

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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Tories attack, bureaucrats cringe:

Rank and file must lead the fight!

THE TORIES' post-election offensive is well under way. Throughout the public sector threats of redundancy, the tearing up of nationally agreed conditions, the introduction of individual contracts, work speed ups, and privatisation are spreading like wildfire:

- In the civil service a pathetic pay offer of 4.2% is tied to "merit" payments based on local management's reports on each worker. This virtually scraps national pay bargaining and is part and parcel of preparations to privatise and break up the civil service.
- In the hospitals the new Trusts are steaming ahead, eroding services and trying to get rid of "surplus" workers.
- In the schools and colleges cuts in budgets related to local management and incorporation are leading to a wave of redundancies and rising class sizes.
- On the railways the bosses are pushing through attacks on national agreements covering shift and overtime rates, while on the London Underground "restructuring" threatens 5,000 jobs.
- And things are no different in the private sector. British Telecom is driving through a massive voluntary redundancy programme in preparation for a compulsory one later. In the banking sector the knives are out for tens of thousands of bank worker's jobs, threatened through takeovers, mergers and mechanisation. British Coal continues its onslaught on jobs and pits in preparation for privatisation.

What are the union leaders doing in this situation?

The answer is predictable—nothing.

Having sat around for the last couple of years promising their members that everything would change under Labour, they now have no answers to this offensive. At best they are sitting on their hands. At worst they are actively selling out and sabotaging their



Lambeth colleges all out strike united workers and students

members attempts to fight back. Jimmy Knapp leader of the Tube and rail workers' union RMT has just called off strike action on the London Underground despite a two to one vote for industrial action against the bosses' redundancy plans. And for what? Promises of further negotiations!

NALGO leaders have sold out the Camden Social workers in a sordid back to work deal, while NUT leaders are pursuing conscious delaying tactics, frittering away the anger of teachers threatened with redundancy, playing for time until action is overtaken by the summer break.

The leadership of the bank workers union BIFU, while organising a ballot on a pathetic

2.5-3.5% offer to low paid clerical staff is not even putting the question of industrial action to its members. CPSA leaders overturned a conference decision to reject the pay offer.

Unlike the union leaders rank and file trade unionists have to face the effects of these sell outs every day in the workplace or at the dole office.

Any worker waiting for their trade union leaders to take effective action against these attacks will still be waiting when the next election comes round . . . if they still have a job by then.

The anger of the rank and file must be mobilised to take immediate action. The Lambeth colleges dispute (see p5) shows in a

small way how immediate and all out action can deliver a victory even where the employer claims there just is not enough money to prevent redundancies.

If you strike, you can win. If you leave the bureaucrats in control, or listen to the whingeing of Labour politicians, you will certainly lose. Rank and file trade unionists must immediately set about building militant, cross union organisation in every workplace. We must deliberately set out to overcome the divisions between the executive, clerical and manual unions that exist in many workplaces: divisions often . . . by our own union leaders.

A new cross-union movement of the militant minority must be built to fight every attack, alongside union leaders who support a fight where possible but against them where they sabotage or betray. Such an organisation must not be afraid to appeal for supportive action from fellow trade unionists over the heads of the sell out union leaders.

The anti-union laws which outlaw solidarity action must not only be ignored, they must be smashed. Strikes must become not only work stoppages, but active campaigns to protect the services that the Tories are out to erode and destroy. The energy of the active strikers must be harnessed to mobilise parents, pupils, students, passengers and patients and all users of the public services in a real struggle against the effects of the Tory attacks.

Such a fighting unity can be built now, in struggle. It is the only way to defend jobs and services and defeat the Tory offensive. ■

● Turn to pages 4 and 5

CANARY WHARF Tombstone of Thatcherism

Karl Marx once said that every crisis serves as an unwanted reminder to the capitalists of the mortality of their system. Canary Wharf now stands as a 300 foot reminder that capitalism is both doomed and irrational, writes **Brian Breen**

CANARY WHARF now stands as a flashily designed tombstone to Thatcherism. It was Thatcher who graced the topping out ceremony, taking the opportunity to give a little sermon on what the entrepreneurial spirit can achieve. The late 1980s in Britain was a time of supreme capitalist confidence. The victory of the free market over "communism" seemed complete.

Nowhere did this triumph of the free market seem so total as in the financial sector. The belated deregulation of the financial system, its globalisation, the blossoming of ever more and elaborate forms of financial instruments, the advent of new computerised technology, and above all the merry-go-round of speculation created a huge demand for new palaces of finance.

The Reichmann brothers spotted these developments, saw the growing shortage of suitable modern buildings, and by novel financial arrangements they transformed their company into the world's largest landlord. Whilst Olympia and York were not unique in the game of "spotting the opportunity and finding the means", the sheer scale and daring of their operations put them in a class of their own. Not content with developing existing financial centres they sought to create entirely new ones. They believed they could create one in Docklands to rival the City of London and the West End. The cornerstone was to be the £4 billion Canary Wharf project. But the colossal vision proved to be a mirage. Within the space of two years its collapse was to bring down the far-flung Reichmann empire.

Many factors led to this result. The first was the collapse of the speculative bubble and the end of the period of cheap credit. A deep property crisis unfolded throughout the world. No imperialist centre escaped this though countries like Britain have been hit harder than most. In its turn the biggest victim of the property crisis has been the financial sector.

The Reichmann brothers relied on the banks and speculators to provide money to build offices and then to pay the exorbitant rents they charged. With the end of the speculative boom they were hit from both sides of the market.

There are good reasons to believe that we are experiencing a longer term, non-cyclical fall in demand for property, as demonstrated by the collapse of the Mountleigh property company only days after Canary Wharf. Instead of the apparently limitless credit boom which fuelled the expansion of commercial property, it is time for the repayment of debt. This will subdue activity in the financial sector for the foreseeable future.

Most financial corporations have had their fingers severely burnt and will refrain from the excesses of the 1980s that filled one skyscraper after another with eager tenants. On top of this caution, "globalisation", the buzz word of



the 80s now sends shivers down the spines of the bankers and financiers.

In the 1980s it was the vogue for banks to establish offices in all the major financial centers in order to become world banks. After the losses they made, particularly in foreign markets, these "world-beaters" have all scuttled back to their home centres to concentrate on their core activities.

But there are also reasons pecu-

liar to London that brought about the downfall of Canary Wharf. First and foremost the doctrinal purity of Thatcherite neo-liberal economics meant that the Tories refused to accept any significant state role in the development of the infrastructure. Alongside the Channel Tunnel, Canary Wharf is the biggest testimony to the stupidity of excluding the state from large civil engineering projects. The future of Canary Wharf was put in doubt by

BOMBER HARRIS Hypocrisy on both sides

IN THE same week that Serbia was universally condemned for the mortar attack which killed thirty civilians in Sarajevo Britain prepared to unveil a statue of Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris. As Commander in Chief of Britain's strategic air force in World War Two Harris was responsible for the saturation bombing of German cities.

On 13 February 1945 saturation bombing killed at least 35,000 residents of Dresden—a refugee centre with no military significance. Nobody knows how many refugees died that night. Overall the strategic bomber offensive is estimated to have cost the lives of 250,000 German civilians.

The monument to Bomber Harris has provoked condemnation in Germany and opened up old wounds within the British establishment.

The strategy of indiscriminate civilian bombing was first seen in Europe during the Spanish Civil War, at Guernica. In response to an American call in 1940 Britain gave an undertaking not to use mass civilian bombing. But the so called "precision bombing" of military targets did not work and soon degenerated into

attacks on German cities. When the Luftwaffe hit back in kind the air war in Europe became a murderous attack on civilian populations of both sides.

Nothing better demonstrates the anti-working class character of inter-imperialist war than the famous statement of the theory of mass bombing by Lord Trenchard. Its aim was "to achieve the maximum effect on morale by striking at the most sensitive part of the German population—the working class".

At the same time as inflicting mass slaughter on German workers Harris' strategy was also inflicting it on the conscripted workers in uniform under his own command. Of 125,000 who served in the bombers 56,000 were killed. The 45% death rate rivalled that achieved by the butchers of 1914-18.

The furore in the media over the Bomber Harris statue has the stink of hypocrisy on both sides.

The idea, sold to British workers, that the mass bombing was helping to reduce the Nazi war machine, was a lie. Soon after the war a British military survey found that "the effects on war production of

the terrifying absence of infra-structural support for the project. The "Dinky Toy" Dockland Railway, the postponed road building programme and Tube extension turned the Thames into a virtual moat around the project, making access difficult and demoralising for prospective clients and their workforces.

The Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) which turned this derelict part of the Thames into Europe's largest building site is a corrupt quango designed to ignore the interests of one of London's most depressed working class communities.

Thousands of local working class households then had to endure month after month of nerve shattering noise and health damaging pollution without even the prospect of a future job. Local estates were bulldozed without consultation and the compensation was only sufficient to silence—newspapers from criticising the speculators.

It now seems that all the imposed sacrifices of the local community may have been in vain. A year ago, the report of the borough surveyor found the quality of work in Docklands so shoddy that 50 year old properties in Southwark were in better condition than five year old Dockland ones. Not only did the local community endure the building of Docklands now they have to endure it rotting away.

Canary Wharf is a monument to the shattered illusions of Thatcher's booming 80s. Now it has gone bust, John Major has made it quite clear that he will not pick up the tab. The Jubilee Line extension has been cancelled. The needs of the local working class community for a reasonable transport system never figured in the LDDC's plans, and will count for nothing now.

Canary Wharf could well be left as a gigantic but empty monument to capitalism's irrationality. Perhaps it could be saved from such a fate even at the eleventh hour. Thatcher has toured the globe raising cash for the "Thatcher Foundation" to promote her ideas. She should put her ill-gotten millions, and her Foundation, into Canary Wharf. There she and her disciples could gaze out of the windows over the abandoned building sites and the acres of derelict land and muse on the superiority of free market capitalism.■

BSKYB No dish — no football!

BILL SHANKLY once said: "Football is not a matter of life and death. It's far more important than that." But to the capitalists, not even football is sacred. The Tories tell us that the free market means greater choice, lower prices and better quality. Rubbish! The scandalous deal giving multi-millionaire Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB exclusive coverage of live football shows exactly what the free market is all about: legalised robbery.

Under the deal anyone wanting to see live football on TV will need to pay hundreds of pounds for a satellite dish. This comes on top of the license fee we all have to pay already. Murdoch will set up a special channel for football, and he'll be charging a subscription fee for that as well. So working people will have to pay not once but *three times!*

The Tories' claim that free competition lowers prices is a lie. Competition itself creates monopolies and ever greater stitch-ups. Spurs' chairman Alan Sugar is also the chairman of Amstrad, who make the satellite dishes in the first place. What better way to boost sagging sales than to set up this deal. While he and Murdoch rake in the profits, millions of working class people have to pay through the nose for the privilege of watching the national sport.

Socialists stand for a democratic plan involving the real exercise of choice by millions of working people. In contrast, the market subjects the wishes of millions to the greed and manipulation of a tiny number of parasites. That is why *Workers Power* calls for the power of the millionaires over our lives and even our TV viewing to be broken. We demand:

- Nationalisation of all broadcasting under workers' control without compensation
- Football clubs and the leagues to be put under the democratic control of supporters and players.

town area attacks were slight". Throughout the war a combination of pacifists and the pro-German faction of the ruling class made discreet protests about Harris' strategy. As a result Harris was denied a peerage and the airmen under his command were the only significant section of the armed forces to be denied a campaign medal of their own.

Having done the dirty work for British imperialism they were quietly forgotten because their task in war didn't fit into the culture of war-comic glorification after 1945.

Many of the former airmen and their relatives see the Harris statue as a belated recognition of their sacrifice. But at the same time the defenders of the Harris statue have been adding fuel to the flames of anti-German chauvinism that have been rising since German reunification.

The idea that "all Germans" were responsible for the crimes of Nazism was one of the key means by which British workers were drawn into support for the war. The same idea is being used to justify honouring Harris.

Our movement, the Trotskyists,

called on workers to support neither Britain nor Germany in the war, which was not a conflict between "democracy and fascism" but a war of plunder on the part of rival gangs of imperialist robbers. Trotskyists fought to turn the war between Britain and the Axis into a civil war on both sides, to overthrow the capitalist rulers, whether of fascist or "democratic" stripe, and build workers' democracy and international socialism. We opposed the war not from a pacifist standpoint but a proletarian internationalist one. For doing so we were condemned as "Trotsky-fascists" by Labour and Stalinist leaders.

The leaders of these same parties now shamefacedly claim to be in favour of European working class unity. They join in the tut-tutting about the Harris statue.

We condemn both the statue and the hypocrisy of those who support wars of plunder but without their most barbaric features.

The only way to finally eradicate the threat of mass annihilation which is implicit in modern war is to eradicate the cause—capitalism and imperialism.■

EDITORIAL

Paras out! Troops out!

The Paras are out of control. On that at least everyone is agreed. Even an SDLP councillor was moved to say:

"It was the soldiers on the street that were causing the trouble and the people will want them removed."

On this occasion it is Coalisland, a small nationalist village in Country Tyrone, which is taking the brunt of their fury. Twice the town centre has been sealed off in the search for republican "suspects". Bars have been raided, innocent people dragged out onto the streets and summarily worked over. Three people have been shot in the legs, numerous others have been stopped, interrogated and clubbed with rifle butts.

The Parachute regiment has a long history of particularly vicious sectarian attacks. On Bloody Sunday in 1972 they shot dead thirteen innocent republican demonstrators. They have already been withdrawn once from service in Northern Ireland, because of fears at the reaction they might provoke. The recent attacks on the Coalisland nationalist community are part and parcel of the Paras' tradition.

The decision to redeploy the paratroops is a clear change of policy on behalf of the British state. It is a change provoked by the continuing failure of the state to isolate and defeat the republican movement, and the renewed IRA offensive.

But it is not the Paras alone who are the agents of repression of the nationalist community. The army has made it quite clear that, in their view, the Parachute Regiment is merely taking its turn on the rota of repression. After their first assault on Coalisland the Paras were pulled out and replaced by the King's Own Scottish Borderers. It was the Borderers who created the incident which led to the paratroops returning and, subsequently, shooting into a crowd hitting three people.

The withdrawal of the paratroops would not stop the attacks on the nationalist community, just as the transfer of their brigadier will not. It is the presence

of British troops in Ireland, and their role in oppressing the nationalist community which is the problem. Britain is defending a rotten *status quo*. Since 1921 Ireland has been partitioned in an undemocratic manner, with borders drawn artificially in order to ensure that the nationalists, a majority in the whole of Ireland, remain a minority.

In the sectarian and gerrymandered statelet of Northern Ireland, under direct rule from Britain, the nationalist minority face both the denial of their democratic national rights and systematic discrimination in education, housing and employment rights. It is a problem that cannot be solved without getting the British troops off the streets and out of Ireland, and without self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.

But the concern of the SDLP is not for the right of the nationalist community to be free from the paratroops' terrorism, let alone British rule. Rather, as their leader John Hume described it, it is the worry that:

"If the security forces are attacking innocent people in this way . . . one of the dangers is that they are acting as recruiting agents for paramilitary organisations, and that is very serious."

The SDLP are the party assigned by the British state to divert nationalist protest and struggle along constitutional lines. Their electoral defeat of Gerry Adams by the SDLP in April in West Belfast only succeeded with the tactical voting of the loyalists in the area. It is difficult to conceive of clearer evidence for the fact that the SDLP are not opponents of British rule in Ireland but supporters of it.

Unlike the SDLP, Sinn Fein and the IRA do struggle against the British presence in Ireland. It was a successful IRA attack on the Paras which led to the original incident at Coalisland. For this reason *Workers Power* supports the just struggle of the IRA against the British army. We do not first demand, as a condition for that support, that they adopt our programme or that they renounce forms of struggle

that we regard as counter-productive: our support is unconditional.

But the weaknesses of the IRA's strategy and tactics are also demonstrated by the events in Coalisland. Following their guerrilla attack on the Paras, it was the working class of Coalisland which had to bear the brunt of their revenge, and to bear it undefended.

A workers' defence organisation based in the Coalisland community could have responded to the paratroops' assaults through organising armed self-defence. Through linking that defence to the broader struggle for democratic rights and by campaigning for it throughout the working class of Ireland, they could have brought into struggle the only force with the potential power to get the troops out: the working class.

British workers have a direct interest in opposing Britain's presence in Northern Ireland. What the paratroops do today in Coalisland tomorrow they will do to us, as the clandestine use of troops showed in the miners' strike eight years ago.

As soon as their interests are really threatened, the British bosses will use the training and discipline of their crack troops to restore "law and order". British workers who support the presence of the troops are not helping to protect the nationalists from a bloody pogrom: they are supporting a pogrom which is happening now at the hands of the military.

In the workplaces, in the trade union and labour movement and on the streets, British workers must demonstrate unbreakable solidarity with the victims of imperialist oppression in Ireland. No matter how difficult or daunting a task it may be, they must raise the call for solidarity with all those fighting imperialism, and for the immediate withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland. ■

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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 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!

