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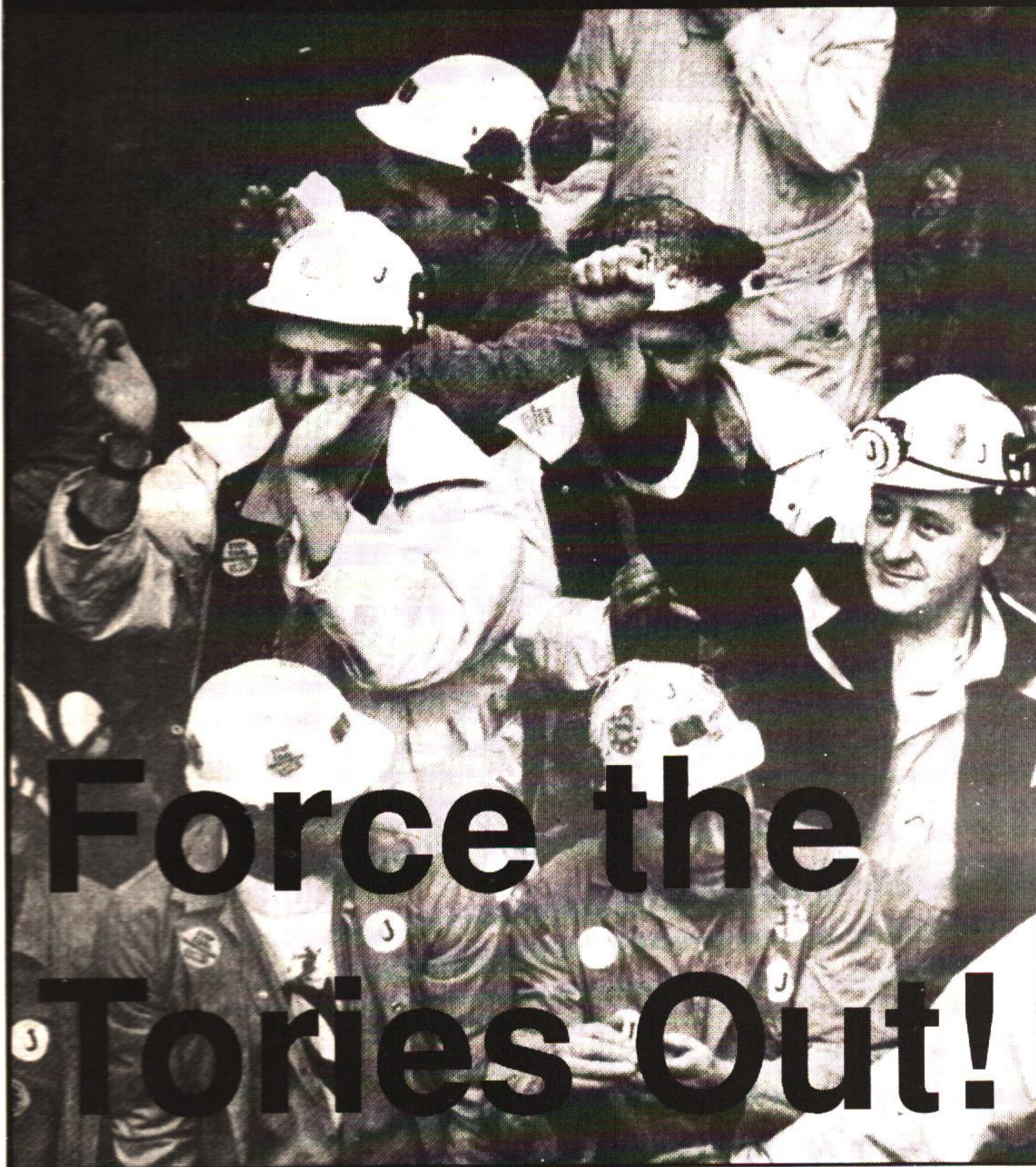
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The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Issue No.9

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TUC Must Act To... ...Stop Jobs Massacre



Force the Tories Out!

For a one day general strike

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From Boom
to Bust**

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TUC: TAKE UP THE CALL FOR ACTION

The Tories are in disarray. The attempt to close 31 pits and put 100,000 workers on the dole has blown up in their face. The groundswell of opposition, even affecting the middle class, culminating in the mass NUM and TUC demonstrations last October, forced them to beat a hasty retreat.

The attempt to ride out the storm by the rushed appointment of a Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate the pit closures has not fooled anyone. The limited proposal to keep open 16 'viable' pits out of 31 is a sop that is unacceptable to the miners and the labour movement. It is too little, too late. The fight against the threatened pit redundancies has now become a fight in defence of jobs in general.

The Tories have retreated before - as in 1981, under Thatcher - all the more to prepare a greater onslaught in the future. They must not be allowed to out-manoeuvre the miners and railworkers.

Class Interests

The task of the labour movement must be to step up the campaign to drive the Tories from office. While they are in power not a single job is safe. The Tories will never change their spots. They represent the class interests of big business and the monopolies. Given the economic laws of their system, the drive for profits means that the cost of the crisis must be placed on the shoulders of the working class. Out of fear of social unrest and alarmed by the continuous upsurge of unemployment, Lamont is desperately attempting to get the economy out of recession by interest rate cuts. But as in America, similar measures have failed to boost the economy in any meaningful fashion.

Even if the economy grows at 1% or 2% this year, unemployment will continue to rise. It has become an ulcer tearing at the system. Unemployment rose from 4% of the workforce to 10% in the early 1980s recession and reached a peak of 11% in 1986, with 3,124,000 officially out of work. In this recession it began to rise from a trough of 6% and is already officially at 10.5%. By 1979 definitions, there are now nearly 4 million on the dole (almost 13%). These statistics represent wholesale misery and degradation up and down the

country, including the formally 'prosperous' South East of England. They represent an utter condemnation of the present economic system we live under. The story is the same throughout Europe where, in reality, 25 million people are on the dole.

"No end to mass unemployment is in sight", states Gerald Holtham, chief economist for Lehman Brothers International. *"In the current European policy debate, no pretence is even made that anything much is to be done about it. There is no hope - official."* (*Independent on Sunday 10.1.93*).

Increased Exploitation

These words, from a strategist of capital, show the complete impasse of capitalism. To boost profitability of big business the ruling class internationally are squeezing greater relative surplus value from the labour of the working class. In Britain they are getting the same levels of production with two million less workers. Wage rates and conditions are being driven down. Last year earnings growth was the lowest for 25 years. In 1991 the number of days lost through sickness reached the record level of 500 million, of which one third was due to stress related illness. This reflects the intensification of exploitation in factories and offices. Over the next two years 100,000 local authority workers are facing the sack. On top of the 5,000 redundancies planned on the railways, a further 25,000 have been ear-marked to go in the next 3 years. The government is attempting to impose a 1.5% wage limit on public sector pay. **The workers are being asked to take the brunt of the capitalist crisis.**

"Is it politically acceptable", asks our learned chief economist, *"...for the unemployed to find work as domestic servants at subsistence wages as in Victorian times?"*

The cost of closing the pits and throwing 100,000 people out of work will add £800 million to the dole bill. In terms of lost production the figure is far higher. The 3 million unemployed cost £27 billion every year. Put another way it means the loss of 300 million work-years of production! This is *"the economics of the madhouse."*

The new proposals to save the pits from the different committees and bodies boil down to partial concessions coupled with squeezing the existing workforce.

Kenneth Clark, the Home Secretary, suggested a 'rescue' package including withdrawal of health and safety conditions introduced in 1908 and 1946. This is the price workers will be asked to pay to keep their jobs - accepting conditions that their fathers and grandfathers fought against.

"No more and no further!" must be the motto of the labour movement. It is time that the TUC took up the gauntlet thrown down by the Tories. It must abandon its attempts to conciliate between the two camps of organised labour and the bosses. No amount of talking with Tory ministers will force them to retreat. The TUC should spearhead the campaign to drive the Tories out. It should take up Arthur Scargill's demand for a national day of action involving the 8 million trade unionists and their families. This should be expressed in terms that the Tories will recognise: a 24 hour general strike. Right-wing leader Bill Jordan has dismissed this call for industrial action as a "throw-back to the bad old days." But far from a "throwback" it is a return to the militant traditions of the labour movement. These are key in the defence of jobs and conditions.

Build for Action

The TUC Day of Action on the 18th February needs maximum support. Rallies and marches should be organised in all areas. The event can provide an essential platform to build for action in March. The decision by the coal and rail unions - representing 200,000 workers - to ballot their members on March 5th over a series of official 24 hour protest strikes is a tremendous step forward. This provides the movement with the vital focal point for action.

A strike of these sections alone will have a dramatic effect in closing down industry and offices. These unions, which are in the forefront of the battle against job losses, are appealing to all those in the public sector unions, covering a further 5 million, to join the action. Jimmy Knapp, RMT leader, has warned of a new "spring of discontent". The unions must organise meetings in the factories and workplaces to explain the case for industrial action, as part of the campaign to defeat the Tories. This could be the real movement towards a 24 hour general strike. The labour movement is re-awakening. It is time for decisive action.

Bring down the Tories!

**For an immediate general election!
Labour to power on a Socialist programme!**

This must be the rallying call of organised Labour.

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Firefighters

Strike Back Against the Cuts

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) members in Leicestershire are threatening to strike if proposed cuts in services go ahead.

County Councillors are considering a 5% reduction in the county's budget in order to meet government-imposed spending targets. For the county's fire service this will mean cuts of around £600,000 or the equivalent of the loss of three crews. How dare local Tory councillors say the government is simply cutting back on waste and mismanagement.

As Labour councillors and the FBU have pointed out, the loss of any staff, let alone three crews will put lives at risk. And as for mismanagement they should take a look at their own councillors up and down the country.

Labour has recently produced a dossier of "fraud and mismanagement" in Tory-run councils up and down the country and in central government departments which have cost millions of pounds. Labour highlighted 22 cases involving government departments and cases in councils such as Westminster, Brent and Blaby. Labour councillors should oppose every Tory-imposed cut. "Waste and mismanagement" is just a feeble cover for their real aim of slashing public expenditure to help pay for the economic mess they have created. The Tories talk of overmanning is ridiculous. Anyone who has had to queue to pay their rent, or had to deal with a council department will have experienced for themselves, that far from being overstaffed, councils are understaffed. But the Tories' only solution is to cut more jobs.

Leyland-Daf

Motor Industry Jobs at Risk

Truck-makers Leyland-Daf have announced that they can no longer meet their bills - and over 5,000 workers face the sack as a consequence. Leyland-Daf factories in Birmingham, Lancashire, Oxfordshire and Glasgow now face the prospect of complete closure. The unions must demand the company opens the books to inspection by the workers who have accepted short-time working and lay-offs during the current recession to protect the jobs that are now under threat. The truck-maker is still the top-ranked producer in the UK and fourth in Europe. If private capital cannot run the company successfully the unions should demand it is nationalised. The demonstration organised by Lancashire workers should be used as a focal point for building a campaign against the job losses and mismanagement.

Labour councils, and Labour councillors in opposition up and down the country should be putting the blame for the cuts firmly at the door of "caring" John Major. But more than that, they need to build a campaign, involving the public sector unions, who will bear the brunt of the job losses and workers and their families who will bear the brunt of the cuts in services. Labour and the TUC should be building energetically for a national demonstration as the starting point for public-sector strikes. As the FBU have shown - it is a matter of life and death.

Anti-Racist Rally

Fascists Not Welcome Here!

One weekend the British National Party appeared on the streets of Harrow selling their filthy racist newspaper. Two weeks later the biggest demonstration in local memory took to the streets of Harrow to send a clear warning to the fascists and racists that they are not welcome here. The demonstration was supported by many local groups, including Harrow East Labour Party and Harrow Trades Union Council.

And from the demonstration a local labour movement campaign will be set up to carry on the campaigning activities. It is vital, that the campaign takes a clear line explaining that it is on poverty, homelessness and despair that these fascist thugs breed and that fascist and racist gangs are a threat to all workers, not just black or Asian workers. We need to link the campaign against fascism and racism to the need for a society where all have a job, decent pay and a roof over their heads. That way the breeding ground for the BNP and NF will be swept away.

Got a Story for Socialist Appeal?



Ring our newsdesk on 021-455-9112

Bus Workers Prepare For Showdown

London bus workers and management are heading for a showdown over pay cuts and tendering.

In mid-January, a T&G district official, along with senior union representatives called on London bus workers employed by Selkent and Central Buses in South East London to attend a meeting on management's latest pay proposals.

The London Bus management, in preparation for privatisation, are seeking wage cuts throughout the fleet. Our official reported that drivers working Block Grant Routes were being asked to accept a cut in rostered earnings of £30 a week and an increase in the working week from 38 to 42 hours.

If the reduction of enhanced payments on overtime, unsocial hours and so on are included, it's likely we would lose on average £60 a week!

Our official said the union would refuse to sign agreements that involved pay cuts and that the TGWU would organise a lobby of parliament, demanding a Select Committee of Enquiry over Tendering, Privatisation and Deregulation.

The union is urging members to stand firm against attempts to bribe staff with one-off payments in return for longer hours and less pay.

At the meeting, the platform were clearly surprised at the turn-out of 500 members. The strong turn-out mirrors the strength of feeling among bus workers and calls for industrial action were sympathetically received. If a lead was given members would support strike action.

A showdown is likely in the coming months. Management have made the mistake of attacking us all at once. All their threats will be hollow because, in the short run, private bus operators do not have the resources to run the London Bus Fleet. It is likely that management will be forced to withdraw their current proposals and revert to a policy of piecemeal tendering of individual routes.

In the near future we are likely to witness the biggest movement of London bus workers since the all-out strike of 1958. The employers have become belligerent. They have taken the current lull as a signal to attack. A big shock is in store for them.

Mark Langabeer, T&G Branch Committee member, Plumstead Garage



Pickets at Leyton bus garage during the 1991 dispute

More Attacks on Tory Anti-Union Laws

Human rights group, Liberty, is the latest in a long line of international organisations to criticise the Tories' proposed new anti-trade union legislation.

The government's Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill is currently proceeding through the committee stage in parliament and is due to become law later this year.

In a briefing on the Bill, Liberty says, "the cumulative effect of eight successive pieces of employment legislation has been two-fold: a drastic curtailment of trade union freedom and a steady erosion of employees' rights." And adds, "The government's Bill...is proposing many measures which will further erode the rights of people at work."

Britain and Ireland are the only EC countries which provide no legal right to strike. Thatcher removed that right. Now John Major is proposing even more severe restrictions on the right of association and expression. Already the Tories have redefined "trade dispute" to make certain types of industrial action illegal and have reduced trade union immunities from litigation. The Tory laws now tell unions how to conduct their elections, write their rule books, manage their financial affairs and prevent them from disciplining or supporting their own members in certain circumstances. Coupled with this legislation has been other laws abolishing

wages councils and creating loopholes in employment protection legislation. And for some reason the Tories seem to believe they are creating a classless society! As if! They are acting in the interests of their class. They are creating a low wage economy, with high levels of unemployment and restricted rights for workers. Labour and the trade unions should be exposing the Tories' anti-union legislation at every opportunity and calling for its immediate repeal. But amazingly, the Labour leadership say a future Labour government would only repeal parts of it. What restrictions on trade union rights do they support then? Labour must make it clear that all restrictions on the trade unions are designed to boost the superprofits of the major monopolies by pushing down the wages and worsening the conditions of workers.

Labour must clearly commit itself to repealing all the anti-trade union legislation and alongside the trade unions build a campaign of opposition to the Tories' latest attacks on our rights.

Yarrow Strike Vote

Workers at Yarrow shipyard in Glasgow have voted massively in favour of strike action to oppose a pay freeze.

Ballot results from the four unions represented at the yard - GMB, UCATT, AEEU and FTAT - showed 1240 in favour and just 37 against.

Workers decisively rejected management's proposals for a £300 lump sum payment and voted for an across the board pay rise and to seek negotiations on cutting the working week.

Now union leaders must use their mandate to force the company to back down.

With such a massive vote in favour there can be no excuse for Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Union leaders to agree to any pay cuts or increases in the working week.

Labour Left Fight Council Cuts

The deputy leader of Birmingham City Council, the largest authority in England and Wales, has resigned from his council seat.

Councillor Ken Barton's resignation was not over the 3000 job cuts being proposed by the right wing Labour council however, but because Labour politics is no longer any "fun" as he told local papers.

He is also planning to take up a well-paid seat on the board of a Housing Action Trust due to take over the massive Castle Vale council estate. Joining him on the board will be defeated Tory MP and rentamouth, Anthony Beaumont-Dark.

His ward Labour Party, Stockland Green, has responded by selecting Richard Evans - a left wing former councillor who had the Labour whip withdrawn in the past because of his stance against the poll tax and cuts - as his successor. Our Labour Party will be ensuring he keeps up that fighting tradition and opposes the job losses and cuts in services the Tories are trying to force on the city.

By a member of Stockland Green Labour Party.

Life on the Line

British Rail management are asking for volunteers to take part in safety tests on the high speed East Coast Line.

Workers in the test will be harnessed to stakes just six feet away from the line, when the new 225 trains pass at speeds of around 140 miles per hour.

BR hope to show that it will be possible to carry out track maintenance without closing down the line and "disrupting" the service.

It's good to know BR bosses take safety issues so seriously!

HMV BRAER DISASTER

Recipe for Disaster

The effects of the 84,000 tonnes of crude oil which spilled from the HMV Braer, after it crashed into rocks off Shetland continue to be felt throughout the region.

And conservative estimates say the effects on the local economy and environment could last for up to eight years.

For the Shetland Islanders more than most the economy and environment are inextricably linked as witnessed by the economic devastation which will be caused to the area by the forced closure of fish farms, the removal of herds of livestock, the damage to the woollen industry and the virtual collapse of the local tourist industry for the foreseeable future.

