

weekly worker



No 82

Thursday February 16 1995

Last week's public sector pay review awards left nurses and teachers fuming. Yet again they are expected to choose between taking a pay cut or losing their job

Stuff the market!

Nurses and teachers fight back!

GONE IS the government's call for public sector workers to make sacrifices in their own long-term interest, for the good of us all. After 15 years of Tory rule, nobody will fall for that any more. The government no longer even pretends that next year we will reap the rewards for this year's pay cuts. We must all just bow down to the sacred cow of market forces.

So, while prices look set to rise by more than four percent, teachers are set to get only 2.7% and nurses just 1%.

Yet the Tories intend to pay as much as 25% more to top civil servants, giving some a pay rise of £55,000 a year.

This is needed, they say, to attract the best people from private industry. But what about attracting the best nurses and teachers? Not a chance. After all it is only workers' health and workers' education on the line. Our rulers prefer to fork out for their own private healthcare and posh schools. The NHS and public education can be left to rot.

Even the meagre rises for nurses and teachers can only be funded in full through cuts made in other areas. Health authorities have been given permission to negotiate additional local rises up to an extra two percent for nurses - but only if they make 'savings'

to pay for them. And that means even more hospital closures, even longer waiting lists.

John Lister of London Health Emergency said, "It amounts to 'go and negotiate yourself out of a job'. The NHS trusts have no money, so it is clearly a question of wage cuts or job losses."

Some trusts are already introducing differential payments for new staff, giving them lower rates for unsocial hours or allocating them to lower grades.

Local authorities are already stumped as to how they should fund the teachers' paltry rise. Whichever option they go for will involve attacks on the working class.

Incredibly, education secretary Gillian Shephard, warning teachers not to resist, said they should "remember that some parents of the children they teach will have had no pay rise at all." No wonder the Financial Times comments, "Ministers might have been expected to handle the public pay issue with more sensitivity."

It adds, "Ministers are taking a high risk in the face of public sector pay discontent."

We should make sure that discontent turns to action and Major's 'high risk' tactics blow up in his face.

United action will send the government running for cover

Smash education cuts!

Too generous?

The recent edition of the *Weekly Worker* (February 9), while excellent, contained a number of statements which I believe could lead to a slight ‘dilution’ of our communist politics.

With respect to Militant Labour’s snap decision to stand in the forthcoming Weavers ward by-election in Tower Hamlets, comrade Alan Fox states, “It is therefore a small, but positive step that Militant Labour has taken”. Sure, but “positive” *for whom* exactly? If comrade Alan Fox means that this is an excellent opportunity for the Communist Party to expose the rotten “right centrist” (Jack Conrad) politics of Militant, then I heartily agree. On the other hand, if the comrade means that is good *in and of itself* that Militant is standing then I beg to differ. It is not entirely clear from the article where comrade Fox’s orientation lies (though I guess that it is the former).

Comrade Steve Kay thinks “as many people as possible should become involved with solidarity organisations like the Cuba Solidarity Campaign”. Why? Further, he erroneously claims that “at least as important as making revolution at home is the task of assisting the survival of revolutions abroad”.

The Bolsheviks always insisted that the *main* enemy is at home, therefore the first priority is to make revolution at home. In reality, to claim that assisting solidarity organisations - ie, the Cuba Solidarity Campaign - is “at least as important” as making socialist revolution - ie, reforging the Communist Party - is tantamount to liquidationism. The only way we can “assist” the Cuban Revolution is by bringing about a socialist Britain (if anything, the Cuban bureaucracy should be “assisting” us a little bit more!).

Finally, the call of Billy Hutchinson of the Progressive Unionist Party (sic) for a “realignment” of politics in the Six Counties on a “left-right basis” - a Workers Party/PUP alliance versus the SDLP/Official Unionists - sounds to me more ‘social fascistic’ than “a vision for a bourgeois ‘socialism’ within the existing capitalist Six Counties statelet” (comrade Jim Blackstock). Surely to call the politics of somebody like Billy Hutchinson ‘bourgeois socialist’ is to make him sound relatively benign?

