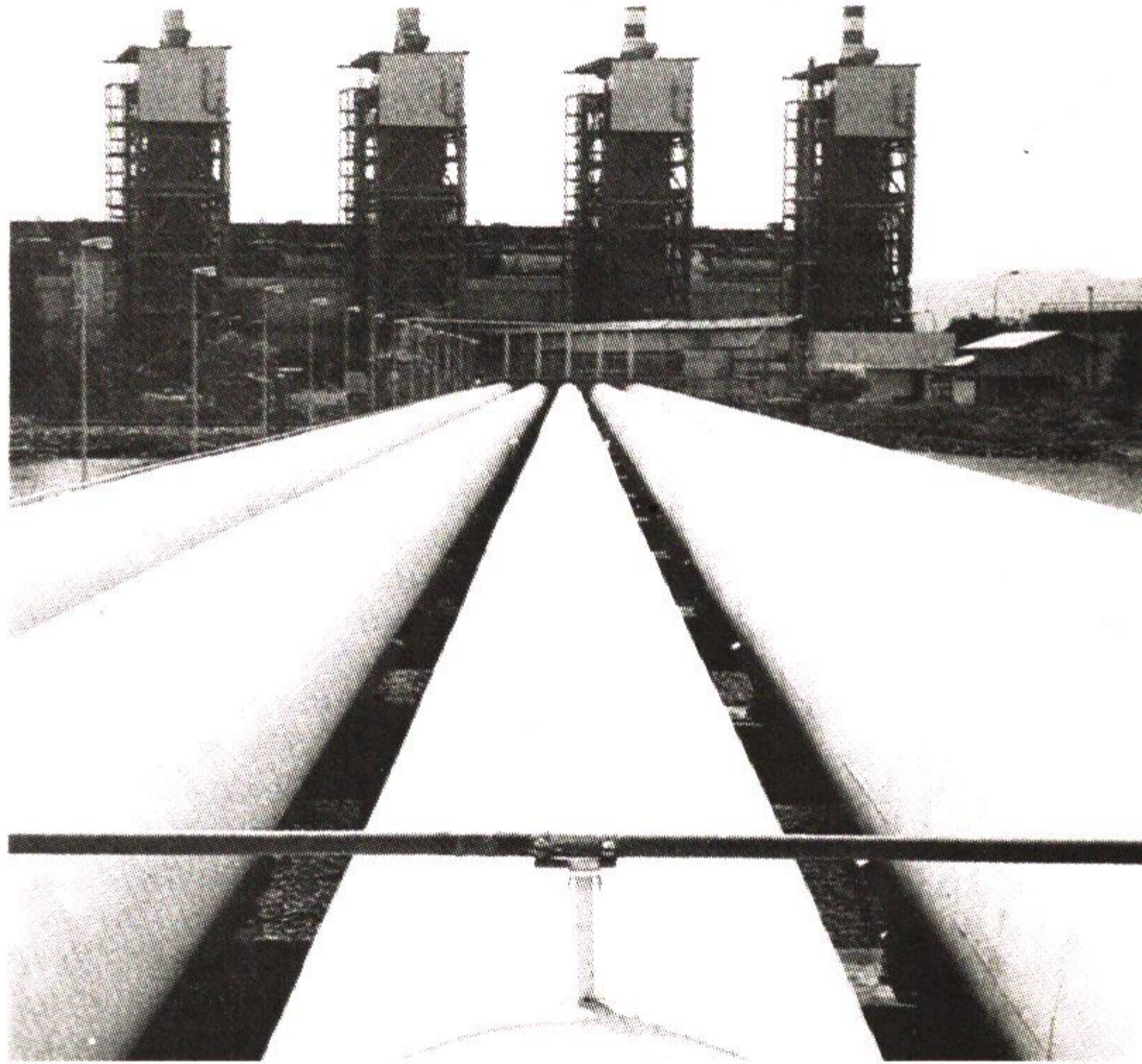
The chief argument of Indonesian capitalism against unionisation and higher wages is that organised labour will see manufacturing investment shift to other countries in the region, namely China, Vietnam, and India where labour is potentially cheaper, and offers better business incentives for investment.

### Dilemma Of Development

Alongside the collapse of the oil price Indonesia has a foreign debt of \$132 billion making it the third most indebted nation after Mexico and Brazil, despite nearly 7% growth over twenty five years. Foreign investment has already fallen 22% with exports levelling off. Seven state owned banks face a shake up with revelations of potentially huge losses rocking the finance sector. Non performing loans in the state banks have reached \$9.7 billion. Villages have been transformed into workshops. However the massive industrialisation of the Indonesian economy has not only meant increased domination of the economy by giant multinational monopolies but has fuelled workers discontent when rising expectations for a better quality of life have not been fulfilled. Government critics argue for

the need to improve infrastructure, electricity, telecommunications and water supply particularly in the volatile urban areas. Many workers receive wages that are below the recognised minimum but even this minimum is not sufficient to meet the basic necessities of life.

29 million youth unemployed - a rate of 36% and this is predicted to increase another 10% by 1998. 70% of university students will not find work and 2.5 million workers enter the labour market each year. Partly as a result of this, students have been in the forefront of protest movements against the regime. Student



The massive industrialisation of the Indonesian economy has led to greater domination by the multinationals.

One South Korean owned firm producing Nike and Adidas shoes paid less than \$10 for a five day week even after a 40% wage increase!

Within Indonesia, government critics say corruption and bureaucracy siphon off a lot of the money that could go to improving wages.

Cracks in Suharto's authoritarian regime are being constantly tested by workers.

### Cracks in the Regime

A retired general and former head of the National Defence Council was heard to remark, "Its obvious that at the current pace of economic development the people will become more critical, more demanding," in response to workers in Central Kalimantan, a province of Borneo, protesting over the appointment of a governor nominated by Jakarta. Unemployment is providing fuel for future unrest. Despite rapid growth, there are a staggering

protesters heard Suharto warn that their methods of protest were those of the PKI communists in the 60's.

