

# Socialist Voice

**Journal of The International Socialist League  
British Section of The IWL (FI)**

**"How long can the  
*intifada* be maintained?"**



**"How long will the  
West support Israel?"**

***In This Issue***

**Interview with AEU leader**

**International Students' Struggle**

**Hands off the Karabakh Committee**

## Editorial:

# Build a fighting education alliance

STUDENTS ARE fighting for the right to free and equal access to education. Teachers are facing one attack after another on their conditions, wages and right to decide what to teach. Polytechnics have become Public Limited Companies; kitchen, portering and lecturing staff will be forced into accepting worsening conditions and services will be privatised.

Further Education Colleges are the next in line for control by business and privatisation of ancillary staff. Further education students will have their access to education restricted and be forced to study on courses demanded by business interests.

All those that use or work in education establishments are under the hammer. Universities, polytechnics, colleges and schools are facing concerted attacks.

It is clear that a united campaign is now necessary. A united campaign of students and youth, a united campaign of teachers and lecturers, a united campaign of all those whose jobs are being privatised and cut, a united campaign of all those that want to use the educational establishments and those who work in them.

In short a massive education alliance of students, workers and communities.

Meetings to form such alliances should be called in every town and city throughout the country. They should be open to all. Such alliances must demand:

- \* Free access to education
- \* No Loss of Jobs
- \* No Closure of Education Buildings
- \* For Courses decided by those involved in education.

The reason behind the attacks of the Thatcher Government have in the first place nothing to do with Thatcher. Why, is the

attack on education a world wide phenomenon? The answer is very simple - the world economic crisis is forcing Governments of all nations to attack the basic life supports of the working class; education, health and housing. That is why, from Argentina to Australia there are movements of teachers and students. Capitalism in Europe is now on a course of vicious attacks against the gains of the post war movement of the working class and what has been achieved since the upsurges of 1968.

In December, in Spain, both students and teachers were on strike against a social democratic Government that is being pushed by the interests of the multi-nationals.

The labour leadership in Britain has done all it can to force teachers' leaders down the path of what is called 'New Realism'. Socialist Voice congratulates teachers, who at their recent conference, dented this 'New Realist' onslaught and warned that they would take action to defend education.

The drive to 1992 requires subservient labour and trade union leaders. Capitalism requires unions to police their membership on behalf of the multi-nationals.

We call on all those fighting these attacks to consider how the international links can be made between the movements in Europe and further afield.

In May we will be calling for the building of an international students movement at the Lutte Ouvrier Festival in Paris.

We have connections with students and teachers in a number of countries in Europe and we will make connections with our comrades and contacts abroad for all those and with all those who fight in Britain.

No movement can be a lasting one unless it is prepared to step out of the strait jacket mentality of fighting your own corner.

## £1500 International Fund Appeal

We have launched this fund to enable the ISL to carry out its international responsibilities.

The central question in the workers' movement is constructing an international trotskyst party which today means helping in the building of the International Workers League (Fourth International).

The struggle to establish a trotskyst leadership in all countries requires the necessary funds.

We need your help in carrying out those tasks we have set ourselves as part of the IWL (FI). We have sections in Italy, Spain, France, Sweden, Greece, Portugal and Germany. Our strongest parties are in Latin America but we are growing throughout the world. Just to keep the essential contact between all the sections requires a lot of money and we intend to do more than just the essential.

The opportunities that are opening up in Europe make this fund imperative.

We have already raised £200 towards the target we have set ourselves. We want your help in completing it. We have already, in fact, spent £400 towards our international responsibilities, so we need money urgently.

The fact that we have established the Socialist Voice is proof that we are serious. In fact this month we produce a twenty page paper. We have received enough material this month for several months publication. The fight to support the Socialist Voice has been very welcome. We think that the same fight should also be waged for the international fund.

Send all donations to:

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## International Socialist League

Take out a subscription to Socialist Voice: 35p + 26p P&P or £3.66 for six months including P&P. Please note our new address:  
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## Socialist Voice

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# Six months to fight closure

**Frank Fitzmaurice**

THE PROPOSED closure of the Birds-Eye factory in Kirkby is supposedly because of union opposition to the new working practices, known as 'Workstyle'. The announcement of closure came, by strange coincidence, just on the same day as Thatcher was making her unannounced visit to Liverpool, which she used as a platform to lay the blame on the Kirkby workforce.

The opposite is the case. There was agreement in principle to accept 'Workstyle' and negotiations were proceeding over the levels of redundancy pay for any job losses and for some commitment by management to the future of the plant.

An indication of the attitude of management to the talks can be seen from their own statements in the 'Birds-Eye Walls Times' on 20th March, where they say: "In December last year the company made its final offer on Workstyle, containing broadly the same terms as those accepted at all the other factories."

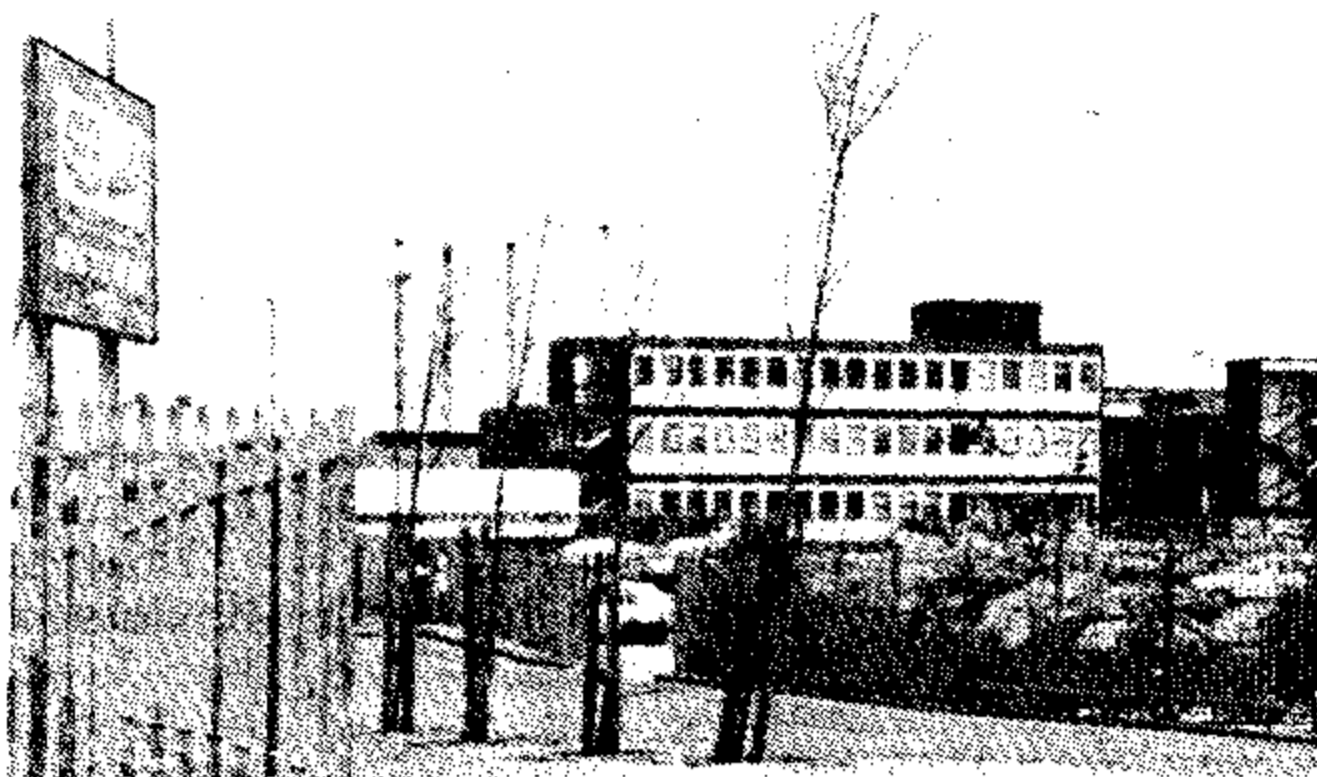
Negotiations began in mid 1987, so for eighteen months they have been offering worse terms than those existing in other plants and they then blame the unions for lack of argument.

Management also boasts about investing in the Kirkby plant: "at the rate of almost £3 million a year." This amount seems pitiful when viewed against a projected advertising budget on frozen foods this year of £20 million.

The real reason behind this proposed closure is to be found in the increased competition between the multi-national food combines, European, American and Japanese, in the run up to the creation of the single European market in 1992, and the takeovers and rationalisation which this has provoked. These include the takeovers of Ross Young by United Biscuits, and Freshbake by US giants Campbell Soup, increasing the cut throat nature of the competition.

The Kirkby workforce, however, are not taking this lying down and have decided to fight the closure. T&GWU area official John Farrell, has secured agreement from four of the five other factories in the Birds-Eye Walls combine not to take any work transferred from Kirkby. This has the effect on the Grimsby plant, the only one not in the agreement, of having to hold out not just against Kirkby but the rest of the combine. This solidarity is the correct method of fighting the multi-national's strategy of pitting plant against plant both within and beyond the boundaries of countries.

In fact Socialist Voice would suggest that the solidarity needs to be carried beyond national boundaries as this is a fight over a European market and needs a Europe-wide unity. The Grimsby plant itself was nearly closed down less than two years ago and its operation threatened to be transferred to mainland Europe.



*Six Months to Save the Kirkby Factory*

## Freedom for Moses Now!

MOSES MAYEKEISO is the General Secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). Along with four others from the Alexandra township he is currently on trial for treason.

The charge is, that in attempting to organise street committees and democratic structures in the black township of Alexandra, they were attempting to overthrow the state. According to a witness, they organised, amongst other things, a consumer boycott of shops that supported the Apartheid regime, organised stay-aways and organised the struggle for better living conditions in Alexandra township around union type democratic structures.

Khola Mayekiso, Moses' wife, has recently toured Britain to raise support for her husband and his co-defendants whose trial is due to recommence this month.

The campaign for the release of Moses Mayekiso has already gained enormous international support. Support has come from the labour movement in many countries, including Britain, the PT( Workers' Party) and the CUT (Central Trade Union

Federation) in Brazil and from Australia and America. In Brazil all of the councils that were taken over by the Workers' Party in the recent elections officially support the campaign.

At a time when the attacks on the working class are taking a clearer international content the task is to turn that support into concrete solidarity action.

Following the visit to the North West by Khola Mayekiso, a demonstration has been called by the Merseyside Anti-Apartheid Trade Union Liaison Committee, supported by the Liverpool Trades Council and the North West TUC, to free Moses and his co-defendants and all South African political prisoners.

The demonstration will take place on 1st April in Liverpool, meeting at Princess Park Gates at 11.00am and marching to Williamson square for a rally with speakers.

