

Workers power

A SOCIALIST GUIDE TO THE ELECTION

Socialism, Internationalism, Revolution

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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education
system**

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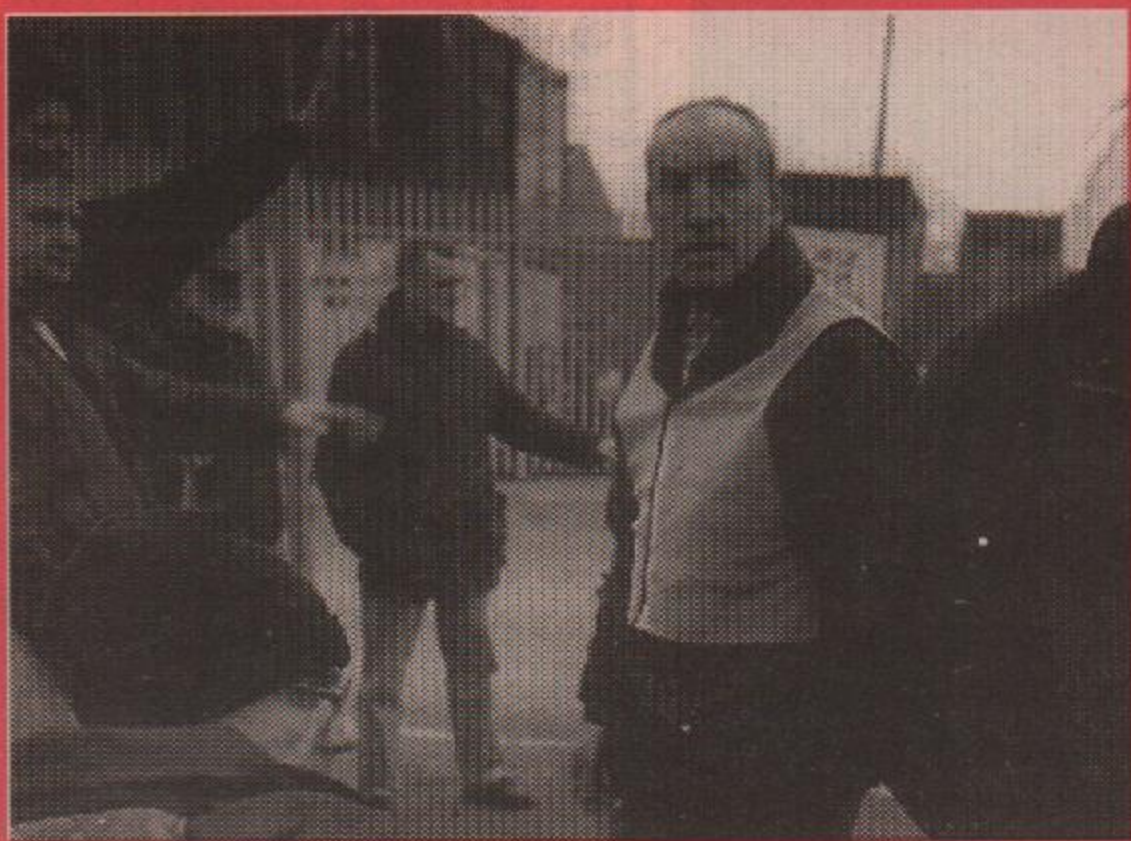
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VOTE



LABOUR

And fight for:



Liverpool dockers: re-instate all sacked trade unionists

- ★ Jobs for all
- ★ £6 an hour min. wage
- ★ Repeal racist laws
- ★ Tax the rich
- ★ Troops out of Ireland

JOB'S FOR ALL!

THE TORIES claim that unemployment is down to just under 1.8 million, and this is because of their economic policies.

But the figures are a sham. Even the department for Education and Employment has been forced to hold an enquiry into reports that staff at Job Centres have been bullied into fiddling the figures.

What is more, whilst the figures for those on the dole have been falling, so have the figures for those with jobs! The only possible explanation for this is that hundreds of thousands are being forced off the dole and into dodgy dealing, desperation and crime.

Fake training schemes, harassment of claimants and loss of benefits all mean that many more than 1.8 million are unemployed.

An independent research survey, carried out by academics at Sheffield University, revealed that the real unemployment figure, as of January 1997, was 3.9 million.

Claimants are forced to undergo the indignity of the Job Seekers Allowance. They are forced to live on poverty-line benefits every week. Life is a soul-destroying game of hide and seek with survival until the next giro comes through.

Since 1979 the Tories have presided over an economy of permanent mass

UNEMPLOYMENT

unemployment. Entire industries have been butchered. Entire towns have been turned into economic disaster zones.

Labour must spend to create jobs

NEW LABOUR promises a cash payment to firms that take on workers who have been unemployed for more than two years.

So they are offering more money to the companies and bosses who have sacked millions of workers in the first place.

Why not cut out the middle man and spend that money directly on job creation?

Labour should announce a massive programme of state spending, to build homes, schools, hospitals and repair the infrastructure of our cities. This would create millions of jobs at a stroke.

As for firms that announce sackings or closures, Labour should immediately nationalise them under workers' control.

In the last five years alone 10 million have suffered a spell of unemployment. As the Tories were revealing in the minor drop in official figures the steel industry announced that it was cutting 10,000 jobs. Unilever, MTL Trustholdings, Great Western Holdings,

and Ford all chimed in with announcements of thousands of job cuts.

After eighteen years it is easy to forget that there is an alternative to the terrible waste and poverty of mass unemployment. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have forgotten it.

Apart from a scheme to reduce youth unemployment, they have not promised to create a single job. They are terrified of upsetting the bosses so they limit themselves to rhetoric about prosperity. But prosperity for the few does not create jobs for millions.

Labour is pledged to introduce compulsory work for unemployed youth on community projects, such as an "environmental task force" doing things like painting out graffiti. You don't get paid for this "work" - you get your benefit plus a small top up.

The boss who employs you will be given a £60 a week subsidy from tax payers' money, even though they are getting you for free! If you don't agree to this your benefit will be cut.

Labour should pay the unemployed full benefits at the rate of the minimum wage until they can be found a proper job. Those out of work should be organised by the trade unions into an unemployed workers' movement.

Millions of jobs could be created at a stroke if Labour were to

introduce a legally enforced maximum 35 hour week with no loss of pay.

A shorter working week would not only create new jobs, it would create a better quality of life for everyone in work.

What about New Labour's proposal for a new training scheme for young people? If this is to be any use it should have a guaranteed job at the end of it. All trainees should get paid full wages and should be entitled to join a union.

Otherwise they will be nothing more than a way of providing employers with cheap labour, just like previous Tory schemes such as YTS and YOPS.

New Labour's whole job creation scheme is really a profit creation scheme for employers. ■

To really fight unemployment workers should respond to every announcement of sackings or closures with strikes and occupations. In the course of such struggles we can start to impose workers' control over hiring, firing and hours worked. We can begin to organise a socialist system in which all the available work is divided up between all those available to do it, and in which the obscenity of unemployment becomes a thing of the past.

TRANSPORT

UNDER THE Tories Britain's public transport system has collapsed into chaos. The rail network has been sold off to 60 companies. Buses have been deregulated. Spending on the road infrastructure has been cut by more than £10 billion. The surface of the moon is in better shape than Britain's roads.

Bus deregulation means that competing buses from different companies are turning a handful of profitable routes into a stock car race. Thousands of people are left stranded with no bus service at all because the routes they use will not turn in a profit.

As for taking the train, privatisation equals cancellation. South West Trains cancelled 39 trains a day in February. Regional Railways North East axed 77 trains on one day alone.

Spending on safety has been slashed, causing a record number of fires on the London Underground and a steady increase in accidents across the rail network.

And despite privatisation taxpayers are still paying a subsidy to the new owners! This year alone £1.8 billion of public money has been handed to the private companies.

Labour say they are in favour of a "publicly owned and accountable rail network". But they refuse to re-nationalise it and are in favour of leaving the buses deregulated.

They say they want to cut the number of cars on the road, but they are not pledging a penny more for public transport.

There is a straightforward answer to this mess: re-nationalise the entire public transport system, without giving a penny to those who have stolen it at knockdown prices over the last seventeen years.

We need an integrated transport system under the democratic control of the workers who run it and use it. ■

End this two-tier education system

EDUCATION

THE TORIES have sacrificed the schooling of the majority of children to fund tax cuts for the rich. Meanwhile they send their kids to private schools.

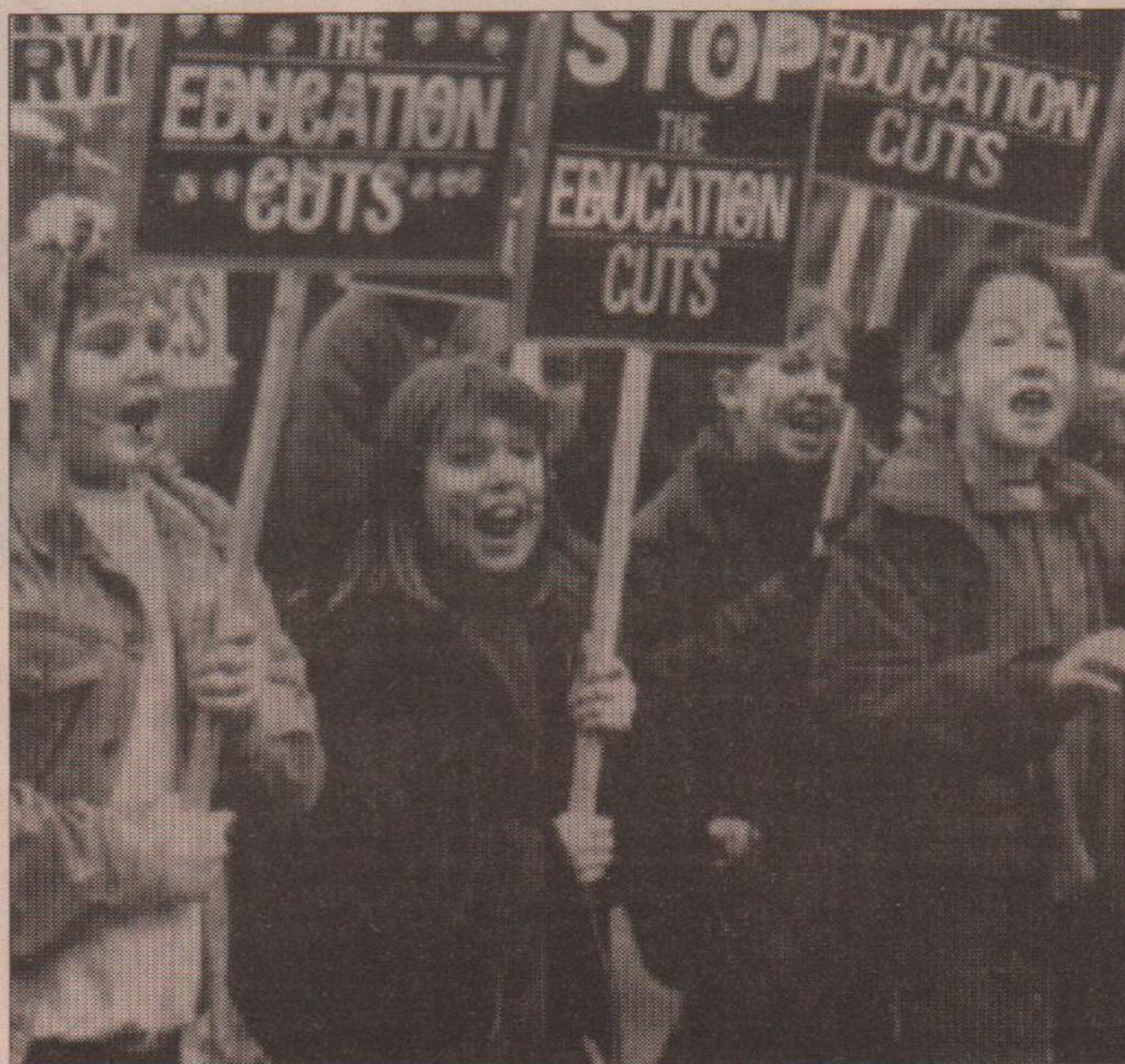
Class sizes have rocketed under the Tories. Despite the fact that there are 100,000 primary school children in classes with more than 36 kids to every teacher, John Major and Gillian Shepherd want to reduce recruitment of new teachers by over 17,000.

