

weekly worker

No 94

Thursday May 18 1995

Fighting fund

COMRADES around the country are flexing their muscles in preparation for this year's Party Offensive. Comrades in South London raised £160 on Saturday alone and have been out throughout the week subsequently.

This is the sort of pace - and more - all comrades need to emulate in order to reach our target of £25,000 for the Offensive over the months of June and July. These two months will be an intensive period of fundraising and political work to build support for the task of reforging the CPGB. It is an ambitious target, as we are already beginning to make plans for the general election. It is vital that we make full use of this election to build communist organisation and challenge the hegemony of the Labour Party over our class.

Phone in pledges now and join us at the Party Offensive launch meeting in London at 5pm on June 4. We need pledges from all readers, supporters and sympathisers. No pledge is too small ... or too big! Book now for the celebration meal on Saturday July 29.

Now for action!

The RCN conference on Tuesday showed the extent of healthworkers' anger towards the government and the system itself. The danger is that union leaders will cave in and settle for some shabby pay-cutting deal. Only rank and file workers can make sure they do not get away with it

THIS WEEK'S step by the Royal College of Nursing towards ending its no-strike rule is a victory for all healthworkers. It is indicative of the anger that *all* workers feel towards this corrupt Tory government and the barbaric system they serve.

But the preparation for action has only just begun. Congress delegates voted to ballot the 300,000 membership on whether the rule should be replaced by a clause allowing *legal and limited industrial action*, falling short of a strike. The rule change would require a two-thirds majority.

Nurses, like all other healthworkers, are angry and frustrated at being overworked, underpaid and abused in what is daily becoming a more demoralising and stressful occupation. As cutbacks arising from the government's market reforms bite ever deeper, the health 'service' has been reduced to cut-throat competition for contracts. Everything must be done on the cheap, and it is the patients - 'customers', as they are now pathetically dubbed - who suffer.

Not only the working class, but just about the whole population understands - often through bitter, personal experience - how bad things are in the NHS. There is overwhelming public support for the healthworkers, and the government's popularity is at an all-time low.

Yet the leaders of neither the RCN nor Unison, the main health trade union, have the slightest intention of using this huge reservoir of support to smash through the government-imposed 'award' of a national one percent rise, plus a possible further two percent through local negotiations.

Unison's official claims are for between eight and fifteen percent, depending on the particular group of workers. But this has been quietly dropped in favour of a straight three percent nationally-agreed increase for everybody. This would represent

a wage *cut* in real terms. Since its 'Fair pay day' on March 30, Unison has been embroiled in a long drawn out consultation exercise with its members on the question of industrial action.

While Unison's position at least has the 'merit' of insisting on a no-strings *national* deal, the RCN's Christine Hancock has stated that a three percent formal offer, without conditions, by 300 of the 485 health trusts would be considered a victory by her. Presumably the remaining 185 with their tens of thousands of RCN members can be quietly ignored. That situation, according to Ms Hancock, would be "better than the anarchy and mess that is around at the moment".

Both organisations see their ballots as merely a means of putting pressure on the authorities to compromise. If the leaders have their way, their members' heart-searching over ways to take industrial action without harming the patients will be for nothing.

NHS managers are in any case pointing out that *any* industrial action, including the widely backed non-co-operation in clerical tasks, will harm patients in the long run. Measures which affect the trusts' efficiency, they say, will lead to further deterioration in healthcare.

Lacking any leadership from their unions, many healthworkers are demoralised, believing there is little possibility of any action being effective. But it is now absolutely clear that healthworkers need to go far beyond the limits set by the union bureaucrats to win their dispute. This would involve taking it into their own hands - organising not only the necessary strikes, but also the emergency cover. Such a campaign would have to be linked to demands for the kind of health service we need and would have the potential to mobilise whole sections of the working class.

It would require vision and imagination. But there is no easier path to victory.

Make sure that healthworkers' enthusiasm and public support are not wasted

Fighting the trusts in Scotland

THE NHS in Scotland, like the rest of Britain, is under attack from all angles. Hospitals are being closed, wards are being mothballed and healthworkers are offered derisory pay awards. Out of 36 trusts in Scotland only three are meeting the unions' demand for a three percent unconditional increase in nurses' pay. Another 24 have offered the three percent only if staff agree to a worsening of conditions of service, including a reduction in bank holidays and acceptance of local pay bargaining.

Many hospital workers are bemused at the onslaught. The public is only seeing the tip of the iceberg as, slice by slice, healthcare is being cut to meet the business demands of the trusts.

