

SIGNALS MUSTN'T

FIGHT ALONE

Form support groups with strikers

The ten-week signals' strike is at a critical stage.

Are 4,000 signal workers to be left alone in their fight against the Tory government?

London's underground workers are due this week to consider action on their own pay claim. Anger is mounting among tube workers at the imposition of a 2 per cent pay deal after the breakdown of negotiations.

■ The main rail union, RMT, has rejected the offer as 'derisory' and is demanding a 'substantial' increase.

■ The train drivers' union, ASLEF, has also rejected the offer. ASLEF wants an increase amounting to more than twice that offered by London Underground bosses.

Every effort must be made to mobilise underground workers for a strike alongside the signal workers. The Tories' 'divide and rule' strategy must be broken.

Everyone who depends on public transport must come together with rail and tube workers to defeat the government.

This is the issue facing the whole of the working class.

The Tories are determined to crush the signal workers. It is estimated that the strike has lost big business over £500 million. Every strike day means £6 million in lost revenue to British Rail.

For the employers and the government, cash is not the main question. They want to break the RMT in the same way they set out to crush the National Union of Mineworkers.

It was the government that blocked Railtrack's original offer of 5.7 per cent which would have settled the dispute.

Make no mistake. If the Tories win this struggle, the floodgates will open for more attacks against public sector workers and the services on which millions depend: transport, health, and social services.

Hit

Even in the last few days the government has hit out at disabled workers and elderly long-term patients in hospitals (see pages 2 and 3).

The signals' strike remains rock-solid. Despite threats and bribes, despite a huge press advertising campaign by Rail-track management, hardly a signal worker in the country has crossed a picket line.

Last week's strike wiped out train services throughout Bri-

tain, and in the face of great pressure put on lower management grades to operate signal boxes well under a third of scheduled services ran.

The travelling public remains solidly behind the signal workers. The latest opinion poll shows support running three to one in favour of the strikers. A majority of people believe that the government should come up with more cash to settle the dispute.

The government takes on the signal workers from a position of great weakness. Its poll ratings are the lowest in living memory. It has lost the support of many middle-class people who oppose the break-up of welfare services, the destruction of the transport system and the run-down of the NHS.

Pretends

What keeps the government in office?

The new Labour Party leader, Tony Blair, issues not a single word in support of the strikers. Like Tory ministers he pretends the strike is an 'industrial-relations' matter between the employers and the unions.

The trade union leaders hide behind the anti-union laws to avoid coming to the aid of the signal workers.

RMT leader Jimmy Knapp has called for the formation of support committees alongside the signal workers. His call must be answered immediately.

Set up committees to bring all public service workers and users together in defence of the signal workers and the underground workers!

Unite the whole working-class movement against the Tory government!

BY GEOFF PILLING



A lobby was held outside the Russian embassy in London on 28 July protesting about the treatment of trades unionists in Kazakhstan. The lobby was called in protest at the sacking of striking Kazakh miners and the declaration by the Kazakhstan courts that the strike was illegal. The protest was supported by bodies including Camden trades council, Aberdeen trades council, Tower Hamlets trades council, Bexley trades council, Croydon trades council, Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures, Transport and General Workers' Union 1/312 (Stamford Hill bus garage) branch, and the Camden Salford (Mental Health) branches of public service union UNISON.

Convoy reaches Tuzla — via Croat police cells

EIGHT Workers Aid for Bosnia lorries — carrying food and clothing collected in Britain, France and Spain — arrived in Tuzla last weekend after a gruelling trip, including an unscheduled overnight stop for six of the convoy team in dungeon-like Croat HVO 'police' cells.

Among those seized by the HVO militia near Mostar was Workers Press editor Mike Cooke, secretary of London area Workers Aid for Bosnia.

Mike was leading a delegation that went to negotiate with officials of the Croat so-called 'Herzeg-Bosna' government

who were blocking Workers Aid on its journey to Tuzla. Mike's trade union, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), was among working-class organisations which sent messages demanding that the convoy be allowed to continue on its mission.

It was after the six Workers Aid volunteers, who were on their way back to join the main convoy waiting outside Split, had seen Spanish United Nations officers that they were grabbed at an HVO checkpoint and bundled into the back of an army lorry.

After being driven around at high speed over bumpy roads for some time, they were then thrown into two basement cells with wet floors — all except one Macedonian comrade, who spoke Serbo-Croat and was held outside in the corridor and interrogated.

The Workers Aid volunteers were held for 18 hours at the HVO 'police' station, with neither food nor places to sleep.

It was only after Workers Aid for Bosnia had alerted friends in the labour movement that the comrades' whereabouts were traced. Suddenly the HVO

captors announced they could go — with no charges, nor apology.

On Sunday 14 August, the eight Workers Aid lorries reached their destination in Tuzla — the headquarters of the Kreka miners union.

Working people in Tuzla — Muslim, Croat and Serb — remain united, determined to resist the carve-up of their country. Workers Aid for Bosnia says its supporters are more determined than ever, after their experience, to step up campaigning for solidarity with the working people of Bosnia.

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Cynicism that knows no bounds

MICHAEL PORTILLO, recently arrived employment secretary in the Tory government, has scrapped an arrangement that gives special treatment to firms employing disabled people when they submit tenders for government work.

This will be another blow against disabled people who already face widespread discrimination when seeking jobs. Firms like Remploy, which employs 8,736 people in its 95 factories, will now be in an impossible situation. Hardest hit will be the company's 26 textile factories, where two-thirds of the business comes from the Ministry of Defence.

This is the second recent blow against disabled people: former minister for social security and disabled people Nicholas Scott was responsible for blocking a bill that would have stopped unfair discrimination against them.

Portillo has made his move on the grounds that, according to him, European Union law now makes such measures unlawful. This is vehemently denied by EU officials in Brussels.

Portillo's hypocrisy is compounded by the fact that he has built his political reputation as the darling of the Tory right on the basis of his jingoistic anti-European stance. Yet when it suits the purposes of his political masters, the ruling class, he is only too willing to hide behind EU laws to hit out at already disadvantaged people.

* * * * *

THE British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP) rightly condemned Portillo's move.

Jane Campbell, chair of BCODP, said: 'I am absolutely amazed at the hypocrisy of Mr Portillo's statement. On the one hand, he is saying we must uphold the letter of the law, even if that makes the employment prospects of disabled people more difficult and, on the other hand, we have a government that has not enforced the law that says every company must employ three per cent registered disabled people in its workforce.'

Campbell was referring to the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act, which has this requirement for organisations employing more than 20 workers. Although failure to comply is a criminal offence, there have been only ten prosecutions under the act, the last one in 1975.

Colin Christopher, national secretary of the Construction, Furniture, Timber and Allied section of the GMB, said:

'Here we have a group of already disadvantaged workers, who have been able to retain a degree of pride and dignity by being allowed to do a job of work.'

* * * * *

THESE are fine words and there is clearly widespread anger at this latest shabby act from Portillo. But the plain fact is that the trade union and Labour leaders have failed to organise any fight against these and similar attacks.

It is the responsibility and duty of the working class to help all the most disadvantaged of its members, including the disabled, the sick, the elderly and the unemployed, to fight the cruel attacks of the Tory government. The case of the disabled must be taken up throughout the trade union and labour movement.

As part of this fight, the leaders of the Labour Party must be made to pledge that the rights of the disabled threatened by Portillo will be immediately restored once they assume office.

If Portillo gets away with this nasty move he will turn his guns on others. Indeed, it is now rumoured that Portillo's next target will be those seeking compensation at industrial tribunals for unfair sacking.

The aim of the review will be to give the bosses virtually unchallenged rights to get rid of anybody they want.

Letters

Conference's one-sided call

THE call by the Workers International for an international conference on 'The Future of Marxism' is to be welcomed by all Marxists and interested parties. It will delineate itself from all others, because we have a dialectical conception of the epoch, as also the epoch of capitalist decay.

My only (considerable) worry is that the conference is too one-sided in its present perspectives. It is weighted too far on the side of the sciences and sociology, and not enough towards contemporary trends in philosophy, cultural and aesthetic questions.

Not so long ago when the word 'postmodernism' was mentioned at Workers Revolutionary Party meetings it brought forth dismissive calls in some quarters, who regard these questions as an elitist irrelevance, of no concern to the

working class.

This is not the case. Post-structuralism is the theoretical basis of postmodernism. It is characterised by scepticism, even nihilism, and eclecticism. This is a central feature of the whole of the bourgeois order. But poststructuralism also represents an attack on philosophy itself.

Can I urge that the conference and its post-conference project — to establish a new theoretical journal for Marxists — extends its brief to cover these areas. We should also make every effort to involve distinguished cultural and literary critics such as Malcolm Bradbury, Terry Eagleton and Peter Dews to participate.

