

weekly worker



No 98

Thursday June 15 1995



offensive

Communist Party
Offensive 95

Cash is starting to flow in towards our £25,000 Summer Offensive target to be achieved by July 30. So far we have raised £1,527.70. Leading the way is Brent CPGB branch, who have already made £478.05.

Total pledges are edging up towards £18,000. It is not too late to join the campaign. Phone or write with your own pledge, or - better still - send in your cheque or postal order today. Send to CPGB, Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. 0181-459 7146

Healthworkers' unity sabotaged

The limitations of the 'official' trade union movement have been made obvious over the last few weeks. The RCN wants to go it alone, while the Unison leadership is now having cosy chats with Virginia Bottomley. We need a drastically different approach

THIS WEEK'S annual conference of Unison, the main health union, carried an emergency resolution accusing the Royal College of Nursing leadership of selling out healthworkers.

This is quite justified. Although the RCN is carrying out a ballot of its membership in order to abolish its no-strike rule, its general secretary, Christine Hancock, seems intent on accepting local pay bargaining, which would leave thousands of her members with only the government-funded one percent pay rise, and thousands more with unacceptable strings attached to a further two percent achieved locally.

Last week the RCN suddenly withdrew from all cooperation with the other unions and held separate talks with health secretary Virginia Bottomley. Following these, Hancock claimed "a significant breakthrough", only to try and pedal back the very next day, stating that they were "nowhere near a deal".

Bottomley has conceded that nursing student grants and some allowances would be increased by the full three percent nationally, and confirmed that NHS trusts would not be allowed *this year* to vary nurses' conditions of service.

But Ken Jarrold, NHS director of human resources, has pointed out that most of the strings did not relate to conditions of service, but to the achievement of 'targets': in other words, you get a pay rise only if you agree to cut services and to somebody else losing their job.

Hancock's go-it-alone sell-out is a disgrace, and is surely out of step with her own members' feelings, yet Unison's approach can hardly be called dynamic. Did you know that the union held another nationwide day of protest last week? You can be forgiven for not having noticed it. The original claim for at least eight percent has sunk without trace in favour of a pay-cutting three percent.

Meanwhile, the government's Audit Commission has reported that some health trusts spend up to 10% of their budget on managers' pay and perks. Spending on managers rose by 35% since the government introduced its 'market reforms' in 1990, and now amounts to just over £1 billion a year.

The Labour Party has no alternative to offer if elected. It does not promise to re-open hospitals or provide any extra money for the health service. Workers' own action, although difficult to achieve today, is the only way to secure the health service the working class and the vast majority of the population need and desire.

Healthworkers must organise to force a way through Bottomley's barriers

Fight NHS Cuts!

Launch of Dundee Health Service Support Group against cuts and closures
Wednesday June 21 in the Trades Council Social Club, Rattery Street, Dundee at 7.30pm
Organised by Unison. Contact Mary Ward on 01302 667517

UWC calls for 100,000 signatures in health campaign

THE Unemployed Workers Charter has launched a campaign for 100,000 signatures on its petition against hospital closures and redundancies in the health industry.

UWC supporters have already collected thousands of names on petitions in local work around the country. "This new initiative," says Mark Fischer, UWC organiser, "aims to build on all that good local work and give it a national focus."

Honorary president of the UWC Vic Turner called for full support for the UWC's petition from the wider workers' movement. "Unity is the key," he underlined. "The Tories

are out to divide us and set one group of workers against another. That is why the UWC's health campaign is an important blow for workers' unity *in struggle* for what we need."

The completed petition will be delivered to health secretary Virginia Bottomley - or her replacement - by a delegation including Vic Turner and healthworkers' representatives in August.

Petition forms and other campaign materials are available from: UWC, Box 28, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS. Or telephone 0181-459 7146

Healthcare for need not profit!

Anatomy of an anti-Party clot

Tom Cowan, sole spokesperson for the 'Independent Communists', has replied to Mark Fischer's criticisms (*Weekly Worker*95). Tom's reply has not been sent to us, is not for publication and has only been circulated to selected members, supporters and ex-members of our organisation

WE HAVE had no formal reply from the Independent Communists (a small group of ex-members/supporters of our organisation) to the principled offer to join the Party as a group, with full factional rights. Instead, we have read in their contributions to other publications that "some of us are not against entry" into the Party "on principle" (*Open Polemic* March 1 1995).

