

weekly worker



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Fighting fund

Last week the *Weekly Worker* team raced ahead of every other Party organisation by raising £513.64 towards our monthly target. This sets the pace which needs to become general throughout the country if we are to run a successful election campaign in England and Wales - to be launched next month.

As we go to press, we have not quite reached our £6,000 special election fund target for March. We have raised over £4,000, which is a substantial increase on previous months.

During its election campaign Dundee branch has so far raised £250. We need your help for the last week of canvassing and for our campaigns around England next month. If you cannot appear in person, rush cash and cheques in now.

Phil Kent

Turn protest into workers' muscle

The time has now passed for building up 'public support'. NHS workers already enjoy overwhelming support from the working class

THIS WEEK'S 'fair pay day', organised by the health trade unions, saw the campaign to win improved pay for NHS workers get off to a sleepy start. Unison, the main health union, has, along with the Royal College of Nursing and the Royal College of Midwives, rejected the government's derisory one percent offer on behalf of all its nursing, administrative, ancillary and ambulance staff.

But the government is playing a canny game. It has strongly suggested that nurses and midwives in particular can expect a top-up to a full three percent if they engage in local negotiations with NHS trusts. Ministers last week were said to be sending an "open message" to hospital managers that they should pay up.

But Unison's claim is for eight percent. By starting the ball rolling at such a pathetic level, the government hopes that three percent will appear a fortune, despite a current inflation rate of 3.4%. It will also have succeeded in determining the principle of local negotiations.

These tactics have already made their mark. Lack of militant union leadership has meant that many local branches have already been drawn towards local deals, and many union representatives have been calling for "the full three percent for all, to be funded nationally" - a pay cut in real terms.

National union leaders have focused their campaigning on what a mere one percent would buy for their members: for

example, an extra cup of tea a day for ambulance workers and two bags of crisps for a nurse's lunch. The full three percent would of course mean that this nutritious meal could also be enjoyed for breakfast and tea.

The time has now passed for building up 'public support'. NHS workers already enjoy overwhelming support from the working class, and real action must now be started if the campaign is to retain any momentum. This will almost certainly depend on healthworkers themselves taking the necessary initiatives.

Union bureaucrats do not believe that they can lead a winning campaign through strikes and are not prepared to endanger their funds in the process.

They prefer to wring their hands and await Tony Blair's election in two year's time. But the Labour Party now shares the belief that continuing funding of the NHS is impossible under capitalism. Labour's 'Commission for Social Justice' has even suggested that private health insurance should be made compulsory for all workers.

When Labour's spokesperson Margaret Beckett protested last week at the government's further

back-door moves to privatisation of health through its Private Finance Initiative - obliging trusts to offer many services out to private tender and allowing them to contract out even the core clinical services - health secretary Virginia Bottomley made a telling response.

She stated that the initiative *does not oblige* the NHS to contract out any clinical services, and continued: "Your letter has again exposed the deep divisions between you and Tony Blair on the subject of health policy."

In fact there are no real differences amongst Labour's leadership. Despite paying lip service to defending the health service, 'new Labour' will continue the Tory policy of running it down, along with the rest of the welfare state.

By May almost all health grades will have had their pay offers. Workers can rely on nobody but themselves. Whether or not Unison ballots its members, workers should prepare now for co-ordinated action.

But healthworkers' pay and our health are not just matters for NHS employees.

If healthworkers give a strong lead, they will inspire the confidence and support of all workers.

- 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

Fighting education cuts

Over 15,000 people marched through London last Saturday to protest against the government's education cuts and refusal to fund the teachers meagre 2.7% pay 'rise' (in real terms a pay cut).

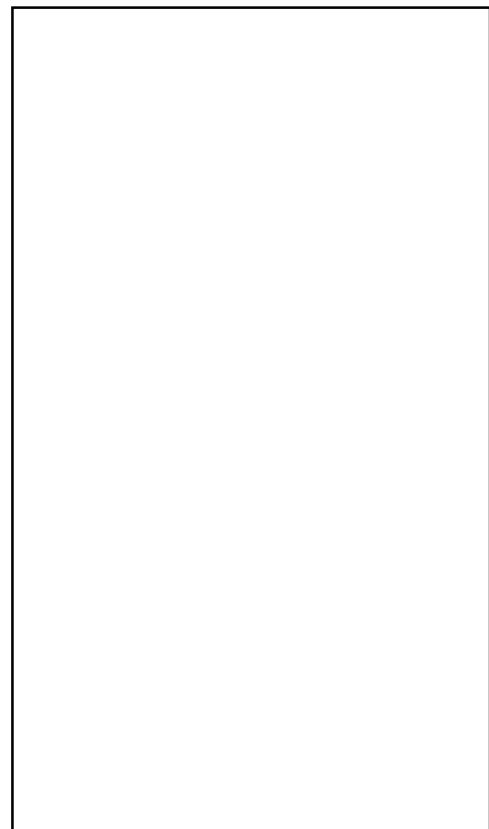
Just the following Monday our much loved education secretary, Gillian Shephard, gave a speech urging school governors not to flinch at sacking teachers. She attacked some teachers for not properly implementing the government's imposed national curriculum and Standard Achievement Tasks (Sats). Well spotted, Gillian. Perhaps this is because the tests are educationally backward and increase teachers' workload to an unbearable level.

