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Workers' power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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LABOUR LOSES BUT ...

We can win the fightback!

"LONG AND wonderful" was how Neil Kinnock described his future as he stepped down from the Labour leadership. For the rest of us the next five years promise to be long and terrible unless we start the fight back right now.

The new Tory government will unleash yet another wave of attacks on our services, our rights and our living standards.

HOSPITALS will opt out of the NHS in their hundreds. That means thousands of health workers on the dole and a two tier health system.

COUNCILS will see their spending powers cut. That means the run down of everything from meals-on-wheels to leisure centres and council house repair teams. The quality of life for millions will be run down while the rich will want for nothing.

THE BOSSES will be allowed to trample on our rights at work. Workers will be forced to accept new contracts, Japanese-style "flexible working", bonus systems that set worker against worker while health and safety regulations and union rights go out of the window.

WAGES will be under attack. Britain entered the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) at a level designed to make managers drive down pay or go out of business. Meanwhile the rich will get richer on their "tax incentives".

THE WAR against the Irish anti-unionist population will be stepped up. Major has appointed an orange bigot to mastermind British opera-

tions. Already the *Sun* has called for death squads against the republican movement in Ireland and the British forces there will be gearing up to oblige.

BLACK PEOPLE will face a renewed wave of attacks as the Tories whip up racism and push the new Asylum Bill through.

Major's victory means that workers have to forget the self-defeating "wait for Labour" strategy that has mesmerised them for the last five years. We have to wake up and start fighting now, or see education, health and local services destroyed before our eyes.

We have to learn the lessons of Kinnock's catastrophe at the polls. By mimicking the Tories, by telling people not to fight back and give in to every Tory attack, Kinnock assured us we could stop a Tory fourth term. It was a con. Millions fell for it. Union meetings and conferences were duped by it. Labour activists were taken in by it.

The Labour and trade union leaders have no alternative to Kinnock's useless strategy. They want to divert our attention with a political Punch and Judy show called the Labour leadership election. The union leaders will wheel out the block



vote, stifling debate in the ranks. The Labour left will be barred from standing by undemocratic rules. Oh yes, this is one election the new realist team of bureaucrats and slick politicians can win!

The real lesson of the last five years is this: fight and you have got a chance of winning. Give in to the Tories, run scared of their press, sabotage the fightback because it "loses votes" and you will be smashed.

Eight million people refused to pay their poll tax when Kinnock told

them to cough up. A quarter of a million flooded Trafalgar Square when Kinnock and the union leaders told them to stay at home. The rich and the Tory journalists stood trembling behind the barred windows of their London homes. Thatcher's flagship was sunk and her days in office numbered because millions fought back.

Workers are sobering up after being intoxicated by Kinnock's rhetoric and media magic lantern shows. On 10 April, for the first time in months, people turned to socialist

activists and trade union reps at work, college, in the pub, and asked: why did it happen, what can we do?

Our answer is: it happened because thirteen years of defeat have scattered the organised workers into a thousand Job Centres and non-union firms. Defeat has taken a heavy toll on the workers who fought the Tories, on the youth who turned over the vans of the racist police, on the activists who tried to make Labour councils defend the old, the sick and the poor.

After a decade of defeat Labour proved incapable of offering millions of workers a different vision of the future so they stuck with the present and hoped for better things.

To change this situation we have to change the labour movement into one that will fight the bosses now. Workers will have to break from Labourism. Activists will have to stop deluding themselves with the idea of a "socialist Labour government", "transforming the Labour Party".

There's about as much chance of seeing that as a squadron of Natural Law MPs yogic flying into the House of Commons.

We need a new, revolutionary workers' party to organise the fight ahead. That fight can be won. We call on every single person who woke up after Labour's disaster determined not to give up the fight to turn to the only strategy that can win it: revolutionary socialism and workers' power. ■

Learning the hard way

Kinnock led Labour to defeat. His friends the union bureaucrats sabotaged our struggles in the name of ensuring a Labour victory. If you are not prepared to learn the lessons of defeat don't bother reading this. Just reconcile yourself to another decade of Tory misery and injustice.

LABOUR HAS suffered its worst defeat in post-war history. The meagre growth in its overall share of the vote cannot disguise this truth.

It is the worst defeat because Labour should have won. At the very least it should have emerged as the largest party in a hung parliament. Instead it is faced with a Tory majority of 21, a Tory vote of 14 million—its highest ever number of votes—and an undented 41.9% share of the vote going to John Major's party.

A party worker told the *Daily Mirror*: "We just can't understand what more he [Kinnock] could have done, what more anyone could have done."

For the Labour leaders everything seemed to have progressed according to plan. Kinnock had remoulded the Labour Party into a credible instrument of government for a modern capitalist Britain. He had purged the left with relentless vigour. The bogey of a divided Labour Party, meekly submitting to its activist base and its union paymasters had been exorcised. The policy review had given Labour a programme that could not, even in the imagination of the most corrupt tabloid journalist, be described as having anything to do with socialism. Pale pink Toryism now permeated every page of Labour's manifesto.

Optimism ran riot on the eve of the election. The much vaunted Shadow Cabinet "team" were openly discussing their ministerial plans for the new Labour government. The *New Statesman* dated 10 April opened with the words: "So long John, it was nice knowing you."

Yet Labour lost. The unthinkable happened. For the first time in the history of universal suffrage in this country a party—the open party of the bosses at that—won a fourth election victory. The *Guardian's* political commentator Hugo Young was right to say:

"Thursday was [Labour's] blackest night in the last thirty years, and arguably in its history. For Labour sincerely expected to win. And for not winning it has no alibis."

This last point is decisive. There are no alibis. In 1983 the left could be blamed for the defeat. In 1987 the election was a trial run for a new model Labour Party in which the Airfix glue holding the model together had not quite dried.

But 1992? The Tories had been through a traumatic crisis in which Thatcher was deposed. They, not Labour, were openly divided. The Tories had suffered a real crisis as a result of the deeply unpopular poll tax, eventually being forced to scuttle their own third term flagship.

Most importantly the recession had created the conditions for the destruction of the Tories' hold over sections of the better off working class and lower middle class. Unemployment and house repossessions became a fact of life for thousands in the south east. *Labour Research's* April issue contained a survey of key marginals held by the Tories in which the recession had played a devastating role.

Swindon is a good example. It is not a bastion of Tory rural idiocy. GEC Plessey, Dowty Aerospace, Rover cars, as well as lesser known firms, all have plants in Swindon. And unemployment has risen in the town. *Labour Research* recalled the 1,000 strong queue at the Job Centre for sixty jobs at a newly opened Japanese factory. It concluded that "a combination of both engineering/manufacturing and service/financial sector jobs are being hit and it is shattering confidence in the Tories."

The Tories held Swindon on 9 April. It is early days yet in the post-election inquest that Labour is conducting. But the answers shaping up as alibis are all wrong. Thousands of party workers and millions of Labour voters are asking, how did this

happen. They will be offered a diet of lies, promises of yet more change and new false hopes for 1997. The despair on the faces of millions on the morning of 10 April demands something different.

Crooked alibis

Already two excuses are emerging. The first is that Labour cannot win under the present electoral system or without concluding a pact with the Liberals. Those who say this are pushing for proportional representation (PR) and a coalition of Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Robin Cook, the Shadow Health spokesperson, argues that, if we had PR:

"This morning we would be waking up to a Labour and Liberal government with a majority in parliament greater than the margin on which John Major is digging in for another five years."

PR would be a fairer electoral system than the present one. But its absence does not explain Labour's defeat. Without PR Labour has won a majority in five general elections and has emerged as the largest single party in three others. Changes in the electoral map have certainly helped the Tories—and will help them further when the Boundary Commission creates another twenty Tory seats for them—but they have not ruled out a Labour victory.

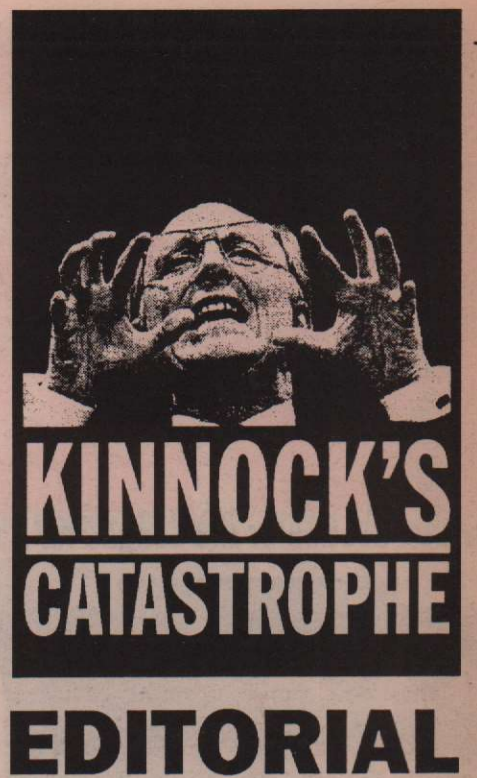
But when PR is tied to the solution of establishing a formal pact with the Liberals the alibi Cook is offering becomes even thinner. The election marked a collapse in the Liberal vote. They too, with a snazzy campaign and a charismatic leader, got nowhere.

Lib-Lab coalitionism will rally only the despairing intelligentsia in the years ahead, not the working class.

The second alibi emerging is that Labour had not yet become right wing enough to win office. So, with remorseless logic, right wingers in the Labour Party will argue for its transformation into a non-working class centre party, capable of incorporating the Liberal Democrats but not going through the messy process of coalitions with them.

Austin Mitchell has come out in favour of this turn. The Labour Party, he insists, must become a mass "people's" party with: "... a mass membership recruited by a low subscription for a low commitment, low involvement party. Involve them by mailings, postal ballots, events, and information rather than mind-numbing demands of local Labour Parties. The Consumers Association has built up a bigger mass membership centred on *Which?* We should base ourselves on that, not some Marxist myth of a mass party which will never return."

Austin Mitchell's contempt for the people who worked to get Labour re-elected is stomach churning. But he represents an important trend in the Labour Party, one which has gained a lot of ground during the Kinnock years. It is a trend away from the



link with the unions, away from an active membership, away from a parliamentary party controlled by the party rank and file, a party that presents its policies for the "people" not for the working class. All of this will find support amongst the right, both in the party and in the new realist super unions that are emerging, like the AEEU.

Yet again it is a hollow alibi. Labour clearly set out a non-socialist stall in this election. The unions were conspicuous by their absence in the campaign. The policies, set against Union Jack backgrounds and endorsed by Labourite bosses in the election broadcasts, distanced the party's goals from anything specifically working class. Yet Labour lost.

Last but not least is the alibi that the leader was the problem, change him and all will be well. It is undoubtedly the case that Kinnock was less popular than his party. But it was not his personal qualities which undermined his popularity. It was far more the whole craven, two-faced campaign to distance Kinnock and his entourage from their centre left past that stuck in people's throats. Even Kinnock's much criticised empty wind-baggery had a political function. He developed it to a fine art during the years of the Policy Review, when he had to speak at conference after conference, committing himself to nothing.

Labour's 1992 defeat cannot be explained by any of these alibis. Nor will victory be guaranteed by changes based upon them. Other factors like the Tory press, the media bias, "backward southerners" etc, will all be cited as contributors. But none of them can explain why the Tories, in the midst of a recession that most people blamed them for, could not be unseated.

Labourism in decline

The real reason for Labour's defeat lies in the failure of the Labour Party to win millions of workers to openly identify with it as their party. Labourism in the working class—positive identification of the party and its traditional goals—is in long term decline. Between 1945 and 1979 Labour lost ground. From regularly achieving over 40% of the vote, and the majority of working class votes, it has slipped to a share of the vote at or below the 30% plus mark. It achieved a higher percentage of the vote in 1979 when it was deeply unpopular after four years in office than it did in 1992 when it was the only credible alternative to an unpopular Tory Party.

This overall decline of Labour support, particularly within the working class, stems from two things. In the first place the betrayals of successive Labour governments have alienated working class support. Hopes betrayed have become votes lost.

Secondly, and in particular in the 1980s, Labour refused to fight vigorously for the values of *Labourism*. By *Labourism* we mean reformist socialism with welfarism, industrial interventionism and protection for the working class as its centrepiece.



Poll Tax demo, Brixton 1991. Mass struggle, not new realism is the only way to beat the Tories.

Politically terrified of criticism from the Tory press it has abandoned any specific big idea of its own, preferring to limp behind every new advance of Toryism.

It offered little or nothing, beyond tax tinkering—to millions of workers in the south east. It believed it could woo these workers, along with the middle class waverers that it relies on for electoral victories, by abandoning Labourism and replacing it with a brand of "social Toryism".

This is why it lost the 1992 election. This brand of social Toryism also appeared to be on offer from Major. It was enough for him to hold onto the middle class vote and to millions of workers and young people in the south east.

Where Labour did swing skilled workers back from Toryism—in parts of the Midlands, the north west and London—it was in areas where Labour traditions were still alive, where union organisations are still an identifiable force, where class consciousness is more prevalent. And these gains were despite, rather than because of, Labour's attempt to play down its own class identity.