All those that support the campaign should now demand the Trades Union Council call a national demonstration in support of the Alexandra Five.

*Moses and Khola*



# Build International

## Spain

A GENERAL STRIKE ripped through the whole of Spain in December last year, mobilizing a 10 million strong tidal wave of workers and youth, against the proposal to introduce a Spanish version of YTS.

Young people in their thousands came out in a national students strike against the YTS two weeks before the big bang.

John Owen from Socialist Voice talked with Miguel a student member of the PST (our sister organization in Spain).

JO: "What role did the students play in the General Strike?"

M: "Plans for the General Strike began with different sectors of workers going on strike but we organized for a national students strike on the 1st of December.

"In Madrid it won 100% support from the secondary schools but in the universities and polytechnics it was uneven. At the polytechnic where I study computers only two courses took action, mine was one of them.

"In other universities of Madrid the support was a lot higher, especially amongst the philosophy, humanities and arts students.

"But the overwhelming majority of the support came from the secondary schools."

JO: "Are they organized in students unions?"

M: "Yes. They have a students' union representative for each school (a kind of shop steward). But there is no one organization to which they all belong.

"Our tendency within this movement is called "Youth Platform", it is one of 22 organizations that exists for youth. We played a major role in the strike, trying to centralise the action.

"The students in our secondary schools are aged 14 to 18 years old."

JO: "What support did the lecturers/teachers give and what role did they play?"

M: "In general, the teachers supported the strike of 1st December because they were in a struggle with the Government themselves. Their own union was supporting the call for a general strike on 16th December."

JO: "What was the march like?"

M: "On the march the main slogans were:

*"Workers and students united go forward" and "Against the Youth Employment Plan" (Plan De Empleo Juvenil)."*

JO: "What plans did you propose against the Government's plans for youth?"

M: "An alternative plan was advanced by the youth; *"For more serious training - Equal jobs with Equal pay."*

JO: "What is happening to education in Spain?"

M: "They are planning to privatise the polytechnics, the universities and the schools but after the strike these plans have been slowed down. In their Reform of Education plans they are destroying subjects like philosophy, arts and humanities and replacing them with business and economics courses.

"Four years ago they put forward the idea of an exam to enter university. Up until then it had been free access to university for anyone who had left secondary school. Now they are proposing more obstacles for youth trying to get into higher education, like more specialised tests."

## Newcastle

IN THE LAST issue of Socialist Voice we put out a call to those that want to fight to set up a campaign against education attacks, as an alternative to the now strangled students campaign, to build an education alliance. As this call was made activists in Newcastle began to set up such a campaign. **Now an Education Union Alliance has begun a city-wide campaign. Other cities should follow this lead and prepare to link the campaigns up nationally.**

At present the campaign is working for a rally in the first week in May and a conference in Newcastle Polytechnic Students Union (NPSU) on 13th May. The conference will be opened at around 10am by Jim Cousins, a local MP, and will include six workshops with the following titles:-

- Free Education Under Threat.
- The Choices For Youth.
- The Future For Further And Higher Education.
- Further Education And Local Government.

## Germany

John Owen also talked to a student from our sister organisation in Germany:

KARL: "After 1968 in West Germany they opened up the universities - they became more democratic. The whole system of grants began in 1968 after the students revolt and mass upsurge."

JO: "Do you think exams are democratic?"

KARL: "No! They are a selective system, that does not take into account peoples background, lives and the conditions they have to work and study in."

JO: "What is happening now in West Germany?"

KARL: "On 18th January the biggest mobilisation of the students in ten years took place. There were demonstrations of 15,000 in Hamburg and similar sized ones held in Berlin and Frankfurt. There have been a whole number of actions over the last six months concerning education. In West Germany they already have the loans system, it was introduced in 1983."

### Higher Education And Incorporation (Privatisation of the polytechnics). Workers In Education.

Socialists Voice calls on all its readers in Newcastle to attend this conference and help those activists already involved to hammer out the strategies and tactics of the future campaign. To readers in the rest of the country, we must say, that only a national campaign against education attacks can win.

In Newcastle, so far, student and trade unions are involved, but we are also asking community groups and tenants organisations (Poll Tax Groups etc), to attend, in order to get representation from the most oppressed sections of society.

Only by establishing organs that represent all sections of society can an effective struggle be waged to defeat these attacks. Only wide democracy in discussion can ensure the correct strategies are adopted. We urge you to join us to help win the campaign.

# Students' Fightback

## Liverpool

ON 1ST APRIL Liverpool Polytechnic, along with all other Polytechnics and larger colleges of Higher Education in England and Wales, will become privatised or as Tory sycophants say, become "Independent". This will mean the control of the Poly by the local authority being severed - and the claws of big business sinking into the flesh of higher education in Liverpool.

What has paved the way for this sacrifice to the altar of Tory greed is the Greater Education Reform Bill, or GERBIL, as it is more commonly known, brought into being by that great sage of wisdom, Kenneth Baker (Thatcher's Education Minister).

The new funding body of the Poly will be the "Polytechnic and Colleges funding Committee". The main creature spouting about the virtues of this new body is the Rector, Professor Peter Toyne, who claims the Poly must become more "student and client orientated", that is, more profitable.

About 30 Polytechnics and 80 large Higher Education Colleges become "Independent" on 1st April.

The students movement must oppose these Thatcherite plans. These moves cannot be separated from the general attack on education and the students movement at the moment, including the introduction of loans, the Poll Tax, cuts in housing and welfare benefits, attacks on the rights of the National Union of Students to mount political campaigns - the list is endless.

A campaign must be mounted to link all

workers connected with education. Assemblies of students and workers affected by these moves must be called. A fight for these things also means a fight for more democracy in the poly's and colleges, more student control over what is being taught and how the poly's and colleges are run.

Every effort must be made to link this campaign with as many struggles as possible - education is a right and not a privilege - just as health is too.

There is a vast army of opposition to the Tory government and its policies just waiting to be mobilised. There are 400,000 youth on YTS - who have had all of their basic rights taken away. Their concerns must become our concerns, as ours will become theirs. Some YTS trainees took strike action during the student's day of action in Liverpool against the introduction of loans, losing a days pay.

Young people have to unite wherever they are against this hated Tory government. As broad a movement as possible needs to be built against these attacks.

**FOR JOINT EDUCATION MEETINGS - BUILD THE EDUCATION ALLIANCE!**

**LINK THE STRUGGLE WITH OTHERS FIGHTING PRIVATISATION!**

**FORGE LINKS WITH YTS TRAINEES - OUR ENEMY IS THE SAME!**

**PLAN FOR ACTION NOW!**

## Australia

THE AUSTRALIAN Labour Government of Bob Hawke is abandoning state funded education. Australia has had free tertiary education in its 45 universities and colleges of advanced education for 18 years.

Education minister John Dawkins is leading the assault, introducing a scheme which, since 1st January has forced the country's 395,000 students to contribute to the cost of their education.

The Higher Education Contribution Scheme, popularly described as a "graduate tax" requires students to pay an annual course charge of A\$1,800 (£860) for each year of full time study regardless of the course they are on.

Students can 'choose' to pay the charge up front as a lump sum or on an 'interest free' deferred basis through the taxation system. BUT if they pay the lump sum they receive a 15% discount. If they defer payment they will be required to commence repayment when personal taxable income reaches A\$22,000 a year, the level of 'average earnings'.

The government stand to save massively on their education budget as a result; projections estimate savings of A\$83 million in 1989, A\$126 million in 1991 and A\$500 million by the end of the century.

The government is also considering ways to "make industry shoulder more of the overall cost of education and training" i.e. open up the education system to the jaws of big business.

These schemes bare a stark resemblance to Kenneth Baker's (British Minister of Education) plans to introduce student loans.

The economic crisis is forcing all governments, Tory and Labour alike, to impose huge cuts in education, health, housing and welfare benefits; the basic life support systems of the working class.

Australian university students held a series of voluble protests in 1988, tightly controlled and organised by their leaders, which failed to prevent the introduction of the government scheme. The students unfortunately fought in isolation.

The lessons from the students fightback on a world scale point to the fact that they must join with the workers to fight education cuts as a class issue.

## Sweden

On 12TH JANUARY 12,000 secondary school students marched through Stockholm in Sweden protesting at government proposals to reduce the education budget by 170 million Krona's (approximately £16 million).

The Social Democratic Government (SAP) were knocked back by the opposition but have only slowed down their plans.

The demonstration united primary and secondary school pupils. (In Sweden primary school is for 5-15 year olds and secondary school for 15-18 year olds.) Primary school pupils asked their parents for permis-

sion to go on the demonstration.

The bureaucrats of the students' union opposed the demonstration as did the leaders of the trade union movement. They proposed instead a "Let the Schools Live" campaign. A campaign without action. They were opposed to demonstrating against the government because it is a social democratic government.

Students of (ELEV) the student organisation in the Stockholm region were in favour of unity with the workers.

The Socialist League, sister organisation of the International Socialist League in Sweden, proposed at trade union meetings that workers should support the students.

**This page was written and compiled by Ed Barbor, John Owen and Sue Gwyer.**

# Tories attack GP's services

Rae Hunter

OPPOSITION has been widespread to Health Secretary, Kenneth Clarke's White Paper on the National Health Service. There is condemnation among all sections of the medical profession - the nurses, the General Practitioners and now the Consultants, who warn that the Government's plans mean "real risks to patients care".

The majority of the public are opposed. It was reported last month that the latest opinion poll showed that only 12% believed that the proposed changes would improve the NHS. 50% thought that these changes would make the service worse, while 20% thought that they would make no difference.

Our family doctors are the most affected by the White Paper. A great number of them are already overworked but now they will be pushed to gain more profitable patients. **The White Paper proposes to alter their contracts so that they will receive a larger part of their pay from capitation allowance. There will be pressure to reduce consultation times.**

In the "Observer" of 19th March, a General Practitioner from Ashford, Kent, declared he stood to lose between £12,000 and £16,000 a year under the proposed new scheme. He would gain £7,000 from new capitation payments but would lose £22,000 from his basic practice allowance, group practice allowance and rural practice payments. He had written to his local MP saying that the new contract and NHS review would force him and his partner to cut services.

In the "Independent" of the 21st March, there was another report about this shedding of patients and services.

"High cost patients in Kent" said this report, have been told by some GP's to find another doctor before the Government's plans to introduce drug budgets come in. David Homeshawc, Chief Executive of Kent Family Practitioner Committee declared that up to one hundred patients with heavy demands for prescriptions had either been removed from GP's lists or told to look elsewhere.

"In a couple of cases" he said "I have had harsh words with the doctor and the patient has been taken back."

