



**Not pacts with bishops and lords but working-class action**

## Asylum Bill fuels racist state terror

The government's Immigration and Asylum Bill outlines an arsenal of racist laws targeting minorities, immigrant communities and political refugees. The Bill's nominal intention is to stop political refugees coming to Britain, which means leaving them prey to torture and murder at home. The Bill targets the job of anyone whose skin isn't white; gives the police increased powers to raid homes and workplaces; makes it a criminal offence to help "refugees"; and attempts to enlist teachers and health workers as appendages of the immigration police. It contains a "white list" of countries from which by definition there can be no asylum seekers. But even before the Bill has been voted on, the state has imposed starvation and homelessness on asylum seekers by denying them benefits, beginning on 5 February. Within the first 48 hours, hundreds were left destitute, forced to resort to church and charity groups to escape freezing-cold temperatures.

Racist to the core, this Bill is a direct threat to the whole of the working class. Hidden amongst its numerous and purposely vague clauses, the Asylum Bill sets out to redefine "immigrant" so as to include many who are currently long-term



Steve Forrest

Home Secretary Michael Howard (right) rails against asylum seekers, gives green light for racist state terror. Down with the racist Immigration and Asylum Bill!

legal residents, chillingly laying the groundwork for deportations in the future. The Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) has warned that this new defi-

nition will mean that thousands of its members who have lived here for decades will be designated "immigrants" and face possible exclusion from council housing,

social benefits and even obtaining a job. The organised working class, drawing in Asian, black and other oppressed minori-

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Graham Turner

## Major plays the Orange card, IRA renews bombing campaign

# British troops out of Northern Ireland now!

At 5.30pm on Friday 9 February the Irish Republican Army (IRA) announced the end of their 17-month ceasefire. Ninety minutes later an IRA bomb packed into a flatbed lorry exploded in an underground car park in East London's Canary Wharf complex killing two people and injuring over 30. Within hours the sectarian Royal Ulster Constabulary was demonstratively patrolling the streets of Belfast with rifles and body armour. Police dragnets were quickly mounted within Britain and 500 more troops were dispatched to reinforce the army in Northern Ireland. Within ten days another IRA bomb exploded in a London bus, killing one person (presumed to be the bomb carrier) and injuring several passengers. Throughout Northern

Ireland both Catholics and Protestants live in fear of renewed sectarian violence; Catholics particularly dread a resumption of murder by Loyalist death squads.

The capitalist media howled about IRA "terrorism", accusing them of jeopardising the "peace process", but said not a word against the main terrorist force stalking these islands, the British Army, behind whom stand the RUC and Loyalist terror gangs. From the standpoint of proletarian revolutionaries the Canary Wharf bombing was indefensible—in no way a blow against the forces of British imperialism. Instead it indiscriminately targeted civilians who simply happen to live or work in London's Docklands.

We Marxists oppose the tactic of ter-

rorism because it is antithetical to the necessary task of mobilising the proletariat against the imperialist oppressors. Rather it reflects the petty-bourgeois aims of its practitioners to assert themselves as the leaders of "their" people. Nonetheless, when the IRA strikes a blow against the forces of British imperialism or Loyalist fascist killers, we defend the perpetrators of such acts against capitalist retribution. But we take a fundamentally different attitude to indiscriminate terror. From a proletarian perspective, these are criminal acts which serve only to deepen hatred between Catholic and Protestant, English and Irish workers.

We demand the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops from

Northern Ireland, as a precondition to any just resolution of the "troubles" in Northern Ireland. As we warned: "Any imperialist 'deal' will be bloody and brutal and will necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority. And it would not do any good for working-class Protestants either" (*Workers Hammer* no 138, November/December 1993). From the start of the IRA ceasefire, the British imperialists have been provocative and arrogant. Having been forced, finally by the Clinton White House, Major has sought to exploit genuine war-weariness and hatred of murderous sectarianism to make the IRA give up its arms.

While the annual Loyalist marching *continued on page 2*

# Ireland...

(Continued from page 1)

season went ahead last summer under virtual martial law in Catholic neighbourhoods of Belfast and Portadown, the British government demanded that the IRA "decommission" its weapons as a precondition for negotiations with Sinn Féin. Major has been backed at every point by Blair's Labour Party, and also finds allies among the venal ruling class of the Irish Republic who, along with the Irish Labour Party and Democratic Left, act as loyal servants of British imperialism in the North while brutally oppressing women and attacking the working class in the South.

Rejecting the proposal of the US-sponsored Mitchell commission that talks should proceed (and "decommissioning" would follow later), Major upped the ante by adopting the Unionists' demand for elections in Northern Ireland before any "talks". The vista of a return to Unionist-dominated Stormont rule sent shivers through the entire Catholic population.

The differences between US and British imperialism are merely tactical. The US considers that the best way to disarm the IRA is to exploit the divisions between the "ballot" wing of Gerry Adams and the more hardline republicans. A week before the Canary Wharf bombing George Mitchell, the former US senator who investigated how best to "decommission" IRA weapons, publicly warned of the danger of a "fracture" in the nationalist camp. Minutes after the IRA declared an end to the ceasefire Gerry Adams telephoned the Clinton White House to say he had heard "some very disturbing news".

The "armalite" and the "ballot box" wings of the IRA/Sinn Féin are symbiotic, reflecting two sides of a desperate nationalist strategy which has no perspective outside the framework of capitalism and looks to imperialism for a "solution". Having built up illusions in an imperialist-brokered settlement, the IRA ended their ceasefire complaining that "instead of embracing the peace process, the British government acted in bad faith", while still calling for an "inclusive, negotiated settlement".



Crispin Rodwell

Belfast, August 1995: RUC thugs drag off Republican demonstrator.

The destruction of the Soviet Union through counterrevolution and the breaking of imperialism's Cold War anti-Soviet consensus led to increasing inter-imperialist rivalries. The Sinn Féin leadership saw in this the possibility to enlist the "good graces" of US imperialism to pressure the British to negotiate. Such illusions in US imperialism are deadly dangerous, the fruits of which have been witnessed from killing fields in Iraq, to US troops mowing down black women and children in Somalia, to the terror bombing of the Serbs.

From the beginning we have warned against any illusions in imperialist-brokered deals from South Africa, to the Middle East, to the Balkans. In Northern Ireland, within the framework of imperialism, the door is open to a "Bosnian solution" predicated on undoubtedly bloody forced population transfers. Under such a scheme given their proportional weight in the population of Northern Ireland, the Protestants would get the bulk of the land centred around Belfast and the Catholics would get the area around Derry. To realise such an "ethnic cleansing" move is quite expensive at least if it is to look "humane" to the viewers of CNN. The British don't have the money to do it, and the Americans won't spend the money to do it. But, such a move would fit with Germany's drive for mastery of Europe, except that the Fourth Reich is currently a little overextended after eating the former East German deformed workers state. In the absence of the shattering of the capitalist system, such is an idea of the options that are open.

The Catholics are an oppressed minor-

ity in Northern Ireland, but they live in the same territory as the Protestants who are a distinct community which very much fears becoming a minority that in turn would be oppressed and discriminated against in a capitalist united Ireland. In such situations of interpenetrated peoples there can be no just solution to national oppression outside of the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of workers rule.

We oppose both the forcible reunification of Ireland or the establishment of an "independent Ulster". We fight for an Irish workers republic as part of a federation of workers republics in the British Isles, forged through the revolutionary unity of the working class across national and religious boundaries, leaving open the question of the future development of the Protestant community. Integrated workers militias—incorporating both Catholics and Protestants, under a communist leadership—are vital in Northern Ireland to combat imperialist and Loyalist rampage as well as sectarian terror from any quarter—Orange or Green.

Genuine justice and equality will only come through working-class rule on both sides of the Irish Sea, through an internationalist struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism, and which will also bring down the sectarian Orange statelet in Northern Ireland and the clericalist capitalist state in the South. As we said when the ceasefire was first declared: "What is critically necessary is the forging of Leninist parties on both sides of the Irish Sea, rooted in the proletariat of all the peoples of these isles" (*Workers Hammer* no 142, September/October 1994). ■

## The lessons of October



TROTSKY

Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the world's first victorious workers revolution which founded the Soviet Union in 1917, also led the fight against political counterrevolution (after Lenin's death in 1924) of the anti-internationalist, anti-Marxist Stalinist bureaucracy who would betray the Soviet Union to the capitalist wolves. Trotsky fought to uphold the lessons of October, crucially the imperative of revolutionary leadership embodied in an internationalist, Bolshevik-type



LENIN

vanguard party. This has particular relevance today for trade union militants fighting the ravages of global capitalist reaction and the repeated betrayals in the service of the bosses by wretched reformist misleaders like the British Labour Party's Tony Blair and "left" Tony Benn.

There has been some talk lately in our press to the effect that we are not, mind you, in a position to tell through what channels the proletarian revolution will come in England.... Such a formulation of the question makes a show of a fictitiously broad historical outlook; it is radically false and dangerous because it obliterates the chief lesson of the last few years. If the triumphant revolution did not come at the end of the war, it was because a party was lacking....

Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer....

Consciousness, premeditation, and planning played a far smaller part in bourgeois revolutions than they are destined to play, and already do play in proletarian revolutions....

The role of the party has become all the more important in view of the fact that the enemy has also become far more conscious. The bourgeoisie, in the course of centuries of rule, has perfected a political schooling far superior to the schooling of the old bureaucratic monarchy. If parliamentarism served the proletariat to a certain extent as a training school for revolution, then it also served the bourgeoisie to a far greater extent as the school of counterrevolutionary strategy. Suffice it to say that by means of parliamentarism the bourgeoisie was able so to train the social democracy that it is today the main prop of private property. The epoch of the social revolution in Europe, as has been shown by its very first steps, will be an epoch not only of strenuous and ruthless struggle but also of planned and calculated battles—far more planned than with us in 1917.

—Leon Trotsky, *The Lessons of October* (1924)

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# Scargill's challenge to Blair upsets Labour-loyal applecart

The launch of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and its decision to run Brenda Nixon as a candidate against the Labour Party in the Hemsworth by-election set the cat amongst the pigeons of the so-called "far left" in Britain. The idea of splitting with the Labour Party is a violation of faith for the Labourite left. Even those groups, like Militant Labour and the Socialist Workers Party, who called for a vote to Nixon, were not breaking from loyalty to Labourism whether as represented by Scargill or Blair's Labour Party.

For communists who fight to build a revolutionary internationalist party of the proletariat, breaking the stranglehold of the Labour Party over the working class is a key strategic task. Although the programme of Scargill's SLP is simply that of "old" Labour as against the "New" Labour Party of Tony Blair, this split within the Labour Party offers the possibility for a fundamental realignment of the political configuration in this country out of which a genuine working-class party can be constituted.

The Spartacist League/Britain called for critical support to, and actively campaigned for, Brenda Nixon. As our article in this issue, "Break with Labourism, 'old' and 'new'—for a revolutionary workers party!", points out, the issues on which Nixon campaigned, taken together with her running as a party of opposition to the Labour Party:

"...provided an opening for communists to intervene to demonstrate to the working class the need for an authentic workers party—one imbued with the understanding that the only guarantee of the welfare of the working class lies through the destruction of a system based on the exploitation of the workers."

As revolutionaries we seek to exacerbate, and resolve, the contradiction that is the British Labour Party, between its pro-capitalist leaders and its working-class base. The Scargill split represents an opportunity for a hearing amongst the most advanced layer of the proletariat for a revolutionary programme. In contrast, whether opposed or in favour of the SLP, the rest of the left maintain a fundamental allegiance to Labourism.

