

workers POWER

● *Low pay in the public sector* ● *More job cuts on the way* ● *Food prices up*

BLAIR'S BRITAIN ISN'T GETTING BETTER



STUDENTS

Take up the fight for free education

TONY BLAIR and New Labour promised to make education their priority. They lied.

Students enrolling this autumn have to pay the new tuition fee of £1000 a year. The maximum grant is only £1000, so you have to get a loan or a job on the side to cover the cost of living. And from next year there will be no student grant at all.

Students will have to take out even bigger loans from the banks that will take years to pay back. The NUS said last year that students leave college with an average debt of £20,000.

Blair's message to students is simple. In the "free market" education is not a right, it is a privilege.

Although students from the poorest backgrounds are supposed to be exempt from the fees, if both your parents are working in low paid jobs you are still likely to have to pay.

No wonder more students than ever are taking low-paid jobs to get through their studies. The minimum wage Blair promised to bring in will have a special low rate for young people, so you could still be working for as little as £3.00 an hour. And with long hours and poor conditions, your course work will suffer as much as your bank balance. The numbers of students forced to drop out has reached record levels.

And there's more. University rents are rising all over the country. In every

possible way, the system is forcing students to pay for their own education.

Of course if you are from a rich family you have a massive head start. Your parents can afford to pay for your studies, your opportunities and your future. Blair has refused to bring back higher tax rates for the rich, so rich kids can look forward to a better time than ever before.

There is tremendous anger in the colleges. And there are so many ways it can be turned into action. Big turnouts on local and national student marches. Joint action with lecturers who are campaigning against cuts. Occupations of colleges. Rent strikes and mass refusal to pay the fees.

To unite students with college lecturers and other workers and to get as many people involved as possible, action committees can be set up with representatives from every course, every hall, every year, every section of students and education workers.

WORKERS POWER SAYS:

- Full grants not loans
- Scrap tuition fees
- Tax the rich
- Nationalise the banks
- Build a socialist alternative to New Labour

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IN BRIEF

The NUT bureaucracy ensured that the Special Delegate Salaries Conference on 26 September ended in farce. They had hoped to head off the growing anger over pay, through proposing a modified version of performance related pay (PRP). The government hopes to use PRP to break down national pay bargaining, divide the union and get round its refusal to fund a decent pay rise. Delegates threw it out and agreed to demand a minimum flat rate pay demand of £2000. This was too much for the leadership who then talked out the conference so nothing was resolved and the fight for decent pay is no further forward!

New Labour Conference Liaison Officers have been busy erasing every vestige of democracy before annual conference this year. At recent conference training sessions officials drew up a database of conference delegates according to the scientific criteria of whether or not they were totally loyal to the Blairite agenda. Left wingers were variously described as "naive", "old left teachers", in "need of a friend" and even, heaven forbid, a "Trot". Tony Blair, who's description in the database has not been released, has yet to comment.

In a pilot scheme launched last month in Chesterfield, Derbyshire County Council fitted all home helps with electronic tags to enable them to monitor their movements effectively. Home helps will now have to log every movement they make as they go through their working day. The calls which will be logged by a call centre in Ipswich, will be charged to the service users and made from their homes. The home helps have decided to boycott this outrageous scheme which typically combines an attack on working conditions with a worse and more expensive service. Messages of support should be sent to: Derbyshire County Unison c/o County offices Matlock Derbyshire D4 3AG

Semira Adamo was a Nigerian asylum seeker. On 22 September she was suffocated and died in a coma after an assault by the Belgian deportation authorities. This was the sixth attempt to deport her and proves the lie once again about the rights of people fleeing oppression to live in the "civilised" west. Across Europe the authorities have been tightening up immigration controls as part of European integration just like our own Home Secretary Jack Straw. Letters of protest against Semira's murder can be sent to: The Belgium Embassy, London Fax: 0171 259 6213 Messages of support to: Collectif Anti-Expulsions 2-4 avenue de la Porte de Hal 1061 Bruxelles, Belgium

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RACISM

Police show contempt for victims of racism

STEPHEN LAWRENCE was black. He was killed in 1993. Stabbed to death. Racists murdered him and racists protected his killers.

Michael Menson was black. He was killed in 1997. Burnt to death. Racists murdered him and racists protected his killers.

A year into a New Labour government none of these murderers have been brought to justice. Institutional racism is alive and well in Tony Blair's New Britain.

The Lawrence enquiry was established by the New Labour Home Secretary Jack Straw, following a long campaign by Stephen Lawrence's parents, Neville and Doreen. The Lawrences were horrified by the failure of the police to properly investigate or prosecute Stephen's killers.

The enquiry gave the police an opportunity to explain why they had so comprehensively failed to undertake an effective investigation. Jack Straw hoped that it would allow the police to rehabilitate themselves. But it hasn't worked out like that.

Day after day the enquiry has shown how the police deliberately failed to pursue lines of investigation. They subjected Duwayne Brooks, Stephen's friend and main witness to the attack, to a catalogue of racist abuse and suspicion. They colluded with racist gangsters to ensure that the main suspects avoided prosecution.

Rather than accept the evidence of

the Lawrence enquiry the police tried to undermine the credibility of the Lawrences' testimony. Sonia Woodley, the Metropolitan Police's QC, claimed in her summing up that the Lawrences had been "anti-police for years". She echoed the words of the racist police investigators who claimed that the Lawrences' demand for justice had "hindered" the investigation.

Jeremy Gompertz QC added that although seven (just seven!) officers had used the words "coloured", "negro" and "negroid" to refer to Stephen: "Even allowing for some racist inference to be drawn, these represent isolated areas and do not 'permeate' the entire organisation."

David Blakey the President of the Association of Chief Police Officers added: "There are individuals who have racist attitudes in the police service. We are determined to root it out at every opportunity."

Once again a return to the lie about a few bad apples spoiling the barrel. This just days after a major report into the police's own stop and search statistics showed that for every 1000 black people 108 of them have been stopped compared with 14 per 1000 whites.

Now the police have been shown to have systematically undermined the investigation into the killing of Michael Menson, a black musician, burnt to death, in January 1997.

Michael was discovered wandering alone, his clothes burned and his flesh



The Mensons are another family who have experienced a racist murder and a racist investigation

still smoking. He was conscious and able to tell the first police officer on the scene as well as witnesses in the area that he had been attacked by four white youths. But the police didn't believe him. They said he had set himself alight. It was not until his brother, Kwesi, forced the police to look into the case that the police bothered to open an "investigation".

It was a further 16 days before Michael died. In hospital he told everyone he could he had been attacked. The police did not take a statement about the attack. Much later they had to rely on notes Kwesi had made at Michael's

bedside.

The police claimed that because Michael was a schizophrenic, the most likely explanation of the attack was that he had set himself alight. This view was not shared by two psychiatrists, who said it was "very unlikely" that Michael had tried to kill himself. Two pathologists analysed the burns and found it was "inconceivable" that Michael had set himself alight. The jury at Michael's inquest found he had been "unlawfully" killed.

But John Townsend, a Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner, who expressed "regret" that "serious mistakes" had been made in the investigation, refused to apologise and confirmed that no officer would face disciplinary action.

The police are as racist now as they were before the Lawrence enquiry. Even Sir William MacPherson, the enquiry Chairman, seems to have discovered the institutional racism of the Metropolitan Police:

"[It] is a collective failure which has to be addressed and not one individual police constable that has to be hauled over the coals."

New Labour should prosecute and sack all racist officers. But we can't rely on Labour to do that, it is loyal to the racist police force. To really protect each other we should build self defence against police and racist attacks in black and working class communities.

WORLD ECONOMY

Hedge funds collapse exposes betting shop capitalism

LAST MONTH the US-based investment fund Long Term Capital Management (LTCM) made history twice in one week: it became the first of capitalism's much vaunted "hedge funds" to go bust and the first company of its kind to be rescued by the US treasury.

Hedge funds operate on the "wild frontiers" of the stock markets - they make fortunes out of bets on minor differences between interest rates in different countries. On the basis of millions of dollars invested in these funds, the managers borrow billions more - \$200 billion in LTCM's case - and then use the money to bet on price movements. They have complex computer programmes to help them. They also

now have two Nobel prize winning Economists!

But unfortunately for their investors, they do not have much common sense.

When the Russian debt crisis hit in August it caused all LTCM's bets to go wrong at once. These economic whizz kids should have read a few Marxist books on capitalist crises. According to an inside source, "the problem is the partners never thought anything like this could happen".

With LTCM on the verge of bankruptcy, even many capitalists gloated: the bosses who "get their hands dirty" actually running companies didn't like the LTCM's methods.

Their gloats soon turned to panic

when they realised that LTCM was "exposed" to the tune of \$100 billion dollars, and having at one time owed \$200 billion. The US government quickly ordered 14 major banks and investment funds to buy the now worthless LTCM for the sum of \$3.5 billion. The alternative would have been to see banks all over the world, already reeling from the Russian collapse, faced with more massive losses, with some themselves going bankrupt.

To put these sums in perspective, \$200 billion was the total value of all the stock market listed companies in South Korea, Indonesia and Thailand in the month the economic crisis started. Three brand new hospitals in central London

could be built with just \$1 billion. The same amount could reverse all the job losses announced since August - at Vickers, Siemens, Shell and Fujitsu.

When capitalist politicians like Tony Blair claim that "bail outs" are part of the socialist past, inefficient, expensive and wrong they are simply lying through their teeth. Multi-billion dollar bail outs to protect the profits of the big banks and multinationals are the order of the day. It is a different matter when the results are massive job cuts and the devastation of communities. The problem for Tony Blair and the international "financial community" is - what happens when the bail out pot runs dry?

BENEFIT INTEGRITY PROJECT

Government fraud claims are a lie - official

The government's attack on disability payments, the Benefit Integrity Project, tried to save £500 million in disability benefits "fraud". It subjected 75,000 severely disabled people to demeaning tests and examinations and stopped benefits to 10,000. But sixty per cent of those who

appealed have had their benefits restored or even improved.

The fact is there is no fraud: and that's official.

According to the Commons Social Security Committee "the DSS has moved sharply, in barely one year, to a position that Disability Living Allowance has virtually no level of

fraud whatsoever". Overall, instead of clawing back money, the project is set to cost more than it saved. Even in official economic terms it is a failure: in terms of human misery it is a disgrace. The BIP should be scrapped immediately and full backdated benefits restored for all affected claimants.

Mark Harrison examines the discontent at this year's TUC

Tough talking masks leaders' fear of action

AT LAST year's Labour conference Tony Blair enjoyed popularity beyond the wildest dreams of most politicians.

He was loved by the party faithful and the union leaders for Labour's massive election victory. The press adored his self confident espousal of modernisation. And the great majority of British people held high hopes that here, at last, was the government to finally bring to a close the wretched era of Tory rule.

This year the government still enjoys overwhelming support. It has carried through a batch of reforms unthinkable in Tory Britain: the "windfall tax" to finance the "New Deal"; the "Fairness at Work" white paper; the minimum wage legislation; pledges of more money for health and education.

Underpinning this popularity, up to now that is, has been the relevant buoyancy of the British economy, especially as compared to the calamities in South East Asia, Japan, Russia and Latin America. But anxiety is starting to creep in over New Labour's economic policy as the threat of a British recession grows.

The havoc that Thatcher wreaked on Britain's manufacturing industry means that despite a recession in this sector, the economy as a whole has not yet succumbed to contraction and crisis. The Blairites are quick to point to the latest figures which reveal yet another fall in unemployment levels as proof that they can protect Britain from the growing crisis.

But the Blairite mantra which hails the market as the cure-all remedy for our woes is being steadily undermined by the market itself. The gradual destruction of jobs in what is left of manufacturing has hit first in the new age hi-tech industries which were supposed to represent the future of the British economy. Labour has refused to act against the destruction of this future.

Gordon Brown has repeatedly warned that all of his spending plans for the public sector - directly affecting both pay and jobs - will be governed by the ups and downs of the economic cycle. Labour's commitment to Tory privatisation policies, either directly (Air Traffic Control, the Royal Mint and possibly even the Post Office) or indirectly via the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and "Best Value" in local government, means the public sector will not be protected when the recession spreads to the whole economy, as indeed it will.

These attacks will render Labour's reforms meaningless. Mass unemployment, miserably low wages, cuts in public spending and attacks on working conditions will all prove to be the substance of Labour policy; the reforms merely a shadow to deflect attention from reality.

At the moment the concern of growing numbers of workers at Labour's pro-capitalist economic management is not being translated into action. In the North East, which has borne the brunt of the recent round of manufacturing sackings, there is widespread anger. The workers of Fujitsu, in Blair's own constituency, voiced their frustration at a Prime Minister who came up to lecture

them on the world price of semi-conductors and explain that Labour couldn't help them.

Workers at UCLH hospital in London went further. Faced with a PFI scheme that threatened their jobs and pay, they balloted for strike action, only to then find the courts - with the blessing of Blair who fully supports the anti-union laws - blocking their action. Strikes by local government workers over the past year in London and Scotland were also indications of the growing anger that exists among workers at Labour.

Of course, these are limited and localised outbreaks. In circumstances where the trade unions have suffered decades of terrible defeats, seen their numbers cut by almost 50 per cent in twenty years and their rights to take action curtailed by law, it is inevitable that this anger and disillusionment will take some time before it translates into widespread action. But the countdown has begun and translate it will.

The trade union leaders, however, remain New Labour loyal. These men and women owe their fat salaries, their perks and pampered lifestyles to the workers they claim to represent. But while these privileges are paid for by the working class, the union tops serve the capitalists. They form a bureaucracy who negotiate on behalf of the workers - but only within the financial and political limits set by capitalism. The bureaucrats' always call for "realism" when selling workers short because the bosses cannot afford to pay a decent wage or maintain every workers' job.

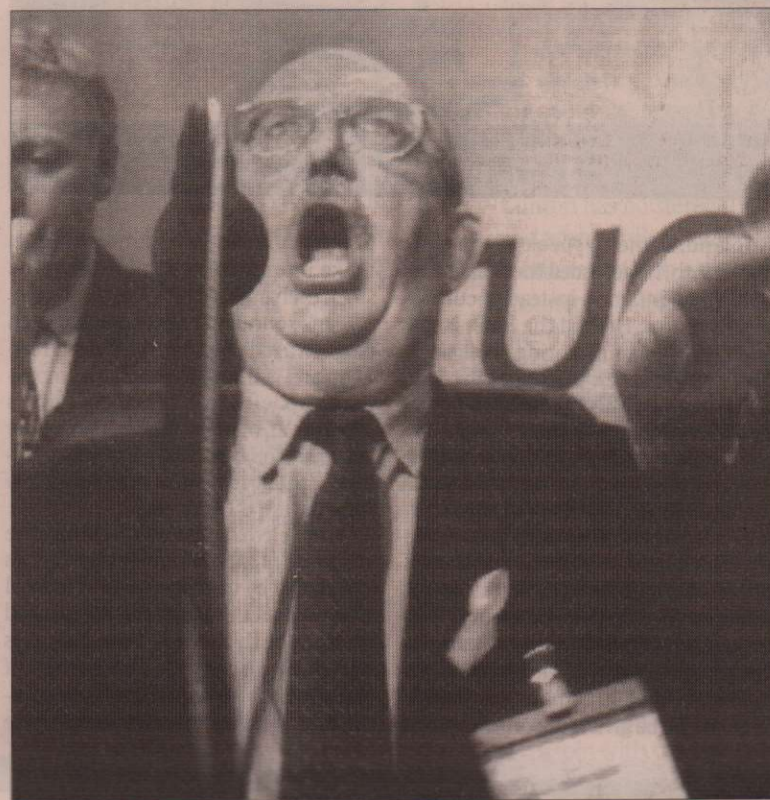
When obliged, on occasion, they will lead action against a particularly obdurate employer. If they didn't they would soon find themselves without a membership and without a job. But they control workers' action to ensure it stays within the rules of their bureaucratic

The trade union leaders are terrified of a re-run of 1978/79's infamous "Winter of Discontent" with strikes by hundreds of thousands of workers

role as arbiters between capital and labour. They do not fight to win but to negotiate.

To win at UCLH, for example, would mean Unison nationally defying the court injunction and calling for solidarity action. In Britain solidarity action is illegal. Rodney Bickerstaffe, the leader of Unison, will therefore make a fiery speech at the TUC but refuse to take any effective action because he puts the bosses' law above his members' interests.

Rather than cynically using the UCLH members to test the water, Bickerstaffe should be forced to launch a national campaign of strike action



Edmonds in full flow but where was the call to action?

against PFI in the public sector. Yes, such a strike could be deemed illegal because it is "political", but the attack is political and so must be our response.

The bureaucrats are loyal to Tony Blair because New Labour allows them to act as labour movement "statesmen". Under its policy for "partnership" - which to date has not translated into a single concrete action, the union leaders are allowed "access" to ministers, "consultation" on Fairness at Work and the minimum wage. It is a partnership which binds the unions to the bosses' interests.

The leader of the TUC, John Monks,

bureaucracy are Blair's front line officers in managing and containing the class war on behalf of the capitalists and against the workers.