That's not all. The Tories have brought in tests for children as young as seven, so that they can publish inaccurate league tables which are supposed to let parents pick and choose their schools. In reality the endless tests, paperwork and inspections just label kids as successes and failures at an early age. Then the Tories want to concentrate on the minority of children they regard as a good investment.

The rest will just be written off and left for the dole queue or a "McJob" on poverty pay.

In the universities, it is students from working class backgrounds who make up the bulk of the 32,000 who have been forced to drop out through poverty. Tory cuts in the student grant have forced scores of thousands to work their way through their degrees in low paid, casual, part-time jobs. Of course, the children of the rich can just get Daddy to pay.

For the Tories, profit is everything. That's why they want education to be a privilege for the few, not a right for all our children. ■



WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

- Free education for all
- No to selection. End grant maintained status for schools. All schools should be controlled by democratically accountable Local Education Authorities.
- No to all school closures and redundancies
- Nationalise all private schools
- Maximum class sizes of 25
- Scrap the tests for 7, 11 and 14 year-olds. Scrap Ofsted and the "league tables"
- Full grant for all students at the level of the minimum wage: no loans, tuition fees or graduate tax
- Build schools, recruit teachers, buy books and resources and expand the whole education system by taxing the rich.
- Schools and the curriculum should be under the control of students, teachers and parents

QUESTIONS FOR LABOUR...

TONY BLAIR says education is New Labour's "number one priority".

But does he believe that it should be a right for all, not a privilege for the few?

If so, then why did he send his child to a selective school? Why did he allow Shadow Minister Harriet Harman to do the same?

Why is New Labour pledging more private involvement in schools

rather than promising to scrap unfair private schooling?

Why is Blair only promising to reduce class sizes to 30 for 6 and 7 year olds, rather than recruiting teachers to allow all classes to be a manageable size?

Why is Labour Education spokesman David Blunkett threatening to sack teachers up and down the country?

Why was Labour's education policy advisor Michael Barber responsible for closing Hackney Downs School in North East London?

Why is Blair proposing to abolish the student grant and replace it with a special tax that will punish graduates with high payments for years?

Answer: so the rich don't have to pay more tax.

Why we need a minimum wage

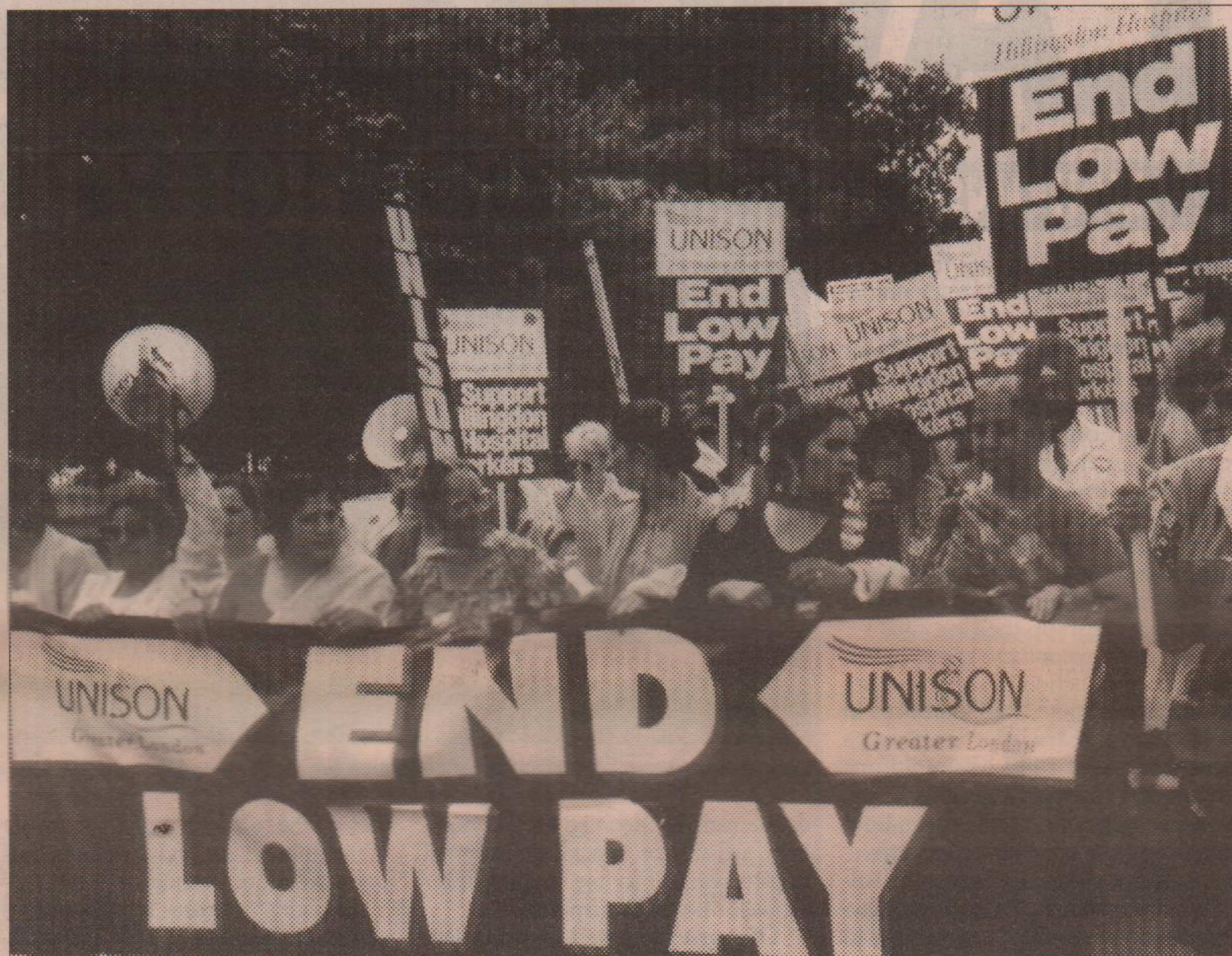
£6 AN HOUR NOW!

LOW PAY

- Britain is the only country in the European Union without a national minimum wage
- Since the abolition of the wages councils in 1993 Britain has had no legal protection against low pay
- 6 million people earn under £4.26 an hour
- 2.5 million people earn under £3.50 an hour
- 1 million people earn under £2.50 an hour
- The Decency Threshold of the European Union is £6 an hour
- The average male industrial wage is £8 an hour

WHEN THE transport workers' union TGWU set up a low pay hotline as part of its campaign for a minimum wage, calls flooded in from workers in retail, catering, cleaning and security firms. One young secretary from Kent - in the supposedly "prosperous" South East - got £1.41 an hour... just £55 for a 39 hour week!

You can't enjoy life on a wage like that. You certainly can't go on holiday. If the truth be told you can't even eat properly.
It shouldn't be allowed.



Hillingdon Hospital workers on strike for more than a year against low pay, sacked by private contractor Pall Mall. Like the Liverpool dockers they have been victimised by anti-union employers. Labour helped the Tories pass 100 Bills through parliament in the last week of parliament. In the first week Labour is in power it should pass a law reinstating all sacked strikers.

THE CASE for a minimum wage is unanswerable. But Tony Blair has refused to set a figure for it.

Time and again the trade unions have raised the call for a national minimum of over £4. Each time Blair has resisted their pressure.

He wants a figure closer to £3.30 an hour. This is a pittance, although even such a low figure would benefit around 2.5 million of the worst paid workers.

Instead of listening to the workers themselves, Blair says that the figure will be set after long negotiations between the employers, the unions and the government.

There are two dangers. The first is that the negotiations will be used to allow employers to delay paying a minimum wage. After all, Blair has already said that it won't be made law in the first year of a Labour government. The second danger is that the employers will be able to block or veto any figure that threatens their profits.

If bosses that make a profit by exploiting the poorest workers are allowed a say on what the figure for a minimum wage should be, it defeats the object. It is like allowing criminals to pass their own sentences.

We fight for

- £6 an hour minimum wage now
- No role for employers in fixing the figure
- Nationalise any companies that cannot or will not pay the minimum wage.

Insurance job...
Peter Wood, Chief Executive, Direct Line Insurance, earned £8,365 an hour in 1994.

TAX THE RICH!

TAX

THE TORIES have made the poor pay more so they can cut taxes for their rich backers. So it's obvious what the next Labour government should be preparing to do.

They should tax the wealth and profits of the richest and most privileged people and the big banks and corporations.

But Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have repeated time and again that they won't do it. Come 2 May the ill-gotten gains of the multi-millionaires and City speculators will be safe in their hands.

So why won't Labour tax the rich?

Blair's main excuse is that Labour lost the last election because it promised to raise taxes. But there is no need to put up income tax for ordinary working people in offices and factories around the country, or even for small business, shops and the like. All the money needed to repair the Tories' damage can be raised from the richest, most privileged layers: the

The great Tory tax robbery

SINCE 1979 Tory tax changes have made the rich much richer and the poor much poorer.

If you are one of the poorest 10% of the population you are getting £13 a week less than twenty years ago.

If you are one of the richest 1% you get an extra £908 a week thanks to Tory tax cuts.

The Tories have cut rates of income tax for top earners in half. But at the

same time they lowered the threshold at which you start paying tax. Today, you start paying basic rate income tax when you reach 21% of average earnings: in 1979 it was at 34% of average.

The Tories have put VAT on heating bills. Thousands of pensioners, already struggling to get through the winter, have faced illness and even death by hypothermia.

multinationals, privatised utilities and millionaire capitalists.

The real reason for Blair and Brown's refusal to tax the rich has nothing to do with winning the election. It is because New Labour and its right-wing leaders intend to carry on where the Tories left off and put the greed of the few before the needs of the many.

How else could Gordon Brown make the breathtaking claim that peo-

ple earning £100,000 a year are "not rich"? That's £2000 a week! Hasn't he got any idea how the rest of us live?

Why else would New Labour refuse to raise income tax at all for top earners? The Tories cut the rate from 83% to 40%. New Labour won't even put it up to 50%.

Why else would Labour refuse to challenge loopholes that let the biggest companies get away with paying next

Elderly people's pensions are not linked to price rises... nor are wages. Only one thing is: tax breaks for the rich. Capital Gains Tax is index linked, so inflation doesn't make the rich pay more. As they say, it's one law for the rich another for the rest.