The fight to save the Dundee Royal Infirmary is now being conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation and double-speak on the part of the trust.

One hospital storeman in Ninewells told us, "I can't sign your petition. We've been told not to sign anything or speak to anyone or we might lose our jobs."

Thousands of people in this city want to fight for better healthcare. This Monday the Dundee branch of the CPGB will not only present its petition to the trust, but will put forward communist demands:

- No hospital closures
- Healthcare according to need not profit
- A minimum wage of £275 for a 35-hour week for all healthworkers

Mary Ward, Communist Party branch secretary, said: "This is just the start of our campaign. At Monday's meeting we will launch our call for a health service support group, including political parties, community leaders and trade unionists. We will also be going

to rank and file workers who feel they have been sold out by their unions. Workers must organise now and fight for the healthcare we need. If current union officials do not have the stomach for a fight then they should be replaced by those with the guts to lead the working class."

Nancy Morelli

Lobby the health trust

Outside Ninewells Hospital lecture room. Assemble in the foyer at 6.45pm, May 22
For details of Dundee Communist Party branch meetings contact 01382-667517

Fightback at Rolls Royce - see back page

Nice ideas

Below we reprint one of the letters received in response to our election material, illustrating some common points raised both in writing and on the doorstep

I have just received a pamphlet from the Communist Party. I have some questions regarding your policies that I would like you to answer.

1. Why should minorities have the right to be educated in their mother tongue when the recognised language for this country is English?, What good would it do to educate someone in their mother tongue, leaving them unable to get a job because their English is too poor?

2. A free public transport system accessible to all does sound like a nice idea, but who will fund this?

3. I agree that drug users should not be criminalised for taking drugs. However, they should be punished if they steal or commit other crimes to pay for their addiction. All drugs should certainly never be made legal, which would encourage younger people to abuse them. If drugs were legalised, who would set their price? Will the crime rate go up so that addicts can pay for their drugs?

4. I agree that prevention is better than cure, but trying to eradicate poverty, alienation, unemployment and social fragmentation would be an almost impossible task.

5. A communist country is run by the people, for the people. However, I believe it is a country run like all countries, capitalist included, by a few men at the top of the ladder who think they know what is best for the majority.

6. A minimum wage of £275 per week sounds good - but who is going to finance companies when they have to pay such high wages? However if benefit was at £275 per week, I wouldn't be working and neither would most of the nation. Again, who will finance the high benefit level?

7. Of course with this benefit and with all immigration controls at an end, the country would be over-populated with the hundreds and thousands of people arriving. Where would they live? Who would pay for the houses?

Helen Avery
Luton

Phil Railston, communist candidate for Strood in Kent, replies:

For communists, capitalism has already created the technical means to abolish want everywhere in the world. What is lacking is the will to do it.

For example, you say that a free public transport system would be astronomically expensive. Transport already is. We have to buy cars, sit in traffic jams, die in accidents, suffer the effects of pollution and pay thousands of pounds a year to be herded like cattle on buses and trains. A rational, free public transport system would work better and cost less.

You fear that if we abolish poverty here the country will be swamped by immigrants and no one will want to work. Communists organise in every country and we demand the abolition of poverty everywhere. Work, not money, creates all the world's wealth. Work, not money, will abolish poverty. We are for full employment and many hands make light work. Work then becomes a part of a life that is worth living. This is what people will work for. Your fears are groundless.

We oppose immigration controls because they treat people as unwanted bits of machinery, but do nothing to reduce unemployment or poverty. You have to find human answers to human problems.

Likewise with drugs. People who damage their health with drugs need help and treatment, not punishment. On this we agree. Legalising drugs enables society to deal with each problem rationally. Take the two most dangerous drugs known: alcohol and tobacco. Both are legal and their

consumption is controlled by very different legislation. Prices are fixed by the market and taxation or, in the case of the next most dangerous category, by doctor's prescription. We can see that where poverty and alienation are greatest so are the drug problems.

Minorities should have the right to be educated in their mother tongue because people learn quickest and best that way, including how to speak the majority language. They learn English quickly and willingly, because it is to their advantage. This right means treating people with respect, as equals, developing their full potential both intellectually and culturally. Education is not about oppressing anyone, but liberating them.

It is true that since the beginning of class society, many thousands of years ago, the few have dominated the many to secure their own narrow advantage. This is the way the world has developed. With each new level of development human nature has spontaneously changed to take advantage of the new conditions. What is new now is the technical possibility of abolishing want, but only if we produce to meet human need rather than profit. This means the end of capitalism and its replacement by the rule of the working class: the majority. Majority rule in turn will work only if it is based on understanding, and develops through education and practice combined.