In fact, the only piece of recent correspondence we have received from anyone associated with the IC was a letter by Tom Cowan featured in *Weekly Worker*94 and replied to by Mark Fischer in *Weekly Worker*95. This letter was criticised for the charity-mongering stance it took on aid to Cuba.

We have received a circular, dated May 30, bearing the Independent Communist's heading, although again written exclusively in the first personal singular and signed 'Tom Cowan'. This circular - it is clear - was never meant to be seen by our organisation. It has been surreptitiously circulated.

The circular says that the original charity-mongering letter of Cowan was also a "private circular letter" sent to possible individual sympathisers of Cuba. Cowan was therefore "surprised" to see it in the *Weekly Worker*.

We can hardly comment. The letter arrived at our postal address. It had no covering note indicating any alternative source than Cowan himself. We therefore published in good faith.

Cowan's new circular makes it clear that he *is* advocating pious charity-mongering. The amount does not matter, Cowan suggests: "However small the contribution, just as long as it assists in their daily lives and struggles ..." (Circular, May 30)

Cowan blithely admits he is talking about the equivalent of "pennies", but to the poor suffering Cuban masses these pathetic amounts actually are "most precious". What distasteful, patronising liberalism!

The circular moves on to reply to our calls for rapprochement and a defence of Cowan's individual position. It is a most unprincipled and dishonest attack on our organisation.

First, Cowan's individual record. Jack Conrad wrote in his 'Notes on Rapprochement' supplement in the *Weekly Worker* (April 27 1995) that Cowan joined our ranks briefly, resigning some three months later "due to business priorities".

Cowan retorts that he was an "active supporter of the Leninists for about five years". He "did not resign because of 'business priorities'". This, he alleges, is to suggest he had "no political differences" - which he most certainly did.

True, Cowan continues, whilst a supporter he was invited by Fischer and Conrad "to join the Party inner circle". Yet three months later he was curtly informed that he had been "excluded" because of irregular attendance at our London seminars (Circular, May 30).

In truth, Cowan, after being a supporter for a number of years (sometimes close, sometimes more distant, depending on his whim) joined the Party for three months but was unable to attend cell meetings or work in a disciplined way. He left after discussion and by mutual consent. He even promised that, come his retirement, he would be able to work for the Party full time. He remained a supporter and was not *excluded* from some conspiratorial "inner circle", as he disgracefully labels membership in his circular.

Membership of the Communist Party is open to anyone who accepts our basic principles and works under the discipline and direction of a Party organisation or committee. This is something that Cowan agreed he could not do.

Cowan did indeed voice many criticisms of the politics of the organisation. These were widely debated and replied to many times in written form and in Party seminars, meetings and cells. Cowan's problems during membership however were never ascribed to these political differences - neither by us, nor by him at the time.

Lastly, on the "opposition" - the Independent Communists. Cowan suggests that our "lies" are designed to "belittle" and "denigrate" this "opposition" which might otherwise attract "members disillusioned and frustrated by bureaucratic methods".

In fact, the IC has no political coherence whatsoever other than a growing, morbid hostility to the Communist Party. Given the political heterogeneity of the individuals who comprise it, it is far more correct to call it a 'clot' than an organisation.

Cowan's politics are a strange brand of left economism and a version of the positions of Ohler, an early - and obscure - critic of Leon Trotsky and his Fourth International. True to these petty-bourgeois leftist antecedents, Cowan still refers to the "despicable traditions" of the "old Stalinist CP", mocking the fact that "Fischer and Conrad" are "proud to be associated" with it.

Also in the Independent Communists are two ex-members of our organisation who left - again with no alternative political platform - but who have subsequently become born-again Stalinites, fans of the purges, authors of hate-mail to our organisation (denounced as "mad" by Cowan himself) and sellers of *Lalkar*, paper of the Indian Workers Association led by avowed Stalin fan, Harpal Brar. One wonders how they feel about Cowan's derision of the "old Stalinist CP".

The fourth clement of the clot that we are aware of is again an ex-supporter. This older person left our organisation because of his localism - the opportunist tendency to chase local campaigns at the expense of conducting national Party tasks and priorities.

Now he appears on the public platforms of the Communist Action Group, another set of born-again Stalinites.

So what keeps this opposition together - if indeed they still are? *Anti-Partyism*, the struggle *against* the work of the Provisional Central Committee of the Party to conduct Party work and recruit others to the task of reforging the CPGB. The fight for revolutionary rapprochement launched by the PCC is now cynically denounced as a "get-rich-quick

gimmick" (Circular, May 30).