Otherwise we shall limit the enormous potential of this conference to reorganise intellectual currents. This task is equally important and also linked to the reorganisation of the working class. I would welcome any critical response.

Rex Dunn
London N4

Socialism in Scotland?

I AM indebted to Terry Brothstone for locating the source of Engels's support for a Scottish parliament ('A breath of fresh air', Workers Press, 30 July). But I want to ask Terry what he means by the Scottish road to socialism being automatically 'utopian'?

Any dreams of socialism anywhere in the world at the moment are 'utopian'; and I don't see why the perspective of socialism in, say, the Britain of the 21st century is any less utopian than socialism in Scotland.

To challenge the parochialism of Stalinism and social democracy we surely need, in the words of the English socialist William Morris, 'brilliant pictures of the future, nor think ourselves impractical and utopian for telling the bare truth, that in destroying monopoly, we shall destroy our present civilisation'.

Besides, I cannot understand the basis of Terry Brothstone's objection to those socialists in Scotland who are struggling for socialism in that corner of the world as a pre-condition for world socialism.

How can that vision be controversial unless Terry is a chauvinist for a greater England! Certainly, the militant trades unionists who I know in Falkirk would not respond to calls for a world revolution everywhere at exactly the same moment.

It is extremely difficult to study and write about the 'international working class'.

This is relevant to the inescapable historical fact that one needs to study the actuality and causes of ethnic conflict in particular working classes instead of pretending that they don't exist — if the international column of Labour is going, in the phrase of Michael Harrington, 'to begin moving once again'.

James D. Young
Falkirk

Ousted Bernie MP finds fans in the Ku Klux Klan

BY CARL PETERSON

IT WAS as predictable as it was embarrassing. Black Labour MP Bernie Grant, who alienated and angered many black people last autumn by backing voluntary 'repatriation' to Africa or the Caribbean as an answer to their problems, has found an appreciative audience — in the white racist Ku Klux Klan.

The US racists' neo-Nazi terror offshoot, White Aryan Resistance, is running a phone-line on which callers are treated to a recording of the Tottenham MP telling Radio 1's Emma Freud that repatriation is 'an option that should be developed'.

Although Grant denies in the interview that such views play into the hands of fascists and racists, White Aryan Resistance follows up with a string of racist 'jokes' about Jews and black people (the 'Guardian', 10 August).

Sadder still for Grant, long the butt of savage right-wing press attacks as 'Barney Bernie' when he led Haringey council in north London, he is trying to fight a hopeless rearguard action now against strong black opposition.

The parliamentary black caucus he boasted of founding has come apart. At an anti-racist rally after his 'repatriation' speech was publicised Grant was jeered and heckled. 'There are some black people who avoid me like the plague,' he admitted in a BBC interview broadcast recently.

'He is a maverick who has made a political blunder,' says Ealing Southall (west London) Labour MP Piara Khabra. 'Instead of retracting what he said and accepting that he made a mistake, he has continued to stick to his guns.'

For some older West Indians the idea of retiring to a little place 'back home' may have its appeal. For younger people, born in Britain, ideas like 'back to Africa' may help with a cultural identity, but they are no answer to today's real problems, and they can give a dangerous weapon to the enemy.

Grant's arguments are 'negative and facile', says fellow-Guyanese Basil Bollers, a former housing association director who has replaced him as chair of the Standing Conference on Racial Equality in Europe (SCORE).

'He says that we don't have a future in Europe and that a huge

proportion wants to go back to the Caribbean or Africa,' said Bollers. 'We've been in Europe for 150 years. Most black people in Britain were born here.'

'Not only is he totally out of touch, he gives credence to the far right. His days as the representative for black people in Britain are over.'

Before SCORE's annual general meeting last month Grant tried to cancel it, claiming there were unspecified 'irregularities'. On 11 July he went to the office in Brixton and ordered staff to send out his letter cancelling the meeting, and otherwise to communicate with nobody but him. Opponents have alleged that the MP attempted to intimidate staff with threats.

SCORE national secretary Mike Rahman said: 'For a chair of a national organisation to instruct staff not to communicate with its national secretary and other members of the executive, who are democratically elected representatives, is in my view a clear indication of the action of a dictator.'

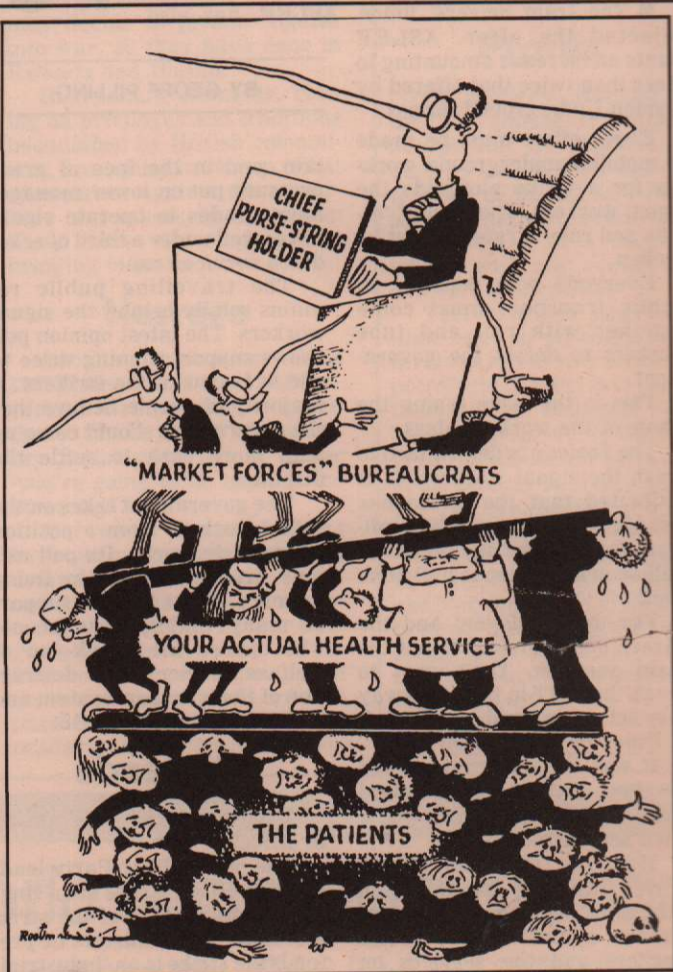
Elected

The date, time and place of the AGM had been decided by previous executive meetings, and minuted, Rahman pointed out, and it was his job to organise it. On 16 July the AGM went ahead, as planned, at Lambeth town hall. Basil Bollers was elected as chair.

In his statement, calling for 'a Europe which is capable of responding to the needs of Black migrants and minorities, by accepting their civil and human rights to play a fuller part in its social economic and political life,' Bollers declared bluntly: 'Bernie Grant cannot provide the leadership for such a task. He hasn't the vision to see that repatriation is the politics of the racists.'

Urging that SCORE 'open its ranks to a mass membership' so as to be 'in the vanguard of the struggle for all minorities', Bollers said there were enough problems with lack of democracy in the European Union without allowing Grant 'to behave in such an undemocratic manner'.

Two days before the meeting, Grant had paid another visit to the Brixton premises and changed the locks. The following week, having left a message claiming the AGM which ousted him was 'unconstitutional', he was reported to be abroad, and unavailable for comment.



Reproduced from 'Health Service Wildcat', a book of cartoons drawn by Donald Room and dedicated to 'the daft doctrine that people trained in making profits can provide a better health service than people trained in caring for the sick'. Freedom Press, £1.95.

COMING SOON

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 24-25 SEPTEMBER: 'Towards a Working Class Politics'. Coventry conference of the Revolutionary Socialist Network. Addresses major issues for socialists attempting to analyse the political situation in Britain and advance the workers' movement. The final session is intended to produce

practical results — both political and organisational. Contact for booking form: Dave Spencer, 17 Winifred Avenue, Earlsdon, Coventry CV4 6JT (tel: 0203 676614). Starts of the Saturday at 10.30am, Barra Green social club, Coventry Street Coventry CV2 4NA. Cost £4/£ unwaged.

Winning more sales!

AS YOU can see Workers Press staff have returned from their summer break. Meanwhile, I know some readers have been working away to increase the circulation of Workers Press.

But there is still a lot to do! Have you asked your trade union or community group to take a regular order of Workers Press, which, at 30p per copy, is the best value you can get!

I know some readers have done this because I have seen the orders — so well done. But what about you others?

Don't forget to send in your reports (and photographs) about what is going on in your area, and in your industry. You are not just Workers Press's readers, you are its reporters too!

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NHS proposals to dump the elderly

FAMILIES could soon be footing the bill for the elderly and the long-term sick, under new health guidelines published last week.

The new procedures were issued following a case in Leeds where a stroke victim, unable to eat, move or talk, was discharged, against his family's wishes, to a nursing home.