Our manifesto needs to be seen as a programme of struggle to prepare the working class for power.

Your comments regarding the 'communist countries' being neither a worker's paradise nor genuine workers' states are correct, but the project of building socialism by order from the top - that beguiled so many communists for so long - has failed. Socialist planning can only be achieved democratically. In our defence we were the faction that argued that case within the Communist Party for many years before the break-up of the Soviet Union. Now we are all that is left. It is our job to reforge the Party, not to repeat its mistakes.

Misleading

The reports on the communist election results (*Weekly Worker* 93) are misleading with respect to the percentage of the vote received by candidates in Luton and Strood. In both cases there were three seats being contested and only one communist candidate. It would be more accurate to describe the percentage as 3% in both cases. It is also worth noting that in all wards where we stood our vote was comparable to all the other contesting parties except Labour, which was way out in front.

Tom May
Communist candidate in Luton

Reformist vehicle

In its April 28 edition, *Militant* argues that Tony Blair has become "Tory Blair, indistinguishable from John Major on most policy issues".

It states: "With the abolition of clause four, Blair will have removed a decisive obstacle on the road of turning the Labour Party into a British version of the US Democratic Party, just another capitalist party."

Yet this is contradicted the following week by Peter Taaffe, ML's general secretary, who asserts: "Even the elimination of clause four and the breaking of the links with the trade unions (which has not yet been completed) would not be sufficient to put a minus against the Labour Party as a workers' party" (May 5).

Apparently what is "more decisive" is "the consciousness, the psychology of the working class ... towards the Labour Party".

Taaffe believes ML can fill the space

left by Labour's rightward slide. He points to his organisation's recent inroads into the Labour vote in the local elections and adds that ML "will have the opportunity to develop on an even more dramatic scale".

Yet he continues: "... we will support all attempts to create a genuine, mass socialist party in Britain. In the future, significant split-offs from Labour are inevitable."

So it is not the reforging of the *revolutionary* alternative - a mass Communist Party - that Militant's leader holds out to us, but the forming of a Labour Party mark II.

Militant Labour has no vision of *itself* providing leadership for the class. Its own potential growth is seen as a means of putting more effective pressure for *reform* - and it is keeping open its options as to whether the reformist vehicle will be the Labour Party mark I or mark II.

Ted Jaszynski
North London

Bad joke

It is sad to see Phil Railston (*Weekly Worker* April 27) bringing up the old 'Hitler was a vegetarian, therefore all vegetarians are genocidal fascists' argument to denigrate the beliefs of an ever-growing number of people, not only in Britain, but all over the world. Not being a communist, but a vegetarian who is a regular reader of the *Weekly Worker*, I see nothing wrong with the idea that social justice should apply to all creatures, not only humans, and it is speciesism to think otherwise.

Unlike what Railston thinks, it is not a sense of moral superiority which spurs us to fight for animal rights. It is simply a desire to ensure that, as far as possible within their natural environment, all creatures have a right to a pain-free life. The world is perfectly capable of surviving without the necessity to slaughter millions of animals for food, although to do this we must first pull down the multinational and governmental interests that try to keep us believing that meat is good for you. Then - with a diet free of animal growth hormones, BSE, salmonella, listeria and countless other unpalatable chemicals, organisms and diseases - we can raise the standard of living for the mass of human beings.

Finally, to equate Alan Clark with all

manner of animal rights activists, from hunt saboteurs to anti-vivisectionists - to people who simply wish to do what they can to lessen the suffering we as a species cause to other creatures - is, I hope, a bad joke.

Mark Field
Dundee

Modest aid

I have recently returned from Cuba where I met members of the Cuban Communist Party and strong supporters of the government. Others were unsure as to the correctness of government policies.

However, despite these natural divisions, without exception they declared that, despite hardships imposed upon them by the American blockade, they wished to retain the socialist system.

A teacher took us to his school which worked on a two shift system and had 500 pupils aged 16 to 17 years, and 40 teachers.

Teachers and pupils had to share pens, pencils and books. Despite all this and more, the spirit of the teachers was that, come what may, they would carry on the struggle to provide their pupils with a high standard of education, and maintain the benefit of socialism: education free of charge.