Ray Collins
Aberdeen

Cuban Thatchers

I notice that the Cuban counterrevolutionaries are taking education, especially higher education, very seriously these days. On February 8 the Cuban American National Foundation held a special luncheon in Florida, at which the guest of honour was Lady Margaret Thatcher.

Apparently, the Cuban exiles have named a school after her at a university planned for post-Castro Havana. Kafkaesquely, it will be called The Margaret Thatcher School of Democratic Government, and is to form part of the Universidad Latinoamerica de la Libertad Friedrich Von Hayek. Something to look forward to, I bet.

Quite reasonably, Thatcher told the assembled intellectuals that “I loathed communism from the first time I read about it. Communism was a creed of the pseudo-intellectuals. Lenin was a pseudo-intellectual. I was astonished that it lasted 72 years”.

The university ‘in exile’ will be organising a whole series of seminars on “democracy and capitalism” throughout the Americas. So, the

Cuban Whites are attempting to win the ‘minds’ as well as the heart. Perversely, it does give you some hope though: if the fate of the counterrevolution depends on the intellectual power of Thatcher and Von Hayek then there is hope for Castro and the Cuban Revolution yet.

Ian Underwood
Nottingham

Direct recall

The recent shock defection of Tory councillor Paul Nesbitt to the Labour Party has given them control of Bury council. But now leading Labour activist David Davis has called for Mr Nesbitt to resign and seek re-election. Nesbitt, councillor for Sedgley ward, Prestwich, claims he has the law on his side. He says that people are elected to office as individuals, and not on a party basis.

This puts the whole idea of local democracy in question. If individuals are elected as such, then the platform they campaigned on is truly worthless. It can not only be abandoned after the election results are known, but allows people to move from one party to another at will. A similar position operates on a free vote in the House of Commons, when MPs are allowed to follow their conscience with no regard for party policy. What is required to remedy the situation is to really extend democracy by having direct recall of all elected representatives.

Roger Harper
Manchester

Stuck in a jam

I disagree with much of Mary Ward’s article ‘M77 dead end’ (*Weekly Worker* 81). It must be symptomatic of the period that I can list off more current anti-new road campaigns than industrial disputes. However we must be careful not to just tail the Greens who generally follow a reactionary, anti-industrial agenda.

My job involves travel around the country, and like millions of workers I choose the car as my means of transport. Where possible I use motorways - they are usually quicker and the driving is easier. I do not like being stuck in traffic jams, or having to use roads which crawl through built up areas.

Consequently I want to see faster, safer cars and more motorways. The motorway network in Britain is full of bottlenecks and missing sections - we should be demanding major improvements in the road system.

The article poses the M77 against a decent local bus service. I say, let’s have both. Besides, the motorway is intended for people coming into Glasgow from further afield.

We are urged to support the ‘highly disciplined’ protesters in their direct action against the state. I’m not so sure: to me this is not class struggle. Where is the involvement of the workers on the nearby council estates? Or the public transport unions? Or the construction workers themselves?

I agree that routes for new roads should have minimal impact on workers’ homes and leisure facilities, but I would rather see them go through golf courses than housing estates. To me the biggest problem with the M77 is where it leads - the structurally unsafe Kingston Bridge, already the site of daily traffic jams. So while I agree with the “dead end” in the headline, my solution is more motorways!

Vernon Douglas
Manchester

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

Law and order pays dividends

EVEN TORY MP Julian Critchley condemned the lenient treatment meted out to four Aldershot-based paratroopers last week. They were convicted of ‘unlawfully wounding’ a local man after a drunken night out, leaving him crippled after a vicious attack. The judge considered it sufficient to order them to pay paltry compensation to their victim and perform ‘community service’ in their spare time.

