

● low pay ● stress ● women ● Pakistan

Socialist Appeal

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STOP

Privatisation



Madness



**The
Burston
'Revolution'**

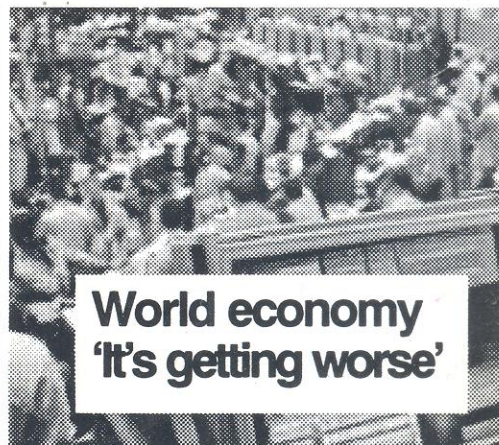
See page 18

Working lives: Stressed out

see page 8

World news

- Repression in Pakistan
- Crisis in Macedonia
- Ireland: Peace process on rocks



**World economy
'It's getting worse'**

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"WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE
 ON COMPANY TIME?"

Plus

Railway Scandal, RMT election, Capital Idea, and Fighting Fund.

Public services: Blair throws down gauntlet to unions

"Anybody who comes to me after the general election from the very traditional old Left and says 'no you cannot involve the private sector in these things', I want to say 'no I made it clear during the election that we wanted a different partnership between the public and private sector'." **Tony Blair.**

Blair's plans to expose the public services, including health and education, to private contractors is a dangerous threat not only to workers in these services, but an affront to the whole Labour movement. It is spitting in the face of millions of working people who faced 18 years of privatisation, compulsory competitive tendering, and wholesale attacks on working conditions under the Tories. If people had wanted more of these Tory policies - and that's what they were offered by Hague - they would have voted Tory. Instead, the Tories were once again humiliated.

There is widespread opposition to privatisation. This is even now the case amongst Tory voters. Forty academics, health professionals and consultants - hardly Bolsheviks - published a letter in *The Times* accusing the government of "galloping privatisation" in the NHS. Whether it is London Underground, air traffic control, the railways, privatisation stinks. Nobody wants Railtrack practices imported on to NHS wards. And yet Blair and the government - despite this huge opposition - is planning to go down that very track!

Under pressure from public sector workers, many in the unions have reacted with alarm. Union conference after union conference has opposed privatisation. The TUC and Labour conferences have been inundated with resolutions opposing privatisation. Pressure is building up within the Labour movement to oppose the government's stand. This policy, said Bill Morris of the TGWU, is "a Trojan horse to a charter for no-holds barred privatisation."

Prescott intervened to defend private interference, but was warned by John Edmonds of the GMB: "You cannot reform public services by simply handing a blank cheque to privateers. If ministers really want to transform our schools and hospitals, they must start to address key issues of under investment, understaffing and poor conditions and pay.

"It's clear from the evidence that, far from bringing extra money into public serv-

ices, the Private Finance Initiative is costing taxpayers billions in profits to the private sector."

Blair insists the government will press ahead, and that he is not seeking confrontation with public sector workers. But who is he trying to fool? Even John Monks commented: "There were some in the Labour Party headquarters during the general election campaign who said they relished an early confrontation with a major public sector trade union. I could not believe it."

Why should we be surprised? The Blairites have their own agenda. They want to turn the Labour Party into a Tory Party. They are already carrying out Tory policies, and have become champions of the market and labour 'flexibility.' They have kept the bulk of the Tory anti-union laws on the books. Now they want to provoke the public sector unions, hoping to cause the trade unions to break the link with the party.

Already there is great frustration with the Blairites within the unions. A number of unions are reviewing their financial support for the party. "Why should we finance a party that is attacking our members?" is an understandable refrain. But to simply cut the party's funding is only a protest. It will not hurt the Blairites who in any case are looking to big business to give them cash. The more they can create a division between the unions and the party, the better - for them at least!

The point is, should the Blairites be allowed to get away with it? The trade unions created the Labour Party to represent the interests of working people in Parliament. They financed it. They sustained it. Over four million trade unionists are affiliated to the party. Unfortunately, Blair and company have infiltrated the party and taken it over, with the past connivance of the right wing trade union leaders. Now there is a groundswell of opposition developing to the government's policies. The trade union leaders are under pressure from the rank and file.

Even the traditional old rightwingers are alarmed at the Blairites. These new upstarts are taking things too far too quickly for them. The Blairites are threatening to upset the apple cart. Even Peter Kilfoyle, the Labour MP for Walton has accused Blair of imposing a "fuhrerpinzip" - a right to command and the people's duty to obey - in a savage attack on the leadership. Roy Hattersley, a traditional right-winger,

has gone further and called on party members to rise up against Blair's "coup d'etat".

"One by one the policies which defined our philosophy have been rejected by the prime minister... Believing that the party does not belong to Tony Blair we should rise up against the coup d'etat which overthrew the legitimate philosophy," states the former Labour deputy leader.

The trade unions have the power to defeat Blairism. They still control 50 percent of the vote at Labour conference. Rather than withholding their cash, the trade union leaders should be organising a campaign to take back the party. That is a more serious strategy. It is the only strategy that can defeat Blairism. The trade unions should flood the party and organise for it to be taken back at every level.

Part and parcel of this campaign should be the fight for an alternative programme to Blairism. That must mean a break from privatisation and marketisation. The only real alternative is a socialist programme to transform the lives of ordinary working people. As opposed to the market, we must advocate a socialist plan of production. Rather than closing factories and throwing people out of work, such a plan would utilise fully the resources of Britain to dramatically raise living standards. This would mean the renationalisation of privatised companies, as well as taking over the commanding heights of the economy: the major monopolies, banks and insurance companies. Compensation would only be given on a means tested basis, effectively excluding the 'fat cats' that have milked us dry.

An end to bureaucracy! The drawing up of a socialist plan would involve all working people, including scientists and computer experts. With working hours slashed, workers would have time to participate fully in the running of the state and industry. All industries and services would be run under workers' control and management, with the election of all officials, who will be paid only skilled workers' wages.

It would eliminate completely the evils of unemployment, poverty pay and stress at work. This would free the colossal talent wasted by capitalism to raise living standards. As opposed to a future of insecurity, a socialist Britain, linked to a socialist Europe, would guarantee prosperity and security for all. ●

Bosses laugh at pay scandal

As the obscene pay rises of Britain's top company directors and Chief Executive Officers continues to prove that you don't have to pay peanuts to get monkeys, many of these same bosses devote what little time they spend 'working' to finding ways to avoid paying their workers the Minimum Wage. According to the TUC an estimated 170,000 workers, predominantly in textile sweatshops, catering and bar work are being denied this minimum legal entitlement. This figure of course excludes the growing number of school-children being exploited for less than the cost of a packet of peanuts, and discounts too the thousands of 18 - 21 year olds inexcusably being paid the lower minimum rate. Rather than abolishing this discrimination against precisely those young workers most in need of a minimum wage, the difference in the two rates paid to different aged workers is about to widen. The new increased rate will see 18 - 21 year olds entitled to £3.50 an hour instead of £3.20 while workers over 21 will see their minimum rise to £4.10 an hour from £3.70 at present.

The introduction of the minimum wage, we are told, has lifted many workers out of poverty. In reality this figure still represents poverty pay, that it meant an increase for thousands only demonstrates the level of exploitation facing workers in this country. Yet even this is too much for the money grabbing bosses who seek to exploit every loophole to avoid paying workers a penny more than they can get away with.

In the nine months to January this year the Inland Revenue sent out 171 enforcement notices to employers ignoring the minimum wage, up from 136 in the previous 12 months.

These are only the reported cases of course. We can assume the majority are not reported. As Barry Morris of the Knitwear, Footwear and Apparel union explains, "When people have spoken up there has often been intimidation and violence."

Individual workers speaking out against employers who ignore the minimum rates, who get rid of workers when they reach 21 to avoid paying them more, who overcome the cost of the minimum wage by increasing hours or preventing workers from taking their holiday entitlement, know they are liable to be sacked. These workers need the unions to organise in their workplaces.

Approaching these workers with a demand to end the discrimination against youth, to increase the rate to at least £6 an hour immediately, and to organise to defend them would lead to a growth in the unions overnight. It also represents the only way forward for low paid workers to fight back against their penny pinching bosses, to fight for the minimum to which they are entitled, and to fight to improve that minimum to a living wage.

Railtrack Bosses Your life in their hands!

After each of the appalling rail tragedies of recent years, we were told that 'this must never be allowed to happen again.' And yet it did happen again. And again. Despite the overwhelming pressure of public opinion that the railways should be renationalised, that integration and planning along with investment are the only ways to make our railways safe, the government refuses to listen.

Now we await another tragedy - on the current basis it is inevitable.

A new report damns the bosses of Railtrack for preparing just such a new disaster through their corner cutting, cheapskate attitude to safety.

A railway safety report published in mid-August showed train derailments at their highest level since 1993. Meanwhile the Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis System (CIRAS) details the widespread use of untrained, inexperienced workers conducting maintenance work and "controlling the movement of trains." It explains that "agency staff frequently turn up for work with no prior training or experience in railway work. This is affecting safety and may result in an accident."

The Sunday Times (19/8/01) investigation into rail safety and maintenance work makes chilling reading.

Railtrack themselves admit, rather bizarrely they boast, that in a check made on 1900 staff in July, 95% were within correct safety standards. Only 95%! In all there are 90,000 workers employed by 3000 different companies working on the railways. If we were to accept Railtrack's own figures that would give us an estimate of 4,500 unqualified workers on our rail-

way lines. How you might ask is it possible? The reason is that Railtrack, to save money, subcontracts out the work of track repair and maintenance to well known (and not so well known) paragons of safety in the construction industry like Jarvis and Balfour Beatty. Many of these workers do not receive the necessary training. The CIRAS report explains that in spite of Hatfield defective rails are still being ignored, "some people are said to be reluctant to report faults as this may result in a speed restriction being imposed, thus causing a delay to the service."

Then we had the Ladbroke Grove tragedy. Now even Gerald Corbett himself, the former boss of Railtrack who resigned after the Hatfield crash, blames privatisation and the breaking up of the rail network. "I'm afraid there will be another train crash" he warns, "and that will explode the whole thing again, and then it will become an absolute political imperative to do something." It should be an imperative now. We shouldn't wait any longer. The government should immediately take over the entire rail network. The argument over cost is irrelevant. The government has already paid out more in subsidies than it would cost to buy it back and now Railtrack hold out the begging bowl again for billions more, not to fix the railway but to pay out dividends to its shareholders. These failures and their system can't run a public service. The railways and all public transport should be publicly owned, planned, integrated and run by the workers involved and the passengers.

.....



Exeter postal workers take action

Postal collections and deliveries in Exeter ground to a halt at the end of August after Royal Mail workers started an unofficial strike which disrupted the deliveries of exam results.

About 700 staff were involved in the protest - 175 at the Bedford Street office and the rest at the Exeter Mail Centre (EMC) at Osprey Road, Sowton.

The unofficial strike started when 25 drivers walked out from the EMC after a dispute over the deployment of temporary staff. They were later joined by 40 night sorters.

The unofficial action did not have official union backing, although the Communication Workers Union is involved in negotiations.

Bob Johns, the South West secretary of the Communication Workers' Union, negotiated with Royal Mail area management throughout the night. He claimed the dispute was near to settlement but talks collapsed after union officials were accused of "orchestrating" the strike. This was not in fact true, it was the workers who could take no more casualisation.

He said: "The cause of our strike is that the Royal Mail management in Exeter has taken the decision to fill all vacancies with temporary contracts.

"This affects the levels of our overtime and earnings. That has been done without negotiation.

"Following on from that, job losses are due to take place in Exeter within the driving section next month, which will have further effects.

"There will be three full-time jobs lost when they are moved to other offices outside Exeter.

"But the situation concerning industrial relations at this moment in time is that they are as bad as they have ever been in all the 30 years I have been here."

"There is not a lot of co-operation going on." A Consignia spokeswoman (the new privatisation friendly name for Royal Mail) said the dispute centred around manning levels and the employment of

seven temporary drivers, who were due to start work at the Sowton sorting depot on two-month temporary contracts. She said the extra collection staff would help existing workers in emptying letter boxes and picking up mail from city companies which fails to answer the question of why they can't have a proper contract and hours instead of casual work. She said: "We are very disappointed this unofficial industrial action has taken place."

Talks started again and Consignia said they were hopeful that common sense would prevail which obviously means that they hope the union would capitulate.

The last industrial action was around a year ago. Drivers staged a lighting walk-out but returned to work again almost immediately.

This is only the latest in a long line of industrial disputes in the postal sector and it certainly won't be the last. The workers will not accept any more attacks on their conditions or wages. It could be argued that the only reason that Royal Mail has not already been sold off is because of the militancy of the postal workers who with or without official union backing will not accept this after seeing the disaster of other sold off public services such as the railways. However, it certainly cannot be taken for granted that privatisation will not be tried as Tony Blair has shown that he is willing to provoke the trade unions into open confrontation and the new Consignia 'brand' could be viewed as the first step down this road. If this is the case he may live to regret it.

Fill vacancies with full time jobs!

No more Sell-offs of Public Assets!

No privatisation!

For democratic workers' control and management of the industry!

by Andy Elliot

Capital Idea

MEMBERSHIP BLUES

Labour Party membership has halved since Tony Blair came to power in 1997. In that year membership was registered at 420,000. A Millbank source confirmed that only 254,000 ballot papers were distributed to members for the elections to the NEC.

When you realise that up to 10% of ballot papers were sent to people who had lapsed, the real figure is likely to be nearer 229,000 - a drop of almost 200,000 in four years. Is there any wonder when Blair is carrying through Tory policies, including the privatisation of health and education?

MARKET MADNESS

"My view is that all this excitement is summer madness", states Meghnad Desai in the 'Economics column' of *Tribune* (17th August). "There is a small chance of British (sic) having a recession or even a drastic slowdown. The worst-case scenario is that the economy may grow at two per cent rather than two-and-a-half per cent." He says Brown has "foreseen" this little difficulty and "the Bank of England has got a good interest rate policy." His solution for the working class? "The rules for claiming benefit will have to be relaxed... That may not be socialism (!), but Labour policy should at least have a humane dispensation." What planet is this guy living on? Can't the *Tribune*, supposedly the Voice of the Left, come up with anything better?

McDONALDS: A GREAT PLACE FOR KIDS

The good old Ronald McDonald restaurant in Camberley, Surrey, has been fined more than £12,000 for employing schoolchildren illegally. Child employment officers from Surrey County Council found more than 50 breaches of the law at the restaurant.

Toshiba axes 18,800 jobs

Toshiba, the world's second largest semiconductor manufacturer, is to axe 18,800 jobs and slash capital spending as it faces its biggest losses. The downturn in semiconductors has already affected Fujitsu and NEC, as well as many other US and European groups, which have also issued profit warnings and big job cuts.