Economic Costs

Companies such as Marks and Spencer have already cancelled long-standing orders of salmon and other sea produce from the region. One firm, employing 800 people declared itself instantly bankrupt and will close later this month. And the government response has been disgraceful. Although they promised "full government resources" in reality compensation for the islanders has in most cases not been made available and in those where it has the amounts have been paltry.

Even some of the dispersants used to clean up the oil had failed previous toxicity tests.

But this is a tragedy that need never have happened. Shipping technology has now reached such high levels that, theoretically, accidents should almost never happen.

Reality, however, is different because companies, in a dash for quick profits, are increasingly using outdated vessels and employing crews who have not received the necessary training for the job. The latter practice, known as "flagging out" is on the increase everywhere. British companies have replaced British seafarers with cheaper labour, largely from Third World countries, at a fraction of the cost. Such crews have no democratic rights and are treated little better than slaves of old.

Filipino crew members on the Braer had complained about low pay, overwork and poor conditions to the International Transport Workers Federation and the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union, RMT, has recently highlighted the increasing use of cheap, "foreign" labour on UK

coastal routes and offshore supply boats operating out of Aberdeen.

Third World seafarers wages can be as low as 20% as those of the average UK crew members' - and often they are forced to work up to 90 hours a week.

Under these conditions it is no wonder accidents happen.

As RMT, assistant general secretary, Tony McGregor told the Glasgow Herald, "*An undermanned, ageing vessel crewed with demoralised seafarers is a recipe for disaster.*"

And yet the Tories' are refusing to put an end to this practice. Two more UK companies, Stephenson Clarke and Rowbotham Tankships have both announced their plans to crew their ships with Polish and Filipino labour.

It should come as no surprise that the Tories' refuse to act. After all, you can't interfere with the "free market."

Inevitable Consequences

But, the Braer disaster, and the accident, just one week later of the 255,000 tonne *Maersk Navigator* carrying 2 million barrels of crude, are inevitable consequences of a system where profit is always put before human quality of life or the health of the environment.

The bosses of the oil multinationals, who make billions in profits, believe they can get away with it, because of the lack of laws or enforcement of laws protecting workers' rights or the environment (90% of pollution in the seas comes from dumping) and by playing workers from different countries off against each other in "competition."

It is vital that the international trade union movement takes these lessons to heart and steps up campaigns to prevent "flagging out" and to recruit seafarers from all countries into the unions.

In October last year, Danish seafarers took solidarity action with a Croatian crew, at Aarhus in Denmark after it was revealed the crew had not been paid for seven months. The Danish workers refused to unload the ship when it arrived at Aarhus. Bulgarian crew members of *Alexander's Unity* won almost \$500,000 in back pay after taking up their case through the union. But the multinationals always find ways round environmental laws in the name of "profit" and "competition."

The only way to protect our environment and workers jobs, wages and conditions is to nationalise under democratic workers control and management these companies.

That way, the resources could be used to the benefit of workers and the environment. Fish could be fished in a way that allows natural replenishing of stocks and modern engineering and technology could mean cleaner and safer transport and future disasters could be avoided.

Pauline Hocking and Jeremy Dear

NEW SOCIALIST APPEAL PAMPHLET!

Britain in Crisis - A Marxist Analysis

By Ted Grant

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Back to the Future...

The "Clintonisation" of Labour

1993 has opened with a new onslaught by Labour's right wing on party policy and organisation. In the wake of last April's fourth consecutive election defeat, a section of the right want to move the party in the direction of the US Democrats. In reality they want to create an SDP mark 2.

However, it is clear that the right wing monolith created under Kinnock is crumbling. Splits are beginning to open up in the leadership, reflecting the tensions developing in society. Recently, David Blunkett talked about the end of the "coalition" built up around Kinnock. John Smith's desire to keep a low profile while making what changes he believed to be necessary is not working out, as division and argument erupt, even in the Shadow Cabinet. The media report the debate as one between "modernisers" and "traditionalists" with Gordon Brown and Tony Blair leading the "reformers", and John Prescott, leading "traditionalist", calling for a return to "conviction politics."

But life is never so simple: and Shadow Chancellor Brown has even been criticised by some other right wingers in the Shadow Cabinet for being too conservative on economic policy.

Clinton's Victory

The "modernisers", invoking Bill Clinton's victory in the US Presidential Election as their guiding example, are launching three major attacks on party policy and structure. Dissolve the historic party-trade union links, end Labour's commitment to universal benefits and endorse some form of electoral reform.

Tony Blair has talked about creating the party of the "individual against vested interests," emulating Clinton's distancing of the traditional "minorities" who supported the Democrats. In reality, this is code for bringing an end to the union block vote and the historic link between the party and the trade unions. Blair believes that these links are an albatross around Labour's neck if they are to woo the "middle one third" of the population away from the Tories.

A draft of the final report of the Party Review Group into Labour Party/Trade Union links, recently leaked to the press, advocates changes to the electoral college in favour of MPs and MEPs in order to provide "party stability", the introduction of "registered supporters" who

would be involved in local electoral colleges to determine the selection of candidates, the reduction of the trade union share of the vote at conference to 50%, and so on. These proposals are an attempt to dissolve the party more and more into "supporters" for the leadership. Point two of the "modernisers" manifesto is the ending of universal benefits. Even TGWU leader Bill Morris has endorsed this policy saying, "we need to shift the emphasis from universality to enablement."

Taxation Threat

The threat of higher taxation is cited as one of the major factors in Labour's election defeat, therefore, "modernisers" argue, if spending levels and taxation are to be held down, benefits need to be targeted.

Ironically, this a step beyond even what the Tories are prepared to go at the present. Major himself, intervened recently to prevent Social Security Secretary Peter Lilley from attempting to bring in such schemes. Lilley has talked about how impressed he was on reading a Fabian pamphlet by Frank Field advocating a "pensions revolution". Lilley is now considering ending the link between pensions and inflation and targeting benefits, in the Tories desperate attempts to reduce the cost of the

welfare state.

The "modernisers" thinking is reflected by Giles Radice, writing in another Fabian pamphlet: "Increases in pensions and child benefits promised by the Labour Party at the last election had little electoral impact. In addition their cost was so great that the party was forced to explain in advance where the money was coming from."

His conclusion, of course, is the targeting of benefits.

John Smith announced in December that he was setting up a Commission on Social Justice under Sir Gordon Borrie. This Commission, to be funded by the Institute for Policy Research, would include Patricia Hewitt (of the Institute, who was sent to the US to "advise" the Clinton campaign last year) and David Marquand (former Party member who left with the SDP and is now a member of the Liberal Democrats!). Smith has said he will not "close off any options for the inquiry."

"What the state ought to be doing these days," he told David Frost in a recent interview, "is not go round to people and say 'Look, we will guarantee everything for you', what they ought to say is, 'Look, here's an opportunity.'"

The Commission is widely seen as one of the vehicles that will be used to move the party away from its commitments to universal benefits in the direction of a means tested system. Point three of their programme is the need for electoral reform and, implicitly, the creation of some kind of Lib-Lab pact.

The Plant Commission on electoral reform has been going since last year and seems to be trying to cobble together a set of proposals with the aim of trying to get them through the



Clinton's victory in the US has persuaded the right-wing that Labour must copy the US Democrats



Leading "moderniser" Gordon Brown

Party conference. Bill Morris has now said the Party can no longer support a status quo which continues to return governments backed by a minority of the popular vote. "Electoral options should be actively examined," he stated recently.

Rather than creating a modern Party, the "modernisers" are attempting to take us back decades. They are not the first people to advocate breaking the links with the trade unions. Some of the Gaitskellites in the 1950s also had such a policy.

A return to means testing, which is exactly what "targeting" is, is hardly a modern policy - it has been tried before, and gone down as one of the bitterest episodes in the history of the British working class.

As for electoral reform, these "modernisers" want to take us back even further - to the days of Lib-Labism before the First World War!

Constitutional Reform

The "Modernisers" even have the support of that "traditional" friend of the labour movement: the Financial Times (8.1.93) - "The best answers are clear. Labour needs a divorce from the unions. Welfare benefits will have to be means-tested if taxation is not to be impossibly high. Constitutional reform is an attractive policy for Labour. Yet none of this will be on offer unless Mr. Smith leads the Party in the modernisers direction, and all of it will be insufficient unless he contrives to win the trust of affluent or would-be affluent voters."

Philip Gould and Patricia Hewitt, two of Kinnock's top aides in the 1992 election campaign and well known "Clintonites", have called for "a new political identity" and a move away from "the party of the poor and the past."

Their "thoughts" were presented in an article, 'Lessons from America', published in 'Renewal', the journal of the Labour Coordinating Committee. They organised the conference on

Clinton Economics held in London in January. The conference, sponsored by the TGWU and *The Guardian*, was a mouthpiece for the party "modernisers".

Bill Morris has spoken of the "political luxury to have lost four elections and suggest no ones' got anything to teach you."

One senior Party official told the *Independent*, "the Clinton victory carried important lessons about how to project a programme that will appeal to the widest possible constituency among electors."

Neil Kinnock has gone as far as saying, "anybody who isn't a moderniser shouldn't be in the Labour Party."

Election Defeats

The right wing are using the smokescreen of Clinton's victory to try and foist more of their policies on the Party. Roy Hattersley has attacked the "traditionalists", "In the Prescott analysis, the litmus test of genuine socialism is opposition to the Maastricht treaty, support for a basically undemocratic party constitution and willingness to go on losing general elections."

But Clinton's campaign emphasised "change." He promised big reforms in areas like healthcare. He attacked the "trickle-down" economics of Reagan and Bush. Judith Scott, chief of staff of the Teamsters Union, said, "Anyone saying Bill Clinton won because he dissociated himself from the labour movement is contrary to the facts and contrary to the commitments Bill Clinton made. He showed up on picket lines, even though it is a no-no for most politicians."

While George Bush attempted to portray himself as a world statesman it was the recession and domestic issues that dominated the campaign. In the British election it was precisely the Labour leadership's failure to expose the Tories' economic policies and highlight the recession that was one of the major factors in Labour's defeat. As *Socialist Appeal* has explained before, "Me too" was their only battle cry!

It was left to the economy itself, in particular Black Wednesday, to show people that the heady days of the late 1980's "boom" were gone.

Now the same advisers to Neil Kinnock, who led the Party to defeat in 1992, are telling us that the Party needs to move even further to the right. This has less to do with Bill Clinton and more to do with David Owen or Paddy Ashdown. They want to take the Party down the same road as the SDP, and create a Party indistinguishable from the Liberal Democrats! John Prescott has stated that "it is a matter of the heart and soul of the Labour Party." At the present time he seems to be reflecting the disquiet felt by many activists and, in particular, the trade unionists in the Party. Given the abysmal role of Smith as leader, then Prescott

could become a focal point for the growing opposition that will develop inside the party in the coming period.

Despite the enormous problems in the economy and the crisis within the ranks of the Tory party, Smith and his cohorts seem incapable of leading a real campaign against the government. On Black Wednesday, Major and Lamont were forced to pull Britain out of the ERM, and their whole economic "programme" lay exposed. Then the announcement of the decimation of Britain's coal industry, with the loss of 31,000 jobs, was the catalyst that really changed the mood of working class people throughout Britain. The NUM and TUC demonstrations in October last year were the biggest held for nearly twenty years. For the first time since the early 1980's there were large numbers of Labour Party banners to be seen on the marches. Clearly, the situation is in a process of change.



"Traditionalist" John Prescott

The right wing, however, do not recognise this. Their "monetarist" role model died on Black Wednesday, 16 September 1992. Their new model was born with Clinton's election victory in November. Ironically, just as the labour movement begins to flex its muscles, Labour's right wing is seeking yet another panacea to its self inflicted problems.

Already, there are concerns in many constituencies about the lack of participation of trade unionists and, in particular, young people, and the lack of an organised struggle on the real issues facing working class people. These feelings are reflected, for example, in the resolutions to the forthcoming Scottish conference of the Party.

The real "modernisation" the Labour Party needs is not a return to the tired old ideas of the SDP and their ancestors, but will need the active involvement of working class people in the Party, the adoption of socialist policies and a genuine campaign to defeat the Tories. If the Labour Party was to "modernise" itself along these lines then victory at the next election would be guaranteed.

Alastair Wilson

TSB Jobs Fight: Step Up Action

A BIFU activist working at the TSB National Computer Centre spoke to Socialist Appeal

Welcome to TSB Andover - This sign which greets rail visitors to the town site of TSB's national headquarters also indicates the relationship between the town and its largest employer. But today a different sight greets you. Outside the TSB, pickets discuss with clerical workers and motorists sound their horns in support of the strikers.

1,000 redundancies are on the cards as TSB merges its banking and insurance sections. Despite the recession both of these areas increased profits. However because of poor lending decisions by management, especially the purchase of Hill Samuel in the late 1980s, bad debts meant the company's total pre-tax profit this year was just £43. So we are being asked to pay for management's failures.

Since privatisation the TSB bank has been constantly shedding jobs and increasing workloads. Poor investments and a lack of provision for bad debts has forced management to make economies, at the expense of wages, jobs and conditions.

In the past, BIFU (Banking Insurance and Finance Union) had failed to channel the mood of anger into action to defend members jobs and conditions. Despite a majority for industrial action against regrading in November 1992, BIFU allowed ACAS to mediate that dispute and then accepted ACAS' recommendations which upheld management's case.

This set back the struggle against the management as many members left the union in disillusion at its failure to mount an effective fightback.

As the recession bit deeper into the finance and insurance sections of TSB a conflict between management and workers became inevitable. Every month saw the announcement of more redundancies and the further erosion of working conditions. Bank workers have never been the most militant section of the working class but now many have realised that they have to take industrial action to prevent even greater job losses. In the past BIFU's leadership has allowed the understandable fears many workers had

of strike action to hold back those sections who were prepared to fight. It was left up to union activists to patiently explain the sham of the negotiation process with a management intent on cutting jobs.

Despite a three-to-one majority for industrial action against compulsory redundancies in the ballot, regional union officials attempted to "reassure" members that no industrial action would be necessary as the ballot alone would force management to negotiate. However, management called the union's bluff by refusing all talks. The question then was whether a formal (if overwhelming) majority for industrial action could be translated into a successful strike against the threat to make 1000 workers redundant.

In Andover union activists took the initiative of organising a membership meeting at the end of the Wednesday day shift to plan the most effective action. In spite of management attempting to stop activists leafletting in the workplace, and the fact that only one shift could be informed, over 100 people turned up.

Mood Changes

The mood initially was one of worry and confusion as the majority had never before been involved in any strike action. But the more members spoke the more confidence grew as members saw that if we stand together management would be unable to take reprisals against us all. Management attempted to intimidate workers on the Thursday afternoon by threatening to sack anyone who dared to go on strike. This rebounded on them badly as many workers who were sceptical about taking action saw very clearly for themselves that life at TSB would become unbearable if the strike didn't succeed and management had the whiphand.

On the day of the national strike we had two well attended picket lines in Andover. At Keens House the majority of clerical workers refused to cross, and many joined the picket line. At the National Computer Centre, not only did the majority of workers refuse to cross the picket line, but even those who did cross indicated their support for our stand but said they were too afraid to defy management. Support was also received from the night shift workers who stayed out until midnight at the computer

centre. Among the lower grades support was solid. Management could only muster a skeleton staff who were unable to cope even with a much reduced workload. Solidarity from other trade unionists was excellent. Three delivery drivers refused to cross despite management's threats to their companies.

Successful Action

Nationally BIFU estimates that 75% of its 19,000 TSB members responded to the strike call. In Liverpool 120 branches were shut and in Manchester 130 out of 150 branches were completely shut, and those that did open had little business as workers from other industries refused to cross our picket lines. Many reports were received of Labour Party members and trade unionists visiting picket lines to show solidarity with striking bank workers. In Nottingham local NUM officials offered the support of 2000 miners from local collieries.

Clearly this action must be built upon. Union activists are opposed to allowing the energy and enthusiasm shown during the course of the one-day strike to be dissipated. But we are equally opposed to throwing workers into an ill-prepared indefinite strike. BIFU must prepare a campaign of action to protect members working conditions and to prevent compulsory redundancies. The first national strike of TSB workers since 1963 has shown that the union has real power and can act to defend members interests. Many workers who were reluctant to take action are now confidently proposing further strikes.

However, the failure to organise an effective strike on January 22nd, the proposed date for further action, could cost the union dearly. The defence of 1000 jobs is a serious matter and must be handled seriously. The stepping down of action will only serve to disorientate and demoralise many workers who have shown they are prepared to defend jobs. The union leadership must realise that only the industrial muscle of bank workers will secure the jobs and conditions of BIFU members. Another one day strike would raise the level of understanding and combativity among bank workers generally and so prepare the way for more concerted action at a later stage. We urge all labour movement activists to support our struggle for jobs.

“TSB's closure and redundancy plans will mean the sack for many long-serving workers and worse conditions for those who stay. This strikes not about greed but about stopping head office managers running roughshod over our rights.”

Sue, a Midlands TSB striker.

"The Tories, in an attempt to placate their backbenchers, and in the face of enormous public pressure have been forced to make cosmetic concessions. But they have not backed down...Our overall aim remains the same: all pit closure threats must be withdrawn..."

- Arthur Scargill,
The Miner

Action Key to Pits Victory

"The NUM remains opposed to all pit closures. We have got to save all the threatened jobs in the 31 pits but more than that save all the allied jobs which are threatened too. Now we need national leadership to take the fight for jobs forward - and that can only come from the TUC. We can't go on forever demonstrating. Arthur Scargill was right when he said there is a time when we have to stop talking and act. There are two days of action planned and the TUC needs now to prepare the ground for action. So far they have done little to build for these days. In Wales the Miners Support Groups have been trying to co-ordinate their activities for the days but the TUC could give the preparations a much higher profile. Those on the left and union branches should be putting public demands on the TUC to step up the action and to publicise the action and ballots on March 5th. I think the miners realise that they may have to stick their head above the parapet first but also many know we cannot win alone and we are looking for a wider fight. At the moment we are building up confidence and that needs to be translated into action with a firm lead from the TUC."