OUT NOW!

TROTSKYIST BULLETIN

Documents of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International 4.00 (Jan 1992)

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3. Letter to the Socialist Workers' Party USA

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LAMBETH COLLEGES

All out strike defeats cuts and sackings!

BY STUART KING

A STRIKE by over 350 lecturers, librarians, technicians, secretaries and other support staff across the three Lambeth colleges ended with a significant victory in early June.

The two week long all out strike came in response to budget cuts imposed by Lambeth Council which threatened more than eighty compulsory redundancies and massive cuts in courses in the borough's Further Education (FE) sector.

When the implications of the cuts were announced both the lecturers union NATFHE and NALGO balloted for industrial action. Thumping majorities were returned, in NATFHE for "escalating strike action" and in NALGO for indefinite strike action.

After the first one day protest strike and demonstration on 8 May divisions appeared within NATFHE as to how to take the strike forward. The "Broad Left" in the college branches, which included members of the National Executive, argued against all out action, preferring a strategy of "rolling action", a series of one and two day stoppages with the threat of indefinite action relegated to sometime in June.

The third general meeting of all strikers on 21 May voted 167 to 3 to turn a three day strike into all out action. This was endorsed overwhelmingly by all the NATFHE branches meeting immediately afterwards, including those that had previously opposed all out action.

A resolution calling for the setting up of a Joint Trade Union Strike Committee (JTUSC) covering all the unions involved in the dispute had already led to the resignation of the Broad Left Liaison Committee Secretary, Christine Davies. In fact

this JTUSC became the crucial organising and negotiating body in the strike, reporting back to mass meetings of the strikers.

Despite the different rules of the many unions represented in the colleges and the obstacle of the Tory anti-union laws, the JTUSC managed to win strike action from NATFHE, NALGO, APEX and NUPE. Only one section of the school keepers, organised by the GMB, consistently scabbed, crossing the college picket line at Vauxhall.

Most importantly the JTUSC right from the outset involved the

students on 22 May, the day before half term. College strikers were joined by NALGO workers from the Education Department, who voted to strike in solidarity to join the rally and demonstration.

Over two hundred demonstrators blocked the main road demanding to see Steve Whaley the leader of Lambeth Council.

Police had to drag him out of the Town Hall to address the demonstrators in order to clear one of the main arterial roads out of London. Whaley got a rough reception, especially from the students. His refrain throughout the strike was that

Lambeth Tertiary Colleges' governing body.

There was a clear commitment to no compulsory redundancies resulting from the budget cuts, that no viable courses would be closed and that any proposal to close a course would be subject to negotiation with the trade unions.

A guarantee was extracted that the council would make no further cuts to the FE budget despite the Tories latest £4.4 million cut on Lambeth by poll capping. It was agreed that student fees would rise by no more than the rate of inflation. Finally, the council agreed to

meetings, of supplementing and using the strike action to organise lobbies, demonstrations, mass occupations etc are all examples from this strike that can be used elsewhere. Above all the dispute shows the effectiveness of indefinite strike action when compared to one day protests.

Lambeth College trade unions have no intention of letting this victory slip away from them.

They know very well that the new merged college management will be looking to break these commitments when they are faced with organising a new staffing structure and potential budget crisis at the end of this year. But the college unions face this challenge better prepared than ever before.

The Joint Trade Union Committee is being formalised across the new college and within the various major sites. A new and active leadership has been thrown up during the strike based on a renewed and active membership. The small number of hardened strike breakers have been "encouraged" to leave the unions, while many previously non-union staff members have joined up in large numbers, especially to NALGO which played a key and very active role in the strike.

The Joint Unions enter the new college confident and militant, ready for the challenges ahead. ■

The effectiveness of the strike action along with the solid alliance between workers and students delivered a clear victory in the Lambeth Colleges dispute which has many lessons for colleges throughout the country and for all trade unionists.

students and their unions and received overwhelming support. The students played a crucial role in the strike. Despite the fact that exams were badly hit by the action, with no exemptions to cover exam work being allowed by the strikers, the students stood by the action.

Lobbies

A series of lobbies was organised one of which ended with the occupation of Lambeth's Labour Group meeting, another with an occupation of the Town Hall by students.

When the JTUSC went in for its first negotiating meeting with the Assistant Director of Education, his office had been occupied by protesting students! This was followed up by a mass rally and march on the Town Hall by all the strikers and

the cuts were none of his doing, it was all the fault of the Tories! Throughout the strike the demand was made on the Labour Council to stop doing the Tories' dirty work, to refuse to implement the cuts, to join the workers and students in the struggle instead of attacking them.

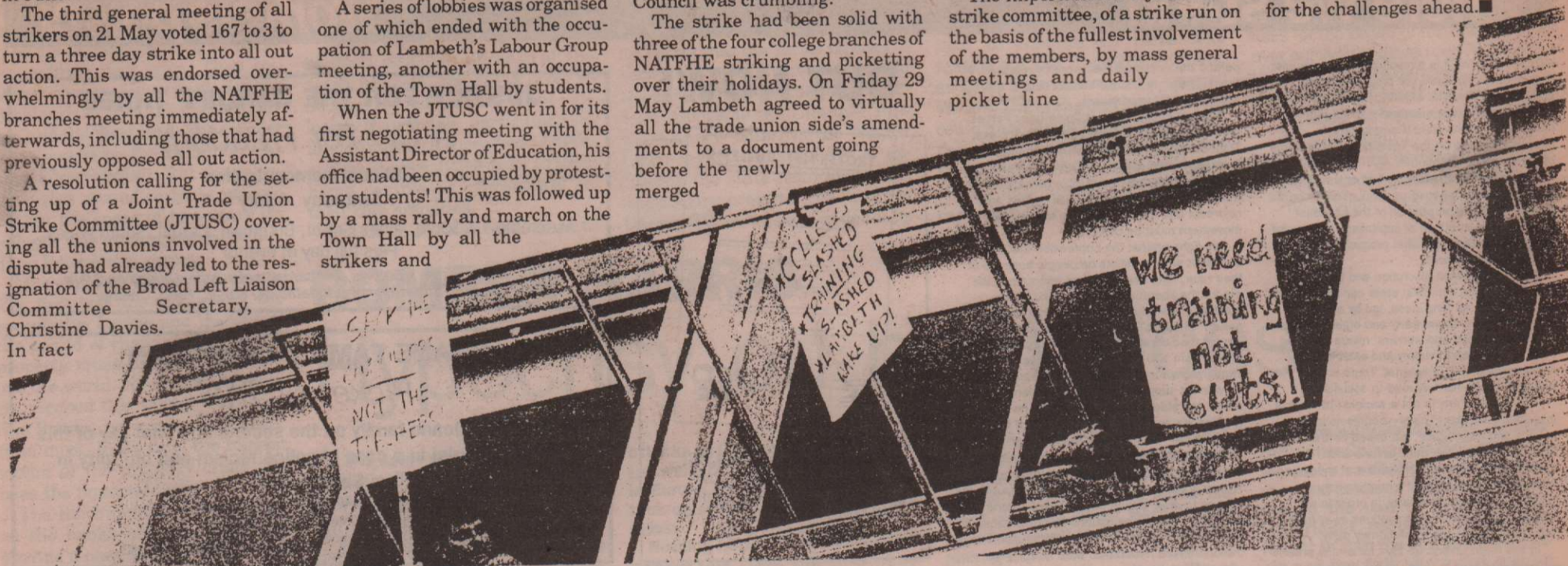
It was clear by the third set of talks on 27 May that Lambeth Council was crumbling.

The strike had been solid with three of the four college branches of NATFHE striking and picketing over their holidays. On Friday 29 May Lambeth agreed to virtually all the trade union side's amendments to a document going before the newly merged

recommend the payment of overtime to clear the backlog of work in the colleges caused by the strike.

The effectiveness of the strike action along with the solid alliance between workers and students delivered a clear victory in the Lambeth Colleges dispute which has many lessons for colleges throughout the country and for all trade unionists.

The importance of a joint union strike committee, of a strike run on the basis of the fullest involvement of the members, by mass general meetings and daily picket line



Students occupy Lambeth Education offices

TWO ONE day strikes by student nurses at the Middlesex and University College hospitals in central London have won important concessions from a management determined to implement vicious job and service cuts. But all NHS staff at the Middlesex, UCH and Elizabeth Garret Anderson hospitals will have to prepare for all out strike action to defeat the job freeze and the plans to cut beds that are still in place.

The background to management's onslaught is its bid for Trust status. Managers sought to rush this through in the wake of the Tories' election victory, hoping health workers would be too stunned and demoralised to resist. So they might have been if they had listened only to the advice of the union leaderships. When, during the election campaign, COHSE members voted for a one day protest strike their leaders declared it ille-

gal and wrote to members telling them to call it off—a classic case of the "wait for Labour" syndrome. Health workers now have no option but to reject this and have shown that they are ready and willing to do so.

However, as the Trust bid was prepared management revealed that the three hospitals were a staggering £19.6 million in the red. Under the NHS Act all hospitals were supposed to be in the black a year ago. In fact the results of the NHS internal market have been spiralling deficits for these specialist teaching hospitals. Quite simply money has not "followed the patient". As well as the result of underfunding the

deficit is a result of massive debts run up by fundholders.

The regional health authority has refused to make available its emergency £10 million fund to cover such situations, and health workers and patients in Bloomsbury are being made to pay the price.

At UCH management closed an orthopaedic ward on the grounds that it needed maintenance work. A day later staff were told it had been shut for good and were all redeployed. At the Middlesex a dermatology ward has closed.

At the end of April management announced a recruitment freeze. The immediate effect of this was that sixty newly qualified nurses found

themselves without jobs and under threat of eviction from their nurses' homes. The two days of strike action won a six month extension on their tenancies and a few concessions giving them priority for agency work and a handful of vacant posts.

This was no thanks to the RCN, the anti-strike so called "professional" nurses union. It put out a leaflet on the day of the strike urging nurses not to strike and to leave the TUC unions. If nurses had listened to the RCN they would be homeless and jobless already. No nurse who cares about the NHS and is prepared to fight for it should be in the RCN.

Now the task is to unite health workers across the three sites, in

particular uniting ancillaries and all unionised nurses in a common fight against the coming cuts package.

Management plans include cutting one hundred beds and further job losses. They already have no chance of achieving Trust status in the "third wave" and in order to balance the books in time for the "fourth wave" in 1994 they will have to inflict more cuts on an already underfunded service. They have gone on record as wanting only one site remaining after trust status—that will mean the loss of over 300 beds.

Health workers plan to picket Downing Street on 2 June, along with representatives from Charing Cross and Whittington and London hospitals where newly qualified nurses are facing the dole as well. They must start now preparing for strike action until all cuts are withdrawn and every newly qualified nurse has a job. ■

London nurses strike!

BR: fight the sell out

THE LEADERSHIP of the railway union RMT has scandalously given the go ahead for acceptance of a deal which will effectively strip 8,000 Signal and Telecommunications (S&T) staff of meaningful trade union rights.

Gone will be national pay bargaining, the right to work agreed rosters negotiated in advance, long standing enhanced shift and overtime rates and conditions of service won through years of activity by militants in the NUR (forerunner to the RMT). These will be replaced by the nightmare of personal contracts, Quality Achievements Schemes (i.e. performance related pay) and unsocial hours at management's behest with greatly reduced overtime pay and shift allowances.

The British Railway Board (BRB)

will now gleefully move their attention to other railway departments where "restructuring packages" are being negotiated one department at a time.

Blame

The blame for this alarming situation must be laid firmly at the door of the RMT's so-called leadership. Over a year ago S&T department staff voted by a five to one majority to reject the BRB's proposals.

Knapp reacted by ignoring the result, refusing to organise a campaign for strike action against the deal, and pleading with the BRB for more (and more) meetings.

The RMT's S&T Permanent Way Overhead Line sub-committee went back to the Council of Executives

and stressed that they could not accept the board's "revised" offer, which has not fundamentally changed despite nearly two years of "negotiations".

But the Executive refused to call for a membership ballot in defiance of the democratically agreed policy decision from the last AGM. Worse, the Executive said that the offer should be "conditionally" accepted—conditional that is on nobody having to sign any new contracts.

What a bloody cheek! These spineless gaffers' narks have spent the last year and more presiding over the ugly spectacle of management tearing up every meaningful collective contract or agreement.

The Executive assured us that they were determined to see that "further negotiations would achieve an acceptable deal". But acceptable to whom? Acceptable to the BRB in its drive to privatise the railways, acceptable to the RMT leadership who would rather talk than fight, but absolutely unacceptable to the rank and file who will have to suffer the consequences for years.

With the ASLEF leadership treacherously announcing in the pages of the latest *Locomotive Jour-*

nal that there is "No ballot, no dispute" on the London Underground, with a 5,000 job massacre in the offing, with BRB and LUL bosses pushing ahead with their respective "restructuring proposals" and "Company Plans" to break the unions prior to privatisation, the rank and file must organise immediately to stop their plans.

Across the industry and across the unions, unofficial national links must be built to lead the strike action which can stop the bosses' offensive.

BR workers must unite to form a national rank and file movement which can root out at every level the timeservers.

RMT workers on British Rail must join with groups like the newly formed Tube Workers' Action Group on the London Underground to fight for the action which can win.

The struggle against "restructuring" and privatisation must be organised in militant rank and file forums and meetings with maximum democracy.

"Watch your leaders" must become the motto of every worker. The rank and file movement must lead the action to win, with Knapp if possible but against him when necessary. ■

CIVIL SERVICE

Turn words into action

THE 1992 conference of the National Union of Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS) met against the backdrop of a two pronged Tory attack in the form of the Treasury's proposals to break up national pay bargaining and introduce further widespread performance pay, coupled with the proposals for privatisation outlined in "Competing for Quality". This goes alongside a derisory 4.1% pay offer this year.

Delegates heard a degree of left talk from members of the National Executive. The same people who, in March of this year, claimed that the best form of industrial action civil servants could take would be to vote Labour, are now calling for significant and widespread strike action to defeat the government's proposals. However, members of NUCPS who are looking to the Executive to lead a fightback should remember that although they were prepared to recommend rejection of the government's pay proposals, their original motion left out the question of industrial action. This was included against their wishes when an amendment was carried calling for specific proposals for industrial action to be included on the ballot paper.

A Broad Left motion which called for a short period of selective strike action to be followed by a ballot for all out strike action before the end of June was defeated, ironically after the NEC speaker had attacked it from the left, arguing that selective action was a waste of time given the scale of the current attack. Of course this was right, but the NEC alternative was only three days of strike action at the end of June to be followed ("if necessary" in their words) by another ballot for further (as yet unspecified) industrial action.

Members should remember a similar rolling programme of action was called off in 1987 with no gains made. Already many London members feel cynical after the momentum built up from the one day London weighting strike on 31 January, was squandered in a vain attempt not to rock Labour's election boat.

The NEC also proposed cutting strike pay to the level of unemployment benefit, which was amended to allow 50% of basic to be paid, and within a document entitled *A Step Ahead* they proposed reducing the size, frequency and duration of the conference. This was quite rightly thrown out by conference as being an attack on union democracy. If any strike action does take place the NEC want to make sure it's not too expensive and cannot challenge their power!

Activists must argue in the round of forthcoming ballot meetings that the Executive should be held to account for their left speeches from the rostrum. Ballot meetings should be used to prepare members for the move to all out action and should stress the need to build alliances with other public sector workers facing similar attacks, such as NALGO. Rank and file members must ensure that the NEC's hesitancy is not allowed to stop the action that can win. ■

● The London Broad Left has organised a public meeting to discuss the developments on pay on Monday 8 June, The Plough, Museum Street, London WC1

● Meanwhile the CPSA conference voted to reject a 4.25% pay offer, but the Executive immediately ignored this decision and recommended acceptance!

JIMMY KNAPP and the leadership of the RMT have sold out London's Tube workers. The leadership had a clear mandate for all-out indefinite action against London Underground Limited's proposals to cut 5,000 jobs. The ballot for action was two to one in favour. The leaders have refused to act on this mandate!

As soon as London Underground offered to negotiate the job cuts instead of imposing them, the RMT leaders announced that they would not call any action. One bureaucrat stated:

"In the ballot, the dispute was over the principle of the right to negotiate."

No it wasn't. The ballot was about the 5,000 job cuts, the proposals for performance related pay and individual contracts—which will mean workers have to re-apply for their own jobs—and the imposition of Japanese style "quality circles".

Every Tube worker knew that they were voting to fight this package. They don't want this package either imposed, or negotiated in by management and the bureaucrats. They want it thrown out altogether, and were prepared to strike for that aim.

By refusing to call action now, and by signalling to management that they

LONDON UNDERGROUND Bureaucrats squander action mandate

will negotiate on this package, the RMT leaders have let the bosses off the hook.

Now they will be able to impose aspects of the package on a step by step basis, confident that the RMT won't re-ballot for action so long as talks are kept going. And they will be able to choose their moment for imposing the job cuts, picking a fight when it suits them.