This very position made the recent TUC congress more interesting than it has been for years. The bureaucrats were like officers afraid of a mutiny in the ranks. Their lower ranking officials were relaying the growing anger at the government over job losses, and low pay in the public sector, and warning them to do something about it. The "something" was to make fiery speeches at the TUC.

Edmonds of the GMB denounced the bosses as "greedy bastards" and the government for carrying through "fag-end Conservatism". Bickerstaffe demanded an end to the "mantra of pay restraint" in the public sector. Morris of the TGWU welcomed the principle of the minimum wage but said it was "a shame about the rate". Together with Bickerstaffe he went on to call for a £5 minimum wage. Things got so boisterous that Monks had to step in and call on delegates not to let "specific disappointments cloud the bigger picture" - namely his access to Tony Blair.

This wasn't just platform rhetoric, despite the lessons the union tops got from the actors' union Equity in advance of the congress!

The union leaders are terrified of a re-run of 1978/79's infamous "Winter of Discontent". In that year their policy of "partnership" with the then Labour government on pay restraint was blown apart by the strikes of hundreds of thousands of workers. They are desperate to avoid that, not just because of the problems such militancy will cause them but because of the damage it will do to their New Labour partners. They are worried that Blair will not give them enough concessions to head off a rebellion in the ranks.

Prior to the TUC congress John Edmonds explained the rationale for what was to become his infamous presidential address. He explained in the

New Statesman that the union leaders "work to an unwritten code, if you like, that we underplay our power [the block vote] and that our first instinct is to support the leadership. We know the damage caused by divisions." The fact that this "unwritten code" has no democratic legitimacy in either the party or the unions doesn't concern him. Loyalty to the leadership is the decisive thing. Why then the TUC congress speech?

Edmonds went on to warn that low public sector pay was pushing the government towards a "Greek tragedy" - a new Winter of Discontent is what he really means, but he hates the thought so much he can't even bring himself to say the words:

"So for the trade unions in a concerted way to oppose the leadership is a very, very important signal. Something important is going on and should be taken very seriously indeed if it happens nowadays."

That signal warns of strikes across the public sector unless the government relents on its pay freeze:

"We're not looking for a fight, but the members feel they are being pushed into a corner."

Edmonds, like the rest of the union leaders, is terrified of a fight breaking out. But the bureaucracy is sending this signal because it needs to wrest some serious concessions from the Labour government. While they agree with the Blairites on all the fundamental points, the union leaders need to use "partnership" to expand and firm up their base - in a word, to recruit and rebuild their membership. An unbridled recession, on the contrary, threatens to slash it.

Revolutionaries can take heart from this situation. Workers voted Labour in their millions to make "Britain better". Blair is betraying their hopes in the face of a growing economic crisis. With each public sector pay packet and each private sector closure workers are waking up to the fact that Britain isn't getting better - and when the recession hits things will get a whole lot worse.

The anger at this situation was tangible enough for the bureaucrats to stage their verbal revolt. Militants must now grasp this opportunity to turn a verbal assault into a physical one. To do this, we need to place concrete demands on the union leaders and organise now to fight.

Morris and Bickerstaffe should launch a campaign of national strike action across the public sector for a £5 minimum wage. Rather than pleading for the Bank of England to lower interest rates the manufacturing unions, the AEEU and MSF, should back strikes and occupations against job cuts and closures and demand their "partners" nationalise all firms laying off workers.

An offensive in the public sector against Brown's pay freeze, coupled with a fight back in the private sector to stop the onslaught on jobs, could mobilise workers against the Blair government.

And in so doing open up the possibility of building a revolutionary alternative to Labour, a revolutionary party committed to the overthrow of capitalism. ■

JOB CUTS

TONY BLAIR visited his Sedgefield constituency with a message for 570 Fujitsu workers facing the sack.

"It would be totally dishonest to pretend that the government can prevent such decisions."

He blamed the job losses on falling prices in the semiconductor market. A further 200 redundancies in East Kilbride and the loss of 1,100 jobs at Siemens in Tyneside are no doubt due to this as well.

If a company cannot make a profit out of production then it has a legal right to throw its workers onto the dole and close down.

The capitalists then have the right to reinvest wherever they like. This is called the "logic of the market". Blair's big con is to say that the government cannot do anything about these sackings. What he really means is that he will not do anything.

New Labour's only solution is to "help the hurt", offering jobs' advice for redundant workers. The problem is that with a recession on the horizon capital will not be reinvested. We will get used to hearing about further closures on the news as we come home from work, maybe for the last time.

The CBI estimates that in the course of next year an extra 130,000 will be made unemployed. The TUC's estimate is 230,000. The TUC has called on the government to change its economic policy. It wants the Bank of England to lower its interest rates. Union leaders say this will lower the value of the pound, help to boost exports and ease the pressure on manufacturing industry.

Even so the union leaders are not prepared to go to the wall with the Labour government over this. When Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of

Fight all job losses



England, came to speak at the TUC last month, he defended the decision to hold down inflation instead of cutting interest rates. He said the Bank is not made up of "manufacturing hooligans". And with these few platitudes the TUC delegates gave this monetarist guru a round of polite applause.

The TUC's whole strategy to beat unemployment is to win over the Labour government and the Bank through reasoned argument. They want to convince these defenders of the natural laws of the market that there are better ways of running the capitalist economy. They argue that manufacturing capitalism is the productive part of the economy and therefore capitalists that invest in this area should be given support as opposed

to all the financiers who do no more than make money from gambling on the stock exchange.

This sounds sensible and can even be given a radical gloss. But what it really means is lining the workers' movement up with one set of exploiters against another. Worse, it naively assumes you can have a capitalist system without the banks and the money men having the main say.

In the North East following the redundancy announcements the unions responded by linking up with the local Chamber of Commerce. But it is no good blocking with the very manufacturers and businessmen who are laying off thousands of workers. The minute workers take action against job losses these

"allies" will reveal themselves to be deadly enemies.

In modern capitalist Britain there is often no distinction between the people who run the manufacturing side of the economy and those involved in the financial side. In the last recession they attacked the workers, thankful that the Tories had weakened the power of the unions, allowing them to pay lower wages and forcing ever greater workloads on to them. This is why the TUC's answer to unemployment is useless.

We need a government that would really act in the interests of the many and not the few. The fight for such a government has to start now by demanding that Labour takes immediate measures. We must fight to make the Labour government nationalise any firm that threatens redundancies or closures. Rich owners should not be paid a penny in compensation.

To immediately cut unemployment, the work that is available should be shared out. The immediate introduction of a 35 hour week would move towards that. Where there is less work then the workers should control how it is possible to reduce the hours even further. This drop in hours should not mean any cut in pay.

To really get full employment we need the government to fund useful work projects – not Welfare for Work, but construction plans to build the houses, hospitals and schools so desperately needed. There is a shortage of teach-

ers and nurses. The government should be ploughing massive funds into the NHS and education system for recruitment and training. Any workers on training schemes should not be paid the dole plus £10. They should receive the rate for the job set by the trade unions with a guaranteed minimum of £6 an hour.

Blair and co will throw up the hands in horror at this – who's going to pay for it? You will ruin the economy – they will cry. We have one simple response – let those whose system is in crisis pay for it, the capitalists.

We must begin to spread this message across the labour movement and prepare to fight more job losses. The workers at Fujitsu should take over their factory calling on all other workers facing the sack to join them by occupying their factories.

They should call on their constituency MP, the Right Honourable Tony Blair, to explain exactly what was the point of them having voted for him if he could do nothing to save their jobs. They should demand of Blair point blank that he could do something but it would mean acting against his dinner party friends – by taking these companies out of the hands of the capitalists and placing them under the control of the workers.

As Tony Blair left Sedgefield, his car sped past a small demonstration of workers from the Grove Europe Crane factory in Wearside. Six hundred and fifty of them have been sacked. These workers did not come to listen to Blair's apologies. They demanded action. This fighting spirit, welded to clear anti-capitalist policies can build the fight-back against job losses and turn it into a fight for a working class government.

MINIMUM WAGE

Equalize! fights for equal rates of pay

JOHN EDMONDS, leader of the GMB trade union, hit the headlines when he called top directors "greedy bastards" at the TUC Congress.

It wasn't so much the use of a swear word that got so many fat cats upset. They were furious that Edmonds exposed top bosses raking it in while workers, especially young workers, continue to suffer from appallingly low levels of pay.

Now young workers are getting together to turn words into action. *Equalize!* is a new campaign set up by young workers. It has one straightforward aim: an equal minimum wage for everyone without exception.

The minimum wage that will be introduced by the government includes a separate and lower rate for workers under 22 and no minimum rate at all for workers under 18. This is blatant dis-

crimination. *Equalize!* wants to organise the young workers that will be affected by this into a militant campaign that demands equal pay for equal work.

Andy, a low paid kitchen worker, said: "It's no good us waiting for the Labour government to change its mind. Without action on the streets we will get nowhere. The people that will really make this campaign a success will be the thousands and thousands of low paid young workers."

Andy explained how the campaign has been getting started:

"Last Sunday we went on the London tube to publicise *Equalize!* I dressed up as a chef like on the New Deal advert on TV. I got up in the first carriage and asked for everyone's attention and then I explained about what was happening with young workers and low pay.

We got a good response. Of course

one or two idiots didn't like what we were doing but we just asked them how much they were earning an hour and they soon shut up. One of them kept asking us why we weren't at work – on a Sunday! People like him would have us working seven days a week for £1

an hour."

The union leaders are feeling pressure from low paid workers. At the TUC, Bill Morris, general secretary of the TGWU, and Rodney Bickerstaffe of UNISON both argued that no-one should receive less than £5 an hour. Now the

GMB and UNISON are sponsoring a conference, called ROAR (Rage Over Age Rates).

But the union leaders want to make an exception for workers in training. An advert in the *Morning Star* newspaper says the aims of ROAR are not equal pay for all but "to hasten the day when the lower "development rate" in the National Minimum Wage is linked only to formal accredited training and to end the exclusion of those under 18." Hardly a catchy slogan!

When union leaders talk of hastening the day of anything you can be sure it will take a long time. *Equalize!* is going to the ROAR conference to argue for the building of a campaign under the control of young workers and geared towards action by thousands of workers, whether they are unionised or not.

**JOIN EQUALIZE!
THE SAME MINIMUM WAGE
FOR ALL WORKERS!
NO EXEMPTIONS!**

Phone 0181 981 0602
or Fax 0181 981 0475

or write to:
BCM Box 7750
LONDON WC1N 3XX.

**ROAR conference
Saturday 17 October
11 am - 4.30 pm**

Britannia Street
Conference Centre
27 Britannia Street
London WC1X 9JP
or contact

GMB Young Members Bureau
Tel: 0181 947 3131
Fax: 0181 944 6139
email: steve.pryle@gmb.org.uk

UCLH

Court injunction stops strike action

A COURT injunction has forced the Unison branch of University College London Hospitals (UCLH), to call off a planned strike against the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Faced with a 75% yes vote in the strike ballot, the hospital management rushed off to court. The unelected judge duly granted an injunction against strike action.

The planned strike was in opposition to a £160 million scheme to replace the four existing hospitals with a new hospital run by the private sector. Hundreds of ancillary staff will be transferred out of the NHS and as the recent disputes in Hillingdon and Tameside have shown, attacks on their terms, pay and condi-

tions will quickly follow.

In opposition Labour used to pretend that it would grant fairness in power. Now it's PFI's favourite friend. A consortium led by AMEC will be paid £30 million a year. So while Labour's new friends in the city will enjoy bumper profits and bonuses, the hospital staff who actually provide the service will pay through their wages and conditions. What's fair about that? Labour get to keep to their Tory inherited public spending limits through leasing the hospital back from the private contractors they paid, or "subsidised" as they prefer to call it, to build it. And they prove once again they can be relied upon to put the

interests of the British capitalists above those of workers and the NHS.

Labour has a particular reason for taking on UCLH workers. The Unison branch has long been a thorn in the side of their plans to privatise the NHS. It has launched numerous demonstrations, lobbies and campaigns against New Labour's plans and Frank Dobson the Health Secretary in particular. The latest ballot sought to protect terms and conditions throughout the 30 years of the PFI contract. If New Labour can smash up union organisation in the UCLH they know that they will deliver a powerful message across workers in the NHS and public sector as a whole.

As usual New Labour have found willing allies in the Unison bureaucracy. Unison may be pledged to fight PFI, it may have sent some full time officials in to UCLH to argue for a yes vote in the ballot, but it has done nothing to stop the hospital management from launching a series of disciplinary actions against leading Unison hospital militants. Disciplinary actions which have the clear objective of undermining the branch leadership and smoothing the way for further attacks in the future. In fact rather than fight these attacks it has launched its own internal enquiry into socialists within the union.

The bureaucracy will do nothing to

lead a real fight against PFI. It is too concerned with maintaining cosy relations with its friends in the New Labour cabinet to do anything which might reduce its "influence" in government. Faced with enough pressure for a fight it may sanction a ballot here and there, but it will not launch a national fight against PFI – which is the best way to beat it – or act to defy the bosses when they rush to court. Nor will it organise the rank and file against the privatisation of our terms and conditions.

We need a rank and file movement across Unison to defeat every attack and break the power of the bureaucracy over our union once and for all.

Right wing back on the attack

LABOUR'S RULING clique has launched a panic-stricken attack on opposition within the party.

The emergence of a new "Grassroots Alliance", which is challenging the Blairites for positions on the party's National Executive Committee at this year's party conference, drove the leader's normally slick "Millbank Tendency" into paroxysms of rage.

Former leader Neil Kinnock went to the *Guardian* to complain about a repeat of the in-fighting that "damaged the party so much in the 1980s". He then launched a vicious diatribe which stopped at nothing to discredit Blair's opponents, calling them troublemakers, naive, sneering sectarians, and, horror of horrors, "Trotskyites". The General Secretary of the Party even denounced the Alliance on the radio.

Millbank then showed how much they have lost touch with the democratic traditions of the labour movement by employing a private lobbying firm run by Lord Bassam to phone up party members and get them to vote for pro-Blair candidates. Jacqui Brown of Brent East was called up by a woman who said "the Party" wanted her to vote for the loyalist slate. Only when challenged did she admit that she meant the right wing pressure group Members First, not the Party itself, and that she was not even a member of the Labour Party!

At the time of writing we do not yet know the result of the NEC elections. If the Grassroots Alliance do well then Blair's humiliation will be richly deserved. It will show that despite all Blair's wooing of big business, the Labour Party is still not immune to pressure from its trade union and working class base, a base that wants real action in defence of living standards, jobs and public services.

The Grassroots Alliance, however, can only go so far. It has no clear alternative to Blair's pro-business economic policy. And several of its members have

no answer to Kinnock's dire warnings about avoiding the "sectarian", "factional" disputes that wracked the Labour Party in the 1980s.

Writing in *Tribune*, which backs the Grassroots Alliance, Steve Platt said:

"You do not need to want a return to the bunfights of the seventies and eighties to feel that there should be more to being a delegate at Labour's annual gathering than a seven-day stint as a cheerleader for the party hierarchy."

As the anti-Blair mood grows, as the recession bites, as jobs are slashed, left wingers in the Labour Party will have to fight for the government to act against the capitalists, not the workers.

What nobody will say clearly is that the challenge to the big business agenda that reached its height in the Labour party in the early 1980s was not a self-destructive "bunfight". It was a good thing. It reflected the determination of millions of workers, after the disaster of the Callaghan years, never again to have a Labour government that held down workers' wages to pay for the profits of the rich.

It was the right wing, not the left, that refused to abide by party policies, that witch-hunted and expelled socialists from the party, that refused to lift a finger for the miners when they could have brought down the Thatcher government in 1984, that closed the party's vibrant youth organisation, that refused

to stand up for Labour councils like Lothian, Lambeth and Liverpool when they challenged the Tories' cuts-driven spending limits.

The disaster was not that there was a struggle in the party. It was that the right wing won. That victory was due to the right wing's clarity of purpose. They wanted to drive the left out of the party. They called all criticism but their own divisive. They recognised an obstacle to the interests of the multi-millionaires and they went all out to smash it up.

The left, meanwhile, is restricted to demanding a change in style and a more "inclusive" party. That is why whenever the right-wing threatened a breach of unity, by deselecting left wing candidates from above or expelling the Militant Tendency, the left knuckled under and gave in.

The whole episode of Blair's faction attacking the Grassroots Alliance is just a dress rehearsal for divisions that will emerge in the years to come. As the anti-Blair mood grows, as the recession bites, as jobs are slashed, left wingers in the Labour Party will have to fight for the government to act against the capitalists, not the workers.

There will be no possibility of "party unity" on anything other than Blair's terms, because Blair and his supporters will put the needs of the ruling class above formal questions like "inclusiveness" and "pluralism". The left will have to fight on clear class grounds.

Those who put unity with the capitalists' favourite faction above questions of principle will end up as nothing more than Blair's pawns. Those who cannot be intimidated will have to make another choice - prepare for independence and a real working class party. Because in the coming economic crisis the workers will fight Blair, whatever any Labour Left MP has to say about it. And in that fight workers and youth, outside parliament, will be throwing more than buns.