Phil White, Branch Secretary, Tower NUM spoke to Socialist Appeal. (The interview took place before the reports from the Commons Committee).

Wales TUC March for the Miners



"The Time for Talk is Over"

At a Cardiff rally organised by Wales TUC, a heckler from the crowd answered shadow Secretary of State for Wales, Ron Davies' question as to what kind of government could vandalise an entire industry with such maliciousness.

"A capitalist one!" the heckler shouted repeatedly, causing the beleaguered MP for Caerphilly to admit that, yes, only a government committed to the "free market" could be so destructive.

The rally in support of the miners' and jobs was not as large as expected, probably due to the fact that there is a different rally nearly every week in the region.

The main speaker, Arthur Scargill, argued the case for coal as eloquently as ever but admitted that this was the 15th rally he had addressed in the campaign and that, "there comes a time in the lives of men and women when rallies are not enough, the time for mere talk and demonstrations is at an end."

And he called on workers to support the day of action on February 18th. "You should stay away from work," he said.

A one-day general strike - surely what he meant - is essential if we are to defeat the Tories this time.

Mark, Nalگو Steward, South Glamorgan County. (personal capacity)

Railways

Save Rail Jobs: Fight Privatisation!

The government has announced its plans for the first stage of rail privatisation. Seven "franchises", accounting for around one-third of BR's annual passenger income, are to be sold off next year. These "franchises" will include the highly profitable and newly modernised main East Coast Line and the profitable Gatwick Express. The whole of ScotRail is also to be sold off.

This, coupled with big planned reductions in government subsidies to BR, from £1.3 billion per annum in 1993 to £580 million in 1995, threaten the closure of around 2,900 miles of track, according to senior rail industry sources. Even this may not make up for the loss of grants, and big fare increases and service reductions could take place. These cuts would mean no rail service north of Perth, west of Swansea and west of Plymouth. Tory transport secretary, John Macgregor has even failed to guarantee the continuation of the railcard scheme for senior citizens and young people.

7,000 jobs are already going by the end of March, another 25,000 redundancies are in the pipeline. The government must not be allowed to get away with these attacks. RMT leader, Jimmy Knapp's warning of a "spring of discontent" must be turned into a reality.

“Yes, and those master painters are so eager to get the work that they cut the price down to what they think is the lowest possible point,” answered Owen, “and the lowest usually gets the job.”



The successful tenderer has to usually cut the price so fine that to make it pay he has to scamp the work, pay low wages, and drive and sweat the men he employs.”

Robert Tressell, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, 1906

Building Industry: From Boom to Bust

Building workers have borne the brunt of the current recession and they are still suffering job losses and wage cuts. But as construction workers explain, conditions today are little changed from those 100 years ago.

“Councils, by law, have to take the lowest tender. These tenders are then contracted out to sub-contractors. These sub-contractors then sub out again at a lower price. This can happen three or four times, in some cases more. Each sub-contractor taking their share. The workers who finally do the job have to work at bottom price, corners are cut, longer hours are worked and health and safety goes out the window. No insurance is paid for the workers. If they refuse to do the job, someone else fills their shoes and they are sent home.”

Don Thomas, *Unemployed Painter*, 1992.

As the recession continues to bite the full effects are shown in the building industry. The workers have borne the full brunt of recession for the past three years.

During the past two years, brick-layers (once one of the most respected trades) have been at the forefront of savings made by building firms taking full advantage of the recession. In the north they have had two 5% cuts in wages and two 10% cuts, a 30% cut in wages overall. In the south it is even worse after six cuts in wages totalling 42.5%. On top of this, a brick-layer used to be paid extra for doing features and soldier courses - but this too has been cut. To take full advantage of this, new houses being built have never had so many features and extras.

Firms now insist that you become self-employed, “to save them paperwork.” In reality it saves them travelling expenses, holiday pay, tools allowances and responsibility.

In addition the work is harder. Instead of using forklifts, now you are expected to move bricks and other heavy objects yourself and whatever the weather they want to see the walls going up.

What is happening in the brick-laying trade is happening generally across the industry.

Why should the conditions of 90 years ago still be faced by workers today in the building industry?

During the boom years of 1950 to 1973, British capitalism was at its peak. The spokesmen of capitalism claimed workers, “had never had it so good.” They used this as proof that capitalism was “working.” Through this period, the labour

movement increasingly took the road of the market (capitalism). Under Gaitskell they even attempted to ditch Clause IV, Part Four of the Labour Party’s constitution. This is the clause which expresses the socialist aspirations of the rank and file trade union and Labour Party members.

During this period, as far as the building industry was concerned, things were easier. Ask any builder who worked through the 60s. You could practically name your price and if you were not happy with conditions you could pack up on a Friday night and get a fresh start on Monday morning. But even during this period Marxists explained that these “glory days” of capitalism would not last.

Inequalities

Marxists have developed the ideas of scientific socialism, and we oppose the anarchy and waste of capitalism and the market. We argue that capitalism creates gross inequalities of income and wealth, wastes the labour of the working class, and above all causes periodic slumps in production which inevitably leads to the slashing of workers’ incomes, mass redundancies and poverty. Capitalism cannot overcome its inherent contradiction: that the working class can never buy back the full product of their labour, because their wages represent only a proportion of what they produce. Over and above this proportion is surplus value, and that surplus is taken in the form of profits by the capitalist, the ruling class.

This was perfectly summed up recently not by an economist or academic but a hod-carrier, Arthur Betteridge. He said: “I reckon if you take into account all the wages from the ground work to the roof, the supply of services, and all the materials, the house is sold for three times its value.”

Capitalism maintains the momentum of capital by ploughing back some of the surplus into production. When profits are increased they are partly invested in new equipment. This in turn produces new goods. Unfortunately workers do not receive enough wages to buy back these goods, resulting in overproduction and slump. This is inevitable under capitalism.

Socialists recognise that manufacturing is the backbone of the economy. During the 1980s whilst manufacturing was destroyed the economy was artificially backed up by massive arms expenditure, a credit boom and increased exploitation of the Third World. Marxists argued at that time that the longer this boom was artificially protracted the greater the oncoming recession would be.

This has proved to be true. One graphic illustration is the slump in house prices. Some properties in the south have declined in value by 30%, leaving mortgage payers owing building societies more than their houses are worth. This slump in prices has in turn taken a massive toll on the terms and conditions and jobs of building workers.

Southampton Council, to secure contracts, negotiates wages and conditions with the unions. Because of Tory laws on tendering the union leaders agree to lower wages and changed conditions just to keep contracts. At a recent Southampton Labour Party meeting the line "no lowering of wages and conditions" was removed from a motion on Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). Leading councillors insisted it was the only way they could keep the contract. If that is the case and workers are forced to accept poverty wages what is the point in keeping it? Their "solution" is not the answer. They should be demanding, alongside building workers, "no lowering of wages and worsening of conditions." But then the argument is that cuts would have to be made elsewhere. This is false. We demand "No cuts". We should not be forced into the position of having to make choices between wage and job cuts. Labour and the unions should be building a campaign to put the Tories under pressure and demanding enough money to run our city and all other towns and cities across Britain, not advocating a policy of doing the Tories' dirty work for them.

Rank and file UCATT members should be seeking to recruit all building workers, whether they are "subbies" or not, self-employed or not, to join the union. Not only would they then receive protection and insurance against accidents, they can fight through the union to improve their terms

and conditions as workers in London and Southampton have been doing.

This campaign should be linked to demands for a programme of massive house building and to put pressure on the Tories to release the wasted billions of pounds held in town halls up and down the country. In Southampton alone, this could mean 750 low rent homes being built. Not only would this yield more money through rent than is currently received in interest but it would also take builders off the dole and provide precious houses for the homeless.

Very little has changed for building workers under capitalism in the last 100 years. The plight of building workers demonstrates clearly the need to sweep away this corrupt and unjust system and fight for socialism. Under a planned economy, based on need not profit, the benefit for building workers would be immeasurable.

The building industry would regain its prestige: houses, schools, hospitals and roads would be built - because they are needed. Skilled workers could practice their trade to the best of their ability. Work could be done properly not scamped.

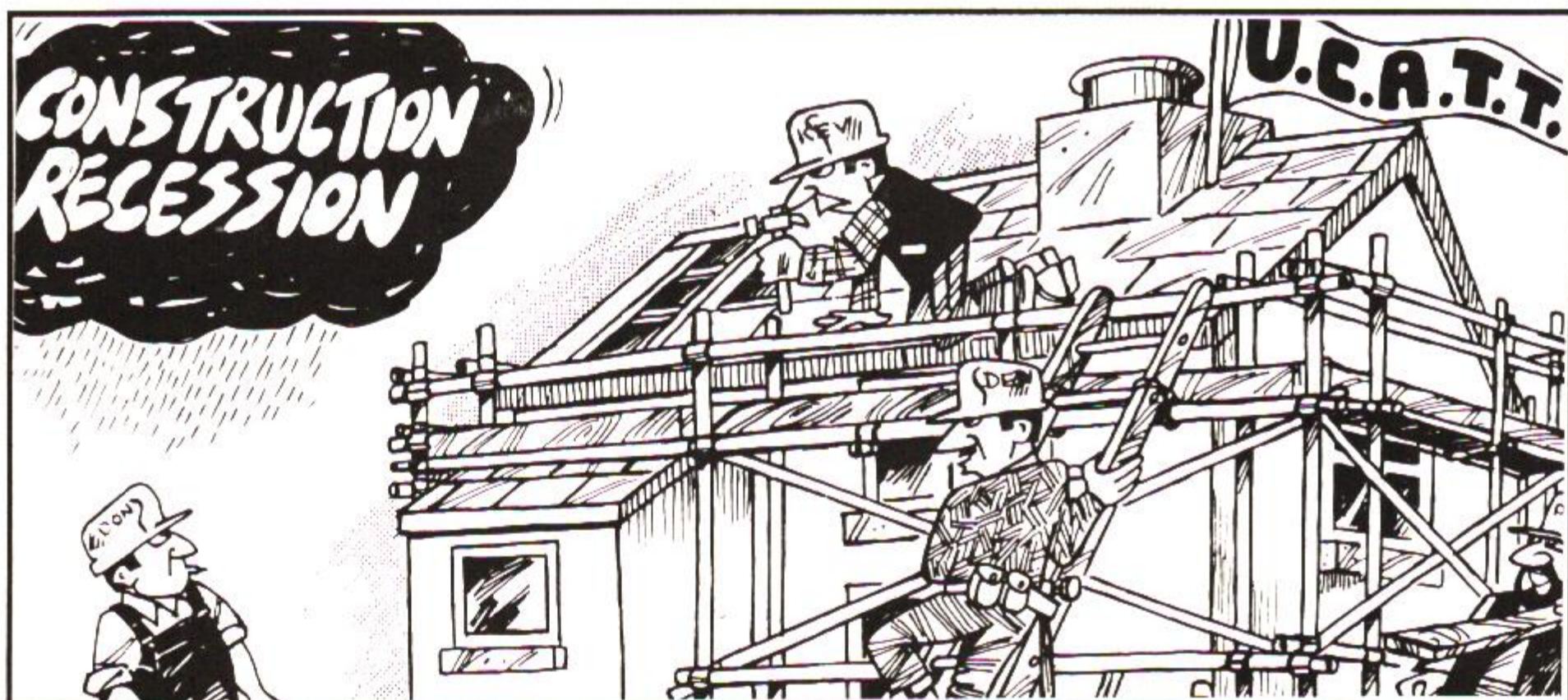
Today, brick-layers are employed not because they build a better wall - it's the speed that counts. Painters splash the paint on and cut corners, or do not put on enough coats - not because they're lazy, but because their work is not paid the rate for the job and because the cut-throat competition demands speed to meet unrealistic deadlines.

Recently, a local house painting contract went out for £600 per house. But by the time it was sub-let three or four times the price was down to £75. How could these workers take their trade seriously and be proud of the end product? It is a mad rush from dawn to dusk to make ends meet.

What an indictment of capitalism when a worker with skills is made to rush around and not use them properly or else see their skills wasted on the dole.

Building workers can't afford this system.

By Perry McMillan, Don Thomas, Dennis Woods (UCATT) and Kev Kavanagh, (NU Scalemakers)



Building workers need a fighting union now more than ever (cartoon: UCATT Viewpoint)

Fight Goes On For Safety

Members of the building workers union UCATT have taken up a number of cases of breaches of health and safety regulations, low wages and poor working conditions flowing from Council contracts. Below we outline some of those cases, demonstrating how Tory rules on Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) and the drive for profits among contractors and sub-contractors is affecting building workers.

Case 1 - Work won on tender, to decorate the outside of a four-storey block of flats, was sub-contracted out to self-employed members. The main contractor should supply scaffold. They told members that if they supplied the scaffold they'd deduct the cost from their wages. If however, they were prepared to use less safe ladders, they'd increase the price.

Case 2 - House painting contract won on tender was sub-contracted out four times, each contractor taking a share of what was left of the price. The final contractor found himself in so much difficulty, he used people who were registered unemployed and receiving benefit, paying them a pittance wage (£10-15 a day) and breaking the law.

Case 3 - While painting blocks of flats in Thornhill (a council estate in Southampton) two UCATT members had £40 stopped out of their extortionately low price because they refused to paint an area that was not properly scaffolded. The same firm used two YTS trainees, working on scaffold towers 20-30 feet high, unsupervised and breaking health and safety regulations.

As a result of pressure from UCATT members these cases have been taken up with councillors and investigations are underway. These cases are by no means the only horrors facing building workers. They show more than ever the need for building workers to join UCATT and fight to protect our wages, jobs and health and safety.

Tube Workers Prepare for New Battles

London Underground's recent attempts to introduce their Company Plan made great steps forward thanks to divisions among the unions and the almost complete lack of co-ordination, strategy and tactics shown by the leadership of the three rail unions - RMT, ASLEF and TSSA.

The rank and file of the unions were completely opposed to the Company Plan, as shown by every "referenda" and ballot majority (despite the deep recession) against the major attacks on jobs, pay and hard-won conditions the Company Plan would usher in.

RMT's initial 2:1 ballot majority when the first of their grades was attacked, was only used by the leadership as a negotiating lever - and a poor one at that. The lack of a call for action from the union's leaders led to the eventual signing of the machinery demanded by management.

Voluntary Redundancy

TSSA's Executive Committee member (about to be challenged in an election) and full timers collaborated from the outset regarding the changes for technical and clerical staff. Apparently, voluntary redundancies were only a matter for individuals and union circulars mirrored management's arguments and quoted Monopolies commission reports, as if this government-appointed anti union body were independent. Their only response to the redundancies and consequently loss of membership for the union was to call for recruitment of those left who were not in the union to make up the numbers (and subs) lost.

They were able to do this partly because of the lack of good officers and organisers to challenge them. However, this situation is now changing due to much hard work from individual union members. Already bureaucratic plans to reorganise branches into mixed/all-grades have been defeated in our LT Divisional Council.

ASLEF also effectively did nothing until the result of their "referendum" showed a 3:1 majority against the Company Plan. The TSSA "referendum" rejected the Plan by a majority of 4:1. The use of such referenda was not accidental. The leadership hoped there would be a YES vote for the Plan or a very narrow majority against which would let them off the hook. Other union leaders are likely to try this in future, in an attempt to avoid ballots and industrial action.

Strike Action

The RMT correctly went straight for a full ballot for all-out strike action, named the day and then announced a 3:1 majority to take action as management set about intimidating and threatening individuals to force them to sign new contracts. Mass meetings and media publicity was used to hype up the effects of strike action and to demand LUL return to negotiations at the Wages Board.

But the biggest problem was all this was done without co-ordination with the other unions. The strike was due to begin days before the results of the TSSA and ASLEF ballots were to be announced. Even these two results were due on different days!

Scandalously, ASLEF officials told their members to sign contracts and to cross any pickets, even *before* they were threatened with legal action. ASLEF activists were told that they would be on their own if they refused to cross. LUL gave ASLEF's officials a "get-out clause", promising a 10-day fortnight in the future. Of course, nothing substantive was agreed and there is no guarantee it will ever materialise.

Facing this situation of a lack of leadership, a refusal to abide by the basic laws of trade union solidarity RMT activists on the ground soon realised that they were unlikely to hold the majority of drivers from working, and many RMT train and station grades were understandably confused and demoralised by such a

scenario. The RMT leadership were already at ACAS by this time, and LUL agreed to go to the Wages Board as a bail out to the union's leaders.

In the subsequent days the TSSA announced a 52% majority for action, but ASLEF had already called off their ballot before the result partly blaming the RMT for calling off the action. The TSSA Executive then announced they would not be sanctioning any action.

Playing on the divisions LUL management, on the same day, announced a further 45 Operations job cuts and a new review of staff levels in Engineering Operations due to cuts in funding announced in the Autumn Statement.

LUL's Plans

To use a cliché, the unions leaderships "*snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.*"

In the future LUL are considering plans to move around 2500 staff to Docklands to help influence the Jubilee Line extension and help the bailing out operation for Canary Wharf.

As far as the unions go their is now a real possibility of forming an RMT Broad Left, especially around the demands for a 35-hour week since many are now working longer hours. The anger felt by many ASLEF members over the events of the past few months has also created a move towards forming an ASLEF Broad Left too. The 1.5% pay offer will be the real test for the unions. We must face this threat of real pay cuts united and determined to take action if the offer is not substantially increased.

- *For a single unified transport union*
- *For tregular election of all full-time officials*
- *For a 35-hour week and inflation proof pay rises*

By a TSSA LUL member

Safeguarding the Future?

Managements certainly have a novel way of looking at things.

Leslie Smith, managing director of Trainload Freight, writing in the management paper, *Trainload Express*, calls the closure of Frodingham and Grangemouth railway yards, "safeguarding the future," and "preserving the core of TLF's business." But he offers a crumb of comfort to those suffering in the recession and those who he had to sack: "I commend a Scots' proverb: "We never died o'winter yet."

