

weekly worker



No 87

Thursday March 23 1995

Demonstrate against education cuts

Join the national demonstration
organised by Face
Saturday March 25
Assemble 1pm, Embankment, London
March to Hyde Park

Health, Education

Fight back together!

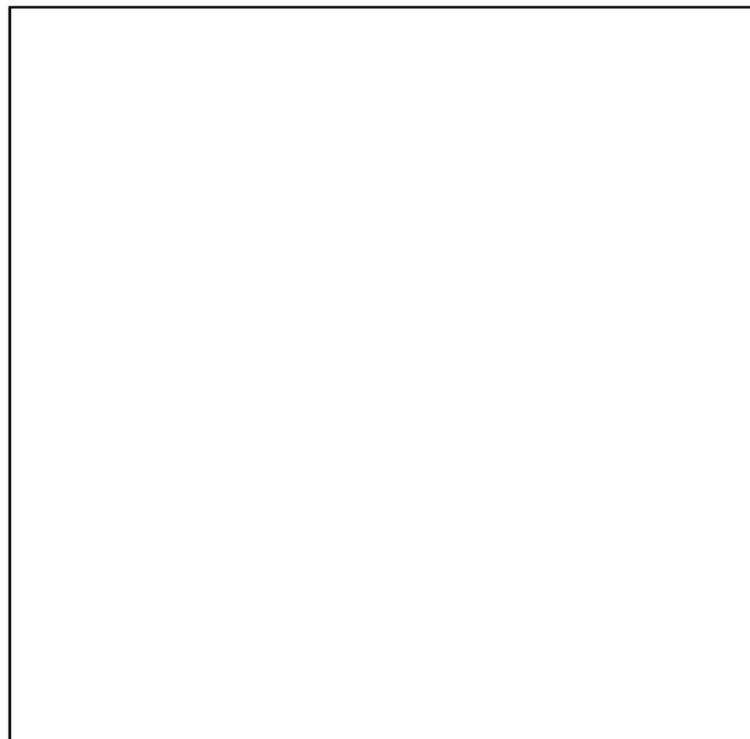
As both health and education workers make their voices heard in protest against attacks on pay, jobs and services, now could not be a better time to organise a united fightback

SUCH IS the outrage felt in the National Health Service over conditions workers are expected to endure that even the ultra-conservative Royal College of Midwives has voted overwhelmingly to drop its no-strike policy.

While nurses and midwives are up in arms over their one percent pay offer, it emerges that the man responsible for thinking up how much they should be paid has been given a nice little earner on the side. Mike Bett, chairman of their pay review body, is to get an extra part-time job - his three-days-a-week post in charge of the quango looking at changes in the civil service pays a cool £57,000 a year.

Bosses like Bett might be sitting pretty, but the strain of trying to cope with the extra workload in hospitals is hitting healthworkers hard. It is estimated that 37,000 dedicated nurses and midwives have left the health service over the past four years - the stress of working for a pittance as the NHS slowly decays has proved too much.

But this is just what the government wants. Capitalism can no longer afford the post-war welfare state to which all political parties were committed - and healthcare is one of the main casualties. For example, long stay beds for mainly old patients recovering from accidents and illness have been slashed - the government argues it is not the NHS's responsibility to look after such people after their clinical treatment has been completed. Yet local council care budgets are also being cut, leaving the most vulnerable without access to many of the services they need.



Health workers must go beyond lunchtime protests if they are to win their struggle for decent pay

Education too is a prime target. Like healthworkers, teachers are faced with daily increasing stress as their relative rates of pay have declined. The conditions many teachers and school students have to suffer is outrageous. According to a report by the National Union of Teachers:

- More than a quarter of schools have had to close dilapidated buildings
- Hundreds are damp and badly ventilated, directly causing conditions such as asthma among workers' children
- Many have such poor hygiene that outbreaks of sickness such as hepatitis A and dysentery have occurred

• Some buildings are infested with vermin such as rats, cockroaches and fleas

Dundee teacher Mary Ward, Communist Party candidate in the forthcoming local elections, told us: "Depression and other stress-related illnesses are now such a problem that up to 70% of teachers are affected. The quality of education is decreasing daily: it is now more often a question of containment. There is no time for individual assessment and this will be accentuated by Tayside Regional Council's £10m cuts."