Break the law not the poor

ing the picket lines. Despite this display of weakness, the conference voted to support Higgs without reservations.

In the afternoon we discussed rank and file democracy in the TGWU and the anti-trade union laws. A resolution from the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL) gave some good concrete proposals for organising, such as holding a demonstration against the anti-union laws, but didn't go far enough in committing the organisation to any clear political principles.

A complementary resolution proposed by Workers Power members did just that, committing the conference to a thorough transformation of the unions through regular elections of officers, their instant recallability and putting them on the same average salary as the people they represent. It also called for supporting all workers in action and for building secondary action to smash the anti-trade union laws.

The AWL then argued to forget the politics and leave them to the next con-

ference in six months, and for now just elect a steering committee to organise the "concrete" side of things. When Workers Power members put an amendment to support all workers in struggle "regardless of the law" they dithered, arguing that the last phrase about illegality was redundant since it was obvious anyway! This when every bureaucrat from Bill Morris down always says they support workers in struggle - but they won't agree to break the law to do it.

That is precisely the bottom line for any real rank and file organisation - it shouldn't be left for a future conference, it has to be the basis right from the start, if we're to build a fighting left in the TGWU.

Politics and clear democratic procedures have been left for the next "Off the Record" conference. Militants should get active now to make the conference set up a fighting rank and file organisation to say clearly that it's better to break the law than break the poor.

workers POWER

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COMMENT

Clinton's mid-term crisis

It's tempting to view the whole Clinton/Lewinsky "sex, lies and videotape" scandal as just a hilarious soap opera. The spectacle of the US President subjected to intensive questioning about the sexual use of cigars is certainly entertaining.

All too few accounts of this saga, however, have pointed out the rancid hypocrisy that Clinton's intimate adventures expose. Clinton has bolstered the US fundamentalist christian right time and again while in office. His attacks on "welfare" single mothers, his lecturing of black teenage girls on sexual abstinence and his dismissal of the surgeon general for uttering the word "masturbation" in a speech, demonstrate that for the ruling class sex and sexuality are weapons in their war against the oppressed.

A repressive morality, perpetrated through the church and the media and through the images of clean living politicians, is used to shore up the family as a prison house for women and youth. Yet the same rulers who preach this morality are busy breaking its ridiculous rules at every opportunity.

This is the reality - and Clinton's denials and apologies, his televised breakfast prayer meeting, the appointment of evangelical spiritual advisers to keep him from temptation merely show that his talent for acting has been sorely wasted.

Of course revolutionaries should not in any way, shape or form join with the reactionary, religious right in demanding Clinton's removal because of his sexual activities. We can attack his hypocrisy without siding with the sex-hating lobby of Republican bigots now calling for his head.

But nor does this mean that we side with Clinton and echo the original defence offered by his wife (well before the latest scandal broke) that he is really a left winger being victimised by the right. He is the leader of the world's most powerful imperialist country and a sworn enemy of workers, peasants and real left wingers everywhere.

The "terrorist bases" that Clinton bombed in Sudan and Afghanistan, just before the Starr report was published, reveal the real moral issues at stake - the morality of massacring

He is the leader of the world's most powerful imperialist country and a sworn enemy of workers, peasants and real left wingers everywhere.

innocent people in the interests of maintaining imperialist rule and imperialist profits throughout the world. They reveal the real Clinton - and Blair who supported his acts of barbarism immediately and without question - as a brutal murderer.

Yes, there are plenty of good reasons to bring Clinton to justice. As President of the United States he has backed the IMF in its insistence that backward, semi colonial countries are forced to cut back on public spending. In Latin America this means the denial of even the most basic health, welfare and education services.

In other countries the IMF forces governments to remove subsidies on the foods that make up the staple diet of the poor, leading to untold suffering, malnutrition and starvation. And if anyone dares raise a voice of opposition to this imperialist system then they will face the full military might of the US war machine. At home his Presidency has done nothing to alleviate the conditions of the despair-ridden ghettos, his policies only increasing poverty through his attacks on welfare.

If Clinton goes, the problem is that it won't be for his real crimes - his assault on the poor at home and abroad and his resolute defence of US capitalism's right to rule the world. The task of getting rid of him, and his economic and moral system, should be down to the US working class not the religious zealots. And it should be carried out by a class struggle involving millions in action, not a court room struggle leaving millions passively watching the proceedings on the TV.

TGWU

TRANSPORT AND General Workers Union (TGWU) activists and officers held a conference in Liverpool on 19 September. A core of 30 people attended, with 50 at the highpoint including a left wing member of the union's national leadership (NEC).

The delegates were fed up with the NEC's failure to back strikes like the Liverpool Dockers and Magnet, and its refusal to fight for union policy, like opposing the anti-trade union laws, campaigning for an equal minimum wage and launching membership drives.

Jimmy Nolan of the Liverpool dockers opened the conference. There followed a passionate speech from Shirley Winters of the Magnet dispute, who condemned the TGWU leadership for starving their strike of support.

Fred Higgs, an officer standing for the next NEC elections, also spoke. The organisers were clearly using the conference to support his election bid. But Higgs refused to criticise the NEC and TGWU leader Bill Morris, and would not commit himself to backing solidarity strike action or breaking the anti-trade union laws.

Instead he said he would "put the interests of the union first", exactly the argument Morris used to keep the dockers' dispute unofficial and separate from other sections of TGWU workers, even those still using the port and break-

Can the nation state handcuff global capital?

Lesley Day reviews, *The Age of Insecurity* by Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson

LARRY ELLIOTT and Dan Atkinson want to stop the retreat of the left. Boxed into a corner by two decades of neo-liberalism, it should come out fighting: for state intervention in the economy, redistribution of wealth, curbs on capital and the restoration of basic personal liberties.

The authors devote a considerable portion of the book to demolishing the myths propounded by the supporters of free market capitalism.

Far from delivering increased liberty, the new market economy has brought greater authoritarianism, more interference in people's lives – the “freeing of capital and the control of people”. Supporters of free market economics say it creates a “level playing field”, exposing and preventing all attempts to “rig” the market. The authors show that this is rubbish: the deregulation of the financial system has brought pension fraud, bank scandals like the Barings collapse, ever greater government “sweeteners” to big business, tax evasion on a massive scale.

And far from eliminating bureaucracy in public services, the new regimes of “market testing” and artificially constructed internal markets operating everywhere from the NHS to the BBC have created their own monstrous bureaucracies.

Instead of producing a “classless society”, the free market has boosted inequality world-wide. The top one per cent of US earners receive more income than the bottom 40 per cent combined. One per cent of multinationals own half the capital invested directly outside their country of origin. In Britain, in 1977, only 7 per cent of the population had incomes below half the average. By the early 1990s 25 per cent of the population was in that bracket.

The new order has even failed in the declared Thatcherite aim of expanding and sustaining the middle class: the number of small businesses has fallen in Britain in the last two decades and whole swathes of the profession-

al middle class have lost their security of employment.

This is the Age of Insecurity and as stock markets and currencies collapse, even its claimed successes prove illusory. Billionaire speculator George Soros calls for reform: even the OECD is now pointing out that increasing inequality and “flexible” labour markets don't deliver growth. Surely, the authors argue, now is the time for the “left” (by which Elliott and Atkinson mean Clinton through to European social democracies) to go on the offensive against rampant unchecked capitalism. Instead it has thrown in the towel. Clinton, Blair and their think tanks accept the triumph of the market and propose only minor tinkering with the system.

In a timely attack on the “Third Way”, on modernisation and the “social market”, Elliott and Atkinson point out that Blair and company have swallowed whole chunks of the right's agenda.

Does this mean that Elliott and Atkinson have become converts to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism? No, they are representatives of the growing trend of “neo-Keynesianism” within ruling class economics: that is, they believe capitalism can and should be controlled by governments. They want a return to the ideas of the liberal economist JM Keynes.

“Depression can be seen as what happens when inequality gets out of hand”, they argue, and indeed in the couple of months since their book was published, their predictions of crisis and slow down have been borne out. No wonder Keynes' work is being recovered from storage and dusted down.

Elliott and Atkinson argue that a whole series of measures can be taken to “put handcuffs on capital”. At an international level this would mean reforming the trade agreements and the international financial institutions (the IMF and World Bank) – and taking measures against currency speculation by imposing reserve requirements. It would mean stressing “fair trade” and environmental concerns.

At a national level there should be taxes on capital, measures to control capital flows and credit controls. Businesses should be told they have to “site here to sell here”. At the same time, there should be price controls on essential goods and high quality cheap public transport, together with various environmental protection measures. Employers should be prevented from sacking at will, giving trade union officials a chance to return to “proper” negotiation rather than relying on narrow legal challenges.

Overall the aim should be to restore “security” to people's lives with local services, safe jobs and decent welfare. The latter, they argue will not be too costly because their measures can bring economic improvement.

It sounds good - but can it work? The most obvious problem is that international capital won't wear it. Elliott and Atkinson believe it is possible to recreate the sort of consensus that produced government intervention, welfare, growth and full employment in the post war period. This could then introduce policies curbing capital using the power of national states. Here their arguments begin to unravel. They believe that government policies can be altered as a result of culture shifts.

In their overview of the shift from post war interventionism to the “new market economy” they give pride of place to cultural changes. They describe the raucous rise of “enterprise culture” in the late 1970s and 1980s and the dissatisfactions and disappointments of the 1970s.

Along the way they make a number of acute observations (Sybil Fawley as a proto-Margaret Thatcher, sorting out the helpless declining middle class) and telling points about the Callaghan government. They chart the rise of ruralism, the search for “authenticity” and self-help. This meant that Thatcher and Reagan were “cutting with the grain” of cultural change. Enjoyable as this account is, though, it doesn't get to the heart of the matter.

Thatcher and Reagan were responding to the needs of international cap-

ital. It was facing a series of problems at the core of which lay a crisis of profitability. The failure of social democracy and its left wing to construct an alternative programme, and the betrayals of Labour leaders like Callaghan and Healey, ensured the victory of the right. The bosses were able to drive through their attacks. It was no mere cultural shift that produced this – and a reversal of it won't persuade international capitalism to turn from a sabre toothed tiger into a friendly domestic cat.

Elliott and Atkinson think they have another potential weapon: the nation state. They argue that the globalisation theorists have massively overestimated the extent to which capital is really able to dictate to nation states and thus to governments. They point out that the state is still essential for enforcing the legal framework for business and for controlling the working class.

This means, they say, that national governments can assert themselves and insist on the various measures to curb capital that they propose. This presupposes the traditional social democratic view of the state as an essentially neutral body standing above class conflict which can be captured by reformist governments.

This not only underestimates the innumerable ties that bind big business, the civil service, the heads of parties, pressure groups and so forth into one ruling class. It also misunderstands the nature of the capitalist state.

The state is there to protect the property of the ruling class and ensure the survival of the profit system. At present, multinationals can move production at a moment's notice. Governments can retaliate but in the event of major capital flight would have to embark on a programme of nationalisation and expropriation. They would need to tax the rich to gain the necessary resources to restart production and solve unemployment. Will the police, courts and army stand idly by?

A serious challenge from a social-

ist government will come up against the same forces that brought down the Allende government in Chile in 1973. What is true is that the bosses and financiers have started to talk amongst themselves about new sets of controls and intervention. The debate at G7 over interest rates and the need for reflationary measures, the (strictly limited) rescue packages - these are signs that the bosses know there is a serious danger of slump.

But the contradictions in the system are so deep seated that no set of policies is going to overcome them altogether. Capitalist competition, the drive for profits, constantly undermines attempts at national and international control. Nation states, far from being the means for controlling international capital, become the means by which rival capitals go to war.

This makes the “little England” outlook of Elliott and Atkinson not only wrong, but in the end dangerous. They may advocate a social democratic, “fluffy” version of nationalism but it is nationalism nevertheless. In a period of sharpened competition this will meld with a much nastier “cultural trend”.

The world's rulers may yet turn to neo-Keynesianism: but it will be a doctrine in which the “neo-” is all important. It will be state intervention – as in Malaysia and Hong Kong – to stave off crisis until the normal service of cuts, privatisation and deregulation can be resumed. The full blown policies of state intervention to ensure full employment, workplace partnership, cheap food and social peace were not adopted after 1945 just because Keynes had a good idea: they were adopted to stave off and buy off revolutions.

In the post war boom, which now looks like a one-off 20-year period of world-wide growth amid a century of squalor, these policies worked to an extent. Amid a world wracked by crisis, lay-offs and bankruptcies they cannot be contemplated without also contemplating an end to world trade and a return to inter-imperialism conflict.

OBITUARY: ZHENG CHAOLIN

Neither prison nor Stalinism could break him

ZHENG CHAOLIN, a veteran of the Chinese Communist Party and a founder of Chinese Trotskyism died in Shanghai on 1 August.

As a young man, Zheng travelled to France to study and worked in factories to fund himself. There he came into contact with Marxism. In 1922 he was a delegate to the founding conference of the Youth Communist Party, also attended by Zhou Enlai, and in 1923 he was selected to go to Moscow for training.

Within a year he was sent back to China and worked in the Party Propaganda Department and taught at

the Party University in Shanghai until the massacre of 1927.

It was in the aftermath of this defeat that Zheng first heard of Trotsky's criticisms of the Comintern's strategy in China and collaborated with Chen Duxiu to build an opposition grouping within the Chinese CP.

In 1931, he was elected, with Chen, to the leadership of a united Trotskyist organisation but within weeks was arrested by the ruling Guomindang and sentenced to fifteen years. Released from prison during the Japanese invasion, Zheng made his way back to Shanghai where he edited the

Trotskyists' underground journal *The Internationalist* and completed the translation of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*.

After the war, he remained in Shanghai and published the open Trotskyist paper *New Banner* until it was suppressed. After the victory of Mao's CP, Zheng was a leader of the International Workers' Party until it too was suppressed by the Maoists in 1952. He was jailed again and was not released until 1979.

Undaunted, Zheng turned his attention to writing about the history of the revolutionary movement in China

and his own memoirs. The spirit of the man can be seen in his response to the collapse of the Soviet Union:

“Most say this shows the bankruptcy of socialism but this is wrong. It is merely the bankruptcy of Stalinism, the doctrine of socialism in one country. We Trotskyists are the only ones who dared to reach this conclusion, for we alone maintained that socialism cannot be built in one or a few countries. We have never conceded that the system in the USSR or the other ‘socialist’ countries was socialist. The greatest dispute of the 20th Century has been finally settled. Trotsky was right, Stalin was wrong.”

marxism THE BASICS

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

Why we need a revolutionary party

The Russian Revolution of 1917 remains the only successful socialist revolution this century. Max Wilson says this was because a revolutionary party had won the leadership of the working class.

IN FEBRUARY 1917 the workers, soldiers, sailors and peasants of Russia revolted against the slaughter of the First World War and the tyrannical regime of Tsar Nicholas II. The workers, soldiers and sailors in the main cities organised themselves, spontaneously, in workers' councils (soviets).

Delegates from the different factories, working class districts and from different regiments in the army constituted an alternative power, based on direct working class democracy. Workers, soldiers and sailors elected delegates from mass meetings to the soviet. Direct representatives, they were accountable and recallable to the workers who elected them. But this did not lead to the workers and their allies taking power immediately.

The representatives of the most popular parties in the soviets, the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries, believed that Russia was not ready for a socialist revolution and instead proceeded to organise a series of short lived governments with the main bourgeois politicians. They resisted the call for "all power to the soviets" in favour of ceding power to the bourgeois Provisional Government.

Within the soviets the Bolshevik Party challenged these parties with clear revolutionary policies. The Bolsheviks fought to win all power for the soviets. Through patient explanation the Bolsheviks defeated the bourgeois parties in the soviets and won the mass of workers and soldiers to insurrection. Soviets led by Bolsheviks were the key to revolutionary victory.

The Bolshevik Party did not appear from nowhere in 1917. It originated within the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP), a party which united all revolutionary Marxists in the Russian empire at the start of the century. In 1903 a row broke out at the RSDLP's founding congress. What appeared to be at first a minor organisational question, over what it meant to be a member of the party, proved to be a key political question in the fight for revolution.

Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik faction, argued in line with what had up until then been the common position of the entire leadership of the RSDLP, that the organisation needed to be a militant, professional and centralised organisation. Its members would have to be under the discipline of one of the party organisations and fight for the party programme, what was later to become known as democratic centralism.

The party would be organised democratically, with freedom of discussion among the members leading to a vote on the party's programme, policies, tactics and action. Once a decision had been made then every member of the party would be obliged to fight for it.

Lenin won a majority at the 1903 congress after a number of his opponents walked out. (Bolshevik is the Russian word for majority). The minority, Mensheviks, (from the Russian word for minority) argued for a looser form of organisation. They refused to accept the right of the congress to elect the editorial board of the party paper, *Iskra*.

This was not just a question of the formal constitution of the party but was directly related to the political tasks of the Social Democrats. In the previous year, Lenin wrote a very important work, *What is to be Done?*, that remains a vital guide for revolutionaries in the struggle today.