As we have stated, time and politics move on. The CPGB has made an honest and principled call for organisations to join us in the central task for communists - reforging the Party. People and organisations define themselves positively or negatively in relation to this *real* process of communist rapprochement. As evidenced by Independent Communists' clandestine publications, they are defining themselves as a low-level *anti-Party* clot.

That's up to them. To the extent that it deals with them at all, history will know how to judge them.

Phil Kent & Mark Fischer
London

Main enemy

'Opportunism's slippery slope', by Ian Mahoney (*Weekly Worker*97), says the Socialist Workers Party is making concessions to imperialist propaganda about World War II. I have not read the SWP statements cited by Mahoney, but he accuses them of forgetting Lenin's dictum that "the main enemy is at home" when it comes to wartime.

My problem with Mahoney is his apparent assumption that World War II was a rerun of World War I. It was not. For example, Nazi occupation of the country you live in was not just any military occupation, especially if you happened to be a Jew, a gypsy or a member of a number of other groups (communists included, actually).

In September 1939 a Polish worker (a Jew, perhaps? - 10% of Poles then were) who thought that his main enemy was the Polish bourgeoisie rather than the invading Nazi German army would have been in the grip of a delusion. As for delusions, there were in fact hundreds of Polish rabbis who let themselves be shot by the Nazis rather than perform forced labour on the sabbath. Adherence to sacred texts - the Torah or Lenin's collected works - can make you do brave, but stupid things.

Mahoney tries to associate the SWP's attitude with Trotsky, who allegedly "made important opportunist concessions to the mass illusions in the democratic capitalist states". It is worth quoting the chapter 'Historical perspectives' in the second edition of the *Communist and Marxist Parties of the World*, published by Longmans in 1990. This notes that "during World War II [Trotskyists] advocated a policy of revolutionary defeatism, modelled on that of the Bolsheviks in 1914-17". This sounds very much like what Mahoney wants, so why is he condemning Trotsky?

Unlike the Stalinists, the followers of Trotsky did not think World War II lost its imperialist colouring once Hitler attacked the USSR.

I personally think Trotsky's followers cut themselves off from the masses during the war by following the line they took, but they did that by following the line Mahoney advocates. They did not engage in "opportunism".

Steve Kay
Berkshire

Communist unity

LAST SUNDAY Steve Freeman from the Revolutionary Democratic Group (faction of the SWP) led the debate at a Communist Party meeting in London, attended also by representatives of the Republican Worker Tendency and Open Polemic.

Under the heading *Communist Unity, Democratic Centralism and the RDG* Steve began by explaining the history of the RDG and outlining the very different traditions from which the RDG and the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB have emerged. Steve emphasised how a coming together of these two different traditions would have significance on the whole of the left.

In discussion a comrade from the RWT stated his organisation's belief that it was vital to break with the old fake communist traditions of the 'official' pro-Soviet Communist Party. For comrades in the CPGB reforging the Party is important because that Party was *part of the class*. This has nothing to do with claiming its politics, which must be ruthlessly criticised from day one.

The RDG agrees that in principle all communists should be united in one Party around its revolutionary programme. In order to unite our groups from their different ideological traditions and in order for it to become genuinely part of the class, it must be a democratic centralist Party.

From here Steve attempted to identify our points of agreement and, more importantly, disagreement and how these would affect a coming together. Our main points of agreement concern the importance of combatting the Labour Party and Labourism; the Socialist Workers Party as a main opponent; the necessity to push bourgeois democracy to its limits, and then to crisis through the minimum programme; and centrally the necessity of a democratic centralist Communist Party.

Two of the major points of difference would be the nature of the Soviet Union and the question of republicanism. The discussion on these aspects could only be aired at the meeting, but will of necessity continue through future discussions on unity.

In the view of the RDG, state capitalism was never abolished in Russia: it was state capitalist pre-1917, post-1991 and throughout the time in between. The important question is political - ie, who controlled society, in whose interests - which is why for the RDG Kronstadt and

the 10th congress in 1921 marked an important turning point.

It was pointed out that in the CPGB there are a number of differing views, but certainly many could agree that 1921 was a significant date, when Bolshevism was in crisis.

This is not to declare agnosticism on the question, but to recognise these questions need to be thrashed out and studied in much greater detail than any of the left has done to date, in order to come to the truth. Joining together in one organisation will aid that process and, more importantly, facilitate correct practice in unity.