Stop the witchhunt against the ATGWU officials

The following is the text of a leaflet by Irish ATGWU shop stewards which was given out at the national TGWU conference in July.

Late on the afternoon of Tuesday 26 June, the Irish Regional secretary and regional organiser of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union were suspended from office by Bill Morris, general secretary of the TGWU.

The two officials - Mick O'Reilly and Eugene McGlone - were suspended with no consultation with the General Executive Council or the Irish Regional Committee. No reason was given by Brother Morris for this unprecedented action.

The Irish Regional Committee is profoundly shocked and disturbed by these actions. It should be pointed out that Michael O'Reilly was democratically elected by the General Executive Council of the TGWU, and both he and Eugene McGlone have long records of loyal service in the union. Eugene McGlone is currently the chairperson of the NITUC, while Michael O'Reilly is an executive member of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions..

The reasons for this action have not been given. However, in the view of some of the members of the Regional Committee, this episode is clearly linked to the consistent opposition of the Irish Region to the social contract in the Republic of Ireland.

The timing of the operation is significant. At the meeting of the Irish Congress

of Trade Unions, due to take place next week, our Region was to present a resolution opposing the social contract, with good prospects of obtaining a majority. This resolution was to be presented by Brothers McGlone and O'Reilly. Owing to the suspensions, this might not now be possible.

We have reason to believe that political pressure from the very highest level has been brought to bear on Bill Morris to instigate these proceedings. The Irish government would have been seriously embarrassed if the aforementioned resolution had been passed, and has taken steps - with the support of certain leading politicians in London - to silence the opposition.

The attempt to silence the opposition by such means will not succeed. The workers are not prepared to accept the holding down of wages while prices and profits rocket. The purpose of trade unions is to defend the workers, not to defend profit margins.

We demand that the TGWU leadership perform the functions for which they were elected, as we have always done in Ireland - i.e. to defend the interests of working people and uphold trade union democracy.

Our opposition to the social contract remains total and implacable. We will not be intimidated or silenced by these, or any other, measures. The TGWU has always prided itself on being a campaigning union. We have the right and duty to represent our membership, and this is just what we intend to do.

These measures have no legality and cannot be accepted. They are a violation of internal democracy and natural justice, and will be vigorously contested. Bill Morris is not even a member of the ICTU yet by his actions he is interfering in the internal affairs of the ICTU. Brothers McGlone and O'Reilly enjoy the wholehearted backing of the Regional Committee and the membership in Ireland.

The imposition of such measures is particularly harmful in Northern Ireland, because it threatens to destabilise a major and long-established trade union which is non-sectarian and has long been a force for the unity of working people in this troubled land. Bill Morris and the TGWU leadership should be

helping to strengthen the trade union movement in Northern Ireland, and not making our work more difficult.

We are not seeking confrontation, only elementary justice. We appeal to the membership of the TGWU in the whole of Britain to back us and demand the immediate rescinding of these unjust measures which, we believe, establish a dangerous precedent for our union and place a question mark over trade union democracy.

It is important that Conference makes its voice heard on this vital matter!

We ask you to raise this matter in every District Committee, Regional Committee, branch and shop stewards' committee, and to contact the Irish Regional Committee. Together we must make the union leadership see reason and abandon these senseless measures which can only serve to weaken and divide our union - a situation that will benefit only the enemies of organised Labour.

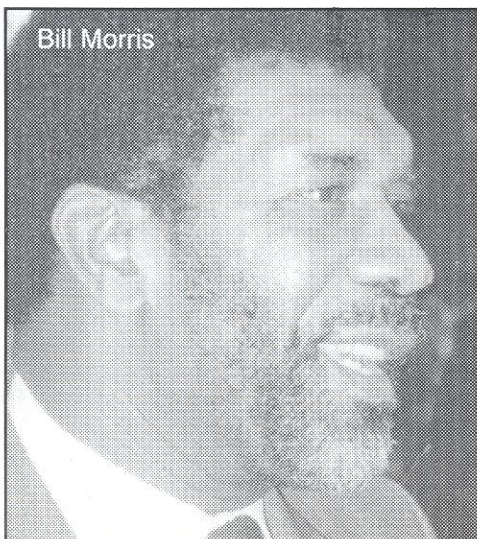
- For the immediate re-instatement of Bros. McGlone and O'Reilly
- Defend union democracy
- Let us unite to build a campaigning and democratic TGWU that fights for the interests of all working people.

Please send letters of protest to:

Bill Morris,
General Secretary
Transport and General Workers Union
Transport House
128 Theobalds Rd
Holborn
London WC1X 8TN
e-mail: tgwu@tgwu.org.uk

Stop Press

A Special Regional Committee meeting was convened on the request of 13 members of the committee on August 13, 2001. The meeting deplored the way in which the two senior officials referred to above were treated and demanded their immediate reinstatement pending their hearings. It seems the leadership of the union is now scurrying around looking for complaints against these officials. We appeal to every branch and every member of the union to demand to know from headquarters why these activists have been treated in this way, and to demand their immediate reinstatement. ●



Bill Morris

The Private National Health service?

It has been described as being the first act of renationalisation since those long ago days of Clement Attlee and the post war Labour government of 1945. The Department of Health has spent around £27 million pounds to buy the privately owned Heart Hospital in London and place it back into the NHS as part of the UCL Hospitals Trust. Should this decision be welcomed and what does it really mean?

by Dan Wexford

On the face of it this looks a good move on the part of the government, for once. The cost of building a new specialist hospital like the Heart Hospital would be at least double what the government has paid to get this one, which is already up and running with trained staff and top class equipment. The Heart Hospital is widely considered to be the best heart hospital in Europe and getting it back for the NHS has been described as a "fantastic deal" by Robert Naylor, the UCLH Trust's chief executive. But let's look closer.

For a start the hospital was originally part of the NHS from 1947 onwards until the Tories shut it down and sold it off in 1989. It was then reopened in 1998 as a luxury private hospital by its new owners, the Singapore based Parkway Holdings. However those people who believe that private ownership is always more effective and efficient at running things should take this as a case study. Far from being the expected success, it was a loss-making "enterprise" from day one. Despite pulling in large numbers of wealthy foreign patients prepared to pay the high fees charged in order to get quality treatment, losses had reached £5 million by the year 2000. Parkway Holdings were in deep trouble and were looking for a buyer, any sort of buyer. So along comes the government and up shoots the company's share price on the Singapore stock exchange. Lucky for them!

But there is more. Rich private patients will have priority. Business as usual so to speak, with only the spare capacity left over being used for ordinary NHS patients. Needless to say Unison has already led the way in drawing attention to the fact that this purchase is both an expensive 'bail out' operation for a company in trouble and a warning about what could and will happen if private enterprise get more of their hands on public assets. If they make a whopping profit then they will be happy. If things go wrong then they can evidently rely on the government to help them out, in effect providing a

cast iron underwriting of any project. They now know that any assets will just be bought back again at great cost hereby preserving the initial investment. Either way they make money at our expense.

Blair's belief that increased privatisation is the way forward for the public sector as a means of solving its ongoing crisis must not be taken at face value. We only have to look to the USA where their health system is largely run for profit. The World Health Organisation has, in a recent report, placed our NHS in 24th place in a listing of health services worldwide, ranked by efficiency. The USA however is way down in 72nd place. In other words more money goes in but less health care comes out. Is this what we can look forward to for our health service in the future?

It doesn't have to be like this. John Prescott's statement in the *Independent on Sunday* of August 5th that they have no choice over the increased use of the private sector in providing important services is simply not correct. Nationalisation of the private health sector and the pharmaceutical/drug firms would release massive resources just on their own. This should be done immediately and with compensation only on the basis of proven need to ordinary shareholders. These firms have ripped-off the health service for countless millions of pounds already and would, given the chance, grab millions more. This is what will happen if they are not stopped. Any promises they make will not be worth a penny. The people at the top will be well rewarded but for the rest...?

The words of Dr. Michael Gross, a top consultant who stopped working for the NHS last year ring all too true: "*Politicians have been dishonest for years about the true extent of the underfunding. If doctors were to tell even a fraction of the lies I read from our elected representatives, they would be rapidly struck off.*" (F.T., 4/7/01). The renationalisation of the Heart Hospital is to be welcomed but all the rest should be taken into public hands as well, and without the big payouts to big business, so that we can have a health service that is universal, free at the point of contact and able to do the job that people want and need. An NHS run on socialist lines would be able to achieve far more than any one could ever imagine. The massaging of waiting lists to reach paper targets, a fetish of big business who do this all the time to prove how efficient they think they are, could be replaced by real improvements and real achievements. ●

The Class Divide

REVOLUTION AT HARRODS

The call for revolution has come from rather unexpected quarters - Mohamed Al Fayed has called on the workers to revolt against their union leaders in PUNCH magazine. But hang on didn't Fayed attack his own trade unionists at Harrods? So much for the words of chairman Mo.

GOD FORBID!

Royal Mail, or is it Consignia, is hoping to restore its battered reputation by calling in a team of consultants who specialise in bringing "spirituality" to business. Richard Barrett, who founded the Spiritual Unfoldment Society at the World Bank in 1993, will ask workers what kind of "positive or love-based values" they would like to see in their workplace and what kind of "negative or fear-based values" they could do without. Send your answers to *Socialist Appeal* and win an application form to join the Royal Mail.

OLD-FASHIONED DIPLOMACY

Britain backed Belgium and the US to murder Lumumba, the radical prime minister of Congo in 1961. He was a threat to their mining interests. In discussions between US President Eisenhower and foreign secretary Home, "The president expressed his wish that Lumumba would fall into a river full of crocodiles," a declassified US document records. "Lord Home said regretfully that we had lost many of the techniques of old-fashioned diplomacy."

Fed up and stressed out

Workers in Britain work the longest hours in Europe. The New Britain we were promised turns out to be a bosses paradise with the least regulation, the lowest corporation tax and the lowest employment costs not just in Europe, but, when US employers health insurance is added, even lower than in the US. In fact British workers work up to 25% longer than their brothers and sisters in Europe and the US. No wonder then that with such long hours, low pay and so few rights stress has become the number one issue in the workplace.

An estimated 6.7 million working days a year are being lost due to ill health caused by stress at a cost to the economy of around £3.7 billion. Bosses organisations have been quick to denounce half of these as "sickies". They have the nerve to call us skivers.

The reason why British business struggles to compete will not be found in a lack of work on our part but in a lack of willingness to invest on the part of the bosses who prefer to speculate and gamble with the profits they make from our hard labour. New machinery and new technology is introduced neither to make our lives easier nor even to make work more efficient, but simply to squeeze more profit out of the efforts of fewer workers. To increase the productivity of each worker is to increase profits, but at such an expense to our health it is a wasteful use of resources. Our attack on capitalism is not simply a moral one, though the impact of their system on our lives is quite vicious. Their system is economically wasteful too. This is not efficiency but exploitation.

Despite the pleadings of many trade

union leaders there is little help for hard pressed workers from the much vaunted European legislation either. Bosses routinely demand workers waive their right to the 48 hour maximum working week as a condition of employment, and flout other directives on sick pay and holidays. This kind of 'red tape' they argue is preventing their businesses being successful. Yet their businesses are less successful than those in European countries who do not have loopholes in their legislation to allow such exploitation. If there is an ounce of benefit for workers in a piece of legislation then we must fight for that ounce to be implemented, but it must be increasingly clear to workers that no matter what pieces of paper circulate in Westminster or Brussels only the determined action of organised workers fighting for their rights through their trade unions can force the bosses even to accept the most minimal of standards.

Communist ideas

If you listened to the bosses you'd think they were all struggling to survive with lazy workers and being strangled by a noose of "red tape". Yet this supposed red tape - wild communist ideas like maximum working hours, a minimum wage and an entitlement to a couple of weeks holiday a year - is being daily ignored by these great supporters of law and order.

Meanwhile we are not only working longer than ever, we work harder too, suffering increasing stress and strain which affects not only our work but the whole of our lives. The pressures of work, bad enough on their own, are supplemented by outright bullying, threats and intimidation in workplaces across the country.

The figures for days lost due to ill health barely scratch the surface of increasing headaches, blood pressure and heart conditions, not to mention the much harder to quantify effects on millions of workers personal relationships and family life.

The government argues that it is not necessary to introduce new legislation but that workers must simply be informed of their rights. In fact, a survey conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that many workers knew their rights but dare not demand them for fear of losing their jobs.

Stress and overwork are now

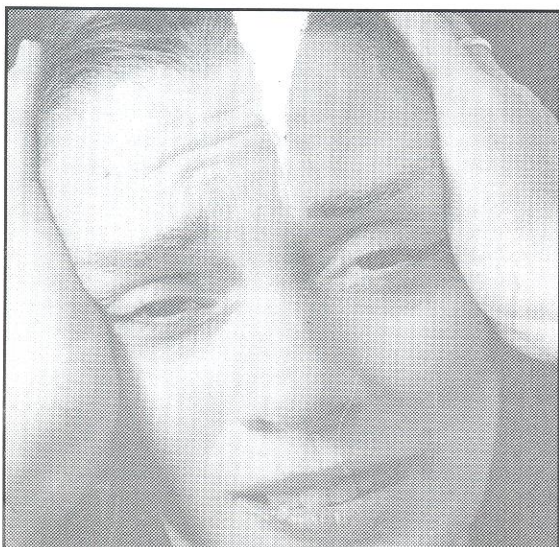
part of daily life in the public sector too. Blair and co. are keen to introduce disastrous private sector management into our health service and education system - the techniques of private management are already well in place. There has been a collapse in job satisfaction amongst doctors, nurses, teachers and civil servants to match the holding down of wages and increase in strain they have endured. A survey by Warwick University found that public sector workers have become less satisfied at work over the last decade, a period in which they have faced extra bureaucracy, pressure to meet targets as well as the introduction of working practices from the private sector.

