



**Communist Party
local election
manifesto
- see inside**

Nurses' unity under threat

While nurses are being offered a pay rise that is in fact a pay cut those lucky lads at bust Barings Bank are to get a million pound bonus to peck up their spirits. Greedy British Gas boss Cedric Brown and his fellow directors have just slipped themselves a million free shares. They live in a world where the millions are just perks. The world is hard, but it's fair. More than fair to a few: much less than fair to the rest

ON FEBRUARY 28 the Royal College of Nursing, Unison and several smaller health unions came together under rank and file pressure to forge a united front to fight their pay claim. That unity seems already under threat.

Christopher Cardwell and Maggie Dunn, representing Nursing and Midwifery Staff, say in *The Guardian* (March 4): "We have agreed to reject the government's pay proposals and to campaign together to ensure all of our members receive a minimum three percent pay rise on April 1."

This leaves open the possibility that they may accept local pay agreements. The RCN is also believed to be ready to accept local negotiations.

Local negotiations on pay and conditions will destroy nurses' unity. Some sections of workers are bound to be left behind, but in the long term all workers will find their bargaining strength weakened. Communists have always argued that the largest possible industry-wide union representing all of the workers gives the class the best chance of protecting our interests against the bosses.

The government knows of the nurses' reluctance to put the patients at risk and is ruthlessly taking advantage of it. Hospital staff need every weapon in the trade union arsenal to tackle this government and the unity to make their action effective.

In fighting for their own needs health workers are also fighting for the health service which everyone needs. The government wants to reduce the staff to cheap scullions so it can tempt private capital in to exploit our health for their profit.

At the same time the bosses' own pay perks are continuing to soar. Despite the government's feeble attempts at damage limitation, everyone can see that top employers and the Tories themselves are in it up to their necks.

But surely the Labour Party is beyond reproach? Not quite. Grenville Janner MP has just been referred to the Nolan committee - investigating 'standards in public life' - over the allocation of his £41,309 MP's office allowance.

Apart from his MP's pay and allowances, Janner 'earns' a cool £220,000 a year from his business interests. One of his consultancy companies is at present running a course entitled 'Discipline and dismissal'.

'Comrade' Janner is the chair of the Commons employment select committee - currently grilling the heads of the privatised utilities about their excessive incomes!

Labour and Tory are both bosses' parties, concerned only at holding down workers' pay in order to jack up their own profits. Only a united fightback by workers can end the pay scandal.

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

Demonstrate against education cuts

Join the national demonstration organised by FACE London, Saturday March 25. Call 0589 789104 for details

David Jones memorial march

Assemble March 11, 10am Church Fields, Barnsley (opposite police station) Followed by lecture by Mike Mansfield QC at NUM HQ, Huddersfield Road.

Is tradition important in the working class movement?

Part of the London CPGB seminar series on aspects of the other British culture. Central London on Sunday March 12 at 5pm. Details - 081-459 7146

Fighting fund

Comrades, we do not have much time to work for our election fighting fund. Soon we will be out on the campaign trail, so we want to clear the decks as much as possible before then.

Dundee branch raised £145 last week as part of its preparations. Our candidates in Scotland can hardly wait to sink their teeth into the flabby neck of local government on April 6. They would welcome not only your financial support but your physical presence as well.

Strike back together on March 30!

Letters

Confused again

I note from previous issues of the paper that we have been very generous to comrade P Conlon (a fact that has not stopped him complaining about our “censorship”, however). His latest offering (*Weekly Worker* 83) should have been spiked. He accuses us of creating confusion “once again” in our reporting of South Africa.

He first quotes our article to the effect that communists in that country must now “organise *against* the bourgeois state, whether it is fronted by black or white faces ...” He then quotes from an interview we conducted with Harry Gwala from the South African Communist Party to the effect that “I don’t think we have reached the point of breaking with the government yet.” Comrade Conlon finds this all very confusing - “What is the policy of the CPGB on these contradictory positions?” he asks us.