Until last week guidelines said that patients must not be transferred to such homes against their will.

But cash-starved hospitals have been flouting the

guidelines, closing 'continuing care' beds for the chronically ill in the rush to get more patients treated.

There has been a severe decline in the number of

long-stays beds in the NHS: ten years ago the National Health Service accounted for 30 per cent of all such beds, but the figure is now only 10 per cent.

Handicaps

The new guidelines say that those who have complex handicaps will continue to get medical help but those who the authorities say can

no longer be assisted medically may be put into homes, with the bill being picked up by their families.

In other words the right of elderly patients to free medical care is under immediate threat.

The charity Age Concern attacked the announcement, saying that this would mean that the right to free care would depend on where you lived.

ESOP myth exposed

BY PETER GIBSON

THE SAGA of employee buy-outs of publicly owned bus companies in Britain was always a strange one.

The bus workers' union, the TGWU, opposed such buy-outs because:

- it opposed the selling-off of public property to the workers or anyone else;

- such buy-outs gave the workers less protection of their rights.

However, the union was forced to change its position because all over the country workers took part in Employee Share Ownership schemes (ESOPs). When a number of bus com-

panies owned by local authorities were to be sold off, the local managers said to the bus drivers and engineers: 'Buy the company with us, and we will all have a safe job. We, and not some outsider, will control the policy'.

Major

In one of the biggest, West Midlands Travel, the union soon found itself in a major battle with the manager. Following a number of strikes over wages, the manager refused to recognise the two most senior shop stewards and sacked another. The sacked shop steward was told it was because he had reported to his members the manager's plans to cut their wages.

After further strikes they were all reinstated. But remember, this was an ESOP scheme, where the workers were supposed to have some control over the running of the company. And things did not end there. West Midlands Travel has now been floated on the stock exchange, so anyone can now control it if they have enough money to buy the shares.

The fate of the other ESOP bus companies is now being revealed.

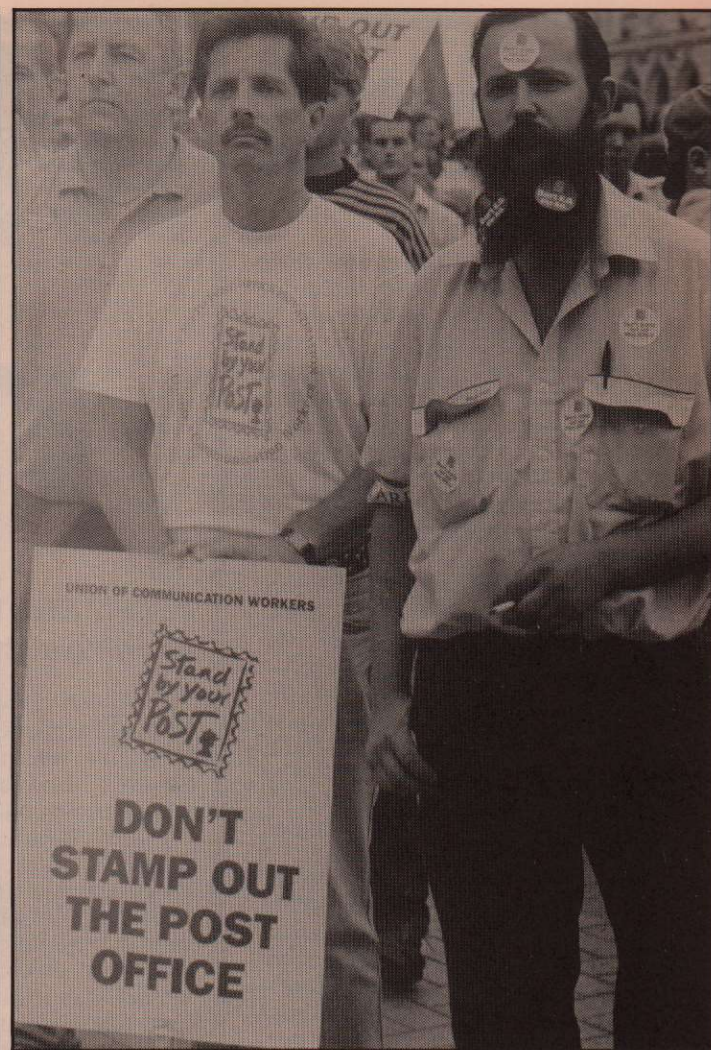
- In the last two months, Luton & District, Derby City, Yorkshire Rider, Busways Travel and Scottish Western, all big Employee Share Ownership bus companies, have been bought out by large private monopoly bus companies.

- Mainline, the big ESOP bus operation in Sheffield, has sold 20 per cent of its shares to a private monopoly bus company.

So the truth is out. ESOP does not defend jobs, wages, working conditions or trade union organisation. It is only the strong union organisation of working men and women that can do that.

Reminder

The myth that if you, and the manager, own shares, you can have some control over the company is exposed. What is happening in the bus companies in Britain is a reminder that ESOP is a fraud. It is not an alternative to workers' and users' control.



Part of a recent march through Birmingham demanding that the Post Office should remain a public service. The demonstration was organised by the Union of Communication Workers' Birmingham district amalgamated branch.

Photo: Mark Salmon

Trades unionists fight deportation

TRADES unionists are supporting a two-day non-stop action in Manchester area next month against immigration controls and deportations.

Bolton Trades Council has appealed to the entire movement to back the Rahman Family Defence Campaign. Rosmina Rahman, from Djibouti, was diagnosed as having cancer while on a visit to Bolton in 1991. Her daughter Shabana is handicapped and attends a special school. The Home Office wants to deport the family.

The Rahmans' appeal comes up on 7 September. The night before, there will be a meeting at Manchester town hall organised by the Manchester and Sal-

ford branches of Unison, some of whose members who are also threatened with deportation will speak.

Following this, there is to be an all-night vigil at Aldine House, New Bailey Street, Salford, the court where the immigration appeal is to be heard. Supporters are advised to bring sleeping bags and some music!

In the morning, on Wednesday 7 September, opponents of the deportation order will picket the appeal court. The Rahman family campaign is urging workers to join on their way to work, and to bring banners.

Following the appeal hearing there will be a lunch-time rally outside the court.



Workers Aid: international music and solidarity in Crawley

NEARLY £300 was collected for Workers Aid for Bosnia at the recent International Music Festival held in Crawley (pictured is the Workers Aid stall, which attracted many visitors).

Apart from the much-needed boost to funds important contacts were made, including a Muslim who opposed those who were sending aid to Bosnia for Muslims only.

The Workers Aid collecting team spent an enjoyable weekend

and were able to listen to bands from Africa, South America and eastern Europe.

For many, the highlight of the festival was an American Jewish band from New York, The Klasmatics, who played what they called 'Rhythm and Jews', a mix of traditional music and jazz. Contact was made with the band, who last year organised a Bosnian aid gig in New York.

Workers Press £3,000 Monthly Fund

July fund closed at £3,015.35

WE MADE IT!

Thanks to everybody who helped. At one of the most difficult times of the year we made our July total, if only just. But to bring you back to reality, I hope you don't need reminding that we have been short of our target several times this year and there is still a lot of catching up to do.

And if July is usually bad for money, August is even worse. By the time you see this, more than half the month will have gone with only £600 of our target in. Can I ask all friends returning from holiday not to forget Workers Press and let us have something extra. We made it in July. Can we do a repeat in August? Over to you!

Geoff Pilling

Please hurry your money, payable to 'Workers Press', PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

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Inside left

sjambok

HADN'T realised how many white South Africans were in London till I went selling Workers Press in Hyde Park on Sunday 24 July. People were gathering to demonstrate against the Criminal Justice Bill, but our headline 'Police attack South African strikers' attracted as much attention from some passing tourists as from protesters.

One man bought a copy 'to see what's happening back home'. A woman said 'Ah, but this isn't our government, this is the new government!' A hard-faced Boer who looked like he'd have used a sjambok on his servants asked what the police had done. Told they'd used savage dogs and gas against trade unionists he declared: 'Good, I'm glad to hear it!', and marched off mutely, ignoring what I called him.

Evidently the class enemy appreciates what the coalition of the African National Congress (ANC), Nationalist Party and Communist Party is doing to workers. But equally eloquent were those 'lefties' who scurried past, nervously eyeing our front page, but clearly not keen to discuss events in South Africa.

Having celebrated the ANC's electoral victory, and voted unionists for it, shouldn't they say something? The 'Guardian', which used to devote considerable coverage to South Africa, had a worldwide round-up of strikes the other day, everything from Israeli academics to Swiss erotic masseuses; but 100,000 strikers in South Africa escaped notice.