Teachers up and down the country will recognise this picture. Yet the NUT itself is

doing its best to actually *prevent* its members from fighting back. It has issued a circular implying that the Fight Against Cuts in Education (Face), organisers of this weekend's demonstration, is a "front" for "extreme political factions". In fact it is led by headteachers, parents and school governors.

Like its health service counterpart Unison, it wants to channel its members' anger along safe lines, such as last week's teachers' lobby of parliament (one teacher per MP). The bureaucrats do not want to lift a finger to actually mobilise their memberships. That is why Unison is so far limiting its protest against the one percent pay limit for nurses and midwives to lunchtime demonstrations on March 30.

Industrial action is far too risky, runs the argument. Much better to hang on until the new-look Labour Party is voted into government. But Labour is moving so quickly to the right that its policies are almost by the day merging with those of the Tories. For example, it now looks unlikely that the party will put a figure on its much vaunted

minimum wage before the general election.

This is not surprising. Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, told Britain's bosses last week, "The answer to Britain's economic problems cannot be to pursue regulation at the expense of competition and dynamism, and New Labour rejects that course."

Yet deputy leader John Prescott had the cheek to say the party's new clause four was writing the 'principle' of full employment and the minimum wage into the constitution. Apparently that is what "the opportunity for all to work and prosper" means. Brown, however, makes clear that Labour, like the Tories, is committed to the 'free market' - a guarantee that our health, education and working conditions will continue to be attacked.

Nurses and teachers can rely neither on the Labour Party nor on their union leaders. Only their own strength can defeat the onslaught.

Use this week's demonstrations to build on the anger that is so widespread and start to link up across union lines.

Demonstrate on March 30!

Lunchtime protests planned;

- Newcastle city centre • Dundee city centre • Glasgow Royal Infirmary
- Edinburgh Royal Infirmary • Royal Edinburgh Hospital • Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and the Ladysbridge Hospital • Christie Hospital in Manchester • Oxford's Radcliffe Hospital • Sheffield's Hallamshire Hospital • Southampton General Hospital and the Royal South Hants • University, Ely and Whitchurch hospitals in Cardiff • Fazakerley and Walton hospitals in Liverpool • Barnsley District Hospital • Dudley's four hospitals • London: Central Middlesex in Brent, UCH and Middlesex hospitals, the London Hospital in Whitechapel, St Clements and Mile End hospitals, and Parson's Green in West London

Unite against Tory and Labour cuts!

Thorny issue

I can't help but feel that comrade Chris Ford takes a somewhat crude position on nationalism and the 'national question' (*Weekly Worker* 86), even if it is motivated by a healthy disgust of British chauvinism in all its forms.

Communist are, as a general principle, in favour of the largest, most centralised states possible. That this is in the long-term interests of the working class, given the global and international nature of imperialism, was clearly Lenin's position.

Yet comrade Ford oddly claims that Lenin had a "programme" which advocated the establishment of a "federal republic" for Britain. I think the comrade is confusing an almost 'throw away' comment, in a completely different historical and political context, with a programme. This is quite a serious error for a communist, as a *programme* represents the crystallisation of the Communist Party's principles and overall strategic approach to the conquest of state power by the proletariat. In other words, it is the standard, the reference point which we revolve around.

Can advocacy of a "federal republic" fit into the *communist* programme of our Party? I would argue not. To call for it *now* in this epoch of global, interdependent capitalism would show an enormous lack of ambition, if not a distinct absence of communist vision.

Yes, I think our manifesto is right to 'moan' that "narrow nationalism still exists as a divisive force" - because it is true. We are internationalists, therefore must be opposed to the poison of nationalism, separatism and localism. How that principled position means that we are "identifying the unity of the working class with that of the state" - ie, the *bourgeois* state - is a bit mystifying to me, but there you go.

Also, I think it is mechanistic to view the "British nation" *entirely* as a conscious counterrevolutionary 'invention', only designed to 'integrate' the labour aristocracy into the British state. I believe that a detailed and scientific examination of the topic would reveal that reality was a lot more complex and contradictory.

However, this is very important and thorny issue, so therefore we welcome all serious and honest contributions. Our Party is about to conduct a series of very lengthy and detailed seminars on nationalism and the 'national question', starting in April. I think comrade Ford should attend these seminars, as he can clearly add some very valuable and stimulating input into these discussions.

