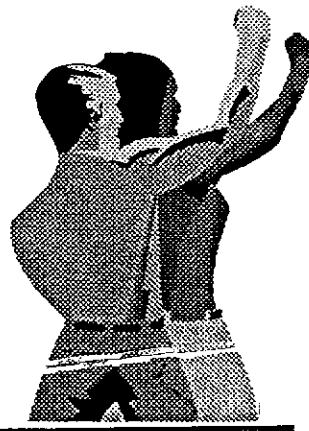
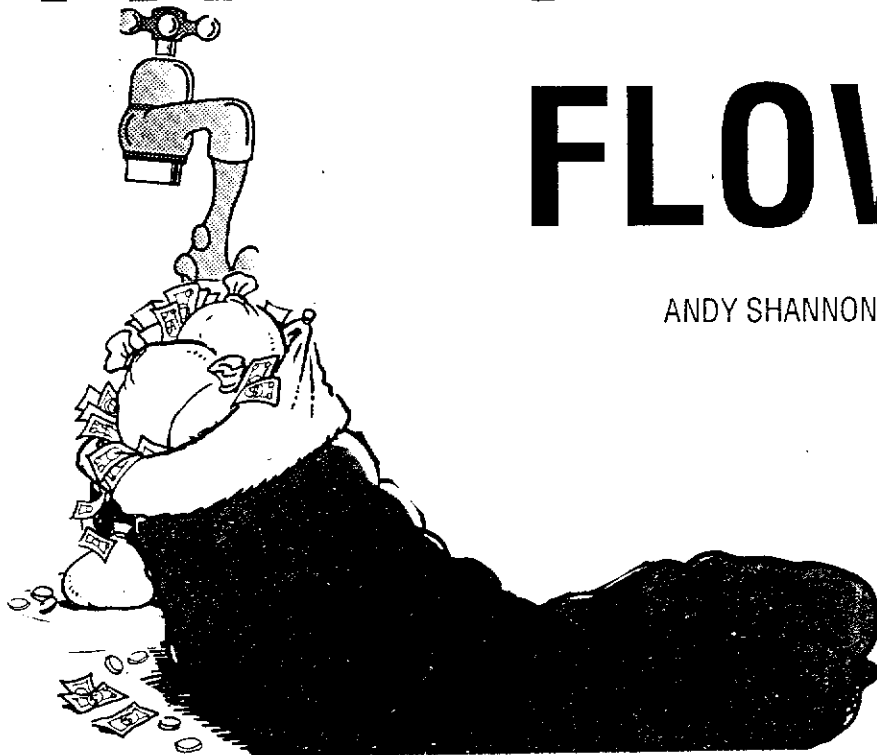


socialist **VOICE**



ISSUE 42
40p
JUNE 92
SOLIDARITY PRICE
4th YEAR
ISSN 1988-92

PAY AS YOU FLOW



ANDY SHANNON

Privatised water authorities are introducing large scale water metering in towns and cities throughout the country with domestic payments for water based on a pay as you drink, pay as you wash method.

In Sheffield, Bradford, Manchester and Wales water meters are being brought in which, in certain cases, are doubling the bills charged for using water.

Already there are reports that fami-

lies living in Birmingham have run out of money for the meter and are having to use buckets instead of the lavatory.

We are going back to the days when sewage ended up on the streets. Many local authorities are closing public toilets as in Lambeth (see the last issue of Socialist Voice). A recent report in the Manchester Evening News highlighted the scandal of dysentery outbreaks in Manchester and of its continuing spread to the rest of Lancashire.

We dedicate this issue of Socialist Voice to Rae Hunter who died of a heart attack in the early hours of 19th May. Rae was the oldest member of the ISL. She had been active in the Labour movement as a Trotskyist for over 54 years.

She was known nationally and internationally as a fighter and a special kind of person.

She had our love and respect. As the nurse said at the hospital where she died Rae was a tough old lady. She was also a sweet lady and we will miss her. See inside this supplement.

This delayed issue has another supplement from the USA and is a statement from the American ISL which is in sympathy with the International Workers League (Fourth International) but it is not a member of it because of the laws of the USA. We received the statement after we had finished the paper and we think it will be of interest to our readers.

INSIDE: Why Labour lost / Independent Labour / Letters

PLUS: Los Angeles / Latin America / Russia & Poland



MONTHLY JOURNAL
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
SOCIALIST
LEAGUE

BRITISH SECTION
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
WORKERS
LEAGUE
[4TH INTERNATIONAL]

**THIS ISSUE
PRODUCED BY**

**MARK HOLT PETER MONEY
CELIA RALPH**

MARTIN RALPH PETER WINDELER

signed articles do not
necessarily reflect
the views of the ISL

SUBSCRIBE

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO
SOCIALIST VOICE

SPECIAL OFFER
£2.00 FOR FOUR ISSUES

**CONTACT
ISL PO BOX 9
ECCLES SO
SALFORD
M30 7FX**

PAY AS YOU FLOW

Twenty homes in Langley, a housing estate in the north of Manchester, have been selected to have the prototype "Pay As You Flow" meters installed.

a public outcry over the exorbitant charges that go with them, but the card systems could still lead to hardship for those who are unemployed, the disabled and the elderly.

What happens when the supply runs out and they cannot get to the Water companies offices to pay for fresh cards especially at weekends or over holiday periods?

What do these companies expect, that houses should do without cooking, washing and even flushing toilets?

The water rates are high enough as it is, and the reason the water company want to interfere with the tap system is purely for profit and not for the benefit of the customer. On top of that they will be asking for standing charges.

This is the same kind of thing as the Poll Tax: for every one who benefits there are tens, hundreds and thousands who do not, who have to pay more, who will end up with bills they cannot afford.

If anyone doubts this they should read the "Sheffield Star" which contains the horror stories of how people are taking health risks by having to severely ration their water because it costs so much by meter.

Just as the Tories said the Poll Tax was democratic and would not cause hardship, so North West Water have tried to imply that the card system is voluntary and is there to help people spread the bills.

They were quoted in the "Middleton and North Manchester Evening News" as saying: "Our cards will mean we give so many days supply of water based on the current water rates for the property. The 'smart cards' can be topped up by going to our Middleton office and making payment."

They also say that the meters are optional. If they are optional then why the secrecy in bringing them in and why not ask the householders if they want them, there is plenty of evidence in Sheffield for example that peo-

ple were forced to have them. It appears that those who get in arrears are a target for water meter cards, which, in reality, is a way of cutting off the water to those who find it difficult to pay.

... Middleton ...

... Middleton ...
... current water mains laying programme going on throughout the town was tied to the meters' introduction."

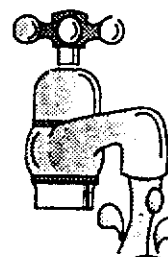
The Tories and the Labour leadership go on about choice but there is no choice with meters. The basis of the Poll Tax

was the same - local services could be maintained if the poor paid for them. The water meters will be located outside properties so they can be read by the company and easily controlled.

Water meters are being installed for profit. If they create hardship, health problems, dysentery then the water company may express sorrow in public, but their money still flows in.

We need campaigns on all the housing estates, council and private, against the introduction of these meters. The Poll Tax would be here to stay if workers and communities had not combined together to force its removal.

The campaign against it has already started in North Wales. Our first aim should be to stop water meters being installed, secondly to ensure that water bills are kept to the old levels and thirdly to take the water companies back into public ownership and to ensure those who run it are directly responsible to the communities they are supposed to serve - not make a profit out of them.



FROM A TRICKLE TO A FLOOD

LABOUR VOTE SHOWS



ONLY STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM CAN WIN

The Labour Party suffered a stinging vote of no confidence in its policies and its collaboration in attacks upon the working class in the local elections. The dedicated followers of Labour fashion in the town halls see nothing, learn nothing and say nothing of the real issues facing the working class.

The central questions in the council elections were over council mis-management, the implementation of the Poll Tax, the cuts and the arrogant disregard of councillors for local people. In many areas people see a councillor or party leaflet only at election time and sometimes not even then.