'Socialist Worker's' report on the Pick 'n' Pay supermarket strike, on page 13 of its 23 July issue, mentioned briefly that 20 workers had been injured and 1,000 arrested, but not that the ANC's police minister is a Communist Party member. 'Workers must rely on their own strength if they are to see real improvements now,' it advised helpfully.

The item was headed 'S. Africa: did we vote for this?' Well, yes, you did! 'Socialist Worker' fully supported the ANC in the South African elections and didn't say a word about revolutionary alternatives. How they remark lamely 'how little the bosses and the police have changed since the elections'.

Half a Mo

LABOUR shadow heritage minister Marjorie ('Mo') Mowlem got something half-right the other day. She proposed that the royal family should be moved out of Buckingham Palace. But she wants us to spend millions building them a new place.

Mowlem (no relation to the contractors, I trust) says Britain should build some suitable architecture for the new millennium. How about decent council housing? And let the royals take their place on the waiting list!

'Bobby' on the beat?

UNKIND Geordie humorists said only a constituency that (legend has it) once hanged a monkey for espionage could elect Peter Mandelson as MP. Apologies to friends in Hartlepool, who I know aren't to blame. Anyway, 'Bobby', as he's known for some reason, was Tony Blair's backstage manager. 'Tribune' editor Mark Seddon hopes his sacking by the London 'Evening Standard' after writing only two weekly columns wasn't because of pressure from the Labour Party ('New Statesman', 5 August). In the 'Guardian' (13 August), Ian Aitken wonders whether 'Bobby' would do this. Surely we should blame the organ grinder, not the monkey?

Charlie Pottins

Moving picture moving stories

TERRY BROTHERSTONE looks at some of the films showing at the Edinburgh Festival.

'LOVE isn't for me! Love's for fucking fairy-tales,' Maggie Conlon tells her partner Jorge in Ken Loach's 'Ladybird, Ladybird' — one of the movies which launched the 48th Edinburgh Festival last weekend. Loach's realisation of Maggie's and Jorge's story could become a defining moment in the British cinema of the 1990s, just as the same director's 'Cathy Come Home' was in the 1960s.

If such a status is less assured this time, it is because the political situation in the last decade of the century presents a very different challenge from that of the 1960s.

There were many fine films from most parts of the world seen during the first half of the two-week festival, but none made a greater impact than 'Ladybird'. It vindicates Loach's loyalty to a relatively naturalistic narrative style, which — despite his often inspired choice of previously non-professional performers — can sometimes seem infuriatingly *English*. It makes one look forward eagerly to his next movie, which is

a story of the Spanish civil war. 'Ladybird, Ladybird' reasserts uncompromisingly the political role of creative film-making. Whereas 'Cathy Come Home' was widely interpreted as a plea for improvements in the 'welfare state', the telling, 30 years on, of Maggie Conlon's tale brutally exposes its failure. In her life the

“Ladybird, Ladybird” reasserts uncompromisingly the political role of creative film-making.

social services have become her main enemy.

They are not the means through which the harsh effects of the dictates of capital on ordinary lives are alleviated. They are themselves the instrument of the authoritarian fist within British capitalism's 'democratic' velvet glove. Maggie sees social workers not as helping her to some sort of

human existence in a world that has offered her no advantages; but rather as the first obstacle in her struggle to live as a human being at all.

Loach is insistent that the film is based on a true story, though the names have been changed and much has been left out. But the authenticity of 'Ladybird' is established by the movie itself — by the way it is written (by Rona Munro), directed and acted. Indeed its one artistic compromise arises from the determination to be faithful to the actual experiences on which it is based.

So intense are the agonies we share with Maggie and Jorge for 100 soul-battering minutes, it is a relief to see a postscript indicating that their real-life *alter egos* have achieved at least some resolution of their problems.

But the film is clearly about an *unresolved* human — and class — situation: one in which there can be no comfortable illusion that the solution lies in trying to improve the supposedly benevolent parts of the state apparatus.

Maggie (played with furious integrity by club-circuit comedian

Crissy Rock) has already had four children taken into care when she takes up with Jorge (a sympathetic performance by Vladimir Vega) — a Paraguayan political refugee whose residence permit soon expires. Their efforts to establish a stable relationship and have their own children come tragically into conflict with the inability of the social services and legal authorities to treat them as human beings striving to overcome problems which, in the main, are not of their making.

Loach neither caricatures the social workers nor idealises Maggie out of all responsibility for her own plight. Most of the social workers can be read as products of good intentions caught up in an impossible system — impossible not just because it is underfunded but, more crucially, because it is based on inherent assumptions about what constitutes proper human behaviour that are ideologically determined within a fundamentally *inhuman* class structure.

LOACH's commitment to the idea that a film should tell an important story well was seen to advantage in a truly international festival which began with the campest of camping trips in the Australian desert, undertaken by three Sydney drag queens; and will conclude next weekend with an enthralling portrayal of the moral desert traversed by those who join the Israeli state security service, Mossad.



Hugo Weaving stars as Mitzi in 'The Adventures of Priscilla — Queen of the Desert'

Imp 10 ye

This article is an edited version of ALEC JENNER that appeared in 'The Guardian' under the title 'for democratic psychiatry' (based on meetings in Sheffield). Jenner had with Ukrainian psychiatrist Semyon Gluzman. Gluzman had been sentenced to a total of ten years for attacking the psychiatric regime

SEMYON GLUZMAN is a Jewish psychiatrist currently working in Kiev, Ukraine. He is the son of the Professor of Medicine in Kiev and the brother of a leading oncologist (a student of tumours, especially cancer). As a young psychiatrist in the 1960s he wrote a report denouncing the compulsory admission to hospital of Pyot Grigorenko, a former general in the Soviet army who had a distinguished record.

At one time Grigorenko was an outspoken adherent of what he called 'pure Leninism'. In 1964 he was accused of being a founder of the 'Action Group for the Revival of Leninism'. In defending his documents attacking anti-democratic

es, es

In 'The Adventures of Priscilla — Queen of the Desert' Priscilla is a bus, silver at the outset but soon painted lavender to cover up a gay-bashing slogan acquired en route. Stephan Elliot's film — chosen for the opening gala — is a witty, sensitive, realistic fantasy full of surreal and colourful images. It has a well-supported central performance by Terence Stamp, British cinema's most beautiful man of the 1960s, now catching the nuances of the insecurities of an ageing transexual whose tongue can be as powerful as the knee s/he is still able to apply to the private parts of Ozzie homophobia.

From France came Eric Rochant's 'Les Patriotes', a title both ironic and straight-faced. It stars Yvan Attal as a Parisian Jew who leaves home at 18 to join Mosad. For two-and-a-half hours we witness the outward impassivity and the sense of inner turmoil with which he lives through the recent past — first on an operation in Paris to acquire the plans for an Arab nuclear power plant, then as the contact for a US security agent who is disillusioned with his government's moves to conciliate the Arabs and wants to supply the Israelis with information.

Although the US agent seems remarkably naive, there is a sense of authority about the film that tantalises you with the idea that it might be a true story trying to find a way of going public. But Rochant's statement that 'Les Patriotes' was born of his more gener-



Maggie (Crissy Rock) and Jorge (Vladimir Vega) desolate at the loss of their child in 'Ladybird, Ladybird'

PARALLAX

al fascination with 'power and seduction' in the spy-story genre, and how to pursue this after the end of the cold war, seems to put paid to that thought.

The better of the two Chinese movies was 'To Live' (to be released in October), an ambitious and moving epic directed by Zhang Yimou ('Red Sorghum', 'Ju Dou' and 'The Story of Qui Ju'). In telling an unheroic tale of a Chinese family surviving the political changes from the 1940s to the 1970s, it recounts an experience of the eastern variety of Stalinism which needs to be held firm with a world-view also encompassing Maggie Conlon's

nightmarish journey through welfare capitalism.

In 'The Story of Xinghua', set in the ruins of the Great Wall in remote northern China, Yin Li explores the impact of the new commercialism on a semi-feudal society, virtually unchanged by decades of so-called 'Communism'. A fine sense of location and convincing performances compensate for a story over-reliant on a heavy-handed metaphor in which corrupt authority is symbolised by an impotent merchant, who is eventually (and predictably) crushed under the collapse of the ancient watchtower he is trying to pillage for

hidden treasures.

The crop of US movies ranged from 'The Hudsucker Proxy', a witty and stylish Coen brother satire — which makes one wonder, however, if Hollywood has any cultural role left other than to make fun of its own history — to 'Clerks' a low-budget first picture by Kevin Smith set during a single day in a rundown neighbourhood convenience store.

The money for 'Clerks' was raised, we are told, through an insurance scam on the director's car. It is shot in black-and-white with fixed camera angles and has a straight-talking, twentysomething

script. It shows that there is still young talent prepared to move heaven and capitalism to get the chance to make a movie and do it pretty well.

