



Merseyside dockers' struggle for British and international workers

BIGGEST LIVERPOOL RALLY SO FAR

TRADE UNION banners were to the fore in the march and rally in support of Merseyside dockers in Liverpool last weekend.

In what was perhaps the biggest march so far held in support of the sacked dockers, banners from the Strathclyde Region of Unison; from strikers at GCHQ; from shop stewards at BAe Preston; from Delco Electronics, Kirkby; from Bury Health branch of Unison; from Land Rover Joint Shop Stewards Committee at Solihull; and from Hillingdon hospital workers were present on the march through the city centre.

Chair of the stewards' committee **Jimmy Nolan** told the rally after the march that if Tony Blair made a statement of support of the strike in the House of Commons 'we would be on our way to victory'.

Jimmy Davies, secretary/treasurer of the stewards' committee said to loud applause that the committee was 'fully confident' that the forthcoming ballot would be 100 per cent solid.

'We would not sell our jobs in 1989 and we will not sell them today,' Davies declared.

He said that the employer was 'terrified' of the international conference that the strikers had called for 17 February.

This was a 'momentous occasion' at which port workers from 40 countries would be represented. 'I have never known anything like this,' he told the enthusiastic audience.

He said that the aim of the conference would be to organise a world-wide blockade of the port of Liverpool. The conference had to formulate a policy that would make possible support for all actions, official and unofficial, of dockers everywhere.

'If the bosses can act on a global scale, then so can we,' he said to applause.

'The Beatles rocked the world in the 1960s. We are going to shock the world in the 1990s,' he said.

Feared FO may sacrifice Papua hostages

FEARS have grown over the past week that the Foreign Office may be willing to sacrifice the lives of British hostages in West Papua to profitable relations with the Indonesian military dictators.

Four British graduates on a field trip to the mountainous area (which the Indonesian occupiers call 'West Irian') are being held along with two Dutch people and 21 Indonesians by the OPM Papua Freedom Movement. The fear is Indonesian troops will attack in force, killing captors and hostages — and then blame it on the Papuans.

The OPM captured the hostages to draw attention to its struggle against military repression, and said from the start that it would negotiate their release. OPM regional

BY GEOFF PILLING

Strike committee member **Mike Carden** gave a history of the strike and told the rally that the sacked dockers would march back to work with their heads held high. He said that he had every confidence that, given the world-wide support for the strike, the employer's offer would be rejected.

Nigel Flanagan from Unison said that he hoped that the employer's offer would be thrown out. He demanded that Harriet Harman save the money she proposed to spend on her child's education and donate the money to the strike. He demanded that T&G leader Bill Morris come out and support the strike.

Greetings

Member of the transport union RMT, **Dave Evans** brought greetings from his union executive. He said that his members were facing job losses as a result of rail privatisation. He declared that the fight in Liverpool was a 'struggle for the whole of the movement'.

Malkit Bilku brought greetings from the strikers at Hillingdon Hospital. She said that their fight was against slave wages and that their fight was the fight of the Liverpool dockers.

She insisted that their four-month-long strike at Hillingdon against a 20 per cent wage cut was not that of

Asian, black or white workers, but one of the whole working class.

GCHQ strike leader **Mike Grindley** said that the rally marked the 4,393th day of the struggle at GCHQ. It would go on until it was won he said to loud cheering. He said that the aim of their long struggle was nothing short of the restoration of full trade union rights at GCHQ. He reminded the crowd that this is what the leaders of the Labour Party had promised.

'We will hold them to this. They will be in dead trouble if they don't keep to their promise.'

Liverpool Labour MP **Eddie Loyden** said that the strike was 'The best example of the leadership of the working class in the last 16 years.' The Liverpool workers were involved in a 'struggle on behalf of the British and the international working-class movement,' Loyden declared.

He drew attention to the formation of the London Support Group that had met the previous Tuesday.

Calling for the building of the group, he said that it was now possible to explain to all workers what the issues in the Liverpool struggle really were.

He said that dockers were now in the vanguard of the struggle of the whole of the working class.

'The only political and industrial leadership for the working class is coming from the Liverpool dockers,' he declared.

commander **Kelly Kwalik** nominated a Catholic bishop as a possible go-between. The Indonesians rejected this.

Workers Press has learned that a former British soldier serving as a senior officer of the East Timor Defence Force, also fighting Indonesian rule, offered to go to help free the captives, but the Foreign Office said it preferred to use 'normal diplomatic channels'.

Three British police officers flew out to Papua to liaise with Indonesian armed forces and, it was suggested, conduct negotiations. But they are not being allowed to negotiate with OPM fighters. Nor is the bishop that the Papuans had suggested. The Indonesian government has authorised its troops to use force.

In a last ditch effort to open

negotiations, East Timor campaigner **Alan Heatherington** has been in touch with the parents of hostages **Bill Oates** and **Anne Van der Col**, as well as with the OPM's European representative **Otis Simopiref** in Holland. But the Foreign Office and the Indonesian authorities remain unwilling.

'My concern is not that the British and European captives will be murdered by the OPM,' Alan told Workers Press, 'but that they will be found and murdered by Indonesian Special Forces and the blame placed upon the OPM. If this happens the British government will collaborate with the Indonesians as they did when Indonesian Special Forces murdered British and Australian journalists in 1975 in East Timor.'



BY NICK BAILEY

FORTY-FIVE sacked workers at JJ Fast Food won a significant victory at their industrial tribunal on 29 January. It ruled they had been wrongfully sacked for joining a trade union against the testimony of JJ Fast Food boss **Mustafa Kamil**.

The company immediately offered the workers £85,000 to drop their case. This was rejected by the sacked workers.

The tribunal reconvenes on 14 February to consider compensation and the question of reinstatement. But the tribunal has no

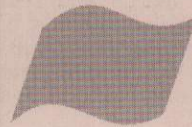
Industrial tribunal victory for JJ Fast Food workers'

powers to order the company to reemploy the sacked workers.

The industrial tribunal strategy was proposed by the Transport and General Workers' Union, after it refused to give the 45 sacked workers official backing or strike pay.

The company may close down its present operation in Tottenham, north London, and set up somewhere else.

The JJ Fast Food strike has highlighted slave-labour conditions endured by thousands of mainly immigrant workers in Britain. It also shows the combative mood emerging in this most oppressed section of the working class.




Workers Press Meeting

Saturday 10 February, 10.30am-4pm

Change of venue: The Falkland Arms, 31 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1. Tube: Holborn.

OUR readers are cordially invited to the 10th anniversary meeting of Workers Press. This is a time for us to review the past ten years, to consider the present and make plans for the future. The editorial board will present a report. We want to know your views, criticisms and proposals. Workers need their own paper, to report on and unite their struggles here and internationally. At this meeting we want to open up the discussion and practically begin the campaign for such a paper. For us in Workers Press our purpose — socialism — is the same purpose as every worker and those intellectuals whose lives are dedicated to the socialist cause.



WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB. Tel: 0171-387 0564 Fax: 0171-387 0569

To all socialist and workingclass organisations and individuals

CRISIS IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT — THE NEED FOR A NEW SOCIALIST PARTY

CONFERENCE:
Saturday 16 March, 11am-5pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1
(Holborn tube) Entrance: £1 (50p concession)

Kohl's chilling warning

GERMAN Chancellor Helmut Kohl has issued a chilling warning to an audience at Louvain University: 'The policy of European integration is a question of war and peace in the 21st century.'

But the real target of his remarks were Germany's rivals in Europe, and particularly the British.

'Nationalism is war', he continued, quoting the late president Mitterrand of France. He repeated threats that those who want to (i.e. France and Germany) will go ahead with monetary union, leaving the others outside.

'Remember what happened the last two times Germany tried to assume the leadership of Europe', is the threatening sub-text of his remarks. Kohl is also anxious to continue enlarging European Union to the east while still keeping up the drive to strengthen the EU's central institutions.

