

WHERE IS LABOUR GOING?

'We seek to govern for the whole nation.' These were the words of Labour leader Tony Blair at this week's conference of the Transport and General Workers' Union, Britain's biggest union of workers in the private sector.

BY CLIFF SLAUGHTER

'The whole nation?' Blair explained: 'Trade unions and employers will be listened to; a Labour government will set a statutory minimum wage, for example, but 'the level will be decided after the general election and in consultation with the employers'. This last remark meant clearly that this Labour leadership will not accept even the TGWU's pathetic figure of a minimum wage of £4.15.

Blair also declared that there will be Party constitutional reforms to reduce the influence of the trade unions and of 'left-wing activists' (which means, active socialists).

Workers Press has warned all along that the removal of the old Clause Four ('common ownership') would be followed by the second stage — a political attack on the organised working class in the trade unions (as in the Dromey candidature against Morris in the recent TGWU general secretary elections).

We also warned that Blair and his team were preparing a 'national' government which will try to put down any working-class resistance.

For example we said: with Blair's politics, why not Ashdown as Foreign Secretary in the next 'Labour' government?

Contrast

Blair's speech followed his address last week to the Fabian Society. There — in contrast to his 'keep off' speech to the unions he called for Labour to 'put an end to the tribal opposition to the Liberal Democrats' and seek 'consensus on the centre-left!'

Workers and all socialists should study these speeches, which are really a warning of how the Labour leaders are making their bid to supply the crisis-ridden capitalist system with a method of achieving some political stability.

They plan to force the working class to bear the burden of the crisis in the name of 'national interest' (in the 'European Union' alone, the official figure of unemployed, well below the reality, is 18 million).

Blair is hammering home the message of 'no reforms', 'no de-

mands for the working class'. He says that it is necessary to state this in order not to frighten middle-class voters and so win the election.

But it is the reality of what the Labour government, faithful servant of the ruling class, will do. They have to take back the gains and rights won by the workers' movement in the past — and in the first place, the right to free and independent trade unions and the right to strike.

That is why they will not repeal the anti-union laws. That is why Prescott at the Durham Min-

ers Gala would say nothing about the future of privatised coal mines. That is why socialists should not deceive the working class by just shouting 'Tories Out! Elect Labour!'

The job is to warn the working class of the realities of the Labour leadership and its plans and prepare politically to fight them.

That is why Workers Press and the WRP have consistently said that the main question is to discuss as widely as possible throughout the workers' movement: **what kind of party must the working class have?**

The deep meaning of the political changes going on in the British Labour Party is emphasised by parallel developments in Italy, Spain and elsewhere. We are confronted by international and profound questions of what is happening to the working-class

movement as we knew it for so many decades.

In the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the old Stalinist 'Communist' parties have fragmented, with many of the dominant factions, as in Serbia, turning to nationalist and ultra-right politics and to the restoration of capitalism.

Split

In Spain, the Socialist Party, dominated by 'modernisers', is in government but is fast losing support and facing a split, an election, and the return of a rightwing government.

In Italy, the 'centre-left consensus' that Blair talks about is already taking shape. Be warned!

The leader of the 'Party of the Democratic Left' (PDS), Massimo D'Alema, at the recent party congress, put his party forward

Release Pierre Fauré!

Pierre Fauré, CGT union delegate at EDF, electricity plant in Montpellier, France and a member of Groupe La Commune has been arrested on a charge of 'association with criminals in relation to terrorism'. He is accused of assisting Basque refugees.

We will report further next week, but immediately, please send in your protests, petitions and raise it in your union branch.

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as the main force in a 'centre-left' coalition government after the coming elections. He proposed this government be headed by the Christian Democrat Romano Prodi, a 'technocrat', former head of the state corporation IRI.

Prodi was received by the congress (mostly ex-Stalinist) with rapturous applause. To complete the picture, next on the platform and warmly embraced by D'Alema, was Berlusconi, the Murdoch-like media baron and leading force of the rightwing Forza Italia coalition which included before it fell apart the northern-separatist Lombard League and the neo-fascist MRI!

The centre-left, said D'Alema (or was it Blair?) must prove that they are the real reformers and liberalisers.

And just to show that Blair is not the only advocate of 'talking to employers', 'national unity' and

'partnership' as against working-class politics, d'Alema's paper 'L'Unita' concluded:

'The debate reflected the PDS's need to talk to the country rather than to itself.' Do doubt Berlusconi and his TV empire will give a hand.

The working class in Britain learned a long time ago what 'national governments' are for. Blair's TGWU conference speech should send us back to the main question, that all trade unionists who are for a **socialist** party, a working-class party, whether they are in the Labour Party or not, raise everywhere they can the discussion of the programme and organisation of such a party.

This preparation is urgent, before the election of a Labour government, **now**. We propose to now begin in Workers Press the open discussion of the programme of that new party.

Workers Aid for Bosnia at Durham Miners Gala



Last Saturday was the Durham Miner Gala, the biggest working-class festival in Britain. Workers Aid for Bosnia took part, see page 3

Workers Press

French nuclear tests and the Rainbow Warrior

THE resumption of France's nuclear weapons' testing near Mururoa atoll in the Pacific ocean by the new rightwing government of President Jacques Chirac has unleashed a tidal wave of fury.

During previous test programmes protest was mainly in New Zealand and Australia, centred around the campaigns by Greenpeace.

Now the anger of the Polynesian and Melanesian people of the Pacific, most at risk from release of radioactivity has been roused. Thousands have taken to the streets in Tahiti, the French colonial outpost in the Pacific.

UNDERWATER nuclear testing is the most environmentally devastating of capitalism's senseless activities, and poses dangers to all life in the Pacific.

Tests are carried out by drilling into the ocean floor and detonating the weapon at depth. Shock from the explosion creates a bulb-like cavity in the ocean crust and shatters the surrounding rock, which then collapses into the cavity. The effects breach the surface, creating a 'chimney' of highly porous debris.

Any assurance that the devices under test are in some hi-tech way 'clean' or contained is pure rubbish. Neutrons emitted by the thermonuclear processes produce a huge range of radioactive isotopes in the surrounding rocks. These range from the very short-lived to those, like Strontium-90, which both enter tissue and have half lives enough to cause lasting physical and genetic damage.

Unlike land-based underground explosions in arid areas, such as Nevada, the chances of radioactive release are very high with submarine or island tests. Seawater pours into the shattered rock, to be heated by the energy remaining from the explosion. It dissolves isotopes and being hot and low density, the water circulates upwards, eventually to vent on to the sea bed.

Such circulation is a natural process on the ocean floors, where heat is available from submarine volcanic action. Plumes from the sea-floor vents rise in the water and then mix by the action of currents. A glance at the flow patterns in the Pacific, particularly in the tropical regions where the tests will be carried out, reveals the dangers.

Pacific water in the tropics is involved in strong westward currents that circulate water through the Tuamotu Society, Samoa, Fiji and New Hebrides island groups to reach New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the east coast of Australia.

Inevitably any radioactive releases will enter the human food chain through plankton and fish, as well as damaging the huge natural diversity of this coral-studded region.

THIS week was the tenth anniversary of the sinking in Auckland, New Zealand of Greenpeace's protest ship, the 'Rainbow Warrior', by French secret agents using limpet mines. The blast killed 30-year-old photographer Fernando Pereira.

The French secret services' murder of the only Greenpeace member to die in its cause shows the ruthlessness of Great French chauvinism, which is the only reason for the new round of tests. And some in the British government want to follow the French and restart its own nuclear-testing for the same reasons.

Although we disagree with Greenpeace's substitution of individual action for organising the fury of the people affected, we salute the memory of those courageous fighters. Now a far more powerful force has emerged in the Pacific. From another hemisphere Workers Press greets it in the spirit of internationalism, confident that Polynesian and Melanesian workers will sweep aside this last token of colonial arrogance.

Letter

Beyond Green criticism

I READ the Nick Lee article on Green protest and multinational capital (8 July) with great interest. However by the end I was reminded of the liberal ecologist riposte to the left:

'How often do you read a book about what is happening to the world's economy, its environment and its people that has nine depressing chapters about what is wrong with the world? Chapter 10 then gives a brief sketch of what might work....'

'New Economics [a group of Green economists] turns the tables. It focuses exclusively on that chapter 10' (New Economics foundation leaflet).

The danger of Nick's article is that many workers will read it, agree and then throw their hands up in despair. Green economics with its slogan of 'think global, act local' message has a resonance for them, particularly in depressed urban settlements located in rural areas like the farming/mining areas of Derbyshire and north Notts.

The question is: where are we going and with what practical programme to physically mobilise people so that they actually challenge capitalism and fundamentally reject the reactionary con-

tent of Green economics?

For Green economics appeals at the practical level. Anyone can begin to set up a local exchange trading system, or clean up their local river, or protest over land-fill and opencast developments.

But Green economics rests on a fundamental political collaboration between 'progressive companies' and the 'poor of the world'. This collaboration is about corporatism, a collaboration where workers give up their rights to the 'whole' (the capitalist system), and goes some way to explain how fascists can work within the Green movement.