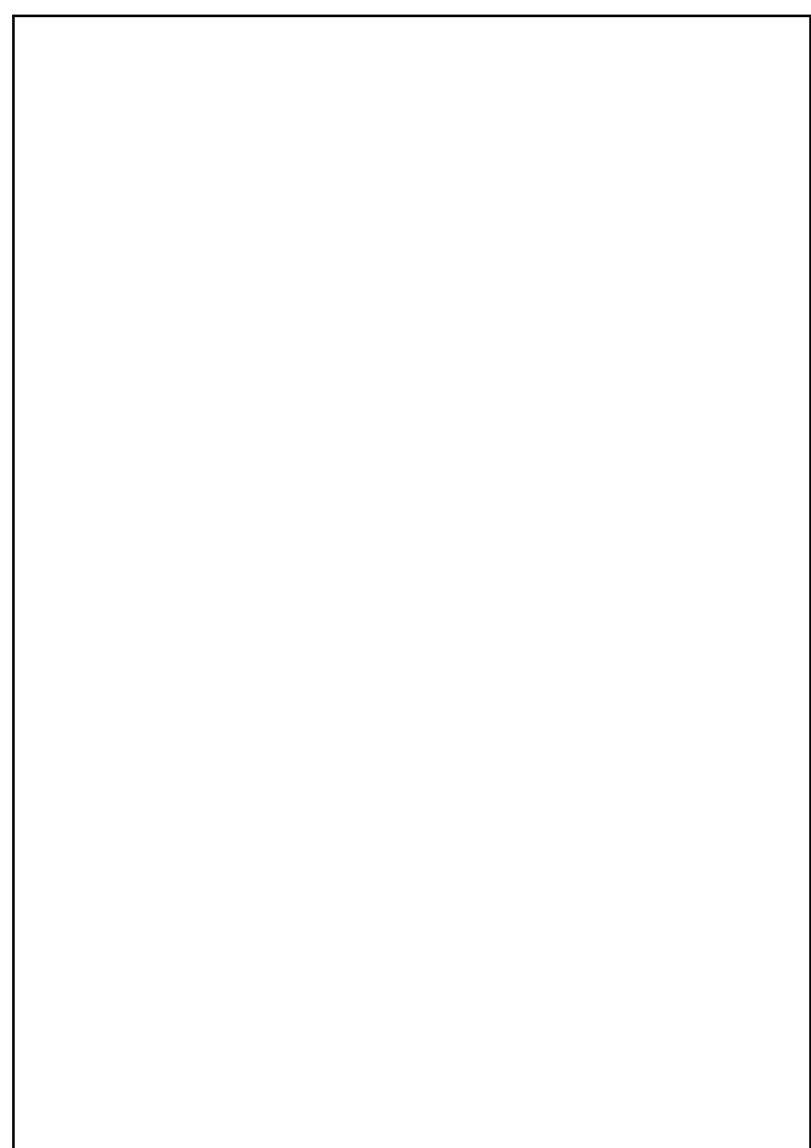
The additional military sentence of a formal warning and reduction in rank compounded the anger of local residents, who are continually being terrorised by mobs of drunken soldiers in the town centre. Critchley complains they are a source of constant trouble to his Aldershot constituents, “much more than other elite units”.

This is no accident. The paras regard themselves as a race apart. Their elite training aims consciously to brutalise them, as Irish workers have found to their cost time and time again. Their terrorism is state policy, to be used when ‘normal’ military methods fail to cow a rebellious population into submission. Unprovoked attacks on civilians are regarded by the establishment as an unfortunate by-product of this policy.

In contrast to the leniency afforded to the paras, last week also saw lengthy sentences passed on three soldiers for murderous attacks in Belfast. Trooper Andrew Clarke received ten years for firing 20 shots into a crowd of mourners at a funeral for an IRA fighter. The soldier had spotted among them republican activist Eddie Copeland, whose photograph the patrol had just been shown. “I shot the bastard,” Clarke said as he attempted to reload to continue his assault. Fortunately nobody was killed.

Less fortunate was 18-year old Peter McBride who died after being shot twice in the back by two members of an army patrol. He had run away after being “thoroughly searched” and found not to be carrying any weapon. The two soldiers were sentenced to life imprisonment for murder.

Such attacks have over the past 25 years been routinely covered up by the military. But in today’s circumstances - where the release of republican prisoners will, at some stage in the ‘peace process’, have to occur - it is perhaps useful for the state to incarcerate some of its own soldiers in



Republican activist, Eddie Copeland (right), was shot twice by Trooper Andrew Clarke who opened fire on unarmed mourners

order that any amnesty should not appear too one-sided.