Lenin explained that without a conscious political leadership, a party, the working class' economic struggle inside the workplace will not, spontaneously, generate a revolutionary socialist consciousness. The party is the bearer of that consciousness, fighting within every sphere of class struggle against capitalism and oppression - not just within the workplace over economic issues - to win the working class and oppressed to the revolutionary programme.

Capitalism conceals the exploitation and oppression

IN BRIEF

■ Without a conscious political leadership, the workers' economic struggles in the workplace will not spontaneously generate a revolutionary socialist consciousness

■ The party roots itself in the working class. It learns from and generalises the lessons of its struggles past and present. It serves as the memory of the class

■ Democratic centralism means the maximum level of debate and discussion within the party. But when a decision has been reached, then there must be unity in action

that is inherent within it. Selling your labour seems to be a fair deal. It appears to be a "free" contract between a boss and a worker. Systematic exploitation is not immediately obvious, even if the effects of it, like low pay are. And it is precisely the fight over the effects - the fight for a better deal, "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work", for reforms within capitalism - that workers spontaneously take up. To go beyond this requires an understanding of capitalism, an understanding of its entire system of exploitation and oppression and a programme of action to fight it. Without this the spontaneous struggle is limited to trade union, reformist consciousness.

Lenin called the spontaneous development of trade union consciousness "the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie". Trade union consciousness and political reformism - the natural political expression of trade unionism - are bourgeois political ideologies even though they are based on workers' organisations. And the strength of such ideology is that it is perpetrated on a daily basis by the vast propaganda machine - now infinitely more extensive than in Lenin's day - of the press, the broadcasting media and so on. As Lenin noted:

"... bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology... it is more fully developed, and... it has at its disposal immeasurably more means of dissemination."

Of course none of this means that the party stands aside from the day to day struggle of the class, bringing socialist consciousness from without in a passive and sectarian way. Far from it. The party roots itself in the working class. It learns from and generalises the lessons of its struggles, past and present. It serves as the memory of the class as well as its vanguard.

But if it was simply an organisational tool for uniting working class struggles as they unfold it would be little more than a glorified, albeit militant, trade union. In order to both learn from and teach the working class the party must have a programme of action for defeating capitalism and not just ameliorating its worst effects.

Today many activists object to the idea of a revolutionary party because they are against "leaders". As the revolutionary party unashamedly seeks to lead the working class activists in various protest movements, local campaigns and so on, they declare themselves to be "against parties".

The history of so many parties - from the Stalinist bureaucratic monstrosities, to the clique dominated reformist social democratic parties and the so-called "Trotskyist" or "revolutionary" parties and sects, run like feudal fiefdoms by unaccountable leaders - gives plenty of cause for suspicion. But two things prove that the genuinely revolutionary party is different.

The first is the concept of democratic centralism itself. Some argue this is a bureaucratic and undemocratic way of organising. Quite the opposite. Democratic centralism means the maximum level of debate and discussion within the party over the correct tactics and programme to adopt. But when a decision has been reached, then the greatest unity must be presented by the party to the working class. Capital is a highly centralised social force. To overthrow it we must have unity in action.

The working class spontaneously gravitates towards democratic centralist types of organisation during times of struggle. The importance of unity and solidarity are well understood by workers on strike. Decisions are made about tactics and strategy in an open and democratic environment. But anybody who breaks with the decision

of the majority once a vote has been taken, becomes a strike breaker, a traitor and a scab.

This democracy must be preserved at all costs and only ever temporarily suspended when repression or illegality make normal democratic functioning practically impossible. It is vital for holding the leaders of the party to account, for allowing dissenters to air their views and to allow mistakes to be corrected. It is the only guarantee against organisational degeneration.

Centralism, the intervention into the external world is the other. For without it, with a free-for-all by members of different views, nobody would be accountable, no policy could be tested and corrected, no leader held responsible for a success or a mistake. The party that acted without centralism would become a laughing stock and quickly fall apart. Centralism in action is equally a guarantee against degeneration.

The second factor that marks out the revolutionary party is that it is open in its quest for leadership of the working class. It "disdains" as Karl Marx said "to conceal its views". And those who say "no leaders" are always, but always, led by cliques or charismatic individuals who direct operations and make the key decisions. The difference between them and revolutionary leaders is that we believe in accountability. Our leaders are chosen and can be replaced.

After all, every struggle requires and finds leadership. Without it, on a picket line for example, the police will have a field day. Our side will have nobody directing our forces to the key points of the struggle while the police commanders direct theirs to the best effect. In reality strike committees and militants selected in which workers demonstrate the way in which workers in struggle can find a leadership.

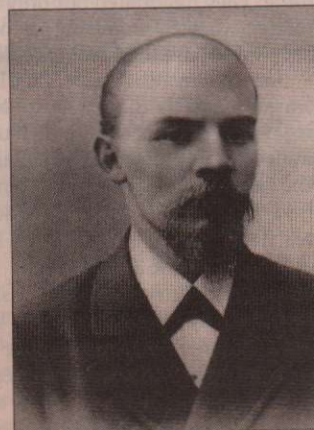
And in every wider struggle leaderships emerge. While reformist consciousness prevails that leadership will be reformist. And the cost, in strikes, in campaigns, in the struggle for progressive legislation, is that we are sold out or sold short by these leaders.

Revolutionary leadership will break the hold of the reformists and win the support of the masses of the working class. Like the Bolsheviks in 1917, we do not do this by tricks or deceit but by proving ourselves the most consistent fighters for the interests of the working class, we do it by placing ourselves at the forefront of every struggle, by acting, as Lenin said, as "tribunes of the people".

Above all, without revolutionary leadership, the revolution cannot triumph. In Indonesia a powerful uprising overthrew a rotten regime. It mobilised thousands upon thousands demanding change. But suddenly it stalled, not because the masses were satisfied. Poverty and hunger are still rife but the leaders of that revolution favoured a compromise with a wing of the old regime. Their leadership deliberately held back the revolution and will try to kill it off altogether once they have satisfied their own limited demands for democratic reform.

Only a revolutionary leadership can take this movement forward to a victory over the decaying capitalism that spells misery for millions of Indonesians.

The revolutionary party needs to be organised and prepared at all levels. From the intervention into workers' meetings, to leading strikes and participating in revolutionary struggles, the party must be politically and organisationally prepared. A revolutionary party will unite those workers who have learnt the lessons of their struggles in a single organisation that can utilise these lessons to lead the entire working class.



LENIN IN 1902

Russia gets yet another compromise government

Economic catastrophe stirs workers into action

After seven years of economic decline Russia has gone into meltdown. **Dave Stockton** examines the reasons behind the relative passivity of the Russian labour movement and asks if the country's Stalinists are poised for a new phase of growth.

RUSSIA'S ECONOMY is in deep crisis (see box). But even before the recent crash it was clear that Russian workers would not endure these privations much longer.

Russian miners in Kemerovo and Kuznetsk blockaded the Trans-Siberian Railway, the spinal column of the vast Russian Federation. On the island of Sakhalin in the far east, miners occupied the main road to the central power station. Other workers either joined the strike or expressed their solidarity. Workers in the defence industry, construction and transport, in Moscow and St Petersburg, have also struck.

The miners' strikes were crucial. They spread along the Trans-Siberian railway and to other rail and road links and could not be ignored by the media. The striking miners, organised by the independent miners' union of Vorkuta and the Komi, set up a protest camp under the walls of the Kremlin.

They received support from the other unions and the Communist Party (CPRF). The government and the provincial governors did not dare use large scale force. They negotiated but only made matters worse by promising payment of back wages and then failing to deliver.

In recent months teachers and health workers have launched national and regional strikes, not only for their unpaid wages but in protest at the collapse of the health and education systems. In mid-September over 100,000 school teachers went on a nation-wide strike at the start of the school year.

This economic and social crisis has led inevitably to a political crisis. Workers place pressure on enterprise managers, who in turn lean on the local and provincial authorities, calling for action to resolve the crisis. From July onwards a series of governors, including the right wing former general Alexander Lebed, began to predict a major social explo-

sion, a "new 1917".

Why has the workers' response been so long in coming? In the first years of the shock therapy the trade unions seemed totally unable to mobilise their members to even protest against the catastrophic fall in working class living standards. Calls for days of action by the former official unions (the Federation of Independent Unions of Russia) and by independent unions met with little or no resonance.

Various reasons have been sought for the Russian workers' seemingly super-human "patience". One theory suggested that under Stalinist rule the workers were atomised - they were prevented from organising in any way by police spies and repression.

An alternative theory states that the passivity is a result of the long years of "social contract" in Soviet society, whereby workers received job security, housing and welfare, and a low intensity of work in return for "tolerating" the managerial and state bureaucracy.

But as the years since the downfall of Stalinism elapsed these explanations seemed inadequate: both the intense state surveillance and the benefits of the social contract had collapsed. A more concrete explanation is needed - and one which would hold true in the conditions of the slow, incomplete restoration process in Russia - it is to be found in the nature of the large workplaces, the so-called "work collectives".

The work collective was, in an important sense, the base unit of Soviet society to a degree unknown under capitalism. The money wage in Soviet society only represented a part of what was needed to reproduce the worker and their family. Many goods and services could not be paid for in roubles but were provided through the enterprise or its trade union.

These were not perks but basic necessities. They included food shops, housing, crèches, clinics, holidays, social clubs, cinemas etc. This was not socialism - the quality was poor, provision was under the control of the management and unions, and no independent union or political activity was allowed. But life outside the "work collective" was difficult if not impos-

er privatisation" from 1994-97 merely gave shares (titles of ownership) to managers and workers.

The workers' reaction to managers' attempts to "privatise" their factories in order to turn them into profitable concerns has been to elect other managers who promise to obstruct this process.

Thus the social relations of production in most of the large industrial enterprises have obstinately remained non-capitalist. The managers do not act as agents of capital. Subjectively they still act as a privileged bureaucracy, seeking to discover a route to their own enrichment and indeed ownership.

It is the attitude of the workforce within the work collective, however, that is an obstacle to the rationalisation plans that would turn the large scale means of production into units of capital. The limit to this elemental class struggle is its fragmentation and lack of consciousness.

The workers are resisting restoration without fully realising what they are doing - they are resisting its effects without understanding its causes. To change this consciousness requires a political intervention, otherwise workers run the danger of being repeatedly deceived by dictators and bureaucratic charlatans.

The working class needs a revolutionary party to work out and fight for a programme to halt the restoration process, to build up a democratic labour movement based on factory committees, militant trade unions, workers' councils in cities, regions and nationally.

The intelligentsia and the youth, increasingly disillusioned by neo-liberalism and corruption, can play a vital role. They must shake off their cynicism, caste-like superiority and fear of the factory workers and join them in the fight to save Russia from advancing social barbarism.

The workers are resisting the effects of restoration without understanding its causes

sible.

The capitalist restoration process has not destroyed this dependence on the enterprise: if anything it has been reinforced. To this day 25% of the "wage" is received through the workplace in the form of services. So when wages are not paid, workers cannot simply leave the factories because they and their families are dependent on these other services.

In Gorbachev's latter years, workers were given the right to elect their managers. This was seen by the central bureaucracy as a counterweight to the autonomy enterprise managers had been given from the plan. The "vouch-



Russian soldiers help women to bring in the harvest. The soldiers will be paid in kind for the work

Capitalism's failure to take root

Last year the OECD loudly trumpeted its prediction that in 1998 Russia would "turn the corner" with the first real growth in GDP since shock therapy began in January 1991.

How sick that prediction looks now. Russia once more faces a catastrophic crisis. Millions of workers have not been paid for more than three months, some for as long as a year.

In Yekaterinburg, for example, 50 per cent of doctors and nurses are on unpaid leave and the police have not been paid for three months. Unemployment in Russia, now at 11.5 per cent, is beginning to rise as companies in the new market sector lay off their workers.

The collapse of the government bond market has thrown the banking system into crisis, and thousands of bank workers are now unemployed. In Moscow alone unemployment has risen by 300,000 since the crisis began.

Inflation is soaring and is predicted to reach 300 per cent by the end of the year. Savings are being rendered worthless. A quarter of the adult population, 32 million people, earns less than the pitiful official level of

subsistence of US\$70 per month.

Social inequality has increased massively. The top 10 per cent of the population earns sixty times that of the poorest 10 per cent.

Business sharks have salted away an estimated \$150 billion in foreign banks, and luxury villas and mansions in London, Paris and the French Riviera.

In contrast, the Russian state itself is on the verge of bankruptcy. The former Kiriyenko government had to admit that it could not meet the repayments on the huge sums owed, both to imperialist finance capital and to Russian industrial-media-banking conglomerates.

Over the last year the government managed to pay the interest on its loans by taking on more loans and promising even higher rates of return to lenders.

By July one third of the whole budget was taken up by interest payments. Add to this the low world market prices for raw materials - Russia's main source of export revenue - and the effects of the Asian crisis, and it is no surprise that first the stock market and then the rouble went into free fall.

What is the Russian Communist Party?

Once again "communists" are the government in Russia. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), the biggest party in the Russian parliament, approved the appointment of Yuri Maslyukov to the new Primakov government last month, having twice thwarted president Boris Yeltsin's attempt to make the Duma approve Chernomyrdin as prime minister.

Since 1991 Russia's Stalinists have lost power, been banned, split into rival parties and led the opposition in the Duma to Yeltsin. But what exactly is the CPRF?

Socialist Worker answers straightforwardly: "Because they (the CPRF) hark back to the Stalin period they have the most reactionary politics – they are racist, nationalist and very anti-working class." This is might be true as a polemical assault on the ideas and speeches of the CPRF's leader Gennadii Zyuganov. But however important these are, as the public face of a party, it is false to deduce the nature of the CPRF from them as it would be to conclude that the Labour Party was a racist, imperialist, bourgeois party purely and simply after hearing a speech by Tony Blair.

The CPRF in its origins is a Stalinist party. It is the indirect successor party to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and its Russian component, the Communist Party of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic (CPRSFSR). The majority of the CPRSFSR, led by Ivan Polozhkov, was vehemently opposed to Gorbachev's market socialism. The present leaders of the CPRF were all leaders of the Russian CP, though at a lower level of the CPRSFSR. Anatolii Lukyanov, Valentin Varrenikov, leaders of the CPRF today, were involved in the August 1991 Yanaev coup. Indeed Zyuganov's article at this time, "A word to the people" was widely considered as the coup's manifesto.

Immediately following the coup attempt Yeltsin banned the CPSU/CPRSFSR and confiscated all its property. A year later in November 1992 the constitutional court confirmed the ban on the party's central bodies and the seizure of its property but overturned the measures aimed at the base organisations, thus allowing rank and file activists to recreate the party from below.

In February 1993 the CPRF was reconstituted as a national party with Zyuganov as its leader. It had 27,000 local branches though it was forbidden by Yeltsin's decrees from attempting to found workplace cells. Ninety per cent of the old CPSU deserted it for good after the ban, leaving only committed Stalinist cadres from the old party.

Alexander Buzgalin, a leader of the non-Stalinist left elements in the CPRF, has pointed out that the CPRF had to be a party of intransigent opposition to the regime or it would get no support from below. Yet at the same time it had to steer clear of serious extra-parliamentary, "revolutionary" opposition

or it would be banned. In short, it was to be a vocal opposition in parliament with little or no action outside.

During the last four years the party's local organisations have largely confined themselves to conducting electoral propaganda in the streets and housing estates. Its 520,000 members make it the only mass party in Russia, a bigger force than all the rest of the parties in Russia put together.

The CPRF's decision not to boycott the elections called after Yeltsin's bloody presidential coup of November 1993 paid off. The CPRF gained 12.4 per cent of the popular vote and 48 deputies in the 450-seat new Duma. Parliamentary immunity, as well as the party's strict legalism, saved it from the repression which fell on the smaller and more radical Stalinist groups. At the December 1995 elections the CPRF nearly doubled its vote to 22.3 per cent (15 million votes) and won 99 seats.

The CPRF was established as the main opposition party. It even penetrated areas like the Siberian coalfields where support for Yeltsin had been strongest in the early 1990s. Party support climbed to nearly 50 per cent in the West Siberian coal producing region of the Kusbass and it can count on hard core support in the so-called "red belt" of old industrial cities west and south of Moscow.

In early 1996 the CPRF was riding high in the opinion polls and a panic set in amongst the Russian elite who had benefited from privatisation, then in full swing. A scramble took place to ensure Yeltsin's victory in the December presidential elections. The "oligarchs" gave huge amounts of money to Yeltsin's campaign. The IMF provided support to enable Yeltsin to clear the unpaid wages of the workers.

The rallying of almost all the parties and media to Yeltsin led to a near total blackout of Zyuganov on the broadcast media. Nevertheless, in the two rounds of the 1996 election Zyuganov received 24.2 million and 30.1 million votes respectively (32 per cent and 40.3 per cent). This was remarkable and shows the strong social roots the party has in the sections of the population most opposed to the restoration process.

