

SOCIALIST VOICE

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LABOUR LEADERS DEFEND

WHOSE SIDE

The shock that the Tories have no remedies to the slump of many sectors of the British economy has forced papers like the Guardian and Observer, 'newspapers of moderation and sober thought', into panic and they call for the "boot to go in" against the Tories in the coming general election.

They point to the problems with Ford (losing \$2.3 Billion in a year), BP, British Aerospace and even the Hanson businesses. Even the well known purveyor of unbiased economic commentary, the Bank of England, starts blurring out the truth: we are in a recession and they do not know when it will end. Well even blind chickens can eat grains of corn. For whatever political reasons they advance this statement, which workers have felt for long time, it does not alter the fact that a new level has been reached. No one can pretend any longer. While they talk of recession capitalism goes into a slump.

An increasing clamour is heard that Thatcherism and the present government has failed. But Labour have been enthusiastic promoters of the freemarket economy in many spheres. If they win the general election they are going to rule on behalf of the minority who control the profits.

Labour will carry on Thatcher's policy of isolating people and attacking the working class.

ARE YOU ON?

THE RICH

This process has been carried on for decades against psychiatric patients who have been emptied out from the institutions, without any provision, onto the streets. Labour are strong promoters of the same idea for the disabled. They call for "community care". But such care needs resources and the funds are drying up. None of the poor, the elderly or the youth get a look in. Those in work are increasingly offered deals which attempt to set worker against worker and Labour intend to keep the restrictions on trade unions.

Labour are moving away totally from the defending the poor. That is why Whitty, General Secretary of the Labour party, can say "Nothing must be allowed to get in the way of achieving" a Labour government when asked to support a charter of existing legal rights (see inside this issue of SV).

**END THE POLL
TAX NOW**

**LOBBY OF THE NEC
26th FEBRUARY 12-2
(SEE INSIDE FOR
MORE DETAILS)**

AND

**SUPPORT THE DEMO
GLASGOW
28th MARCH**

**OTHER MEETINGS
16th MARCH
7.30 BURY**

**OVER BCCI AND THE POLL
TAX
(SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS)**

INSIDE > LAMBETH / POLL TAX / BURY

PLUS > BCCI / VOICE SPECIAL ON RUSSIA



**MONTHLY JOURNAL
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**BRITISH SECTION
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
WORKERS
LEAGUE
[4TH INTERNATIONAL]**

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THE VOICE SAYS

In order to govern against the working class they jettison any pretence of nationalisation, council house building, trade union rights, they support Bush's war and want to build nuclear weapons as rapidly as the worst war mongers.

They treat Scotland with a chauvinism equal to the Tories. The Labour leadership have abandoned the Scottish working class as they have the English and Welsh.

The people of Scotland have the right to elect the government of their choice. The Scottish working class finds no support in parliament and it has developed strong national sentiments. To sweep this discussion aside, as not only the Labour leadership does, but lefts such as Militant, actually means leaving the working class to the SNP.

No strong and lasting relationship can be made with the working class without supporting the demand for the right to self-determination. While supporting that demand we will encourage all attempts at building unity between the working class both side of the border.

In fact nowhere is there away out for a future Labour government. There is no answer in North Sea oil, the European Market or easy pickings in Eastern Europe. What benefits there are will go to the US, Germany or Japan. But even they are fearful of the chaos and the working class.

In Lithuania, recent polls showed a majority opposed to the government's policies. Rumania's three trade unions are threatening a general strike unless the government triples the minimum wage. The government so far has refused to budge above the present minimum of £16 while the unions are demanding £45.70. The workers' wages buy less and less. In the twenty months after the revolution prices tripled. In the three months since then they have doubled again. In Czechoslovakia output has fallen by 30% or more while inflation has accelerated. Unemployment has shot up - ominously more quickly in the Slovak part of the country.

In Poland the "shock therapy", which started two years ago, has resulted in rising unemployment, growing fears of industrial and financial collapse and last month a general strike.

All the advanced and European countries are also facing crisis. Germany and Japan are slowing down. The slump in the USA forces 10,000 workers to queue for one job in a hotel. Australian markets are loosing out to Japan. In New Zealand workers rights are furiously attacked. Unemployment in Sweden is the highest level since 1960 when statistics were first recorded. The property market has collapsed and banks are losing billions in bad loans to the construction industry. Volvo are demanding the government intervenes to save industry.

The Greek government is also in deep crisis. Their solution, after the discredited PASOK was forced out, was to privatise 325 state owned industries. They have been opposed by a general strike and have only sold a handful of firms.

The ground on which British reformism stands is shrinking. In the coming election the main question for those who offer leadership is: what side are you on, the toilers or the rich?

Workers want an explanation for what is going on and they want a way out, but there is no easy road it is either towards ever deepening chaos and rule in the name of profit or the rebuilding the mass movement with a leadership turned to the international and national problems facing the working class.

At the beginning of this stage of world developments we are now passing through, we repeat the words of the Manifesto of the Emergency Conference of the Fourth International which gathered, in 1940, in the tense atmosphere of engulfing war which was to slaughter millions:

"The capitalist world has no way out, unless a prolonged death agony be so considered. It is necessary to prepare for long years, if not decades, of war, uprisings brief interludes of truce, new wars and new uprisings. A young revolutionary party must base itself on this perspective. History will provide it with enough opportunities and possibilities to test itself, to accumulate experience and to mature. The swifter the ranks of the vanguard are fused the more the epoch of bloody convulsions will be shortened, the less destruction will our planet suffer."

Only by telling the truth to the working class and developing a fighting programme based on the new realities can a leadership be built that will be able to withstand the present period of rapid changes and utilise the great possibilities.

MORE LIKE THE TORIES EVERY DAY

As some Tory councils slightly ease back in collecting the Poll Tax in the run up to the general election, Labour councils seem more Thatcherite than Conservative one's.

For example Southwark (Labour) council are still using 'Pete Wallis Today', a firm of bailiffs at present at the centre of an assault charge and this is not the first accusation aimed at this firm!

Margaret Hodge leader of Islington (Labour) Council and spokesperson for the London authorities called on the police to be more effective in helping councils collect the Poll Tax. Camden (Labour) council is threatening to sack a council worker if she gets sent down because of non-payment. Meanwhile Hackney (Labour) council is trying to avoid such a situation by threatening to sack people if they have not paid the Poll Tax (not even waiting for the court case) and making applicants for council jobs state whether they have paid the Poll Tax: "You are required under threat of future dismissal to disclose in application forms rent arrears of yourself or partner, details of squatting or any withholding of the Poll Tax."