The new realist unions have failed—by deliberate calculation—to develop organisation and class consciousness amongst the new layers of workers. But that, short of a much deeper economic crisis, is the only way to rebuild the elementary class consciousness needed to stop workers voting for the party of their bosses.

Labourism's inability to address the working class in its new industries and new communities has left its base of support within the working class reduced, according to an NOP poll, to "young voters, manual workers in the DE social group, council tenants, Scots and northerners". (*Independent* 12 April) Even amongst the 18 to 24 year olds Labour was only one point ahead!

Labour has no answers

The prophets of Eurocommunism will have a field day after Labour's defeat. Momentarily disorientated by the fall of Thatcher they will return with renewed vigour to their explanation for Labour's decline: the "demographic restructuring" of the British working class which has seen over ten million workers pulled into the new service sectors and industrial areas in the south east.

The Eurocommunists concluded from this fact that working class politics was dead. That was always a transparent new excuse for the Stalinists old, old strategy of cross class coalitions.

But to simply blame Tory voting workers in the south east for their backwardness, whilst endorsing the very strategy that is failing to reorganise them, is self-defeating. It was the sentiment behind Kinnock's stunned speech as the truth dawned on 10 April. It was the sentiment, too, behind Hattersley's response: "I do not know how the British mind operates to produce this result".

The Labour leaders can only heap blame on non class conscious workers and wait for them to wake up. It proves that Labour's leaders have no answers. It is a recipe for socialists to sit in dwindling and beleaguered centres of class consciousness and organisation while new generations get their heads filled full of rubbish by Tory managers and politicians.

The task now is to rebuild class consciousness and self-organisation throughout the whole working class. But those who really want to do this will find that the Labour Party and new realist led trade unions are totally inadequate for that task.

A party purged of activists by witch-hunts, a party without a youth movement, unions distanced from the shop floor by mergers, a movement that identifies socialism with the 100 year old banners of long dead unions in long dead industries: this is



Kinnock under the Union Jack. When workers want a Tory they vote for a real one. Only struggle will rebuild class consciousness in the South East.

not the movement that will inspire millions of unorganised and Tory voting workers to abandon their passivity and fight for a different future.

Faced with this the left of the party, perhaps via Livingstone, or even, in a safer form, via Prescott, may call for a return to the traditional values of Labourism, a more radical socialist cutting edge to policy, a turn to the working class (or in Livingstone's case to a coalition of "new" forces). But these "lefts" are part of the problem, not its solution.

In the first place their own policies have moved right along with those of the party. They are now the fervent proponents of the

When we argued "Vote Labour but organise to fight" it was not as some soul-saving mantra to guard us from contamination by reformism. It was the best way, as it turned out the only way, to guarantee a Labour victory. Mobilising workers for active participation within the campaign, linking struggles in the workplace to specific demands on Labour, never flinching from open criticism and from explaining that we would have to fight Labour in power.

But the leadership rejected active working class participation as so much of a distraction from the TV broadcasts. And the left loyally retired to its self-imposed

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"mixed economy", where once they stood for nationalisation and "socialism".

Secondly, they accepted the rules of the game as laid down by the right. They were complicit, by their failure to oppose, Kinnock's election campaign. They offered no challenge to his rotten policies, to his leadership or to his restructuring of the party.

Full of answers today, Benn and Livingstone had to be dragged out of hiding by the TV pundits during the election before they would open their mouths to the national press. Offered the chance to criticise the Labour manifesto Tony Benn could only assure the watching millions that it contained "policies I have fought for all my life".

silence instead of mobilising its own critical campaign for a Labour victory.

The Labour left is implicated in the defeat that has occurred. As a coherent force the left is marginalised. It has little base inside the party and none at all outside it. It is weak in the unions, except perhaps those not affiliated to Labour. It is a spent force. It too has no alibis or coherent answers for the future.

Labour's defeat will lead to a mood of despondency amongst sections of the working class. It will explode every schema for the socialist transformation of the party or for the election of a socialist Labour government that the quacks of the so called revolutionary groups (*Socialist Outlook*, *Socialist Organiser*, *Militant*) have peddled for

the last decade or more.

But what the electoral defeat won't do is eradicate the class struggle. The Tories have returned to power in a recession claiming thousands of jobs. They are pledged to a programme of attacks on the NHS, education and local government that will have devastating effects on public sector workers and users alike. Their anti-union laws will further limit the legal right of trade unionists to fight back.

Don't fight, wait for Labour we were told by Kinnock and his allies in the unions. What a sick joke that now seems.

Labour has failed four times to rescue the working class by means of an election. It has demonstrated, by its failure, that there is a real crisis of Labour and Labourism, a crisis of bourgeois politics within the working class.

Reformism is pro-capitalist politics within the working class. It is a brand of politics that tells workers that all they can hope for are reforms, and that the only way to get reforms is by voting Labour. It has failed to deliver a government and it cannot promise reforms when crisis-ridden capitalism can't afford them.

The most likely development in the months ahead is that under a new leader Labour will embrace PR, a deal with the Liberals and press ahead with its transformation into a bourgeois "people's party".

While all of these developments should be fought, they are not the principal battles facing the working class today. The battles ahead have less and less to do with the Labour Party and elections. They are battles that will take place in the workplace and on the streets.

And they are battles that the working class can win.

The Tories were forced to abandon the poll tax not because of Kinnock's rhetoric but because millions refused to pay and hundreds of thousands took to the streets.

Our starting point for the years ahead must be to rally the forces for more such battles—be it a miners' strike against privatisations or NHS strikes against opting out.

Every single worker in Britain is facing a stark choice. It is no longer a choice between fighting back or hanging on for a Labour victory.

It is a choice between fighting back or accepting every cruelty and injustice that a Tory Britain has to offer.

And fighting back means rebuilding working class organisation in every single workplace and in every single workers' district, from the bottom up.

The new realist leaders will forge ahead with plans for mergers that will not protect a single members' job. Labour has begun its preparations for a new election battle in five years time.

We say start the fightback now. Direct action and rank and file organisation are the key. But more than that we need a credible political alternative to the ideas that are swilling around the minds of Tory voting workers. Labourism clearly can't provide it. Revolutionary socialism can. But it has to be taken up and fought for by the tens of thousands of people who form the active base of the labour movement and by tens of thousands of young people who Labour and the unions leave unorganised.

We are not promising the fightback will be easy. But we say to every working class activist: if you want easy answers then stay with the masters of self-deception who run the Labour Party and who lead its loyal left wing.

If you are prepared to face the truth, here it is: struggle or go to the wall. Turn to revolutionary socialism or relive the misery of defeat again in five years time. ■

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

Theoretical journal of
Workers Power (Britain) · Issue 9

THE RETREAT FROM LABOURISM

Price: £3.00 (inc P&P)



Where now for the Labour left?

What will Labour's "Trotskyist" left do now? asks Arthur Merton

"ALL SOCIALISTS must see this general election as marking the climax of all the industrial and political campaigns that we have waged over the last 13 years."

So wrote Tony Benn in the election issue of *Socialist Campaign Group News*.

Benn's words are rubbish. The election was not a climax of the great struggles of the 1980s. Not one miner, printer or docker was likely to win back their job as a result of the election. The anti-union laws would have still been in place if Labour had won. Poll tax non-payers would have remained behind bars.

The election was a cruel anti-climax to the great struggles. Labour's defeat at the polls was a reflection of the defeats the working class has suffered in the workplaces and on the streets. Left reformists like Benn, every bit as mesmerised by the palaver of Parliament as their right wing friends in the Shadow Cabinet, believed that winning the election was everything.

Isolation

For them it was the only possible way of ending their own state of isolation and powerlessness. That is why they kept their mouths shut throughout the campaign. That is why they acted as Kinnock loyalists. That is why they are now as bewildered and despairing as Kinnock and Hattersley. Left reformism is every bit as bankrupt as its twin, right wing Labourism.

Revolutionary socialists are not surprised by this. It is consistent with the basic features of left reformism.

Yet when we look around those "revolutionary" groups who have buried themselves in Labour's ranks it is astonishing how similar they are to Benn's way of thinking. So right wing have *Socialist Organiser*, *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Outlook* become that their message had been reduced to, vote Labour—for god's sake!

Socialist Action are the force behind *Socialist Campaign Group News*. Their only criticisms of Benn occur when he occasionally strays too far left of their main idol, Ken Livingstone!

Warn

Socialist Outlook were the most left of the whole crew. They went so far as to warn that Labour wouldn't actually deliver that much. Even so, they fell into line with Benn by declaring this a make or break election. Listing the legacy of Thatcherism and its effects in the working class, they concluded:

"The final denouement of this whole development now hinges on the outcome of 9 April. Socialists must do everything possible to ensure a Tory defeat, and if at all possible a Labour victory. On 9 April it will be literally true that the whole world will be watching." (21.3.92)

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines "denouement" as the "final resolution" of a play, novel and so on. Well we have had 9 April, and the final resolution is a Tory government. It will leave *Socialist Out-*

look in a state of inconsolable despair. Their whole strategy is in ruins.

In their 4 April issue they attempt to analyse the decline of the Labour left, and are bold enough to embark upon an examination of the "failure of the Bennite left to overcome right wing and bureaucratic resistance" in the 1980s. These criticisms come a little late. And an honest Bennite would be more than justified to ask why *Socialist Outlook*, or one of its many predecessor papers, refused to murmur a word of criticism of Benn throughout the 1980s.

The practical consequences of this were that every time it became a question of defying the right wing over, for example, standing a democratically selected parliamentary candidate against an imposed Kinnockite candidate, *Socialist Outlook* backed down. It was only recently that they adopted the position of supporting anti-witch hunt candidates against official stooges, something that *Workers Power* has advocated throughout the 1980s.

And whilst *Socialist Outlook* carried support for Nellist and Fields during this campaign, at the same time their paper was being sold in London with a four page supplement calling for a Labour vote in every constituency.

Where has the 1992 election left *Socialist Organiser*? They informed us that 9 April was the "release date" from 13 years of Tory hell. Now they haven't even been granted parole.

The supporters of *Socialist Organiser* were so wedded to the strategy of getting Labour in at all costs, and staying in the Labour Party at all costs in order to see that happen, that they refused to support the Labour MPs who had been ex-

pelled from the party, Nellist and Fields. Class consciousness and working class resistance could only come from a Labour victory. They argued:

"The Tories must be kicked out and replaced by a Labour government, a government of the labour and trade union movement. It is, in present circumstances, only by doing this that the Tory hegemony established over 13 years can be shattered and dispelled; it is only by way of this political victory that the labour movement will begin to get its confidence back and begin to throw off the paralysis which long Tory rule and the seemingly endless succession of Tory victories has laid on the working class." (19.3.92, emphasis in the original)

Demonstrates

This statement demonstrates that *Socialist Organiser*, whatever else they might be, have nothing whatsoever to do with revolutionary politics. It demonstrates that when, back in the early 1980s they hitched themselves to Benn's left reformist movement, with the infamous words "we are all Bennites now", they did so for life.

The idea that a Labour government could be equated with a government of "the labour and trade union movement" is the first howling untruth. A Labour government is certainly better for revolutionaries since it allows us to put reformists directly to the test. But all Labour governments have been governments against the labour and trade union movement.

Labour in office is a bosses' government. Labour governments have, as recently as the 1970s, used troops and riot police to break the strikes of the labour and trade un-

ion movement, followed the dictates of the IMF against the express wishes of the labour and trade union movement, and imposed pay restraint against the decisions of virtually every labour and trade union conference. To say otherwise, to pretend that somehow Labour in office will be a workers' government, is a lie.

Worse, to tell the working class that their "only" salvation lies through the election of a Labour government is to tell those workers that nothing can be done now.

Socialist Organiser supporters will have no answers for the working class now. They told us everything hinged on a Labour victory and without it nothing was possible. They will become victims of their own prophecies.

In the campaign itself *Socialist Organiser* openly endorsed the left reformist line of falling in behind Kinnock. They argued:

"The serious left therefore has no alternative but to 'steer to the right' in the electoral campaign."

They certainly put their recommendation into practice. If *Socialist Organiser* had any supporters in Coventry South East their votes would have been cast against Dave Nellist, who came within a hair's breadth of defeating the official Labour candidate. They insisted that it is illegitimate for the rank and file to stand up to the leadership if it means breaking the rule book and risking letting in the Tories.

That is nothing more than a continuation of the strategy that has led the Labour left into the abyss. What is more, once the leadership election is over Labour's new "dream ticket" will begin another four year long election campaign. By their own logic that would leave

Socialist Organiser "steering to the right" until 1997.

Militant have recently broken with their past accommodation in the face of the right wing offensive. Their tactical turn has been proved highly effective, though a little late given their cowardice in the face of the right and its witch-hunts through the 1980s.

Terry Fields polled nearly 6,000 votes, beating the Tories into fourth place. Dave Nellist came close to victory with over 10,000 votes, splitting the Labour vote down the middle. If the Tory had got in it would have been entirely the fault of the right. And in Pollock, Tommy Sheridan won over 6,000 votes, clearly displaying the strong support that he has built up among workers in the area through his leadership of the Strathclyde Anti-Poll Tax Federation and his personal courage in defying the courts and the law (see opposite).

Incomplete

Yet *Militant's* turn remains an incomplete break from their accommodation to Labourism. They still claim that socialism can be gained through Parliament, and stand for a "Socialist Labour government". This has always been a nonsensical position, suggesting as it does that a Labour government could be socialist.