Eddie Ford
South London

Anathema

Chris Ford's letter obviously contained many truths and represents a position that could be legitimately held by any member of the CPGB. I disagree with him however.

I think he mistakes the position of the CPGB, in that it maintains that the four nations incorporated inside the UK still retain their national identity and, as a consequence of this, have the right to cede from either the UK or any successor state - in line with Lenin's position on the rights of self-determination of nations. This does not mean that the CPGB advocates such secession: the larger the territory of the state, the easier it is for the workers to organise the overthrow of capitalism. After its overthrow, the better their position for the building of communism.

In the case of Britain, I would certainly look for the unity of the whole of the working class. The nations in Britain are extremely close to one another and no antagonism exists between them, irrespective of what problems the ruling class may cause in its running of the economy of the British Isles. Additionally, they have formed common instruments of class struggle in terms of political parties and trade unions

that tends to make them a national working class.

He goes on to say that Lenin was in favour of a federal republic for the British Isles and I agree. Seventy-five years ago that was the case, but times have moved on. I feel now that a federal Europe would be a step forward. That does not mean to say that we should support a bourgeois policy of forming one. Certainly we should not oppose it on any chauvinist grounds. Communist parties must determine their policies on the basis of the working class, having both interests and programmes independent of the bourgeoisie. Welsh or Scottish nationalism, or any other nationalism, is certainly an anathema to us insofar as they preach the doctrine that all peoples of a common nation have a common interest. In any case, communists surely believe that it is both desirable and inevitable that nations will dissolve.

As far as devolution is concerned, Lenin made the point that local democracy was the highest form of democracy that the bourgeoisie could achieve, and devolution would certainly be a step towards greater local democracy. This is something that has been systematically undermined by government over the last few decades. Insofar as democracy represents the best conditions for the development of a communist party, then quite clearly we should be in favour of it.

Having said this, it is certainly true that we must make considerably more study of the question of the relationships between nations and how to overcome the disruptive influences of bourgeois nationalism on our movement.

John Walsh
Guildford

Leading millions

Comrade Phil Kent's comment that Paul Conlon is "just like Harry Gwala" (*Letters*, No85) is absurd.

Conlon cannot even bring himself to join the CPGB. He contents himself with sniping criticisms of the *Weekly Worker's* contents.

I do not, however, agree with comrade Mark Fischer's implication that Conlon's letters should no longer be published. When he has some serious criticisms or comments to make, such as stating his views on the bourgeois democratic revolution, there should be no objection.

It is difficult to see how anyone can compare Paul Conlon with comrade Harry Gwala of the South African Communist Party. Here is a comrade who has dedicated his whole life to active revolutionary struggle, making untold sacrifices in the fight against vicious apartheid repression and for socialism. We therefore treat his opinions with respect, even when we do not share them.

For example, it is a grave error to offer support of any kind to Mandela's capitalist government. No matter how unpopular it may be to criticise the president, workers must be told the truth: he is trying to make the system work - inevitably *at the expense* of the working class. Leaders like comrade Gwala are followed by millions. Yet it is left to the likes of the self-seeking Winnie Mandela to say what those millions are themselves experiencing: nothing has really changed.

The greatest support and encouragement we can give to South Africa's genuine communists is to reforge our own Party, to show that we too can lead millions.

Instead of pretending, Paul, that you can't tell the difference between opinions expressed in an interview and those in a signed article, why don't you join us in that task?

Peter Manson
South London

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

Turkey's crisis and the crisis of the left

IN EUROPE we have grown accustomed to hear about the Kurdish movement of independence and about the colonial war to suppress it waged in south eastern Turkey. However last week's events in Istanbul and in other major cities of Turkey brought forward a relatively little known aspect of Turkey and its people which also tears the society apart.

The Alevi community constitutes about one third of Turkey's population. Despite the European media's confusion in presenting Alevis as Kurds, the two problems are quite separate. Although there is a smaller Kurdish Alevi community, Alevism has been historically the popular religion of Turks. The Kurds in Turkey in the main follow the most conservative Shafi sect of Sunni Islam and never accepted the Alevi Kurds as religious and tribal kin. Historically this led to alliances of Kurdish tribes with the Ottoman court against Alevi uprisings.

Previously Kurdish nationalist movements were vehemently against any mention or movement of Alevi Kurds as they feared this would lead to a split within their midst. However in recent months, as Alevism has shown its potential in Turkey, this attitude is being changed and attempts to create a Kurdish-Alevi movement in support and under the control of the nationalist movement has emerged.