"You must not further the aims of an organisation in conflict with the council, say Freemasons, A SQUATTERS ACTION GROUP, a fascist organisation."

Gone is the pretence, often repeated over the last few years, that Labour councils will implement the Poll Tax more humanely than the Tories would.

Care for the poor, the elderly, the disabled has gone. The Labour leadership do not stoop to even talking about them in the run up to the general election. They are too busy implementing the Poll Tax - happily helping magistrates break the law. Council employees in the court are often heard to ask the magistrate to use his common sense rather than base their judgement on the law, while the clerk of the court (whose wage is paid by the council) is often heard encouraging the magistrate to ignore the law.

A whole generation of Labour councillors has been brought up on the diet of manoeuvre and fudge, of creative accounting and treating the electorate as so many punters, as a lump of inert matter to be used in the elections. The Poll Tax signified the end of all that. **With the introduction of the Poll Tax councillors had to choose where to**

With the introduction of the Poll Tax councillors had to choose where to stand, either with the struggle or for implementation of the tax, there was and there is no other road, no middle ground.

ED BARBOR

stand, either with the struggle or for implementation of the tax, there was and there is no other road, no middle ground.

In order to develop a fighting alternative we should say kick the Tories out fight the Labour leaders and councils now, during and after the election.

Labour candidates in local and general elections should only be voted for if there is no alternative prepared to fight on principles and defend the working class. They should only be supported like, as Lenin said, a rope supports a hanging man.

One of the independent candidates in last year's local election Abdul Rashid (Werneth and Coppice Ward, Oldham) linked his candidacy to a strike in the Oldham Royal Infirmary of workers sacked for striking against the cuts. He said, in the Socialist Voice after last year's election:

"During the run up to the election the leader of the Council asked me to withdraw my nomination. I said I would if the Councillors agreed to be always with the people, outside in the street or wherever people wanted them. Secondly, if they agreed to stop summoning people to court and stop using the bailiffs. If they agreed on this then I would withdraw. They did not agree to do this.

"I also told them that the Labour Party had lost three general elections and if they do not change their policies they could easily lose the fourth. But if they change their policies, within two months the Labour Party would definitely win."

The climate in which the Labour Party will come to power (if it does at all) is a climate in which the number of bankruptcies and liquidations rose from 28,935 in 1990 to 47,777 in 1991 and the number of companies going into receivership rose 56% in 1991 to 4,000. In this year Building Societies expect 85,000 house repossessions due to mortgage defaulting to add to the 167,400 households recognised as homeless by local authorities in 1990 (of which the councils recognised they had a duty to house 59,800 households - probably meaning they are elderly, pregnant women or families.)

A united movement of the working class is the only forward. That does not mean we wait for the working class to develop and

DRESSING UP WAGE CUTS

As the world economy enters a depression the tactics of employers begin to resemble those they used in the 1920's and 1930's. Then it was pay cuts against a background of mass unemployment. In fact it was such a tactic which led to the 1926 General Strike.

Today pay-cuts are dressed up as *profit* or *performance* related pay.

The Tory government, to encourage the process, introduced a special incentive scheme in 1987. **If a company can place at least 80% of its workforce on such schemes employees receive additional tax relief. Last year the number of companies with such schemes more than doubled to 3,000 covering 600,000 employees.** The schemes in practice are cumbersome and offer very little benefit other than introducing the principle of pay-cutting.

Last year Lloyds Bank attempted to introduce such a scheme alongside a re-grading program. Staff at Lloyds defeated the attempt by strike action which crippled their International Department in Birmingham. Now Barclays is attempting to introduce the principle by insisting that staff with a poor individual appraisal will be excluded from pay rises. BIFU the banking union successfully defeated Lloyds Bank and is now organising strike action in Barclays.

The principles at stake here cannot be underestimated. The working class has only managed to improve its once abysmal living conditions by collective action. Now employers are using arguments like the recession to undermine completely the notion of collective bargaining and to individualise employees.

Profit and performance related pay was first introduced in smaller sized companies. Major private sector employers like banks are attempting to follow and now even the civil service and local authorities are attempting to introduce this form of wage cutting.

then we can step in to take the credit and the leadership. No, such a movement will have to re-learn the old methods of fighting and a movement will be built by fighting on all the issues pressing down on the working class and uniting them together against all the careerists, self-seekers and supporters of the rich.

LAMBETH: THE ATTEMPT TO DESTROY A COMMUNITY

MARTIN MITCHELL OF THE BRIXTON HILL ANTI-POLL TAX GROUP AND THE UNEMPLOYED ACTION GROUP

An internal Labour group document in Lambeth reveals an estimated £26.1 million could be cut off Lambeth's budget for the next financial year.

Last year £25 million was cut and 800 jobs lost - in a borough with 25% unemployment. Thousands of residents suffered as grants to youth centres, swimming pools, community halls, nurseries, creches, play-groups, and many voluntary groups were either axed or reduced.

A look at environmental services shows the sort of devastation that will be caused if Labour adopts its "draft proposals". The leaked proposals include a 30% cut in spending on libraries with a minimum of 4 and possibly 9 libraries closing - and up to 50 staff being sacked. Either Streatham or Clapham swimming pools will be closed (the lido at Brockwell Park is already closed, and the one at Kennington park abandoned after £.5 million had been spent developing it - it is now expected it will be filled in and earthed over). Ferndale sports centre will be closed, Flaxman's hours reduced and 2 out of 3 sports halls closed down. In the Arts there will be more cuts, with concerts, shows in parks and cultural events scrapped, and the axing of grants to voluntary arts groups, 80% of their budget in a lot of cases.

In other areas there will be a 15% cut in advice centres, a 20% cut in adult education and a 20% cut in youth services. This is all on top of last years massive cuts and at a time when increasing unemployment and poverty means greater need and demand for public services.

What is needed in Lambeth is a boost to the economy, increasing public services to provide a decent environment in which to live and to provide more jobs. It makes a nonsense of Lambeth's business initiatives to attract jobs and "industry" when the future for people who live here looks like being that of living in a poverty stricken "ghetto" where people are less and less likely to want to live, the area spiralling downwards in a cycle of poverty, neglect and further impoverishment.

Henry Gilby, the council officer in charge of Environmental Services, pointed



NALGO WORKERS RESISTING LAMBETH COUNCIL'S COMPULSORY REDUNDANCIES POLICY

out recently that these cuts need not take place. Gilby outlined an alternative strategy, designed to defend services and increase them, involving re-scheduling debts, seeing more "effective" interest rates on debt, and stopping "central-purchasing", a crazy situation whereby everything Lambeth Council buys has 10% added to it through a central-purchasing system. He is setting out an alternate strategy pointing out to the politicians of the Labour party that if they wanted they could stop and even reverse cuts. The council's own officers have a greater political will and attitude to defend the community than the ruling Labour group. Indeed the Labour group has suspended 13 of its own councillors in Lambeth for opposing the implementation of Tory policy.