The question of the revolutionary minimum programme was established by both the RDG and the CPGB as being central to unity. In reply to Open Polemic's concern for a detailed written constitution before any coming together is possible, it was agreed that Party rules had to go hand in hand with the programme, but that both of these would develop in struggle and through communist work. The programme is part of the struggle for the Party.

Making the programme and rules real requires comradeship and communist work. Steve pointed out that the culture of the SWP, not the rules, was the main problem. When comrades were expelled from that organisation by a bureaucratic leadership the biggest problem was that the membership did not do anything about it. There was no culture of democracy, no communist morality. These cannot be legislated: they have to be fought for in struggle.

In this period of reaction the organisation of revolutionaries in one Communist Party is urgent. Nobody is suggesting instant unity, or a glitzy over of differences. But discussions amongst communists must be part of the fight to fill the vacuum in society from the left, before it is filled from the right.

Lee-Anne Bates

From *Workers' Dreadnought*, paper of the Workers' Socialist Federation, June 12 1921

The Communist Revolutionary Conference

For parties and groups who are opposed to parliamentarianism and Labour Party affiliation

IT IS important that the revolutionary communists who are opposed to affiliation to the Labour Party and to parliamentary action should meet to consider the present Unity negotiations and to decide:

(1) Whether they shall take part in the Communist Unity Conference, the date of which has been provisionally fixed for August 1 ...

(2) Whether they shall take other action. ... The Unity negotiations decided that only those organisations or groups may be represented at the August 1 conference which are prepared to accept the findings of the conference, and to merge themselves in the party which will be formed by it, whether the basis of that party is affiliation to the Labour Party, or whatever its programme, or basis, may turn out to be.

It is therefore imperative that the various groups or parties shall decide in advance ... whether to join the party which is to come out of the conference.

It is important that the revolutionary communists shall be much more closely linked together than at present. Otherwise ... the field will be left clear for the opportunists to side-track ... the communist impulse which is growing amongst the workers.

The Workers' Socialist Federation (Communist Party) is therefore inviting to a preliminary conference representatives from the various communist groups ... on Saturday (June 19) at 7.45pm

C · P · G · B
Y E A R S
JULY 31 1920
JULY 31 1995

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

Dave Douglass

Dave is vice chair of South Yorkshire NUM panel

Answer ‘illegal’ ruling with action

‘HOW DID we drop a bollock like that?’ the miners are asking. Basically we took advice from the Electoral Reform Society on the conduct of the ballot and were told the strike against RJB could start from midnight on the last day. The judge has ruled that this is one second too late and had to be already happening by then. Times were when we would have held mass pit head meetings, heard the arguments for action, and then voted by show of hands for a strike.

The ballot was always an ‘either-or’ in this industry, as demonstrated by 1984. What mattered was the metal of the membership, not the fashion of recording it. In the very recent past an employer’s injunction would not have stopped a strike we had resolved to take part in. We’d have gone ahead anyway, but that was when we were younger and had the wind in our hair. Today we have to be very much more cautious not to swing the more timid members away from action.

Still, it is a dangerous decision to wait two weeks to a national conference to decide on what action to take now. Suppose we decide to re-ballot: it will be at least a month before the whole thing gets set up again. Time for endless propaganda and scare stories to be spread by the employer and the trail to go cold. The re-ballot should have been organised at once. A wildcat should be let loose all over the country on the day we had planned for action, to show the bosses’ court just what we think of them.

There is much to do though: the danger of non-unionised miners walking through the lines is only too real. We should be talking to such men face to face, day by day, and winning them back to the union and back to strike action.

Review

A world divided

David Edgar, *Pentecost*, directed by Michael Attenborough

AT FIRST sight Edgar’s *Pentecost* may seem to deny the possibility of a new society being constructed on the basis of need. It is a very real and unrelenting look at the political landscape today. It does not offer easy answers and yet it is certainly a deeply human, and in that sense, ultimately optimistic play.

It is set in an “unnamed south-east European country”. The collapse of the bureaucratic regimes of Eastern Europe and the subsequent fragmentation of nations, peoples and society provide one of the many backgrounds which Edgar uses to explore both contemporary events and human history.

The action throughout the whole play takes place inside an abandoned church in front of a fresco which is gradually revealed. The church and the fresco itself have their own history of invasion, domination, occupation, capture and torture. They themselves tell the story of a human world divided.

Gabriella, an art curator from the local area, discovers the fresco and a British and American art historian, the catholic and orthodox church and the state are brought together to determine its history and heritage.