The spirit of resistance and self-sacrifice by the ordinary people of Cuba to retain their way of life, of mutual solidarity and assistance, was such a moving experience, that we resolved we would not just sentimentally sympathise, but on our return to Britain would try to assist the Cuban people in some small way. We decided to provide direct aid as soon as possible to the school we visited in the modest form of 100 pens, 125 pencils, 100 erasers and 144 blackboard chalks. Also, a pair of shoes for an ex-pupil who has to borrow shoes from relatives! the cost: £100. We decided on this modest figure on the basis of us having to meet the sum ourselves without outside assistance. If each one of us contributes £10 we cover the £100. If we double that to £20 each, we can ensure that each pupil has their own pencil!

Tom Cowan
South London

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

Steps to rapprochement

Stan Kelsey, on behalf of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee, replies to the Republican Worker Tendency letter printed in the *Weekly Worker* 92

WE ARE pleased you will be considering the question of regroupment at your aggregate meeting and we hope you and your comrades will decide to take steps towards joining us in the task of reforging the CPGB. In our view the first duty of communists is to organise ourselves, and we regard the reforging of the Communist Party as a matter of

urgency, to which every other question must be subordinated.

We are sure there will be differences of opinion, but in our view, as long as they are within the parameters of Marxism, this is natural and healthy in a communist organisation, and must not be used as an obstacle to disciplined communist work.

In reply to your three particular questions:

1. No, we do not favour the break-up of the British capitalist state, but its overthrow and replacement by a workers' republic - which would provide the best conditions for the nationalities in Britain to exercise their right to self-determination.

2. Yes, a programme is essential for a Party, and we plan to publish a draft CPGB programme this year.

3. Yes, we consider the united front a legitimate tactic in theory and practice.

Lastly, we wish to renew our invitation for the RWT to be represented at our annual school, or for individuals to attend. We regard this as a vital event for the advancement of theoretical clarity and the development of communist cadres. We urge you to give the school priority.

From *Workers' Dreadnought*, paper of the Workers' Socialist Federation, May 15 1920

Well done, London dockers!

British workers waking up at last

ON MONDAY May 10 at 1pm, the shipping dockers in the East India Dock, who were ordered to load the 'Jolly George', which was to carry munitions to Poland, struck work. They had only been working 20 minutes when they saw the guns coming down and declined to touch them.

The coalies heard a great commotion amongst the dockers and asked the cause of the trouble. When they learnt it, they refused to coal the ship.

Meanwhile someone rushed along to the Dockers' Union offices and the union officials agreed to the strike.

The ship cannot be diverted to another port until she has been coaled.

... It is expected that the stevedores will refuse to load any further provisions for the counter-revolutionaries, and that this movement will spread to all sections of dock workers, and to all ports ...

The action of the Port of London workers provides a splendid opportunity for explaining to all sections of workers the great ideas that are at stake in the war which capitalism is making upon the Workers' Republic.

... We can handicap the capitalists in their attack on Soviet Russia by striking and sabotage; but we cannot permanently stop that fight till we overturn the capitalist system at home.

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Y E A R S
JULY 31 1920
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Turkish workers give lessons in class pride

I WAS lucky enough to be the Irish representative of the Rail Maritime and Transport union on an international delegation of trade unionists to the May Day demonstrations in Turkey.

As demonstrations were taking part in all the major cities, it was decided to split the delegation up with one German, Greek, Turkish and English speaker going to each venue.

I went to Izmir, where on April 30 there was also a demonstration against the pension cuts. This was called by the left Turkish trade union centre, Turk-is. We were advised by our hosts, the Tumtis transport union, that this was a deliberate ploy by Turk-is to disrupt the illegal May 1 demonstration.

Over 60,000 people turned out on April 30 and the demonstration was good natured with traditional music and dancing to entertain the crowd. The police, armed with water cannon, machine guns, pistols and riot gear, kept a pretty low profile, but harassed the Tumtis delegation by employing stop and search tactics. At the rallying point the Turk-is bureaucrats hogged the stage, but were verbally abused by a large section of advanced workers who could smell a sell-out.

The May 1 demo, despite its illegality and falling on a working day, attracted over 20,000 in Izmir and 50,000 in Istanbul. Again demonstrators enjoyed themselves, but above all showed their class consciousness by chanting international slogans of solidarity.

The police tried to provoke the marchers by making catcalls and rude signs from the safety of their armoured cars. We were assured by our hosts that this was very mild behaviour from the pigs, who had to restrain themselves greatly because foreigners were present.

The international delegation addressed the crowd at the rally bringing them solidarity greetings from workers in various countries.

It was truly inspiring to see Turkish and Kurdish comrades turn out in such numbers. They face an oppressive state which frequently murders, tortures and makes trade unionists ‘disappear’ and still refuse to be browbeaten. Compare this to workers in Britain and Ireland



May Day, London 1995: tiny compared to demonstrations in Turkey, despite the strong Communist Party contingent

who fear only the loss of a day’s leave and do not celebrate this most important of working class festivals.