Despite the fact that the Alevis follow the main tenets of the Shia sect of Islam, their religious ideas and practices do not have much in common with the Shia Islam of present day Iran. The Iranian Shia, by becoming the state religion, through its use as an instrument of oppression of the Shahs, lost its earlier aspects of opposition. The Alevis in Turkey however have always remained the popular religion of peasants, craft workers in the towns and nomadic tribespeople, who always stood against the central and brutal power of the Ottoman court. The Ottoman Empire adopted Sunni Islam as its official religion.

This social conflict gave way to a great many uprisings of Alevis and the brutal suppression of these revolts.

The result of this process is today's Alevi community. A community which does not trust officialdom and which has a vested interest in the existence of a secular state system,

The army intervenes to prevent young revolutionaries from taking a police tank in Gazi

which has a basic belief in social justice and egalitarianism and which has a culture based on humanism and tolerance. Consequently the Alevi youth have always been over-represented in revolutionary youth organisations and movements. Many Alevi ballads are still sung in working class socials.

As Islamic fundamentalism has been on the rise across the Middle East and North Africa, Sunni Islam in Turkey has also enjoyed a new revival. During the military regime of the 1980s Sunni Islamic fundamentalism was supported by the state as a measure to counter socialist ideology and also against the upbeat Shia Islamic fundamentalism of Iran. The last remnants of the secular state were removed one by one under the army generals. The same policy was continued by the civilian governments following the Junta.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent decline in socialist appeal, the Alevi community began to organise under its own banners to stand against this rise of Sunni Islamic fundamentalism. Many associations were formed and the spiritual leadership was pressurised into taking a more active stance in political life.

As they began to make their presence felt they also became the targets of the Islamic fundamentalist terror campaigns, as did other democratic forces.

Last week's deliberately provocative

attack was intended to force the Alevis onto the defensive. In one sense it was successful. The attack killed four people, but more than twenty were killed in the streets by police forces which are heavily and openly infiltrated by Sunni Islamic reactionaries.

However, the attack has also brought about a positive aspect. Many Alevi organisations have seen the limits of their movement and have also seen the urgency of cooperation with other democratic forces. On the other hand, despite their lip service, many of the democratic associations (and especially the trade unions) stayed aloof with a distinct fear of getting involved in a religious communal split. Small and extremist left organisations have shown their inability to understand realities and have called for an immediate revolution.

The events have also shown how divided the ruling class of Turkey is and how incapable of forming a government with a popular mandate. This split has also indicated that many illegal and secret organisations with their own agendas are active within the crevices of the state monolith in Turkey. The events showed how deep the social crisis is and how this in turn deepens the crisis of the left.

Above all the events of the last week have shown the desperate and urgent need of a revolutionary Communist Party in Turkey.

Aziz Demir

Solidarity needed at Badgerline

Steve Argent, one of the workers sacked from the Badgerline bus company in Chelmsford, reports on the progress of the dispute

THE POLICE are doing the best they can to stop us running the free bus service, which at least shows to us that the company is being affected. We have introduced two bigger buses and have 11 running altogether now. The buses are still full and we are still collecting donations from the public.

We are having regular public meetings in Chelmsford which are well attended. We have also been around the country to other Badgerline companies, asking workers to refuse to discuss any changes in working conditions until the Chelmsford workers are reinstated.

Everyone is facing longer hours. A survey in a Leeds Badgerline depot showed that 25% of sick leave was due to stress-related illness because of the increased workload, which is sometimes 15-20% more than it was two years ago. We are being well received, but it is difficult to get

pledges of physical support.

Bus drivers obviously work in isolation, so communication is difficult. Some came down to work in Chelmsford being told that it was just a chronic shortage in staff.

We need that extra push to win this dispute but, although other Badgerline workers are very angry, they are looking over their shoulder all the time.

We can't win this on our own, but the leadership of the union has to take a lead. Sooner or later someone has to say, 'Sod the law', otherwise the unions might as well pack up and go home.

The other choice facing us is to actually run our own company. But then you become a capitalist yourself, and we wouldn't be big enough to stand up to Stagecoach-type tactics.

It is the same for everybody in every sphere of work - until you get

to the directors of course - and it will be the same until the unions are unshackled from the law.