Mr Gilby also revealed that at a meeting between councillors and council officers on 20th January the "possibility" that all concessions will be withdrawn for one year - including the concessions to OAPs and under 16s was discussed.

But at a time of increasing hardship concessions should be extended. The Unemployed Action Group in Brixton is demanding an increase of concessionary hours at the councils recreational facilities and the re-introduction of no admission charges during those periods for the huge number of unemployed in the borough - over 32,000.

So just whose interest is the Labour group

servicing? Not the growing numbers of unemployed and under-privileged in the borough. Not the interests of the people who voted Labour in the last council election - when labour promised "no cuts" in services. The answer must be, once again, the interests of big business and the economic doctrine that was "Thatcherism". What we are witnessing in Lambeth is part of what is happening all over Britain, and internationally, the deliberate creation of a vast pool of unemployed and under privileged people to provide cheap labour and keep wages low and falling. British government and industry seek to drive down labour costs further and further to protect profits and compete with other countries which are technically far more advanced and with the low wage costs of slave-labour societies which increasingly compete with the so-called "developed" nations.

But this attack on communities by the government also seeks to extinguish any power-centre of opposition.

Cutting services and increasing mass unemployment also serves the purpose of destroying trade unions, local left-wing councils, and communities of people who believe in themselves. Instead of standing up for itself and its people, Lambeth council is following the line of the Labour Party - seeking to implement Tory policies to show itself respectable and worthy of business

SUPPORT FOR RUSSIAN MINERS

TO THE MINeworkERS OF TENTESKA
FROM THE BRIXTON HILL ANTI-POLL TAX UNION

support.

Perhaps a "warning" of the political suicide the Labour group is embarked on in Lambeth and elsewhere was shown in the December by-election (reported in the last issue of SV) when its vote fell by 300% and the Tories took a seat in a strong working class estate by a huge majority. If Lambeth goes ahead with these cuts it turns on the very people it ostensibly seeks to defend and whose interests it should promote.

FIGHTING THE COUNCIL

Steve Whalley, the leader of the Labour council in Lambeth says: "Inevitably there will be job losses and cuts in services." The only chance for the people is to take on the council in Lambeth. Caroline Hathaway, branch secretary of NALGO (the local government union) has warned the council over cuts: "There is no way we will sit back and allow them to do this." On Thursday, 16th January, 70% of NALGO's 5,000 members went on strike over the axing of 2 jobs in Lambeth's computer department. Three youth centres are still occupied since they were "axed" last year.

Massive resistance to the Poll Tax continues as up to 80% of Poll Tax non-payers face the courts. Cheers and applause greeted the adjournment of 2,400 summonses until April because of the question of computer evidence admissibility.

Only the people can save Lambeth and the threatened communities around Britain - all the recognised political parties have turned their backs on the people in their desire to please, feed and promote the international capitalist system of destruction and exploitation, which relies on people living in ignorance, fear and mistrust. But once people exert the power they have, anything and everything can change. And, as demonstrated by the Poll Tax, when pushed too far, people can and do react and those in government get a "shock". Communities can be strengthened and united when faced with a common struggle.

The lid can only be kept screwed down for so long.

This is to send you greetings and support in your strike for increased wages. We have heard via the miners of Asturias, Spain that you are fighting for a wage of 15% of production.

In this country we are facing many struggles. Unemployment in this part of London, the borough of Lambeth is 24.9% and people are faced with enormous bills of Poll Tax, now nearly £1,000 per head for 2 years tax unpaid. Of 186,000 people liable for the Poll Tax in Lambeth, up to 150,000 have either not paid any of the tax or have stopped paying it. So up to 150,000 are faced with legal action for not paying. Every week up to 4,000 are taken to the Magistrates Court by the local council knowing they cannot pay the unjust tax.

In this country over 7 million people have been summoned to Court so far. Over 150 have been sent to prison for not paying the tax. At the same time, services provided by the council are being cutback, for example in Brixton the Youth Centre has been closed, but kept going by an occupation by its workers, the swimming pool in the local park has been shut down, the old, the disabled, and the sick are being hit as services are slowly eroded and changes imposed.

In this area, the government training programmes for the unemployed are nothing but a sham, after a year's "training" only 9% of people get a full-time job with an employer.

We seek to fight this government and all who attempt to impose this repressive system on us, by exposing their lives and deceits and attempting to express and let be known the truth of what is happening in our society do-day. This is a basis for finding new solutions and changing our living and working conditions.

WE SUPPORT YOUR WAGE DEMANDS AND WISH YOU A FULL VICTORY.

In Solidarity
Martin Mitchell
Amanda Bentham
RG

этими мастерами.
Мы поддерживаем и поздравляем вас в вашей борьбе за
повышение зарплаты. Мастера из Испании в Испании вам знать,
что вы боретесь за зарплату в 15% производства. В нашей стране
перед нами такая статистика. В этой части Лондона, в районе
Ламбет, безработица является 24.9% рабочей силы. К тому же,
1,000 фунтов стерлингов в этой части Лондона, в районе
наверняка надо иметь по крайней мере на одну семью в
платили его налоги. Это значит, что местный совет Ламбета,
просто около 150,000 человек. Из 186,000 человек, около
препятствование судам потому что, они не в состоянии заплатить
напрямую налоги. В нашей стране возбудили дело против
более 7 миллионов людей. В прошлом году более 150 людей
за то, что не платили налоги. В то же время, районный совет
всё сокращает социальные услуги. Например, в Брикстоне
закрывают детские центры, спортивные клубы, закрывают секции и
закрывают занятия спортом и другие программы. Это означает
местным людям, что социальное обслуживание и образование
сокращаются.
В этом районе, государственные программы обучения
стали неэффективны. После года "обучения" лишь 9%
людей находят работу, занимающую всё время.
Мы хотим бороться с этим сокращением и со всеми,
кто хочет возложить эту репрессивную систему на нас. Мы
стремимся раскрыть их лжи и обман, и бороться против
этих программ. Мы хотим изменить ситуацию и изменить нашу
жизнь и труд.
Мы поддерживаем вашу борьбу за повышение
и желаем вам полной победы.
С солидарностью,
Союз противников погнутых налогов
Брикстон Хилл, Лондон.