Private sector

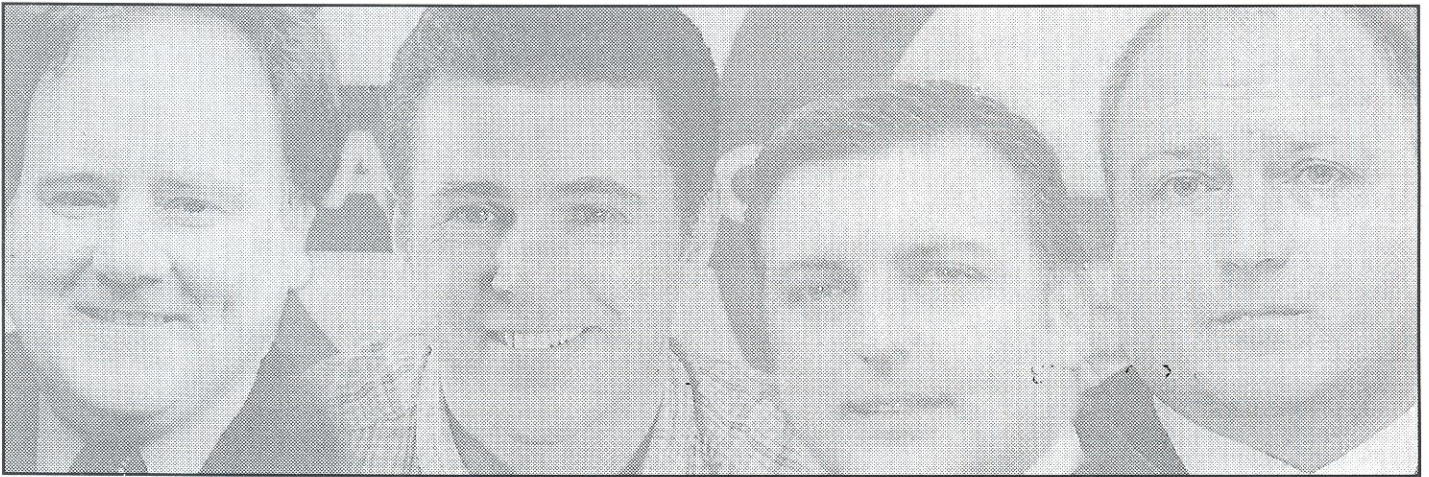
Back in the private sector the pressure of work, the intimidation of bosses in the pursuit of maximum profit leads to accidents, maiming and death. Take the case of the two bakery workers sent in to clean an oven only two hours after it had been switched off, instead of two days. The oven's temperature was still 100 degrees centigrade when they entered. They were roasted to death.

Or the worker at a paper factory who tried to remove an errant piece of paper from a machine working full out without safety guards. At the end of a tiring shift his concentration was no doubt impaired. A series of gears crunched through the bones of his arm right up to his shoulder. Most of these accidents occur at the end of over long shifts. That proper safety measures are ignored is a major factor too. The only way to prevent such tragedies, and the many less obvious but no less tragic deaths from heart attacks, the effects of stress and bullying on workers health and on their family life, is shorter working hours, and proper trade union inspection of safety conditions. The bosses however are prepared to hand over none of these. There is little comfort to be found in European social legislation being so openly flouted by bosses. The only way is to fight for our rights through the unions, and furthermore fight to take the purse strings and the whip out of the hands of the bosses and place our economy, with all its fabulous human and material resources, in the hands of workers themselves to plan and run - safely, efficiently and in all our interests. ●

by David Green



new union leaders: reflecting a shift leftwards?



After a decade or more of very difficult conditions for trade union activists, a new mood is developing amongst union members. After years of savage attacks on pay and conditions, the introduction of labour flexibility, and the undermining of workers' rights, workers on the shop floor are saying enough is enough. This growing frustration at work has fed into the trade unions and has resulted in shock election defeats for rightwing candidates and election victories for leftwingers.

by our industrial correspondent

A recent article in the *Financial Times* by Robert Taylor headed "New breed of leaders join the fight over privatisation", describes the new intake of trade union leaders as "hard left", determined to confront the anti-working class policies of the Blair government. While the description of some as "hard left" is stretching the point, there are certainly left changes at the top of a number of trade unions that can have important consequences for the future.

"The names of Billy Hayes, Bob Crow, Mick Rix and Mark Serwotka mean nothing to most people", states the article, "but this new group of union leaders could pose a serious threat to Tony Blair's modernisation programme."

Billy Hayes is the newly elected general secretary of the CWU. Bob Crow is currently the assistant general secretary of the RMT. Mick Rix is the general secretary of ASLEF, while Mark Serwotka recently won the position of general secretary of the civil service union PCS.

The *Financial Times*, the most astute organ of British finance capital, was correct when it commented about those newly elected radicals: "Each reflects genuine anger and frustration among workers who still enjoy the collective strength to make life uncomfortable for the rest of society." There is colossal bitterness at the workplace at the way things have gone. It represents a product of, and growing backlash to the employers' offensive that has gone on for the past fifteen years. The working class, blue collar and white collar, has been relentlessly squeezed. And now it is pay back time.

With the retirement of John Foster an election is also taking place for general secretary of the journalists' union, the NUJ. The left's favoured candidate, Jeremy Dear, is national organiser for newspapers and is a long-standing union activist. The NUJ has recently turned the tide with a whole string of recognition deals. A victory for Jeremy would add further impetus to the left developments in the wider trade union movement.

Class collaboration

Many trade union leaders have appeared helpless in the face of the employers' bandwagon. Many have adapted to it by embracing 'class collaboration', with the accompanying sacrifice of the membership. Although there is frustration and anger in the workplaces, the trade union bureaucracy acts as a colossal brake on the movement. They hide behind the anti-trade union laws to blunt any struggle.

The leaders of the AEEU epitomise

business unionism, with their no-strike deals and 'sweetheart' agreements. As a result discontent within the union, as reflected at conference, is widespread. The surprise election of Davy Hall as President a few years ago, although he gave up after a short time and went back to the North East, again reflected the underlying dissatisfaction in the rank and file. In the not too distant future, this opposition will sound the death knell of the right wing's domination.

Symptomatic

The election of these left individuals to key trade union positions is symptomatic of a change taking place in the Labour movement. The election of Billy Hayes as general secretary of the Communication Workers is described by the FT as "the most surprising." However, the defeat of John Keggie, the chosen candidate of the right, reflected the growing rank and file discontent at the management attempt to drive through changes in working practises throughout the Post Office. Postal workers have experienced management bullying at first hand and have reacted with a whole series of unofficial and illegal strikes. Hayes was clearly the beneficiary of this militant mood.

It is significant that Hayes stressed in the election his commitment to a decentralisation of the union's structure and a willingness to listen to members' complaints. This certainly paid off, as members saw in greater numbers the need for the union hierarchy to respond to the realities on the shop floor. Hayes was more in tune with their aspirations. "We cannot expect

good policies if we are frightened of embarrassing the Labour government," he told members.

The rail unions have also been radicalised over the last decade, but especially with the advent of rail privatisation. The RMT union has successfully forced big concessions from the different rail companies, the latest being the protection of guards' jobs, after an aggressive strike strategy and threats of disruption. Bob Crow has been a key figure in this struggle. Now with the death of Jimmy Knapp, it is very likely that Crow will take over as the general secretary of the union. This will put the union on the left of the trade union movement, an incredible turn around since the days of rightwing domination under Green and Weighel.

Bob Crow, who was a member of Scargill's party, has no truck with Blairism. "Labour is now a party driven by private enterprise. It shares the interests of the privateers now. It does not stand up for working people," he said.

Mick Rix, the 38-year old Yorkshireman who leads the train drivers' union ASLEF, was also once a paid-up member of the SLP, but now belongs to the Labour Party. Out of the blue, he defeated Lew Adams, who was seen as increasingly compromising his position.

A further shock election came earlier this year with the election of Mark Serwotka in the 260,000-strong PCS. The sitting rightwing general secretary Barry Reamsbottom failed to get the required nominations, clearing the way for a fight between the establishment-man Lanning and the openly socialist candidate Serwotka. Originally, the Broad Left failed to put up its own candidate, preferring to support Lanning. It had completely failed to appreciate the opposition mood that had developed in the union. Serwotka's victory - which surprised even the left - was a result of years of attacks - outsourcing and privatisation - on the members who had had enough. Serwotka represented a chal-

lenge to all of that.

In his election campaign, Serwotka emphasised he was a socialist and wanted to see the union being "more openly critical of the government when it attacks our members and working people in general."

The election of these new radical leaders reflects a growing mood of discontent developing within the trade unions. The message of 'new realism' has no appeal to workers who have felt the brunt of the employers' offensive for more than a decade. The right wing leaders are increasingly out of touch with the realities on the shop floor. It is only inertia and bureaucratic structure that keeps them in power in. But this cannot last forever.

What has happened today in the CWU, PCS and RMT, will take place in the AEEU, GMB and TGWU tomorrow. The rule of the rightwing is being undermined by events. What has happened in the unions where left-wingers have been elected is a harbinger of what is to come in the others.

"The class struggle is dead," said Tony Blair, as he sets out to attack the conditions of millions of workers in the public sector. "The working class sometimes needs the whip of counter-revolution to push it into action," said Marx. The actions of Blair will certainly provoke reaction as can be seen over the creeping privatisation in health and education. New battles will force new changes in the unions and Labour movement generally. Such left wing shifts in the trade unions - which are inevitable - will also have their affects within the Labour Party itself. Rather than disaffiliate, unions will take up the struggle to rid their party of Tory infiltrators, and return it to the working class. As for its entire history, the trade unions remain the key to the Labour Party. A leftward moving trade union movement, reflecting the aspirations of workers, will serve to transform the situation and put the class struggle back on the top of the agenda. ●

RMT General Secretary: Bob Crow the Left Contender

The death of Jimmy Knapp, the long-standing general secretary of the RMT, opens up a battle for the leadership of the rail workers' union. As we go to press, there appears to be three challengers for the position. The favourite is left winger Bob Crow, the current assistant general secretary, who has led strikes on London Underground against the threats of privatisation as well as South West Trains. He is a former Tube track worker, and has wide support in the union as an able negotiator.

He is likely to be opposed by the less well-known Phil Bialyk, the south-west regional organiser who is a loyal Labour supporter and stands on the right wing of the union.

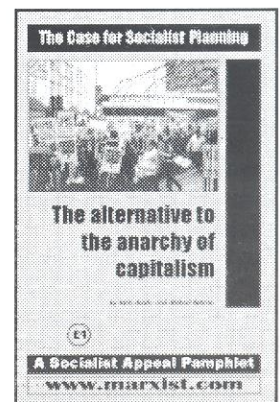
The third contender will probably be Ken Usher, a Midlands-based official, also a rightwinger and coming from the shipping side of the union. He is the union's chief negotiator with Virgin Trains and will try to present himself as the 'unity' candidate.

Other potential candidates such as Greg Tucker and Pat Sikorski are likely to stand aside in order not to split the left vote.

Although Bob Crow prevaricated over the last tube strike - he tried to call it off but was overruled by his national executive - he is undoubtedly the best candidate to lead the union. The contest will probably continue until early next year. A victory for Crow will mark a further milestone in the long awaited shift to the left of the trade union movement.



The alternative to the anarchy of capitalism
by Mick Brooks and Michael Roberts
price £1
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New elections in the NUJ

We speak to Jeremy Dear

From FoC to President Jeremy Dear has been an activist in the National Union of Journalists for over 10 years. At 34 he is the youngest candidate in the forthcoming General Secretary election. We asked him a few questions.

Why did you decide to run for General Secretary?

Many people from across the union came to me and asked me to run. It was felt the NUJ has made great progress in the past couple of years winning back recognition and rebuilding union organisation. I am the official responsible for that campaign. We recruited thousands of new members and have won over 40 agreements covering 4000 journalists by having an active campaign, explaining to a whole new generation of union members how we can tackle job losses, improve pay and protect their conditions. As a consequence of that there is widespread support for my campaign from all sectors of the union.

What do you hope to achieve if you win?

I hope to continue to build a union people are proud to belong to - one that fights for its members and help them achieve better terms and conditions. Ours is an industry which has changed greatly in recent years. There has been a much greater concentration of ownership and instead of dealing with family run firms we are dealing with multinational corporations like Gannett (an American company which is the biggest publisher of local newspapers in England), AOL-Time warner (who recently bought the massive magazine company IPC) and Reed-Elsevier, intent on achieving maximum profit at our expense.

What that means in human terms is more and more journalists working longer and longer hours and a relative decline in pay in comparison to other industries.

One in ten journalists earn under £10,000 a year, many of them living in London or other expensive towns and cities. Many will work 50 hours a week, especially in local newspapers. We need to be able to say to these people - join the NUJ and we will fight vigorously for better pay and conditions. That requires strong union organisation at workplace level.

That's where we need to start - rebuilding organisation and rebuilding confidence.

What are the other key issues in this campaign?

With low pay and long hours comes stress. We are seeing an increasing number of stress cases with terrible human consequences. It is not unusual for us to have experienced journalists at big companies on the phone in tears because they cannot cope with the bullying and harassment that goes on as companies try to squeeze more and more out of fewer employees. And with the prospect of further redundancies blamed by employers on falling advertising revenues as companies cut back fearing a recession, stress will become even more of a problem.

Government attempts to remove regulations governing cross-media ownership are also a big issue with Labour set to sweep away regulations even the Tories didn't get rid of. It opens the door to Murdoch, Bertelsmann, Berlusconi and others to own newspapers, magazines, book publishing companies, TV, radio and internet services as the media becomes more and more monopolised. At the same time parts of the BBC are being privatised and services squeezed as the major media players attack the concept of public service broadcasting - it is important our union is at the front of a campaign in defence of the public service role for the BBC and in defence of terms and conditions in commercial broadcasting.

Extending rights at work is also vital.

We have welcomed the Employment Relations Act and have made the best of the legislation in winning back recognition but it still leaves Britain with the most restrictive labour laws in Europe. We want the right to strike, employment rights from day one, the scrapping of the thresholds for achieving union recognition and the removal of the ability for companies to set up stooge unions to block independent trade unions attempts to represent their members. The TUC should be campaigning on these issues - they would win enormous support.

Can young people be won to the unions or do they just not care?

Young people are eager for unions - when you explain to them the potential benefits. It is often young people, who as trainees, are the most exploited. But too many people have written them off as non-political or selfish. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are seeking justice at work but do not have the experience of collective organisation. It is part of our role to reach out to them and bring them in to the labour movement. Who else can they rely on to fight for their interests?

In many of our recent campaigns it has been young people to the fore and a good number of them have begun to take on union positions. They can be won to the unions if the unions themselves are seen to be actively campaigning and achieving improvements at work.

How are you organising your campaign?

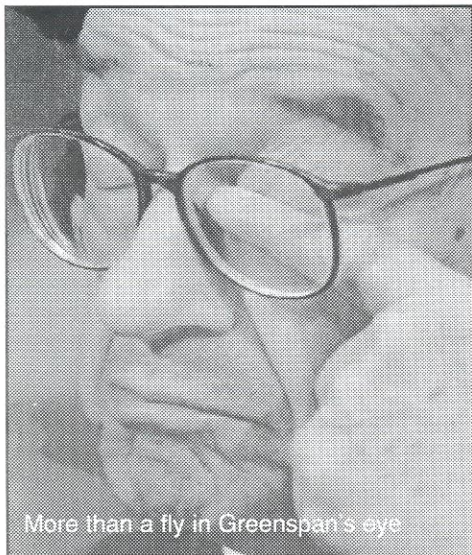
I'm trying to involve as many people as possible in debate on the way forward for the union. Our elections have traditionally seen a low turnout of around 25%. We need to give people a vision of how the union can be organised and run democratically and give them a sense that they are the union - and together they can improve conditions, win better pay, protect health and safety and so on. That way I hope they will gain a sense of their own strength - and of course vote for me! ●



The world economy: It's still getting worse

The US economy continues to live on borrowed time. The last time our economics correspondent commented on the state of the US and the world economy was in May. The article was called: "The worst is yet to come." So how are things developing? Well, it's holiday time in the northern hemisphere and things are getting worse for world capitalism.

by Michael Roberts
our economics
correspondent



More than a fly in Greenspan's eye

The US economy is now in "recession", which capitalist economists define as two consecutive three-month periods when national output (gross domestic product) falls. The latest official figures have not been released yet but we know that in the second quarter of this year, GDP was down by 0.1% over last year. But we must all wait for the third quarter figures, not released until October, to know for certain that the long boom of US capitalism, which started way back in 1992, is finally officially over.