Behind Kohl's remarks is a rapidly maturing economic and social crisis in Europe that is threatening to tear the EU apart and plunge the continent into a 1930s-style crisis in which a vicious fight for shrinking markets creates the conditions for war.

EUROPEAN capitalists are caught between a rock and a hard place on plans to develop the European Union. Kohl has been using a barely-veiled threat: 'German power can only be contained by a strong European Union.'

At the moment not a single one of the major countries meets the terms for joining a common currency in 1999. All governments owe too much money. They are piling up debts to pay for social security, massive bills for unemployment benefit, health care, education, which for the moment they cannot get rid of.

They have shied away from raising extra taxes knowing that in the world economy of today employers can easily switch production to countries where capital is not faced with such burdens.

More and more countries, such as Italy, are now, like the British Tories, sceptical whether economic integration can be quickly achieved.

In his speech Kohl demanded decisive progress on further integration at an inter-governmental conference in March.

He called for 'considerable efforts on everybody's part to achieve a major step forward'.

THE real 'effort' is that each group of capitalists has to try to remove the huge cost of sustaining the comparatively high living standards enjoyed by the working class and the middle class in Europe. This is why even pro-European Tories like Douglas Hurd have asked Kohl to put off the timetable for a single currency in 1999.

Other European countries besides Britain would have real trouble in meeting the convergence criteria, which involve huge cuts in public spending. The employers know that this will meet with massive resistance from the working class and increasingly from the middle class. Here the lessons of France are staring them in the face.

But unless severe cuts are made, big rises in unemployment, costing millions in benefit, will only be made worse by cuts in state spending, subsidies to agriculture, and so forth. Kohl criticised 'current fashion to exude pessimism about monetary union and European integration'.

GERMANY herself is at present unable to meet the convergence criteria, and will only do so through a concerted attack on the living standards and rights of the working class. Cuts in these areas are attacks on historic gains in the struggle of the human race against poverty, disease and ignorance. They are attacks which the working class is bound to counter.

Indeed, they can only be countered by an offensive strategy which workers will have to develop.

Meanwhile in Davos, Switzerland, the German and French central bankers made it absolutely clear the necessary attacks on working-class living conditions would go ahead. Bundesbank president Hans Tietmeyer and Jean-Claude Trichet, the Bank of France's governor, insisted that they would stick by the convergence terms even at the cost of soaring unemployment.

Kohl's speech underlines yet again that there is no possibility of the unification of Europe on capitalist foundations. Only the working class, in a common fight for a workers' Europe can achieve that aim.

Letters

Give the paper to the workers!

PETER GIBSON is right (Letter, 3 February)! Workers Press must be the paper of all those fighting exploitation and oppression.

The problem is that many people, drawn into struggle out of necessity, see the range of papers on the left as part of a choice, not part of the necessity of struggle. How do we make Workers Press part of the necessity of struggle, integral to people's lives.

The bold answer to that is to give the paper to the people: to seek and establish the best organisational forms for transferring the paper from the political control of a very small group of people over to those who are now experiencing the bitterness of struggle on a dizzying array of fronts.

On 10 February, Workers Press readers could lay the basis

for a successful conference on 16 March by calling on the editorial board of Workers Press to set out a plan, central to which is the proposal that the paper becomes the weekly of all those who recognise that we need a new socialist party.

What a difference to the launch of the Socialist Labour Party with its secret meetings, an arm-twisted candidate at Hemsworth and the cult of the personality!

Here in 1996 we have a Marxist organisation, with its weekly paper, stating very clearly that it will continue to fight for its politics inside the movement of the working class by giving that movement a weekly paper to continue reconstruction and political regeneration.

In what relation do the Com-

munists stand to the proletariat as a whole?

'The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement' (*Communist Manifesto*, K. Marx and F. Engels).

We are fighting for the independence of the working class from all other political influences; we are struggling for a new material force, namely millions of people imbued with the ideas of socialism, a force that will brook no capitulation or collaboration with a ruling class that has had its share of history.

The development of such a

force requires its papers, journals, and information technology — Workers Press can play its part in that development.

When I come to London on 16 March, to what I hope is the birth of a new socialist party, I would also dearly love to be at the birth of the independent paper of the new and independent working-class movement.

Because Trotskyism has fought for that Marxist principle of independence for so long, surely we cannot now renege on that principle and leave the paper as a matter of choice for workers coming into struggle.

Make the leap from propaganda and exhortation — give the paper to the workers!

John Rees
Shirebrook

Questions & Answers on Hemsworth

BY SIMON PIRANI

In this imaginary conversation, the questions are asked by a worker who is not in any party. The answers are from a Workers Press reader, who has been following our discussion on the 'new party'.

Q: What did you think of the Hemsworth by-election result and the SLP's vote?

A: The SLP candidate, Brenda Nixon, did very well. The SLP is not properly set up yet, it decided to enter the by-election only two weeks before polling day — and still received 1,193 votes, one-twentieth of the total. Brenda Nixon's vote was not far behind that of the Liberals and Tories.

The time when large sections of workers break consciously from Labour is still ahead. Most workers in Hemsworth rejected Labour by staying at home, not by voting SLP. The turnout was only 39.5 per cent.

But Brenda Nixon's candidature put the issue of a new workers' party in front of the whole movement. It also put it in front of Tony Blair and Co., who sent more than 50 MPs and a host of front-bench people to Hemsworth! They failed in their main aim, to humiliate the SLP and Arthur Scargill.

Q: What about the SLP's policies?

A: It proposed measures to end unemployment and to reverse

cuts. These are burning issues in Hemsworth, which has been laid waste by pit closures.

To counter unemployment, Brenda Nixon proposed a four-day working week with no loss of pay, a ban on non-essential overtime and voluntary retirement on full pay at 55.

Attractive as these ideas must sound to unemployed people, outside a worked-out socialist plan for the economy they are just optimistic slogans.

Take the four-day week. A workers' government that tried to legislate it, without a battery of punitive measures against firms that broke the law, would fail.

And, were such measures implemented, what would stop capitalist investors pulling money out of Britain and investing elsewhere?

The New Labour gurus argue, of course, that socialist measures inevitably lead to an exodus of capital and a consequent increase in unemployment.

Their conclusion is — surrender to capitalism. They must be answered not with trite formulae but with a wide-ranging discussion on a socialist programme for the 1990s — a programme that would show how socialism answers the problems posed by capitalism on an international scale.

Workers like the Liverpool dockers are confronting capitalism on an international plane. We need to develop our programme on that plane too. One element should be an international work-

ers' plan, under which rich countries' resources will be used to fight the poverty and devastation caused by imperialism in the poor countries.

This discussion is part of the preparation for the new party.

Q: But which 'new party'? You comrades are calling for a new party; Arthur Scargill and his friends have formed the SLP. What is the difference? Why don't you all get together?

A: Maybe we will. But not by rushing.

We know from the miners' support groups, the anti-poll tax campaign, the fight against the Criminal Justice Bill, etc., that unity can be built between many political tendencies against the right-wing Labour leadership.

We should have that unity at elections too, when possible.

Workers Press supported Brenda Nixon at Hemsworth. The only reason there wasn't a strong contingent of its supporters at the hustings is because the WRP is small.

Q: But you do not want to join Socialist Labour?

A: No 'yes or no' answer, I am afraid!

Workers Press started discussing the need for a new party two years ago. Obviously, when Arthur Scargill and his collaborators — who mostly come out of the Labour Party and Communist Party — began talking about a new party too, this was extremely welcome.

But Workers Press and the WRP are not coming at this with a clean sheet. The WRP represents a distinct tendency in the working class, Trotskyism. That implies a whole history, a programme, a body of theory, an attitude to international questions.

