

weekly worker

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March against Badgerline

March in support of sacked Chelmsford busworkers. Assemble Saturday March 25, 10am at Central Park, Chelmsford to rally at Chancellor Hall, Market Road. Speakers include: Bill Morris, TGWU; Steve Argent, chair of "Chelmsford 96" disputes committee; John Monks, TUC; Michael Meacher, shadow transport secretary

Demonstrate!

Join the national demonstration organised by Fight Against Cuts in Education
London, Saturday March 25. Call 0589 789104 for details

Organise against the pay scandal!

With whole sections of workers furious over low pay and threats to their jobs, anger is mounting against the bosses' pay perks. Major is promising 'action' to curb them, but all is not as it seems

MILLIONS of British workers face cuts in their pay as they are 'awarded' pay rises well below the rate of inflation. Many have their pay frozen and others are told to choose between having their wages slashed and losing their job.

Yet the very bosses who are imposing such shopfloor misery are calmly paying themselves huge bonuses on top of their already inflated salaries. And why shouldn't they, they ask in hurt innocence. After all they are paid by results - their job is to push up profits, and what better way to achieve those results than to clamp down on their employees?

It is all a question of market forces, the government has argued. You can attract the very best managers by paying them millionaire wages, but if you cut back on the jobs of teachers and nurses they will clamour to work, whatever you pay them.

Certainly many workers are expressing such frustrations.

"There is just so much bitterness," one South London nurse told us, "but we are so terrified for our jobs that nobody wants to risk a strike. Our manager wants a five percent cut across the board and it is so easy to be sacked for 'negligence' and even struck off the register."

But the government has sensed that if it allows frustration to build up too much, it could face an explosion of anger. So earlier this week John Major did a U-turn. After saying for months that he could do nothing to stop the resentment against the bosses' pay perks, he unexpectedly told parliament on Tuesday that he would be considering legislation to curb them.

Among the biggest jackpots for top directors have been the share

option schemes, particularly useful in the newly privatised industries. The bosses have the option of buying shares in their own company at an agreed low fixed price even if share prices have doubled. They can then sell them off on the market and become millionaires overnight.

Often they are rather reluctant to come clean on such daylight robbery, but recently the extent of their fortunes has been revealed. Ed Wallis, Powergen's chief gained a cool £1.2m in share option deals last year, and Bob Horton, chairman of Railtrack, stands to make a million when BR is privatised. Water and gas chiefs have profited in the same way.

Now the government is to examine the recommendations of a study group to prevent such embarrassing disclosures in future. Major says he will change

the law to prevent such deals "when they cannot be justified". What could be fairer?

There is just one snag. The 'study group' is made up of the top bosses themselves! It was set up by the Confederation of British Industry and is headed by Marks and Spencer chairman Sir Richard Greenbury. And last year the noble Sir Richard himself raked in £465,057 through share option instant profits - on top of his 'basic' £629,588 salary. How confident we all are that fair play will prevail!

We must look to our own strength. No matter how the bosses disguise their own windfalls, workers should fight for what we need. Many feel demoralised and powerless now, but they can be won to fight if a path to victory can be demonstrated.

There are signs that the trade union bureaucrats are considering some kind of action. For example the nurses' unions have launched a joint campaign - even the 'professional' Royal College of Nursing may be prepared to strike.

What is clear is that workers themselves will have to organise at rank and file level to have a real hope of victory. We must build on the union chiefs' NHS Fair Pay Day on March 30 and the national demonstration against education cuts on March 25, organised by the newly formed Fight Against Education Cuts. But we must go much further.

Start now to link up at local level. United workers' action can not only fight off the bosses' attacks, but make real gains for the entire working class.

Heads of privatised utilities rake it in while sacking workers. From left to right James Smith, chairman of Eastern Electric made £466,287 on top of his £237,000 salary last year; Desmond Pitcher chairman of Northwest water on £315,000 a six-fold rise on that paid to his predecessor and Cedric Brown chief executive of British Gas on £475,000 a 75% pay rise

Fighting fund

The Party has launched a special fund-raising drive which aims to double our normal £3,000 monthly target to £6,000 for March. We need this special push to raise money for the local elections in Scotland, on April 6, and in England and Wales in May.