There is little doubt that the third quarter figures will confirm the end of the long boom. For a start, US industrial production has been down for eight months in a row. That's more than in the great world recession of 1973-74 or in the terrible industrial slumps of 1981-2 or 1990-1. The utilization of industrial plant and equipment has fallen to its lowest reading since 1983 and the productivity of American workers had its largest drop in eight years, falling at an annual rate of 1.8%. At the same time, more than 3 million Americans filed for jobless benefits in July. That's higher than any figure since 1992. And in the US, increases in unemployment usually precede a recession by about seven months. That means the downturn should begin in the third quarter (and that's where we are now).

What's been different about the end of the long boom this time is that, while US industrial production has collapsed, the rest of the economy has apparently continued on its merry way (until now). That's partly because industry (as defined by the official figures) is now only a small part of the economy and so has less of an impact on the rest. While the manufacturing sector has lost 785,000 jobs in the last year, the so-called service sector has put on jobs (at least until last month).

The other main reason why the boom has extended beyond the collapse in industry has been the huge credit and borrowing binge that US households and corporations have been engaged in, with the connivance of the monetary authorities represented by the Federal Reserve Bank and its chairman, Alan Greenspan.

American households, incited by very low interest rates provided by Mr Greenspan (interest rates are now down 3% since the beginning of the year, the quickest set of cuts ever), have slipped deeper and deeper into debt to sustain their spending spree. In June, consumer credit reached a record 22% of personal income levels, way higher than before the last busts

of 1980 and 1990. This spending spree has kept up demand for cars, electronic gadgets and other retail items. But above all, it has fuelled a property boom. Last year, house prices rose by over 8% and home sales continue at an annual rate of 6 million.

But this binge is coming to an end. That's because the productive sectors of the US economy have now fallen to their knees and the final blow to the chin is about to hit them. The reason is clear. The great hi-tech revolution of the internet that supposedly created a 'permanent boom' has been exposed as a fraud and the huge bubble of investment pumped into this sector has not produced great profits, but the opposite, huge losses. As a result, US company profits are now down 25% on last year and investment in all sectors of the economy are in free fall.

The optimists about US capitalism remain in the ascendancy, however. Since its peak in March 2000, the American stock exchange that sets the prices of the shares of US manufacturing and technology companies, the NASDAQ, has fallen 60%. Yet in June, Americans ploughed another \$11bn into the hands of stockbrokers to invest in NASDAQ shares. The majority are still expecting a quick recovery in the US economy and therefore in the stock market. Recession, profits slump, rising unemployment, further collapse in share prices - it's not going to happen!

Chairman Greenspan

Americans are reassured in this belief by Fed Chairman Greenspan himself. Recently, he was asked a question in the US Senate: "If this is a bust, the boom was sure as hell worth it. You agree?" Alan replied: "Certainly". The hope and belief is that the US economy will have a V-shaped recovery, a quick upturn again, probably before the end of this year.

But following the advice of Alan Greenspan may not be the best thing for Americans to do. Back in March 2000, orders for high-tech goods were rising at over 25% a year. Greenspan waxed lyrical: "When historians look back at the latter half of the 1990s, they will conclude that we are now living through a pivotal period in American history... The fact that the capital spending boom is still going strong indicates that businesses continue to find a wide array of high rate of return, productivity-enhancing investments. And I see nothing to suggest that these opportunities will peter out any time soon."

Well, one year later, orders for high-tech goods are falling at a record 31% annual rate; big high-tech companies have been writing off

huge amounts of excess equipment that they can't sell (Cisco Systems wrote off \$2.25bn in the last quarter alone). Companies like Lucent, Nortel, Corning, at the heart of the 'New Economy', have written off their purchases of other internet and high-tech companies that are now worthless to the tune of \$100bn! That's greater than the GDP of Ireland, another global high-tech casualty. Last month, the real story about the New Economy was revealed. The US authorities announced revisions of the figures for productivity growth in the last five years, the period of the great internet revolution. They show that productivity did not grow at 4%-plus as previously thought, but by an average of just 2.5% a year. That's good. But it's not nearly as good as the rate of growth achieved in that famous industrial boom of the 1920-27, when productivity rose 3.8% a year, or in the golden age of capitalism of 1948-73, when recessions were slight and booms long. Then productivity grew at 2.8% a year.

The truth is that the long boom of the 1990s has not been as productive as some previous booms, all of which ended in a massive slump. The boom and bust cycle of capitalism is still alive and roaring, despite the soothing words of Mr Greenspan. It's just that the underlying slowdown in profits and productivity have been hidden under a deluge of cheap credit and inflated share prices. Now that this tide of credit has ebbed, the rocks of capitalist crisis are being revealed underneath.

Having failed to recognise a bubble as a bubble, Mr Greenspan, along with the US government and most American stock market 'experts', have failed to see a bust as a bust.

Short-term business

Last February, Mr Greenspan commented on the US economic slowdown that was then becoming more visible:

"Although recent short-term business profits have softened considerably, most corporate managers have not altered their optimism about the future returns from new technology... at least this is what I glean from equity analysts, who, one must presume, obtain most of their insights from corporate managers."

Many other Americans relied on the advice and forecasts of these 'equity analysts'. Now with corporate profits falling off a cliff, productivity slumping and the stock market down 60%, many investors are taking legal action against these analysts. Investors are going to court, saying they were misled by these 'experts', who had a vested interest in recommending shares that their companies were selling. What happened to the latest court decision on that? The investors' case was thrown out

on the grounds that investing is a risky business! Welcome to the capitalist world!

What now? The US recession is now with us. It just hasn't been declared official yet. The question is will it will be short and shallow with a quick recovery? The majority of capitalist experts say yes. But then before, they said there would not be a recession. The size of this credit bubble and the extent of the expansion in speculative (fictitious) capital are unprecedented. This is a bigger bubble than the famous Tulip bubble of the 17th century or the South Sea bubble of the 18th century. It's bigger than the consumer credit boom of the 1920s when the productive foundations of growth were better than in the 1990s.

The falling dollar

The US economy continues to live on borrowed time and borrowed money. US corporations and households have been spending about 6% of GDP more than they have in incomes. They have borrowed the difference, mainly from investors abroad. The US economy runs a trade deficit of 4% of GDP with the rest of the world and US corporations invest hugely abroad in the great process of 'globalisation'. They finance all this by attracting foreign investors to buy US companies or US shares and bonds. Indeed, up to now, the US economic boom has attracted so much money that the US dollar has appreciated against all other currencies.

But now the boom is over. Foreigners are becoming more reluctant to buy US assets. The dollar has started to slip in the last month. If this slip accelerates, it will put Mr Greenspan in a major dilemma. He wants to cut interest rates to stimulate the credit bubble. But if he keeps cutting, then foreigners will get less for holding dollars. So they may stop buying dollar assets. Even worse, they may start selling them.

Then Mr Greenspan cannot cut interest rates because he must protect the value of the dollar. If he stops cutting, then American investors and corporations will realize that the cost of investment is not going to fall any more and yet profits are diving. They will cut back on investment and jobs even more, while a falling dollar will start to drive up the cost of importing goods from abroad. Inflation will rear its ugly head. The great enemy of capitalism in the 1970s and 1980s - stagflation (rising inflation and falling output) - will reappear.

The rest of the world is no position to take up the slack if the US founders. Japan remains in recession. This year, national output there will fall by 1% and probably by the same amount next year.

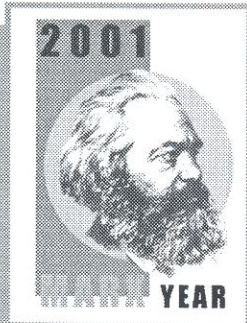
Unemployment is a record levels. The new government under the nationalist, 'Mr Hairdo', Junichiro Koizumi, is pledged to reduce government spending even if it makes the economic recession worse!

Germany is slowing down fast.

Industry is in recession and the economy will be lucky to grow more than 1% this year. The rest of Europe looks little better.

The UK's property bubble and borrowing binge (similar to the US) is keeping the economy above the water line, but only at the expense of a sharply rising trade deficit and low productivity and profits. It cannot last. And places like Ireland are about to be decimated by the huge job cuts that global hi-tech firms are now making to get their balance sheets back in order. Asia is diving. Taiwan's national output is falling by 8% a year, Singapore's by 10%. Only China continues to grow, relying on its low wages to export and government-directed stimulation of the domestic economy. As the world slips into recession and the dollar devalues, that will increase the danger of protectionism as governments put up walls to defend themselves from the contagion of slump. Of course, as in the 1930s, that will only make things worse. Already China has imposed punitive tariffs on Japanese cars, mobile phones and air conditioners in retaliation for Japan's ban on Chinese food products. The US and Europe have a major dispute over \$4bn worth of help that the US government gives to its exporters in contravention of world trade rules. And the Bush administration is pledged to help its steel producers with action against foreign imports. Export growth has plunged worldwide from 11% rise in 2000 to just 4% this year. The world recession next year will mean a rise in the misery index for everybody. We've talked of this index before (the level of inflation plus unemployment rate). In the US, it fell to a low of 5.9% in mid-1998. Since then, it has been on an inexorable rise. Now it's 7.8%. That's still low by historic standards. But with unemployment rising at its fastest pace since 1992 and inflation likely to blip up if the dollar slides, we can expect double figures next year pretty quick. Then American households will start to feel the pinch in a big way. And when the US catches a cold, the rest of the world gets pneumonia. ●





what is marxism?

The workings of capitalism explained

by Mick Brooks



In the last issues of *Socialist Appeal* we showed how workers are exploited in the strictly objective and scientific sense that the ruling class lives off their unpaid labour. After all, where else could their wealth possibly come from? We used statistics published by the American textile workers' union UNITE to show the case of a machinist in the clothing industry.

To rewrite their example in Marxist terms, for a \$100 dress:-

- constant capital (spending on plant and raw materials) is \$33
- variable capital (what the boss spends on wages) is \$12
- surplus value (rent, interest and profit etc.) is \$55

Rate of surplus value

The rate of surplus value or rate of exploitation (the amount of time the worker puts in to reproduce the elements of their wages compared with the amount of time the worker puts in enriching the capitalist class) is more than 450%!

Here's how the rich get rich and the poor stay poor. And it's true whether you work on a farm or in a factory, and whether you dish up burgers or write computer programmes. The rich get rich off our unpaid labour. Don't you think a rate of exploitation of 450% is good enough for the bosses? Don't you think they'd be happy getting a worker to put in about 11 minutes

every hour to get her wages back while she works the other 49 minutes to keep the capitalist class in clover? Not on your nelly! It's never enough. There is a compulsion on individual capitalists to squeeze more and more out of you. In part the whip is supplied by competition with other firms. If you have to beat the opposition, the best way is to sell the stuff cheaper. The best way to sell cheaper is to make it cheaper - that is with less labour. They call it cutting costs, but that's what it is. Let's see what this race does for the development of the system as a whole.

Absolute surplus value

The bosses are always out to get that little bit more out of the workers. One obvious way they do that is to get you to work longer hours. Let's stick with the garment industry.

Lina Rodriguez Meza, a clothing worker in New York explains. "When it's busy, we work up to sixty to sixty-three hours. The conditions in the factory are not good. In the factory where I work, almost everyone is from Ecuador. Those people work hard. And since they come very far from their land, they come and are afraid of losing their jobs, so they enslave themselves."

Lina's in a difficult position. Nobody wants to put in over sixty hours in a week. But the basic rate is so low. And in the fashion industry work is completely casual, as she explains. "Last week we only worked for fifteen hours. And now we worked two days in a row, but it seems like we're going to be off again."

Lina actually needs the overtime to make ends

meet. She is a worker in the richest country in the world.

What's going on here? As we have seen, there is a compulsion on the capitalist class to try to get more and more out of us, to raise the rate of exploitation. One way to do this is what Marx called the extraction of absolute surplus value. This means exploiting the worker over a longer time. For instance if a worker does four hours to earn their keep and then puts in another four hours to help the boss out, the rate of exploitation is 100%. But if the worker can be induced to slave for ten hours a day, then that extra two hours is a free lunch for their boss. In Marx's time the capitalists just used their class power to lengthen the working day. Since workers were usually paid by the day, the struggle over the length of the working day was a basic form of class struggle.

Relative surplus value

Critics of Marx say that's all out of date. What is happening to Lina and millions like her shows that the extraction of absolute surplus value is still a very effective way of lining the bosses' pockets. That's why it's still going on as we enter a new millennium in the heart of New York. We all know the jobs - security guards, caterers, cleaners, drivers, railway workers - where it's understood that you'll have to work overtime to make enough to feed a family on because the basic rate is so low.

Most workers in the United States and the other rich countries did gain better wages and conditions - for a time. They did it by organising in trade unions and threatening the strike weapon. Any strike shows that when the workers stop working, nothing gets done. It's us that produce the wealth.

But now big business is trying to take back all the gains of past struggles. Why? - because they can. Because they can roam the world looking for cheap labour to exploit. Because they can sniff out and batten on to low pay pockets in rich countries. Because if they can use child labour, they will use child labour. Because if they can use slave labour, they will use slave labour.

How does all this affect workers in rich countries such as the United States. In 1973 there were nearly 1.5 million clothing and textile workers in the USA. Some of them have lost their jobs as firms like Nike pull up stakes and go where they can get away with paying workers less. While only 4% of clothing was imported into the States in the 1960s, it's now gone up to 60%.

But 860,000 still work in the rag trade in the United States. American bosses have responded to foreign competition in different ways. One response of textile and clothing companies in the rich countries to

foreign competitors has been to make sure that, if they're paying you more than workers in Pakistan or El Salvador, they get more out of you.

American clothing bosses have cut costs by mechanising. Whereas only 6% of clothing production in the United States used modern machinery in the 1960s, twenty years later the business was 40% automated. As a result productivity in clothing manufacture has doubled in the rich countries over a twenty year period. In other words workers are producing twice as much as they did before. As a result they are working less time to make up the value of their wages and more time for the boss class. This is what Marx called the production of relative surplus value. Relative surplus value can be increased by raising the intensity of labour (which is what bosses were trying to do to British textile workers in the 1930s - as we see below) or by raising the productivity of labour through mechanisation.

What has happened to American workers' wages as a result of mechanisation? Clothing workers' wages in the USA are exactly the same as they did twenty years ago. The entire benefits of this increased productivity has gone to the clothing employers.