Their tax record shows what Tory policies have been all about. It is Robin Hood in reverse: stealing from the poor to give to the rich.

to nothing in Corporation Tax and Capital Gains Tax?

Why won't they clamp down on tycoons who evade £3 billion a year in tax by commuting from tax havens in helicopters? And why else would they only offer to reduce VAT on fuel to 5%, instead of making an election-winning promise to scrap this most hated tax altogether?

Blair has promised that Labour's proposals "do not involve any new

spending commitments that cannot be met from existing resources". This means that the Tory cuts in spending on schools, hospitals, homes and transport will not be reversed. ■

Windfall tax - page 8

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

- For a massive tax on unearned wealth
- For a steeply progressive income tax which hits the rich hardest and the poorest not at all
- Close tax loopholes; strict penalties for rich evaders. Open the books and accounts of the big companies to public inspection
- Abolish VAT and all unfair flat-rate taxes
- No exemptions to the Windfall Tax on privatised utilities. Ban bill increases that try to pass on the effects of the tax to consumers

Asylum rights for all

"RACE IS not an issue" said John Major when a bunch of Tory right wingers led by Nicholas Budgen decided to raise immigration in their election manifestos.

Major is a hypocrite. Race is always an issue in British politics because racism is embedded in the whole raft of immigration laws passed by both the Tories and Labour.

Nowhere is it clearer than where the immigration laws carefully distinguish between those with "family links" to Britain (ie whites) and those without. The aim of all immigration controls has been to prevent black people coming to Britain.

During the last parliament the Tories took their racism a step further when they decided to target political refugees with the Asylum Act.

Britain is a signatory to a United Nations Convention guaranteeing entry for those seeking political asylum. But the 1990s saw a jump in the numbers of asylum seekers coming to Britain. Many were forced to flee the military dictatorship in Nigeria, people often brutalised and tortured with military equipment supplied by the British arms industry. Others fled repression in Turkey, India and Pakistan.

The racists screamed for new controls and the Tories introduced them. The new Act sets up a series of hurdles aimed at catching out refugees and sending them back where they came from or to third countries.

It is a Catch 22 law: if you do not claim asylum immediately you arrive at point of entry you have no rights to any benefits while your case is considered. If you do claim asylum you can be immediately deported to any country you travelled through!

Children have had free school meals withdrawn. Families have been turned out of their accommodation. Thousands of asylum seekers have been locked up immediately they arrive.

Many have to travel on false documents. If you are fleeing a regime they are unlikely to give you a passport! But this alone is enough to send you to the lock up. A recent report by Amnesty International revealed that 80% of detainees were imprisoned on day one of their asylum under extraordinary powers given to immigration officers under the 1971 Immigration Act.

Hundreds are held indefinitely at detention centres. It took a hunger strike by nearly 50 detainees at Rochester Prison this year to highlight their plight.

This racist Act has added one more means of harassing black people in Britain. Labour says that it voted against the 1996 Asylum Act but gives no commitment to repealing it!

Labour must be forced to repeal this law. More than this, we must campaign to repeal all the immigration control laws: they are racist to the core.★

Abolish all immigration controls!

SCRAP THE ANTI-UNION LAWS!

UNIONS

IN THE PAST 18 years the Tories have banned effective trade unionism.

The purpose of trade unions is for workers to combine together to achieve better wages and conditions. These can only be gained at the expense of the bosses profits. By weakening trade unions, by restricting their right to strike, by preventing workers from making their actions effective, the Tories were strengthening the employers and helping to push up their profits.

So called "secondary strikes", when workers take action to support other workers in dispute, were outlawed in 1980. Two years later employers were given the right to sue unions involved in solidarity actions. Laws were passed forcing unions to hold time-consuming ballots before strikes.

Judges can decide whether the ballots have been carried out correctly giving the bosses endless opportunity to delay strikes and force re-balloting. The employers were given the right to sue unions or workers representatives for damages if they went on unofficial strike.

The state can now interfere in virtually every area of union life. Demanding the election by secret ballot of union leaders, giving the right of individual members to opt out of the political levy



Liverpool dockers: latest victims of anti-union laws

democratically decided by the members, insisting on supervised ballots if unions wanted to use some of their funds for political purposes.

Of course there were no equivalent measures for the employers. They can de-recognise unions when they want, lockout workers in dispute, sack workers for joining a union, donate millions to Tory party coffers. Heseltine has championed the Tory war on so-called "red tape" - the rules and regulations that compel employers to meet safety legislation.

The anti-union laws are class law:

Workers' rights from day one!

UNDER THE Tory laws, you have to work two years at your job before you get any legal rights to redundancy or claim against unfair dismissal. Small firms are exempted even after this period.

With the attack on "jobs for life", with the growth of short term contracts and "flexibility" the two year rule is a noose around the neck of trade union members - particularly in the private sector.

The unions should demand full employment rights for every worker - full time or part time, permanent or temporary - from day one!

Save the health service

FOR THE last 18 years the Tories have been waging war on the National Health Service.

Since 1979 they have closed one in five hospitals.

One in three hospital beds have disappeared - 43,000 since Major took power in 1990. Lack of beds causes the cancellation of over 1,000 operations every week.

Over the last ten years the number of nurses has fallen by 50,000.

But private hospital beds have increased by 60%. And money spent on NHS bureaucrats has rocketed from around £25 million ten years

ago to a staggering £500 million last year.

Free healthcare is not profitable, so the Tories don't want to "waste" money on it. No wonder a recent independent report revealed that death rates for the poor are twice as high as for the rich. The rich can expect to live longer, by an average of around 8 years.

New Labour has put forward some policies that would help. They say that they will end the bureaucratic internal market, that they will cut waiting lists by 100,000, and ensure that no-one has to wait for cancer

surgery.

They will pay for this by using £100,000 cut from NHS "red tape". But it is a drop in the ocean.

The real costs of meeting our health needs will always rise: people live longer and new treatments will be invented, like the £1,000 a week new drug for Alzheimer's Disease.

If the NHS is to be repaired and extended in the interests of the people's health, then we will need to force Blair and Brown to break their promise to spend nothing beyond the Tories' own miserly limits.

ballots, flying and secondary pickets. Trade union legislation will remain in force and this means that Britain has more restrictive trade union legislation than any other western country".

Every trade unionist must get ready for a fightback that will make Blair eat his words.

The union movement must mobilise its delegates at every level of the Labour Party to force Labour to repeal the Tory laws. If workers are to be able to defend their jobs, to prevent the bosses demanding ever greater "productivity", to fight job insecurity and for better wages and conditions, these laws that bind the unions must be smashed.

- Repeal all the anti-union laws. No state interference in the trade unions.
- Demand immediate trade union and Labour support for all actions against this laws.
- For the legal right to join a trade union. Compulsory union recognition in all workplaces where there are trade union members.■

Mobilise the rank and file

WE CANNOT rely on the trade union leaders to lead a struggle against these laws. They have gone along with Blair every inch of the way in the belief that it makes Labour more "electable".

These leaders will only move if they are pushed from below.

Trade union members must strengthen rank and file union organisations and openly challenge these laws through strike action. If and when the union leaders obstruct or stand in the way of this struggle they must be replaced with a new fighting leadership.■

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

- Abolish the internal market. Scrap NHS Trusts. Sack all the unelected health authorities and trust boards. Annual elections for local health authorities.
- A massive programme of state spending to reopen closed hospitals and wards, and to recruit nurses and ancillary staff.
- Abolish all private healthcare - all hospitals to be brought within the NHS
- Nationalise the drug companies without compensation under workers' control



SMASH THE NAZIS!

29 March saw a massive demonstration in Strasbourg against the French Nazis of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front. Here at least 50 Nazis from the British National Party will be standing on May 1. As in France, their "respectable" image is a sham. They will be using the election to whip up hatred and violence against black people. We should get organised to drive the fascists off the streets: we should use any means necessary to stop their election rallies, canvassing, and political broadcasts. The fascists have grown in France because a Labour government failed to address poverty, poor housing and unemployment. Now Britain's Nazis - despite their small support today - are waiting in the wings for disillusionment with Blair to grow. That is why they must be stopped now.

Build a Socialist United Europe!

EUROPEAN WORKERS are fighting back and hitting the headlines. But both main parties are trying to ignore the question of Europe until after the election campaign.

Both have promised a referendum if Britain is faced with joining a single currency before the year 2000. Neither has ruled out joining the single currency altogether.

But not so far beneath the surface, the Tories are tearing themselves apart over Europe. The plan for a single currency has exposed major divisions within the British ruling class.

One section desperately needs a single currency and a central bank: this includes exporters to Europe and some big financial capitalists in the City of London.

But the other wing of the British ruling class makes its money in America and the Far East, not in Europe. It does not want to see a more united European trade bloc emerge to rival the USA and Japan.

The ruling class debate over Europe is one in which workers are right to take neither side.

If it is a choice between a little-England capitalism ruled by Redwood and Portillo or a co-ordinated Euro capitalism ruled from Brussels by Neil Kinnock and Leon Brittan, we should say "no thanks" to either.

That does not mean British workers can ignore the European question. We have to pose a different question: workers' Europe or a bosses Europe?

In Germany the employers are demanding an end to high wage costs and "social partnership". Last year they tried to rip up the employment conditions of engineering workers. This year it was coal-miners. In both cases the workers fought back and turned the tide.

In France the government is attacking public spending and welfare. Two years running France has been brought

to a standstill by workers' action against attacks on living standards.

When the French lorry drivers struck last December, they were joined by drivers in Belgium, Denmark, Spain and Norway. And in a marvellous display of solidarity, French car workers have struck in support of strikes at Renault in Belgium.

Why this upsurge of workers' struggles across Europe? Because the employers are trying to make the workers pay for the imposition of a single currency. Instead of reining in spending on military hardware, the Euro-bosses are slashing benefits, education and health spending.

Inside or outside of Europe or the single currency, the capitalist markets will always dictate the economic priorities of capitalist governments.

The trade union leaders have convinced themselves that only the toothless "social chapter" can give us back our union rights. Better to let a Brussels bureaucrat sort out the problem of low pay and poor conditions than to encourage union members to fight against them, they reason.

The old left of the labour movement has a different answer: it is simply anti-Europe and anti-Maastricht. Arthur

Scargill ludicrously claims that Britain could pull out of Europe and fill the gap by trading with North Korea and Cuba.

No: the struggle of the British working class is now intimately linked to the struggle of our brothers and sisters in Europe.

Inside or outside of a single currency British bosses will be forced to cut labour costs to compete with America and the Far East. As whole industries like coal, steel, cars and aerospace are slashed it is vital that European workers are not turned against each other.

We need a united fight against the Euro-capitalists - not unity with the little-Englanders of the Tory right against Brussels.

Most of all we need active solidarity with the workers in struggle across Europe. We have more in common with the workers of the farthest away country than we have with the British capitalists.

We should follow the lead of European workers: and start fighting hard like French and German workers. We should really unite the continent: not in a superstate of Brussels bureaucrats, but in a Socialist United States of Europe. ■

ONE MONTH after the election Tony Blair plans to be in Amsterdam, heading the British delegation to the crucial Euro-summit that could give the green light to a single currency.

So does Workers Power and our sister organisations from France, Austria, Sweden, Ireland and Germany. But while Tony will be indoors, scoffing an expensive lunch with the cream of the European elite, we plan to be right outside the door with hundreds of thousands of trade unionists saying: Single currency? Not at our

expense!