The Turkish unions are an example to our own union bureaucrats, who hide behind the law. Tumtis puts it simply: “Legal or illegal, if an action benefits

our members, then we will take it.”

The whole delegation was touched by the hospitality we received from our impoverished hosts. Working class hospitality is good in every country, but in Turkey it is something special.

I did not truly understand the living

process which is communism until I went there. With their indomitable spirits and steely determination the working class in Turkey will inevitably triumph over their oppressive military puppet government.

Steve Hedley

VE Day hype and lies

TWO WEEKS after VE Day some bunting still flutters forlornly to remind us of the parties from which all passion has now gone. The celebrations could not recreate the upwelling of popular feeling of 1945. They were not meant to.

VE Day propaganda was not about remembering the past, but an attempt to reinforce a myth about the present. Namely, that we British are all on the same side and all that is wrong with the world is really the fault of vicious foreigners. It explains away present day reality as only choppy waters on the deep sea of historical progress and national unity. Keep our constitution, keep our monarchy, keep faith in the church, keep our ruling class and all will come well in the end.

World War II was not fought to save Poland, the Jews or democracy, but to prevent Germany developing an empire

which could challenge British world eminence. The Americans used to have a popular song which went, “Bang! Bang! The British are coming”. Britain is the only ‘peace loving democracy’ to have conquered a quarter of the globe by force of arms and denied democracy to its subject peoples. British rule was justified by bogus theories of racial superiority. Hitler’s ‘evil genius’ differed in degree, not essence, from normal British practice.

The true moronic face of patriotism was exposed when thugs in Kent made the life of a Mrs Knight a misery on the grounds that she had been born in Germany. She felt the attacks were racially motivated. But it is not racism that the celebrations encouraged. They glorified ‘our’ country as against all outsiders: ie, national chauvinism. It is being drummed up by a ruling class with nothing else to offer.

Churchill and others within the ruling class at first *supported* the rise of fascism in Italy and Spain, because it suppressed the working class. Then, as now, mass unemployment was making the working class a burden on the rich. National chauvinism turns workers’ anger away from the ruling class and directs it against fellow workers.

The war smashed apart the stagnant, British-dominated world economy of the pre-war years for the American-led post-war boom. In 1945 the working class was armed and demanding full employment, housing, universal education, and proper healthcare. The boom enabled them to buy us off. Now they are recreating all the old shit again.

So World War II did not save the world for peace, democracy and human dignity. It is still all there waiting to be done.

Arthur Lawrence

Thornton referred to Appeal

SARA THORNTON, who was given a mandatory life sentence five years ago for the murder of her violent and alcoholic husband, was told two weeks ago by Michael Howard that her case is to be referred back to the Court of Appeal. This will be a major victory for Thornton, who is seeking to have the charge reduced to manslaughter on the grounds of provocation.

The case highlights the way women are treated by the legal system; in particular, it exposes the discrepancies between the treatment of male and female domestic killers and over the legal definition of provocation, which appears to ‘favour’ men.

Malcolm Thornton, a former police officer, had a consistent history of violent and abusive behaviour towards Sara and her daughter, Louise, which

was aggravated by his chronic alcoholism. He was due to appear in court for attacking her when she stabbed him in the stomach with a kitchen knife, as he lay in a drunken stupor.

At her trial Sara’s lawyers did not put forward a defence of provocation - even though the evidence for it was a mile high - because of the ‘time lapse’ between the provocation and the killing. Instead, they relied upon the defence of ‘diminished responsibility’ - ie, pretend you are mad. Sara was not permitted a real defence.

The injustice was cruelly compounded when Sara discovered that a man, *at the same court*, had been given a two-year suspended sentence after killing his “nagging” (as the Judge put it), alcoholic common-law wife.

As the Sara Thornton case and others since demonstrate, the legal and judicial system contains many elements of sexism. This is hardly surprising, when you consider that judges are recruited almost solely from the public school, ‘old boy’ network, which is infamous for its bigotry and intolerance. This will continue as long as capitalism uses women as a reserve army of cheap labour - consigning them to home, family and the institution of bourgeois marriage (up until recently, rape within marriage was legally ‘impossible’).

Communists will never miss an opportunity to expose the rotten, corrupt, sexist, anti-working class nature of ‘our’ legal system and look forward to the day when it is abolished by revolutionary decree.

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.