However, the organic links of the CPRF to the working class as an organised movement are weak. So too is its link to young people, likely to be the most active in any future social upheaval of resistance to Yeltsin. The average age of its membership is 53, with only 10 per cent under 30. The Yeltsinite and western media portray the CPRF mass base as only made up of ferociously Stalinist OAPs is a caricature. Young students in the sciences desperate for more funding, dissident internationalists from the provinces, millions of all ages angry at the results of "shock therapy" – all these support the CPRF.

But the CPRF has only weak roots in the industrial proletariat: 20 per cent of party members are manual workers or collective farmers; 23 per cent engi-



Zyuganov plays the populist on the streets of Moscow

neering or technical workers; 32 per cent employees in education, technical and military sectors. The lack of organic roots in the workplace is enforced by the continued ban on workplace organisation. But another important factor is that the unions have resisted all attempts of the party to get closer to them including during the day of action on 27 March 1997 and the one planned for 7 October 1998.

The programme developed by the CPRF from 1993 to 1995 indicates a degree of post-Stalinist evolution towards social democracy. Whilst this has been a common feature of post-1989 Stalinism it is very underdeveloped compared to the wholesale social democratisation of the former Stalinists of Eastern Europe. The Programmatic Declaration of the refounding congress in 1993 stigmatised the longstanding bureaucratisation of the party, the treachery of the nomenklatura (i.e. the ruling clique in the old CPSU), the "bureaucratic centralism" which stifled the views of the party rank and file. This sentiment was widespread among a rank and file who had to build the party up from below and had witnessed most of the nomenklatura go over to capitalist restoration and then loot wholesale the state property whilst they were thrown into penury.

The statutes of the party called for "broad democracy and conscious discipline" and also for the "right of members to criticise any party organ or individual communist". Members would be permitted to form "associations based on platforms" – though not factions. The programme defended the centrality of the planned economy to the old USSR but also the failure of the nomenklatura to adapt to the technological revolution in the West during the Brezhnev years. It denounced Gorbachev's market socialism and his proposed new fed-

eral constitution of 1991 as a betrayal of the USSR.

Yet when the programme turned to what could be achieved it came remarkably close to what Gorbachev was trying to create in the years 1988-91. It advocated a "voluntary" and "democratic" return to socialism and the reconstruction of the USSR only by the consent of the now independent republics. It advocated "freedom of association in political parties and social organisation".

Its economic programme called for "a planned-market, socially oriented, ecologically safe economy". It opposed a return to the "former system of bureaucratic management" and advocated a "mixed economy". It advocates the renationalisation of "illegally" privatised state property, that is, the large industrial and extractive corporations. This, of course, makes it unpopular with the oligarchs and popular with the workers whose wages have not been paid for months. But in practice its programme – despite occasional references to Lenin and Bolshevism – is reformist: a programme which while it presents itself as being for a slow, gradualist return to "socialism" is in reality a "gradualist" yielding to capitalism.

The party contains a number of tendencies. There are old-style hardline Stalinists making up about 10-15 per cent of the party, led by long time opponents of Gorbachev such as Anatolii Lukyanov, Oleg Miroov, Valentin Varrenikov and Nikolai Bindyukov. They openly praise Stalin as the industrialiser of the country, the great war leader. They favour united action with the smaller hard-line Stalinist parties and a common reintegration into a refounded CPSU.

Opposed to them – and probably dominant in the party apparatus and amongst the membership – are those who have been called "Marxist Reform-

ers" headed by the first deputy chairman of the party Valentin Kuptsov. They dominated the 1993 Second Congress and were able to block Zyuganov's nationalist amendments to the programme at the Third Congress in 1995.

Around Zyuganov, though in a minority, are the so-called "communist-nationalists". This tradition within Stalinism goes back to the 1920s and 1930s when their predecessors were called "national Bolsheviks". They saw 1917 as the foundation of a "Great State". They rejected the internationalism of the real Bolsheviks, and rejoiced when Stalin destroyed it. While strongly inclined to anti-semitism they recognised that the Russian state could not be built on a Great Russian basis alone. The other Slavic and non-Slavic peoples had to be assembled round the "elder brother". For them Russia has a racially-based dual mission: to "civilise" Asia but to resist Atlanticism – i.e. the USA and Britain.

Last but not least, in terms of their positions within the Duma fraction is a social democratic faction, which is eager for more "constructive engagement" with the regime and eager to enter government even as a helpless minority. It is headed by Yuri Maslyukov, the last head of the state planning ministry Gosplan – a man with numerous links to the industrial managers and who is now back in government.

The leadership of the party thus consists of a spectrum from extreme right chauvinism, through old style Stalinism to social democracy. None of these ideologies have anything to do with the historic interests of the working class or with Marxism. They represent the poisonous influence of the bourgeoisie and the putrefying odours of Stalinism.

Nevertheless, what all of these features confirm is that what we have in the CPRF is a Stalinist bourgeois workers party: politically bourgeois in its programme and leadership, but with significant roots in the working class.

The right tactics to break the ideological influence and treachery of this leadership are those of putting demands on the leaders and calling for united action between the party and the trade unions – together with all other parties that are based on working class organisations

If mass workers' opposition results in Yeltsin and Primakov calling early elections then it may prove necessary to give critical electoral support to the CPRF – with the demand that it breaks its concealed coalition with the bourgeois, bureaucratic and national-chauvinist forces.

Put to the test of power, under conditions of mass pressure to meet the workers' demands Zyuganov and the rest will expose themselves for what they are and the road will be opened for the creation of a mass revolutionary workers' party to hurl Stalinism finally and for ever on to the rubbish dump of Russian history.

For a workers' government and new emergency plan

THE NEXT opportunity for developing the local and sectional resistance is the 7 October general strike. The unions have threatened to start an indefinite general strike if their wages are not paid by then. The CPRF has backed the call if only to strengthen its hand in the Duma against Yeltsin.

Russia's crisis could develop in the coming months into a revolutionary crisis. The working class has its best chance to get rid of the bloodsucking Yeltsin administration since 1993. The government has never been so weak nor the working class so angry.

Class conscious workers in Russia must fight for an indefinite political general strike extending to all important sectors of the economy.

They must demand the payment of all wages owed, the resignation of the President and the government, and the calling of elections to a sovereign constituent assembly.

To organise the general strike, preserve order and ensure essential supplies for the population, they must elect councils of workers from every workplace and collective farm – democratic soviets.

Workers should not trust the CPRF. It has voted for significant parts of the

latest anti-crisis programme in the Duma, and has repeatedly backed down from a decisive confrontation with Yeltsin. Likewise they should not trust the leadership of the unions.

But they should demand that the CPRF and the trade union leadership throw all their resources into the struggle to overthrow Yeltsin and be prepared to serve in a provisional government answerable to a national congress of workers' councils.

Workers should at once approach the barracks, airfields and naval bases calling on the unpaid and suffering rank and file service personnel to elect their

own councils of action, to prevent any attempted coup d'état by the generals or the officer corps, to help arm and train a workers' and people's militia. All workers and socialist militants should fight in the coming weeks to:

- Launch an indefinite political general strike for payment of all wages and the resignation of Yeltsin and the government

- Re-nationalise the conglomerates without compensation and under the control of their workers.

- Take the media out of the control of the oligarchs and the government! Full freedom of expression! All parties

and unions and workplace representative to have access to broadcasting.

- Confiscate the bank deposits of the oligarchs and Mafia. Banking workers should take control of the banks and open the records to inspection.

- Russia's workers should appeal to the labour movements in the imperialist countries to demand the confiscation and return of the billions of dollars the oligarchs and Mafia have salted away in the western banks.

- Price controls on essential goods and inflation indexation of all wages.

- Down with Yeltsin and Primakov! For a workers' government!

SWEDEN

Workers vote against Persson's austerity

THE SWEDISH elections on 20 September resulted in a further polarisation of Swedish society and a big headache for Social Democrat prime minister Göran Persson.

For several years Persson has been congratulating himself for having carried out the most far-reaching austerity programme in Western Europe. He was not congratulated, however, by the Swedish workers. Substantial numbers of workers vented their anger at the government by deserting the Social Democratic Party (SDP) at the polls.

The social democrats managed to keep their hands on the government – just. With a lower than normal turnout they lost almost 8.8 per cent of their support and received only 36.6 per cent of the votes, the lowest figure since the early 1920s.

The right-wing Moderates registered a small gain, but two other ruling class parties, the liberal People's Party and the Centre Party, together lost five percent, thereby reducing, and almost destroying, the traditional alliance partners of the SDP. Some of those votes went to the Christian Democrats, who reached 11.8 percent. This party, which is a safe haven for reactionary groups like the anti-abortion campaign, will for the first time be able to play a significant role in Swedish politics.

Together the SDP and the Left Party achieved 48.6 per cent, winning 174 seats – one seat from a majority. The remaining 4.5 per cent went to the Greens, who

are likely to support an SDP-led coalition. At their last conference the Greens decided they would not vote for a government led by the Moderates.

It is likely the SDP government will continue but with a different kind of parliamentary support. Following the last elections in 1994, the government, supported by a section of the ruling class, made deals with the Centre Party in a conscious attempt to put a stop to an alliance with the Left.

The result of these deals were cuts and austerity measures. In response to these, many traditional SDP supporters voted for the Left Party, which won 12 per cent of the total vote, its highest ever vote.

This is a dream come true for the Left Party leadership who, since the 1960s, have been trying to shed their Stalin-

ist heritage and become the Swedish equivalent of the left socialist parties in Denmark and Norway.

A clear majority of the Social Democratic Party's supporters, members and union activists, favour an alliance with the Left Party, an alliance that will stand up for what militants call "left politics".

Since the election Persson has been conducting frantic negotiations to establish his coalition. The Left Party leader Gudrun Schyman, who had a very successful campaign as the only female party leader, is demanding a deal with Persson for a four-year alliance.

Schyman doesn't want government posts, which Persson has rejected out of hand anyway, she wants a "pact" which is written into the declaration of the new government's intentions. This

is combined with a five-point programme: referendum on the EMU (supported by the Greens), more money to local councils, reduction of the working week, increased equality and speedy conversion to an ecological society.

Schyman has been very careful not to put forward her five points as demands on the government. She doesn't want to create problems for the SDP, but increase the opportunities for her party's influence on the government. In classic Stalinist fashion she is working hard to rescue the SDP from the problems it faces.

After initial signs of splits in the bureaucratic top leadership of the SDP and the TUC, it looks like the more decisive figures, such as TUC leader Bertil Jonsson, have come down on the side of a limited alliance with the Left and the Greens. At the time of writing a deal has been reached, without any specific details being known, although the Left and the Greens will be given a chance to influence the new budget, due to be published in mid-October.

As usual the Greens advance a typical mixture of progressive and reactionary demands. While demanding no entry into NATO, which the Left have been silent about, the Greens strongly emphasise the need to repay the national debt (mostly owned by domestic capitalists). They are eager to prove themselves to be able defenders of a balanced budget, implying that the Left Party would be less willing to do so.

During the 1990's, however, the Lefts have been very good at taking "responsibility" for capitalist budgets in local and regional councils, where they have maintained alliances with the SDP and the Greens, sometimes in spite of popular protests against their decisions.

But the Left's success could also create problems for the leadership. Under the pressure of a social democratic government demanding responsibility as the price of an alliance, the leaders will make more compromises than many of their supporters are willing to accept. This could re-activate tensions inside the Left Party between its left and right wings. The left wing have already suffered from tabloid red-scare horror stories since some of the new MPs characterise themselves as "Communists".

But these self-proclaimed "Communists" are the remnants of the Left Party's Stalinism. They will not pose any threat to capitalism and the bosses, having proved their loyalty to the Swedish bosses for many years.

The Young Left, with its thousands of members, will be very vulnerable when its ever more right-wing leaders fail to force any real concessions from the government. Together with the revival of interest in leftist politics among broad layers of working people, this will create excellent opportunities for a revolutionary intervention to win Left Party activists and youth to a revolutionary alternative to social democracy and Stalinism.

ARBETARMAKT AND MARXIST LEFT FUSION

Arbetarmakt, Swedish section of the LRCI and the Marxist Left, a split from the Swedish CWI-group, ran a joint campaign for a critical vote for the SDP or the Left.

This marked a new stage in the two years of discussion and collaboration between the two organisations. The two groups will fuse at a conference in early November, constituting a new and bigger section of the

LRCI. Such an organisation is badly needed as an alternative to the centrist groups who think they can build a new (left reformist) workers' party behind the backs of the working class.

The fusion will strengthen the forces of Trotskyism in Sweden and enable us to take advantage of the coming wave of struggles and carry forward the struggle to build a Swedish revolutionary party.

CONGO

Peace talks fail to deliver as war worsens

AT THE end of August, the rebellion in western Congo was stopped at the gates of Kinshasa, the capital. The offensive, (see Workers Power 225), was driven back by the combined forces of 2,800 Zimbabwean troops, more than 2,500 troops from Angola and an unspecified number from Namibia. The rebels were ousted from two important sites, the airbase of Matadi and the port of Kitona.

Peace talks on 8 September at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, were followed by discussions in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Laurent Kabila, Congo's ruler, and his allies Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia accused Rwanda and Uganda of trying to create a "Tutsi empire".

Rwanda and Uganda on the other hand accused Kabila's Democratic

Republic of Congo (DRC) government of genocide against the Tutsis: recent DRC radio broadcasts and government statements have indeed called for attacks on Tutsis.

The peace talks brokered a commitment to a ceasefire but no actual settlement. The secretary general of the UN, Kofi Annan called on all concerned parties to "act decisively in order to translate the Victoria Falls agreement into action that will end the bloodshed and human suffering." Yet while the actual fighting has lessened since the conference more foreign troops have entered Congo and more look likely to enter.

Angola wants to open up a land corridor to its enclave of Cabinda which lies beyond a narrow strip of DRC land, to shore up Kabila and attack the bases

of UNITA, the Angolan opposition movement, with its 30,000 strong army. UNITA launched its own large-scale offensive in late August.

Zimbabwe wants to back Kabila and take attention away from its own internal situation where thousands of black peasants are occupying the land of white farmers. The peasants want to take back the land stolen from them by white settlers. The government is dragging its feet over the issue which it claims will cost \$2.2 billion. The Zimbabwean troops in Congo cost \$280,000 a day.

Uganda admits to having troops in the area to "secure our security interests" and to prevent Sudanese backed rebels from using the east of Congo as a base. Yet, Ugandan leader Yoweri Museveni said on the BBC that, at

the peace conferences, "we have reiterated our support for the Kabila government". Museveni fears a major war in the region and is keeping his options open.

A limited war in eastern DRC is manageable. A major conflict involving six or more countries would lead to the mutual ruin of its participants. Uganda's position was not helped when in September 2,000 Sudanese troops replaced Angolans in the DRC – the Angolans returned home to deal with the UNITA rebels. Sudan and Uganda are locked in a proxy war using rebel groups within the borders of each state.

The situation in Congo can go two ways. Either the rebel movement continues, backed by Rwanda, or a major war breaks out involving the states of

southern Africa lining up against those of eastern Africa. In the words of Susan Rice of the US State Department it would be "potentially among the most dangerous conflicts in the globe".

Either way the workers and peasants of the region will pay with their blood. Whatever the injustices meted out to sections of the population by one side or another; whatever the formal violations of the 19th century colonial borders that take place, the workers and poor peasants can gain nothing from supporting their own governments in these wars.

Only when the working class and poor peasants take power in the region as part of an international socialist revolution will the damage, divisions and death wrought by colonialism and imperialism be brought to an end.

GERMANY

IN GERMANY the bourgeois commentators and the representatives of the political establishment claim that it was their particular effort that stopped the far right and fascist REP, DVU and NPD getting into parliament.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Throughout this year, there was a significant increase in fascist and far-right mobilisations.

The NPD and its youth organisation, the JN, in particular, are an outspoken fascist force, who openly state that they want to "overthrow the existing order", who pose as the militant and militarised "national resistance". The DVU and the REPs pose as much more respectable parties.

The social basis for the forging of a fascist party – currently most likely around the NPD/JN – already exists. According to opinion polls around a third (!) of the young people were considering voting for a far right party.

Racism and its use as a supposed answer to the social problems of young people in particular, with slogans like

Far right gathers strength

"Work for Germans first!", have attracted these youth in the absence of a fighting alternative from the labour movement.

The forward march of the far right can be observed in their street mobilisations, in their political dominance and the terror they exercise in some of the smaller towns in east Germany.

They have successfully created so called "nationally liberated zones" in the east. Leftists and immigrants are systematically harassed when they appear on the streets in the evening.

Moreover, the NPD deliberately chooses working class events as dates for its mobilisations. The best known example was the May Day March this year in Leipzig where 6000 fascists met, protected by even more police. The weekend before the elections a similar march took place in Rostock where



NPD march in Rostock.

the pogroms had taken place in Autumn 1992.

Of course, if the unions, the (ex-Stalinist) PDS, the SPD would mobilise their

members in an offensive against the fascists their organisations could be smashed rapidly and easily. But it is the bankrupt politics of these organisation, of the leaderships of the reformist workers' parties and the trade union bureaucracy which is the major source for the growing attraction of racist and fascist ideas amongst the youth in particular.