What's this all about? We know that a simple and obvious way of raising the rate of exploitation when the labour movement is weak is to make the workers put in more hours to extract more absolute surplus value. Marx showed how this strategy came up against the resistance of the working class in the cotton textile industry in the middle of the nineteenth century. The workers imposed their own limits through strike action and later won a legal limit on the working day. If capitalists can't increase hours without limits to raise the rate of exploitation then they're going to have to make the workers achieve more in the hours when they do have them at their disposal. If a worker is knocking out twice as many dresses in eight hours, then they're reproducing the elements of their wages in two hours instead of four. That leaves six hours for the production of surplus value.

One way of extracting relative surplus value is by raising the productivity of labour. This usually involves the accumulation of capital with more and more

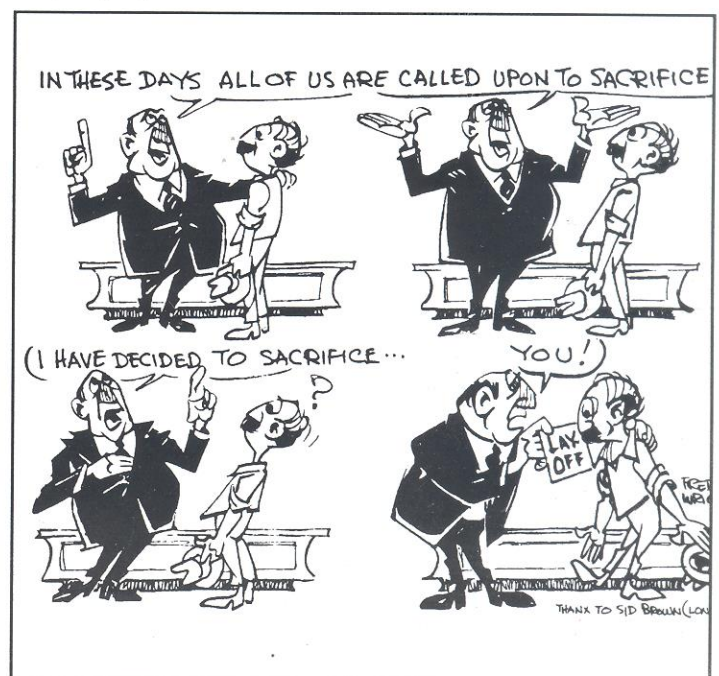
machinery behind the elbow of each worker.

Another way is by raising the intensity of labour. If you can't lengthen hours, then they make sure they get more out of you while you're there. Two classic ways of getting more sweat out of workers are speeding up the track and getting the workers to mind more machines.

This has been going on a long time. However much you produce for them they always want more. At the time of the great depression of 1929-33, the British cotton capitalists thought it was a good time to put the boot in to textile workers. They demanded that weavers mind six looms instead of four - like Japanese workers. The 'more-looms' dispute, went together with a demand for pay cuts of up to 12.5% - more work for less pay! This triggered a walkout of 150,000 weavers in Lancashire. After a bitter dispute in which police baton charges against picket lines became routine, the strike was sold out by the trade union tops.

Accumulation of capital

The process whereby more and more dead labour (constant capital, in Marx's term) is used relative to living labour in the production process is called the accumulation of capital. It is the curse of the individual capitalist that they cannot just consume the unpaid labour of the working class in luxury living (though they don't do badly). They are forced by competition among themselves to plough back a major part of their ill-gotten gains. This in turn raises the productivity of labour. By accumulating capital and creating a mass working class all over the world capitalism is creating the conditions for its own supersession as a system. It is taking us to the



threshold of a society of abundance. Yet at the present time half the world's population lives in desperate poverty on \$2 a day or less.

Industrial Revolution

The *Economist* in 1985 explained that the productivity of labour in textile spinning has gone up two thousand times over since the industrial revolution began around 1750 - up to 1980. It's still rising, faster than ever. So they are certainly exploiting us more! We've deliberately used the old-fashioned example of spinning. The reader will probably have been told about the Spinning Jenny and the industrial revolution at school and Marx dealt with it extensively in his writings. But clearly the most spectacular starburst of productivity is to be seen in industries subject to computerisation. "The speed at which computers are capable of carrying immense computations is almost impossible to grasp. As long ago as the early 1960s, when the space-frame centrepiece of Expo 67 was being designed, a computer was employed for two hours. A mathematical graduate could have performed the same calculations, but would have taken about 30,000 years. This is equivalent to about 1000 mathematicians working for their entire lifetimes." (from Mike Cooley - 'Architect and bee')

So modern textile machinery makes workers enormously more productive than people with distaffs three hundred years ago. Likewise Computer Aided Design

means a three dimensional design of a complex piece of machinery can be generated in an instant - whereas twenty years ago a team of draftsmen with 5H pencils and 'T' squares took a week to do the same job. The examples can be multiplied at will. But there is a fly in the ointment. Modern textile machinery costs more than distaffs. A bank of computers costs more than pencils and 'T' squares. It costs a lot more to exploit the workers more. Dead labour progressively replaces living labour in production. Marx called the secular trend for the ratio of constant capital (outlays on plant and raw materials) to rise relative to variable capital (money laid out on wages) an increase in the organic composition of capital. And it's been going on all over.

Socialist transformation

One example: General Motors opened its Saturn plant on a greenfield site in Tennessee. The plant cost \$5 billion - that's \$5 thousand million. It will employ about 6,000 workers. That's nearly \$1 million behind the elbow of each worker in the modern car industry.

You won't stop the bosses exploiting workers. As long as they are bosses, they have to do that. But you'll never stop workers fighting back against exploitation either. As long as they are wage workers they will have to fight for a better future. That means an end to the bosses' system and the socialist transformation of society. ●

Recommended reading

Karl Marx: Wage Labour & Capital/Wages, Price and Profit. Price £3.95

(Marx, in two short pamphlets, explains the workings of the capitalist system and why it has to exploit wage labour.)

Frederick Engels: Socialism - Utopian and Scientific. Price £2.95
(Explains the development of capitalism and its workings and why socialism is the only alternative.)

Marx and Engels: Selected works in one volume. Price £13.99

(Contains the above pamphlets plus much more in a single handy volume - available in hardback at a bargain price.)

V. I. Lenin: Imperialism - the highest Stage of Capitalism. Price £4.50

(Lenin develops the analysis of Marx in looking at how the world market has come to dominate in the modern world - and the price paid by the working class.)

All of the above and more are available to be ordered online by visiting
WWW.MARXIST.COM/WELLRED/

www.socialist.net

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YFIS

Youth For International Socialism

The beginning of the university and school term is an important time for YFIS. A large number of young people are organised in schools and universities, and at the beginning of term are still fresh and idealistic before the barrage of academic work, bar/takeaway work, and late night partying sets in.

University can teach us a lot about the world we live in. We meet and mix with a range of different people, hear different perspectives and think independently. In university we can study history, the arts, science, economics... but everybody must work out their own understanding of the world based on their own experiences.

More and more what we experience in life and in the press - war, hunger, unemployment, pollution, and poverty - is beginning to conflict with the vision of society we are given in the university lecture or seminar. Politicians seem unable or unwilling to face the problems of the world. They have formed a hardened crust of self-interest, in alliance with the capitalist monopolies. The passionate and energetic eruptions of the youth internationally in Seattle, Prague, Gothenburg, Genoa etc have shown the cracks in their façade. Despite the disorganised character of these demonstrations they have revealed mass discontent among key layers of society - young

people feel that something is wrong, and they are looking for solutions!

Socialism is the only way to solve the problems of humanity!

Only the ideas of Marxism can answer the questions that are being raised in people's heads. Economic collapse and impoverishment, social decay, and war, are the crises that result from the decline of capitalism into ever more parasitic imperialist states leeching humanity for the benefit of a few faceless slave masters.

Youth for International Socialism wants to capture the raw energy of the youth rebelling against an unjust system, and unite this with the movement of the working class. The workers will force the labour movement into opposition with the capitalist system at a certain stage. When the working class move to change society, the students and young workers will be at the forefront.

The working class holds the economic power in capitalist society, when the working class stops working, society grinds to a halt, the labour of the worker is the only source of new value. The workers can unite with other oppressed layers of society and take power into their own hands, using society's resources for the benefit of society. When the masses are

put in the driving seat the diseases of humanity: greed, racism, sexism, and small mindedness, will fade as humanity develops and blossoms.

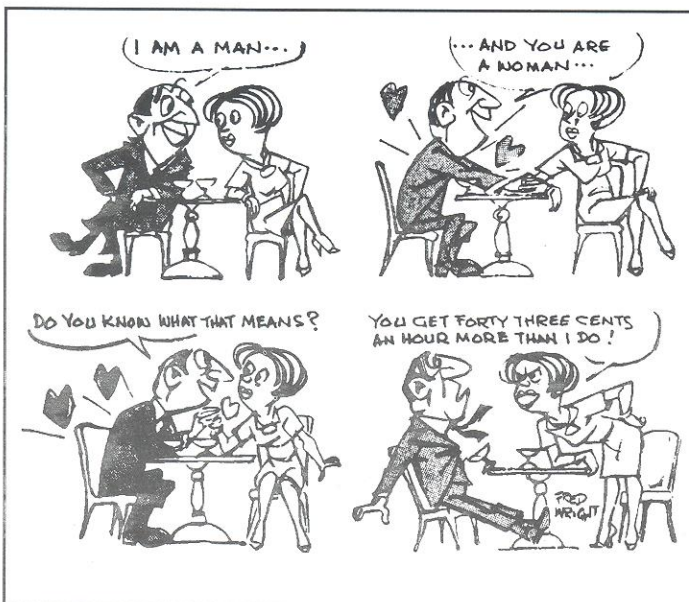
The task ahead is to build the forces of socialist revolution in every country of the world to end the misery, disaster, the horror without end which is the capitalist system, and establish a society where everyone can fulfil their full potential.

Kris Lawrie

Autumn Appeal: Dig deep for Socialism!

As summer starts to draw to an end, the evenings start to get darker and the weather gets cooler and cooler. But for the government things are going to get hotter, starting with the TUC and Labour Party conferences. More and more activists in the Labour movement are starting to ask questions about the direction the government is taking... and they want answers. A mood of anger is starting to develop - on health, the crisis in teaching, the poor treatment of asylum seekers and so on - but that anger needs to be focused. That is the job of *Socialist Appeal*: to explain and analyse but also to provide a socialist alternative. But to do this we need cash. It costs a lot to produce this journal each month and we do not have any wealthy backers unlike the bosses press. So we need your help. Firstly by buying *Socialist Appeal*, secondly by the sending in of donations. What is this cash used for? Well, for example, the journal you are holding costs £1 - the same price it has been since we started publication. We could have raised the cover price over the years to reflect increases in costs but we decided not to so that those on low income can still afford to buy it. But to cover the shortfall requires the support of others. Over the summer we have received a number of donations including £60 from a London reader, Eddie Donaghy £50, Peterborough readers £26, AEEU readers £20 and a number of others - thanks!. We are also expecting over £100 from Glasgow sellers and the same from sellers in the Essex area. The editorial board of *Socialist Appeal* would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to the special international appeal which we launched in the July issue. Our target was £2000 but in fact we raised £2,600! A marvellous indication of the true internationalism of the organised working class - well done! Now let's see what can be done over the autumn months to hit our £3000 seasonal target for the Socialist Appeal fighting fund. Donations should be made payable to *Socialist Appeal* and sent to us at Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ.

Steve Jones



What was the 'The Burston Revolution'?

Every year in September there is a gathering of labour movement activists in the village of Burston in Norfolk to celebrate the Burston school strike. Below is the story of the Burston school strike and how a small Norfolk village took on the Tory establishment and won.

Burston, a few miles from the town of Diss, was the epitome of rural England at the turn of the century. For year upon year the village had rested on the Tory traditions of British rural society. The agricultural labourers lived in squalor and worked for a pittance, to be ruled over by their 'betters' on the Parish Council; the local farm-owners and the High Church of England. The head of the Parish Council, and so the veritable ruler of the village, was the Vicar of Burston, the Rev. Charles Tucker Eland.

The Rev. Eland believed strongly in the 'British way of life' and was a firm supporter of the Church of England's pious paternalism. While the average weekly wage for a farm labourer was sixty pence, Rev. Eland's annual salary was £495. The worker's homes were tumble-down hovels: one man, his wife and six children had a cottage with only two bedrooms; another worker with a wife and four children, had only one bedroom. The vicarage had 20 rooms.

Rev. Eland was a sporting type too, often seen around the village in his hunting cap and a rifle slung over his shoulder. But on Sunday, from the pulpit, he led the singing of 'All creatures great and small', and preached the evils of poaching.

However the Rev. Eland's cosy world, and with it the Tory establishment, was about to be turned upside down.

In 1911, two teachers arrived at the village to teach at the local school, Mrs A. Higden and her husband Tom. Both were ardent social reformers, and, although both teachers, had been active in the farm labourers' unions, which at the time were springing up around the country.

They were soon to clash with Rev. Eland. It was bad enough that they joined forces with a local 'troublemaker', 60 year old trade unionist John Potter, and started recruiting the villagers into a union. What angered Rev. Eland was their 'disrespectfulness' for the village hierarchy and for his position. Not only was Tom outspoken with his native Somerset plain speaking, but Mrs Higden was even less respectful, when after all she was only a woman - a working woman at that!

Although upset by these

continual snipings at his authority, the real crunch for the Vicar came in 1913 with the Parish Council elections.

Organised around the local farm labourers' union, Tom Higdon and other workers stood for election. They swept the board, clearing out the farmers and Rev. Eland's band of loyal churchwardens. Indeed, while Tom came top of the poll, the Rev. Eland came bottom! To add insult to injury, the vicar's former privileged post as Council Chairman was given to a farm labourer, John Potter's son.

This victory sent shock waves right through the Norfolk landowners and rulers. The local newspaper greeted the workers advance with the screaming headline: 'The Burston Revolution!'

The new workers' council began battling with the Local Government Board to get new houses built for the labourers. They managed to secure four new homes (annulled by the outbreak of World War One). But as they struggled on this new political level, they did not have time to notice Rev. Eland's manoeuvrings for revenge.

The Vicar's Revenge

The Vicar's second line of defence was the school's Management Committee, made up of himself, his wife, a farmer who rented land from Eland, and the Rector of Shrimpling. Needless to say, the committee was safely in Eland's pocket. They supported his demand that Mrs Higdon be sacked.

The excuse was the spurious accusation that Mrs Higdon had caned one of the Barnardo children who attended the school. This allegation was of course denied. The village noted the irony of the Education Committee's sudden concern over the ragged, poor waifs from the Barnardo home, who for years had lived out their lives crammed into a damp, low-roofed slum in the village. It was also a 'surprise' that the Vicar was against caning.

Despite an intervention by the National Union of Teachers, the Higdon's were to be dismissed on April 1, 1914. But when that day came the April fool was on the authorities.

As the Higdon's got ready to leave, it was their pupils who took up the fight. One young girl called Violet Potter (of good 'trouble-making' stock!) walked to the front of the 60 strong class and wrote on the blackboard, "WE WILL GO ON STRIKE."

With this the children swarmed out onto the Village Green, laughing and shouting their defiance. When the Vicar heard of this mutiny,



he summoned the forces of the state, in this instance the village's four policemen. But they were powerless to intervene - or was it reluctance, the red-faced Vicar noted?