The Party will be campaigning to expose the fraud of bourgeois politics and taking the opportunity to put forward a revolutionary alternative. By standing as many candidates as we can we hope to bring the Party programme to the attention of a much wider section of the working class. If elected - whether to parliament or a local council - the duty of a communist is to act as a tribune of the people and use the seat as a platform for organising the class.

Phil Kent

Strike back on March 30!

Militant silence

Militant (February 17) published a useful article on the split within the Maoist-led Philippines Communist Party by Phil Hearse - a recent recruit, previously editor of *Socialist Outlook*.

The article upholds the "Leninist principle of freedom of internal debate coupled with unity in action". It is therefore ironic that Militant Labour has not seen fit to publish any of the contending viewpoints within its own organisation regarding its decision to stand a candidate in last week's Tower Hamlets by-election (see 'Militant hushes up election stand split', *Weekly Worker* 81).

ML members have told us they think our article was "out of order", because internal debate *did* take place. The point is that this was restricted to a minority of members who attended the relevant meetings and that the existence of differences over the important election tactic question was suppressed - the announcement of the decision to contest even appears to have been delayed.

Democratic centralism means the fullest possible debate, *openly conducted* before the entire working class.

Both 'official communism' and Trotskyism have tended to see internal differences as a sign of weakness, not to be aired in public. The most notorious example of this, as far as ML is concerned, was the refusal to publish discussion around the 1991 Ted Grant split - 'open ideological debate' took place on that occasion in the pages of *The Guardian*.

Peter Manson
South London

Take the biscuit

The comments of Assad Rahman, of the Newham Monitoring Project, in *Weekly Worker* 81 really take the biscuit.

Now, let me see if I have got this right. Assad apparently agrees with us that Labour is "part of the problem", yet he is quite happy to hand out leaflets which simply say, 'Don't Vote BNP', which - as we all know - means 'Vote Labour' (by default). Furthermore, he has the sauce to tell us that the job of the NMP "is to combat racism and fascism here and now. It is up to you to offer the long-term solutions."

So, Assad and his chums in the NMP stroll around Newham casually handing out leaflets which implore workers to vote Labour (or worse), while we in the Communist Party have to rush about like blue-arsed flies trying to undo the damage, telling the very same workers *not* to vote Labour.

Hmmm....no wonder that the masses are not exactly queuing up to join leftwing organisations.

Robert Martin
Halifax

Stalin erred

With regard to comrade Hammill's letter (*Weekly Worker* 81), I would like to make some points about Stalin's role in the purges.

The common view that Stalin had a long range plan to consolidate power for himself is a gross oversimplification.

The true scenario was that of a divided and indecisive leadership in constant conflict with the various regional Party organisations. From 1929 until 1935 the central authorities carried out a series of purges against the regional bureaucracies. These were aimed at fighting against the increasing cases of nepotism, favouritism, Party apparat high handedness and remoteness with the rank and file membership; as well as combating the lack of self-criticism among regional Party secretaries and the low level of debate of Party policies and local issues at primary organisation level.

During the course of industrialisation and collectivisation, Party records had become out of date, members who had been expelled still held Party cards and cards were traded on the black market. Careerists and adventurists joined the Party; vast numbers didn't bother to attend meetings.

Stalin had little to gain from the death of Kirov. He was in fact (along with Zhdanov) closely associated with Kirov's policies of maintaining Party unity and tackling the above-mentioned problems, not by mass purging, but by a comprehensive policy of political re-education, propaganda, agitation and increased Party democracy.

As late as the February 1937 plenum of the central committee Stalin supported Zhdanov's criticism of the regional Party set-up. He also cautioned against root and branch expulsions of Trotskyites.

The fate of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and Rykov were sealed by the readiness of the regional secretaries to mark them down as scapegoats and as fronts for Trotskyite opposition (Zinoviev and Kamenev actually did have links with Trotsky). Their expulsion from the Party mirrored a central committee split on whether to accept the Zhdanov or Ezhov programme.

Only slowly did Stalin err towards the disastrous programme advocated by Ezhov, which led to the massacre of many innocent communists running out of control.