Revolutionaries must put a wedge between the reformist and trade union leaders and the rank and file. This requires both the denunciation of their social-chauvinist, imperialist politics and placing demands on them to meet the needs of their working class supporters.

At the same time we need to mobilise the workers' movement and youth in a militant united front to smash the growing fascist threat on the streets, rallying thousands to make the slogan "no platform for fascists" a reality.

■ Next month we will analyse the German election results in detail

Car strikes put brake on bosses' attacks

Kim Min-Su, an LRCI supporter in South Korea, surveys the results of the recent strikes and occupations by car workers facing mass redundancy



ON 15 AND 16 July South Korean workers launched a mass strike against the sacking of thousands of workers in the car industry.

In the first six months of this year Korean bosses tripled unemployment to seven per cent (about 1.5 million) by pushing through closures and sackings in the smaller factories where union organisation was weak or non-existent.

If they had succeeded in pushing through massive job cuts in the car industry, where the record of trade union organisation and militancy is second to none, it would have been a major victory for the multinationals.

But instead of giving in, around 120,000 workers – including Hyundai and Daewoo car workers – launched a mass strike. The oppositional Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (the so-called new KCTU, see box) also called out thousands of public sector employees and shipyard workers, whose jobs were under threat.

The government reacted in its usual authoritarian way. It arrested union leaders and denounced them as criminals. This intimidated the new KCTU to call off the action. But 10,000 Hyundai car workers in Ulsan stayed out demanding that the company withdraw the 1,538 sackings. Three union leaders scaled a 100 metre chimney and stayed there demanding the company back down.

The employers' frontal attack on jobs comes 18 months after the government first tried to make the labour market more "flexible". In late 1996 it tabled legislation to make it easier to sack

workers and end job security guarantees within the big conglomerates (chaebols). The KCTU called a strike which forced the government to back down temporarily.

Then came the Asian economic crisis. Massive over-investment in Korean and other east Asian companies resulted in a regional financial crash. South Korea's economy nose-dived. Domestic demand slumped. The chaebols relunched the attack on jobs.

The recently elected militant leadership of the new KCTU was at the head of the Hyundai workers when the July strike began. Despite shaving their heads and climbing smokestacks, however the leaders were prepared to compromise.

Faced with a lock-out by Hyundai bosses the union leaders first called a general strike in solidarity with Hyundai for 23 July but then backed down after government threats. The leaders offered management a 50 per cent wage cut in return for no sackings. Finally, after weeks of occupation and surrounded by 5,000 tooled-up riot police, the union leaders at the plant negotiated a deal on 20 August.

The negotiators agreed to the sacking of 277 of the original 1,538 dismissed workers. Moreover, the ones not formally sacked will go on 18 months unpaid leave at the end of which time they will be given retraining by government agencies. The union leaders also agreed to industrial peace for at least two years while the workers strive to increase productivity; in return the management will "try" not to sack any more workers.

This plan did not go through with-

out opposition. The rank and file workers inside Hyundai are grouped in the Struggle Committee of Democratic Workers and Practising Labour Group. The union shop floor organisation is very strong and democratic. They organised protest rallies outside the scene of the talks between the management and union officials with slogans such as "Withdraw all dismissals!"

The resulting agreement is a partial victory for the Hyundai management. But the union remains intact and the desire to resist is strong. Two lessons can be drawn from recent events which will arm the South Korean workers for the next round of struggles.

First, the rank and file of the unions have to re-assert their control over the leadership: in fact they should ensure that all decisions and agreements be placed solely in the hands of sovereign shop floor delegates and assemblies of workers.

Second, these workers must tear up the agreement with the management. Otherwise it will demoralise the many thousands of less well organised workers in South Korea. Some 26 per cent of South Korea's urban workers are casuals on short-time contracts. Wages, job security and trade union organisation are better in the chaebols. These workers must lead the fight and unify all workers in struggle. As one bitter worker said:

"Hyundai workers' struggle is not only for themselves, but for all workers in Korea... They should not have compromised."

A mass campaign for unionisation, the extension of legal rights and levelling

up of employment conditions to all workers should be a priority for the new KCTU.

Third, South Korean workers need an independent working class party. The predecessor of the new KCTU, the NWURC, called in 1988 for the establishment of an independent labour party. The influential former KCTU President Kwon Young-Gil still talks of the need to form such a party to fight the elections in 2000. A smaller independent union grouping, Peoples Victory 21, called this month for a Labour-led Progressive Party to be launched by May 1999. The KCTU has given its backing to the plan.

Such a party must be rooted in the membership of the unions, but not controlled by their bureaucracies. It must stand against all bosses' parties on a platform that openly rejects the idea of peaceful, parliamentary progress towards social justice. The real face of the Korean state can be seen in the thousands of armed police that confront any strike in Korea.

A workers' party that openly fights for the overthrow of the existing political and military regime by force of arms could quickly rally hundreds of thousands of workers to its ranks in the deepening crisis in South Korea.

A workers' government based on democratic committees of delegates from the shop floor and the poorer areas and defended by the fighting organisations of the working class, could bring a halt to the growing misery and fear that is gripping millions of Koreans today and light a beacon of resistance and revolution for the whole of South East Asia.

SOUTH KOREA'S UNION MOVEMENT

FACING THE management were two union federations, both called KCTU. The original, larger, one (with 1.5 million members) was set up by the USA after World War Two as a pro-business union to insulate workers from the effects of post war revolts in Asia and to purge the labour movement of left wing militants.

The gravity of the crisis since July 1997 has forced the old KCTU to take a more oppositional stance. In 1996-97 it joined in the strike against the labour legislation changes; then in the 1997 Presidential elections it backed the opposition candidate for the first time in history.

But with Kim Dae Jung's victory last December, the KCTU bureaucracy moved quickly to sign an accord between bosses, government and unions, to reintroduce a variant of the old labour law that was beaten back in early 1997.

The other union, the new KCTU, has half a million members including the most militant workers in the car industry and state sector. Formed officially in 1995 its origins go back to 1988; it is still formally illegal but tolerated.

The new KCTU was drawn into supporting the accord after the elections and supported legal changes to job security.

But in February this year the rank and file kicked out the leaders in a conference to ratify the proposed changes, setting them on a collision course with the Kim government.

Asian slump sparks snap general election

AUSTRALIA FACES a general election and the chance to get rid of the right-wing government of liberal leader John Howard.

In the two and a half years since Howard's Liberal/National Party coalition was elected, working class Australians have been under constant assault.

Attacks on job security and unions; AU\$8 billion cuts to health, education and welfare; privatisation; new limits on the rights of indigenous people and migrants; and a rise in racism: these are the hallmarks of the Coalition's years in office.

Despite the onset of a deep economic crisis in surrounding Asia, and a drop in the value of the Australian dollar, Howard decided that the worst is yet to come and that the best time for a re-election bid is before a massive slump hits Australia.

The \$8 billion spending cuts in the Coalition's first budget went right to the heart of social welfare. The public health system is now in crisis with painfully long waiting lists and medical services stretched to breaking

point. Education has been slashed. Students saw their fees increased by thousands of dollars, while college budgets were decimated. This has meant dramatic staff cuts, a decline in quality, and up-front fees for more students than ever.

Young people have suffered in other ways. Thousands have been thrown off benefits and some have been forced to work for the dole. Unemployment for under-25s has increased to over 50 per cent in some areas.

Howard's anti-union laws have made it easier for bosses to cut workers' wages and conditions: strike action has been made more difficult and even illegal. However, in a massive showdown with Australia's strongest unionised workers – the wharfies (dockers) – the government could only force a draw, and not the crushing victory it needed to unleash a Thatcher-style purge of workplace militancy.

If the Coalition is re-elected Australian workers can expect more of the same cuts and a renewed offensive on union rights. With storm clouds mount-

ing on the economic front, the overwhelming majority of employers want the Coalition to win. The restructuring, the cuts, privatisations, racist laws and anti-union laws have inflated the profit margins of the major corporations and banks. The bosses want the Coalition re-elected to make the working class pay for the economic crisis.

At the start of the 1998 election campaign, the Australian Labor Party is neck and neck with the Coalition in the polls. At the last election, after holding office for thirteen years, Labor was deserted by voters in droves. The reasons were simple: while in office Labor attacked those it claimed to represent. Under the cover of the "Accord" with the union leaders, Labor held down wages while cutting services. During its 13 year reign, wages fell every year by between 1 and 3 per cent.

Labor now claims to have learned from its mistakes. It promises tax cuts for the poor and less to the rich. It says it will block Howard's new tax. Labor leader Kim Beazley has unveiled a

programme of reform for Labor's first 100 days. He promises hundreds of thousands of jobs, and to abolish nursing home fees for old people. He promises to increase spending on health and education and stop the privatisation of the rest of the telecoms company Telstra.

Labor still holds the political allegiance of the broad mass of the Australian working class. Two and a half million workers are in unions affiliated to Labor. They supply not only the funds for Labor's election bid but also the organisers and militants who campaign for the party in the working class.

Australian socialists call for a vote for Labor, but demand that they not only meet their meagre promises but go beyond them to meet the real needs and aspirations of working people.

Beazley will say that the country cannot afford such luxuries. This is just not true. They could be paid for by a steeply progressive taxation policy. All income under \$15,000 per annum should not be taxed, but individual income over \$80,000 a year should be taxed at 90

cents in the dollar.

Income from corporations should be evaluated on the same basis. All loopholes, like trust funds and the use of tax havens, should be closed. If the big corporations threaten to move their investments, Labor should nationalise their corporate holdings.

Workers' needs cannot be met through piecemeal reforms: the whole capitalist system needs to be overthrown. Labor's refusal to go beyond limited reforms means it will be unable to meet the basic needs of the class that it claims to represent. Waiting in the wings, to reap from the despair sown by Labor and Coalition governments, is the new far-right One Nation party that will bid to hold the balance of power if the election result is close.

Australian politics is polarising. The Australian working class needs, more than ever, a new revolutionary workers' party that can challenge the grip of Laborism over the minds of organised workers and help lead their struggles to victory.

How feminism fai

The Women's Liberation Movement was part of a generalised revolt against capitalism and imperialism at the end of the 1960s. Today that movement does not exist. But the torrent of ideas and causes that it gave rise to continue to be debated. They shape the ideas of many women who want to combat their oppression. To make sense of those ideas and to help elaborate a strategy for fighting women's oppression today **Alison Hudson** examines the rise and fall of the Women's Liberation Movement and on page 14 **Helen Watson** begins a debate with the different strands of feminist thought that have emerged since the heyday of the women's movement.

FEMINISM HAS "gone too far", according to former activist turned novelist Fay Weldon. In the late 1990s men are the disadvantaged sex – at school, in sexual relationships, in matters of childcare, in employment and of course at the hands of the Child Support Agency.

Weldon's plea on behalf of men will no doubt boost sales of her books and keep her in the lap of luxury but it bears no relationship to the truth. Millions of women in Britain, as elsewhere, continue to suffer systematic and frequently brutal oppression.

In work women, often consigned to part time jobs, continue to suffer discrimination – lower pay, fewer promotion opportunities and sexual harassment. In the home women continue their role as domestic slaves, even when working full time and as recent figures reveal are subjected to domestic violence on a far wider scale than previously thought.

Outside of a handful of liberal middle class homes the caring, sharing "new man" is largely a press invention. His antithesis, however, the "new lad" – read, old sexist – is real. In every walk of life women face sexism on a daily basis, reflected in the images of the media and in advertising.

Girl Power notwithstanding, women's oppression is still with us. Thirty years ago, as part of the great upheavals that shook world capitalism, women across the world organised to fight this oppression. In the climate of working class, anti-imperialist and anti-racist revolt that mobilised millions of young people in France, Northern Ireland, Czechoslovakia, USA, Britain, Germany and above all in Vietnam, a women's liberation movement was forged to fight every manifestation of sexism and oppression.

And there was a great deal to fight over. In the 1960s the under achievement of girls in science subjects at school was officially explained by their supposed lack of certain hormones. Stereotypical images of girls' passivity and natural propensity for housework and caring were in place from a child's earliest years – in Ladybird books for example.

Young women were also required to be passive and yielding when it came to sex, only experiencing vague sensations "like watching a beautiful sunset and wanting to keep it forever" according to one boys' sex education manual.

At work, the concept of the family wage (for men) meant that women's work was trivialised. It was "pin money" for "luxuries" and pay was kept well down as a result. Militancy among women workers was ridiculed if not treated with open hostility.

Sexist images were everywhere in the media. And by law women needed their husbands' permission before they could secure a loan for big items such as washing machines.

In response, in Britain and the USA in particular, a mass Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) was built. Thousands of women came onto the streets in campaigns and demonstrations for equal pay and to fight for abortion rights. They were protesting at sexist images of women, at the idea that women were in some way the property of men and at the "Ideal Homes" existence that women were meant to aspire to, as against the reality of endless low paid work, childcare and housework.

Left wing organisations found their own sexist practices and primitive notions of what women's oppression was and how it could be fought, ingrained by years of reformist and centrist degeneration and isolation, challenged by a new generation of confident women fighters. So too did the wider labour movement.

In this sense, the early WLM (often referred to as the "second wave" women's movement – the "first wave" having been around the struggle for the vote) represented a powerful and welcome challenge. It brought to the fore issues that had been either taboo or had long been downgraded by the left – sexuality, abortion and contraception, equal pay and equal rights to work.

It improvised and innovated tactics, meeting sexism in the media with stage invasions of Miss World contests, subverting advertising campaigns with stickers and graffiti and challenging the hypocritical piety of the Catholic church led anti-abortion movement with counter-demonstrations, pickets and the imaginative use of condoms!

The legacy of this vibrant movement was a real improvement, principally in the imperialist west, in the lives of many women. But millions remained untouched or barely touched by these gains for the simple reason that the oppression of women was challenged but not overthrown.

And the reason it was not overthrown was that as the WLM developed it was obliged to come up with more than just activism. It was obliged to come up with explanations of what caused women's oppression and answers to how that oppression could be ended. Here the WLM failed.

The very growth in the use of the term "feminist", as opposed to "women's liberation" was an indication of that failure. The ideologies that grew out of the WLM were not ideologies of liberation. All of them failed to understand the roots of women's oppression within class society and the concomitant need to fight for women's liberation as part of the fight to overthrow modern class society, capitalism.

A powerful movement for liberation was turned into the all encompassing label, feminist, that can be sported by women at opposite ends of the class divide and by campaigns with diametrically opposed objectives.

The Women's Liberation Movement was built by courageous activists. But in its own way capitalism prepared the ground for their successes. By the 1960s technological advances, the impact of the welfare state, legal liberalisation and most importantly the economic boom which had massively increased the number of women in the workforce, all worked against the model of dotting and homebound mothers so typical of the 1950s.

Convenience foods and domestic appliances eased some of the drudgery of housework. New and improved health and social services meant that caring for sick or disabled family members was less of a burden on women.

The post war expansion of higher education, creating new job opportunities and increasing expectations, also had a big impact on women's lives. The most fundamental changes for women resulted from the growing numbers in paid work as a result of the bosses' clamour for cheap labour (in 1970 for every £1 in the average man's pay packet there was only 54.5 pence in the average woman's).

In Britain, the 1967 Abortion Act and the increased provision of improved methods of birth control were partly a response to the bosses' demand for cheap flexible women workers: unwanted pregnancy was no longer just a source of misery to individual women, it was an inconvenience for the bosses.

Employing women workers is an enormous advantage to the bosses, as long as their paid work could still be combined with their unpaid role in maintaining the other workers past, present and future within the family.

But the increase in the number of women workers, and their organisation in the unions, brought into sharp relief their oppression under capitalism. This, when combined with the growing willingness of women to fight, sparked rebellion. And the increase in the number of women students, especially those from working class backgrounds, meant that the rebellion was furnished with an articulate and confident voice.

It was in the USA that the Women's Liberation Movement originated, growing directly out of the protest movements. Women students involved in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) began to protest about their marginal role and low status in the organisation and the sexism of the civil rights movement. The response from male activists was ridicule, illustrated by Stokeley Carmichael's famous put down in 1964: "the only position for women in SNCC is prone."

Other attempts to combat the sexism of the various student and radical organisations also failed. At one conference in 1967, of the Students for a Democratic Society, women attempting to raise issues of women's oppression were pelted with tomatoes and driven from the stage. Disaffected women activists, fed up with being told there were more important things to discuss than women's liberation, began to organise their own groups.

Despite its origins in left politics, the comparatively weak labour movement in the US meant there was always a strong bourgeois component of the Women's Movement, with exponents of equal rights such as Betty Friedan setting up the National Organisation of Women (NOW) whose purpose was limited to lobbying the government and pressing for legal reforms, specifically the Equal Rights Amendment.

In Britain, where there was close to 50 per cent union membership compared to 28 per cent in the US, the Women's Liberation Movement that began to develop in 1968/69, influenced by the militant class struggle of the time and the examples of the new organisations for women's liberation in the States, initially had much stronger links with the labour movement.