## "New" Labour socialists

Unremarkably, the editor of the Communist Party of Britain's *Morning Star* denounced the SLP as "a diversion from the overwhelming need to defeat the Tory government". This was echoed by the Alliance for Workers Liberty who railed against the SLP for taking the liberty of standing candidates against the Labour Party. No surprises here. The launching of the SLP caused slightly more torture for the ever rightward-moving centrists of Workers Power. In the end they resolved their agony by shamelessly calling for a vote to Blair's Labour candidate in the Hemsworth by-election.

When Scargill's new party was first mooted, Workers Power dabbled with the idea of being a loyal opposition within it, claiming "Our aim is the construction of a revolutionary Socialist Labour Party" (*Workers Power*, December 1995). Hardly. In fact, WP couldn't even stomach the idea of a party in opposition to the

Labour Party. The same article argues that "a revolutionary SLP" would "call for a vote to Labour in any constituency where there was no revolutionary candidate, and continue to demand that Labour acts in the interests of those workers"!

This was posed as the means to ensure that "revolutionaries in a new party are not cut off from workers who have yet to break from Labour", ie, by maintaining the allegiance of said workers to Labour by sowing illusions that the Labour Party can be pressured to act in the interests of the proletariat. By January, Workers Power could see the door into the SLP being closed in its face, when Scargill made clear that no other organisations, outside of "bona fide" trade unions, would be allowed into his party. Although continuing to enthuse over fighting to "make the SLP a revolutionary party", they began castigating Scargill for practices "derived directly from Stalinism".

By the February issue of *Workers Power* this had reached full flower. Accusing Scargill's SLP of the "worst features of Stalinist bureaucratic centralism", they pouted, "Workers Power members and supporters will not be voting for the SLP in Hemsworth. We will vote Labour". Trying to put some left gloss on supporting a candidate who even they noted was "a trusted right winger", "hand-picked by the Blair leadership", Workers Power argued, "Arthur Scargill is a reformist.... He does not believe the working class needs a revolution." True enough. But one can only marvel at the hypocrisy of these snivelling Labour loyalists.

The example they give to demonstrate Scargill's reformism was that during the miners strike he "dared not condemn the TUC and Kinnock for their sabotage" because he "had no perspective of a head-on political clash... which would pose the question of power". This too is quite an accurate political assessment, and one that we have repeatedly made. But it is pretty rich coming from Workers Power which during the miners strike echoed not only Kinnock, but Margaret Thatcher and the scabs in calling for a strikebreaking ballot vote after the miners were already out.

Denouncing Scargill for not calling a ballot, *Workers Power* (2 May 1984) opined:

"In refusing point blank to call for any form of national vote for or against a national strike, Scargill, Taylor and Co have left themselves without any weapon for winning over Nottingham miners except mass picketing and demonstrations."

In the tradition of parliamentary Labourism, WP sees the picket line—a basic weapon in the class struggle—as a weaker instrument than the ballot.

The 1984-85 miners strike was affected throughout by the imperialist drive to destroy the Soviet Union. We argued that those who refused to defend the remaining gains of the 1917 Russian Revolution, although grievously undermined by the Stalinist bureaucracy and since swept away by Yeltsin's capitalist counterrevolution, could not defend the unions at home against capitalist attack. Having dutifully echoed the anti-communist Labour leaders in cheering virtually any and every counterrevolutionary force within the former Soviet bloc throughout the

1980s, the connection between the defence of the bureaucratically deformed workers states and the defence of the unions was brought home with a vengeance against Workers Power in 1990 when they were the co-sponsors of a tour by one Yuri Butchenko.

Well-connected with Russian fascists, Butchenko emerged during his British tour as a key player in the witch hunt against Scargill, appearing with the head of the scab UDM to "testify" in the lying frame-up that Scargill had misappropriated funds during the miners strike. Although somewhat embarrassed by this incident, today Workers Power's denunciations of Scargill's "Stalinism" is only further testament to their fealty to Labourism and "democracy".

## "Old" Labour socialists

In response to Scargill's announcement that he would be forming the SLP, *Socialist Worker* opined: "We're sympathetic to Scargill's reasoning. But at least until the next election, a left alternative to Blair has to be extraparliamentary." The call for extraparliamentary "struggle" has long served Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party as a cover for their real position of parliamentary loyalty to Labour. While advocating a vote for Brenda Nixon in the Hemsworth by-election, they made doubly clear that this didn't mean opposition to Blair's Labour Party. Advising that it was okay to vote for Nixon in this ultra-safe Labour seat, they warned: "it would be a mistake for the SLP to stand in every constituency, especially in marginal areas where Labour is challenging the Tories". They argued that a "victory for Labour at the next general election will be a boost to the confidence of every worker and trade unionist in Britain" (*Socialist Worker*, 20 January).

Militant Labour has been amongst the biggest enthusiasts for the SLP, despite being excluded from joining it as a pressure group, for which they have all the reformist prerequisites from their longstanding role in the same capacity within the Labour Party. While Scargill has refused their bid to build an autonomous branch of the SLP in Scotland, Scottish Militant Labour have been instrumental in launching the "Scottish Socialist Alliance".

A lash-up of Labourites and ex-Stalinists, to the right of the SLP, the primary aim of this "alliance" is to campaign for a Scottish Assembly. Their whole programme is based on getting Blair elected to Westminster and allows for the option of voting for bourgeois parties like the Scottish National Party (SNP) or the Liberal Democrats. To this end, Militant has already proposed an electoral bloc with "Liberation", the youth wing of the SNP. Class independence of the working class is an elementary principle for Marxists, which always means opposition to popular fronts. We refuse to vote for workers parties (or candidates) in such coalitions with the bourgeoisie in all circumstances.

## The chauvinism of social democrats

As Leninists we fight against all forms of national oppression. Against the dominant English chauvinism, we uphold the

right of self-determination of Scotland and Wales, although we presently advocate a framework of common struggle of the working people of Scotland, Wales and England against their common oppressors. At the same time, like Lenin, we give no quarter to nationalism of any stripe. The stance of Militant in Scotland is the exact opposite.

For decades they were buried in the Unionist Labour Party and notoriously indifferent to questions of special oppression. Now excluded from the Labour Party and faced with the growth of nationalism in Scotland, where they have some base, they seek to build a nationalist popular front. With the Labour Party promising a Scottish Assembly (to save the Union of course) Militant can tail Labourism and Scottish nationalism simultaneously.

Scandalously, in Northern Ireland Militant has avidly pursued an ugly (and potentially deadly) "alliance" with the paramilitary wing of the Ulster Loyalists. Militant meetings in Belfast and Dublin have hosted Billy Hutchinson, a leading member of the "Progressive Unionist Party" which is a front group for the fascistic Ulster Volunteer Force. One of Hutchinson's henchmen, Lindsay Robb, recently jailed in Scotland, was caught in the act of gun-running to the Loyalist death squads. Militant refuses to raise the call for the immediate unconditional withdrawal of the British Army from Northern Ireland and needless to say this demand is absent from the draft programme of the Scottish Socialist Alliance, which echoes the line of the Blairites in calling for an imperialist-sponsored "negotiated solution".

This seems to cause little dissension from the "Communist Party of Great Britain", formerly the "Leninist". A small group, which appropriated the name of the CPGB when it collapsed, they are simultaneously unconditional cheerleaders for the IRA and part of the Scottish Socialist Alliance. And, mum's the word on Militant's chauvinist position on Northern Ireland.

Meanwhile the self-proclaimed "International Bolshevik Tendency" (IBT) is currently taking us to task for not giving critical support to Militant, when after being purged from the Labour Party, they did a brief stint of running their own "independent" candidates, like Leslie Mahmood in the 1991 Walton by-election. As we noted at the time, "while claiming to challenge Kinnock's puppet in Liverpool, the Militant/Broad Left have not broken in any fashion from support to the puppeteer Kinnock. So much for their 'independent' campaign—the tooth bites down on nothing" ("Labourites fall out in Liverpool", *Workers Hammer* no 124, July/August 1991).

Against social democracy the IBT has not much in the way of teeth, while against us this organisation, which was founded by embittered ex-members of our international, surely has a lot of venom. For our part, we can only say that we are not surprised by the fact that IBT feels more comfortable sharing the sheets with Militant even as an after-the-fact fantasy. The IBT's own sneering at any question of special oppression—from the Catholics in Northern Ireland, to the Maoris of New

*continued on page 11*

# ICL statement of solidarity with Luta Metalúrgica

## Brazil: witch hunt against Trotskyist union militants

*In response to a vicious anti-communist smear campaign in the bourgeois press in the Brazilian steel centre of Volta Redonda, which aims at driving revolutionary militants out of the unions, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) issued the following declaration in Mexico City on 4 February.*

At a time when comrades and supporters of Luta Metalúrgica (Brazil) are under many-sided organisational and personal attack from forces ranging from centrist opponents and popular-frontists through to direct public organs of the bourgeoisie, the International Communist League strongly affirms our solidarity with these comrades.

Our fraternal comrades of Luta Metalúrgica were the *only* tendency in Brazil to uphold working-class independence by refusing to vote on principle for any candidates of the class-collaborationist bloc of the Frente Brasil Popular, centred on Lula's Workers Party (PT), in the 1994 elections. That is why LM is hated and feared by the bourgeoisie and its lackeys. That is also one of the principles which has drawn LM to the International Communist League, which continues Trotsky's struggle against popular frontism, from Spain in the 1930s to Chile in the 1970s, France in the 1970s and '80s and Brazil today.

Likewise, the ICL and LM shared agreement with Trotsky's programme of unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union against imperialism and for proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy which paved the way for counterrevolution. In the face of the US-led anti-Soviet war drive in the early 1980s, while most of the opportunist left howled with the imperialist wolves, the ICL proclaimed, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and "Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution in Poland!"

The September 1994 Declaration of Fraternal Relations between the ICL and LM (see *Workers Hammer* no 143, November/December 1994) expresses our commitment to building an authentic Trotskyist party in Brazil today as a *tribune of the people*, a champion of all the oppressed, of women, homosexuals, indigenous peoples. While the class-collaborationist left buys the lie of supposed "racial democracy" in Brazil, LM and the ICL hold that the fight against racial oppression—including in the unions—is strategic to proletarian revolution. When we call for a revolutionary workers and peasants government, this is not contradicted (as in the case of the opportunists) by support for the PT, which as part of the government of the state of Rondônia shares responsibility for the police/army massacre of scores of peasants last September.

The vicious campaign of provocation underway in the city of Volta Redonda is

in direct response to victory in union elections last November of the *Municípios em Luta* (Municipal Workers in Struggle [MEL]) slate, which is allied with Luta Metalúrgica and ran on a programme opposing the popular front of class collaboration. Faced with this show of the workers' determination to struggle, an unholy alliance stretching from the bosses' press and company union officials to opportunist left parties is frantically seeking to drive revolutionaries out of the union.

Already last July, in the elections in the Metal Workers Union in Volta Redonda, a similar rotten coalition was drummed together. The PT-led popular front brought in top leaders, including PT senator Benedita da Silva and CUT union federation leader Vicentinho, to campaign against LM. *Diário do Vale*, notorious as a mouthpiece for the privatised CSN steel company bosses, gave prominent coverage to attacks on LM spokesman Alexandre Honorato (Cerezo) both by the CSN-sponsored "union" Força Sindical and by the pseudo-Trotskyist group Causa Operária (CO).

During the municipal workers campaign, this labour-hating press organ tried to whip up a ludicrous scandal over Cerezo painting slogans together with MEL activists. A last-minute candidacy by Força Sindical used *Diário do Vale* as a sounding board in its campaign against the "radicalism" of Luta Metalúrgica. Rejected by the union ranks, the defeated bosses' candidate sought—with the aid of Mayor Baltazar—to prevent the MEL from taking office. Now that that ploy has failed as well, this newspaper of the bosses is trumpeting vile accusations from a phantom "Servidores em Luta" outfit, evidently a creation of CO, appearing out of nowhere to demand that Cerezo be excluded from union meetings.