So to confront capitalism, which is the system that threatens the planet, and Green economics, requires an independent working-class programme that has two fundamental elements:

■ Local programmes of reconstruction where socialists actively bring unwaged and unemployed people together with waged workers to create centres of resistance to capitalist environmental destruction.

Here Nick's arguments can be explained in the context of people actively fighting that destruction, and who have the confidence, community spirit, and solidarity that rest on food in the stomach, sport in the fields, and communication between neighbours.

How else do you think local centres of power (remember Soviet power and its base in 1917) can be created?

Now there may be a counter argument to this. Revolutionaries could argue that I'm campaigning in depressed former mining communities. That the battle is lost there. That we need to concentrate our forces among the big battalions of the world working class, centred on manufacturing production at other sites on the planet.

This is dangerously one-sided given the global attack on working-class communities, their welfare and social cohesion. What we have to argue is very simple: in the past reformists took up the battle for the cohesion and social welfare of our communities. Revolutionaries often spent more time organising in the trade unions.

This syndicalist approach — still exemplified by the Scargill's of this world — has left our communities dangerously exposed. Reformism can no longer fill in the potholes on the road or mend Mrs Boggins's blocked pipes — she bought her council house long ago!

Consistent agitational and practical activity in local communities must be a vital element in rebuilding political leadership in our class.

■ The second fundamental element is internationalising the local work — at its simplest bringing communities together through joint cultural, political, social and sporting activity, and at a more complex level creating the political body that can bring the representatives of the working-class settlements together with international trade unionists.

Such a body would then be in the first rank of protests about and alternatives to the sinking of the Brent Spar platform. People listened to Greenpeace because it was there.

First: it is only from a position of engagement with the world's problems that you can go on to change the minds of millions and create a new material force.

The programme we offer must at one and the same time mobilise people; for example community self-defence, and provide a vision of what will be, the international unity of workers exemplified in the Fourth International.

At the root of all this is the struggle for power — the power to oppose and the power to build: working-class people need to taste some of that power now if they are to build the 21st century — it's time for us to concentrate on chapter 10!

John Rees
Shirebrook

Turkish forces invade again

FOR the second time in months, Turkish forces have invaded Iraq in an attempt to crush Kurds fighting for national independence. Thousands of Turkish troops crossed the border into Iraq-Kurdistan on 5 July, occupying 15 villages in the Barzan region. Jet fighters and helicopters were also in action.

A spokesperson for the Kurdish Democratic Party said villages some nine miles from the border had been attacked, and about 3,000 people had fled their homes. Rejecting the Turkish government's claim that its forces were only pursuing guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), he said the PKK had no guerrillas that far south.

The area invaded is part of the so-called 'safe haven' which John Major announced in 1991, when Kurds were fleeing into the mountains from Saddam Hussein's forces. It is supposed to be under the joint protection of US, French, Turkish and British forces including RAF Tornados. This means that attacking Turkish forces have the advantage of NATO air surveillance providing photos for bombing raids.

In March this year 35,000 Turkish troops went into Iraq-Kurdistan for what became a six week operation to hunt down the PKK. But the Turkish government now says Kurdish guerrilla attacks have resumed. Prime minister Tansu Ciller has called

the 'safe' zone a 'burden loaded on our shoulders by the Gulf War', and might prefer Baghdad to police it; but Saddam Hussein has enough trouble policing Baghdad these days, with clashes within his forces.

The Turkish parliament agreed recently to maintain Operation Provide Comfort, the US, British and French patrols over Iraq. US Chief of Staff General John Shalikashvili warned US congressmen contemplating aid cuts against 'imposing more restraints on this valued ally'.

As Turkish forces invaded again this month, a Pentagon spokesperson said he hoped civilians would not be hurt, and that the operation would not last too

long. Similar sentiments were mouthed during the Russian invasion of Chechnya.

Riot police arrested over 250 people in Ankara, where four leading members of the People's Democracy party (Hadep) were going on trial, accused of supporting Kurdish independence. A Hadep official said prosecutors had complained about the crowd and said 'throw them all in prison'. People were bundled on buses outside the courthouse.

Writer Yashar Kemal went on trial last week over an article in the German magazine 'Der Spiegel' in which he said the Turkish authorities had imposed 'unbearable repression and atrocity' on the Kurds.

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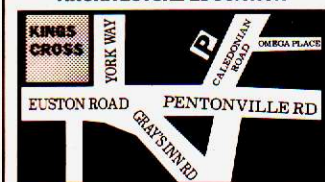
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John Prescott avoids Scargill's challenge on renationalisation



Gathered dignitaries view the bands from the County hotel

BY BRONWEN HANDYSIDE

The Big Meeting will not die! Despite the closure of all the mines in the county, last Saturday's 111th Durham Miners Gala vividly maintained this traditional celebration of working-class solidarity.

Workers and their families from all over the district joined with the former miners as they marched through the narrow streets behind the bands.

It took over three hours for the parade which had 23 bands and 52 banners from miners' lodges to pass the County hotel where the miners' leaders and their invited guests viewed it from a balcony.

More than 10,000 were at the racecourse — the traditional rallying point — at the end of the march to enjoy the different stalls and listen to the speakers at the rally.

The Workers Aid for Bosnia contingent made a big impact with their banner and distinctive tee-shirts and were applauded as they marched along.

Even though the Gala is an occasion for workers and their families to relax and enjoy themselves the decades of Tory offensive against the miners ensures that the big political questions are prominent.

Reflected

This was reflected in the souvenir programme where David Hopper, general secretary of the North East area of the National Union of Mineworkers described the campaign by the Blair leadership of the Labour party to change Clause Four as 'a crusade to rid the party of any semblance of socialism'.

Hopper declared that this campaign was aimed at giving the 'New Labour' leadership an

entirely free hand on gaining office.

'They can then fully support the so called "mixed economy" and "caring capitalism" without having any commitment to the re-nationalisation of the public utilities privatised by the Tories,' Hopper said.

'Sadly this includes coal. A failure to re-nationalise coal will be the ultimate betrayal of the mining communities.'

Directly

This issue was taken up by National Union of Mineworkers president Arthur Scargill when he addressed the rally.

Scargill directly challenged Labour deputy leader John Prescott, who was speaking after Scargill, to say if a Labour government would renationalise the mines.

Prescott huffed and puffed about the Tory leadership election and all the woes inflicted on the working class by Thatcher and Major. But not a word passed his lips about the closed mines.

In front of thousands of redundant miners in an area of the country which has been solidly Labour he insulted everyone with his cowardly refusal to answer the challenge.

But of course it is abundantly clear that Blair and Prescott will lead a government which will continue the Tory onslaught on the working class.

The urgent question now for all those who want to fight for socialism is how to build a new political party which can take the working class to power.

It is not sufficient to put the challenge down to Prescott and then carry on as normal, like Scargill, when it is clear that this incoming Labour government will not renationalise the mines nor reverse any of the Tory anti-working-class legislation.



Dawdon band marches with the banner through Durham

Views from Durham Miners Gala

Worker Press asked some of those at the Durham Miners Gala for their opinions on prospects for the Tory and Labour parties

Rob Crute, local councillor from Blackhall colliery, County Durham:

THE Tory leadership election didn't change anything whatsoever. Nobody is going to be fooled — the Tory party is still the Tory party — just as divided as it was six months, two years ago.

If you can believe the papers and the news the division is over Europe. But at the very heart of it, is how to run a capitalist society.

I'm a Labour party voter and I hope we do have a Labour government this time next year. But I think it's capitalist, like the Tory party is capitalist, and they'll do anything to get elected. Have you heard about the anagram for Tony Blair? I am Tony plan B — well that says it all.

But if the Labour party can shift to the right, it can also shift to the left.

The trouble is that it has lost touch with its natural constituency. What the Labour party is all about is to represent the organised working class.

You get a lot of people saying that Clause Four is outmoded. To me it's more important than it ever was — because of the privatisations carried out by the Tories. To me, if the Labour party can't commit itself to renationalisation — well, I don't say it's not worth getting them elected, they're the lesser of two evils.

They've gone all out to attract this middle-class vote. The fact



Chris Maughan and Michael Eccles at the Durham gala

volumes. But you have to be inside the Labour party, because it is the organised party of the working class.

I am in a branch with about 20 members — but the trouble with the membership is that they're all old. I want to get some young people into it, but the young people are saying what for — the Labour party's got nothing for them.

Chris Maughan (21) and Michael Eccles (20) from Durham:

I DON'T think anything was changed by the Tory leadership election. They're in a worse position now, because nobody trusts them any more, nobody believes in them any more. People think it's time for a change.

I'm not bothered myself. I don't think it would make any difference who's in there.

I wouldn't vote in the next election. I don't agree enough with anybody to vote for them.

I think Labour will get in anyway, but when they get in, they'll just do what they want to do, they don't speak for their constituency or anything. I'd love to change that, but I just don't know how

to do. I agree with those people who campaigned against the Criminal Justice Bill and against the motorways. I wouldn't climb up a tree myself, but I support them.

Sylvia Pye — from Parkside pit camp, and chair of Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures:

I WAS reading an article a short time ago, it was a Labour man that wrote it, he'd been Labour all his life, and he said: after the next election, when the Labour party gets elected, and gets into Number 10, there'll be a notice outside — 'Business as usual'.