Under the White Paper, GP's would have to work to a strict medicine budget. **A great many old people and chronically ill people who require a cocktail of drugs daily - like patients with heart problems - will be a drain on this budget.**

Most doctors, of course, are appalled at cutting down their care of patients. General



Nurses demonstrate in defence of the health service

Practitioners have been meeting together in various areas to discuss the effects of the White Paper and to discuss how to stop its introduction. Opposition is so great among some GP's that they have talked of resigning from the NHS in protest. This is clearly not the way to oppose the White Paper and save the Health Service.

Thatcher, at Scarborough, recently declared that: "Our reforms have nothing to do with privatising the Health Service." That, however, is clearly the aim of the government,

**complete profitisation is the motive.**

Doctors, like nurses, cannot fight these plans by opting out. What is required is joining their forces to those of the patients and the nurses. Of all the struggles facing us - attacks on state benefits, pollution, Poll Tax, water privatisation - the defence of the Health Service can be the biggest.

The links between GP and patient, between Consultant and patient and nurse and patient are strong. There must be a joint struggle.

## Food mixed with

Kevin Bulman

REMEMBER when all the fuss was made by the British Tory Government over the quality of meat carcasses imported from the Irish Republic and cheese from France? Well, latest figures from the Institute of Environmental Health Officers expose the hypocrisy of the British Tory Government. They state that there is a shortage of 450 Environmental Health Officers to inspect Britain's abattoirs and that this shortage, alongside archaic regulations, make it impossible to maintain proper hygiene standards, leaving meat eaters at risk of poisoning.

The Tory Government and other European governments are only now lifting the lid on the taboo subject of contamination of food, poor standards of hygiene, and unhealthy food additives. They are preparing for the unified European Market in 1992, which will mean, despite the harmonising name, a return to the strong trade protectionism witnessed in the 1930's.

It would appear that the Tories are giving us an ultimatum on the issue of food poisoning; "Why be poisoned by eating European Community food when you can be poisoned by eating British food?"

In the January issue of Socialist Voice, after the revelations of the widescale epidemic of salmonella in eggs and poultry and the attempt to cover it up, we posed the question: "How many more foodstuffs are contaminated or adulterated with unsafe additives?"

The "Independent" newspaper published findings from a MORI poll which found that: "70% of people questioned were not confident that take-away restaurants ensured that food was uncontaminated" and that "About half felt the same about poultry and egg farms and food-processing plants."

But the Tory Government answer this fear with abstract cynicism, refusing to acknowledge widespread belief that for every case of reported food poisoning another 100 cases go unreported, and by increasing spending on

# Regional pay means low pay

THE LARGEST union in the Civil Service, the CPSA, in a ballot of members voted four to one to accept a new Long Term Pay Agreement based on regional pay and performance pay. At the time of writing the second largest union, the NUCPS, was anticipating a similar result in its ballot.

The postal workers union, the Union of Communications Workers, accepted a similar deal in a ballot of members, although the vote was very close.

These results mean a complete turn around in union policy in less than twelve months and represent a major capitulation by the union leadership to the Tories.

The destruction of national pay bargaining is a prime objective of the Tories. Exploiting the high levels of unemployment they plan to drive down the wages of the working class as they drive towards privatisation. The next in line will be the railwaymen, nurses and education workers.

The question is what to do? Without the active collaboration of the trade union leadership these deals would never have been accepted. The leadership of the Civil Service unions had to go against specific conference policy decisions not to ballot on a pay deal, without reference to annual conference, to get the result they wanted. Similarly in the

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Peter Money

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UCW the leadership, had to go against the rank and file who, less than twelve months ago, were on strike in defence of national pay bargaining.

This process will continue. The trade union bureaucracy will be increasingly forced to attack the democratic rights and gains of the members as the Tories, driven by the deepening economic crisis and the demands of the multi-nationals, demand more and more from them as the price for allowing them a role in negotiating and policing deals.

The answer to these attacks is to build up a broad opposition to the increasingly anti-democratic and anti-working class policies of the trade union leaders. This could have been done in the ballots in the Civil Service unions where even many of the right wing members opposed the leadership because they were breaking conference decisions. It was the failure of the lefts in the unions to take up the attack by the executive and to mount a serious campaign of opposition that played right into the leaderships hands. The "leave it to the ballot" folded arms policy of the left resulted in a big vote for the Executive's positions. Many left led District Committees

took decisions against the deal but voted against calling for a special delegates conference which could have easily stopped the Executive.

It is only through rank and file unity and solidarity that the plans of the Tories and the union bureaucracy can be stopped as the postal workers showed last year, when local decisions were taken not to go back to work in one town after another.

The capital of such solidarity in face of national leaders opposition shows in the votes against regional pay that were cast in Bristol, Manchester, Liverpool and Edinburgh as well as parts of London.

A campaign for a democratic and fighting union is what is needed. It is a question of involving and mobilising the membership.

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## Apartheid Sacking

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Ed Barbor

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IN JANUARY, in Newcastle, a part-time worker at W. M. Low's, the supermarket chain, refused to handle South African goods and was promptly, sacked with no notice, after working there for over six months. Prior to this she had been refused membership of USDAW (the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) because she was only fifteen.

For taking this courageous stand the USDAW leadership have given her no support at all. They have not even answered her letters.

It means that a fifteen year old has more courage than the leadership of a national union. Their stance forced her to fight on an individual basis making the struggle very hard to win. They never replied to letters that were sent to them.

The sacking is no surprise (though we applaud her principled stand on the issue) as the willingness of employers to sack workers who express their support for the Anti-Apartheid struggle is well known. What is appalling for the labour movement is how the unions turn their back on the youth and support for the liberation struggle.

We must continue to fight for the unions to open their doors to the youth - those old enough to work are old enough to join a union!

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## profit = poisoning

research into salmonella from the paltry £0.25m to the miserly sum of £1.25m. At the same time they save £5m through the closure of five research laboratories.

Whenever the capitalist class wants to maximise its profits, or increase efficiency, it is always the working class as consumer or producer that suffers.

The Tory cut-backs in food and hygiene inspection are only a mirror reflection of their cut-backs in health and safety at work inspection.

Most workers in factories, shops and other workplaces can expect a health and safety inspection or visit at best once every seven years. If they survive a fatal tragedy like Piper Alpha or Zeebrugge however they are ensured an immediate visit from Margeret Thatcher, expressing her deep concern - for good publicity.

Food poisoning and health and safety at work are class issues dictated by the money greed of the multi-national capitalists. But this greed runs like a thread right the way

through to the small producers. They too cut corners and overlook standards in order to boost profits.

The working class, especially the unemployed and pensioners, suffer the most. Many of the unemployed and retired citizens have lost so much in the cut-backs in benefit, that they are forced to live on a low budget and eat an unnutritious and unhealthy diet.

Only proper control of health and safety inspection at work can guarantee decent food. Such control can only be ensured through trade union and workers inspection, working where possible in connection with food inspectors.

Only those that do not profit from food production can stop the production of increasingly poisonous food.

The fact that the labour leaders are already retreating on the question of re-nationalisation means that they will have no desire for the control and regulation of food production that will benefit consumers. Such concern will be left to the working class.

# Hands off the Karabakh Committee!

Bill Hunter

AN ARTICLE in January's Socialist Voice declared that the bureaucratic rulers of the Soviet Union "*met the disaster with hypocrisy, confusion, even demoralisation, and used it to increase national oppression.*"

Very little news is now appearing in the British press about Armenia. However, we were absolutely correct to point to the increase in bureaucratic national oppression.

The session Armenian Parliament was broken up last November. Tanks and troops have occupied the country since then and the capital has been under martial law and curfew ever since.

All the leaders of the Karabakh Committee - which led massive demonstrations of Armenians - are now in jail, having been hunted down by the police and army.

Even so, Armenians have found ways to demonstrate. The "Independent" reported that a women's delegation to discuss election issues, on 8th March, International Women's Day, turned into a mass demonstration. Two recent football matches in Erevan turned into demonstrations and the authorities threatened to impose an indefinite ban on home games.

There are widespread complaints about bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption in the reconstruction work after the earthquake. The local party leadership is accused of helping themselves to international gifts meant for the stricken towns and of diverting materials for resale.

The Karabakh Committee has existed for several years with wide popular support. It consists of representatives from factories and areas in the manner of the Soviets in the early years of the Soviet Union. Participants have described how workers from enterprises would come to ask for representation. One report, of a meeting in February 1988, declares 800 representatives were present from various areas, factories and enterprises.

An interview with a member of the Committee, in "Soviet Nationality Survey" of August 1988, gave a picture of the atmosphere and of the feelings of the hundreds of thousands who participated in the Committee and in its demonstrations: "*...if a speaker spoke truthfully and intelligently, he was applauded. It was a case of natural selection. The nation elected who should speak.*"

*"And the nation was selecting democracy and freedom. It rejected servility and sycophancy. It also rejected extremism, anti-Azerbaijani and anti-moslem sentiments. All of this was an expression of broadly democratic principles.*

*"At first there was something of a natural process, and out of this process a leadership emerged, a leadership selected by the hundreds of thousands who gathered to protest.*

*"This was a remarkable phenomena. It cannot be adequately explained in words.*

*"In the end, the nation was opting more and more for self determination, for the right to determine one's own fate."*

With Gorbachev and the bureaucracy ruthlessly suppressing their higher form of democracy, it is no wonder that the population has no illusions in perestroika and the majority has boycotted the Soviet elections.

## Soviet Elections:

### Workers' Blow Against Bureaucracy

The March Soviet elections reveal the anti-bureaucratic feeling of Soviet workers to be something that can and will mobilise mass opposition to the privileged caste that rule.

Over twenty party leaders have been removed. In Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev the old leaders have been slung out, at times the vote against them reaching ninety per cent.

This result is, in all its contradictory forms, part of the vast movement for workers democracy throughout the globe. It is primarily a vote against the old leadership that has proved utterly incapable of organising society for the benefit of the working class and which keeps workers from taking control of the society which they brought into being.

The election of Yeltsin shows the strength of the anti-bureaucratic feeling but it does not mean that the working class has won the battle against the bureaucracy. We have continuously stressed that it would be foolish to believe that there could be a simple evolution to socialism and workers democracy. The bureaucracy will not peacefully give up its privileges, but these election results are a mighty blow against it.

The elections also show that the same process that has been rocking the bureaucracy at its periphery is now erupting in the centre. It has taken decades of struggle to build the level of organisation and leadership of the working class that exists in countries such as Poland. As the Soviet working class takes the road of broad anti-bureaucratic struggle it can quickly attain and go beyond the opposition already built in other parts of the Soviet bloc.

Trotsky predicted the degeneration of stalinism because he was firmly convinced that no narrow or nationalist solution, no socialism in one country, could be successful. Only the world wide movement of the working class can resolve the fundamental problems.