The campaign against Sats was initiated by rank and file teachers and parents. Refusal to implement the tests forced the government to backtrack - until the union bureaucracies settled one by one.

The present attack on education has even brought former Conservatives onto the streets. On the platform in Hyde Park on Saturday many admitted to having voted Tory, but never again. Unfortunately for them, Labour offers only the same cuts. That is why a strong campaign on the streets is needed.

The march was a good beginning, but headteachers, governors and parents are mistaken if they think they can win this battle by appealing to the better judgement of Gillian Shephard and other Tory MPs. Recent struggles should have shown even former Tories how disastrous this avenue is.

Cutbacks are not restricted to education. Most notably, the



Sharpening up our act

government has chosen to attack the health service and nurses' pay at the same time.

All workers are angry at the destruction of these vital services and the insulting pay offers made to both nurses and teachers. We need to organise that anger into a force which can put the Tories and their likely successors, the Labour Party, on the run.

Fight Against Cuts in Education - national conference
Saturday June 10, 11am to 4pm in Coventry.

For details, contact Face, c/o St Giles Middle School, Hayes Lane, Exhall, Coventry CV7 9NS.

Communists stand against cuts - see back pg

Letters

Winners and losers

I refer to Tyrone O’Sullivan’s letter (*Weekly Worker* 86). It is excellent to hear that workers at Tower Colliery have benefited so much since ‘taking control’ and buying the pit from British Coal. Tyrone suggests however that such a strategy should be pursued by all workers as a way “to control their destiny”. I disagree.

The fight to make industries ‘worker-owned’ is a tactical one and something that should be decided by workers in certain situations. But pursuing this strategy on principle is incorrect.

The long-term interests of the working class as a whole do not rest in workers aiming to buy their own particular industry or factory and simply improving their pay and basic working conditions. A much more important political goal needs to be fought for.

Tyrone states, “We are looking to our coal going overseas, not only to Welsh or British Valleys”: ie, Tower will be competing with other pits in the UK to sell their coal to interested parties. We all know that under capitalism competition means there are winners and losers. The pit may be doing well at the moment, but there are no guarantees this will continue.

This, coupled with the fact that Tower is not immune to economic slumps, means that if the pit’s profits drop significantly, tough decisions will have to be made about how to improve its performance. Cuts in wages and enforcing redundancies cannot be ruled out.

I wish Tower miners well in their efforts to run their pit and improve their lot. Nothing however should detract them and other workers from our main aim of fighting for socialism in order to secure lasting benefits for all.

Gareth Phillips
East London

John Walsh’s reply to comrade Chris Ford (*Weekly Worker* 87) was at times opaque and in some places misleading.

Comrade Walsh claims that “no antagonism exists between” the nations in Britain, which demonstrates why we have a “national working class”. This is why the CPGB does not advocate secession for the “four nations” which make up the UK.

Leaving aside the conflation of concepts (UK, Great Britain, nations, nationalities, etc), this is a slightly rose-tinted view of

the ‘United Kingdom’. There is still what you could call some residual ‘national antagonism’ within the UK, alongside regionalism, localism and parochialism. In so far as these outlooks still exist they must be vigorously opposed by communists.

Secondly, is comrade Walsh implying that if there was ‘national antagonism’ (to one degree or another) then perhaps communists would not be obliged to fight for the unity of the working class - perhaps even that secession would not be such a bad idea after all? I hope not. If there was ‘national antagonism’, communists would be obliged to fight nationalism/separatism even more.

Comrade Walsh goes on to say, “I feel now that a federal Europe would be a step forward”. Confusingly he then adds the rejoinder, “Certainly we should not oppose it on any chauvinist grounds”. So, on what grounds should we support or not support it?