And finally . . . 'The Strategy of the Snail', a Loach-like gem by Sergio Cabrera from 1980s Colombia, which shows that there is an alternative to direct political and legal confrontation when it comes to getting the better of a predatory landlord trying to evict a small community from a city tenement.

'We cannot do that,' declares the earnestly orthodox revolutionary, 'It has not been agreed by any committee!' They can, and they do.

Prison was freedom for criticising Soviet psychiatry

...ion of one by Professor
...d in 'Asylum: the magazine
...Vol. 8, Number 1, 1994). It is
...held at the end of last year that
...psychiatrist Dr Semyon
...n imprisoned and exiled for a
...ng the Soviet Union's

psychiatry from the worst periods of Soviet psychiatry.

In the USSR there were particularly powerful forensic psychiatrists who had effective centralised control of forensic decisions, which were sometimes of a political nature. They were based in the Serbsky Institute in Moscow.

For drawing attention to, with two colleagues, the absurdities of the official documents from the Grigorenko case, Gluzman was charged and imprisoned (seven years hard labour and three years in exile in Siberia).

Although Gluzman wouldn't like to repeat such an experience, he clearly learnt a great deal about life and his own country. 'At least we could talk honestly together. We didn't need to be afraid: what more could they do?' he said.

During his sentence, Gluzman met men who were much more revolutionary activists than himself, especially Vladimir Bukovsky, who is now in Cambridge working as a biologist. Bukovsky had frequently been in and out of mental hospitals for protesting. Together they wrote a booklet, 'A manual on psychiatry for dissenters'.

This work is full of insights, at times is even amusing, but is essentially very profound, not least for its analysis of the concept of 'sluggish schizophrenia' which was developed in the leading Moscow school of psychiatry, and is still used in analysis.

The booklet is well worth reading, and perhaps its quotation from

"Where we lack concepts, words promptly step in to take their place." The words "sluggish schizophrenia" follow this rule and are particularly dangerous in an authoritarian state.'

Goethe's 'Faust' indicates its flavour: 'Where we lack concepts, words promptly step in to take their place.' The words 'sluggish schizophrenia' follow this rule and are particularly dangerous in an authoritarian state.

The booklet quotes a Professor Timofeyev: 'The more one studies mild attenuated (stereotype) forms

of schizophrenia (i.e. sluggish) the more difficulties one encounters in diagnostics.

'Dissent may be caused by a disuse of the brain in which the pathological process develops very slowly and mildly, while its other symptoms remain for the time being.

'Sometimes, until the criminal act is committed, imperceptibly.'

The booklet's manuscript and those for other works were taken out of prison in little plastic bags swallowed by visitors, or in the vaginas or rectums of relatives. They were then printed on underground presses. Gluzman said that to those in the prison camps Soviet psychiatry seemed black and things in the West white. They hoped people in the West would do something to help them but found support to be slow in forthcoming.

Gluzman said that the worst extremes of Soviet psychiatry are now in abeyance, but that students still use the same textbooks and that the same clinical psychiatrists are still in powerful positions. Gluzman said that the situation today is not unlike pre-Nazi Germany: there is freedom but no sausages or

cheese, and for many people that is the important issue. Prices can in one day jump six-fold. The average income of a doctor in Ukraine is \$10 a month.

Gluzman said that he is now older and wiser but despite this still something of an idealist. In a country in which shortages have led to a burgeoning black market, increasing disparities in wealth and little hope of immediate, simple solutions, he had remained in Ukraine to fight for improvements in care for the mentally disturbed.

He hadn't fled to the greater ease and comfort of Israel or the US. It is difficult not to respect his maturity — gained so expensively.

Quite clearly Marx's ideas had little to do with Soviet psychiatry. It didn't recognise the extent to which social circumstances contribute to psychopathology, even while paying lip-service to the creation of the new normal person.

Gluzman was apparently undecided on these theoretical issues. He certainly seemed to agree that power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. But he didn't blame Marx for the tragic history of Soviet society.

activities, Grigorenko challenged his accusers to publish them.

Indeed the fear of his outspokenness probably led to his compulsory hospitalisation. However, even that wasn't easy for the state. In 1969 psychiatrists in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, declared Grigorenko to be sane and to have been sane. Two months later he was conveniently taken to the notorious Serbsky Institute in Moscow and diagnosed as psychopathic.

In 1964 Grigorenko had been diagnosed as mentally ill and indeed psychotic with early arteriosclerotic dementia. Differences and changes in diagnoses are not unusual in British psychiatry. But there are many warnings to

Grave language

WILL the knee-jerk defenders of 'political correctness' please tell us where they stand on what must be considered the latest example of this disease?

It comes from Freckleton in Lancashire, whose vicar, the Revd Stephen Brian, has banned the words 'Dad' and 'Grandad' from gravestones in the cemetery adjacent to his church, on the ground that they are 'undignified'.

His decision has been upheld by the Blackburn Consistory (i.e. bishop's) Court. It was taken, he told television viewers last week, because the line has to be drawn somewhere, and that is where he chose to draw it.

Otherwise even less dignified words, such as 'Mummy', 'Daddy', 'Ma', and 'Pop', would soon be seen on gravestones, encouraging juvenile delinquency, frightening the horses, and signalling the end of civilisation as we know it.

From the linguistic point of view, the vicar hasn't got an organ of support and locomotion to stand on. The word 'dad' has been in the English language for at least 500 years, and has been used by at least one major poet:

*Th' expectant wee-things,
toddlin', stacher through
To meet their Dad, wi'
flichterin' noise an' glee.*

(But perhaps, since Robert Burns wrote in the Scots tongue, he doesn't carry much weight with a Church of England parson.)

Even from the Christian point of view, the vicar is on extremely shaky ground. For was not the founder of that religion reported to have addressed his 'heavenly father' as 'Abba', which is the precise Aramaic equivalent of the English word 'Dad'?

But I shall be asked, no doubt, what the Vicar of Freckleton's censorship of gravestones has to do with 'political correctness'. The answer is: everything.

The whole essence of 'political correctness' is an attempt to prohibit some words and phrases in favour of others. Behind this lie certain assumptions: that language can and should be changed by decree; that enforced linguistic change is a universal panacea, a swift and infallible key to making the world a better and sweeter place; and that authoritarianism in this field — i.e. telling people how they should speak and write, and branding them as some kind of 'ist' if they demur — is fully justified.

These assumptions don't bear a moment's critical examination. Language doesn't change by decree but from below, unpredictably; shit smells just the same whatever you call it; and self-appointed language police, like Orwell's thought police, are the uncomprehending enemies of creativity, imagination, and originality.

'Political' means having to do with power. In Freckleton's graveyard the man with the dog-collar has power to ban the use of the 'undignified' local dialect, and impose his own posh dialect, in tombstone inscriptions.

That he should do this is not merely mindless pomposity, but an unwarranted elitist intrusion into family grief.

What on earth (or in heaven, for that matter) gives this reverend gentleman the right to lay down to working-class people the form of words they must use in expressing their grief and pain at the death of a loved one?

What gives him the right to say to them: 'The person you have known as your "Dad" for the whole of your life may no longer be referred to thus. In your enduring public tribute to him you must use the dignified word "Father"?'

This man of God reveals himself as totally ignorant of, and alien to, his parishioners' culture. If the Church of England carries on like this, it will lose even the greatly diminished following it still has; and it will deserve to.

PERSONAL COLUMN

Slap-happiness

THE courts, in their wisdom, have backed up a child-minder who refused to give an undertaking not to inflict pain on her charges. Her misguided supporters have launched an organisation called 'Families for Discipline'.

This has a familiar and rather sinister ring. I am reminded of a grubby little organisation that briefly flourished around the year 1950, with the title (as I recall) 'National Association for Corporal Punishment'. In its published literature the last two words were often abbreviated to 'Corpun'.

As a young reporter I was sent to attend its inaugural meeting in a Westminster hall. It was the brain-child of an obsessed and highly unsavoury individual called Eric Wildman, whose eyes glistened as he slobberingly showed journalists his large collection of canes.

Many years later I found in the British Library's Private Case three huge parcels containing specimens of the pamphlets issued by Wildman and his organisation.

Some, intended for the general public and therefore relatively restrained, sang the praises of 'family discipline' in general, of flexible ('whippy') canes in particular, with plenty of gloating references to punishment 'on the part nature intended'.

In the other publications, whose circulation had evidently been restricted to fellow enthusiasts, the mask came off. These were crudely illustrated with drawings of adults beating hell out of children.

Pictures and texts alike were mere pornographic fantasies, for whose distribution Wildman was ultimately prosecuted.

Those who defend the infliction of pain on children — and, as I write, a government spokeswoman is telling radio listeners that there is no harm in a 'sharp tap' now and again — are taking the first step on a slippery slope.