The children's demonstration, led by placards demanding, "We want our teachers back," sparked the parents into action. They decided the children should be kept from school until the Higdon's were reinstated.

The next morning the school bell rang loudly; the children formed up, marched to the school - and then away again! Never again did they enter that school building.

The strike action was on day after day, the children, along with their parents carried out a series of demonstrations often led by Violet Potter on her red painted bike.

'We want justice'

Parents were repeatedly summoned before the courts, each time being fined for not sending their children to school. Eighteen mothers were summoned on the first occasion. Joined by others, and led by the children carrying a big red banner with the proclamation "We want justice" inscribed on it, they marched the three miles to the court. Every time the mothers were fined, the villagers responded by collecting the amount of money needed.

The children were being schooled, however. In the summer, the Higdon's held classes on the Village Green. But with the nights drawing in, a blind old carpenter named Sandy came to the rescue. He gave up his workshop to the school, which became known as the 'Strike School'.

Desperate to discredit this new movement, County Councillors, school inspectors, attendance officers etc, were soon queuing up outside to find something wrong with the Strike School, but to no avail!

A further blow came to the Vicar when a preacher arrived in the village. Sunday Schools were held in the Strike School, and he even carried out baptisms. Empty pews met the Vicar's pompous sermons - Rev. Eland could not even lecture his flock from the pulpit!

Despite attempts by Rev. Eland to evict Sandy (one of his many tenants), eventually driving the carpenter from the village, the story of the Burston school strike had begun to spread across the land.

The labour movement came to the village's aid. The Higdon's received victimisation pay from the NUT. Resolutions of support and donations came flooding in - £165 from the railway unions, £300 from the miners, £1000 from ILP and Co-op branches. A national defence committee was formed, including amongst its leaders,

George Lansbury and F.O. Roberts.

Meetings were held on the Green with top socialist speakers coming up from London to address the village.

The turning point came on July 15, 1914, when a great demonstration was held. A brass band came down from Norwich, 18 trade union banners ringed the Green, and a special train from London brought another brass band and hundreds of railwaymen, who had taken the cause of Burston to heart.

Burston was now becoming a national issue. The struggle now was not just for re-instatement of the teachers, but a full pitch battle against the 'old order'.

As the campaign grew, as solidarity action reached every corner of the movement, a sad note came with the death of John Potter. But his funeral was another show of strength to the authorities, with a trade union procession and funeral service held in the school. A Baptist minister from Diss took the service, much to the annoyance of the C of E Vicar of Burston.

With increasing support and funds coming in, victory was in sight. By 1917, a new school building was opened, paid for by the labour movement and run by the Higdon's. After three years of struggle they had shown that the working class was quite capable - and still was - of educating its children.

Struggle not over

It was a victory, the villagers had won. They had taken on the Vicar, the village hierarchy, the law, the courts, indeed the whole Tory establishment. All had been forced into retreat. The school was eventually recognised by the Education Authorities, and so recognising the new social force in society. It served the village right up to the mid '30s.

The strike school still stands in Burston today, with the legend 'Burston Strike School, 1917' carved into the brickwork. It stands as a monument to the struggle of the Higdon's, the villagers and the labour movement.

But the struggle is not over. Despite the gains of the labour movement, the 'Vicar of Burston' and his ilk still run and control society, and are trying to push us all back to the days of 1913.

Today though, the labour movement is ten times stronger. With the correct leadership and an ounce of the determination shown by the Higdon's and Burston's school children, it can sweep aside the cant, compositeness, corruption and power of capitalist society, the monolith the villagers of Burston took on and fought against all those years ago. ●



**BURSTON SCHOOL
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BURSTON, NORFOLK.
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JACK JONES,
BARRY CAMFIELD (TGWU),
ANDREW MACKINLAY MP**

Pakistan: Postal Workers Under Attack!

Under pressure from the IMF and the World Bank the military regime of General Musharraf announced that they will privatise the postal service by December 2002 and have appointed an army general to oversee this process.

The four postal trade unions that organise 36,000 workers in this sector have all been banned. All their union offices have been closed down and the collection of union funds has been declared illegal. The General has already arrested seventeen central and regional union leaders actively opposing these policies. At the moment, no union can organise any meeting and if any worker dares to participate in a meeting they will face instant dismissal and possible arrest and imprisonment. Forced by the dictates of the policies of the IMF the regime has already closed 2,200 post offices in the drive to privatisation and wants to sack 4,300 workers in the first phase of privatisation starting with the most militant section of workers, the trade union activists. In the next phase their aim is to reduce the workforce by a further 14,000, which would represent a cut of 50% of its current level.

Under these attacks the main postal union leadership has already surrendered and wants to make a compromise with the regime rather than organise an all out struggle against privatisation and attacks on their union members.

The PTUDC (Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign) is a campaign that organises across all sectors and all layers of workers in Pakistan for one joint platform of struggle. The PTUDC has already organised three protest rallies in Lahore to defend postal workers jobs. In Baluchistan the provincial President of the largest union in the postal service, the National Organisation of the Postal Employees (NOPE), Nazar Mengal has led a great resistance by the postal workers in defiance of the attacks and repression of the military regime. Under great pressure they continue to occupy the union office in Khuzdar, the second largest city in Baluchistan. This is the only office, which has been occupied and still remains in the hands of the union after the imposition of the regime's orders.

Nazar Mengal along with two other militant trade unionists, Javed Nasir (Secretary, Khuzdar, General Post Office) and Safullah Sasooli (Provincial Assistant Secretary NOPE), are now facing the desperate attempts of the postal authorities to

banish them from the political front, by fabricating charges and issuing their immediate arrest. The only crime that these trade union militants can be accused of, is that they fearlessly and unconditionally try to uphold and defend the rights of their fellow trade unionists. By exercising their duty and commitment, these leaders have gained the respect of the rank and file and they have been placed under its direct protection. This became evident when the police in an attempt to arrest them, faced the immense anger of the workers and was forced to withdraw.

Under Nazar Mohammed Mengal's leadership it is the first real resistance and challenge to their dictatorial clampdown on trade union activity in the postal sector. They know that such resistance can boost the confidence and the fighting will of 36,000 postal workers, as well as inspire militant attitudes in other trade union sectors. For that reason the state machinery has been fully mobilised in an attempt to make these defiant activists an example to the rest. The PTUDC is approaching vast layers of postal workers in other parts of Pakistan and is trying its best to mobilise union leadership. It is also spreading this campaign to other sections of the labour movement, PTCL, railways, banking and other important industries.

These postal workers are putting up enormous resistance and have shown courage at a moment when most of the union leaders had succumbed to the pressures and capitulated to the regime and its policies. They have nobody on their side except their brethren - the workers around the world. They are struggling in conditions of extreme poverty and in adverse circumstances. They have expressed their gratitude to the British, Belgian and workers from other countries that have sent messages of support and protest messages to the military dictatorship against the repression. Bro. Nazar Mengal has appealed to all trade unionists, especially in the postal sector in Britain, Europe and elsewhere to continue the support and expand it further. His message was "AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL."

Even though in Pakistan the capitalists rest upon the brutality of the regime in order for their interests to be enforced, in Britain the present government under the leadership of Tony Blair, is pursuing a similar pro-capitalist agenda in unleashing a

widespread programme of privatisation throughout the public sector. The government's aims are the same as those of the Pakistani military regimes'. The unconditional and brutal fragmentation of the public sector is an effort to increase the exploitation of the workers for private companies (always under the auspices of the state), and so we see the attacks upon the public sector trade unions. The management and the government have left no room for negotiation and this has provoked a mood of militancy on the part of public sector workers with strikes and protests against not only the attacks on working conditions but also the prospect of privatisation.

The postal workers' struggle in Pakistan needs to be given the full support of the workers in Britain and internationally. To organize the fight and resistance they need international support and solidarity from workers around the world. They need resources to continue the struggle, organise the national convention of postal employees and to print more posters, leaflets and organise demos and protest rallies against privatisation and the vicious attacks of the military regime.

SEND PROTEST MESSAGES AND RESOLUTIONS TO: The President of Pakistan, General Musharraf: ce@pak.gov.pk the Ministry of communications Islamabad, Post Master General Quetta, Baluchistan and Pakistan Embassies in your country.

SEND MESSAGES OF SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY TO:

Nazar Mengal,
Provincial President, NOPE,
Baluchistan,
General Post Office [G.P.O.],
Khuzdar, Baluchistan, Pakistan.
(Phone: +92 871 413393)

Send Copies to:

Khalid Bhatti,
National Organiser, PTUDC,
105, Mangal Mansion, Royal Park,
Lakshami Chowk, Lahore,
Pakistan.
(phone/fax: +92 42 6316214.)

CAMPAIGN DETAILS:

For a speaker at your trade union meeting or to forward any resolutions of support or donations to the campaign (cheques should be made payable to: PTUDC) please email: ptudc@hotmail.com or write to the PTUDC at PTUDC PO Box 6977, London N1 3JN. ●

Why is Nato intervening in Macedonia?

The recent deployment of troops into Macedonia has once again highlighted the volatile situation in the Balkans. We ask what are the real interests that lie behind Nato's entry into Macedonia?

by Fred Weston

On Wednesday, August 15, Nato approved plans to send 3,500 troops to Macedonia to take part in 'Operation Essential Harvest', with the stated aim of disarming the Albanian rebels who have been involved in armed conflict with the Macedonian army over a period of months. Those troops have now started to arrive. But even as they arrived the supposed cease-fire was being broken by fighting between the Albanian rebels and the Macedonian army.

The deployment of Nato troops is an attempt to prevent Macedonia's descent into open civil war. If this were allowed to spread and get out of control it would have far greater consequences than simply destabilizing Macedonia itself. We have explained many times that a war in Macedonia could spark off a far wider war, involving Albania, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia.

Albania has a de facto agreement with Turkey in the case of war and if Albania were to be sucked in "to defend" the Albanian minority in Macedonia this would increase pressure on Turkey to come down on the side of Albania.

Bulgaria would probably be the first country to intervene as they regard Macedonia as simply a part of Bulgaria anyway. Greece and Serbia would also attempt to carve up spheres of influence for each other.

What is most worrying for Western imperialism is that this whole scenario would inevitably involve a war between Greece and Turkey, who are both members of Nato. Thus

it would seriously weaken Nato's south eastern flank. These are the real concerns of the imperialist powers in the Balkans - not the interests of the peoples.

The sending in of Nato is based on the August 13th Agreement - a draft document, which states that Macedonia will continue to be one sovereign

state, indivisible and integral. The proposed constitutional changes are in the domain of the usage of languages and the police forces. Thus Albanian would become an official language. And positive discrimination would be applied in the distribution of nationalities in the public sector. The key to one's future employment would be one's ethnic origin.

If applied, this would actually exacerbate the conflict. In a situation where unemployment is so high, reserving jobs for people on the basis of their ethnic group will only lead to resentment on all sides.

The Albanian guerrillas have promised to give up their arms on the basis of these concessions. In reality they will not disarm. Thus the Macedonian speaking majority will be further enraged. This agreement solves nothing. It only prepares new conflicts in the future.

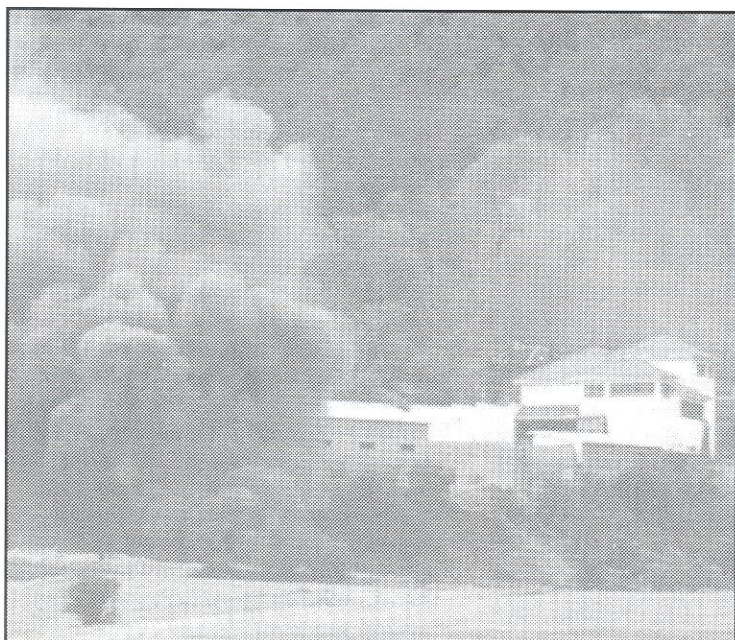
Nato unable to leave

The 3,500 troops are supposedly going on a very short term mission of 30 days, in which they are to disarm all the Albanian fighters in North Western Macedonia. This is going to prove an impossible task. A Nato spokesman asked "If 100 per cent of the weapons will be handed in? The honest answer, I think is no" (*Financial Times*, 13.8.01). The fact is that Nato does not know how many weapons are held by the rebels. Most likely the rebels will make a show of handing over their guns, while the bulk of their weaponry will be stashed away in safe hiding places within Macedonia itself and also just across the border in Kosovo.

Thus the Nato troops will not be able to leave. If they left the conflict would flare up again. In Bosnia and Kosovo, where 20,000 and 40,000 Nato troops respectively, are stationed there is no indication of when they are to withdraw.

Anyone listening to the TV news programmes in the West would think that it is going to be a quick, easy operation. But the more serious bourgeois commentators have a much more sober approach. In an editorial statement in *The Economist* of August 18th, we read the following: "Nato insists the job will last only a month - though all past experience in the Balkans suggests that the task it is about to take on will turn out to be neither that simple, nor that short."

What is happening now is a de facto extension of Nato's protectorates in the ex-Yugoslavia. Macedonia has already become



an economic colony of imperialism. The presence of imperialist troops merely confirms this position.

Western imperialism has plans for this region. In particular they wish to build an oil pipeline from the Caucasus region to the Adriatic. For this to take place they need stability in the Balkans. But the only way they can achieve this is by a permanent military presence throughout the region, and this means that no long lasting stability is possible.

But it is imperialism itself which is to blame for this whole mess. Through the IMF and the World Bank they have imposed stringent economic policies on all these countries. They have demanded the rapid privatisation of these countries' economies, which has led to a massive collapse in living standards, with huge increases in unemployment and the consequent poverty that goes with this. These are the social and economic conditions in which ethnic conflicts can thrive.

Plight of the Workers

The situation facing the workers is dire. About 40 factories in Macedonia have been producing at a loss now for some time. The IMF and World Bank have been putting pressure on the Macedonian government to sell off the factories quickly. This would lead to a further 35,000 job losses. This in a country where unemployment already stands at 360,000, around 45%! In May the workers of these factories organised a series of protests. They had had enough after months, and in some cases years, of not receiving their wages. In some cases they set up barricades and road blocks.