The trouble is I can't see any change from a Labour government.

Is this an epoch of wars and revolution or the continued spread of capitalism?

The Communist Party seminar series on **Why the Collapse?**, this week asks, "Has socialism failed?"

Seminars are in central London at 5pm every Sunday. For more details call 0181-459 7146.

Next week (Sunday April 2) our series on **Trade Unions** looks at "The general strike - what it is and when should we call for it?"

From *The Call*, paper of the British Socialist Party, March 25 1920

The German Revolution

WHAT WILL strike anyone who has read the history of the recent Russian Revolution is the great similarity presented in the course of that revolution with the one now taking place in Germany ... The masses rise and the reaction breaks like a soap bubble ...

The most striking element in the whole situation is undoubtedly the revelation of the power of the workers. *The Times*, writing on Saturday, says that both parties in Germany now know that it is impossible to rule without the workers, and goes on to say that "the general strike has been the greatest silent protest ever made. Its passivity is more deadly than any action."

... The situation in the West is most satisfactory where the industrial region is in the hands of the communists - but the news from Berlin, I must confess, makes me somewhat apprehensive - of a compromise.

Our duty as English comrades is to see that our government is not allowed in any pretext to strangle the German communists - whether by blockade, or direct intervention of any sort. Let the workers here take the words quoted above from *The Times* to heart and make their power felt to control the policy of Great Britain. Let them ensure not only that the so-called peace treaty shall be torn up but that hands shall actually be taken off all other countries - Russia, Germany, Ireland, Egypt, India, etc, by setting up the Dictatorship of the Proletariat here.

C.P.G.B.
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Adams in the White House

Adams, before his dinner with Clinton - where pictures were not allowed

THE discovery of explosives in Northern Ireland at the end of last week was loudly proclaimed by the British authorities as evidence that a 'terrorist' threat still existed. However, Adams' retort that it was a case of "British dirty tricks" is nearer the truth. The front page of *Republican News* hailed "Adams in the White House".

The whole strategy of Sinn Fein is now dedicated to the 'peace' process, and turning itself into a 'respectable' bourgeois party.

The IRA simply had no motive to disrupt the Adams visit to the USA. The British authorities on the other hand would have liked to divert as much attention as possible from it.

Apart from its obvious impact on events in the north of Ireland, the visit has cast a revealing light on the fabled "special relationship" between Britain and the United States.

US society has of course never been as vehemently anti-republican as the

British. It has its own revolutionary history against Britain, a large Irish immigrant community, but - certainly most importantly - it is further away.

More significantly what the row does emphasise is that the USA needs Britain less with the end of the Cold War. The mighty united Germany is potentially a more exciting partner for the US ruling class than the UK is.

Although it is pleasant to see the British ruling class bothered and upset, it must be remembered that the Adams' visit marks another stage in the republican movement's welcome into the fold of 'respectable' politics. The USA is the most powerful imperialist force in the world today.

Clinton's welcoming of Adams indicates again that any so-called 'peace' will be on imperialism's terms and therefore only a prelude to another war. Socialists need to be prepared to turn such a war into a victory for our class.

Andrew MacKay

Gorbachev's comeback bid

PRESIDENTIAL elections are due in Russia in 1996, and already various contenders seem likely to throw their hats in the ring. It is too early to say who will actually stand, or even whether elections or the institution of the presidency itself will exist in 1996. Russia is simply too unstable for assumptions to be made about it. However, one possible contender has already had a crack at the whip and may have another go.

Mikhail Gorbachev was elected general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on March 11 1985. He has been out of Russian politics since 1991 when he ceased to be general secretary of a party that was banned in a Soviet Union which then passed into history. Not a startling record of success.

Yet Gorbachev is being tipped as a presidential contender 10 years after he became head of the Soviet Union. He certainly feels he has something to offer. He wrote an article in the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* on March 9 saying that "Russia needs perestroika with its democratic, human and non-violent methods". He said that these values represented the "salvation of Russia". Gorbachev denied that perestroika was a spent force, though it might need to appear in a "more modern form".