However high-minded it claims to be, 'Families for Discipline' will find among its members a great many who seek justification and licence for the darker side of their psyches.

In any case, 'discipline' imposed by pain and fear of pain is an enforced hairshirt that any child whose spirit has not been utterly crushed will throw off as soon as possible.

True discipline is self-discipline, and this is taught not by terror but by love, reason, respect for the child's individuality, and the power of good example.

Mutinies remembered

IN 1997 it will be 200 years since the naval mutinies at Spithead (which was largely successful) and the Nore (which was not).

I don't know how many books are being written to coincide with this forthcoming anniversary; but I do know that it is something that deserves the widest commemoration by the workers' movement.

The red flag flew from the riggings; London was blockaded, and all trade stopped, for several days; and there were among the sailors many Irishmen, many of whom were radical members of the United Irishmen.

There is a clear case for at least a public meeting to recall these events, and to salute the memory of 'Admiral' Richard Parker, who was hanged as one of the ringleaders.

Peter Fryer

'Trades unions are going to pieces'

EARLIER this summer Workers Press was invited to a conference of European energy workers held in Slovenia. Organised jointly by the Federation of Energy Workers of Slovenia and the National Federation of Energy Workers of Italy, the conference was attended by almost 50 representatives of trades unions from nine countries of western and central Europe. GEOFF PILLING spoke to the two principal organisers of the conference: to Franc Druks from Slovenia about the purpose of the conference, and to Vittorio Fiori from Italy about the situation in that country

WP: Could you say something about the purpose of the conference?

FD: Our main aim was to establish communication between energy workers about the present stage and position of the energy industries in various European countries. We are concerned with the problems of the workers of Europe. We want to find mutual points of agreement and common problems in our trade union work.

We are especially interested in the energy policies being carried out by the governments of Europe. I have spoken to many of the participants and they believe it has been a success — for many it is their first experience of such a gathering. It has been especially important that workers from eastern and western Europe have been able to participate.

Trade union organisations are going to pieces and there is not enough co-operation between them. Membership is in decline. Multinational capital is strengthening its links, while at the same time the countries of Europe collaborate with each other. But the trades unions are not organised for this and we must deal with this situation.

WP: What about the problem of workers who are not in the unions?

FD: The specific feature of the work of unions is to fight for human rights for everybody, whether they are in the unions or not. So when a union negotiates contracts with the government and achieves certain wages and conditions this is of value to everybody and not just the members of the union.

WP: How do you see the changes that have taken place in eastern Europe?

FD: Ecological problems don't

have any boundaries, they don't stay in any one country, as the example of Chernobyl shows. We are concerned that living conditions be as good as possible. We accept the existence of the market but at the same time we want to see the operation of the market put on the same basis in each country. In particular, we aim to see throughout Europe the same standard of living in each country, the same human rights and the same level of wages.

We now have two processes at work in the European energy sector. In western Europe we have privatisation, while in the former Eastern bloc we have the transition from state property to private property. These two processes must be treated separately, but at the same time they can have the same effect.

We must be very careful about this process of privatisation. The interests of capital are not the same as the interests of labour. Naturally, the interests of capital are higher production creating high profits, while the interests of ordinary people are to have good quality and cheap energy. Electricity is like air and water — everybody is entitled to it. If private capital tramples on this right it goes against the interests of the people. It is this that should establish the limits of private capital.

WP: How do you see the political situation in the former Yugoslavia?

FD: Our meeting takes place at the time of war in the Balkans, at the time of a war in Bosnia. There has been aggression against Bosnia — which is a sovereign country. We are very concerned about how the people in Bosnia are being forced to live.

The idea of socialism has lost its power in eastern Europe. At



Chernobyl: ecological problems have no boundaries

first the idea of socialism was very attractive, but it did not develop. This situation was used by very narrow nationalistic forces that have recently reappeared.

People are very dissatisfied with things such as rapid inflation and the nationalists have used this situation to stir up the old Balkan battles. When Yugoslavia was formed at the end of World War I certain peoples were forced into it and these old conflicts have now been blown up again. Serbia has taken advantage of this situation to wage war against Bosnia and Croatia.

WP: How do you see the work of the conference developing?

FD: We do not intend for this conference to become a forum. We should exchange information and exchange our experiences. But we have no specific date in mind for another conference. We will meet when necessary.

We have already established many contacts and these will be

developed. I want to stress that there are many unions in Europe and this conference is not the basis for alternative unions; we are not building an organisation.

* * * * *

WP: Can you say something briefly about the situation you face in Italy?

VF: In Italy the situation presents us with great difficulties. The victory of the right in the elections has made the position of the unions very difficult: this is a serious threat, with neo-fascists present in the government. We have elements in the government that are no respecters of democracy. We face a serious unemployment problem, an industrial crisis and this situation is present not only in the south but in the more industrialised north.

The victory of the right not only threatens the gains that the working class has made in its past struggles, it is a threat to democracy.



Bosnian refugees: dissatisfaction in ex-Yugoslavia with such things as rapid inflation has been used by nationalists to stir up old battles

Workers must control Bosnia aid

This resolution was agreed by a meeting of the International Secretariat of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International on 10 July on the need for a new stage in the fight of Workers Aid for Bosnia

THE Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign has begun to give a positive answer to the new tasks and possibilities for the working class that have opened up in the new international political situation following the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

We have fought as part of Workers Aid to mobilise the working class, East and West, to support the multi-ethnic mining community of Tuzla and the multi-ethnic Bosnian working class in general — and to mobilise several convoys of aid to Tuzla.

At the centre of the campaign is the demand to open the Sava corridor (the 'northern route') — the route which could unite the Tuzla workers with the rest of Europe's workers; the route which has been kept closed by the complicity of the United Nations with the Croatian and Serbian nationalist forces.

The Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign has come into contact with, worked together with, and won the support of thousands of workers, unions, trade union militants, and young people in the West and East, in Europe, Africa and the Americas.

The experiences of the second and third convoys, in which the Slovenian miners participated, have shown:

■ The correctness of the policy to defend the Bosnian resistance against 'ethnic cleansing' and the carve-up of Bosnia;

■ The necessity of developing our fight on what is the main question — that is the fight against Serbian fascist aggression — against Bosnia, while at the same time developing a working-class policy against the Bosnian nationalists and petty-bourgeois and

bourgeois forces; and

■ The need to clarify a working-class policy for an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the framework of a working-class solution to the crisis of all the states of the former Yugoslavia.

The experiences of the convoys enable us to understand and clarify the problems of Workers Aid for Bosnia at the present stage of its work, and react to the political situation as it changes.

The latest imperialist plan, of the 'contact group', is an attempt to present the ethnic cleansing and carve-up of Bosnia in a new guise. The plan claims to maintain the 'integrity of Bosnia' — but is based on the idea of a Bosnia-Croatia federation covering 51 per cent of the territory, while 49 per cent is controlled by a new Greater Serbia. It means the cantonisation of Bosnia.

Defiant

This plan is a new attempt to crush the defiant Bosnian military resistance — after previous attempts at a carve-up have broken on the rock of this solid resistance by the Bosnian people, essentially the working class. A conflict can be foreseen between the Bosnian government led by Alija Izetbegovic, which is negotiating in order to accept the plan in some form, and those who want to continue the fight.

Muslim fundamentalism, which is gaining strength in Bosnia, cannot lead a consistent fight against imperialism or resist its control. The examples of Iran, Algeria, Bangladesh and others show that, on the contrary, fundamentalism mobilises its forces to crush the working-class movement with

fascist methods.

There is no possibility of an independent, democratic Bosnia being attained by these reactionary forces. Only the working class — internationally, not only in Bosnia — can realise the democratic aspirations of the Bosnian people.

During the coming months all the political and economic problems will raise themselves in a harsh form: the 'peace talks', the Bosnian government's plans for privatisation of industry, the coming election, the continuing military resistance, the exodus of thousands of refugees.

In this situation Trotskyists must raise the question of the rebuilding of the workers' movement, the regrouping of the new working-class revolutionary leadership in Bosnia and the other states of former Yugoslavia.

Workers Aid for Bosnia remains central to this work. From the start, the campaign has had a dual character — the provision of material aid, and the political campaign. But now, more than ever before, the campaign has to answer more concretely and politically the growing problems in Bosnia.

Without changing its broad character, in which those with different political standpoints work together, Workers Aid can, and should, very naturally give answers to the new problems facing workers.

Workers Aid has always not only taken food, medicines, etc. to Bosnia, but, above all, taken the fight to rebuild the international solidarity of workers of all countries.

The most important cargo in the Workers Aid lorries is the experience of militant, fighting workers all over the world — against nationalism, against



Workers Aid has won support among young people, West and East

fascism, against the Stalinist, former Stalinist and reformist trade union bureaucracies.