It hardly seems credible that someone can be that stupid. However, for comrade Conlon’s benefit: the first is a report, written by a communist journalist, and broadly within what the CPGB has consistently said about the struggle in South Africa for a number of years, both in our paper and elsewhere; the second is an *interview* with a member of the SACP who gives his *opinion*.

Confusing? No I didn’t think so. Seems like its just you then, comrade Conlon ...

Mark Fischer
London

More confused

P Conlon’s letter confused me. He seems to agree with the Party’s line on South Africa, as with most important issues. Yet he continues to criticise from a distance.

But when it comes to really offering uncritical support to individuals with confused and - yes - ‘Stalinist’ viewpoints, Conlon’s Independent Communists cannot be beaten. His tiny group is entirely constituted of individuals united only in their determination to be independent of the Communist Party, and - as he well

knows - often independent of rational thought as well. These people confuse the workers and sometimes talk such rubbish as to bring Communist politics into disrepute.

It is impossible to build a revolutionary movement from the bottom up, especially from such disparate elements. At the end of the day Paul is just like Harry Gwala: he is taking a political line that deprives the working class of his talents.

Phil Kent
Rochester

Hobsbawm revisited

Readers might be interested to know that Eric Hobsbawm, ‘official communist’-cum-Kinnockite-cum-gloomy guru, appeared on Radio Four’s ‘Desert Island Discs’ this Sunday. According to Hobsbawm there are “two types” of communists: “sectarian” communists and “responsible” communists (Sue Lawley agreed). Naturally, our Eric likes to believe that he has always fallen into the latter category of “responsible” communist.

Guess what? “Sectarian” communists are those nasty ‘extremists’ who form separate communist parties and organisations and actively oppose social democracy Labourism. “Responsible” communists, on the other hand, dedicate themselves to the noble task of getting social democratic Labourite governments elected.

Still, what can you expect from a man who wrote in his latest book that “it was in 1920 that the Bolsheviks committed themselves to what in retrospect seems a major error, the permanent division of the international labour movement”?

Eric seems to go even further than the New Communist Party types when he refers to “the *so-called* First International” (my emphasis).

I don’t know about anybody else, but I can’t wait to read Eric’s next book - *The Age of Sectarianism: Karl Marx, Lenin and the Communist International*. Pre-order your copy now.

Eddie Ford
South London

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

Rail bosses’ expanding pay packet bonanza

HOT ON the heels of the other privatised utilities’ bosses, senior managers within the newly formed train operating companies are expecting to get their snouts in the privatisation trough. Their pay could expand by 75% to 100% according to a survey conducted by Meridian.

At the same time the government is trying to convince railworkers that there is no money for pay rises. Railworkers however are not that stupid. Both RMT and Aslef have submitted the usual claims for pay increases.

Aslef is already threatening industrial action. Lew Adams, general secretary, told Aslef district council No3 that the offer would have to be above inflation before the union would consider it.

The cost of privatisation continues to soar. At the same time the government has again cut the public sector obligation grant paid to run unprofitable, socially necessary services. This is likely to lead to service cuts along with attacks on staffing.

The passenger transport executive, who fund rail and bus services in Yorkshire North West and Scotland, have also suffered funding losses.

Along with these problems the operating companies are having to find resources to fund the uncontrollable explosion of legal documents needed to establish the separate rail companies. 15,000 legal documents from 50 law firms have so far been produced. The volume has been so great that fork-lift trucks have been used to move them.

Operating companies are already at each other’s throats, as they jostle for advantage before they become fully fledged private companies. Bills are flying around the various companies for train delays and signalling failures, etc.

Any major national industrial action at this stage will cause enormous problems for the government. Any additional costs incurred will throw the whole privatisation plan off course and has the potential to sink it.

This is why it is imperative that railworkers are encouraged and supported in their campaign to win a major increase in the pathetic rates of pay they receive.

If 75-100% is good enough for rail bosses, it is certainly good enough for railworkers.