Colin McGhie
Glasgow

Confusion

Once again I see the *Weekly Worker* is not only failing to give leadership to the workers, but actually creating confusion within their ranks. No 83 carries two reports regarding South Africa: one a critical report on Mandela and the second an uncritical report of an interview between Harry Gwala of the ANC and your reporter Peter Manson.

The first correctly states that communists must "... now ... organise

against the bourgeois state, whether it is fronted by black or white faces ..." In the second uncritical report we read exactly the *opposite*! Gwala states, "I don't think we have reached the point of breaking with the government yet." So, what is the policy of the CPGB on these contradictory positions?

Actually the two stages theory of revolution offered by Gwala reflects the opportunism and menshevism of the SACP. I hesitate to suggest that it is a hangover from 'Stalinism', as this theory and concept is embraced by the world Trotskyist movement, but in a more subtle 'left' form. They call for a bourgeois parliament (constituent assembly) and, where workers' councils are mentioned, they are given the task, not of overthrowing the capitalist government and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, but of organising the bourgeois parliament in order to complete the democratic 'stage' of the bourgeois democratic revolution (BDR). So much for permanent revolution!

What is the BDR? Quite simply it is a revolution to install the bourgeois class and system to power, with broad democratic rights for the working class at the expense of autocratic feudalism.

The capitalist class, with the assistance of imperialism, has ruled in South Africa for many years. The fact that the masses of black people have not had full democratic rights does not question the nature of class rule in South Africa, but rather reveals the class against which one must struggle in order to obtain freedom to organise, strike, speak, vote, etc. In other words an anti-capitalist struggle - for working class state power, as opposed to class collaboration.

P Conlon
South London

Eternal life?

All those ageing centrists who dream of discovering the elixir of youth (so they can repeat their mistakes *ad infinitum*, god forbid) must be looking to North Korea for salvation at this moment.

The North Koreans, guided by the infallible scientific methodology of *Juche*, are reputedly seeking elixirs made from bird droppings to prolong the life of the Dear Leader, Kim Jong-Il. All the latest research indicates that Taiwanese swallow droppings and birds' nest are particularly effective with regards to longevity.

True to the spirit of dialectical materialism and scientific socialism, the state media - ie, all the media - has claimed that the Dear Leader descended from heaven. Naturally, twin rainbows were reportedly seen on the 'holy' mountain where he was born.

Welcome to 'hard line communism', North Korean style. Who needs religion when you have got so-called 'Marxism-Leninism-Jucheism'?

Terry Dunbar
Cardiff

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

Big business boxes clever

AS BOXER Gerald McClellan lies critically ill after the removal of a huge brain clot following last Saturday's fight with Nigel Benn, the call to ban boxing is once again being vigorously promoted by sections of the liberal bourgeoisie. In response the money-grabbing professional boxing establishment has wheeled out those in the front line to defend its ill-gotten gains.

One such person who made - in his own naive way - a particularly telling intervention against the hypocrisy of

the anti-boxing lobby was Gary Mason, the former British heavyweight champion. "All that two individuals are trying to do is better themselves through fighting," he said. "It's like saying, 'let's stop sending people to war; stop sending them to kill people they don't even know?'"

Anti-boxing liberals and 'leftists' can indeed frequently be found among those campaigning, for example, for stronger imperialist intervention against Serbia - an intervention which would lead to the slaughter of thousands more

- all in the name of humanity.

Working class youths sometimes look to boxing as their route away from the poverty and alienation of capitalism. Like drugs and prostitution, it can provide such an escape for a minority.

However unsavoury these escape routes may be, we should not call for the state to ban them, thus driving them underground. Instead we need to win those at the very bottom of society to see their liberation in the smashing of capitalism itself.

Alan Fox

Lost Barings

Barings' dealer slumps over his desk as collapse shakes the city

THE BOURGEOISIE was stunned by the total collapse on Sunday night of Barings Bank. By Tuesday losses amounted to £800 million, and the Bank of England warned that Barings is exposed to "unquantifiable further losses until the contracts expire or are otherwise closed out."

Incredibly, the 'black hole' can be traced to 'rogue' share deals carried out by a 28-year old dealer named Nick Leeson in Barings' Singapore office, who was gambling on the casino-like derivatives. These shares speculate in changes on future market conditions.