No government, even one stuffed with well-meaning Nellists, Sheridans and Fields, could be anything other than a capitalist government if it was based on the repressive apparatus of the bosses' state. A socialist government must be based on workers' councils and the armed working class, or it is no socialist government at all.

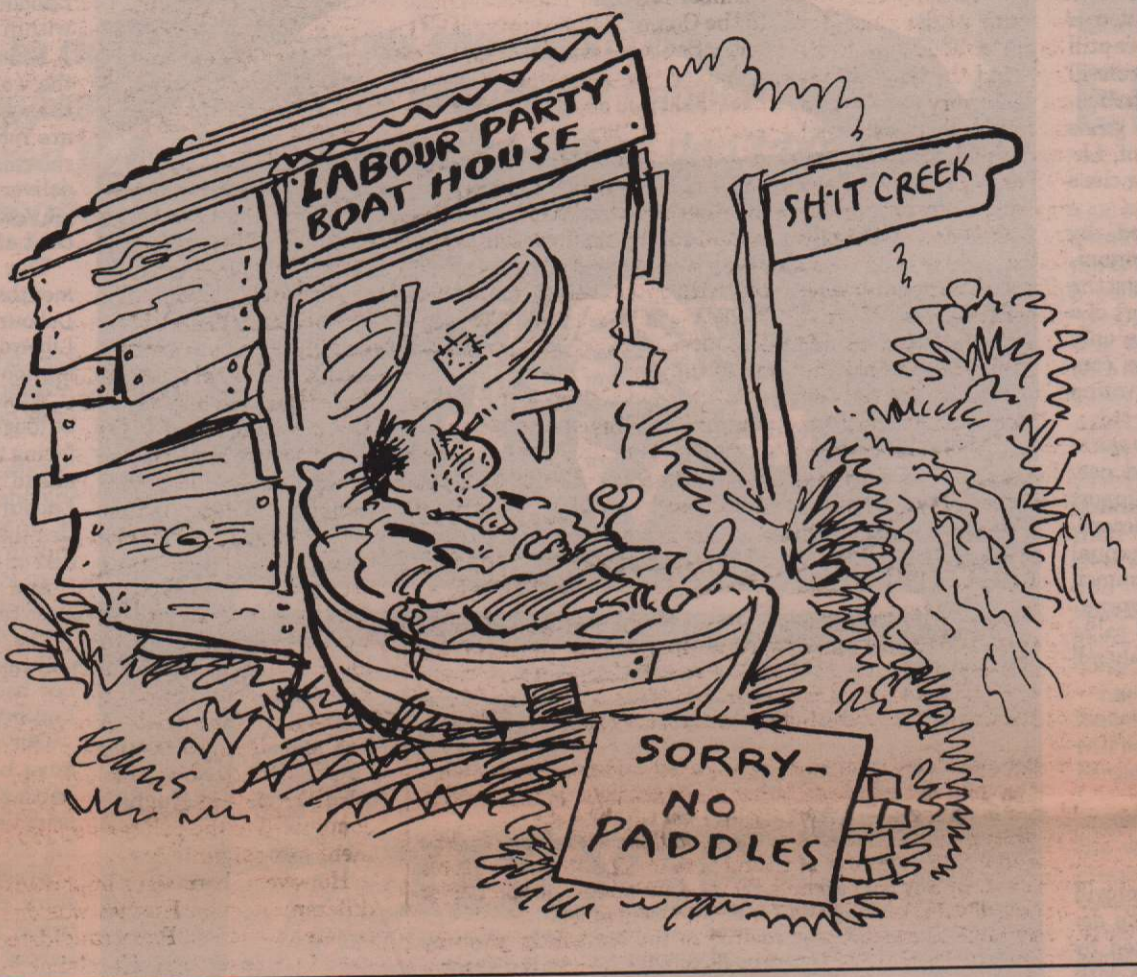
But now there is a further absurdity to *Militant's* position, and its echo in the pages of *Socialist Organiser*, *Socialist Outlook* and *Labour Briefing*. The next Labour government could well be part of a coalition with the Liberals or even of a transformed party that has broken its organic link with the working class. The notion of the transformation of the party into an instrument for real socialist change via a "socialist Labour government" has never looked so stupid.

The clearest expression of all these groups' accommodation to left reformism is to be found in their programmes. Despite outlining a detailed catalogue of demands on the next Labour government, they avoid the crucial question of state power. They do not comment on the impossibility of introducing socialism through Parliament.

Bankrupt

The politics of the so-called "revolutionary" groups that found a comfortable niche as the slimy fan clubs for left MPs in the 1980s are now manifestly bankrupt. Their prospects look none too healthy either. The best activists among them cannot but have been given cause for thought as the meaning of 9 April begins to sink in.

We call on them to join us, subordinating the fight in the Labour Party to the unambiguous goal of a revolutionary party and working class power. ■





Nellist vindicated

TWO of Coventry's constituencies voters were faced with a choice between an official Labour candidate and an independent one. In both cases the independent was the former MP for the constituency. In Coventry South East Dave Nellist narrowly failed to retain his seat with a vote of 10,551. In the neighbouring constituency of Coventry North East John Hughes finished well behind the winning candidate with 4,088 votes.

It was at a rally at Coventry Polytechnic on 29 January—nearly two months after he was expelled from the Labour Party—that Nellist announced his intention to stand as an independent candidate.

Workers Power supporters in Coventry South East Labour Party had consistently argued that he should take the principled position of defying Kinnock's witch-hunt by standing independently. But up to this point Dave Nellist and his supporters had opted instead for a campaign for his reinstatement to the party. They refused to say publicly that he would be prepared to stand as an independent candidate. He consistently denied allegations that he had links with the *Militant*.

When the Labour Party leadership produced a dossier purporting to prove this the response from the Nellist camp was to produce their own alternative dossier which focussed on his excellent record as an MP, the fact that Kinnock had supported him in the past and that even some Tories were impressed with his conduct at Westminster!

The decision to stand independently was absolutely correct, representing as it did part of a fightback against the witch-hunt of socialists in the Labour Party. It was also without question an extremely popular decision in the constituency.

As the election approached, hundreds and eventually thousands of posters began appearing in windows and it became virtually impossible to go anywhere in this part of the city without seeing his name prominently displayed. Even buses running through the South East constituency had the "Re-elect Dave Nellist" slogan plastered all over them!

His opponent was the leader of Coventry City Council, Jim Cunningham, who was imposed as the official Labour Party candidate, by head office. He ran a far more low key campaign, relying on reminders to the electors that he was the official candidate and raising the possibility of a split vote letting in the Tories.

The fact that Dave Nellist continued his stand whilst this very real possibility existed has to be commended. Had the Tory won it should have been very clear where the blame would lie—with Neil Kinnock and the Labour leadership. It was they who forced the split by imposing their own candidate in place of the democratically selected Nellist.

But whilst the possibility was there to present the case against Kinnock's witch-hunt and to advance fighting slogans against the pale pink Toryism of the Labour leadership, the campaign chose instead to blur the differences between Nellist and the official candidate. The leaflets produced were,

especially at the start of the campaign, nothing short of misleading.

For a start, they played down the fact that it was the Labour Party that had expelled him, saying instead that it was "the Tories" who had demanded that he must go. On the basis that Nellist pledged that upon re-election to Parliament he would re-apply for Labour Party membership and support Labour in the Commons, the voters of Coventry South East were urged: "For a Labour government—vote Nellist". This was despite the fact that a vote for Nellist was quite clearly a vote *against* the Labour Party.

As canvassing got under way, all mention of the fact that Dave Nellist was standing against the Labour Party was avoided wherever possible, with voters being assured that Nellist would remain "the same Labour MP he had been for the last nine years".

Most importantly, there was no attempt to bring the people of Coventry into action via the campaign. The most obvious target for this would have been a struggle



Dave Nellist

against council cuts—overseen in the previous year by the Labour Council leader, the official candidate, Jim Cunningham!

Although the doorstep campaign to re-elect Nellist was impressively organised, it has done nothing to break workers from reformism. Nellist himself has even stated that there would be very little difference between him and Cunningham except that with him you get a bonus—you get a fighter.

The case of John Hughes had some similarities. Like Nellist, Hughes was opposed in the election by a long-serving member of Coventry City Council, in this case head of the Finance Committee, Bob Ainsworth. Known to Labour activists as "Bailiff Bob", Ainsworth has been amongst the most enthusiastic collectors of the poll tax. Also like Nellist, Hughes had been committed to the poll tax non-payment campaign.

However, there were important differences. John Hughes was deselected as Labour Party candidate over two years ago. He claimed, almost certainly with some justification, that some ballot-rigging had occurred in the selection procedure and therefore that he had been deselected because of his politics. But he never really raised this issue within the local Labour Party,

relying instead on appeals to Walworth Road and the police!

Although there was quite rightly some sympathy for him as a hard done by "honest MP", this should not add up to political support in an election. He had no real base of support and has not mobilised within the Labour Party against his treatment. As soon as Dave Nellist announced his intention to stand, John Hughes took the opportunity to make the individual decision to stand as well. His stance was really just for personal revenge for the injustice done to him—it did not, as in the case of Dave Nellist, represent a real fight against an organised, open attack on the left in the Labour Party.

The few who actively supported him, which includes the SWP, did so mainly for sectarian reasons or because it provided the opportunity to so some election work away from the *Militant*-dominated Nellist campaign. *Militant* themselves supported Hughes, although many Nellist canvassers could give no serious reason why.

In supporting non-Labour left wing candidates we need a method that clearly identifies when and why this has to be done. Otherwise, the tactic of critical support for Labour at the elections becomes unravelled whenever an embittered ex-MP, or a self-deluding sect, decides to stand against Labour.

Critical support for Labour is the main tactic as long as revolutionaries themselves cannot stand candidates, and as long as significant groups of workers do not show signs of breaking away from Labour to the left.

Nellist's candidacy, because it was part of an ongoing fight in the Labour Party against the witch-hunt and centred on an issue that had mobilised millions in defiance of Kinnock (the poll tax), had the possibility to mobilise that working class support.■

We were wrong about Sheridan

IN THE last issue of *Workers Power*, we explained that we would be supporting Dave Nellist and Terry Fields in the election. However, we refused to offer support to the candidacy of Tommy Sheridan in Pollock. This was a mistake founded on our incorrect estimate of the degree of support for Sheridan and Scottish Militant Labour in Pollock. As we wrote in WP 153:

"Like Nellist and Fields he is standing on a left reformist programme. Unlike them he does not represent either major sections of the working class engaged in struggle or a fight against the witch-hunt."

This was clearly a false estimate of the conditions in Pollock. Tommy Sheridan polled 6,287 votes out of a total vote of 32,643, some 19.3% of the votes cast. By any fair estimate this is a substantial proportion of the working class vote, beating the Tories into third place.

Clearly this level of support was related to the leadership given by Tommy Sheridan to the Anti-Poll Tax struggle on Strathclyde. It may have been related as well to popular indignation at his incarceration in Saughton prison. We were unable to assess the strength of this support given our lack of implantation in the area. It would have been principled for Trotskyists to give critical support to Tommy Sheridan on the same basis as we supported Dave Nellist and Terry Fields.

Meanwhile Tommy remains in jail, and we remain committed to the fight to get him out and win an amnesty for all non-payers.■

THE CHICKENS of New Realism have certainly come home to roost for this year's Annual Conference of The National Union of Teachers (NUT).

Three years of "centralisation" have quelled the activists and all the demands for action have been bureaucratically removed from the resolutions submitted for voting on. Everything is prepared for life under Labour. Except that a Labour victory was the one detail that Doug McAvoy and the "Broad Left" who dominate the Executive couldn't fix.

Unions were stopping Labour from being re-elected, so the argument went. They were too militant, took too much industrial action. They only had to prove that they could be good boys and girls and the Labour Party would be back in power. No need for Conference to discuss action to protect the union's members and the education system.

In preparation for the glorious day when they would be taking tea and sandwiches with Jack Straw in Whitehall, McAvoy and his friends have worked hard to "modernise" the NUT. That is, to render it impotent.

Centralisation of membership and subscriptions were intended to bypass the activists of the left in the local associations. Armed with his computer printout of the membership McAvoy could appeal directly to teachers in their homes if he needed to win a vote. Activists in school-based groups and local associations would be marginalised with the same methods Kinnock used in the Labour Party.

NUT CONFERENCE

Definitely time for a change!

Unfortunately the centralisation had a far more immediate and dire consequence. It has resulted in a substantial loss of members, and their subscriptions, many through the inefficiency of the NUT bureaucracy. And who now is to check up that local members are still members? The activists in local associations no longer have access to details such as who their local members are.

Over the past three years a rapid decrease in the amount of official action sanctioned by the Executive has coincided with an increased use of the Sustenance Fund for other purposes. Millions of pounds have been spent on advertising campaigns, for instance. The rundown of the union's strike fund and the dire financial consequences of the loss of subscriptions has provided the leaders with a perfect excuse for refusing to call official action: we can't afford it! This year, in preparation for a La-

bour Government, the Executive moved to stop any talk of action. All motions were censored by the Conference Business Committee (CBC), with any offending mention of action

THE LEFT in the NUT now consists of two organisations: the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) and the more recently formed, Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CDFU). Many rank and file NUT members may be bemused by the existence of two organisations, particularly since they seem to spend so much time manoeuvring against each other, for example splitting the vote in recent Executive elections.