The Euromarch for jobs has already started. Delegations are coming from all over Europe. Small feeder marches, organised by local trade unions, have set off for Amsterdam. The march culminates with a mass demonstration outside the Inter Governmental Conference in Amsterdam on 14 June.

Come with Workers Power and the youth organisation Revolution on the Euromarch: Telephone 0171 357 0388 now. ■

EUROMARCH

workers power

EDITORIAL

Vote Labour

WE NEED a massive Labour victory on 1 May. Workers Power is calling on all its readers to vote Labour and campaign for Labour in the workplaces, on the estates and in the town centres across Britain.

Millions hate the Tories. They have taxed the poor, poured millions into the bank accounts of fat-cat bosses, run down the NHS and ruined the education system. But what does Labour offer? Since Tony Blair took control Labour has moved further to the right than ever before. It accepts the Tory tax and spending limits. It will keep the Tory anti-union laws.

It accepts the Tory logic that millions of working class people should suffer low pay, mass unemployment, poverty, poor housing and a second class education system so that the profit system can survive.

Everywhere people are saying: "the politicians are all the same" - no wonder! And no wonder too that many young first time voters are apathetic, given the choice between the sleazy John and smarmy Tony.

So why vote Labour? Here are five good reasons:

● **The Tories and Lib-Dems are outright parties of business.**

Blair, so far, is just a big business wannabe. Labour - beneath all the glitz and smarm - remains the party of the trade unions. Workers will have to fight to force Blair to meet our needs. The best conditions for that fight is with Blair in power, not the Tories.

● **It is a blow against the bosses. The bankers and businessmen don't fear Tony Blair. But they do fear what could happen if Labour comes to power.**

They fear losing their grip on the hundreds of quangos that really run Britain. They fear the rising confidence of trade union members and the rising expectations of voters who want Blair to do something about poverty, unemployment and low pay. They are not keen on Blair's meagre promises: the minimum wage, rights to union recognition and the social charter, allowing councils to spend money to build new homes, the windfall tax on the privatised utilities.

● **It's time for a change - not just in parliament, but where it matters: in the workplace.**

Over the last 18 years union rights, job security and workplace health safeguards have been steadily removed and wages driven downwards. Meanwhile your managers are clocking up huge bonuses, and the shareholders huge profits. Blair's promises to workers are few and far between. But with a massive Labour majority in parliament we can force them to meet our demands for restored employment rights and higher wages.

● **Not voting plays into the Tories' hands.**

If you hate the Tories but despise Blair playing the Tory game, not voting may seem like a way of registering a protest. But no-one will be listening. The capitalist system gives you just one chance in five years to decide who governs. A Labour government will massively boost the confidence of ordinary people to fight for their rights and living standards. It will change the conditions of struggle over pay, tax, housing, pensions and education. The best way to express your anger at the Tories and disgust at Blair is to put Blair in office and organise to fight against him, to force him to meet our needs.

● **We can use the fight for a Labour victory to mobilise for the fight after the election**

Parliament is a political puppet show while the real decisions about our lives are made in the boardrooms and on the stock exchanges. The real question is not whether we want John Major or Tony Blair in Downing Street, but in whose interests society should be run. Should it be run to meet the needs of a few rich shareholders or to give everyone a real job with a decent wage, a first class education and quality services? If you want that you have to fight for it by getting organised.

Let's use the election to get organised and to raise the real issues: which class should control society and how? Let's use the election - the one time when it's OK to "talk politics" at work, or in school, or on the doorstep - to build a real, fighting, socialist alternative to Blair's New Labour.

Vote Labour - but get organised to fight!

Why we fight for

SOCIALISM

TAKE A LOOK at the Tory election manifesto: it is a programme for a sick system.

It has nothing to do with the "classless society" John Major once promised.

The Tory strategy is based on one priority: keep the profits of big business flowing at any cost – as long as that cost is borne by ordinary working people. It is a crisis-management programme for a crisis ridden system.

Labour

Now take a look at New Labour's election programme. Labour has issued a five point summary of its election demands on a credit card-sized handout. Labour too wants "tough rules for government spending and borrowing".

It plans to force 250,000 under 25s off the dole with a compulsory training scheme. It promises to jail youngsters faster than the Tories. True, it promises to shift a few resources round – from NHS red tape to shorter waiting lists, from private utilities to training, from assisted grammar school places to smaller infant school classes.

But nowhere does it promise a fundamental shift of spending to meet the needs of millions suffering poverty and unemployment. It can't. It will not raise taxes. It will not spend money.

Credit card

Labour's credit card image is appropriate. With your credit card, you can spend a bit more money now, feel cheerful for a few weeks, then – as the bills come in – you are back with the same money problems only worse.

Labour cannot promise to spend new money to improve education, health and pensions – or to invest in creating real jobs, decent services and a modernised transport infrastructure. Why? Because that would mean shifting the costs of all the failures of the present profit system away from the poor and onto the rich.

It would mean taking money away from the fat cats and spreading it out amongst those who need it most.

Agreement

Today there is total agreement amongst politicians, pundits, economists and experts that "we can't afford" things like the welfare state, full employment, proper pensions, decent wages and secure jobs.

Funnily enough just 50 years ago, as Britain emerged from wartime austerity, there was broad agreement – between Labour and Tory alike – that we could afford all these things and more: nationalised industries, planned industrial development and a "partnership" between the unions and the employers that was supposed to

overcome class division.

Go back even further to the 1930s – when the profit system demanded starvation level wages, mass unemployment, a totally private health system and a class-based education system bordering on apartheid and you

control the wealth of society.

Take the example of Ford, the multinational car manufacturer. In January Ford announced that it would make no more new cars at its Halewood plant on Merseyside. Tens of thousands of jobs were threatened – in an area

What gives big companies the power to devastate the lives of whole communities? Ownership and control of the factories, the distribution system and investment plans.

find...you guessed it: a Labour/Tory coalition government implementing it all jointly because there was "no alternative".

What this proves is that all parliamentary politics is ultimately dictated by the needs of the profit system.

But there is an alternative. It is called socialism. What socialism really means has been distorted by the Stalinist dictatorships in Russia and Eastern Europe, watered down by Labour left wingers like Ken Livingstone and Tony Benn, and systematically slandered, day-in day-out, by the mass media.

Control

It is not an alternative policy for running the present system better: it is an alternative system for running society for the benefit of millions of ordinary people. At its heart is a challenge to the employers, the bankers and the stockbrokers who own and con-

with already high unemployment. Meanwhile, in Belgium, Ford's rival car maker Renault announced the complete closure of its Vilvoerde plant, again with tens of thousands of workers thrown immediately on the scrap heap.

What gives big companies the power to devastate the lives of whole communities? Ownership and control of the factories, the distribution system and the investment plans is the simple answer.

You can accept that as inevitable and resign yourself to long term unemployment: to poverty, depression, illness, premature ageing and death. Or, like workers at both Halewood and Vilvoerde, you can fight back.

But the moment you fight back the question of ownership and control looms right there in the foreground. The trade union leaders, who accept the capitalist profit system and reject real socialism, will always try to avoid

this question. So at Halewood they pleaded for Ford to sack other workers, in other plants, in other countries. In Belgium the union leaders pleaded with Renault for "social partnership": keep the ownership and control but just let us negotiate our members' jobs and employment rights away.

There is a much more simple and direct solution: take Ford, Renault and the rest into state ownership and place all the decision making in the company under the control of the workers themselves.

Nationalisation, without compensation, and under workers' control is the only answer to mass unemployment and to the anarchy of the market. It is one of the keystones of the socialist solution.

Failed?

"But it's been tried and failed" comes the answer. In Russia the state-owned industries stagnated, and even in Britain the nationalised companies became a byword for inefficiency, goes the argument. Our answer is that it doesn't work without workers control.

In Stalinist Russia and in the old British state-owned industries there was no workers' control. But this is an essential part of nationalisation. Take it away and you simply get a set of incompetent state bureaucrats replacing a set of overpaid private fat-cats.

And socialist nationalisation is only half the solution. As well as taking the fixed assets of the ruling class into state ownership we also have to attack their "liquid" assets – and that means a lot more than raiding their drinks cabinet.

Tax

It means slapping a massive tax on unearned wealth: primarily on business profits and share dividends, but also on individual incomes over £50,000 a year, and on the £190 billion a day traded on the London for-

ign exchange markets.

If we nationalised the banks and major industries, and placed them under workers' control – and if we taxed the rich – we could take the first steps to solving the problems that neither New Labour nor the Tories can begin to address.

With the wealth of the private banks and businesses firmly in state hands, mass unemployment could be eradicated with a massive investment plan in high-technology industries, better public services and overhauled transport, energy and housing infrastructures.

Soon it would not be a question of cutting jobs to meet the market's needs but cutting the hours of those in work. This could be done with no loss of pay simply by turning some of the benefits of new technology into cutting the hours rather than cutting the workforce.

Homeless

The logic of capitalism dictates that 100,000 building workers are unemployed while tens of thousands have no homes and millions more live in cramped, insanitary housing.

The sensible solution – employ the workers to build the homes – is the one thing the capitalist system will not allow. It is not simply a question of too little government income from taxation. While the bosses are only too happy to reward themselves with their sports cars and yachts, their jet-skis and holiday villas, they insist that any major spending to meet working class needs can only "revive inflation".

Inflation

It is true that the capitalist economy, especially placed within a global worldwide system, generates inflation. Like a sick houseplant, whenever it grows it gets unhealthy.

The capitalist solution is to treat the



IS M



economy like a Bonsai tree: to deliberately stunt its growth, for fear of inflation and "overheating". So sick is the capitalist system that even with 2 million unemployed the Bank of England wants to slow down economic

growth with interest rate rises, and will dictate those rises to whoever becomes Chancellor of the Exchequer on 1 May.

The short term solution is state control of prices, and a sliding scale of incomes whereby every 1% increase

in the cost of living triggers a guaranteed 1% rise in wages, pensions and benefits. Ultimately however, the capitalist system always produces inflation, because growth is always based on credit, and a lender always demands

profit in return.

Under socialism state-controlled investment could go a long way to reigning back inflation. In the end it can only be abolished by driving the profit motive out of the system worldwide.

International

Any attack on the private capitalists in Britain would immediately pose that problem anyway. Britain is part of a world economic system. We depend on goods from other countries just as they depend on what we produce here.

Under the Stalinist model of "socialism in one country" the myth was that we could build socialism behind

national economic barriers, sealed off from the capitalist world. The result was a monstrous catastrophe.

The only people peddling such solutions today are Stalinist dinosaurs like Arthur Scargill. Real socialism has nothing to do with economic nationalism: that's why we want to build an international socialist working class alternative – not a little-England version that will not work.

Dream?

Socialism could bring full employment, world-beating services, a modernised infrastructure and revitalised industry. It could provide a high class education for every child and a decent quality of life for retired people. Capitalism can never do this. It can only make things worse.

"But it's just a dream" say the sceptics. "Or a state directed nightmare," add the rich and their supporters who cannot imagine a world without privilege and injustice.

The fact is even today capitalism cannot function without state intervention.

What was the Tories' solution to the crisis at Ford Halewood? They have given Ford £15 million to "think about" bringing a new car to the Hale-

wood plant. They have reportedly given Toyota £30,000 per job to invest in South Wales. And of course they are prepared to spend billions on armaments – effectively subsidising a whole sector of the capitalists.

