

weekly worker

No 78

Thursday January 19 1995

**Lobby of the
NUT executive
Smash Sats!**

Wednesday January 25, 4pm to
5.30pm at Hamilton House,
London, followed by a rally at
Friends House

Labour's clause four dead-end

Labour's infighting over clause four is in full swing now with almost every left group imaginable inside and out of the Labour Party jumping on board to defend the clause. Everybody knows that it has meant nothing to the Labour Party in power and that the wording itself means little. But just as with the leadership contest, until we are able to build an effective alternative to Labour the left will hang desperately on to its skirt tails

THE ROW over Tony Blair's attempts to rewrite the Labour Party's clause four this week focused on whether or not Labour would renationalise British Rail. 'We would love to do it,' runs the argument, 'but the Tories always spend what they get from state sell-offs. So where would we get the money?'

Champion of the left John Prescott was brought in to give a 'firm commitment' to take back the railways under 'public control'. Well ... not quite. The six-year private contracts would be allowed to stand, but after they expire, "... we want a publicly owned and publicly accountable railway and we are entitled then to *allow BR to bid* for those franchises" (our emphasis).

So the market will decide whether the railways will be privately run or collectively managed by the capitalist class as a whole. What matters is how the system is best served.

Those opposing any change to clause four pose their utopian version of 'socialism' as being able to operate within the ravages of the capitalist market. For example the first bulletin of the Defend Clause Four campaign states, ".... during the 1980s, privatised industries ... had lower productivity than in the decade before privatisation." Those united around the campaign all claim that clause four will be their weapon to bring about fluffy, nice - and productive! - capitalism which they will *call* socialism.

This is not exactly a new idea, but it is significant that those on the revolutionary left who claim the tradition of Marx and scientific socialism have thrown their weight behind the fluffy, nice, 'national' socialists.

Socialism must, by definition, be

international - a fact ignored by the Defend Clause Four campaigners. Nationalisation is no answer to the global capitalist economy, which needs an *internationalist* response - common ownership by the world's working class.

Labour's right wing, keen to ditch its 'socialist' rhetoric altogether in favour of nice, fluffy *capitalism*, has in contrast been disarmingly honest in its assessment of the clause. Roy Hattersley declares himself to be a believer in public ownership, but is wholehearted in his support for the ditching of clause four. He writes that its author, Sydney Webb, intended to "combine inspirational language with a total absence of meaning" (*The Independent* January 11).

Hattersley continues: "Some months after the 1918 constitution was ratified, he wrote in the *Observer* that his great philosophical work was 'open to a variety of meanings' ... Strange that a radical party is expected to worship an absurdity simply because it has been around for so long."

Clause four was written primarily as a sop to workers to win them from the ideas of socialist revolution. Now, when such ideas appear to an over-confident bourgeoisie to be no longer on the agenda, it is "a hopelessly out-of-date expression of what the Labour Party stands for", as Blair puts it.

Tailing Labourism may be the easy option for the left, but the job of serious revolutionaries is to break workers from a party that has proved itself time and time again to be useless to the working class. That demands the harder but essential task of building a serious revolutionary alternative.

Tony Blair: with or without clause four, capitalism has had little to fear from the Labour Party

Workers' needs not Labour promises!

Letters

National service

I have been concerned to read in the *Weekly Worker* continuous attacks on the idea of nationalisation over the clause four issue.

Though I agree that the Labour Party has never had a real commitment to public ownership, I do think nationalisation is worth defending even if clause four is not.

The principle of nationalisation is to provide services for the good of society rather than the profits of a few. Surely this is a socialist principle.

We have seen what privatisation has done to the coal industry, not to mention the other privatised utilities. But the prime example now must be the railways. It is obvious to everyone that a privatised rail 'system' will be total chaos. A nationalised service is the only way to provide an efficient rail service.

The Communist Party should become the champion of the nationalised railways even if the Labour Party cannot.

Tricia Harris
Newcastle

Fighting the cause

I have been pleased to see the *Weekly Worker* over the past few months fighting a lone battle exposing the Labour Party's clause four.

The terminal weakness of the 'hard left' is exposed beautifully at this time. They are reduced to a totemic, sentimentalist defence of a clause which was specifically designed and inserted by 'hard core' anti-communists (ie, the Webbs) for the overt purpose of averting socialist revolution and 'containing' working class militants within the cage of the Labour Party, where they could be eventually neutralised (or Labourised).