Now is surely the time for unity amongst the rank and file activists. By this we do not mean burying real political differences. The problem is that the STA and the CDFU are based not on political clarity, but on cliquism and historical loyalties. Political debate within the STA has long been suppressed by the leader-

removed from the agenda. It is due to be discussed for only two hours on the last morning of the conference. This is for a total of fifty motions calling for action!

ship and the CDFU appears to be going in the same direction.

We don't need bureaucratic electoral machines or petty personal bickering. We need open political debate combined with unity in action: fighting the leadership and organising at a rank and file level. We need a strong rank and file teachers' organisation movement committed to militant action, including unofficial strike action, to defend jobs, conditions and the state education system as a whole.

While we can't ignore fighting for official positions, especially in a union where the current leadership has abused its powers so blatantly, teachers' militancy and confidence to fight has to be built at school and association level.■

Now the union is faced with a government that will carry out none of the objectives laid out in the union's pre-election special *What future for education?*

What strategy is the leadership now putting forward to achieve these objectives? The question remains unanswered.

The role of the left within the union is crucial. Many will be demoralised at the Tories' re-election, and may feel that nothing can be done. We must show them that now is the time for the union to go onto the attack.

Passivity has achieved nothing. And if we wait for the next election, there will be precious little of our education system left to fight for.

The Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA) and the Campaign For a Democratic and Fighting Union (CDFU) must work together to forge a united fight

- against testing and league tables
- against opting-out
- for smaller class sizes and proper funding for the education system as a whole.

The election of CDFU candidate, Ian Murch, as Treasurer provides us with an opportunity for real information about the priorities given to union finances. The Executive's bureaucratic rearguard action against Murch's victory shows just how much they think they have to hide.

We've always said that the Executive's strategy wouldn't work. It's time for us to take a lead in a united campaign that will stop the Tories education policies. New Realism got us nowhere. *It's time for a fight.■*

Fighting fascism in the election

WP: What do you make of the fascist vote in the elections?

AS: The main threat came from the British National Party (BNP). Clearly where they did a lot of work—the East End of London, Bermondsey and Leicestershire—they got higher than the average “fringe candidate” vote. We always knew they were not going all out for electoral success like the National Front (NF) did in the 1970s. Their aim was to build up a core of people they could recruit into their street fighting organisations later, so they concentrated their resources.

In Bethnal Green Richard Edmonds got 1,310 votes. Down the road in Bow and Poplar the BNP führer John Tyndall got 1,107. In Bermondsey they managed 530 plus 168 for a rival NF candidate (!). And in Blaby they managed 521. Clearly this is nothing to match the success of fascist and far right parties in Europe.

But that is no reason to get complacent. They are not trying to match that yet. Tyndall has made it clear in *Spearhead* that they aim to turn their working class supporters into “a shock force in British politics”. They are only doing election work in the areas they already think they have a base, and they will be aiming to build on over 2,000 people in the East End who voted fascist in the full knowledge of what they were doing.

Why is their base stronger in the East End than elsewhere?

Unfortunately there has always been the remnants of a fascist tradition in the East End since the time of Mosley, based around Brick Lane. It is also the case that this is an area where there is incredibly run down housing. The fascists use the experience of working class poverty to scapegoat black people for the poor housing, unemployment and rotten services.

In this election they have been peddling the idea that “whites get a poor deal” and putting forward their “rights for whites” slogan. But we don't accept that white working class communities like the East End have to be natural recruiting grounds for the fascists. One of the things AFA set out to do was to reclaim the anti-fascist traditions of the East End, and organise workers to fight back.

One of the things that also helped

A. Stuart, a Workers Power supporter and East London Anti-Fascist Action organiser gave us a balance sheet of AFA's work to stop the fascists during the election campaign.

the fascists is the Liberal council in Tower Hamlets. We saw in Cheltenham how the Liberals used covert racism to help defeat a black Tory. In Tower Hamlets they appeal to the lowest form of racism to keep out Labour. So you have the BNP's open repatriation policies alongside the Liberal council's covert support for the same idea—putting homeless black people on barges, sending a councillor to Bangladesh to warn people that they “weren't welcome” in the borough and going to the High Court to claim the right to refuse housing to homeless people if they suspect they are “illegal immigrants”.

What did AFA do during the election?

We held several public meetings to rally support—in Tower Hamlets and in South East London. We gave out thousands of leaflets to combat the BNP's specific appeal to “working class” interests by pointing out how fascism aims to destroy workers' rights. We went out on a concerted campaign to remove the fascist stickers and posters that sprang up like a plague over certain parts of East and South East London.

What joint work did AFA do with other anti-racist and anti-fascist groups, in particular with the ANL?

We made every possible effort to work with the ANL, despite the fact that the ANL is not committed to the



tactic of “No platform for fascists”. We planned a joint leaflet in South London, but ANL leader Paul Holborow quickly moved in to stop that. The ANL agreed to speak at a meeting we held in Tower Hamlets but failed to show up.

The ANL did its own leafleting, making no attempts to contact local anti-fascists. The people who told us we were wasting our time six months ago suddenly became experts on anti-fascism. We tried to participate, but had to point out that some of their tactics—wandering into the fascists territory with undisciplined groups of people to do leafleting—would lead to problems. They told us to go away and not bother about it. In the end there were problems; they got attacked. Because they equate “No platform” with “squadism” they con-

sistently fail to take the measures needed to take on the fascists, even to protect their own leafleting and public stalls.

AFA organised a mass presence in Bermondsey. What happened?

We received consistent reports that the BNP had a high profile presence in a Bermondsey shopping centre. So we organised a mass leafleting session with over 100 people involved. That scattered the BNP and the NF who had turned up to sell their racist rag. A number of local people congratulated us for coming and clearing out the “blackshirts”.

This is in complete contrast to the local SWP/ANL response. They reported several times how the BNP had attacked their paper sellers and ripped down placards defending the NHS. They told us they had decided not to confront the BNP. Effectively that means selling alongside them.

Then the SWP tell us that they have “exposed” the BNP as anti-working class because the BNP ripped down placards and turned over anti-poll tax stalls. We think this “exposure” only tells working class youth in the area that the fascist thugs control the streets. We did something about it. The SWP, which claims there are 200 ANL members in the area did not even call a meeting during the campaign—openly admitting that it was because “we don't want sectarians coming along”. What's that if not sectarianism?

The BNP had a big national rally in Tower Hamlets. Could it have been stopped?

Given the way the police organise these days to protect the fascists to stop a rally like that needs literally thousands of local people. Contrary to what the SWP says about AFA that is exactly what we tried to organise. But the difference is that, if only hundreds turn up as happened on the night we don't just give up and march off somewhere else.

The SWP always likes to pretend AFA doesn't exist, but the local press reported that AFA were arguing for “violent confrontation”. The press coverage also revealed that as the BNP tried to make their getaway large groups of local people streamed put of the pubs to confront them, and

they were showered with bottles and glasses from tower blocks. I can safely say that this was not the doing of the ANL.

One area where AFA has built support is amongst students. But at the NUS conference there was a witch-hunt of the SWP and ANL organised by the Union of Jewish Students (UJS). Some of their resolutions urged people to support AFA and *Searchlight* magazine instead of the ANL. What is AFA's response?

We haven't discussed this issue in AFA but speaking as a Workers Power supporter within AFA I think the reason that UJS are against the ANL is that the SWP is behind it. Now, we think the ANL is an SWP front and say so. But the UJS go on to accuse the SWP of anti-Semitism because it supports the Palestinian struggle. This is ludicrous. Workers Power supports the Palestinian struggle as well.

We would welcome support for AFA from anybody, including the UJS, but it is ridiculous to accuse the SWP of anti-Semitism, or to place an obstacle to unity in action with it because of its anti-Zionism. In fact many of those behind this witch-hunt refuse to organise for “No platform”, just the same as the ANL. And for an anti-fascist united front that is the crucial question.

What do you think the fascists will do next?

Clearly during the elections they played down the physical side of their activity in the hope of winning a few votes. Now they will try to turn those votes into the kind of street activity that sees black people attacked and abused every day in East London, and left wing paper sales and meetings attacked. No doubt they will be making stronger links with their counterparts in Europe and drawing material support from them. The key to making sure they don't repeat the kind of success we've seen in France or Italy is to smash them now, in particular in the areas they have targeted.

AFA has a national conference on 26 April. What do you expect to come out of that?

In the past few months groups all round the country have been getting in touch with London AFA and there are now 15 or 16 local AFA groups. The conference is going to see whether or not we can weld those organisations into a genuine national organisation committed to the same aims. Now that the election is over and the SWP and other groups have recruited a few people we believe they will downplay anti-fascist work. We don't think the fascists will go away.

Workers Power will be arguing at that conference for a clear orientation to action against the fascists and winning the working class and the workers' movement to support and participate in that action. We will be in favour of political work in the workplaces, estates, unions, trades councils, black organisations etc, to win affiliations to AFA on the clear basis of support for a policy of “No platform”. And when there are future fascist attacks or public rallies, paper sales or marches we will aim to turn affiliations into active support and mobilise the numbers for a workers' united front against fascism that really means something. ■

BNP stopped in Rochdale

ONE TARGET area for the BNP is Rochdale. Nazi candidate Henderson, along with BNP leaders Edmonds and Peacock, were planning an election address on 4 April as the showpiece of their campaign. The best laid plans of rats and fascists...

On the previous evening a meeting of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) stewards together with the ANL and other anti-racist groups agreed to confront the BNP at their main re-direction point and prevent them from carrying their message of racial hatred to the people of Rochdale.

On the day it was clear from the ANL's behaviour that they preferred to leaflet Rochdale town centre than

to unite with AFA, who had reliable information as to where the fascists were meeting and were determined to stop them.

Workers Power members had persistent arguments with the ANL telling them to go to where the fascists were meeting.

This paid off when they sent a contingent to join AFA, though they did keep a large number of people back to make the centre of Rochdale, where there were no Nazis, a “Nazi-free zone”.

The day proved an enormous success.

The fascists were made only too well aware of AFA's commitment to preventing them gaining any space

to put out their filthy propaganda. After a number of their members suffered damaged morale in a robust argument with AFA members, the fascists hid behind police lines inside a pub for almost three hours. Instead of an election rally they had to be escorted out of Rochdale by the police. Elsewhere another group of fascists, unable to get near the re-direction point, got their come-uppance at the hands of the local Asian community.

This success must be built on. With the BNP getting 650 votes in the general election and planning to put up two candidates in the council elections, we can't afford to give them any space to organise. ■

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Further information contact

Deane Family Campaign

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PO Box 273

Forest Gate, London E7

SINCE JEAN-CLAUDE "Baby Doc" Duvalier was forced to flee Haiti in 1986 the country has been in political turmoil. The masses got rid of the hated president, but it was the armed forces that stepped in to rule the country. Since then general strikes, barricades, bloody massacres and elections drowned in blood have characterised Haiti's recent history.

The Duvalier dynasty had ruled the country since 1957 and developed a notorious repressive apparatus with a private army of thugs, the *Tonton Macoutes*. The economy was based on subordination to the USA, with a parasitic bourgeoisie whose money came from trade and, more recently, on the development of assembly plants for the USA.

The majority of the population scrape a living on land ravaged by deforestation and soil erosion which has left less than a third of the country suitable for agricultural use. The vast bulk of agricultural production—sugar and coffee—is for export.

Under François "Papa Doc", and then Jean-Claude "Baby Doc", the Duvaliers created a huge system of corrupt officials at every level of the state, collecting exorbitant taxes from the peasants, creaming the money off for themselves, and controlling the judicial and executive functions.

Modernise

After the Duvaliers a section of the bourgeoisie, in alliance with the USA, hoped to modernise the country. They sought to develop a neo-liberal programme for the economy with an import of foreign capital and expansion of the assembly industry.

They are opposed by a Duvalierist section of the bourgeoisie who wish to maintain their privileges with a more protectionist economy and continued domination of the countryside by the massive landowning families and their corrupt state officials.

The period since 1986 has seen a continuous struggle between these different wings of the bourgeoisie, but one conducted in the context of decisive, if sporadic, interventions by the masses and the army. The new constitution, introduced in March 1986 after the flight of Duvalier, had banned Duvalierists from office for ten years, but this in no way indicated the defeat of their apparatus.

The 1987 election was aborted when non-Duvalierist candidates and their supporters were gunned down wherever they were found. Voters queueing up at polling stations were sprayed with automatic rifle fire from passing vehicles. The response of the military to this intervention was to dismiss the electoral commission and oversee a re-convened election themselves in which Duvalierists were allowed to stand.