Their disregard for workers, families and the youth cost them dear. But will they learn? Socialist Voice believes they will not. It is Labour councils that have been foremost in the jailing of non and part payers of the Poll Tax. It is Labour councils that have been setting the highest Poll Taxes. It is Labour councils that have been putting up rents and it is Labour councils who have made the biggest cuts. They have inflicted all kinds of financial cuts and surcharges, including making the poor, the unemployed and the elderly cough up as much for services as they can wring out of them. Is there any wonder people refused to vote Labour by staying at home.

In the face of all this, the Labour leadership and their advisers are moving even more to the right.

Recently, one of their policy advisors, Tim Brighouse, has advocated the total privatisation of all state schools. Incredibly the professor offers this as part of the "left's" new agenda (Observer 10th May). Nothing could be more illustrative than this. His proposals help shore up the failing private sector and destroy comprehensive education at the same time. The proposals coming from this Labour camp adviser would make the Tory think tanks glow with pride.

Others in the party are looking towards a "democratic opposition".

Robin Cook and Bryan Gould give the Liberals a verbal come-on when they make overtures to the Labour Party for an alliance.

The only possible basis of such an anti-Tory alliance would be its hostility to the working class

While the Liberals are as hostile to independent class movements as the Tories (or the Labour leadership), they know how to manoeuvre at a local level. In other words when it comes to sorting out individual housing problems such as leaking roofs, ill-fitting windows, street lighting and the like they often do it better than the Labour councillors. This creates the incredible situation in which the Liberals appear as a better alternative to the Tories than Labour does.

The extremely poor turnout marks a new phase in Labour's continued decline. For four successive general elections workers were made to follow the line of keeping their heads down and taking whatever the Tories threw at them, in order to smooth the way for a Labour victory. But the only way to defeat the Tories is to attack the Tories, not to adopt their policies, collaborate with them and end up as no more than pale pink Tories yourselves. Labour's defeat, therefore, is hardly a surprise given that Labour have been doing the Tories dirty work by continuously attacking their own supporters, even before the Poll Tax came in.

Workers are fed up with the Labour leadership but they are also fed up with the electoral system.

The act of putting your mark on a ballot paper will not stop the attacks on our communities, our living standards, our jobs or our trade unions. In order for a vote to count there has to be something or someone worth voting for. Apart from a handful of fighting Labour candidates, for most people, there was no real choice. The only choice was for which brand of capitalist party was going to mis-manage our affairs for the next number of years. It was a choice between tweedledum and tweedledee, between blue Tories, yellow Tories and pale pink Tory collaborators. This was no choice at all. No wonder that for many people it did not matter which of the three gangs took office.

The election results are appalling for La-

bour. In Labour 'strongholds' the turnout dropped to as low as 20% and in the Rhondda less than 2%.

The low turn out came as voters rejected the present electoral farce. But in many areas independent candidates were standing. The result in Scotland was the most notable success where Scottish Militant Labour took four seats from the Labour Party. Independent Labour also won seats in Rochdale and Knowsley, while candidates against the official Labour were put up in Liverpool and Manchester.

The key issue facing all those who stand as Independent Labour is what they actually do in the communities. In many areas Labour councillors are seen once a year. They never hold public meetings and take decisions behind closed doors. Independent Labour candidates will get in and stay in if they turn to the struggles in the communities. There are issues which workers and their families want to fight on. The basis of winning elections is not the elections but what is fought for and how it is fought in the communities. The elections show that workers are prepared to vote for an alternative.

It is important that those fighting for an alternative develop links with those trying to do the same thing in other parts of the country. The ISL directly supported the Independent Labour candidates where we have members in Liverpool and Manchester.

We are in a period where movements can suddenly start. It may be over the introduction of water meters, rent increases, the Council Tax or the never ending injustice of the Poll Tax. In Salford for example £80,000 has been raised from workers to help a young girl have an operation which should be available on the National Health Service. The amount of money collected reveals the depth of feeling in the working class over questions of health which has not yet found an organised expression.

But it does indicate that when workers feel they have a party which they can trust they will be prepared to make sacrifices which will ensure the future of such a party.

LABOUR MEANS

The general election result was a profound shock to many activists in the labour movement because they expected Labour to win after all these years. It is not a blow against the politics of socialism because that was never tested out.

The result was a blow against "new realism", the anti-socialist and anti-working class policies of the Labour right wing. Despite this, the new leadership of the Labour Party will not move to the left, it will continue where Kinnock stopped.

They were more interested in the yuppie vote than in the unemployed miners of south Wales; their policies relied on purely parliamentary methods, sub-ordinating all class struggles and issues to the winning of the election. It is that which has failed.

The election gloss covered over international and national economic crisis. It took the news about the Japanese recession and stock market crisis, just days before the election, to give a glimpse of some of the deep economic forces creating the poverty for the working class.

As we said in the April edition of Socialist Voice: *"The period of national and local elections could be called the 'silence of the politicians'. Silence that is on the real issues facing millions of workers. Pensioners, flung a few pounds by the Tory budget, have now joined the ranks of the forgotten. The misery of the unemployed, rhetorically referred to by the party hacks, is ignored in practice and policy. As for the youth and black people - they do not even warrant a mention."*

We went on to say that the central reason for this is that Labour did not want to win an election in the process of mobilising workers.

The finance world became scared of a Labour victory. Their euphoria at a Tory victory added £20 billion in 28 minutes to the stock exchange values. What they were so worried about, and the Japanese crisis added to this worry, is that the big rip off of the Tory years might end, that all the immense greed, corruption, cover ups might be blown apart and their insatiable appetite for profit would be dented.

The market is now so fragile for some of the speculators that a labour victory could be fatal. A Labour victory would have weakened the confidence of the international speculators in the freewheeling profit "revolution" and the thought of that could send some to the wall. That fragility has been graphically demonstrated since with the col-

lapse of Olympia and York, the world's largest property company and the developers of Canary Warf in London's docklands.

The Tory vote came from upper middle class and top people who have been doing very well out of the credit and debt boom and Thatcherism in general. It also came from some deluded people who are uneasy and worried about their prospects under the Tories but feel no confidence in Labour policies.

Labour leaders offered nothing but a glitzy package made up by well-paid publicity "experts". Underneath the razamataz there was very little difference with Tory policies.

The corruption in BCCI, Maxwell, and the Polly Peck scandals were not even mentioned. The dis-interest in capitalist thievery by Labour party leaders was plainly in evidence, when just before the election, politicians went to a meeting of Lloyd's Names, where *"insiders cream off the best business for themselves while leaving outside Names with loss making business"* (Guardian 11th April), the only Labour member of parliament to attend was Tam Dalyell.

However, when it comes to those who are unable to pay a few pounds towards their Poll Tax, Labour's leaders want them jailed. When the rich break the law to make money, the Labour leadership makes no comment.

England has become the place of individual rights: the right to not to eat, the right not to have a house, the right not to have a job; you are free, free to go without, in a land of plenty.

A party that cannot fight for the rights of the working class, even for those rights that exist today, deserves to break up.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

Britain has become one of the most parasitic capitalisms. It spends less than other countries in Europe on public services and infrastructure. When Thatcher talked about turning back the frontiers of Socialism, she was actually breaking up the foundations of the state.

Not only has Manufacturing industry declined but receipts from profits, interest and dividends from abroad, which formerly made up the deficit in the balance of trade when Britain still remained one of the foremost banking and insurance centres, are now falling away.

Thatcherism was based on a speculative boom not on a developing economy. High profits and dividend payments were made while Britain declined.

Thatcherism made the opportunity for this bonanza through the decimation of the strongest workers' organisation even though that meant destroying manufacturing industry.

Now the British economy is one of the worst performers among the industrial countries. Government borrowing requirement, due to its excess of spending over income, has become £38 billion.

WORKING CLASS OPPOSITION

It is not the working class who are to blame for the Labour defeat. They have a proud history of struggle against the Tory government.