To portray this veteran class-struggle militant—fired by the steel bosses for defending the workers' interests, and slandered by Força Sindical and the class-collaborationist left alike—as an "outsider" in Steel City is an abomination propagated by those who are at home in the antechambers of Popular Front mayor Baltazar and Lula's Frente Brasil Popular, if not in the front offices of the CSN itself. Luta Metalúrgica was invited to advise *Municípios em Luta* precisely because LM was the only group which fought for the independence of the working class, refusing to vote for any candidates of a popular front tying the workers to sectors of the bourgeoisie. For municipal workers in Volta Redonda, the popular front is no abstraction but their immediate enemy, the city government, which is threatening to fire thousands.

Seeing this all-sided onslaught against Luta Metalúrgica, every thinking worker will ask: Who is behind this? Why is this happening? And why now? They will recall that 12,000 steel workers were fired at CSN with

the co-operation of Força Sindical and acquiescence by the CUT, which did not want to hurt the electoral chances of the Lula popular front, not in 1989 nor in 1995. These mass firings were a continuation of the unrelenting repression by the bourgeoisie and its state against the combative Volta Redonda workers symbolised by the army's murder of three steel workers during the 1988 strike, William, Walmir and Barroso. In 1993, the Popular Front city administration tried to fire 2800 workers but were defeated. If the bosses and their agents succeed in removing from the unions the most combative elements, it will be a first step to firings, pay cuts and a return to the *pelego* (state-controlled) "unions" of the past.

The history of the class struggle is replete with examples of such orchestrated attempts at defamation and repression of militant workers leaders, often with the connivance of the reformists, in order to destroy the capacity for resistance of the workers movement. In Mexico last year, the government launched its campaign to destroy the powerful and militant SUTAUR bus drivers union in the capital, firing all 13,000 workers, by jailing the union's legal adviser, naturally on trumped-up charges of corruption. In France after World War II, when Trotskyists played a leading role in the 1947 Renault auto workers strike, they were denounced as "provocateurs" by the Stalinist Communist Party, then in a popular-front coalition government which was determined to enforce a brutal wage freeze.

In the United States in the 1930s, the Trotskyists won the leadership of the Teamsters (lorry drivers) of the city of Minneapolis, leading and winning a local general strike. Their revolutionary politics and class-struggle methods of organising so frightened the capitalists and their agents in the workers movement that a years-long vendetta of repression was launched against the Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamsters. Police assaulted their picket lines. Agents of a company union were infiltrated to raise charges of theft and "intimidation". Union leaders were accused of embezzlement and larceny for using union funds to aid other groups of workers to organise. Ultimately, 29 Minneapolis Teamster and Trotskyist leaders were indicted (and 18 were imprisoned) on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government and to foment insubordination in the armed forces, because of their revolutionary opposition to the imperialist Second World War. This frame-up was egged on by the reformist Stalinists and the national Teamster union leaders.

So the kind of smear charges being used today against Luta Metalúrgica are nothing new. The bourgeoisie and the opportunist left are worried, even if they are unaware of the history, that Volta Redonda could become a new Minneapolis. Some of the accusers, like CO and its "Servidores em Luta" front, try to pass themselves off as defenders of union de-

mocracy. What hypocrisy! There will be no workers democracy if revolutionaries are excluded and the agents of the CSN and the Popular Front government hold sway. More than half a century ago, the internationalist revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky wrote that "*trade union democracy*... presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state". Trotsky continued:

"In other words, the trade unions in the present epoch cannot simply be the organs of democracy as they were in the epoch of free capitalism and they cannot any longer remain politically neutral, that is, limit themselves to serving the daily needs of the working class. They cannot any longer be anarchistic, i.e., ignore the decisive influence of the state on the life of people and classes. They can no longer be reformist, because the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms. The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat."

— "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" (August 1940)

The class independence of the trade unions from the bourgeois state, Trotsky emphasised, can "be assured only by a completely revolutionary leadership, that is the leadership of the Fourth International".

These prophetic words vividly describe the situation in Brazil today. In September 1995, the CUT sabotaged the metal workers strike in the ABC (São Paulo area) industrial zone in order to boost the electoral chances of Lula's Frente Brasil Popular. Having lost again at the polls, Lula has been seeking a corridor coalition with Fernando Henrique Cardoso. And so the PT and CUT stabbed the petroleum workers in the back during their strike last May-June, refusing to mobilise workers action when FHC called in the army to occupy the refineries. Reformist and centrist pseudo-Trotskyists either were submerged in the PT (Democracia Socialista, O Trabalho) or participated directly in the popular front (PSTU), or like Causa Operária tried to disguise their capitulation by calling to vote for Lula and the "worker-peasant candidates" of this class-collaborationist coalition. Still others (LBD) argued that for conjunctural reasons *this* time it was wrong to vote Lula, while upholding a vote to this candidate of the Frente Brasil Popular in 1989. Their fancy footwork cannot hide the fact that they all line up with the bosses politically. The opportunists' new-found (and very temporary) professions of "union democracy" ring hollow when they are in bed with the frontmen for the CSN and the Popular Front.

The opportunists traffic in accusations of corruption and scandalmongering in

# SLP ...

(Continued from page 12)

## Break Labour's stranglehold on the working class

In contrast, members and supporters of the SL/B actively campaigned for Nixon in Hemsworth, going door to door with her election material. At the same time we sought out miners welfare clubs, as well as leafletting and selling on local street corners and at Leeds University, with our own revolutionary propaganda. We wanted Brenda Nixon to be elected to parliament and held to the programme on which she ran. The issues Nixon campaigned for—which included a call for “an end to unemployment” through measures such as “the introduction of a four-day working week with no loss of pay”—cannot be addressed in the absence of hard-fought struggle which, pursued to the end, must shatter the framework of capitalism. Taken together with her statement of being a party of opposition to the Labour Party, this provided an opening for communists to intervene to demonstrate to the working class the need for an authentic workers party—one imbued with the understanding that the only guarantee of the welfare of the working class lies through the destruction of a system based on the exploitation of the workers. The SLP turns a blind eye to rampant anti-immigrant racism and anti-Irish chauvinism which are wielded by the capitalist rulers to keep the working people pitted against each other. We fight for a revolutionary internationalist workers party that champions the cause of all the oppressed.

Our campaigning for Brenda Nixon is what communists mean by “critical support” to a working-class candidate standing in an election. Critical support is an application of the tactic of the united front developed by the Communist International in the early 1920s. By proposing urgent united *action* around concrete issues in defence of the working class, the young Communist Parties sought to win the mass of workers who retained allegiance to the reformist social-democratic parties, proving in struggle the superiority of the communist programme and leadership. Like-

imitation of the social mores of their bourgeois masters, from FHC to Collor. When their popular-front politics are unpopular, they resort to smears to divert attention from the fundamental questions at issue and to discredit those who do defend the workers' interests. In contrast to their unscrupulous manoeuvring, for revolutionaries, deeds must match words. When we say that workers democracy is inseparable from complete independence from the capitalist state, this means: cops and courts out of the unions. When we say, with Trotsky, that today “unions can be really independent only to the extent that they are conscious of being, in action, the organs of proletarian revolution”, this means: a fight to the finish against reformism and centrism, obstacles to reforging the Fourth International as world party of socialist revolution.

In the face of the unceasing provocations and attacks by the bourgeoisie, the rules of the Fourth International are: “To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives.” ■

wise in Britain today, we seek to exacerbate the contradictions between the aspirations and interests of the working-class base of the Labour Party and its pro-capitalist leaders.

As Leon Trotsky, a leader together with Lenin of the 1917 Russian Revolution, which showed in real life that the workers have the power to overthrow the rule of capital, explained in “Problems of the British Labour Movement”:

“The struggle for a united front has such importance in Britain precisely because it answers the elementary requirements of the working class in the new orientation and grouping of forces. The struggle for a united front will thereby pose the problem of leadership, that is of programme and tactics and this means the party. Yet the struggle for a united front will not in itself solve this task but will merely create the conditions for its solution. The ideological and organizational formation of a genuinely revolutionary, that is of a communist party on the basis of the movement of the masses is conceivable only under the condition of a perpetual, systematic, inflexible, untiring and irrecusable unmasking of the quasi-left leaders of every hue, of their confusion, of their compromises and of their reticence.”

Breaking the grip of Labour on the working class is essential to building a genuine workers party—one that understands that “Her Majesty's Parliament” is no road to socialism but rather an instrument for the suppression of any struggle for the emancipation of the working class. We call for the abolition of the monarchy, the established churches and the House of Lords, leading—as the relationship of forces permits—to confrontations over the institution of the House of Commons and the City of London financiers and capitalists it represents. What is needed is a sweeping social revolution culminating with the workers in power, opening a new line of historical development.

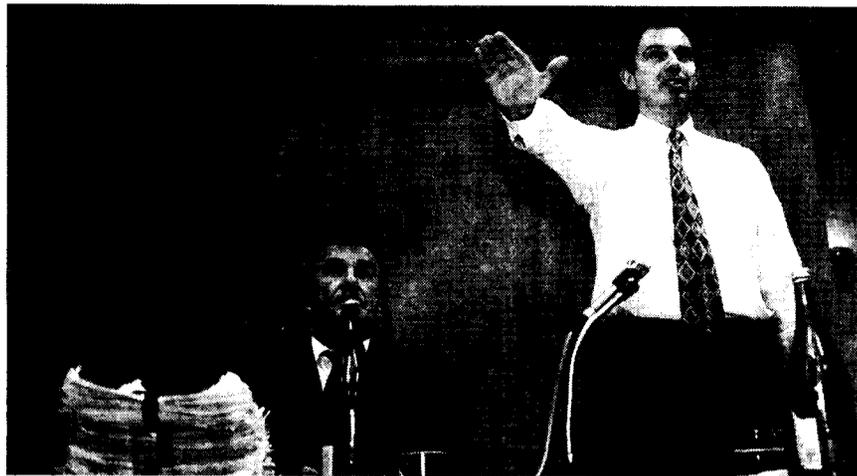
This is not what Scargill's SLP has on offer. It tacitly accepts the framework of capitalist exploitation, national oppression, racism and war, looking not towards a revolutionary future but to a social-democratic past. Scargill sees Clause IV as Labour's “socialist soul” which Blair has sold to the devil. In fact this clause to Labour's constitution, penned in 1918 by Fabian socialist Sydney Webb, was meant to head off the very palpable possibility of the struggle for proletarian socialist rule by the working people of the British Isles who found great inspiration in the 1917 Russian Revolution.

At a “Defend Clause IV” rally in London last year, Scargill pointed to the post-war Labour government as having the most radical programme ever seen. As a spokesman for the SL/B responded:

“If you look at 1945 or any of the Labour governments—the Labour Party has never touched a hair on the head of capitalism...if you leave power in the hands of the capitalists, if you don't actually destroy their state—if you want to talk about Marxism, that is the conclusion Marx drew from the Paris Commune of 1871, that we have to destroy their state machine. We can't just take it over like some ready-made instrument. We have to destroy it and construct our own workers state. And that's what this debate is about, it's about what socialism is, how you get socialism. There has to be a discussion of why parliamentary reformism will never do anything more than the last six or however many Labour governments....”

## The miners strike and the crisis of leadership

Hemsworth, a former stronghold of the NUM, has been devastated by the pit closures which were Margaret Thatcher's and her successors' vindictive revenge against the heroic 1984-85 coal strike.



David Howells

**Tony Blair (standing): aiming to recast “new” Labour in the mould of the openly capitalist US Democratic Party.**

The Frickley colliery which once employed 2500 miners is an empty shell. Here is a living indictment of Scargill's claim that “a Labour Government could solve unemployment—even within a Capitalist society—overnight”. Capitalism and its ills cannot be eliminated through parliamentarist means while keeping intact a system based on the exploitation of the working class and the destruction of the lives of those who are no longer of “use” to the production of profit.