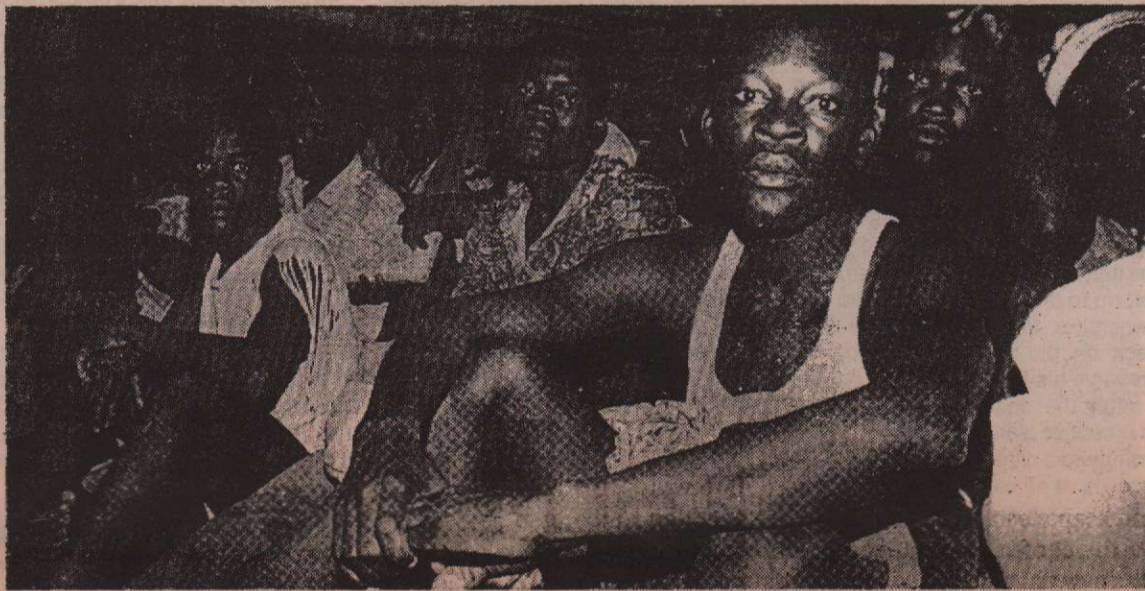
Election

In 1990 the first free election was held and the masses voted in a left wing Catholic priest, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He had entered the campaign relatively late on, and stood against the favoured candidate of the USA.

Aristide was elected after a campaign in which the USA sought to get their chosen man into power. The USA wanted a "democratic" regime with the legitimacy of free elections, but they also wanted stability in order to push through neo-liberal reforms and reduce the obstructive power of the corrupt Duvalier officials. Their chosen man was Marc Bazin, a conservative and former World Bank technocrat. He had previously been finance minister

HAITI

Endless poverty and repression?



Haitian refugees shipped back to the hellhole they fled from by US champions of "democracy"

Haiti is the poorest country in the western world, with 75% of the population living below the World Bank's poverty line. Less than half the population are fully employed. One per cent of the population get 44% of the income. The masses are heading towards starvation.

*In December 1990 Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a radical populist priest, was elected president with 67.5% of the vote. September 1991 saw him overthrown by a military coup, whose leaders are still in power seven months later. Is Haiti's failed attempt at parliamentary democracy an exception to the trend in the rest of the region? **Laura Watkins** and **Clare Heath** look at the background to the fall of the popular priest.*

ter under Jean-Claude Duvalier for nine months, but had absolved himself by getting fired over a disagreement about curbing corruption.

The hostility of the masses to candidates like Bazin was massive, shown by their support for Aristide. In Aristide the masses were presented with a candidate who had been a fierce opponent of the military regime, who had spoken out against corruption and against the domination of the country by the USA. He had faced down the wrath of his church, and called for a radical redistribution of wealth, advocating armed mobilisation and mass participation in government to achieve it.

To many of the slum dwellers, in large areas of the capital Port-au-Prince, Aristide appeared to be offering leadership for resistance to the worst excesses of dictatorship. They quickly rallied to his banner and tens of thousands formed self-defence brigades in the cities to protect their areas, to attack symbols of Duvalierism and to take on the *Tonton Macoutes*. The day of the elections saw massive mobilisations, thereby preventing fraudulent intervention of the Duvalierists or other forces.

The election of Aristide threw

the bourgeoisie and the USA into confusion—this was not the kind of puppet they had hoped for. Here was a man advocating direct action by the masses against the rich and corrupt. He spoke openly of a people's revolution.

Inaugurated

In January 1991, three weeks after Aristide's election and before he was inaugurated Roger Lafontant, the former Interior Minister under Duvalier, seized the national palace and declared himself provisional president. In less than an hour Aristide supporters flocked onto the streets. Fifty thousand people massed in front of the palace, barricades were erected and in the following days hundreds of Duvalierists were lynched or "necklaced". The army were indecisive and the masses were successful—Lafontant's coup lasted a mere ten hours.

This decisive intervention by the masses on the side of Aristide served as a warning to the bourgeoisie, and strengthened the new president in his early declarations. In his inaugural speech he sacked six of the seven top military general staff and promoted officers who he

viewed as sympathetic or at least politically neutral. He then talked of the need for a "marriage between the people and the army".

One of these new officers, Raoul Cedras, was to lead the successful coup against him later the same year. The failure of Aristide to avert the second coup was based on the timidity of his reforms. He did not carry through a thorough purge of the armed forces and the state bureaucracy. He appointed a conservative businessman, Rene Preval, as his prime minister. He deprioritised the struggle of the poor against social injustice and concentrated on deals with the USA to secure aid.

Aristide continued to try and balance a slow reformist programme aimed at appeasing the bourgeoisie with a rhetoric which urged mass action against corruption. In September 1991, just before the coup, he made a speech which was taken by many to be an incitement: "Wherever you feel the heat of unemployment, whenever the heat of the pavements gets to you, whenever you feel revolt inside you, turn your eyes in the direction of those with the money. Ask them why not. What are they waiting for. For the sea to dry up?"

He referred to a "beautiful tool" that they may use against the Duvalierists, a reference many took to be to necklacing.

But this rhetoric failed to rouse enough action to prevent the coup this time. The army was united and the mass response met brutal repression. Although there was general strike action and mobilisations of the defence brigades in the urban areas, these were terrorised by the coup-makers. Forty-four youth were executed in the Carrefour neighbourhood and 200 killed in the shanty town of Soleil.

It was these mass movements that were the real target of the coup, because it was the threat from them, shown in the January coup attempt, which had allowed Aristide to rule without reference to the bourgeois parties.

Since the coup the military government, led by Joseph Nérette has faced a trade embargo from the Organisation of American States (OAS). In the immediate aftermath US Secretary of State James Baker said "This coup must not and will not succeed." The OAS demanded the return of Aristide before the embargo could be lifted.

But the coup-makers almost certainly had the backing of the USA at some level: they may well have urged the crushing of the mass movement without the removal of Aristide from office. The lack of concern by the USA about democracy in Haiti is revealed by the weakening of their stance in recent weeks, and also by their forcible repatriation of Haitian refugees who had fled to the USA.

Settlement

There is an attempt at a negotiated settlement which would return Aristide but tie him to a more acceptable bourgeois government. Aristide has indicated willingness to go along with this, and even agreed to having René Théodore as prime minister. Théodore is leader of the Haitian Communist Party and was committed to a bourgeois alliance to overthrow Aristide from the start. Even this agreement was not enough to guarantee a date for Aristide's return.

In the meantime the masses are suffering increased repression and terror, combined with growing hunger as the effects of the trade embargo hit them, rather than the bourgeoisie.

Since the downfall of Duvalier the masses have repeatedly taken action in defence of their interests and against the remnants of the repressive regime. But at each stage they have been unable to go beyond the sporadic, angry demonstrations to the building of a solid working class based organisation which could lead to a government of the workers, peasants and the urban poor.

Support

Their mass support for Aristide is illustrative—he had no organised base in terms of a party or unions, but could rely on the backing of all those who were anti-Duvalier and anti-imperialist. Once in power he called for mass mobilisations but granted no power to the masses.

The only way forward for the workers and peasants of Haiti is to begin building unions and community based workers' organisations and make sure that the inevitable mass resistance to military rule gives birth to a network of workers' councils willing and able to mobilise a disciplined armed force to shatter and defeat the army. Only then can the Haitian masses begin to overcome the obscene poverty which the imperialist system has imposed on them for decades. ■

RUSSIA

Yeltsin reforms falter

DURING THE first half of April Boris Yeltsin and his government were locked into a battle with the Russian Congress of People's Deputies. This 1,000 member assembly provided the first major parliamentary test for Yeltsin since launching the country onto a programme of rapid transformation towards capitalism on 2 January.

Congress is a sounding board for a diverse and unstable coalition of anti-Yeltsin interests. Some deputies represent the elements of the old ruling bureaucracy that have most to lose at the hands of the Russian President as he deprives them of their privileges in the race for capitalism. Others are sensitive to the pressure of the workers who elected them in 1990. Those workers are now bearing the full brunt of Yeltsin's free market measures.

Yet the sessions of Congress revealed that these dissident voices have no real alternative to Yeltsin. Despite dire threats they proved reluctant to deprive him of the powers he needs to carry out his project.

Destruction

There is no doubting the scale of destruction that Yeltsin has inflicted upon the country since January. In the first three months industrial output has slumped by around 15%. Government forecasts suggest this could reach 25% to 30% by the end of the year. Deputy Minister Gaidar, in charge of the reforms, has said that unemployment will rise to around six million by December. And for those thrown out of work the benefit entitlement has been substantially reduced in real terms.

On 2 January 90% of consumer prices and 80% of industrial goods prices were freed. Those prices that remained regulated by the government were increased by around three to four times. Altogether in January the average price level rose by between 300% and 500%. Though wages also rose only a small section of workers earmarked to be the future labour aristocracy received anything like an increase in line with inflation.

Given a typical wage of 1,000 roubles a month for a clerical worker it is not hard to see what this means for millions of Russians. Salami is 350 roubles a kilo. Butter costs about the same. A bag of pasta costs over 35 roubles—a day's pay!

Forecasts

But the worst is yet to come. The government forecasts a ten to eleven fold increase in prices by the end of this year. So far such price increases have wiped out a large part of the savings and accumulated food stocks of the Russian workers. Now they face a new round of rent, energy and food price increases between April and June. These will cut living standards further, putting essentials out of the reach of ordinary people and reducing the old and the sick to the depths of absolute poverty.

It is easy to see from this why Yeltsin and his hand-picked government are increasingly unpopular. But Yeltsin has only completed his preparatory measures and even then not the most decisive ones for the destruction of the property relations of the degenerate workers' state.

To restore capitalism Yeltsin has not only to destroy the central regulatory apparatus of the old planning

In April George Bush announced an \$18 billion aid package for Russia and Boris Yeltsin fought off a challenge to his presidential powers from the Russian Congress of People's Deputies. Meanwhile millions of Russian workers saw their savings disappear and their living standards plunge. Keith Harvey surveys the results of four months of the capitalist restoration process in Russia and explains why Bush's new aid package is a drop in the ocean.

system. He has to transform the mode of operation of the 8,500 enterprises: the way in which they deal with each other and with their central bank creditors. Only if and when decisions over investment and credit are actually based upon strict commercial criteria—the profit motive—will it be possible to say that capitalism has been restored. Only then will what Marxists call the "circuit of capital" dominate the production process in the CIS.

This is far from the case today. And on the eve of the Congress all the signs were that Yeltsin recognised the impossibility of leaping from price reform to transforming structure and ownership. In truth he took a step back on the economy in order to preserve his hold on political power.

After the destruction of Gosplan (the central planning ministry), most enterprises did not suddenly become models of efficient profit-making enterprise. On the contrary, most of the big factories that dominate the bulk of Russian output took advantage of their monopoly position, raised prices and kept output low. They established new direct links with other enterprises to replace the co-ordinating links of the centre and so maintained access to material resources.

ket as quickly as possible."

At the other extreme the forces around the parliamentary speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, have lobbied for more leniency for the factory managers. His deputy, Shumeiko, even called for the creation of "a powerful centre for the administration of industry"—a plan by any other name!

In March Gaidar's resolve was put to the test and collapsed. If it were simply a matter of throwing to the wall a few hundred members of the *nomenklatura* and obstructive factory managers then Gaidar and his capitalist backers would have lost no sleep. But the majority of the proto-capitalist "entrepreneurs" were also up in arms. The Russian Union of Industrialists, for example, urged Gaidar's team to relax credit.

Retreat

Yeltsin's retreat does not signal an abandonment of his plans for swift privatisation and another attempt to restructure industry along commercial lines. Rather he has made temporary concessions in the face of Congress' opposition in order to divide his opponents and deflect them from taking away his existing presi-

ex-USSR states.

More than half the productive assets of the ex-USSR are obsolete, according to Russian and IMF studies. One report suggests:

"It would require about fifteen years to bring as much as a quarter of the industrial base up to competitive levels... Soviet economists estimate that less than 30% of serial machine-building production can compete on the world market... If such claims are borne out, the liberalisation of foreign trade would set into motion a devastating de-industrialisation which few enterprises will be able to survive. Forty per cent of all Soviet enterprises cannot make a profit today... At least half of them would probably go under if exposed to international competition, putting up to a third of the labour force out of work." (P Flaherty, *Monthly Review*, January 1992)

Those in any doubt about the magnitude of Yeltsin's problem should look at the experience of Germany since 1990. The GDR was the most industrially advanced of the degenerate workers' states before it collapsed into the arms of the strongest imperialist economy in Europe. But in 1991 and 1992 it will have cost Germany

that, on a conservative estimate, Russia needed \$80-170 billion every year for the foreseeable future: to stabilise the currency at a level that will allow imports of raw materials to come down to affordable levels; for agricultural reconstruction; for training and welfare; for energy supply modernisation. The list is endless but the credit supply of the imperialists is not.