What is also remarkable about the defenders of clause four is how defensive they are. Alex Falconer, MEP for Mid-Scotland and Fife, has snappily remarked that "common ownership" is not to be confused with "brute nationalisation", and that "public control and public ownership have nothing to do with common ownership". Tony Benn, 'hard left' stalwart, has also made the odd claim that "clause four is nothing to do with nationalisation - it is about common ownership".

Now Marxists would agree that there is nothing inherently socialist, or even socialistic, about nationalisation (Engels talked about "a certain spurious socialism ... here and there degenerating into a kind of

flunkeyism ... which without more ado declares all nationalisations ... to be socialistic"). However to imply that socialism has "nothing to do" with nationalisation is something else altogether and is the slippery slope to utter reformism.

The 'irony' of course is that thanks to the Labour Party 'socialism' has become largely identified with state, top-down nationalisation. It treats the working class as a purely passive spectator (at best) and leaves social and economic power firmly in the hands of the capitalist class.

Communists should utilise this latest Labour fuss to drive home the message that the Labour Party is and always has been committed heart and soul to capitalism - and historically clause four has been part of that Faustian commitment, rather than some socialist Holy Grail which will miraculously reappear one day to be claimed victoriously by the virtuous 'hard left' paladins.

John Dart
South London

Overstated

I feel that comrade Eddie Ford allowed his youthful enthusiasm for the Communist Party to get the better of him in last week's paper (*Weekly Worker* 77, Letters). He is correct in stressing "that all genuine communists coalesce around the CPGB and its principles", but his blanket condemnation of the rest of the left (and by implication most of its membership) was in my opinion a little overstated.

May I remind him that, for example, the Independent Communists and Open Polemic both sent delegates to our summer school in Catalonia last year, while I understand that the Communist Action Group sent its apologies for being unable to attend. The use of the expressions, "sordidly dishonest" and "pathological hatred for the Communist Party of Great Britain", when referring to such organisations strikes me as being rather out of place in such circumstances.

The reformed CPGB will contain many hundreds of individuals who now give their support to small left groups, not to mention bigger organisations, such as Militant and the SWP. We are talking about sincere comrades who are genuinely seeking correct answers to honest questions.

We should resist the temptation to alienate or dismiss these elements when we know we can help them find those answers.

Ted Jaszynski
North London

Note: Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed.

The cost of greed

Cedric Brown pushed his snout deeper into the trough with a 75% pay rise

INDUSTRY AND city leaders are mightily perplexed and sore troubled by the greed of top executives. Particularly by a certain son of Mammon, Cedric Brown, and other directors of privatised utilities now cashing it in. No, the Christian gentlemen are not afeared that their beloved brethren will lose their immortal souls. Verily, they say it would be hypocritical of us to deny working people the right to sip from the pail of plenty that their betters have quaffed so deeply.

Michael Prowse (*Financial Times* January 16) complains that many "still appear to regard the capitalist system as fundamentally immoral. They are appalled by the vast rewards garnered by chief executives ...". He appeals to Adam Smith *laissez faire* morality in which - *hopefully* - "rich individuals

would voluntarily engage in philanthropy".

So when the gas workers put in their claim for a 25% pay rise, as is proposed, the city accepts their moral right to it. Sadly this will not stop the bosses and the government uniting to fight the claim tooth and nail. Not in the spirit of hypocrisy, but to save us all from a plague worse than anything visited on the Egyptians. Inflation is the name thereof.

Our mighty men are wracking their

brains to find a way to keep their salaries down. Alas, despite many an ingenious scheme neither they nor John Major have been able to find a way.

Should the workers sacrifice their pay claim to save the country from inflation? To misquote the bible: Sodom - let their profits turn into pillars of salt; let inflation rain like frogs from heaven so long as it is paid for by the employers. There will be no end to our lean years until we are rid of them.

Phil Kent

Review

Bang up to date

John D Barrow, *The Origin of the Universe*, Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1994, pp150, £9.99

WRITTEN FOR the educated layman, like the rest of Wiedenfeld & Nicolson's Science Masters series, this is a lucid account of the latest knowledge - and speculations - of scientists about the origins of the universe.