Gorbachev however lacks popularity in Russia. However popular he was with westerners, the last leader of the CPSU was much less beloved by ordinary Soviet citizens, whose living standards started to decline noticeably under his rule. Gorbachev could never satisfy the 'radical democrats' in Russia, and he cannot satisfy their wishes now. On the other hand, the USSR went into its death agonies when he was 'in charge', and Russia began to lose influence in the world to a quite dramatic degree. So Gorbachev cannot appeal to Russian 'communists' who want the Soviet Union restored, and he cannot appeal to Russian nationalists. Both groups hate him. Gorbachev might wish to appeal to a moderately anti-Yeltsin 'centre ground', but this hardly exists in Russia, a society in deep crisis.

The Guardian (March 14) carried an article about the far right in Russia. Some are young men dressing up in SS uniforms, but there are also ex-KGB generals like Aleksandr Sterligov or influential parliamentary deputies like Vladimir Zhirinovsky or Sergei Baburin. The future of Russia might not be shaped by these individuals, but it is their project, not Gorbachev's, which seems to stand more chance at the moment.

Steve Kay

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.

Churches' hypocrisy

OVER the last couple of weeks Peter Tatchell, leader of Outrage, has been denounced as "a fascist", "a terrorist", "one of the least attractive characters in British public life" and, most damning of all to some, "an Australian-born Vietnam draft-dodger".

It is Tatchell's recent drive to 'out' supposedly gay bishops in the Church of England that has ruffled the sensitivities of the rightwing press (which has recently 'outed' Joan Lester and Michael Foot as "agents of influence" for the KGB).

Coming from the church, whose moral hypocrisy knows no bounds, and MPs who are gay or bisexual, but disgustingly do not support gay rights in parliament, all this is a bit rich.

It is wonderful how the media has almost exclusively set its guns on Tatchell and defended homophobes and powerful and dangerous hypocrites as the victims.

However the episode does expose the whole strategy of Outrage - based on the conviction that the only way to combat homophobia is by making the personal 'political'.

Thus it concentrates solely on the private lives of prominent individuals in bourgeois society. This project rejects revolutionary change *from below*, which in reality is the only way to sweep aside bourgeois society and *all* its rotten prejudices and bigotry.

Outrage is also premised on the reactionary view that 'gayness' and 'straightness' are two absolutely distinct categories, and the twain shall never meet. As Suzanne Moore of *The*

Guardian correctly pointed out, "Any historical or anthropological study of sexuality demonstrates that the idea of a distinct homosexual identity is a relatively new one. It depends entirely on heterosexuality being an entirely watertight category." (March 16) A healthy society would allow scope for fluidity when it comes to sexual identity, not resort to pigeon-holing.

It is the task of communists to be champions of the oppressed, which

means absolute opposition to all forms of bigotry and chauvinism. Therefore, we are in the vanguard when it comes to challenging homophobia *within* the working class and the labour movement, as well as bourgeois society as a whole.

It has to be said that 'official communism', even our own 'official' Communist Party of Great Britain, has an abysmal - if not criminal - record on this matter.

Frank Vincent

By-pass official channels

THE UNIONS came under a further barrage of attacks last week. A law lords' judgement ruled that employers are entitled to withhold pay rises from workers who refuse to sign personal contracts removing their union-based negotiating rights.

On top of this Royal Mail, gaining confidence after its £100,000 settlement against the Communication Workers Union last month, made a further legal claim against the union arising from its members' actions in five centres. Total damages amount to £1 million.

TUC chief John Monks, responding to the law lords' judgement, moaned: "This shows there is a total lack of employee rights in UK law." What he did not admit was the total failure of trade union bureaucrats to defend their members.

For example the CWU thinks winning 'public sympathy' and allying itself with maverick Tory MPs such as Elizabeth Peacock (yes - the one who wants to entertain workers with floggings as they settle down to watch the National Lottery) is the way to defend its members working for Post Office Counters.

The bureaucrats are shackled by the anti-trade union laws and so have become virtually impotent. Not so the workers, as was demonstrated at the beginning of this year. Against attacks on working conditions postal workers throughout the country came out spontaneously on unofficial action.

Having conceded most of their demands, Royal Mail is now seeking revenge from the more lily-livered union leaders, and seeking it where it hurts - in their pockets.

A postal worker from London commented: "They are just using the courts to try and stifle the unions. Since we are virtually the only union to take action recently, they will do everything they can to frighten us off".

Postal workers have shown the way for the future. If we are to defend even our basic rights and conditions, we will have to bypass the official channels and the law.