It is a myth that the Tory Government carried out its programme without great difficulty and opposition. At the beginning of the eighties there were demonstrations and strikes against dismissals and closures. In



For Labour the minimum wage was just a slogan

(BIG) BUSINESS



Labour never even mentioned immigrant and Black workers

1980 Britain was on the verge of a general strike and the "Times" editorial talked of revolution.

In 1985, the miners strike against the closure of collieries was defeated because of the cowardice of the TUC. Only the militant traditions of British miners and the support of the network of Miners Aid committees which sprang up throughout Britain helped them to maintain their struggle for an incredible twelve months.

After the miners' strike, the trade union leadership dropped everything but token opposition to the Tory Government's continuing anti-union laws. Kinnock and the Labour leaders attacked the miners' "violence" in defending themselves against the state, and then moved further to the right.

The seafarers, the dockers, the nurses and the well supported ambulance workers struggled against the Tories. But their leaderships betrayed.

Three years after the miners' strike the opposition to Thatcherism burst into revolt, with Scotland in the forefront. This time it was not a movement through the trade unions, although rank and file trade union members participated in it. Unofficial anti-Poll Tax unions were set up. At one time 15 million people refused to pay the Poll Tax. The widespread opposition to the Poll Tax, together with grave difficulties for the Tory government in Europe, brought about Thatcher's fall.

The Tory Government, at that time, was able to continue because the Labour and trade union bureaucracy were mortally afraid to organise any real campaign against them and mobilise a mass movement.

The election was run by the same method. Most of the trade union leaderships have spent their time and union money telling

their members that the Labour policies were good for the unions and how Labour would take care of them. Their line was: don't ask any embarrassing questions - vote Labour.

A WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

In the future, the movement which gathered around the Poll Tax will undoubtedly take shape again.

One of the explosive issues left by the election is the national struggle in Scotland. The majority of the Scottish population are now demanding independence from Britain. Many Scottish people and workers see poverty, closure of factories and the Poll Tax as a product of English rule. The Tory leaders have bluntly rejected Scottish independence, and the compromise policy of "devolution" which was the policy of the Labour Party.

However, less than one in four voters in Scotland voted Tory. The resistance to a Tory Government in London will raise the demand for independence more sharply and a popular movement will develop around the demand for a Scottish government organised by the Scottish people. For us the struggle for a workers' republic should be at the centre of this movement.

In Scotland calls are being made for a referendum, which we support. But the struggle for national rights has to go much further. In the end the only way for workers to establish their right for self-determination is by organised struggle and by electing their own representatives.

The struggle in Scotland is not just for independence, behind it, within the working class lies the struggle against domination by the multi-nationals of any country. The strong struggle against the Poll Tax is an anti-capitalist struggle. It spilled over into England and Wales. Scottish workers can lead, therefore, not only the struggle for independence

but can also be the head of the class struggle in all three countries.

The underlying unity in these struggles is that international and British capitalism seeks to oppress and exploit all working people.

State finance will continue to decline because of the recession. The answers of the bankers, businessmen and Tory government will be to give assistance to their "enterprises" to recover while slashing expenditure on the poor. They will press ahead with the privatisation of the railways, education and with the services for the old and the disabled.

Major's promises to keep the Health Service will disappear with the coming policies to save British capitalism at the expense of the mass of the population. 30,000 miners face being axed leaving only twelve pits being worked, according to the British Coal Commercial director.

All sections of the working class and its housing, education and health services are going to have to be defended in the streets in the coming period.

The new government will put the boot in harder than before and the Labour leadership, without Kinnock, will move further to the right and closer to the Liberals.

We know that activists and workers are not only being expelled from the Labour Party they are walking away from it. We think that public meetings should be organised throughout England, Wales and Scotland between shop stewards, Labour Party activists and all political parties such as the International Socialist League to work out in policy and practice how we are going to build a new leadership in the working class and its organisations. One thing is for sure a new leadership will only be successful if it tells THE TRUTH TO THE WORKING CLASS.

Those who base themselves on the struggles of the working class and see the need for a revolutionary party which assists in the struggles of the working class should consider joining the ISL.

For our part we are willing and prepared to fight alongside any party, group or individuals who genuinely want to build working class alliances in the fight against the government, the employers, councils or anyone who oppresses the working class.

The situation can become so explosive, that with a combative leadership this government can be prevented from lasting five years.

WHY LABOUR LOST

a view from the labour party

AUDREY SMITH

One of the first things Kinnock did in his first year of leadership was to kick away one of the ladders he had used to reach power. He distanced himself from the miners' strike.

He went onto the picket line for the first time after nine months of strike but he had already condemned miners' violence at Question Time on the second day of the strike before most picketing had started. It was what Thatcher and her media supporters wanted to hear. It set an unalterable agenda for the full year of the strike. It was so called picket line violence which filled the headlines not the plight of miners' families. He never spoke a word about Maxwell when he was plundering pension funds but he presented awards to his journalists who tried to dig dirt on the NUM, Scargill and Heathfield.

Can John Smith pretend to be different from Kinnock? It was Smith who courted the City of London. When the history of the last decade comes to be written it will be a history of corruption with the City of London at the centre, but Smith did not have lunch with the city to tell them that a Labour Government would make them put their house in order. He lunched with the City to reconcile them to a Labour Government, smooth their feathers and gentle their fears.

For instance, there has been nothing said about insider dealing. Insider dealing is hav-

ing inside knowledge about the way in which stocks and shares will behave, it is an open secret that it has reached scandal proportions. It is not just stealing paper money, this

John Smith came to notice for his speech in the Westland debate. He is a creature of the Parliamentary Party and his economics brief is not a product of the Labour movement.

process robs people of jobs, health care and education. Any just society would treat it as the most serious form of theft. Non Poll Tax payers are being sent to goal with the approval of Labour Party Leaders but nothing is done about the City of London

It is John Smith's rapport with the City which incredibly now helps make him front runner for the leadership. Manchester M. P.s are already talking about the respect he commands, his intelligence and his influence. Why was it then that the worst open scandal in the City of London was missed by John Smith? When rich people take a seat at Lloyds they risk their capital to insure world wide risk, their "friends" who actually work everyday at Lloyds know what is most risky and ensure that their money is not involved.

These so called country members allow others to underwrite i.e. risk their capital for them. Why was it that it was a partnership of Dennis Skinner and Brian Sedgemore informed by enraged Tory back benchers who asked questions in the House of Commons.

Neil Kinnock came to notice and a seat in Parliament because of his background from which he distanced himself when he became leader. John Smith came to notice for his speech in the Westland debate. He is a creature of the Parliamentary Party and his economics brief is not a product of the Labour movement. John Smith will give us no surprises, he will be what he has always been, what you see is what you get. His is the background of the spin doctors, appealing over the heads of the party to the electorate. The ever declining party will not be one of education and organisation, that will be done elsewhere, but one continuously repackaged and deodorised.

Since the end of the Miners' strike it is impossible to find any struggle with which the Labour Party has been allied, Wapping, Poll Tax, the Gulf War; not one. As fast as he distanced himself from struggle Neil Kinnock distanced himself from the policies of unilateralism and clause four and began the expulsion of socialists and the forced selection of 'suitable' candidates. There will be no welcome for socialists in John Smith's Party. The crucial issues will be ignored and by

Typical slogans which LABOUR used:

LABOUR'S BETTER WAY FOR THE 1990s
LABOUR - OPPORTUNITY BRITAIN
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE
CAMPAIGN TO WIN
IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE
LABOUR MEANS BUSINESS

The most meaningful slogan is the one at the end - "Labour means (BIG) business", but then why not vote for the real thing. For John Smith and Bryan Gould the last slogan will be the most important.



LONDON COUNCILS AGAINST WORKERS

Martin Mitchell reports from South London on the struggle against the Poll Tax and cuts in council services

distracting the party with an election there is no hope of investigating the reasons why we lost.