In 1992 the Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE) satellite was able to measure the immense heat of the tiny, incredibly dense fireball which constituted the universe in the earliest seconds of its known history, now spread out over the vastness of the 15 billion light-years-wide universe to give a background temperature of only 2.7 degrees above absolute zero.

Where Newton's classical physics are accurate only for low velocity movements, Einstein's relativity equations are only adequate where gravity is a force of attraction.

Now it seems repulsion - antigravity - may have been responsible for a short but very significant surge of extra-rapid expansion during the pre-chemical phase of microcosmic expansion. If the gravity of matter can be negative under certain conditions, this removes one of the essential conditions used by the mathematician Roger Penrose to prove the necessity of a "singularity", a beginning to space and time, from which the expansion

of matter emerged.

In the extraordinarily high temperatures, pressures and densities of matter a split second after "the apparent beginning that has become known as the big bang" (p5), electromagnetism and nuclear radiation emerged from a common source - the "electroweak force". Now particle physicists are working to connect this with the two other fundamental forces of nature - the "strong nuclear force" (which binds the nucleus of an atom) and the force of gravity - in a "single unified theory" of everything.

John Barrow points out experimental facts of particle physics and cosmology right up to 1994. While informing us of the latest hypotheses, he maintains a healthy scepticism towards the speculations of imaginative mathematicians, some of whom have conjured up a universe of as many as 27 unknown dimensions - simply because they can multiply 27 factors together in complex formulae.

A fascinating read, and a recommendation for the other Science Masters titles already available: *The Last Three Minutes* by Paul Davies, and Richard Leaky's *The Origin of Humankind*.

Ian Farrell

From *The Call*, paper of the British Socialist Party, January 22 1920

Germany going 'red'

THE EVENTS in Berlin last week prove that there is an enormous movement among the German workers to make the revolution a real one and not to be satisfied with the mere change of masters ... The imperialist majority Socialists of Germany have shown that their rule means no change for the workers. The old methods, so beloved by the capitalist governing class, of shooting down the workers when they demonstrate to ventilate their grievances, are resorted to by the

murderous tyrant Noske, and the streets of Berlin are stained with the blood of those who dared approach the sacred precincts of the Reichstag. (Note - Gustav Noske was a leader of the German Social-Democratic Party, placed in power after World War I in order to suppress the workers' revolution)

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Moscow turmoil as Chechens resist

THE BLOODY war in Chechnya is a result of Yeltsin attempting to defend his country's 'national integrity' by imperialist methods. He will judge the success of his policy on its ability to deter others from breaking away rather than on what happens in Chechnya. The Chechens can continue their independence struggle in many ways after the fall of Grozny but, so long as they can be isolated, they will in the end be defeated.

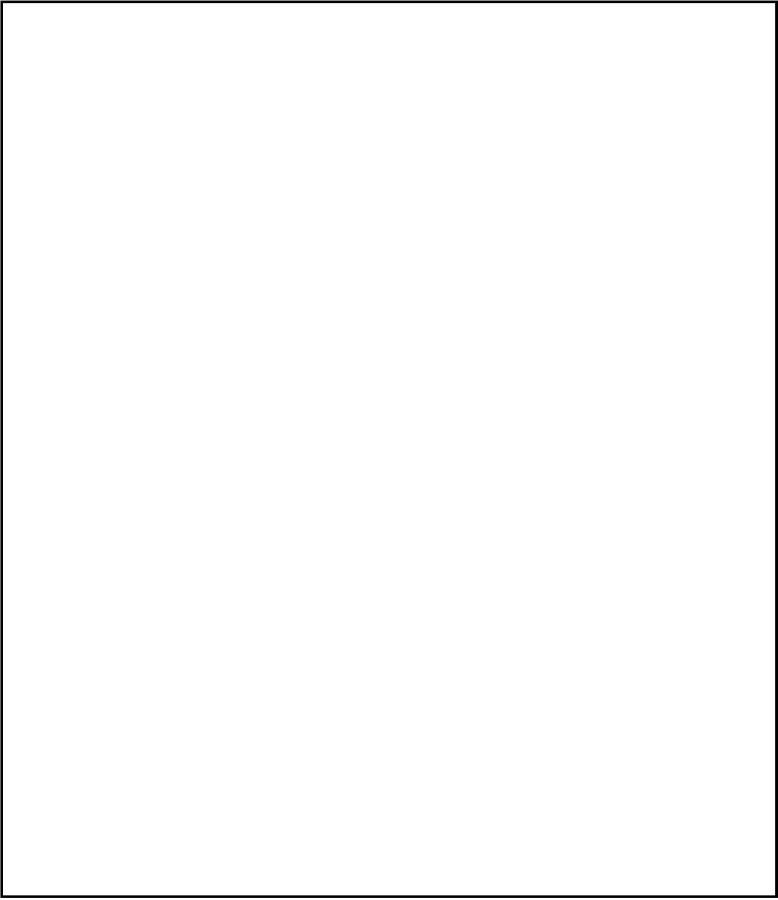
We know from our experience of Ireland that a nation which oppresses another cannot itself be free. In the more brutal conditions of the Commonwealth of In-dependent States we can expect an even more authoritarian response.