Obscenely, the Labour Party which knifed the miners strike is now appealing to unemployed miners to blame Scargill for their present misery. Against the SLP, Labour MP Kevin Barron pontificated: “People have traditionally been loyal to the NUM in this area, but in 1984-85 Arthur stretched that loyalty. Ten years on, he may feel the backlash” (*Financial Times*, 31 January).

The miners strike was defeated by the Thatcher government, its cops and courts, with the active connivance of Neil Kinnock's Labour Party and the TUC bureaucrats. To prevail against the full force of the capitalist state meant spreading the strike to other key sections of the working class. But the trade union misleaders, including the so-called “left”, actively sabotaged the very real possibilities of strike action by other unions alongside the NUM. We called for a *fighting Triple Alliance* of rail workers, dockers and miners (and in America, our Partisan Defense Committee collected over \$23,000 that was sent to aid the British miners and their families). United strike action together with the miners effectively would have amounted to a general strike, which goes beyond simple trade union struggle and poses the question of which class shall rule. Despite his militancy, Scargill had no answer to this question as his idea of “power” did not, and does not, transcend the framework of a parliamentary Labour government.

Had there existed even a modest-sized revolutionary party, rooted in the trade unions, it could have won a sizeable chunk of Labour's working-class base through mobilising a class-struggle fight behind the miners which would necessarily have meant breaking with the traitorous leadership of the Labour Party. While the Labourite left falsely preach that the Labour Party is a “broad church” embracing the entire workers movement (except those who are expelled or excluded), in fact they actively foment *disunity* in struggle, as was driven home with a vengeance during the miners strike.

As Marx and Engels stressed in the *Communist Manifesto* every class battle is a political struggle, and the Communists are distinguished from other working-class parties because “they everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole”. We communists fight for the broadest

unity of the trade unions, the defensive organisations of the working class, in the struggle against the capitalist exploiters. At the same time on the political front, we fight to build a Leninist vanguard party through sharp struggle aimed at breaking the stranglehold of the reformist parties on the working class.

The miners strike was a powerful negative confirmation that such political struggle is a necessary condition for trade union unity. The unity of Benn, Scargill and other “lefts” behind Kinnock's Labour Party facilitated the isolation and strangulation of this massive class battle. Moreover, the idea of building a party of “the whole class” (not only as represented by the Labour Party but typified by the German social democracy before World War I) necessarily means dissolving the vanguard of the proletariat into the most backward layers of the working class, which are rife with the racism, sexism and chauvinism peddled by the capitalist rulers.

What existed in support of the NUM was the potential core of a revolutionary internationalist party that would champion the struggle of all the oppressed. Black and Asian communities were the best allies of the strikers. The Republican population in Belfast welcomed British miners with a huge sign reading “Victory to the miners!” From the former Soviet Union to South Africa international labour solidarity was mobilised in financial support to the NUM. The strike also highlighted the key role of working-class women as a political powerhouse. With their militant marches and rallies and confrontation of scabs and cops on the picket lines, the miners' wives were the backbone of the strike.

Today, Scargill's SLP turns its back on these “constituencies”. Not only does it not have a word to say in opposition to the escalating anti-immigrant racism codified in the Asylum Bill but the SLP's constitution would prohibit membership to asylum seekers and recent immigrants by confining membership to those who have “resided in Wales, Scotland, England or Ireland for more than one year”. Not a word has yet been expressed against the British Army occupation of Northern Ireland. And international working-class solidarity is sacrificed on the altar of “little Englandism”. Scargill's Discussion Paper, “Future strategy for the left”, calls only for a *reduction* in the armaments budget of bloody British imperialism. We say: Not a penny, not a man for the bourgeois army! British troops out of Northern Ireland and out of the Balkans now!

Long a hallmark of British Labourism, nationalism is an implicit part of the SLP's programme. In 1992-93, the opportunity for class-wide strike action against Major's pit closure programme was dissolved into a class-collaborationist alliance to save “British coal”. The NUM leadership joined hands with everyone

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## Union misleaders derail strike wave

# French workers fight off government assault

JANUARY 1—French public service workers returned to work after a massive strike wave against a government assault on the country's social security system. The strikes electrified militant workers throughout Europe and the world. For three weeks, the country slowed to a crawl, as striking railwaymen were joined by workers in public transport, the postal system, public utilities, schools and hospitals. Paris and other large cities were paralysed. Contrary to the government's expectations, the workers' actions were widely and even enthusiastically supported by the bulk of the population, who saw their basic social security net threatened by Prime Minister Alain Juppé's "reforms".

Juppé was able to hardline it for weeks as the strike wave remained limited to public sector workers without spreading to heavy industry. However, a series of half a dozen one-day general strikes by public workers saw steadily growing mass mobilisations, culminating on 12 December when more than two million protesters flooded the streets. The mass anti-government mobilisations, which had been centred on Paris, took off virtually throughout the country. It was just at this point that the reformist leaders of the working class stepped in to put out the fires of class struggle.

Seeking to stop a dangerous escalation, the government tried "salami tactics", offering to piece off the railway workers, the hard core of the strike movement. At the same time, Juppé vowed to maintain the centrepiece of his anti-working-class "reforms": plans to gut public health care. With events escalating towards a frontal clash, posing an all-out workers mobilisation which could easily have escaped their control, the union tops signed on to the bourgeoisie's policy of "divide and rule". In exchange for the government dropping its planned cuts of pensions and jobs of rail workers, the strikes would be brought to an end.

Echoing the famous statement by French Stalinist leader Maurice Thorez in the 1936 general strike, the CGC managers "union" declared, "It's necessary to know how to end a strike." The reformists certainly know how. Both *l'Humanité*, daily paper of the French Communist Party (PCF), and the social-democratic *Libération* ran front-page photos showing jubilant railway workers waving red flags on the train taking them back to work. Louis Viannet, head of the PCF-led CGT union federation, cynically hailed the "rail workers' victory in imposing their sectoral demands". Nicole Notat, leader of the social-democratic CFDT federation, who had opposed the strikes from the start, declared that the workers "have fought and won". The Saturday, 16 December "day of action" was intended to declare victory... and send the strikers home. Yet no sooner had the workers started returning to work than parliament approved legislation empowering Juppé to impose new taxes by decree, so that his 0.5 per cent income tax hike could take effect on 1 January.

The strike movement was so powerful that there are still pockets of determined strikers: Marseille remains paralysed by a



Eric Levilly

Transport workers were backbone of recent strikes against French capitalists' assault on trade unions and social services. Above: general assembly of striking rail workers in Sotteville.

### Build a revolutionary party to fight for a workers government!

shut down of railway and public transportation, now in its fifth week, while isolated walkouts continue to occur in the public sector. Last week, the government sent one hundred CRS riot cops against workers occupying the postal sorting centre in Caen. The strikers were not defeated; there is widespread bitterness among militant workers, who talk of going back on strike against the government's attacks. While giving in to the rail unions made it possible to split the strike movement, it also highlighted the government's weakness and could embolden other sectors. A wage freeze for all 5.5 million public workers scheduled to take effect in January could provoke a new outbreak of protest. But you can't turn struggles on and off like a tap. The key question was and remains that of leadership.

From the beginning of the strikes, the union tops (along with the leaders of the Socialist and Communist parties) and the ranks of the strikers have had two completely different motivations. In this battle, the reformist bureaucrats were in effect in a temporary *bloc* with the workers for their own ends. The workers were fed up after 13 years of anti-working-class austerity, of attacks on wages and mounting unemployment (now over twelve per cent) under Socialist president Mitterrand. Then came the "reforms" of the conservative Chirac/Juppé government, a sweeping attack on the standard of living they had achieved over the last several decades. But while the workers were fighting in their own class interests against a concerted ruling-class assault, the reformist

leaderships were fighting to retain their role as class collaborators to control and sell out the working class.

The trade union bureaucracy appeared uncharacteristically contentious in the course of this strike, because the "reforms" struck at its underpinnings. This included the social-democratic Force ouvrière federation, long a mainstay of Cold War anti-Communism, which is concentrated among public employees. The trade union leaders are heavily integrated into the state administration through a myriad of class-collaborationist bodies which help administer the huge French social service system that combines health benefits, unemployment benefits, pensions, etc. The bureaucrats got their own privileges from these gains, which allowed the unions to have hundreds of paid functionaries. This is the pay-off for the reformists' social and political role in keeping France safe for capitalist exploitation at home and colonialism abroad. And now the material base for their role as *interlocuteurs privilégiés* with the bourgeoisie and its state was under attack.

The French strike wave was the first major class battle in the "New World Order", which Washington triumphantly proclaimed with the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. The restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe and the former USSR has led to a worldwide assault on workers' living standards and organisations by the emboldened exploiters. Across West Europe, governments have declared that social services must be drastically slashed to conform to the 1992 Maastricht treaty for

European integration. The German bourgeoisie has put enormous pressure on Paris to reduce the budget deficit as a precondition to creating a common European currency. Europe's capitalist rulers today are seeking to emulate the assaults on the working class carried out by Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s. They want to increase their "competitiveness" in a climate of fierce inter-imperialist economic rivalry, as the dominant powers (US, Germany and Japan) consolidate their spheres of influence.

The massive strike wave in France sent shock waves throughout Europe and the world. The *Wall Street Journal* (22 December 1995) declared that the assault on social welfare programmes was a "time bomb" and warned that the strikes in France could be "a foretaste of things to come elsewhere in Europe". Already on 13 December, there was a 60,000-strong mobilisation in Brussels against sweeping budget cuts ordered by the Belgian government. Even the *New York Times* (24 December 1995) showed signs of nervousness, fearing that "American unions will begin using aggressive tactics", while excluding a "replay of the events in France" because "American workers do not share France's tradition of general strikes and mass unrest", citing the 1789 revolution, the 1871 Paris Commune and the 1968 worker-student uprising. The new AFL-CIO chief, John Sweeney, declared he was "impressed" with how the workers' strikes shut down France, but quickly added, "I hope it never comes to that here in America."

While the French strikes began as a defensive struggle by particular sectors, they quickly took on the character of a broad social struggle. But the reformists' political stranglehold kept them from taking on, for example, the government's "Vigipirate" police dragnet aimed at "immigrants", which in France includes many youth of North African and black African descent born in the country. Mobilising the workers against the racist cop terror would have had a huge impact in spreading the strike to the private sector—where immigrant workers are a key component of heavy industry—as well as inspiring support from the seething suburban ghettos. Nor did the reformists raise a peep against France's participation in the NATO occupation of the former Yugoslavia, which was sealed in a ceremony in strike-bound Paris on 14 December. A revolutionary leadership would have seized upon the tremendous opportunity for working-class action against this imperialist expedition: as it was, the rail strike disrupted shipment of war matériel.

As the mobilisations reached their highest point, there was a chorus coming from bourgeois politicians, the media and CFDT leader Notat howling about the "politicisation" of the strikes. The strike movement had reached the point where its scope had to be extended to the overwhelmingly non-unionised private sector and to directly challenge the *state power*.

That is why the reformist working-class leaders hurriedly stepped in to bring the movement to a close. The Ligue trotskyste de France, section of the International Communist League, defined the crucial task: to build an authoritative revolutionary leadership rooted in the working class—a party like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky capable of transforming defensive struggles into a conscious assault on the bourgeois order. As the LTF declared in their 14 December leaflet:

“For some time now, the situation has been moving towards a total general strike, which would pose the question of who will be the master in this country... What is posed in this historic strike is workers rule of society. What is posed is the struggle for a workers government, for the overthrow of the capitalist system which is destined to perish and not to be reformed.”

### Transitional programme for socialist revolution

The question of leadership was thrown into sharp relief in this strike. Daily general assemblies in virtually every striking workplace, often with hundreds of workers participating, voted on whether to continue the strike. Debates over how to go forward were intently followed. At the same time, these assemblies were kept separate from each other, the better to maintain the bureaucrats' control over the strikers.