Aslef driver, Manchester

Rank and file action across one union

Pat McManus is a staff nurse at the Central Middlesex Hospital in London. He is branch secretary for the main health union, Unison. Here he talks to Peter Manson

Tell me about the divisions on the local level. Is it confirmed that Central Middlesex will be getting the full three percent?

Yes, but we’re concerned at what might happen to Parkside Health Trust, which covers Brent. It won’t have the money to fully fund the three percent pay award.

What are the strings attached to the three percent in terms of cuts and jobs?

It could result in cutbacks in services - not this year, but in 1996-97. It could mean redundancies. Unison have asked the pay review body for an eight percent pay rise, but at the very least the three percent should be fully funded.

So you don’t particularly object to the two-tier approach?

We do, but if we’re left in the position of having to negotiate locally, then we would like three percent as a base.

But surely we shouldn’t even be discussing local negotiations at this stage?

The problem that we have is divide and rule: we’ve seen this in the health service in the past. We don’t know what position the Royal College of Nursing and the Royal College of Midwives will take. If they do ballot their membership and return a vote for strike action, that’s setting a very clear and positive agenda. Unison are dilly-dallying about taking a course of action. They’ve called for a one-day ‘event’.

What is likely to happen on that day?

It will depend on how active the branches are. The more militant branches will be able to produce all-day localised action. But there should be a national day of action with a London march as a central focus.

Local action doesn’t get the media coverage it actually needs. Nurses should be seen taking to the streets within the capital, and saying to the public, ‘Come and support us’.

You were talking earlier about your hopes for the new union Unison. You now have a single union, but things haven’t changed very much on the ground. How can that be got over?

I think the biggest problem is in the last six years in the health sector we’ve been beaten, battered and bruised by this government.

Most trusts have gagging clauses in people’s contracts. Any action taken could result in disciplinary action against union members. This is something I thought Unison would do something about. We thought Unison was the bear which could roar its head instead of the sheep that walked away.

We saw in last year’s pay award on the clerical and ancillary side the leadership backtrack in the health service after the membership had voted for industrial action.

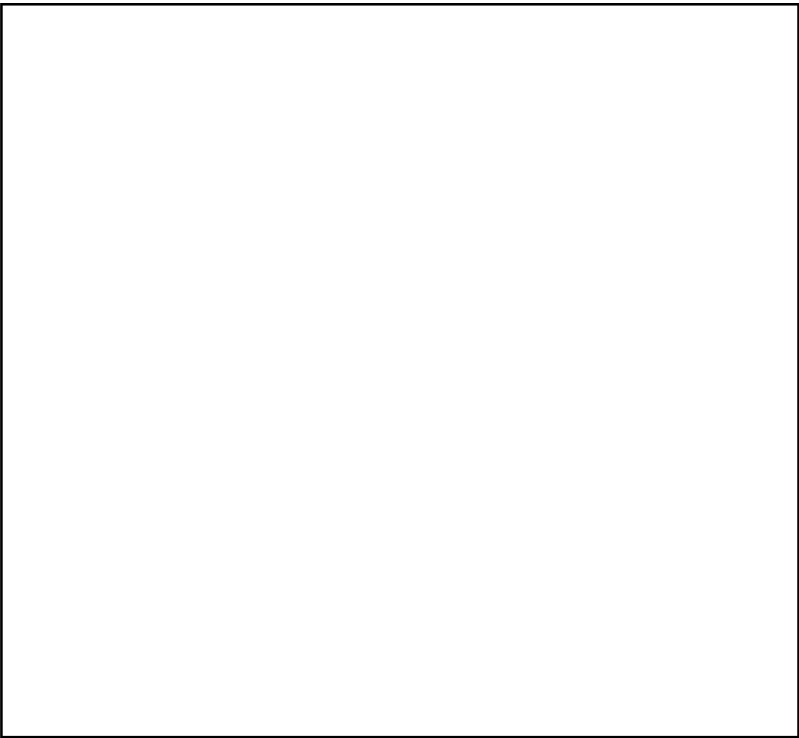
How can you get over these difficulties?