The government has indicated that it has no intention, however, of repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act, despite the likely settlement in Ireland. Although up to now it has been used almost exclusively against the Irish, the Home Office now wants to keep it in place for use against ‘international sources of terrorism’. The PTA’s draconian powers have proved far too valuable to relinquish.

At the same time as the use of these powers - together with brutalising training methods - are deemed essential, the forces’ top brass continue to live

their luxurious life styles. But poor old Air Chief Marshall Sir Sandy Wilson has had to resign after going just that little bit too far. He spent £380,000 on refurbishing his official residence at state expense, including £33,000 on curtains alone.

No doubt a lump sum of £150,000 plus an annual pension of £50,000 will go some way to console him.

Alan Fox

Russia abolishes death penalty

From *The Call*, paper of the British Socialist Party, February 19 1920

[Quoting Lenin’s speech to the central executive committee of the All-Russian Soviet Congress] “In this way we have definitely overthrown the bourgeois calumny that the Soviet government is essentially terrorist. On the contrary, as soon as we gained a decisive victory, we renounced the death penalty without a day’s delay. Nevertheless any attempt on the part of the Entente or its Russian lackeys to resume their old policies of strangling the Soviet Republic will force us to reintroduce the terror. We do not bind our hands. But our duty is to show that, once victory is achieved, we renounce all the exceptional laws which all the capitalist states are at the present moment applying in all their rigour.”

Fighting fund

OH DEAR. Red nose rip-off night will soon be here again, when ‘comedians’ will be taking up the annual opportunity to further their careers. Comics who supposedly express the alienation of the underdog are to prostitute their talent to save the rich the expense of paying to clear up the mess they have made.

Charity creates the illusion of clearing up this mess. But poverty, war and ecological disaster cannot be conquered with sticky plaster solutions. These gimmick merchants take good intentions and fritter them away by tackling the symptom and ignoring the cause. In the end it produces compassion fatigue. The objects of pity become the objects of contempt because the problems always end up by growing larger. The lesson of throwing good money after bad is learned, but negatively.

Capitalism benefits by dividing the forces against it. The working class, sitting in front of TV screens, remains passive and atomised, the more easily manipulated by the ruling class.

Attacks on charity always sound callous, but it is charity itself that is the cruel illusion. The answer is hard but it is fair. All the world’s major problems can be solved by humanity bringing its affairs under its conscious control. This requires socialist planning and revolutionary action. Come out of your living rooms: help build a Party that can do this. Use your resources to create a new world. Do not waste your time shoring up capitalism.

February’s £3,000 fund has made a good start with over £1,100 already in. Send in your donations to see us laughing all the way to the bank

Phil Kent



Minister rats on Major

CHARLES WARDLE's re-signation from his post as junior trade minister on Saturday bears all the hallmarks of a rat deserting a sinking ship. Wardle has long held the view that vast numbers of illegal immigrants could find their way into Britain under the Single Europe Act despite article 7A which states that members can "take such measures as they consider necessary for the purposes of controlling immigration". However, he felt no obligation to resign when he was the junior minister for immigration for two years up till last July.

Major's reproachful reply of "I am sorry you think it necessary to resign where there is no disagreement between us on the government's objectives" is fair comment. The European Union's very essence is the free movement of both capital and workers among member states. Yet home secretary Michael Howard assured his cronies, "We have no intention of dismantling frontier controls."

Wardle says he is frightened ministers will not fight hard enough against European pressure to ease 'our' immigration controls. He has thrown in his lot with the Eurosceptics at precisely the time Lord Tebbit is declaring that "in a united Europe, Britons would become a subject race like the Chechens in Russia" and the single currency is under attack. The Tories are more concerned with their internal problems than ruling the country.

One thing parliament is not divided on is immigration. Wardle has cross-party support for his stance. Jack Straw for the Labour Party said, "Britain needs, but has not got, a just and robust system of immigration rules and controls. Whatever its sympathy, this country cannot sustain a large influx of economic migrants, for example from eastern Europe."