The profit system will always demand state subsidies and interventions to benefit the bosses. What it will

never do is relinquish real ownership and control over the economy. That is why, despite all their rhetoric about "rolling back the frontiers of the state", the bosses are quite happy with a "strong state" when it is bashing the miners or attacking trade unions.

"Planning" say the sceptics, is outdated.

It causes stagnation and bureaucracy, they claim, and can never meet the needs of a dynamic modern economy.

But just take a look at the top jobs pages of the *Times* or *Telegraph*. Who do the capitalists employ in their hundreds and thousands? Production planners, marketing planners, strategic planners, economic planners. Every company – from a small shop to a multinational – has to have a "business plan".

Well, socialism means planning for humanity not for business. Its starting point is human need, not profit.

Dynamic

With the expertise available today, backed up with advances in information technology, economic resources could be allocated to meet human need flexibly, dynamically and – unlike under capitalism – completely openly.

We could all take part in the economic decision making process, which today is in the hands of a few and shrouded in business secrecy.

The real "dreamers" are not the socialists but those who dream of a peaceful, dynamic, steadily expanding capitalism that provides a decent life for all. It will never exist. ■

Planned production could eradicate poverty

What we mean by workers' power

THE REAL obstacles to socialism are political, not economic. Standing in the way of socialist transformation is a whole defence mechanism for the existing capitalist system.

Parliament forms part of it, so do the Tory, Liberal and Labour parties. But the real defence of the system lies outside parliament.

In theory, Britain is a democracy where Parliament makes laws and the courts uphold them. But in practice, the courts have the power to delay and even overturn laws that attack the so-called natural rights to own property and make profits. The judges also make the law: the decision of one public-school educated bigot can count for more than the decision of parliament. **Under capitalism some laws are more legal than others . . .**

Behind the unelected judiciary stands the police. There is no democratic control over the police whatsoever and, under capitalism, there cannot be. Even an elected police authority could not order the police to stop harassing black youth on the streets and start harassing sweat-shop employers. Because it is not a "crime" to exploit workers – the capitalists see it as a basic human right. But let those workers go on strike for better pay; let them break one of the anti-union laws Tony Blair intends to keep, and

the riot squads will be there, backed up by court orders to bankrupt shop stewards.

In a "democracy" every individual is supposed to be equal before the law. **But when it comes to disputes between workers and employers, some individuals are more equal than others . . .**

Behind the police stand the security services: the Special Branch, MI5 and MI6. There is no pretence at par-

liamentary regulation of these forces. In fact they see their job as to police the politicians. Any politician who is seen as threatening the capitalist order is harassed, bugged, burgled and monitored by the intelligence services. No law says that they should be: only the unwritten rules of the British establishment. Rule number one is: protect capitalism.

The only way is to find an alternative to the armed power of the state and its politically powerless parliament. That alternative is working class power.

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In a democracy there is supposed to be freedom of speech. But speak out against profit and exploitation and the full force of the spy-machine will be turned against you. **Clearly,**

within is the working class, the socialists and all those in Ireland fighting for independence.

If ever a Labour government, or a break-away Scottish Assembly for that matter, really challenged the wealth and power of the bosses, the army would be used to stop it.

Key to this whole extra-parliamentary defence mechanism is the Monarchy. The Queen commands the armed forces, not the Prime Minister. The Queen has the power to appoint the Prime Minister – not parliament.

At school they tell us that these

powers are just ceremonial, and will never be used. But in 1975 the Queen's representative in Australia dismissed an elected Labour government and put the Tories in power. The Queen has the power to do this in Britain. **And some powers are more ceremonial than others . . .**

Faced with the existence of the non-parliamentary state power of the ruling class, socialists have a choice. We can limit our struggles to the parliamentary arena and what the capitalist state machine will allow and accept or we can look for another solution.

The first course gets you nowhere. In 1973 Salvador Allende, the socialist prime minister of Chile, fearing a military coup, tried to placate the army by appointing a hard-line commander.

The general's name was Pinochet. Pinochet launched the coup himself, murdering Allende along with thousands of trade unionists and socialists, and enforcing twenty years of torture and injustice.

The only way is to find an alternative to the armed power of the state and its politically powerless parliament. That alternative is working class power.

Working class people have the ingenuity to rule society themselves. There is more democracy practised

(and more sense talked) in the workplace and on the street than there is in parliament. Through the trade unions – and by creating other, new organisations of struggle, residents action committees, school student unions, justice campaigns – workers can learn that politics is not ultimately about what goes on in parliament. We can learn to control and direct our own lives.

To carry out the socialist solution we need to take on and smash the resistance of the state outside parliament. We need workers councils, locally and nationally, as an alternative to the parliamentary puppet show. Workers councils, composed of directly elected delegates – not just from housing areas but also workplaces – have sprung up wherever mass working class struggle takes place.

We will have to:

- replace parliament with a government of workers councils
- replace the police and army of the capitalists with a workers' militia
- replace the chaos of the market with a democratically planned economy.

Socialism cannot be delivered from above, through parliament. It will have to come from below, from the struggles of working class people transformed into a struggle for working class power. ■

Scottish Assembly now!

EVERY NATION should have the right to determine its own future. But the Scottish people are being denied that basic right.

Four in every five Scots wants a Scottish Assembly in Edinburgh. They have expressed this wish in poll after poll. Every political party in Scotland supports an Assembly, except the party that hardly any Scots vote for... the Conservative Party.

In 1979, under the last Labour government, the Scottish people were given the chance to vote in a referendum. A clear majority voted for an Assembly. But in Westminster a cynical trick was played.

They counted everyone that didn't vote, everyone that spoiled their ballot paper and everyone who abstained as a vote against a Scottish parliament. And they refused to set one up.

Not surprisingly the Scottish Labour Party wants an Assembly. After all, they would certainly dominate it. So they were livid when Blair

DEVOLUTION

suddenly changed his tune last year. Instead of setting up an Assembly straight away, there will now be... another referendum! No wonder ordinary people all over Scotland are losing patience.

But there was worse to come. Not satisfied with delaying the Assembly, Blair wants to stop it having any real powers. There will now be not one referendum, but two! There will be a second vote on whether the Assembly should have tax raising powers.

Well of course it should. Socialists in such an Assembly would argue for a swingeing tax on unearned wealth, on the great Scottish landowners, the oil multinationals and other companies.

That way they could start to reverse the terrible cuts that are forcing schools, libraries and nurseries to close all over Scotland. This is the last

sort of assembly that a Blair led government would want.

That is why workers and socialists in Scotland should demand an assembly with full powers, a sovereign one. That way the assembly can decide whatever it wants, including its relationship to the rest of Britain and the Westminster parliament.

If Blair is allowed to impose a toothless assembly on Scotland there is a real danger that the Scottish nationalists will capitalise on the anger of the Scottish people. They

will direct the Scottish working class down the blind alley of national separation, which would divide them from English and Welsh workers and weaken the fight for socialism in Britain as a whole.

That is why **Workers Power** says:

- Self-determination for the Scottish people. Sovereign Scottish Assembly now
- No to separation. Scottish, English and Welsh workers unite and fight.
- For a Socialist Republic of Britain

IN WALES, there is a different situation from Scotland. In the 1979 referendum the Welsh people voted overwhelmingly against a Welsh Assembly.

Socialists want to unite the workers of all countries. We have no interest in dividing countries from one another unless the people themselves have decided on it.

There should be a referendum in Wales on whether they want an assembly. Socialists would campaign for a no vote, and for a united struggle for socialism together with the English and Scottish workers. The result of the referendum should be upheld, and if over 50% vote for an assembly, then elections should be held right away. ■

What kind of democracy?

CONSTITUTION

OPINION POLLS show that well over half the population want the British constitution radically overhauled.

But *New Labour* is only prepared to tinker with it.

The continued existence of the House of Lords is indefensible. There is no possible democratic argument for it. But Tony Blair will not abolish it. He will only remove the right of hereditary peers to vote. The Lords will still be unelected and will still be able to delay laws.

• **The House of Lords should be abolished**

The monarchy has rarely been so unpopular as it is today. Blair says Labour won't spend millions on the Royal Yacht... but he will still support the Civil List. Every year even more millions of our money will be paid straight into the bank accounts of some of the richest people in the world. Worse still, the Queen will keep all her powers, including the power to block laws and sack the government.

• **The monarchy should be abolished**

What about the voting system? New Labour will hold a referendum on the issue. But they have refused to say what options will be put to the people. It ought to be totally straightforward: the seats in parliament should be divided between the parties in proportion to the votes they get. Why won't Blair speak out clearly for democracy?



Just look at the injustices of Britain's system of government

□ An unelected House of Lords stuffed with great landowners, businessmen and government appointees. This undemocratic obstacle has a built in Tory majority and can delay the passing of laws.

□ A monarchy and a Royal Family that is increasingly unpopular and maintained at huge expense by the tax payers. It is also a very dangerous institution. The Queen has the power to block any law she chooses. In Australia the Queen's representative used this power to sack a

Labour government in 1975.

□ A voting system that is so unfair no government since 1935 has ever won more than half of the votes cast.

□ A sleaze-ridden parliament protected by one of the most secretive systems of government in the western world.

• **Proportional representation should be introduced.**

There should be a system of party lists, with no 5% hurdle for smaller parties. The voting age should be reduced to 16 years.

Labour says it will bring in a Free-

dom of Information Act... and about time too. But will it still preserve the shroud of secrecy behind which cabinets and civil servants hatch their plots? If he really put our rights above the interests of a corrupt establishment, he would take steps to bring

their dirty dealing into the light of day.

• **All government papers should be published without delay.**

MI5 and MI6 secret police should be abolished. Secret treaties and deals with repressive regimes should be opened to public inspection. ■

WINDFALL TAX:
Fat cats get off lightly

LABOUR'S ONLY commitment to raise more money from the rich is the famous Windfall Tax.

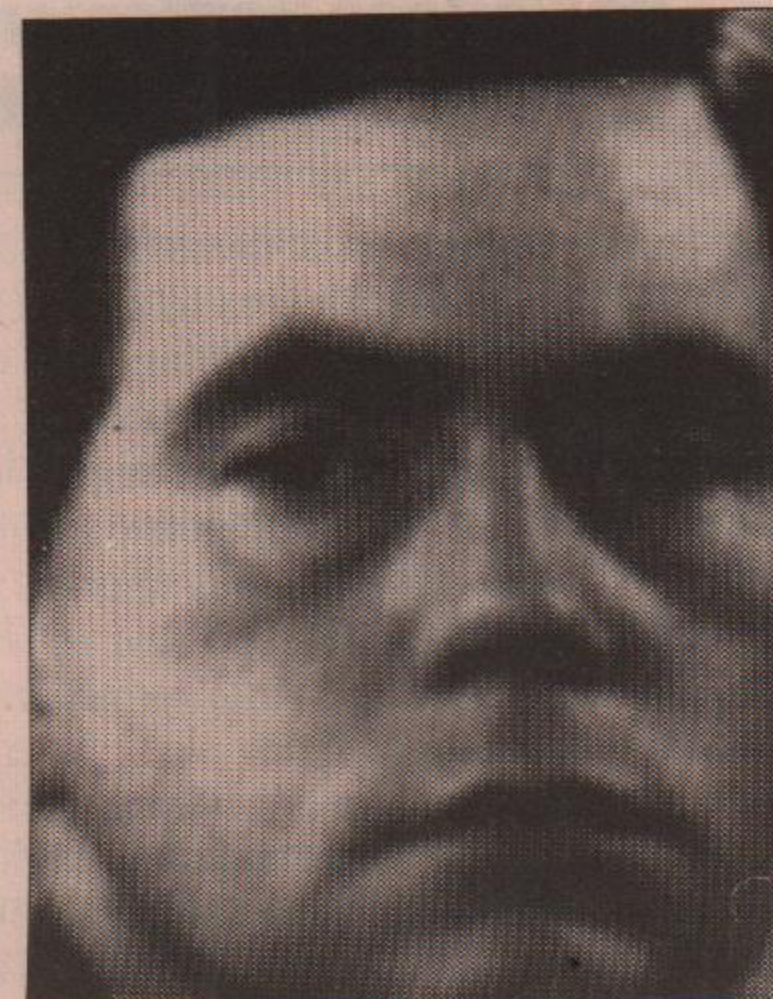
This was announced last year by Gordon Brown. The idea was to raise between £5-£10 billion from the swollen profits of privatised corporations like the telephone, water and gas companies. Brown promised that the money would be spent on jobs.