Suharto came to power by literally crushing the life out of 500,000 PKI workers and arresting one million others. Now with the regime the object of anger and under pressure from a growing and more confident labour movement, the fear has been expressed by western businessmen that the governments handling strikes, 'could inflame the situation' but still argued that, 'the wage demands are excessive...you can't increase wages further than productivity...that would send the wrong signals to potential investors'.

The appearance of two independent unions in the last two years, SBSI, the 'Workers Union for a Prosperous Indonesia' with 130,000 members and Setiakawan - 'Solidarity,' is testing the openness of the Suharto

**“Wild Cat strikes increased from 20 in 1989 to between 156 and 294 in the 12 months of 1992. Officially recorded strikes trebled to 146 in 1991 to 1992, 76% were over wages, 8% for the right to form unions.**

**The strikes have forced the government to raise the minimum wage to \$1.80 (3,800 rupiah) per day.”**



regime.

While not outlawed, constant surveillance and harassment makes it virtually impossible to organise and recruit workers in order to get official recognition. Marsinah, a workers leader tortured and murdered by the military last year after leading a strike for better wages and conditions has galvanised the movement for workers rights. Her death marks a political turning point for the movement after two years of strike activity. Wild Cat strikes increased from 20 in 1989 to between 156 and 294 in the 12 months of 1992. Officially recorded strikes trebled to 146 in 1991 to 1992, 76% were over wages, 8% for the right to form unions.

### Strikes

The strikes have forced the government to raise the minimum wage to \$1.80 (3,800 rupiah) per day, accompanied by a threat to prosecute factory owners who do not comply. Independent trade unions are pushing to increase the minimum wage to 7,000 rupiah a day. But strike action is often frustrated by the detaining of strike leaders and general intimidation by the military. Alongside the campaign for better wages a political campaign is being fought for the repeal of regulation 342 which allows the military to intervene in a labour dispute. The official state philosophy PANCASILA calls for national unity and 'inner wisdom of unanimity' which has been used to crush dissent in the past.

But a reflection of the shift in the balance of power is evident in the argument currently used by the independent trade unions of the fifth principle 'Social justice for all Indonesians'. The union SBSI argues it is 'exploiting the gap between rhetoric and reality'. The repeal of regulation 342 amounts to little more than name changes. The military intervened in a strike of shoe workers in West Java the very day after the repeal. Nevertheless the success of this campaign must be recognised as a victory for organised labour that would have been unthinkable a few

years ago.

The rising confidence of workers is not only reflected in the growth of independent unions but also in the pressure put onto the official state union the SPSI. Some striking workers in West Java have demanded that a unit of the official union the SPSI be set up in their plant.

The main reason for this is that it is the only way for workers to feel that they can have grievances addressed, as ad-hoc negotiating groups formed by workers in the aftermath of wild cat strikes are not always taken seriously by management.

Such is the hostility of employers to unionism that even the official state union meets resistance.

A South Korean owned factory has workers doing eleven hours with one hour break with no regard to its physical side effects. No SPSI unit was allowed by the Korean owner who argued that if any union was allowed, workers demands would escalate.

However, where the SPSI does exist, workers often demand that it be dissolved for failing to protect their interests.

Less than 6% of the workforce is organised into the SPSI. The government asserts that the greatest obstacle to the formation of workplace units is 'lack of worker familiarity with trade union practices, employer resistance, employee apathy and employee fear of possible employer retaliation'.

However more to the point is the Government and bosses' influence over SPSI affairs.

A retired army colonel and district chairman of GOLKAR is also chairman of the largest provincial branch of SPSI, the Minister of Manpower is a member of SPSI's Consultative Council, and SPSI officials are pressured to join GOLKAR and GOLKAR members dominate the SPSI leadership.

While it is still very early days, it is clear that these developments herald a new epoch of the Indonesian workers movement.

The Indonesian working class has a magnificent history of struggle. For a period this tradition was buried on the



President Suharto

bones of those massacred in 1965, but today a new generation is retying the knot. The determination to struggle and overcome formidable odds is already providing a source of inspiration to union activists within Australia.

As the struggle within Indonesia gathers pace and scope in the months and years ahead, it will play a growing role in boosting the confidence of Australian workers where conditions are far more favourable to the Labour Movement.

### Labour Support for Suharto

In the past, the struggles of Indonesian workers were backed up with solidarity action by some Australian trade unions, most notably the Waterside Workers and Seamen.

But this proud record has been blighted in more recent times by the appalling record of the Labour government, which has not only turned a blind eye to the atrocities of the Suharto regime but has aided and abetted the use of repression by the Indonesian military with which it has developed close ties.

Speaking at the opening of a \$12 million Australia-Indonesia trade promotion in March 1994, Keating (Australia's Labour prime minister) described the "stability and prosperity

achieved by the Suharto government as the single most beneficial strategic development to have affected Asia and its region in the past 30 years...great potential exists for further defence cooperation between Australia and Indonesia."

Echoing the Federal Labour government's stance, the ACTU has given credibility to the government union the SPSI by recognising it as a genuine union and offering practical assistance to its work.

But the attitude of the ACTU and Labour government is becoming increasingly untenable as the movement within Indonesia gathers strength and exposes the true character of the Suharto regime.

For this reason it is time for activists within the Australian Labour Movement to redouble their efforts and force a change of policy in the direction of genuine solidarity and internationalism with Indonesian workers rather than with their enslavers and murderers.

**Contact Socialist Appeal in Australia at PO Box 194, Brunswick East, Melbourne 3087, Australia.**



# An Engineer's Tale part 2

*In part one Jim Dallas described the struggle of the apprentices in the thirties. Now he continues the story...*

The success of the strike was tremendous, a great achievement, but the sad situation was that out of the 400 apprentices who took part in Leeds, 200 lost their jobs on returning to work. I was told, like many others, that there was no work. I was sacked and had to report to the labour exchange and make myself available for work immediately. For a lad who had only been in work for 6 months it was a frightening experience. I wondered at the time what was likely to happen next. It was a very depressing situation, people standing on street corners in groups, toddlers running about in bare feet (hence the song 'Barefoot days').