Parliament's interest is not working class interest. Remember how the 'collapse of communism' was going to produce healthy capitalist economies based on the verities of Thatcherism? The system that produced unemployment here has worked the same magic there. The furore about migrants taking British jobs serves to make workers compete against workers rather than combining to protect themselves against their bosses. What workers need is full employment and decent wages. The economy is organised on a worldwide basis. Unemployment has to be combated internationally. It is not true that there are too many people, too few jobs, an incapacity for humanity to create enough wealth for everybody: it is just the way capitalism runs things.

Making immigration illegal does not stop it happening. Employers give jobs to 'illegal' immigrants because they must accept whatever terms the bosses offer. Without legal rights they cannot complain. This in turn forces down wages and conditions for everyone.

This does not mean that we should fall into the trap of supporting immigration bans or crackdowns, on the specious grounds that we are trying to stop 'our' conditions and wages from being undercut. We are internationalists and for us no worker is illegal. We are for decent wages, conditions and full citizenship rights for all workers, no matter what their country of origin.

Phil Kent

Tale of two factions

'WAR out in the open', 'A party deeply at odds with itself', 'split widens', 'civil war'. Old headlines from Tory newspapers of the 1980s, mocking the Labour Party for its compulsive factionalism and in-fighting? Wrong. Current headlines highlighting the Tories' chronic disarray over European and monetary union, which has been brought to a head by Kenneth Clarke's speech at the European Movement's dinner on February 9.

The hoary political cliché about headless chickens springs to mind, with the hapless John Major acting as chicken supreme, caught in a tug-of-war between the Euro 'phobes' and 'philes'. This is quite ironic in many ways, as it was precisely Major's 'Euro-cmollience' which was deemed necessary to bring peace to a party which was fracturing under the pressure of Thatcher's intransigence over Europe. Now the carefully constructed Majorite centre ground is crumbling, as "nobody knows where it is or what it is" (*The Guardian* February 11).

The frenzied, almost Pythonesque, chronology is very illuminating. On February 5 the distinctly nutty Jonathan Aitken declared, "I don't want to see a

single currency. Period. For as long as I can possibly foresee. I would hesitate for an eternity before I came out and said I vote for a single currency." This neatly reinforced Michael Portillo's previous comments that a "single currency would mean giving up the government of the UK. No British government can give that up. It's impossible."

No one can accuse Aitken or Portillo of being ambiguous or mealy-mouthed on this issue.

No wonder the Eurosceptics were salivating at the mouth when Major addressed the 'sceptical' Conservative Way Forward dinner on February 3, promising that the government would seek to impose additional hurdles before considering any moves towards a single currency. Then, playing footsie with the anti-Europeans, he announced that Kenneth Clarke would clarify his position on February 10.

Unfortunately for the unlovely phobes, he did this by telling the 'enthusiastic' European Movement that it is quite possible to have monetary union without political union. "It is a mistake to believe that a monetary union need be a huge step on the path to a federal Europe".

No wonder that all hell broke out, as

Churchillian fantasies were rudely shattered by Clarke's tone of studied casualness. Portillo immediately retaliated, saying that Clarke's comments were "unhelpful".

Norman Tebbit told a blood-thirsty meeting of the Young Conservatives two days later that "civil disobedience" could be on the cards, if a federal European Union threatened to swallow Britain up.

The deep splits in the Tories, and the ruling class in general, are an inevitable result of the globalisation and interdependency of capitalism, which is speeding up' dramatically: "the international financial markets and world trade have by-passed the reach of national parliaments" (*The Guardian*, February 11). Broadly speaking, the Tory 'left' and Labour 'right' have recognised this and are attempting, albeit inconsistently and slightly reluctantly, to flow with the social and economic movement in the world (or, at least, hitch a ride!). On the other hand, the Tory 'right' and Labour 'left' represent more and more the most backward looking section of bourgeois society. They are sticking their heads in the nation-state sands and behaving like second rate King Canutes.

Eddie Ford

Business has faith in Labour

THE PEARSON group of industries donated £25,000 to the Labour Party last week. This is no surprise, as this company, with holdings mainly in the media and information industries, is the owner of the *Financial Times*, which called for a vote for Labour in the last general election.