THE TEXT IN RUSSIAN

VOICE COMMENT NEC SUPPORTS LAW BREAKERS

A letter has been received by the Northern Anti-Poll Tax Forum from Larry Whitty, General Secretary of the Labour Party which, in effect, supports magistrates and councils breaking the law in order to implement the Poll Tax.

We re-print the letter so readers can judge for themselves and we also re-print the charter of legal rights, which he was asked to circulate, along with more detailed legal information.

The charter of legal rights will be launched at a lobby of the NEC of the Labour Party on 26th February. It is part of the campaign to force the authorities to observe the legal rights of people concerning the Poll Tax and to force the immediate repeal of the Poll Tax. The lobby, agreed in October at a meeting of over 80 anti-Poll Tax groups, is also demanding the immediate repeal of the Poll Tax, an amnesty and an end to the witch-hunts.

Whitty avoids answering any of the legal points. He does say the Poll Tax is unjust but the Poll Tax is being implemented by Labour councils who are contravening the legal rights of people who cannot pay and or will not pay. The question here is: does he support the existing legal rights which courts and councils are supposed to observe or not?

The fact that he does not answer and would not even circulate the material so that others on the NEC could read it is his real answer. He makes a chilling comment when he says "Nothing must be allowed to get in the way of achieving" the election of a Labour government.

Does he mean that he will support people's legal rights after the general election, but for the moment they are suspended?

By acting in this way Whitty is promoting judicial thuggery against the working class. He stands, like Blunket and Gould, behind the councils and magistrates urging them on to do the job regardless of the law.

Are Benn and Skinner of the NEC going to oppose this position of Larry Whitty by supporting the lobby of the NEC and by organising the ranks of the Labour and Trade Union movement in defence of basic legal rights or will they remain silent.

What is happening to those going to court over the Poll Tax is in the long line of attack on democratic rights against the miners, the blacks, the Irish and minority communities. The breaking of these rights has now been applied to over 7 million people.

We hope that Labour party and trade union organisations condemn Whitty's reply and support the lobby.

LETTER FROM LARRY

From Larry Whitty, General Secretary of the Labour Party

To Northern Anti-Poll Tax Forum

I am writing in response to your letter asking me to circulate documents from your organisation to the NEC and Home Policy Committee.

I cannot agree to your request. The NEC and Annual Conference of the Labour Party has consistently endorsed the view that despite the injustice and unfairness of the poll tax, people should pay it. Indeed those who refuse to pay place a heavier burden on those who do pay and also undermine vital local services.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to collect the tax and we support them in this role. We have given guidance to Labour groups on carrying out their statutory responsibilities in this area.

The only way the poll tax - and its unfair successor the Council Tax - will be completely abolished is by the election of a Labour government. Nothing must be allowed to get in the way of achieving this objective.

Yours sincerely
J. L. Whitty

THE ILLEGALITY OF COURTS

The Poll Tax Legal Group has done important work in fighting many injustices concerning the Poll Tax. Rob Manson talked to Socialist Voice about recent events concerning the Poll Tax.

"The courts have been turned into rubber stamping factories. The Poll Tax has helped break up society and hit the youth and the sick.

"All the liability orders should be wiped clean and the whole thing started again because computer evidence should not have been allowed in a magistrates court, it was hearsay evidence.

"The Tories intend to change the law, but not retrospectively so they are hoping that those who have been through the court will not appeal. If they had to deal with all the 7 million cases again it would cost approximately £33 million, which is the cost of one frigate.

"When the Tories could not come up with an answer Blunket and Gould [both on the Labour NEC] stepped in to say they would support changes including retrospective changes which even the Tories would not introduce.

"Their response was that the Poll Tax has

got to be collected - we cannot be seen to support non-payment, what matters most to these gentlemen is the efficient administration of the Poll Tax collection not the lawful administration of justice. Blunket and Gould have destroyed any basis of opposition to fighting the Poll Tax because it is efficiency that matters to them.

"I was almost sick on the spot because I thought we were giving the Labour Party the best present they could have. They could have demanded the government cease enforcing the Poll Tax and local authorities should refused to implement it any further and demanded the Tories foot the bill. But they are not willing to safeguard the rights of the poor, the inarticulate and the unrepresented.

"The Labour leadership are horrified at the thought of covering the cost of a Tory mistake and they would rather see the poor suffer. Labour are supporting the idea of disenfranchising the unemployed, youth and

the working class and pandering to the middle classes. For every one liberal they gain they will lose two or three in Wales or Scotland. Their reply is: so what?

"When I went to help at the Clerkenwell court recently over a 100 people, pregnant mothers, single mothers and pensioners were shouting with jubilation that someone was coming to their aid. All these people will be hit from a great height by the Labour Party who have been telling them for the last two years that you have got to pay the Poll Tax because it is law. Now they have the right not to be dealt with in the courts according to the law and Labour do not want to know.

"I am in support of a party that will represent the people. The Labour party is actively working to disenfranchise socialists. We need to get agreement by campaigning over practical issues. I am convinced that the Labour party will not support the ideas against the Poll Tax."



SOCIALIST

VOICE SPECIAL

WORKERS OPPOSE PRICE HIKES AS YELTSIN BRINGS CHAOS

Yegor Gaidar, deputy prime minister of the Russian federation and minister of economics and finance, declared in January that the first element of the "shock therapy" plan was the "freeing of markets" for goods, services and foreign exchange.

Only a few basic goods remain controlled and their prices have, on average, tripled. In reaction to the sufferings imposed on the Russian people he said: "Some ask: 'how can people afford the higher prices?'" He answered: "This largely misses the point. The prices only rose because the people - taken as a whole - had the money to spend."

Mr Gaidar's team include Mr Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard and Professor Richard Layard of the LSE. Their talk of people, "taken as a whole" contains the people who were growing rich and pushing up the prices by speculation and corruption, and the privileged elite. These people are the very people who will continue to get rich under the present "radical economic reform" in the same way as they are getting richer in Poland.

Mr. Gaidar says that; "Care must be taken, however, to protect the poorer people - such as pensioners - who have already spent all their income. We have done all that we can to protect these groups. On 1st January, the basic pension, child support and the minimum wage were increased by 90%. This is less than the rise in prices, but any bigger increase would have been irresponsible."

These groups get a 90% increase while the price of basic goods is tripled and other commodities rise even further. The Guardian of 17th January reported that in some places workers were not being paid because their factories had no cash. One MP told Parliament that in Novosibirsk people had not received pensions since November.