Workers Aid derives its authority to speak on these questions in Bosnia not only from its convoys, but also from its political fight in the international workers' movement, among the exploited, youth, immigrants, trades unionists, etc., to build up these convoys.

The most immediate problem of the working class in Bosnia is to survive as a class, without having its unity broken up. The distribution of foreign aid by the big aid agencies and the UN is actually the main means by which it is disarmed, divided and subordinated to

anti-working-class forces (nationalist parties, religious movements, etc.).

The Workers International will fight in Workers Aid, and among all its supporters, for the first basis of the politically independent fight of the working class during the war: democracy. That means the control of foreign aid by the workers.

Today in Tuzla there is food in the shops, but the workers have no money to buy it — despite the fact that foreign aid arrives free. Where does the money go? Who controls the distribution of supplies? To answer this question means to start to answer all the other questions: above all, who con-

trols the state; to whom does the economy belong and who controls it?

The demand for workers' control will be supported by all those who really have the interests of the Bosnian working class at heart, by all those who really want democracy and all who want to eliminate the black market. And we will fight alongside all in the workers' movement in Bosnia who are fighting for these aims.

The demand for workers' control over aid will take our campaign forward, will enable us to clarify how the working class can strengthen itself against its enemies, will open the way for principled alliances and relationships.

Our call for workers' control over aid is raised in the spirit that the transitional demands of our programme are raised: as a means to mobilise the working class, to develop it politically, to test out its leaderships.

Study

Workers International has the responsibility, starting from this point, to study all the political problems in the former Yugoslavia and to elaborate a working-class policy. This work must be carried out first of all in our press. We will also begin systematic work to introduce Trotskyist ideas with material printed in Bosnian and Serbo-Croat for distribution in Bosnia and the other former Yugoslav states.

Central to this work will be to take our fight against the reformists, Stalinists and others — which has already begun with the fight against their attempts to block aid to the Bosnian workers — on to a new level.

'Kiwi' fruit turns sour for Canada

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

CANADIANS who were happy to see their New Democratic Party (NDP) — roughly equivalent to Labour — on the way up a year ago are saying it has taken the wrong turning. The NDP governs three of Canada's provinces, including the most populous, Ontario.

They're comparing it with the Labour government which took office in New Zealand ten years ago, only to carry out the kind of anti-working-class, anti-'welfare-state' policies associated with Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, or Canada's Brian Mulroney. After six years of right-wing Labourism, followed by the National Party (Tories) from 1991, New Zealand's century-old welfare policies — it had a health service long before Britain — were ruined.

'The Kiwi experiment in neo-liberal economics has been both an economic and social disaster,' warns Sid Shniad, research director for Canada's Telecommunications Workers' Union. Labour voters and trades unionists in Britain should take note, especially after some of Tony Blair's utterances.

Enemy

'It has been more than a year now since Bob Rae's [NDP] provincial government [in Ontario] declared the deficit and debt to be public enemy number one,' says Michael Davison in the 'Hamilton Spectator' on 15 April. 'Government services, especially those delivered by municipalities, are deteriorating rapidly. Family incomes of those working in the broader public

sector have been substantially reduced.

'Promises of a fair tax system and new programming have been put on hold. Privatisation of public facilities and services is well under way. There is a level of public tension and anxiety that was unknown in Ontario when the New Democratic Party came to power in 1990.'

Writing in the July-August issue of the Canadian Jewish magazine 'Outlook', Shniad warns:

'Unfortunately, instead of easing the plight of victims of the economic crisis, too many prominent NDP politicians are pandering to the right, attacking welfare recipients and stepping up surveillance to combat the statistically non-existent problem of welfare fraud.'

Bashing

'By bashing welfare recipients as if they, and not the corporations that have caused the unemployment crisis, are responsible for the mess that we're in, Canada's social democratic politicians are playing a self-defeating game.'

He argues that using the right's arguments weakens the morale of NDP supporters, and opens the way for the right to demand more. 'The bottom line is that, like their New Zealand Labour Party counterparts before them, Canada's NDP cannot slash spending fast enough to satisfy the forces that it is pandering to when it uses the strategies and rhetoric of the right.'

Shniad describes how in New Zealand Labour's finance minister, Roger Douglas, led a programme under

'THE small country of New Zealand offers a cautionary tale. Its recent history provides sobering evidence of the American model's ability to wreak havoc in both the economic and social sphere. Long regarded as one of the most enlightened social democracies, New Zealand has, since 1984, demolished a cradle-to-grave social welfare system in the name of market efficiency.

'Nevertheless, untrammelled markets have not produced vigorous growth. On the contrary, eight years of stringent monetarist policies have produced massive unemployment, rising crime rates, a widening gap between the rich and the poor, and a declining GDP. Between 1985 and 1990, New Zealand's GNP fell by 0.7 per cent, the worst record of any industrialised country, while unemployment more than doubled. The deterioration in living standards has been particularly severe among families with children, with predictable results. New Zealand now has the highest youth suicide rate among industrial countries, and reported cases of child abuse have doubled since 1985.'

From 'Child Neglect in Rich Nations', published by UNICEF, 1993

which the New Zealand dollar was devalued then floated; financial regulations were removed; income tax reduced while indirect taxes were increased; subsidies were removed from farming and industry; and government departments were run on business lines, then sold to the private sector.

When the NDP first took office in Ontario, it was happy to cite New Zealand's example of how to reduce deficits. No more, says Davison: 'The example has turned into a social disaster.' By the time the Tories took over, things had gone downhill so fast, the momentum of demolishing services seemed unstoppable, he says.

'Child tax credits were abolished, social benefits ranging from unemployment benefits to widows' pensions were reduced by 9 to 25 per cent. The universality of programmes such as the old-age pension and health care ended. In any real sense, public housing became a thing of the past,' says Davison.

'In three short years, this tiny country saw the number of people living in

poverty rise from 360,000 to 510,000. The demands on food banks became absolutely unmettable. Incidents of child abuse and neglect climbed by a frightening 60 per cent and the prison population increased by a third.'

Despite all the cutbacks, which have dramatically widened the gap between rich and poor, slashing family incomes of the poorest 20 per cent of New Zealanders by 20.9 per cent, and left over 10 per cent unemployment earlier this year, New Zealand's debts have soared, rising by 16 times between 1974 and 1984.

Cuts

In 1991 the National Party took office, 'picking up where Labour left had left off'. Cuts were planned in welfare benefits of 25 per cent, plus cuts in education, health and other services, and an Employment Contracts Bill attacking workers' rights.

'The Labour Party, now in opposition, found itself in an untenable position. Having paved the way for the

National Party's cuts with its own reductions to social spending, Labour was unable to play a meaningful role in opposition,' says Davison.

The new employment law effectively took away union recognition, outlawed the closed shop, and empowered employers to decide whether they wanted collective or individual contracts. If this sounds not unlike Tory anti-union laws in Britain, another aspect will sound familiar to local government workers such as those in Labour-run Camden, north London.

'Contractual coverage was limited to the workers employed when the contract was signed. Newly hired workers had no right to automatic coverage under the existing contract.'

Repealed

New Zealand's Tories have also repealed fair pay legislation, imposed a 26-week waiting period for unemployment benefit, and taken away minimum wages from young workers. Any similarity to 'reforms' introduced by right-wing governments in Canada or Britain cannot be coincidence!

After too many years under Tory government, and too many people talking as though 'Thatcherism' or 'Reaganomics' were a matter of wicked individuals, its salutary to look at how capitalism, given its head by conservative, liberal or social-democratic governments alike, has wreaked havoc even on what seemed relatively better-off working classes, and well-established welfare systems.

With Labour leaders dedicated to 'style' rather than policies, why should workers in Britain kid themselves they'll be better off?

North Sea unions give solidarity to Nigerian strikers

WORKERS in the Norwegian and British off-shore oil industry have declared their support for Nigerian oil workers, whose six-week strike has spearheaded workers' efforts to topple the country's military regime.

They have demanded that transnational oil companies — Royal Dutch Shell is the main one in Nigeria — should withdraw personnel so they can't be used for strike-breaking. They have told Norway's Labour prime minister, Gro Harlem, to halt investment by state-owned Statoil in Nigeria.

Nigerian workers have faced hunger and police bullets in a battle for democratic rights.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

Millions of workers, ranging from dockers to bank staff, have taken strike action to demand that the military rulers step down, and allow jailed Chief Moshood Abiola, who won elec-

tions in June last year, to become president. The army arrested Abiola last month, charging him with treason.

The oil workers' action, hitting both domestic transport and industry and Nigeria's most valuable export, has been the most powerful. Nigeria is Africa's biggest oil producer, and fifth world-wide. Oil accounts for 90 per cent of the country's export earnings, and 80 per cent of government revenue. Shell has been unable to meet orders.