The first strike for equal pay in Britain – by women sewing machinists who brought the production lines to a halt at Fords, Dagenham – was in 1968. This was an influential dispute and the first of several high profile strikes involving women workers fighting for equal pay and union recognition (Trico, Grunwicks, etc.), as well as in struggles against cuts in health and social services. In 1969 Barbara Castle's draft equal pay bill was introduced (although the law was not implemented until 1975).

But the British labour movement was for the most part male dominated and riddled with sexist assumptions. Women's work was seen as peripheral despite the reality of women's wages being crucial to the income of many working class families.

Pay differentials between male and female occupations were protected by the unions, often based on notions of "skill" – with women's work usually being classified as unskilled. This was the case for the Ford's machinists despite the fact that "when they went for the job the women had to pass a test on three machines. If they failed they weren't employed", as one account of the strike noted.

Yet women accounted for seventy per cent of the increase in union membership between 1964 and 1970, and in 1970 forty per cent of the Labour Party's membership were women. Blatant sidelining of issues relevant to women workers and the channelling of women's activism into party fund-raising could not last. On the left, many women activists also felt marginalised, relegated to licking envelopes and typing leaflets rather than writing articles or giving speeches.

As a result of the Ford's dispute a labour movement campaign for women's equal pay and equal rights was set up – the National Joint Action Committee for Women's Equal Rights – which organised a demonstration for equal pay in May 1969.

Primarily though, the women who started organising International Women's Day demos, actions such as the disruption of the Miss World event and the many "consciousness raising" groups were not organised workers but students, professional women and better paid white collar workers (teachers, social workers) and intellectuals.

DESPITE ITS links with the left and the organised working class this new movement was a petit bourgeois movement. That is, its politics were directed towards the achievement of equality within capitalism, its leadership favoured and created an all-class alliance of women and in its organisation it favoured autonomy (not in the sense of self organisation within the working class, but in the sense of political and organisational "separateness" from the working class movement, which became lumped together with all other male dominated movements and institutions).

These features of the movement opened the way to a profoundly wrong and ultimately reactionary ideology within the WLM – radical feminism:

"Women are an oppressed class . . . We are exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants and cheap labour . . . Our prescribed behaviour is enforced by threat of physical violence. Because we have lived so intimately with our oppressors, in isolation from each other, we have been kept from seeing our personal suffering as

led women

a political condition . . . We cannot rely on existing ideologies as they are all products of male supremacist culture . . . We identify with all women. We define our best interest as that of the poorest most brutally exploited woman. In fighting for our liberation we will always take the side of women against their oppressors. We will not ask what is 'revolutionary' or 'reformist', only what is good for women."

This early statement of radical feminism from the New York Redstockings "Manifesto of Women's Liberation" in 1969, contains the essential political ideas that came to dominate the WLM on both sides of the Atlantic.

In response "socialist feminists", such as Juliet Mitchell and Sheila Rowbotham, initially tried to link their understanding of Marxism to the new theories of women's oppression but proved unable to challenge the fundamental precepts of radical feminism. This was largely due to the left's failure to re-elaborate the revolutionary communist position on the oppression of women, developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and culminating in the serious attempts to achieve liberation for women by the Bolsheviks.

The unceremonious burial of this tradition by Stalinism, and centrist Trotskyism's woeful record on the woman question, left the socialist feminists ill equipped to deal with theories of radical feminism. Indeed, the apparent failure of socialism to advance a consistent strategy for women's liberation gave credence to the claims of the radical feminists that women had to wage the fight separately from men. And the socialist feminists accepted this deeply flawed idea. They capitulated on the central issues of the cross class nature of the women's movement and the notion that all men conspire to oppress all women and control them through the constant threat of violence.

Once they conceded these points to the radical feminists it was difficult to oppose their other conclusions: that women were a class in themselves; that no existing ideologies (including Marxism) can explain or offer a solution to women's oppression; that social class is of secondary concern to women and that distinctions of class and race among men do not seriously impact on their role as oppressors.

The early theorists of the WLM rooted women's oppression in their biological role as child bearers, separating completely their reproductive role from the social and economic conditions under which they carry it out. Thus reproduction was viewed as a form of exploitation distinct from any system of economic exploitation that existed alongside it. Shulamith Firestone wrote:

"So that just as to assure elimination of economic classes requires the revolt of the underclass (the proletariat) and, in a temporary dictatorship, their seizure of the means of production, so to assure the elimination of sexual classes requires the revolt of the underclass (women) and the seizure of control of reproduction."

Instead of recognising that capitalism uses women's unpaid domestic labour within the family to maintain and reproduce the workforce and that sexist ideology is used to justify this system of oppression, Firestone and others inverted Marxist theory to argue that the revolutionary overturn of capitalism could not do anything at all for the liberation of women.

Juliet Mitchell did try to modify such views by linking patriarchal theories of women's oppression with class politics.

Mitchell located the origins of women's oppression in class society but rejected "the idea that woman's condition can be deduced derivatively from the economy or equated symbolically with society. Rather, it must be seen as a specific structure, which is a unity of different elements . . . The key structures can be listed as follows: Production, Reproduction, Sex and Socialisation of Children."

As with the radical feminists this separate structure requires a separate revolution, which for Mitchell is tied in with the need for psychological change to undermine the sexist ideology she saw as universal to all societies.

Sheila Rowbotham argued for the centrality



Ford sewing machinists vote for action

The early theorists of the WLM rooted women's oppression in their biological role as child bearers, separating completely their reproductive role from the social and economic conditions under which they carry out this role.

of working class women in any movement aiming to end women's oppression because of their double burden of domestic labour in the home and exploitation in the workplace. But while acknowledging the attempts of the Bolsheviks to address the position of women in the early USSR she emphasises that structural changes alone will not remove "male hegemony":

"The struggle is not simply against the external mechanisms of domination and containment, but against those internal mechanisms. It is the struggle against the assumptions that men make and define the world, whether it be capitalist or socialist. Unless this is made explicit and conscious, revolutionary politics will remain for most women something removed and abstracted."

HAVING IDENTIFIED the Economism of most of the left in relation to women's oppression and asserted that what had been dismissed as "personal" circumstances were in fact "political" conditions of repression, the socialist feminists proceeded to reduce liberation to personal effort and personal politics – hence the emphasis they gave to "consciousness raising" as opposed to organising for change. This meant increasing suspicion towards working class methods of organisation, for example Rowbotham's statement that: "if you accept a high degree of centralisation and define yourselves as professionals concentrating above everything upon the central task of seizing power you necessarily diminish the self activity and self confidence of most of the people involved".

Attitudes such as this provided socialist feminists with an escape route from any real commitment to revolutionary politics because the struggle for the seizure of power was indefinitely postponed until new forms of organisation could be created that valued the individual and their personal concerns as much as the collective and its political goals.

For most of the 1970s the small groups and diverse politics of women's liberation in Britain did gel into a cohesive movement of sorts, in that there were publications (*Shrew*, *Spare Rib* etc.), conferences and a series of demands that held the movement together. But these demands themselves were the source of intense debate, especially as the decade wore on and eventually, internal differences could no longer be contained.

The second WLM conference in 1972 adopted the four demands of: "equal pay now, equal education and job opportunities, free contraception and abortion on demand, and free 24 hour nurseries" – very much reflecting the concerns of women workers organised in the labour movement. In 1975 demands for "financial and legal independence" and more controversially, "an end to all discrimination against lesbians and a woman's right to define her own sexuality" were added. In 1978, the final demand was included: "freedom from intimidation by threat or use of violence or sexual coercion, regardless of marital status; and an end to all laws, assumptions and institutions which perpetuate male dominance and men's aggression towards women."

Lindsey German of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has argued in her book *Sex, Class and Socialism* that "the increased emphasis on issues which women faced as individuals represented a shift away from a collective solution to women's oppression". Indeed this shift did occur but not because, as German wrongly implies, there could not be a collective response to such "individual" issues as homophobia and domestic violence. German and the SWP are guilty of Economism.

Their position is that the "real" issues to fight on are those of the workplace – wages and jobs. They fail to realise that all manifestations of oppression, including those outside of and separate from the workplace altogether, must be fought collectively by socialists. It is imperative that the labour movement takes up the fight against such symptoms of social oppression. Its failure to do so strengthened the tendencies within the WLM who were eager to lead it away from class struggle and class politics.

The logical extension of the growing separatism inside the WLM was the development of a biological determinist view that men are "nat-

urally" oppressors of women. Porn is the theory, rape is the practice, all men are irredeemably the enemy: such was the creed developed by the "revolutionary" feminists out of radical feminism.

The debate, summed up by the Leeds Revolutionary Feminists in their paper "Political Lesbianism: The Case Against Heterosexuality", published in 1979, over whether women who had sex with men were collaborators and agents of the oppressors, was the final straw that broke the formal organisation of the WLM ensuring that the bitter and acrimonious 1978 national conference was the last.

Feminist activity was increasingly split between those who opted for separatist and utopian solutions, and those who chose to turn to the labour movement but with openly reformist projects.

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the further development of theories of male violence and a concentration on pornography as the main threat to women. The "Reclaim the Night" demos, targeting sex shops, red light areas and porn cinemas, that were informed by this perspective, used militant tactics and were often attacked by the police, but were totally misdirected.

By condemning all pornography and demanding its legal censorship feminists – whose forebears had demonstrated against anti-sex bigots like Mary Whitehouse – now entered an alliance with the right wing pro-censorship lobby. In the US this even amounted to the joint feminist/moral right sponsorship of anti-porn local government legislation.

A reflection of this shift in the women's movement was the transformation of woman as fighter – the abiding and revolutionary legacy of the early WLM – with woman as either victim (of male violence, porn etc.) or as a sort of spiritual earth-mother and symbol of peace and harmony, counterposed to man, the aggressor. And, despite highlighting the destructive power of imperialism through their protests at the US nuclear base at Greenham Common, the feminists there portrayed the struggle as being against male violence – summed up in slogans like "take the toys [missiles] from the boys".

This really did mark the final transformation of the women's liberation movement into a diffuse feminist series of causes and fads. It marked a degeneration that, not surprisingly, also witnessed the dissolution of activism into the reformist politics of incorporation, either via the development of self help initiatives, such as Women's Aid refuges and Rape Crisis Centres, into a substantial voluntary sector providing employment for former activists, or via "municipal feminism".

Many feminists took their reformist politics into the Labour Party and the Trade Unions, becoming women's officers, setting up women's committees and units (such as the influential GLC Women's Committee) or they took up posts in government agencies such as the Equal Opportunities Commission. Lucrative careers in academia, teaching women's, gender and peace studies or in publishing proved too much of a temptation for other former activists.

The fragmentation and dissolution of the WLM was a result of its failure to transcend its petit bourgeois politics. Its competing ideologies – radical feminism's all out war on men and socialist feminism's compromised and unconvincing alternative of parallel struggles by the whole working class against capitalism and by all women against patriarchy – both contributed to the movement's downfall.

The absence of a revolutionary party capable of demonstrating in theory and practice the interconnected character of the struggle for socialism and women's liberation, of building a working class women's movement (the potential of which was briefly shown in 1984/85 in the inspiring women's support movement for the miners' strike of that year) meant that many of the best activists and fighters were lost to the struggle.

But that is not the end of the matter. The task now for socialists is to win a new generation of women to the real politics of women's liberation, the politics of revolutionary Marxism. And to do that successfully we must take on and defeat the new feminist theories that are springing up.

From insurrection to introspection

A RECENTLY PUBLISHED anthology destined for reading lists on gender studies courses neatly sums up the state of current feminist debates: "The early feminist stress on the sociological and material is not represented here. This is not simple oversight, it is indicative of the field . . . Feminist theoretical endeavour has increasingly challenged the dominance of materialist theoretical perspectives, focusing in their place on processes of symbolisation and representation." (Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, editors, *Feminisms*, Oxford Readers, 1997, p7)

The content of the book, and other similar collections of recent feminist material, reveals how utterly passive major strands of feminism have become, and how distant modern feminism is from the liberatory struggles of the early days of the second wave women's movement. That was a real movement and the participants sought emancipation.

Thirty years on the movement has evaporated and the theorists have sunk deep roots into academia, producing arguments that justify passivity and leave millions of oppressed and exploited women to rot.

The same reader spells this out, unashamedly, when the editors write:

"It is significant that the focus of such questioning (of the sections of the book) is not primarily the central question of early second wave feminism - 'what is to be done?' but rather the more reflexive, 'what is the basis of my claim to knowledge', and 'who is the 'I' that makes such a claim?'"

A clear shift from insurrection to introspection, as they themselves suggest.

Faced with this advert for current debates, it is tempting to close the books, say farewell to feminism and move onto other issues. But whether we like it or not, feminist academics have enormous influence on young women and men through the women's studies, gender and sexuality courses and modules that have mushroomed in the colleges.

In the future, new militants looking for explanations of oppression will come across these theories. We have to answer the arguments and put forward an alternative theory and programme to meet the needs of the next generation of militant women and men seeking liberation.

The past thirty years have produced an explosion of theoretical and academic material on women's oppression. It is not possible to fully deal with even the major theories here, but instead to look at the broad developments and see why they emerged.

The women's liberation movement faced divisions as soon as it began in Britain and the USA in the late 1960s and early 1970s (see previous article). But the various competing theories shared some key features: all women are oppressed and share common and fundamental interests; women are oppressed through a system of patriarchy that is the equivalent to the capitalist system oppressing workers. Many included the view that oppression was sustained by the power of men, exercised through violence, sexual relationships and abuse, and the institutions of the family and the state.

The movement was soon challenged by women who felt excluded. Black women, lesbians and working class women argued that their voices were not heard and their interests not addressed. This had a major impact on the movement and the theory. Black and working class women whose daily lives and struggles were carried out in solidarity with men argued against theories that led to separatism.

Poor women rejected the idea that middle class women not only shared their oppression but could speak on their behalf in a unified movement. The rebellion against the dominance of



Julia Kristeva: "Strictly speaking, 'women' cannot be said to exist", Brazilian women workers beg to differ

white, educated women in the movement was not just a challenge to the focus or orientation of the movement. It pierced the heart of most early second wave feminist theories by revealing that all women do not share a common interest.

This has led to a crucial debate at the level of philosophy, epistemology and politics. If women do not all share the same political problems and interests, what, if anything, do they have in common? The question soon becomes what is a woman?

"For many contemporary feminist theorists, the concept of woman is a problem," wrote Linda Alcoff. Because all feminist theory is based on the category of woman, it is a problem if you cannot agree on what it means:

"In attempting to speak for women, feminism often seems to presuppose that it knows what women truly are, but such an assumption is foolhardy given that every source of knowledge about women has been contaminated with misogyny and sexism." (Alcoff)

This apparently abstract argument has become a key debate. Essentialists argue that there is such a thing as "woman", but argue that feminists must be the ones who determine what it means. This underpins a broadly defined group of "cultural feminists" who have tried to reclaim the identity of woman and celebrate the essence of woman that is different from man.

For example, women in the peace movements argued that men are inherently violent, women nurturing and peaceful. Some deal with the divisions between women through looking at various identities or standpoints - those of black women, or third world women, for example, who define their own essence.

Mary Daly is one of the main proponents of cultural feminism. She regards sex not only as an essence, but the essence of people. All other differences between women, based on ethnicity, class etc., are seen as inessential, and not real. For Daly, sexism is based on male hatred for women arising from their own inability to bear children and the consequent need to "parasitise" and "control" women's fertility.

Adrienne Rich has a similar position: "The ancient, continuing envy, awe and dread of the male for the female capacity to create life has repeatedly taken the form of hatred for every other female aspect of creativity."

The solution is to rediscover and give new value to the female essence:

"The repossession by women of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human

society than the seizing of the means of production by workers. In such a human world women will truly create new life, bring forth not only children (if and when we chose) but the visions, and the thinking, necessary to sustain, console and alter human existence - a new relationship with the universe". (Rich)

Cultural feminism locates oppression at the level of ideology and individual psychology, taking action in the sphere of education, representation, pornography and sometimes on reproductive rights. They seek cultural change and much of their writing is on the media, film, literature and art. Once again feminists neglect the interests of the most oppressed women.

ON THE other side of the argument are "anti-essentialists" who argue against the idea that woman is a common identity. Rejecting materialist explanations of oppression in favour of the notion of social construction through discourse.

- Simone de Beauvoir: "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one"
- Julia Kristeva: "Strictly speaking, 'women' cannot be said to exist"
- Luce Irigaray: "Woman does not have a sex"

Judith Butler argues that if you are a woman, you are not only a woman. The term is not sufficient, "because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained." (in *Feminisms* 1997, p278)

The idea that woman is a social construct that must be deconstructed pervades much feminist writing of the 1990s. But it is deeply problematic for feminists. Based on post-structuralist and post-modern ideology it is clearly a rejection of materialism and therefore of an understanding of women's oppression as being rooted in actual social relations and power rather than in ideas and discourse.

It also leads to a negation of the fundamental basis of feminism itself, which assumes a universal oppression shared by women across, divisions of class and race for example.

Theories of patriarchy are based on there being some common essence of woman to underpin common mechanisms of oppression. These have

been criticised for failing to take into account the varied experience of women in different cultures and have been accused of a kind of feminist imperialism for imposing one model on the rest of the world.