Showing excessive entrepreneurial zeal, Leeson purchased up to 20,000 packages of share contracts, priced at £120,000 apiece, which were based on predicting movements in the Tokyo Nikkei 225 Stock Market index. The Tokyo stock market fell and the losses started to snowball.

This dramatically exposes the increasingly fragile nature of international capitalism, which is becoming more and more vulnerable to the 'domino effect'. As *The Guardian*

phrased it, "in financial matters, every bank is linked to every other in an umbilical chain and by breaking one link you threaten every other element, however blameless" (February 28).

Britain and the Bank of England are no longer the financial powers they once were - indeed, it could even be the end of an epoch. The fact that the Bank of England was unable to rally the City around the hapless Barings Bank and come to its rescue will send shock waves throughout the ruling class. The 'old boy' network, so valued by our rulers, counted for nothing when it came to the crunch.

The parasitical nature of capitalism in this era of ever increasing globalisation and interdependency is impossible to disguise, much to the embarrassment of many an expert and commentator, whose job is to extol the virtues of the free market and bourgeois democracy.

The potential for an absolutely catastrophic meltdown is immense, given the increasingly irrational and anarchical nature of the system.

Eddie Ford

Benn gives Labour left excuse to stay

LAST WEEK'S meeting of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs voted down Tony Benn's proposals to change its name to the Socialist Group. Benn had further called for the insertion of the party's existing clause four, word for word, into the aims and values of the organisation.

He wrote in a memo to his colleagues: "The purpose of both these changes would be to make clear to the movement and to the public that socialist ideas are still to be found inside the party. It might discourage members of the party from resigning, as some have suggested they might if clause four is deleted."

No doubt he is right. So many Trotskyite entryist groups, as well as individual leftists, have been able to cite the existence of clause four in justification of their membership of a party which has never had - and will never have - the possibility of advancing the working class along the road to socialism.

The scrapping of clause four will not make an ounce of difference to the party's practice.

The change will, however, be useful in gaining support from the 'middle ground', as Labour now consolidates itself as capitalism's government-in-waiting.

Meanwhile the Labour left will continue as it always has, constituting the most dedicated section of membership, faithfully campaigning on behalf of the rightwing leadership at election time, while most of the 'revolutionary' left groups will continue with their absurd 'Vote Labour but ...' parrot cries.

Tony Blair still has some sort of fight on his hands to ditch the offending clause. But in the long term Benn's desire to keep the left in the party - with its mouth clamped shut - will have done a disservice to the working class, whose urgent need is to build an alternative, revolutionary organisation.

Jim Blackstock

Socialist unity

Extracts from a resolution of the British Socialist Party executive, published in its weekly paper, *The Call*, March 4 1920

THE EXECUTIVE Committee of the BSP adhere to the views their delegates have expressed as to the relations of the Communist Party to the Labour Party and the industrial organisation of the working class. Nevertheless they feel that this question, important though it is, is secondary to the need for uniting in one Communist Party all those organisations in this country that adhere to the Third International, and accept the Soviet system, and the dictatorship of the working class. For this reason they are prepared to make a further concession in order to carry the negotiations with other bodies to a successful issue, and express their willingness to withdraw that clause in the original unity recommendations referring to a referendum three months after the formation of the Communist Party on the question of relations with the Labour Party.

This offer of the BSP executive is, of course, made without prejudice to their freedom inside the Communist Party to advocate affiliation to the Labour Party, and to submit a full statement of their view on this question to the central executive committee of the Third International at Petrograd.



Mexico faces new crisis

THE US and Mexican governments finally agreed last week to the tough terms of America's \$20 billion loan to bale out the stricken Mexican economy, but it seems almost certain that the 'cure' will be more fatal than the disease.

Under pressure from the US, the Bank of Mexico raised interest rates to 50% on January 20. The effect on companies and businesses will be devastating, triggering off untold collapses and bankruptcies.

It is only a matter of time before the business community runs out of patience and turns against the already divided Zedillo government. Such withdrawal of support (and capital) would create a crisis at the top. Coupled with this is the organised armed uprisings which first hit the British press in January 1994. The US will try and make workers pay for the crisis in Mexico just as it has at home, but workers in Mexico may not be so easily skinned.