The working class can build that international movement, they have no alternative, for their enemies are now clearly the same throughout the world. As the initiative of the working class pushes forward to resolve its own destiny, the imperialists and the bureaucracies find a common bond in their fear of the mass movement. The fear of imperialism is that Gorbachev and the stalinists could lose control of the masses.

What imperialists need is a bureaucracy willing to put them in a favourable position to expand their profit into the economy of the Soviet Union.

The degree of suffering and sacrifice which the masses will meet will be decided by the struggle of living forces. The quicker they build an international leadership the quicker the solution.

For fifty years, since the formation of the Fourth International, the revolutionary upsurge throughout the world has been testing out social democratic and stalinist bureaucracies.

The working class is now breaking through. That is why we say it is the age of Trotskyism. It is the age of those who, like the IWL (FI), are turned to the great social task of building the world party of socialism inside the capitalist countries and the stalinist states in an unbreakable unity of struggle.





# Soviet Union Attempts to Strangle Liberation Struggle

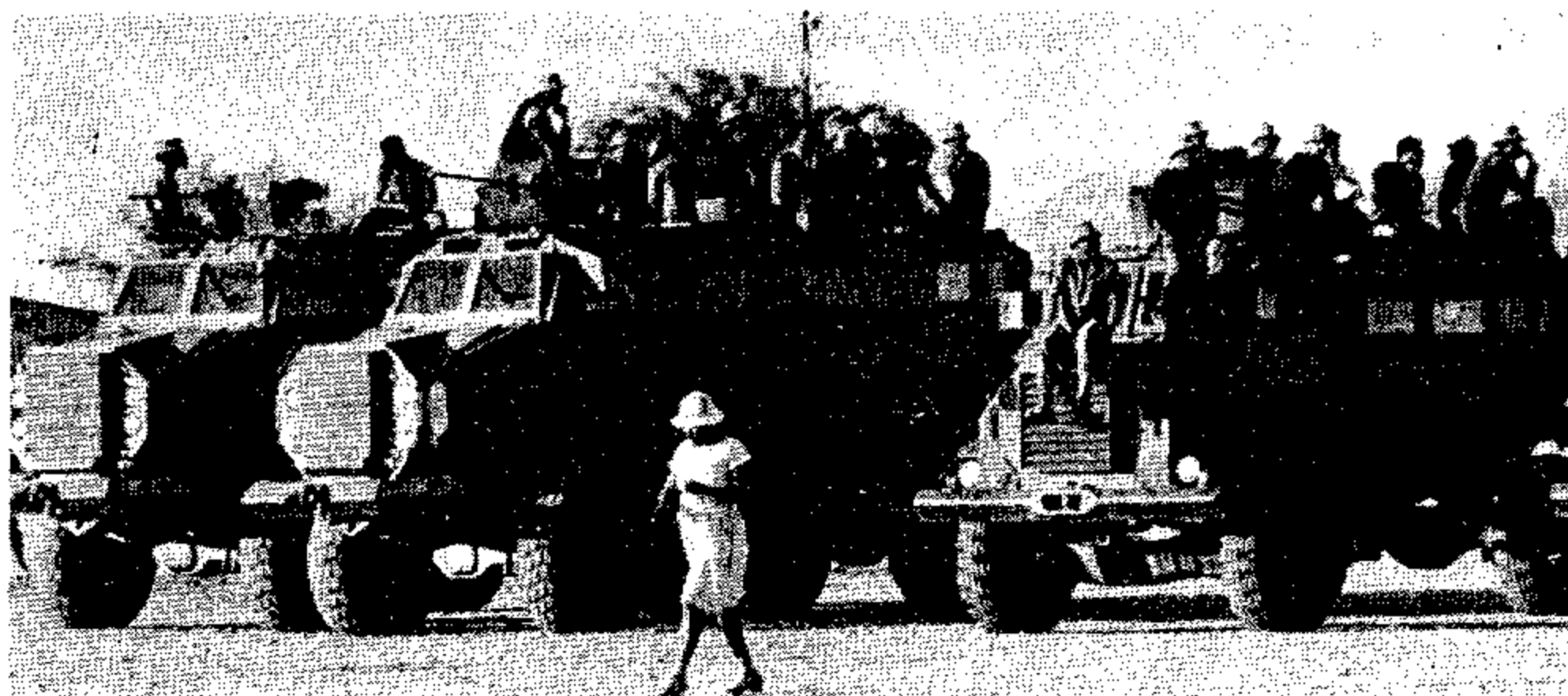
YURI YUKALOV, head of the Southern Africa Department of the Soviet Foreign Ministry said in March, in line with all the new concessions that the Soviets are making to imperialism, that: "South Africa should not be destroyed."

The Soviets have already established economic links with Apartheid. It is through these relations that they extract uranium and diamonds from Namibia and in South Africa they trade in automobiles,

fairs, said in the "Independent" on 17th March, Namibia had been "...a major political headache ... a continual stumbling block in our relations with Africa.

"We will be relieved from the prospect of an open ended-war."

However, the case is not as simple and Van Heerden knows this. Other forces are aligned against real independence. Unita, the Angolan 'contras', are freely crossing the unmonitored border into Namibia's Caprivi Strip



The hated 'Koevoet' paramilitary police watch striking workers in the Katutura township, June 1988

watches and SA diamonds.

They are also opposed to the armed struggle in the southern Africa. This attack on the black worker's right to fight as they want, and how they must, has forced the African National Congress (ANC) to reply that the political and military campaign must be increased. Such a statement itself reflects the conflicts inside the ANC.

Apartheid outside of South Africa, has already found new forms of exploiting the working class in the southern cone of the continent. It has a strangle hold over Mozambique and has established one over Angola with the help of the Soviet Union. It hopes to do the same in Namibia, which will shortly have 'independence'.

Any economic and trade agreements that a future Namibian Government will sign will have to rely on South African cooperation, as it controls the only deep water port in Namibia and the only railway line. It controls over 80 per cent of imports and exports. So the noose is already placed around the neck of the Namibian liberation struggle.

It is likely, even with a SWAPO (South West African Peoples Organisation) Government, that the ANC military presence in Angola will be forbidden. This would complete the encirclement of territories that refuse the presence of the ANC camps.

As Van Heerden, Minister of Foreign Af-

(as reported by the Namibia Support Committee). Unita may also register to vote against SWAPO.

South Africa wants to keep 3,000 of the notorious murder squad - the Koevoet - as part of the policing force in Namibia in the run up to the elections.

They will also keep Walvis Bay, the main communications centre and military base.

Clearly, for independence to bring benefits for the masses in Namibia would require measures that would include nationalisation under the control of workers. But any Government that emerges tied to the diplomacy of Apartheid, the Americans and the Soviet Union would be unable to carry through such measures. If this was the case then it would also come into collision with the aspirations of the masses.

What is also posed in Namibia therefore is an international programme and the direct support of the international working class.

What Imperialism and Apartheid are seeking is the control of the masses not by armed intervention at this stage but a new control based on leaderships and petty-bourgeois forces that will seek to operate against the masses.

All leaderships such as SWAPO and the ANC will come under tremendous pressure as stalinism tries to deliver its 'peaceful solution' in the southern cone.

## Support the PPS

THE POLISH Socialist Party (PPS), which was formed in November 1987, now has an international office in London.

The document adopted by the first national conference of the PPS declared that: "Post-stalinist totalitarianism is seeking out new forms in order to survive. Free market processes, with the preservation of the nomenklatura authorities, have the effect of strengthening and deepening the mechanisms of exploitation and domination. Conflict is increasing, between the governing elite and the rich layers under its tutelage on the one hand and the working majority on the other."

The PPS stands for: "...the socialisation of the state; the take-over of economic power in the factories by the workers together with the creation of a democratic form of representation for society; a commonwealth of producers and citizens."

On the anniversary of martial law in Poland, on the 13th December last year, it was one of the main groups organising large demonstrations in a number of Polish cities. In Wroclaw, for example, 15,000 marched behind PPS banners.

The monthly information bulletin of the Party can be obtained from the London office: 92 Ladbroke Grove, London, W11 for an annual subscription of five pounds.

The Party is making an appeal for funds from members and organisations in the British Labour Movement, declaring: "A Polish industrial worker earns about seven pounds a month. Even modest donations can help the family of a political prisoner or help keep the PPS press (Democratic Revolution) up and running."

**Sue Gwyer**

# Deforestation Cannot Pay

IN RESPONSE to international criticism of Brazil's conservation record, the chief military adviser to President Jose Sarney, General Bayma Denys, said: "*Brazilian Amazonia is the sovereign patrimony of Brazil and the country will not surrender its right to integrate it into the national economy, exploiting its resources.*"

The decimation of 200,000 square kilometres of Amazonian rainforest in 1987 - an area roughly equivalent to that of the Netherlands - has devastating implications not only for Brazil and its peoples but for the whole world.

The most conservative scientific analysis estimates that at least 8% of the original primary forest has been lost.

The Brazilian government have treated the region as if it were an infinitely exploitable resource - burning the equivalent of a football pitch every five seconds for a year.

In Rondonia, the far western state of the Amazon, vast immigrations of subsistence farmers were encouraged by free plots to devastate land wholly unsuited to farming. A whole sheaf of fiscal incentives to forest destruction is still in place. The current development strategy is to encourage large-scale immigration to the regions of the south and east of the rainforest for a major new agricultural development drive.

A road route from the western Amazon to

the Pacific coast is also planned.

**Hundreds of thousands of Brazilian peasants have been displaced by large plantation farms.**

The effect on the tribal peoples living in the Amazon is even worse. Some 136 new hydro-electric dams are scheduled to flood tens of thousands of square kilometres of inhabited tropical rainforest in the next two decades. **The dams will forcibly displace over 500,000 people.** The Balbina dam, north west of Manaus, the Amazonian capital, has flooded thousands of square kilometres for a puny 250 megawatt pay-off, not even enough to meet local demand!

The Parakana Indians have already felt the effects of the flooding of nearly 2,500 square kilometres of rainforest: relocated 10 times, the Parakana were at no stage consulted about their fate and have suffered debilitating waterborne diseases and the disappearance of their livelihood.

**Only last year 300 people died in floods caused by deforestation around Rio.**

In the south east of the Amazon the Carajas iron ore scheme has towed in its wake pig-iron plants with export incentives where the only fuel is wood torn from the rainforest itself.

Across the region cattle barons have won

tax concessions to plough up forest while up to a million uncontrolled gold miners poison rivers with tonnes of mercury.

The increasing incidence of violent attacks on peasant farmers and ecologists opposed to the deforestation in Brazil is testimony to the country's economic crisis and mounting frenzy over the necessity to pay the International Monetary Fund and the foreign banks.

The murder of Chico Mendes, President of a rural workers' union in the western Amazon, leaves little doubt as to the danger of demonstrating opposition to the Governments over-exploitation of natural resources.