The Labour Party's press officer quoted the group's financial director as saying that this shows that people are coming into line with Labour's 'new' thinking and that other companies, such as Marks and Spencer, were also thinking of making donations.

The *Financial Times*, which is amongst the most realistic of the bourgeois press, certainly seems to be the "people" that

the Labour Party spokesman had in mind. As to whether the Labour Party's thinking is coming into line with people who think that £250 a week is a necessary minimum for workers to live on is a more open question.

The Tory Party's direct links with big business are considerably reduced, compared to even 30 years ago, when most Tory MPs would have had very close ties with it. Their viewpoint would have been more coherent, less ashamed to trumpet their national chauvinist prejudices.

Nowadays these very large companies tend to have more of a world-wide interest and, on the issue of European union, would probably not be so sympathetic to the Tory Party. As many Tory MPs are

now drawn from the carpet-bagging section of the get-rich-quick variety, it is not surprising that the largest of the monopoly capitalist firms are getting irritated by the Tory Party's parochialism.

The Labour Party under Tony Blair has a much more rational and long-term strategy for capitalist development. Blair recognises that without structural changes in UK society and the integration of its economy on a world scale, the capitalist long-term future cannot be guaranteed.

Yet again the *Weekly Worker* finds itself in complete agreement with the *Financial Times* in its assessment that the Labour Party is an instrument for capitalist oppression of the working class.

John Bayliss

Poverty gap grows ever wider

A life of poverty: what kind of future does decaying capitalism offer them?

THE ROWNTREE Foundation has confirmed our report in the *Weekly Worker* 80 two weeks ago that the gap between the richest 10% and the poorest 10% has increased from £200 to £400 since 1979. While the income of those at the bottom has remained stable at about £100 per week (1994 prices), the income of the richest 10% has grown between 50% and 60%. The average increase in income overall has been 35%. The contrast is even more marked in the USA, where the bottom *twenty percent*-representing millions of working people - are three percent *worse off*, as opposed to a rise of 35% for the richest five percent.

Although the trend is very clear, there are complications that the rightwing press is playing on. In particular, there seems

to be some improvement at the bottom in the number of household durables owned by the poor. In fact, the position of the poorer section of the population has *worsened*, as social changes now mean that televisions, fridges, even cars, are *essential* for many workers.

In addition, social services such as health and education are being further tilted against the low-income groups. In other words, *absolute* pauperisation has increased.

Howard Davies, the director of the Confederation of British Industry, writing in the *Financial Times* (February 10), comments that the social structure of Britain is leading to the greatest difficulties for the capitalist class and that is why sections of big business are looking to the Labour Party to provide a more

rational, stable position.

This increase in differentiation is largely between sections of the working class. It does not show up the huge increases in the very top two percent of society. The ratio of incomes in the UK between the bottom 10% and the top 10% is about 1:5.5, whereas in the USA the ratio is nearer 1:20.

Davies considers the main cause of these changes to be the degree of integration of the world's economy. The only other country that equals this degree of change is New Zealand, itself having adopted essentially the same strategy as the US and the UK of globalising its economy, while stripping the working class of virtually all legal powers for its own self-defence.

Tom May

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.

I want to be a Communist Party supporter. Send me details. ☐

I wish to subscribe to the *Weekly Worker*. ☐

WW subscription £ _____

Donation £ _____

Cheques and postal orders should be in sterling.

	6 m	1yr	Institutions
Britain & Ireland	£7.50	£15	£25
Europe	£10	£20	£35
Rest of World	£14	£28	£40

Special offer to new subscribers: 3 months for £3.00

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL _____

Return to: CPGB, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 081-459 7146 Fax: 081-830 1639.

Printed by and published by: November Publications Ltd (081-459 7146). Registered as a newspaper by Royal Mail. ISSN 1351-0150. © February 1995

Czar Boris teeters as 'left' alliance takes shape

Yeltsin on the ropes

THE Morning Star of February 8 carried an article entitled, "Lurching on without hope", dealing with the current political situation of Russia and its president, Boris Yeltsin. The article was written by Russian leftwing activist Boris Kagarlitsky, a leading figure in the Party of Labour there.