Then John Major called the election. Brown immediately started backing down. Quietly, hoping no-one would notice - he halved the amount to be raised. Then he announced that one of the companies that has made the most obscene profits from privatisation - British Telecom - will

not have to pay the tax at all.

These companies are all awash with our money. Brown's proposal will now raise a maximum of £3 billion. Yet a big firm of City accountants says that these companies could pay £10 billion and still hardly notice it. The trade union GMB says that with £8 billion of that the government could get a million people off the dole and into real jobs.

Exactly. And why stop there? If the privatised utilities were taken back into state hands and placed under the control of their workforce and consumers then their profits could be used to finance state spending on health and education - and massive cuts in domestic bills. ■



Gordon Brown

SLEAZE

The whole system is corrupt

THE "CASH for questions" scandal provided a rare glimpse at the inner workings of "democracy" in Britain.

Tory Minister Tim Smith was exposed for taking over £25,000 in bribes to ask questions for Harrod's boss al-Fayed. He and several other MPs received regular cash filled brown envelopes, none of which were declared for tax. Some, like Neil Hamilton MP, got all-expenses paid holidays at the Paris Ritz.

Corruption

Labour MPs coined the word "sleaze" to describe this. Why? Wasn't this large scale corruption? Isn't defrauding the revenue a crime? Not apparently if you are an MP.

It is called "sleaze" because it is how a capitalist parliament works. If you are paid thousands of pounds as a retainer by a tobacco or drugs company, or if you are paid to represent the Police Federation or the car lobby, this is fine. All you have to do is register it in the members interests book.

Perks

Big companies pay tens of thousands to employ parliamentary "lobbyists" to funnel these perks to the right places. Sir Michael Grylls ran the Tories' trade and industry committee for 16 years. The Nolan Committee evidence reveals that he was given massive payments, up to £10,000 a time, from some of the largest companies in the country like Rank Xerox, British Airways and Whitbread for services rendered.

This is all "legal". It is how a capitalist democracy works. If you are working class and poor you are given a chance to influence government every 5 years. If you are a rich businessman or woman you have that chance every day.

Billions

A few years ago the Tory Party central office was deep in debt. It owed millions to its bank. Since then their membership has shrunk dramatically. Yet now they are able to spend £50 million on the current election campaign. How? Because the businesses, the multi-nationals and the super-rich, here and abroad, have dug into their pockets to re-cycle a fraction of the billions they have made under the Tories back into the party.

Labour has few big business backers. It was founded by the trade unions and has always relied on millions of union members to contribute to and support the party.

System

The Tories hate this. So does Blair. It means millions of workers expect Labour to do something for them, just as they expect the Tories to back their big business friends. That is why Blair is so sympathetic to state funding of parties: it would release him from this last element of control and enable him to break Labour's link to the unions. Workers should fight any such proposals tooth and nail.

As long as capitalism exists parliament will be controlled behind the scenes by the rich and privileged. Corruption is inevitable in such a system, whatever they say about "cleaning up politics".

The only real clean up will be done by the working class when it sweeps away the whole rotten system. ■

TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND

THIS IS NORTHERN Ireland's second general election in 12 months. Last May, as part of the "peace process", elections were held to a new Forum in which "all parties" were supposed to hammer out a peace agreement.

It did not work out that way. Sinn Fein - against the expectations of the Tories and their Unionist friends - increased its vote to 17%, challenging the "moderate" SDLP for first position amongst anti-unionist parties. Despite his pre-election pledge that "nothing was ruled out" the Tory Northern Ireland spokesman Patrick Mayhew, banned Sinn Fein from the Forum.

By July the SDLP too had walked out, after the police and army launched a series of massive attacks

IRISH WAR

on Catholic communities protesting against sectarian Orange parades coming through their areas.

So an election came and went, solving nothing, but revealing starkly that in Northern Ireland "democracy" is a sham.

The official British attitude to Northern Ireland is riddled with lies and contradictions.

In Westminster there is a so-called "bi-partisan" approach to Northern Ireland. As long as there is a "security threat", the party leaders say, there will be no public disagreements over policy. That policy is to keep troops on the streets, maintain a 90% protestant armed police force to keep

in place a policy of repression against the Catholic minority and refuse to change a border drawn up against the wishes of the Irish people in 1921.

Britain justifies all this on the grounds that the unionists have a right to veto a united Ireland. The unionists are a majority in the 6 Counties of Northern Ireland: the borders were drawn at gunpoint to ensure that would happen.

The unionists also have a veto on the "peace process" one that has ensured that there will be no peace and no process. The unionists even have a veto even over the actions of the police. Last July, a raging mob of loyalists confronted the Royal Ulster Constabulary at Portadown, demanding the right to stage a sectarian parade through a nationalist area. The police caved in:

"You cannot in a democracy remotely consider using lethal firearms against a parade of Orangemen" said RUC chief Hugh Annesley.

What a contrast with the way anti-unionists were treated. Those protesting against the Orange march found their streets occupied with armed troops, their children fired at with lethal plastic bullets (hundreds were fired in a single night), and loaded guns pointed through their living room windows.

The media in Britain avoids the real reasons behind the war in Northern



Drumcree 1996: RUC batters nationalists to protect Orange bigots

Ireland. It likes to paint it as a religious conflict. The IRA are "terrorists" and "psychos", Sinn Fein is the same - says the media. So why has Sinn Fein's vote grown, even despite the breaking of the IRA cease-fire?

The reason is clear: the mass of anti-unionists in Northern Ireland feel trapped within an undemocratic sectarian state, whose police force and legal system is stacked against them. They want peace - and they know the only way to get it is for Britain to get out of Ireland for good. We agree.

The peace process is a sham. It was designed to force the IRA to surren-

der without solving any of the injustices that forced the republican movement to take up arms in the first place. Major and Mayhew, propped up by the unionist bigots at Westminster, were never going to make the least concession.

There is only one way to bring peace: British troops should get out of Ireland now. The Royal Irish Regiment - full of part time loyalist bigots - and the RUC should be disbanded.

The whole Irish people, both sides of the border, should be given the right to decide the future of the island free of foreign military interference. ■

THE PREVENTION OF Terrorism Act - used to terrorise and harass the Irish community in Britain - continues in force.

It allows the police to incarcerate anyone they want for two weeks without charge. Anyone from Northern Ireland can be banned from mainland Britain. Labour voted against its renewal. Now it must be forced to repeal it.

Our jails are full of Irish political prisoners whose only "crime" was to take up arms against British imperi-

alism and its sectarian state in the north of Ireland. The British state shows no mercy to such prisoners.

Roisin McAliskey, held in a British jail only because the German courts want to question her, has been subjected to horrendous treatment. In the last months of pregnancy she has been chained, stripped searched daily, and threatened with separation from her baby when it is born. Other Irish prisoners have received similar treatment.

Repeat the PTA. Release all the Irish political prisoners now.

No place on Blair's agenda?

WOMEN

OUT OF A likely 42 million voters just 70,000 will decide the outcome of the election. According to the pollsters, this group of "swing voters" in 53 marginal seats will be crucial to Tony Blair's chances.

Apparently the typical swing voter is a woman. "Worcester woman" has replaced "Essex man" as the symbol of the kind of voter Labour wants to attract.

But what is Labour offering women? *New Labour New Britain*, the party magazine, has published a "handy pull out guide" to its plans for government. Animal welfare gets a whole section to itself, with detailed points about Labour's plans for the animal kingdom. Women - half of humanity and half the workforce - get no special mention whatsoever.



The party's bland commitment to "ending unfair discrimination" and providing opportunities for all irrespective of sex is the only specific mention of women's rights and concerns in the whole document.

The reason Blair has sidelined women's issues is that every problem working class women face is traceable

to the capitalist system, its hypocrisy about family values, and its need for a low paid army of flexible workers.

Under the Tories, the number of women at work has increased massively - from 39% to 50% of the workforce. But almost half of women's jobs are part time.

Millions of women know all too well what that means. It's a double shift: a low paid, low skilled part time job, followed by hours of housework and childcare.

Child benefit - the only benefit specifically for women - is under attack from Labour and the Tories alike. And after years of equal opportunities legislation, women's wages - for work of equal value - remain around 73% of men's.

Labour's new intake of women MPs will be just the window dressing. A maximum of 90 Labour women could get into parliament - still less than a quarter of the likely number of Labour

MPs. These new women MPs have the lowest percentage of union members of any group of Labour candidates. Labour's new women are Blairites to the core: they have risen out of their class, not with it. They symbolise New Labour's attitude to women workers.

If you're middle class, and you've had a decent education, you can get on in New Labour's New Britain.

If you're a working class mother

your benefits will be cut, your services slashed and - if your kids misbehave - both you and they could be on a fast track to prison.

With Blair committed to maintaining slave labour conditions and low pay across industry and the public sector, women are in the firing line. That's why every working woman should join a union and fight to force Labour to meet our needs. ★

Free abortion on demand!

LABOUR IS running scared on the abortion issue. Attacked by Catholic bishops in Scotland, under fire from the new "anti-abortion" party, and desperate to maintain his "God-fearing" image, Tony Blair ducks and dives on abortion rights.

Every Labour supporter should be clear: there should be free abortion on demand, no rollbacks of the existing limited abortion rights, and Labour should impose a 5 line whip on every Labour MP for all abortion votes in Parliament.

Women should have the right to choose - to control their own bodies - whether it be through access to abortion or access to fertility treatment. That should be a Labour policy - not just a question of individual conscience. ■

SLP

THERE ARE several smaller socialist parties standing in this election. Shouldn't we vote for them instead of Labour?

Some workers and youth will vote New Labour with gritted teeth. It has rushed to dump its old policies to win over the media and big business. It has kicked the trade unions in the teeth over the anti-union laws. It declares it will stick by the letter of the Tories public spending plans.

So why not vote for one of the smaller left-wing parties, such as the Socialist Party or the Socialist Labour Party of Arthur Scargill? Don't these parties offer a socialist alternative to Labour?

Unfortunately they don't. The main task of the working class in this election is to kick the Tories out. The election is a class struggle between a party of the unions and an outright

An alternative to Blair?

party of capitalists. The SLP and SP are tiny parties with little support in the working class.

While millions of workers will vote Labour, and millions more are in unions that are affiliated to Labour, these par-

ties represent nothing.

"But surely you have to start somewhere?" some might object. True: except that these parties' programmes offer no coherent alternative to Labour. And this is the most important point.