And I think that's about the best statement I've heard for a long time.

What frightens me is, they won't just be the same — they'll be worse! I've been Labour all my life, and I found it very hard to vote at the last local elections.

Labour has not come out and said what their policies are — at least the Tories have said what theirs are, and it's very bad but better the devil you know.

I used to think Labour was the alternative — but not now — especially since they've thrown

I know a lot of my friends who have left the Labour party after being in it for a long time. I don't know what the alternative is.

Tony Blair is one of the biggest wimps — where does he come from? He's not one of us. He's never pretended to be one of us.

They have never opposed the Criminal Justice Bill. It takes people's rights away — we could never have run the pit camp if that had been in place.

Blair has also said they're never going to renationalise the pits.

We've gone full circle to where we have to start all over again with the unions. We've had it, we've lost it, and now we have to do it again. I think there has got to be an alternative, a way of uniting the working class. We can't fight in isolation, each fight has got to be for all.

[Sylvia Pye helped organise 20 months of resistance at Parkside pit camp, set up in opposition to the Tory pit closures. The camp was maintained against state surveillance, two attacks by riot police, threats and intimidation.]

Ten days after the pit camp ended, British Coal's solicitors wrote to Sylvia Pye demanding the costs of the pit camp's eviction — £15,877.16.

She will be imprisoned if she does not pay.

The Sylvia Pye Appeal Fighting Fund was set up on 6 May 1994.

Make cheques payable to The SP.A.F.F. and send to:

The Sylvia Pye Appeal Fighting Fund, c/o Communist Party, 100 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0LP.

Building workers stage sit-in

OVER 200 angry Southwark building workers staged a sit-in at their Direct Labour Organisation headquarters last Tuesday demanding no cuts in wages and no loss of jobs.

Last week, in a deliberate act to break the unions and smash working agreements, the council decided to transfer building work to outside contractors.

The unions claim that the EU directive on the transfer of undertakings (TUPE), which was supposed to protect workers' jobs and pay, is being used to selectively transfer some workers whilst at the same time increasing the overall workload.

They fear the loss of their guaranteed minimum earn-

ings agreement and cuts in wages of up to £50 a week. Those transferred could lose their pensions and other agreements and could even face the sack.

At the same time that the council have decided on the forcible transfer of some workers, they intend to take on new workers on short-term contracts at lower rates of pay.

A union spokesman said: 'Southwark Councillors seem only too willing to go along with management's proposals to butcher its workers' wages and jobs.'

Botes, the main contractor concerned is currently in the High Court facing charges by Lambeth council of corruption and £3.5 million overcharging.

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Inside left

Inkatha Chetniks

HAVING gleefully adopted the expression 'ethnic cleansing', the neo-Nazi scum of C18 support Serb fascism in Bosnia. They are in line with Russian antisemite Zhirinovskiy, and ex-Thatcher aide Sir Alfred Sherman.

They aren't the only reactionaries thus inspired. Norman Cigar's book 'Genocide in Bosnia', reviewed last week in Workers Press, quotes Chief Mangusutho Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party in South Africa, boasting in 1993 that the Zulu would have to be reckoned with as the 'Serbs of South Africa', since 'we are the most numerous.'

In KwaZulu-Natal, surrounding Durban's city working class and unions, Buthelezi, the ally of white racists, rules a bigger fief than he held under Apartheid. His regime hasn't changed.

Mthembeni and Enoch Nkwanzana, from the Inkatha-dominated Mankunzane Reserve area, joined COSATU-affiliated trade unions. Enoch was killed in 1993. In August last year Buthelezi's Internal Security Unit raided a house where Mthembeni's wife and mother were staying. They beat the women, and said they would kill Mthembeni. In November Mthembeni and his brother Vusi were killed.

On 18 January armed men attacked the home of Bheki Ntuli, regional chairperson of COSATU, in Mtubatuba, northern KwaZulu-Natal. They killed his mother Grace, and a neighbour, 18-year Thulani Mbatha, and seriously wounded brother JJ Ntuli, chair of the local ANC branch.

Well-funded, armed by South African security forces and allegedly by Britain's MI6, Inkatha continues to demand (and get) its own way from the Mandela government, and to terrorise workers. Buthelezi no more represents all Zulu than Karadzic speaks for all Serbs. But the British media will present any conflict as 'tribal', even when, as in KwaZulu, Inkatha's victims are Zulu.

This is the colonialist frame of reference to which facts, and people, must conform. 'Tribes' or ethnic groups should be under 'traditional' leaders, and perennially at each others' throats. If the natives resist colonial rule, the answer is partition — tried and found wanting in Ireland, India and Palestine, and proposed for Bosnia by Lord Owen. What if it were tried again in South Africa?

Would 'Socialist Worker' urge neutrality between a multi-ethnic South Africa (though under the bourgeois ANC) and ethnically 'cleansed' white or Inkatha 'homelands'? If Durban was besieged by Buthelezi's forces, would the Communist Party of Great Britain ('Weekly Worker') oppose efforts to assist the workers there, as it opposed Workers Aid for Bosnia?

Would other Stalinists support Buthelezi, just as they favour Karadzic's backward Chetniks against advanced, working-class cities? We are entitled to ask. We all opposed Apartheid in South Africa. We must resist it in Europe.

Mean Spirits

A friend has been reading 'Back in Time' by Nadezhda Joffe, whose father, Soviet diplomat Adolphe Joffe shot himself in 1927, in protest at Stalin's repression of Trotsky's Left Opposition. Her mother Maria Joffe spent years in Arctic labour camps, described in her book 'One Long Night' (New Park, 1978).

Made available in English by Labor Publications in Detroit. 'Back in Time' has an introduction by David North of the US Workers League, with no mention of Maria Joffe's book. An example of mean-spiritedness on the left, our reader comments

A letter from Metropolitan police Commissioner Paul Condon to black leaders has sparked outrage in the black community. NICK LEE explains why the letter was racist and the ideology and that stands behind it

THE letter by Paul Condon, Commissioner of the Metropolitan police, to 40 leading figures in the black community urging them to 'grasp the nettle' of a high level of involvement of young black men in street robbery, or 'mugging', has re-opened once again the issue of racism and crime statistics, and of the use of racist stereotypes of the criminal as fuel for a deliberately created 'moral panic' about law and order.

Condon's apparent naïvety is staggering. He is a leading representative of the new generation of 'sophisticated' police chiefs with a reputation for 'political correctness'. Why then circulate such a letter to, among others, the Commission for Racial Equality and London black Labour MPs, Bernie Grant, Paul Boateng and Diane Abbott, asking for their views and support?

Diversion

SUCH a move could not have come at a better time for the Tories. In the context of a new onslaught of trade unionism and a major Cabinet reshuffle that has solved nothing, a racist campaign on law and order taken up by the rightwing media is a welcome diversion.

It has to be made clear why Condon's letter, irrespective of his own intentions, is thoroughly racist.

Firstly, to call on black community leaders to deal with the involvement of youth in street crime is to say that crime by blacks is something to do with the nature of black culture, rather than the fact that black youth in inner-city London is over-represented among the poor and unemployed.

The effect of making the crime and ethnicity connection in this way

Police ch way for

was taken up by Bernie Grant MP who said: 'People will think that every young black person is a mugger because the Metropolitan Police Commissioner says so.'

Secondly, the racist slur of a connection between crime and ethnicity is always double edged. On the one hand it is suggested that engaging in a particular type of crime — in this case street robbery — somehow follows from being black.

On the other hand it is certainly not suggested that engaging in other types of crime for which whites have a monopoly, is somehow a result of being white.

This aspect was taken up by the Black Police Association — an organisation which Condon himself had welcomed as a way to encourage more black recruits to the 'Met'. A spokesperson for the Association referred back to a crackdown against burglary in various areas of London last year — known as 'Operation Bumblebee'.

Burglary is overwhelmingly carried out by whites. As the officer pointed out: 'The police service has handed the racists ammunition....'

'We know that white people are disproportionately involved in burglary yet when we did Operation Bumblebee there was no mention of this as being a white problem.'

Finally, the racist argument involves a reversal of cause and effect. While there is no connection between being black and committing street crime — muggers in Newcastle are overwhelmingly whites — in areas where there is a large black population obviously a large proportion of offenders will be black.

A simple statistical fact is elevated into a racist theory of the causes of crime.

As a young person from the streets of Stoke Newington in north London pointed out: 'The areas that he's mentioned are full of black people so the chances are that the criminals are most likely to be black. Most Joyriders are white but I don't see Condon saying that there's a criminal problem in the white community' ('Guardian', 8 July).

As far as the white communities are concerned criminals are just criminals. When it comes to the black community, criminals are 'black criminals'. That's the essence of racist ideology about street crime.

Real causes

MEANWHILE, the real causes of street crime — poverty, a collapsing state education system, no prospects for a meaningful job — are covered up. Young blacks in the inner city ar-

reas are themselves disproportionately victims of economic decay precisely because of racial discrimination by whites.

If there are any letters to be written, they should be directed to Downing Street, not at the parents of the victims of racist Tory policies.