The lay membership is starting to gel together now. I was at the London Regional Council two weeks ago. We managed to get all our resolutions from the left through in a day. Last year the bureaucrats staged it so we ran out of time, so things are changing.

Local government and health, education and gas were all starting to get into bed together. We never did this before.

What happens if Unison ends up not calling national action? Is that the end of it? Is there any hope through a rank and file alternative?

I think the rank and file would organise against the national union. A lot of us were angry about what happened last year. There are various activists throughout the country saying, 1995 is the year we can create some change in



Healthworkers need rank and file organisation to overcome Unison’s monstrous bureaucracy

the health service: we should go for it.’ There are meetings, small gatherings, up and down the country.

Looking back at the 1988 dispute, would you say there are any lessons to be learnt from that for the present situation?

They are quite clear and simple. Then we had a divided trade union movement, with Cohse and Nupe

calling separate days of action. We don’t have that problem any more.

The workers took it upon themselves. Councils were set up within hospitals. At Charing Cross the bureaucrats were sent home. Full-time officers were shown the back door. But the lessons from ’88 could have been better with one union. It was great because we actually won a major pay award.

PO workers fight closures

AN OFFICIAL strike, called by the Communication Workers Union, led to crown post offices in 18 towns and cities across Britain being closed down for one day earlier this week.

The strike was in protest against the threatened closure of many post offices, including ‘backdoor privatisation’ through relocating them under franchise in high street supermarkets. Half of all crown post offices have disappeared since 1989 and Counters Ltd plans to slash the remaining 750 to just 397 over the next five years.

With opinion polls showing 79% opposition to the policy, the CWU believes it is on to a good thing in attempting to build up ‘public support’ for the defence of its members’ jobs - particularly in view of the government’s recent withdrawal of full-blown privatisation plans.

This may be correct in some towns. Several Tory MPs who rebelled against the privatisation proposals are supporting the present campaign, including Batley’s Elizabeth Peacock, who does not want the town’s main office moved into Tesco’s.

However, there is no threat to the government’s majority on the issue, as it is Counters Ltd itself which is operating the rolling programme. Post office workers must rely on their own strength and solidarity to save their jobs.

This week’s strike was useful in building up morale. For example on Merseyside, the union won

overwhelming support from its members. “Twelve offices were completely shut down,” Bill Butterworth, the Merseyside branch secretary, told me. “At the remaining six where action was called management themselves ran a skeleton service with the help of a handful of ‘disaffected members’.”

Unfortunately, as in all areas of the post office and BT where members are under attack, the CWU - its hands tied by anti-union laws - cannot be relied upon to build the necessary solidarity action. January’s magnificent action by 13,000 London delivery workers led to a fine being imposed on the union.

“Funds must be protected,” joint general secretary Alan Johnson warns in the March edition of *CWU Voice*. “We must ensure union branches always act constitutionally on industrial relations issues.” And that means walking away from victimised members.

But the same attitude is not displayed by local militants: “If you’ve got to do something, you’ve got to do it,” commented one member in London’s Mount Pleasant sorting office.

Delivery workers themselves may soon be forced to repeat the January action. The dispute over computer-assisted delivery duties still rumbles on, and there are rumours of impending redundancies over Royal Mail’s attempts to abolish second deliveries.

Peter Manson

From *The Call*, paper of the British Socialist Party, March 11 1920

United States: No comment required

The Communist, organ of the Communist Party of America, appears ... (February 15) with no signed articles or printer's address. Possibly in connection with this, it states that "about 3,000 members of the Communist Party are being held at Ellis Island, New York City; Deer Island, Boston; and in prisons throughout the country ... charged with being members of the Communist Party ... Over 250 members of the Party, amongst them the entire central executive committee and all the translator secretaries of the federations, are under indictment under 'criminal syndicalism' and 'criminal anarchy' laws.

"...The programme of the Party has been declared illegal and the Party organisation is under ban ...

"The Party organisation must go underground ... Open branch meetings should be discontinued at once ... All membership cards and charters should be destroyed. The details of the organisation plan will be communicated to the Party units through new channels."