The WRP is not going to hide all that. You would not ask it to. Its members will come into the discussion on the new party with our ideas and our experience — not to find things to create artificial divisions, but to make a real contribution.

Q: So what next?

A: Let's have the discussion. Arthur Scargill's document, and the SLP's campaign at Hemsworth, raised many issues.

Already, meetings are being held — by WRP comrades, by the SLP, by the Militant group which is now outside the Labour Party, by the coalition of groups in Scotland, by others. The more the merrier.

Let's build the new party 'from below'!

I would like to see discussion on the socialist programme. I mentioned problems with the SLP's proposals on unemployment above. Perhaps the WRP will produce its own proposals.

Of course a workers' party will not be built just by a discussion between the SLP and the WRP. It will be built by workers. The form it takes cannot be decided in advance; it will be worked out in practice.

Pressure for military to take over India

From PETER GIBSON
in India

A MILITARY dictatorship is being hawked as the solution to India's many problems. Calls for the army to take over the Indian government come after three years of regulation, and a steady rise in unemployment and corruption.

Many leading political figures, including the prime minister, have been accused of taking bribes. While the 1992-97 five-year plan expected an increase in the creation of jobs at 4 per cent a year, only 2.1 per cent were produced in 1992-93 and 1.8 per cent in 1993-94. The whole economy grew by only 4.3 per cent a year and not 5.6 per cent as planned.

The only growth area has been pay-offs to politicians. In just one case, it is reported that £13 million (650 million rupees) was paid by businessmen and companies in backhanders. Police have questioned 32 senior civil servants and 30 politicians. Some party of-

ficials have been charged. A number of others have swiftly skipped to London, Antwerp, Dubai or Geneva! Other investigations are underway on backhanders in the purchase of Bofors guns, a scam on import and sale of sugar, and corruption on telecom and securities.

'The political-criminal-business nexus has punctured the credibility of politicians,' says some of the press. There has been a call for 'the army to be vested with the power to run the country'. Bitu Patnaik, former Orissa state chief minister and veteran Janata Dal leader, said: 'The army should take over the country in view of the corruption among the current breed of politicians.'

■ At the naval shipyards sections of the police and civil servants are in dispute over pay. The price of bread has doubled in some parts of India. The labour minister has assured businessmen that he will not allow any union militancy to get in the way of economic growth.

Autonomous Refugee Centre — Hackney (ARCH)

From the Colin Roach Centre

A NETWORK of refugee organisations, church groups, squatters and supporters have occupied the old magistrates' court on Stoke Newington High Street, Hackney, next to the Halkevi centre, as an emergency night shelter/refugee centre. The building has been unoccupied for years and is being made habitable by volunteers.

From 5 February, thousands of asylum seekers lost their rights to benefit. People seeking asylum are often escaping torture and persecution. They are fleeing oppressive regimes like Nigeria, Turkey, Algeria — dictatorships supported politically and economically by the British government.

Asylum seekers have a genuine fear of deportation and are increasingly being harassed, criminalised and imprisoned in detention centres and jails.

Without benefit, these people will be destitute and vulnerable. About 2,500 people will be

affected each month, and up to 36,000 will be affected in the first year.

But this is not simply an attack on refugees. The government is attacking all benefits and services — for the young, the disabled, the unemployed, single parents... They are using racism to justify this attack. If they succeed, they divide us all and leave us defenceless.

Church groups have begun organising some practical support but the scale of this attack is overwhelming. The seriousness of this situation for tens of thousands of refugees and their families has barely been recognised in the national media.

Charity is not enough. For real resistance against this legislation we need to take practical direct action to defend ourselves.

We are launching an appeal for donations of food, bedding, utensils, as well as more volunteers and donations of money. If due to this legislation you need somewhere to live, or advice on fighting eviction, a telephone contact is Squatters Action for Secure Homes (SQUASH): 0171-226 8938.

More information on the campaign at the Colin Roach Centre: 0181-533 7111.

Newbury protesters fight on

BY DANIEL ROBERTSON

AN UNPLEASANT development in the Newbury campaign against the by-pass has been the increasing use of violent and illegal methods by security guards. Benders (improvised tents) have been torn down and more protesters are reporting heavy-handed tactics.

We delivered 6 trays of soft drinks (to complaints of where's the beer then!) and spoke to people at the visitors' area. We were struck by their reasoned intelligent arguments and efficient organisation — they are not at all the rabble that the media wants to portray.

The guards have been fed fantastic stories about the protesters. These range from lying claims that they are paid £30 a day by Greenpeace to accounts of unpleasant and bizarre personal habits like platted arm pits! We found everyone we met friendly and helpful and very 'together'.

Joe told us: 'A load of us were up Skinners Green on Thursday when they were cutting down some lovely oaks — hundreds of years old. They started using their bully-boy tactics.'

'Some of them are all right, but this one guy told me to get off the embankment. I was forced down and slipped to the ground where one of them grabbed my ankle and started to push me along.'

'I insisted on being allowed to make my own way but they were determined on being violent.' Support was growing. 'There are lots of people from all over the country coming down and the numbers are growing.'

Fred explained what the road builders were doing: 'They have to clear the trees by March when the birds come back to nest. We are holding them up a lot. Some days they get only 10 trees down, but other days it might be 100.'

The route is only being cleared at present — the main contracts for road building have not been awarded yet.

Friends of the Earth know who the possible contractors are and have organised a pressure campaign to force them to pull out.

We went on to discuss the decline of public transport: 'What's going on here is the front line between road building and public transport.'

'Some big towns have good transport, say a bus to a railway station, but out of town it becomes more and more sparse.'

'Buying a ticket is like a nightmare. Can you use it all the way on the route now? Different companies charge different fares.'

'In one case I know of, the price of a ticket from A to B is £3 greater than to C which is beyond B. People get cheap tickets for C but get off at B, but if you get caught you're fined £100!'

Later we visited the confrontation site. A long stretch of woodland has been demolished leaving scenes like a battle field.

The protesters have constructed around 25 camps along

the by-pass route to obstruct the tree felling and many more are planned.

These consist of tents both on the ground and up in the trees — we watched these being constructed. The tree tents are connected above ground by long



A 'bender'

aerial walkways that look precarious but make defending the trees successful.

The devastation passes around these defended areas and is clearly obstructing the by-pass's construction. The police will have to physically evict these deter-

mined people. We were also struck by the beauty of the woodland which is being destroyed. This is original deciduous forest which is increasingly rare in Britain.

The threatened road passes through a series of nature reserve areas destroying populations of rare wildlife, including colonies of dormice which are declining in numbers so rapidly that they have European Union-protected status.

The devastation that is being imposed on this beautiful area has to be seen to understand the anger of the protesters.

Friends of the Earth have circulated a press statement to the ambassadors of 10 top tropical rainforest countries pointing out the British government's hypocrisy.

The countries oppressed by multinationals and imperialist countries are regularly lectured about preserving their forests — difficult when you've got limited resources — but unnecessary

destruction for a luxury like an additional road is sanctioned when it is at home.

The by-pass is part of a national trunk road system designed to encourage freight to be carried by lorry when this traffic could be moved onto the rail system.

Instead privatisation of rail is going to lead to the closing of more lines and the shifting of even more traffic onto the roads.

Part of the by-pass route paradoxically follows an old, environmentally unobtrusive railway line — closed by Beeching.

■ A protest walk along the route is planned for Saturday 11 February. Details available from 0990 224488. Julian Cope will be presenting a benefit concert that evening at Shepherds Bush Empire. Tickets £10, bookings 0181-740 7474.

Workers Press will be visiting the protest again soon. Any readers who would like to come with us should send a note c/o Workers Press.

No cover-up of war crimes in Bosnia!

SINCE the implementation of the US imposed Dayton 'peace agreement' in Bosnia, journalists have been able to penetrate former Serb-controlled areas, and the existence of at least three separate mass-grave sites have been reported in the British press.