Meanwhile, *Railnews*, the British Rail staff magazine opens with the news that 5,000 jobs are to go. However, the workers are not being sacked or even made redundant they are being "released." (From what to what?)

But those losing their jobs should not worry. As TLF director Kim Jordan states: "If major changes are forced on us by outside events, everyone in the industry should take pride in the fact that we are, and will remain, the biggest freight haulier in the country."

Tube Worker interview. →

"Management Is Squeezing Every Last Ounce Out Of Us"

"The main effect of the strikes being called off is that morale has hit rock bottom and management are coming down hard on us.

Management have a sickness target of 4%, which they are usually near but now sickness has rocketed to 11% - more than double!

We have now become wage slaves. We have no social life anymore. All the little things which made the job palatable have gone. Because all the agreements have gone management are playing up. People are shell-shocked. The strike didn't come off because of inter-union politics among the bureaucracy. The ballots proved the feeling there was among the members for action but ASLEF's bureaucracy always had the position that you can't fight and can't win and therefore their aim was just to get the best deal they could in talks. They accepted a promise of a 5-day week and that sold it to the train crews - but it is only a promise, we have no date for it to be implemented. Activists like myself had the frighteners put on by our own union! I was told, "go into work or you'll get sacked and the union won't help you." For the ordinary union member what they saw was inter-union fighting.

The RMT should have waited until the result of the ASLEF ballot was known before calling strike action. As it was ASLEF called off their ballot before the result was even out!

The Company Plan has now been implemented and is a farce. One of the aims was to save

money by cutting down on clerical staff but now people are being paid overtime because management can't work the pay system. We used to get half an hour spare at the end of a shift, now we don't. So if the train is five minutes late then we are on overtime. It must be costing LUL a fortune. Management don't know where they are and we don't know where we are.

As a result of the dispute a group of activists have got together and a cross-union Broad Left is going to be launched on February 1st - but we also need to build the strength of the Broad Lefts in the individual unions.

The pay round in May could be used as a focal point to fight back. We have lost our commissions, therefore we should go for a pay rise. The NUM/RMT day of action on March 5th, should include tubeworkers linking the action to the 1.5% pay "offer".

Although privatisation is not an immediate prospect for us, the government have spent millions on the Central Line, getting new rolling stock and resignalling, so at some stage that is prime for privatisation because the buyer would have to spend little on the infrastructure.

Our job has changed. With "speed-ups" they are trying to get every last ounce out of us. We have only got our most basic rights left. A lot of older workers are just glad to get out now."

Socialist Appeal spoke to an ASLEF underground train operator

NHS Crisis

"Our Reforms are Working!"

Labour's motion in the Commons criticising the Tory NHS "reforms" was ridiculed by a series of ministers and backbenchers, who claimed the reforms were "working" and "equipping the NHS for the future." Are they really? Perhaps Conservative politicians forgot to look up the facts first! Even in the month of the debate, newspapers reported:

- At Romford's Olchurch and Rush Green hospitals nurses and domestics had been sacked and operations cancelled, portering overtime suspended, vacancies in the works department frozen and a host of cost-cutting measures introduced in a bid to get the hospital into the black before "opt-out day". However, senior management had their offices redecorated and general manager Stephen Eames received a j-reg Audi.
- South Birmingham Health Authority announced massive losses and the closure of two hospitals
- Oxfordshire District Health Authority confirmed it is to cut 24-hour casualty and maternity services at Horton Hospital in Banbury
- Manchester Royal Infirmary has been forced to close its casualty department on several occasions due to staff shortages
- Dozens of hospitals across the country were forced to declare a "yellow alert" because of bed shortages.

But then the Tories never let the facts get in the way of their propaganda.

Crash Landing for Aviation Industry

A worldwide crisis is gripping the aviation industry as hundreds of holiday companies and airlines go bust or announce large scale redundancies.

But not all is doom and gloom. Some workers have fought, and won, against the redundancies and attempts to impose wage cuts.

Workers at USAir walked out after 22 hours of talks had failed to persuade management to ditch cost-cutting proposals which amounted to cuts in pay, health care benefits and changes in working practices.

What they could not achieve in 22 hours of talks, the 8300 machinists achieved after four days of solid strike action, winning major concessions on wages, saving hundreds of mechanics jobs and forcing the company to scrap proposals to change working practices. The machinists strike forced the immediate cancellation of 60% of USAir's scheduled flights and the solidarity shown by flight attendants who refused to cross picket lines ensured a quick and successful outcome to the dispute.

Meanwhile workers at the Belgian airline Sabena staged a series of protests and stoppages to protest at the prospect of further job cuts on top of the 1,000 announced last October.

Aer Lingus and Air France have also announced large scale redundancies - almost 4,000 between them. Mass rallies (under the slogan, "Our belts have already been tightened enough - what about yours?") were held at Geneva and Zurich airports against proposals by Swissair to make 1,400 redundant. The Swiss transport union VPOD says that if a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached for 1993 then the union will take industrial action to protect jobs and passenger safety.

USAir workers have shown the way workers can organise and win. In 1991 50,000 airline workers lost their jobs in the US and 20,000 in Europe. Increasing competition has led airlines into a cost-cutting spiral which is having serious consequences for the safety of passengers and workers. Many of the world's largest airlines are now moving their administrative headquarters out of Europe to India and Malaysia to take advantage of cheap labour and weaker labour laws.

The international trade union movement has to respond to the growing crisis of the airline industry, and the wider transport industry by building greater workplace links across borders, by implementing a strategy to fight redundancies and wage cuts and campaign for a planned integrated transport policy that safeguards the passengers and workers in all branches of the transport industry.

Iraq
Bosnia
Recession
Somalia

By Ted Grant

Whither
the
New
World
Order?

As Stalinism collapsed and the Gulf War came to an end then US president George Bush hailed the New World Order - today that order lies in ruins. American imperialism, using the United Nations as a transparent cover for its aims, has demonstrated that what determines its actions, like all the other powers, is not "justice" or "freedom" or "peace", but naked class interests.

It is their class interests and not the struggle for peace and the authority of the (dis)United Nations which also determine the policy of France, Britain and the other "great" powers.

In the crises of the last decades, and now in Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, and in Somalia, the "authority" of the United Nations has practically disappeared and it has revealed itself as an empty and impotent tool of western imperialism.

Iraq Bombings

The US, Britain and France, without being "empowered" to do so, have bombed Iraq. After the first two bombings, opposition began to surface in France and Britain. The French government publicly disavowed the third wave of bombings. They "considered (that the US) exceeded UN Security Council resolutions."

But a trifle like that does not bother US imperialism when it suits their interests. Denis Healey, former Labour Foreign Secretary, quoted in the *Independent*, criticised the bombings as "*gesture politics of a dangerous type... it is difficult to see the purpose or whether they have UN authority behind it.*"

Major duly obliged in parliament. With Britain now a satellite of the United States, he tried to justify the bombings. However, he telephoned Bush six times to try and dissuade him from this course but had to accept the fait accompli; the accomplished fact.

John Smith, and the right wing Labour leadership, voted with the government while 21 left Labour MPs voted against. But while protesting, and this

is to their credit, they appealed to the non-existent authority of the United Nations for action. This is like complaining to Beelzebub about Satan. Who in the United Nations will challenge the United States, and to what effect? The US will merely exercise its Security Council veto!

Since the collapse of the Stalinist controlled Soviet Union, Russia has remained subservient to the Western imperialists. Though, with the revival of Russian nationalism, Yeltsin has murmured a feeble protest against the actions against Serbia and Iraq. Whether they will maintain this stand remains to be seen. **In any event it is a question of power politics and not the rights and wrongs of these actions which dictate the policies of all the powers.**

The "aid" to Russia from the West has turned largely into promises which are illusory. Hence the change in the attitude of Yeltsin. The big conflicts at the present time: Angola, Bosnia and the Serb and Croat conflict, Iraq, all demonstrate the toothlessness behind pious United Nations resolutions.

Western Interests

Only when the vital interests of the Western powers are affected will they directly intervene, like in Iraq's threat to the oil interests of the west. Crocodile tears shed over "poor little Kuwait" and talk of the aggression by Iraq are so much eyewash. It is the virtual control of the Security Council, with the obsequiousness of Russia, which the US and its allies have seized upon to push UN resolutions through in their interests.

The smaller powers and the ex-colonial regimes have bowed before the economic might of the Western imperialists. They are afraid of economic, aid and loan reprisals if they do not vote the way US, French and British allies dictate. China abstains because of it too needs to trade with the US and the West. In the last period Russia has voted for, or abstains. The UN has therefore become a tool of the West instead of being paralysed, as in the past, by the Cold War conflicts between the Soviet Union and the West. The Soviet Union championed the interests of the ex-colonial peoples. As Russia moves in the direction of capitalism, so she has abandoned any anti-imperialist stance. Hence its changed role at the UN. But the direction of Russian internal politics will in turn decide their policy in the Security

Council and in the deliberations of the UN.

The US imperialists regard the UN as a convenient cover for their imperialist policies. The naked use of force has been screened by the banner of the UN. The massive blanket bombing of Iraq in 1991 was intended to destroy its military power, but also to act as a warning to the other ex-colonial countries not to step out of line lest they receive the same treatment. According to some estimates up to 100,000 people were killed. Now there are threats to bomb Iraq again if the Iraqi government and people do not submit to the UN and the ceasefire terms. If the intention of the new bombing is to lead to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the installation of a more pliable General, who would be a puppet of the US, it has failed utterly in its purpose.

Arab Opposition

The Arab "allies" of the UN came out against the bombing. They were afraid of the effect of support on their own people. The Syrian, Jordanian, Egyptian and Saudi governments all came out in opposition. They were afraid of an explosion of anger if they had supported the bombings.

The UN has displayed its penchant for hypocrisy, propaganda and lying over the demands that Iraq obey UN resolutions. In reality it was a demand that Iraq obey the nominal victors in the war, US imperialism, and to a lesser extent, British and French imperialism.

However, the resolutions did not give the necessary "legal" authorisation by the UN for the recent bombings. So they stretched the meaning of the resolution to cover their actions. By the time of the third

bombing, French imperialism had exposed the farce. Britain, for fear of the effects on the Arab peoples and their own commercial interests, tried, behind the scenes, to restrain Bush. However, the "obeying" of UN resolutions became a burning issue.

Israel, though, has ignored the "humanitarian" resolution that the expelled Palestinians be allowed to return from Lebanon. Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, revealed that the US State Department had privately assured him that the US would veto any punitive resolution by the Security Council! So cynical are the imperialists not only of the United States but of all the imperialist countries. There are countless resolutions of the UN, passed by the Assembly and the Security Council, against "aggressors" which have been laughed at and ignored by the "guilty" party.

Indonesia invaded the former Dutch colony of Timor, brushing aside its declaration, agreed by Dutch imperialism, of nominal independence. They have maintained a cruel and repressive occupation for 17 years. 200,000 people have been murdered. Rape, torture and assassination are the normal methods of terror used by the Indonesian overlords.

The UN Security Council passed a resolution asking Indonesia to withdraw. Nothing happened. The big imperialist governments vital interests were not affected so they turned a blind eye and did nothing.

When the US "aggressor" invaded Panama and Grenada to set up their own puppet governments and enhance their interests in the Caribbean, the UN did nothing. When it came to questions of the "national interests" ie. big business inter-

ests, the US did not bother with the UN, but used military force.

Both Clinton and Bush have openly declared that when the vital interests of the US are threatened they will resort to force. The so-called conciliation procedures of the UN count for nothing when the "national interest" is at stake.

"Small issues" of the "lesser countries" may be settled at the UN but not even these when vital capitalist interests are at stake and the big imperialist powers commercial, strategic or other interests are involved, including the upholding of their prestige and power. This is what determines the policy, diplomacy and actions of all the imperialist powers.

The G7 imperialist powers have usurped the "authority" of the UN, or rather they are the "authority" of the UN.

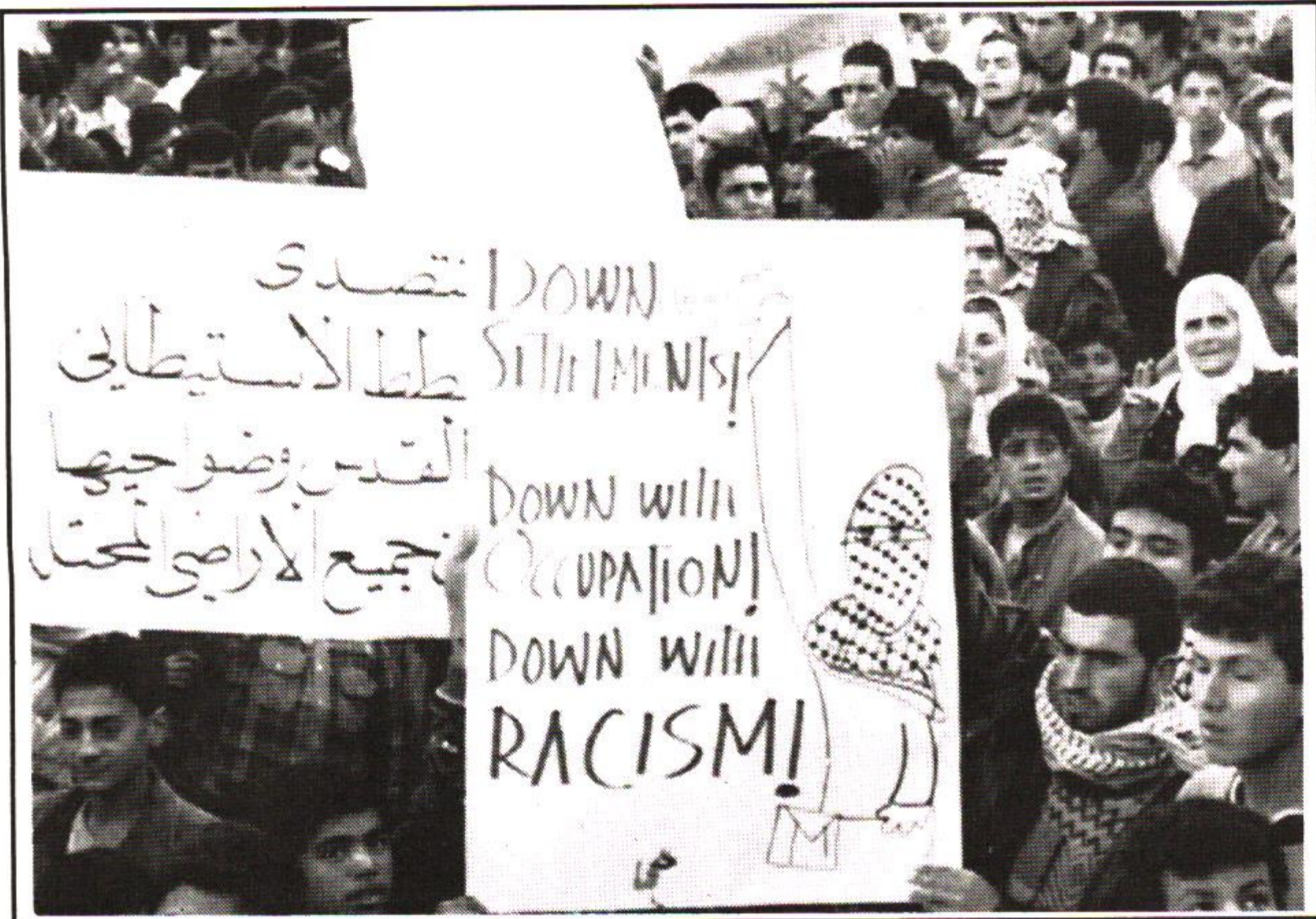
So the G7 imperialist powers have usurped the "authority" of the UN, or rather they are the "authority" of the UN. The "aggression" of Iraq in attacking Iran was secretly supported by the US and the other western powers. This was the game of power politics- *The enemy of my enemy is my friend*. Imperialist Britain violated its own laws to covertly supply Iraq during and after the Iran-Iraq war with forbidden materials. It was a very lucrative trade. But that was not the main reason for their dirty deals. They looked on Iraq as a strong bastion of power to hold Iran in check.

They were not bothered about the crimes of Saddam Hussein then. His torture and imprisonment of communists and socialists and any oppositionists was dealt with by a shrug of the shoulders. They did not intervene in "internal politics." Only when he threatened their oil interests did they bother about his crimes. Then they "discovered" his repression of the Kurds and the Shias. Both these peoples, by the way, were opposed to the recent bombings.

But the oppression and murder against the Iraqi people was not the reason for the blockading of Iraq. That was "internal



Western soldiers prepare to "defend" Kuwait



The UN have failed to solve the problems of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories

politics", the "sovereignty" of Iraq was not to be interfered with. Only when Saddam Hussein threatened the oil supplies of the West by attacking Kuwait did the US, French, British and the others go to war.

After their "victory" the western powers conducted a vendetta under the mask of the UN. All Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were to be destroyed. However, despite the end of the Cold War they themselves retained the most fearsome weapons of mass destruction, even apart from nuclear arms.

These "humanitarians" continued to blockade Iraq and prevented milk and medicines being imported. Tens of thousands of children and adults died as a consequence. They only eased the blockade of medicines when the scandal grew too big.

Power and Prestige

The policies of all capitalist-imperialist powers are determined by cold calculation. Their manipulation of the United Nations is determined thereby. They are, in reality, not interested in "justice", "freedom" or "peace", but a sordid calculation of profits, power, spheres of interest, sources of raw materials, the domination of former colonies and, last but not least, prestige,

That is what dictates their actions at the United Nations-- all the rest is propaganda to fool the workers as to their lofty motives. They stand for power politics. The EC powers are not any better or any worse than US imperialism. The latter is more crude only because of the lack of a socialist opposition.