The rebellion has shaken Russia's rulers. They are accusing one another of incompetence, even treachery. Vice premier Shakhrai claimed, "Without the accomplices from Moscow the enormous arsenals ... would never have got into the hands of the separatists." Defence minister Grachev and former prime minister Gaidar are accused. Yeltsin holds on to power only because no one can agree on a replacement. The army is under-financed and the war has exposed its inefficiency and low morale. Some generals are unhappy because their advice was ignored.

Public opinion in the CIS is strongly against the armed suppression except for the xenophobes, such as Liberal Democratic Party leader Zhirinovsky, who has called for the killing of more Chechens.

Russian bourgeois liberals fear, with good reason, that the increased military spending will derail their free market reforms and increase the power of the bureaucracy and military over parliament.

Opposition also centres round the old 'official communists', who are horrified by the developing economic crisis and just want to go back to the



Chechen workers suffer under Yeltsin's heel

old days when things were bad - but not *so* bad. They too are nationalistic, but more interested in getting rid of the present misrulers so they can misrule in the old way. For want of a real Communist Party the tottering counterrevolution goes unopposed.

It has been five years since the upheavals that produced the collapse of bureaucratic socialism. The *Weekly Worker* was almost alone in saying that it was a counterrevolutionary movement. Tariq Ali even hailed Yeltsin as

a great democrat.

Alex Callinicos in *Socialist Worker* (January 7) is anxious to remind readers that "it was right to cheer" the 'revolutionary upheavals' at the end of the 1980s. Unfortunately "they were not anything like thoroughgoing enough because they looked to western capitalism for inspiration". *Socialist Worker* readers may well now wonder why they chose to cheer the 'heroic' Yeltsin in 1991.

Arthur Lawrence

Labour's communist moles?

COMRADES, it appears that we have got it all wrong. The Labour Party is not a *bourgeois* workers' party, which is led by the worst sort of reactionaries imaginable. No. All this time Labour has been plotting with the ex-Soviet Union, to undermine the capitalist state and usher in socialism. Well, some of them. OK, only five, but you have to start somewhere.

Five Labour MPs - Joan Lestor, Frank Allaun, Stan Newens, Joan Maynard, Jo Richardson (deceased) - have been 'fingered' by obnoxious young-fogey Rupert Allason, Tory MP for Torbay and supposed 'spy expert'. He bases his information on 'cold war' warrior Brian Crozier's book *Free Agent* (who in turn has been chatting to KGB defector Oleg Gordievsky). Allason claims that the 'Labour Five' were "agents of influence" who were prepared to put down parliamentary questions at the behest of the KGB (of course it is only a coincidence that this follows so soon after the 'cash-for-questions' scandal).

Naturally, this motley-minded bunch of peaceniks, left Labourites and ex-'official communists' are outraged by this attack on their patriotic credentials. Joan Lestor, never exactly known for her espousal of revolutionary communism, is now taking legal advice and Frank Allaun protested that, "As far as I know, I have not talked to a KGB man in my life" (*The Guardian* January 12).

A triumphalist McCarthyite tendency is emerging, which is determined to continue the Cold War by other means (ie, retroactively), and this tendency is characterised by irrationality. Anybody can be targeted and labelled a red, no matter how farcical the claim.