The more the international outrage at the senseless rainforest destruction surfaces the more the Brazilian Government protests its sovereign right to send bulldozers in to rip the Amazon apart.

The demands of debt servicing are a major factor in the Amazon's destruction. \$12 billion (£6.9 billion) in debt interest alone has to be found each year. The Brazilian Government exploit the natural resources to earn the foreign exchange to pay off the debt.

**The Brazilian Government know they have unleashed a holocaust in the Amazon. They know that the consequences will be dire not just for the forest but for their own people and the world population.**

**Peter Windeler**

# IMF Sets Venezuela

**RIOTS IN Venezuela, against International Monetary Fund (IMF) dictated price rises, have reaffirmed once again the instability of the Latin American continent, continually being shaken by the action of the masses.**

Venezuela, for decades considered 'Latin America's Sweden', is experiencing severe economic problems. It has an external debt of \$33BN, on which it is unable to even pay the interest.

The IMF insisted that the Venezuelan Government devalue the currency, stop controls on interest rates and end subsidies on goods and services to enable debt repayment.

Unemployment in Venezuela is 25% according to official statistics, estimated to be as high as 40% by other sources. 372,000 families are without an income and one million living on just one wage. Shanty towns have mushroomed around Caracas, the capi-

tal, and other big cities. 228,337 houses are without water, electricity and gas.

The IMF dictates, imposed by the newly elected President, Carlos Andres Perez, resulted in increases in petrol prices of 80% and increases in the price of food and other essential items. The price of milk rose 400%.

These measures came on top of a situation where wages had been reduced to the level they were 20 years ago with an inflation rate last year of 35%. There were already shortages of bread, coffee and salt. Teachers and Court staff immediately went on strike. These were the only organised actions. Students and workers in Caracas, the capital, and eight other cities staged spontaneous protests over the increases. The protests developed into riots against the tough IMF austerity measures being imposed by the Government. Thousands of people took control of the streets for a whole week, looting shops, barricading

streets and confronting the security forces. For days the police and army were unable to control the uprising.

What followed was a repression the like of which shocked ordinary Venezuelans. **In Caracas over 10,000 troops were airlifted in by Hercules C130 transport planes. All civil rights were suspended and press censored.** It is obvious that soldiers, as well as the police, were on orders to shoot to kill. Frequently crowds were raked with gun fire and the shacks in the shanty towns were sprayed with bullets. **1,000 people were shot dead, 2,000 injured and ten thousand arrested. At one point Caracas City morgue ran out of coffins**

In the city of Guayana, with a population of 750,000, 2,500 people were detained.

**Only after the concession of a 50% wage increase and a guaranteed price freeze on basic food stuffs could Perez stop the up-**

# American Air Boss Grounded

Dave Dunnico Reports From Miami

ON 3RD MARCH what could be one of the most important strikes in US labour history started at Eastern Airlines. Like Wapping, the dispute is about one man trying to destroy a union.

Since Frank Lorenzo bought the airline in 1986 he's been preparing to take on the International Association of Machinists which represents 9,000 of his workforce. Profitable parts of the operation, together with loans of \$900 million, have been given to Texas Air and Continental Airlines. Both of these are owned by Frank Lorenzo. Both are non-unionised. In the last two years Continental has doubled in size while Eastern has shrunk by a quarter.

Like the run-up to the British miners' strike the period before the dispute was marked by a large scale slashing of the workforce and firings of union activists. Lorenzo spent the time building up a \$100 million 'war chest' to fund the strike.

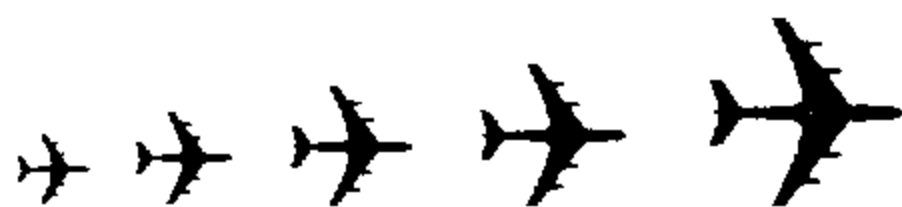
The Eastern workers prepared for 3rd

March. A week before, one fitter, Charlie, said: "I've been saving up for 18 months. I've got \$10,000 in the bank. I'm going on strike and I'm staying on strike."

The strike is solid. Eastern's main facilities in Miami and Florida are picketed 24 hours a day. Pickets are blocking Eastern at New York, Washington and everywhere else in the USA they fly. Only 6% of their flights were leaving the ground in the first week of the dispute. Lorenzo countered by transferring flights to Texas and Continental. The strikers have had some success in stopping these.

Morale is still high. From the start the Machinists have known that if they lose they lose everything. In the words of one: "This ain't a strike - It's a war."

The techniques in Britain of MacGregor, Murdoch and Sterling were all imported from the USA. The ultimate failure of the fights against these multi-national barons was due to the lack of solidarity between workers in Britain and abroad. Workers' solidarity was the only way these disputes could have won - It's the only way the strikers at Eastern will win.



## on Fire

rising.

Press in Caracas have since reported the discovery of a mass grave filled with up to 100 corpses. The victims are thought to be illegal immigrants living in the shanty towns. No records are held of these people and so the army considered few questions would be asked.

In Venezuela the Social Democrat President Carlos Andres Perez, Vice-President of the Second International, sent in the army to do the IMF's bidding. One Caracas daily newspaper on 28th February ran as its headline: "The IMF sets fire to the streets of Caracas", which could not be closer to the truth!

The international banks have lent \$600M (£353M) in extra finance since the riots but were hoping to obtain Venezuela's oil export revenue direct in repayment. Vene-

continued on page 16

IN THE FIRST week of the Eastern Airlines strike a supportive 'fly to rule' action by pilots of America's other airlines, including Pan Am, threatened to disrupt all US internal and international flights.

Unions of the AFL-CIO (the American TUC), specifically the Communication Workers' Union, which failed to mobilise support for the striking air traffic controllers sacked by Reagan in 1981, and subsequently entered a decade of haemorrhaging union membership, plan to spread the strike to other airlines and commuter and long distance railways.

President Bush, himself a former pilot, has called for an end to the 'fly to rule' and warned that he will introduce emergency legislation to ban secondary picketing if the unions carry out their threats to spread the dispute.

Eastern's 3,600 pilots, members of the Air Line Pilots Association, are honouring and joining picket lines mounted by striking ground crew. As a result, on the fourth day of the strike, Eastern shut down all but three routes of its 120-city network.

Eastern's main routes in the eastern US, south Florida, the Caribbean and South America are being flown by Pan Am, Delta Airlines, American Airlines and TransWorld Airlines.

Eastern attempted to issue an injunction on their striking pilots who, they say, are staging an illegal strike by not crossing the picket lines. They are arguing that the Railway Labour Act, which covers airlines, outlaws a strike unless there is a 30 day cooling off period. This

cooling off period expired at midnight on 3rd March for Eastern's 8,500 baggage handlers and mechanics.

As a result of the solid support from the pilots Eastern have now filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the US bankruptcy code.

Frank Lorenzo, chairman of Eastern's parent company, Texas Air, took Continental Air, another Texas Air subsidiary, into bankruptcy in 1982 in order to rescind union contracts. He used the bankruptcy to force through huge wage cuts across the board. He emerged with a low wage, non-union, competitive airline.

Lorenzo has turned his tiny crop spraying Texas Air Company into the largest airline group in the world after Aeroflot.

The unions accuse Lorenzo of stripping Eastern's assets by switching routes and prized airport gates and take-off slots to his other airline, Continental.

Most Texas Air employees have accepted wage cuts of 15% to bring their pay down to Continentals level (the lowest in the US) but the mechanics and baggage handlers at Eastern have refused.

Just hours before filing for bankruptcy Eastern sold eight of its Philadelphia gates and two Canadian routes for \$85 million to US Air.

Captain Gordon Lane of the Eastern pilots' union said: "He (Lorenzo) was bleeding the airline so fast there wouldn't have been an airline to work for quite soon."

Strikers have picketed banks in an attempt to prevent the asset stripping antics of their boss Lorenzo.

# Intifada cannot be defeated

Martin Ralph

TODAY the world knows that unless the demands of the Intifada are met the struggle will continue and intensify. This is acknowledged by the Israeli Intelligence service, the Thatcher Government and the Bush administration.

But why are they making public statements which either condemn the occupation force on the West Bank and Gaza Strip or say that the uprising will only worsen if there are no negotiations?

Essentially they cannot stop the Intifada and the longer it continues the greater its effect inside Israel and the greater the instability all over the Middle East, where a growing peace movement is demanding the cessation of Israeli brutality.

Even the American State Department had to admit, in an annual human rights review in February, that "...many cases of unjustified killing did not result in disciplinary action.

"Troops used clubs to break limbs and beat Palestinians who were not directly involved in disturbances... At least 13 Palestinians are reported to have died from beatings."

These reports are intended to bring pressure on Israeli leaders. The Americans could, of course, bring immediate changes. They could even destroy Israel, by stopping their daily aid of millions of dollars. But they are seeking a change where the Israeli rulers remain firmly in control.

The other face of the American rulers was shown in a report published two weeks later. The American TUC, the AFL/CIO, attacked the US Government for allowing criticism of Israel. In a February report they say that Israel is: "...host of the most free and democratic labor practices in the region."

The AFL/CIO noted: "...there have been occasions when the Israeli authorities deserved criticism for acting with excessive use of force to contain Palestinian uprisings..." but also pointed out that, "...certain Israeli responses to the activities of organisations and individuals (its banning of some unions and prohibitions against allowing known terrorists to run for union office) were linked



to their support for the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) and its terrorist activities."

The monkey is still dancing to the old tune while the organ grinder has a new song.

Such statements can be of use because it makes some appear like the peacemakers they are not.

For instance, it was reported in the Financial Times on the 23rd March that the Americans are saying that in the next round of talks with the PLO: "we will not be asking for an end to the Intifada (uprising), but for practical steps that can be taken to reduce the tension and reduce the suffering." The old iron fist, covered in blood, comes to the fore as peacemaker.

All this signifies a new stage of collaboration is now opening up at an international level. Palestinians beware!

The 'Observer' played its role in the new conspiracy being developed against the Intifada on the 19th March, when it said that a week of peace is worth a lot more than one year of uprising. It was a piece full of the old British colonial arrogance.

But such an attitude will be supported by the trade union and the left leaderships in this country. Not one trade union has uttered support for the Intifada let alone organised a campaign in support of it. Many trade unions have international departments, many send delegations around the world, some have even been to Palestine. Their attitude is that if they talk to the oppressed they have to talk to the oppressor. The only conclusion that should be drawn from their visits is that a campaign to isolate the Israelis and to raise

support from the working class for the uprising is a duty for all in the labour movement. The first step is to fight for the breaking off of all links with the Histadrut (Israeli TUC) and the Israeli Labour Party.