These are in addition to the US satellite pictures of the grave near Srebrenica.

Local witnesses say that all of these graves contain many thousands of bodies. In west Bosnia, the Ljubija mine is reputed to contain 8,000 corpses. Near Brcko, north eastern Bosnia, less than 100 yards from the main road, locals led journalists to a grave said to contain 3,000 people. Other graves are said to be nearby.

The US government's chief war-crimes investigator travelled along with journalists to a mass grave site in Glogova, again in the north east of Bosnia, where 2,000 victims are reported to be buried. Most of the people in Glogova are said to have been slaughtered en masse in the nearby Kravica warehouse.

These graves, and others like them contain the bodies of the 20 to 30,000 people who went 'missing' in Bosnia over the last three years.

The graves are evidence, along with thousands of eyewitness accounts by survivors of ethnic cleansing, that Serbian fascists carried out a conscious policy of genocide during the conflict.

Atrocities

Atrocities were committed by Croatian nationalists, but not on the same scale.

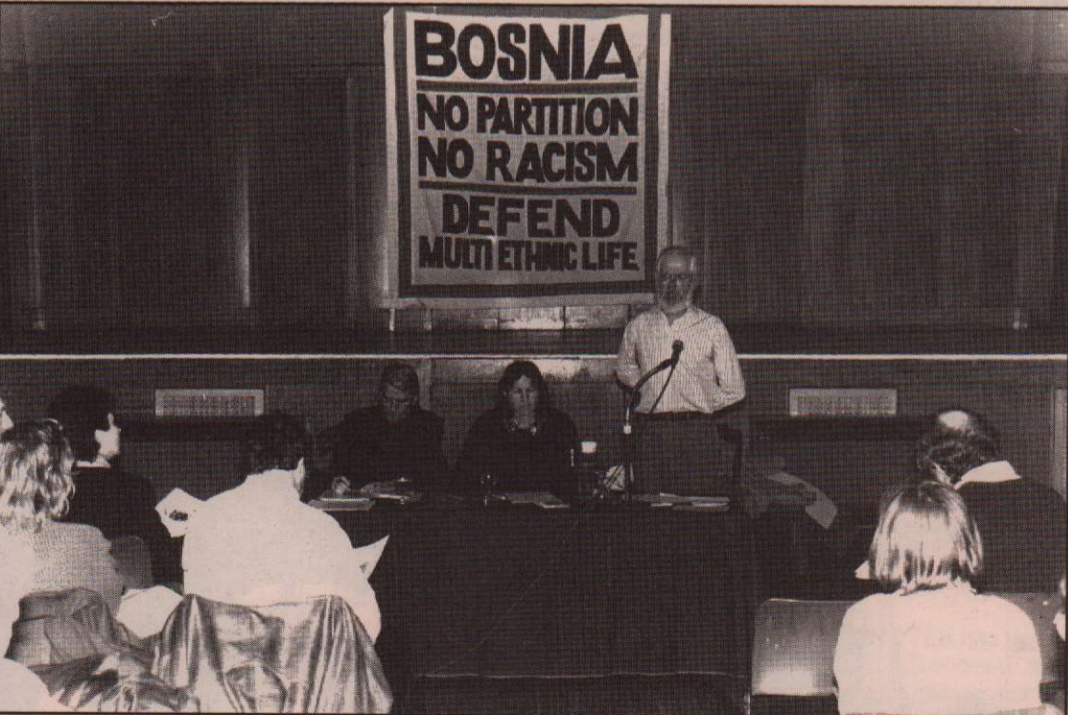
What steps are being taken to gather evidence on these hideous war crimes — to prosecute the criminals, to bring justice for the victims, to end the frightful uncertainty for families and friends of the missing?

The Hague war-crimes tribunal was set up by the UN. Whatever good intentions lawyers working for the tribunal may have, it is vastly hampered by lack of funds and resources.

Payan Akhavan, a tribunal member, said at a meeting in London two weeks ago: 'The resources are limited. We will not be able to exhume bodies, or make that kind of investigation. At best we will bring to trial a limited number of people... some justice is better than no justice.'

At a book launch in the House of Commons, historian Noel Mal-

The Bosnia Solidarity Campaign is launching an inquiry into the filthy role played by Western governments in condoning genocide. Seventy people came to a meeting in London on 29 January to demand no cover-up over the Bosnia war crimes (photo, Marg Nicol). The campaign intends to launch the inquiry in a few weeks at the House of Commons. If you can help, come to the meetings, every Monday 7pm at IVC, Cubitts Yard, off James Street, near Covent Garden Market. BRONWEN HANDYSIDE writes on why the war-crimes tribunal in the Hague will not get the real criminals or achieve real justice for the people of Bosnia



so far been indicted, there were at least 5,000 more who should be.

At Dayton the Bosnian government called for the occupying forces (IFOR) to have the power to arrest indicted criminals, and transfer them for trial.

This was ferociously opposed — for obvious reasons — by Croatian and Serbian presidents Tudjman and Milosevic. In the last four days of the negotiations, the US, British, French, and German governments exerted huge pressure on the Bosnian president to withdraw this request.

Most of the mass graves are in Bosnian Serb territory, and are watched and guarded by Bosnian Serb forces.

The only power at present which can investigate, or protect investigators are the occupying armies — but as they keep pointing out, according to the Dayton agreement, this is not their job. What's more, they are refusing point blank to do it!

US IFOR Commander Admiral Leighton Smith issued a categorical statement in January: 'NATO is not, I repeat, NATO is not, going to provide specific

ante security, for teams investigating these [mass grave] sites.'

Meanwhile, evidence is being covered up. It is reported that Serbian nationalists are digging up the bodies from the Ljubija mine, crushing them in mining machinery, pouring destructive chemicals over them, and reburying them under tons of earth and rocks.

Judge Goldstone, chief prosecutor for the tribunal, is complaining that the Serbian government is refusing all cooperation in the search for war criminals, as is Tudjman of Croatia.

Broader

The Guardian editorial of 31 January sheds some light on this feet dragging: 'NATO allies need Milosevic and Tudjman in the implementation of the Dayton agreement, where war crimes are only one aspect of a much broader whole.'

The US, with the assistance of the other Great Powers, imposed the Dayton agreement on the people of Bosnia.

bombing which preceded it, appeared at the point where the Bosnian and Croatia armies were gaining big victories on the way to winning back the whole of Bosnia.

It is a treaty made with war criminals, which legitimises the ethnic division of the country, and brutally suppresses the independence of the Bosnian people and their desire to lead a multi-ethnic life.

The Americans and the rest of the Great Powers have no intention of rocking this carefully constructed boat by seriously pursuing genocidal statesmen. Indeed they have rewarded them by presenting them with half of Bosnia.

If they did so, they would have to start by indicting Milosevic and Tudjman — and themselves as the greatest criminals of all.

It was the leaders of imperialism — Britain in particular — who opposed the lifting of the arms embargo, allowing a defenceless people to be slaughtered. Their agent, the UN, lured people into the 'safe areas', and abandoned them — with Sre-

BOSNIA: US Admiral rules the waves (and waives the rules)

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

SINCE stepping into Bosnia and Herzegovina to enforce its Dayton peace agreement, the US government has shown about as much respect for the law and legitimate national feelings as some UN Protection Force drivers showed careering through Bosnian towns.

The arrogance of the US commanded Implementation Force (IFOR) has been seen and noted.

'In a typically American manner, IFOR commander Admiral Leighton Smith has launched a media campaign aimed at securing support for his soldiers in the field and making their task easier,' said a Sarajevo television commentator.

A newspaper, the *Voice of Peace*, in Cyrillic and Roman type, was being printed at NATO's Naples base for distribution throughout Bosnia.

'In addition to the newspaper, IFOR has launched a radio station. It is run by American marines, who are very helpful. Its programming is currently very simple — 18 hours of mainly rock music with occasional newscasts.'