The fact that crime is a response to the desperation produced by these conditions is something that the Tory government will do all in its power to cover up.

Condon's remarks were a gift for the government. Home Secretary Michael Howard immediately jumped to defend the commissioner's right to 'air all the issues he sees fit in the fight against street crime'.

Last month the Tory government welcomed with open arms a report from leading academic psychologists suggesting that crime was little to do with unemployment and poverty but more a matter of bad parenting combined with greater freedom for young people.

But however politically useful his remarks, the commissioner clearly had his own more pragmatic operational agenda.

Operation Bumblebee was seen as a great success in reducing burglary rates — though it is widely known that police are reclassifying many burglaries as criminal damage in or-



ief paves racists

der to 'massage' the crime statistics.

Crackdown

CONDON announced last April that he was intending to follow up with a new crackdown on street robbery.

Whereas a police operation against household burglary can be conducted relatively unobtrusively, an operation against street robbery is likely to involve a very high police profile — lots of officers stopping people on the streets.

'Stop and Search' as it is known, has a notorious history. One such operation in south London, known as 'Swamp-81' was a major factor in the Brixton riots of that year. The practice of stopping people at random in the streets is wide open for police officers to bring all manner of racist stereotypes into play in deciding who to stop.

The 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act was supposed to introduce certain safeguards against this: a police officer who stops and searches you is required to provide a written statement of the reasons for the action.

Many young people stopped and searched by police will no doubt be very surprised indeed to learn that this is supposed to take place!

Social surveys suggest that a large

number of young blacks continue to be stopped in such operations. They also suggest that whereas the — predominantly white — police may well be streetwise about which young whites to stop and search, in many districts in the case of blacks it tends to be the racist stereotype of 'any black might be a mugger'.

This is the sort of behaviour that sparked off events in Brixton over a decade ago. Condon wants to make sure that this sort of thing doesn't happen to his operation against street crime in the coming months.

What better solution than to get black parents and community leaders to come out publicly and say 'yes, we agree that a disproportionate number of our youth are involved in street crime, and we take much of the responsibility for that, and we regard it as quite understandable if police officers go around the streets stopping and searching young blacks in general'.

Condon's action raises an important issue about the police as an arm of the state. The Metropolitan police was created in 1829 by Tory Prime Minister Robert Peel. It was intended as a 'public order' force directly answerable to the Home Secretary, with no element of local government control as in the provincial police forces.

Paul Condon is therefore one of the most powerful, and at the same time completely unaccountable, bureaucrats in the country. He can rely on the fact that no Home Secretary, let alone a Tory one, is likely to overrule or even question his decisions.

Accountability

IN THE mid 1980s, there was a campaign, led by the Greater London Council — now abolished by the Tory government — for placing the policing of London under some form of democratic control by Londoners. It is time this campaign was reopened.

Such accountability would not of course prevent the police being ultimately a weapon of the ruling class. But it would mean that police chiefs would not have the freedom to issue blanket policy statements with racist implications. As it is, there is no way that representatives of the black community — yet alone the youth — can effectively rebut Condon's remarks.

A socialist policy to deal with crime must confront these two issues: the necessity to fight the economic conditions of a crisis-ridden capitalism that produce crime, and to bring policing under democratic control answerable to the working class whose streets are being policed.

City Lights

Standort Deutschland

FOR years the great strength of the Deutschmark was widely regarded as the symbol of modern Germany's economic might. Although more discerning commentators knew matters were somewhat more complex, only now is it more obvious that the very strength of the German currency is striking serious blows at the heart of the country's industry. For a powerful Deutschmark has one severe drawback: it means that German exports are in danger of being priced out of world markets.

The other side of the coin of the strong Deutschmark is the weak dollar. It is the plunging dollar — arising from the yawning US budget and balance of payments deficits — that is more than anything hitting German exports and is one of the sources of the growing tensions between Europe and the United States. So serious is the position today that many German firms, in an effort to avoid the consequences of a strong Deutschmark, are moving their production facilities out of the country.

A curt statement from that flagship of German industry, Daimler-Benz, brought home the bad tidings. The company blamed the strong mark and 'dramatic currency movements' for a 'sizeable loss' this year, during which time the dollar has fallen some 11 per cent against the Deutschmark.

Daimler-Benz has announced its first operating loss since the end of World War II, and to reduce these losses the company intends 'limiting its domestic operations by transferring production and purchasing overseas' where costs are often much lower.

The question of the Standort Deutschland (Position of Germany), or the ability of Germany to sustain its industrial base, is being debated long and hard. Distress has been loudest in the German car industry where, despite often buoyant sales, profits are being squeezed.

David Herman, Opel's boss, said last week that the car-maker's profits would be a huge 11 billion Deutschmarks bigger if the exchange rates of 1991 still existed.

He says: 'I know this is a theoretical calculation. But this is a threat to the industrial base of Germany. A further problem is the introduction of the 35-hour week and the latest wage agreements in the car and metal industries. The consequence is an erosion of competitiveness.'

'Standort Deutschland is under pressure,' said a spokesman for the power and electronics giant Siemens last week. 'The strong currency will hurt us and we will have to respond.'

Profits of other leading German firms are also falling. Steelmaker Krupp Hoesch claims it will lose Dm150m by converting foreign currency receipts into Deutschmarks; Bayer, the chemical firm, despite rising sales, still expects to see its profits depressed this year by Dm500m because of the strong currency; 'restructuring' and 'downsizing' (sackings, to you and me) are being planned.

The same pattern — rationalisation at home and increasing production abroad — can now be seen across much of German industry. Mannersman, the powerful engineering and telecoms group, derives Dm30bn of sales from its foreign subsidiaries and has recently stated its intention of transferring as much industrial capacity abroad as possible. Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic in particular, are favoured targets.

But German industry's problems are not just currency-related. The unions have managed to increase wages in many key manufacturing industries by up to 6 per cent while at the same time reducing the work-

industry bosses, German hourly wages are Dm57, compared with Dm33 in France, Dm27 in Spain, Dm26 in Britain, and Dm6 in the Czech Republic.

The German employers are now daily warning the unions that they are in danger of pricing their members out of work. The building industry is the most graphic example of what is happening in the economy as a whole.

Many of the construction workers in Berlin are from either Portugal or Britain. These workers earn around Dm20 an hour, while the local rate is Dm60. There are now about 150,000 EU migrants on Germany's building sites, alongside some 800,000 Germans.

Japan's property crisis

I DON'T suppose it will bring much cheer to the thousands in Britain suffering from 'negative equity' — the value of their houses has fallen below the amount they borrowed to buy them — to learn that the same problem now faces millions of Japanese families.

Between 1987 and 1994 some 5 million Japanese households, or roughly one in six of the total, bought houses. Estimates suggest that the value of these properties has dropped by as much as \$884bn. Today house starts are 11 per cent down on a year ago and at least one big Tokyo property company reckons that the growth of negative equity could trigger an even more severe collapse in residential land prices.

This would only add to the burden of Japan's seven specialist housing lenders, whose combined debts now total several trillion yen.

But the matter does not rest there. For this collapse in house prices is the latest factor threatening to undermine a number of the country's leading banks. Much of the lending made by Japan's banks in recent years has been based on rising land prices. The severe drop in land prices — down 85 per cent from their peak four years ago — has wiped out much of the collateral on which the banks made their loans.

The fall has been especially acute in the price of urban residential land. The greater the fall the larger the holes in the banks' balance sheets.

The banks' dilemma is that, if they sell land taken from defaulting debtors, land prices will fall even further. Even if they chose not to sell, the knowledge that they are simply waiting their chance to do so pushes prices down just the same.

The government has expressed its growing concern about this situation and a committee has been formed to organise a bank bail-out scheme. But the government seems to be at sixes and sevens about what to do. The finance ministry is contemplating a cut in property taxes but the government has hinted that it may rein in subsidised loans to house buyers — as the Tories are doing here with the cut in mortgage interest relief. The latter measure would only exacerbate the property crisis.

French welfare tax

Company sales taxes in France are due to double by 1997 as the government battles with a growing welfare budget. The tax, known as C3S and designed to finance welfare benefits for the self-employed, is currently set at 0.1 per cent of sales values but by next year will rise to 0.2 per cent. A government spokesman said that the increase was necessary because people were being laid off.

News from the frontline against ethnic division in Sarajevo

UNPROFOR exposed

The following commentary on UNPROFOR was written for Sarajevo Fax by Milenko Vockic of Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina. It bitterly reflects the experience Bosnians have had of the United Nations.

THE behaviour and the whole activity of the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina have never been satisfactory. Nevertheless, they had not so far been asked to leave the territory controlled by the legal authorities.

Alija Izetbegovic's statement that the advantages of UNPROFOR were equally balanced by the disadvantages marked a turning point. Especially since it was followed by another statement that from now on the disadvantages were definitely of greater weight.

Most political parties and public opinion are currently demanding a reassessment of UNPROFOR's role. Relations worsened when general Janvier, commander in chief of UN forces in ex-Yugoslavia, secretly met general Mladic at Zvornik and promised him he could re-supply his troops from Serbia through the occupied territories.