Faced with this situation the parties in government (a coalition of Macedonian and Albanian nationalists plus a few others) have been slowing down the process of privatisation (of what little is left of the old state run companies) because of the social and political consequences. The government fears the wrath of the masses. The mass movement of the workers in Yugoslavia itself (Serbia) is a lesson that is not lost on them.

This also explains the totally inconsistent, confused propaganda of the bi-nationalist "government of national salvation". It is totally incapable of solving any of the economic problems facing the workers of Macedonia. That is why the ruling Albanian and Macedonian speaking nationalist petty bourgeois cliques are attempting to divert attention away from the social problems by whipping up anti-Albanian feelings on one side or by presenting the false image of Macedonians as murderers "worse than the Serbs" on the other, depending on which of these two bourgeois cliques is "yours".

This has created a paradoxical situation for western imperialism. In 1998 the

VMRO-DPMNE (a right wing conservative nationalist party) led by Georgevski won the elections, ousting the previous government led by the SDSM (Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia). The SDSM is made up of former bureaucrats of the ex "Communist" Yugoslavia. With the coming to power of Georgevski the West thought they had found a reliable ally who would speed up the process of privatisation and bring Macedonia more in line with

the interests of western imperialism. But in the recent period Georgevski has been lambasting Nato and the West for their policies in Macedonia. He and his nationalist party, have been whipping up Macedonian patriotism, which is actually an expression of a deep felt frustration among the Macedonian masses towards the West.

The VMRO-DPMNE would actually have preferred outright war against the Albanian rebels. Thus even someone who appeared to be a western stooge can turn against his masters. The fact is that the leaders of the VMRO-DPMNE have been busily enriching themselves at the expense of the workers of Macedonia, both Macedonian and Albanian speaking! Knowing this the deal that has just been brokered with the Macedonian government has been based on the promise of an extra \$27 million in aid for the country. This is nothing but a bribe to convince the parasites now occupying ministerial positions in Macedonia. It is actually a pittance compared to what the Macedonians needs and will not serve to alleviate the suffering of the workers in Macedonia.

No trust in NATO

The Macedonian speaking masses mistrust and despise NATO. The fact that the Albanian rebels possess US weapons, with special high tech night vision goggles supplied by US advisers, justifiably adds to their mistrust, especially of the US. Furthermore, the Macedonian army has few offensive weapons. The Ukraine had been supplying them with armoured vehicles, but under US pressure the Ukraine



stopped these supplies.

What happened in the village of Arachinovo (8 km east of Skopje) illustrates the situation very well. In the middle of June, the Macedonian police decided to take back the big village of Arachinovo. The Albanian rebels were threatening to bomb the nearby International Airport and the only Macedonian oil-refinery, Okta. The NLA had expelled the Macedonian speaking peasants from that village. The activities of the NLA were also the reason why many Albanian speaking Arachinovo people had fled, mostly to Kosovo, for fear of war. The village was thus abandoned and only the guerrillas remained. The Ministry of the Interior ordered an attack on the village. The rebels fought the Macedonian forces but after seeing that they could not withdraw safely, they called in Nato.

Nato forces formed a shield protecting the Albanian rebel forces as they dislocated to Nikushtak (3 km to the north east). Once established there, they started to open fire from the village. Nato, according to their policy, only had to relocate the armed groups, so the guns, the bombs, mines, etc., were temporarily held and then returned! After this, the anti-Nato mood of the Macedonian population reached boiling point.

The Macedonian people see Nato's role as that of partitioning the country, similar to what happened in Bosnia and in Kosovo. Thus the present government will pay a heavy price for the deal it has struck with Nato.

On June 14 the NLA published its "peace plan". In this it agreed to disarm on condition that its fighters be integrated into the Macedonian army and police. This means that in reality they would not dis-

arm. They would simply police their own territory under the protection of Nato. In other words they want a share of the spoils that are flowing from the process of privatisation in Macedonia

The NLA leaders were perfectly aware of the fact that they could not win an outright war against the Macedonian army. Their strategy was to create a situation whereby Nato would be sucked into the situation. Behind Nato protection they hope to achieve some kind of permanent control over those parts of Macedonia where the Albanian speaking population is a majority.

The NLA was not in a position to defeat the Macedonian army, but it does have the capability of waging a guerrilla war of attack and retreat. The NLA would continue to harass the Macedonian speaking population in the "Albanian" areas, while the same fate would await those Albanian speaking people living among the Macedonian speaking majority. The prospect would be one of terrible "ethnic cleansing" on both sides. There are already 67,000 Macedonian refugees who have been internally displaced, mainly from Tetovo and Kumanovo. The number of ethnic Albanian refugees that have fled to Kosovo is 52,000. (Data from UNHCR).

The role of NATO

The role of Nato troops will be to hold the situation, to stop it getting out of hand. Nato is terrified of getting involved in further fighting. At the same time it must intervene if it is to avoid the conflict spiralling out of control. It is going in on the basis of a "voluntary" agreement of the NLA to hand over its arms. This means that real disarmament will not take place. What we will see is a situation where the Macedonian Republic will remain on paper. But in practice the North - Western strip of Macedonia, where the population is overwhelmingly Albanian speaking, will be run by the NLA under Nato protection.

However, is it true that Nato "was called in"? In the case of this recent Nato mission to Macedonia, the media have repeated over and over again that it was Macedonia that called Nato troops in. The truth is that Nato has entered Macedonian territory before, without the support of the Macedonian parliament or of the Macedonian people, as the example of Arachinovo illustrates.

All the political parties in Macedonia are sceptical about the success of the voluntary disarmament of the rebels. The rebels have announced they would hand over about 3,000 old and useless Chinese guns. It is in fact a farce.

This will not satisfy the Macedonian speaking population. The NLA has harassed Macedonian speaking people in the areas it controls, and many of these

people have been forced to leave. This will stoke the fires of Macedonian nationalism. The problem will fester and will flare up again and again over the coming years.

Nato and the Western powers cannot offer any lasting stability to Macedonia, because their capitalist system cannot solve any of the economic and social problems facing the country. They will insist on privatisations, sackings, cuts in welfare and state spending in general. They will suck every last drop of blood out of Macedonia, and it will be the workers, both Albanian and Macedonian speaking, who will suffer.

The working class of Macedonia is the only class capable of offering a way out of the impasse facing the country. But, as we have said many times before, the workers of Macedonia are leaderless. It is necessary to learn from the past history of ex-Yugoslavia. In the mid 1980s there was a mass protest movement of the Yugoslav workers. Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians, Albanians, all marched together against the then federal government in Belgrade. But all that revolutionary potential was lost because the workers did not have the revolutionary leadership they deserved. In those conditions nationalism raised its ugly head. In order to divert the attention of the masses away from the real causes of the economic crisis each local bureaucratic clique blamed the other nationalities. Thus Yugoslavia was plunged into a series of terrible wars.

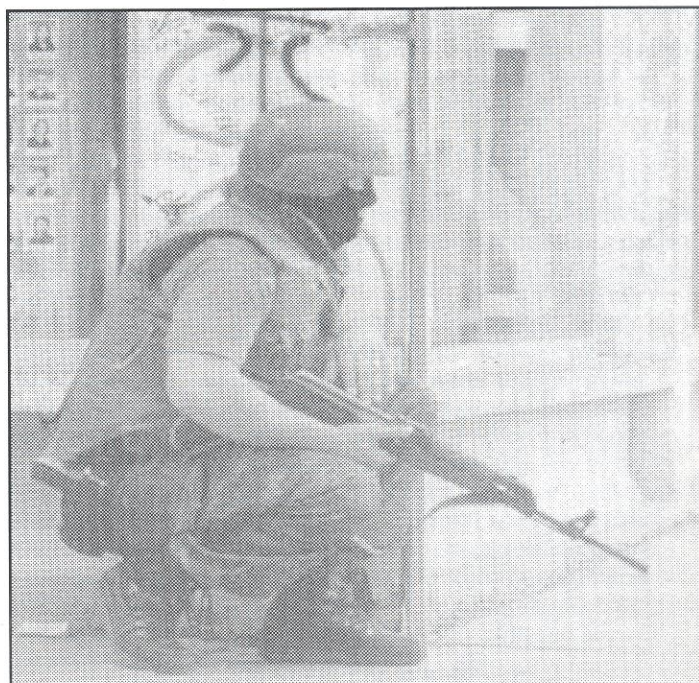
The present conflict in Macedonia is a continuation of the wars that started back in 1991. Genuine Marxists in the Balkans must warn the workers of Macedonia. Do not listen to the nationalists, whether they be the NLA or Georgevski and his friends. In reality the NLA and the present Macedonian coalition government are arguing over who is to have the greater share of the spoils. None of them have any care for the suffering of the workers on both sides. Still less can the workers have any faith in Nato or western imperialists whose sole concerns as ever are their own interests - markets, raw materials and spheres of influence.

Imperialism has always used the tactic of divide and rule whereby they set one nation against another. To them the different peo-

ples that inhabit the Balkans are mere pawns. In Kosovo, when their main aim was to topple Milosevic, they claimed they were intervening to defend the "poor little Kosovar Albanians". Once Milosevic had been overthrown and a pro-western government was installed in Belgrade the Kosovar Albanians became less important. The imperialist powers were never going to allow the Albanian speaking people to gather together in one Greater Albania, or even have an independent Kosovo. The Albanians of Macedonia may believe that Nato is a friend today. Tomorrow they will get a big surprise. The last thing Nato wants is for the Albanian speaking population of this region to come together as one nation as this would further destabilise the region.

Socialist Federation

The task of building workers' unity is an urgent one. But this can only be achieved on the basis of breaking with all those who wish to restore capitalism in Macedonia, irrespective of the language they speak. What is needed is a return to the genuine ideas of socialism, of workers' democracy and a democratically controlled planned economy. The working class needs its own voice, its own political force. This can only be based on a programme of expropriation of the various pro-bourgeois cliques in the area. In this programme the rights of all nationalities would be taken into account, such as the right to use one's own language and to decide on one's own future. Only within an all-Balkans Socialist Federation could this be achieved. Either this or, in the long run other bloody wars will flare up in spite of Nato's efforts to hold the situation today. ●



The origins of women's oppression

While middle class feminists regard the oppression of women as an inherent biological trait of men, Marxism explains that the root of women's oppression lies not in biology, but in social conditions. Rob Sewell examines this question.

**Well ye know
What woman is, for none of woman
born
Can choose but drain the bitter dregs
of woe
Which ever to the oppressed from
the oppressors flow.**

SHELLEY

The oppression of women has been a key question for Marxism. After all, women constitute half the human race, and have faced discrimination and degradation in many areas of life. The oppression of women in the third world has reached abominable levels. It is accompanied by child prostitution, bonded-labour and slavery. It is capitalism in the raw. Recently, an Iranian Islamic court found a woman guilty of adultery. For this heinous crime, she was sentenced to death by stoning. Here, in its most cruel and brutal form, is reflected the worse features of class society. In the 'civilised' west, working class women are treated as second-class citizens, many of who are forced into the menial jobs on poor wages. Despite equal pay legislation, employers still continue to discriminate against women in terms of pay and conditions.

Unlike the petty bourgeois feminists who see the oppression of women as the inherent biological trait of men, Marxism understands that the root of women's oppression lies not in biology, but in social conditions. While feminists blame men for all the ills of women, Marxism sees the liberation of working class women as a part of the struggle for the liberation of the working class as a whole. While feminists set women against men, the socialist movement attempts to forge solidarity between male and female workers in a common struggle against capitalist exploitation. The emancipation of women can never be achieved under capitalist society, which holds working people, both women and men, in subjugation.

Marxism has a duty to win the best women workers to its banner, as from this oppressed layer - "a slave of a slave", to use Engels' words - will come the best class fighters for the socialist revolution. It is no accident that women began the Russian Revolution of 1917 on international women's day.

The oppression of women did not always exist. In fact it is a relatively new phenomenon in historical terms. It arose with the division of society into classes and the emergence of class society some 6,000 or so years ago. Prior to that, in the period described by the

American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan as 'primitive communism', neither classes, the state, private property nor the family existed. There was no domination of man over women, or man over man. As there was no surplus created, only enough to survive, there was no exploitation, which only emerged with the development of the slave empires of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome.

Engels wrote 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State', based mainly on the findings of Lewis Morgan, but also supplemented by his own research, which examined this 'question' from a scientific point of view. The founding-fathers of modern anthropology, in particular Morgan and his English counterpart Edward Tylor, gathered a colossal amount of material from primitive tribes, the accounts of missionaries and travellers, and many other sources in an attempt to reconstruct a picture of primitive society. Morgan himself lived for many years among the Iroquois Indians, who still lived at the higher stage of savagery.

They were completely stunned when they found that primitive society had no resemblance whatsoever, in terms of social structure, customs and institutions, to modern civilised society. It was fundamentally different.

Classless society

The common assumption held by the scientific establishment until then, was that primitive life was simply a more basic and underdeveloped version of modern-day life. For them, all our class-based institutions would exist in a less developed form. This completely suited the apologists of capitalist society, who regarded exploitation, classes and social division as eternal. This misconception was completely turned on its head. Private property, family and state simply did not exist. There was no ruling class or working class. There was no domination or the degradation of women by men, or men by men. This classless society was built on completely different egalitarian foundations.

According to Morgan, before class society - which embraced some 99% of human development - there existed two distinct phases of human society: Savagery, based upon a hunter/gatherer economy, which corresponds to the Old Stone Age, and Barbarism, based upon agriculture and stock rearing, the New Stone Age. Throughout this massive expanse of time, the structure of society, which was totally different from our own, was based upon a clan or tribal system. This in turn was based upon kinship, in which women were highly

respected and played a leading role within the clan. Production and distribution was all carried out in common. There were no privileges or elites. Women were held in esteem, as they were the bringers of life and future of the clan. To quote Engels: "The communistic household, in which most or all of the women belong to one and the same *gens* (clan), while men come from various *gentes* (clans), is the material foundation of that supremacy of women which was general in primitive times..."

Both Morgan and Engels were indebted to the German Bachofen, whose book, *Der Murrrecht (Mother Right)*, provided a history of the family based upon the myths and legends of the past, which showed that women were held in high regard within the clan system. In this primitive society, sexual relations were based upon primitive mating, where conception was thought to have occurred through divine intervention. Primitive mating went through a variety of changes, reaching a phase of group marriage based on kinship. Under these circumstances, a child's biological father was unknown, and so the line of descent was traced through the mother. This was the only way it could possibly be traced. This gave women their pivotal role within society, and determined the matriarchal character of the clan.

Mother-care

The importance of women to society stemmed from - among other things - their role in child bearing and mother-care, which was essential for the survival not only of the clan, but also of the whole species. It is no accident that in all the early myths and legends of creation, it is the woman that is the bringer of life. Again, all the early gods were women. Only with the advent of class society and dominant patriarchal relations, do we see the emergence of the great male gods of the ancients.