The characters here may seem immediately recognisable, but Edgar breaks down all our expectations and produces a powerful and shifting dialogue between them on the origins of the painting which encompasses the origins of civilisation and ‘rational man’ or whether there is such a thing as ‘universal human values’.

The British art historian, Oliver, argues that all art is of equal value. The American, Leo, wants to let art live in its historical setting. Gabriella is desperate to find some cultural value and roots in the East.

At the end of the first half Gabriella defends her attachment to the fresco since it tells the story of “How our country through all history will be betrayed. By occupying - oh sorry - by protecting power. By our own High Priest and screaming mob. By seeming friend and now by you.”

Leo shouts his reply in frustration, not anger or despair: “Where you had the chance to build the world anew, you built a prison camp. And now the walls are down, you shut out all the other voices in the world - in all their rich variety - you throw up the portcullis and you sell yourself to fucking Disneyland.”

But here the first half is interrupted by a group of refugees demanding sanctuary: Afghan, Palestinian, Kurdish, Russian, Sri Lankan and Bosnian.

Different cultural influences among people have already been set up as a theme at the beginning of the play, with the attempt to find the origins of the fresco.

The refugees bring a multitude of languages with them and they try to communicate to each other their own very different experiences. Through story-telling they begin to come to some shared understanding. Not a ‘universal human culture’, but a patience and willingness to listen and to try to understand each other’s different language, culture, experience and ideologies.

This moment is fiercely broken as the real world again intrudes: the strong arm of the state intervenes and promises only some of the refugees asylum, and divisions are immediately sown.

Thoughtful and engaging performances as well as staging ensure that the explorative nature of the play is human in all its complexity.

There is no moral messenger in the play, but it does have an underlying morality, which starts to explore the truth behind the so called ‘rational’ West and the fact that human diversity is not the problem. The mixed bag of ordinary people thrown together in the church have a keen interest and patience with each other, which is not sentimental, but certainly passionate.

Edgar’s *Pentecost*, when “...all that believed were together, and had all things common” may seem a long way off, but somehow this has to be the solution.

Helen Ellis

Win the mass in the NUT

Teachers need to build on the work of the Fight Against Cuts in Education and bypass the union bureaucracy

THE National Union of Teachers has rejected a one-day national strike in protest at rising class sizes by an overwhelming majority. The proposal to ballot had been secured by a slender majority against the advice of the executive at the union’s annual conference in April.

The decision delighted Doug McAvoy, the NUT general secretary, who had written to all its members urging them to “reclaim” the union from “militants...in pursuit of a narrow and extreme political agenda.”

This comes as a blow to the left, particularly the SWP, who had invested a considerable amount of time and energy securing the ballot vote at the Blackpool annual conference, as well as talking up the possibilities of a new ‘upturn’.

McAvoy has promised measures to isolate militancy at union conferences. These might include opinion polls to ‘establish’ members’ views on key issues, followed by moves against the left, Thought Police style.

In a further rightwing move, the leadership has softened its opposition to grant maintained schools, after a membership survey revealed that GM schools are “popular” and “effective” in ‘releasing’ extra resources for teaching and equipment.

The Guardian summed it up aptly: “The move is part of a concerted drive by the National Union of Teachers’ leadership to return the union to the mainstream of political debate on education” (June 13).

GM schools are a form of educational apartheid, with the poor consigned to the second-rate, local authority-funded institutions.

Genuine leftwing militants in the NUT must regroup their forces and develop a *long-term* strategy for this period of unrelenting ‘downturn’.

We need to win over the great mass of demoralised teachers to the idea that victory is possible, not pour all our efforts into achieving narrow conference majorities.

Danny Hammill

Fawning Star

THE BIGOTS in the British army won another victory last Wednesday, when three servicemen and one servicewoman failed to overturn the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces.

Nevertheless Lord Justice Brown did give the MoD a bit of a slap on the wrist, saying that “the tide of history” was turning against them. The armed forces is deviating from mainstream bourgeois politics, which is gradually incorporating gay rights - like anti-racism - into its agenda.

The reasons presented by the MoD for maintaining the ban on homosexuals did indeed sound like something out of the Stone Age: gays would diminish unit effectiveness and endanger the *in loco parentis* role that

the services play in relation to recruits under 18.