In a number of cities, 24-hour organising centres of the strike were spontaneously created—the Gare du Nord railway station in Paris, the central squares in Toulouse and Bordeaux. Strikers organised flying pickets, such as the postal workers of the PLM sorting centre who brought out the workers at the Central Receipts office of Paris-XII. The rail strikers at Gare du Nord sent delegations to neighbouring hospitals and postal sorting centres, and even tried to bring out a Citroën plant. Describing young strike militants at the postal sorting centre of Saint-Lazare in Paris, *Libération* (9-10 December 1995) commented: “After nine days of voting on the strike every morning in a general assembly, they have the sense of participating in a real ‘workers democracy’. They seem more like Communards than strikers.”

Strikers returned to work bitter and furious at the trade union bureaucrats for their sell-out. In Rouen, where the 16 December demonstration was the largest in that city's history, demonstrating strikers ejected the CGT and FO leaders from the demonstration, just as Paris workers had done earlier to the CFDT's Notat. A railway worker at the Sotteville yards bitterly declared: “There is a fundamental difference between those who want to fight and those who are content to negotiate” (*Info Matin*, 19 December 1995).

Even as the government was granting them concessions, the great majority of railway strikers voted to continue the strike which began to show signs of spreading to the private sector. This is the context in which the LTF published its leaflet of 14 December. Our forces are small, but it is necessary to state what is, and what is to be done. Calling for a new, revolutionary party, the leaflet focused on the urgent need for *elected strike committees*, for *mass pickets* to extend the strike to the private sector, and *worker-immigrant defence guards* to protect against scabs, cops and racist attacks. As Trotsky declared in the *Transitional Programme* (1938), the founding document of the Fourth International:

“Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating *workers' groups for self-defence*. It is necessary to write this slogan into the programme of the revolutionary wing of

the trade unions.”

In present-day France, such demands were key to the fight for a victorious outcome of the strike movement.

The importance of strike pickets and self-defence squads was driven home as cops were sent against student demos in Paris, Montpellier, Saint-Etienne and Nantes. To smash the railway and public



Army troops deployed at Eiffel Tower in September as part of “Vigipirate” state terror campaign targeting “immigrants”.

transportation strikes, the government organised scabs and even threatened to use the army. And in the middle of the bureaucrats' open strike-breaking, the government sent the same “security” force that terrorises the “immigrant” population against strikers, for example at the Porte Maillot metro station.

Another key question in bringing out the private sector is the fight against unemployment. With *under ten per cent* of the French workforce unionised, and most of that concentrated in the public sector, in whole sectors of private employment unions are extremely weak or non-existent. And with joblessness in double digits, hitting “immigrant” youth particularly hard (over 25 per cent), the hesitancy among private sector workers to join the strike was rooted in their vulnerability to reprisals, lacking protection against layoffs or firing. To overcome this, a class-struggle leadership would go beyond the initial narrowly sectoral and defensive demands of the strike to raise a programme capable of uniting the working class as a whole. Thus we call for a *sliding scale of wages and hours*, in order to distribute the available work among all workers. For a revolutionary leadership, the fight for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay would be a key component in the necessarily convulsive battle to organise the private sector.

Mobilising the private sector in the strikes also required a determined fight against the racist anti-immigrant terror which was carried out for 14 years under the “socialist” Mitterrand and has now been greatly stepped up by Chirac. The current “Vigipirate” police/army dragnet has led to more than *three million* identity checks, and thousands of deportations. Yet the union leaderships have not only done nothing to fight the racist crusade of the right-wing government, they even sought to mobilise support for the government's “anti-terrorist” crackdown.

While the trade union bureaucrats bemoan the fact that the strikes did not spread to the private sector, they actually did everything in their power to *prevent* it. At the key Renault car plant in Flins, the CGT put out a leaflet warning that a strike would be “premature”. Such strike-breaking tactics are hardly new for the reformists. When Flins workers spearheaded strikes during last spring's presidential campaign, the union

bureaucrats did nothing to mobilise in their support, while the bosses taunted the strikers for being led by North Africans. And in 1983, Flins workers were the first to strike against Mitterrand's austerity; the “socialists” in government called them “fundamentalists” who were supposedly manipulated from abroad.

Factory committees, worker-immigrant

defence guards, a sliding scale of wages and hours: these are examples of *transitional demands*, which are meant to bridge the gap between the strikers' defensive struggles and the revolutionary fight for power. The Third Congress of the Communist International, which first formulated such a transitional programme as a counter to the reformist minimum programme of the social democracy, called on Communists to “extend and intensify every defensive struggle, transforming it into an attack on capitalist society” (“Theses on Tactics”, July 1921).

### Key is revolutionary leadership

In their opportunist prostration before the government, the reformist bureaucrats were mimicked by the “far left”, which ignominiously capitulated to and even joined Chirac's racist terror campaign. Last autumn, as the government was brandishing the “terrorist menace”, *Lutte ouvrière* (20 October) wrote:

“If one really wanted to help the North African population to dissociate itself from the terrorists and to defend itself from them, if one wanted to aid the population of the poor districts where they are perhaps recruited, it would be necessary to show this population that they have nothing to fear from the Vigipirate plan.”

Reacting against such vile chauvinism, some anti-racist youth have begun identi-

fying themselves as anarchists, a current which had largely become moribund in France. For example, at St. Denis university outside Paris, where anarchists were in the leadership, students put out a leaflet during the strike movement attacking the government's racist anti-immigrant mobilisation. Disgusted by the betrayals of the reformists, the anarchists reject political parties altogether in favour of spontaneous action. Yet the strike wave showed the limits of spontaneous working-class militancy, which was enormous but was unable to overcome the stranglehold of the bureaucrats who were the central obstacle to extending the strikes and transforming the defensive struggle into a fight against the capitalist system.

In contrast to the opportunist “far left”, the Ligue trotskyste has highlighted the struggle against the racist anti-immigrant attacks. The LTF's special supplement to *Le Bolchévique* was headlined, “Smash Vigipirate! Unite ‘immigrants’, women, youth behind the power of the working class! For a new, revolutionary leadership!” (reprinted in *WV* no 635, 15 December 1995). This supplement was also translated into Arabic for distribution among workers and youth of North African origin.

A key role was played in the strike wave by “far left” organisations, *who acted as the “left” face of the union bureaucracy*. We noted in our last issue how their call for an “unlimited general strike” was simply a formula for pressuring the trade-union bureaucrats. The fact that these former “68ers” now have their perspective locked on the bureaucracy reflects a social fact: *they are part of it*. This is a key reason why, in contrast to the 1986 rail walkout, there were no *coordinations* (strike coordinating committees) this time. Those who were shop delegates then have become local presidents and national leaders. Thus the Parti des travailleurs (PT) of Pierre Lambert is deeply entrenched at all levels of Force ouvrière, where a PT supporter, Claude Jenet, is national organisation secretary and a close ally of FO chief Blondel.

The opening for the “far left” was conditioned by the relative decline of the ex-Stalinist PCF, its influence sharply cut by its grovelling support to Mitterrand and by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The PCF was largely invisible during the strikes, hardly surprising as Communist leader Robert Hue's policy of “constructive opposition” really means offering the hand of friendship to Chirac. So at the key moment, it fell to the “far left” to drive the sell-out down the throats of the workers. Thus, the SUD trade union in the Paris CCP (postal cheque centre), which is led by Ligue communiste révolutionnaire

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## WORKERS HAMMER

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# Dockers, Vauxhall, Ford, postal workers, firefighters: Time for a working-class counterattack!

Striking Liverpool dockers sacked since September by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company for defending union conditions on the job against union-busting "casualisation" continue to win support from workers across Britain and solidarity action from dock workers internationally who have refused to handle ships loaded by scabs in Liverpool. A mass meeting in Liverpool on 2 February overwhelmingly threw out an insulting Company "offer" to buy off and divide the strikers with bribes of up to £25,000—an "offer" which the TGWU "leaders" naturally recommended since sell-outs like Bill Morris are afraid to back this strike. What's needed are mass pickets that nothing and nobody crosses to shut down Mersey docks tight! From the striking Liverpool dockers to postal workers and firefighters, across the public sector and the privatised utilities, pressure continues to build for a class-wide counterattack against the union-busting, wage-slashing, profit-gouging capitalist leeches who own and run this country. What's missing is a class-struggle, revolutionary leadership in the trade unions. Class-conscious workers must fight as internationalists!

We reprint below excerpts from a leaflet we distributed initially at a Liverpool demonstration on 13 January.

The attacks on the working class across Europe today are being dictated by the drive by each national capitalist class to improve its position vis-à-vis its imperialist rivals. The French and German governments want to do to their working classes what Thatcher did to us and Reagan did to the American workers. The British rulers seek to hone their competitive edge by ensuring that wages and working conditions remain lower than those in Japan and the rest of Europe. Now that capitalist counterrevolution has destroyed the Soviet Union and East European deformed workers states, the imperialists think the way is open to reintroduce the untrammelled exploitation and oppression that existed in the nineteenth century. And each capitalist class wants and needs its working people to line up behind the so-called "national interests". Attacks on the working class go hand in hand with imperialist war moves abroad. NATO's military intervention in the Bal-



Liverpool dockers are waging bitter battle against union-busting.

kans—where each capitalist power is jockeying for position—presages new imperialist rivalries and war.

What is needed is the kind of uncompromising, Marxist class-struggle workers party that led the Russian workers to power in October 1917. An internationalist party that fights for the interests of all the oppressed—against the racism of the capitalist system, typified by the sequence of police killings of black people last year and by the brutal Asylum and Immigration Bill.

## Shut down the Mersey docks! Smash the anti-union laws!

The need for such a party is pointed to by the struggle on the Merseyside docks.

- For mass pickets to shut down the Mersey docks!
- Smash the anti-union laws!
- No deportations!
- Down with the racist Asylum and Immigration Bill!
- NATO troops out of the Balkans!
- British troops out of Northern Ireland!

The TGWU leadership has treacherously sheltered behind the anti-union laws and refused to organise the full force of the union's membership, including lorry drivers, to shut down the Liverpool port. But in a powerful display of working-class internationalism, port workers from across the globe have taken action in support of the dockers.

The splendid action of dockers around the world points the way forward. The Merseyside docks should be shut down tight by mass picket lines, which nothing and nobody can cross. But Morris & Co are so in awe of the bosses' state (which they want Blair to administer), that they haven't even given official backing to the dockers. Thanks to the T&G leadership's

treachery, the port bosses have been able to bring in scab "replacement" workers to work the docks. Repeatedly, mass rallies in support of the dockers have brought out thousands of supporters from across the country, including Fire Brigades Union members who have carried out a series of strikes against the job-slashing attacks of the Labour-controlled Liverpool local authority. *But demonstrations alone will not win this dispute: only a complete shut-down of the port will stop the scab operation altogether!* Militant Labour (who claim "The strike has been run on model lines") argue that "mass pickets by themselves aren't sufficient to win the dispute" (*Militant*, 1 December 1995). Instead they emphasise a more militant form of demonstration—"the 24-hour Merseyside stoppage"—which would be a gesture to blow off steam, a *diversion* in the absence of a successful struggle to actually shut down the docks.

The 500 dockers who are on strike have the determination to win this struggle, but they don't have the power on their own. The labour movement as a whole has the potential, but it is shackled by a trade-

*continued on page 10*

## France...

(Continued from page 7)

(LCR) supporters, intervened in the general assemblies to tell workers to "keep up the pressure until Saturday" (16 December, the bureaucrats' "final" demonstration) and that then it will be necessary to "look for other forms of action".

This growing together with the reformists goes back years. The "far left" signed up as extra-parliamentary auxiliaries of the Mitterrand government in the early 1980s. They marched shoulder to shoulder with the Cold War social democrats in solidarity with Solidarność. And now they "know how to end strikes".