In rejecting any common patriarchal system, and any commonality of woman, the "feminists" are left struggling to find a reason for existing. If there is no essence, how can you talk of a common oppression? If there is no common oppression what is the point of a women's movement, and who would be part of it?

There are many attempts to deal with this obvious limitation. Butler, whose writings have been remarkably influential given their opaque form and ultimately pointless content suggests:

"If a stable notion of gender no longer proves to be the foundational premise of feminist politics, perhaps a new sort of feminist politics is now desirable to contest the very reifications of gender and identity, one that will take the variable construction of identity as both a methodological and normative prerequisite, if not a political goal."

What she seems to be trying to say is that feminism should struggle for multiple and variable identities to replace the single category woman (which doesn't mean anything). If you are a young, white lesbian working class woman today, you maybe something different tomorrow. This is not only the process, but the goal of feminism. "Variable construction of identity" is an attempt to resist categorisation which is seen as restrictive and male.

This example of post-modern "feminism" shows how far it has moved from the emancipatory aspirations of the early 1970s. Oppression is not considered to be based on common material conditions, such as the limitations on women imposed by domestic labour, the lower pay and worse conditions of women workers, the restriction of access to abortion and contraception. Indeed material conditions, like the category woman, do not exist outside of the way they are perceived and "socially constructed".

These feminists are true subjective idealists. Any residual urge they have to explain "oppression", and thereby justify feminism as a movement rather than one form of academic naval gazing, is satisfied by the struggle around identities and the refusal to be categorised. Their point here is not to change the world, but to interpret it.

The vast majority of women in the world are in a daily struggle against poverty, repression, ill health and lack of rights. Each woman could claim a separate identity that incorporated her gender, class, ethnicity, religion, age . . . but would that really get her anywhere?

To describe the world as a collection of distinct and changing identities is individualism at its worst. It may feel "liberating" for a middle class feminist in a university to proclaim her identity and refuse to be categorised. But it does nothing to challenge the real roots of oppression. In the debate over essentialism, Marxists side squarely with the essentialists. While we accept that the categories are to varying degrees socially constructed, understanding and interpreting the world can only be done by discovering the essence of real things and of social relations.

Most feminists have rejected that for idealism, either post-modernist or cultural, and some, Marxist or materialist feminists, have tried to retain historical materialism but graft on their own explanation of the fundamental importance of women's rather than, or as well as, class oppression. We defend the primacy of class and have used that to explain all oppressions and their interrelationship. Unlike the feminists we use our theory to interpret the world and then change it.

Paul Morris takes a look at the life of George Orwell

Rebel without a theory

IN 1927, after five years service, an English officer resigned from the Indian police. A few years later the former policeman, one George Orwell, described his motivation: "I had reduced everything to the simple theory that the oppressed are always right and the oppressors always wrong: a mistaken theory but the natural result of being one of the oppressors yourself. I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against the tyrants"

Orwell had made a radical break with the British ruling class. But by the time he died in January 1950 he had become a Cold War icon: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the earlier *Animal Farm* were shoved at teenagers by enthusiastic teachers to school them in the horrors of communism. Orwell busied himself in his final years informing on "crypto-communists" to the British secret service.

George Orwell was born Eric Blair in India in 1903 and brought up in Britain as a typical member of what he called the lower-upper middle class. Even before leaving the police he had decided to become a writer.

Between 1931 and 1935 Orwell gradually fulfilled his ambition to become part of the literary world. From 1927 until the early 1930s he described himself as a "Tory anarchist". And during this tumultuous period, marked by the rise of fascism and the triumph of Stalin in the USSR, he began to be drawn towards working class socialism.

In January 1936 Orwell was commissioned to go to the depressed areas of northern England and write about miners and the unemployed. On arriving in Wigan Orwell was introduced to a network of Communist Party activists. He spent his days with the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. He went down a mine and returned shell shocked. He travelled to Liverpool to see dockers fighting over a day's casual work and the losers trooping off to the dole, where as "casuals", they had to sign on twice a day. The experience had a profoundly radicalising effect on him.

As a result of these experiences Orwell wrote *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Whereas we can take or leave Orwell's books prior to this, *The Road to Wigan Pier* still has the power to inspire and instil us with anger. It provides a composite picture of the working class struggle: of the miners, the dockers, the unemployed, the women, the casualties and the communist agitators.

Orwell began to discover the real intelligence and ingenuity of the organised workers, nurtured within the most degrading conditions and embodied in a conscious vanguard of socialist and communist workers.

However, Orwell had no real contact with the labour movement, no understanding of trade unions or the bureaucracy. He had very little grasp of socialism as a theory and no interest in economics. But he could see socialism would come from below and that the existing parties were not adequate.

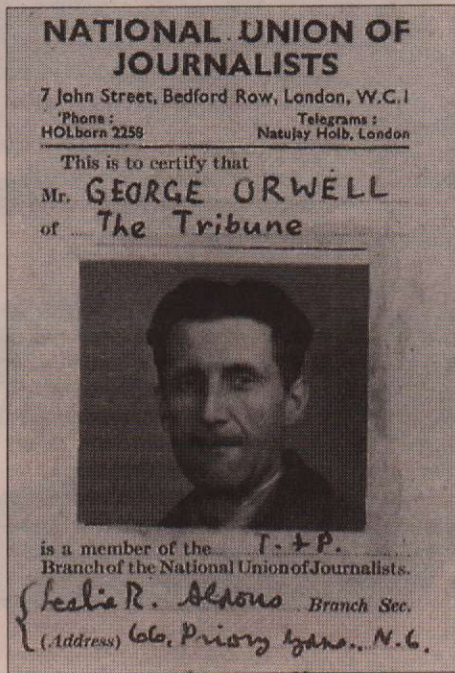
In July 1936 the Spanish generals overthrew the Popular Front government and were met by a workers' uprising. The Spanish Civil War had begun, and Orwell, by December 1936 was on his way to join it.

By the time Orwell got to Barcelona the capital of Catalonia was the centre of working class organisation in Spain. The class dynamics of Spanish Civil War were already unfolding.

The Popular Front government was led by Stalinists and reformists. The government also included a large anarcho-syndicalist movement, the CNT and what Trotsky called the "shadow of the bourgeoisie" – a dwindling band of ministers drawn from "democratic" capitalist parties.

Stalinism had turned towards the Popular Front strategy in 1934. This meant an alliance with the "democratic" bourgeoisie against fascism at the price of abstaining from – and in fact ruthlessly suppressing – any attempt to go beyond "democracy" to socialism.

Until December 1936 the government of Cat-



"If you had to choose between Russia and America who would you choose... In spite of the fashionable chatter of the moment everyone knows in his heart that we should choose America."
– George Orwell

alonia also included the Workers' Party of Marxist Unity, the POUM: its leaders had been part of Fourth International but, like the centrist Independent Labour Party (ILP) in Britain, had resisted revolutionary unity with the Trotskyists. By December 1936 though, the POUM had been expelled from government by Stalinists on the grounds that it wanted to go beyond the democratic stage. On 16 December *Pravda* in Moscow wrote:

"In Catalonia the elimination of the Trotskyists and the Anarcho syndicalists has begun. It will be carried out with the same energy as it was in the Soviet Union."

Orwell arrived in January 1937 and immediately joined the POUM militia. He fought on the Aragon front but initially "kept out of politics". Nevertheless the experience of life in revolutionary Barcelona pushed him towards revolutionary conclusions. He wrote:

"One had been in a community where hope was more normal than apathy or cynicism, where the word 'comrade' stood for comradeship and not, as in most countries, humbug... In that community where no one was on the make, where there was a shortage of everything but no privilege and no boot-licking, one got, perhaps a crude forecast of what the opening stages of Socialism might be like. And after all, instead of disillusioning me it deeply attracted me. The effect was to make my desire to see socialism established much more actual than it had been before."

By coincidence, Orwell was in Barcelona when the fighting broke out between the Stalinists and the POUM, after the POUM was banned. CNT and POUM workers put up barricades and the militias fought hand to hand. But within a week the revolutionary situation was over and Stalinism had won a bloody triumph. Orwell returned to the front and was wounded. When he returned to Britain he wrote probably his greatest book, *Homage to Catalonia*.

His experience in Barcelona led him to draw revolutionary conclusions. He not only participated in the May uprising, he also defended it in British press against Stalinists who said it was a fascist uprising.

Branded a Trotskyist by the CP's *Daily Worker*, blacklisted by the *New Statesman*, Orwell started to collaborate actively with the ILP, becoming an organised supporter in 1937 and a member in 1938.

The rightward-moving centrism of the ILP was summed up in his own joining statement: he was a revolutionary socialist without a revolutionary programme; an anti-Stalinist who did not defend Russia against the West; prone to make alliances with pacifism in the name of opposing imperialist war; chronically British centred; and in total opposition to what he called the "pea and thimble trick" of Marxist theory.

Despite being accused of Trotskyism he always equated Lenin and Trotsky with Stalin. He wrote in 1938:

"Trotsky in exile denounces the Russian dictatorship, but he is probably as much responsible for it as any man now living."

Together with a whole section of left intellectuals in the late 1930s, Orwell was beginning to develop a version of the theory of bureaucratic collectivism. This held that the failure of the working class to overthrow capitalism, alongside the collapse of capitalism itself, was bringing to power a new middle class of technocrats, managers and bureaucrats. Whether it be through fascism in Germany or workers' revolution in Russia the outcome was still the same: totalitarian dictatorship.

In the USA in the late 1930s a section of Trotskyist movement, led by James Burnham and Max Schachtman, also supported a theory of bureaucratic collectivism. Though he read Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* Orwell seems to have been influenced more by the liberal intellectual Franz Borkenauer, but his political trajectory was the same: towards a refusal to defend the USSR as a workers' state and seeing "democratic" imperialism (Britain and the USA) as more progressive than any Stalinist country.

However Orwell's embrace of bureaucratic

collectivist theory was only one ideological influence gnawing at his socialism in the late 1930s: the second was English nationalism.

As the outbreak of war loomed Orwell had been preparing, together with ILP comrades and anarchists, for underground anti-war work. As he wrote in his diary:

"The night before the Russo-German pact was announced I dreamed that the war had started. It was one of those dreams which, whatever Freudian inner meaning they may have, do sometimes reveal to you the real state of your feelings. It taught me two things: first, that I should be simply relieved when the long-dreaded war started, secondly, that I was patriotic at heart, would not sabotage or act against my own side, would support the war, would fight in it if possible".

HE TRIED to join the army but was refused on medical grounds. He was turned down for a job at the BBC because of his socialist background. He joined the Local Defence Volunteers (the Home Guard), and conducted a propaganda campaign to "Arm the People". During the Blitz of 1940-41 Orwell's diaries chronicle the real depths of working class defeatism and discontent – a history hidden from us by countless patriotic war films.

With Hitler's invasion of the USSR and Stalin's alliance with the USA and Britain things changed dramatically. The British establishment rushed to put on its left face. Suddenly Orwell was "in" – in the Indian propaganda section of the BBC to be specific, where he laboured, so he told his friends, to "keep our propaganda more decent than theirs".

Orwell emerged from the second world war a left reformist, firmly ensconced within Nye Bevan's circle around *Tribune*, which he wrote a regular personal column for. Here he produced some of his best journalism. It was during this time that he wrote "Politics and the English Language", a must for anyone who wants to write socialist journalism.

Paradoxically his most famous novel, *Animal Farm*, a brilliant parody of Stalinist Russia, was virtually suppressed when it appeared in 1944: Russia was still an ally. But by 1948 *Animal Farm* was being relentlessly translated and published by the CIA and Orwell had turned to the bleak task of writing his account of revolt and betrayal in Britain's totalitarian future, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is, in fact, also a brilliant parody on Britain in 1948. It is not just an attack on Russia but a description of how Britain would be if the managerial classes ever seized power from the capitalists. But despite the fact that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is also an attack on the superpower system, Orwell could still write: "If you had to choose between Russia and America who would you choose? . . . In spite of the fashionable chatter of the moment everyone knows in his heart that we should choose America."

Orwell went from being an anti-imperialist to a left centrist without ever becoming a Marxist. Subsequently he became a reformist and an overt pro-imperialist.

He never had a theory: his socialism was a series of intuitive positions drawn from comparing the world as it is with the world as it should be. He was a critic of capitalism, but never understood – in the sense of theory – capitalism, socialism or the working class.

The one "theory" to which he consciously subscribed was the garbled and confused 1940s doctrine of bureaucratic collectivism – which was a retreat from Marxism by former revolutionaries.

It has been remarked that the theme of nearly all Orwell's novels is an individual trapped within an intolerable situation created by capitalism, or imperialism or totalitarianism, who rebels but fails to break free and is ultimately reincorporated into the system. Ultimately, that was also the story of his life: he escaped from the English ruling class but the system got him in the end. ■

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 world-wide. 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!

Kosovan refugees are welcome here



Victims of the Serbian army's brutal crackdown

THEY WANDER the streets in groups of nine or ten: shell shocked young men fleeing genocide and war in Kosovo, clutching food parcels.

The scene is Croydon. It could be Margate, Liverpool or Brent. These refugees carry the tell-tale shopping bags that mark them out as banned from claiming benefits: their local social services have to pay them "in kind", not in cash. If they could read English, they would see the headline "London swamped by refugee crime wave" plastered across the *Evening Standard's* billboards.

The Serbian army's crackdown in Kosovo has driven 300,000 people from their homes and backed the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army into its last remaining mountain stronghold. Day after day the Serb army is carrying out ethnic cleansing on the familiar pattern of its war with Croatia and Bosnia. The untrained and poorly armed KLA has little or no chance.

The population of Kosovo is 90 per cent ethnic Albanian and since 1988 has been made prisoner in its own country by the occupying Serb nationalist forces. For decades the population carried out passive resistance. It saw its schools and universities closed and its workers excluded from the core economy.

By last year it had had enough. Tens of thousands took to the streets to be met with bloody repression. Thousands then rallied to the guerrilla army of the KLA which, until Serbia launched its summer offensive in August, had made up to one third of Kosovo's territory a no-go area for the genocidal Serb forces.

The world tuned a blind eye, preoccupied with Clinton's sex life and Boris Yeltsin's bad debts. But now NATO is cranking up the military rhetoric in an attempt to bring Serbian president Milosevic to negotiate with the "moderate" Kosovo nationalist leaders. NATO is threatening air strikes not out of any sympathy with the refugees, the

imprisoned guerrillas and their families but because the whole conflict is threatening to spill over and destabilise the region.

Kosovo is just one ethnic Albanian enclave. Macedonia, the Balkans' most fragile state, holds a large Albanian minority and the ethnic conflict is threatening to blow it up. Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey and Albania have their armies on alert to enter the fray if Macedonia explodes.

Since the Kosovo conflict began Workers Power has called for victory to and solidarity with the Kosovo Albanians fighting for independence from Serbia. It is for the population of Kosovo alone to decide whether this means fusion with Albania. What is certain is that the majority has decided it wants rid of Serb rule, and that the Serbian government is determined to smash the KLA before it enters UN peace talks: talks to decide yet another plan to recognise the results of ethnic cleansing.

If and when NATO goes into action its air and missile strikes will not be to kick the Serbs out of Kosovo but to make them more pliable in their negotiations with the west. They could be used to save the UN's humanitarian face, or because Clinton is facing a new crisis in the White House.

It will, as with NATO intervention in Bosnia, play no progressive role for the Kosovo Albanians: from Madeleine Albright to Robin Cook, the imperialist politicians have made it clear that self-determination is off the agenda for Kosovo. This is why we say that imperialism—in the form of both NATO and the UN—should get out of the Balkans altogether.

As for the refugees, even Jack Straw's draconian Asylum rules cannot deny they risk death if they return. They will be herded into the decaying B&Bs of coastal Britain, exploited by their landlords, vilified by the press, spat on and attacked by local racists, and shunted back and forth by social services departments, but they will count themselves lucky to be alive.

The workers' movement cannot ignore the plight of Kosovo any longer. Its refugees are on our doorstep; British planes and ships are being prepared to bomb Serb conscripts until a deal is done.

What we think:

- The refugees are welcome here. We call on Labour councils to defy the bans on state benefits. Refugees need rights not hand outs. We demand the Labour government immediately release the funds to house them.
- British troops should get out of the Balkans. They can do no good: they can only impose a pro-imperialist peace that will leave Kosovo under Serbian occupation and the thousands of refugees homeless and stateless for years to come.
- All those who claim to support democratic rights should support the right of Kosovo to self-determination and organise solidarity and aid to the KLA's struggle for freedom.

FEEDBACK ■ Contact us on 0181 981 0602

WORKERS POWER PUBLIC MEETINGS

South London

BUILD A FIGHTBACK IN THE UNIONS

Speakers from Workers Power and Equalize!

Date: 20 October, Time: 8.00pm

Venue: Bread and Roses Public House, Clapham Manor Street (Nearest tube, Clapham Common)

Sheffield

MARXISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Date: Tuesday 6 October, Time: 7.30pm

Venue: Riverside pub, Mowbray Street

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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