The ‘official communist’/Labourite *Morning Star* loftily proclaimed, “The judges in yesterday’s test case were correct to refuse to consider lifting the ban because it is a matter for parliament.” (June 8)

This is parliamentary cretinism combined with respectful subservience to bourgeois legality. Parliament refused to “equalise” the age of consent for gays, which remains at the age of 18.

As communists, we believe that it is parliamentary democracy itself which is standing against “the tide of history” and hence needs to be swept away at the first possible opportunity.

Eddie Ford

Jack Dash commemoration

Jack Dash - the famous dockers’ leader and member of the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1920s and 1930s - was the first honorary president of the Unemployed Workers Charter. Every year the UWC pays tribute to this great fighter for the working class and re-dedicates itself to the fight for social justice and human dignity that was the content of Jack’s life. Join us this year.

Saturday July 15 at 3.30pm. To sponsor the commemoration or for more details, contact the UWC on 0181-459 7146

What we fight for

● Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.

● The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers’ movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.

● Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.

● We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.

● The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.

● Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs, ie communism.

● We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.

● Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.

● War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world’s problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

We urge all who accept these principles to join us. A Communist Party Supporter reads and fights to build the circulation of the Party’s publications; contributes regularly to the Party’s funds and encourages others to do the same; where possible, builds and participates in the work of a Communist Party Supporters Group.

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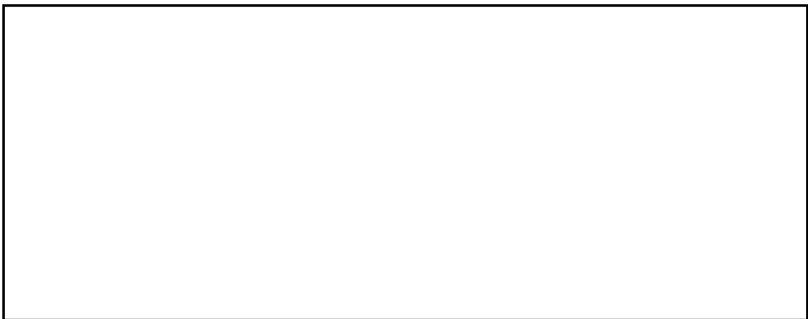
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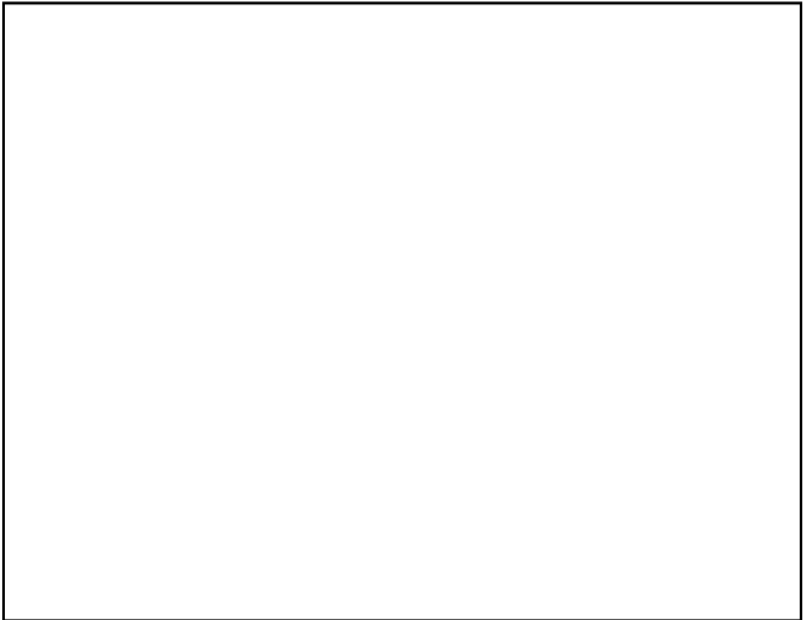
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Bradford youth protest



Bradford youth have pointed the finger at the cause of their alienation

THE TROUBLES in Bradford on Friday and Saturday are not the first sparked by police action. In 1976 the police protected a National Front demonstration from attack, and in 1981 the Asian youth of Bradford fought a long campaign in defence of the Bradford 12 against police intimidation. Young Bradford Asians want to enter fully into British society. Racism, poverty and ghettoisation are preventing this happening. Bradford council's response to their alienation has been to subsidise local mosques and to try to strengthen the control of the elders over the youth. This has encouraged reactionary calls for separate education for girls and death to Salmon Rushdie. But of these there was no mention by the demonstrators' spokesperson on BBC radio. Indeed all the complaints were about poor services and the attitude of those agents of the state, the police. What separates the