It is not entirely surprising that the Labour Party is edging into the target-sights of that element within MI5, and the top echelons of the civil service and the military, which has a venomous class hatred for the bourgeois workers' party. Yet we all know that at the end of the day the Labour Party is quite happy to take over the reins of state, which means climbing into bed with the secret services.

Communists will one day publish *all* the secrets of the bourgeois state, as did the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution. You can guarantee that they will make fascinating reading.

Frank Vincent

SWP calls for state capitalism

THE SOCIALIST Workers Party has thrown its weight behind the campaign to save clause four, calling for its supporters to press for the passing of a motion against changes to the clause in their union organisations.

The recommended motion condemns the "market economy" and demands "public ownership and control". It may win support. After all a study among *Conservative Party members* published last year found that 43% were in favour of "public ownership" for the gas industry and 39% for water.

It is surprising that the SWP does not seem to realise that the phrase is used to mean 'ownership by the capitalist state' - state capitalism - and has nothing to do with advancing to socialism.

For that the present system has to be overthrown. "The working class needs an entirely different kind of state - a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia."

Now where have I read *that* one before? See *Socialist Worker's* 'Where we stand' column to find the answer.

Alan Fox

What we fight for

● Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.

● The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers' movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.

● Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.

● We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.

● The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.

● Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs, ie communism.

● We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.

● Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.

● War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world's problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

We urge all who accept these principles to join us. A Communist Party Supporter reads and fights to build the circulation of the Party's publications; contributes regularly to the Party's funds and encourages others to do the same; where possible, builds and participates in the work of a Communist Party Supporters Group.

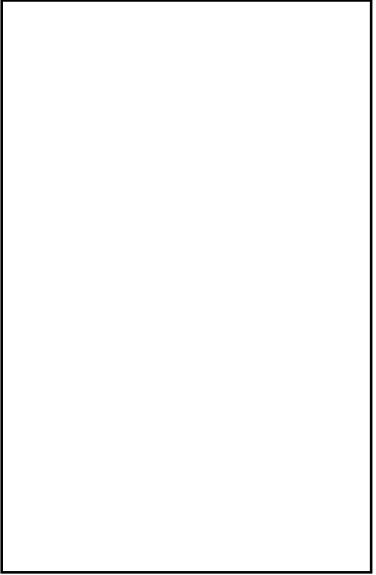
Cuba - revolution in danger

Steve Kay has just returned from Cuba. Here he gives his first impressions of a now isolated revolution in danger

I WENT to Cuba as part of a delegation organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. My interest in visiting the island was awakened by the 'rafters' crisis in the summer of 1994, when Cubans tried to flee to the USA to escape the island's poverty and economic crisis. I decided that I wanted to take a look for myself, rather than rely on the bourgeois media, and extend whatever solidarity one person can offer.

The first point to make about Cuba is that it is not simply a kind of Caribbean extension of the Soviet bloc countries. Perhaps it was to some degree, but Cuba is more than that - otherwise the switching off of the Soviet life support system in 1991 would have switched off Cuba as well, at least in its present form. One of the slogans painted on Cuban walls is "Cuba dura" (Cuba endures). A Caribbean island of 11 million people - so far from god, so near to the United States - is continuing to hold out, while the mighty Soviet Union has collapsed.

Nevertheless, Cuba is plagued by serious problems. During my stay on the island I went to a talk given by a professor of economics at Havana University, Augustin Hernandez. He said that the breaking of the economic tie with the Soviet Union reduced Cuba's gross domestic product by about three quarters. This shows the heavy dependence Cuba had come to have on a country thousands of miles



Fidel Castro, now battling against economic crisis

away. In spite of attempts at industrialisation, sugar cane remains the key factor in the Cuban economy, and it was the Soviet Union's heavy purchases of Cuban sugar, without reference to world market conditions, which helped Cuba to endure the economic blockade led by an implacably hostile USA since the early 1960s. In return for its sugar, Cuba received oil and petrol from the USSR.

Soviet-Cuban relations were

worsening during the last few years of the USSR's existence, when Fidel Castro and the Cuban leadership showed a reluctance to imitate glasnost and perestroika and other things dear to the heart of Mikhail Gorbachev.