Arriving at the labour exchange, where the queue was flowing halfway down Eastgate, I was obviously in for a long wait. When it came to my turn the questions were: had I been involved in the apprentices strike? where had I been employed? were my father and mother working?. They were, so I was told there was no dole allowance. I should come back in a weeks time to sign on thereby making myself available for work.

There was not any point trying to find work yourself. Labour exchanges and employers worked in close harmony. you needed a job card which the labour exchange issued and if you refused the job that you were directed to then your dole money was stopped.

After three visits to the labour exchange I was given a job card with the details of the company I had been directed to— Dixon and Powner Engineers (Trellice Gates-Lifts). It was a dismal place, gas lights were on all the time, no windows, seemed at one time that it could have been a warehouse. I was met by a big burly chap in a brown boiler suit. He said "you will have to wait to see Mr. Powner before we can give you a start". I could see drillers belts driven by counter shafts and a steel shearing machine and the lads, about twelve, all not much older than me, some working on the shear cutting steel strips into lengths, others drilling holes in them. The big fellow came back and said the boss will see you now. He had a bloated face sporting a walrus moustache.

## Surveillance

His first words: "I hear you've been involved in the apprentices strike. Well lad, whilst tha's working under this roof you'll do as your told or I'll want to know reason why. Take him into the shop. Give him something, lets

**Everyone was under constant surveillance, the big fellow never missed a trick, the atmosphere was difficult to describe, not a word was uttered, just complete silence apart from the noise of machinery and the man in the background breathing down our necks.**

see what he's made of". I was given a job drilling holes with templates in those lengths of metal I had seen earlier. Everyone was under constant surveillance, the big fellow never missed a trick, the atmosphere was difficult to describe, not a word was uttered, just complete silence apart from the noise of machinery and the man in the background breathing down our necks. It was a very boring job, measured day work, drill so many holes at a price, something like 40 holes in 12 lengths equals twopence. After a few weeks it became obvious that something had to be done as 12s 6d just wasn't good enough for a weeks wage.

## Down the Road

After being caught talking to the lads I was hurriedly whisked away to see the boss. He immediately asked "What's it about lad, come out with it". "Well," I said "All of us feel that for what we are doing, the prices should be increased". His reaction was "If you don't like working here you're sacked". "I've a weeks wage to come so I'll collect it and go". "You'll not get any money lad, yer sacked and I want you off my premises now". Walking down the road again not knowing what to do, I saw this policeman who I thought maybe could help me. I explained the situation and he said "take me to where you have been working and we will see about this". Entering the office I saw the look of amazement on the face of the boss, which I will never forget,

when he saw the policeman. "I can explain everything" he said. "There's no need, the lad has already put me in the picture. You get the lad paid up and don't let's have any more nonsense". I couldn't thank the policeman enough and he said "It's alright, we've had trouble with him before, it's a slave shop".

Already I'd had two jobs and wasn't quite fifteen! It seemed like a lifetime under such terrible conditions. I couldn't bring myself to report back to the Labour exchange, might cause some problems.

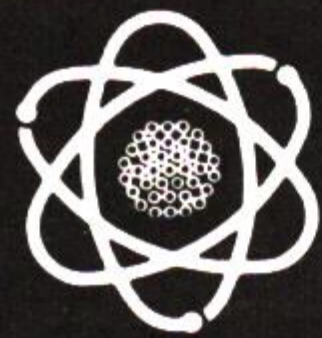
I dropped lucky, finding another job starting at Hawthorn Davey Sulzer Co (Hydraulic engineers) who amazed me when they never asked for my job card. I was taken on as an apprentice fitter working on the impeller section filing the blades and later keying them on to shafts. I also had to mash tea's on the morning and lunchtime breaks.

## Union

After a while this became a sore point as there were younger apprentices I thought should be doing the job. After persistently telling the chargehand that I didn't want to do the job without any result, I decided the tea's would be mashed with cold water. The men were furious and it was reported to the foreman. "What's the problem lad?", "Well there's younger apprentices who could do the tea mashing". "If you don't want the job, better put your coat on and collect your monies at the office on the way out". On my way once again!

I managed to get another job the day after at Henry Berry's Hydraulic Engineers in Hunslet. It was here that I was encouraged to join the union and later on to be a representative for apprentices at a Junior Workers committee in the Leeds area. This didn't last very long. The war started and the Junior Workers Committee fell apart. The lads were being called up for the services.





Iain Miller looks at the development of the ...

# Secret Life of the Brain

*"Our consciousness and thinking, however suprasensuous they may seem, are the product of a material, bodily organ, the brain. Matter is not a product of mind, but mind itself is merely the highest product of matter. This is, of course, pure materialism."*  
(Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach, Selected Works Vol2, p337)

This statement contains the essence of the controversy that divides the main schools of philosophy. With advances in modern science, the materialist outlook has been confirmed. This is particularly the case in relation to the science of the brain and in neurobiology. The conceptions of the human brain have changed considerably over the past 300 years - since the birth of modern science and the emergence of capitalist society. "Science's way of thinking about the brain has, historically, been profoundly coloured by the prevailing view of the universe; as God's house, or clockwork machine, or improbable sum of probabilistic events", states neurobiologist Steven Rose.