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

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Nothing less

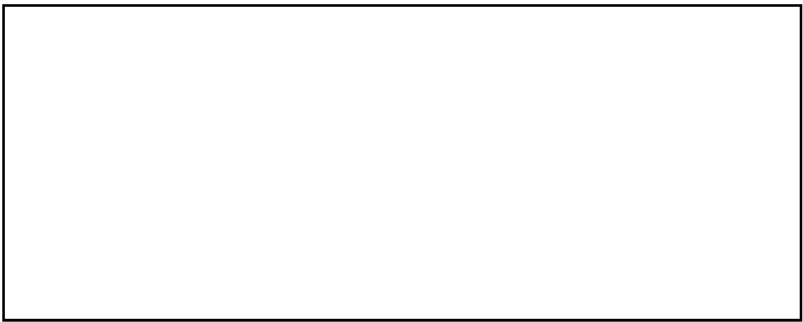
CHARLIE Kimber, writing in *Socialist Worker* (May 13) has endorsed the demand by the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union for a minimum wage of £4.15 per hour. That would amount to £145.25 for a 35-hour week, or £170 for 40 hours - and this would be before stoppages.

Given that in the same article he calculates the cost of keeping an individual on the dole as £180, the modesty of the SWP demands amazes me.

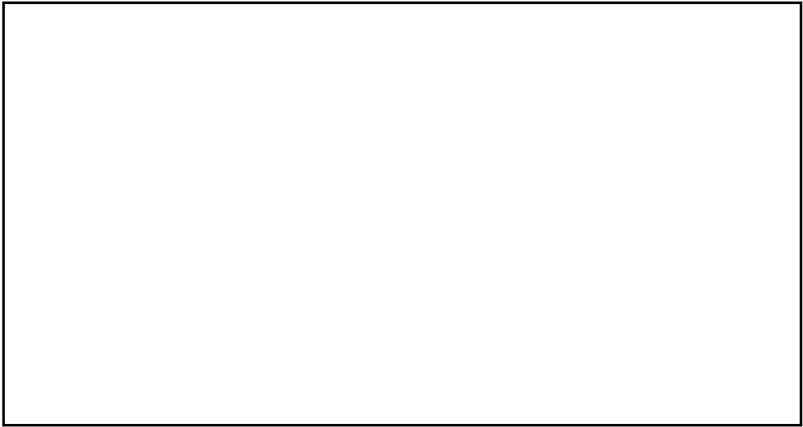
When the Communist Party calculated the *minimum* figure of £275 per week, it assumed that a wage was the basis of raising the next generation and that it would still take two wages to provide a modest living for a family of four. A university study subsequently calculated a higher figure, even though no allowance for drink or tobacco was made - on the grounds that the authors disapproved of them.

The SWP clearly believes in limiting its demands to what it thinks the system can afford, not what workers actually need to live.

Tom May



Labour woos the bosses



Tony Blair: at home in the boardroom

THERE WERE no surprises this week when Labour’s shadow treasury minister, Gordon Brown, reasserted yet again his promise to be ruthless in cutting spending in a future Labour government.

But it was Tony Blair’s shameless love affair with the “rigours of competition” and the “enterprise of the market” which made Labour’s position most explicit when he addressed the British Chambers of Commerce conference in Aberdeen last Friday.

The title of the conference was ‘Towards the millennium’ and Blair made more than clear the sort of millennium he expects and *positively* looks forward to - ie, an era of unchallenged free-market supremacy, with the working class permanently relegated to the sidelines.

He reassured the assembled fategats that Labour’s ‘modernisation’ would continue unchecked. Encouraged by the beaming smiles of the delegates, Blair enthused about how the ‘reformed’ Labour Party was committed to free trade, open markets, competition and competitiveness, thus rather making a mockery of certain ‘revolutionary’ organisations which believe that the “real fight” is to get Blair elected and then make ‘left’ demands upon him.

To clear the air once and for all, to exorcise the ghost of Labour’s ‘socialist’

past, Blair announced that the aim of his policy is to “identify the key objectives which business and government share and then work in partnership to achieve them”. As a little taster of the Blairite future to come, he listed as a “priority” the sacking of teachers who did not come up to scratch.

Unsurprisingly, the delegates were mightily impressed. Some 74% of them said the ‘new’ clause four had made the Labour Party more electable and Richard Brown, deputy director-general of the BCC, said Blair’s speech was “quite remarkable”. A conference survey comparing Major and Blair as future government leaders saw them level pegging with 31% of the votes each.