## Will God Provide?

ON 14TH MARCH the Financial Times reported that, for the first time ever, Swedish Lutheran priests took to the streets in the capital, Stockholm, to demonstrate over low pay.

The priests are demanding a 40% wage increase. The 3-4% being discussed in the national wage negotiations have provoked talk of strike action which could lead to the disruption of weddings, baptisms and confirmations.

Quoting Swedish born labour organiser Joe Hill, one priest said: "People just think priests work on Sundays and that you'll get pie in the sky when you die." One woman priest told Swedish television: "Our wages are so bad we simply must protest."

# Life of the LIT

Socialist Voice discussed with Enrique Mosquera, a member of the Central Committee of the PST (section of the International Workers' League in Spain) about the General Strike last December and the subsequent developments.

**SV:** "What role did the PST play in the General Strike?"

**EM:** "We supported the strike wherever we had members.

In the morning workers picketed factories to stop the scabs. We had an important role, where we had influence, in this process.

In the Basque country the Asamblea de Parados (the unemployed organisation) called a demonstration with the trade unions. The most important group on the demonstration was the Asamblea de Parados. The PST is the leadership of this organisation.

This organisation has forced employers to take on specific unemployed workers. They give the most active workers the priority in finding them jobs. If, for instance, on a building site, where they are taking on labour, the employer refuses to take on someone suggested by the Asamblea de Parados they will picket the site until they are taken on.

We made a special intervention in Sevilla in Andalucia with young people and workers. Here we organised groups of young workers to ensure that all the factories stopped.

We had a key role in Ceuta, a Spanish colonial town in North Africa. The indigenous people, Muslims, did not want to support the strike because they said it was a Christian strike but we organised groups of young people and Arab workers to convince the workers to support the General Strike.

Through our support and persuasion they joined the strike.

In the Canary Islands we stopped the tobacco factory.

The task in the streets in Madrid and Barcelona was to organise and support the strikes."

**SV:** "What has happened since the General Strike?"

**EM:** "The strike demands have not been met by the Government. The demands included dropping the cheap labour plans, pay increases for pensioners, negotiating rights for civil service union committees and greater numbers of the unemployed to receive gov-

# Extradite Hellin!

OVER 17,000 trade unionists and prominent people in the Spanish labour movement have signed a petition demanding the extradition of a fascist from Chile who, nine years ago, assassinated a national youth leader, Yolanda Gonzalez, also a member of the PST.

**The murderer, Emelio Hellin, is now working for the Chilean Government.**

The reason for the killing was that at the time Yolanda was a public figure, an acknowledged leader of a very strong youth movement. The movement involved many of the secondary schools and universities throughout Spain. The Government of the time and the fascists wanted to break the movement. In fact the police had killed two students on a demonstration prior to Yolanda's

murder. One of the assassins had information about Yolanda that could have come only from the police. At the outset the Government had said that some police were involved in the conspiracy.

**The Gonzalez Government has done nothing to aid the extradition of the fascist even though an extradition treaty does**

THE PST of Ceuta decided some weeks ago to call a meeting in the Muslim area of "El Principe" on the serious problems facing local people.

We wanted to hold the meeting in a school in the area because it was the only building big enough. It is normally used for community events and marriages etc. This request was refused on the basis that the meeting was not the sort of activity that the building could be used for.

We started a campaign to get signatures and in one week we got 400. With this support we demanded the use of the building or said we would hold the meeting in the street. Well we had the meeting in the street.

ernment money. It is impossible for the Government to concede on all these points.

Between December and February there was no agreement. The trade union leadership did not continue the fight to force the concessions.

It was not until March that some strikes took place.

There are strikes now but they are individual strikes, as in the railways and Iberia, the Spanish airlines, in the textiles and the metal

exist between the two countries.

This is not the first time that the PST has had to demand that the state carry out their responsibilities in bringing these criminals to justice. When Yolanda was murdered the two who carried out the action were put on trial. They were members of the fascist party "New Force". They revealed in court that it was an organised action. It had been coordi-

nated by a leader of their party. That man was left to walk free in Spain.

It was only after the PST began a campaign and in the process collected 70,000 signatures that they put him in prison with the other two.

This time the 17,000 who have signed include factory committees of the 17 most important factories in Spain including Talbot and Marconi, the rail union, leaders of the

CCOO and CGT unions, the council of Bilbao, the Government of Catalonia and prominent lawyers and judges.

Yolanda's family is active in the campaign, especially her mother.

The campaign achieved national media coverage in March in the El Pais and on television.

The serious problems are the racial discrimination, the unemployment and the poverty. Of those that are unemployed seventy per cent are Muslims, that is 5,400. The vast majority born in Ceuta are Muslim.

Another problem is the housing discrimination. The Spanish are given good housing and the Muslims who live in "Chabolas" - a shanty town - are given the housing that the Spanish have left. Even the old Muslims do not get proper housing.

Most people in Ceuta have no nationality rights, for example they cannot vote in the elections. The majority of the population do not have Spanish nationality.

industry. The individual employers are giving wage increases. The Government and the bosses have tried to break up the unity.

The relationship between the bosses and the trade union leadership has grown closer again since the strike.

Our proposition is to continue the General strike. We have attended many general meetings where workers say we want a plan of struggle to win the demands of the General Strike.



Yolanda

## A Reader's Letter:

Dear Comrades,

Your January issue reported on the electoral pact of the MAS and the Communist Party in Argentina.

I think that any article, however brief, that deals with an alliance between the revolutionary movement and the party that for 50 years has systematically sought to destroy bolshevism can not contain the vague statements that yours does.

The fight to break the masses from Peronism is essential, but you state that the IU (the electoral front) is the force that is doing that. The MAS may want to do that but half the leadership of the IU has consistently tied the masses to Peronism.

You say the IU is the only force on the left, but the word force implies direction. The IU is lead by two parties, one of which is seeking out ways of supporting Gorbachev's collaboration with imperialism.

If the IU is the only force on the left where does that leave the MAS?

Alliances between the revolutionary movement and other parties reflect the fact that the majority of the masses are still under the influence of reformist, nationalist or stalinist leaders. By describing the IU in the way you have done blurs over this fact.

Without comment you note that this tactic has temporarily strengthened the Stalinists.

This blurring of the nature of the IU is compounded when you describe its programme as "anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist". After many years sitting in Trades Councils and union branches listening to

the Stalinists waffling about anti-imperialist movements I am suspicious.

There is a sleight of hand here. Is the programme of the IU revolutionary or is it not?

Is it a programme that prepares, directs and seeks to educate the masses in the struggle for power. In other words is it the programme of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky for there isn't any other revolutionary programme.

If it isn't then isn't the use of the words 'anti-imperialist' a cover for the fact that it is a programme that is opposed to some aspects of capitalism. Something that all sorts of people will support, sometimes very militantly.

Does the programme in anyway go over the experiences of Chile or Cuba or Nicaragua where the party of some of the leaders of the IU has played a role in beheading the struggle for socialism? So what is the meaning of 'anti-capitalism'?

Imprecise phrases, unclear thought, about the contents of an alliance with any non revolutionary forces will mean that it is they and not us who will gain from the experiment.

I see any such alliance as a question of who will gain the support of the masses in order to strangle the other leading partner first. That seems to me to be far removed from "the only political force with its anti-imperialist programme."

Comradely Yours,  
Bob Myers.

# Workers'

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Kevin Bulman

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WE WELCOME the opportunity to reply to Comrade Myers' letter attacking the Movement towards Socialism (MAS - Argentine section of the International Workers League) because it raises amongst other issues the question of how trotskyism is to break out of circle and propaganda existence, give leadership to the masses and develop programmes and methods of struggle on the way to building parties with mass influence.

After reading comrade Myers' complacent attitude towards the anti-imperialist character of the socialist revolution in an imperialist dominated and exploited country like Argentina, we would say first and foremost you must be part of a **democratic centralist international** if you want to develop alliances with any non-trotskyist organisations making a turn to the left. **Without such an international - with its democratic and centralised mutual criticism and its living exchange of experience - that alliance could lead to opportunist adaptation.**

The United Left is an electoral alliance proposed by the trotskyist MAS to the Communist Party (CP) of Argentina. It is an agreement to mobilise and to push the consciousness of the working class to make a break from the illusions it has in bourgeois parties, in particular Peronism.

The working class in Argentina is beginning, like in other countries in Latin America, to make an historic break with the old bourgeois and petty bourgeois governments and movements.

To understand why this is taking place in Argentina and why the MAS has adopted the tactic of the United Left, it is necessary to study closely the economic processes since the fall of the dictatorship in 1982 and what seven years of Alfonsin's rule has meant for the workers and overwhelming mass of the population.

Some details of the hunger and misery of workers, the absolute destruction and plunder of the country and the almost virtual collapse of the political, social and military infrastructure will highlight the necessity for a revolutionary struggle.

Inflation in 1988 was around 387.7%. There has been no net-investment in Argentina since 1983. The share in national earnings that goes into paying the populations' wages has fallen from the 1955 level of 50% to today's level of a little more than 25%. Workers



May Day 1988... 16,000 members and supporters of the MAS gather at the Ferro Football Stadium in Buenos Aires.

# Programme for Struggle

wages under Alfonsín have fallen by 27.5%, while at the same time the buying power of wages has fallen by 26%. 7.6 million people (27% of the population) are not able to cover the basic needs for nutrition, education, housing, comfort and health.

To this we could add the rise of electricity prices by 541.2% in 1988.

To pay the external debt it would be necessary to increase exports by the an impossible 930%.

How have the working class and popular sectors reacted to this huge crisis of the capitalist system?

In March 1988 500,000 teachers went on an indefinite strike for better pay and conditions which lasted almost two months. In the first five months of 1988 health workers, administration workers, doctors, factory workers and even the police took action against government austerity plans.

**Only in March the Government and employers were saved from more strike action when they were forced to concede a 40% pay rise to gas workers, 33% to health workers and 30% to railway workers.**

The electoral alliance of the United Left has the aim of helping to break the working class from its old leadership. The agreement is to fight for the 29 points of the programme which include; refusal to pay the external debt, for an immediate rise in pensions and wages rising with the cost of living, for the nationalisation of all the factories that close under workers control, the bringing to justice of the military torturers and murderers and for a Workers' and People's Government to thoroughly carry out this programme.