It is vital that this setback is not turned into a major defeat. In the

months ahead Tube workers will have to fight the imposition of aspects of the bosses' package with strike action, official if possible, unofficial if necessary. Only strike action can make the bosses back down.

To prepare for such battles it is vital that the Tube Workers Action Group, set up earlier this year, builds itself into a powerful rank and file organisation.

It must go on the offensive now to win more and more Tube workers to

its ranks, building on the good work it has done in breaking down union rivalries between ASLEF, the RMT and the TSSA, and uniting rank and file workers from different unions for a common struggle.

It should prepare for action by building links with other transport workers, on British Rail and on the buses.

It must build itself into a movement that can either force the hand of Knapp or launch action in spite of and against him if he won't lead a fight. ■

MSF conference

IN HIS opening address to last month's MSF conference, outgoing General Secretary Ken Gill attacked press reports that MSF had become "a moderate union, in other words a right wing union". On the face of it the conference seemed to vindicate his view.

All the "progressive policies" so beloved of the leadership were kept in place. The scrapping of all the anti-union laws, unilateral nuclear disarmament, defence diversification, full employment, public ownership and the link between the Labour Party and trade unions remained in place. But when we came to discuss how we are to achieve these aims we were treated to the tried, tested and failed answer of "popular" public campaigns.

The MSF leadership were more concerned to make themselves even "more of a super union" as Ken Gill told conference. Merger discussions are currently underway with no less than 24 smaller unions! What

Ken fails to explain is how lumping insurance officers and North Sea oil workers together in a general union can help them fight for their aims. Of course, the leadership have no intention of mounting any militant industrial action.

The limits of the NEC's progressive policies were easily shown over the issue of Ireland. A relatively weak resolution on employment discrimination was rejected when a loyalist veto was exercised by the delegates from Harland and Wolff and Bombardier (formerly Shorts). The Stalinists on the NEC were prepared to support the struggle of South African miners, the defence of Cuba, the Palestinian fight and the democracy movement in Bangkok, but Ireland was a bit too close to home.

A *Workers Power* supporter motivated a composite resolution on anti-racism and anti-fascism which was overwhelmingly carried by conference. It includes a call for "No

platform for fascists", building a campaign in the union and wider labour movement and support for existing anti fascist campaigns. Rather than have an open debate on which campaigns to support, the ANL withdrew their amendment for affiliation in a cowardly manner, despite having a stall at conference! Affiliation to AFA was raised, but as a new campaign to most delegates and without NEC support it was defeated.

All four of the Labour leadership contenders addressed conference. But like the MSF leadership they were all words and no action. Prescott got by far the most applause, including the only standing ovation, for announcing he was "proud to be a trade unionist" but he failed to explain why he was proud to support the anti-trade union laws.

The only organised alternative to the MSF leadership is "Network 90" This is a loose rank and file



Ken Gill: denied being "moderate"

group which includes most of the left like the SWP and *Socialist Outlook*. It has close links with the Socialist Movement, and campaigns for greater membership control and accountability over the union's officers and the NEC. To win any future influence the left will have to fight to put MSF's "progressive" policies into action and lay the basis for an alternative, accountable leadership to the left of the not-so-left talkers on the NEC. ■

Europe in the pink?

PETER TATCHELL'S new book, *Europe in the Pink*, is a mixed offering. It is in part a revised and updated version of his earlier book *Out in Europe*, published in conjunction with Channel Four, which was a survey of lesbian and gay rights in Europe.

The parts of *Europe in the Pink* which update this include extensive notes on recent developments across Eastern Europe and in the former USSR—where a 1991 poll showed 35% in favour of executing all homosexuals!

The book has a very detailed and well documented account of the legal situation in Britain for lesbians and gay men. It also gives a useful summary of the various Europe-wide institutions which affect lesbian and gay rights, in particular the EC, detailing various attempts at passing progressive legislation which positively enshrines lesbian and gay equality in written protocols and statutes. However, the key political element to the book is woefully inadequate as a guide to action for those fighting for lesbian and gay liberation.

Tatchell's strategy is clearly put: "Lesbian and gay demands for the eradication of discrimination from all European countries neatly coincide with [the] trend to closer integration and common action. It's a trend that we can exploit to our advantage. If there is going to be a united Europe we can justifiably insist that it upholds equal rights for homosexuals throughout all its member states." (pg41)

Recognition of the European-wide, not to mention global, scale of the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation is an essential first step for campaigners to take.

Weakness

But there is one overriding and glaring weakness in Tatchell's strategy. The great majority of the EC states are *imperialist* states, savagely exploiting the semi-colonies, restoring exploitation and indeed super-exploitation to Eastern Europe and the CIS. A capitalist United States of Europe would be a new imperialist superpower. Nothing inherently progressive can be expected from it. The EC's emerging policies on immigration and the rights of minorities demonstrates that there is no automatic progressive levelling up process at work. Quite the reverse! Yet Tatchell is full of illusions in the liberal future of an imperialist united Europe. He concludes that "there is the opportunity of a new European enlightenment based on a commitment to military disarmament, environmental protection, social equality, human rights and global justice". (pg11)

Of course Tatchell does not think that this liberal utopia will arrive without any struggle but he poses that struggle in a thoroughly reformist way.

He has a fairly sceptical attitude to the present EC and its institutions pointing to the powerlessness of the European Parliament, the EC's only elected body, to enact legislation. Conversely, he shows the European Commission and the Council of Ministers to be unelected, unaccountable and unhelpful to progressive causes.

The European Parliament has passed five resolutions and reports since 1984 which explicitly call for equal rights in law for lesbians and gay men against discrimination and harassment. All of them have remained dead letters. As Willemien Ruygrok, a Dutch lesbian activist, said of the first of these reports:

"On many occasions, we wrote to the European Commission asking them what they were doing to implement the Squarcialupi Report. Most of the time we got no answer.

Peter Tatchell believes the European Community is the vehicle for progressive reforms on lesbian and gay rights. Sam Lowry disagrees.

The other times, they were always evasive." (pg17)

Tatchell himself admits: "Since there is nothing explicit in the EC Treaties [principally the Treaty of Rome and the Single European Act] about the rights of lesbians and gay men, the Commission insisted it has no legal competence to take action on matters of sexuality." (pg18)

Equal rights clauses in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Social Charter, the International Covenant on

Civil and Political Rights, the Helsinki Final Act and many other fine sounding documents, all avoid making any explicit reference to homosexuality

Therefore, Tatchell's first target is for the EC to give a "liberal" interpretation to the relevant clauses. He recognises the interpretation given is "a question of political will and policy priorities". He notes that the EC primarily sees itself as an economic body, concerned with bringing about a single European market. He rightly points out that the impulse behind

the Social Charter is intended to prevent one country undercutting another through lower wages and production costs—creating a "level playing field" for the bosses in each member state. His conclusion from this is that lesbians and gay men have the best chance of getting action on discrimination in employment.

Tatchell's strategy is explicitly that of a political lobbyist and pressure group activist. He outlines a plan to get a liberal interpretation of existing treaties, the revision of those treaties to explicitly include lesbian and gay rights, the launching of a new EC "equality agenda" and a Europe-wide campaign to lobby for all of these things. The equality agenda would have three key goals: a bill of rights, an anti-discrimination directive (a brief statement of equal rights) and an equal opportunities executive.

Strategy

Yet ironically Tatchell exposes the fundamental weakness of this strategy himself. Tatchell is basically relying on an act of good will from the European bosses.

His whole strategy is geared to attaining some sort of explicit legal equality. This is something revolutionary socialists are in favour of. But real lesbian and gay liberation is not simply about equality being recognised on paper. Since it is integrally linked to the ending of the social policing role of the bourgeois family, to ending the social oppression of women and youth, it can never be achieved on the road of legal reform. The only way real equality is going to be won is through a revolutionary movement

with the real power of the working class behind it fighting for social justice for all those in Europe and beyond.

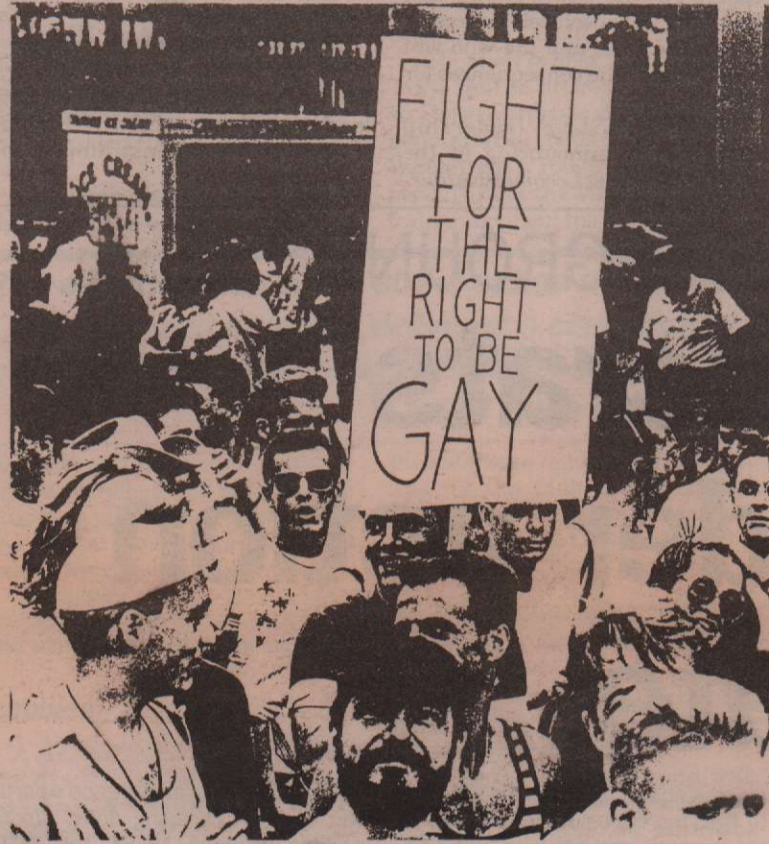
Tatchell estimates that there are 32 million lesbians and gay men plus 48 million bisexuals living in Europe. But he recognises that this is a small minority in a total population of 320 million. He is right to say it is necessary to build alliances with non-lesbian and gay parties and social movements.

However, in the entire book there is only one reference to using the trade unions to fight for equality. and then it is the bureaucratic top of the unions that he wants to appeal to. He wants us to use the TUC "which has comprehensive policy in support of lesbian and gay rights" to put pressure on the EC via the European TUC. Rather than looking to rank and file trade unionists for support we must rely on the good will of Norman Willis!

Tatchell, who was the left wing Labour candidate in the ill-fated Bermondsey by-election of 1983, has clearly abandoned any hope in the organised working class' ability to struggle. His book, while worth reading for its research, leads lesbian and gay activists into the futile strategy of knocking politely on the closed doors and closed minds of the Brussels bureaucracy. This sums up the bankruptcy of liberal "enlighteners".

Militants must look elsewhere for a revolutionary strategy, one based on mass working class action to batter down the gates of European imperialism, creating a workers' Europe pledged, amongst other goals, to full liberation for lesbians and gay men. ■

Europe in the Pink: lesbian and gay equality in the new Europe
by Peter Tatchell
Gay Men's Press, £5.95



Paul Morris reviews
Yardie
by Victor Headley
The X Press £5.95

BLACK GANG leaders fight each other with Uzis in a vicious war over crack dealing territory. Bullets fly, blood flows and life is cheap. It could be the plot of *New Jack City* or *Colours*. But it's set in Harlesden, North London. *Yardie*, a novel by Victor Headley, deals explicitly with the world of Jamaican gangsters operating in Britain's black communities. All over Brixton and Hackney at the moment there are posters advertising the book as "the novel they wanna ban".

The black press has widely reviewed the book, and though giving it a mixed reception, generally acknowledged its accuracy in portraying life at the sharp end for a particular section of black youth in Britain. This accounts for the fact that the left wing and alternative bookshops that stock *Yardie* are selling hundreds of copies a week to black youth.

The book's own publicity blurb calls it "A modern day *Skinhead/Chopper/Suedehead*". Like these cult books of the mid-1970s *Yardie* will be passed from hand to hand in schools and dance-halls and hidden from disapproving parents and teachers. Like its predecessors, unfortunately, much of it is reactionary crap.

The hero is D, a young Jamaican drug courier who turns the tables on his masters and builds his own crack empire in North London; he stops at nothing and respects no-one. But despite blowing away numerous rivals he manages to touch not one

hair on the head of the racist police.

He makes his money and provides himself with a flashy lifestyle through subjecting black youths to the misery of crack addiction. Nowhere are the physical and economic miseries of crack for the users dealt with. Only when the police informer Barry appears, the black heroin addict dealing a white man's drug, are we treated to an account of the effect of heavy drugs on the youth.

D's rival Blue tries to shoot him. In reply D rapes Blue's girlfriend to "send him a message". Throughout, black women are depicted as weak appendages of their men. British born black women in particular are depicted as "too independent" compared to Jamaican women.

Politics

Despite the fact that Britain's black community is alive with political debate and self-organisation politics hardly appears, except for a brief mention of the Jamaican elections which are depicted as little more than criminal gang warfare.

The power of the book, however, and its popularity, come from its extreme accuracy in depicting the lives, language and experience of the Yardies and the youth culture they inhabit. Compared to the racist rubbish and the "concerned" liberal pap that depicts the black experience on

TV it is streets ahead. Reggae "sound-clashes", Jamaican food, the kind of cars people drive and want to drive are all captured in fine detail. As Dotun Adebayo wrote in the *Black Briton*, "Quite simply, Headley knows what time it is". Apparently the book is so accurate that Headley has received death threats from real Yardies!

The world depicted in the book is very "Yard" (Jamaica) orientated. Most of the youth involved are first generation Jamaican migrants. No one in the book works, goes to college or has much contact at all with the world outside the Yardies. The whole story is a clear metaphor for the wider alienation of black youth in Britain.

At the same time it deals with the extremes of criminal activity in a way that gives them an unreal and semi-legendary quality. There is crack in London, but probably not on the scale depicted. There may be Uzis freely available in Hackney, but they are clearly not being used with the regularity Headley depicts.

As well as depicting, for once accurately, the lives of black youth it also bluntly explains why the Yardies exist and what drives them to crime. In the words of Piper, the pacifist dread philosopher:

"Society spoil dem because it show dem dat money is all dat matters. Yet at the same time, education is set up in a way dat mek dem feel it is of no value to dem. Imagine, a youth see a

man who have a criss car, jewellery and nice clothes and him know seh is not work and education the man get it t'rough. You no feel seh the youth will want to do the same t'ing dat man do fe get money?"

The book shows how a decade of imperialist imposed austerity has undermined solidarity in the Kingston working class communities, turning a minority of youth towards the drug trade: "Hear dis, if you grow up poor in Jamaica, with no education, drugs is the only t'ing that will take you out of the trap. Either you take your chance or you stay and suffer" says one youth. It charts the decline, throughout the last decade, of African history and black consciousness in the lyrics of the reggae MCs and their replacement by a message extolling drugs and violence.

Outrage

The predictable outrage of community leaders and the police about the book should lead nobody to try to ban it. It deserves, far more than any episode of *Neighbours* or *Coronation Street*, to be studied in schools and GCSE classes. If it depicts a bleak world with a bleak outlook it is only saying what thousands of black youth feel.

But there is a way out of ghetto poverty other than drug dealing: that is the fight to destroy poverty, imperialism and racism once and for all. It is a testimony to the failure of the left and the workers' movement—in Britain and Jamaica—that it is the dead end world of the Yardies, and not a story of collective struggle, that has become the latest symbol of black resistance. ■

Yardie

FIGHTING TALK

Anti-fascism on the box

LAST MONTH viewers of BBC2's *Open Space* got the chance to see a documentary with a difference. Instead of the usual liberal treatment of the questions of fascism and racism, a whole half hour was given over to supporters of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA). The programme *Fighting Talk* was an incisive exposure of the activities of fascists in Britain today and a militant call for direct action, including physical confrontation, to stop them.

The great strength of the programme was that AFA speakers and interviewees consistently identified fascism as a class issue. The narrator, Menzie, of the band the Angelic Upstarts, pointed out how young white people from working class communities are prey to the radical and divisive racist or sectarian rhetoric of the fascists. He explained why we need a class movement able to represent the common interests of working people as an alternative both to the failures of official politics and the radicalism of the far right. He showed how the fascists, far from being the authentic voice of working class people, are in fact the mercenaries of the rich. On free airtime from the BBC that's not bad going!

The video contained interviews with veterans of the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, when workers, the left and the Jewish community of the East End joined to stop Mosley's British Union of Fascists from marching through their area. The need for physical confrontation was established beyond doubt, as one woman veteran told of how most of the fighting at Cable Street was between the anti-fascists and the police, who were determined to allow the blackshirts to march.