GETTING RICH ON POVERTY

A survey of living standards carried out by a Norwegian trade union research organization at the beginning of January declared that more than 60% of Muscovites had been driven below the poverty line in the previous months, that is, before Yeltsin's price reform! Real per capita income of the poorest sections of the population fell by twenty per cent after last April's limited price reforms while the incomes of middle income households fell 250%. The report indicated that the freeing of prices hits the elderly, the handicapped, the chronically ill, and single mothers the hardest.

The lives of the men and women in the former Soviet Union are now being run by people from the elite in their own country or from the western universities who know and care as little about the conditions of the population as did the stalinist rulers. Most of those bureaucrats it must be added are, of course, not suffering, but very well esconced in the new elite.

Professor Jeffrey Sachs, who was described by the city editor of the Guardian as "adviser extraordinary to the former communist bloc as it pilots its way to capitalism", gave his opinion to a Financial Times interviewer that the opposition to the soaring prices was; "Yak.Yak.Yak".



A Muscovite demonstrates against the price increases. The banner says, "No increase in prices".

Gaidar, Yeltsin and Sachs try to minimize the reaction to the price rise. Gaidar told the Russian Parliament that people were accepting huge increases with "courage and clenched teeth". He maintained that "the general reaction had been calm and that there had been no large strikes and demonstrations had not got much support."

PRICE PROTEST

At the same time a Tass Newsagency despatch reported that people in the southern town of Stavropol smashed shop windows at the abrupt rise of prices triggered by the end of seven decades of price control. Shops were forced to reduce their newly liberated prices for meat and sausage.

Protests in Vladimir forced authorities to intervene to lower the still controlled price of milk, from 6 roubles to 1.2 roubles while a complaint by young mothers prompted similar action by the regional government council in Nizhni Novgorod. 7,000 taxi drivers went on strike in St. Petersburg against the increase of fares.

At this time miners in Kazakhstan, the third largest of the former Union's coal fields, went on strike with a demand to double their pay. Workers in industries in the capital of Kazakhstan, Alma Ata, were also reported to have been on strike since 6th January, when prices were freed. Miners in the Kuzbass also came out.

In a number of cities and regions of Russia and in a number of Commonwealth states the authorities have decreed a reduction in prices for a number of basic necessities in response to popular anger at what looked like purely speculative rises.

Gaidar said that wage rises would mean the death of the "shock therapy" but Yeltsin was forced to give miners in Kuzbass a 300% increase a week later. The Financial Times, 24th January, reports that Yeltsin met representatives from Russia's biggest coalfield the Kuzbass and was reported by the Interfax newsagency to have conceded their demand for higher salaries. Such a concession to the powerful mineworkers will open the way to other workers. The resistance of the population shattered previous plans, including the 500 days, Shatalin plan of "shock therapy" which was supported by Yeltsin last year.

CHAOS AFTER BUREAUCRATIC PLANNING

The opposition from below is now responsible for the crisis and splits at the top in the government and new bureaucracy. The speaker of the Russian Parliament on 13th January attacked the reforms, criticized the destruction of collective and state farms, and called on



Workers in Moscow having to sift through a garbage dump in order to live

the government to resign. The vice-president also attacked the price "reforms" and declared: "I hear everyone calling for a change in the present economic reform process; many deputies, including democrats and non-democrats, specialists, heads of plants and enterprises both state owned and not state owned. We are fed up with experiments, we have had enough of them." The Moscow city administration announced its collective resignation on the 9th January following a prolonged struggle with Gavril Popov, the mayor, over the privatization of houses.

The countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union go from crisis to crisis because the old planning, even though distorted by the bureaucracy, has been abolished. There is chaos and crisis because there are no powerful groups of capitalists able to take hold of the economy in their own interests. The governments of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are tiny greedy people in face of giant tasks. They desperately beg for assistance from the powerful foreign capitalists and surround themselves with academic capitalist theorists. However, continually they run up against the resistance of workers. For, in order that a governing class can take these central industries and control the economy, the working class has to suffer and its reaction be crushed. On this rock, so far, every plan has been wrecked.

They bluster, like Yeltsin, but the usurping restorationists, motivated by no general principles, are like the mule, of which it is said: "It has no pride of ancestry and no hope of posterity". They go from crisis to crisis, without vision, resting only on those who want to feather their own nest at the expense of everybody else. **The acute problem for the restorationists is the creation of a capitalist class.** In all these countries now, the privatization has been generally of small firms. Also, generally, the joint activity with foreign firms has been in the food factories, trading firms and service industry.

The great state combines are untouched, such as the military industrial complex in Russia. Certainly there has been a "flowering" of "entrepreneurs", speculators, gangsters including a great number of ex-stalinist bureaucrats, exploiting shortages and the suffering of the people, engaged in wheeling and dealing, making fortunes, and, of course, enthusiastically supporting capitalism. However, the basic extractive, manufacturing and transport industries remain practically untouched. Increasingly their only ambition is to be agents of western imperialism. Their abject posture before western capitalism must undoubtedly be a subject of some anger amongst workers.

COLLAPSE

Gaidar pleaded with the West, in his article in the Financial Times. "We need a stabilization fund to peg the rouble at a reasonable rate." He wants to peg the exchange rate to give enterprises the confidence to part with their dollars. "Unfortunately", he tells western businessmen, "Russia has no reserves for this purpose. They were squandered by the Union government." The reserves, however, have been drastically reduced during the last few years with groups of bureaucrats, old

stalinists and new "democrats" encouraging the break-up of old economic ties in order to protect their own interests and feather their own nests. The chairman of the Central Bank Matiukin - who now refuses to hand over to Yeltsin's nominee, Mr Boris Feodorov, a senior executive with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London and IMF nominee - claims that, when he was "stoking up the fires of credit last year", he was quietly encouraged to do so by a Russian Government which wanted to de-stabilize the Soviet Union. The bank has refused government and IMF officials access to its books.

The Soviet Union's financial system is plunging into total chaos. The problems are of achieving one stable currency throughout the area with a constant relationship with the world market. The unprincipled restorationists are now trapped by their own blind dissolution of the links that bound the Soviet Union together.

The headlong blind nihilist rush of the petty bourgeois nationalists and capitalist restorationists has increased the difficulties, not only in Russia, but also in the other republics, including the Baltic republics. Russia seeks the rouble as a currency controlled by a central bank which it would dominate. Already however, the Ukraine, in order to counter the effects of Yeltsin's recent massive price rises, and the control of the printing of roubles by Russia, has introduced a coupon



LENIN

as the first steps to a new currency. There is very little hope of an agreement between the republics and the continuing total chaos of the financial system is inevitable.

In his article Gaidar said, "The sums of money needed are similar on a per head basis to those given to Poland." The imperialists, however, consider just what the result of their aid to Poland has been. They face the prospect of pumping in more money, to build reserves, only to see it go down the drain.