The oil workers' unions, NUPENG and PENGASSAN, are demanding release of all political prisoners, restoration of democratic rights, and an end

to exploitative oil practices that have destroyed large areas of the environment for agriculture and fishing.

After two weeks of strike action which brought the capital, Lagos, to a standstill, trades unionists went to the market women — often a force to be reckoned with in mass struggles — and persuaded them to join with the workers, setting up committees in three areas of the city in order to control food distribution.

Shut

As well as Abiola, the regime has arrested trades unionists and opposition writers such as Ken Saro-Iwa, and closed Abiola's Concord Newspapers. Last week they shut down the 'Guardian' newspaper after it had reported a factional struggle within the junta. The paper is owned by the internal affairs minister, Alex Ibru.

Elsewhere, students at Delta State University took over a local radio station and broadcast anti-government speeches. And dockers took over a food shipment, declared it a 'people's landing' and distributed it free to schoolchildren.

These actions, and the stamina shown by trades unionists, must frighten Abiola, a wealthy

banker, and Western interests, as much as the military regime. Having discovered their strength, Nigerian workers will not forget how to use it, in determining their future.

There is a danger to them, and their people as a whole, however. Imperialist interests may decide to plunge Nigeria into war, as they have done in Rwanda and Bosnia.

Reactionary elements, resting on privileges and traditions bequeathed by British colonialism, are trying to stir up tribal chauvinism against the oilworkers and others in the south. They have reportedly been bringing in arms.

Horrors

Recalling the horrors of the 1967 Biafra war, a leader of Concerned Professional warned that if 'these jokers' (the military junta) were left in power 'you're going to be back to the Stone Age soon'.

Yet while the oilworkers have maintained their action, demanding democratic rights and the release of political prisoners, the Nigerian Labour Congress (equivalent to the TUC in Britain) has twice postponed general strike action in order to pursue a 'dialogue' with the military junta.

This joint statement on the Nigerian situation has been issued by the Norwegian offshore oil industry union, OFS, and the OILC, the British offshore union

BRITISH and Norwegian oil workers support members of oil unions in Nigeria in their struggle to have the rightful leadership of the country released from detention and installed in office.

We demand that the present military regime in Nigeria respects common democratic principles and call on it to implement all necessary action to ensure that the will of the people is respected.

We demand that no foreign oil company personnel are used to attempt to break the strike which the Nigerian oil unions embarked on four weeks ago. All such personnel should be withdrawn immediately from the area.

Profits

Oil workers affiliated to the OILC and the OFS cannot accept that the profits created by us, through the extraction of British and Norwegian natural resources are invested in a country which will not recognise democratic elections.

Therefore our organisations ask all oil companies involved in the extraction of petroleum in Nigeria to bring their current activities to halt. We also say no further investments should be made in the country until democracy is established and secured.

Further, the OILC and the OFS appeal to the British and Norwegian governments to apply maximum pressure on the Nigerian military regime to persuade it to acknowledge the will of the people through elections.

South African strikes shake government

SOUTH Africa's exploding strike wave, which has brought out shop and factory workers, public servants and transport workers, has spread to the gas and chemical industries.

A striking Cape Gas worker was shot dead by company security. The Chemical Workers' Industrial Union has called a stayaway in Cape Town for Monday 23 August.

The miners could be next, if their union takes action over its demand for a £50 a week minimum for underground workers. Miners have seen 200,000 jobs go in the last four years, while pay has been cut. Now mining companies are paying their biggest dividends since 1989, and workers are saying enough is enough!

The working class is shaking the ruling coalition of the African National Congress (ANC), white Nationalist Party and Communist Party (SACP). President Mandela met Sam Shilowa, general secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), on 18 July, urging that unions show 'restraint'. The unions lowered pay demands, but when the employers refused to accept returned to their position.

The SACP has criticised the ANC for 'dampening popular

expectations', and expressed support for Pick 'n' Pay shopworkers who have faced police brutality. But the SACP stays in the government, and the ANC minister of police, a former COSATU assistant general secretary, is an SACP leader!

Active

South African Trotskyists, members of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, are playing an active part in the workers' struggles, and their paper 'Workers International News' has condemned the two-faced tactics of the Stalinist SACP.

At a meeting that the Workers International organised with the Workers List Party and others in Cape Town, trades unionists from Cape Gas and victimised Golden Arrow bus workers spoke about their struggles.

A resolution was adopted saying that only a worker-led revolution could bring the fundamental changes needed for the masses to attain their rights; that a campaign started to break apartheid-created local government bodies and replace them with democratic, accountable mass bodies; and that active support be mobilised

for workers in struggle.

The Workers International is campaigning against Stalinist victimisation of comrade Shaheed 'Mo' Mahomed, who was sacked from his post in the Printing and Paper Workers Union in May, because he had campaigned for the Workers International instead of the ANC in the elections. The Chemical Workers' union has invited the Workers International to help in its pickets and campaigning. Things are changing fast.

Appreciation

A life devoted to the world socialist revolution

CLIFF SLAUGHTER writes in appreciation of the life of comrade 'Raoul' (Claude Bernard) who died of a heart attack on 7 May at the age of 73. (See also the obituary by Pierre Broué in Workers Press, 23 July.)

COMRADE RAOUL's life was one entirely and selflessly devoted to the cause of the world socialist revolution. And Raoul knew that this meant above all that the Fourth International must be built, whatever the difficulties and setbacks, however deep-going the crisis of the movement.

The task to which he gave everything was to fight to resolve the crisis of working-class leadership. His Marxist conviction of the revolutionary and liberating role of the working class was profound and unshakable, and it was this that lay at the root of those characteristics of Raoul that we all remember.

There was no comrade more modest and unassuming. Like so many other comrades who have fought for the Fourth International through all its crises, he had not the slightest interest in seeking the limelight. And while remaining always immovably loyal to his party, internationally and in France, he was critical of everything bureaucratic and authoritarian, which he knew tended to stifle the possibilities of his class.

For that reason he was always critical of Healy (who was leader of the movement in Britain), as well as of Lambert (leader of the International Communist Party, PCI), even when there was agreement about programme and policies. Their degeneration into an arrogance of manner and delusions of grandeur, and into the opportunist politics which encouraged even further these traits, evoked bitter reactions from Raoul, who after 1980 had

to decide to play his part in the movement by keeping his own counsel, as it were, and, as he put it to me, 'talking to those who will talk to me', yet 'never and in no way considering myself as outside the movement'.

For all the years I knew him, I looked on Raoul as a dear friend as well as a comrade, and coming so soon after the death of Tom Kemp in December last year, Raoul's passing is indeed a bitter blow. Like so many others, I can never forget what a life-giving experience it was to spend a day or an hour with Raoul. Now we shall never be able to tell him how much it meant to us to have that effortless trust and confidence. Whenever he was asked for help or advice he gave it without reservation. When he disagreed, he said so openly and clearly.

Others who knew him better than I will write about his work since the day he became a communist, before World War II. Raoul's legacy is a precious one to every young comrade who joins the Fourth International. He spent his life as a 'professional revolutionary', building the movement in France, in Canada, and in Vietnam. He was one of the very few comrades who from the very beginning (in relation to the Algerian National Movement, MNA, and Messali Hadj in the Algerian revolution) opposed the way Trotskyists began to subordinate the independent politics of the working class to bourgeois 'national-liberation' leaders.

After the expulsion of Healy from the

WRP in 1985, I made contact with Raoul after a break of several years. By that time he had left Lambert's OCI (the successor to the PCI) — the last straw had been the 'exclusion' of Pierre Broué — and he had had his first heart attack. Some time later in March 1989, I suggested to him in a letter that he would make a great contribution to the movement, especially to the youth, by writing a book about his life story. His reply confirms the saying: 'the style is the man'.

'Write a book about "My Life in the Fourth International"?! But I do understand your point. Lambert and several others over here, flattering the "youth" (some of these "youth" are already 35-40!), have done all they can to make me believe that the first 30 years of the Fourth International amounted to nothing more than an esoteric, burlesque, incomprehensible tragi-comedy (except of course for the historic role of Lambert himself, which goes back at least to the Wars of the Roses).

'I have already described many times what I have witnessed since 1941, and given my interpretation of the facts, especially on the split of 1951-52 [in the Fourth International] and its consequences of all kinds. I understand the necessity of establishing and maintaining this continuity. . . . Beyond there, to write a book! That's out of the question. Above all, it's not in my character. Don't be deceived by this letter believe me it has been a considerable effort to write this. . . .'

I know that when comrades like Pierre Broué, who worked closely with Raoul and has access to his papers, give us a comprehensive account of his life and work, it will be an inspiration to every young comrade who comes forward in the reconstruction of the working-class movement and of the Fourth International.

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