Another excellent contribution came from Mickey Fenn, whose role as a leader of militant Tilbury dockers was unfortunately not mentioned in the film. Mickey spelt out clearly the lessons of successful physical confrontations with the National Front in the 1970s. As he put it, after everyone assumed that the fascists had disappeared following the battles of the 1970s, the



BNP election rally: AFA video spells out uncompromising No Platform message

problem did not go away for Asian families in the East End. They have borne the brunt of racist violence in the form of brutal assaults and fire bombings as the fascists have begun to regroup and consolidate. Excellent use was made of comments from the boxer Terry Marsh, who spoke out with a clear class-based appeal for opposition to the BNP.

The programme gave a generally accurate picture of the state of the campaign and of AFA's present activity. There was footage of AFA members leafletting estates in Rochdale to cut off the fascists potential support, a school visit and talk by AFA on the lessons of Cable Street and an AFA-organised physical challenge to an NF paper sale in Bermondsey.

The video chronicled the failure of the organisers of the Thamesmead demonstration to physically confront the BNP march and how this emboldened the BNP, leading to their successful challenge to the subsequent anti-racist march in Bermondsey (see WP 146 September 1991).

A classic ruling class response to the programme came from Peter Paterson of the *Daily Mail* on 19

May. In a review entitled "A BBC platform for thuggery?", Paterson could scarcely conceal his outrage—not only at AFA's clear appeal to smash the fascists, but also at the very fact that young working class people were being allowed a voice on TV.

He spluttered that the narrator was "a burly ruffian with a thick Geordie accent, a leather jacket and a woolly hat of the type worn by football supporters". These outpourings were accompanied by a photograph of Mr Paterson, from which it is apparent that he is a burly parasite with a plummy Oxbridge accent, wearing a white collar and tie of the type worn by Tory sycophants.

Not content with sneering at the overwhelming majority of the population for having working class accents and liking football, Paterson went on to lie about the contents of the programme twice in the space of a couple of hundred words.

He claimed that the narrator had spoken of confronting the fascists with "political force" as an evasive way of avoiding AFA's true intentions. In fact the speaker said "physical force" without ambiguity. But Paterson also went on to say

that "woolly-hat" denied that Jews in the thirties had been as badly attacked as the Asians in Britain today. In fact, it was an elderly Jewish participant in Cable Street who said that the Jews had not suffered the same scale of attacks—she mentioned fire bombings as an example—and said that it was mainly because the young Jews were well organised.

Predictably Paterson ended his lying piece with a scarcely-veiled call for air-time for the BNP. All in keeping with the general tenor of a paper that ran the headline "Hurrah for the Blackshirts!" in the 1930s.

There were weaknesses in the programme however. Fans of Glasgow Rangers were over-identified with loyalism, which one speaker himself went so far as to describe as "a parochial form of fascism". There were also not enough voices of women and black people, and no mention at all of attacks by the fascists on lesbians and gays, who have been the target of vicious BNP campaigns.

One AFA speaker overstated his exasperation at the refusal of the Anti-Nazi League to confront the fascists physically seeming to be

opposed to chanting anti-fascist slogans, carrying placards and involving teachers in the movement. In fact, we need all of these things alongside and within the physical challenge. Menzie at one point even said that AFA "is not a protest group". This is the sort of statement that might go down well with those within AFA who want to reduce anti-fascism to physical challenges alone. But in fact we need a protest movement to mobilise the broadest possible forces within the working class, and to win them to direct action against the BNP.

This was the greatest weakness of the programme. Although Menzie referred to AFA's role in calling demonstrations and a range of public activities, the film failed to draw attention to the range of affiliations and support that AFA has won from trade unions, trades councils and political organisations of the working class movement. It is only by building the broadest possible unity in action of all working class organisations that fascism can be defeated in those areas where it is developing a base. With almost all AFA activists' faces being blacked out, it was not explained that this was simply to avoid fascist reprisals—creating the impression of AFA as some sort of underground movement rather than a vibrant public campaign.

Overall the programme was an excellent antidote to the usual hand-wringing democratic responses to fascism that we get to see on our screens. The video should be shown in every school, college and trade union where fascism is being discussed.

If you agree with the arguments outlined in the video, then join Anti-Fascist Action. As Terry Marsh said: as the mainstream parties move to the right, the void needs to be filled by a new left party or the fascists will grow amongst the youth. Workers Power builds AFA and fights for this strategy as part our work to build the nucleus of a new revolutionary workers' party. When we bury the bosses' system, we'll be burying fascism for good. ■

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BASIC INSTINCT

Basic ideology!

BASIC INSTINCT, the chart topping film in Britain and the USA, is about sex and violence. Nothing unusual about that. But it is also the latest in a string of big-budget Hollywood releases which are ramming home a reactionary message for the 1990s. The permissive society of the 1960s and 1970s has, it is suggested, gone too far. A new culture of female independence, sexual promiscuity, homosexuality and hostility to the established model of family is undermining the very fabric of society; that is the message of *Basic Instinct*.

The treatment of women's sexuality in film is an important indicator of attitudes in society as a whole. Of course mainstream cinema, as with all other media, closely follows the prevailing ideology in society—the ideology of the ruling class. Women in film are largely portrayed as vulnerable, weak, dependent on men both sexually and socially. But from the 1960s onwards more liberal attitudes began to make an appearance.

By the mid to late-1980s the pattern was changing in line with the moral backlash under Reagan. In *Fatal Attraction*, a well adjusted male yuppie has casual sex with Glenn Close. Her sexual obsessiveness is rapidly transformed into a murderous assault on the hero and his idyllic young family. She makes it

abundantly clear that he will not be allowed to have his fun in a one-night stand and then walk away without taking the consequences. In a clear metaphor for the threat posed by HIV, Close's character became the virus, endangering and undermining her victim's career, relationship, security.

Promiscuity equals breakdown of family equals death was the message. The film may have been a crude attack on sexually liberated attitudes, but it was no less effective for it.

Michael Douglas, the hero of *Fatal Attraction*, returns as the main character in *Basic Instinct*. He is again confronted by a female killer with an interest in extra-marital sex.

A series of coital murders are graphically displayed, although the sex and violence are only rarely gratuitous given that they make up the very theme of the film. Douglas himself gets his kit off as the menopau-

Dave Green reviews
Basic Instinct
by Paul Verhoeven

sal killer cop assigned the job of tracking down the murderess. Prime suspect is Sharon Stone, a rich writer/top psychology graduate who lives in a fantastically opulent apartment and is in league with a sinister older murderess who exerts a strange power over her.

The film is notable for its treatment of female bisexuality. When I saw it, the first embrace between Sharon Stone and her lesbian lover brought groans of disgust from around the packed cinema—but the voices were all female. The men in the audience were silent, settling down to watch a scene designed for their titillation rather than as a positive representation of sex between women.

In the USA lesbian and gay organi-

sations have picketed the film, wrongly seeking to impose censorship because of the manner in which lesbianism is portrayed. But opposition to censorship should not prevent socialists from recognising the virulently anti-homosexual prejudices that the film peddles.

When Michael Douglas addressed Stone's jealous lesbian partner "man to man", the Streatham Odeon exploded into cheers and laughter. Lesbians in the audience must have been sickened and terrified at this public abuse.

All this follows hot on the heels of *Silence of the Lambs*, in which the deeply sick serial killer is... a gay male transvestite. No matter how many Hollywood directors solemnly swear that their villains "just happen" to be gay, the message is clear. Whilst all statistics indicate that a tiny minority of sexual attacks and murders are carried out by gay men, and still fewer by lesbians,

the most powerful film industry in the world is persistently suggesting the opposite, linking homosexuality to criminal violence and mental illness.

Basic Instinct attempts an ambiguous ending. As the closing credits go up, you may still be wondering which of the film's four female bisexual promiscuous maniacs was the criminal. If you're sensible, you may not care.

But at the level of ideology, the film is unambiguous. Women's independence, free choice of sexual partners, sex for pleasure instead of procreation, women's control over their own bodies: all of these signs of human progress become threatening, criminal and perverse rather than liberatory and enlightening.

Overall, the film is an attempt to convince its mass audience that the spiritual malaise of US society is related not to economic decline, to abundance in the midst of poverty, to formal equality alongside sexual oppression and violence. Instead it attributes it to the liberation of lesbians, gays and women.

The film certainly gives us images of "strong" women. But it is a strength that warps and destroys, not liberates. You don't have to be a prude, support censorship or pretend not to have enjoyed *Basic Instinct* to recognise it as a thoroughly reactionary film. ■

AFTER THE LA RISING

“UNDERCLASS” WAS the word on every US media commentator’s lips following the Los Angeles uprising. J K Galbraith, guru of American liberalism, commented on the irony of this in a society that prided itself on being “classless”. But there is nothing in the idea of a modern “underclass” that contradicts the myth of the “classless society”. They are myths that reinforce each other. For the apologists of modern capitalism the “underclass” is precisely a stratum that has fallen out of “the classless” society, an alien minority, a problem with no solutions.

At the same time the underclass myth conveniently allows the capitalist media to ignore or sideline racism. Pointing to black middle class opponents of the rioting and the Korean victims of the looting, *Newsweek’s* Tom Morgenthau claimed that, “much of the spluttering national debate over race is outdated . . . The truth is, there is no such thing as ‘black’”.

How convenient. Perhaps there is no such thing as excluding black people from juries either!

In rejecting the myth of the “underclass” Marxists do not deny the existence of the ghettoised urban poor. In pointing to racism as the root cause of the misery and brutality of life in urban black America we do not ignore the existence of a black middle class, or of white rioters.

To understand the real relationship between social deprivation, racism and the uprisings we have to understand the role of racial oppression in capitalist exploitation.

The majority of African-Americans, and the majority of Latinos, like the majority of black people in Britain, are part of the working class. But, as a consequence of their racial oppression, they are a particularly discriminated against and disadvantaged section, more often jobless, homeless, confined to poor jobs and dilapidated housing and denied full political and social participation. A key task for those who wish to lead the working class to victory over capitalism is to challenge this position and ensure that the oppressed take their rightful place, not only as part of the struggle of all the exploited, but as an essential part of its leadership.

The Los Angeles uprising was first and foremost a protest against racism. The original assault on Rodney King and the jury verdict which absolved the police attackers, were plainly manifestations of social oppression—not simply of individual racist attitudes, but of state racism and of the unequal position of black people in US society.

Systematic oppression is a part of capitalist social relations—functional for the most part to the capitalist class’ exploitation of the working class as a whole. Racism divides black and white workers and has been used consistently by the US bosses to break the unity of US workers. It is rooted in the imperialist system of exploitation which survives on virulent nationalism and chauvinism.

Although racism is an inevitable part of modern capitalism there are times when aspects of it are disruptive to bourgeois society. Such a phase occurred after the militant phase of the civil rights movement and the Watts riots of 1965.

During this period the ruling class saw important sections of the black working class taking to the streets to protest against their racial oppression and social conditions. They

The recent events in Los Angeles have led bourgeois commentators and academic “Marxists” to brush up the old concept of an “underclass”. **Lesley Day** and **Colin Lloyd** argue that this idea is not only useless for analysing the class structure of the US urban centres but is a positive diversion from the search for a working class solution to the crisis of the US inner cities.

The myth of the underclass

feared that a growing radical black leadership, such as the Black Panthers, calling for armed struggle and “revolutionary solutions” would connect with this movement. US political leaders pursued a dual strategy to prevent this. Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society” programme was designed to encourage the expansion and integration of a layer of middle class black people who would in turn act as leaders and pacifiers of the black majority. At the same time state funds were pumped into equal

opportunities policies and urban programmes to promote an improvement in job opportunities for sections of the black working class, counteracting alienation and militancy. The other side of their strategy involved isolating, persecuting and murdering the leadership of the Black Panthers and other radical black organisations.

They have succeeded in creating a black middle class. By 1989, one out of seven black American families had incomes exceeding \$50,000

annually, compared to less than \$22,000 for the average black household. The creation of significant numbers of black political leaders, academics, holders of public office and so on, is another aspect of this development.

But for the black working class things have got worse. What US capitalism could do in a period of expansion in the 1960s was impossible to sustain in the recession hit 1970s and 80s. Not only have these policies been unable to provide new jobs but the recession has led to the destruction of swathes of blue collar jobs including those of black workers. The unemployment rate amongst black workers has risen even faster than that of whites. Meanwhile their income levels have fallen. In 1975 the average annual income of blacks was 63% that of whites, by 1991 the figure had fallen to 56%.

At the same time, budget cut-backs and the policies of Reagan and Bush reversed the urban programmes. The situation in the city centres became particularly acute for the 60% of impoverished black people living in inner city areas.

Countless statistics reveal the existence of racial oppression—higher unemployment amongst blacks and Latinos, higher infant mortality rates, less favourable treatment in the courts.

Racial oppression is not just a set of attitudes, it can survive the eradication of specific racist laws. It exists through countless social structures. One of its chief functions, as

with the oppression of women and youth, is to provide capitalism with a stratum of second class citizens to do the menial jobs or rot on the dole on minimal benefits when capitalism doesn’t need them.

The emergence of a middle class or even a black bourgeoisie stratifying the black community, does not in any way spell the progressive eradication of that oppression. Jews, the racially oppressed scapegoats of a crisis wracked European capitalism in the 1930s, included hundreds of bourgeois families as well as millions of workers and artisans. That did not stop the racists from turning against all Jews when capitalism’s survival demanded scapegoats for the crisis and pogroms and genocide.

The massive proportion of black people amongst the urban poor, the unemployed and the low paid is testimony to the fact that racism exists. But it is exactly this which also leads academics and media pundits to label the majority of black people in the USA as part of an “underclass”, mainly defined by economic position, encompassing the dispossessed both white and black, the unemployed, rarely employed and long term poor.

Why do Marxists reject this concept? In the first place, because it suggests that the urban poor and the majority of black people are not part of the working class but rather some “special” category. Secondly, because it leads directly to political



Racist cops in LA

answers which reinforce both poverty and oppression and diverts attention from the root cause of the problem—capitalism, and the need to overthrow it through a workers' revolution.

The very term "underclass" is inexact, especially as it is often prefixed with the words "self-perpetuating". Many of the officially classified poor are low paid workers, others are in and out of work. Even the long term unemployed and poor remain part of the proletariat. When out of work they retain the essential class characteristic: they have no property to support themselves with, nothing to sell except their labour. Throughout capitalism's history there has existed what Marx and Engels referred to as either the reserve army of labour or the "surplus population". Capitalism can never provide secure employment for all its workers.

The reserve army takes on different proportions and forms at different stages of capitalism's history—whether the huge swathes of the newly urbanised poor in Victorian England, migrant workers in modern Europe, or the millions still flocking into the shanty towns of third world cities making up the so-called "informal sector".

The US urban poor is part of such a reserve army of labour, swollen by factory closures and migration. It is the "surplus population" of a declining imperialist power, with declining profit rates, cut-backs on public expenditure and welfare, and one where racist oppression is particularly rooted.

The gap between rich and poor grew in the USA in the 1980s as it did in Thatcher's Britain. Thus for many, exclusion from work and social life is a daily and continuing reality. So whilst we reject the "underclass" term we have to recognise the phenomenon of the growing surplus population in both the imperialist countries and the semi-colonies. We have to fight for the proletariat to adopt aims and methods of struggle which can draw this layer into full participation in its ranks.

The reserve army of labour is not an homogeneous "underclass", it is itself stratified. For some families, existence in the reserve army is a fairly temporary phenomenon. They live in areas or have resources which give a chance of recovery. For others, and this is particularly true in the urban centres of the USA at present, there are few opportunities for escape. A part of this section sinks into the "lumpenproletariat".

It is well known that Marx and Engels wrote about the "lumpenproletariat" as a "dangerous class" and a "passively rotting mass" who could easily be used by reactionary politicians.

In assessing the character of the LA uprising it is important not to confuse the lumpenproletariat with the much larger reserve army of labour. It is equally important not to deny that the lumpenproletariat exists out of some liberal or romantic view of the inner city uprisings.

Whole sections of the reserve army are criminalised by their lack of other ways to survive and by the activity of the state. This process has been particularly pronounced during the last period of US imperialism's economic crisis, by the "war on drugs".

Ignoring the miserable quality of life that induces young people to take drugs as a means of escape, and turning a blind eye to the key capitalists who run the drugs trade and get away with enormous profits, the US state has targeted the young users and petty street dealers. It



Unemployed black people in Los Angeles. Only working class struggle holds the solution to liberation.

has declared war on black and Latino communities in the name of the fight against drugs, but with the direct aim of repressing the youth in these potentially explosive ghettoised communities.

In response to this, criminal activity amongst the urban poor, particularly in Los Angeles, has assumed a developed gang organisation for the purposes of protection against both the police and rival gangs.

While it is true that many working class youth pass through the gangs and into normal employment, the criminal gang is a lumpen form of organisation, based on a highly distorted notion of collective solidarity. At the centre of a criminal gang's networks sit the gang leaders whose role in the drug and sex industry makes them in reality

lumpenproletariat. Indeed the intention of the most politically conscious black activists from the Black Muslims through the Panthers, to many of today's socialist and black separatist activists, is to prevent this lumpenisation.