In 1987 the new restructured Party spent £2.4 million to win 21 seats, ten of them were given on a plate from Scotland because of the Poll Tax and one was Pat Wall's seat in Bradford which should have been won in 1983 except that the hierarchy thought that he was too left wing. The cost per seat? £240,000, the media said that it was a brilliant campaign, pity about the result. Nobody knows how much the 1992 election has cost and it is not likely we will ever know the true cost. The party is more in debt than it has ever been, possibly by millions. John Smith cannot offer an alternative means of campaigning because he never experienced any.

Neil Kinnock controlled policy and restructured the Party, putting his own people in place by using the NEC and the Shadow Cabinet. The expulsions, the reselections and the policy, which abandoned socialism, when put to the NEC were heartily endorsed. Month after month votes were won by Kinnock with the support of the 20 plus members of the NEC who were present with only two votes against, those of Benn and Skinner. A new leader is not likely to alter any of this as a democratic party is an unruly party. Take the example of the Manchester members who have been suspended, as yet they have had no accusations and evidence presented to them, they were suspended in July 1991.

The shadow Cabinet is elected by the Parliamentary Party but the posts are distributed by the leader. The election policies were policies of the whole leadership.

What does matter is that the election for leader prevents the party discussing the real issues of membership and policy. Those outside the Labour Party will find it hard to believe but, since 1979 there has been no proper discussion of why we lost the '79, '83 and '87 elections, at least not at ward level which is where the bulk of the membership is found. Another election will just confirm that all the trappings of a media party committed to running capitalism better than the capitalists are still in place. The decline of party membership will continue, campaigning will be about tailoring to suit the returns from the pollsters. Ideas will not come from the real life experience of the poor and the dispossessed but from the spin doctors of Walworth Road.



Southwark council takes thousands of people to court every week for non-ability to pay the Poll Tax. However on Friday 24th April, they came a cropper. The magistrate, persuaded by anti-Poll Tax campaigners, had not been happy with the way Southwark council was presenting its evidence to comply with the new rules allowing computer evidence to be used and a test case was due to be heard. But before it even got to that stage the magistrate dismissed 3 cases and adjourned the other 3,997. Southwark council could not provide any evidence of the sending out of bills or reminders to anybody in court. Another 4,000 cases for 27th April were also subsequently adjourned. Meanwhile in Lambeth on 16th April nearly 4,000 more cases were adjourned as the McKenzie's Friends did battle with the council barrister spending most of the day on one case regarding the admissibility of the council's evidence. The magistrate was not happy about granting the council liability orders against 3,500 odd non-appearers en bloc - he adjourned all the non-appearances at the end of the day and told the council to "try again" at a future date.

Lambeth council faces £4.4million in further cuts as a result of expected Poll Tax capping and Greenwich, which is to be capped a cut of £9million, says it will have to dismiss 45 teachers and 185 part-time nursery staff. Education in all the boroughs is under attack. In Wandsworth, some schools predict widespread job losses as their budgets are cut by

up to 25%. The National Union of Teachers in Wandsworth warned that about 100 temporary staff, including teachers faced the two week Easter holiday not knowing if they would have a job next term.

Southwark council has decided to close Horizon Community Arts on the Aylesbury Estate in Walworth, the largest arts project in Southwark. The project provides a drop-in service for minority groups, pensioners, children and the disabled wanting to use its video, print, photographic and publishing facilities for projects ranging from oral history tapes to group newsletters. One of its five workers, Suzanne Ciechowski says of the project: "If it disappears, it will take a very valuable resource from a very disadvantaged area".

In Lambeth, where the council voted through £1.2million cuts in the adult education in March, NATFHE, the lectures union, has called a one day strike at the boroughs three further education colleges for 8th May against any redundancies. They are to ballot on an all-out indefinite strike against the education cuts, with Lambeth National Association Local Government Officers, representing 80 librarians, technicians, administration staff and creche workers voting to ballot its members on possible joint strike action. Lambeth National Union of Public Employees has pledged its support to both unions. NALGO believes the cuts could mean up to 100 full-time job losses.

ANDY SHANNON

ANDY SHANNON stood in Harpurhay, Manchester as Independent Labour against the leader of the City Council, Graham Stringer who managed a paltry 1,000 votes - a reduction of at least 50%. Only 21% voted. Andy Shannon took 267 votes. A typical comment was: "I may vote for Andy or I may not vote but I won't be voting for Stringer". On this page we reprint one of Andy's election leaflets.

VOTE

Independent LABOUR

Dear Voter,

As the prospective Independent Labour candidate for the Harpurhey ward I am standing as a fighter and tenant who knows the problems of the area, who, over the years, has opposed council policy on many serious issues. These issues include: the fight alongside other tenant organisations in Manchester against rent increases, the fight against cuts in services and jobs and the imposition of the poll tax.

I will be against those who discriminate against black people, Jews, any religious or ethnic group, or young people.

I have been doing the work that existing councillors should have been doing. I have often resolved tenant problems in their favour. Other issues I have fought have been over repairs to houses, gardens, drains and roadways. I believe that there should be more control over the council by the people of this ward.

New rent increases are planned of up to £7.50 this year to which I am opposed. I am also fighting to help build a sports complex and if I am elected that project will have a much better chance of being completed. Yet another proposal coming up is the introduction of water meters, which they have already attempted on the Langley estate. The introduction of water meters is an attempt by the water authority to make even more profit out people's basic needs, this, at a time, when dysentery is on the increase in Manchester.

The only way we can fight all the attempts to stop us having control over our lives is by uniting in struggle, not by pitting one section of the community against another.

I shall fight and uphold your rights to fair administration of justice. Manchester Council, as well as other councils, is increasingly denying people's rights.

The poll tax highlighted this to a high degree, for example no person who is poor and unable to pay should be threatened with prison but that is happening. The council is now saying that people should be collectively responsible for other people's debt; I believe it is immoral and illegal for the council to be adding extra adjustments to poll tax bills.

The council acts in this way because they fight the people rather than the government.

The Labour Party failed in the general election because it tried to appease the Tories rather than fight them. The Tories did not win the election. Labour lost it.

All the witch-hunts, the attacks against the trade unions, the cuts, privatisation and break up of services mean the council is prepared to implement Tory policy and wait for the next election. Perhaps their worst policies are the vicious cut back of adult education, the crude policy of "community care" and the forcing into trusts of old people's residential centres.

There is vast corruption in the city of London yet no Labour politician contrasted the plight of the homeless and the poor with the millions of pounds being made. The Labour leadership and those who supported the Labour leadership have failed us. They have taken our votes and our money over the years. In the thirties some still had a conscience about the poor, now all that has gone.

Independent candidates are standing in

the local elections throughout the country ready and willing to fight this government rather than just moan about it. They are responding to a feeling in the working class that a genuine socialist alternative now has to be built. That alternative will be built by campaigning on the streets not by making decisions behind closed doors.

While Major has a softer voice than Thatcher, watch out for the Tory boot, because of the economic situation they will be forced to intensify the cuts in services and the attacks over the poll tax. This Labour authority will not seek to mobilise workers against the government. Instead it will find ways of implementing government policy. The next issue may be selling off council houses.

The ward in which I am standing will be one of many affected by the financial problems created by central government. We cannot wait for the next Labour government as Labour keeps on telling us.

If you vote for me I promise to hold surgeries twice a month and attend them in person. Often the council takes a decision and then tells you what is going to happen, but you are entitled to all available information before decisions are made. I think that public meetings should be held and regular bulletins issued so that you can tell councillors what you want.

I cannot achieve anything as one person but if I can take my place in the council your struggles will have a voice from within the council.

DOUBLE ATTACK ON POLL TAX

HEDLEY MERVIN

Liverpool's Main Brideswell is not a prison, it is part of the container system for holding prisoners when the prisons are full. Prisoners are held for many weeks and a note at the end of a corridor of cells reads: "you are not covered by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act or Home Office rules".

In practice, this means prisoners do not get fresh air or the statutory one-hour's exercise a day. No prison work and three to a cell instead of two. Across the cell window is a plastic sheet with six one-inch holes for air.