A cheap currency makes the situation more profitable for foreign capitalist firms. On the other hand, a whole unstable economy with great explosions makes it far from favourable. Seeking to stabilize the currency at twenty times its present value, as Gaidar proposes, is a desperate plea for help but cannot be granted. The reserves would continue to drain away given the present completely unstable state of social, political and national problems and, above all, the increasing workers' struggles.

IMPERIALISTS DILEMMAS

The imperialists are very close to insoluble dilemmas. Everything pushes the capitalists to more direct control. A recent editorial in the Financial Times saw the choice before western capitalists firms thus; "the resultant crisis has given democratic reformers an opportunity but no more than a brief one. Should they fail far uglier forces lie in wait". At the beginning of January Peter Aven, Russia's new foreign economic relations minister, warned that, "unless Russia received further debt relief the West could soon be dealing with a communist regime again but a much tougher one."

The investments flowing to the Soviet Union have been reduced. Professor Sachs on the 16th January declared that the West had so far barely supported the "courageous actions" of the Russian government and he said that the conference in Washington must be expanded to include urgent consideration of structural assistance. "I estimate that the west must give between \$15 billion (£8.3 billion) and \$20 billion this year: \$5 billion in humanitarian aid, \$6 billion to support the balance of payments and \$5 billion as a stabilization fund for rouble convertibility" He said that, "In the past year governments and banks pulled their money out of Russia, they woke up to what was happening and killed their credits. It means that this government has almost no funds, It is in a desperate position..."

At the end of January Major announced, £280 million worth of export credit insurance to the former Soviet Union. However, according to the Guardian, 1st February, the offer has so many "small print restrictions" that, "none of the newly independent republics are in a position to qualify for the scheme". The Guardian said that restriction are understood to be that cover would only be allowed for exports to republics which conformed to a six point list of restrictions, namely, that a republic must be deemed to be credit worthy, have agreed to take up their share of the former Soviet Unions debt, be prepared to honour the Paris Club agreement, have negotiated an IMF programme and have its own central lending facility.

The US itself has provided only 6.5% of the \$80 billion in aid and

credits supplied by the West so far. The group of seven leading industrial nations at the end of last year turned down a request from Russia for a multi-billion dollar fund to help stabilize its economy. The Guardian, 17th January, brings out the feeling among some of the other capitalist countries that the US government called the meeting in Washington in order to keep the initiative while most of the giving of funds would be by the other capitalist nations. Meanwhile, the Financial Times talks about sceptical allies describing "collective engagement" as a fancy phrase to cover up the real goal of using other peoples money to serve US foreign policy goals; "In 1991 the US persuaded allies such as Germany Japan and Gulf Arab states to stump up more than \$50 billion to pay for the war against Iraq and to finance aid to front line states such as Egypt, Jordan and Turkey. By some calculations the US even turned in a small profit."

In December Bush declared victory in the Cold War and said that what had happened in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was "a victory for the moral force of our values", but the United States now entered "a new world of hope and possibilities for our children". He added that these events served the national interests of the US despite a potential for instability and chaos.

The only outcome that appears likely in this cauldron of insoluble dilemmas is that there must be an attempt at dictatorship. Democracy is getting elected on promises. What promises can the demagogues give? In a situation like this the opening up of a semi-colonization of the Soviet Union could only be through the crushing of the people. That is something which cannot be accomplished shortly, not even before the end of this decade.

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

We are at the beginning of the development of class and international consciousness of the workers of this area. They have already participated in great struggles from 1989, but there was not the confidence of class power, nor a leadership, to take them to put their rule in place of that of the hated bureaucracy. It is a working class which has only been able to build a knowledge of organizing in struggle over the past few years. However, it is a working class that is going rapidly through experiences of its strength. It is now re-orienting itself and has made some big strides in consciousness of its collective power as was seen in the struggles at the time of the miners' strike last year. We said that this was the force whose interests compelled it to go beyond frontiers and towards unity as a class. The correctness of what we were saying has been proved in a report from the Donbass which appeared in the Guardian of 24th January.

The article is on the grave shortage of pit props in Dzerzhinsk in the heart of the Donbass coal fields where since 10th January the Dzerzhinsk mine, with 15,000 miners, has received only one tenth of its pit props needs. The pit props come from forests in the north of Russia and without a regular supply the half million miners in the Donbass face lay-offs and the loss of coal faces. The crisis stems from collapse of the Soviet Union. But the important fact in this article is the attitude of Donbass miners. The article says that the independent trade union, NPG and the powerful mining combine Donetz Coal "share a common view of Ukrainian independence. They voted for it as a vote against the Soviet Union not as a vote for new



TROTSKY

economic boundaries". However, the article goes on: "*The trade union has no intention of severing ties with its fellow miners in Russia - each side has pledged to strike in sympathy if the other takes action - and Donetz coal wants to be allowed to make deals with Russian companies free from the attentions of tin pot dictators.*"

Michael Krulov joint chairman of NPG's permanent strike committee, blamed the Ukrainian President for aborting a previous sugar for wood deal by insisting that Ukrainian sugar could only be sold for hard currency. The union had tried to get wood by organizing its own sugar consignment to Komi but the wood had been impounded by customs officials on the Russian Ukrainian border. "*The Soviet Union may have fallen apart but we have closer relations with the miners of other republics than with the government of our Ukraine*" said Mr. Krulov.

The Guardian says that Mr. Ilyushenko, the general director of Donetz Coal believes that the solution to the restrictions is that full rights should be given to local business, "*they should help us to establish direct links with businesses in other republics*". It comments however, that the NPG is "*less optimistic and has re-directed its anger from the Kremlin to Kiev*". "*The government is just pushing us towards a strike. It wants to use us to rid itself of the responsibility of social security as mines shut down*". said Mr Krulov.

DIRECT RULE

For imperialism now to open up this area to vastly profitable exploitation enabling a new expansion is a formidable task. To obtain the direct rule necessary to bring this about means the direct control of the whole area and the crushing of the populations. The imperialists face great dilemmas. They have willing servitors, pleading to be put into the pockets of imperialist bankers and industrialists, but the present governments are weak agents because the basic means of production have yet to be seized by a capitalist class.

But most importantly there are working classes with powerful potential, whatever their present contradictory consciousness as a result of stalinism. They are strong enough to force governments to retreat at the threat of action. They are strong enough to be a big factor in the imperialists' fear of chaos in these countries and reluctance to give assistance until there is complete control.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, which has disintegrated without the working class being able to create an alternative power to that of the stalinist bureaucracy, is raising up a number of sharp and difficult problems, and is introducing a state of chaos. In the middle are the workers in the big enterprises who begin to feel their own power but have to find their way to a consciousness of the need to link with other workers in challenging for the power over their own lives: to begin generalizing out of the immediate problems that face them of the drastically worsening conditions.