The Americans also planned to set up transmitters in Tuzla, Zenica and Banja Luka. This was alright, the Sarajevo television station commented, because the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina upheld the freedom of the press.

Admiral's piracy

'HOWEVER, IFOR did not feel it was necessary to seek any kind of permission, i.e. it did not feel the need to respect the basic procedure envisaged by international regulations in the sphere of telecommunications...

'Therefore, the state committee for co-operation with the UN has lodged an energetic protest with Admiral Smith...

'The key provision of the Dayton agreement provides for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This somewhat pirate manner in which IFOR began its media activity in our country could not be described as very firm support for sovereignty.'

It was reported last month that a CIA team had arrived in Bosnia to 'take care of the bad guys and co-operate with the good guys'. The CIA experts would be working with US military intelligence officers, but a former state department official warned that intelligence operations 'may draw you into Bosnian internal affairs more deeply than you would like.'

While the US forces set up their media to influence people in Bosnia, American GIs arriving near Tuzla were given briefings telling them not to listen to what local people told them. US troops in Bosnia have been forbidden to use local shops, bars and cafes.

WORKERS PRESS IS THE PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

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Inside left

Tough on crime...

How is Castro's Cuba faring, allowing the 'enterprise culture' into its planned economy? Not very well, according to Ron Ridenour in the *Morning Star* (2 February).

After three decades of US blockade and the collapse of the Soviet-led economic market, Cuba's sugar industry faces a \$300 million debt for fertiliser, pesticides, spares and other goods, making net profit from this year's harvest most unlikely.

The one-time dream of escaping from a colonial one-crop economy has not been achieved, in a mock sort of way. Tourism is now the top earner. Sugar workers' wages have fallen behind, and with them their incentive to produce more.

Once the dollar was devalued on 23 July 1993 and a free market established for many products and services, vendors and persons with transportation means — be it a car, a horse, burro or goat — began accumulating capital, earning one day, as the president pointed out, what a doctor or teacher earns in a month.

The government has not legalised residential rents, Ridenour says, 'but he hinted that it may do so in order for the state to obtain taxes and thus benefit from what is happening illegally. But the commander-in-chief is not happy about this turn of events.'

Has 'Only Fools and Horses' reached Cuba? Citing an up-and-coming winemaker, a TV repairman who overcharged probably using tools stolen from state workshops, and officials who rent out cars and who the government gave them, Cas- sarned they'd all be paying tax in the future.

A sociologist says 'the new times are making people think individually'. Ridenour says the resulting social deterioration 'is obvious to any Havana resident.'

Less than a year ago, for instance, the city bought over 2,000 refuse bins and 2,000 more were donated by solidarity workers abroad. The objective was to clean up the ever-present, abundant rubbish on city streets. No sustained improvement has been seen. Many of the bins' wheels are stolen for private use and people continue to throw their rubbish anywhere it pleases them, just as they leave water taps and electric lights on when not in use.

Sounds like 'socialist' Cuba is experiencing some of the decay we've seen in capitalist Britain. Speeches by 'the commander-in-chief' telling people they are not happy, are as unlikely to stop the rot as preaching from hypocritical Labour leaders here. Workers' democracy and control are what's needed.

Best we forget

STALINIST hacks are denouncing Loach's *Land and Freedom*, for recycling all their old lies, labelling militant Barcelona workers 'fascist agents', and slander the POUM and anarchist militia. Inwards, they resort to phoney outrage, claiming Loach's film 'insults' those who served in the International Brigade.

After Bob Armstrong came back wounded from Spain, to work for the 'people's' aid, Communist Party members took him to heckle meetings in the presence of Leon Trotsky. It worked. Armstrong developed his own views on what had happened in Spain, got expelled from the CP, and joined the Trotskyists.

Many Spanish war veterans perished in Soviet camps or East European show trials. The same kind of people who are striking poses now over Stalin's frame-up and murder of anti-fascist fighters.

Charlie Pottins

Which way to party for w

Significance of Stalinism's

We publish here two comments on the fight for a new party in which the working class can find the political representation of its interests.

MARTIN ROBERTS is a WRP member and ROB MENZIES is a member of the International Socialist League which is the British section of the International Workers League/Fourth International (LIT/CI), largely based in South America.

These comments represent distinctive and personal viewpoints published to take forward the discussion and do not necessarily reflect the position of Workers Press.

AT A recent Socialist Labour Party meeting in Manchester, one speaker said that its formation was the most significant thing that had happened in British politics since the war. I disagree.

The most significant thing has been that capitalism has reached a crisis, not just in Britain but across the world, in which one of its main pillars of support — the Soviet bureaucracy — could no longer maintain the fraud that it was 'building socialism in one country'!

This bureaucracy was not just capitalism's main force of social control in Eastern Europe. Across the world it was a powerful shackle on the labour movement as a whole.

The emergence of New Labour, provoking the formation of Socialist Labour, is a result of this capitalist crisis and its impossibility of offering reforms. In addition, the main left-wing prop of the Labour Party — the myth of 'socialism in one country' — has been kicked away.

In the past Scargill's world view — support for the Labour Party and the tyrants of Eastern Europe — must have helped keep thousands of people in the Labour Party.

The working-class struggle in the dock strike in Liverpool or in Workers Aid for Bosnia is every bit as significant an indicator of underlying change as the fact that Arthur Scargill could no longer persuade people that the place to be was in the Labour Party.

The formation of the Socialist Labour Party is only one symptom of this great world change. But, will the Socialist Labour Party help the working class take advantage of capitalism's crisis?

From the recent SLP meeting in Manchester I don't think so. It will certainly recruit members over the coming months. But it duplicates the relationship between the working class and 'the party' that flourished under Stalin and continued since by nearly all left groups, including the Trotskyist ones.

The 'party' decides, the class joins as individuals and acts only through the party.

How else can I interpret the opening of the meeting in Manchester where the chair Paul Hardman, of Lancs. NUM, said he was not going to allow any discussion about whether it was the right time to set up a new

party or if it had been set up in the right way? How can you open a meeting by banning such a discussion of tactics?

Everyone in the room had been socialists for donkey's years and had so far made little progress in the 'project'. A new leader, a new name, a new enthusiasm was supposed to substitute for thought about these problems.

Constitution

'If you don't like our constitution you can join and change it,' we were told. Socialist Workers' Party members, despite their childish disagreements, must have felt at home. This was 'party' as they knew it.

(SWP members welcomed the new party and then proceeded to give a stupid lecture on how the class struggle was on the streets and on the picket lines. They implored Socialist Labour to give up its electioneering strategy.)

Those who have not been able to cope with the world since the demise of the Communist Party or the good 'Old' Labour Party will be happy to find a new home.



Many Labour Party members and ex-members will probably gravitate to the views of Arthur Scargill

Do new socialist working class?

collapse

Some workers who are seriously trying to address the problems of the working class will try to make the SLP their party and will have to confront the fact that it has been born with the bureaucratic conception that the working class is a passive object needing to be under the control of a party.

The debate about the constitution excluding parties is an important one but flows from the SLP's political perspectives. In reality there are no socialist parties in Britain to be excluded. There may be many organisations that call themselves parties but their smallness makes them all factions within the working-class movement.

The SLP is not excluding parties but is really saying that it will not permit the existence of tendencies and different points of view within its ranks. But this is exactly the task that needs to be undertaken: The building of an organisation in which all those in struggle can unite, across the world, while discussing and working through all the differences that must exist.

In Britain, the Liverpool dockers, the anti-road protesters, Workers Aid for Bosnia, defenders of education, Militant Labour, asylum protesters, etc. — all these can and must be united in struggle. In the patient work of uniting, policies, constitutions, forms of organisation, types of leadership can all be worked over.