On arrival, prisoners are not given prison garments and no facility is made to clean underpants and socks. I later found out that you are allowed prison garments but only if you ask for them. At no time are you told your entitlement.

I shared a cell with a man who had been on hunger strike, for this, he told me he was put in the punishment cells and beaten by the police. At a meeting with the police inspector and a doctor, he alleged that he was told that if he didn't cease his hunger strike, he would be left in the punishment cells to die. He was termed "disruptive" and had not been allowed to change his bedding for three weeks. Whilst I cannot vouch that these things happened, he looked anaemic and his bedding smelt.

On arrival, they took all my possessions including my Ventolin inhalers. I informed them that my asthma was emotionally based, that it was psycho-somatic. I told them, I had always had possession of my inhalers and that not having them might bring on an attack. They replied that it was prison rules that they had possession of all medicines in case prisoners tried to overdose. An officer informed me it would be brought to me three times a day and whenever need arose, I only had to bang the door and it would be given to me. Ventolin inhalers are curative as opposed to preventative, and need to be taken when needed as opposed to fixed intervals in the day. When I was allowed it, I felt rushed, unrelaxed and unable to take it properly.

There was no exercise, no fresh air and in my cell were smokers. My asthma grew worse. At night it was cold, and we were given only one sheet and a blanket. I asked for an extra blanket, and was refused.

On the second morning, at about 9.30 a.m., I was wheezy so I banged on the door for

SAVE BLACK RESOURCE CENTRE

The Manchester Black Resource Centre Action Group calls on your maximum support in challenging the Manchester city council's decision to sell the building that it occupies.

Within seven months this independent centre, based in Cheetham Hill, has demonstrated the creativity, vision and determination of the African, Asian and Caribbean people. It has provided the City of Manchester with:

- An African, Asian and Caribbean Cafe
- An Electronic Village Hall
- Manchester's only Black Book and Craft Shop
- A Printing and Design Centre
- Accommodation for 12 Different Community Projects
- A Function Room
- A Resource Unit

All of the MBRC's activities have been established without any financial strain to the city council. The MBRC has created jobs and training facilities in an area that suffers from record unemployment.

We demand that the Council support this project and that the building is given over to the Black Resource Centre.

The Support That Is Needed

- Write your letters of support to the Centre
- Help raise the profile of this campaign by asking your Councillor to support the Centre
- Circulate copies of our leaflet
- Write to the leader of Manchester City Council - Graham Stringer
- Lobby city council members
- Join our mailing list and be prepared to be a part of our massive demonstration in support of the centre
- We need people to make banners, signs and to leaflet areas
- We need money for advertising campaigns and posters

People's Action Creates Change Let Manchester Council hear Your Voice and show them that the Black Resource Centre is here to stay.

Write to: Black Resource Centre, Cheetham Hill, Manchester

The Manchester Black Resource Centre Action Group

help. The prison officer, who had assured me that I could use my Ventolin inhaler whenever I needed it, came. He said very nastily: "What do you want?" I replied: "My Ventolin inhaler." He asked: "Why"? I replied "I was asthmatic". He replied "we've had enough of this out of you. I'm not giving it to you nine times a day. You had ago just over an hour ago. We will give it to you when we see fit. You can have it now, but this is the last time."

The truth was that it was the third time I had ever called them, and the most I had it was four times in one day. That lunch time, as per their schedule, my Ventolin never came. In the course of my stay I asked to see the doctor three times. I was asked why? I told them I needed to have possession of my inhaler to put my mind at rest. They replied that even if the doctor agreed, he could not over-rule their rules. On this basis I was refused a doctor.

Our cell was next to the women's wing, and on the second night for two hours a woman could be heard crying uncontrollably. Her soft voice would cry: "God, God, Please God help me" and now and then she would call someone's name. The next night, for three hours, another woman would bang and scream on the cell door. An officer told me she had just had an operation.

After a number of hours listening to her screams, I fell asleep. Later in the night, a shriek of weird laughter awoke me. The loud, insane laughter continued. It was the feeling in our cell that some prisoners had smuggled

some drugs in and were 'tripping'. The laughter was grating, and unable to sleep. After sometime, I realised I must have my Ventolin inhaler. So I shouted and banged on the door several times. We were at the end of a corridor of cells, around a corner, the furthest from the officers. The laughter stopped and a voice called: "What do you want?" I replied: "I need my Ventolin inhaler." They replied, "We are not opening up." I asked again, and the reply twice was: "Suck on your pillow." After further request the reply was: "We will open the door and fill you in." Then insane laughter

Then it happened. I turned around from the door and in the dark the cell window at the opposite end moved towards me and the whole cell imploded in on me several times. My body was racked by an uncontrollable fear. My cell mates helped me and they banged on the door solidly for five minutes until a prison officer came.

I was prepared to put up with a lot of hardship. But being denied possession of my ventolin inhaler, created great anxiety. I am sure that if I had stayed much longer, it would have damaged my health. I had an officer ring a relative, my poll tax was paid and I was out.

No doubt some conservative people will gloat and be happy that somebody was forced to pay. I am happy with the non-payment campaign. It rid us of an unjust tax that people would have had to pay for generations.

PRIVATISATION NIGHTMARE

The historic lie told by the supporters of capitalism was that the choice for the populations of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was either: a command economy and dictatorship, or capitalist market and democracy. Some of those who trumpeted it, like Mrs Thatcher obviously believed in it. But then, there is no reason why she should not; she has added considerably to the Thatcher family fortune by lecturing on it throughout the world.

Do the Governments seeking to restore capitalism in these countries, express the wish of the majority, or of the mass who rose up for change? In fact, all the governments came in with arrangements from the top.

To be sure Yeltsin was voted in. But his parliament was the product of limited elections and the population has had no control over running their lives since. Governing Russia and the other former Soviet and Eastern European republics today is a coalition of a privileged elite plus the representatives of imperialism - which has the last word on major questions.

The elite is composed mainly of former stalinist bureaucrats (Nomenklatura) occupying similar places of power in the state and in the economy as before, and new "demo-

cratic" figures from the pro-capitalist opposition. All are ambitious to join the capitalist gravy train and most have already piled up their wealth. The majority of the populations in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union revolted against repression and worsening conditions in an economy that was grinding to a halt.

But the great numbers of the bureaucrats who formerly oppressed them continued in positions of power and privilege. They engage, together with the democrats and demagogues who came to the top, in developing their places in capitalism and cooperating with the imperialist governments. Sections or individuals of the old nomenklatura may have been overturned or even physically

liquidated, however, the majority of those who were in the leading circles of the stalinist bureaucracy occupy places of power and privilege in the new regimes.

Everywhere, the cleansing out of the privileged and corrupt stalinist bureaucracy was blocked. The real decisions - deciding the nature of governments, economic plans, use of police and state forces, foreign policy, distribution of wealth and goods remained in the hands of bureaucrats, petty bourgeois babblers, and ex-stalinists.

In Russia, a group of people around Yeltsin took the decisions. They decided to abolish the Soviet Union - referendum of the Soviet people had, in fact, decided to maintain it. All the plans, including the latest, were imposed on the people, who had no control while the imperialists were and are fully consulted and in fact determine policy.

The working population can only make its will felt by its discontent and force of organisation. The opposition of the population to the 500 days privatisation plan under Gorbachov - described as the "sale of the century" by some British journalists - caused it to be dropped. Now the Yeltsin government comes back again with a wholesale privatisation plan.

There is now a mountain of reports showing the feeling of the population against the plans. A recent report was that of John Lloyd of the Financial Times, 6th April. He declares: "*Privatisation by sale is unpopular; most people see it as the rich or the criminal (no strong distinction is made) getting their hands on property - indisputably true, in the short run. Thus the voices against the creation of capitalists are strong and take on*



15 million workers could lose their jobs by the end of the year. In Nizhny Novgorod at the end of April one car factory announced plans to lay off 10,000 workers. But there is fear amongst Yeltsin's team of social unrest

Elizabeth and the "copper" at the gate

increasing moral force."