The article states that Yeltsin launched the attack on Chechnya in order to escape from crisis by means of a short sharp conflict, like the USA's invasion of Grenada in 1983. "That obviously did not work and the war has been intensely unpopular," writes Kagarlitsky. He adds, however, that despite the current weakness of Yeltsin's government, no other force has yet come together to remove it from power.

Kagarlitsky says that the only realistic prospect for removing Yeltsin is the creation of a "strong left alliance". This would include his own party, with other parties and trade unions as minor partners in a bloc headed by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. There are parliamentary elections scheduled for December 1995 in Russia and Kagarlitsky contends that the most likely result of this election is a majority for the left alliance whose creation he advocates.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) is indeed a formidable political organisation. After its congress in January its leader, Gennady Zyuganov, said the party had 500,000 members. Even allowing for exaggeration, it is clear that this party has been the one most favoured by ex-members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union - and these number many millions. The pro-market Moscow newspaper, *Kommersant Daily*, said on February 14 that the CPRF would benefit if Russian electoral law was changed to create more single-seat constituencies, because the CPRF had the grass roots organisation to campaign effectively in such seats.

Kagarlitsky says the CPRF voted against the war in parliament. This is true, though the Moscow newspaper *Kuranty* reported in January that there was vacillation on the war question among communist deputies, and liberal groupings in the Russian Parliament were reported to have been more consistently opposed to the Chechen

war than the CPRF was. Kagarlitsky says also that the CPRF "is moving to the left". However, much of its electoral appeal and tactical orientation is nationalistic. After the January Congress, Zyuganov said the CPRF's most urgent task is to create a "union of patriotic forces", according to the Itar-Tass news agency on January 24. On some issues, CPRF deputies are reported to have cooperated in parliament with those deputies from Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's far right party, the Liberal Democrats, though the latter definitely supports the Chechen war. 'Left' and 'right' are very tricky concepts in Russia.

The CPRF is well placed in many ways to do well in the forthcoming elections - if they are actually held. The newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets* of February 11 said Yeltsin's team expected to badly in the elections and would try to postpone them if at all possible. Yeltsin might even attempt a ban on elections, a sort of coup, but he is unpopular with the military now, partly because of the Chechen mess. A military coup against Yeltsin is more likely. Nothing can be ruled out in the current situation in Russia.

Coal miners were once important allies of Yeltsin, but they are compounding his difficulties now. On February 8 there was a 24 hour warning strike which affected 200 Russian pits out of 228. The miners were protesting against government failure to pay wages. The CPRF has moved to express its support for their action.

The Yeltsin era is approaching its end. It is simply a matter of what replaces the hero of the White House. It should not surprise us if it turns out to be Kagarlitsky's 'left alliance'. However, as elsewhere in eastern Europe, former 'official communists' will not halt the process of capitalist restoration. There can be no return to the dead end of bureaucratic socialism. Workers need to reforge the party of Lenin, the party of world revolution.

Steve Kay

Chechen blood leaves a bitter taste

Tories regain power in Brent

A storm in a municipal tea cup was resolved this Monday when a councillor rose from his sick bed to restore the Tory majority over the Liberal-Labour coalition that had temporarily seized power.

It was impossible to follow the procedures from the spectators' gallery because the Tories arrogantly ran the meeting like a private party. We could only see that the Tories were carrying the votes. The Labour Party had been no better when it also carried a series of motions before the main meeting, presumably to protect its temporary majorities on the committees.

Labour had reduced council rent increases to 'only' three times the rate of inflation and increased the amount for council house repairs. Other small improvements were under consideration. But to quote Labour leader Paul Daisley, "The Labour Party in Brent is not the Labour Party of ten or fifteen years ago and with budget settings we will stay within legal limits." In effect Labour accepts Conservative policy except for small details.

Among those lobbying the meeting were school dinner workers protesting against Tory plans to replace hot school dinners with sandwiches for those entitled to free meals. They were understandably disgusted with the

Tory victory.

And what of the Labour Party? Will it perhaps take the struggle into the community, rally the trades unions, organise the class nationally against Tory policies? It will of course do nothing but grumble.