## Ideology

In Mediaeval times, where the Catholic ideology dominated everything, the soul permeated all portions of the body; brain, body, mind or matter were indistinguishable. With the appearance of Copernicus, Galileo and finally Newton and Descartes, there was a radical change in viewpoint. The new physics generated a new conception of the universe and man's place within it. The

new technology was a system of cogs, gears, pistons and pumps. In the view of Descartes, organisms became clockwork replicas. But thinking man, as opposed to animal, had a soul, which according to Descartes, was located deep in the brain in the pineal gland. This split between mind and body (dualism) has subsequently remained at the centre of philosophy. Nevertheless, it represented a leap forward compared to the past. At least the mind was considered part of the brain. In ancient times, Aristotle believed it in the heart, whereas the Hebrews in the kidneys and bowels. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the conception changes. With the advent of electricity, the brain and nervous system was seen as an electrical maze. At the turn of the century, the telephone exchange analogy emerges, where the brain processes messages from different organs. With the era of mass production came the model of business organisation, as typified in this postwar child's encyclopaedia:

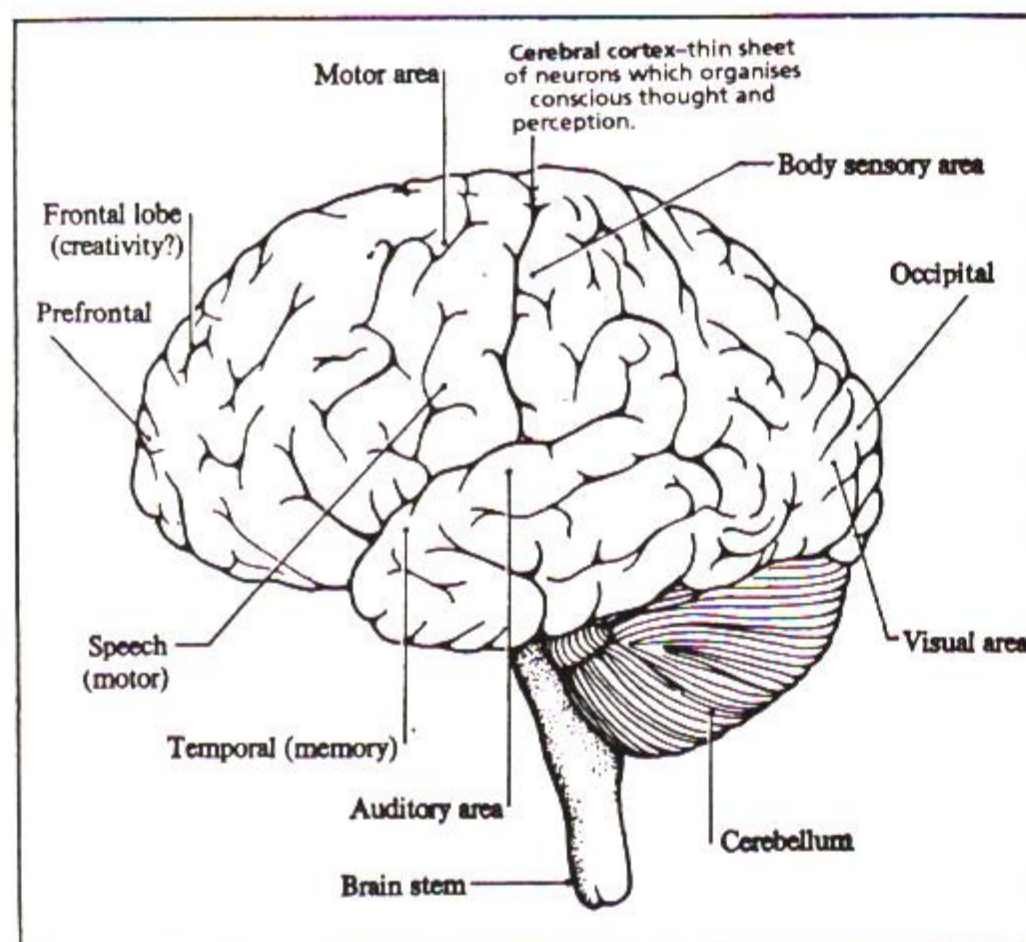
*"Imagine your brain as the executive branch of big business... Seated at the big desk in the headquarters office is the General Manager - your conscious self - with*

*telephone lines running to all departments..."*

With the advent of the computer, parallels with the brain became inevitable. The very way computers store information is called memory. More and more powerful computers have been built. How close can a computer get to the human brain?

## Terminator

Eventually, science fiction brought us the Terminator films, where computers had surpassed human intelligence and had taken over the world. Yet as Professor Rose in his last book explains: "Brains do not work with INFORMATION in the computer sense, but with MEANING. And meaning is a historically and developmentally shaped process, expressed by individuals in interaction with



*their natural and social environment. Indeed, one of the problems of studying memory is precisely that it is a dialectical phenomenon. Because each time we remember, we in some senses do work on and transform our memories; they are not simply being called up*

*from store and, once consulted, replaced unmodified. Our memories are recreated each time we remember."* (The Making of Memory, p91)  
The human brain weighs about the same as a two-pound bag of sugar, heavier than most human organs. It is wrinkled like a walnut and has a colour and consistency of cold porridge. The brain, however, is very complex biologically. It contains a vast number of cells (neurons), maybe numbering 100 billion in total. But even this is dwarfed when we discover that each neuron is embedded in a mass of smaller cells called glia, which provide an essential supportive role.

The walnut-like mass is largely composed of the cerebrum, which is divided into two equal parts. The surface area is known as the Cortex. Its size distinguishes humans from other organisms. The cerebrum is divided into regions or lobes, which correspond approximately to particular functions of body activity and in processing sensory information. Behind the cerebrum lies the cerebellum, which monitors all those tiny muscular movements of the body. Below these is a thick stalk or brain stem, which is the continuation of the spinal cord. This carries the nerve fibres from the brain through the spinal cord and via the nerves which run throughout the body, bringing everything into communication with the brain. This constitutes the central nervous system.