Reporting on an auction of shops in Nizhni Novgorod, which was a pilot plan drawn up and organised by the International Finance Corporation, the private sector of the World Bank, in partnership with the newly appointed Mayor and Governor of the town who is no less than Gaidor, the architect of Yeitsin's reforms, the Guardian said that. *"A crowd of two hundred demonstrators, many of them from the shops on offer were not so thrilled 'A Polish model will push us into penury', claimed one banner, 'Collectivisation 1929, Privatisation 1992', said another alleging that the process was undemocratic."*

But the press has also reported the divisions at the top. In an interview given to the Economist 25th April, Yegor Gaidar, number two in the Russian government, declared that, *"Looking at the Eastern European experience we recognised from the beginning that it was impossible to eliminate workers' share in the enterprise, because that would clog up the progress."* He went on to say that, *"We give them 25% of shares, free, though without voting rights"*. The Guardian article quoted above, had reported differently. According to it, workers as a collective would be able to buy a 51% stake through vouchers they would be given.

The different reports, the divisions over schemes in the Parliament and Government and the increasingly tough pressure from imperialism, reflect the extreme difficulties on the road of creating a capitalist class in the former stalinist states and the tension in a situation where there is a nervousness over the reactions of the population.

We talked of the "historic" lie above, because the choice for the Russian population which was posed by the "democrats" who rode on their discontent was in truth: either a bureaucratic command economy or a capitalist command economy and repression. The "double-speak" of capitalism means that it is not against the "command economy" when it is commanding the working class and giving the subsidies it takes from them to the wealthy capitalists and their businesses.

Mr. Gaidar, writing for the "Economist" could not be clearer: *"The most important medium-term issue"*, he said, *"is the transformation of our system of social protection"*, and he did not mean making it better than it was under stalinism. Quite the oppo-

Peasants have been occupying the Ministry of Agriculture building in Warsaw. They have been refused direct talks with the authorities. The correspondent of the "Socialist Voice" in Poland - Elizabeth - has told us about the peasants' hunger strike in previous issues. They are protesting at the seizure of farms by the banks because they cannot pay back the loans they were lured into.

They started this hunger strike on 14th April. Elizabeth reports that among the hunger strikers is a farmer who is 63 and has had two heart attacks. He wanted to transfer his farm to his son but they needed a tractor. The father obtained a bank loan which he now cannot pay back and his farm is about to be seized. He told Elizabeth that if he has to starve he will starve fighting. *"There is no way of dodging hunger"*, he said.

She described how she tried to see the farmers occupying the government building.

"To enter the occupied building is an adventure in itself", she writes, "I ask a policeman at the gate, whether the "Self Defence" people are there - which is what the peasants call their organisation. He answers with a face that is supposed to remind you of the toughness of authority but only manages to evoke the image of robot-like stupidity.

"Which way can I go to talk to them?" I ask.

"You can't go in" he answers.

"Why not?"

"Because I have orders not to let anybody in".

"Maybe you can call one of them to come to the gate".

"I shall call nobody".

"Why not?"

"Because I am on duty".

"But there must be a way of getting in".

"Only if you have a pass".

"And where do I get that pass?"

"Inside the building".

"Are you pulling my leg?"

"No. I'm only doing what I am told".

Only the first floor is occupied. Employees of the Ministry go in and out through another gate. I go in after some of them and head for the information desk. To talk to the peasants, they say, I have to go back to the gate I have just come from. At the same time they call on the intercom to say somebody from the press wants to interview the Minister of Agriculture.

"It's not the Minister I want to talk to but the peasants."

"Why don't you want to talk to the Minister?"

"Because his declarations are all in the mass media. I would like to hear the other side".

Suddenly they discover I have not the required credentials.

site.

The big demand of imperialism is to get rid of the "nanny state". Throughout the world, capitalist rulers want to take public money away from the lower classes and give it to help business. Gaidar bluntly says: *"Russia cannot afford the social spending we had before."* And, in pointing to the destruction of these social conquests of the Russian Revolution which are left, he suddenly says: *"We teach too many students"*.

If this privatization measure ever begins to get off the ground then it is likely only to fuel further the disillusionment, frustration and anger among the middle class and workers who cannot, in any case, afford to buy shares or to keep them and who will fall victim to the voracious capitalist sharks.

In the former Soviet Union and Eastern

Europe there looms up a tumultuous period. Under the facade of democracy, the imperialists had thought to gain their bridgeheads of capitalism and to develop a capitalist class capable of taking the property and introducing their firm exploitation. This has been proved to be illusory. What becomes ever more clear is that it is only through extreme struggle and forms of dictatorship that capitalism can be re-established as a viable form in these countries.

NEW WORLD DISORDER

MARTIN RALPH

When Bush sent in the armed personnel dressed in Gulf war clothing it was meant to send a clear message that the lives of American workers and especially Blacks were as expendable as the Iraqi civilians and that the "new order" will be imposed by any means necessary, in foreign lands or inside the US borders.

The troops did not try and bring peace, they went to impose order. The fact that most of the people who died were blacks in police gun battles while no police were reported killed shows that they had been ordered to kill.

But the military style operation was also meant to reinforce the very thing that created the riot. By the time of the riots sergeant Stoug Koon (one of the cops who beat Rodney King) had written a book in which he says he repeatedly shot an armed Black man in the arms, legs and torso and kicked a Latino drug suspect in the groin so hard he was lifted off the ground. As with the King beating the incident was filmed; only this one was shown to recruits for training purposes (Guardian 18th May).

BLACKS AND LATINOS

California dreaming is long gone for the poor while it remains the richest state in the country. The Reagan and Bush years have seen to that. Between 1973 and 1990 average yearly income for black high school graduates fell by 44% and Latino earnings fell by 35%.

California's state budget is \$14 billion in deficit forcing cuts in welfare and public services.

The New York Times on 22nd March outlined the conditions of gripping poverty in the Black and Latino communities. Mydan, the reporter, said of Salvador Martinez an 18 year old high school drop out from one of the poorest neighbourhoods in LA: "...he has never had a steady job, and the more he looks for one the more he thinks he never will."

Mydan adds: "Almost half the teenagers in urban poverty areas are unemployed, with young blacks suffering the most..."

"One contributing factor is a dropout rate that rises from 60 percent to nearly 80 percent in some largely black and Hispanic high schools in Los Angeles. Many of these dropouts can barely read and write..."

The NYT also interviewed Shamiena Byrd,

a Black high school dropout now working on her high school equivalency diploma and who holds a part-time secretarial job at a day centre. She said:

"A lot of times the system doesn't look at who you are but where you come from..."
"Because of the reputation that Watts has, they usually think anybody that comes from Watts, they're bad... I have to say most girls-most women around here, they are on welfare."

Humberto Zapata writing in "Avanzada" for April (the paper of the sympathising section of the International Workers' League in the USA) says that, of the 150,000 workers in employment in Los Angeles, the majority are Latin American and are employed mainly in the textile industry. They work for ludicrous wages and are little more than slaves. They work in factories with poor light or ventilation and have no canteen facilities. They live in the poorest parts of the city in tiny flats. They put up with these conditions because they are sending money to their families in Latin America to keep them alive. But also because these workers often have no proper immigration documents and because there are no trade unions fighting for their rights.

SPREADING

Why did the protest spread so rapidly and widely to other states and cities? It is because the similar conditions prevail throughout the USA. The US as a whole has the biggest national debt in the world. It pays more to the debt than it does for the whole of the education service. Since July 1990 almost 2 million people have lost jobs. In 1991 25 million (20% of the work force) were unemployed at some time.

Cuts in public services, unemployment, housing all mean that the "third world" has entered the USA in a big way. Reagan and Bush developed the war against the working

class but in that war the immigrant and Black workers were first in the firing line.

In a report issued last year, "State of Black America", Dr David Swinton said:

"The degree of racial inequality is higher as we begin the 1990's than at any other time in the last 20 years... Both in absolute terms and in comparison to white Americans, Blacks have high unemployment rates, low rates of employment, inferior occupational distribution and low wages and earnings."