Against this near apocalyptic backdrop, more information is emerging about the mysterious "Subcomandante Marcos", and the Mexican revolutionary movement.

Marcos is a sophisticated and intelligent revolutionary, with a distinctly creative touch. After being taunted by the pro-government press for being homosexual, which is quite a serious 'accusation' in a macho society like Mexico, Marcos issued one of his typically idiosyncratic E-mail communiqués: "Marcos is gay in San Francisco, a Palestinian in Israel, a Jew in Germany, a pacifist in Bosnia, a housewife alone on a Saturday night in

any neighbourhood of any city in Mexico..."

Originally a university lecturer, he moved to Nicaragua after the Sandinista revolution. In 1984, he disappeared into the Mexican jungle with a group of Central American Maoists, where he spent 10 years training a peasant army. As we know, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) finally struck on New Year's Day 1994 in Chiapas - the day that Nafta became law.

Marcos declared in July 1994: "We don't want power; we don't want money; just our land back. So in this kind of struggle the communists, the communist bogeymen, cannot be invoked."

It seems from this that Marcos's 'guerrillaist' tactics may be directed towards negotiation rather than revolution. This is not the behaviour of a serious proletarian revolutionary, who employs warfare as an integral part of a revolutionary programme. It smacks more of petty bourgeois adventurism, which is content to play cat-and-mouse with government forces until it either exhausts itself or is defeated militarily (remember the very different fates of Regis Debray and Che Guevara).

However, the German journal *Gegen die Stromung* (Against the Tide) contains an interview with a representative of the Movimiento Revolucionario de Mexico (Mexican Revolutionary Movement) a coalition of seven *armed revolutionary* organisations, including the EZLN, which have been working together since 1978. The journal is distributed by the Stalin Society, so should be read critically, but some interesting facts can be gleaned.

The MRM was central in organising the 100,000-strong pro-Marcos demonstration in Mexico City on January 12.

But the political ideology of the MRM has its limitations. Primarily it is characterised by a backward looking

nationalism. The MRM comrade states in the journal that the "Mexican revolution is our own affair". The comrade plainly affirms that the MRM has "never had relationships with other countries. Not with the Soviet Union, nor Cuba, Vietnam, Albania, China or Korea...the path we have chosen in Mexico and which has developed in the course of the struggle is to rely upon ourselves alone."

This can only lead to demoralisation and eventual defeat. The comrade goes on to defend the Mexican constitution against Nafta and declares that "Mexican nationalism is a process of finding and defending ourselves against the American invasion and so it plays a progressive role."

Real strength for the MRM would be to exploit the opportunity presented by Nafta and unite with the North American working class, to organise across national borders. The revolutionary dynamism of Mexican workers could have a huge impact on the working class in the US, whose politics at the moment are incredibly reactionary.

Although MRM's stated aim is socialist revolution, it seems content to find 'liberation' in the pre-capitalist past. It idealises primitive communist communalism and isolates itself from the international working class in a manner reminiscent of Enver Hoxha or Kim Il Sung.

A socialist revolution in this weak link of imperialism could not survive in isolation, but it could act as a spark for workers in the US itself.

The US economy is tied tightly to Mexico and a revolutionary situation there would cause it massive problems. A working class united throughout North America under the inspiration of the revolutionary movement in Mexico would be a threat to imperialism world-wide.

Frank Vincent

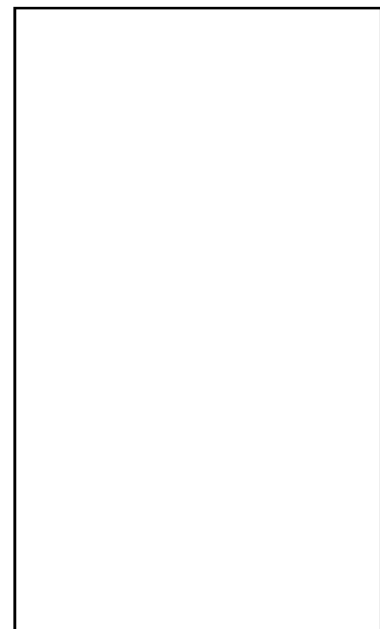
Medieval new wave

SINCE the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the collapse of the pro-Moscow administration there, Afghanistan has been yanked back into the Middle Ages. However flawed they were, pro-Soviet and communist Afghans adhered to certain concepts appropriate to the 20th century - like literacy, and education for women. The anti-Soviet mujahedin who were so assiduously backed by Washington and the West, not to mention most of the British left, would never dream of entertaining such notions.