However, Blair has a couple of hoops to leap through yet. Mr Brown and friends are distinctly hostile to any mention of the social chapter or a minimum wage, which they regard as ‘anti-business’. Still, ‘consultations’ on these matters are promised ...

A Blair government would be just as vicious as the Tories, *if not more so*. This is why it is imperative for us to ruthlessly combat Labourism and tirelessly fight to reforge the Communist Party - and why it is treachery to sow any sort of illusions, let alone socialist ones, in the Labour Party.

Eddie Ford

No promises for workers

ON MAY 10 over 80 railworkers and members of the Rail Maritime and Transport union’s retired section turned up to seek guarantees from the shadow transport minister, Michael Meacher, concerning the future of the rail industry and the British Rail pension fund.

Speaker after speaker demanded complete renationalisation under a future Labour government and the guarantee that any form of legalised robbing of the pension fund by profiteering private sector sharks would be paid back in full by those self-same parasites.

Meacher made the appropriate noises, but he did not get where he is today by answering straight questions. He promised to try his best to “bring under public accountability” all sections of the railway which will be privatised and to do his utmost to safeguard the pension fund.

Of course these ‘guarantees’ are more full of holes than Rab Nesbitt’s vest, but it was a boost to some that Meacher

even bothered to turn up to a working class gathering like this.

Bob Crowe, RMT assistant general secretary, roused the crowd, but the actual content of his speech was decidedly lacking. Whilst demanding that the railways be renationalised, he said he understood why Labour could not renationalise the likes of the gas, electric and steel industries because of the cost.

One question from the floor posed the possibility of a breakaway leftist party from Labour. Obviously none of the speakers agreed that this was a good idea, but it did find some sympathy in the crowd.

One thing became clear as the night drew to a close - workers would back Blair to get rid of the Tories. However when Labour is elected and it fails to deliver significant sops to the working class, communists must be ready to give the leadership required.

Steve David
RMT member, London

Unity at Rolls

WORKERS at Rolls Royce acro-engine plants in East Kilbride and Coventry are continuing their weekly two-day strikes in defence of jobs and working conditions - and getting tremendous solidarity support in the form of a £2 a week levy from plants up and down the country.

Union convenors elsewhere are about to put in their wage claims for the current year and are expecting tough resistance from the company - not only in order to achieve a decent rise, but also to hold on to existing conditions.

At East Kilbride, where the main battle is in defence of 500 jobs at the research and development section, the workforce has been buoyed up by the help the levy has been providing. Owen Thomas, the MSF union chair, told me: “Rolls Royce cannot survive the damage the strike is causing - they are in an enormous panic. The question is how tough are they prepared to get - we are not about to give in.”

In Coventry, I spoke to Alan Wilkins, the senior convenor at the company’s Ansty acro-engine section, where the 350 shop-floor workers resumed after their seventh two-day strike. Here the dispute is over the horrendous conditions attached to the 1994 wage

‘offer’ - a pay cut for shift workers, because of the withdrawal of shift allowances. “The strikes are practically 100%,” Alan said. “Morale is high as a result of the levy, but we are definitely hoping for better coordination with all the other plants.”

At Derby’s civil engine section, AEEU convenor Tony McCandless said that the 4,200 workers had only just had their 1994 pay claim (for “a princely two percent”) paid after a successful two-week overtime ban. He does not think the members would settle for such a meagre sum this year - particularly in the light of the 27% the directors recently awarded themselves.

The Sunderland plant has a much smaller workforce of some 370, but, according to senior convenor Jim Clark, there is 100% participation in the voluntary levy: “We have a tradition of solidarity here - we supported the miners 100% from day one.”

He does not expect a positive response to their new pay claim: “Two and a half percent with strings is likely to be on the table,” he told me. “The company will try to claw back on terms and conditions, particularly on shift premiums and working hours. But the members are now angry enough to do

something about it. After the minimum increases of the last few years, while the chairman gets a £60,000 bonus, people are fed up - they’ve had enough.”

Jim thinks that strike action is on the cards: “We could soon be polishing the cobbles.” He believes that workers will always have to struggle.

“It has nothing to do with Labour’s clause four. Rolls Royce was brought into state ownership by a Tory government without clause four, and we still faced attacks on jobs. We make gains through our own strength.”

Although, like convenors elsewhere, Jim says that plant by plant bargaining has been more beneficial than national negotiations would have been, he firmly supports national co-operation: “The trade unions are well organised throughout the company - it only takes a phone call. When it comes to coordinating tactics, we have done it before and we can do it again. The biggest problem is the lads on the floor: persuading them that a short-term sacrifice will be worth it in the long run.”