Martin Roberts



Demonstration in Alexanderplatz, Berlin, 4 November 1989. The collapse of Stalinism has created a new situation for the working class by removing one of its main shackles in Eastern Europe and the rest of the world

It is time to put aside infantile sectarianism!

THERE is a feeling developing within our movement that demands political expression. Trade union bureaucrats and reformists may block, attempt to head off and neuter this movement, but the struggle will out.

The class struggle reveals itself in many ways: wildcat strikes with union bosses kow towing before capitalist laws; the magnificent anti-poll-tax fight with the working class fighting a national battle against the Labour and trade union leaderships; and the countless local struggles against the interests of big business on the environment, motorways, toxic-waste dumping...

Many involved in these fights have never been involved in politics before. They may not see their fights in an overtly class-conscious way. But in developing their struggles, they give them an independent political expression and refuse to subordinate themselves to the traditional Labour and trade union leaderships.

How do we, as the revolutionary left, develop class consciousness and build unity of purpose among the disparate fighting sections of our class. How do we avoid the oft-repeated sectarian and holier than thou mistakes of the past?

MANY Labour Party members and ex-members will probably gravitate to the views of Arthur Scargill. They

are socialists in the sense of the sort of society they aspire to. But they have a wholly reformist perspective. They hark back to 'Old Labour': a more vociferous but still basically parliamentary gradualism.

They do not yet understand that it was 'Old Labour' that laid the basis for 'New Labour'.

But, their experiences at the hands of Blair & Co., and the inability of the system to provide further meaningful reforms, gives them and us the opportunity for developing a more revolutionary outlook.

Capitalism is in such a crisis that the bureaucratic and left reformist tendencies can't turn back the clock, even if they tried.

SCARGILL's baggage train will no doubt contain ex-Stalinist remnants: Morning Star supporters, the Communist Party of Britain, the New Communist Party and other ex-CP fellow travellers.

Leaders

Their leaders will still peddle the reformist and reactionary politics of the old CP programme: the 'British Road to Socialism', etc. But, many in the non Euro-Communist CP organisations may be won to a more revolutionary perspective.

Tactics must be found to isolate reformist approaches and support movements breaking from the

strait-jacket of Stalinism. Should a united front with these forces not be built, the alternative is that two, not one, new socialist party will be founded.

TO BUILD unity on the left and win left reformists to revolution, the best way is to work with people in struggle. Through joint struggles people come to respect and listen to other views and become less vitriolic.

Once our comrades are known as hard-working fellow fighters, they are more inclined to listen to and be won to a revolutionary stance than to be won by those who merely sling invective from the sidelines.

In the anti-poll-tax struggle, Trotskyists, anarchists, Labour Party and CP members fought together.

At that time, I was in the Communist Party of Britain. There was a party directive not to get involved in case it upset Labour councils! But several of us got involved in spite of this.

At first there were furious debates in the anti-poll-tax group, but over time I began to regard my Trotskyist and anarchist fellow fighters as better comrades than the CPB leadership.

I would not have been won to Trotskyism had it not been for the unity and respect forged in that struggle.

The lesson is clear. If we are not in there fighting alongside reformists,

we will never win them over. It is imperative that some sort of organisational unity, some kind of united front, is made for the opportunities which now present themselves.

NEVER has the reformist left been so disillusioned with the party they clinged to for decades. Never have Stalinism's followers been so weak, shaken and potentially more open to a non-sectarian Trotskyist position.

Opposes

For example, there is a large minority of the Communist Party of Britain that totally opposes its programme as being reformist. Rarely since the war, has there been such a plethora of independent struggles and fighters emerging as in the recent period.

Most, if not all of these forces are winnable. First, to unity in struggle in a new party. Ultimately, to unity for revolution!

SOCIALISTS call for workers' unity, say that 'unity is strength', and demand that workers of the world unite. Yet these socialists belong to a myriad of left parties, many are sectarian beyond belief and refuse to talk, let alone work together.

It is time to put aside such infantile antics. How can workers unite when socialists can't?

The confusing array of left parties

often spend more time attacking each other than the class enemy. This only disillusiones and confuses emerging class fighters.

If we are serious about class unity we must be prepared to bury the hatchet. We must learn to debate in a unified framework and respect differences even where we still disagree.

We do not deserve the title 'vanguard' if we can't achieve what we're asking the class to do.

The prerequisite for leading a united movement must be the building of that unity from the start. Differences will remain, but healthy debate in a united party will be a pole apart from the vitriol which many self-styled revolutionary parties direct at one another.

Let us practice what we preach. Let us work with others on the left and build a new united front, a new truly socialist party.

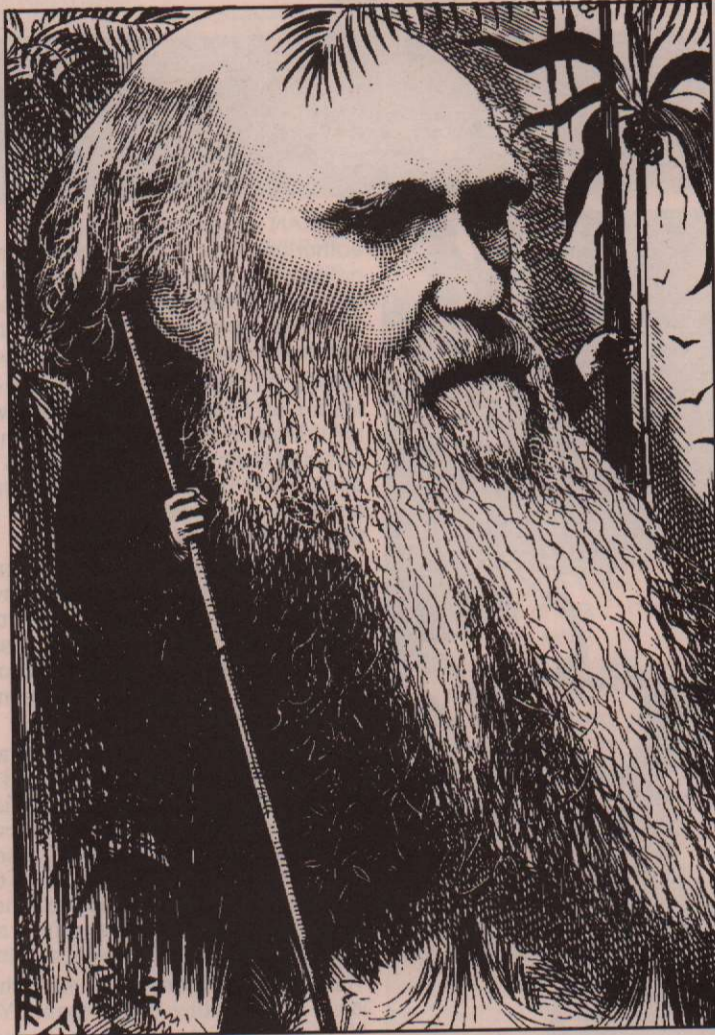
I applaud the co-operation in the 'Liaison Committee' between my organisation, the Workers International League (LIT/CI), and the Workers International as a crucial step toward a united world workers' party. But, organisational unity should be achieved as soon as possible. As principled Trotskyist and socialist organisations there can be no excuse for not joining forces. We should start merger talks immediately!

Bob Menzies

Workers' movement needs support from scientists

scientists

NORMAN HARDING writes on the conference in London sponsored by Workers Press on 16 March: 'Crisis in the labour movement — the need for a new socialist party'



Cartoon of Charles Darwin by F. Waddy (1873)

of date but it is the Conservative Party that is out of date and can no longer be the protector of capitalism.

Blair is saying to the ruling class that New Labour will do the job for them. But of course he has to show that he means what he says.

Blair has made many speeches giving comfort to the banking fraternity etc. Then to put some meat round the bones he organised the throwing out of Clause Four from the Labour Party constitution.