In the past three years, fighting between rival mujahedin bands has claimed 20,000 lives in the capital Kabul alone. The mujahedin, who accused the Soviet army of killing civilians, have shown every willingness to fire rocket barrages into densely-populated districts of Kabul.

Yet reports about the situation in Afghanistan have been remarkably rare in the British media. Sandy Gall, for example, has kept his distance. No longer a Cold War football, Afghanistan seems to have lost all interest for such people (Speaking of football, some mujahedin have banned the game on the grounds that it is inappropriate to Islam). Or perhaps the mujahedin are themselves a source of some embarrassment.

However, a new spectre haunts Afghan politics. The Taliban is a group of religious students who have emerged, seemingly from nowhere, and scored important battlefield victories. *Time* magazine (February 27) reported one of the Taliban leaders as saying that their aim was to "cleanse Afghanistan of those mujahedin who have become killers, thieves and drug dealers in the name of Islam. We want



Taleban face of reaction in Afghanistan

to bring an end to looting, lawlessness and the dishonouring of our women."

Many Afghans welcome the Taliban, hoping they will end the incessant fighting and crime. The Taliban have forced women to stop attending school, and in this they are no different from those forces they are trying to "cleanse". They cherish the ambition of creating an Islamic state, although that is what Afghanistan officially is - or would be if a state actually existed. The Taliban could end the endemic fighting, but Afghanistan appears set on a road towards a system that will make Saudi Arabia look progressive.

Steve Kay

Stench of peace

ALMOST UNIVERSAL support has been given to the framework document for the Anglo-Irish peace negotiations. Only the Ulster Unionists are opposed to it but, according to the *Independent on Sunday*, 81% of Ulster Unionist Party supporters and 63% of Democratic Unionist Party supporters back the talks.

Many of the proposals are vague but three things seem settled. Firstly, British rule will continue indefinitely. Secondly, protestant domination over catholics is guaranteed. Thirdly, Eire will drop its constitutional claim to the North. How the new constitution works when it comes will depend on the political situation rather than legal niceties. Sinn Fein is committed to the parliamentary route and Irish unification is relegated to a long term dream. The 25 year crisis for the British state is being resolved in Britain's favour.

Yet most of those who consider themselves to be revolutionary are pleased with Britain's victory. They are glad once again to be playing revolutionary politics safe from the threat of revolutionary action.

The *Morning Star* is only worried that unionists may upset the apple cart. It writes on February 27: "History will not forgive the British government if it fritters away the chances for a lasting peace by putting its parliamentary support from the unionists before this prize."

In *Militant* on February 24 Manus Maguire comments: "All capitalist arrangements should be rejected. The working class needs to build on the magnificent movements of 1992 and 1993 to provide a socialist solution to the national conflict." Those demonstrations, organised by trade union bureaucrats against the IRA, were both reformist and subservient to British interests. *Militant* is typical of the British left in wanting to build on peace movements rather than on revolutionary situations.

John Molyneux, writing in his column in *Socialist Worker* (February 18), says: "... a lasting peace in Northern Ireland can only be achieved by overriding the unionist bosses". Peace under capitalism, whether the bosses be unionist or not, is a nonsense. It is amazing that the left still cannot identify the British state and its army as the main enemy in the Six Counties. Only through socialist revolution can we achieve a 'lasting peace' that will render the term defunct.

The resolution of the revolutionary situation in the Six Counties in imperialism's favour is not something we should welcome. Our job is to re-organise our forces, preparing for the time when workers in Britain and Ireland, united on a socialist programme, can once more take up arms against the bosses' state.

Arthur Lawrence

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.

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Celebrate International Working Women's Day

Women's liberation through class struggle

SINCE the feminist movement ran out of steam, the marking of March 8 in bourgeois circles is left exclusively to columnists in *The Guardian* celebrating those courageous and superhuman women who manage to run their own advertising company, nurture two children and host dinner parties, of course with a little bit of help from their loyal 'new man'. The columns have become increasingly cynical, it is true, since the shattering of the feminist movement has left the dichards arguing over what it is exactly they are fighting for.