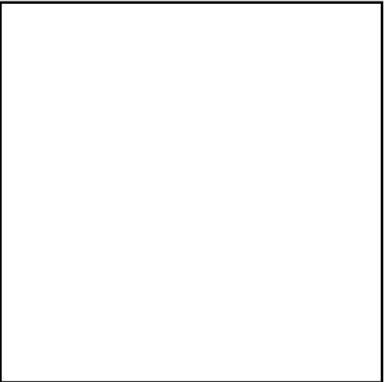
Manningham estate from many other poor areas in Britain is not the conditions themselves, but the sense of community to do something about them. Once again the state is making a great fuss about the damage done and trying to use the religious establishment to re-impose its control. As yet it has offered absolutely nothing to meet the needs of the people. Certain figures are arguing for a single body to represent muslims wherever they are, claiming that this would strengthen liberal opinion against extremists. In fact the Muslim Parliament, the last attempt to set up such a body, proved to be a platform for the opinionated and deeply reactionary Kalim Saddiqui. Muslim workers do not need leadership from some cross-class alliance, but a common agenda with the rest of the working class.

Phil Kent

Self defence is no offence

ON NOVEMBER 16 1986 Satpal Ram was attacked in Birmingham. One of the gang of attackers broke a glass and stabbed Satpal in the face. After being stabbed twice, Satpal took out a small knife and tried to warn off his attacker, who assaulted him again. In fear of his life Satpal stabbed him in self-defence. The attacker died. Satpal's trial was a total farce. He was found guilty of murder and it has taken over eight years to force an appeal. The campaign is well aware that an appeal does not guarantee victory. It is solidarity action which forces the authorities to take notice. The campaign is therefore asking for support from all working class organisations in publicising and supporting Satpal's case. Self-defence against racist, chauvinist or police attack must be a right that the whole of the working class fights for.

Linda Addison



Public meeting, Sunday June 25, 3pm at Guru Ravidass Temple, Union Row, Handsworth, Birmingham. Speakers include George Silcott and the Tower Hamlets Nine Affiliate to the Free Satpal Campaign. Send £25 to 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B19 1NH

Spinning out profit

THE WORKING class is exploited - official. A new study, *Time and Money*, from the Henley Centre for Forecasting, graphically illustrates how the bosses are squeezing more and more hours out of workers, as it becomes increasingly difficult to make a 'decent' profit. British working hours are now the longest in Europe, with a quarter of all male employees working more than 48 hours a week, a fifth of all manual workers working more than 50 hours and one in eight managers working more than 60 hours. Revealingly, Britain's average working week is now 43.4 hours, compared with a European average of 40.3, and Britain was one of only two countries in the European Union - the other is Ireland - where work hours lengthened in the 1980s, thus reversing the previous decline in the working week. Time off work with stress-related illnesses has increased by 500 percent since the 1950s. *Time and Money* bleakly, though accurately no doubt, predicts that working hours will go on lengthening and that free time will diminish for the

Free Irish prisoners

JOHN MAJOR and Patrick Mayhew are straining hard not to have the imminent release of Private Lee Clegg linked with a change in policy towards Irish republican prisoners. Taoiseach John Bruton and SDLP MP Joe Hendron have said that the two must go hand in hand. It is easy to understand why Major and Mayhew say what they do, but Bruton has an unrivalled 'pro-Brit' reputation and substantial numbers of republican prisoners of his own. Hendron came to notoriety in 1992 by making deals with the UDA in West Belfast's Shankhill Road in order to unseat Gerry Adams. The republican prisoners' cause is gathering a brace of establishment forces of its own because the ongoing 'peace process' has brought the issue into the realm of constitutional politics. After all no one is expecting freed volunteers to head straight back into the fray. The Communist Party maintains its own stand for the release of all Irish political prisoners, and does not line up with the likes of Hendron. On June 7, a public meeting was hosted by Brent Branch of the CPGB and addressed by Saoirse, the campaign for Irish political prisoners' rights, initiated by the prisoners' families. Saoirse described the worsening conditions being suffered by republican prisoners since the ceasefire. Regular beatings, intimidation of visitors and attacks on political status are becoming more widespread and intensive.