The *Independent*, sober representative of capitalist public opinion cynically observed: "*In the real world it is impossible for the United Nations to be totally even handed or to implement all Security Council resolutions with equal determination because it is no more than the sum of its parts, which are nation states pursuing their own interests.*"

US Imperialism

They have ignored the expulsion of 360,000 Palestinians from Kuwait, some of whom had lived there for decades. They were accused of collaboration with the Iraqis when they controlled Kuwait. This barbarous expulsion has been accepted by the Western allies. After all Kuwait is also an "ally" - in reality a puppet of US imperialism.

The then President Bush, on January 5, proclaimed his belief in "*the selective use of military force for selective purposes...in order to ensure that a new world democratic order was sustained...*". He continued, "*Other nations must contribute militarily and economically whenever their interests are at stake.*" Force could serve as "*a complement to diplomacy or as a temporary alternative to it.*" This is a crude expression of power politics.

He went on to say that the invasion of Panama (in violation of the UN charter) by unilateral action was determined by the US when it considered "*its own vital interests were at stake.*" The US could not remain "*passive and aloof*" from events far from its shores. Thus the mailed fist of imperialist might is brandished. Clinton's policy is no different.

There is not much room for settling disputes in the United Nations in all this. All the powers are prepared to use force when it is necessary to defend their imperialist interests. But this use of naked force brings its own nemesis. The coalition of imperialism's Arab satellites has virtually collapsed. The Secretary General of the Arab League said that military action against Iraq was not acceptable. Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Pakistan all expressed opposition. They were afraid of the reaction of their populations if they did not do so.

UN Interventions

In 1992 UN "peacekeeping" or "humanitarian" operations were carried out in five different countries. All have been a disaster. Somalia, Cambodia, Angola, Yugoslavia and even in tiny El Salvador, "peacekeeping" operations are threatened with collapse.

The civil war in Angola was supposed to be ended with the collapse of the Cold War. All the backers of the UNITA thugs exerted pressure for an agreement and elections to decide policy when the MPLA embraced capitalism and abandoned "socialism." Savimbi (leader of UNITA) was not prepared to accept the electoral defeat. The UN which had brokered "peace" was pushed aside and the bitter civil war began anew.

In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge ignored the ceasefire and was not prepared to accept elections. The UN is left empty and powerless.

In Somalia US imperialism has intervened theoretically because UN food aid was not reaching the starving but systematically being hijacked by the different armed clans. The US armed forces intervened allegedly for humanitarian motives. The real reason was mainly to set a precedent for new interventions in

The imperialist powers are now afraid of the possibility of a generalised Balkan war in which they would be sucked in

the small underdeveloped countries in the future. Another reason was the clamour on a world scale that the starvation in Yugoslavia was used for propaganda purposes while the Somalian starving were ignored. The TV newsreels of the dead and dying in Somalia pressured the US intervention.

In the former Yugoslavia, the UN intervention has been a disaster. Five disasters out of five is the inglorious record. The *Financial Times* (22.1.93) comments that there is "widespread view amongst non-western member states and among their nationals in the Secretariat that the western powers have turned the United Nations into nothing more than an instrument of their own political whims."

German imperialism accelerated the drift towards civil war in ex-Yugoslavia by forcing the other EC states to recognise the independence of Croatia. They did not count on the consequences. This was because of the new "drang nach osten," the drive to the east, which the German monopolies see as a market for goods and investment and a sphere of influence.

Balkan War

The imperialist powers are now afraid of the possibility of a generalised Balkan war in which they would be sucked in. Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria could all be involved if the civil war spreads to Macedonia. No one takes much notice of the United Nations in all this.

If the imperialist powers have not intervened with military force it is not because of any niceties of conduct but because of their fear of the consequences. They have imposed, through the United Nations an embargo on arms and goods going to Serbia and arms for Croatia and Bosnia. The embargo has not been effective. Goods are still reaching Serbia, including oil.

But the next step would be military intervention. The US, Britain and France would overcome Serbia, but Yugoslavia is ideal guerrilla country. Germany had to send in 50 divisions during the Second World War despite having set up a Croatian puppet fascist state under Pavelic. It is the memory of this by the Serbs, rekindled by Tudjman the Croatian leader who in some of his speeches said that Serbs and Jews would be second class citizens in the new independent Croatia, which has fuelled the civil war.

The Serbs remember the thousands of Jewish dead and the hundreds of thousands of Serbs who were murdered by the fascist gangs of Pavelic. The Croats have been portrayed as innocent victims of the

Serbs, though there is not much to choose between the leaderships of both Croatia and Serbia. All ex "Communist" Party leaders, they fanned the fires of chauvinism, the ghastly consequences of which we see at the present time.

The West, under German imperialist pressure, supported the Croats. The Croats made a marriage of convenience with the Bosnian Muslims, but now have launched an unprovoked attack on them from the rear. In any event there was a secret agreement between Milosevic and Tudjman to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina between them. Balkan power politics are as dirty and unprincipled as the power politics of the West. The Bosnian Muslims have had the worst of this nightmare. The Serbs are enrolling volunteers

The Stalinist bureaucrats in all the republics fanned the flames of nationalism. That is one way they maintained control - at least for a while. Now there is a reopening of all the old sores



UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali

to fight in Krajina and threatening an all-out assault by the Yugoslav Army.

Russia, under Yeltsin, because of pressures from nationalists and the hardline former Stalinists, has threatened to demand sanctions against "aggression" by Croatia against the Serbs in violation of the peacekeeping agreement. This may be partially as a means of pressure on the West for loans and grants, partially as gesture for Slav solidarity and fear of the reaction in Russia to all out war.

If they returned to the old Czarist policies of pan-Slavism that would result in a renewed stalemate on the Security Council, once again paralysing the UN. Yeltsin has also condemned the recent bombing of Iraq, saying that the "allies" have no mandate from the UN.

Ethnic Cleansing

The Vance Plan for Croatia set up four UN protected zones on about one third of Croatian territory held by the Serb nationalists. The Croatian leader Tudjman decided to use military force in violation of the decisions of the Security Council. If the Serbs react by an all-out attack on Croatia this will present difficulties for the Western powers. The Bonn Foreign Ministry has frantically pleaded in vain for the Croat Army to cease their advance because of fear of the complications.

Because of the contradictions within the Balkan states and all the medley and mixture of peoples, it has always been a tinderbox which could ignite in conflagration. Under Tito, when there was relative prosperity, the antagonisms were muted and partially overcome. But the Stalinist bureaucrats in all the republics fanned the flames of nationalism. That is how they maintained control - at least for a while. The collapse of the Stalinist regime led to a reopening of all the old sores.

"Ethnic cleansing", the driving out of minorities - in some areas the majority, has been practised by both Serbs and Croats. This is the madness of frenzied nationalism. This with peoples who lived amicably for decades side by side, with a great deal of inter-marriage.

Fratricide has been whipped up by nationalist demagogues. The Bosnian Muslims have suffered the worst, having the least amount of arms, and their fighters lack heavy weapons. Major is frantically trying to prevent Clinton from lifting the embargo on arms to the Bosnians, because that too could escalate the war. The Allied powers are afraid to intervene because the lessons of Vietnam have been burned into the consciousness of the ruling classes of the west. General Zivota

Panic, the Yugoslav Army Chief of Staff, said in Belgrade on December 30th, "If intervention comes, we will defend our freedom, independence and territory with all means at our disposal." This must have sent shivers down the spine of the West's generals.

In the *Daily Telegraph* (December 30), British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd declared, "Democratic opinion would not support us in military occupation over years, with the inevitable losses and casualties."

Malcolm Rifkind, Tory Defence Secretary, on January 14, added that warships and extra troops being sent "...will also be available to cover a withdrawal of British forces if that becomes necessary... our position remains that it is not appropriate to intervene in what is essentially a civil war."

This is not because of any concern for the troops or the people of Britain but because they are afraid of the consequences of a long drawn out war. They would use up resources endlessly and would be forced to withdraw ignominiously by the pressure from workers and the middle class. So their solution to the impasse and the threat of all out war between Croats and Serbs is to prepare to get out!

Labour's Response

Since 1945 every year without exception there have been wars. The (dis)United Nations have not been able to prevent any of them and in some cases as with the Iraqi and Korean wars have participated on the side of the imperialist powers. The attitude of the right wing Labour leaders has been largely the same as that of the Tories. They have demanded that the "authority" of the UN be upheld. John Smith and the opposition front bench have had a "me too" policy to that of the Tories. They supported the bombing of Iraq, and the government's policy on Yugoslavia. There was no substantial difference on policy - only shades of difference. **It is the Labour "hard left" which has been the most inconsistent. They opposed the recent bombing of Iraq but still adhere to support for the UN. Support for a body which reflects its composition as a capitalist-imperialist tool. They attempt to poke fun at the Marxists for being "unrealistic." In reality they, like Michael Foot, an erstwhile left, are the utopians. They dream of a universal body taking action against the "aggressors". As Michael Foot wrote in the *Guardian* (25.8.92), "More than ever before, what the world cries out for is an**

effective world authority, determined to stop aggression, starting with this one."

Instead of appealing to the solidarity of the international working class, the "hard left" invoke the myth of the "United Nations". It is the same as appealing for "collaboration" between workers and bosses and the government at home. When the lion and the lamb lie down together, the lamb invariably ends up in the lion's stomach!

The Left would not advocate this at home but mysteriously imagine the workers interests can be safeguarded abroad by the horse-deals between the diplomatic representatives of the capitalist governments.

But the United Nations, being composed in the main of the imperialist powers and their satellites, can never play that role. When fundamental capitalist interests are threatened, as Bush crudely explained, they eschew discussion and resort to force.

Marxist Position

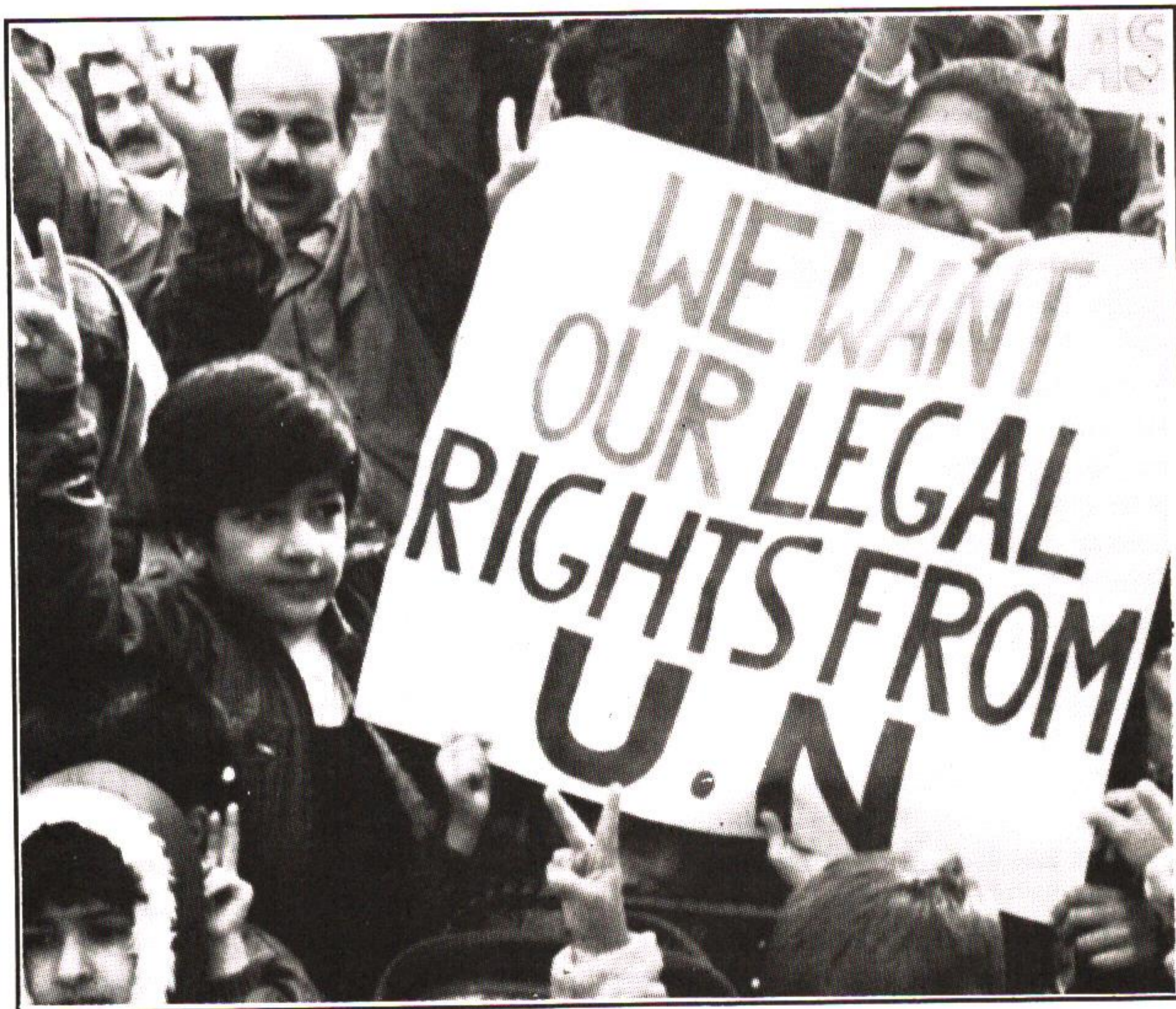
The only thing that would prevent this is counter-action by the working class. That requires great events to rouse the workers. Marxists, in foreign as in home policy, start from the proposition that the interests of the working class are fundamentally opposed to those of the capitalists. The workers have a common interest with the working class of all countries. Their interests are irreconcilably opposed to the capitalists of all countries.

The Tory government represents the interests of big business. Diplomacy, armed action and war are a means to increase the power and influence of the national state. These are a means for increasing the share of the capitalists on the world market. To increase their prestige and big business interests the government and the state defend the interests of the ruling class as a whole. They are not interested in democracy or the "decisions" of the United Nations. Nor are their rivals and allies abroad.

Both at home and abroad the workers must preserve their class independence from the institutions of capitalism. The working class can only ever rely on their own collective power, solidarity and class consciousness.

The UN has brought no peace in the last decades. It can never bring peace to the world. Capitalism brings an endless sequence of "small" wars, each more terrifying than the last. The Labour "lefts" are guilty of the worst sort of utopianism, which can deceive the workers on the issues of peace. The UN is a fraud and a con-trick which must be exposed to the class conscious workers and the real alternative explained.

The struggle for peace is the struggle for democratic socialism. Peace can never be achieved by the "United Nations", but only by a Democratic Socialist Federation of the World.



Many, including some on the left, held out the hope the UN would be a world peace force but in reality it is simply being used as a tool of the imperialist powers



BUILDING SOLIDARITY WITH PAKISTANI WORKERS

The Pakistan Labour Solidarity Committee has been formed in Britain by activists in the British and Pakistani labour movements

The PLSC was initiated during the recent brutal clampdown by the Nawaz Sharif government on the "Long March" protestors, and campaigned for the release of the 20,000 detainees. The PLSC aims to build solidarity links between the trade union and labour movement in Britain and Pakistan, and give material and political support to Pakistani trade unionists. Resolutions of support, and donations should be sent to: PLSC, PO Box 977, London SE11 6XA. Financial sponsorship is urgently required and is asked from: local bodies (£25), national bodies (£50). The latest sponsor is Labour MP Tony Benn. Get your union or Labour Party branch to follow suit. The PLSC will be producing a regular newsletter providing information on the work of trade unionists in Pakistan.

THE AIMS OF THE PAKISTAN LABOUR SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE ARE:

1. Release of all political prisoners and an end to the brutal repression of the IJI government in Pakistan.
2. The ending of child labour and for a compulsory and free education system. Unemployment benefit from the state.
3. The ending of contract labour, for full trade union rights, and decent wages. For decent medical facilities, and adequate housing and transport.
4. The repeal of discriminatory laws against women. Equal status for women in all fields of work. Maternity leave and equal wages for working women.
5. The ending of discrimination on the basis of religion. Repeal of the law requiring the indicating of religion on the national identity card. Equal rights to religious minorities. The ending of laws based on fundamentalism.
6. Support for the right to self-determination of the oppressed nationalities. The linking of national liberation to working class unity and the struggle for socialism.



Sajida Meer, arrested by police in December during anti-IJI government demonstrations

**Contact the
PLSC at:
PO Box 977,
London SE11 6XA**

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Jeremy Dear, NUJ National Executive
Roy Wenbourne, Assistant Secretary, NCU London Postal Engineering

NETHERLANDS:

A.Niazi, Executive Committee, FNV union (KLM), Amsterdam

Health Warning: Capitalism Can Seriously Damage the Environment.

During January, a wave of floods and severe weather conditions swept Britain. More “natural disasters” ? Or is there something else behind the extremes of weather internationally? Pauline Hocking examines the issues.

During Pakistan's recent floods 2000 people lost their lives, 3.5 million people their homes and half the country's cotton crop was devastated. TV coverage could not convey the full scale and horror of the disaster.

But such dramatic floods are not just a discountable, faraway, Third World phenomena only to be seen on TV screens.

The Towyn sea wall disaster, the now almost annual floods in England and Wales and the recent weather fronts which have swept Europe, spelling death and destruction, have dispelled that myth.

A global overview, with major floods also affecting Bangladesh, China and Australia to name but a few, clearly shows that the world water cycle is suffering enormous upheavals. Coupled with these build-ups of water in flooded areas are the extreme drought conditions currently devastating desert regions. Our TV screens show the tragedy of Somalia - but this is just a snapshot in the interminable horror of a drought that is threatening all of Eastern Africa, parts of Southern Africa and even threatens to desertify

Mediterranean areas and parts of Southern Europe.

Scientists from around the world have documented the changing weather conditions in all parts of the globe yet governments and big business responds with a shrug of the shoulders.