As the sham of equal pay is yet again exposed in a report by the Equal Opportunities Commission (February 22) the reality for the vast mass of working class women is very different. Most are still caught in domestic slavery, but often have to take two or three low paid part-time jobs as well just to survive. It is beholden then on communists to reclaim International *Working Women's* Day - torn from its revolutionary roots by the feminist movement - for the working class.

International Working Women's Day was first celebrated on March 8 1911 at the initiative of the International Women's Socialist Organisation, and its leader Clara Zetkin, a leading member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany who later played a prominent role in the formation of the Communist Party of Germany.

The day was to commemorate a demonstration three years earlier in

which women machinists of New York's Lower East Side marched, demanding better working conditions and the right to vote. They demonstrated against the bosses but also the bourgeois women's movement, which refused to call for women workers' votes.

Zetkin fought not only against bourgeois feminists of her day but also against the so called 'socialist feminists' who wanted a cross class alliance for the liberation of women. She argued there is **"no such thing as a women's movement"**. Bourgeois women struggle for improved conditions within capitalism. Only by fighting in a revolutionary way can the demands of working class women be achieved. Ultimately, Zetkin said, we can only gain our liberation **"through the political rule of the working class."**

The IWSO resolved that **"socialist women must not ally themselves with bourgeois feminists, but lead the battle side by side with socialist men"**. This was also the line of march taken by the Bolsheviks when International Working Women's Day was first commemorated in Russia in 1913. In *Rabotnitsa* (Woman Worker), they argued - in opposition to the Mensheviks who wanted women-only demonstrations - against cross class collaboration with feminism and for a demonstration of both women and men workers to celebrate March 8.

In Russia, communist Alexandra Kollantai argued that **"the women's world is divided, just like the world of**

Working women fight for decent pay

men, into two camps" - bourgeois and proletarian.

Women workers in Petrograd proved this beyond all doubt when on March 8 1917 the Bolshevik line shook the world. Strikes by women celebrating International Working Women's Day acted as the catalyst for the February Revolution which toppled the Tsar and paved the way for the October Socialist Revolution.

International Working Women's Day is therefore a communist celebration.

Mary Ward, branch secretary of Dundee CPGB, will be speaking at the IWWD celebration meeting in London. Here she compares her experience as a Labour Party councillor with her experience as a communist

I JOINED the CPGB during the Timex dispute and last year I was a communist candidate in the Hilltown by-election and the Scotland North East European elections. Next week we will be launching our local election campaign in Dundee and I will be standing in the Hilltown again.

Standing as a communist has been very different to my experience as a Labour Party candidate. For Labour our campaigns were simply about finding the vote. We were told not to discuss anything with anybody but only to identify who they were voting for. If they weren't Labour they would have a circular sent to them targeting which party they said they were going to vote for.

When you knock on the door for the Communist Party at the moment you know that the mass of people will not have it in mind to vote Communist! It actually surprised me how positive the response was to us as communist canvassers. People were very interested in our ideas. They had generally read our literature before we arrived and would ask us about points in the manifesto.

I think people were interested in what we had to say because it was so different from the rest.

Votes for us are a test of our strength - what is important is working class action. The Labour Party wants working class votes, but not working class action.

As a Labour councillor for Coldsides, I acted as an advice or social worker. We

Feminism only gained authority (and duly dropped the *Working Women* from the day) because the 'official communists' first vacated the field to them and then jumped on the feminist bandwagon.

The implosion of the feminist movement means their celebrations on March 8 no longer take place. But our forces are undeniably very weak. The lack of any strong independent working class organisation shows itself in the condition of women workers, as it does for all workers.

The increase in part-time work, far from being a liberation for women, has been responsible for dragging wages down and removing any rights to sickness and other benefits. Attacks on wages have seen the absolute pauperisation of many working class families. Not only have we seen the slashing of benefits for single mothers but the closing of crèche facilities and nurseries throughout the country.