THERE IS ONE constituency where Scargill's SLP is standing on a revolutionary programme. It is in Cardiff Central and we urge a vote for their candidate Terry Burns.

There has been a struggle going on inside Arthur Scargill's SLP. Many socialists have already expelled or "voided" from the party. Vauxhall Constituency in Lambeth was dissolved for just daring to discuss a local election manifesto!

This is because it was a revolutionary programme, not just Arthur's preferred version of warmed-up old Labour reformism.

Cardiff Central has refused to be intimidated and is standing its candidate on a clearly revolutionary manifesto. This is excellent. Workers Power wholeheartedly supports Terry Burns. We encourage other SLP branches to follow Cardiff's example.

For all their talk of "socialism" both the SP and the SLP offer only a more left wing version of the parliamentary road to socialism.

They offer more radical slogans than Blair (which is not difficult). They call for renationalisation, for higher taxes on the rich, for a shorter working week etc.

But they are silent on the most important point about how socialism can be established.

No ruling class is going to allow its profits to be confiscated without fighting back. If voting could get you anywhere in the end, it wouldn't be allowed. Any attempt to get socialism through parliamentary would be met by a military coup.

That is why consistent socialists are revolutionaries. We say openly to the

working class that we will need to overthrow the state and break up the capitalists' apparatus of repression through a mass movement prepared to use force.

Both the SLP and the Socialist Party refuse to accept this. Their election manifestos offer a series of radical sounding measures to be achieved through parliament and by using parliamentary methods.

That is why despite their policy differences they are no alternative to Labour's reformism.

But unlike Labour they do not have the masses behind them, so the working class has no way of bringing its influence to bear on them through trade union links. And - of course - they cannot beat the Tories.

Until such time as we succeed in building a revolutionary party that can run a serious campaign in numerous constituencies, the best approach is to Vote Labour and organise to fight. ■

ISRAEL

THIRTY YEARS ago the Israeli army stormed into the neighbouring territory of the West Bank. So began three decades of brutal occupation against the wishes of the resident Arab population.

Israel refuses to leave the West Bank and continues to steal land from its Arab owners to build Jewish settlements in the heart of their communities.

There is mass resistance to the occupation, especially from young people who fight back with great bravery against the army.

Resistance is strong because, in violation of international agreements, Israel is going ahead with plans to build 6,500 homes in Jabal Abu Ghunaym in the heart of Arab East Jerusalem. They are trying to turn the Arabs into a minority in their own city.

The decision to press ahead with this settlement was made by Prime Minister Netanyahu weeks after the Israeli troops partially withdrew from the Arab town of Hebron in the West Bank.

This withdrawal, long delayed, was part of the Oslo accords signed in 1993. The Palestine Liberation Organisation agreed to end its resistance to Israel in return for a powerless local authority in a few West Bank towns covering a fraction of the occupied territory. As many Palestinians realised at the time, including the famous writer Edward Said, this was a shocking climbdown.

For the first time the PLO accepted that the wholesale murder and theft by Jewish terror gangs in the war which led to the creation of the state of Israel 1947-48 would be allowed to stand. At a stroke, PLO leader Yasir Arafat abandoned the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who had been driven from their homes in 1948 and reneged on their right to return some day as citizens of a Palestinian state.

Years of ineffective guerrilla war and reliance on the treacherous friendship of the UN, European and Arab governments had led Arafat to drive the PLO into a cul-de-sac. In return for Israel's recognition of him as "President" Arafat, the PLO abandoned the fight for a Palestinian state.

Israel's bully-boy tactics in going ahead with their racist settlement in Jerusalem are also a way of trying to put pressure on the PLO in the talks that are due to start soon.

The talks are meant to agree the "future status" of Jerusalem. The Palestinians claim the eastern Arab part as their capital city. The Israelis are determined to resist this by building new settlements in Arab areas and by withdrawing residency papers from Arabs in East Jerusalem. They want to colonize the whole city.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has blamed Yasir Arafat for colluding with the Islamic resistance movement Hamas. They have demanded that Arafat once more unleashes his armed police against them for the crime of fighting the occupation. But Arafat is meeting growing opposition to his role as Israel's puppet ruler in the West Bank and Gaza.

That is why we say:

- Israeli troops out of the West Bank
- Down with the racist settlements
- The "peace process" is a fraud
- Self-determination for the Palestinian people
- For a socialist republic of all Palestine!■

ALBANIA: The people take control

Mob rule or revolution?

"IF THE PRESIDENT does not go, the people will not lay down their arms".

These are the words of Xhevat Kocin, one of the leaders of the Committee for Public Safety for Democracy in Albania.

The Committee was set up on 11 March in the southern town of Gjirokaster. It brings together numerous town organisations that have sprung up since February and which effectively rule the southern half of the country.

The national government, based in the capital Tirana, fell apart during February and March. Town after town in the south fell into the hands of thou-

sands of armed citizens. They seized weapons from army barracks as the troops fled or joined the uprisings.

The headquarters of the ruling Democratic Party and the hated secret police were set on fire. In each place as the old regime collapsed, the citizens themselves took control. As Kocin explained about the town of Sarande:

"We have organised two provisional committees, one for the civic sector and the other for law and order."

The former committee "takes care of economic aspects, of keeping streets clean, of the water supply, the

electric power supply and so forth". The second stops looting and defends the town from the secret police.

In short, in the south the mass of the population has taken up arms and has taken power into their own hands.

The old government fixed the last elections in May 1996. It arrested its opponents, banned rival candidates, stuffed ballot boxes and forced the press and TV to praise government candidates.

When such a rotten government is overthrown supporters of democracy everywhere should celebrate.

But the Albanian government was backed by the West, financed by

the World Bank, and was praised as a "model market economy". So the media tells us it is not a revolution. Instead the uprising is slandered as an "outbreak of anarchy", or denounced as the "rule of the mob".

When the people of towns like Sarande patrol the streets, Kalashnikovs in hand, directing traffic and being vigilant for the dirty tricks of the secret police, the western press calls them as "lawless thugs".

When President Berisha's armed henchmen go onto the streets to protect his rip-off regime, the Western press calls them a "rough volunteer force".

The madness of the market

ALBANIA IS A poor country of 3 million people: the poorest of all those in eastern and central Europe. Up to 1989 it was ruled by a Stalinist dictatorship. The people rose up in 1989-90 to overthrow this dictatorship. But the governments that followed lied to the masses.

They promised prosperity and stability once Albania opened up its economy to western investors, gave its land back to old owners, and privatised its state industries.

In 1992 President Berisha and his Democratic Party were elected to office with the support of John Major and Bill Clinton. In the next four years this government received more financial aid per head of population than any other in eastern Europe to "ease its path to the market economy".

But the people never saw the money.

Berisha's government pocketed it. Taxes were not paid by business - it was cheaper to bribe the taxman. Justice was available - if you had the money to bribe the judges. There was no new investment in industry or job creation. The only new factory to be built in four years was a Coca-Cola plant.

Jobs were reduced to a third of their 1989 level. The average wage was £30 a month.

The government offered the solution of the "pyramid schemes" - a type of savings account that offered enormous returns on investment of up to 50% a month.

It sounded too good to be true. It was.

But millions of Albanians put all their savings into them. Many sold their homes to get the cash to invest and then rented their homes back. Most of the 600,000 Albanians who left to work abroad sent back money to families to invest. Peasants sold their land and moved to shanty towns on the edge of the capital city, Tirana.

In the run up to the May 1996 election President Berisha encouraged the pyramid schemes in the hope that he would be swept back into office on the back of a massive "feelgood factor". The head of the biggest scheme, Vefa Holdings, made huge donations to the ruling Democratic Party.

But by the end of last year three schemes collapsed between November and January.

On 5 February a further scheme, based in the port of Vlora, collapsed - ruining the 80,000 local people who had invested up to £200 million in it. A student hunger strike called for compensation and the resignation of the government. The secret police tried to stop it. Then the protests in Vlora turned into an uprising.

The rebellion spread across the south like wildfire. In the north the government clings on to power by propping up the biggest pyramid scheme and enforcing a state of emergency with a dusk to dawn curfew on the streets.

But the people of Tirana do not

The Italian navy rammed a refugee ship, reportedly drowning over 100 women and children. That is the shape of things to come as Western troops invade Albania.

support Berisha or the government. In fact from September last year there have been two general strikes against the government and massive demonstrations, plus a complete boycott of all classes by Tirana's university students.

All were demanding higher wages and grants to protect themselves against rising inflation caused by the huge increases in the interest rates.

From mid-March the situation stabilised, the south in the hands of the uprising and the north controlled by the government. Then Berisha had to agree to form a new government with a prime minister and many other Cabinet posts given to the Socialist Party opposition.

This government, led by Fino Bashkim, has one aim: to disarm the people.

Meanwhile, Berisha has kept control of the secret police and media and is preparing a June election.

Last month the West agreed to an Italian-led, UN backed intervention force. It is supposed to "protect aid convoys". But like the US intervention

in Somalia it is there to impose order for the Western banks and multinationals.

Britain and Germany have refused to take part because it fears another Somalia, with the masses inflicting a humiliating military defeat on the Italian, Greek and Spanish armies. That is just what should happen.

The military intervention must be resisted. All US and European military and diplomatic forces must be sent packing because they are only there to prop up the corrupt government, not to help the Albanian people.

Up to now the leadership in the south, mainly officers who have left Berisha's army, have insisted on Berisha's resignation before giving up arms. This is absolutely right. But where they go wrong is their belief in a government of "honest" politicians and "technocrats" to sort the country's problems out.

In fact the people have already shown that they do not need professional politicians at all! They need a government made up of democratically elected and recallable representatives drawn from the mass of armed workers themselves. At present, the Committees are run by men who have stepped forward and assumed control in what was a largely chaotic situation. The Albanian masses need to finish what they started; they have made half a revolution in half a country. Now they need to finish off the job of overthrowing Berisha in the north.

Since the mass industrial action of public sector workers in January the initiative has passed to the armed

insurgents in the south; many if not most of these are unemployed. They were worst affected by the collapse. Most workers stayed at work throughout the crisis. Now they must be convinced to join the revolutionary rising to bring Berisha and the new government crashing down. A general strike in the north would paralyse the administration, break the weak grip of the secret police and encourage thousands of poorly paid soldiers to come over to the side of the uprising.

With the old state apparatus in ruins, a new government of workers and peasants could then set about taking all the resources off the remaining schemes and the state banks to draw up an emergency plan for reconstructing the economy. This would have to involve a planned return to agriculture and a renewed system of state orders for supplies to kick start production again, employ people and feed the population.

The Albanian workers have already shown that revolution is not a thing of the past. They have nailed the lie that the market and capitalism would bring peace and prosperity after the misery of Stalinism. If they can create a genuine revolutionary leadership in time, they can go on to show workers all over the world that they can rule society and run an economy without parliamentary windbags, corrupt administrators, financial speculators and factory owners.■

**Open EU borders to refugees!
Western troops out now!**



A letter from the Editor

Build a revolutionary alternative to Blair

Dear Workers Power Reader, New Labour, like the Tories, exists to defend the wealth and privilege of the rich. It is a party of the working class but it is not for the working class.

We need a different kind of party. **Workers Power** is fighting to build a new party that can really represent the interests of the working class and the fight for socialism.

That new party will not look for support among "Middle England", newspaper moguls and smug yuppies. It will look to the real majority: the working class.