## Electricity

The nerves transmit information electrically. The signal that passes down a nerve does so as a wave of electricity; a pulse which passes from the cell body to the end of the nerve fibre. So the language of the brain is composed of electrical impulses. The neuron is composed of a whole number of properties (dendrites, cell body, axon, synapses), which carry out this relay of information. Thousands of motor neurons are involved in any coordinated muscular action. Something more complex will involve millions - though even a million represents only about 0.01 per cent of the total available in the human cortex. While analysis of the detailed make up of the brain is vital, it can only go so far. "The whole is greater than its separate parts".







## In the Cause of Labour

# Waves of struggle

The election of the Heath Government in June 1970 saw a dramatic change in the industrial and political situation. The government, reflecting the deepening crisis of British capitalism, abandoned the class collaboration of the past two decades, and engaged in a determined struggle with organised labour. It brought the class struggle to record heights with

dock strike over pay and the introduction of a state of emergency. Although the use of troops was threatened, an inquiry recommended an improved offer which was accepted by a conference of dockers. The second test for the government came in September 1970 when 125,000 local authority workers went on strike to pursue their wage claim. Bernard Dix, a NUPE

the Palace'. While in the private sector, Fords won an £8 a week rise over two years. The only success of the government was the seven week Post Office strike which managed, after a bitter struggle, to secure an increase of only one percent above the government's target figure. The key to the Tory strategy, however, was the new Industrial Relations legislation which sought to curtail the power of trade unions. The Bill was an attempt to force the unions to police their own membership. The main aspects of the legislation was:

- 1) *Outlaw the closed shop.*
- 2) *Trade unions to register with a Registrar as a condition for keeping certain legal immunities. Registration would bind trade unions to a code under which strikes could be called. This would impose*

*limits on members to avoid claims against unions for 'unfair industrial practices'. Workers who scab, even on an official strike, which is deemed 'unfair' by the Bill, could not be "expelled, disciplined or discriminated against by the organisation, notwithstanding anything in the rules."*

- 3) *To treat all collective agreements as legally binding contracts.*

- 4) *Removal of legal immunity from sympathy strikes. 'Unregistered' unions, like shop stewards committees, would have a total absence of protection at law from crippling fines.*

- 5) *Allow the Secretary of State the right to order the postponement of strike action ("cooling-off" period) for up to 60 days.*

- 6) *Compulsory ballots prior to action if a dispute threatened 'life of the nation'. Any employer could apply for 'compensation' against trade unions and unionists for a wide range of supposed offences.*

- 7) *Grant trade union recognition only after investigation by the Commission on Industrial Relations. The National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC) would have such powers as would leave union rule books and funds at their mercy.*

In the labour movement it became known as "the scabs charter".

Between July 1970 and July 1974, more than three million days were lost in political protest strikes against the Industrial Relations Bill, more than one million against the NIRC and 1.6 million against the government's incomes policy. Both the TUC and PLP came out against the Bill. Although the TUC rejected strike action, a massive protest strike of 600,000 was organised - the biggest since the General Strike of 1926 - mainly by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions on 8th December 1970. On the 12th January, 1/2 million took part in a day of protest. By 21st February 300,000 trade



Picket of Sattley Gate

strike movements reaching the levels of the stormy upheavals immediately following the First World War. Within four years the industrial struggle had succeeded for the first time in history in bringing down the government. Between 1964 and 1970 the rate of profit of British capitalism had fallen dramatically from 12% to 6.8%. Heath was determined to put Britain back on its feet by cutting costs and driving down wages. Robert Carr, the employment minister, set an example by paying public sector workers 1% below the previous claim. In less than four weeks of the Tories being elected they were faced with a national

official later recalled: "Within three days of the strike in 1970 we were called up before the Lord President of the Council, who was William Whitelaw, who said that if we didn't put people back on sewerage work they would have to call in the troops. We told them they could call in who they liked." A Committee of Inquiry, to the dismay of the government, awarded a significant part of their claim. Setbacks for the Tories followed one after another. An unofficial miners' strike secured a £3 a week rise. Electricity supply workers gained around 15%, after a state of emergency was declared and the Queen was forced to 'take tea by candlelight in



unionists demonstrated in London to "Kill the Bill". The left AUEW called a series of one day strikes beginning on 1st March, where more than two million took strike action. At the time of the TUC Special Conference in Croydon on 18th March, 3 million workers went on strike. The conference 'strongly advised' a complete boycott of the act. At the the September TUC, a resolution from the AUEW and TGWU instructing unions not to register was passed and implemented. Only a handful of unions dithered and a few were expelled from the TUC for failing to comply with the decision.

In the summer of 1971, a big movement to save the workers employed by the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders took place. Since its inception UCS had staggered from one crisis to another. Created by the Labour government in 1966, this artificial conglomerate suffered from the general decline of British shipbuilding over the previous 15 years. Instead of nationalising the industry, Labour preferred (under Tony Benn at the time!) to dish out public money, and reorganise on capitalist lines. Despite a 30% cut in the workforce and an 85% increase in productivity, within five years the yards faced bankruptcy and closure.

The most profitable sections were sold to Yarrow for the nominal sum of £1, in return Yarrow received a £4.5 million loan. The government refused UCS's request for new loans and a Committee of Inquiry recommended closure of two of the four UCS yards with the loss of 6,000 out of 8,500 jobs.

### UCS

The workers responded magnificently in defence of their jobs. A 'work-in' was immediately organised at the yards and two one-day strikes across Scotland were held in support. Throughout the country messages of support and finance poured in. However, despite the heroism of the UCS workers, their leaders Jimmy Airlie and Jimmy Reid, both members of the Communist Party, wanted to limit the action to a protest confined to the yards when the issue should have been to safeguard all jobs by a mass campaign to force the Tories out and nationalise the shipbuilding industry.