Nothing was done to secure supplies to the encircled Bosnian towns.

The news that UN representative Akashi had written to Karadzic to re-assure him that the Rapid Reaction Force would have the same mission as UNPROFOR — none at all — was also very badly received. The

'persona non grata' by the Sarajevo municipal assembly.

Hasan Muratovic, the minister in charge of relations with UNPROFOR, stated that he 'had nothing left to say to Akashi'.

At that point UNPROFOR ceased all activity in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The exclusion zones ceased to exist, as did the so-called 'security zones'. The Serb terrorists' planes flew over Bosnia, which is explicitly forbidden by a UN resolution.

The ultimatum is no longer observed. Humanitarian aid no longer arrives. Nothing is respected any more except the arms embargo. The only reason to have the 'blue-berets' in Bosnia any longer is if there were any prospect of a peaceful settlement.

The Bosnian government has set out the following conditions:

Raise the siege of Sarajevo, respect the exclusion zone for heavy weapons for a radius of 20 kilometers, re-open the airport and the 'blue routes', restore the water, electricity and gas supply to Sarajevo. Serbia must recognise Bosnia-Herzegovina and Pale must accept the contact group peace plan as a condition for any cessation of hostilities.

Supplies short

Sarajevo airport has been closed since 9 April. Stocks of flour in the city are down to almost nothing. Not a single ounce of food has been distributed in the city for the last two weeks.

water supply. Sarajevans watch the sky and hope for rain.

Shelling continues

The army of Milosevic and Karadzic rakes Sarajevo with the fire of 600 artillery pieces and 30 tanks (6 of them French made). They mostly use 60, 82 and 120 millimetre mortars. They also use 76 millimetre ZIS and 100 millimetre T-12 cannons and 105mm and 155mm howitzers.

Civilian targets are shelled using special shells filled with phosphorus. They are banned by international convention as so-called asphyxiating chemical weapons.

In June, several home-made bombs containing enormous quantities of explosives were launched at Sarajevo.

Often made from washing-machine drums, these bombs have a huge destructive power and were also used by the Bosnian-Croat HVO forces during their war against Bosnia.

The worst damage is done by quarter-tonne and half-tonne flying bombs. The Serb aggressors launch them from a special ramp at their base in Lukavica near Sarajevo.

The aim of these bombs is to kill the maximum number of people and destroy important buildings, but also to sow panic among the population.

They were involved in the attack on the television building and a big building in a district of Sarajevo the week before last.

David Herman of Opel's boss re-

The new opium of the people

PERSONAL COLUMN

FOUND three o'clock in the morning — that hour when the human animal is physically and mentally at its lowest ebb — I found to my dismay that I'd lost the entire week's wages.

Not that it sounds a lot of money by today's standards: a mere £7, which was the 'party line' I was drawing as a reporter in the 'Daily Worker'. But 40 years ago this sum was quite enough to keep body and soul together for a week, and far too much to lose in an all-night poker session.

In sheer desperation I battled Dawn brought me my second hand and a modest change of fortune, and by 7am, when we broke I'd managed to recoup about half of what I'd lost.

This was a salutary, if costly, lesson for a young man in his mid-20s. And from that day to this I've given poker a wide berth, though once or twice a year I do have a mild flutter on a big horse-race.

And I'm looking forward to next month's Penybont races at Llandrindod Wells, where the horses pull two-wheeled carts in what I like to see as a tradition going back to the human occupation, and from which I came back last year all of a better off.

SAVING aside professional gamblers, who have special skills and their own ways of going about things, two elementary rules of thumb must guide all amateurs who bet, whether on a horse or a dog or a Saturday afternoon's football matches or the turn of a card.

First, don't wager more in a single day or a single evening than you'd be prepared to lay out in any other form of entertainment. And, second, don't gamble much as a penny piece on astronomical odds, for you might as well chuck your money down the drain.

It's this last precept that would guide those who may be tempted to waste their money on the National Lottery. However during those glittering rolling billions may seem, the odds against winning are so enormous that it's a huge con trick, a heavily publicised device for extracting money out of gullible folks' pockets.

The plain fact is that you're more likely to be knocked over by a bus tomorrow than to be transformed into a multi-millionaire in this way.

The mathematical theory of probability, which should guide our decisions on these matters, is unfortunately not widely understood. But all of us should bear in mind that probability, as mathematicians understand it, has no necessary link with either our past experiences, or our information about the present, or our beliefs however strong, about the future.

It's an interesting confirmation of the materialist conception of history to find that the theory of probability arose in the 17th century in response to the practical needs of two sorts of gambler: aristocrats who spent much of their time playing card games, and capitalist speculators in the budding insurance business.

cal's 'Treatise on Figurate Numbers' was published posthumously in 1665.

At that time the insurance business was still a pure gamble relying largely on astrological predictions; one astrologer, who cast horoscopes to forecast the prices of pepper, ginger, and saffron a fortnight in advance, was said to be 'surrounded with work as a man in the ocean with water'.

But the financiers who risked their money as 'underwriters' needed better guidance than that, and in 1693 the English mathematician Edmond Halley (1656-1742), first to predict the return of a comet, published a Life Table based on the births and deaths in the city of Breslau. This was 'an attempt to ascertain the price of annuities upon lives'.

Thus did the insurance business, like the courtly card-players before it, turn from magic to a modicum of scientific method — a development in the best interests of capitalism as a whole, as W.S. Gilbert would point out:

Down went the owners — greedy men whom hope of gain allured; Oh, dry the starting tear, for they were heavily insured.

SADLY the average punter knows little and cares less about the mathematical laws that determine success or failure. Most people who bet seem to be guided by a hotchpotch of magic, hunch, and hope that is as flimsy, and generally as disappointing, as the First Little Pig's house of straw.

The publicity for the National Lottery is consciously and cynically designed to appeal to this backwardness. Its targets are people like my Yorkshire great-aunts who knew that breaking a mirror would bring seven years' bad luck, who knew that spilling salt would have dire consequences unless you immediately cast a pinch of it over your left shoulder, who knew that on seeing the new moon you must turn your money over to make sure that it grew as the moon waxed.

The deepening social crisis has brought the growth of a vast 'underclass' of people with neither jobs nor hope nor power over their future, condemned to everlasting poverty and despair, badly housed, badly nourished, policed (as in Luton) by bullies in riot gear for whom 'social control' begins and ends with a massive show of strength.

The capitalist state can't provide jobs or housing or decent benefits or elementary dignity. It no longer even pretends to. But what it can and does provide is a dream of instantaneous vast wealth.

Day in and day out, this specious dream is promoted by every means at the publicists' command. And, though by no means everybody is taken in, there are already a great number of poor families which each week spend on the National Lottery far more than they can afford.

Some religious people oppose the National Lottery on the declared ground that all gambling is immoral, so a state-sponsored gambling scheme must be very immoral indeed. But surely gambling resembles many other forms of entertainment in that a little warms, a lot burns.

I suspect these religious objections really spring from the fear of the men and women in dog-collars that their dog-eared dream of heaven has been outbid by the National Lottery with its garish dream of heaven on earth.

The National Lottery is the new opium of the people.

Peter Froyer

Sheffield NATFHE sign agreement

LECTURERS' union officials have signed what the Saturday 24 June 'Guardian' called a 'break-through' agreement with the management of 'Sheffield College Corporation'.

Both the college principal and the union's general secretary welcomed the agreement in the country's largest further education institution.

The deal was reached through the most extraordinary set of industrial relations procedures the union membership had ever experienced.

After a two-year dispute, culminating in a three-day strike, negotiations on pay and a package of conditions of service and retirement agreements broke down because the management would not budge on the members' determination to limit teaching contact time to 800

hours a year. The Sheffield 'Star' ran a head-line declaring the possibility of an all-out indefinite strike.

A day later it was announced that 'informal' talks were on the way. The result of these 'talks' was a management document, which was not a 'negotiated' agreement but was recommended by a section of the union leadership on the grounds that it had the status of a guaranteed 'collective agreement', that it staved off a 'bloodletting' through enforced redundancies, and that it would preserve the 'unity' of the union.

The document's conditions of service involve potentially huge increases in weekly teaching contact hours and a substantial loss in holiday entitlement. Large areas of initiative and power are given to line managers.

There are important lessons to

be drawn from this dispute. A clique of ex-Stalinists and Labourites have done a deal with the management of the largest further education institution in the country.

The rhetoric of 'lions led by donkeys' may have some resonance with those very angry militants, who feel bitterly betrayed. But this is not an adequate explanation of the political process which has produced this sell-out and the resulting confusion.

Protracted

There is no doubt that in this protracted and uneven struggle sections of the membership, left to their own local devices, maintained remarkable discipline and conducted all-out open-ended strikes against lockouts and

involuntary redundancies.

The Sheffield 'agreement' was not just an industrial sell-out, it was a political deal at the point when the membership sensed the Tories' weakness and wanted to build up links with the wider public-sector unions.

Despite the deal and the signing of the new contracts by virtually all the members, the issues that prompted the action will not go away; in fact they will be intensified. But above all those members of the union who want to resist are facing the question of what is the role of trade unions?