This is what made the Socialist Workers Party's chants of "Kick the Tories out" so pathetic. It claims to believe that bourgeois parliaments and councils are just talking shops and the real class struggle is in the community. Brent's Labourites will not fight in the community, cannot fight in the council. Workers need an alternative leadership, not the reinforcement of any remaining illusions in the Labour Party.

Phil Kent

Running out of patience

The story of the nurses' strike in Victoria, Australia 7.30pm, Wednesday March 1 Featuring Pat MacManus of Central Middlesex Hospital Unison Branch, a veteran striker and a member of Unison's London health committee Organised by Brent Communist Party 081-4597146

South African rulers need new Slovo

THE RECENT scandals which have rocked the African National Congress demonstrate the vacuum that the death of South African Communist Party leader Joe Slovo has left in the country.

Slovo filled the vital role of the bourgeoisie of intermediary between the ANC-dominated government and the millions of oppressed workers who yearn for liberation from their poverty and squalor.

He was revered by them for his past leadership of the revolutionary revolt against apartheid and his apparent incorruptibility. At the same time he preached patience and trust in the new bourgeois government and played an important role in helping to create the post-apartheid capitalist stability.

The fall from grace of both Allan Boesak and Winnie Mandela demonstrates that politicians with such a blatant bourgeois orientation are most unlikely to be able to fill such a role. No matter how courageously they have fought apartheid, their lack of any working class orientation means that of necessity they are drawn into the 'morality' of profit and the hazy area that divides it from corruption.

Boesak, co-founder in 1983 of the United Democratic Front - the ANC's legal wing when the party was banned - has been forced to resign from his position as ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva. It is alleged that he used money entrusted to him for anti-apartheid campaigning and children's charities to pay for a luxury house, holidays and family debts.

Winnie Mandela, the president's estranged wife, has never been one to favour a modest life-style. The latest accusation against her is that she pocketed a donation intended for the ANC's Women's League from Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan's prime minister. At the same time she has always figured high on the list of working class idols because of her previous uncompromising attitude to the fight against apartheid, and the necessity to employ the regime's own tactics of violence and terror in order to destroy it.

Last week she criticised the government - of which she herself is a deputy minister - for failing to act on behalf of the black masses. The truth of this is apparent, but she is using the language of populist black separatism to express it. This week, however, faced with expulsion from government and the undermining of her position in the leadership of the Women's League, she was forced to make a humiliating apology.

Such self-seekers are of no use to the bourgeoisie, but - more importantly - they are worthless in the struggle for working class liberation.

Jim Blackstock

Mexican hot house

MEXICO CITY'S historic main square was the sight of a huge and dramatic rally last weekend, as 100,000 people vented their rage against the government of Ernesto Zedillo and his vicious military campaign against the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). This was part of a nationwide protest against the regime, which is slipping inexorably into a catastrophic financial crisis and is hoping to shift some of the £96.6 billion debt onto the backs of the already impoverished masses. Thus, 'real' war reinforces and complements the existing economic war.

With the support of the Clinton administration, the Zedillo government has been pursuing a 'get tough' policy against the EZLN in Chiapas, which is the power base of the guerrillas. This 'toughness' has included the torture of detainees, bombing of civilians, drastic censorship and a general 'scorched-earth' approach of the kind used by the Guatemalan military against the

insurgents and their sympathisers.

At the rally many demonstrators chanted, "*Todos somos Marcos*" (We are all Marcos) and carried gigantic painted portraits of "Subcomandante Marcos", leader of the Zapatista guerrillas. Marcos sees himself as following in the footsteps of revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata and one of his key slogans is "national liberation" - from Mexico's unbroken 65-year, one-party rule.

While we applaud the heroism of the Zapatistas, and the healthy development of militant anti-government sentiment amongst the masses, we would strike a note of caution. The essentially petty bourgeois, *ruralist* nature of the Zapatistas can only lead the rebellion into a dead end, if not a blood soaked disaster. The masses need *proletarian* leadership and tactics, not Maoist type romanticism, which can easily degenerate into the realm of futile terrorism and 'left' nationalistic demagoguery.

Frank Vincent