The world economy is fixed in recession. In particular the current Japanese stock market and global property collapses have left international banks heavily burdened with bad debts. This completely constrains their ability to finance a general credit-based investment expansion in Russia.

Finally, even if the money existed the unified political will of the imperialist big three (the EC, USA and Japan) does not. The USA clearly does not want to take responsibility for the reconstruction of the CIS, preferring to concentrate its limited powers upon the Pacific.

Absorbed

Meanwhile, Germany which has the will to dominate Eastern Europe economically is absorbed with its own domestic concerns. Beyond that its hands are full providing funds for the stabilisation of Hungary. Russia therefore faces an enormously bleak future as a capitalist country. There is no room in the late twentieth century for another imperialist nation to emerge.

Short term profit maximisation for Russia would have to come from intensive exploitation of its mineral wealth, and the imperialist multinationals are keen to advance capital in this sector if nowhere else. The most likely scenario for Russia towards the new millennium is that of a dependent semi-colonial country, providing cheap raw materials for western industry and offering its relatively skilled, educated and very low-waged workforce for EC and Japanese owned industrial assembly operations.

The working class will be made to pay with years of poverty and unemployment for the restoration of capitalism.

Rivalries

This is all the more likely if the "single economic space" of the CIS states falls short of its original ambition. Inter-state rivalries make it improbable that CIS can rapidly attain even the degree of economic integration and harmonisation that prevails within the EC. Given the pre-existing interdependency on trade between the CIS member states, the failure to stop the multiplication of currencies, the erection of tariff walls and custom posts etc, would spell economic disaster.

It is precisely because of all this that Yeltsin jealously guards his presidential powers against erosion by the Congress of People's Deputies. In the coming months he will have many reasons to call upon them if he is to make millions of Russian workers swallow the social cost of his economic reforms. ■



Since August 1991 they have lived in a never-never land of mounting inter-enterprise debt in order to keep producing more or less on the old basis—even if on reduced foundations. Unpaid bills and lost loans have exploded from R40 billion to R800 billion.

Harsh decisions over restructuring and mass sackings have been postponed. In turn this has to be guaranteed by the central banking system. Whether or not to guarantee these debts has become a major debate within the Russian parliament.

Two months ago Gaidar threatened to resist the trend to bail the factories out:

"Our policy of restructuring is aimed precisely at denying credits to those who should be thrown onto the mar-

dinal powers. He must make sure he is not stripped of these, which will soon prove crucial as he returns to the offensive.

Yeltsin no longer has a mass base amongst the Russian people. He has to rely more and more on decrees over the heads of the parliamentary deputies. He is seeking support for this not from the masses but, on the one hand, from the armed forces and, on the other hand, from the agencies of world imperialism.

Yeltsin needs all the help from his imperialist friends he can muster. There is every reason to be sceptical about the viability of any future capitalist regime, despite Russia's size and natural resources and its consequent advantages compared to the rest of Eastern Europe and the other

around \$200 billion in investment and grants (and more in 1993) to turn this country of 16 million into a relatively backward part of an enlarged imperialist country.

By contrast all that imperialism has offered Russia is \$24 billion and membership of the IMF. The IMF will allow it to call on another \$4 billion in due course—depending on the success of its reform programme. This is a drop in the ocean. Its significance lies not in what it will do for Russia's economy but in the short term boost it may give to Yeltsin's government. Armed with the imperialist aid package he can portray himself as the only one capable of getting help from the imperialists.

One study of Russia by merchant bankers Morgan Stanley concluded

Russia's fast track to ruin
an in-depth survey
by Keith Harvey
appears in the latest issue of
Trotskyist International,
out this month

POLAND

At the beginning of April Polish President Lech Walesa began secret talks with army chiefs and parliamentary leaders to prepare a presidential coup. **Martin Suchanek** examines the situation

Walesa set for presidential coup

LECH WALESAs is preparing to dissolve parliament unconstitutionally, and put the army under presidential control thus allowing himself to rule the country by decree.

Revelations about the coup plans prompted protests from within the parliamentary government of Jan Olszewski. Defence Minister Jan Parys offered his resignation in protest. But the government's protestations about Walesa's undermining of democracy have a hollow ring. Olszewski himself has been demanding emergency powers to bypass parliament and push through his economic programme by decree.

Poland's capitalist restorationist rulers are facing a twofold problem. The process of economic transition to capitalism has been stalled by working class resistance and by the failure of the economy to recover from the shock therapy Walesa applied in 1991. Those leaders willing to take on the working class and apply a second round of neo-liberal economic reforms are faced with a parliament which is too fragmented to provide a base of support.

Polish workers took western ideology about a "democratic revolution" a little too seriously and voted for a variety of unpredictable parties and politicians in the elections of October 1991. No party was embraced by more than 6% of the electorate, 56% of voters abstained and the Beer Lovers Party emerged as a small but significant parliamentary force.

The weakness and fragmentation of the parliament reflect the under-development of class differentiation in society and the consequent difficulty in finding a stable social base for capitalist restoration. Walesa tried several times to impose his own candidate on parliament after October 1991, but ended up with the unhappy compromise of Olszewski's coalition.

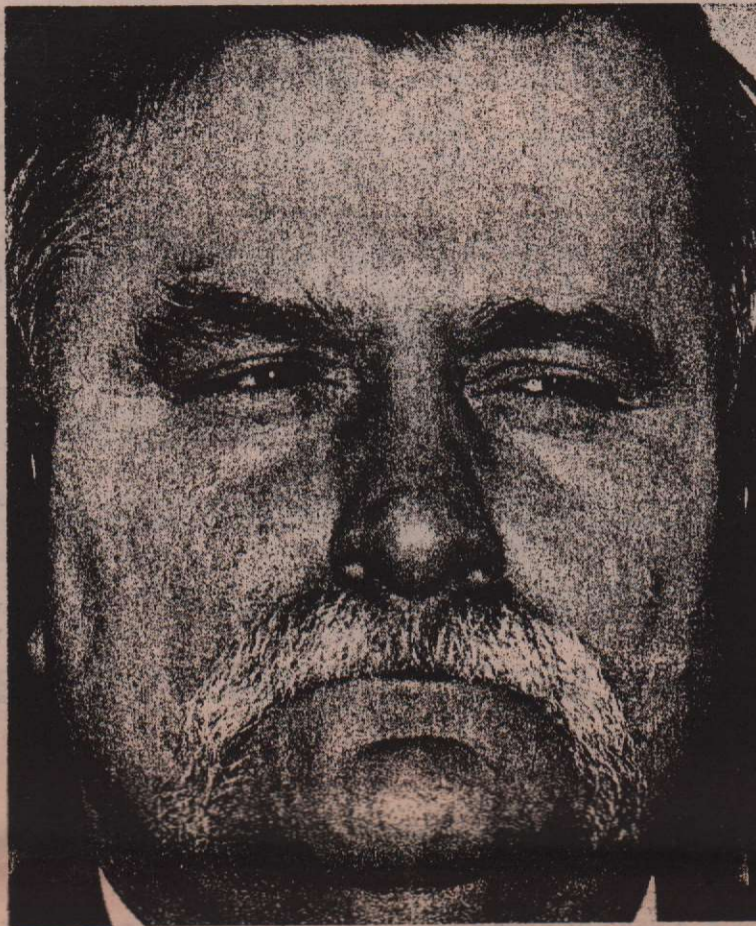
Olszewski took office bitterly complaining that "Poland and its

economy are in a state of collapse". His solution was to slow down the restoration process in an attempt to halt economic chaos and buy off the growing wave of working class resistance. At the same time he unleashed a power struggle between his own government and the military high command.

Jan Parys, Olszewski's new defence minister, is one of the youngest members of the government and a civilian. He was a naturalised British citizen (having fled Poland in 1980) and a commercial representative of Rupert Murdoch! Within a few weeks of his appointment he succeeded in dismissing the army commander and the head of military intelligence under a programme of completing the purge of former bureaucrats from the repressive apparatus. Unfortunately these were precisely the old bureaucrats Walesa had been cultivating as his puppets within the armed forces in preparation for any future presidential crackdown.

But it was Olszewski's economic programme which moved the idea of a presidential coup from the realm of fantasy into the realm of possibility. Olszewski's first task in office was to placate the IMF. The big western bankers had withdrawn a loan guarantee because successive Polish governments proved incapable of controlling state spending. Olszewski drew up a budget which would imply massive cuts in welfare spending and in state credit to enterprises.

The Sejm (the Polish parliament)



threw that budget out at the beginning of April, precipitating Walesa's coup-mongering response.

Walesa himself has had to cast his net far and wide in constructing his presidential coup plan. He consulted not only his own preferred prime minister, Jan Bielecki, but

also Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the former leader of the Democratic Union and the preferred candidate of the imperialists.

In addition he consulted the leaders of the former CP, the Social Democratic Party, who would be crucial in delivering support

amongst the army and police lower officer caste.

The capitalist restoration process demands further attacks on the working class. The state sector has to be "commercialised" to make it profitable and destroy the last vestiges of the economic mechanisms of the degenerate workers' state. This inevitably means the smashing of the workers' self-management bodies at plant level, which retain the right to replace the management in a majority of factories.

This process will have to face a workers' movement which, though fragmented into several competing union federations, has managed to produce not only strikes and occupations but also sporadic inter-union strike committees and solidarity action over the last six months.

That is why Walesa needs a strong government. If he tries to get it over the heads of parliament it will be further proof to the workers of the whole of Eastern Europe that the dream of a democratic capitalist restoration is turning into the dictatorial nightmare which revolutionary socialists predicted.

Workers must meet any coup attempt with a class wide general strike. So far the union leaders have said nothing about the coup, and the Social Democratic leaders are likely to be involved in it. The workers cannot rely on their current leaders any more than they could on their former leader Walesa.

That is why they need to organise independently of the bureaucratic leadership, form factory based committees and workers' militias to try to break the rank and file of the army and police from their officers.

In such a struggle a revolutionary workers' party must be built, because without it—as the experience of Solidarnosc showed—even the most powerful mass workers' resistance can be defeated and channelled into the reactionary dead end of support for the return of the profit system. ■

ONLY 25% of registered Democratic voters bothered to turn out in the recent New York primary, an area vital to front-runner Bill Clinton's bid for the White House.

It should be no surprise that American workers show little enthusiasm to participate in the media circus that passes for the presidential election race. The only thing workers have to get excited about in the Democrats' campaign is the latest revelations about the candidates' extra-marital affairs or non-inhaling methods of smoking dope!

But while the media attempts to keep the electorate stupefied with trivia there are serious debates going on within the US ruling class and its two parties.

Barely two years ago George Bush was riding high in the opinion polls. The Soviet "evil empire" had collapsed and the USA was victorious. Bush had constructed a new world order and destroyed Saddam Hussein's war machine. America was on top once again.

Today large portions of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are on the brink of violent ethnic and national strife. The restoration of the free market is going far from smoothly. The pro-western regimes in East Europe are increasingly demanding billions of dollars to try and save their bacon. Saddam Hussein remains stubbornly in power and the Middle East "peace process" has ground to a halt.

Something even worse than these foreign policy setbacks is agitating the bosses: the economy.

It is not just the long recession, or

USA

Democrats no answer for US workers

the decay of the infrastructure in the cities, the rising crime rates and growing deficit. There is a growing realisation that all these are symptoms of the long term decline of US imperialism relative to Japan and Europe.

As in Britain, the US ruling class is waking up from the hangover of a decade of monetarism and has realised that free market economic policies, far from remedying the ills of the economy, have only compounded the problems.

Bush has done his best to ignore these problems—partly because the Republicans have no answers that are palatable to the voters. His weakness has spawned the far right candidacy of Pat Buchanan, a national journalist and long time Washington insider. Buchanan came forward as an unashamed racist who has flirted with theories of the genetic superiority of the white race, and as a virulent homophobe.

His programme which he dubs "new nationalism" is a mixture of extreme protectionism, anti-Japanese and anti-South East Asian chauvinism, withdrawal from military involvement in

Europe and the Middle East (all the better to concentrate on the exploitation of Latin America) and still more restrictive immigration controls.

Some liberal journalists have seen in Buchanan the leader in waiting of a "peculiar American kind of fascism". But this misunderstands his appeal. While Buchanan's support has gone beyond the ranks of ultra-right religious bigots and cranks, gaining 20 and 30% against Bush in the early primaries, this does not represent the base of a fascist movement.

Buchanan appeals to nostalgia for the early years of the "American century" shared by many white middle class suburbanites in the throes of downward mobility. It is an appeal to "isolationism", for a return to the youthful period of American capitalism when it had yet to take on its imperialist world role. As such it is a backward looking programme that has no serious adherents within the US ruling class.

Far more serious a candidate was Democrat Paul Tsongas. Tsongas put forward a programme for restructuring US capitalism. His pamphlet "A

Call to Economic Arms" was quoted ceaselessly during his campaign. It pointed out the malaise in US capitalism and called for radical measures to address it.