The Heath government had already nationalised Rolls Royce ('at a stroke') in February 1971. They could have been forced to do the same for shipbuilding if a massive campaign had been undertaken. A strategy of occupation could have been spread to Swan Hunters, Cammell Lairds, Harland and Wolf, and throughout the industry. Unfortunately, the opportunity was lost. Eventually, three of the yards were incorporated into Govan shipbuilders, with a grant of £35 million and the fourth yard was sold off to Marathon with grants of £12 million. When Govan became operative in July 1972 John Davies, Minister for Industry, was forced to guarantee support 'for five years or until the company is on its feet'. However, 2000 UCS workers lost their

jobs in the deal.

The UCS struggle, however, forced a U-turn of policy on the government. Up until then they had pursued a policy of no subsidies for 'lame duck' industries. Firstly the Rolls Royce crisis and then UCS, as Nicholas Ridley subsequently admitted, forced the government to ditch its old policy.

The UCS 'work-in' was an inspiration to all workers facing redundancies.

Unemployment had risen sharply with the 'shake-out' of labour during the recession of 1971. Unemployment in the winter of 1971/72 was the highest since 1939 - prompting the TUC to organise a national lobby of parliament. The response of workers facing closure was a wave of factory occupations and sit-ins. Following the upsurge in 1971, the following years saw no fewer than 200 occupations or 'work-ins'. The most prominent were: Plessey in Dunbartonshire, Fisher Bendix, Don Steel Works, Pressed Steel Fisher in Birmingham, Briant Colour, BSA, Norton Villiers Triumph, Thomeycroft in Basingstoke, Allis Chambers, Seiko Time, Scottish Daily Express, and many others. The movement represented a massive upsurge in militant industrial action not seen since the 'Great Unrest' of the pre-First World War period.

The miners strike of January and February

## **Almost all 40,000 engineering workers in Birmingham went on strike and some 10,000 marched on Saltley Gate. They joined 2,000 miners. The 1,000 police on duty were simply overwhelmed.**

1972 had a profound impact on the working class and bosses alike. The stoppage began on 9th January 1972, when the 280,000 strong NUM staged its first national official strike since 1926. A layer of younger militant activists had emerged in the coalfields, although the left on the NUM Executive numbered only 8 out of 26 members. The action, which was in pursuit of a 47% wage rise, was preceded by a two month over-time ban. The union marched as one. No picket lines were required at the pitheads, so attention was turned to coal stocks. Solidarity was pledged by the movement, and the tradition of 'flying pickets' was revived, made more effective since the advent of the car. Up to 300 miners disrupted coal supplies to Scottish power stations. The story was similar in Kent, South Wales, Derbyshire and Yorkshire. Miners hoped that electricity power workers would join them over their pay dispute, but they settled on 7th February.

Two days later, the government declared a state of emergency. Attention soon moved to the coke depot at Saltley Gasworks in Birmingham, the last big fuel depot to remain open in the Midlands. The number of pickets at the gate steadily increased. On Tuesday, 8th February 1,800 Midland car delivery workers struck in sympathy. The following day, about 200 shop stewards in the Midland engineering industry called for solidarity action from the 40,000 engineering workers and a march on Saltley. The secretary of the West Birmingham AEU District Committee stated "We saw what happened to the postal workers last year. We are not going to let it happen to the miners." (Financial Times, 10th February 1972).

### Saltley Gates

Almost all 40,000 engineering workers in Birmingham went on strike and some 10,000 marched on Saltley Gate. They joined 2,000 miners. The 1,000 police on duty were simply overwhelmed. "At first there were only ten of us, then twenty, fifty, five hundred and finally ten thousand", reported eye witness Bob McKee outside the gates. "That is how the picketing built up outside Saltley coke depot." With no alternative, the Chief Constable of Birmingham ordered the gates of the depot closed. Finally, the strike was called off after the NEC voted by 14 to 11 to suspend picketing when the Wilberforce Inquiry recommended concessions. Although a partial victory, if the leadership had remained solid the union could have achieved its full claim. "The end of the strike", notes Vic Allen, "was untidy and confusing." Nevertheless, for many miners it proved just reward for the defeat of 1926.

It proved a bloody nose for the ruling class, who were deeply alarmed by the threat of industrial and civil disorder. As a result, the Civil Contingencies Unit was set up in the Spring of 1972 to deal with civil disturbances, under Brigadier Richard Bishop. The very existence of the CCU was still denied ten years after its formation. However, it continued without doubt to advise the government during this period. 'The Times' reported that "by early 1973 ministers had detailed estimates of 16 key industries, their capacity for disruption, their importance to the country's well-being and the possibility of using alternative military labour in the event of strikes." (13th November 1979). In April 1972 the government stepped in to order a compulsory ballot on the railways - but the ballot went 129,441 in favour of action and 23,181 against.

A battle also flared up on the docks where workers were undertaking unofficial blacking on certain container terminals. The NIRC under the chair of Tory judge Sir John Donaldson proclaimed that the TGWU would be responsible for their stewards' actions at Heaton's Liverpool terminal unless it withdrew their credentials or expelled them. The T&G refused to attend the hearing and was fined £5,000 for contempt of court. A



further fine of £50,000 was added by the court. The purpose of this action was to turn the union leaders and the union apparatus into auxiliary police for the government. But the stewards refused to stop the blacking. The vote on the T&G executive (18 - 18) to pay the fines was only carried by the chairs casting vote.