These two cases are undoubtedly a setback for the union movement, but we should not let them intimidate us, as they will our so-called leaders. If the courts strangle all possibility of action through official channels, we will have to organise unofficially - and that could unleash a much more powerful force that the bosses have not reckoned with.

Linda Addison

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Both Tories and Labour have starved the NHS of funds. Communist candidates in Scotland say it should meet the growing needs of the population, not operate according to what capitalism can afford

Dundee hospital protest

ROBIN HUNTER, Unison branch secretary for Dundee hospitals, told me that the call was going out to his members to attend a Dundee lunchtime protest rally in the city square at 12.30pm on March 30. He was hoping for a good turnout, as all levels of hospital staff are very unhappy with the government's one percent national offer.

None of the unions in Dundee want locally negotiated pay deals, but one of the reasons for setting up the trusts in the first place was to create conditions for splitting the unions.

Unison has had to enter complicated negotiating patterns with the trust. It contains four separate committees, but ignores the hospital cleaners who work for sub-contractors and are non-

unionised.

"Our jobs are the worst paid and the most insecure," one cleaner from the Dundee Royal Infirmary told us, so it is not surprising that they feel let down by their co-workers.

One committee - for doctors and dentists - has had its pay claim settled nationally, much to the anger of the other three committees who face difficult negotiations with the cash-strapped Dundee NHS Trust.

Robin Hunter thinks that management will not be able to split the other three committees - for nurses and midwives, professional and scientific staff, and support workers - over the three percent national demand. Industrial action is likely if it is not agreed, especially as the second largest

union in the health service, the RCN, will probably now accept the need for industrial muscle. The government is due to announce the national pay offer for support staff this week. It will not be more than one percent.

Robin believes there is room for local flexibility over peripherals like annual leave and 'pay spines'. He said, "Hopefully we will be able to hold the line on national conditions until the next election, when a Labour government will create different conditions."

Alas, here hospital staff are likely to be disappointed. Tony Blair can afford to dump clause four, but he cannot commit himself to repealing any Tory legislation. Even in opposition the Labour Party blights the prospects of the workers by seeming to offer an alternative. In fact Labour is strangling the struggle with soft words and no action.

We know what Blair means when, on Wednesday night, he talked about modernising the "market-orientated economy" and "eliminating the social evil of welfare dependence". Very thinly veiled rhetoric to make the system work for the bosses at the expense of workers.

The way things are, hospital staff are going to be treated like dirt until we take action ourselves.

Phil Kent

Communists campaign against hospital closures in Dundee

The Communist Party, campaigning against health cuts both in Dundee and around the country, knows that everybody is sick to death of the erosion of the health service that is so important to them. That is why in our manifesto we unambiguously demand:

- Abolish waiting lists
 - No private practice in NHS institutions
 - Free medical, dental and optical treatment
 - Full state funding of Aids research. NHS care for Aids sufferers
- The Communist Party in Dundee has regular Monday meetings at 8pm. For details call 01382 667517

Vic Turner, honorary president of the Unemployed Workers Charter, gives his reaction to the unemployment figures announced last week

2,365,000 too many

AMAZINGLY much of the press has welcomed the new seasonally adjusted unemployment figures which have apparently fallen by 8.5% from the previous year.

Workers on the other hand are now all too well aware of the reality behind this apparent drop. Firstly the 'adjusting' of the figures is now well known, with many groups disappearing from the statistics - most significantly those on Tory slave labour 'training' schemes.

But it is not only workers on those schemes who are working for poverty wages. The much vaunted rise in part-time work, which was supposed to hail a new era of flexibility, has unsurprisingly been only flexible for the bosses, not for workers. Part-time

workers are low paid and denied basic rights.

Unemployment is not an accident for the bosses and we should not be under any illusions that they will get rid of it voluntarily, despite the popularity today of full employment rhetoric.

That is why the Unemployed Workers Charter exists. To unite employed and unemployed workers in their common fight to end both unemployment and poverty wages. The trade union movement needs to take on this struggle. Join Us!

For details, contact UWC,
BCM Box 928,
London WC1N 3XX.
Tel 0181-459 7146

Fighting fund

Despite the cold people were queuing up to sign the CPGB petition against closing Dundee Royal Infirmary at the Wellgate shopping centre on Saturday. A hospital cleaner told Mary Ward "It is a bloody disgrace. My ward has been closed and I do not know what is going to happen to my job."