Are they to defend their members' interests or are they to police management policy? The Sheffield 'deal' is a microcosm of the larger political situation and a foretaste of what the Labourites intend to do when they move into government office.

GPMU conference

Printers' struggle against anti-trade-union laws

BY BOZENA LANGLEY
GPMU conference delegate

THE printers' union biennial delegate conference began by facing the problem of having in the chair an individual who had used anti-trade-union legislation against his own union to remain in office.

The election for president took place last year and was won by a little-known unemployed member from the London region, Doug Douglas.

In a clear breach of the union's rules governing the election for the president — which provide for statements by the prospective candidates to appear on the ballot papers, including endorsements by branches — Douglas's supporters engaged in a smear campaign, publishing attacks on the union in the London 'Evening Standard'.

Unfortunately general secretary Tony Dubbins's lack of support for the left-wing candidate Ray Williams, and the inability of the other half of the amalgamated GPMU — consisting of ex-Sogat members — to put forward a more forceful candidate than Ted Chard, contributed to the confusion, resulting in the membership's vote for Doug Douglas.

In view of the irregularities in the election campaign, and after a further consultation with the Electoral Reform Society, the union's executive council decided to re-ballot the membership for the post.

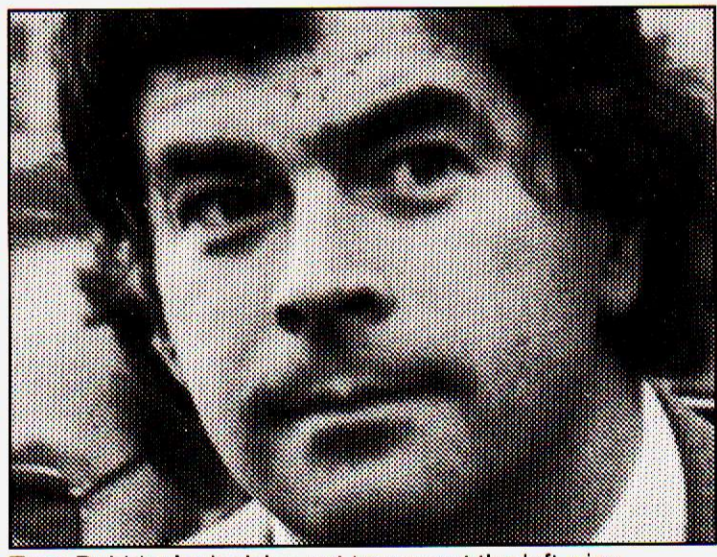
Faced with this, Douglas had a choice: to stand for re-election or to appeal to the membership to change the rules regulating the election.

He did neither! Instead he went to the Tory-appointed Commissioner for Trade Union Rights to fund his case against the union in the High Court.

Ruled

The judge ruled that he should remain GPMU president, and rewarded him with two injunctions threatening the union with sequestration of funds if any officer or member of the union tried to obstruct Douglas in carrying out his duties.

This action by the union president — 'a custodian of the rule book' — became a clear class issue for the membership, raising the question of the union's right to be



Tony Dubbins's decision not to support the left-wing candidate for president led to confusion at conference

independent from the state and workers' control of their own organisations: the trade unions.

The Mid-Southern GPMU branch submitted a motion on the issue to this year's conference and argued for it to be taken as the first motion on the agenda.

It called for resignation from union office of any individual who has sought assistance from the Commissioner for Trade Union Rights to maintain themselves in office.

Before the conference could move on, the question of who was going to be in the chair had to be resolved.

Those familiar with trade union conferences will know that the chair is normally taken by the union president, who is sometimes relieved from duty by various vice- and former presidents.

Clearly, if Douglas was in the chair during the debate on this motion would not have the necessary confidence of, or authority over, the 300 delegates.

Their feelings of disgust were immediately shown during the president's opening address, when a large number of delegates left their seats to stand at the back of the hall and ignored his speech.

On Monday morning, the Mid-Southern motion — '191' — was brought to the top of the agenda and Mid-Southern assisstant secretary John Bunn compared Douglas to a scab for breaking the principle of never taking the union into the courts.

His speech was warmly applauded and was followed by a

great number of speakers in support of the motion. The motion was carried overwhelmingly, but the president refused to vacate the chair.

What followed can only be described as an enormous and concerted effort to resolve the problem of the inability to proceed with the conference agenda with Douglas in the chair.

The subsequent emergency motion expressed no confidence in the president and called on him to vacate the chair and to allow the vice-president to take his place.

This motion was ruled out of order. By this time Douglas's arrogance and indifference to the feelings and will of the delegates had become clear. He was determined not to act in the best interests of the union and was prepared to wreck the conference in order to keep his position.

The mood of the conference had changed by that time, from utter disgust with Douglas, through frustration and disappointment with the inability to move on with the agenda, to openly growing anger.

In fear of the delegates, Douglas was only too glad to adjourn the conference for the rest of the day while the executive council was to prepare a statement.

This was read out by general secretary Dubbins the following morning.

It proposed a recall conference in three months which would consider one emergency motion: to give Douglas six months' notice of dismissal. But the

statement also said there was a need to uphold the union's rules governing the conference and that Douglas should be allowed to continue in the chair for the rest of the conference. On Wednesday morning, the fourth day of the conference, John Bunn from Mid-Southern branch accepted the executive council statement except for the last sentence allowing Douglas to chair the rest of the conference.

Protracted

Among many delegates who argued to reject the last sentence was one from Scotland who drew attention to the fact that even John Prescott, due to speak at the conference that morning, was turned away.

He ended by saying that the conference was sending a clear message to the Labour Party to repeal the anti-trade-union laws which were paralysing the conference.

The only speaker in support of Douglas was the London region secretary, Arthur Bonner. He could not put forward any argument in Douglas's defence, but instead repeated the accusation of a conspiracy by the left-wing extremists.

At this point he must have forgotten his own past as a leader of the Stalinist-dominated Broad Left group on the executive council in the late 1970s. His speech had the predictable effect of further melting down the number of president's supporters to a handful.

Later the executive submitted emergency resolutions to change union rules about the chairing of the conference — to allow it to choose a chair for further conferences. It also called for the conference to be adjourned to a future date and place to be fixed by the executive.

After an overwhelming vote in favour, and only four or five votes against, the conference closed on the afternoon of Wednesday 21 June, to be recalled in three months.

The next step will be a ballot of the membership on the proposed union rule change on the chairing of future conferences.

All the delegates, on their return to the workplaces, have a duty to inform the members about the issues fought out at the conference and the importance of the ballot on the rule change.

Taking sides on Bosnia

An open letter to members of the Socialist Workers Party from DAVE TEMPLE, ex-miner at Murton colliery

DEAR comrades,

Most working people across Europe are sickened by the racist violence in former Yugoslavia but are unable to see a way that they, as anti-fascists, socialists or trade unionists, can intervene in the situation.

Despite the existence of large anti-racist organisations in many countries of Europe not a single protest or demonstration has been called by them over the mass rape of Muslim women, the use of concentration camps and the activities of openly fascist militias aided by volunteers from fascist groups in Britain and elsewhere.

Your article on Bosnia in 'Socialist Worker' ('Don't take sides', 3 June) argues that it is impossible for workers here to take sides in the war or advance any anti-racist, anti-fascist position.

According to your article Serbs, Croats and Muslims are all in the grip of nationalist leaders, all equally prepared to commit atrocities, all equally misguided.

But the workers of ex-Yugoslavia are not stupid. On the eve of the war in Bosnia tens of thousands of workers, with the Tuzla miners at their head, marched on the Sarajevo parliament to denounce the squabbling nationalist politicians. Some called for the dissolution of parliament.

This growing protest was broken up by the Serbian-nationalist snipers. Did that working-class opposition to nationalism just vanish? Your article doesn't give any hint that it ever existed or of the huge protests of workers against Milosevic in Serbia.

If the communities are all in the grip of nationalism how do you explain that in Sarajevo after three years of siege and murder — there are as many mixed marriages taking place as before the war?

You describe the Serbian-nationalist forces attacking Sarajevo and elsewhere as made up of local Bosnian Serbs, misled into fighting their neighbours by nationalist leaders. Like David Owen you describe an ethnic war.

But this is a complete distortion on two counts. **Firstly**, you ignore the role of the Yugoslav National Army, dominated by the Serbian-nationalist commanders in Belgrade, which invaded Bosnia, via predominantly Serb areas. **Secondly**, you write as if all Bosnian Serbs are with the nationalists — they are not.

Taking the mining town of Tuzla for example. It has been besieged for three years, but there are Bosnian Serbs in both the attacking and the defending forces. In Tuzla there are still thousands of Serbs who have decided to stay to defend their town.

Why don't you mention them? If their existence is acknowledged it makes a nonsense of the popular myth that this is an 'ethnic' civil war.

Tuzla is not being attacked by Serbs. It is under attack from Greater Serbian nationalists pursuing a policy of ethnic division. A different matter.

The miners in Tuzla are Croats, Serbs, Muslims, Hungarians and many who before the war would have simply described themselves as Yugoslavs and now as Bosnians. They have maintained the front lines around Tuzla.

What are they defending and against what? What are the Serbian miners in Tuzla defending? Surely it is the right of all workers to live together even if they do not use those words.