Deforestation

Given the extent of human interference in the realm of plant life that greater imbalance in the water cycle is logical. In the pursuit of profit, big business has bulldozed three-quarters of all tropical forests and continues, unimpeded, floodlit at night, 24 hours a day. The remaining forests in other regions, if not taken for timber or paper are threatened by acid rain or other viruses linked to environmental pollution.

Add to this the loss of the previously regulatory effect of the tropical forests on world weather systems and today “natural disasters” are no great mystery.

The era of the greenhouse effect, ushered in by emissions of greenhouse gases, released by unchecked and unplanned industrialisation and aggravated by rain-forest destruction, will, according to scientific models, convert the world weather system into one where floods, hurricanes and drought become the norm.

Of course chance alone ensures some weather records are broken from time to time, but never so many, and of such



Drought and deforestation have led to total crop failures in Zimbabwe and other parts of Africa

extremes as we have witnessed recently. Using the most advanced techniques available scientists have studied trapped gases in arctic and antarctic ice sheets and from the results concluded that there is a naturally occurring self-regulating glacial/interglacial cycle using as a thermostat a naturally occurring "greenhouse effect" which gives a traceable long-term rhythm to our weather conditions.

However, studies also show that this underlying cycle may now have been irreversibly interrupted - that current climatic conditions are not just a compact series of anomalies but a departure from the long-term pattern.

Governments' Responses

So what is the response from governments and industry to these studies? Despite facing an unprecedented shift in global weather conditions we also have previously undreamed of scientific understanding and technical resources.

However, unbelievably, with the British first in line, governments are cutting back on all science research projects and throwing scientists on the dole.

In the USA, money has been transferred from the Earth Observing System (which studies weather and pollution) and given to a space study station for military research.

The WMO, the world authority on climate, has appealed to all governments to "*foresee and prevent potential manmade climatic changes that might be adverse to the well-being of humanity.*" Despite their pleas, capitalism continues on its course of destruction.

Robert McKie, science correspondent for the *Observer*, summed up the situation: "*Just as we are developing the computers and mathematical techniques to unravel the Byzantine forces that influence our weather, we are tampering with nature in an utterly uncontrolled way...Our meteorologists and weather forecasters are world leaders, though as current governmental cuts continue, the research base behind that excellence is being eroded.*"

Massive investment in science and research is needed to accurately assess climatic shifts. Economic and social planning based on such information would then be much more appropriate. The building of new sea walls, large reservoirs and special drainage systems are among basic steps that urgently need to be taken. However, private capital has proved itself unwilling to invest in such "unprofitable" ventures. Why risk money in such schemes when quicker and easier bucks can be made flirting either on the stock

market, or by importing water from Third World countries desperate for cash, or by installing water meters in the homes of workers in Britain? **When it's a question of power, prestige or oil fantastic sums of money are conjured up but "uneconomic" schemes to protect the environment are continually starved of cash.**

Big Business

Big business controls the purse strings when it comes to research and development. Funds are only allocated if there is a potential product, no matter how hazardous, and a "reasonable expectation that a market exists." The big multinationals are not only unwilling to invest themselves in research and development without a guaranteed return, but they also actively use their power to impede R+D into "environmentally friendly" products to protect their share of the market.

Of course, the multinationals are only behaving in their own interests as the laws of capitalism insist they must in order to survive. Such are the laws of that system.

What is good for the capitalists is increasingly bad for humankind as a whole

But what is good for the capitalists is increasingly bad for humankind as a whole. Weather change can cause disruption and disaster in every aspect of life. As is always the case, workers, especially the low paid, will pay the biggest price. During the last four years of European drought, the rich of the major cities of Spain, Italy, Greece and France still managed to replenish their lawns and refill their swimming pools whilst in neighbouring districts bath water had to be shared and toilet water left unflushed. Many families whose homes were damaged by the recent floods could not afford insurance. Their homes, which many had spent a lifetime building, were washed away.

Unlike the Queen they did not have

another "palace" to go to or a personal fortune to draw on. The government, so ready to help the royals, gave less than one pence per head to the victims of the Towyn sea wall disaster.

There is a growing level of consciousness among workers of the need to defend the environment. This level of consciousness needs to be turned into action. But all actions are impeded by the fact that you cannot control what you do not own, that which is under the firm control of a self-interested minority.

The arm of the working class against the selfish orientation of these magnates of capital is the organised labour movement - the Labour Party and the trade unions. Labour must put forward a clear programme in defence of the working class's interests. That means committing itself to a massive programme of scientific investment and investigation of global warming but most importantly to pledge itself to implement Clause 4, Part 4 of the party's constitution, taking over the monopolies and manufacturing combines under democratic workers control and management to plan production geared to the needs of workers and the environment.

The trade unions must take up the same call. But they must make it clear that workers will not pay any of the costs of "environmentally friendly" adaptations made necessary by recent EEC legislation via wage restraint or redundancies, whilst profits remain intact.

Plan of Production

With a plan of production cities could be equipped with efficient overground transport, underground metros, interlinked with cycleways and a regular, efficient and cheap bus service - in other words an integrated planned transport system. Such a system would attract car-users away from their vehicles. Instead of this kind of necessary investment the Tories are planning to sell off the railways!

The technology exists to produce our energy requirements without harmful side effects. The NUM has long called for investment in the pits to "green" the production of coal and with investment into alternative forms of energy such as wind, wave, solar, biomass or geothermal energy, emissions of CO₂ could be substantially reduced.

But to achieve this a break is needed with the system which puts profit before people. Only under the democratic control and management of workers can production and the protection of our environment go hand in hand.



Questions
for
Socialists
No.2

As the pro-capitalist governments of Eastern Europe plan mass privatisations and "market reforms" *Michael Roberts* asks what are the prospects for a successful restoration of capitalism in the former Stalinist states.

Capitalism Goes East: Prosperity or Poverty?

Last week the prime ministers of Poland and the Czech republic visited Davos in Switzerland. They went to tell a gathering of top capitalist strategists and policy makers, who meet every year in the small Swiss village to discuss the "world order", three things: first, capitalism is being restored in the former Stalinist states of Eastern Europe; second, that the policy of a "big bang" transformation from a planned economy to a privately owned market economy was working; and thirdly that capitalism was going to create prosperity within a short period of time.

Vaclav Klaus, the right-wing premier of the Czech republic, told the assembled capitalist leaders that "I'm pretty sure that the Czech republic will be a standard European country in two or three years."

What Klaus did not say was that the Czech republic is not yet "a standard European country" i.e. a capitalist one.

When the Czech Stalinist regime fell, it was the most centralised of all the former Eastern bloc countries. Even after three years of pro-capitalist governments, the private sector remains small, contributing just 7% of GDP in 1991. There are over one million people registered as "entrepreneurs" but they are mostly engaged in part-time work in shops, services and construction. In March 1992, 18,000 small firms were auctioned off but this is still less than one-third of the total that free-marketeer Klaus had planned. The crunch in industry is still to come.

Klaus now plans to privatise about one-third of

the large-scale enterprises in the middle of this year. As before, people are being offered vouchers worth about \$35 to buy shares in the newly privatised industries, or to place them with investment funds who promise to pay out huge dividends in return. These investment funds, many of them foreign-owned, will thus obtain the lion's share of the shareholdings in the new companies. And they may well not keep their promise to pay out the dividends for which workers have given them vouchers. It is a recipe for bankruptcy and corruption. But what is new about that in any emerging capitalism?

In Poland the move to capitalism has been even more timid. The privatisation law passed in June 1991 has still to be implemented. Again, the private sector is largely restricted to shops and services (80% private). Now the govern-

ment of Hana Suchocka plans mass privatisation of 400 major state enterprises which will be sold to 20 investment funds which will administer the shares of the new companies for the Polish people, who can buy up to 60% of the stock. However, it will be a question of who can afford it as shares will be sold at a cost equivalent to 10% of their annual income.

In Hungary too, the major transformation from state to privately owned companies is still to come: up to now only 8% of 2200 state firms have been privatised and many of those still have state majority ownership. The Budapest government is going for capitalism directly through foreign ownership and is trying to persuade foreign capitalists to buy up to 30% of Hungarian assets. Agriculture has hardly been touched by the hand of privatisation.

So in the three East European countries which



McDonalds, Prague - But few can afford to indulge themselves as living standards continue to slump

western capitalism regards as the most likely to be transformed into capitalist economies, the issue of moving to a market economy with private ownership has yet to be decided. Will the pro-capitalist governments succeed in their programme or will the reaction of workers faced with the consequences of privatisation be so great that these governments will fall or be forced to retreat?

Privatisation and the move to the market means rising prices, unemployment, lack of medical care and growing homelessness for the vast majority of the people in these countries - or to be more exact it means the continuation of such privations for the foreseeable future.

Under the policies of the big bang monetarist economic theorists who lead and advise the governments of Poland and the Czech republic, people have suffered the worst collapse of production and living standards in modern history. The view of the free marketeers was that there should be no attempt to prop up the old state industries or plan production. Subsidies were withdrawn, prices were allowed to spiral, and welfare services were dismantled. Industrial production plunged to subterranean depths and unemployment rose startlingly.

If you were an ex-bureaucrat or state factory manager, you could buy up property and small firms cheaply, perhaps wangle some investment from a foreign bank or company and charge rip-off prices to make yourself wealthy, but for the majority, life became a continual struggle for survival.

Industrial Production

In Poland industrial production fell 24% in 1990 and a further 12% in 1991. Investment fell 22% over the last three years, while agricultural output dropped 15%. Overall GDP has fallen 12%. Inflation rose 585% in 1990, 70% in 1991 and prices still rose 44% in 1992, with little prospect of it slackening off this year. Underlying unemployment is around 15% and that is even before mass privatisation. In contrast real wages for workers in the state sector (the majority) fell 9% and for pensioners income fell by 6%.

**Living standards
are still only
half that of what
they were five
years ago under
Stalinism**



Hungarian miners, among the industrial workers who are bearing the brunt of pro-capitalist policies

In the Czech republic GNP has fallen nearly 30% in the last three years and industrial production even more. Investment fell by nearly 50%. In Hungary GDP fell about 18%, industry declined a staggering 75%, investment more than half, while inflation continues to rise at over 25% a year.

But for the likes of Klaus and his western capitalist advisers this disaster at the expense of the people of Eastern Europe has all been worthwhile. As Klaus told his rich audience in Davos: *"radical transformation must be done, not postponed. There's no chance to escape it or its consequences - the faster we do it, the better."*

Stagnation

As one western economist advising the right-wing Hungarian government summed up the last three years: *"It's really the story of two economies, the new market one and the old socialist one. The old one is withering, that's as it should be. The question is when will the new one take over and pull up the old one."*

If the pro-capitalist governments of Eastern Europe manage to impose their privatisation programmes on the economy, will the new market economies flourish and bring prosperity or will they stagger on in stagnation, offering nothing but misery and deprivation for the mass of working people?

Of course, Klaus and Poland's Suchocka are confident that their "reforms" will succeed. Suchocka told the Davos dignitaries that *"Poland pioneered economic reforms in Eastern Europe and is now the first country to restore economic growth."*

New Expansion?

And it does appear that after three years of industrial collapse, industrial production turned the corner in the latter half of 1992 and is predicted to expand by 3.5% in 1993. With the private sector contributing nearly half of output in 1992, the government is looking to the market to boost production in the future.

However, much of this talk is so much hype. As one analysis of the Czech economy remarked: *"with privatisation and the end of subsidies, bankruptcy will be the main problem. Klaus and his team are simply not telling the truth. The recession will deepen this year."* Another western observer in Hungary commented, *"the economy is turning, painfully. There will probably be zero growth this year, stagnation basically."*

The truth that Klaus and Suchocka refuse to admit is that it is a ridiculous dream to suggest that in two or three years their budding capitalist states will become "standard normal European countries." Living standards are still only half that of what they were five years ago under

Stalinism! Only East Germany of the former Stalinist states has achieved any catching up in living standards, and that has been massively financed by the West German state shifting 6% of its GNP into Eastern Germany for each of the last three years.

Any real improvement for the Eastern European states depends on exports and sufficient foreign investment in their industries. The existing private sector makes little that can be exported, so unless the state industries are privatised and modernised in order to export into the US and Western Europe successfully, or unless agricultural exports are stepped up dramatically, output will continue to stagnate or at best crawl along.

German Capitalism

The collapse in production in the last three years was due in part to the collapse of the former Soviet Union which provided the main market for the satellite Stalinist economies. When that market disappeared, then Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and the others had to turn to the west for markets. Now up to 50% of exports go to Western Europe, and of these 60% to Germany alone.

Increasingly the future prosperity of the capitalist Czech, Polish and Hungarian economies depends on German capitalism. This means they must be prepared to import cheap Eastern

European goods (and eventually undermine their own industries, particularly the agricultural sector) and also be prepared to invest billions of marks into buying up and modernising factories that can then exploit the cheap but skilled workforces of the former Stalinist states.

But what prospects are there for East European exports while Germany heads into a major recession in 1993? **Exports are not likely to grow, especially if the EEC decides to impose further quotas and restrictions to those already in force on steel tubes and agricul-**

tural produce, on imports from Eastern Europe to avoid higher unemployment in the west. No wonder the pro-capitalist governments are desperate to join the EEC. But that prospect may be many years away yet.

Foreign Investment

As for foreign investment, that is likely to increase from about \$5 billion of assets in 1991 to about \$10 billion in 1993. But that is just a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed to revive industrial investment which has collapsed by one-half. Remember, the west invested \$20 billion in China in just the first half of 1992.

So the prospects for success for the new capitalists of Eastern Europe remains poor at best. Production is not going to leap forward, investment is not going to bound back, and unemployment is going to go on rising, perhaps even faster under the weight of mass privatisations planned by the governments. **If the west was to provide a massive inflow of investment without demanding any return on their capital and if the west was to sustain fast growth in their economies for the next decade without interruption and so provide the finance for investment and the markets for East Europe's exports, then Polish and Czech capitalism could begin to flourish, as junior partners of German capitalism. But that is not going to happen.**

The prospect for the people of the former Stalinist states is not a land of milk and honey under "democratic capitalism" as the current leaders proclaim, and perhaps many hoped for after the release from Stalinist terror. It is much more likely to be stagnation, poverty, unemployment and homelessness - the "benefits of capitalism" in a slump or what the market economies have brought the peoples of the so-called Third World.

The prospects for the success of capitalism in Eastern Europe remain poor at best. Production is not going to leap forward, investment is not going to bound back and unemployment will go on rising.



Polish Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka

Any Questions?

Questions for Socialists will be a regular feature in Socialist Appeal. Are there theoretical questions you would like explained, or current events you would like more analysis of?

Why not drop us a line and we will try and include your suggestions. Send your ideas to Questions for Socialists, PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

Market Moves Fail to Bring Peace to Angola

The new bloody offensive by Jonas Savimbi's UNITA forces, backed by white mercenaries and elements of the South African and Zairean armies against the MPLA government in Angola has resulted in more than 2000 deaths since the beginning of 1993.

Mainly based in the countryside, UNITA is attempting to wrest control of the oil and diamond producing areas and then move on to the towns, whose population in the main support the MPLA.

Defeated in the September elections, UNITA are desperately trying to bring down the government that has ruled the country since independence was won from Portugal in 1975.

The long guerilla war that led to independence was also one of the factors which fuelled the Portugese revolution of April 1974. The despair, the revolt and the anger amongst the masses against the Caetano dictatorship's struggle to maintain the colony, coupled with economic conditions, produced, in layers of the army officers and amongst the conscript soldiers a revolutionary mood. The April revolution speeded up the struggle for Angolan independence, leading to the formation of a deformed workers' state, that nationalised the land and industry and introduced a regime along similar lines to those in Stalinist Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Economy Undermined

When the South African and Zairean expeditionary forces, backed by British and American mercenaries invaded the country to prevent the MPLA taking power, and to support their UNITA and FLNA allies, they were defeated. They then changed their policy to attempts to economically undermine and militarily weaken the MPLA government, whilst at the same time arming to the teeth UNITA gangs.