Many Blacks and Latinos, especially the youth do not have jobs, when they get jobs they are the worst paid and the most dangerous. The lack of health and safety create conditions like a modern day horror story.

Take a typical example:

"At a small company that reconditions used wooden pallets, those not worth saving are thrown into a grinder. Sometimes, when the grinder gets jammed with too many pallets, one of the workers is lowered with a cord into the still-running machine to move the jammed wood." Labor Notes May 1992. It is a firm that employs mainly Mexican workers.

At the same time as the Los Angeles riots the fight over Caterpillar was lost. It illustrated part of the problem: the refusal of the US Labour leaders to lead united struggles and to organise communities irrespective of colour. The list is long, PATCO, Phelps-Dodge, Hormel, International Paper, Greyhound and Eastern Air Lines. But one example shows something different:

"The Pittston strike was run by a union that was not afraid to take big chances when it had to. A union which was willing to use all its resources and ask for help from other unions and the broader community. Strikers, their families, and the retired sat down in front of coal trucks. Students walked out of high school and picketed company headquarters. Women sat down in Pittston's office building. Miners occupied a key Pittston plant. The union built Camp Soli-



US capitalism has proved itself incapable of solving one of its historic problems

IN L.A.

...arity and asked everyone to come. They ran a strike leader for the state legislature. They did all this in the face of injunctions and fines that, if upheld, could have stripped the union of all its assets." (Labor Notes)

This strategy of mobilising all possible layers of the working class is opposed by union leaderships.

At a recent rally sponsored by Labor Party Forum and The Organiser in March in Los Angeles and San Francisco Dolores Huerta vice-president of the United Farm Workers of America and co-chair of a new party to be launched by the National Organisation for Women said:

"Hispanics and African-Americans in our society face a desperate situation. Teachers and maintenance people are being fired because of budget cuts in education. In Delano, California half the teachers have been fired. The school district in Richmond, California is facing bankruptcy. We know who is being fired: people of colour."

I really do believe that they want to keep our children ignorant. You know what they are doing for our children - how they are going to care of them. They are building prisons for them all over the state of California. We know who will be sent to those prisons - children of colour." The Organiser April 1992.

The large "Solidarity" march in September, which included large sections of black workers, showed that something underneath was stirring.

There are independent class organisations developing in the USA, those which seek to organise Blacks, women, trade unionists and those which seek to build a Labor Party.

The rebellion in Los Angeles come from the same desperate struggle which drive people to raid the super-markets in Argentina, Venezuela and, since the events in LA, in Rio De Janeiro. The rebellion of the poor communities burnt buildings owned by the rich in Beverley Hills, shops they could not afford to buy in and factories which treated them like slaves.

What was clearly demonstrated in the heart of imperialism was the developing anger of sections of the working class and the youth. Since 1989 the internal problems of the US have not diminished they have grown. The USA contains one of the greatest proletarian forces on earth. Its future is in the struggle for socialism.

What has to be built is an international leadership which can gain the trust of the dispossessed Blacks and Latinos in which they will exert their great abilities for leadership.

...AND LIBYA

PETER WINDELER



The anti-war movement will quickly rebuild if the USA goes to war against Libya

The US after reducing Iraq to a pile of rubble in the Gulf war is now focussing its attention upon Libya. To many American leaders Libya along with Iraq are the bete noire's of the world stage. Both countries lie in extremely strategic areas of the globe and of course have, in oil, a commodity that imperialism must control.

They have forced a series of sanctions through the United Nations against it. The sanctions are contained in resolution 748 and include a ban on air links and arms trading.

On the face of it the sanctions are punishment for blowing up Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie in 1988 and also for alleged Libyan involvement in the destruction of a French UTA airliner in Niger nine months after the Lockerbie disaster. In both incidents a total of 441 people perished.

However there is mounting evidence that Libya was not involved in the Lockerbie incident. According to a report in *Time* magazine the bomb was planted by a Syrian drugs dealer. The investigation shows that Iran ordered the bombing using the Syrian based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC) as revenge for the shooting down of an Iranian Airbus by the US navy over the Persian Gulf in July 1987 killing the 298 people on board. Iran had been tracking a five man team of CIA operatives who were involved in an attempt to free Western hostages and were also on the Pan Am flight.

The sanctions against Libya call for the handing over of two "suspects" and insist that Libya "cease all forms of terrorist action". The sanctions are opposed by the Arab League and Iraq, Lebanon and the PLO

have derided resolution 748 as another example of "double standards" compared with the UN stance on Israeli occupation of Arab land.

According to the Financial Times in its editorial of 16th April a military assault is very possible in the near future and "...US and Israeli military dominance of the region ensures that attacks can be carried out with little immediate risk".

On the other hand the special nature of Libyan oil is such that the economies of Italy, Germany and Spain would suffer if there was a trade embargo and in November these countries told the US that they would not support such action. Unless the US is able to undertake a "swift, clean strike" against Libya there will be considerable friction between the Western powers.

Whilst Socialist Voice would never condone acts of individual terrorism it is a bit rich for the US to call another country "terrorist" whilst in the past it has supported the contras in Nicaragua and the UNITA guerrillas in Angola, to name but two terrorist organisations. In fact the actions by the UN are thought by many to be illegal. Some of the relatives of those killed Lockerbie have voiced their unease about what America is doing and think that their sad losses are being used by the USA for its own purposes. A Libyan expert on BBC radio said Libya was correct when it said that those accused of the Lockerbie bombing could not get a fair trial in the West. Libya has appealed in the World Court and Professor Ian Brownlie, an Oxford law don speaking on behalf of Libya, said the US was using a "pattern of ultimatums not seen for some decades".

BANGING PANS AND THROWING STONES PEOPLE DEMANDED: "OUT PEREZ"

This report is compiled from our sister paper *Convergencia Socialista* from Brazil and a fax from our sister organisation in Venezuela the PST (Socialist Workers' Party).

At midday on Tuesday 10th March the police savagely repressed a rally held at Bolivar Square in Caracas. This was a signal that the government and its new minister Pinerva was preparing to confront the protest - the "panelacs" - called for the that night.

In the afternoon, the national guard took over the neighbourhoods and strategic points in many cities in the country. Later on they imposed a total censorship on radio and television. The suspension of constitutional rights was overcome by leaflets going from hand to hand, phone calls and pirate radio stations.

In the first hours of the night transport was paralysed. In almost all the country streets were deserted with only a few police patrols. At 9pm, an hour before schedule, the noise of the pans started and extended, developing as if in some big concert. The people were shouting and demanding: "Carlos Perez out!"

"At the start of the demonstrations, the

situation already looked uncontrollable. The image of Caracas was a city of

conflict. In many places the population built barricades using old tyres, rubbish bags and threw stones and bottles towards cars and the police." Folka De Sao Paulo, Brazilian newspaper.

People not only banged pans at the windows they took to the street and used every implement they could. In Maracay, Valencia and Merida barricades were also built and fights with the police broke out all night. The middle class in their

districts also joined the protest against the government.

This rebellion on the 10th March has deepened the crisis facing the Government of Carlos Perez.

The protest was greater than the last great rebellion known as the "Caracazo" of February 1989. Protests spread to all the major cities and came after 200 demonstrations in the preceding four weeks.

Venezuela is one of the richest countries in Latin America. It has oil reserves to last 40 years and enormous sums have been invested in state industry, agrarian reform, education and housing.

It has the fourth largest debt in Latin America and the country's oil earnings go to service the debt re-payments. Every year \$5 billion are paid to the IMF.

The IMF agreement "freed the market". These policies mean freezing wages for up to 5 years and freeing prices. The economy is being privatised and wealth is concentrated in the hands of family clans. Over \$70 billion has been taken out of the country and invested abroad.

Another aspect is the reduction or elimination of subsidies.

The basic "shopping basket" for a family of four is 6,000 Bolivars, a low income now is 4000 Bolivars and some products such as food have an inflation of 200%.

Officially unemployment stand at 13%, unofficially it is nearer 25%. Four million are illiterate, 20% of the population.