The cost of terror

"THE economic cost of a PKK terrorist is nearly £75,000".

This edifying sentence comes from the Human Rights minister of Turkey - a tough job by anyone's standards - speaking at a recent press conference in Ankara.

He stated: "If someone is taken to the police station, they must then either be taken to court or released. In fact, sometimes this doesn't happen. Sometimes they are killed."

He admitted that this alienated many people but, pointing to the "reality of Turkey", gave some official statistics concerning the abuse of human rights that followed the 1980 military coup.

- The military junta denied passports to 88,000 people because of their political affiliations
- 650,000 people were arrested.
- 550 were sentenced to death and many are still waiting the results of their final appeal to Turkey's parliament.
- 55 people were actually executed.
- 30,000 escaped abroad and have become political refugees.
- 937 films were banned.
- The Kurdish language was banned.
- In the ten year period between August 1984 and August 1994, 13,000 people have been killed in clashes with the police and army - mostly as a result of the armed struggle waged by the Kurdish national movement, the PKK.
- 2,689 prisoners are officially recognised as having been tortured while in custody.

Of course, we should not trust the statistics of the government - they are certainly *underestimates* in all categories cited. However, the fact that the Turkish state authorities themselves are now recognising the scale of the oppression that came down on the heads of the progressive movement and the working class after 1980 indicates just how ferocious the reaction actually was.

Kemal Osman

Crisis in Mexico

THE MEXICAN ruling class was plunged head first into a fresh crisis last week with the detention of Raul Salinas, elder brother of former president Carlos Salinas, on suspicion of organising the murder of the secretary general of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), Ruiz Massieu. As its grip on society weakens by the day, the PRI is consequently disintegrating into warring factions.

Massieu was a leading member of the 'reformist wing', which for many 'hard-liners' within the PRI, such as Raul Salinas, can only be seen as a serious threat to their political and financial power base. Last March Luis Donaldo Colosio, the PRI's hand-picked successor as presidential candidate and also a leading 'reformist', was gunned down by a so-called "lone mad gunman" a few days after he had given a speech urging the PRI to democratise itself.

Even though he recently went on hunger strike in order to protest his innocence, suspicion has fallen on Carlos Salinas himself - at the very least it appears that he has colluded in covering up the truth behind the Colosio killing.

It is abundantly clear that a revolutionary situation is developing in Mexico. The ruling class can no longer rule in the old way and the masses are beginning to refuse to be ruled in the old way. When members of the ruling class have to resort to assassination and thuggery to resolve their internal differences, then it is apparent that an extremely deep and organic crisis is gripping it.

Meanwhile, the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas rumbles on, ominously for the ruling class. On Sunday the EZLN issued a statement firmly rejecting Zedillo's 'peace' proposals, saying they were "humiliating, undignified, arrogant and unjust", and that they were being set up for betrayal, if not elimination, by government forces. Remembering what happened to Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, who were similarly tricked into attending government 'peace' talks, one cannot but help think that the EZLN made a wise decision.

The economic situation continues to deteriorate. For the past 65 years or more Mexico has been run on the basis of a rough and ready form of state capitalism, with government - or quasi-government - bodies controlling all aspects of the economy. That phase has now ended. Mexico has now formally handed over the reins of the economy

to Washington.

The US 'rescue' package is expected to include a four percent rise in wages, although public transport fares have increased by 100% and there has been a 56% overall fall in purchasing power since December. Forty-six percent of firms are expected to sack part of their workforce and 16% to close.

Clearly, if Mexico was to 'blow' this would have immense ramifications within the US and upon the American working class. Mexico 1995 is not Mexico 1911 or 1919. It is not even Cuba 1959. Mexican (and Latino) labour is widespread throughout the US, its economy is deeply entrenched in Mexico. An explosion there would shake-up US society in a manner that is hard to predict.