But Cuba's economic dependence on the USSR was not so easily set aside, and after the Soviet Union's collapse Russian president Boris Yeltsin has no ideological motive whatsoever to give support to Cuba. He does have a motive to curry favour with the USA, and dropping Cuba is one way to do it.

The current impoverishment of Cuban society is obvious, with severe shortages, power cuts, rationing of foodstuffs and other signs of a society under siege. Cubans do not appear to be starving, but the typical diet seemed to be a monotonous round of beans and rice. I was told by one Cuban that most people had some recourse to the black market just to obtain foodstuffs not available with ration cards. The average Cuban might perhaps eat meat once a week, and not fresh meat at that.

Nonetheless, Cuba's peculiar isolated bureaucratic socialism is hanging on grimly, in spite of privations. In a future article, I will deal with the reasons why this is the case, and discuss the dangers that the outside world poses to Cuba - dangers less obvious than, say, an invasion by US troops or the CIA-backed counterrevolutionaries of Miami.



The row over devolution is being used to fuel nationalism in Scotland. A Scottish parliament will not put power into the hands of workers

Devolutionary socialism?

THE RECENT flurry of interest at Westminster in the Scottish question has not arisen because of any sudden increase in Scottish nationalism. Indeed political activity and debate around this issue has been on the wane with Scotland United - launched immediately after the 1992 general election with a fanfare of cross-party cooperation, pop stars and mass rallies - withering to non-existence.

What has sparked the interest has been John Major's response to Blair's programme of constitutional reform. Major has decided to use the issue in a nationalist appeal to Mr and Mrs Bigot in middle England.

Hyperbole and facile sound bites have been coming from all sides in the Westminster pillow fight. For example Major's statement that Labour's devolution plan is "one of the most dangerous propositions ever put before the British people" is obviously ludicrous. Indeed many present cabinet ministers supported devolution until Thatcher put a stop to that in 1976.

Perhaps most facile has been the assertion by George Robertson, shadow Scottish secretary, that Scots are "not narrow, inward looking people", but "outward looking, outgoing" (*The Scotsman* January 11). Nationalist rhetoric does tend to thrive on such stupid generalisations.

Despite Major's nonsense there are real dangers involved. A rise in anti-Scottish English nationalism (which the rhetoric of the Scottish National Party serves to encourage) would be disastrous for workers in Britain as a whole.

While it is unlikely that the Conservatives can build any such populist platform, it is vital that workers in England support Scotland's right to self-determination. Denial of this right can only fuel increased nationalism in Scotland. At present polls indicate that 82% of Scots support some form of home rule, with full-blown independence at 38%.

These frustrations need to be channelled along class lines, away from nationalism. The feeding of illusions that constitutional changes, such as a Scottish parliament, will offer greater democracy and can even become a vehicle for socialism provides another danger. This is something that many on the left have been guilty of, putting short term popularity before the real interests of the working class.

Labour's programme for constitutional change is designed to

strengthen British capitalism, not weaken it. Whatever form of government the bosses' state sets up, communists will stand for election to it to expose it as a sham, and always have at the top of the agenda the need to smash it and establish real workers'

democracy.

In today's world it is surely abundantly clear that nationalism can offer nothing positive and can only be used as a scapegoating cover to hide the real common problems facing workers throughout the

world - the capitalist system with its ravenous drive for profit and its inevitable slide to general crisis.

Our forces are woefully weak at present. We must fight any attempt to divide us along national lines.

Tam Burn

For a workers' republic

IF *The Guardian* is anything to go by, republicanism is "a growing force in our society" (January 9).

To back up this cheery claim, the newspaper has conducted an extensive opinion poll (groan), which reveals that 28%, out of a random sample of 1,003 adults, are now 'republicans' (of course, only 8% "want to end the monarchy immediately" - you cannot go too far). Also, an "astonishing" 34% are "not especially keen" on the monarchy.

So, does that mean hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of workers are about to take to the streets, demanding the dictatorship of the proletariat now? No, of course not. What we are witnessing is a slight - probably temporary - upsurge in *bourgeois* republicanism, not

proletarian republicanism.

Trotsky once said, "No demon cuts off its own claws." Similarly, the monarchy is not going to peacefully wither away into nothingness. Nor, more pertinently, will the ruling-class willingly divest itself of a significant counterrevolutionary weapon.