In contrast to the fake Trotskyists (LO/PT/LCR) the Ligue trotskyste fights for the forging of a new, revolutionary workers party. As the LTF declared in its 4 December supplement: "The reformists and class collaborators of the PCF and PS and their centrist tails offer only illusory

reforms. They are all incapable of leading the working class in the current struggles and in the struggle to end the system of wage slavery once and for all."

To really fight to win required taking control of the strike out of the hands of the venal bureaucrats. It meant going beyond the admirable local initiative of individual workplaces to create organised forms embodying the struggle: elected strike committees to unite all trade unionists, now split into different unions along party lines, and non-union workers, some of whom were exemplary strike militants; mass picket lines to spread the strike and defend the strikers; and national coordinating committees, linking the capital with the heavily mobilised provincial cities, whose marches drew contingents from industry.

The strike movement had to go beyond simple trade unionism, on a programme to unite the entire working class and draw along the pensioners, the youth, the immigrants, against whom the ominous militarisation of French society is being

aimed. These immediate tasks cry out for revolutionary leadership and a Leninist party: to push the proletariat's struggles forward instead of subordinating them to the constraints of the capitalist system; to expose the pro-capitalist misleaders in their deeds; to reach out to struggling working people in other lands as the bourgeoisies drum up racism and trade war.

The fight against the government's attacks on social services is far from over. The French ruling class is gambling on the demoralising effect of the strike movement being called off when millions thought they were winning. The government is counting on the misleaders, old and new, to keep a lid on the working class. The "left" leaders are more than willing, but nobody has the stranglehold that the PCF used to have on the most militant sectors.

While the French working class had sufficient defensive capacity to temporarily repel the Maastricht-driven attacks of the bourgeoisie, without a forward revolutionary strategy, embodied in the revolu-

tionary Marxist programme and a Leninist vanguard party, they can only succeed in frustrating the bourgeoisie, not conquering it. The capitalists will return to the offensive, perhaps in league with the fascists, if the reformists can no longer play their former role, and the working class remains intractable. In terms of class struggle in Europe, this is the opening act in this new historic period.

In the new world *disorder*, the capitalist onslaught against the working class will not abate—nor will the resistance against it, in the form of demonstrations, strikes, etc. It is in the crucible of such class struggles that an internationalist workers party will be built, a party like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky, forged on a programme to lead the working class and all the oppressed in the fight for socialist revolution. This is the crucial lesson of the French strikes.

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 636, 5 January 1996.

# Mumia Abu-Jamal files appeal in Pennsylvania Supreme Court

We reprint below a press release issued by the US Partisan Defense Committee in New York on 10 February 1996.

On 9 February, attorneys for death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal filed an appeal on his behalf in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in Philadelphia. The 119-page legal brief documents 26 constitutional and procedural errors in challenging Judge Sabo's 15 September 1995 ruling against Jamal's petition for a new trial under the state's Post Conviction Relief Act (PCRA).

A former Black Panther Party leader, MOVE supporter, award-winning journalist and outspoken advocate for the oppressed, Jamal was wrongly convicted and sentenced to death for the 1981 killing of Philadelphia policeman Daniel Faulkner in a frame-up trial presided over by Judge Albert Sabo, a notorious "hanging judge" who has sentenced more people to death—32, all but two of whom were racial minorities—than any other sitting judge in the US.

In a well-attended news conference following the filing of the appeal, Jamal's lead attorney, Leonard Weinglass, stated that "these papers indicate Mumia never had a trial in any real sense of the word. We very carefully point out in these briefs the facts of what occurred at his trial, the facts of what occurred at the post-conviction relief hearing last summer before Judge Sabo.... The conclusion is irresistible: that Mumia Abu-Jamal needs a new trial." Also speaking at the press conference were Rachel Wolkenstein, one of Mumia's co-counsel as well as counsel for the Partisan Defense Committee, Karl Baker of the ACLU, Pam Africa of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Mumia's son Jamal.

The PCRA hearings began in Sabo's court on 26 July, only three weeks before Jamal's scheduled execution date of 17 August. Due to mounting publicity and an international outcry of protest, a stay of execution was granted on 7 August. For millions around the world, Mumia's cause has become the leading edge in the fight to abolish the barbaric, racist death penalty.

As the appeal brief states, throughout the PCRA hearings, Sabo showed "a bias so open and notorious that it became a matter of public scandal":

"Judge Sabo rushed the proceedings in order to debilitate Jamal's efforts to present all of the evidence supporting his constitutional claims. The judge repeatedly and without warrant castigated Jamal's attorneys, routinely issuing threats of contempt, and ultimately incarcerating one and fining another. He quashed defense subpoenas at the behest of the Commonwealth.... Virtually every single defense objection was overruled and every single Commonwealth objection sustained—logic, consistency, and the rules of evidence mattered not at all."

Noting "the court's allegiance to the Fraternal Order of Police", of which Sabo, an undersheriff for 16 years, is a retired member, the brief states: "The court not only permitted but encouraged off-duty FOP members to carry loaded firearms in court, stating the FOP 'are in here for my protection'." Furthermore, Sabo's "prosecution bias was but the flip side of

Following signing of Jamal's death warrant, a wave of international protests over the summer of 1995 stayed the executioner's hand. Right: Trade unionists join Partisan Defense Committee contingent at 12 August demonstration in Philadelphia.



the same coin":

"Indeed, his allegiance to the prosecution culminated with his 154-page opinion issued just three days after taking the matter under submission. Just as the court granted every application of the prosecution during the course of a lengthy hearing, the court adopted, virtually verbatim, the Commonwealth's proposed findings and conclusions."

As Weinglass told the press on 9 February, "If the system were just and fair, Judge Sabo would not be a sitting judge."

The brief lashes into the "confession" supposedly made by Jamal which was a central prop in the state's frame-up. The PCRA testimony of Officer Gary Wakshul exposes this fabrication. Assigned to guard Jamal from the time of his arrest until his hospital treatment for the critical injury inflicted from a gunshot fired by Faulkner, Wakshul reported to homicide detectives shortly afterward that Jamal "made no comments". The story of Jamal's "confession" was not recorded until 64 days later, after a "round table" prep meeting conducted by prosecutor Joseph McGill with the police officers involved in the case. In recounting Wakshul's testimony, the brief writes that police officers were asked "to raise their hands if they had heard" Jamal confess "and Wakshul responded"—a clear contradiction to his earlier written report.

During the 1982 "trial", Wakshul was said by the prosecution to be on vacation and unavailable for questioning. But in the PCRA hearing, Wakshul testified that in fact he had remained in Philadelphia and "did not go away". He said this was "in compliance to a request to stay while cases were going on". The importance of Wakshul's testimony was explained in the appeal brief: "His true value as a witness centered on what he would have revealed to the jury about the integrity of the prosecution itself. By showing how law enforcement wilfully fabricated testimony about a confession to secure a conviction, the defense also sought to bolster its claims that law enforcement coaxed and coerced eyewitnesses and corrupted the physical evidence tests."

The appeal also underscored the important PCRA testimony of William Singletary, who saw a man other than Mumia shoot Faulkner and flee from the scene. The cops who questioned him immediately after the shooting repeatedly tore up his statements that the fleeing man, not Jamal, was the shooter. Hours

later, under threats of physical violence, Singletary signed a false statement dictated by one Officer Green which claimed that he had not seen the shooting. Faced with relentless police harassment and suspicious vandalism to the gas station he owned, Singletary fled Philadelphia. His testimony demonstrated how the prosecution had suppressed evidence of Jamal's innocence, which in and of itself should be grounds for voiding a guilty verdict—but not in Sabo's kangaroo court.

Similarly, the appeal brief highlights that police ballistics tests and autopsy report were suspiciously incomplete. If Jamal had been able to present experts at trial, they would have established that there was simply no ballistics link between Jamal or his licensed .38 calibre gun and the shooting. A key bullet fragment, necessary to accurately determine the calibre of the fatal bullet, was destroyed or disappeared; the medical examiner determined that the cop was shot with a .44 calibre bullet.

Another key component of the appeal is the evidence of extreme incompetence on the part of Jamal's court-appointed attorney in 1982, which infringes on Jamal's Sixth Amendment right to legal representation. The brief also includes testimony of numerous other witnesses who could have demonstrated Jamal's innocence but were hidden from his court-appointed lawyer or intimidated into silence or given prosecutorial favours to change their eyewitness accounts.

As Rachel Wolkenstein said at the press conference, "We are representing an innocent man, someone who has maintained his innocence from the very beginning and has been subjected to a politically motivated and racially biased set of proceedings, both the original trial and the hearing that we had this summer." "Mumia", she continued, "is entitled to his freedom". Powerfully backing up the evidence that Jamal was politically railroaded to death row was a "friend of the court" brief submitted on 9 February by the Philadelphia chapters of the ACLU, National Conference of Black Lawyers and the NAACP. Describing the basis of the brief, Karl Baker assailed the District Attorney's use during the 1982 sentencing hearing of a statement, written by Jamal twelve years before as a Black Panther spokesman, that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun".

Baker noted, "The context of that statement was that in the past two years, 23 members of the Black Panther Party had been killed, and, just one month before, Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, the leaders of a chapter in Chicago, had been murdered... when the police broke in at 4.30 in the morning, firing over 90 shots, and killed them in their sleep." This is what Mumia meant, Baker added, "when he said, 'We know very well from the deaths of numerous of our members that in America political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.' And to turn that around and use it against him and say that this is a reason that we should put him to death is the most cynical and manipulative effort on the part of the prosecution. And this alone should be grounds to vacate the sentence of death."

Jamal continues to win support in his fight against the racist death penalty. From death row, Jamal not only continues to write and speak out for justice for the oppressed, but on 21 January was awarded a hard-earned degree in psychology from Goddard College. His book, *Live from Death Row*, which has already helped galvanise support around the world, has been translated into at least five languages and is being published as a paperback.

Gene Herson, labour coordinator of the PDC said: "From the 800 pages of FBI files on Jamal dating from his Black Panther activities, to the 1982 frame-up conviction and sentencing, to the antics in Sabo's courtroom 13 years later, there is no room for illusions in the 'fairness' or 'impartiality' of the racist capitalist 'justice' system. The battle for Mumia's freedom—and to abolish the racist death penalty—must continue outside as well as inside the courtroom. Above all, this means looking to mobilise the integrated labour movement in defence of Mumia, as part of the struggle against the whole system of racist, anti-labour repression."

For more information about the campaign to free Mumia, contact the Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX, Tel: 0171-485 1396. Contribute to Mumia's legal defence: send/make payable to PDC and write "Jamal legal defence" on the back of the cheque. Letters of solidarity to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E Roy Furman Highway, Waynesburg PA 15370-8090, USA. ■

# North's ICP: "socialist" apologists for scabbing

In December, trade unionists of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) in the US turned back a scab Atlantic Container Lines ship from three US ports by honouring a picket line by dock workers who had flown in from Liverpool. Here was a real example in action of the kind of international labour solidarity that is needed to fight the worldwide capitalist assault on the unions, the poor and all of the oppressed. Yet when dock workers unions from North America to Australia announced they would refuse to handle ships loaded by scabs in Liverpool, the so-called "International Communist Party" (ICP) denounced this as a "fraud" in a scurrilous article headlined "Dockers Must Reject Fake Internationalism" (*International Worker*, 2 December 1995)!

The ICP, the British followers of David North's International Committee, reject labour solidarity because they have written off the unions altogether claiming, "They no longer function as worker's defensive organisations, but as the direct agents of the bosses and the capitalist state" (*IW*, 27 January). Their articles on class struggle are peppered with calls for workers to break from the unions, "destroying the deadly stranglehold these rotting apparatuses have over the workers' movement and freeing the millions of workers trapped in these bureaucratic prisons" (*IW*, 27 January). No doubt, many Liverpool dockers who have been left to hang out to dry by the T&G misleaders are painfully aware that the union "leaders" act as the labour agents of the bosses in enforcing the capitalist status quo (in this case hiding behind the government's anti-union laws). But the Northites equate the unions as a whole with the bosses and their government. Dockers at the 3 February demonstration in Liverpool, disgusted by this union-hating line, angrily screwed up ICP leaflets and threw them on the ground.