Given the thoroughly aristocratic, non-working class, chauvinistic nature of US labour organisations, and the

working class in general, it cannot be discounted that a Mexican revolution could shift American society even further to the right. Ultimately, though, revolution-aries thrive where there are crises, splits and polarisations in society.

We should recognise that a potentially enormous historical opportunity is opening up in Mexico. Despite the backward looking nationalism of the EZLN and the Maoist ruralism of the MRM, a revolutionary situation would see the masses sympathise with the Zapatistas, thus unleashing unquantifiable revolutionary forces.

As the crisis inevitably hits the US economy, the working class throughout North America must be won to act as a class for itself. Such a revolutionary wave could not be held within the borders of North America.

Frank Vincent

'Protecting' the peasants in Chiapas

SWP beyond reform?

Mark Fischer spoke to Andy Wilson of the recent split from the Socialist Workers Party, the International Socialist Group. The ISG has links with SWP breakaway groups in South Africa and Germany and has recently published a pamphlet which we reviewed in the *Weekly Worker* (December 15 1994)

Where now for the ISG as an organisation?

We have agreed that we want to take the critique we have developed of the International Socialist tradition back to SWP members. The annual 'Marxism' event brings thousands of SWP members and supporters together, for example. If you can make an intervention at an event like that, then the leadership finds it hard to isolate you.

The unfortunate point is that we know of many people in the branches around the country who have been forced out of the party and have gone into the wilderness because they have felt there is no alternative. They haven't taken their critique back into the party.

Unlike the Revolutionary Democratic Group, we do not want to constitute ourselves as a faction of the SWP. At present we think we must maintain an orientation towards the SWP in a propagandist way, but we do not pretend that we are going to carry on as an IS Group indefinitely. We do not see ourselves as having the nucleus of some new group for the future.

But then won't the accusation come back that you are simply carrying out a wrecking operation?

I see that danger. But I would say that we simply do not know what comes next. Personally, I would say that it is unlikely that there will be any huge shake-up in the SWP at all. Before Christmas 1994, their perspective

seemed to be 'ever onwards, ever upwards', more recruitment. But even then we predicted that in the new year the leadership would have to put the brakes on that. Now leading figures are warning against over-expectations of a breakthrough in the near future.

I think they can succeed in dampening down the critical layer which has been emerging. I don't know if it was ever given any official articulation anyway, because that is more or less impossible.

The last conference documents had more critical contributions in them than any conference documents I have seen. But they do not represent the emergence of real opposition. They are an opportunity to let off steam. Whoever wrote those contributions has no chance of forming any organisational links with anyone else.

But the Central Committee would have been quite alarmed by these developments. For example, a leading cadre of the SWP arguing with someone outside conference said, "Look, we're recruiting lots of people. That's why we can't have internal democracy. Anarchists would take over the SWP".

The SWP's tone has become more authoritarian. There have been expulsions, which they justified at the time by saying that they were having to cut a load of dead wood in order to grow.

But they haven't had the successes that might have justified that. They

haven't grown spectacularly. Talking to activists in many of the branches, they say that although there are more branches, the meetings are smaller.

The perspective that the organisation was about to root itself among the working class for the first time since the 1970s hasn't happened, obviously. But the 'tension' that this outlook produced caused concern among rank and file members.

We do not see the role of our organisation to divine the future, work out the prospects for the SWP and integrate that into our own 'masterplan'. All we see is the need for members and supporters of the SWP who have criticisms to try to find a way to make those publicly in front of existing members.

If you take any group of SWPers you will find a number who are ultra-loyal to the leadership and will not countenance any criticisms. Among the rest there is a small proportion who are extremely hostile to the way that the party is being run, but who would never express that openly. They would justify their continued membership through things like the Anti-Nazi League.

I think that it is very important that we - even in a small way - show that you can criticise from within the IS tradition.

I don't think the SWP in its current state is reformable. But what becomes of it depends a lot on what is happening in the wider world.

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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Election campaign launched in Scotland

Class fighters!