Revolutionary communists argue in the ranks of the organised working class for a programme which addresses the need of those oppressed both by racism and poverty. At the same time we campaign vigorously within the most political and militant sectors of the oppressed and poor for working class forms of struggle.

Our answer to racist juries, racist policing and lumpen gang warfare is the imposition of working class order in our own communities. Quo-

and middle class. This is quite deliberate. The National Guard is there to defend the bourgeoisie and its property at home against the workers. It is a strike-breaking force where it is needed and is there to repress expressions of outrage, riots and looting.

When spontaneous risings of the oppressed take place all workers should defend the oppressed against the state repression meted out. We seek to organise resistance to state repression, win organised workers in the factories to solidarity strike action, and to channel protest into mass demonstrations and the organised defence of working class areas. Revolutionaries fully understand why looting takes place. We do not condemn it. At the same time we do not advocate it or glorify it. It is a dead end. It is an illusory and

measures at work and in the trade unions.

- The building of caucuses of black and Latino workers at work and in the unions.
 - For the organisation of the unemployed. For a massive unionisation campaign, financed by the AFL/CIO, amongst the unemployed. For the unemployed to receive full rights within the unions of their choice at reduced rates.
 - Disband the National Guard and all special police forces. Get the police and armed forces out of black/Latino areas and support the right for black self-defence.
 - No restrictions on the right to bear arms.
 - For weapons' training for all workers and unemployed under workers'/community control. For the building of a working class led community militia that can defend the communities from police repression and stand as an alternative to the rule of the streets by the gangs or other criminals.
 - For a workers' tribunal to try and decide on punishment for all the police officers involved in the Rodney King affair.
 - For workers'/community courts to deal with all cases of police brutality and racist violence, as well as anti-social and criminal activity.
 - Drop all charges resulting from the protests against the Rodney King verdict. For the immediate release of all those arrested during the riots
- North American capitalism is in decline. Alongside the miracles of modern technology virtual third world conditions of health and housing exist for millions. The only answer is a workers' revolution. Workers in the USA have to break from the open bosses parties, and from trade union and black community leaders who encourage dependence on these parties. They have to form their own workers' party around a revolutionary programme for the overthrow of capitalism. The tradition of militant black struggle, a tradition born before the American workers' movement itself, will ensure that black Americans take their rightful place amongst the leaders of the fight for that party. ■

In rejecting the myth of the "underclass" Marxists do not deny the existence of the ghettoised urban poor. In pointing to racism as the root cause of the misery and brutality of life in urban black America we do not ignore the existence of a black middle class, or of white rioters.

small-time bosses, a semi-legal part of the petit bourgeoisie.

As a form of organisation the criminal gang can only be superseded, and permanent lumpenisation of whole communities avoided, if working class collective organisation penetrates the communities and demonstrates its value. Calls for more policing, crackdowns on prostitution and drug dealing, and patriarchal charity work by the churches and the bosses are no solutions to the problems and are a diversion from the real solution which lies in working class self-organisation in the inner-city.

This means that working class organisations must be built that can both advance effective struggles to secure collective goals and practically help the urban poor through working class controlled social centres, benefits advice, physical defence etc.

Black male youth in particular are the victims of lumpenisation and criminalisation. More of them are in jail than are in further education. But the majority do not permanently join the ranks of the

tas on juries, the election of black judges, mayors and police chiefs might ensure that particular outrages like the King verdict occur less frequently. But they will not eradicate the social conditions that spawned the police attack on Rodney King, nor that fuelled the response of the black community.

Ghetto policing does not just mean a repressive police force. It means that for whole sections of the community there is no effective police force, and no rule of law. Armed crackdowns go alongside day to day rake-offs and deals between police and criminal leaders and agreed "no go" areas where the community is left to the mercy of the criminals and gangs.

At the same time the National Guard is testimony to the racist nature of the US state machine. The regular army, recruited from the dole queues and sent to the Gulf, Lebanon and Central America to die for Uncle Sam contains over 30% black and Latino soldiers. The National Guard—the organised expression of "every American's right to bear arms"—is overwhelmingly white

temporary redistribution of wealth, often from shopkeepers only one step above the working class themselves. Often it destroys jobs as well as property.

The inner cities of the USA do not contain a hopeless "underclass". They contain oppressed and exploited workers. US politicians are right to wring their hands in impotence. Declining imperialism has no answers. But there is a working class answer to poverty and oppression. US workers, black and white, have to fight now for:

- A massive programme of public works under trade union control to rebuild the inner cities and give jobs to everybody, funded by a tax on wealth.
- No to work-for-dole or New Deal schemes which pay slave wages.
- Free state health care available to all at the time of need.
- For a massive expansion of state education and nursery provision. No to the education credit/voucher systems. No state subsidy for private and religious schools.
- The enforcement of anti-racist

Leaders of over 120 countries, surrounded by rock stars and the world's media, assemble in Rio this month to discuss what can be done to reverse the greenhouse effect and the depletion of the ozone layer. But the only significant effect the Earth Summit will have on the environment will be the emission of a great quantity of hot air, writes **Keith Harvey**.

Earth summit solves nothing

THE EARTH summit is unlikely to save the planet. Its main aim is to bolster the reputation of those in attendance. This won't include Carlo Ripa di Meana (the EC Environment Minister) since he believes it will produce "words, rather than binding obligations and precise understandings". This is exactly why George Bush will attend.

The summit will discuss items such as global warming and third world development without making any positive commitments. Such cynicism is appalling when it is projected that at present rates:

- all accessible rain forests of West Africa, South East Asia and Central America will have been cleared by the year 2000
- temperatures will rise 1.7°C by 2025 with rising sea levels potentially submerging whole areas
- the ozone layer will be depleted with a resulting increase in skin cancers and other incalculable effects.

What should workers do faced with these developments? First, it is necessary to understand that these developments are not the consequence of "industrialism" or "consumerism" in and of themselves. They are the product of a specific historical set of social relations of production—capitalism.

Capitalism is a social system that does not produce according to the needs of the population or with an eye to the long term possibilities lodged within the eco-system.

Production is driven by the need for profit. This can have a direct or indirect effect on the environment.

Take deforestation as an example. Twenty million hectares of forest every year (about the size of Wales) is devoured by logging companies for commercial gain. But in fact some 60% of rainforest destruction occurs as a result of peasant land hunger. They have been driven off their former land by profit hungry capitalist farmers, cattle ranchers for example in Latin America, and forced to clear the forests to scrape a living.

Capitalists are, by material interest, indifferent to pollution and depletion of raw materials. To make these a concern would be to increase production costs and threaten profit margins when competitors face no such compulsion. This makes the individual capitalist complacent and short-sighted about the environment.

Process

The state does intervene into the process—usually under the pressure of the working class and the middle class—in order to enforce rules that impede the reckless destruction of the environment by the bosses and impose general conditions on them all for their own good. But if such intervention threatens the capitalists' ability in general to make a profit it will not happen.

This explains the central fact about Rio that can be predicted in advance. It will commit the world's imperialist governments to doing precisely nothing. Because to remove the social conditions which drive individual capitalists and peasants to destroy the environment would remove the source of profits. In particular third world debt, which is a massive impulse for the wasteful exploitation of natural resources and for land hunger, will not be discussed.

In addition, the capitalist class is

essentially a national class. It has no supra-national state machine that could enforce laws even in the feeble way national environment ministries do. It makes enforceable international agreements only when strong imperialist nations are prepared to back them up by force.

As a result, in Rio, we see governments coaxing and cajoling towards meagre environmental agreements rather than imposing them.

Of course groups of private sector capitalists can club together and seek to promote environmental measures in their self-interest. But these are usually image conscious multinationals who calculate that they can generate good publicity and "green" customers as a result.

Waste

More typical by far are the 2,000 US and Canadian owned companies that operate just inside the Mexican border. Nearly half of them generate hazardous waste. Four out of five of them have admitted that weak environmental laws were the reason for moving to Mexico. Meanwhile, polluted waters have increased birth defects in Mexico.

Such environmental destruction is normal and logical for the capitalist system, not an aberration. In February of this year the chief economist of the World Bank, Lawrence Summers, admitted this:

"Shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDCs?" Since the cost of pollution to the community depends upon loss of earnings due to death and injury he argued that "the logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable".

Bourgeois forces for reform are facing an uphill struggle in Rio precisely because in the 1980s and 1990s the dominant trend within the imperialist ruling class is to move away from state regulation and intervention and towards neoliberal deregulation. In the name of the free movement of capital, of creating a "level playing field", tariffs come down, health, safety and environmental measures are sidelined or scrapped.

In the semi-colonial countries of the Third World the situation is even worse. On the one hand, it is their resources that are mercilessly plundered without a care to conservation or replenishment, or the damaging effect it has on the local economies of indigenous populations. Japan, for example, eats up Thailand's forests for its wood product needs but protects its own forests from destruction.

On the other hand, semi-colonial dependency ensures that those regimes that still aspire to industrial economic development are only allowed access by the multinational firms to semi-obsolete, highly polluting and energy-inefficient technologies. This ensures both that

they remain uncompetitive and that they continue to pour filth into the semi-colonial environment.

It is a mark of narrow-mindedness, rather than lofty high ideals, that the imperialists come to Rio in such numbers.

It is precisely because the issues under discussion there are not simply problems for the poor and exploited masses of the semi-colonies but have global effects that they are starting to take the problems seriously.

But equally urgent environmental issues such as Third World debt and poverty—which have little immediate bearing on the lives of the imperialist bourgeoisie—will find no place on the official agenda of the summit.

One issue—population growth and the need to control it—will be the subject of fierce debate around the summit. On the one side stand the reactionary Catholic church and its supporters amongst the corrupt regimes of Latin America and the Far East. They want to stop any initiatives which require making contraception more easily available to working class and peasant women. On the other side stand people like Prince Charles who thinks population growth is the main cause of a lot of the world's poverty and environmental degradation. Charles, along with powerful allies like the World Bank, peddles the old argument of nineteenth century quack scientist Thomas Malthus who regarded war, famine and disease as the natural "regulators" of population. Whilst opposing the Catholic hierarchy on contraception and abortion, workers should reject the arguments and the solutions of the "neo-Malthusians".

Large families occur in poor, largely rural economies where chil-

dren's labour is vital to sustaining the whole family.

All the facts show that it is modern industrial development that slows down population growth fastest. Birth rates in the semi-colonial countries are slowing down at the same time as food production is rising. There is no truth in the argument that "the earth cannot support so many people". It is capitalism that prevents the allocation of natural resources, in particular food, rationally to meet the needs of starving millions.

Logic

In denouncing the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie and its essential destructive logic the workers' movement should not uncritically embrace the various doomsday scenarios produced by the petit bourgeois forces active in environmental causes. Over the last decade or so various, often contradictory, forecasts produced by different research bodies have been used to predict first a new ice age and later a new epoch of irreversible global warming. In reality the techniques of prediction are still primitive and scientists are not unanimous.

The petit bourgeoisie is imbued with a pessimism that stems from its class position. It feels the victim of forces beyond its control and pessimistic about the prospects for change promoted by either the workers' movement or by bourgeois reforms. An air of alarmism and desperation is introduced into its propaganda as a result.

The working class must adopt an independent programme of struggle to save the environment. The bourgeoisie approaches reform from an image-conscious self-interested standpoint; the middle class above all from a green consumerist point

of view that is blind to the urgent needs of the mass of the world population. The workers and poor peasants require more production, more growth and more industrialisation—not less—if they are to satisfy their most basic needs.

That is why we reject the various green utopias of "no-growth economies" and "sustainable growth". To say that economic progress must stop because it damages the environment, that the third world must abandon industrialisation, is to concede that the social relations which make this so are permanent. They are not.

The goal of the workers' struggle around environmental issues must be the overthrow of capitalism since it is the source of all unplanned, reckless consumption of natural resources without any thought given to conservation and reproduction.

But conservation and protection have to be approached from the standpoint of the needs of the mass of the working population not the rights of species of flora and fauna to be protected. That species die, that resources are used up and not replaced is inevitable. That ecosystems are destroyed and replaced with new ones is a result of humanity's struggle to raise itself above nature and control it for human needs.

Socialism unashamedly stands for the continuation and ultimate victory of that struggle. Nevertheless our goal is the optimum rather than maximum development of production. Only this can combine an increasing standard of living with planned depletion and reproduction of natural resources.

To reach that goal requires that we fight here and now against all effects of environmental damage upon the lives of the workers and poor peasants. To prevent the further destruction of the rainforest we demand that land hunger be addressed so that the poor of Brazil and elsewhere do not need to slash and burn a natural resource to survive.

Combat

To combat the environmental hazards caused by third world industrialisation we demand the immediate cancellation of all debt and all debt repayments and the nationalisation of industry under workers' control.

Against pollution and hazards at work we fight for factory committees and for the trade unions to impose a workers' veto over the processes. Safer technology and conditions should be introduced under workers' inspection at the bosses expense.

Beyond the factory we argue for unity in action between production workers and the population of the surrounding areas, to force the governments to impose safer methods of waste disposal on the bosses. Local committees to monitor air, water and food pollution levels should be formed.

Finally, the environmental question for the working class is not only a preventative struggle. Much damage has already been done and must be repaired. We demand that within programmes of public spending a high priority be given to restoration of the environment. Better sanitation and reliable supplies of drinking water, integrated rehabilitation programmes in regions of desertification, the construction of river and sea defences in monsoon regions—all these capitalism should be forced to pay up for now.

Only through this programme—and not through standing as spectators outside Earth Summits between capitalist ministers—will the working class save the planet from needless destruction by capitalism. ■



Capitalism, not population growth is the main threat to the environment.

MILITANT VS SOCIALIST APPEAL

Between Labourism and nationalism

BY JEREMY DEWAR

LAST OCTOBER Militant held a special conference to discuss a new turn for the group. For decades Militant had stuck firmly to a perspective of strategic work inside the British Labour Party. Anything that threatened their position in the Labour Party was avoided.

The biggest crime of all, according to Militant, was to try to build an independent revolutionary organisation outside of the Labour Party. Only "sectarians on the fringes of the labour movement", impatient with workers' seemingly undying allegiance to their traditional reformist organisations, would attempt to recruit directly to an independent revolutionary banner.

Preserving their position in the Labour Party at all costs was justified through a lifeless schema which regularly predicted imminent economic slumps. These capitalist crises, it was argued, would produce massive radicalisations of the working class who would flood into the Labour Party where they would find the "Marxist wing" ready and waiting to transform the Labour Party into an instrument for seizing working class power.

This schema has been proved thoroughly bankrupt, in particular during the anti-poll tax struggle.

Militant became nationally famous over Liverpool Council's initial defiance of the Tories. But in 1984 and again in 1985 they climbed down, first hailing a rotten compromise which took Liverpool out of the potential generalising mass movement around the striking miners. The Labour Party leadership took the opportunity of the second climbdown and the miners' defeat to launch a savage witch-hunt against the left. Militant, as the largest organised left force in the party, soon became Kinnock's prime target. They avoided a head on clash and frittered away many of their gains of the early 1980s.

The poll tax struggle, however, gave them another opportunity for mass influence. Yet despite playing a central leadership role in the movement, their activists found it increasingly difficult to recruit workers into a Labour Party which not only denounced the non-payment movement but actively hounded the non-payers. Nowhere was this more the case than in Scotland where the anti-poll tax struggle was strongest.

In May 1988, Militant supporters encouraged 500 anti-poll tax fighters to apply for membership of Pollok Labour Party in Glasgow. They were all turned down. As a result of this and similar events, as well as the Scottish Labour Councils' role in implementing the hated tax, neither Labour nor Militant grew from the radicalisation of Scottish youth. The Scottish National Party (SNP) did. It was this series of events that encouraged the majority at Militant's special conference to set up a separate and open organisation, Scottish Militant Labour (SML).

A minority faction, led by Ted

Grant, Rob Sewell and Alan Woods, has since split from the Militant and are now organised around a new monthly review, *Socialist Appeal* (SA). SA have recently launched a public polemic against Militant and the SML in their pamphlet *Scotland—Socialism or Nationalism* by Ted Grant.

Grant's pamphlet attacks the SML as an impatient adventure that makes unnecessary and dangerous adaptations to Scottish nationalism. While Grant is able to make many correct points in relation to SML's opportunist adaptation to Scottish nationalism, he does it from the point of view of a complete defence of Militant's old bankrupt strategy.

Grant correctly takes the SML and the Militant to task for their softness on the Scottish National Party (SNP). He points out how a series of articles in their papers fail to develop any serious critique of the SNP, how the *Militant* (20.9.91) can declare that in Scotland "it is the SNP which stands on a radical, left wing programme". He quotes leading SML members as characterising Scottish nationalism as being the "outer shell of an immature Bolshevism".