But these measures concentrated on solving the crisis at the expense of the workers. In essence Tsongas called on US workers, most of whom have seen real wages fall for the last decade or more, to make still more sacrifices.

"Belt tightening" by US workers could restore the bosses' profits. Then with the right mixture of tax incentives and state fostering of research and development, the USA could start on a new round of productive investment rather than the short term stock market speculation which characterises the economy at present. This in the end, the argument goes, would lead to an increase in well paid manufacturing jobs.

Bill Clinton, putting forward an alternative programme based on enhancing US productivity through improving "human capital", including some renewal of pre-school programmes, stiffer academic testing

and limited state intervention in training, gained his support from the more traditional working class Democratic voters.

Despite Clinton's criticisms of Tsongas' programme as being typical Republican "trickle down economics" Tsongas' candidature, has performed its function of pulling the Democratic campaign rightwards. All the predictions are that many of Tsongas' proposals will reappear in Clinton's campaign for the presidency against George Bush.

The US working class is faced with its perennial weakness: the lack of a class based workers' party which can defend its interests against the capitalists. In a period of long term decline for US capitalism both the bourgeois parties will be looking to further erode the gains made by the American workers during the boom period after World War Two.

US workers should not vote Democrat in the coming presidential elections, but fight for a united front to present a workers' candidate. The Democrats, while they pose as "friends of labor" have no organic connection to the workers' movement, no accountability to it and are a party no different from the British Liberal Democrats.

North American workers and the trade unions must take urgent steps to form a workers' party, and revolutionary socialists must fight to win that party to revolutionary answers to the crisis. If not the working class will face repeated and even harsher attacks on their organisations and standards of living than they experienced in the Reaganite 1980s. ■

PERU: AFTER FUJI-SHOCK, FUJI-COUP!

LATE IN the evening on Sunday 5 April Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori announced he was getting rid of the elected parliament. He no longer had a use for it. For several months the President and his appointed government had been in conflict with the main bourgeois opposition parties in the Congress over the fate of a number of draconian economic and political decrees he had announced in November last year.

Fujimori's party, Cambio '90, having only a small number of deputies, could not get its way. The opposition of the other parties such as APRA was secondary, and they only really objected to those measures that hit

the Peruvian bosses, not those aimed at the workers or the left.

But Fujimori, after nearly two years in office, has not managed to turn the Peruvian economy around by his measures despite the huge social costs of austerity. Moreover, the main guerrilla group, Sendero Luminoso, has been gaining influence steadily in the shanty towns around Lima. Fujimori's attack on Congress is thus a pretext for deflecting attention from his own failings while taking full advantage of the popular distrust of the masses in their corrupt elected representatives.

Although the bourgeois parties caught the first blows of the Fujimori-

military clampdown, we can expect further blows to be delivered against Sendero Luminoso and the trade unions. Imperialism and the surrounding governments of South America have urged Fujimori to reverse his measures and threatened economic sanctions. Whatever the short-term reaction of the President it is clear that the main tasks of the left now are to rouse the masses from their indifference and to get them to fight for their independent class interests.

We print below a leaflet produced a few days after the Fuji coup by Poder Obrero, the Peruvian section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International.



FUJIMORI HAS declared himself a dictator, smashing the constitution and all the institutions which will not serve him. His real objective is not to put an end to corruption, but to fully militarise society; to privatise as many enterprises and services as possible, to attack the countryside and the national industry; to impose massive redundancies, new economic packages and to destroy all the workers' gains; to carry out new massacres and to create his own Gestapo with a license to go where it pleases.

The Fujimori family is involved in the business of "donations" and the repressive forces which are well used to taking bribes cannot stop corruption. On the contrary, in attacking those who fight corruption it ensures corruption will grow.

The only dictatorship that can put an end to corruption and hunger is that of the proletariat against all the capitalists. Only a government of popular assemblies and workers' and peasants' councils can provide the widest democracy for the majority of the people.

In the power struggle between the executive and the armed forces on the one side and parliament and the judiciary on the other, we the workers oppose both sides. The only way to finish with the chaos, the misery and the corruption is to cut out at its source the cancer that is destroying our society. That cancer is the bourgeoisie.

Like the great majority, we repudiate the bourgeois parliament and all its political parties. But we are against this dictatorship deciding to close down and repress them, because behind this is a hidden attack on the freedom and gains of the workers and the unleashing of massive repression. The majority of MPs have elected, as a new constitutional President, Carlos Garcia. The workers cannot support this "parallel government" whose main objective is to negotiate a settlement with those in power and to open the way to a pro-IMF regime that can govern without violating the constitution.

At the same time as maintaining its class independence in the conflict between two bourgeois and pro-imperialist factions, the working class should try to take advantage of the breach that is opening up in that dispute, putting forward its own actions and demands. While participating in the demonstrations in defence of democratic freedoms, the workers should not subordinate themselves to the bourgeoisie, nor organise popular fronts with the bourgeoisie or its parties (APRA, FREDEMO, MAS) and "constitutionalist" coup-makers.

The PC-U, UNIR, PUM, MRTA, Sendero Luminoso and the trade union and popular organisations should implement a workers' and anti-imperialist united front of struggle for resisting the regime.

Down with the dictatorship! General strike! For a national committee of struggle! Abolish the presidency of the republic! For new elections! For a single chamber assembly with full powers! For a workers' and peasants' government!

Nevertheless, not one of these groups is calling for mass mobilisations and a general strike. The United Left is asking the workers to put aside their differences with the bosses of FREDEMO. The PUM went to the Organisation of American States (OAS) to ask for help from imperialism. The MRTA will try to become the armed force of the bourgeoisie's constitutionalist wing. Sendero Luminoso persists in its sectarian attitude against labour organisations while attempting to give birth to a new democratic bourgeois republic.

All the trade unions, popular organisations and parties of the left should form a national committee of struggle, with delegates elected

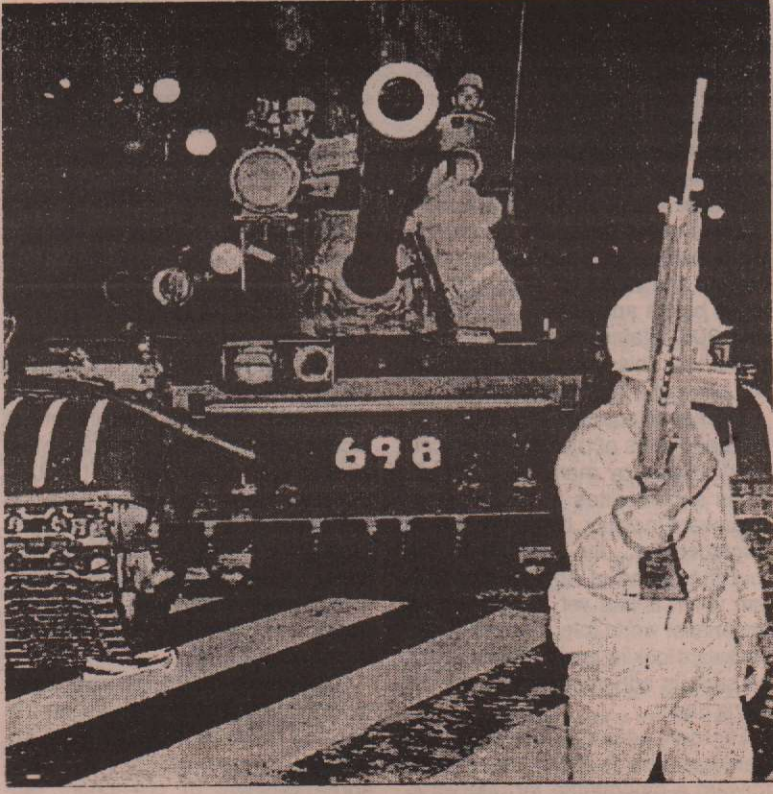
from and accountable to rank and file assemblies, to organise a general strike. The self-defence committees, and Regional Committees of Struggle and Mobilisation, have to reach out towards the people's neighbourhoods in order to centralise the struggle and achieve a great general mobilisation.

Against Fujimori's Bonapartist coup and his closure of parliament, we demand the abolition of the presidency of the republic and immediate elections for a single chamber assembly with full powers, whose representatives should not earn more than the wages of a skilled worker. This assembly should be renewed every year, should be controlled by the popular

organisations and the electorate and should be recallable at the demand of any of them.

Still, this kind of organisation does not overcome bourgeois democracy even if it is the most advanced. In the struggle for it we should unmask the false democratism of the bourgeoisie and reformism, and open the way to the mobilisation and the formation of councils and pickets which can fight for a workers' and peasants' government:

- Clear out the rats' nest of the judiciary. For the popular election of judges. For popular tribunals to punish the corrupt and the murderers.
- For the unrestricted defence of constitutional rights and guarantees. Release all political prisoners. Reinstate autonomy in the universities. Troops out of the universities, trade unions, shanty towns and emergency zones!
- In the light of the announcement by the Chancellor that a new economic package is in the offing, and in the face of the neo-liberal model that unites the government and the parliament, we fight for:
 - A minimum living wage protected against the cost of living rises so as to cover the cost of family expenses!
 - Share out all available work among the workers!
 - The state should provide full pay or work for the unemployed!
 - Stop all privatisations and closures!
 - Demand the reactivation of the enterprises by opening the books! For workers' control!
 - Expropriate the bourgeoisie. Repudiate the foreign debt. For a state monopoly of foreign trade. Build a socialist and planned economy to meet the needs of the workers themselves!



Tanks outside the Congress building in Lima shortly after the coup

Where we stand

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

The first victorious working class revolution, the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, established a workers' state. But Stalin and the bureaucracy destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The corrupt, parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

Internationally Stalinist Communist Parties have consistently betrayed the working class. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist and their influence in the workers' movement must be defeated.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary Communist International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

Abortion Another referendum

THE POLITICAL earthquake following the Irish Supreme Court's ruling on abortion continues. Its March decision was based on an unexpected interpretation of the Eighth Amendment to the constitution, which was supposed to be a water-tight anti-abortion measure. It conceded the right to abortion "where there is a real and substantial risk to the life of the mother"—including threatened suicide.

Now the government is in a legal Catch-22. In December it got the EC to exempt the Eighth Amendment from any right of appeal to European law or the European Court. This means the government itself can't bring in the changes it now needs in order to walk the tightrope between fundamentalists and liberals.

Demands

The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) demands a new referendum to tighten up the Eight Amendment and cancel the Supreme Court decision. The Dáil parties are maintaining an opportunist "consensus", trying to get this fundamentalist monkey off their backs, but equally determined to keep the basic anti-abortion article intact. That means making sure that the problem can still be exported to Britain.

Unfortunately for them, successive Supreme Court rulings now make travel for such purposes, and information or abortion counselling, illegal!

So, they turned to the EC to amend the Irish anti-abortion protocol in the Maastricht Treaty to exclude travel and abortion information from its ambit, but were rebuffed on 6 April by European governments who fear the unravelling of the whole Treaty if any part of the text is reopened.

Two days later the Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, announced instead a referendum to add a new clause to the Irish Constitution to exempt travel rights and abortion information from the ambit of the Eighth Amendment in Irish law. But such information would be "highly regulated". The trouble is, he is asking the opposition and the electorate to take it on trust that this referendum would be held *after* the Maastricht Treaty, containing the reactionary protocol, is voted on in another referendum on 18 June.

Unless he is doing a secret deal with the SPUC lobby—whose leaders are prestigious figures in his own party!—it seems inevitable that the Maastricht Treaty will be opposed by both pro-choice and anti-abortion lobbies on an issue which has no central relevance at all to the Treaty. If the

BY BERNADETTE MULLIGAN

referendum is not carried in Ireland, it blocks the whole European Union project which is fundamental to the economic survival of the Irish ruling class.

The referendum campaign will thus be hard-fought. Already the issue has plunged the pro-choice lobby into confusion. The Repeal the Eighth Amendment Campaign, dominated by feminists, has been paralysed since its foundation on 8 March. Given the small scale of its forces it would have been no problem for the far left to have taken the lead from the start. But the Socialist Workers Movement and Socialist Militant (their new name) have both ploughed their own sectarian furrows while keeping only a token presence in the campaign. Thus it is left under the thumb of feminists whose whole perspective is no more than to trail behind one or other liberal current among the opposition parties, hoping for illusory "reforms".

The campaign leaders narrowly voted to drop "Repeal the Eighth Amendment" from its name but this was repudiated by the local activist groups. They persist, however, in relegating this central goal to the indefinite future or putting it on a par with supporting the immediate legal reforms which the Supreme Court has forced the government to contemplate.

Critical support for such measures, as against the SPUC forces, is an important practical task, but it must be constantly emphasised that such reforms, in the hands of the Irish state, are intended to enshrine the basic anti-abortion position against further pressure for change.

Fought

The Irish Workers Group alone—and openly opposed by PD, the SWM and the feminists—has fought to make a woman's right to choose a positive demand of the campaign by proposing that it call for abortion services to be made free and legal in Ireland, on the health services and on demand to all women.