Any serious examination of the history of monarchies shows that they are only removed, or dislodged, by a revolutionary movement in society - or, reluctantly, offered as a sacrificial lamb to the masses, in an attempt to head off revolution. They are not reformed out of existence.

Predictably, the Charter 88-type think tank tinkers are blissfully unaware of this. They are content to conjure up tortuous schemes - eg, 'slimmed down' royals, kicking them out of Buckingham Palace, removal

of hereditary peers, Freedom of Information acts, etc - which they imagine will rid bourgeois society of its current malaise. Jack Straw even believes that the monarchy ('slimmed down' version of course) can "become a figurehead at the apex of a classless society" (*The Guardian* December 5 1994).

Communists treat such 'radical' utopianism with contempt. The only 'realist' approach to the monarchy, and all its parasitic entourage, is to destroy the capitalist system which nurtures the royals and which the royals feed off. This means good-bye to the House of Lords, House of Commons, the standing army, civil service and all the weapons of bourgeois rule. We need a *workers'* republic.

Eddie Ford

When all else fails, hoist the flag

No reliance on police

THE ACQUITTAL last week of John Rutter of taking part in the vicious attack on Quddus Ali 18 months ago has left campaigners for justice on the issue bitter and frustrated. They contrast the failure to bring any successful prosecutions in a case which left a young Asian on the point of death with the vigorous way the authorities are pursuing charges against the Tower Hamlets Nine - Asian youths arrested outside the hospital on the night following the Quddus Ali outrage who were themselves attacked by the police.

Rutter was originally charged with attempted murder, reduced to grievous bodily harm, before the crown prosecution service (CPS) eventually settled for affray. Yet the jury took only 45 minutes to find him not guilty. This was hardly surprising, as there appeared to be no evidence against him apart from a disputed 'confession of involvement' to a work colleague.

Naz Uddin of the Tower Hamlets Nine committee told me that the prosecution was "a bland effort to calm the community", and called for support for the forthcoming picket of the CPS (details to be announced) to protest against the failure to bring to book the attackers of Quddus Ali.

Many community activists appear to believe that John Rutter must have been guilty and that the police and CPS are characterised by 'institutionalised racism' in failing to secure his conviction. They call for greater police accountability.

"If the police are not going to protect us, we will have to defend ourselves," says Adil Rahman, also from the Tower Hamlets Nine committee.

Unaccountable and chauvinist the police undoubtedly are. But more importantly they are an arm of the state, dedicated to defending the very capitalism which fosters the deprivation of workers and drives them towards the vicious chauvinism and thuggery of the BNP.

We need our own workers defence corps to protect ourselves from both the fascists and the police.

Peter Manson

Defend the Tower Hamlets Nine

Picket Southwark Crown Court
Monday February 6
Call 081-548 0099 for details

Hospitals not charters

OVER 350 people marched from Stevenage's Lister Hospital to a meeting to discuss the health authority's plans to close 50% of Hertfordshire's accident and emergency units. At the meeting the speakers from the health authority found themselves the butt of local residents' anger that such a move could even be contemplated.

Tellingly the bright spark who had drawn up the proposals was not at the meeting but, as the assembled were told, he was still on his Christmas holidays and unable to get a flight home because of weather conditions. Altogether now: "Ah!"

The health service represented the case for about 30 minutes and were as believable as Richard Nixon or Conservative election promises. One thing for sure is that the attempt to run healthcare at a profit in the area will mean longer travel times for injured and sick people in need of emergency care and the possibility that care may not come soon enough for some.

This week also saw the launch of Virginia Bottomley's new 'Patients' Charter'. Our experience of campaigning indicates that Bottomley is perhaps the most hated character in British politics. Her charter will not cut much ice with those on the receiving end of healthcare cuts.

Gary Salisbury

Scottish calendar against the Criminal Justice Act

Saturday January 21
Edinburgh:

Demonstration

Assemble 11.30am,

Kingstables Road

Called by the Scottish

Coalition against the CJA

February 4 **Dundee:** Gig

Dundee College Students' Union

February 11 **Glasgow:**

Conference

Called by the Scottish

Alliance against the CJA

February 25 **Glasgow:**

Demonstration

Protest against the M77

motorway

The Unemployed Workers Charter is campaigning throughout the country against hospital closures and health cuts - call 081-459 7146 to get involved