The ICP's response to the Liverpool dockers strike and that of North's Workers League in the US to a defeated 17-month strike against Caterpillar, have taken their pronouncement against the unions out of the realm of theory and shown it to be what it really is: an open prescription for strike-breaking. Their propaganda on the Liverpool docks strike never once calls for mass picket lines, there is no strategy for shutting down the docks, no call to defeat the anti-

union laws, no mention of how to win the strike. While writing off the unions as "reactionary", the ICP in fact favours no unions at all.

As a cover for their anti-internationalist, anti-working-class line on the dockers strike, the ICP pointed to the ILA's "history of working with the U.S. State Department and CIA backed operations abroad". This is pretty cheeky coming from an organisation which took up every imperialist-backed anti-Soviet movement from the Lithuanian nationalists in 1990 to the bloodthirsty Afghan *mujahedin* reactionaries in the early 1980s, to Solidarność counterrevolution in Poland.

Now, in a recent letter appealing to the reformists of Militant Labour for a "genuine mass socialist party in Britain", ICP National Secretary David Hyland writes: "nothing can be defended on a trade-union perspective, as is shown by the example of Solidarność in Poland" (*International Workers Bulletin*, 11 September 1995). In the first place, Solidarność was not a "union", but a political movement whose efforts to organise the Polish working class behind a programme for capitalist restoration were bankrolled by the CIA and the Vatican. Not only was Solidarność cheered by the ICP's international organisation, they wielded the rallying cry of "Solidarity with Solidarność" to undermine the miners union on the eve of the 1984-85 coal strike.

The ICP are the direct and immediate heirs of Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party. As the battle lines were being drawn for the hard-fought miners strike, Healy's press featured an article reviling Scargill for his opposition to Solidarność which he had quite correctly denounced as "an anti-socialist organisation" and the ICP continue to proudly stand on the anti-communist attack on Scargill. This "exposé" was timed for maximum coverage in the union-hating capitalist press and it became the centrepiece for the witch hunt against Scargill by the TUC leadership who were desperate to isolate the militant miners union.

For the cause of anti-Soviet counterrevolution these political bandits served the interests of the Cold War labour bureaucrats against the most militant class battle in Britain since the 1926 general strike. In 1990 they were still pleading, "[Workers] must demand the mobilisation of general strike action by the TUC and Labour Party



As Liverpool dockers wage determined battle in defence of their union and jobs, ICP vilely take bosses' side, writing off the unions as "reactionary".

to bring down the Tory Government and replace it with a Labour Government pledged to socialist policies" (*IW*, 27 January 1990). Then, in the aftermath of the destruction of the Soviet Union they rushed to proclaim that the unions can no longer be considered any kind of working-class organisations. While the latter comes dressed in appeals to build new organisations of the working class that will fight to defend their interests, far from promoting proletarian class struggle the Northites' call for workers to ditch their unions in fact dovetails neatly with the interests of the union-busting bosses.

Equating the unions with the pro-capitalist bureaucracy that keeps them chained to exploiters and their state, North's Workers League in the US have become lawyers for outright scabbing. Reporting on the strike by the United Auto Workers Union against Caterpillar, which was betrayed outright by the union misleaders, their American newspaper writes, "UAW officials have attempted to absolve themselves of blame for what has happened by diverting the anger of strikers towards the 'scabs,' i.e., those union members who decided to cross picket lines" (*International Workers Bulletin*, 18 December 1995). Putting quotation marks around "scab" is no slip. In fact, the article justifies scabbing, claiming that "the large majority of the 4,000 union members

who returned to work were not right-wing or anti-union. Most simply recognized the futility of the policies being pursued by the UAW, which had, after all, abandoned the previous strike." Now that corporations are shelling out billions every year to hire union-busting law firms and private police, are the Northites offering themselves as PR agents for the growing army of strikebreakers?

From kowtowing before the labour bureaucrats to their new position of writing off any potential of the unions to act in pursuit of class struggle, the common denominator is the exclusion of a revolutionary political fight within the unions to oust the bureaucracy, to make them in Trotsky's words "the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat". Of course, the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy in Britain as well as in the US is up to its neck in class collaboration with the bosses and the state. Our perspective is the forging of a new, class-struggle leadership in the labour movement as part of the fight to build a revolutionary workers party. This requires a hard political struggle to drive out the sell-out bureaucracy—the "labour lieutenants" of the bosses—that is undermining and destroying the unions. That fight must also be waged against scab "socialists" like the Northites, who spit on the best traditions of working-class struggle as they stand on the side of the capitalist union-busters. ■

## Dockers...

(Continued from page 8)

union leadership which across the board, fears unleashing that power because they don't want to jeopardise Tony Blair's election and their own cozy relations with the capitalist bosses. They quake in fear of a strike declared "illegal" by the bosses' state. Well, the only "illegal" strike is one that loses!

Strike action alongside the dockers at Vauxhall Ellesmere Port and Ford Halewood would make Merseyside a launching pad for the working-class fight-back we so sorely need. Once again, the T&G is a key union in the automotive industry, but Morris & Co are trying to keep these struggles separate (witness their recommendation of the Vauxhall management's offer). Yet in last year's TGWU elections, Morris was backed by almost every single "socialist" group, from Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party (SWP), to Militant Labour, to Workers Power. They lied when they told workers that Morris was

some kind of alternative to Blair's croney Jack Dromey. The Spartacist League told the truth—that there was no basis to support either candidate. Morris refused to countenance any strike that went outside the anti-union laws. As we wrote in *Workers Hammer*, there was no choice: "old-style treachery was pitted against New Labour betrayal". What the unions need is revolutionary leadership, not an alternation of pro-capitalist bureaucrats who differ only on how best to hold in check the working class.

Still the fake-lefts prate on with the same old tired theme of making Morris and other supposed "Labour lefts" fight. "Time for Morris to deliver" was the headline in the 6 January *Socialist Worker*. *Workers Power* (November 1995) bleats out the same message: "Force Labour to meet our needs!"

**The Labour Party has never had a socialist soul**

It is the ideology of Labourism and the dominance of the Labour Party in the workers movement that has hobbled the

British working class since early in this century. While the break from the Liberals that led to the formation of Labour was an important step towards political class consciousness, the party that resulted was not politically independent of the capitalists, because it did not stand on or fight for a programme of socialist revolution, but rather one of parliamentary reform. The Labour Party is a bourgeois workers party, with a working-class base but a pro-capitalist leadership. Blair wants to turn back the clock, and sever the links with the trade unions: to abandon even the pretence of class independence. Arthur Scargill wants to maintain the pretence.

But the working class doesn't need a pretence—it needs the real thing: a party which actually represents the separate class interests of the proletariat, which can only be satisfied by a workers state. A revolutionary party will be built by widening the contradictions and antagonism between the aspirations and objective interests of the working class, centrally organised in the trade unions, against the policies and actions of the pro-capitalist

leadership. Marxists seek to win the support of the working-class base of reformist parties like Labour, in order to build up a vanguard party like Lenin's Bolsheviks, which can lead the working class to victory in the class battles which will rend apart the new world disorder. The purpose of the Spartacist League, British section of the International Communist League, is to pursue this perspective, in order to bring about the overthrow of bloody British imperialism, its monarchy, House of Lords and parliament, and to replace it with a federation of workers republics. For a workers government based on workers councils (soviets) to expropriate the bourgeoisie!

**Support the Liverpool dockers!**

Collect money at your workplace and send to: Jimmy Davies, Secretary Merseyside Port Shop Stewards, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS. Cheques to: Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards Appeal Fund. ■

# Asylum Bill...

(Continued from page 1)

ties, must lead a struggle to smash the Immigration and Asylum Bill! Free all the interned asylum seekers! Shut down Campsfield and the other detention centres now!

The Labour Party has bent over backwards to avoid opposing the Bill in parliament, with Blair even proposing joining the Tories in an all-party committee of enquiry with the aim of achieving a racist "consensus". On this and every other question the Labour Party has vied with the Tories over who can most capably administer capitalist "law and order".

The current spate of anti-immigrant legislation occurs in the context of the post-Soviet "New World Disorder", in which sharpened inter-imperialist rivalries dictate intensified exploitation of the working class. The imperialists have imposed murderous IMF austerity throughout the world, gouging massive profits from the superexploitation of workers and peasants, while training and supplying Third World armed forces for the murder and torture of their own people. Escalating numbers of people are fleeing such horrors—from countries such as Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

At home the imperialists' aim is to break the unions, removing obstacles to increased exploitation. These attacks dovetail with racist attacks on minorities and asylum seekers, whom the ruling class scapegoats for its economic crisis while it aims to divide the working class on the basis of racism. Elementary self-defence of the entire proletariat demands that the workers movement fight all forms of discrimination in employment, wages, education and housing. To fight unemployment we demand a shorter working week at no loss in pay to provide jobs for all! Trade unions must block the implementation of racist checks on immigration status by government agencies and employers. Full citizenship rights for all foreign-born workers and their families! The state is continuing its vindictive campaign against the Onibiyo family—whose father Abdul was sent back to Nigeria and "disappeared". Free Ade Onibiyo from detention and grant

the whole family asylum now!

This racist offensive has given the green light for the growth of the fascist BNP and the rise in racist terror across the country. This year alone has seen a massive 25 per cent rise in the rate of reported racist attacks, and this is according to "official" figures (*Independent on Sunday*, 21 January). There have been at least a dozen racist murders since the April 1993 killing of 18-year-old black student Stephen Lawrence in southeast London.

Last month an inquest into the December 1994 killing of Nigerian asylum seeker Shiji Lapite confirmed that the police neckhold had crushed his windpipe. But the killers of Lapite, like those of Joy Gardner and Wayne Douglas, a young black Brixton man beaten to death by cops in December 1995, continue to walk free. The working class must stand in the forefront of the struggle against the Asylum Bill and the general racial oppression which is endemic to capitalism. Failure to do so leaves the working class divided and minority communities prey to despair and the reactionaries who feed off such despair, such as the Islamic fundamentalists.

Labour MP Bernie Grant has resurrected the reactionary call for "voluntary repatriation" of blacks to Africa and has even held discussions with the Home Office about the provision of funds to realise the project! This places Grant in the company of racists like Tory MP Winston Churchill Jr who has endorsed Grant's line. Such talk is also supported by the fascist BNP whose real aim is genocide.

The Immigration and Asylum Bill has attracted widespread popular opposition, including from trade unions and from minority communities. The integrated working class—for example car workers in the Midlands and postal and Underground workers in London—has the social power to effectively fight the racists in the government and on the streets. But far from organising working-class action in opposition to the Bill, Labour Party and trade union leaders have helped to create the Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill (CAIAB), membership in and support for which stretches across the class line to bishops and church bodies and the Liberal Democrats.

The CAIAB's maximum programme is

to lobby parliament to win all-party support to alter the Bill. The very last thing the bishops, lords, bourgeois spokesmen and trade union bureaucrats want to see is the working class fighting in its own interests and on behalf of all the oppressed against the ruling class. The crucial lesson of the popular front (cross-class coalitions) historically has always been that it leads to defeat of the working class by tying it to the class enemy. What's needed is a revolutionary party acting as the tribune of all the oppressed, which will only be built through hard political struggle against all the trade union and Labourite misleaders, from Tony Blair to Bill Morris, Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill.