Given that the ultra-conservative Supreme Court is now compelling the state to legislate for at least some limited right to abortion, the issue of positive abortion rights is posed and revolutionaries must make it part of the practical struggle, however reluctant many activists may yet be to take it up. Anything less will strengthen the slightly modified but fundamentally anti-abortion position of Irish "liberalism" which finds it more politic to export the issue to Britain than to confront clericalist reaction. ■



Sinn Féin Adams unseated

BY JIM LARKIN

CANVASSING UNDER constant harassment by British troops, against a background of year-round censorship, Sinn Féin increased its support in West Belfast from 41 to 42.1% but lost the seat Gerry Adams had held for nine years.

Nationalist Joe Hendron of the SDLP was elected on his third attempt because, according to the experts, thousands of loyalists forsook their own Unionist candidate in order to oust Sinn Féin. And it was the loyalist murder gangs of the UDA and UFF who mobilised this tactical vote which added nearly eight points to the previous 36% that the SDLP commanded in West Belfast.

In the final week of the campaign a Sinn Féin election worker was killed by a UDA death squad in County Derry. At his funeral the anti-IRA bishop publicly condemned the police for harassing the victim and setting him up for the UDA.

Nothing could better underline why Sinn Féin still commands the votes of a third of the nationalist population despite twenty years of the most intensive military and police blanket repression in Europe. Despite the counter-productive guerrilla tactics of their own movement, significant mass sections of Irish nationalists find in Sinn Féin their only champion against perma-

nent national oppression by the loyalist state and British imperialism.

Propped up by a privileged position under the Anglo-Irish accord, the SDLP remains the "great white hope" of the imperialist powers, for tightening the lid on the nationalist anti-imperialist revolt. It remains the party of middle class nationalist support for police and army repression. That is why it continues to attract funds from the US government and constant political support from Dublin and the British Labour Party.

Sinn Féin's support across the province dropped by 1.5%. This was the inevitable result of guerrilla tactics which fail to mobilise the oppressed to organise mass protest and resistance. It was the consequence of a utopian strategy which sows illusions in pan-nationalist unity with the very forces which openly seek to smash the anti-imperialist struggle—the church, the SDLP and Fianna Fáil.

The loss of Adams' seat is a blow, but a small one in terms of the real task, which must be to organise the mass action of the most oppressed, putting their *class* interests at the centre of a strategy against both imperialism and capitalism in Ireland. ■

Irish Workers Group: J Larkin, c/o 12 Langrishe Place, Dublin 1, Ireland

Abortion Information Helpline: (Dublin) 01 - 679 4700

After the tragic death of our comrade Dave Hughes in August 1991 the LRCI launched a Memorial Fund for work in the USSR/CIS. Since then we have received donations totalling £1,722.

With this cash we have been able to provide much needed resources for our work in the former USSR. The money has been used to finance regular extended visits by LRCI comrades to strengthen the work in the CIS. We have produced two issues of a Russian paper, *Rabochaya Vlast*, and have sold hundreds of copies each issue (see opposite).

The Trotskyist Manifesto, programme of the LRCI, has been translated into Russian and published as a pamphlet. We are selling these as quickly as we have printed them and have plans for further print runs.

The money has enabled us to plan an ambitious programme of translation of our theoretical material into Russian, essential if we are to help overcome the ideological confusion that pervades the Russian working class and radical left. With this material we hope to produce a regular

DAVE HUGHES MEMORIAL FUND

journal as a complement to a series of leaflets and news-sheets with which to intervene in the political ferment within the CIS.

In February the LRCI held its first public meeting in Moscow—a debate with the Federation of Revolutionary Anarchists.

With our small forces we have been able to play a part in initiating united front demonstrations, holding joint meetings and giving out leaflets to raise a voice of protest against Yeltsin which is not tainted with Stalinism, nationalism and chauvinism.

All of this means we continue to need money. We believe

it is proof of our seriousness as a revolutionary organisation that, unlike many, we have not simply sat back analysing the collapse of Stalinism in the USSR. We are determined to intervene. We have trained comrades in languages, organised a permanent presence, and demanded self-sacrifice from our militants in order to carry out this work.

Despite the current ascendancy of the capitalist restorationists and the growth of nationalism in the CIS, there are great opportunities for genuine Trotskyism. The LRCI is determined to make the most of these opportunities, but that will take considerable material, as well as political, resources. Our intervention is the most fitting tribute possible to Dave Hughes, and we urge you to support us in this work through further donations to the Dave Hughes Memorial Fund.

Send donations to:
DAVE HUGHES MEMORIAL FUND
c/o LRCI, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX
(cheques payable to Trotskyist International)

Workers Power

15 April 1992

Monthly paper of Workers Power (Britain) Price 40p

IN THE aftermath of Labour's fourth successive election defeat the question is posed point blank: what kind of party does the working class need to turn the tide?

The middle class pundits and Labour bigwigs are queuing up with their plans and proposals for a still more right wing party. Fewer links with the trade unions, fusion with the Liberals, ever more moderate policies—these are the only answers they can muster after 9 April.

The remnants of the Labour left offer a mixture of slightly more radical policies, coupled with vague calls for a return to "basics". By the "basics" they mean the failed politics of Labourism in the seventies and early eighties.

Since 1979 Labour has been calling on workers to hold back all struggles against the employers and their government in order to help Labour get back into power.

Kinnock called the miners' strike a "wasted year" because it distracted the attention of the party and the population away from his attempts to present Labour as moderate and responsible. In the meantime the Tories singled out and defeated militant groups of workers section by section. This led not only to the dissolution of the shopfloor organisation that had been built up in the sixties and seventies, but also to a decline in the numbers of workers in unions.

Fresh

No serious attempts were made to build strong organisation within the new industries and fresh layers of the working class. The result of Labour's right wing electoralist approach has been to make the party less and less electable, as direct identification with Labour has been confined to shrinking sections of the working class.

This will not be won back by any amount of public relations, fresh packaging or more "responsible" policies for running the profit system. The Tory vote has stayed firm because millions of workers believe that if there is no alternative to capitalism, then it should be run by those who best understand and defend that system, the Tories.

The way to turn the tide and win workers to a real alternative to the Tories is to recognise the truth behind what revolutionary socialists have been saying since the days of Karl Marx: ideas change in struggle.

The Tory fourth term will see renewed attacks on the pay, employment rights, conditions and services of the working class. No matter how weak, sectional and isolated resistance may be at first, it is through resistance that ideas can begin to change.

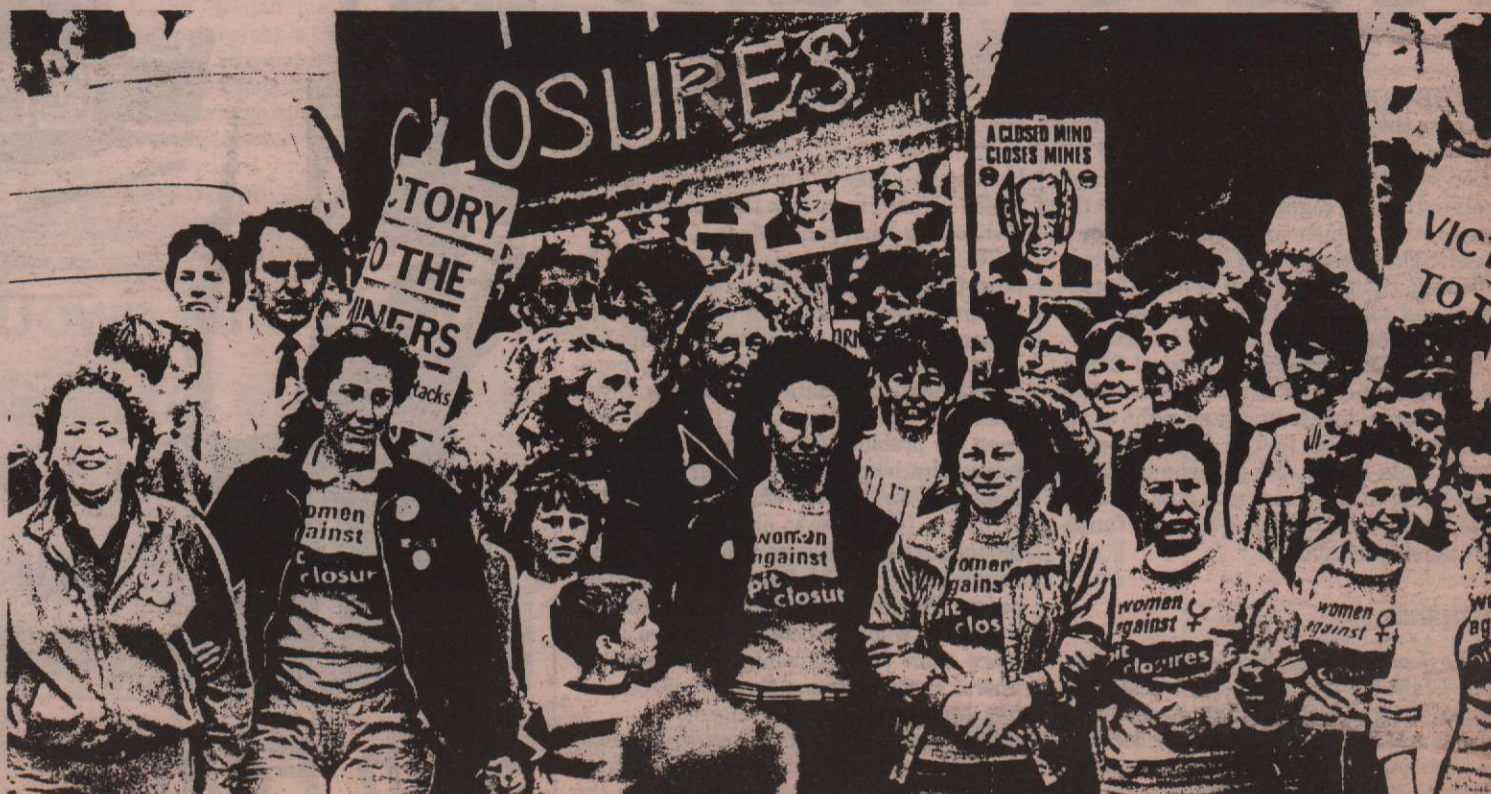
To make the most of that potential we need a party that can organise the fight.

Unions

Labour is set to distance itself even further from association with the unions. What we need is a party that actually organises the militants within the unions to really put them in the hands of their members—not through Tory legislation but through making the unions fighting democratic organisations.

Labour is set to distance itself from the oppressed: black people, women, youth, lesbians and gays can all expect to be sidelined as Labour carries on its search for respectability. What we need is a party that not only takes up the struggles of the socially oppressed but is prepared to help organise them to play a leading role in their own liberation.

Labour's inquest will focus on its taxation programme. Constantly challenged to say where the money comes from for spending on health and education Labour had no answers. We need a party with clear answers: tax the super rich and take away not just part of their income but its source—the vast



We need a new kind of party!

wealth in stocks and shares that allows them to make millions from sitting on their backsides. Then there would be no need to hit the middle class and well paid workers to pay for social spending.

Labour is set to bury even deeper the idea of socialism. We need a party that can explain what socialism means to the huge layer of workers and youth who think socialism died when the statues toppled in Eastern Europe.

We need a party that fights for what workers need, not what the capitalists can afford.

Anybody who tells us that Labour can be turned into the kind of party workers need has got to be joking. Can it organise militant workers in

the factories of the south east to combat rampant Toryism? After Kinnock's purge of activists, in many wards it is lucky if it can organise a jumble sale.

What we need is a new kind of party—a revolutionary workers' party that sets out to change ideas through struggle, that sets out to lead struggles in the workplace and society as a whole, and which allows the voice of the most committed workers and young people to be heard because it is led by them.

A revolutionary workers' party has to be organised with the maximum centralisation to permit the utmost effectiveness in struggle. Look how the bosses used ruthless centralisation to win the class battles of the

1980s. We have to do the same. But we have to combine this with the utmost internal democracy, avoiding bureaucratic or clique domination and enabling the party to be guided by the experience of different sections of the working class and by a scientific analysis of the situation.

We need a revolutionary party most of all because the final goal of our struggle is not to put a set of careerist politicians in Parliament but to put millions of workers in control of their own lives. For that we will have to take on and defeat the power of the police, courts, army and monarchy and replace it with the power of delegate workers' councils. A revolutionary party fights every struggle with the aim of mobilising and preparing for that final goal.

It does this by fighting for a clear programme of demands to meet workers' needs—not just better reforms under capitalism but for measures that advance workers' control and self-organisation.

We need a party that starts from the recognition that the struggle against capitalism is international. Every step along the road of Euro-

pean integration provides further evidence that just as the bosses organise across national borders, so too must the working class. A truly revolutionary party in Britain will have to be built as part of a new workers' international or not at all.

No such party exists in Britain today. The left wing organisations who call themselves revolutionary parties are not revolutionary. Nor are they real parties. A party is an organisation that represents significant forces in the working class. It is a measure of the left's failure to represent and organise such forces that the leaders of these groups are able to squander the energies of their members on one futile opportunist stunt after another without being called to account.

Our aim is to rally the forces committed to building a revolutionary party. The manifest failure of Labour's strategy and the decline of the Labour left give the fight for a revolutionary party a new relevance and urgency. No one is pretending that building it will be easy. But it will be a lot easier than completing the impossible mission of making Labour represent the workers' needs. ■