With a few pointers as to what the SNP actually stands on Grant quickly disposes of this drivel:

"In its 1987 Manifesto, [the SNP] talks about 'an independent Scotland [being] governed by a democratic parliament. The head of state [will] be the Queen in a limited constitutional monarchy'. Their present policies talk about 'a Scottish currency in the ERM, bolstered by strong exports and oil revenues'. It stood for 'Tax reform that will remove the higher business rate burden that is crippling Scottish business'." (p3)

To the workers who want to fight the Tories Socialist Appeal can only say: join Labour and wait

Grant also quotes the SNP's record of voting for the anti-union laws in Westminster and implementing the poll tax in Angus Regional Council where they held office.

In contrast to the SML, Grant argues that the way to win young workers from Scottish nationalism is not to adapt to it but to take "an implacable stand against this trend. We must above all expose its reactionary divisive character which poses colossal dangers for the working class movement". He goes on to correctly argue:

"Marxists defend the right of the Scottish people to self-determination. But, in the first place this does not mean that we take it upon ourselves to advocate separation. On the contrary we must fight against it."



Right said Ted . . .

But Grant himself ends up taking far from an "implacable" stand against Scottish nationalism. For all his polemical intransigence he too ends up tailing the Labour leaders in advocating a Scottish Assembly:

"While we stand firmly for the idea of a Scottish assembly with real powers, as one of our democratic demands, we must honestly explain to workers, that such an assembly, on a capitalist basis, would not be able to resolve the fundamental problems of the Scottish people." (p6)

This is completely contradictory. The call for the Assembly, he says, is a "democratic demand", i.e. on the terrain of capitalism, but at the same time it is absolutely useless to "resolve the fundamental problems of the Scottish people"! Indeed it is. That is why Marxists should not advocate it as any kind of solution to the problems facing Scottish workers. What "real powers" would Grant give it? If he advocated that it had sovereign powers, i.e. that it was in effect a constituent assembly, this would indeed be a real democratic demand but it would also concede the necessity of independence for Scotland.

Then of course real revolutionaries would have to fight inside and, far more importantly, outside this assembly for Scotland to be a workers' council republic, not the capitalist monarchy that the Tartan Tories (and Tartan Kinnockites) of the SNP want. But all talk of assemblies with real powers but limited to the framework of the Union is a self-defeating diversion. Such an assembly would actually play into the hands of the Scottish nationalists. They, unlike Grant, openly say it is a diversion, that the only solution is full "independ-

ence". A limited regional assembly would prove them, not the "Marxists" of SML and SA right.

While Grant can sound "orthodox" on the question of Scottish nationalism in relation to the opportunism of SML, running through the whole of Grant's pamphlet is his chronic subservience to the "official movement". For Grant the really heinous crime of his old organisation is to take up independent activity:

"The decision of the SML to stand a candidate against Labour in the general election is a fundamental break with the methods pursued by Militant in the past."

The standing of candidates against Labour certainly represents a "fundamental break" with the past positions of Militant. But those positions were thoroughly centrist ones, based on the idea that as long as the Labour Party retained the allegiance of the mass of the working class it was "sectarian" for Marxists to stand against Labour. This argument turned the Marxist position on elections on its head.

Elections are periods when major political issues are posed to workers. What policies should be adopted to defend workers' living standards? How should the economy and society be run? Wherever possible, where Marxists have sufficient resources and roots in the working class communities, they should stand independent candidates and use revolutionary propaganda to expose not only the openly bourgeois parties but also the reformist solutions of the Labour Party.

In this way Marxists use elections in a revolutionary fashion, linking up with strikes in progress, mobilising workers and the unemployed in demonstrations, drawing in the anti-poll tax movement etc.

The aim of standing revolutionary candidates is not purely or even mainly to win a seat in Parliament, although this clearly would be a gain, but to mobilise the workers, offer an alternative, strengthen the revolutionary party.

It is precisely this method, the method of Lenin and Trotsky clearly outlined by the revolutionary Communist International, that Grant rejects. The Militant turned the tactic of critical electoral support for Labour, a form of united front tactic at an electoral level, into a strategy as an excuse for the most chronic political adaptation to Labourism. Grant attacks every aspect of the new Militant tactic which dares to look outside the "official movement":

"In the past Militant had a proud record of patient work in the Labour and trade union movement which achieved great results. Now in their search for new layers outside the Labour movement, all this is being thrown away."

He denounces the idea of setting up independent youth organisations. He reserves particular venom for the "ultra-left and adventurist policy in relation to OILC" the new off shore oilworkers' union set up by rank and file oil workers. Militant has dared to support this union, Grant stands clearly with the officials of the AEEU, GMB, MSF etc, who are out to marginalise it. For Grant the foundation of the OILC is an "adventure" despite the fact that it has more members in the off shore industry than all the other unions combined.

What characterises the whole of Grant's and the new *Socialist Appeal's* politics is a chronic Labour and official trade union cretinism. For Grant the fact that significant numbers of workers were willing to vote for candidates that they believed represented an alternative to the class collaboration of Labour is a negative rather than a positive factor. It is something that has to be fought against with all his might.

In today's Labour Party, where every expression of opposition to the right is crushed or driven out, this can only mean total passivity, keeping your head down and waiting for the objective conditions, "slump and revolutionary crisis", to change things.

In the meantime, to the workers who want to fight the Tories, who come into increasing conflict with service cutting Labour councils, who increasingly clash with the trade union bureaucrats who sell out their struggles, *Socialist Appeal* can only say: join Labour and wait. They are denounced for ultra-leftism if they attempt to organise independently.

As Trotsky wrote in the *Transitional Programme*:

"If it be criminal to turn one's back on mass organisations for the sake of fostering sectarian factions, it is no less so passively to tolerate subordination of the revolutionary mass movement to the control of openly reactionary or disguised conservative ('progressive') bureaucratic cliques."

Socialist Appeal represents the worst in the tradition of Grant's Militant, a tradition of chronic adaptation to Labourism. Peter Taaffe and Scottish Militant Labour have broken from one element of this strategy, but have done so without making any real analysis of or political break from the opportunist method that underlies it. That is why they have adapted to bourgeois Scottish nationalism.

Those supporters of Militant, SML and *Socialist Appeal* who are dissatisfied with this method should read the revolutionary ideas of Leon Trotsky afresh. They should turn to the only organisation that applies those ideas in Britain today: Workers Power. ■

CHINA

Three years after the massacre

THREE YEARS on from the massacre of Tiananmen Square, factional splits are developing within the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy. The compromise leadership that was established to carry through the repression of the Democracy Movement included supporters of at least three economic strategies.

The most conservative of these, represented by Chen Yun, the 87 year old head of the Central Advisory Commission, was for a return to a more centralised system of planning. This faction was at first the dominant one and remained so as long as repression was to be the agenda. It could draw on support from the armed forces and the entrenched managers and planning bureaucrats of the heavy industrial empires. But at this time, terrified by Tiananmen Square, all factions recognised the need to placate working class anger by subsidising even highly inefficient old state enterprises.

Repression and the cost of "buying" working class quiescence led to an economic mess. A second faction moved to the fore as plans for getting out of this mess took precedence over simply retaining control. As reported in WP 149, this faction's strategy was "market socialism", relinquishing direct planning controls in favour of financial manipulation, credit policy and various fiscal measures. This was intended to ensure that, whilst the state set overall economic priorities, "market forces" would supply the immediate incentives to managers and entrepreneurs. By these means they hoped to identify the most efficient firms in each economic sector and direct resources towards them, at the expense of the less efficient.

In large part, the capital for development was to be attracted from abroad through Development Zones such as Pu Dong near Shanghai. Unlike the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), in which the foreign investors are free to make their own decisions, such as Shenzhen, near Hong Kong, Pu Dong was to be much more closely controlled and "planned" by state and provincial authorities.

Congress

Since the turn of the year, a third faction is making the running. It is based around "paramount leader" Deng Xiaoping, and is gearing up for the Fourteenth Party Congress due at the end of the year. It was Deng who masterminded the openly capitalist reforms in Chinese agriculture in the late 1970s and championed the reform leader Zhao Ziyang, until the Democracy Movement threatened all factions with

common ruin.

Deng is now opposed to the caution inherent in the "market socialist" strategy. At the National People's Congress in March, Li Peng, General Secretary of the Party, spoke of 6% growth whereas Deng has been quoted as calling for 10% and more. Deng is basing his projection on the 13.5% actual growth rate in Guangdong province in South China for the last year. Guangdong is the most "liberalised" of the provinces and Deng's strategy is therefore based on extending this complete "liberalisation" to the whole economy. To emphasise the point, Deng has praised Shenzhen (which is in Guangdong) as a model for development, and has suggested that Shanghai itself should have been made an SEZ.

Factions

It would be rash to predict which of the factions will come out on top in the short term. It is, however, clear that none of these factions base their strategy on a defence of the gains the Chinese working class acquired with the abolition of capitalism, let alone making any progress towards higher living standards. The August coup in the Soviet Union stands as a dire warning to even the most conservative elements that when the majority of the bureaucracy lose faith in maintaining the remnants of centralised planning then armed force alone will not keep them in power. The bloody carnage of Tiananmen gave this faction a renewed lease of life. But they have no positive programme for the future.



Deng votes yes to repression and capitalist restoration

Meanwhile, Vice-President Zhu Rongji, associated with the market socialism school, has launched a campaign against the system of guaranteed jobs, wages and promotion for government cadres and state employees ("the three irons"). The same faction is committed to the closure of inefficient plants as soon as the efficient ones can be identified. This grouping draws a different conclusion from events in

the CIS and Eastern Europe. They argue that "big bangs" have been proven to possess only destructive power with no capacity to generate development.

The enthusiastic reception in the West for an offer of one million shares in the Shanghai Vacuum Electronic Device Company, for US\$80 million underlines that their argument has won converts in unlikely quarters. The firm is state

controlled and as a result can guarantee that its output (TV tubes) will be bought throughout the huge state sector. Should Zhu Rongji's faction come out on top, the logic of its policies would be towards a state-capitalist restoration process in China. Given recent negative feedback from the "big bang" strategy in Eastern Europe, the imperialist powers might well go along with this. The need to accompany this strategy with a harshly repressive regime against the masses would provide the basis for a continued alliance with at least those sections of the conservative faction who control the repressive machinery.

Crisis

But as Gorbachev's fate proved, the "market socialist" strategy is no third way between bureaucratic centralised planning and outright restoration. It is a prelude to the latter, via economic crisis and breakdown. Increasingly the needs of capital accumulation would undermine any alliance between the factions and encourage centripetal forces within the bureaucracy.

Deng Xiaoping is clearly the single most eminent leader within the CCP. Recent official praise for the decisions of 1987's Thirteenth Congress, which was dominated by Deng, together with the publication of speeches by Zhao Ziyang, may indicate that his faction is once again achieving dominance. The precise economic policies for which Deng stands have not been made public.

Although his open support for Guangdong and Shenzhen point to open restoration, it is not clear whether he favours the same road for the interior provinces of China. An attempt at compromise would be to allow greater autonomy to the coastal provinces in the hope that they would act as a source of capital and new technology for the more state-controlled interior. In contrast to the "big bang" strategy, this could perhaps be called "a controlled chain reaction". It is the policy most likely to be welcomed by the imperialist powers because it would further consolidate the integration of the coastal provinces into the world market.

Whichever faction emerges as victorious in the coming months, it is clear that there is already pressure on state industry to improve efficiency by reducing the workforce.

Troops

There are reports that in April troops were used against strikers protesting at unemployment in Tianjin, in northern China. In February, an anti-government manifesto by the "Preparatory Committee for a Free Union" was circulated in Beijing. The fact that this body presented itself as modelled on Poland's Solidarnosc underlines both the continued combativity of the underground workers' movement and the probability that it is dominated by pro-restorationist ideas.

As the underlying economic situation worsens and the bureaucratic factions jockey for position, it is vital that the real lessons of the Polish experience are learned by the Chinese workers' movement. The way forward lies not with any of the bureaucratic factions, but in the creation of a politically independent working class leadership. Chinese workers must complete the unfinished business of Tiananmen. To do so they need a party committed to democratic planning and the rule of workers' and peasants' councils, through the revolutionary overthrow of Stalinist conservatives and restorationists alike. ■

THE REFORMS introduced in the industrial sphere during the 1980s have reduced the share of production of the centralised state sector from nearly 70% in 1986, to just 53% in 1990. The balance is taken up by privately owned enterprises. However, before the conclusion is drawn that China has already become a capitalist country, it should be pointed out that "privately-owned" includes enterprises belonging to townships and villages.

The lion's share of production, therefore, is still within the public sector and subject to state direction. Nonetheless, the trend is unmistakable. In Guangdong province, held up by Deng as the model for the whole country, State-owned enterprises accounted for 73% in 1978. Today it is only 35%, less than is produced by "private and foreign" enterprises.

Nationally, 40% of state industries are classified as "non-profitable" and they swallowed up Renminbi (Rmb) 31 billion (approximately US\$5 billion) in subsidies last year. Nearly 30% of state enterprises broke even in the same year, leaving only about one third as generators of net income for the state.

Such a state of affairs cannot go on for long. However, the National People's Congress was told that there would be an increase of 12.4% for "enterprise development" and commentators expect that much of this will go to economic

basket cases rather than worthwhile new investment.

The projected increase of the state deficit to US\$15.7 billion must also point to a huge inflationary threat, like that which preceded the emergence of the Democracy Movement in autumn 1988. As in the Soviet Union, attempts to maintain working class support via wage increases have led, in the absence of increased consumer production, to a massive "cash overhang" reckoned at a staggering US\$224 billion. Such an immense amount of unsatisfied demand must present a major threat to the ability of the state to maintain control of the currency. To soak some of it up, the state will issue bonds to finance its deficit, but this is politically unpopular and will make no qualitative difference.

One consequence of these enforced savings has been the flow of funds into the newly opened stock exchanges in Shanghai and Shenzhen. Another is the burgeoning black market in foreign currencies in Guangdong.

Because of the proximity of Shenzhen, where the Hong Kong dollar circulates illegally but freely, Rmb can be exchanged relatively easily for hard currencies which then finance purchases of consumer durables. These are then traded to the interior provinces of China for inflated prices in Rmb.

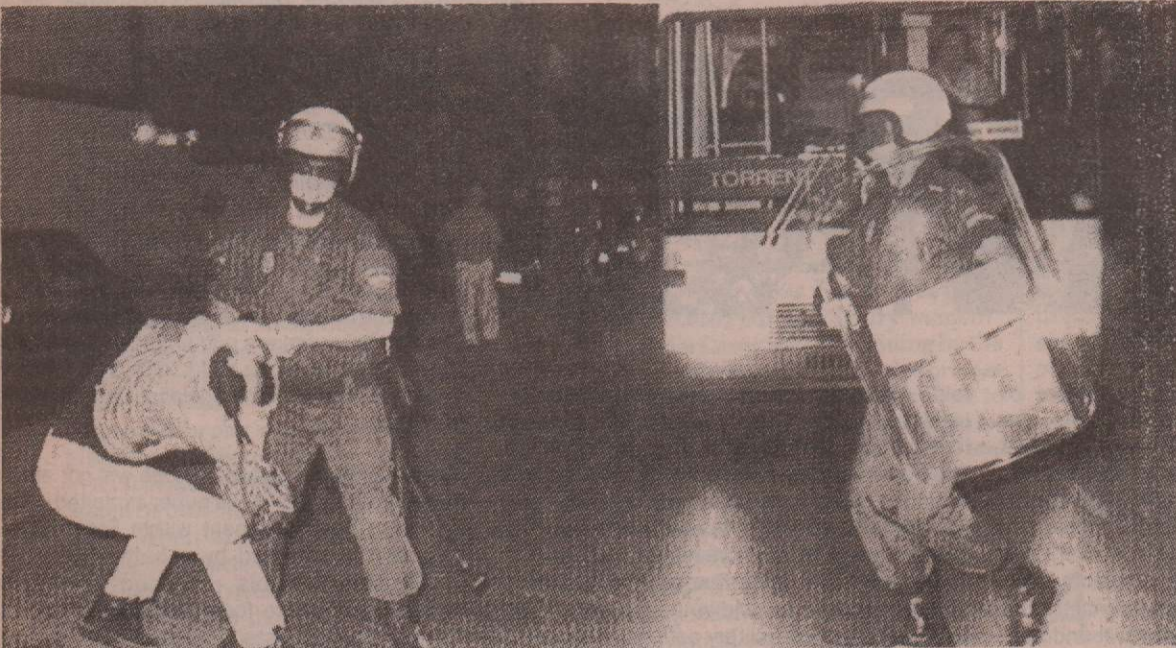
Guangdong's high growth rates, reportedly 27%

in some sectors, are already beginning to produce structural changes. Shenzhen, which began as a low wage, textile and light industrial assembly region, has seen average growth of 50% per annum since 1980. Restrictions on immigration, coupled with some militant union activity in the mid-1980s, has led to relatively high wage levels and the original jobs have been displaced outside of the Special Economic Zone. Their place has been taken by servicing and financial companies whose arrival has forced up land prices and made property speculation a lucrative business in itself.