Justified

Your article implies that the Bosnian Serbs in the nationalist forces have their rights and justified grievances. As a miner I heard this argument during the 1984-85 strike.

The Tory government was able to organise a section of the miners to break ranks and scab. The media, the Tories, Labour politicians and union leaders all discovered the rights of the working miners — their right to work.

As good democrats they conceded our right to strike but when we went to picket we were violating the scabs' right to work.

Whose side were you on in that situation? The strikers or the scabs?

Now, in Tuzla or Sarajevo, whose side are you on? The Serbian nationalists who are fighting to divide communities along cultural lines (i.e. divide the working class) or on the side of the people, including Serbs,



During the miners' strike in 1984-85 unity of the working class was fought for by taking sides — the side of the pickets!

remaining inside the besieged towns to defend the right of all people to live side-by-side. You must answer this question.

It is no use throwing up a smokescreen about Muslim nationalists in the Izetbegovic government. Nor is it acceptable to start counting how many people in the communities still support multi-ethnic Bosnia.

As long as there are people in Sarajevo, Tuzla and elsewhere, including Belgrade, standing up for an undivided Bosnia in which

all people can live with equal rights, they should be supported by our workers' movement and also by you.

If the National Front here attacks a Muslim do you refuse to protest because some Muslim leaders are Tories?

Despite your opposition to the United Nations intervention your analysis echoes the UN's. Like them you describe communities as totally caught up in nationalism.

The only difference between

you and the UN on this issue is that the UN uses this false description to justify their imperialist intervention to divide 'the warring factions' while you use it to justify international working-class silence.

But working-class 'neutrality' — that is the refusal to oppose the foreign policy of the Tory government and their representative, David Owen, in fact allows the UN to further their plans to divide and suppress the working class in the Balkans.

Your article ends up saying the way forward is for the workers to unite. But these are just empty words.

The workers in Tuzla are united — against nationalists, racists and fascists and you refuse to support them. What could the unity that you call for look like other than what already exists in Tuzla? If the working class of Europe cannot act now to defend this existing unity what chance is there of moving to some wider unity across the region?

In the miners' strike we wanted unity of all miners. But what unity? Unity of scabs or unity of strikers? There was no other possible unity, though many tried to find it.

Working-class unity could only be won by the scabs joining the strike. Was our picketing of scab pits fighting for unity or disunity?

Attack

In Bosnia the working class is under attack. There cannot be an abstract unity on some airy fairy principles which ignore the present murderous war. There can only be a unity on the basis of the defence of the multi-cultural societies of Tuzla, Sarajevo and the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

There can only be unity on the basis of the right of all the people of Bosnia to live and work together. There can only be unity on the basis of defending this way of life that was won by the partisans in their fight against fascism.

The only other basis of unity is

unity with the nationalist aggressors. A unity supported by Milosevic, David Owen, Major, Clinton et al.

It is a long-established principle of working-class internationalists to support the right of self-determination of a country against a foreign aggressor regardless of the outlook of the politicians who happen at any one moment to head that national struggle.

In Bosnia this struggle for self-determination becomes a very clear issue for all European workers. Self-determination for Bosnia means the struggle for the rights of all its inhabitants — Serbs, Croats, Muslims and others.

In opposition to this are the proponents of a Greater Serbia via genocide — ethnic cleansing, mass rape and murder.

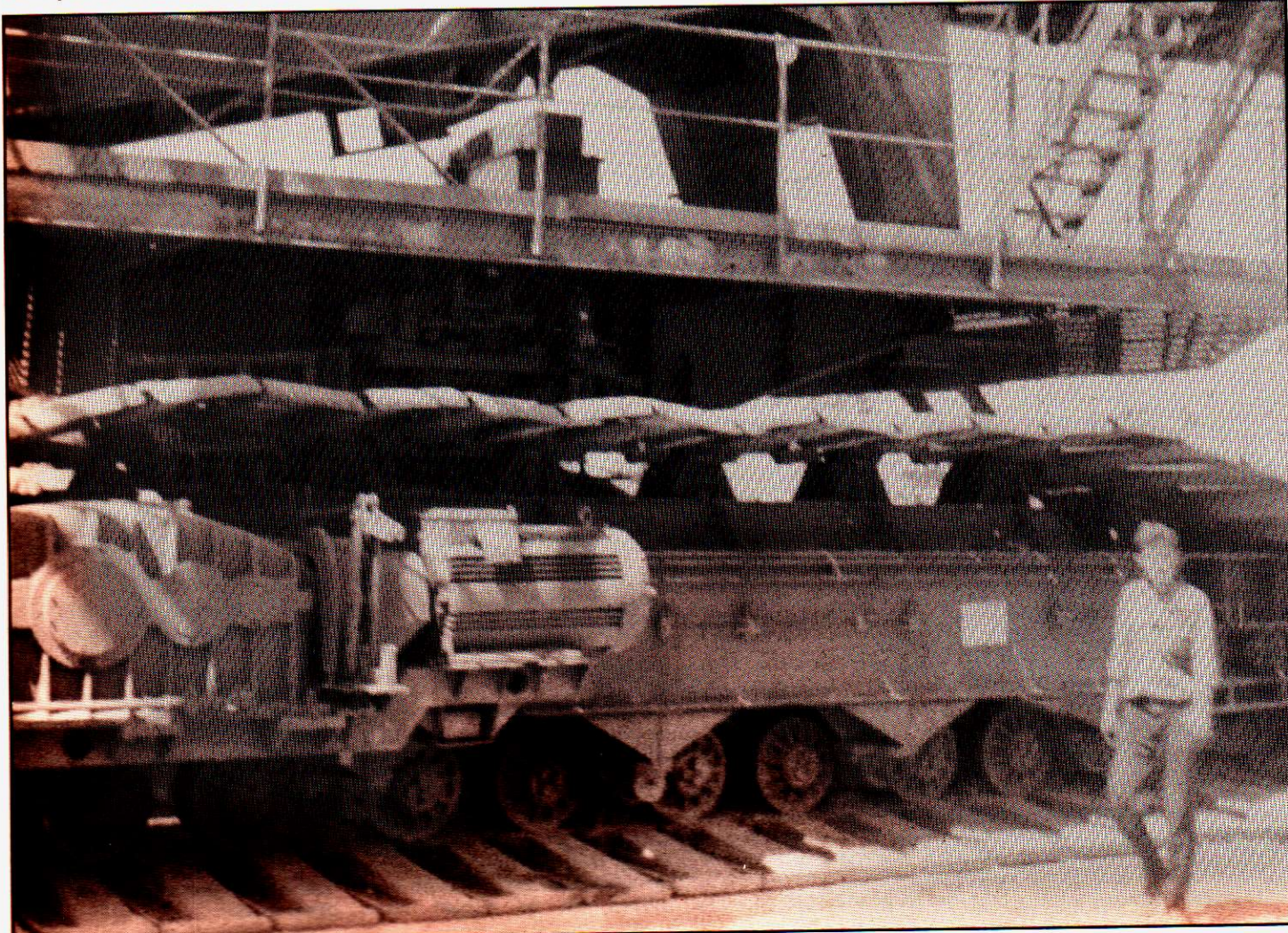
If the working class of Europe cannot act as a class and intervene to defend its brothers and sisters threatened with destruction by Serbian nationalism then it is not just Bosnian workers who will suffer.

A victory for the Greater Serbian nationalists' policy of division, supported by the UN and Major will strengthen the forces of racism across the continent. We are all under attack in Bosnia and to refuse to take sides is to open the door to disaster for our class.

Miners and other workers in Britain are now preparing to take mining equipment and food to Tuzla miners and other workers on a convoy organised by the multi-ethnic trade unions of Tuzla and supported by many trade unions here in Britain.

We are taking sides. This is what fighting fascism means. I ask you to support this work and propose that you send representatives with this convoy to talk to the workers in Tuzla and actually find out what is happening.

Tuzla (Bosnia) TU Committee: 00 387 75 221 438. Convoy co-ordinator in Britain: 0171-582 5462.



Tuzla miners from Britain are sending gear on the trade union convoy leaving later this month

BEATEN, HANDCUFFED AND SENT TO WAR

Milosevic forces Serbs to front

BY CHARLIE POTTINS
SERBIAN president Slobodan Milosevic, presented by the British government and media as some kind of peacemaker for Bosnia, has sent tanks, missiles and unwilling conscripts to reinforce the Serb-nationalist forces fighting in both Bosnia and Croatia.

Interviewed in 'Time' magazine (17 July), Milosevic says modestly: 'I'm just an ordinary man who, by the circumstances of his position, can help by having a policy of peace, one that is honest and objective to all sides.'

But a report from Belgrade says Serbian police have rounded up thousands of Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia, and sent them back to be cannon fodder for the nationalists.

'In most cases police used force if met with any resistance,' says Milos Vasic of the Belgrade magazine 'Vrome'. 'People were handcuffed, occasionally beaten, and in at least one case a man was shot in both legs while trying to escape.'