### Pentonville Five

An order was then obtained to halt picketing at the Chodham Farm container depot. The order was quashed by the Court of Appeal. The Midland Cold Storage Company brought the next case. It refused to use dock labour and was blacked. On the evidence of private detectives, five dockers were imprisoned in Pentonville Prison on 21st July. 44,000 dockers and 130,000 other workers took immediate strike action in protest. All came out in London, Liverpool, Cardiff, Glasgow, Bristol, Felixtowe, Leith, Chatham, Ipswich, Middlesborough and even King's Lynn. The movement spread rapidly from below. Tom Hilton, the spokesperson for the Swansea dockers said: "People must realise that this is not a dockers' strike, but a strike in defence of trade union rights against the Industrial Relations Act." Pressure mounted rapidly on the TUC General Council to act

*results, mostly raspberry flavoured."* As the dockers struck again on 28th July over jobs, the government called another state of emergency. By mid August a compromise was thrashed out and agreed. The final skirmish over the Act was when the AUEW was fined £55,000 on 1st December 1972, for refusing membership to Mr James Goad, a scab, lay preacher, and crusader for the 'freedom of the individual'. The refusal to pay resulted in the money being sequestered from the union's funds by the court. In the face of this blatant attack on trade union rights, 750,000 took strike action. The court and their Tory masters could have been forced to retreat if the muscle of the union movement was used, but the leadership preferred verbal protests instead. In reality, the anti-union laws had been made inoperable by the actions of the rank and file.

The victory of the miners - widely regarded as the vanguard of organised labour - was an example to all sections. The building workers, which had merged all their separate unions in the single Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT) in 1971, staged their first national stoppage for 50 years in June 1972 for £30 for a 35-hour week, and against lump labour. The 13-week strike

whom, scandalously, continued to serve their sentence under a Labour government.

1972 was the year of industrial insurrection. Even if the figures for the miners' strike are excluded, only once in Britain was the number of strike days greater: 1919. There had been 23,909,000 days lost through strikes - excluding about 4 million lost through political action. New traditions of militancy were being reborn. Such movements were also affecting the political wing, the Labour Party. The NEC began to swing to the left. For the first time in decades, a left group emerged on the General Council and the Labour Party NEC.

In the Autumn of 1972, the Heath government adopted a statutory incomes policy. This heralded an ebb on the industrial front. The mass movement could not be sustained indefinitely.

This 'lull' period largely took place throughout 1973 where the number of days lost through strikes slumped. From a peak of 24 million strike-days lost, it plummeted to just under 8 million. However, by this time the number of shop stewards had risen to around 300,000 and trade union membership rose substantially, especially amongst white collar and professional workers.



NUM executive leaves Downing Street after the resolution of the 1974 strike

### General Election

A turnaround in the industrial situation took place towards the end of 1973. The left had strengthened itself in the NUM. Mick McGahey had been recently elected as vice-president. Earlier in the year miners had rejected strike action over wages, but feelings had changed and an overtime ban was started in November. A ballot for strike action over pay recorded a massive 80.99% in favour of action. The strike was scheduled for 9th February 1974. The Tories announced a three-day week. By the middle of January more than one million workers had been laid off.

Fearing a repeat of 1972, Heath panicked. A few days before the strike was to begin the Prime Minister announced the dissolution of parliament and called a general election for 28th February.

The capitalist press attempted to whip up a campaign against the miners: "Who runs the country? Parliament or the militants?" The whole gamble back-fired and the Tory government was defeated. The miners returned to work on 11th March with big concessions. It was a turning point in working class history.

'The Times' editorial summed it all up: "This has been an historic dispute. It is the first time that an industrial stoppage has provoked a general election and indirectly brought about the downfall of a government." (7th March 1974).

The mass of organised labour looked to the new Labour government to solve its problems and sweep away the anti-union laws.

**Rob Sewell**

immediately. Reluctantly, they were forced to call (by 18 votes to 7) a one-day general strike for 31st July - despite the platitudes of general secretary Vic Feather who said a few weeks earlier that general strikes were alien to the British movement! The whole situation threatened to explode. Out of sheer panic the government called in the Official Solicitor, an unknown legal relic, to bail them out of the situation. The original position was reinterpreted to state that the law held the unions, rather than individual pickets, responsible for their actions. The Pentonville Five were released and the general strike, to the relief of the TUC, called off. The whole episode was described by 'The Times' as a "disordered slot-machine which produced a succession of unforeseen

resulted in increased union organisation and the biggest single rise ever negotiated in the building industry. The key weapon in this struggle was flying pickets around the sites.

The Tories were desperate to contain the situation and prevent the picketing. As a result arrests were made of leading unionists in the North Wales area. The trial of the 'Shrewsbury 24' was a conspiracy of the Employers' Federation, government, state and media to frame the men, resulting in six being charged with conspiracy, unlawful assembly and affray. All six were found guilty of unlawful assembly; three of affray; McKinsie Jones, Des Warren, and Eric Tomlinson of conspiracy. They got nine months, three years and two years respectively. Two of



# The Great British Tradition

By Beatrice Windsor



## Feed the poor - eat the sheep!

1549 saw the last major rebellion of the Middle Ages - and the first mass revolt along class lines.

The reign of the Tudors was a crucial period in British history, seeing the foundation stones being set for a future capitalist society.

Society was in turmoil. The new merchant class were transforming feudal England into a trading nation, enclosing the land to keep vast flocks of sheep to produce the new commodity - textiles. Hedgerows, ditches and fences went up while the peasantry, formally tied to the land, were evicted.

By the 1540s a *tenth* of the population were homeless, begging and stealing to survive. These new itinerants were hounded from county to county. Beggars were flogged while some villages passed by-laws making being poor punishable by hanging (don't let Portillo see this - Ed). The old feudal relationships between Master and Peasants were fractured.

Discontent brewed. 'Hedgepulling' became a national pastime and peasants formed combinations which held rent strikes and raised funds for mutual assistance.

Meanwhile, the ruling class was split; the Monarchy grimly held onto power, but realised the basis of their wealth - ownership of the land - was being surpassed by a rising merchant class whose wealth rested on money, trade and commodities.

This discontent exploded into revolutionary action in Norfolk. At Wymondham, at the annual fair (and no doubt after a few jugs of Mead) peasants went on a bout of hedgepulling. This unruly mass began to take on a more disciplined, organised form under the leadership of Robert Kett, a respected Tanner.

They besieged Norwich - the city's ruling elite under Mayor Thomas Codd opted for a neutral line, as the State was in disarray. The 'armed bodies of men' at the disposal of the boy king Edward VI were all awa' suppressing the Scots. But Codd wouldn't let the rebels into the walled city, so Kett formed an armed camp outside at Mousehold Heath.