Surely the point comrade Walsh is groping towards is that as communists, as materialists, our task is to harness social development, not stand against it like King Canute. Communists seek the liberation of humanity by going forward, not in attempts to return to the past or to preserve the status quo.

If the bourgeoisie do set up a federal Europe then that will be our starting point: ie, a Communist Party of the European Union would be our counterweight.

Similarly we do not seek to disinvest nuclear technology, despite the fact that it has produced the hydrogen bomb, capable of annihilating the world many times over, or led to hundreds of thousands of actual deaths in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We seek to harness the progressive, beneficial aspects of nuclear technology.

Finally comrade Walsh claims (using Lenin as an authority, somewhat dubiously, I suspect) that “local democracy was the highest form of democracy that the bourgeoisie could achieve and devolution would certainly be a step forwards to greater local democracy”.

It sounds like a step backwards to me! From a communist perspective, how could a bureaucratic Yorkshire parliament be in the interests of the ‘national’ working class in the UK? It could spawn regionalism and localism.

Eddie Ford
South London

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

Irish prisoners kept hostage

WHILE THE mass media have widely reported the ending of routine patrols in Belfast and the imminent talks between Sinn Fein and the government, there is one issue which has been largely absent from their coverage of the Irish ‘peace process’.

There are still more than 30 prisoners of war held in British jails, with no indication of when they will be freed or even transferred to the Six Counties. Sinn Fein is mobilising its supporters around the issue with its *Saoirse* (freedom) campaign, and Sunday April 2 will see a march by several thousand in Crossmaglen, assembling in the square at 2pm.

Conditions for the POWs have in many cases actually worsened, particularly since the escape attempt from Whitemoor Prison last year. The prisoners, who were badly beaten on their recapture, were refused visits for six months. When, finally, relatives were informed that they would be granted a visit, it turned out to be under unacceptable secure ‘closed’ conditions. This resulted in relatives having to return to Ireland before open visits were at last agreed the following week.

Those held in SSUs (special secure units) have borne the brunt of the clampdown. Gerry Mackin in Frankland Prison has spent several weeks ‘on the blanket’ after being withheld the ‘privilege’ - normally granted to SSU prisoners - of wearing his own clothes.

In Full Sutton, Feilim O hAdhmaill has been prevented from telephoning his family, even on Christmas Day, because they wish to speak in Irish, and the prison authorities are insisting that only English must be used. Letters from relatives written in Irish have been held up for weeks because, according to the Home Office, there is a lack of censors.

Sinn Fein spokesperson Donncha O’Hara points out that most IRA fighters are from working class families, who can ill afford the journey to England: “The prisoners are nothing less than political hostages. What a contrast to the treatment given to private Lee Clegg.”

Another Frankland prisoner, Paul Norney, has been held in British prisons for almost twenty years. Now aged 37, his transfer to Ireland has been rejected because of an alleged technical infringement of rules last year.

All prisoners should be released immediately. It is no crime to fight for the right of self-determination. But it is clear that Britain intends to use them as pawns in its game of imposing an imperialist ‘peace’ - a peace where the IRA and Inla must “decommission” their arms, while imperialism itself will remain armed to the teeth.

Alan Fox

Demonstrate!

Join the fight for union rights called by the National Union of Journalists

The NUJ is calling on all trade unionists to support a demonstration against management attacks at the Sheffield *Star*.

Assemble 12.30pm, Saturday April 1, at Paternoster, Sheffield, near the rail and bus station.

March to the University of Sheffield for a rally.

Dave Douglass

Dave is vice chair of South Yorkshire NUM panel

Opportunists moving right

VETERAN communist Bill Matthews once predicted the political trajectory of a young Party firebrand, Kevin Hughes, who left the CPGB to join the New Communist Party. Bill predicted that the move after that would be into the Labour Party, then on to selection as an MP, and finally settling in as a rightwing parliamentarian. The last piece of the prediction seems to be coming to pass.

Kevin Hughes, sponsored NUM MP for Doncaster North, has rejected NUM policy to stand by clause four and thrown his weight in with the Blair Yuppies’ Tory political vision.

It might be noted, incidentally, that the Webbs did not in fact invent the famous form of words. These came more or less directly from the constitution of the Miners Federation of Great Britain and had been in place at least on paper since 1900.

The power of the miners’ union and the labour movement at large undoubtedly led to their wording being drafted into the new political party’s constitution, albeit with a bit of tarring up by the Webbs.

More particularly was clause four, part *five*, which was simultaneously drafted to exclude communists and Marxists from the party and to keep it firmly within social democratic bounds.