From their use of their own group strength to raise their wages in face of the enormous price increases workers like the miners, who time and again have fought price increases, must pass to the expression of their strength to control their lives in all aspects. At the present time that means the control and distribution of the goods essential to life and the suppression of the speculators, those making fortunes from shortages, the Mafia and the self seeking would be capitalists.

The immediate question is workers control just as Lenin put it in 1917 before the Russian Revolution. In his "Threatening Catastrophe" of May 1917 he spoke of the famine and catastrophe threatening Russia and said the only answer was to hand control to the workers. And it was the power of the workers in the Soviets at that time which curtailed speculators.

The bureaucratic planning has been destroyed. The vital economic links over the Soviet area and the exchange of goods between the republics has been broken up by the nihilist policies of the petty bourgeois capitalist restorations and sharks who saw the feathering of their own nests in the break up of the Soviet union and who deliberately disrupted its finance and any central planning at all,

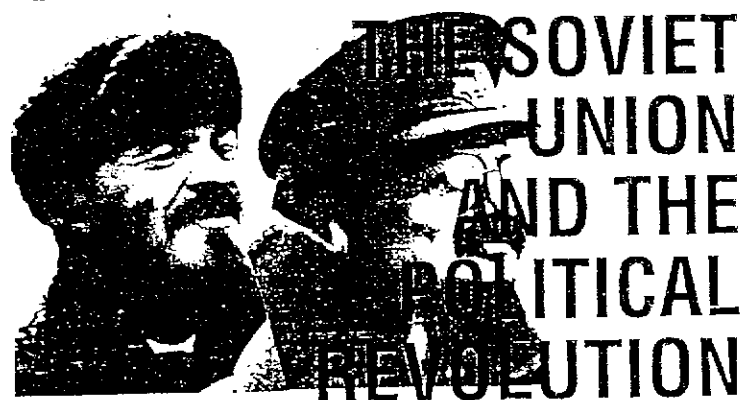
believing out of the chaos that a capitalist market would arise. They peddled the cruel lie that this would regulate production and distribution and produce a better life while ensuring that the better life began with themselves.

Before the working class remains the same task that they were unable to carry through in the big mobilizations that shook Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in 1989/90. The question still is: either imperialism dominates these countries or the working class. They are the only force that can rescue the areas and secure a real national development which can only come out of defeating these new parasitic demagogic governments and a free unity of toilers building together. This is also the only force which can bring along the middle class which had the greatest illusions in capitalism

They could be brought into struggle for control of goods. Here is also the question that in reality sections hesitate because they do not see an alternative. If the working class does not win them to a real control of the means to live, then they can fall victim to, or be swept up by, the chauvinistic neo-fascist forces advocating a strong hand, as in Pinochet's Chile, who will accelerate the process of handing whole areas of production to exploitation by the capitalist industrial and financial combines.

TOWARDS CAPITALISM OR SOCIALISM?

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BY BILL HUNTER



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THE CHARTER OF LEGAL RIGHTS WAS PROPOSED AND DRAWN UP BY A MEMBER OF THE POLL TAX LEGAL GROUP

THE GENERAL SECRETARY, LARRY WHITTY IS REFUSING TO CIRCULATE EVEN THE CHARTER OF LEGAL RIGHTS.

If you agree with any of the demands you should send a delegation

THE CHARTER... WHICH WHITTY REFUSED TO CIRCULATE

A Charter of existing Legal Rights

which are enjoyed by those persons whose great misfortune it is to be made the subject of enforcement measures undertaken by a local charging authority which seeks to secure unpaid poll tax.

SUMMARY

- [1] No chargepayer will be dealt with in their absence by a magistrates' court, thereby denying them the right to be heard in their own defence, unless and until it is first proved that a summons to appear had "come to their knowledge" and not merely that it was posted.
- [2] Every chargepayer in court has the right to know what they are accused of, to hear all of the evidence said against them, and to be allowed every reasonable opportunity to cross examine those who adduce it.
- [3] Every unrepresented chargepayer is entitled as of right to the quiet and unobtrusive advice and assistance of a helper accompanying them in court, and so long as there is no unreasonable interference with due process it is not a matter of concern for the court.
- [4] No chargepayer shall be condemned on the basis of inadmissible second hand or 'hearsay' evidence unless and until it can first be shown that that evidence satisfies the conditions of some legally recognised exception to its general exclusion at common law.
- [5] Every chargepayer is entitled to show by way of a defence to a liability order that their charge has not become 'payable' and to that end to establish that although posted requisite billing documents were not received by them.
- [6] No bailiff may levy or purport to levy a distress on a chargepayers' goods held on premises unless and until that bailiff has first gained a lawful, and thus a peaceable, entry onto those premises.
- [7] Every chargepayer is entitled as of right to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in order to eject a bailiff who has gained entry onto premises forcibly, and thus unlawfully, or in order to prevent their so doing, whether accompanied by a constable or not.
- [8] No charges, costs or other fees etc. shall be recovered from a chargepayer without their agreement by any bailiff, other than those lawfully provided for by the natural and ordinary meaning of the terms of the relevant statutory scheme.
- [9] No bailiff in the course of levying a distress on a chargepayer's goods shall be entitled to remove any cash or money unless and until voluntarily proffered in payment by the chargepayer.
- [10] Under the law of agency a local charging authority shall remain vicariously liable for the conduct of any bailiff while acting within the *bona fide* ambit of their duties on its behalf; and furthermore any chargepayer who even so much as tenders payment of their arrears to the authority shall thereafter be exempt from any further enforcement procedure.
- [11] A local charging authority may not employ any method for the enforcement of unpaid charge arrears not provided for by the appropriate statutory provisions, such as for example deductions from housing benefit.
- [12] A magistrate's court shall not hear an application of a charging authority instituted by way of complaint for the issue of a warrant committing a chargepayer in arrears to prison unless that complaint was made within 6 the months statutory time limit of when the matter of complaint arose, ie the time when the sum due ought to have been paid but was not.
- [13] A magistrates' court may not conclude that 'unemployment' constitutes a cause for culpable neglect as regards non payment unless and until it is first shown that suitable paid employment had been offered to and refused by the chargepayer concerned.
- [14] A magistrates' court may not issue a warrant committing a chargepayer to prison unless and until it has first examined and determined that no other method of enforcement is reasonably available to the charging authority concerned, such as for example deductions from income support.