The workers' movement in Britain has already paid a high price, not least in the miners' Great Strike, for its failure to support the Irish revolution. The task still remains to win workers throughout the UK to oppose 'our own' state in Ireland, and in particular campaign for the release of Irish revolutionaries. The UK state has no right to detain Irish men and women in its jails. It has no right to occupy any part of Ireland. The CPGB demands the unconditional release of all Irish political prisoners. Saoirse calls, as an intermediate measure, for their immediate transfer to jails in Ireland near their families. Brent branch of the CPGB has affiliated to Saoirse and will be organising solidarity visits to Irish political prisoners held on the British mainland.

Mike Smith

Hackney branch of the CPGB is holding a public meeting with Saoirse on July 4 at 7.30pm. Call 0181-459 7146 for more details



Overwork and stress are affecting all sections of society

remainder of the 1990s, falling over the next five years from 39% to 36% of total time. If the bosses could somehow reduce free time to zero through the invention of some miraculous 'work drug' then they would. The recent rapid entry of women into the workforce is an important factor in shaping these changes in work and leisure patterns, as they have to cope with employment, housework and child care; this leaves full-time working women with 14 hours less free time than full-time men, as they have to shoulder a disproportionate burden of the child care and housework duties. This is not a phenomenon confined to Britain. In America, for instance, the average employed person now works the equivalent of one month more a year than in the 1970s. It has been estimated that ten thousand people in Japan die each year from overwork. The new "post-industrial culture" - with its buzzing information super-highways, flexi-time working and dreams of every home linked up to the internet - is turning into its very opposite. Demos, the unattached think-tank and bastard son of *Marxism Today*, makes exactly this point in the latest issue of *Demos Quarterly* (June): "But far from ushering in a leisured utopia, its most immediate effect has been a growing divide between those with too much work and those without any." To rectify this imbalance Demos pins its hopes on 'enlightened' employers who will benignly "offer time off to recharge the batteries, to learn a new

skill or just to travel the world". All that is needed is "the right funding arrangement." Those of us living in the real world know that mass unemployment and chronic job insecurity is dragooning the entire working class, and even a significant section of the 'professional' middle-class, turning them into a slave class. The permanent pool of unemployed acts a 'gravitational' force, constantly pulling them downwards into the 'black hole' of near super-exploitation. Technological advances and innovations have only enhanced this process, as more workers are deemed 'surplus' to requirements and tossed onto the scrapheap. Science under capitalism acts as a dehumanising force, not as a liberating agency. One of the male manual workers interviewed in the *Time and Money* study notes, "I've no social life; I'm too knackered. I work and then it's to bed. That's all." The 'hopelessly outdated' and 'dogmatic' Karl Marx - well, according to Demos anyway - observed in 1847 that the worker "works in order to live. He does not even reckon labour as part of his life; it is rather a sacrifice of his life...If the silk worm were to spin in order to continue its existence as a caterpillar, it would be a complete wage-worker." We must fight the system which wants to turn us all into "caterpillars", denying us our individual potential and our very humanity.

Frank Vincent

Another stab in the union back

TONY BLAIR made his position on the unions quite clear this week. "There will not be a repeal of basic elements of the legislation in the 1980s," he told the GMB conference, referring to the Tory anti-trade union laws. "What is required is not to redress power between one side of industry or the other, but a fair framework of law based on the essential rights of the individual at work." The unions will be kept at arm's length, not courted like the City. The unions which founded the Labour Party are now content to be treated like any other pressure group, according to John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB. "Fairness, not favours" is all we ask. Blair can afford to be arrogant. To those who believe that the most important task facing the working class is getting the Tories out, he is the answer and his critics are the problem. So much so that John Edmonds could only reply: "The guiding principle for the labour movement in the run up to the next election must be: say something useful or bite your tongue and shut up." The Labour Party is, and always has

been, a reformist organisation with total loyalty to the British capitalist state. Ken Livingstone has now grasped this reality: "Labour is best led by an ideologist with a firm set of beliefs from either wing of the party ... Blair is the most rightwing leader Labour has ever had." (*The Guardian* June 12) He concludes: "We may therefore find to our surprise that Blair could yet deliver a Labour government of which socialists could be proud if he is prepared to take on the vested interests of the City." By which he means: get City speculators to invest more in British industry. This view - that what socialists really need is a dynamic capitalist economy - is at the heart of Labourism and trade unionism alike. A trade union movement based on the long-term interests of our class would be a very different beast from what we have today. And a genuine revolutionary party will be far removed from those pathetic 'revolutionary' tail-enders who pin their hopes on 'left' Labourism.

Arthur Lawrence