Hughes’ opportunism does his mining and union past a great discredit, but does go to show the way that parliament and being a bigshot at Westminster totally destroys honest class principle, now matter how much the heart has thumped before setting off to that evil place.

Blair and all those diving into the gravy train for high office are the antithesis of class principle and socialist struggle. Honest members of the Labour Party ought to reflect deep and hard as to whether they really want to share a bed with such people.

The stench coming outside is unbearable, so the reek within that organisation must belie belief.

Viewpoint Tom May

Crisis waiting to happen

LAST MONTH the derivatives dealer Nick Leeson was set up as the fall guy for an event that is inherent in the banking system. Although on this occasion it did not lead to a major crisis, more and bigger troubles are on the way.

Dealing in derivatives is a form of gambling. As long as the bookie hedges his bets, taking a small percentage for profit, he will never lose; in fact this is no different from the actions of insurance companies. Of course insurance companies - and even bookies - do go broke if they try to take more than a small percentage, but the system as a whole does not necessarily lose as a result.

The question is, why do financial institutions end up taking bigger risks? The real problem is that if they do not get a rate of return on their capital of about 20% they will be forced out of the market, either by capital being withdrawn from them or by being taken over by other institutions. In any gambling game those with the larger stake in the first place have an advantage over the others. The tendency is for the banks to become even larger. So it is better for small players to take risks, rather than face the certainty of failure.

The *Financial Times* has predicted that by the end of the century there may be as few as six to a dozen banks controlling the vast majority of the world’s capital. This process of capital concentration goes on even in the very stable conditions enjoyed by the world monetary system since 1945, based on the US dollar. The dollar still maintains its world role but, as the US government has continued to finance its deficits by printing dollars, the deutschemark and the yen are gaining strength. As the institutions move out of the dollar, they threaten the stability

Gambling with workers livlihoods

of the other currencies. This has been very true for Mexico and Spain, but the other non-DM based currencies of the EU are also under threat.

In addition the globalisation of the world economy is leading to huge currency switches, causing further instabilities in the banking system.

These problems are a combination of the uneven development of the world economy and the political struggles between the various capitalist states and blocs. One likely product is to accelerate the arrival of the common EU currency.

In the financial crisis at the Crédit Lyonnais Bank (the largest bank in the world outside Japan) losses were sustained that are probably ten times those of Barings. The French government has agreed to refinance the bank at a cost of anything up to £100 per French citizen. This is probably illegal under EU law, but there is general political agreement that this is necessary. The alternative - a political and financial crisis caused by such a collapse - would probably have precipitated events similar to those seen in the 1930s.

Reviews

Shocking massacre

La Reine Margot, director Patrice Chereau, 1994, Curzon Phoenix, Charing Cross Road, £4 (no concessions)

SOMEWHAT unusually for a mainstream French film, *La Reine Margot* deals with the subject of a woman coming to maturity, while the men around either succumb to hubris or remain stunted by their poisonous upbringing.

The background is the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of 1572, an atrocity which shocked everybody in Europe except the Pope, who threw a party to celebrate it. 6,000 Huguenots were murdered after being lured into Paris for the wedding celebration of Margot, the sister of King Charles IX, and Henri de Navarre, champion of the Huguenot cause in France.

The massacre itself is dealt with superbly: the special effects are graphic and the mass graves are unavoidably reminiscent of Auschwitz.

This film does present one major difficulty though: anyone who does not have a reasonably sound knowledge of the French wars of religion and the endless infighting at the French court might well become quickly bewildered by the very rapid turn of events.

For instance, one of the main

perpetrators of the massacre, Henri de Guise, is presented merely as a villain who just so happened to be one of Margot’s lovers rather than the central political figure he was at the time.

However this is more than amply compensated for by a brilliant portrayal of the extremely sinister Catherine de Medici, which almost single-handedly evokes the atmosphere of sickness and malevolence which hangs permanently over the French court.

A recurring theme in the film is the relationship between love and betrayal, and all the major characters are, to one degree or another, torn between these two poles. This is particularly highlighted by Margot’s protracted struggle to discover where her loyalties really lie.

The film is well worth seeing - even if only for the sheer strength of the performances. The tormented Charles IX, the diabolical Catherine and the slowly transforming Margot herself are colourful characters that will linger in the memory for a long time to come - not to mention the truly shocking massacre itself.