Over time a different system of taboos were introduced, with grave punishments for those who transgressed them, to regulate relations between male and female. The rule of incest was invented to give stability to the tribe. Within the clan everyone was a "brother" and "sister", and a "mother" and "father" to everyone. The children would be regarded as everyone's children and brought up in this communal matriarchal community. Sex was forbidden between men and women of the same clan, which prevented competition amongst males for females. Men had to seek sexual partners in another clan and be adopted by them, while women would remain within their original clan. Above all, within this communistic clan there were fraternal relations between all members. Today they are based upon class rule and

reflect domination, subordination and exploitation.

In the words of Morgan, "All the members of an Iroquois gens were personally free and they were bound to defend each other's freedom; they were equal in privileges and in personal rights, the sachem and chiefs claiming no superiority; and they were a brotherhood bound together by the ties of kin. Liberty, equality and fraternity, though never formulated, were cardinal principles of the gens."

The term "mother" was not a family term as today, but a social one. There is no term for "father" or "family" in the matriarchal clan system as these were incomprehensible terms. Biological relationships were subordinate to collective-clan relationships. In clan society, the mother's brother is also regarded as the "male mother."

Within the clan everyone was a "brother" and "sister", and a "mother" and "father" to everyone. The children would be regarded as everyone's children and brought up in this communal matriarchal community.

The bulk of modern anthropologists reject the concept of a communist matriarchy. According to them, all the evidence existing in today's hunter/gatherer tribes at best points to matrilineal descent, but nothing more. They fail to see that existing matrilineal lines are leftovers of a prehistoric past where women played a key role in all spheres. Logically, patriarchal forms could not have pre-dated matriarchal ones as the father was unknown. Of course the early matriarchy was not the mirror opposite of today's patriarchal society. Primitive society was communistic and egalitarian. There were no classes or domination that exists today.

The "family" emerged within the clan system at the stage of Barbarism and the development of settled communities. The "pairing" family was the embryo of the modern family, which emerged first as a matri-family and then patri-family. This development coincided with the "Neolithic Revolution", to use the words of Gordon Childe. It coincided with the increased productivity and wealth that arose. The invention of the iron plough opened the way for surpluses of grain. New methods of breeding livestock increased the herds. This, in its turn, produced social forces that began to undermine the clan/tribal system. It saw the development of private property, which at first remained within the clan, but given

the division of labour increasingly fell into the hands of men. "To him, therefore", stated Engels, belonged the cattle, and to him the commodities and the slaves received in exchange for cattle. All the surplus which the acquisition of the necessities of life now yielded fell to the man; the women shared in its enjoyment, but had no part in its ownership."

However, children, who belonged to their mother's clan, could not inherit from their father, being of a different clan in which his property had to remain. So with the new wealth came new contradictions. As Engels explained: "Thus, on the one hand, in proportion as wealth increased, it made the man's position in the family more important than the woman's, and on the other hand created an impulse to exploit this strengthened position in order to overthrow, in favour of his children, the traditional order of inheritance. This, however, was impossible so long as descent was reckoned according to mother-right. Mother-right, therefore, had to be overthrown, and overthrown it was." As Engels adds, this act constituted "the world historical defeat of the female sex."

Maternal clans

With private property came the destruction of the communistic maternal clans. In their place came class society, the state and the patriarchal family. The form of marriage changed from polygamy to monogamy, ensuring that children born in wedlock were those of the husband. Marriage became a way of consolidating family fortunes and power. It was not men who gained, as the majority were still enslaved. Only an elite ruling class gained. The rest of society - men and women - were brought under the heel of class rule. Only with the elimination of class society can the human race be free of this enslavement. The emancipation of women has become a class question, which is inseparable from the socialist transformation of society.

And what of the family? Under socialism, private housekeeping will be transformed into a social industry. The care and education of children will become a public matter. The domination of money relations will come to an end, and men and women will find genuine relationships. To use Engels words: "Once such people appear, they will not care a rap about what we today think they should do. They will establish their own practice and their own public opinion, conformable therewith, on the practice of each individual - and that's the end of it." Socialist society will free us from the inhuman social relations under capitalism and the market economy, and open up new vistas of human development. It will bring about the liberation of men and women. ●

Irish Peace Process on the Rocks

The Irish peace process is mired in crisis. Despite all the fanfare accompanying the Good Friday Agreement, the people in the Six Counties of the north once again find themselves at an impasse. Phil Mitchinson looks at the issues involved.

The arrest of three suspected Provisional IRA members in Colombia alleged to be training the FARC guerrillas in bomb making techniques has been cited as a reason for the Unionists to reject the Provisional's offer on decommissioning, putting their arms "verifiably beyond use." Yet this discovery was made after the Provo's plan, agreed with General de Chastelain, had already been rejected. Hardliners like Jeffrey Donaldson, MP for Lagan Valley, have been gaining the upper hand for months inside unionism. The Unionists fear too many concessions have been made to the republicans already. Just imagine their reaction if at any time there had been any mention of a move in the direction of a united Ireland.

Meanwhile the concessions made by republican leaders have provoked fears too. Graffiti scrawled on a brick wall in South Armagh declares "Ealing is Realing - Smash Stormont." The Real IRA's bomb in Ealing must worry Sinn Féin leaders that any further concessions would put their own positions in jeopardy.

What about Stormont? The devolved assembly, the centrepiece of Blair's plans, is now suspended, now open. Democracy it seems can be turned on and off like a tap.

Secret negotiations between sectarian parties and British imperialism cannot lead to a solution. That must now be clear. The national and social problems of Ireland cannot be solved within the confines of capitalism. That is what the current crisis once again demonstrates.

British imperialism, responsible in the first place for the criminal carving up of Ireland, and therefore directly responsible for the death and destruction wreaked ever since, cannot control the sectarian monster it created.

The latest attempt at a compromise between the Provos and the unionists seemed to have gone a lot further than many previous attempts - yet still it has failed. We take no pleasure in this fact, but a fact it remains. Once again the inability of capitalism to solve the problem of Ireland leaves Catholics and Protestants alike facing an uncertain future.

Unionist leaders are hostages to the hardliners in their own ranks. They cannot back down on the destruction of Provo weapons. Even more, they are demanding the Provisional IRA's abject surrender, destroying their weapons in the presence of a Unionist inspector.

Of course the Loyalist terrorists have been responsible for just as many atrocities themselves, and show no sign of disarming. Sinn Féin has released a report giving details of more than 180 sectarian attacks by Loyalists this year alone. The Unionists don't have to rely on paramilitaries however, when they are backed up by British troops and the RUC.

For the Provos to have handed over their weapons would have spelt disaster for them. They cannot accept the idea of destroying them before one of Donaldson's representatives. If they decommission in this way then the leaders responsible stand every chance of being dead men. But why do they want to keep their guns?

Do they seriously propose to return to the so-called armed struggle, the counter-productive policy of individual terrorism that achieved so little over 30 years? If not, then what method, what policy will they adopt in the struggle to unite Ireland? Is the policy of the Armalite and the ballot box to be replaced by the ballot box alone? Does anyone really believe that Ireland can be united, that British imperialism can be booted out of Ireland by the simple expedient of winning one or two seats at Westminster, which they will never take up? Meanwhile the Unionists and the Protestant paramilitaries will just sit idly by?

Individual terrorism

The method of individual terror must be abandoned for good, but an electoral tactic alone is not enough. Firstly what will their policy be? Unless it is a socialist programme in the interests of the workers of all backgrounds you cannot hope to have any impact on the Protestant community. Only a movement based on workers' unity, socialism and internationalism can begin to overcome the prejudices which exist on all sides, appealing to Protestant workers and to British workers too. The only point in holding on to weapons would be to defend such a movement from the inevitable and vicious attacks of bigots, and sectarians. Such a movement would strike the fear of god into the British ruling class, more than any tax-bomb. It would deprive them of the greatest weapon in their arsenal - the division of the workers along sectarian lines.

The method of James Connolly and Jim Larkin is the only route to a free and united Ireland, an Ireland free of discrimination and prejudice, an Ireland free not only of British

imperialist occupation but free too from capitalist exploitation, where the political and economic rights of all can be guaranteed, an Ireland freed by the struggle of a united working class for socialism.

Without such a struggle whatever happens today or tomorrow, whether the agreement is salvaged again for a time or not, the tragedy is that there will be a return to violence eventually, nothing will be solved and the working class, Catholic and Protestant, will continue to suffer low wages, bad housing, poor health care and be prevented from successfully struggling against these consequences of capitalism by the sectarian divisions imposed upon them.

What about the Unionists? It is true that Trimble used the excuse of delays in decommissioning to walk out of the Assembly. In reality this was more a matter of defending his own position within an increasingly hardline Unionist movement. They want a devolved assembly which they are confident will be dominated by Unionists. But at the same time they are quite happy to tolerate direct rule. They are desperate to cling on to their privileged position. Discrimination may now be outlawed, but Ulster Unionism remains a bastion of bigotry and reaction. They were forced to make a number of concessions, but it seems they will go no further. Instead they have now forced Blair to suspend the assembly. Sinn Fein and the Provos on the other hand cannot offer any more without disintegrating.

British Rule

The IRA puts the blame for the breakdown on the British government and the unionists. The result, as *Socialist Appeal* has explained before, is back to square one - again.

In reality the establishment of the devolved body itself represented a capitulation by the Provisional IRA. It wasn't even a gesture towards Irish unity. It amounts to an acceptance of British rule and an acceptance of partition. The Protestants meanwhile will never accept any real step towards uniting with the south on the basis of the current system. So British imperialism is stuck with the north, whether they like it or not. The irony is that Britain would now like to withdraw. They would like to be shot of the £4 billion a year subsidy. Their problem is that the result would be a bloodbath, the Catholics of West Belfast and Derry would face a massacre and the violence would not be confined to Ireland. Sectarianism, fostered by British imperialism as part of its divide and rule tactic, has become an uncontrollable monster.

The only solution now lies in the hands not of the professional politicians but the working class. The only force capable of struggling for a united Ireland whilst

defending the interests of Catholic and Protestant workers equally is a movement of the working class for socialism. The potential for such workers unity is demonstrated by the trade unions. They remain the only force organised on a non-sectarian basis. The unions must provide the foundation for a political expression for that united working class - a party of labour. Armed with a socialist programme, such a party could win the overwhelming support of workers from both communities.

Campaigning for a socialist solution to unemployment, low pay and bad housing, the working class could guarantee the rights of the Protestants in a socialist united Ireland linked to the workers in England, Scotland and Wales.

Of course some will argue that this is utopian. This is always the argument of those who lack confidence in the ability of the working class to change society. Surely what is utopian is to believe that after centuries of raping and pillaging Ireland, capitalism can offer any new way forward. Today they have failed again.

British imperialism created the mess in the first place, and they remain responsible for the mess today. They can play no part in any solution. Nor can the sectarian parties of Unionist reaction or nationalist republicanism. To achieve a peaceful and lasting solution the workers of all communities can trust only in their own strength and their own united class organisations.

There is no doubt that many in the republican movement genuinely want to struggle for the cause of a united Ireland. For them the end justifies the means. Tragically however, the method of bombings and shootings has led them ever further away from their desired end. In this way a generation of young fighters have been wasted, poisoned by middle class nationalist ideas, their courage and willingness to struggle, had it been channelled in a socialist direction, could have brought a real solution much closer.

The IRA's campaign of individual terrorism all along sought to substitute itself for the role of the proletariat. They denied the class question and turned instead to so-called urban guerrillaism. While guerrilla struggle may still have a role to play in more backward countries, though even there only as an auxiliary to the actions of the working class, in an industrialised society guerrillaism has no place. It is not a method of the working class.

Despite all talk to the contrary, the Protestants will remain the majority in the north for the foreseeable future. A million armed Protestants is a guarantee that any new talks between sectarian parties and



paramilitary organisations cannot lead to a united Ireland. The only real way out would be through the industrial and political struggle of the working class uniting Protestant and Catholic workers in the struggle for socialism.

All the problems facing Irish workers are interconnected. None of them, social or political, can be solved by the market. Only an Ireland united by the struggle for socialism alongside their British and European brothers and sisters can begin to tackle all these questions. None can be solved in isolation.

The current peace process created illusions for many that finally the problems of Ireland could be solved. Now those hopes are being dashed, and the consequence will be new splits and divisions amongst Republican and Unionist groups.

National problem

The press speculates that the Real IRA now has up to a hundred members with an impressive arsenal at their disposal. The Protestant paramilitaries are heavily armed too, and they will inevitably retaliate against any attacks by these splinters. There can always be temporary agreements. By their very nature temporary agreements break down, and it will be the working class who will pay.

Under modern conditions there can be no solution anywhere to the national problem. A decade ago the illusion of such solutions was all part of the New World Order. In today's Disorder not only have those illusions been shattered, but new ethnic and national divisions across the planet are exploding to create a more turbulent and dangerous world. Today only the working class plays the progressive role in society required to solve these problems. United by the need to struggle over social and political questions, the working class alone can provide the only realistic lasting peace in a Socialist united Ireland linked by a free and voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain and a Socialist United States of Europe. ●



Socialist Appeal Fights for

☆ **For a Labour government with a bold socialist programme!** Labour must break with big business and Tory economic policies. Vote Labour and fight to reclaim the party.

☆ **A national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.** £6.00 an hour as a step toward this goal, with no exemptions.

☆ **Full employment!** No redundancies. The right to a job or decent benefits. For a 32 hour week without loss of pay. No compulsory overtime. For voluntary retirement at 55 with a decent full pension for all.

☆ **No more sell offs.** Reverse the Tories privatisation scandal. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities under democratic workers control and management. No compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need.

☆ **The repeal of all Tory anti-union laws.** Full employment rights for all from day one. For the right to strike, the right to union representation and collective bargaining. Election of all trade union officials with the right of recall. No official to receive more than the wage of a skilled worker.

☆ **Action to protect our environment.** Only public ownership of the land, and major industries, petro-chemical enterprises, food companies, energy and transport, can form the basis of a genuine socialist approach to the environment.

☆ **A fully funded and fully comprehensive education system under local democratic control.** Keep big business out of our schools and colleges. Free access for all to further and higher education. Scrap tuition fees. No to student loans. For a living grant for all over 16 in education or training.

☆ **The outlawing of all forms of discrimination.** Equal pay for equal work. Invest in quality childcare facilities available to all. Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls. Abolish the Criminal Justice Act.

☆ **The reversal of the Tories' cuts in the health service.** Abolish private health care. For a National Health Service, free to all at the point of need, based on the nationalisation of the big drug companies that squeeze their profits out of the health of working people.

☆ **Reclaim the Labour Party!** Defeat Blairism! Fight for Party democracy and socialist policies. For workers' MPs on workers' wages.

☆ **The abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.** Full economic powers for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, enabling them to introduce socialist measures in the interests of working people. ☆ No to sectarianism. For a Socialist United Ireland linked by a voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain.

☆ **Break with the anarchy of the capitalist free market.** Labour to immediately take over the "commanding heights of the economy." Nationalise the big monopolies, banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises to be run under workers control and management and integrated through a democratic socialist plan of production.

☆ **Socialist internationalism.** No to the bosses European Union. Yes to a socialist united states of Europe, as part of a world socialist federation.