On April 6 in Scotland SNP, Labour and Tory will be vying for working class votes in the 'shadow' council elections. But none of them are offering anything for workers in Scotland. There is an alternative - Vote Communist and join the fightback

THE NEXT two months will be important for all political parties. Following the elections in Scotland in April, local elections take place in England and Wales.

The Communist Party intends to take the elections by storm, fielding candidates wherever we can, but also taking the message to the whole country: only by organising together in our own Party can the working class beat back the attacks of the bosses' parties - Labour, SNP and Tory - both nationally and locally.

But our vision extends much further than just defending our rights under capitalism. We need to get rid of the system itself, which is so deeply unpopular.

This may seem an impossible and even crazy task to many, and yet the mass of the working class accepts that the system itself is irrational and brutal.

Communists know - from knocking on doors in previous elections, from our campaigning for striking signal workers last year and from our work against hospital closures and against the Criminal Justice Act - that the market system - capitalism - is more unpopular than perhaps ever before.

There is a huge backlash in society against the capitalist triumphalism that followed the collapse of the bureaucratic regimes throughout Eastern Europe. The bourgeoisie claimed that this meant that communism was dead and that we must all tighten our belts and grit our teeth to make capitalism work better.

But as the reality of capitalism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union comes home, with unemployment, homelessness, disease and Mafia-type gang war running the economies, capitalist triumphalism can no longer be sustained.

At home Thatcherism may have weakened the working class but it quite evidently has not made Britain great again. It has however removed many of its own safety valves - breaking the social democratic consensus and making effective trade unionism illegal with a barrage of anti-trade union laws followed up by the Criminal Justice

Mary Ward (left) is standing in the Hilltown. A Tayside secondary school teacher, she was a Labour district councillor for eight years and leader of the council for two. She joined the CPGB during the Timex strike and has since been involved in the campaigns against the closure of Dundee Royal Infirmary and the closing of Ward One at Kings Cross, as well as against education cuts

Act.

This latest act has turned a whole layer of youth - previously interested primarily in partying - into an organised voice which is vehemently anti-Tory and often anti-state. The attacks on trade union organisation mean that if there is an explosion of anger the trade union bureaucrats will not be able to control it.

The Tories have created the conditions for the development of unofficial organisation which bypasses the traditionally conservative leaders.

Postal workers demonstrated the possibilities for this when they took unofficial action across London sorting offices last month. The channels for official action were closed to them but, although the union was fined, the united solidarity action of postal workers meant they won their demands.

The tragedy for the working class at the moment is that the depth of anti-capitalist sentiment is not organised in a force for change. In fact it comes in the absence of any vehicle even

offering an alternative to the market - both 'official communism' and social democracy have collapsed.

Blair unambiguously promises to run capitalism. The Labour Party therefore cannot act as a mouthpiece for the discontent at the base of society. Rather it is successfully making itself acceptable to the establishment, as *Financial Times* owners, Pearsons, indicated with its donation last week.

In local government the SNP in Scotland has shown that it is quite as corrupt and ruthless as the Tories, despite the opportunist 'socialist', 'nationalist' or 'conservative' rhetoric it uses, depending on which audience it is addressing.

The failure of capitalism and its parties, the collapse of the regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and of 'official communism' has produced a vacuum in society - an absence of a party that can offer hope for the future. We know that those voting for the Labour Party do not believe it will radically change their lives, but they just hope after 17 years of Tory rule that it cannot be worse.

In this situation the parties of the revolutionary left which call for a vote for Labour are doing the working class a great disservice. As social democracy collapses back into Liberalism, these groups are busy shoring it up - 'defending' clause four and urging the working class to vote Labour to kick the Tories out.

In Scotland on April 6 it devolves on the Communist Party to offer the vision of a different society that the working class so desperately needs. Given such a vision, the anger that exists can be forged very quickly into a material force capable of sweeping aside this barbaric capitalist system and building a society for the needs of humanity, not the profits of a few bosses.