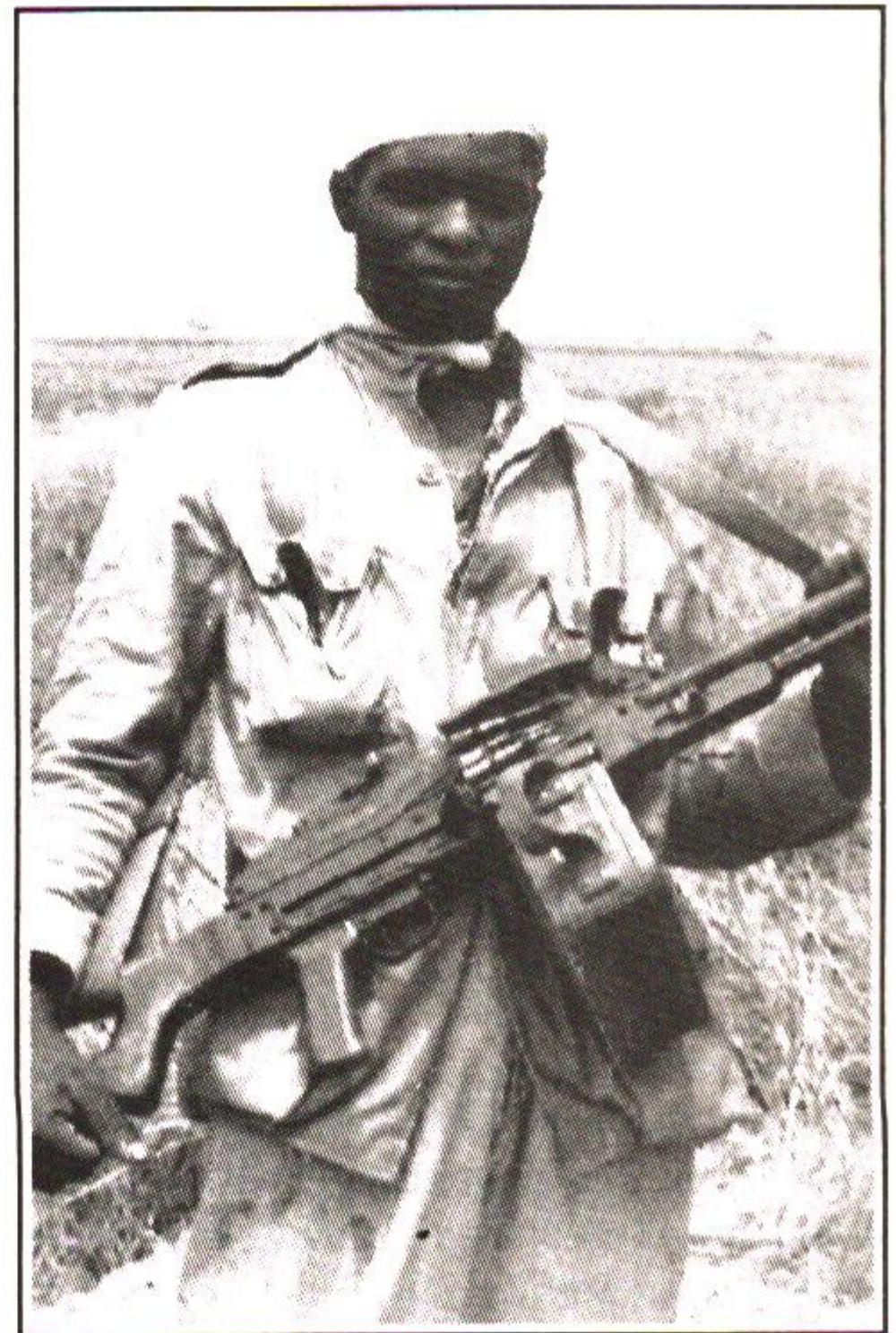
They wanted then, as they would like now, to control the rich oil areas (that account for 90% of Angola's foreign exchange revenue), the diamond mines and the fisheries banks, but above all they wanted to destroy the threat posed to their interests by the MPLA regime and the regime in Mozambique. The capitalists feared these two regimes could become a rallying point for the revolutionary movements of the African masses. Consciously, they promoted a civil war that has already cost 300,000 lives and caused more than \$30 billion worth of damage (just in the last 12 years), which has seriously affected any possibility of improving the living standards of the masses. However, the support among the workers, the peasants and the youth remains with the MPLA. The financial and military aid given to the regime by the Soviet Union and Cuba was also decisive in defeating imperialist destabilisation. However, the changes in Moscow in the late eighties, with the dominant wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy playing with the idea of "moving to the market" and ready to show world imperialism their "good will", and the increasing difficulties facing the

Cuban regime meant that the aid was not so easy to come by. This led to changes in the policies of the MPLA. They accepted a peace and collaboration agreement with South Africa at the expense of refusing the ANC's military wing (MK) permission for bases on Angolan soil. At the same time, the MPLA government announced plans to move towards the market economy, in the vain hope that this would immediately produce fresh investment from the big multinationals and pave the way for an end to the civil war.

Cubans Withdraw

The withdrawal of the 50,000 strong Cuban army did not stop the imperialist support for UNITA. Their low-level of activity in the run-up to their defeat in the 1992 elections was skillfully used to prepare for the current offensive. The 10,000 lives lost since the polls closed bear witness in blood, to what many of UNITA's rivals predicted then. UNITA has now declared themselves ready to carry through the "Somali-isation of Angola" and "to reduce the country to powder." (*Guardian*, 9.10.92)

The failure of the Estoril peace agreement of 1991 between the MPLA and UNITA is another testimony of the complete inability of the United Nations to solve a single one of the international conflicts in which it intervenes. The idea that they somehow represent a "neutral" force is pure nonsense. UN interventions are guided by the defence



UNITA militiamen have regrouped for new attacks

of the interests of world imperialism. Prior to the elections, the UN turned a blind eye to violent attacks by UNITA, describing them as "normal". Forced to recognise the elections as "fair", the UN have been making pious appeals to UNITA to sit down and negotiate - with no effect. Now, the UN are talking about withdrawing completely. Whatever the "humanitarian" statement of aims they use, American and South African imperialism are still behind UNITA forces and they would be very pleased by their eventual victory in the civil war.

International Struggle

The case of Angola is a clear demonstration of the need to struggle for socialism on an international scale, and the impossibility of building socialism in isolation and error of following the path of a bureaucratically planned economy.

The struggle for the democratic control of the economy and state by workers and peasants would be the way to win over sections of the dispossessed, who, out of despair and fear, have been pulled behind the reactionary UNITA forces. It would make difficult an imperialist intervention by South Africa or Zaire.

A democratic, socialist Angola would get the support of the oppressed masses throughout the region, who in turn would rise up against their own capitalist regimes.

The wealth of raw materials, combined with the technology and industrial skills of the South African workers, would provide the material basis for fulfilling the basic needs of the workers and peasants coming together in a socialist federation of Southern Africa, and linking together with the workers of the developed countries in a struggle for socialism on a global scale.

Ramon Mendiluce

Factfile:

GDP: \$5.45bn
GDP per head: \$569
Population Growth: 2.8%
Distribution of Labour:
47.7% industry
9.7% agriculture
42.6% services

The British working class were, as Marx explained, the “first-born sons of modern history.” They were a product of the Industrial Revolution of the mid 18th century that ushered in the development of modern capitalism. From the very beginning, in a battle to maintain their existence and improve their plight, they were the pioneers of trade unionism. The class struggle forced them to organise against the naked exploitation of the factory system, which came into being “dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt”. (Capital vol 1, page 712)

The period preceding the Industrial Revolution saw the wholesale destruction of the peasantry in England and the break-up of the old guild system that previously guaranteed a certain social stability. The relationship between masters and journeymen broke down, as the latter began to lose their independence and emerge as a part of the class of propertiless workers.

The Enclosures forced huge numbers of agricultural labourers off the land and into the towns. Irish immigrants, desperate to escape the horrors that blighted their rural areas, flooded into the industrial areas in search of work.

Economic Power

This movement of labour into the towns, provided the capitalists with a plentiful source of raw material for exploitation. This human flood also served to depress the existing starvation wages and give greater powers of domination to the employers. The developing capitalist class, on the other side, concentrated further economic power into its hands, and used its position to ruthlessly expand industry and commerce wherever profits could be made. The earlier domestic industry gave way to the factory system of large-scale capitalist production.

Conditions in the factories, these “Dark Satanic Mills”, were abominable. There were no meaningful restrictions on the exploitation of the workers - men, women and children. Whole families were forced to work to simply survive. It was not uncommon for those desperate enough to seek Poor Law relief in the workhouses (known as Bastilles), to be faced with a pre-condition that their children were sent to work in the mills. Pauper’s children were even apprenticed in the workhouses and later transported in thousands to the Lancashire mills. “Prior to the Act of 1833, young persons and children were worked all night, all day, or both ad libitum.” (Quoted in Marx’s Capital, p264).



In the Cause of Labour

The British trade unions are a vital feature of working class life. They have shaped the history of the last 200 years. Their importance has been burned into the consciousness of working people.

In the first of a regular series Rob Sewell looks at the early heroic attempts to forge the British unions.

In the silk industry, little children would stand for 10 hours upon stools to perform their work. Hundreds of thousands of children were worked to death.

"The punishments for arriving late in the morning had to be made cruel enough to overcome the temptation to tired children to take more than three or four hours in bed. One witness before Sadler's Committee had known a child, who had reached home at eleven o'clock one night, got up at two o'clock the next morning in panic and limped to the mill gate. In some mills scarcely an hour passed in the long day without the sound of beating and cries of pain. Fathers beat their own children to save them from a worse beating by the overseers. In the afternoon the strain grew so severe that the heavy iron stick known as the billy-roller was in constant use, and, even then, it happened not infrequently that a small child, as he dozed, tumbled into the machine beside him to be mangled for life...

In one mill, indeed, where the owner, a Mr Gott, had forbidden the use of anything but a ferule (a metal ring), some of the slubbers (weavers) tried to keep the children awake, when they worked from five in the morning to nine at night, by encouraging them to sing hymns. As the evening wore on, the pain and fatigue and tension on the mind became insupportable. Children would implore anyone who came near to tell them how many hours there were still before them. A witness told Sadler's Committee that his child, a boy of six, would say to him, 'Father, what o'clock is it?' I said perhaps it is seven o'clock. 'Oh, it is two hours to nine o'clock? I cannot bear it.'" (The Town Labourer, by J.L. and B. Hammond, page 160).

These horrendous conditions were a spur to organise on behalf of the workers. Despite 'combinations' being illegal there was no alternative but to struggle. These conditions were the social basis for the establishment of trade unions and the conducting of "go-slows" and "turn-outs" (the word 'strike' didn't come into being until the early 19th century) against the poverty wages, long hours and insufferable conditions of the factory system.

For Frederick Engels, who observed the development of organised labour in England, "What gives these unions and the strikes arising from them their real importance is this, that they are the first attempt of the workers to abolish competition. They imply the recognition of the fact that the supremacy of the bourgeoisie is based wholly upon the competition of the workers among themselves, ie. upon their want of cohesion. And precisely because the unions direct themselves against the vital nerve of the present social order, however one-sidedly, in however narrow a way, are they so dangerous to this social order." (Conditions of the Working Class in England 1844.)

The aim to unify the workers and prevent this cut throat competition between them became

the principle aim of the emerging trade unions. So, contained in the initiation oaths of the Friendly Society of Coal Mining (1831), was the statement: "I never will instruct any person into the art of coal mining... except to an obliged brother or brothers or an apprentice;... I will never take any more work than I can do myself in one day...; I will never in a boasting manner make known how much money I get, or in how short a time."

The rules of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union (1834) read: "That every member of this Union do use his best endeavours... to induce his fellows to join the brotherhood, in order that no workmen may remain out of the Union to undersell them in the market of labour."

By the end of the 18th century, trade unions began to spread in the form of trade clubs, established primarily by skilled handicraftsmen: joiners, carpenters, shipwrights, coopers, printers, etc.

By the 1790's new layers of factory workers became organised, especially among the cotton spinners. Given the illegal nature of many 'combinations', and to avoid suppression, a number took the guise of Friendly Societies, which were recognised by the Act of 1793. One of the strongest unions of the period was established by the London printers, "The Phoenix, or Society of Compositors" was founded in March 1792 "at the Hole in the Wall, Fleet Street", with a subscription of 2s 3d monthly. Tailors, shipwrights, silk-weavers and many other sections followed suit.

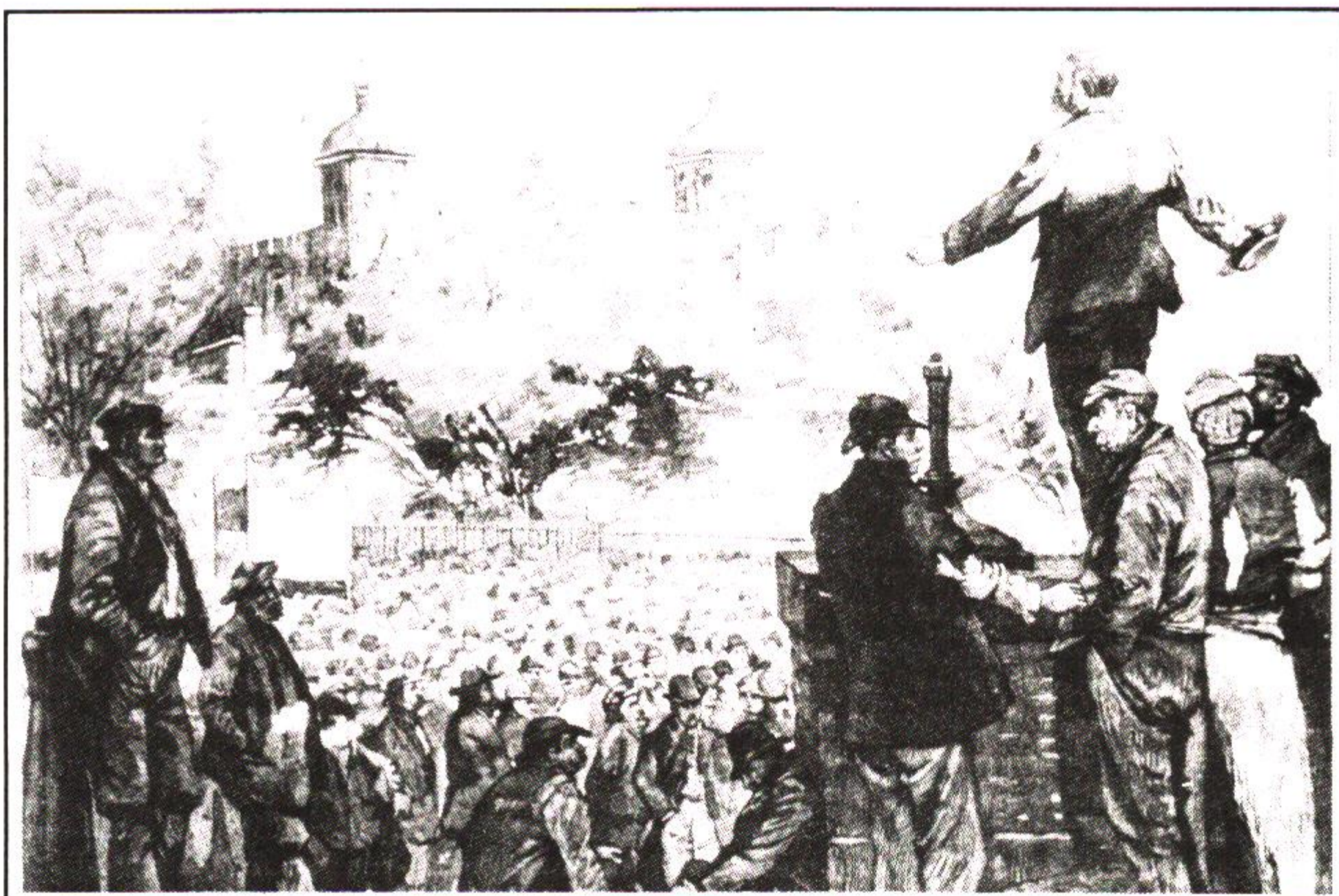
This growth of trade unionism took place at a time when the ruling class was terrified of the effects in Britain of the French Revolution.

In 1794 William Pitt suspended Habeas Corpus, the right to a trial, for the following eight years. The uprising of the United Irishmen in Ireland, together with naval mutinies in

“ They gave the masters unlimited power to reduce wages and make conditions more severe. They established the new industry on the basis of serf labour and low wages ”

Spithead and at the Nore, forced the Government to act. To crush the social unrest an act against illegal oaths (1797) was used to break the trade unions, while the draconian Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 outlawed them completely.

This drastic action, an attempt to make resistance impossible, followed a petition from the master millwrights of London demanding action against a union amongst their workers. On the instigation of the sanctimonious William Wilberforce, so concerned about the slave trade, Parliament passed a general Act "to prevent unlawful combinations of workmen", which was tightened up in the following year. The legislation made liable to three months imprisonment, or two months' hard labour, "any



Early trade union demonstration in London

worker who combined with another to increase wages or decrease hours, or conduct any such trade union activity."

Nominally, employers' combinations were prohibited, but this was never enforced. In any case the magistrates who administered the laws were either landowners or industrialists. According to the Hammonds, they "gave the masters unlimited power to reduce wages and make conditions more severe. They established the new industry on a basis of...serf labour and low wages." (*The Town Labourer*, p 141).

Anti-Union Terror

This reign of anti-union terror, which lasted a quarter of a century, gave birth to modern trade unionism. Driven underground, these unions became conspiratorial bodies that bound their members together by oaths and initiation ceremonies of a secret society.

The Society of Ironfounders, established in 1810, met at night on the moors in the Midland area. The London tailors had "all but a military system. Their orders come from the Executive and are always obeyed."

These pioneering trade unionists faced enormous hardships and sacrifices in order to fight for their rights and improve their position. They led a whole series of heroic strikes in the new industries; outstanding amongst them were those of Scottish weavers (1812), the Lancashire spinners (1818), the miners on the North-East coast (1810), in Scotland (1818) and South Wales (1816). The latter included a successful strike of iron-workers against wage cuts.

The methods they employed reflected the illegal conditions in which they operated. In Coventry the Weavers' Aggregate Committee punished those who broke rules or opposed the union by tying the offender to an ass, face to tail, and drove them about the town "exposed to the ridicule and violence of the mob".

The North-East miners employed the method of "bothering", which was "so named because the members of the union bound themselves by a most solemn oath to obey the orders of the brotherhood, under the penalty of being stabbed through the heart or of having their bowels ripped up." (*Webb, History of Trade Unionism*, p90).

The period 1800 to the end of the Napoleonic War in 1815 was nevertheless a period of defeats and oppression. To eliminate all restrictions on exploitation, all the Elizabethan legislation fixing wages and conditions of apprentices was swiftly repealed.

The government employed an army of spies, informers and provocateurs, to infiltrate and smash the unions. Francis Place, a radical

reformer, relates that "the suffering of persons employed in the cotton manufacture were beyond credibility; they were drawn into combinations, betrayed, prosecuted, convicted, sentenced, and monstrously severe punishments inflicted on them; they were reduced to and kept in the most wretched state of existence."

The revolt against these conditions resulted in periodic rioting and violence. This came to a head in the years 1812-1814 in the famous Luddite riots centred around the Nottingham hosiery area where the introduction of stocking frames had cut prices to the bone.

Machine wrecking also spread to the West Riding and elsewhere. In 1817 a mass hunger march from Manchester to London ('the Blanketeers') was repressed by Government troops. In 1819 in Manchester a giant rally was also attacked resulting in the death of eleven workers and 400 wounded. The immediate reaction to the 'Peterloo Massacre' was a tightening of Government repression.

Illegal Conditions

Despite the illegal conditions, these bitter years saw advances in the formation of national trade unions (the Calico-printers, the Ironfounders, the Steam Engine Makers and the Papermakers) and the drawing together of the different local organisations.