In previous medieval uprisings, the masses had rallied around dissident noblemen or liberal clergy. Not this time - the peasant masses relied on their own strengths and introduced a novel new concept: democracy, and peasant democracy at that! Mass meetings of up to 20,000 were held under a large Oak, which was named the 'Oak of Reformation'. Even those who counselled against the revolt, including Mayor Codd, were allowed a voice. Organisation was put on a more formal footing, with two delegates being elected from each of the 33 'Hundreds' in the county, to sit on a 'Peasants Council'.

This Council formulated their basic demands which included:

- ☞ all bond men to be made free
- ☞ equitable rents
- ☞ common rights for fishing and taking game
- ☞ a clergyman for every parish to educate the peasants' children.

Despite numerous emissaries from the King's court, they could not be bought off with hollow promises of pardons if 'only they would disperse'. The peasants had fallen for that old chestnut

before. Their mood was summed up by Kett who warned:

**"Harmless counsels are fit for tame fools. For you who have already stirred, there is no hope but in adventuring boldly."**

And adventure boldly they did. All Lords, Ladies and grasping merchants fled before them, leaving Kett's Peasant Council in control of East Anglia. Yet not one person was killed.

But how to sustain a rebel army? One of their problems - the mass introduction of sheep - provided the solution. In six weeks they chomped their way through 20,000 sheep, burping this merry ditty of the day as they went:

*Mr Pratt, your sheep are very fat,  
And we thank you for that.  
We have left you the skins,  
To pay for your wife's pins,  
And you must thank us for that!*

Eventually the King managed to scabble together a make shift army, who occupied Norwich (so much for Codd's neutrality). But they were soon beaten by Kett's rebels, who now occupied Norwich. The defeat of the King's army sent shockwaves through the nation. As news spread, riots broke out in country areas against the enclosures, Exeter was besieged by a 10,000 strong rebel force, and London was put under martial law.

But the defeat also decisively shifted the balance of power in the King's Court. The old absolutists (who wanted to stick with the old ways and were against the enclosures as they saw it boost the wealth of their merchant rivals) were sidelined by the new breed of hard-nosed merchants, adventurers and entrepreneurs.

The latter took control, and diverted a slice of the professional army quelling the Scots to attack Kett. This new force, mainly made up of feared *Landsknechts* - heavily armoured, ruthless German mercenaries - attacked Norwich and eventually dislodged Kett, but only after bitter street fighting where the German's new fangled hand guns gave them the edge.

The Peasant Council retreated to Mousehold Heath where they held their last meeting. Despite repeated offers of pardons, they refused to give in. For six weeks they had tasted freedom, equality, democracy and brotherhood in their early communistic community - they would rather fight and die than return to the chains of bondage and destitution.

To the incredulous King's army, the peasant force armed only with cudgels and swords marched onto the battlefield - they were slaughtered in their thousands as they were pounded with cannon and cut to ribbons by the *Landsknecht* heavy calvary. Any caught alive were put to death and soon the walls of Norwich were decorated with 300 hanged rebels. Rebel leaders, in a spiteful act of vengeance, were hung from the Oak of Reformation. Kett was eventually caught and given a grisly death.

But the communistic ideals and values of the Mousehold Community could not be drowned in a sea of blood - their ideas would be resurrected in a new era of revolutionary struggle.

*Next month: workers flock to join the Sects*



# SOCIALIST

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# Support the Railworkers

**The Signalmen's dispute seem set to become a long and bitter struggle. Railtrack have consistently failed to even come close to meeting the RMT demands as they continue to act under 'orders' from the Tory government who forced them to withdraw an original offer of 5.7%. They have adopted this attitude towards the strikers claim despite spending £7 million on redecorating their offices when £4.9 million would have been enough to have settled the strike!**

Trains are only running on strikes days with the help of a few scabs and the dragooned forces of middle management who, with minimal training which must raise serious doubts about safety, are manning some signal boxes for at least part of the day and on some lines only. They are doing this so that Railtrack can claim to be running a service (and avoid paying out extra day's to season ticket holders etc.?) when in fact the service is very patchy and partial at best.

Signalmen are having to work with a basic pay of as little as £146 per week. Signalmen are being forced to work an average of 11 hours a week extra in overtime just to make ends meet. Staffing levels have been cut by 30% since 1984 yet productivity has risen by 47%. All this is taking place against a background of an industry being run down, with grants and investment being reduced year by year. Anyone who travels abroad by

train cannot help but notice the sharp difference in quality between the railways in Europe and the 'service' in Britain with it's high fares and low quality. Since 1990, 13,000 railway workers have been laid off leading to reduced services, unmanned stations and endless delays due to train breakdowns and other problems caused by unavailability of responsible staff to fix them. The government have spent £650 million preparing the industry for privatisation and precious little on anything else. No wonder railway workers have been pushed to breaking point.

Just as the Tory leadership and big business are backing the management, so the TUC should organise to support the strikers. At the very least a proper national demonstration should be called and properly organised for. The labour leaders should also get off the fence, do the job they are being paid for and declare full support for the RMT. Resolutions of support should be passed at trade union and Labour party meetings calling for local and national campaigns by the labour movement of solidarity with the strikers. Donations should be made and collections organised. However, we should go further and make sure that the call is clearly heard for the next Labour government to renationalise the railways with compensation on the basis of need only. The Signalmen cannot be left to fight alone, the full force of the organisations of labour

must be mobilised to back them. The government have, by their actions, made this a political strike—we should take them at their word and use this as a golden opportunity to push another nail into their coffin.

● More RMT news and reports on page 7

## Scottish TUC march

*Demonstrate in  
support of the  
Signal workers*

Glasgow  
**Saturday  
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Ring Scottish TUC  
041 332 4946  
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# Fight for Socialist Policies