Letter from America

Ed Barbor writes from Los Angeles where events in EL Salvador are closely watched by many refugees from that country.

Jesus Garcia was assassinated by EL Salvadorian death squads on 2nd March. He was a union activist and his fate is tragic proof that the peace accord agreed by the FMLN and the Government is not what they say it is.

The FMLN and the guerrillas, led by the Communist Party and Social Democrats, have proclaimed victory because of the agreement and halted the fighting.

But this "victory" did not include prosecuting those responsible for the assassination of Monsignor Romero (whose assassination triggered a popular uprising of 1981), the Mariknol nuns and more than 70,000 dead during the war. Recently two left wing guerillas - Profirio and Domingo - who shot down a helicopter containing military advisers have been handed over to the state police by the FMLN. At the time they were treated like national heroes, now they treat them like criminals.

The agreement states that the FMLN should totally disarm in the period between 2nd February and 31st October. Their forces will be assimilated into the state police while the army must half its strength in two years. The army is recruiting soldiers and in January increased their numbers by several thousand.

The hated National Guard will be incorporated into the civilian police alongside FMLN combatants. The FMLN says implementing the agreement will convert the popular combatants and activists into police representatives to watch over the security of the enemies of the people.

The dissolution of the National Guard was hailed, along with small agrarian reform, as a gain for the Salvadorian people. But the FMLN retreated even over that: land occupied by the peasants in areas the FMLN controlled is being returned to its original owners.

The Sandinistas supported the agreement and the Nicaraguan government will not allow FMLN bases in Nicaragua.

The same dictatorship continues in power thanks to the politics of negotiation agreed by the guerrillas after 12 years of bloody civil war. The agreement has been imposed from above in the name of peace and unity.

READERS write

As a worker for the Housing Department in Manchester City Council I was interested in your interview with Alf McDermot from Langley. There is a good deal he says I would agree with but I'd like to take issue with his comment that "...Project officers interpret the rules (on compensation) the way that's best for them."

In fact the statement is correct but not in the way Alf suggests, namely that the rules are deliberately interpreted against the tenant! The compensation system which used to be fairly good in council terms, was cut back about a year ago, very much against the wishes of local project staff who realised it would make their job harder, as well as being hard on tenants. To the extent that the local staff have any discretion they tend to interpret the rules in the tenants favour. You might get the odd worker who enjoys exercising a little spurious power by saying NO to tenants, but most Council workers would much rather say YES whenever they can.

This might seem a small point to raise but it illustrates a bigger problem. Inevitably the way capitalism is structured there will be points of conflict between workers in work and workers as tenants. It seems unlikely that this can really be overcome outside of a much bigger and more intense phase of class struggle. But ill informed and cavalier statements, such as the one quoted put unnecessary obstacles in the path of workers unity. We need to encourage a better practical understanding between workers in different situations, not create unnecessary barriers.

A Manchester Housing worker.

Voice Comment

We received this letter just before we went to print. We have asked Alf McDermot to comment on the letter and will leave the points concerning Langley estate for him to answer.

We agree with the writer that points of conflict between workers are very important to resolve, but we think the main point is how do we set about overcoming them - not in the future but now.

That is a question which the Voice constantly raises - how unity in struggle can be achieved not in only in the future but now.

There are very few meetings between council workers and the communities they serve. The divisions are maintained often by councillors who have an easier time of implementing decisions such as the cuts if they can prevent close association between sections of workers and keep the communities in the dark.

Trade union leaders resist the call for public meetings and joint forums of struggle with all their might. Since when did the leadership of NALGO, NUPE, NATFHE, TGWU, NUT etc call for and get off the ground joint meetings between themselves and Manchester workers? Again, like the majority of councillors they do not turn out to the working class. For example the council is organising for increasing privatisation rather than organising against it.

Many times the council intention of closing down and cutting services has been opposed by a unity of council workers and communities, sometimes they have been successful.

BUILD THE VOICE

THE 40p you pay for Socialist Voice doesn't cover the cost of producing it. The difference is made up out of our own pockets and from donations from readers and supporters.

For the last four years, we've brought you news and information from strikers, youth fighting 'work-for-dole' schemes, students against loans, communities defending themselves from deportations, council workers' opposing cuts, and the struggles of the anti-poll tax movement. Plus; no other paper has brought you so many first hand reports from all over the world.

Every month we open our pages to ordinary workers to gain support for their dispute or campaign-with no if's or but's. Help us go on.

To continue and make Socialist Voice better you can show your support by:

Paying the solidarity price of £1
Selling a copy to someone else
Making a one-off or a regular donation

For working class people involved in a struggle, we know it can be hard to afford donations. But just the price of a Sunday paper, or a magazine will help to make a difference; and no Sunday paper will ever give you the support we do.

SUBSCRIBE TO

SOCIALIST **VOICE**

SPECIAL OFFER
ONLY £2 [inc P&P]
FOR 4 ISSUES

SOLIDARITY SUBSCRIPTION £4

WORKERS PARTY ATTACKS BRAZILIAN TROTSKYISTS

At its meeting on 6th April, the majority of the National Executive of the Workers Party of Brazil carried a resolution moved by the General Secretary of the party and member of parliament, Jose Dirceu, to begin a process of expulsion of the Convergencia Socialista (CS).

The CS is one of the organisations which helped to form the Workers Party. It is a Trotskyist organisation and supporter of the same international of which the ISL is a member, the International Workers League.

The leading faction in the party, "Articulation", is responsible for this attack. It has been moving away from its past militant socialist policies and moving to a position of greater collaboration with social democracy. Among the tendencies which voted for the resolution was "Socialist Democracy" (supporters of "USec", the Mandelist "Fourth International"). The finalising of the expulsion will be discussed on 8th May.

Jose Dirceu said that one of the greatest faults of the CS was to develop and promote demonstrations against the government. The government of Collor is attacking the working class every day. Articulation has said nothing about the Workers Party mayors

who continually break the programme of the party by publishing the names of workers who go on strike against the monthly rises in the price of public transport.

But not only do Workers Party mayors break party policy, members of Parliament continually make speeches with policies that have never been discussed in the party.

The resolution aims to punish a political position. An article in the paper of the CS declares that it is very proud to have founded the Workers Party and helped to build its editorial apparatus. They go on:

"We dedicated more than twelve years to build a party that could represent the exploited people of Brazil. The threats of the various governments and the bourgeoisie could not shut us up. Neither will "Articulation".

"We call on all honest militants all over the world and especially those from USec who have been part of the trotskyst movement to condemn this bureaucratic resolution whose objective is to shut up an opposition voice and to attack Trotskyist principles.

"To expel us from the Workers Party is a disruption of the democratic traditions of the party."

VOICE CONDEMNS EXPULSIONS!

The attack by the leadership of the Workers' Party in Brazil is based on a method of dealing with political oppositions which cannot be defeated by honest means.

It is a method honed to perfection by the leadership of the Labour Party in Britain. The British Labour leadership have expelled fighters and Trotskyists for decades but recently they have been slashing away at the Labour activists as if they were playing some monster in a horror film.

Those inside and outside the Labour Party who have been opposed to these expulsions should join with us in condemning a leadership in Brazil who is now adopting the same methods.

SOCIALIST COUNCILLORS

THE FINAL HURDLE

Two councillors still face possible long jail sentences, because of their struggle to defend the families of a shanty town called "Villa Socialista". Their case is, finally, to be heard soon in court. Manuel Boni is an independent councillor and Romildo Rapose is a member of Convergencia Socialista from the area of Diadema (Sao Paulo). They were imprisoned on false charges in 1991, then months later released on bail.

We urge anti-Poll Tax groups, trade unions and Trade Councils who supported the campaign in Britain to renew their effort and write again demanding the dropping of all charges.

Write to:

Forum da Comarca de Diadema
Juiz Ira. Vara Criminal
Avenida 7 de setembro 2740
Diadema, Sao Paulo - Brazil

Please send a copy to FAX 005511
571 09 82 (Brazil)

convergência
socialista 