Danny Hammill

Kurdish liberation needs class struggle

TURKISH armed forces have occupied a large belt along the border with Iraqi Kurdistan in a massive operation. The total force mobilised in south-eastern Turkey is about 200,000 and those units moved into Iraqi territory number around 35,000. While international attention was focused on the invasion inside Iraq, the internal operation has already killed more ‘insurgents’ than the whole operation in Iraq.

Almost one third of the Turkish army is on a war footing. The mobilised troops are the best trained and most well equipped units selected from every corps, division and brigade based all around Turkey. This is the cream of the Turkish army.

As a result the governor of Istanbul complained there were inadequate numbers of gendarmeric troops with counter-insurgency training during the recent Alevi demonstrations.

The transporting of the troops started last November, which indicates that this is no ‘hot pursuit’ of armed bands. The planning without doubt

had an American input, since the US flights in the UN-declared ‘safe zone’ north of the 36th parallel stopped simultaneously with the Turkish bombing raids.

Low-key criticism and tacit support was adopted by the British government. Despite more critical posturing, the Germans, along with the rest of the European Union, expressed a similar attitude. While this was going on, Turkey’s membership of the Customs Union was rushed through, giving Turkey a clear message: go ahead with your plans in the south-east; your western borders will be secured.

The vacuum created in Northern Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War was never properly filled. The coalition’s half baked plans could not be implemented. Imperialism dared not make changes to Middle East boundaries. They could not be contemplated while the consequences of the Soviet collapse remain unclear and while there are very serious problems in the Balkans and the Caucasus.

An attempt was made to create a quasi-Kurdish state by forcing the two main tribal guerrillas of Talabani and Barzani into a government. Soon the Kurdish groups were fighting among themselves over who was to control the main market towns and consequently the trade fostered by the US and UN ‘aid’ carried into the region by Turkish companies.

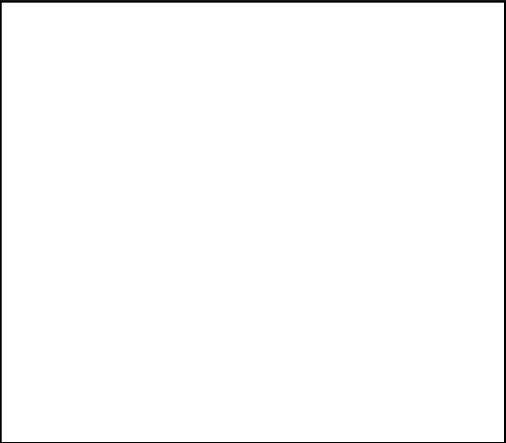
This produced a very beneficial situation for the PKK guerrillas in maintaining their ability to infiltrate the Turkish zone at will. When neither Barzani nor Talabani proved willing or able to hold back the PKK, Ankara began to turn the screw.

Turkey began to choke the aid convoys. It initiated a dialogue with Baghdad and resuscitated the old 1970s proposal for Kurdish autonomy. This seemingly no-hope idea was a step towards a new concept: maintaining an internationally acceptable regime in Iraqi Kurdistan with a Turkish army presence.

Imperialism is looking to ‘solve’ the Kurdish national question in the secession of Iraqi Kurds into a federal structure within Turkey. This would of course require a major change in the balance of forces in the region, including control of the Kirkuk oil fields, but cannot be dismissed out of hand.

Several Turkish incursions into the region over the last decade and very good cooperation with some of the local militia forces have already prepared the ground for this, and the present operation is a further step in that direction. While all this applies new pressure to Iraq, it also affects Syria and Iran - still near the top of the US agenda.

Within Turkey the working class and



Over 5,000 Kurdish and Turkish workers marched in Hackney, London the day after the attack on Alevis in Turkey

forces of democracy are losing ground. The military’s prestige has been raised, while the civilian government is in crisis. The remnants of the so-called Social Democratic Party has been forced into a shotgun marriage government coalition.

Turkey’s disorganised left is on its knees in face of the onslaught of Turkish nationalism, and many organisations, apart from organising a one-off anti-war protest, act as if nothing has happened. Some organisations have gone so far as to drop their support for Kurdish self-determination in favour of centralised, larger states.

However, the crisis-ridden economy and disunited bourgeoisie will not allow retreat from class struggle. Whatever the expansionist aims of the Turkish bourgeoisie, the working class is faced with the basic issue of the Kurdish question. That can only be settled under full democracy and with the fully expressed free will of the Kurdish people. Such a democracy can only come to Turkey via a revolution led by the working class.