**We understand these demands quite clearly to be against imperialism. They are against the whole of capitalism and not just some aspects of it.** The programme is anti-capitalist because to stop paying the \$59 billion debt would mean overthrowing imperialism and its capitalist allies and the convocation of a Workers' and People's Government. To bring the military to justice, to nationalise and keep open the factories and to raise wages and pensions guaranteeing the majority of the population a permanent and secure standard of living is beyond the realm of the bourgeois system. **All they can offer the masses is more hunger and more misery.**

If workers fighting inside the trade unions in Britain could get a tenth of the agreement that the MAS and CP in Argentina has it would represent a monumental force against



*Rallies of the United Left in March*



the bureaucracy and its pro-boss and pro-state collaboration.

Electoral alliances do not mean an absolute centralised organism. The MAS and the CP are quite free to make, and have made, criticisms of each others politics. But we agree to fight as one for the 29 points of the programme and nothing else. We still have our own independent organisation and political line.

Comrade Myers and sadly all too many on the left in Britain seem to believe it is imper-

missible, at any time, to form alliances with other workers organisations, without beforehand telling them we are going to strangle them.

We would not go into a trade union meeting, Trades Council meeting or workers meeting and begin by telling the bureaucrats that we were there to strangle them. No! We would go through an experience with the rank and file workers, patiently revealing the contradictions in the politics of their leaders and the needs of their class.

# Reject Merger

Socialist Voice interviewed Chris Bailey, delegate to the Amalgamated Engineering Union's (AEU) National Committee from Division 21, East Anglia, about the moves afoot in the AEU to merge with the EEPTU (the Electricians' union).

Chris Bailey is proposed by the left as Divisional Organiser for that area in the forthcoming elections.

**Socialist Voice:** "What, in your opinion, are the reasons for the moves towards amalgamation?"

**Chris Bailey:** "There is little doubt that the AEU is facing a severe economic crisis. The leadership see the amalgamation as a way out of this crisis. The engineering industry in Britain has been devastated under the Thatcher Government. The leadership of the AEU failed to give a lead when fighting factory closures. When members did attempt to fight such closures, like at Lawrence Scotts for example, they were given totally inadequate support.

"Now we are being told by the leaders of the union that we must face the 'new reality' and that the answers to our problems is a new sort of trade unionism that is attractive to the employers. By this they mean single union deals, such as the attempted deal at Dundee with Fords in which the employer forces the workforce to pay subscriptions to the union in return for the union becoming the policemen for the employer on the shopfloor. The EEPTU has of course pioneered such deals - Wapping is a prime example.

"The idea behind the merger is the creation of a big union with a structure adapted to this so called 'new trade-unionism'."

**SV:** "Could you give a complete resume of the moves?"

**CB:** "It is difficult to trace the whole history of the moves since most of them were carried on behind the backs of the membership in secret talks. In the first place they were disguised as discussion with the EEPTU as effects of new technology. Even now we are dependant on leaks, and often in the capitalist press, to obtain information.

"Jordan was highly committed to the merger from the time he was elected President and it is likely that he consulted with the EEPTU



*Let the rank and file decide*

leaders on the best way to approach the question. Concrete plans for the merger have only really just emerged in the last year and a half. These plans have never been presented to the membership of the AEU or its National Committee. Members of the EEPTU have been given more information than we have."

**SV:** "How extensive has the opposition been?"

**CB:** "The extent of the opposition was clearly shown at last year's National Committee. The resolution that amalgamation should take place on the basis of retaining the unions democratic structure was supported by 68 votes to 46. This meant that a substantial section of the leadership's traditional supporters voted with the left.

"Another clear indication of the opposition concerned the retired members of the union - a number of these are invited to attend the National Committee as observers. They continually heckled and jeered speeches in favour of the amalgamation. At one point Jordan had to threaten to have them removed.

"My area, division 21, is a right-wing dominated area but has supported, for the last year, National Committee resolutions in

opposition to the merger. I think this is a major factor in my re-election to the National Committee this year. This opposition exists right through the union. Shop stewards at one of the largest factories in Cambridge have indicated to me, as their branch secretary, that they will seek to transfer the entire membership at the factory to another union if the merger takes place.

"The biggest problem has been the failure by the left of the union to organise opposition."

**SV:** "What is the Democracy that would be lost?"

**CB:** "Our union is one of the oldest in Britain, indeed in the world. Those who fought to build the union, often under conditions of illegality, were not only trade unionists, they were heavily committed to workers' democracy. Our union rule book reflects this. The rules are very carefully formulated to separate full-time officials out of the policy making bodies. The founders of the union saw such officials as servants of the membership not the other way round. All officials are elected. At the same time the rule book provides for discussion and debate at all lev-



# with EETPU



els on policy making. Of particular importance here is the role of the District Committees. These provide a forum for discussion between the branch structure and the shop stewards organisations and include direct shop steward representation. The merger would do away with these District Committees.

“The whole policy making structure, with its various levels of debate and discussion, would be replaced by a policy conference once every two years. The EEPTU leadership wants to make even this an advisory body only. They also want branch secretaries and all full-time officials, except the President, General Secretary and Executive Council, to be appointment not elected.”

**SV: “What is behind the ballot?”**

CB: “The leadership of the AEU are attempting to by-pass the policy making structure of the union by balloting the membership on the merger. It is necessary to be very clear on this question. The present policy making structure of the union is far more democratic than the ballot. The use of a referendum is a

favourite trick of dictators throughout the world - it is impossible to arrive at a correct decision on a question without the fullest information, debate and discussion of opposing views. Use of the ballot by-passes this. A ballot can be carefully worded to mis-represent what people are actually voting for. The recent ballot in the EEPTU on leaving the TUC was a good example of this. At the same time the capitalist press and media will undoubtedly be advising members to vote for the merger and will be giving their usual biased presentation of the facts.”

**SV: “What is the purpose of the lobby?”**

CB: “The lobby of the AEU National Committee called for Monday 17th April at Eastbourne is the first real attempt to organise the opposition to the merger and involve the membership as a whole in this. It is planned as the first action in an all out fight to defeat the merger plans.”

**SV: “How did the lobby come into being?”**

CB: “The lobby was organised from a meeting in Birmingham called by the Birmingham Engineering Gazette group. This meeting was organised and supported by members at all levels of the union structure who were dissatisfied with the total lack of a campaign against the merger by the Engineering Gazette nationally. We hoped to win support within Engineering Gazette supporters nationally. This has in fact happened. Both Manchester and Preston District Committees which were not represented at this first meeting have now come out in support of the lobby and are demanding a meeting on a national basis to open up an Engineering Gazette led anti-merger campaign. Those of us associated with the Birmingham meeting very much welcome this initiative and would seek to build the maximum participation by the membership of the union in such a meeting.”

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON IMMIGRATION & NATIONALITY

### 15th April 1989

MANCHESTER  
TOWN HALL,  
10 AM - 12.30PM.  
MECHANICS' INSTITUTE  
PRINCESS STREET,  
1.30PM - 4.30PM

Organised by Manchester  
NALGO Branch and the  
Francis Okanlami  
Defence Campaign:

1st Floor, Elliot  
House, 3 Jacksons Row,  
Manchester M2 5NJ.  
Telephone for more  
information on  
(061) 834 6564.



## Venezuela

*Continued from page 10*

zuela has refused to sign on as chief source of finance and now relations between it and its creditors has deteriorated with little hope of more money.

The Bolivar was devalued by 150% in just one month which has sent shock waves through the economy.

All car assembly plants, which are a major employer, have now closed down as the devaluation has caused the cost of imported components to go high. Many other companies have curtailed operations until they, like the car plants, have devised plans to cope. Multi-nationals like Ford and Volkswagen are now likely to move their operations to other countries in the region.

The action of the Venezuelan masses represents one more link in the chain of the revolutionary uprising of the Latin American working class. As the US congressman, Walter Fauntroy said: “...what we have seen in Venezuela could happen tomorrow in Argentina, Brazil and other countries of Latin America.”

**MOST WORKING** class people I have spoken to, say: *"I can't live now, how the hell are we going to live when we get the Poll Tax."*

# Poll Tax needs a community campaign

Celia Jones

That feeling is widespread and is shown in the soaring rent arrears. Once again, those rent arrears were in the news recently when the National Federation of Housing Associations reported that the basic cause was: *"not inefficiencies in management or administration, but simply that many households do not have enough money"*. They concluded that: *"tenants on social security, who must pay 20 per cent of their rates and water rates will not be able to cope and rent arrears can only get worse."*

Another reaction I have had when talking about the Poll Tax or when people hear about a meeting being called is: "Oh I hope they can stop it."

The only answer when somebody comes out with that reaction is to tell them that there is no one else that can stop it except themselves. The only way the Poll Tax can be fought is by masses of people organising collective action, so that the authorities see that they are dealing with an organised mass and not with isolated individuals.

**There is no doubt that working people are feeling their way towards collective action on the Poll Tax.** Already some working class people are aware of the need to organise. They are the first of many. In Liverpool, it has only taken small groups of people in areas to distribute leaflets, and in a short space of time committees have been formed.

Gas, water and electricity charges will all be up under privatisation. Even before privatisation there has been an increase in water rates with no increase in benefit to those on social security. The rise in food prices is eating into income and here also, far from there being an increase in benefits, state benefits are being eroded.

The latest we have to face is that the Gov-



*Anti-Poll Tax demonstrators in Glasgow, March 1989*

ernment is determined to bring in new housing benefit rules on the 1st April, although it has been warned that half the local authorities are unable to cope with the changes.

The regulations mean that benefit will be cut if the local rent officer thinks that claimants have "too many rooms" for their needs or if the rent is higher than local market rents.

"Too many rooms" means more than one bedroom for a couple or for each adult, for two children of the same sex, or for two children under ten.

Working class people feel frightened on their own. In fact, they cannot fight on their own, the working class has always fought traditionally in organisations.

These committees that are being formed are only a beginning. In the next two years, masses of people will be moving, as the conditions of life deteriorate. What is shown

in Armenia (see this issue of Socialist Voice) will be happening in this country with mass movements linking together.

Tenants must build links with council workers whose jobs are threatened, while our services worsen. Community groups will be a superior force in fighting council or government officials if they have strong bonds with trade unionists, particularly council and government workers. Gas, electricity and water workers must be brought in - for privatisation will hit them too while prices for tenants continue to rise.

**We have to build a movement that can protect the old, the sick, the disabled and the youth who will be the worst hit, and prevent our class from having to suffer intolerable burdens of poverty and misery.**

## In Thatcher's Britain:

# Youth are Free to Starve

TODAY, in Britain, more than 20% of under 25's are unemployed. Youth homelessness is growing at a faster rate than anywhere else in Western Europe. 'Shelter', the homeless charity, estimates that nationally there are 150,000 homeless young people of whom at least 30,000 are in London.

Just five years ago under 25's were entitled to the same financial support from the state as anyone else. BUT since 1985 a stream of legislation has gouged a chasm in their welfare rights.