Dominic Handley, candidate for Lochee, knows that being elected to Dundee shadow council will not in itself solve working class problems. "But I am standing to use the council chambers as a working class platform from which to organise our class against council cuts."

Whilst campaigning for the elections comrades in Dundee raised £105 for the Party's election fund. We need an extra push this week to reach our £6,000 target for March. Comrades in London have pulled out the stops to make sure our election campaigns in Scotland on April 6 and the rest of the country on May 4 are a success. But their work needs to be generalised throughout the country this week to make sure we reach the target.

Remember, comrades, Scotland would also welcome your physical support for the last week of the campaign.

Phil Kent

Not another Labour Party!

THERE CAN be no doubt that the contents of *Militant* have improved recently. Most marked has been the inclusion of analytical articles, particularly those dealing with the globalisation of modern capitalism.

For example Lynn Walsh (March 17) writes of "the world-wide integration of financial markets largely outside the control of national economies". By way of illustration she states, "The global turnover on foreign exchanges in April 1992 averaged \$880 billion per working day."

What is also marked is the failure to draw the necessary *internationalist* working class conclusions throughout the rest of the paper. Socialism in one country, as Militant Labour will (at least formally) agree, has always been impossible. How is it then that ML - even in 1995 - calls for the *nationalisation* of "the top 200 monopolies"? It is not only capitalist *financial* transactions that cut across national frontiers. Each monopoly's production is almost without exception located in several countries, which means that nationalisation of existing plants will not result in the ability to

manufacture finished commodities by any single state.

While the failure to tackle this glaring contradiction within *Militant's* pages is clearly a serious omission, ML's orientation in Scotland is even more opportunistic. Precisely in order to give the organisation a tartan cover, it is known north of the border as *Scottish Militant Labour*. Its local election address for the Hilltown in Dundee complains that "Scottish Labour councils invested millions in English private water companies".

Such concessions to nationalism are entirely harmful to the interests of the working class. Only through organisational unity can we defeat our common enemy, the British capitalist state, and it is the duty of Scottish revolutionaries to stress this simple fact on every possible occasion.

The Dundee manifesto makes one other very serious 'mistake': "Only SML would refuse to carry out council cuts," it says. "Only SML fights for socialism. All the other parties promote the anarchy of free market capitalism." This conveniently 'overlooks' the fact that communists are contesting the Hilltown ward.

The difference is that the Communist Party of Great Britain is standing on a revolutionary, as opposed to a reformist, platform. While *Militant: what we stand for* dreams of speedily implementing socialism "through an Enabling Bill in parliament", communists say that the state power of the bourgeoisie must be smashed through armed revolution.

While ML says that what is needed is a genuinely socialist, reformed *Labour* Party, we say that only a communist party can carry through a socialist revolution. Despite *Militant's* claims to the contrary, the Labour Party has always been a bourgeois workers' party, created by Liberals and trade union

bureaucrats to campaign for capitalist reform.

It adopted the much vaunted clause four in 1918 as a sop to workers who were identifying in increasing numbers with the Russian Revolution, which the Labour Party always opposed. It never had the slightest intention - let alone the ability - to implement clause four's contents. *Militant's* editorial (March 17) correctly states that Labour's dropping of the clause means that it "no longer holds out even the hope, in the future, of radical anti-capitalist policies" and opens the door to its mutation into a copy of the US Democratic Party.

So when will ML make the break and give up all hope of edging its way back into Labour? When will it stop worrying about 'splitting the vote' in marginal wards and constituencies for fear of letting in the BNP, Tories, SNP or Liberals?

What the working class desperately needs is the building of a genuine anti-capitalist alternative to all the bourgeois parties. Standing for election ourselves is an excellent way to promote that idea.

But a genuine alternative must tell workers the truth: we can only liberate ourselves through revolution, carried through on a world scale, not through reforming parliament or the local council.

Alan Fox

What kind of party does the working class need?

Public meeting organised by Dundee CPGB Speakers: Mary Ward (Communist candidate) and Mark Walker (SML). SNP and Labour candidates also invited Thursday March 30, 7.30pm, St Salvador's Church Hall, Hilltown

1979: Labour in Power Red Brent looks at what the Labour Party was really like with a video showing of the *Year of the Beaver* Wednesday March 29 at 7.30pm. For details, call Brent Communist Party on 0181-459 7146