Men have been arrested in night raids on refugee centres and hostels, or just taken off the streets. Serbian police were accompanied by military police from Radovan Karadzic's so-called 'Republic of Srpska' (RS), in Bosnia, or from the 'Republic of Serbian Krajina' (RSK), in Croatia. 'The size of the round-up is unheard of,' Vasic writes. More than 3,000 men of military age were seized last month.

There are known cases of people who just happened to be born in Bosnia-Herzegovina and never lived there, and were abducted,' the Serb journalist says.

'There are cases of people born in Serbia and abducted just because they drove a car with RS or RSK licence plates. There are cases of people born in Serbia and abducted because they used to work in Croatia or Bosnia many years ago.'

look bad for the Milosevic regime's image abroad, and its efforts to lift sanctions.

The pro-government media and politicians either deny the raids happened, or claim those taken away were wastrels arrested for 'loitering'. In her column in 'Duga' fortnightly on 24 June, Milosevic's wife Mira Markovic accused refugees of trying to 'take over the key economic, political and social positions' in Serbia.

Taken

Those seized were taken to Yugoslav National Army barracks, where there were emotional scenes as families saw their menfolk taken away. The men were put on buses and sent to such destinations as Banja Luka (main town in Serb-occupied Bosnia), Bijeljina, Knin (Serb headquarters town in Krajina), Benkovac, Korenica, and Zeljave (Serb-held military airfield in the mountains near Bihac).

There are rumours of men being shot while trying to escape. Sources in Pale and in the Krajina say new arrivals have been beaten and punished as 'draft dodgers' and 'deserters'.

There is a general concern that such conscripts might be used as spearheading forces in future battles and deliberately wasted,' Vasic says.

The round-ups began after General Mile Mrksic, deputy chief of staff of the Yugoslav army, took command of Serb-nationalist forces (Chetniks) in the Krajina, in May.

Like General Mladic, the Chetnik commander in Bosnia, Mrksic played a leading part in the destruction of Vukovar, a Croatian industrial town with a mixed Croat-Serb population, late in 1991. In April last year he led Serb forces in the attack on Gorazde in eastern Bosnia.

'Military analysts say the general has brought 50 Yugoslav army officers with him, and is building an elite mobile operations group in the town of Slunj with an estimated 1,000 troops and up to 30 M-84 tanks, an improved version of the Russian T-72. The group also comprises artillery and engineering units' ('Milosevic resumes military sup-

port for rebel Serbs', 'Guardian', 6 July).

Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic says 26 of the tanks came from Serbia, although UN officials say some were taken from their compounds.

Outside the town of Pale where Radovan Karadzic's 'Bosnian Serb' government sits, a twin-dome radar installation built by the Yugoslav military before the war rests on huge shock-absorbing springs, and is shielded by reinforced concrete.

Ranging out over the Adriatic, it is linked via Belgrade's air defence system with missile batteries in Bosnia and Krajina.

Awed US officers think the Serb missile crew who brought

down Scott O'Grady's F-16 probably knew who they were aiming for, their electronic intelligence was so good.

When US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert Frasure was in Belgrade, Milosevic was able to assure him, a few days before the 'rescue', that the US pilot was alive and safe. How come, if not through his military's link to Pale?

Bosnians say the Serb missile batteries were not on line when the war began. Milosevic claims to have broken off relations with Karadzic, but admits this does not apply to General Mladic, who makes frequent visits to Belgrade.

Recent publicity for Mladic (a

generous profile in the 'Independent'), and talk of replacing Karadzic, could signal a new conspiracy against Bosnia. In secret talks in March, Milosevic asked US Congressman Bill Richardson to pass on to Washington his proposals for co-operation.

Axis

The Serbian leader wants to renew his axis with Croatian leader Tudjman, and carve up Bosnia-Herzegovina between a Bosnian-Croat federation and the 'Republica Srpska'. The Muslims, and all those Bosnians who oppose 'ethnic' partition, would be betrayed by such a 'peace'.

'Like it or not, Milosevic is the key player in the region,' insists

Congressman Richardson, 'and we have to deal with him, come hell or high water' ('Time', 17 July).

New Tory Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, highly recommended by predecessor Douglas Hurd, had strongly pro-Serbian advisors at the Ministry of Defence, and will try to pull US policy this way.

Those who want 'peace in the Balkans' should support Serb war-resisters, and not defend Milosevic and the Chetniks. We support the Bosnian people's resistance and fight for workers unity as the way to peace. As for friends of Karadzic and Milosevic — we cannot arrange 'high water', but we will give them hell!

Dunnes strike ends with gains

BY JOHN STEELE

THE three-week strike by 6,000 workers of Dunnes Stores, the largest multiple retail company in the south of Ireland, has ended with many gains for the strikers.

In a ballot of the workers 3,843 voted for and 973 against the Labour Court recommendations for improving working conditions. Dunnes management have also agreed to accept the settlement.

All 62 of Dunnes' branches had been closed by the strike, which centred on the crucial issues of compulsory Sunday working, 'zero-hour' contracts and new staff having to work Sundays on the flat rate.

Basis

Since last October Dunnes have been recruiting new staff on the basis that they work Sundays as part of a normal roster at the flat rate.

Under 'zero-hour' contracts employees who are paid by the



Shop workers picket Dunnes Stores in Clondalkin, Ireland

hour must be available for work but were guaranteed no hours.

Some of these were working as little as four hours a week and during the strike were receiving more in strike pay than they would normally receive if they worked.

The main Labour Court recommendations are:

- Staff employed at Dunnes before last October should be paid double time for working Sundays;
- Staff employed at the com-

pany since then should be paid time-and-a-half for working Sundays;

■ 'Zero-hour' (on-call) contracts be eliminated and part-time staff should be guaranteed a minimum of 15 hours per week with a minimum of three hours a day;

■ 200 extra full-time posts be created at the company.

The strike received widespread support from the general public with shoppers everywhere refusing to pass the pickets out-

side the stores and young part-time workers elsewhere associating with the struggle.

Dunnes have been notorious for their anti-union policies and union membership before this dispute was only about one third of the workforce.

Joined

However, an officer of MANDATE, the main union at Dunnes, says that about 2,000 employees joined the union in the run-up to the strike.

One of the smaller unions involved, the Marine Port and General Workers Union, reports that it was receiving applications for membership from young part-time workers in a whole range of small companies where the rates of pay and conditions are worse than Dunnes.

The majority for acceptance of the Labour Court recommendations was significantly lower in Dublin than the rest of the country and in Tallaght, Clondalkin and Crumlin areas there was particular opposition to the terms.

Fraud squad raids Chirac HQ

BY PIERRE DUPONT

FRAUD squad detectives raided the Paris headquarters of President Jacques Chirac's Gaullist RPR party on 3 July in a probe into building fraud when Chirac was mayor of Paris.

They have arrested Louise-Yvonne Casseta, the rightwing party's staff director and keeper of the slush-fund, for questioning about backhanders from building firms awarded city contracts.

More than 30 leading RPR

members are facing charges, including two of Chirac's former lieutenants at city hall, Michel Roussin and Robert Pandraud. The former head of Paris council housing, Georges Pérol, an MP, is under suspicion.

Despite Chirac winning the presidential election, his party lost six out of 20 Paris arrondissements in municipal elections soon after as the building scandal started to break.

The magistrate leading the investigation is Eric Halphen, whose inquiries into the Gaullist-run housing department in Hauts de Seine, west of Paris, led to a deeper scandal in February, over phone-tapping.

Interior Minister Jacques Pasqua, leader of the RPR in Hauts de Seine, had tried entrapping Halphen's father-in-law asking for a million franc 'biscuit' from an official to influence the case.

The Paris investigation comes

up alongside revelations about politicians and their relatives enjoying high-class housing at cut-price rents, courtesy of the city.

Chirac rents a garden flat in the haute bourgeois Seventh arrondissement for about £1,400 a month, half the going rate. Prime Minister Alain Juppé, pays slightly more for his sumptuous city-owned luxury flat, but he had nearly £100,000 worth of work done on it at the citizens' expense.

Luxury

'Le Canard Enchaîné' says Juppé's son, daughter, ex-wife and half-brother have all got luxury city-council-owned flats and had them done up at the taxpayers' expense, though leased at well under market rents.

Mayor Jean Tiberi's grown-up son and daughter each enjoy cheap rents on city-owned apartments while leasing their own places out at market rates.

Bernard de Gaulle, the former president's nephew is another of those named.

'Le Figaro' has published a district-by-district list of the high-living freeloaders, who include politicians and their pals, top civil servants, and some journalists who have presumably been rewarded for services rendered. One tenant pays 108 Francs per month (£13.96) for a flat in the Place des Vosges.

As if prime minister Juppé had not got enough troubles, he found it necessary recently to hold a press conference disassociating himself from his cousin Patrick, a tobaccoist, arrested for shooting a 16-year-old boy outside his shop near Bordeaux. Juppé is mayor of Bordeaux.

The scandals over subsidised rents for the rich, and bribery for building contracts, come amid a growing movement for action over homelessness in Paris and other cities.

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Russian army suicides

A total of 423 Russian soldiers committed suicide last year. Many were young conscripts unable to stand any more bullying and ill-treatment by the NCOs or older soldiers, according to the Interfax news agency.