Aziz Demir

Illusionary socialism

TONY BLAIR’S *Spectator* speech last week must have been yet another blow to both the reformist and revolutionary left, who still insist on calling for a vote for Labour. Tony’s targets this week were ‘irresponsible’ parents, teenage ‘delinquents’ and ‘anti-social’ tenants. Proving once and for all that he is the genius of the truly nasty sound bite, Blair announced his attention to “end the give and take-away society”.

No wonder Kenneth Clarke commented: “Sometimes I think Tony Blair is copying my speeches”.

The supreme irony is that Blair advocates cracking down on tenants and parents by increasing state power against them, while simultaneously preaching the ‘new right’ ethos of opposition to the “overbearing state”.

The response of Militant Labour and the Socialist Workers Party to the Blairite ‘new turn’ has exposed the sheer poverty and timidity of the revolutionary left.

ML members will be lobbying the special Labour Party conference on April 29 “to protest and oppose Tony Blair’s attempts to ditch socialism by scrapping clause four” (*Militant* March 24).

Not only is ML defending Labour’s anti-communist inspired clause, but it is actually sowing socialist illusions in it.

Alex Callinicos in *Socialist Worker* (March 25) displays the same rank cowardice. He writes: “Simply to dismiss Labour as no different to the Tories would be to cut oneself off from

the aspirations for real change that have become concentrated in it.”

As we know the solemn task of the SWP is to act as cheer leader for the Labour Party. Its hegemony over the working class must never be challenged, especially at elections - to do so would be to ‘let the Tories in’.

Callinicos looks forward to some future date when “Blair could find himself isolated and in head to head combat with substantial figures who would prefer to set up an alternative rather than see their influence entirely eliminated”.

We are supposed to sit around twiddling our thumbs, waiting for the disillusioned reformist left to form a monstrous reformed Labour Party. What reactionary fantasies. The SWP is determined to close its eyes to the real movement in society and wish it away.

In the absence of any real alternative, society is moving to the right and the Labour Party is moving in harmony with it. Yes, this is creating a vacuum, but until the revolutionary left is bold enough to begin to try and fill it, the left in the Labour Party will be dragged right with it. Remember all those who were going to leave if Blair got elected?

All genuine revolutionaries must break from the stifling trend of trying to salvage Labourism which haunts the left. Our task now is to reforge the Communist Party, which will ruthlessly oppose Labourism and social democracy in all its guises.

Frank Vincent

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.

For workers’ European unions

DESPITE this week’s delay, the European social affairs council looks likely to pass a directive in June equalising migrant workers’ pay and conditions with those of the host country.

Britain’s employment secretary, Michael Portillo, opposes the directive, calling it a ‘protectionist’ barrier, but is himself concerned that European bosses’ rights to exploit cheap labour are ‘protected’. He is also opposing proposals for a social clause in international trade agreements to recognise trade unions and ban child labour.

It is ironic that the states most in favour of the equalisation measures - Germany and France in particular - are those which employ the highest number of legal EU ‘guest’ workers. They want to prevent the undercutting of wage rates, thus discouraging the importation of unemployment from EU states such as Britain, where wage rates are lower.

However it is clear that workers cannot rely on EU legislation. Despite changes in law, bosses throughout Europe remain expert at exploiting cheap labour - and all the better if it is made illegal, since then they are guaranteed that workers cannot organise or claim any rights.

German bosses employ 500,000 ‘illegal’ workers in the construction industry. The pay and conditions of these ‘illegal’ workers are dismal in comparison to those won by the strength of trade union organisation in Germany.

These rights are in danger of being eroded by bosses exploiting cheap labour, even when the ‘guest’ workers are legal. Local workers - mainly German and Turkish - work an eight hour day, while migrant workers - mainly from Britain and Portugal - work about 14 hours. Local workers stop work with pay when the weather is too bad. Migrant workers work through or lose pay. When all lost benefits are taken into account migrant workers get about 48% less pay than the Berlin union rates.

Cheap labour not only affects those enduring its appalling conditions, but

it also drives down the wages of all workers. Our job is to ensure we get the best. This demands working class organisation across Europe. We need one European union for one European industry - on the German model - to enable workers throughout Europe to fight together instead of being forced to compete by the bosses.

We must demand the free movement of workers not only throughout Europe, but also into and out of Europe - no worker should be illegal. It is clear that immigration controls and a so-called fortress Europe have nothing to do with the myth of overcrowding, but are designed to criminalise migrant workers.

We know, whatever laws the bosses pass, they will use them to drive down our wages and conditions as best they can, unless we are organised to resist such attacks.

Linda Addison

Could the working class liberate itself simply by staging one big strike?