Now, the provincial authorities are planning to establish Development Zones along the Pearl River which will become new low wage industrial areas. Similarly, although Guangdong has enjoyed a 17% per annum export growth over the last ten years, it is now looking to the Chinese internal market, partly because of increasing objections from the USA with which China now has a US\$13 billion trade surplus. Provincial authorities in neighbouring Guangxi and Hunan have established roadblocks to try to prevent peasants selling their produce in Guangdong where price controls have now ceased altogether. Given that almost all Chinese agriculture is now privatised, this should give an idea of what would follow from further liberalisation in the coastal provinces.

SPAIN

For an indefinite general strike



Spanish police clash with pickets

ON 27 May in Euskadi (Basque country) and on the following day in the rest of the Spanish State industry came to a complete standstill. The major trade unions, the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and the UGT called a half day general stoppage in protest against the new decree on unemployment that the "socialist" government is pushing through the Spanish parliament.

The decree means a reduction of up to 40% in unemployment benefit. It cuts the period that can be claimed for and increases the period for which a worker has to be in work to be eligible to claim it from six months to one year. This last measure will have a tremendous impact on about a quarter of the work force who are on temporary contracts, most of them not longer than 6 months. These workers will no longer be eligible for unemployment benefit during the winter months when there is no work on the land or in tourism.

Decree

Originally the trade unions demanded the revocation of the decree before the unions would even sit down and negotiate. On this basis they first raised the call for a general strike. But almost at once the union bureaucrats began to temporise and manoeuvre against one another sowing divisions where immediate united action was called for.

First of all, none of them were clear whether it was going to be a national strike, on the same day, or how long it was going to last for. In the end, the ELA/SLB, the majority trade union in Euskadi opted for a 24 hour general strike on 27 May. The UGT refused to strike in Euskadi! In the other regions the UGT and the CCOO negotiated variations on the theme of half day stoppages. Meanwhile, the minority unions the CNT, USO together with the left workers' parties called for at least a 24 hour national general strike.

The transport network, the health services and other services operated "minimum" services, mostly imposed by management, of up to 50% of the normal service. In the hospitals the service was

actually fuller than during a normal weekend. However, in the main centres of industrial production, the car factories, the mines, the steelworks, the ports and engineering, the workers were all out.

The stoppage immediately became the object of a hysterical propaganda campaign from all the forces of order, from the CEOE (the Spanish equivalent of the CBI) to the PSOE government. Jose Maria Cuevas, President of the CEOE, painted a lurid picture of the unbridled violence that union pickets were using to coerce workers into joining the stoppage. This tactic actually backfired as many people who may have felt inclined to scab thought better of it. Felipe Gonzalez warned the unions that his government was not going to allow the strikers to threaten the right to work of a single worker. The fifth of the working population of Spain at present unemployed must have been astonished to hear of Don Felipe's concern for the inalienable right to work.

In fact the campaign of union intimidation was a complete bosses' fantasy. What was not a fantasy was the intimidation and violence of the police. Luis Corcuera, ex-right hand man of Nicolas Redondo, the President of the UGT and now Minister of Home Affairs, deployed a massive police force, 3,000 in Madrid alone, to prevent "informative pickets" trying to discourage workers from crossing the picket lines.

Charged

In Madrid, in Atocha station 150 police "gorillas" charged 200 peaceful pickets beating them to the ground and leaving over 15 injured. In Valencia, more were injured when the police charged pickets outside the central bus garage. These scenes were repeated across Spain. Yet throughout length and breadth of the country mass demonstrations took place. Up to 200,000 in Madrid, 80,000 in Barcelona and 20,000 in Zaragoza. The marchers in Madrid were very militant and very angry.

At the end of this demo the leader of the UGT, Redondo, announced the bureaucracy's climb down. Instead of calling for the complete

BY LRCI SUPPORTERS IN MADRID

scrapping of the decree he was now talking about negotiating the reduction of unemployment benefit. He also demanded negotiations of the restriction on the right to strike contained in the new anti-strike law and policies for re-industrialisation.

Grassroots

It is only the stubborn refusal of the PSOE government to negotiate that gets up the noses of the bureaucrats. This combined with grassroots anger at the decree pushed them into calling a stoppage. However, the government is not intimidated by the bureaucrats huffing and puffing. Both the government and the bourgeoisie know full well that the unions organise only 5% of the Spanish workforce.

They also know that the several competing union structures, far from expressing the democratically decided demands of the working class, often thwart mass action. Having done this so often the bosses are inclined to regard them as paper tigers. Jose Maria Cuevas of CEOE said the unions leaders "are not the mobilisers of public opinion". In a certain sense this is true. The UGT now has no official link to any political party. CCOO whilst it still has links to the Stalinist PCE produces no press and rarely calls assemblies or meetings in the workplace.

The union leaderships are totally unprepared for the new get-tough policies and tactics that the bourgeoisie and the government are now using. The massive deployment of police, the terrorising of pickets, the imposition of ridiculous levels of minimum services, police infiltration of strike meetings and the collecting of data on strikers, the proclamation of the "worker's right to work" during a strike and the priority of the citizens' right to normal services over and above the right to strike are all elements of a generalised attack on the working class.

The great majority of the workers that struck were not union members nor were they members of any left political party. It is clear that the working class is losing most

GERMANY

Lessons of the strike wave

On 8 May the leadership of the German public sector union ÖTV settled with the employers. A massive strike wave of hundreds of thousands was bureaucratically sold out for a wage rise of 5.5%, only just above the inflation rate of 4.8%. Workers Power spoke to Paul Allwetter and Max Michallek who are ÖTV members, health service strikers and supporters of the Gruppe Arbeitermacht (German section of the LRCI). They described the rank and file's reaction to the sell out and spelled out the lessons of the strike wave.

"THIS WAS not an average pay round. To maintain profitability West German bosses have to attack workers' wages, jobs and living standards. The public sector pay round was just one part of the employers "new course". Backed by the government, they rejected 5.4% deal and forced the public sector unions into struggle.

Union members were balloted and an 80% vote in favour of action showed their willingness to fight. The rank and file had no influence over the action and no control over the ÖTV negotiating team, whose bureaucratic leadership used the action simply as a bargaining tool.

But despite all these bureaucratic limitations the workers demonstrated their tremendous strength. For nearly two weeks between 100,000 and 450,000 were on strike: public transport workers, rubbish collectors, office staff, nurses etc. The potential became so great, that employers and trade union leaders alike were terrified the action would get out of control.

The trade union bureaucrats used two methods to ensure that they could restrict action to forcing the employers back to the negotiating table.

On the one hand, there was the "tactic of selective strikes" and on the other complete control of the action from above. This meant that actions were switched on and off by the trade union leadership, without any possibility of the rank and file deciding.

This tactic, legitimised with the argument of "saving money for the strike fund", leads to frustration, confusion and passivity, leaving union members to wait for "orders from above". It also led to the bureaucracy opposing solidarity action between different services, which would have strengthened the whole strike. For example, the ÖTV made no attempt to mobilise the rubbish collectors, one of the most militant sectors of public service workers, to support the picket lines in the health service, which are usually badly organised and much more threatened by scabs.

It was these bureaucratic tactics which ensured that the ÖTV and the other public sector unions could call off the strike. But the result of the ballot taken after the deal with the employers reduced the bureaucrats' delight at this "success". Fifty six per cent of all ÖTV members rejected the compromise, with an even greater majority amongst the low-paid layers of public sector workers. The reason for this was that they were more active in the strike. The refuse

collectors in North Rhine-Westphalia had already announced that they would not accept any deal of less than 7%. Not only the ÖTV leadership, but also the GdED (railway workers) and the DAG (a staff union, which is outside the DGB—the German TUC) failed to get a majority for the deal.

ÖTV-leader Wulf-Matthies cynically interpreted the rejection of the deal as a "no vote for further strike action", which would need a 75% majority. However, the ballot demonstrated that the trade union bureaucracy is still in control of "its" members, although they did not accept the deal. This was a sell-out, but not a strategic or demoralising defeat. The bosses have still a long way to go to beat the German working class decisively. The strike demonstrated the fighting potential of the rank and file. Union membership increased dramatically during the strike.

But the rank and file must learn the lessons from this experience to prevent further sell-outs. Workers should demand trade union meetings in every workplace to discuss the deal and the lessons of the strike.

One lesson is that the the struggle itself poses the question of trade union democracy. Working class militants must fight for full democracy and rank and file control within the unions and over industrial action, for full accountability of representatives and negotiators to the rank and file and for the right to replace them if necessary.

Secondly, the refusal of the trade union leadership to combine the wages struggle with the fight against sackings, the introduction of Japanese work-practices and, crucially, to unite this with the struggle of the workers in the East will guarantee defeat in the long term.

Workers must demand a militant response to all these attacks through all-out indefinite action against all sackings and for equal wages in the East. They should fight the undemocratic refusal of the leadership to recognise the memberships rejection of the deal, and take strike action for the original demand of 9.5%. The coming ÖTV-congress could be a focus for militants prepared to fight for these goals.

But to be successful against the powerful trade union bureaucracy, militants who want to fight the betrayals of the leadership must organise. They need to build a rank and file movement which stands for workers' democracy and class struggle action and which can become an alternative to the bureaucratic leadership. ■

of its illusions in the the PSOE government and is now willing to fight them and the bosses with their traditional methods.

The only way to smash the latest attacks on unemployment benefit, the only way to smash the anti-strike laws, the only way to smash the racist immigration law, the "Ley de Extranjeria", or to achieve the banning of temporary contracts is

by an all out indefinite general strike. Militants must fight to build local workplace strike committees involving all the workforce, union members and non-union members alike, to organise the general strike. There should be a nationwide congress of delegates from the strike committees to co-ordinate the strike and prevent sabotage and surrender by the bureaucrats. ■

MAASTRICHT

Throughout Europe parliaments and referendums are considering the Maastricht Treaty. Drawn up last December, it is designed to implement the latest stage of the bosses' plans for Europe. Workers and their representatives should reject both the treaty and the reactionary nationalist opposition to it and abstain on the vote as part of the fight for a Socialist United States of Europe.

1 The Maastricht Treaty of December 1991 marks a new stage in the process of European economic integration. The Single European Act (1986) was designed to create a single market by January 1993. This policy of the European imperialist powers was intended to overcome the crisis and stagnation into which the European Community (EC) fell in the 1970s and early 1980s. Growth levels fell to half those of the 1960s and growth of intra-EC trade stopped. The erection of non-tariff barriers to trade within the EC in the 1970s seemed to be a step back from the goal of integration.

2 In the mid-1980s, recovery from recession, the relaxation of the Second Cold War and, most importantly, the increased economic pressure from Japan and the USA changed the situation. Mitterrand and Kohl took the initiative for a new round of more profound integration. The European bourgeoisies—in particular France, Germany and Italy—needed a new series of co-ordinating mechanisms. In particular they needed the free circulation of all commodities—including labour power—within the frontiers of the EC.

3 They needed to decrease the burden of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which swallowed up 75% of the EC Budget, in order to free resources for greater regional aid. They needed to move on from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism towards European Monetary Union if they were to really compete with the USA and create a regional international currency to rival the dollar. They needed to create a common system of social welfare costs and provision and to equalise labour costs throughout Europe, in order to prevent "social dumping"—unequal competition due to cheap labour and poor social provision. Under the terms of Maastricht the pressure on each country is to meet the criteria leading to greater "convergence" of economic performance. Those which fail will be relegated to the second division of European powers, which will doubtless include the peripheral semi-colonial economies which have no chance of achieving convergence.

4 Each of these measures—regional aid, economic and monetary union and the Social Charter—has run into enormous opposition from one or another of the major or minor powers. The collapse of Eastern Europe, the disintegration of the USSR and the unification of Germany enormously increased the pressure not only to fulfil all of these measures but to take concrete steps, or at least agree on the goal of moving towards some sort of political and military union. Within a decade, this could mean the creation of a federal European imperialist superstate.

5 The international working class has nothing in principle to fear from the centralisation and organisation of production on a continental scale; such a mode of organisation is intrinsically superior to isolated national production, which is one of the elements restraining the unfettered development of the forces of production. However, a precondition for such continental organisation being progressive is that it should take place under the rule of the international working class. It is not excluded that capitalism can unite Europe, but it will only lead to increasing exploitation, oppression, competition and, ultimately, war.

6 Britain's strategy is to hold open the door to enough EFTA and East European states so as to slow the crystallisation of the EC into a regional bloc let alone into a federal superstate. Britain wants to continue its world exploitative role (under US and Japanese hegemony); the huge non-European investments of British imperialism (far greater than any other EC nation) would be most threatened if growing economic regionalisation led to a fracturing of world trade and capital flows. However, it is unlikely—outside of a fracture of the Franco-German alliance—that Britain possesses either the political cunning or the strength to obstruct the unification process.

Workers must abstain



European steelworkers demonstrate

7 German imperialism faces a number of major short and medium term problems: the "unforeseen costs" of unification and the need to reduce its (higher than Japanese and US) unit labour costs. In turn this points the need to discipline and weaken the unions, generally reducing the unsustainably high "social" and "co-determining" elements of their system, such as worker participation in management etc. The class struggle that this will bring will undoubtedly delay and divert Germany from its integrative goals to some degree. But the opening up of Eastern Europe and the CIS, the relatively high level of German investment there, the rivalry with the USA and Japan that will develop, as the destructive phase of restoration reveals viable scientific and high-tech elements to be salvaged from the defence industries, raw materials etc, will all push Germany, in alliance with France and Italy, to press ahead with fashioning out of the EC a supra-national state capable of fighting for their interests.

8 The EC states are currently attempting to adopt legislation through parliaments or referendums which will open the road to further social, economic and political unification. In every country this will mean not only the erosion of "national sovereignty" as bourgeois parliaments lose legislative power to the European institutions. It will also mean an attack on democratic rights, as decisions affecting the lives of hundreds of millions of European workers are increasingly taken by the unelected European Commission.

9 Maastricht will provide the political and social framework for a series of attacks on working class gains such as welfare services, nationalised industries etc. This, together with the loss of democratic rights, has led sections of the labour movement to oppose the Maastricht treaty from a nationalist point of view. For example, the French Communist Party has been mounting a massive campaign, seeking out sectors of the ruling class as allies. This position is profoundly mistaken. Maastricht does not impose such measures directly and without mediation. The national governments have to impose them and the working class has to be beaten into accepting them. If any member state were to withdraw from Maastricht, the anti-working class attacks would continue. In many countries they would increase, as intensified competition with an ever more unified European imperialism, and the withdrawal of EC funding creates growing difficulties for the ruling class. Finally, not all gains are being levelled to the lowest common denominator: the terms of the Maastricht treaty can also be a basis for extending rights and gains from states where the working class never won these gains, or where it has lost them.

10 Although Europe does not yet have a united armed force, renewed debate about the future role of Western European Union (WEU), Europe's intervention into Yugoslavia, the joint French-German regiments and Mitterrand's demagogic offer to cede power of France's nuclear arsenal to a united Europe all indicate that steps are being made in this direction. In European countries such as Ireland which claim a

false "neutrality" the bourgeoisie will increasingly be pressured into bringing its declarations into line with its consistent participation in imperialist actions under the aegis of the United Nations. This may eventually take the form of joining NATO, although this particular Cold War battlehorse is being increasingly retired in favour of a new, distinctly European armed force. We are opposed to, and vote against, all military spending and military actions of the bourgeois state. At the same time we denounce the hypocrisy of those ruling classes which claim neutrality whilst prosecuting the class war at home and abroad, arms in hand. A breach of such a fake "neutrality" can be no reason for voting "No".

11 Some centrists, such as the French LCR, are arguing for "a social 'no' in the name of international solidarity". But to some extent European workers will be better armed to fight back on a continental scale after the implementation of the terms of Maastricht. The "free movement of labour" not only lets the bosses move scabs, but can be the basis for promoting the unity of European workers resistance to scabbing. The main way forward for European workers is to fight together against these attacks, to strive to universalise the best workers wages and conditions, the best protective legislation, the best health service and the freest civil and political rights which already exist in one state or another and build from there. Further, to regard the frontiers of the existing imperialist states as a protective bulwark, let alone to line up behind them with a Le Pen or a Thatcher, would be to poison internationalism, of which the working class must be the foremost champion. The workers of Europe should reject the call for a "No to Maastricht".

12 In Ireland, where a referendum is to decide on ratification, the issue of abortion has clouded the question of Maastricht. The Treaty contains a specific clause (a Protocol) which prevents an appeal to the European Court against the anti-abortion Eighth Amendment of the Irish Constitution. This attack on democratic rights was insisted upon by the Irish bourgeoisie in order to enforce the reactionary constitutional ban on abortion. On this basis the Irish pro-choice movement has been arguing for a "No" vote. This position is wrong for several reasons. Firstly, voting against the Maastricht Treaty would mean voting for the continued "independence" of the state which is responsible for the absence of these rights in the first place. Furthermore, since the anti-abortion movement has also been arguing for a "No" vote, even in terms of a campaign to show the strength of the pro-choice movement, the referendum will reveal little except that abortion rights was not the main issue in the minds of the majority who will vote on the Maastricht Treaty. Worse, the "No" vote stands a danger of confusing this vote with the reactionary sections of the petit bourgeoisie. Finally, in the context of the anti-abortion movement this campaign has shifted the focus away from one of the direct struggle for abortion rights to the

more general questions of Europe, to which it is giving mistaken answers. In Ireland as in the rest of Europe, the working class should mount a

campaign of abstention, and in the case of Ireland they should spoil the ballot forms with "Free abortion on demand—a woman's right to choose" as a protest against the reactionary anti-abortion legislation enshrined in the current constitution and which will be protected under Maastricht.