The *Sunday Mirror* comment of 31 December 1995 (Labour Party mouthpiece) had this to say about Emma Nicholson. 'Salute Emma Nicholson, a woman of substance. And, rarity of rarities, a Tory politician of high principle, conviction, consistency, character and charm.' It goes on: 'In short, Emma Nicholson embodies every quality that the modern Tory party has abandoned.'

We will have to assume by this that the *Mirror* thinks that the 'old' Tory party was one with good qualities.

Set out next to this comment is an article by Tony Blair. He has this to say about the Tory party: 'that it is divided beyond repair. That it panders to the forces of the extreme right wing. That it has simply given up the One

agree to print them. When Darwin made his five-year trip on the *Beagle*, the ship's artist asked him why he didn't just look at the plants and birds and so on, and simply enjoy their beauty.

Observe, and never mind all this detailed study, such as why does one type of bird have many of its kind with a different shape or size of beak. Be satisfied with the work of God, Darwin was told, and stop interfering with His creations.

It is well known that workers take a deep interest in scientific programmes on TV. The series of lectures given by Bronowski some 40 years ago are my first memory of such a programme and it created a great deal of discussion and interest in the factory where I was working.

From that day, the list of such lectures and documentaries appearing on TV is a very long one.

Short

One such series I want to mention, David Bellamy's, so that we can see where some of these scientists fall short. Whether to avoid upsetting the establishment or because they cannot or will not carry on their analyses beyond a certain point, I do not know. But it was a series watched by millions of people.

After giving four or five lectures on the development of plant life, starting from the formation of our planet, at the end of his last lecture, as the sun set in the west, he waved at the trees, the mountains and the sun's rays reflected on the sea, turned to face the camera, held both of his arms upward and said 'all this is the work of the Creator'.

Nobody holding this point of view could come to the conclusion that for progress to be made all life has had to change and has changed by changing its relation to the environment that it lives in.

He would most likely say: 'Yes, in order to make progress all creatures since the formation of the earth have changed not by evolutionary necessity but by the intervention of God, who decided it was time for a change. The Creator became bored with the dinosaurs so He wiped them out.'

Like Darwin, Marx and Engels did not just observe, they also dissected. This time it was not animals, birds and plants. They examined the development of human society.

The *Communist Manifesto* could not have been written without that scientific study. Are there any scientists who will be able and prepared to develop and popularise the profound historical reasons why the conference on 16 March is so important?

There will be many members of the intelligentsia starting to think on these lines. Those who are should publish, lecture, broadcast on radio and TV.

New Labour and the Tories have their individual and joint advisers and supporters from the establishment. We must rally all the support we can. No matter how small, can a supporting conference be organised at a later date?

Will any of the scientists who have access to the media come forward and sponsor such a gathering? Maybe to start with a debate in the Oxford Union after the style of the one that took place on Darwin's *Origin of the Species*.

How can anyone who raises thier arms to God explain to the starving millions in the world why milk is poured down the drains and wheat is being burned. They can observe it and even condemn it but they cannot explain it!

Who killed Gino Gallagher?

BY JOHN STEELE

LAST week's killing of Gino Gallagher in Belfast demonstrates the great dangers facing those who are seen to represent a threat to the so-called Irish 'peace process'.

There is deep hostility — not only from the state forces — to those who insist that the fight for socialism cannot be achieved through peaceful means nor can it be separated from the struggle to remove partition.

Gallagher — recently elected national organiser of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) and leader of its armed wing the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) — was shot four times in the back of the head as he was claiming unemployment benefit.

He was well aware of the dangers he faced. In an internal report to the IRSP executive dated 7 January 1996 he predicted possible attacks on members.

He warned: 'the recent spate of drug killings could be used to shoot down or jail RSM [Republican Socialist Movement] personnel in order to disrupt the re-organisation of the movement — to the benefit of state forces; the Provisionals; our enemies.'

Immediately following Gallagher's murder the representatives of the British government and the SDLP were concerned only to stress that his slaying did not affect the course of the 'peace process'.

But how many killings does it take for it to be 'unpeaceful'? It seems licence has been given to murder alleged drug dealers and those organising opposition to the British and Irish governments' 'Framework Document'.

The RUC has tried to build up the view that Gallagher's murder was due to internal IRSP power

struggles. This has been strenuously denied by party spokesperson, Kevin McQuillen.

McQuillen explained to Workers Press that given the recent history of his organisation this suggestion might gain some credence, but it had no basis on this occasion and was a conscious attempt by the state to steer the blame away from those responsible.

'This was a very professional job,' he said. 'No forensic links were left nor any burnt-out car. The killer just walked away leaving no trace.'

There was an absence of elected representatives of Sinn Fein and their supporters at Gallagher's funeral when it was attacked by the baton-wielding thugs of the RUC.

It was the IRSP supporters and the family who successfully fought off police on their own as they tried to arrest the INLA guard of honour.

The 'compromise' that was reached was in fact a victory for the principles that Gallagher represented and his cortege was escorted the next day to Milltown cemetery accompanied by the INLA guard of honour.

Sinn Fein representatives were present this time as they tried to cash in on the wave of revulsion that swept west Belfast following the initial police assault on the funeral.

With the 'peace process' increasingly being recognised as a means of beheading Republican struggle, there is growing opposition to Sinn Fein's involvement. The IRSP has re-organised.

With its claim to be a Marxist organisation, it will inevitably be a focal point for much of this opposition.

Kevin McQuillen has no doubt that the situation once again is 'revolutionary politics versus traditional Republicanism'.

Camden Labour goes for 4,000 terminations

CAMDEN Labour councillors have decided to terminate the contracts of 3,500 to 4,000 workers. The Camden workers are refusing to accept drastic changes in terms and conditions.

Letters have been sent to all Camden staff demanding they agree to new conditions by 8 March. If the workers don't sign by then they are to be given two months notice until 9 May.

There was a mass meeting of the local council workers' union UNISON last Wednesday and branch leaders are urging for a ballot for six days of strike action to get the Labour council to withdraw the termination notices.

Improvements to the new terms and conditions — which were agreed in negotiations between the union and management — have been withdrawn by the Labour councillors and are no longer on offer.

On Monday 29 January, a Labour group meeting voted by 22 to 11 to give thousands on Camden's workforce three months' notice to accept the new conditions or be sacked.

The decision has to be ratified on the Corporate Services committee, but Labour has such a large majority this is a foregone conclusion.

A UNISON deputation, led by branch chair Liz Leicester, addressed the Labour councillors and called on them to think again.

'The unions have compromised on every proposed change,' said Leicester. 'The reason we have not been able to reach a negotiated settlement is that management hasn't met us halfway.'

'The Director of Corporate Services has said this attack on the terms and conditions of your workforce is not finance-led. It is seen by the vast majority of people as councillors caving into the ethos of the private sector with the intention of proving that you are the bosses.'

three years to get workers to accept a new contract. Since January 1995, all new workers have been automatically on the new contract, creating a potentially divided workforce.

UNISON meetings attended by hundreds of members have twice mandated branch negotiators to try to get a settlement while protecting equal opportunities.

Liz Leicester told councillors that the new contract was above all an attack on women, the parents of young children, those responsible for dependants and staff with disabilities.

The council was trying to change all the agreements affecting them.

'Job sharing; flexible working hours; maternity, paternity and adoption leave and dependency leave: all will be drastically restricted, hitting the most vulnerable and newest groups of staff.'

Message

The overwhelming message of the proposed changes is in complete contradiction to what you claim are core values of Camden, Leicester said.

Camden's recently launched policy document states that it aims to reduce 'disadvantage through the promotion of service equality, enabled and assisted by the encouragement of diversity in the workforce.'

Leicester closed by saying the union had asked to negotiate directly with councillors because senior managers refused meaningful compromises.

'If you go ahead with these terminations, it will have a terrible effect on staff and services. You will be faced with anger, mistrust, low morale, loss of goodwill and frustration.'