The Communist Party London seminar series on *Trade Unions* this week looks at “The general strike - what it is and when should we call for it?”

On April 9 we open a new seminar programme with three parallel series running concurrently. Beginning with the series on *Nationalism*, the first seminar considers “Nations, their origin and definition”, and is followed by *Marx’s theory of alienation* and *Modern revolutionary moments*.

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

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Workers in Scotland go to the polls this week to elect the new 'shadow' councils. But it is clear that - Labour, SNP or Tory - the new councils will still be 'cutting councils'. So use your vote positively - vote communist and join us in fighting back

Vote communist on April 6

Jobseekers, no jobs

LAST MONDAY I met Davey Selkirk in the Dundee Trades Club and we talked about the dispute at Timex, where he was an engineer. He said he regretted nothing about the strike except the way it ended: "At the beginning nobody would have believed that we could have achieved what we did."

He spoke about all the years of training and retraining he had received as an engineer now being wasted, because at his age he could not find employment in his profession. "I am now getting half

the pay cleaning at a garage after being unemployed for about a year." Despite this he is not allowing bitterness to spoil his life.

He speaks for many workers, not just those at Timex, whose lives are being blighted by government employment policies. This is the reality behind, 'Jobseekers', "flexible labour" and retraining to meet market needs - policies introduced by the Tories, but Blair promises that they will be continued under Labour.

Mary Ward

Shadow chaos

JOHN BERRIDGE of Dundee University political science department explained in *The Courier* on March 27 the case for local government reorganisation in Scotland, which necessitates next week's 'shadow' elections. As he is a former Conservative branch chairman, I will quote: "The Tories instigated the reorganisation principally for their own political advantage. They wanted local government to be as weak as possible, so it could not present any sort of challenge to them."

According to Berridge, the new administrations "will have populations too small to support viable individual services in areas such as education and roads.

"If the savings the government say will accrue from the reorganisation are to happen, they will have to come from reduced services, job losses or both. Since staff costs account for such a large proportion of local government expenditure, that's the most obvious area in which to make savings."

We know that neither Labour nor the SNP will challenge Whitehall's power to limit local government expenditure. So a vote for them on April 6 is a vote for poorer services and possibly for your own sacking. Only a struggle by ordinary workers can prevent this from happening. A Communist vote is part of that struggle.

Arthur Lawrence

Council robbery

DUNDEE Labour Party has announced its election pledges for April 6. Top of the list is a commitment to a minimum wage - but only for workers employed by companies the council deals with. As far as we know, it is not the £275 per week that every worker needs as a minimum to lead a civilised life style. In fact Labour is keeping quiet about an actual figure. My guess is, if it ever sees the light of day, it will be no higher than the inadequate wage level presently paid to many council staff.

It is all hogwash to disguise the fact that the council budget is too low to provide the necessary services.

Take the dispute on Tayside council last Thursday. Labour councillor Mike Barr rose from his sick bed to make possible the defeat of the SNP budget proposal to cut social services by £1.5 million.

Money will now be taken from the roads department's reserve fund.

Ewan Dow for the SNP commented that Labour's action had taken the councils reserves to their lowest-ever point and he predicted this could cause problems in funding school staffing and police pay restructuring. They are all at it: robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Phil Kent

Seize empty houses

ACCORDING to the housing charity Shelter, 852 people became homeless in Dundee in 1993-4. The general picture is that 25% are under 24. They leave home because of domestic problems. In 1991 at least 10,000 young men in Scotland ended up homeless in London, indicating that there are no answers to their problems to be found in Scotland, particularly jobs.

With the older age group, eviction by private landlords or mortgage arrears are the usual cause.

Dundee council has a brilliant policy for boosting the homelessness figures: when people cannot afford their rent, the council evicts them. Just like any private landlord with

only profit in mind and no social responsibilities.

Dundee has surplus housing, but 80% of tenants want to live in only 20% of the stock, because the rest is so dilapidated.

Shelter says that a net increase of only one percent on the annual budget could totally eliminate homelessness in Scotland.

The Communist Party says everybody has the right to good quality housing. If the council says it cannot afford this basic need, empty houses and the second homes of the rich should be occupied by the working class to house the homeless.

Phil Kent

Communists in Scotland: taking the campaign onto the streets of Dundee

THE ANGER amongst workers in Scotland has been obvious during our campaign. This is why the presence of the Communist Party on the streets has been so important.