13 Attracted to a "social Europe" or a "Europe of the regions or the small nations", right wing reformists, nationalists and even some "Marxists" are arguing for a "Yes" vote. This too is profoundly mistaken and will have equally reactionary and class-collaborationist consequences. The unifying EC has the overall character of an imperialist power, exploiting semi-colonies both within its frontiers and beyond, restoring capitalist exploitation and misery to Eastern Europe, fomenting rivalry, and economic and, ultimately, military confrontation with the USA and Japan. We can never give a vote of confidence in imperialism to unify Europe in the interests of all its peoples and in the interest of its workers and small farmers. Only the working class can build such a federation, under the banner of the Socialist United States of Europe.

14 A united capitalist Europe will not aid or benefit the masses of the super-exploited semi-colonies. Free movement within Fortress Europe will be matched by a battery of racist immigration controls, imposed by a new transnational police force with added powers for tracking "terrorists". There will be pressure for the introduction of obligatory identity cards on those countries which did not previously have them. The agreements of Trevi and Schengen are only a taste of things to come. Post-1992 Europe will be a fortress against political refugees and those fleeing the economic havoc that the EC and the IMF has wrought in the semi-colonies.

15 We reject both the new capitalist Europe which is currently being constructed and the isolated capitalist nation states which currently exist. To indicate this double rejection workers should demonstratively and actively abstain from choosing between the existing states and the existing EC of which they are a part and the post-Maastricht new order. Where the population is directly asked to endorse or reject Maastricht we say neither option is a real choice for workers.

16 Where national parliaments or constitutional assemblies take this decision we say to all the deputies who claim to represent the working class; do not vote in this false choice! But this is not a negative abstention. Deputies should use every tribune to attack all the reactionary consequences of the Maastricht Treaty and the existing reactionary legislation and constitutions of the member states. They should use it to call on workers across Europe to fight against the loss of all past gains and for the extension of the best conditions to all.

- For the levelling up of all social benefits to the highest level to be found in Europe
- For working class action to stop attacks on social benefits
- For a Europe-wide fightback against the bosses' attacks
- Down with all anti-trade union laws designed to shackle resistance to convergence measures
- For rank and file links in all industries
- For the free movement of all workers within, into and out of Europe
- For the right to political asylum. Down with all immigration controls.
- Down with the Trevi and Schengen police agreements
- Scrap the Irish Maastricht Protocol
- No to a European police force, no to a European army
- Down with the unelected European Commission and Council of Ministers
- For the election of a sovereign European Constituent Assembly for all those countries in the EC or who seek to join it, convened and protected by the fighting organisations of the working class
- No to the bosses' Europe. Only workers revolution and a workers' council state can unify Europe on a progressive basis
- For the United Socialist States of Europe—a federation of revolutionary workers' states open to all peoples who wish to join.

International Secretariat of the LRCI
26 May 1992

**No to the bosses' Europe!
For a Europe-wide fightback
against capitalist attacks!
For a workers' Europe!**

THE REVELATION that Eamonn Casey, Bishop of Galway, fathered a child in 1975 has rocked the Catholic hierarchy.

Casey combined two elements that made him a powerful force in the eyes of many workers and youth.

First, he was a very effective spokesperson for the "socially caring" pretensions of the church because of his leading role in the third world Catholic charity organisation Trocaire, and because of his associations with the poor in Latin America and the Phillipines. A popular photograph shows him surrounded by the guns of Salvadorean troops just after they gunned down Archbishop Romero.

Secondly, Casey combined this pedigree with repeated condemnations of contraception, extra-marital sex, divorce and abortion. He had more authority than most bishops in doing so because of the illusions in him as a socially concerned religious leader.

Casey's liaison with the American divorcee Annie Murphy began when he was Bishop of Kerry seventeen years ago.

In one thing at least, Casey was consistent. Being a good Catholic he followed the Pope's advice and did not use "artificial contraceptives".

Annie Murphy was soon pregnant. This gutless champion of moral virtue refused even to acknowledge the birth of his son—whom he otherwise referred to as a "child of God". When Murphy declined to give up her baby, despite enormous pressure from his lordship. Irritability turned to anger. Casey could see that his cushy and lucrative career as a bishop was in danger. His hypocrisy was quickly supplemented by bullying. Murphy was repeatedly reminded that only by agreeing to adoption could she be "cleansed" and "forgiven".

Showing considerable mettle she survived this onslaught and pursued Casey for private maintenance payments.

It was especially this aspect of the affair—the misappropriation of church funds—that finally caused the *Irish Times* to go public with the scoop it had been sitting on for months. This and the fact that Murphy and her son were now determined to break the silence.

Yet even then media criticism was muted. While preaching reliance on the crumbs of charity to the poor Casey himself has lived the life of a rich playboy.

In addition to his Galway palace Casey has his own luxury flat in Dublin. He likes to drive flash cars and frequents expensive restaurants.

The Irish media covered up for him by saying he only "borrowed" money from the diocesan kitty—a notion that stretched the credulity of most Catholics to breaking point.

This is the same establishment which jailed a working class Dublin girl last year for failure to pay her DART train fare.

The Casey scandal should make any Catholic woman facing an unwanted pregnancy think twice about her options before relying on clerically dominated adoption agencies, such as CURA. If Annie Murphy, a privileged woman from a wealthy US

Casey scandal rocks Catholic hierarchy

background, was blackmailed and bullied to give up her baby, how much worse is the treatment meted out to ordinary women?

Meanwhile Casey is kept in hiding by the very same church and friends who profess to be so offended by his behaviour. True to form he skulked out of the country hours before the story broke. When the fuss has died down he will be handsomely pensioned off and left to pursue "work in the missions". No longer considered squeaky clean enough for Irish Catholic consumption he is to be dumped on the third world.

The Casey affair has dealt an important blow to the moral authority of the Catholic hierarchy at a crucial time. Their weakened position is shown by the fact that in their Maastricht statement they claim they are not calling for abortion travel or information to be restricted by law. They are liars.

But for the moment they are obliged to keep their heads down.

Every militant activist knows we have to hit them while they are down. We must



Bishop Casey

SEPARATE CHURCH AND STATE!

step up mass mobilisations of women, workers and youth for free and legal contraception and for abortion on demand, for freely available divorce and for decriminalisation of homosexuality. A mass struggle will be necessary to fight the stranglehold of the

church over schools colleges and hospitals.

Only then can we ensure that the stinking hypocrisy of the Catholic church—the obedient servant of capitalism and imperialism—will meet with its long overdue punishment.■

Abortion row simmers

ALBERT REYNOLDS heaved a sigh of relief when a long awaited statement of the Catholic Bishops' Conference on 26 May stopped short of opposing the Maastricht Treaty. Embarrassed by the Casey affair the authors were not as triumphalist as usual. But they did not hesitate to call for a sustained political mobilisation of opinion against abortion rights.

Three key issues lie at the heart of the simmering crisis in the ruling class over abortion. Albert Reynolds promises a referendum in November to remove the right to travel from the ambit of the anti-abortion Eighth Amendment, and allow restricted access to abortion information.

He has faced down his own liberal wing, his coalition partners and all the opposition parties and steadfastly refused to publicise his proposed wording for the new amendment before the Maastricht referendum on 18 June.

He appears to be succeeding in separating abortion and Maastricht issues without having to commit himself to any specific further reform. Opposition to the Treaty from pro-choice and anti-abortion movements does not now appear to be much of a threat. The bourgeoisie is now broadly united in claiming that the Irish anti-abortion Protocol in the Maastricht Treaty will not matter be-

cause travel and information rights will be conceded in the autumn, thus allowing the problem to continue to be "exported".

Conveniently this hides the central purpose of the Protocol which is to prevent European abortion rights being extended to Ireland by any appeal to European law against Irish law. This is the second key aspect of the abortion controversy and is the basic reason why the pro-choice campaign is calling for a protest vote against Maastricht.

But the IWG says: in or out of the European Union, the Protocol must go! (See resolution opposite.)

The central question remains the repeal of the Eighth Amendment itself—as the first step to decriminalising abortion.

By refusing to say exactly what he plans for the autumn Reynolds remains free to amend the constitution even in a reactionary direction, if the balance of forces tilts in the direction of the "pro-life" campaign once more. Such a referendum, to tighten up the Eighth Amendment, is the central call in the hierarchy's recent statement.

The pro-choice campaign must make its central immediate issue therefore, the repeal of the Eighth Amendment, thereby neutralising the Maastricht Protocol and opening the road of struggle for real abortion rights in Ireland.

The recent conference of the campaign affirmed this in words but has not in practice put this to the centre of its propaganda. It even adopted the call for the "right to choose" but still forbids its representatives to express any public view on the demand for free and legal abortion on demand, which the IWG is fighting for.■

CPSU witch-hunt beaten

DELEGATES AT the Annual Congress of the Irish Civil and Public Services Union (CPSU) on 15 May decisively rejected the witch-hunt of left activists by the bureaucracy.

They overwhelmingly supported the appeal of two activists who had just been banned from holding any office for two years. What was expected to be a ten minute formality turned into an hour long debate in which General Secretary John O'Dowd pleaded in vain for endorsement of his

disciplinary action.

The fight was led by an IWG supporter who explained how a branch procedure on "collective responsibility" was being used to silence the activist minority on her branch committee. She and others were instructed to treat general meetings of the union as "public" meetings at which they were forbidden to dissent from the positions of the right wing majority. When issues were being put to the members "collective responsibility" was used to

stop any committee member revealing to the membership any of the reasons why they should consider rejecting the "recommendation" of the BC. In effect this meant concealing the informed views from members when important decisions were being discussed and voted on.

The IWG supporter and two others were targeted because they had actively canvassed against a number of deals. The majority of her union branch committee introduced a

local standing order on "collective responsibility" specifically to silence them in front of the members. This led to a confrontation, at a stormy general meeting between the membership and the branch chairman, who hit back by instigating a formal witch-hunt.

Two of the activists refused to kowtow before the bureaucratic bullies. During the kangaroo court set up to find them guilty a prominent supporter of Militant broke ranks with the other victims.

Disciplinary action against him was dropped when he apologised for "breaching collective responsibility", even though he and Militant openly admitted that this rule was a bureaucratic weapon against the left in the branch.

He and Militant's leaders told the IWG that an appeal would have no hope of success, that it was better to get elected back onto the right wing dominated BC and to fight "from within" than to stand on principle.

When the issue finally

came before the Congress he obediently submitted to the right wing's ultimatum *not to speak* in defence of the witch-hunt victims!

The activists' small but important victory against the witch-hunt gives the lie to the defeatist notion that it is not possible to win against the big guns in union head offices. Every blow struck in defence of trade union democracy is a step in the direction of reclaiming the unions as fighting organs of struggle—run by and for the ordinary members.■

Workers power

- All troops out of Ireland
- China
- Maastricht: workers should abstain

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YUGOSLAVIA

No sanctions!

No UN intervention!

"IT'S TIME to stop looking for reasons not to take action" US Secretary of State James Baker announced on 25 May, after another savage bombardment of the city of Sarajevo by the "Army of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia".

The United Nations Security Council has imposed comprehensive economic sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro. Sickeningly Tony Benn and the Labour left have joined in the call for sanctions. The US-led NATO powers are now making clear that sanctions are not the ultimate measure of imperialist interference in disintegrating Yugoslavia. According to Baker and John Major, military action will be "considered" should the economic and diplomatic sanctions not work quickly. The British government, faithful as always to the promptings of the USA, has executed a somersault and become one of the biggest sabre-rattlers against Serbia. Ominously, sand tables full of model tanks have started to appear on *Newsnight* once again.

Workers should condemn the bloody and wholly unjustified annexationist attacks of the Yugoslav army against the Muslim and Croatian population of Bosnia-Herzegovina. We should support the victims of these vicious attacks when they resist being driven out towns where they and their ancestors have lived for centuries. But we cannot support either the imperialist sanctions against Serbia or any form of military intervention by the imperialist powers—whether under the banner of NATO or wearing the blue helmets of the UN.

Claim

The imperialists claim their sole objective is to prevent forced population transfers, pogroms and starvation.

This is a brazen lie. Their policies are directly responsible for provoking the bloody carnage in Sarajevo. The "quality" and the gutter press alike have set about fueling a war psychosis. Serbian atrocities are reported in all their gory details. Serbs are cartooned as ape-like sub-humans in supposedly liberal papers like the *Independent*. The old racist "explanations" of Balkan savagery are being rolled off the presses day by day. All this is to prepare public



Bosnian moslems flee the slaughter. Britain and the EC must open their borders to all refugees Photo: Mo Khan

opinion in Europe and North America for an armed intervention.

Imperialism has a long history of interfering in Yugoslavia. Through their international financial institutions like the IMF, they forced the Stalinist bureaucracy to impose savage austerity programs on the Yugoslav working class in the 1980s which provided the economic background for demagogues like Serbia's Milosevic and Croatia's Tudjman to re-create old national antagonisms.

They backed various reactionary nationalist forces in the civil war and helped to further poison the relations between the peoples. This was demonstrated in Bosnia itself, where the imperialists actually prompted the nationalist policies of Itzbegevic and the Muslim Party by promising immediate political recognition and economic aid if he would hold a referendum showing a majority for independence.

This referendum, the subsequent declaration of independence and its instant recognition by the EC gave the Serbian generals just what they needed to begin the carve up of Bosnia-Herzegovina—probably with the secret connivance of Tudjman's

Croatia. Why was imperialism's recognition so swift compared with their long drawn out resistance to recognising Slovene and Croatian secession?

Led by the USA, their initial policy was simply to use Slovenian and Croatian demands for greater autonomy to speed up the capitalist restoration process within the framework of a continued Yugoslav federation.

Imperialism

But the newly strengthened German imperialism, assisted in the region by its Austrian junior partner, adopted a policy of promoting the partition of Yugoslavia. Their aim was to gain economic and political dominance over the more developed northern republics, i.e. to turn Croatia and Slovenia into Austro-German semi-colonies. Serbia could be left to stew in Balkan economic backwardness.

The reactionary "Lisbon Solution"—dividing up Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines and converting it into a buffer state against Serbia—reflects the shift of

all major imperialist powers towards the German strategy. The UN blue berets' aim of disarming the Serbian enclaves in Croatia was meant to ensure the realisation of this plan.

But when it comes to military action it is still the USA which makes the running. This reflects the continued weakness in this field of the European Community and its leading power, Germany.

Any UN, US or European solution to the crisis will not be in the interests of the workers and peasants of any republic or nationality. It will be aimed at speeding up the restoration of capitalism and carving up the most profitable parts of Yugoslavia for imperialist exploitation.

Of course Milosevic, the Yugoslav army generals and the Serbian bureaucrats are no less responsible for the bloodshed in Bosnia and the reactionary civil war than Tudjman and co. They are trying to create a Greater Serbia by driving Muslim and Croat populations out of the areas that separate the Serbian areas. Already they have seized over 60% of Bosnia-Herzegovina where the Serbs constitute only 31% of the population.

This is not in the interests of the workers of Serbia who already face mass unemployment and a collapsing economy. Serbian expansionism will not help them to defend what is left of the economy of a degenerate workers' state, which Milosevic will attack as soon as their hands are free.

Economic sanctions and military intervention will not end the bloodshed in Bosnia. They will simply turn the tables between the murderous nationalist militias.

Military intervention would enable the Croatian and Muslim nationalists, especially the fascist Ustase in western Herzegovina, to annex the region to Croatia, driving out its non-Croat population. It could well lead to the outbreak of murderous civil war in Kosovo with its majority Albanian population. Bulgaria is already calling for NATO intervention. So is Turkey's president Ozal. It is not at all excluded that a NATO intervention could light the fuse of a regional war in the entire Balkans.

The only peace that can be achieved this way is the peace of the graveyard. The imperialists are not bothered about the trail of broken lives, of smashed communities which lived in peace with one another and intermarried for generation after generation. And while they throw up their hands in horror at the plight of a million Yugoslav refugees the doors of the EC remain firmly closed, as with the Kurds. All they want is to shower the blessings of capitalist exploitation on to the Yugoslav republics; hyper-inflation, mass unemployment and de-industrialisation.

Chauvinism

Only if the working class of all the nationalities breaks free of the leadership of the national chauvinists, breaks the terror grip of the gangsters who run the militias and creates its own multinational defence force to protect all communities against pogrom and deportation can the vicious circle of atrocities be broken.

Only workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils could mobilise mass action to stop the reactionary war, keep out the imperialists and overthrow the pro-capitalist governments in Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo. ■