'The Labour Party was built by and is supported by the trade unions. If you do this, you will be betraying those origins.'

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Money for war on Chechnya but not for salaries RUSSIAN MINERS STRIKE FOR PAY

A COORDINATED strike of more than 2 million miners across the Russian Federation and Ukraine demanded the wages which have not been paid for five months. In Russia wage arrears are said to be \$200 million.

The miners rejected promises of half what they are owed. The miners' leaders agreed to call off the action until March after further promises that the arrears would be paid.

Union leaders claimed 170 mines in Russia were on strike, while in Ukraine around 880,000 miners were out at 210 pits. Ukrainian miners have been without pay since October. In Kiev disabled miners demonstrated over their invalidity benefits, which have been unpaid since last July.

The coordinated action has seen miners striking together across the former Soviet Union from Ukraine's West Donbass region to Russia's eastern Siberia. Romanian miners also stopped for two hours, threatening indefinite stoppage later this month.

Crowded

In Moscow, miners crowded into Red Square, broke their miners' helmets on the ground, and said they had no money to feed their families.

In the northern Urals town of Vorkuta, 7,000 miners marched with banners saying 'Down with hungry reforms' and 'It's there for the war but not for our salaries', and called on the government to resign.

Five years ago the miners helped to bring down Gorbachev

BY KEITH SCOTCHER

and bring Yeltsin to power. Now it is Yeltsin and his government that is the target of their anger.

Russia's coal industry produces 850,000 tonnes a day — for power stations and industry. Even a week's strike would shut down the generating stations and plunge vast areas into darkness and cold in the sub-zero winter.

Privatisation

Privatisation has played a key role in the crisis. Under the centralised economy, the miners were paid by the state. Now the power and other industries do not want to pay for the coal which was always supplied to them without charge before; they complain they too have not been paid by their customers.

Hidden behind this is the wholesale theft of funds being carried out by officials and managers of both private and state corporations. While Yeltsin negotiates a \$9 billion loan from the IMF (on stringent terms), \$50 billion has been spirited out of the country and deposited in private bank accounts in the West.

The miners are still the leading section of what is the largest industrial working class in the world. Although their wages are set at a higher level than those of other workers, they are seen as being the main force which can take on the government. In their previous actions in 1991 whole towns rallied to support them.

Simultaneous with the present strike 300,000 teachers in 51 Russian regions, who are among the lowest paid of all, have gone on strike after not being paid for three months.

'Where are our sons?'



WOMAN refugee from Srebrenica aims her protest at the authorities. Over 1,000 women, driven out when Serb nationalists overran their town last July, demonstrated for two days at the International Red Cross Committee headquarters in Tuzla, demanding the truth about the fate of 8,000 missing men and boys, many known to have been butchered by Serb forces.

Hasija, 40, said Serb soldiers had seized her 14-year-old son Medin, as he tried to board a bus with her. 'I was afraid to say anything and they didn't talk. I can remember his face as I boarded the bus. . . . He will be 15 years old on 26 May, but I don't where he is and no one will help me find him. That is why I am here — why we are all here — our men and children are missing. And they must be found.'

Violence broke out when canton president Izet Hodzic drove his limousine erratically across the pavement through the angry crowd. Women chased his car, throwing stones at vehicles and government buildings, and some scuffled with police who had tried to stop them speaking to reporters. 'We will tell our story and you can't stop us,' one old woman shouted. 'What gives you the right to keep us down?'

Some policemen expressed frustration at having to use force against their own people, and said they sympathised with the protest. Later a coach laid on by Tuzla municipality took 50 protestors to Sarajevo to see President Izetbegovic. The women demanded an escort to go to Srebrenica themselves, to inspect the places where husbands, sons or brothers were taken away, and where they may be buried. The US-brokered Dayton agreement leaves the Srebrenica area in the hands of its Serb captors, a reward for genocidal 'ethnic cleansing'.

The right of refugees to return to their homes remains a major issue throughout war-torn former Yugoslavia. Some Bosnian Muslim families have begun returning to Serb-held Banja Luka and to Jajce, which is Croat-held. The European Union's administrator for Mostar has received a petition on behalf of 20,000 expelled citizens who want to return and firmly oppose Croat nationalist maintenance of a 'Berlin wall' ethnic partition on the city.

The association of expelled people from the Posavina area in northern Bosnia has issued a statement rejecting resettlement in western and eastern Slavonia, and insisting on the right to go home. In the Vojvodina, some 140 Serbs housed in a school petitioned the Belgrade government saying they would rather return to Krajina under Croat rule than be sent to Kosovo or the Sandzak.

Uganda '96

African Liberation Support Campaign and Uganda Joint Working Platform for Democracy: A series of discussions on an African case of a fight-back against military dictatorship — 'Building a task force network for democracy'. February to April 1996. Umoja Theatre, The Base, 59 Bethwin Road, Camberwell, London SE5, 1pm-6pm. Sundays 11 and 25 Feb, 10 and 24 Mar, 7 and 21 Apr. Case 1, **Sunday 11 February**: The Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and comparative parties in Africa. Information: Kofi (0171-924 9033) or Alfred (0956 222 497)

Springsteen supports striking Detroit newspaper workers

BY VIC CHARLES

ROCK star Bruce Springsteen has donated the proceeds from souvenir sales at a Detroit concert to striking newspaper workers in the city, matching the sum with a personal donation.

'Whatever their faults, unions have been the only powerful and effective voice working people have ever had in the history of this country', Springsteen said. The singer had also let the strikers set up information tables in the foyer at his concert.

'We applaud his support and initiative,' said Dave Hecker of the Detroit AFL-CIO unions. 'He not only sings and writes about working people, their trials and tribulations, in addition to that, he takes further, concrete action to help working people in need.'

Springsteen's latest album 'The Ghost of Tom Joad' taking its

name from the hero of John Steinbeck's 'Grapes of Wrath', about dispossessed small farmers, evokes images of working people today, displaced by global capitalism.

Some 2,000 workers have been on strike almost a year against the *Detroit Free Press*, owned by the Knight-Ridder chain, and the *News*. Attempts by the owners to produce scab papers without union labour have misfired, with major advertisers like the Detroit Auto Dealers' Association and the Wayne County authority switching their advertising away.

The strikers' own paper, the *Detroit Sunday Journal*, has revealed that Gannett and Knight-Ridder claimed false circulation figures for their papers, and company officials bumped up share prices by underestimating the cost of the strike, before dumping stock. In November Knight-Ridder's chief executive said the

strike would cost both companies \$66 million. In December, after selling \$318,000 of stock he admitted to Wall Street analysts the strike would cost each company more than \$100 million.

Four workers whom the owners brought in as scabs have testified at press conferences for the unions.

'Basically, we were held hostage,' said Kimberley Bailey, from Des Moines, Indiana. She and her brother Dan were flown in to be delivery drivers. 'Once we got here, they took our return ticket, and wouldn't give it back until they decided they were done with us.' Sometimes she was forced to work 16 hours a day, seven days a week. 'Sometimes I'd catch myself falling asleep while I was driving. It wasn't safe.'

Bill Prestage, from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where he used to work for a Gannett paper, said he was often given more than 1,000

papers a day to deliver. 'We delivered those papers until we couldn't do it any more, and the rest would get trashed. That kind of thing happened all the time.'

A public works director in the suburbs has confirmed this, complaining that carriers were dumping undelivered bundles of papers at the city recycling centre, violating the bye-laws.

The Detroit Auto Show is usually worth about \$100,000 in advertising to the papers but this year they lost the advertising and were barred from having a stall at the show. The strikers' *Sunday Journal* was available in the show press room and at the United Auto Workers-Ford booth, and a union fact sheet about the strike was included in the official press packet. The newspaper workers have also produced a video on their strike, including scenes of police violence.

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