Communists must take the lead in reversing this trend. The needs of capitalism dictate that it will continue to attack working class women. The reclaiming and rebuilding of International Working Women's Day on the basis of class struggle is part of our fight to defend even very basic women's rights under capitalism, but - more importantly - to end capitalism, so that women's liberation can become real.

Helen Ellis

Workers' unity in Europe

STRIKERS in France seem to set up the barricades at the drop of a hat. The recent ferry workers' strike was no exception - obstructing motorway traffic, throwing paint over buildings and fighting the riot police. In part this reflects France's revolutionary tradition, but it also reflects the weakness of French trade unionism. French union organisation is divided between three competing politically committed bodies, none with more than a few hundred thousand members. Strikes are therefore often unofficial, unrestrained by legal threats, but - despite their overtly political demeanour - usually isolated and short-lived.

This contrasts with the less spectacular IG Metall strike for a six percent pay rise presently likely to escalate in Germany. Here the union organises the entire industry. It is massive and well funded. The workers are disciplined and united in action. The employers will be forced to negotiate. Yes, it is bureaucratic and rightwing and will not drive a hard bargain. But it has the power to win: that is the point.

Both strikes have important international significance. French ferry workers are blockading channel ports to prevent a British company using cheap Polish labour. French workers earn about £1,250 per month, the Poles £310. The non-striking British workers get about half the French pay; the French also have the best working conditions. The employers have retaliated by re-routing their ships to Belgian ports. The case for a single union for all European workers is obvious.

Our argument of course is not against Polish workers, but the conditions and pay they are working for. It is absurd that French workers fought an isolated battle which should be one for all British, French, Polish and Belgian workers.

As the Tories squabble over the European Union, the need for workers' unity is clear. Despite the reactionary bigotry of the Tory Eurosceptics, whom Major has been leaning over backwards to pacify, the European economy is merging and Britain cannot isolate itself from that.

High profile cases like BMW's purchase of Rover in England and VW ownership of Seat in Spain demonstrate the way in which capitalism produces without regard to frontiers. Workers must do the same or be played off against one another. Engineering Workers, for example, could unite their struggles on a European-wide basis, linking up with IG Metall.

We need a single TUC for the whole of Europe and international industrial unions on the German model if workers are to be able to compete with their bosses. Communists must also look beyond the industrial struggle. To the extent that the bosses come together under a EU state we will have to be united in a Communist Party of the European Union to smash that state.

Phil Kent

An absence of leadership

Maggie Crow, a Unison steward at Christie hospital in Manchester, talks about the prospects for a fightback among nurses

NURSES FEEL the one percent pay offer has been just another kick in the teeth really. Here, we are just going through a process of voluntary redundancy, so we know this hospital will not pay more. Everyone feels angry that this also seems to be the beginning of local pay bargaining.

Ancillary workers who already have horrendous low pay feel that this is a sign of worse to come for them next year. For nurses short-term contracts are creeping in and low staffing levels make the job very difficult, although here conditions are not as bad as those at the big district hospitals. Skill mix reviews are also being done in a very underhand way to downgrade workers.

In the past taking action has been difficult since nurses feel a moral duty to their patients. But there is a limit to that emotional blackmail and past loyalties to the hospital are being eroded now.

Nurses would take action if there was strong national leadership, but at the moment the RCN is talking more militant than Unison. The trouble with the day of action that Unison has organised on March 30 is that people know it isn't going to achieve anything. Although nurses won't necessarily be

immediately ready for strike action they do know that it is pretty futile to do anything less. The union is playing into the government's hands as well by keeping it to local demonstrations rather than giving it the national focus that it needs.

Nurses do want something to happen, but I don't know how committed they are to doing anything themselves and nobody is taking leadership initiative. A lead from the union would make a difference, but people are feeling very insecure about their jobs so it would take a lot to get any sustained action.

The reforms in the NHS have been brought in so smoothly and sneakily that I think nurses feel quite powerless. People have very little faith in the trade unions because they don't feel the unions have any power to do anything. They aren't giving a lead that people can believe in. They do not offer the possibility of any real change.

I think sickness absence is being used as a form of unorganised conflict, because there isn't any leadership from the unions. Although people may wait for a Labour government, they know it will not make a difference either. There is no other channel for the expression of that discontent.