Helen Ellis

Lee-Anne Bates

Labour perks

CORRUPTION in local politics is as old as the hills. The present allegations about political favours in Birmingham are not due to any decline in Labour Party morality but to a simple falling out among thieves. The object of their greedy desires is the safe Sparkbrook seat, due to be relinquished by Roy Hattersley.

One faction alleges that rightwing fixer and MP for Small Heath, Roger Godsiff, has been soliciting personal support by diverting urban renewal grants worth up to £20,000 each to his supporters in the Labour Party. Godsiff admits that 95 of his constituents were referred to John Woodcock, an expert in housing renewal grants, who helped them fill in the complex 26 page application forms. Here is the real corruption - mandatory grants so complicated to apply for that ordinary people cannot get them.

Mr Godsiff in protesting his innocence has suggested the real corruption is elsewhere. "If people want to throw mud around and make me the fall guy, I say 'no way'. If they go on with it and start turning up stones, they will find a lot of other nasty things coming out." He seems prepared to keep quiet about his opponents' activities if they keep quiet about his.

Nationally Labour is benefiting from the sleazy image of the Tory Party and is determined to look respectable. As a result four Birmingham constituency parties are being suspended while Peter Coleman, Labour's organisation director, tries to clean up their image.

This kind of toytown chicanery would be very difficult if the Labour Party was a genuine working class organisation, with its officials and representatives democratically elected and subject to recall. But then it would not *be* the Labour Party - that bureaucratic mess of self interested little cliques with their own hole-in-the-wall agendas.

Creating homeless

WANDSWORTH council leader Sir Paul Beresford proved his love for Thatcherism by going beyond her anti-working class housing laws and, in the words of the district auditor, "broke the law to house the homeless in its rush to sell council homes". Wandsworth has halved its ability to house people since 1983. The Department of Environment planning inspector said the council was not providing enough affordable housing. We must conclude that, as author of the *Good Council Guide* and a former member of the Audit Commission, Sir Paul knew what he was doing.

The Auditor cleared the council of gerrymandering, although *The Guardian* writes, "In one area expenditure was disproportionately high in a number of marginal Conservative wards." Not all the home buyers are happy with the council's sales policy, as many are now sitting on negative equity. Having been duped by one set of politicians, they are now going to vote Labour, paving the way for them to be duped by the other lot.

Nothing is going to be done to punish the miscreants because the cost of legal action is likely to exceed the probable surcharge.

By the way, Sir Paul has not been penalised for aggravating the housing problem. He is now Minister of Housing.

Communists are for decent housing for all as a right. We support the right of the homeless to occupy empty properties and call for an emergency building programme wherever there is a shortage of suitable houses.

Arthur Lawrence

A real alternative in Dundee

THE ELECTIONS in Dundee where Mary and Dominic are standing will create new all-purpose councils, abolishing the regions. Labour and SNP councillors are busy nearly killing each other as they squabble over the reduced number of seats, but the reorganisation has much bigger implications for the working class in Dundee.

The services which were previously shared by the regions and districts are threatened with the axe. These include special education facilities and many services in the voluntary sector.

But already services have been cut by SNP and Labour budgets alike. This Thursday councillors meet to

discuss a £10 million cut in the education budget.

Under the SNP in Tayside the price of school meals has been put up, but of course wages have not increased and nor has unemployment benefit. Single mothers, unemployed parents and those on the now common poverty wages are expected just to magic up the extra money.

On top of this the council has decided, despite the thousands of empty properties in Dundee, despite the overcrowding and slum conditions many are expected to live in, that it will now not house anyone with rent arrears. Life on the streets is the punishment for poverty in

Dundee.

The news is no better for all those caring for the sick or elderly. Home help services will now be charged for. Wardens in sheltered housing are also being cut. Capitalism is no longer willing to give anyone even a half decent life if they cannot fill the bosses' pockets in return.

As Dominic Handley says, "Labour and the SNP are committed, just like the Tories, to running capitalism. They raise rents, impose the council tax and slash vital services. A vote for a Communist councillor in Lochee is a vote for working class power. We must make decisions about our own lives."

Helen Ellis

Lee-Anne Bates