Shoppers have been literally queuing up to sign our petitions against local hospital closures. They have taken

communist manifestos away with them. There has been no anti-communist feeling - people are glad somebody is doing something to stop the rot. In Dundee, where communists have been out on the streets every day, it is the Communist Party which is now known to be taking the lead against the cuts.

Labour and the Scottish National Party have been only notable by their absence and, where they do pop up their ugly heads, they have nothing to offer workers - whether in a devolved or an independent Scotland.

Last week we got a taste of what Blair meant by devolution. It had nothing to do with workers taking control: rather he is concerned, as with all 'good' rightwing bourgeois politicians, to strengthen the bosses' state.

Noisy neighbours will apparently be targeted, along with parents of truants. This of course is the best that Labour can offer as it flows comfortably with the rightwing agenda.

But more state laws will do nothing except further oppress the working class. They will do nothing to provide all neighbours with a decent environment, instead of squashing them into derelict, damp and filthy multis.

They will do nothing to ensure that our children get an education that teaches the truth, encourages their enthusiasm and imagination and prepares them for life, rather than fills their head with the bosses' deadening ideology. They will do nothing to give our children hope and a vision for a future freed from the confines of unemployment and poverty.

Communist candidates have taken a very different message to the doorstep of voters in Scotland. The only way to stop the attacks of all the bosses' parties is to organise ourselves, and this message has had a powerful resonance among voters.

The fact that communist candidates are not knocking on doors with a list of empty promises has been appreciated. Workers have been sold out so many times by SNP and Labour, who both increase council tax and at the same time shut down and cut services.

Many of course tell us they will be voting Labour, but it is quite unusual to find anyone who expects anything to be delivered by a Labour council - its record is too notorious. The SNP now also has its own record of attacks on workers while in power on the council. Talk of Scottish independence may be persuasive to people who feel totally

powerless in the face of their lives being ruled from Westminster. But the SNP has proved that its own rule in Scotland would be no more attractive.

One voter in Lochee, Dundee, slated his local Labour councillor: "Tom McDonald is a waste of space. The only way we're going to get anything today is to do it ourselves," he told the communist candidate, Dominic Handley. This voter was not alone.

That is why our election address hit home. Workers know they cannot rely on any of the other parties. The problem is that equally they do not feel strong enough to do anything themselves.

Our task of putting forward the alternative is vitally important. Communist candidate Mary Ward was told by Julie, a Hilltown voter, "I've never put my name on the electoral register, because none of the parties are going to make any difference to me." But she was impressed by our manifesto, which is a fighting programme for action rather than a list of meagre promises. Julie, like many others, wants to come to Communist Party meetings.

This is the reason we are standing in these elections. A vote for the Communist Party, unlike a vote for any of the other parties, will not be wasted.

Our work goes much further than a cross on a ballot paper. Voting communist in these elections is the first step for the working class. It states: we will not be treated as so much fodder to make money for the bosses, who take 75% pay rises while our pay drops; we will not live in squalor any more; we will not accept unemployment and smile as you slash our benefits.

A communist vote is a vote for action. It is a vote to rebuild the working class organisation that we so desperately need to really put power into our own hands.

Vote communist for what the working class needs, not what the bosses say they can afford!

Lee-Anne Bates

Where there is no Communist Party candidate, we say voters should only vote for candidates who support the following demands:

- For a £275 minimum weekly wage
- Work or full benefit at the level of the minimum wage
- Pensions at the level of the minimum wage
- Free abortion and contraception on demand
- Unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland
- Support the right of self-determination in Wales and Scotland
- Against immigration controls

From *The Call*, paper of the British Socialist Party, April 1 1920

Communist unity conference

ANOTHER attempt to achieve unity was made on March 13 last, when delegates representing the BSP ... , SLP [Socialist Labour Party] ... , WSF [Workers Socialist Federation] ... and the SWSS [South Wales Socialist Society] met.

F Peet, on behalf of the BSP, expressed the keen desire of that organisation to achieve the unity of all bodies in this country who adhered to the Third International, the Soviet system and the dictatorship of the proletariat ...

Miss Pankhurst [WSF] insisted that the new party should pledge itself in advance against any connection with the Labour Party, local or otherwise. T Mitchell for the SLP said ... that even if the BSP executive waived the question of affiliation to the Labour Party altogether, the SLP would not be willing to go forward, seeing that the majority of the BSP membership were in favour of affiliation. This being the position a deadlock resulted ...

The BSP position is clear. We consider the formation of a virile Communist Party in this country essential. We do not wish to abandon, in advance, any weapon it may be necessary for that Party to use in the future. Let the new Party decide for itself.

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