The CAIAB popular front has also attracted the support of Labour-loyal fake-left groups like the SWP and Workers Power (WP). In an article entitled "How to beat the Bill" (*Workers Power*, January 1996), WP complains that the involvement of bourgeois organisations and representatives "weakens the ability of the movement to organise the one thing that can stop this racist law—militant action". But in the very next breath WP counsels that workers, youth and refugees should join and "set up local CAIAB groups" in order to "fight to engage the trade union and refugee groupings in CAIAB into militant direct action". WP's centrist contortions only prove one thing: that they will tail Labour and the trade union bureaucracy always and everywhere, even into an alliance with bishops and lords!

The Revolutionary Internationalist League (RIL) attempts to stand to the left of the CAIAB popular front with its Movement for Justice. But RIL's occasional militant posture, including "Non-Co-operation with Howard's New Immigration Proposals", in fact favours youth vanguardism in place of mobilisation of the organised working class as the leading force in the fight against the government's attacks, a perspective which requires sharp political struggle against the Labour and trade union misleaders. Instead the RIL perennially advocates electoral support for Labour even as Blair vies with the Tories over how best to administer racist capitalist rule. Behind the RIL's "community" activism lies an abject capitulation to reformism. In 1994 the RIL responded to the increase in cop brutality in Kentish Town by calling to "Dismiss guilty police

officers" and "Close down Kentish Town police station". This line panders to the dangerous illusion that the police can be reformed.

Today's Immigration and Asylum Bill throws into sharp focus the tasks outlined by Leon Trotsky in the *Transitional Programme* of 1938, on the eve of World War II:

"Before exhausting or drowning mankind in blood, capitalism befouls the world atmosphere with the poisonous vapors of national and race hatred. *Anti-Semitism* today is one of the more malignant convulsions of capitalism's death agony. "An uncompromising disclosure of the roots of race prejudice and all forms and shades of national arrogance and chauvinism particularly anti-Semitism, should become part of the daily work of all sections of the Fourth International, as the most important part of the struggle against imperialism and war. Our basic slogan remains: Workers of the World Unite!"

This is the programme on which the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) fights. ■

## Defend the Movement for Justice Five!

Five members of the Movement for Justice—a campaign against the Immigration and Asylum Bill—face trial under the Public Order Act for throwing paint at Tory party chairman Brian Mawhinney and his wife at last November's state opening of Parliament. The charges include "common assault" and "threatening words and behaviour". A plea hearing has been set for 28 February. The state's vindictive charges against the five is intended to intimidate all those who would oppose this virulently racist bill.

Drop all the charges against Nick De Marco, Karen Doyle, Naveed Malik, Amanda Egbe and Anthony Gard now! The Movement for Justice is calling for a protest outside Bow Street Court on 28 February.

## Blair...

(Continued from page 3)

Zealand, to opposing independence for Quebec—certainly makes them suitable bed partners. In this regard, it is also notable that in their various "critiques" of Scargill's SLP none of the fake left takes the least exception to the fact that the SLP has nothing to say against anti-immigrant racism and anti-Irish chauvinism.

### For a revolutionary workers party that fights for all the oppressed!

Those who claim to be "revolutionary socialists" are so tied to the Labour Party that Scargill often comes off sounding far to their left. At a recent rally for the SLP in Glasgow, the NUM leader castigated "segments of the left arguing that we should support the election of a Labour government, on the basis that that is the unity purpose of our movement... to get rid of the Tories after 17 years". Of course, such "unity" was precisely the purpose which Scargill himself served for so many years. While currently arguing that it stands in opposition to Blair's "New" Labour Party, the SLP stands in the mould of Labourite parliamentarism. That is precisely the mould that we as communists seek to break in order to build a revolutionary internationalist party of the working class that fights as a tribune of all the oppressed. ■

## SLP...

(Continued from page 5)

from the TUC and Labour leaders to capitalist Liberal Democrats and even the racist Tory MP Winston Churchill Jr in a popular front which peddled racist protectionist poison and tied the workers to their class enemy.

Political and organisational independence is a prerequisite to any fight by the working class in its own interests. The

consequences of class collaborationism and the popular front are measured in historical defeats of the working class, from Spain in the 1930s, to Chile in the 1970s and South Africa today, where the nationalist popular front under Nelson Mandela attacks union struggles in the service of neo-apartheid capitalism.

### For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!

Brenda Nixon got 5.5 per cent of the vote. While the Labour Party sneered at this as a "derisory" result, Scargill, referring to Labour's origins at the turn of the century from Hardie's Independent Labour Party, the Fabians and the trade union bureaucracy, responded: "Five per cent is excellent. We did not lose our deposit. A century ago Keir Hardie lost his deposit and went on to form a mass party and the rest is history" (*Guardian*, 2 February). A generation before, however, the British workers forged the first mass, independent workers movement—the Chartists. Unlike the ILP and their ilk, the Chartists did not bow their heads before the monarch and were not filled with awed respect for the state and the barely civilised barbarians who run this country. Instead Chartism

was republican, internationalist and revolutionary-minded.

As communists, we seek to politically resolve the contradiction that is the British Labour Party and win its working-class base to a revolutionary programme. Brenda Nixon's campaign in opposition to the Labour Party offered an opening to advance such a perspective. That does not translate into any kind of promise of critical support in the future to the SLP, which could equally well seek to advance its electoral opportunities through some kind of popular-front alliance like that of the SLP's equivalent in Scotland, the Scottish Socialist Alliance. This is an alliance of Labourites, ex-Stalinists, Militant Labour and elements of the bourgeois Scottish National Party.

Our aim is the construction of a genuine workers party. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto*:

"The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing conditions. Let the ruling classes of the world tremble at a communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!" ■

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# WORKERS HAMMER 4

## Hemsworth by-election: challenge to Blair's Labour Party

# Break with Labourism, "old" and "new"—for a revolutionary workers party!

The British Labour Party has long served as the vehicle for tying the working class of this country to the interests of "queen, country and (maybe) god", promising "democratic socialism" to be achieved within the framework of "Her Majesty's Parliament" and the preservation of the capitalist order. A massive system of public welfare was proffered by the post-World War II Labour government to console those at the bottom of this system of brutal exploitation of the many by the few, and particularly to ward off the possibility of any serious social struggle.

Today, in the aftermath of the capitalist counterrevolutions that have destroyed the rotten bureaucratic deformed workers states in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the ruling classes internationally feel they have free rein to grind the work-

ing class and the poor without much need for the mediating influence of the social-democratic and Stalinist-derived misleaders of the mass reformist parties. So Tony Blair's "New" Labour Party is seeking to recast itself in the mould of the openly capitalist US Democratic Party, pushing to rupture Labour's historic ties with the trade unions and dumping any pretence to socialism, like the famous Clause IV with its call for "common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange".

In opposition to the Blairites, the gutsy Arthur Scargill announced the formation of his Socialist Labour Party (SLP). Although the programme of Scargill's SLP is simply that of the "old" Labour Party, this split represents a potential opening for breaking the stranglehold of Labour over the workers movement. While the

Labour Party sneered that Scargill's party would be no challenge to their authority, most recently more than half of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union leadership have joined the SLP.

On 1 February, in the Hemsworth by-election, the SLP ran its first candidate for parliament, Brenda Nixon of the Women Against Pit Closures movement. The Spartacist League/Britain called for critical support to the SLP's candidate. As our leaflet "Vote Brenda Nixon!" (reprinted below) argued "the issues she is standing on—renationalisation of the main privatised industries, repeal of the anti-union laws and the rebuilding of the public services—speak to the felt needs of the working people of these islands". Unlike Militant's "independent" candidate in the 1991 Walton by-election—who was independent only because Militant had been

purged from the Labour Party and who otherwise sought to maintain the allegiance of the working class to Labour by calling for a vote to Kinnock—Nixon ran in opposition to Labour.

As she put it, "We are saying to voters that they don't have to vote for Labour because it's the lesser of two evils" (*Times*, 22 January). This violation of the "eleventh commandment" of the British left—"Thou shalt vote Labour to keep the Tories out"—was met with howls all the way from the Labour Party to the "far left" (see "Challenge to Blair upsets Labour-loyal applecart", p3). Old "red Ken" Livingstone, the former pariah of the Labour Party where he was seen as a veritable "Bolshevik", is now being trotted out as the responsible spokesman for the Labour Party against Scargill's SLP.

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## Vote Brenda Nixon!

We strongly urge support to Brenda Nixon of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) in the Hemsworth by-election because the issues she is standing on—renationalisation of the main privatised industries, repeal of the anti-union laws and the rebuilding of the public services—speak to the felt needs of the working people of these islands. Further, she has said that the SLP will be a party of opposition to Labour.

Everyone knows that a Blair Labour government will not redress the social crimes of the Tories. Blair's "New Labour" seizes every opportunity to show their utter contempt for the working class and oppressed. They endorse everything from the hated anti-union laws to attacks on health and education and even exceed the Tories when it comes to promoting racist "law and order" in order to carry out the City's dictates. The City is making a mess of the national economy to preserve their bloody privileges and power.

The Hemsworth electorate covers key Yorkshire mining areas that have been devastated by the pit closures and ravaged by unemployment. This is an area where miners stood firm to the very end during the historic strike of 1984-85. There is a residue of bitterness and hatred not only over the years of Tory government union-busting austerity but also against the Labour bureaucracy's treachery and betrayal.

A deep gulf lies between what working people want and what Blair promises to deliver. Labour's refusal to even advocate renationalisation of the railways has aroused fury within Labour's union base,

most recently expressed in the rail unions. A real fight against rail privatisation centred in the rail unions would garner widespread support.

While the demands that Brenda Nixon has raised are clearly supportable, they cannot be achieved within the confines of capitalism. We need workers republics! Her Majesty's existing governmental arrangements are counterposed to the struggle for workers emancipation. We are for a federation of workers republics in the British Isles—for a start: abolish the monarchy, the established churches and the House of Lords! For the right of self-determination for Scotland and Wales!

At the heart of Labourism ("new" or "old") has always been allegiance to British capitalist rule and espousal of British nationalism. Protectionism is poison to the needs of the international working class. French and South African workers aid and support to the miners strike was invaluable. Yet the call to "save British coal" and for import controls was central to Arthur Scargill's campaign over the 1992 pit closures. Only a party which fights for international working-class solidarity across national lines can fight in the interests of the working class. That means, above all, fighting the machinations of our own imperialist rulers.

From countries as diverse as South Korea, Brazil and South Africa there have been major outbreaks of working-class struggle. Across Britain there have been a series of bitter defensive struggles going on, from the locked-out Liverpool dockers to the firefighters and postal workers. Their strug-



Socialist Labour Party candidate Brenda Nixon with miners union leader Arthur Scargill.

gles have been encouraged by the recent massive strike wave in France against a government assault on social welfare.

The 1984-85 miners battle galvanised support from broad layers of British society, youth, blacks and Asians who were amongst the most active and eager supporters of the strike. This is because they saw in the miners the potential to deal a blow against the whole racist system of state brutality. What the SLP does not address, but which is vital, is the resurgence of racist anti-immigrant hysteria in this country and throughout Europe. Down with the Asylum and Immigration Bill which threatens thousands of refugees with deportation, torture and death!

During the miners strike, Scargill took militant trade unionism about as far as possible. The entire force of the capitalist state was arrayed against the miners. Their

defeat was sealed by the sabotage and treachery of the Labour Party leadership of Neil Kinnock and the TUC leaders, and also by the outright refusal of the "left" leaders, especially in the railway and dockers' unions, to strike alongside the miners.

But the lesson from all these struggles is that without a revolutionary Marxist programme and a Leninist vanguard party we can only succeed in frustrating the ruling class, not overthrowing it. We need the type of party that embodies what Chartist leader James Bronterre O'Brien said:

"My motto is... 'What you *take* you may have'. I will not attempt to deal with the abstract question of right, but will proceed to show that it is POWER, solid, substantial POWER, that the millions must obtain *and retain*, if they would enjoy the produce of their own labour and the privileges of freemen" (1837). ■