New Labour is the party of the Westminster wine bars and the big bank boardrooms. We need a party of the housing estates, of the factories, offices and schools where the majority live and work.

New Labour constantly changes its policies to appeal to Tory voters. We need a party that fights unswervingly for a socialist revolution. We need a party that can organise working class to take real power.

New Labour politicians campaign on the streets when they need your vote. Revolutionary socialists are campaigning every day of the year: on the streets, doorsteps, picket lines, demonstrations and campaigns – because we know that mass action decides

more than any election.

Everywhere we have branches, you will find **Workers Power** members supporting working class struggles and arguing for revolutionary socialism: in campaigns against racism and fascism, against Britain's oppression of Ireland; against British Petroleum's sponsorship of death squads in the oil fields of Colombia.

A revolutionary alternative to Labour will never be built just by sitting around and talking about socialism. It can only be built if socialists involve themselves collectively in the struggles of the working class and oppressed people, transforming piecemeal resistance to the effects of capitalism into a united struggle to get rid of the whole profit system.

That is where you come in.

We want you to join **Workers Power** and get organised in the fight for a socialist alternative.

In this election millions of workers will vote Labour, to kick the Tories out and put in power a party backed by the trade unions. **Workers Power** will fight for a Labour victory. At the same time we are mobilising working people to fight for the measures we desperately need to alleviate poverty, unemployment, declining services, racism and injustice.

To get these things we will have to fight

New Labour. Those who do not yet believe we are about to find out when Tony Blair freezes their wages and attacks their unions, when Jack Straw victimises young people and Asylum seekers, and when David Blunkett deprives our children of decent education.

The election of a Labour government opens up a whole new phase in British politics. New struggles lie ahead, new opportunities to make the bosses pay for the 18 years of Tory cruelty.

And these new struggles take place in a world in turmoil: a world just as full of war and revolution as in the first decades of the century.

That is why we need a revolutionary party that can unite the working class all over the world - not just in Britain. It is why **Workers Power** is part of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International.

The election will have made many of you think long and hard about politics. Life under Labour will make you think even more.

The time to get active is now. Help us build the party the working class needs as an alternative to New Labour. Join **Workers Power**.

Mark Harrison,
Editor, **Workers Power**

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.

The Trade Unions

must be transformed by 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.

October 1917

The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin 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 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. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class worldwide. These parties are reformist.

Social Oppression

is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of 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.

Imperialism

is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. 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. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism. In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of the imperialist 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 a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third International and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. **Workers Power** is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (the 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. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!★

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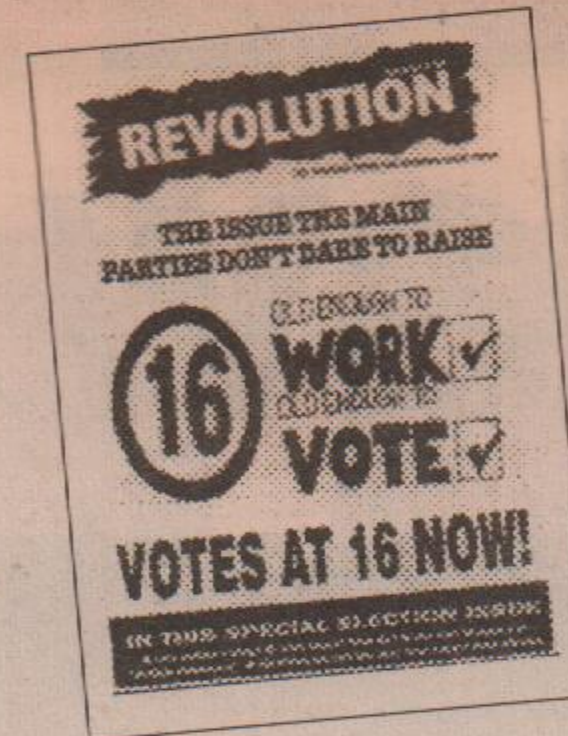
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Leicester

Tuesday 22 April 7.30pm
Spread Eagle Public House, Charles Street

Birmingham

Tuesday 22 April 7.30pm
Carrs Lane Church centre, Carrs Lane Birmingham City centre

Sheffield

Wednesday 23 April 7.30pm
Sheffield Campaign Against Unem-

ployment Centre, West Street

Cardiff

Monday 28 April 7.30pm
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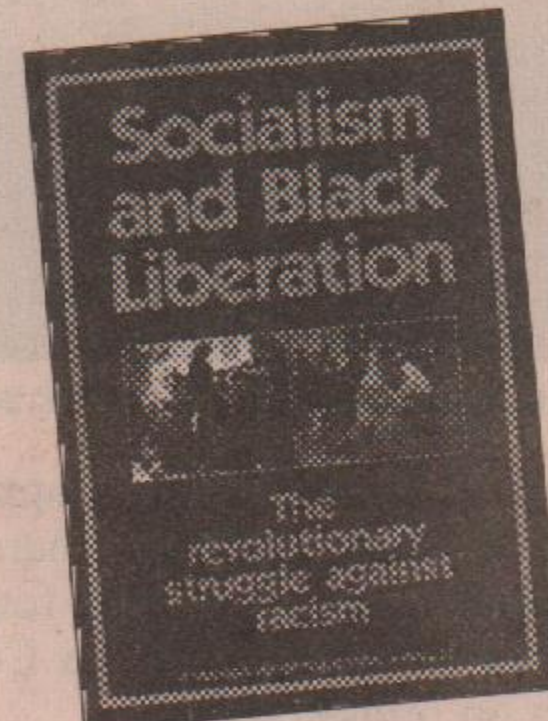
Coventry

Tuesday 29 April 7.30pm
West Indian Social Club, Spon Street, Spon End

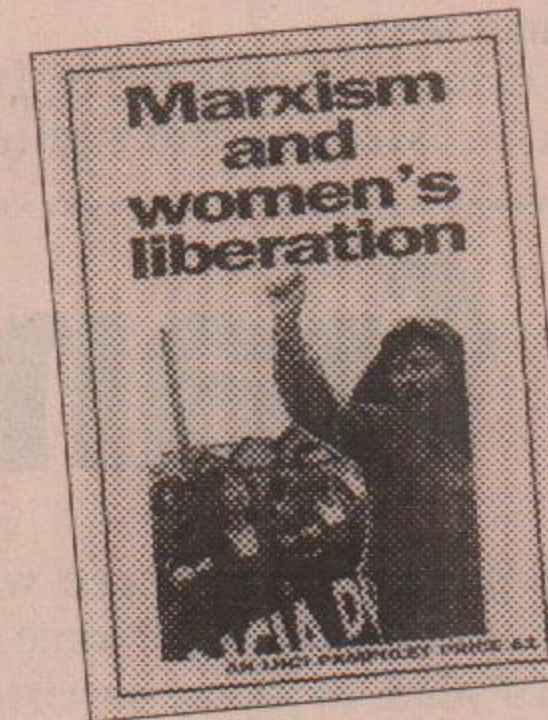
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Where next in the fight for socialism?

Speakers from Liverpool dockers, Hillingdon strikers, Workers Power and the youth group REVOLUTION on the class struggle after the election

workers
power

REVOLUTION

Tory law and order lies

BRITISH POLITICIANS used to boast about this country's great traditions of "civil liberty". While other countries suffered authoritarian governments or worse, we had freedoms defended by Parliament and the common law, went the argument.

Not any more. Now the parties compete to "out tough" each other on law and order. Never mind that it gives the police, judges and security services massive new powers; that it results in innocent people being railroaded off to prison - or that young people are being criminalised for partying or protesting.

Individual liberties in Britain have never been "given", they have been fought for by the working class.

It is not surprising therefore that the Tories have used their 18 years in office to erode our rights.

Since the Tories came to power Britain has lost more cases at the European Court of Human Rights than any other country in Europe. On interrogation in Northern Ireland, on immigration rules, on detention of



Labour's Straw and Tory Howard: spot the difference

the mentally ill, on telephone tapping without warrants and more than 40 other cases Britain has been found in breach of the European Convention on human rights.

None of this stopped Michael Howard from pushing through more draconian laws.

The Criminal Justice Act of 1994 not only restricted the rights of

young people to hold "raves" but abolished the legal right to hold peaceful protests and pickets. Now the police can ban a lobby outside a council, a protest outside a prison, an animal rights lobby outside a shop, whether or not it obstructs anyone going about their business.

The same act abolished the age old "right to silence". Now if you are

arrested and refuse to answer police questions until you have a solicitor present a jury is invited to infer guilt from the accused persons silence.

The Tories have massively increased police powers. They have given them new and lethal weapons to use on the streets.

The first victim of the newly introduced long baton was a black man from south London, Brian Douglas, who suffered fatal brain injuries after being arrested by police. Within weeks of CS gas being issued, Ibrahim Sey died after being sprayed in the face while handcuffed in a police station. Both victims were black.

Black people have been singled out as guinea pigs for the new array of laws and weapons - but they are targeted at everybody who fights back or falls foul of the Tories ruling class justice system.

Labour's Jack Straw has demanded especially tough action against youngsters. He has announced plans to abolish the caution for young offenders, replacing it with a "final

warning" linked to supervised youth or community activities. Failure to comply will bring more young people before the courts. He wants a new "fast track" approach to bring youngsters before the courts as quickly as possible.

For the very young Labour wants to abolish the age old assumption that 10 to 13 year olds are "incapable of evil" unless it is proved otherwise in court.

Straw happily talks about imposing "curfews" on the young and making parents legally liable for the children's wrong doing.

Blair's catch phrase is "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime". But Labour offers nothing to tackle the real causes of crime and anti-social behaviour: the poverty, job insecurity and debt which increasingly burden working class families, the crumbling and neglected council estates where young people are brought up, the endless cuts in youth clubs and youth activities made to slash local authority expenditure.

These are the real crimes and they are inflicted every day on working class people.

To tackle the "causes of crime" will cost money. It means making the rich pay for it, something Blair and co. have ruled out. Instead they would rather give yet more powers to the police and further erode our rights.

What we fight for:

- Repeal the Criminal Justice Act!
- Repeal the Police Act, no right for the cops to bug or burgle.
- Disarm the police: end the use of batons, CS gas and pepper sprays. Disband the tactical support units.
- No curfews on youth! ■

Free all frame-up victims!

"BRITISH JUSTICE, no justice" goes the chant. It is truer today than ever.

A string of so-called "miscarriages" of justice have unmasked the class system that British justice defends and represents. The Guildford Four were banged away for a bombing they did not commit, caught up in a wave of anti-Irish hysteria. The police and the judges did the rest.

The Bridgewater Three were framed by a corrupt police force and spent 19 years in jail as barristers, Crown Prosecution Service, the Home Office and the Judges clubbed together to defend the original decision.

Winston Silcott and many other black prisoners remain in jail because the system is racist.

The M25 Three -Raphael Rowe, Michael Davis, and Randolph John-

son- three black men, were sentenced to life imprisonment for robbery and manslaughter. This was despite the fact that all the witnesses had said that two white men and one black man had committed the offences.

The fact is if you are Irish, black, working class, you are many times more likely to end up inside than if you belong to the upper class. The Maxwell's had no problem: after all

they were capitalists who had only ripped-off thousands of pensioners. They got the best lawyers and walked free.

Only a society run by the working class, with its own courts and tribunals will be able to deliver justice. Until then we must continue to campaign for the release of all those unjustly imprisoned by the ruling class justice system.■