In April 1988 the Department of Social Security cut Income Support for two age groups. 18 to 24 year olds had their weekly benefit cut from £33 to £26 while under 18 year olds had a £14 cut leaving them with just £19 a week. The April changes immediately swelled the ranks of homeless youths. Not only was benefit cut but payments were changed to two weeks in arrears.

In September 1988 the Government enacted legislation which removed the right to claim any benefits from all 16 to 17 year olds. They now have to go on a Youth Training Scheme or starve. 90,000 teenagers had all their Income Support suddenly removed.

The Government's promise of a guaranteed place on a YTS was soon shown to be a lie. Shelter and other voluntary groups have confirmed that many teenagers have been unable to get onto a training scheme losing all benefits as a result. Shelter reported that over 13,000 16 to 17 year olds nationally have no YTS scheme and no benefits.

The Government have justified these Draconian measures by arguing that young people should be, 'weaned off dependence on the state and put back where they rightly belong - in the parental home.'

But many homeless teenagers and young people do not have loving homes to which they can return. Some come straight out of care institutions while others have fled from sexual or physical abuse.

The Government's attacks on the working class have served only to force families to eject children from the parental home as soon as they reach school leaving age.

And what has the trade union movement done to protect the young and unemployed? - NOTHING!

The conditions are here for building a mass youth movement. A movement that won't stop at words of opposition or favouring the last cheap labour scheme in opposition to the latest. A movement that will not hesitate at taking what they feel

they are entitled to. And this is precisely what the trade union and Labour Party leaders fear!

Spontaneous movements will undoubtedly arise in opposition to the massive attacks young people are facing on all fronts. But these movements will seek programmes of struggle and new leaders coming out of the struggle will have to give direction in the fight.

We offer the following programme as a basis for building a movement against youth slavery:

**Proper training under trade union control payed for by the bosses.**

**Unions to recruit all youth at rates they can afford**

**Immediate and decent housing for youth.**

**A living level of state benefits for all unemployed linked to inflation.**

**A sliding scale of wages and hours in workplaces to allow full employment and re-employment of all those on the dole.**

**An organised movement to take over boarded up council housing and any unused inhabitable property.**

**An end to the sale of council housing.**



# Tory Law In A Pickle

THE DECISION of Judge Pickles to jail a woman for seven days for contempt, when she refused to give evidence against an ex-boyfriend after she had received intimidatory threats, is a direct attack upon the rights of women and particularly on working class women. What is at stake is the right of women to carry out and determine their own self defence, in whatever way they feel necessary.

Far from encouraging women to stand up to violence, as Pickles infers, it will, and is intended to have, the exact opposite effect. It will deter women from standing up to male violence.

With the arrogance usually associated with Tory judges, typical of the ruling class of this country, Pickles dismisses demands for his resignation and haughtily replies that: "People can say what they like but I am not going to resign."

Pickles obviously lives in a world of his own, believing himself to be the guardian of the 'peoples' interests and of the interests of battered women. The decision of Pickles to jail a victim of male violence puts under the spotlight the class nature of the judicial system.

Even legislation against sexual harassment of women at work provides an escape clause for those guilty through out of court settlements which means women who can ill-afford to pay legal costs, signing no-publicity clauses as a condition of out-of-court settlements with employers. In this way, like in the Pickles judgement, the woman is turned from innocent victim into guilty offender with her name splashed over the pages, no doubt, of the gutter press.

# Fight Youth Slavery

IN THE WAKE OF THE REMOVAL OF THE trades unions right to approve the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) trainees are to be stripped of all remaining employment rights under new rules drawn up by the governments' Training Agency.

Companies and organisations providing work experience and Managing Agents such as city councils, responsible for the day to day running of courses, will no longer be 'required' to ensure provision of the previously guaranteed minimum rights such as holiday entitlement, payment for sickness and time off for other purposes, for example job seeking.

There will be no enforced grievance and disciplinary procedures and no restrictions on overtime working or travel out of the home area.

Labour councils which prided themselves on the terms and conditions they provided within the YTS will now find themselves in a position where they will increasingly be expected to impose truly 'slave labour schemes' or fight the schemes as they and the trades unions should have done fifteen years ago, when the first schemes were introduced by a Labour government.

A letter sent to all Training Agents from the director of field operations at the Governments' Training Agency envisages: "a relaxation of restrictions to ensure flexibility".

The new rules will apply to all 400,000 trainees on the YTS.

The Government is removing the minimum safeguards agreed by the trade union movement. This move must call into question the trade union movements continued support for the YTS.

Meanwhile the Tories are to widen the net of the Employment Training (ET) scheme from those unemployed for more than six months to people who have been out of work for three months, correspondingly making the compulsory restart interviews ('benefit

poning) more regular, every three months as opposed to six.

ET is no longer a scheme aimed at the long term unemployed and is to embrace more 'project based' courses which would make it almost indistinguishable from the old Community Programme scheme except that participants receive half the

money and work twice the

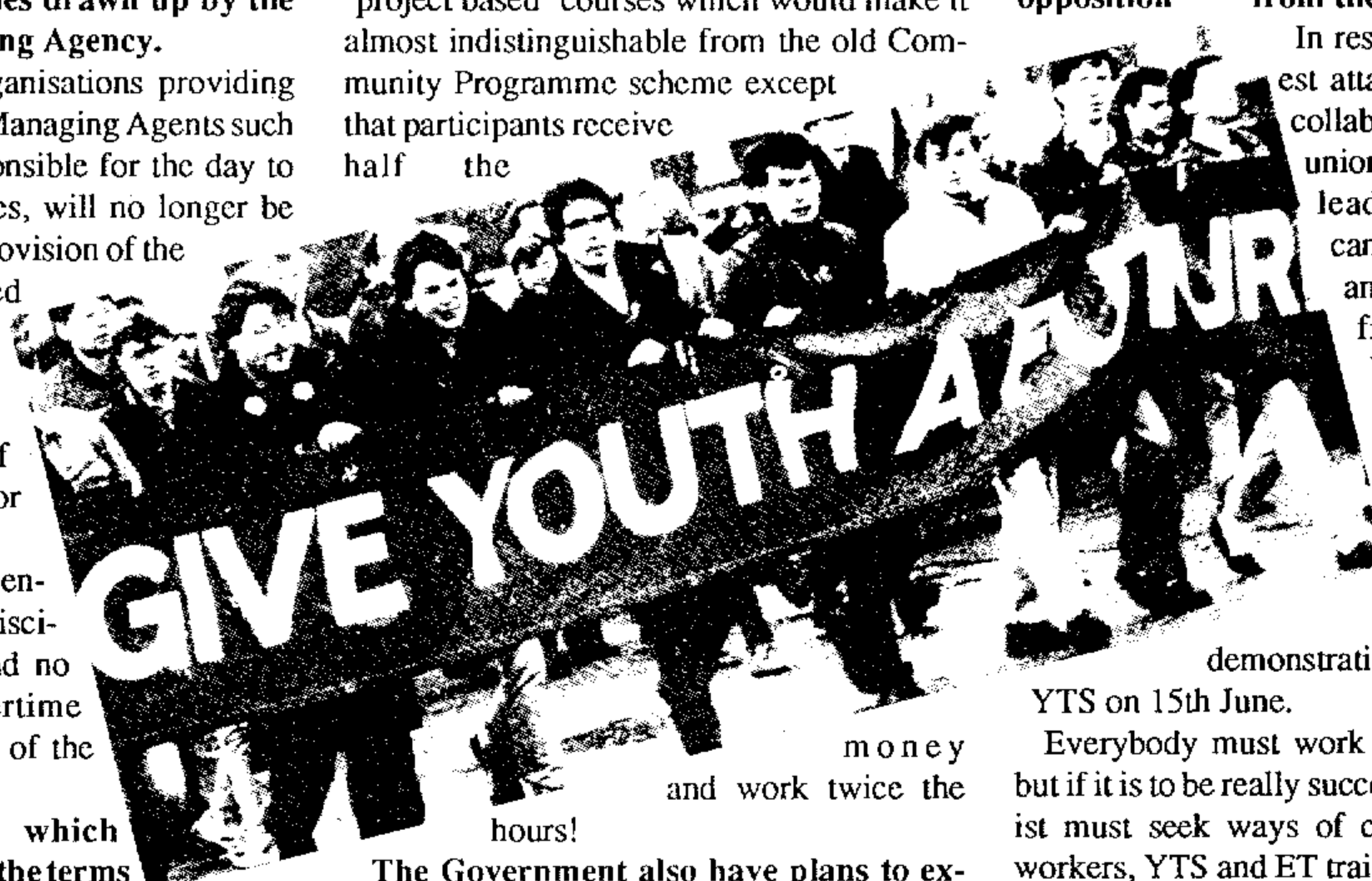
hours! interpreted in all ways to an people As the schemes get worse, the trade unions and Labour Party move in quicker than ever to ensure there is no organised opposition from the base.

In response to these latest attacks, and the total collaboration of the trade union and Labour Party leaderships, ad-hoc campaigning groups and trade unionists from Scotland, Wales and many regions of England, met in March and decided to go back to their areas and mobilise for regional demonstrations against ET and YTS on 15th June.

Everybody must work for this initiative, but if it is to be really successful, every activist must seek ways of calling on scheme workers, YTS and ET trainees, to take strike action on this day.

Last year, on June 15th, over 20,000 Community Programme (CP) scheme workers took strike action in opposition to the introduction of the Employment Training, 'work-for-your-dole', scheme. This tremendous action frightened the trade union leaders, in particular, the leadership of the T&GWU, whose members made up the majority of CP workers at the time, into adopting opposition 'in words' to ET. This position was then fought through at the TUC conference in September. But within two weeks the TUC General Council had met and overturned conference policy of opposition. The T&G will now try to tie the union to this collaborationist and turncoat policy as the Tory government continue to make the schemes worse.

All those opposed to the schemes must pinpoint the big YTS agencies in their areas and build for 15th June by getting sections of trainees to take up the call for strike action and spreading it amongst the smaller sites and workplaces. We must build a movement against youth slavery



The Government also have plans to extend the YTS to 19 year olds so that 17 year olds would be eligible for a two year programme. There is a clear danger that unemployed 19 year olds could soon be denied benefit alongside all 17 and 18 year olds debarred since last September, lowering the unemployment statistics yet further.

In response to the latest attacks the Labour Party is proposing a four year programme for 16-20 year olds to replace the present two year YTS. Four year schemes instead of two year schemes - no talk of proper jobs or of training linked to jobs.

The T&GWU (Transport and General Workers' Union), renowned for their wordy 'opposition' to the schemes, whose biennial delegate conference is to take place this summer, will debate a record number of resolutions on training. Most resolutions demand continued opposition to ET, some demand an extension of opposition to all temporary employment schemes including YTS. The General Executive Council have a very long, wordy resolution, which looks as if it upholds the position of 'opposition' to ET until closer examination reveals a resolution that can be