Rolls Royce is coordinating its own attacks on the entire workforce. The sort of united response Jim Clark refers to should surely be escalated now.

Peter Manson

Police licensed to kill

THE BRUTAL and murderous nature of the police force has been starkly highlighted in recent weeks, notwithstanding their senior officers’ anti-racist platitudes.

Brian Douglas became the latest victim on May 8, when he died in the intensive care unit at St Thomas Hospital, five days after being arrested for “driving suspiciously”. He was savagely beaten by police from Kennington Police Station, who claim they were acting in ‘self-defence’, although Brian sustained a fracture to the skull. He was examined by police surgeons at Kennington four times, yet they gave him the all clear every time. It was only when his face became partially paralysed that he was taken to hospital, some 15 hours after his arrest.

Last Sunday around 2,000 protestors joined the grieving Douglas family to picket Kennington police station. The demonstration was angry and chants of “No justice, no peace” and “Police murder” made sure that the occupants

got the message. The demonstration was overwhelmingly black - the most visible section being Panther - and around 25 Nation of Islam members were also present.

The demonstration continued as the picket moved for an unscheduled march towards Brixton. Cars and bystanders joined in, and the police were momentarily caught unaware. By the time that the front of the march - which is illegal under the Criminal Justice Act - reached Kennington Park, the police had reinforced themselves with ‘tooled up’ tactical support units.

In a similar vein, it was revealed at the Old Bailey on Tuesday how members of Scotland Yard’s specialist Aliens Deportation Group killed ‘illegal’ immigrant Joy Gardner nearly two years ago, when they came to serve a deportation order.

Thirteen feet of surgical tape was wound seven times around Joy’s head, and she died of extensive brain damage four days later.

In court, PC Linda Evans stated, “The equipment used, I understood, was authorised ... the procedures used had been established by regular practice.”

Communists are not surprised by these actions. The police force are state thugs, employed by the ruling class to do its dirty work.

John Praven

Immigration crackdown

The government is renewing its attack on immigration with new DSS laws, detention centres and special security squads. Come to the meeting organised by Brent CPGB with a speaker from the Newham Monitoring Project.
Wednesday May 24 at 7.30pm in Brent. For more details contact 0181-459 7146

Left impotence in CPSA

SINCE 1979 the Civil Service has lost 250,000 jobs. In the next three years a further 100,000 jobs are intended to be cut. Next year, despite the six-month delay announced this week, the Job Seekers Allowance will be introduced, which will lead to a massive assault on the unemployed, civil service jobs and conditions, and the welfare benefits system in general. Against this background the 1995 conference of the largest civil service union should have been an organising centre for resistance. Instead it brought to the fore the arrogance of the bureaucracy and the impotence of the ‘Broad Left’ opposition.

For eight years the National Moderate Group has dominated the CPSA as one of the most entrenched, rightist bureaucracies in the British trade union movement. The CPSA today has a fighting fund of over £4 million, yet there is no action, no campaigns. Of course, it is the nature of the bureaucracy to retard and betray struggles. The CPSA is just a more extreme case.

The Job Seekers Allowance is an attack on the entire working class, so the current position of the CPSA is of strategic importance for what is potentially a major class battle ahead. This conference should have been the launch for such a fight by the left not only to remove this leadership, but to defend our class as a whole.

Instead the 1995 conference has seen the left, Militant Labour in particular, truly sink into a political gutter. For years the tradition of the left in the CPSA has concentrated on ‘unity’. Not unity based on mobilising the rank and file in defence of its own interests against the bosses and the bureaucrats. No, unity of left ‘leaders’ in smoke filled rooms, drawing up election strategies. This electoralism has led to self-imposed isolation.

This year Broad Left/Militant Labour turned to the capitalist state in the form of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members, which was established so that scabs could take their own union to the High Court.

The so-called Left Unity has responded to rightwing electoral manoeuvring, not by campaigning amongst members, but by using the bosses’ own state bodies.

The 1995 conference was flooded with fudge motions dressed in radical rhetoric. The only significant section of the left in the CPSA to distance itself from this rightward shift has been Socialist Caucus and its magazine *Rank and File*.

In the face of an entrenched bureaucracy, and the failure of the left, the way ahead was shown by *Rank and File*. “There are no quick fixes,” the magazine states. We added: “The solution to the problems of who runs the CPSA, in whose interests, will only be solved when we have a powerful workplace organisation at our disposal.”

It is a task which grows ever more urgently each day.

Chris Ford
Chair CPSA, West London and Uxbridge BA
Personal capacity