It was their widespread agitation under the direction of the energetic John Gast (secretary of the Shipwrights'), combined with the work of radicals like Francis Place, which resulted in the repeal of the Combination Acts of 1824-25. Place, a London tailor, had no enthusiasm for unions but believed the Combination Acts aggravated the ill-feeling between labour and capital which encouraged the growth of combinations. "If the cause were removed," argued Place to the Parliamentary Committee, "the effect would cease." The Committee agreed.

The repeal of the Combination Acts did not give rise to free and unfettered trade unionism. Severe restrictions were placed on effective picketing; "molesting" or "obstructing" persons at work was outlawed and the definition of legal unionism was narrowed to wages and hours. Despite this, and despite the intentions of Place and company, underground unions came to the surface with a vengeance. Hundreds of new unions were formed and new layers organised. A stormy strike wave convulsed the industrial areas. The history of this period wrote the Hammonds, "reads like a history of civil war."

It was the prelude to a new, and higher stage in the development of the British labour and trade union movement.

Can Clerks Kick?

H'm! You cannot see Percy's firm raising his wages by 12s a week! It does look a stiff proposition. But I think I can show you how the firm could be persuaded to do it.

A couple of years ago 25% of the clerks employed by the West Ham Town Council above the age of 21 were in receipt of wages from 16s to 33s a week. Today no clerk 21 years of age receives less than 35s. By going to work in the right way these clerks obtained increases ranging from 2s to 17s a week. A year ago a Stockport Corporation junior clerk commencing with 7s a week at 15 years of age could, at the age of 21, receive only 19s a week. Today a clerk of 21 receives 27s a week.

How was it done? It was done by kicking. Not only did these clerks get increases of wages, they obtained also increased holidays, reduction of hours, guarantee of sick pay, and other advantages. By kicking.

If you want Percy to improve his position you must teach him to kick. When I saw Percy going to meet you the other day, I had just been to a meeting of kicking clerks in Hyde Park. Percy was not amongst them. He is not a kicker. Indeed, it is possible that he thinks it rather vulgar to kick.

You may agree with him. Percy gets 23s a week. He works in an office with 50 other clerks in a room which allows about 250 cubic feet of air space to each person. His ordinary hours of labour are 50, but overtime often brings them up to sixty or more.

He is not paid for overtime. He has one week's holiday annually. If you pick up any newspaper you will find clerks advertised for as low as 10s a week. One in three clerks dies from consumption or some form of lung disease, due to unhealthy offices, bad air and light and starvation wages.

Why are his conditions so bad? Because he doesn't kick. But if Percy complained very likely he would be discharged. Then what is he to do? I advise him not to complain. I advise him to combine. The only way for a clerk to kick with success is to kick in union with his fellow clerks. Percy must join his trade union.

Excerpt from *Can Clerks Kick*, reprinted in *The Clarion*, 1913.

Next Month Rob Sewell continues his look at the growth of British Trade Unionism from Owenism to the rise of Chartism.

£3,000 Press Fund Campaign... You've Done It!

Thank you! What a magnificent response to our Xmas appeal. Supporters from every region in the country took the appeal to heart asking regular readers for a donation, collecting journal extras on paper sales, approaching Labour Party members and trade unionists for a seasonal gift to help build the resources of *Socialist Appeal*.

Even before the closing date for receipt of donations we had broken our target of £3,000. The final total was £3,528 in the office by January 15th.

But more has come in since then and given us a flying start to our next Press Fund appeal - £3,000 by Friday April 9th.

With the money already collected we have made important purchases of additional computer equipment, a laser printer and fax all of

which will enable us to continue to improve the quality and content of *Socialist Appeal*.

By the end of February all the equipment should be up and running, allowing us to produce better and more frequent supplements, leaflets and pamphlets.

But with the Tories still on the ropes, the crisis in the Gulf, local government spending cuts and rail privatisation looming there is a greater need than ever for the Marxist voice of the labour movement to be heard loud and clear, putting forward a socialist programme for Labour.

That means we need to step up our production of special supplements, leaflets and pamphlets tackling the key questions in workers minds and offering a strategy to fight the cuts, privatisation and kick the Tories out.

We appeal to readers in every region of the country to respond with equal vigour to our new campaign. We have no pot of gold - every penny raised is used to maximum effect in getting across socialist ideas.

Why not visit regular readers and ask them for the solidarity price or organise a street stall and sale and ask those who sign our petitions or buy our journal to make a donation to the Press Fund?

Or follow the example of supporters in Newcastle and organise a readers' meeting and hold a Press Fund collection at the meeting? And don't forget to take your Press Fund collecting tins to local labour movement meetings.

There is another way you can help us. Become a regular contributor to our Press Fund by filling out the standing order form on the back page. All you need do is fill in the amount, your bank details, sign the form and then return it to us and we will forward it to the bank. It's that easy.

So many people donated to the Xmas appeal it is impossible to mention them all - but thank you to everyone. Keep up the excellent work!

Join The Fight For Socialism

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

Socialist Appeal explains events in society and the labour movement from a Marxist viewpoint.

Marxism is not dead, as the establishment circles, both West and East would like to claim. On the contrary, it is living in the struggles of working people worldwide and in the ideas of socialists and trade unionists everywhere.

And Marxism still provides the best explanation of modern class society and the most effective guide to action in changing it. Each month *Socialist Appeal* will analyse the trends in modern capitalist society, comment on recent events in the class struggle, and provide the latest news from the labour movement, from correspondents in Britain and internationally - people who are not just commentators but are personally participating in the struggle for socialism.

Socialist Appeal is written by members of the Labour Party and trade unionists. Why not do more than just subscribe? Why not join our fight for socialism?

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Socialist Appeal is the essential journal for the activist in the labour movement - you cannot afford to be without it.

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SELLING SOCIALIST APPEAL

Supporters in Blyth, Northumberland have set a fine example which all other areas should follow. They visited readers of the journal with subscription forms and brought in another 8 subscribers. Can you beat that?

Supporters in the Black Country took *Socialist Appeal* down to an NUM meeting at Littleton Colliery and were rewarded for their efforts with 17 sales, and 16 copies were sold on the Wales TUC march for the miners.

Last month's article on Pakistan created a good deal of interest among Pakistani workers in various areas, including Newcastle where a number of regular sales have been established.

One trade unionist from Hull wrote to us asking for back copies and a regular order of 10 journals to sell at work and in the Labour Party and a West London supporter has asked for five extra copies to sell. Every reader of the journal should be approached about becoming a seller.

New subscription forms will be available shortly, so why not ring our office and get some to take around your friends and workmates. Every new subscriber is a valuable asset in spreading the ideas of Marxism and a vital prerequisite in developing a more regular publication in the future.

Steve Jones, Journal Manager

Defeat From the Jaws of Victory

Inside Kinnock's Labour Party

by David Heffernan and Mike Marqusee
(Published by Verso, priced £11.95)



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Intrigue, deceit, McCarthyite terror, patronage and passion - perfect ingredients for a blockbuster novel. But *Defeat From the Jaws of Victory* is no work of fiction - it is a carefully documented and meticulously researched insight into the Labour Party under Neil Kinnock's "Ruthless, reactionary and in the final analysis, spectacularly unsuccessful" leadership.

Using Labour archives and interviews with leading MPs, activists and party employees Heffernan and Marqusee chronicle brilliantly the manoeuvrings and vote fixing behind the Kinnock rise to leader and the ruthless pursuit of power.

Defeat From the Jaws of Victory takes as its starting point Patricia Hewitt's plea for "a strategy against the Tory government cuts around which we can unite and fight" at the 1980 Labour Party Conference, a period of the ascendancy of the left in the party. In the course of the book's 330 pages it is not only Patricia Hewitt (who was Kinnock's personal assistant during the 1992 general election campaign) but many of the other "left-wing firebrands" of the early 1980s who are prepared to ditch their principles and Labour's working class base to "win power"!

Labour movement activists are well aware of the number of times conference decisions have been ignored, votes appear to have been decided well in advance of meetings and of the numerous policy reverses but while reading the book it is impossible not to be surprised at the lengths Kinnock's loyal lieutenants went to to force through policy changes and stifle democratic debate within the party from the PLP to the NEC to constituencies and wards.

Of course, there were times when the rightward shift of the Party came into conflict with party activists - but as Marqusee and Heffernan show, any dissension was dealt with ruthlessly. And they expose concretely the double standards of the leadership in backing Frank Field

in Birkenhead and Roger Godsiff in Birmingham because of their loyal support for Kinnock's "modernisation" compared to the expulsions and witch-hunts of Dave Nellist, Terry Fields and dozens of party activists, despite the fact that the former had blatantly broken Labour's own rules.

In its documentation of the behind-closed-doors decisions of Kinnock's Labour hierarchy the book is invaluable to those active in the Party but it falls on its inability to really draw the link between the economic and social conditions which gave rise to Labour's move to the right and the bureaucratic manoeuvrings.

Behind the increasing centralisation of power in the hands of the Labour leadership lay the boom of the 1980s which was a factor in falling attendances at Labour and trade union meetings, there was the defeat of the miner's strike which dealt a heavy blow to the morale of the working class as well as the defeats of the printers, dockers and seafarers and the fear of unemployment which served to undermine confidence among sections of workers. This lack of activity on the part of large sections of the workers provided the conditions in which the right wing could ride roughshod over the democratic rights won during the course of the battles of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

However, don't let this fact put you off reading this book. Kinnock's "counter-revolution" deserves study, in all its aspects and there are few comparable studies of this important period in the development of the Labour Party.

Reviewed by John Davidson

Win the Youth!

Dear Comrades,

When the recent Scotland to London march reached Birmingham, amongst the Labour Party banners unfurled in support of the miners was one from Hall Green LPYS. The formation of this Labour youth branch was not the initiative of any "left" group but was indicative of the growing number of young people - albeit a trickle at the moment - that are gravitating towards the Labour Party. What was significant was the attitude of the trade unionists and Labour Party members present. There was a general agreement on the need to get the LPYS going again.

If an LPYS branch has been set up in your region, get your ward party to invite them to come and speak and discuss how to set up a branch in your constituency. And get your ward or constituency to call on the Labour Party NEC to end the crazy age restriction on the LPYS - 23 - and return it to the old limit of 25.

Most young workers don't get involved in the Labour Party until they are in their early twenties, so many possible LPYS branches cannot be formed because of a bureaucratic age ruling.

Indeed, when the right wing used to criticise the old LPYS before the witch-hunt for being "too small" - even though with 12,000 members it was a darn sight bigger than it is today - they used to cite the "success" (and political timidity) of the Swedish Young Socialists, the SSU. Yet their age limit was 35!

Let's get the LPYS going again - Labour needs that influx of youth that will bring with it elan and radicalism, desperately needed by our party.

Brian Wilson, Birmingham

YOUR LETTERS.....

Send your letters for publication to: The Editor,
PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU.

Fight Legal Aid Cuts

Dear Comrades,

As if the Tories weren't doing enough damage with unemployment and cuts in public services! They are now attacking working people in yet another way - by drastically reducing the access to Legal Aid.

If the government proposals go through on April 1st (unfortunately this is not an April Fool's joke) then you will only be eligible for free Legal Aid in civil cases if your weekly income is £42.50 or less, compared to the current figure of £56.50.

The Scottish Law Society has estimated that one million Scots will lose access to free legal help under these new rules. In fact, the Glasgow Bar Association organised a public demonstration in the city on January 21st to highlight the serious threat posed by these changes. A public demonstration by lawyers and solicitors has probably never before been seen in Glasgow!

Women will be particularly hard hit because 80% of the Legal Aid claims are made by women. It will also be harder for workers to follow up compensation claims for injury at work.

Free legal advice and assistance can currently be obtained for the investigations and preparations required in order to get a case to court if your income is £75 per week or less. That is being cut to £42.

Solicitors in Scotland explain that a typical low to middle income worker might only have to pay £5-10 currently to get a case to court whereas after April 1st it will be approximately £1000! Many workers will not be able to afford to make justified compensation claims.

The impact of these changes is very far reaching. They must be stopped.

Dave Cartwright, Dumbarton.

How to Take the Struggle Forward

Dear comrades,

The letter from the ASLEF member in last month's issue raises a very important point about

what slogans will take the struggle forward. In particular is the demand for strike action by a "triple alliance" (miners, railworkers and power workers) more in tune than that of a "24-hour general strike"?

In reality both slogans are correct in the current situation. It is not a question of one being more "moderate" than another - the strike of a triple alliance would have similar consequences to a general strike: pits closed, railways at a halt, power-cuts throughout industry. The power workers alone could bring British industry (and the government) to its knees. These sections are in the front line in the defence of jobs and at least the rail and mining unions are balloting for action. The slogan of the 24-hour general strike answers the wider needs of uniting workers across the board in a protest action against the Tory government. It is not a question of isolated action by different sections, but of united action to defeat the real enemy, the Tories. Strike action by a triple alliance would be a real stepping stone to wider action. The TUC and NUM demonstrations in October indicated the willingness to fight. However this situation will not last for ever. It needs a strategy for success - the 24 hour general strike answers this need.

Steve Redwood, East London

SUPPORTING AND DEFENDING MARXISM

Dear Comrades,

I would like through the pages of the journal to express my best wishes to all the comrades. The ideas you represent today have a very long history. I myself took up those ideas in the mid-1930s and helped to pioneer Trotskyism in the Liverpool area. Given the collapse of Stalinism and the attack on Marxism today, it is necessary to support and defend those ideas as we did in the old days.

The establishment of Socialist Appeal is a valuable asset in this work, and I would like to share with you the sense of achievement in what you have accomplished so far. A Marxist tendency must combat any traces of ultra-leftism that arise out of impatience. Patience was one of the great virtues of Trotsky. He suffered terribly, but had the ability to learn from events and arm a new generation of comrades. He had the perspectives, the theory and also the faith in the working class. He educated the youth that there are no short cuts. Those who go down this path will only cut their own throats. I have seen it many times in the past.

The most important thing is to learn and address the real movement of the working class, using the scientific ideas of Marxism. You have to go back to basics all the time. There are no easy solutions to difficult problems. But there will be big opportunities in the future. I have known Ted Grant for decades. He has played a vital role as the key theoretician of the Trotskyist movement. He has made, and continues to make an historic contribution through the development of Marxist theory and the training of Marxist cadres. I wish you every success and am confident that you will go from strength to strength on the basis of correct theory, perspectives and methods.

Jimmy Deane, Liverpool

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Where the Cuts Fall

BIRMINGHAM: Shortfall of £35-40m. Up to 3,000 job losses. 10-15% cuts in services

BRADFORD: £8.5m cuts

GATESHEAD: £13m cuts

SHEFFIELD: £37m shortfall will mean 1120 job losses

LAMBETH: £29m cuts. Up to 1000 jobs to go

CLEVELAND: £14m cuts. 400-600 job cuts. 300 teachers and 4% cuts in services.

AVON: Cuts of £39m, 600 jobs to go

DERBYSHIRE: £38m cuts. Up to 2500 jobs to go

LANCASHIRE: cuts of £67m, 2000 redundancies

NORTHUMBERLAND: £13m cuts, 180 teachers and 420 other job losses

HARLOW: £14m shortfall. Half of council services to go, 800 of 1600 jobs to go

DUDLEY: £17m cuts, mainly in education

CAMDEN: Cuts of £30m. 1100 jobs already cut

GREENWICH: Cuts of £32m. About 720 jobs to go, 230 in social services

100,000 council workers face dole...

Fight the Cuts!

100,000 local authority workers are facing the sack. Local services, from home helps to elderly people's homes are being cut to the bone or abolished altogether. The crisis is without parallel in local government provision.

The post-war economic upswing permitted reforms to be granted by central government, allowing local authorities to develop housing and local services. Local councillors simply allocated the resources from a growing economic pie.

Rate Support Grant

However, the new period of capitalist crisis ushered in a period of counter-reforms and cuts in spending. Since 1979 the rate support grant given by central government to local authorities was reduced from 67% of local income to 47%, this amounts to £57 billion stolen. This situation precipitated a crisis. Local authorities attempted to deal with the cuts by rate rises, cosmetic cuts and creative accounting.

But with rate capping and the new council tax, councils are faced with either making massive cuts or facing bankruptcy. **There are no soft options or "dented**

shields". The only solution is the return to councils of the billions of pounds stolen by the Tories in reduced grants. This requires a mass campaign by the labour movement, including industrial action, to force the government to reintroduce the 1979-level grant.

The trade unions must take the lead. Their members are in the front line. A national local authority strike, maintaining emergency cover, and linked to the NUM/rail unions ballot on March 5th would provide a massive focal point. **Local strikes against cuts and redundancies, while important, should be linked up nationally to strike a heavy blow against these attacks and mobilise the workers against the Tory government. It is they who lie behind the cuts. Councils are acting as servants of Tory central government, who in turn are acting as the servants of big business.**

Tory Cuts

Labour councils should not allow themselves to do the dirty work for the Tory government. To do so will bring the blame for these cuts on the labour movement. They should refuse to carry out the Tory cuts.

There is no middle road: either capitulate to the Tories or organise a fightback.

Labour councils must come together nationally to organise a united fight against the Tory cuts. They were elected to represent the interests of working people, not carry through Tory policies. A national conference of the trade unions and Labour councils should be organised to plan a campaign of action and publicity, to show who is responsible for the proposed massacre of local jobs and services. **Part and parcel of the fight against the cuts must be the fight to transform the Labour Party and unions into organisations that will fight in the interests of the working people they represent**

Potentially the organised labour movement has the power to defend local jobs and services and force the Tories out. Trade union activists must ensure that this power is used.

Support the Marxist Voice of the Labour Movement

By making a regular financial contribution to our Press Fund you can play a vital role in the development of Marxist ideas in the labour and trade union movement and help to build the movement's Marxist voice, Socialist Appeal. Please fill in the form and return it to: Socialist Appeal Press Fund, PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU.

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