A BURY RESIDENT SPEAKS OUT

Socialist Voice talked to Brian Patrick who is part of the Bury anti-Poll Tax Union and has also been one of the many Bury residents angered by the council losing £6.5 million in the BCCI fraud.

SV: Are people still fighting liability orders in court?

Hundreds are still turning up. Last week 150 queued outside the court. I went over to them and said that if anybody wants information or help come over to the anti-Poll Tax table. So many came over we could not deal with them all.

Some had already paid, some had only missed one payment, some had only just started living in the borough and yet had received a full tax bill. I always say each person who comes for advice has a different problem from all the rest.

One young lad, a student, from Salford Technical College had a Poll Tax bill for the full amount. He had a letter from the students' union solicitor saying he did not owe anything. I told him to produce the letter in court and make the authorities look as stupid as they are!

Afterwards he came back having won in court. He signed both the BCCI and the anti-Poll Tax petitions. I told him to go to his students union and fight for the removal of the 20% Poll Tax payment that students have to pay; get hold of other students and fight the cuts in housing benefit and the freezing of grants. Fight whatever you can otherwise you won't get anything.

A 76 year old woman had also been summonsed to court. She asked me to help her. She had been summonsed for missing one instalment of £16.68 whilst she was on holiday. She had not missed a single payment before!

One youngster had wanted to go into court but a council official said: "If you agree to pay you can go into court. But if you are not going to pay then you cannot go into court". A lot of those summonsed said would not pay anything. Council officials told them that therefore they could not go in. That had been happening all day long. I personally was aware of ten such cases!

I called the council official in charge and said that they have no right stopping people from going into court. That it was illegal for officials to be the judge, prosecutor and jury. It was a violation of human rights.

She said that I was wrong, but how can ten people all say the same thing?

I said that if she does not stop officials from carrying on in this way then a writ would be issued against her and the department.

I rang Colin Jones, the Council leader, that night. I told him what had happened and said

that, if he did not want a writ being served on council employees of the housing department, he had better meet me with the Head of the Finance Department.

I told him that it was what they did in Nazi Germany. In fact they didn't let them get so far because they shot them before they got in the court building!

Jones agreed to meet us. But so far they have not fixed a date.

SV: What do you think about the BCCI scandal?

We want the councillors to come to a meeting and tell the residents of Bury how and why they lost the money. We had no consultation before or after the money was lost. Few people in Bury even knew they had such an amount of money. We said that the £6.5 million they lost could have built more houses and helped to house the homeless or even invested in local industry. Bury has seen in living memory the paper, cotton, engineering and manufacturing industries close down.

That £6.5 million could have gone towards keeping jobs in Bury. I say the Labour council and the director of finance, Brian Smallridge, should be made accountable.

S.V. Do people care about this?

The response we are getting is magnificent. We have only been on the market three Saturdays and the response is great! They are giving us money without even being asked. They are signing the petition. Everyone says that the council as a whole should be fired forthwith; both Labour and Tory.

Two people have now issued writs against the council. When the second one was issued the solicitor for the council told the Manchester Evening the "council is not going to be intimidated into holding a public meeting through the issuing of writs." Who are the people running the council, is it solicitors or councillors and was he speaking on behalf of the councillors?

Surely councillors are supposed to hold public meetings and not be forced into holding them. The way they speak it is as if they feel there is something wrong when Bury residents ask for a meeting to discuss what happened to the £6.5 million.

It seems that Bury councillors want our money and our votes to do what they like with. It is not on.

COUNCIL LEADER MEETS ACTIVISTS

Since this interview Colin Jones, the council leader, has met those fighting against the Poll Tax and for accountability over BCCI.

He agreed that in future all council employees should act only as helpers inside the court buildings and that no OAP, unemployed, single parent and those on low wages would be taken to court. If they do receive a court summons then they should get in touch with the council.

Concerning BCCI he agreed that they would work with the Bury Residents and 'Campaign for Justice Within the Law' and he agreed to speak at a public meeting.

To get the councillor leaders to discuss in this way is an achievement. These limited agreements with anti-Poll Tax campaigners in Bury to safeguard the rights of those going to court are obviously just the first steps in the right direction. The assistance to the communities of Bury will come if the council keeps to its words in practice.

BCCI - STILL OPERATING WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT HIDING?

ANDY SHANNON

Recent developments concerning the collapse of the BCCI bank in which 53,363 depositors lost their money gives cause for alarm on the future prospects of the settlement of claims before 1995. Up to the 24th January 1992 the total number of claims forms sent to depositors by the Deposit Protection Board is 39,687. In addition to this figure there are still 13,676 forms that cannot be dispatched because the bank destroyed records of correspondence addresses of depositors. The actual number of claims made to the board up to the 24th January 1992 is 12,818 leaving a deficit of 40,545 depositors not accounted for. This means that unless these depositors file claims BCCI will only be accountable for 12,818 depositors accounts.

The Deposit Protection Board headed by the Governor of the Bank of England, the Deputy Chief Cashier, Mr B. Quinn, Mr R. T. Fox and Mr T.P. Frost started their initial enquiries into the collapse of the bank with an operating costs budget of £200,000. Up to 28th February 1991 operating costs to the

Board were £314,000. This clearly indicates that extra financial resources to deal with BCCI could put a further burden on tax payers in excess of £2 million plus. To add further to the government's dilemma the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received no representation from the liquidators of BCCI concerning the emergence of further evidence relevant to employees of BCCI who lost their property through mortgage foreclosures.

It must be noted that it was the policy of the bank that all employees took out mortgages through their employers.

The government and the Bank of England must take full responsibility for failing to protect investors from the time, two years ago, that they became aware of BCCI's dealings in laundering drugs money, it's association with the CIA and it's involvement in illicit arms deals. It also poses the question as to how many people in high office invested money on a short term basis at 15% interest and then withdrew their money causing the

bank to collapse. If we are to rectify this financial disaster depositors must now demand that the government issue extradition papers on the Governors of the bank to bring them to trial on charges of embezzlement.

The Campaign for Justice Within the Law and their solicitor Mr Milton Firman are in the process of negotiations with the Sheikh of Abu Dabi and the Amir's government to resolve the financial disaster.

Today the bank still operates in Luxembourg, Pakistan and the Camen Islands, it is also clear that much of the 'lost' money is still in the hands of the bank and, in the opinion of this campaign and some Members of Parliament, in Swiss bank accounts.

Campaign for Justice Within the Law.
Secretary: A.J. Shannon, 061 205 0256

Depositors wishing for information or representation contact Mr M Firman, Burton Coupland Solicitors on: 061 834 7374 or 061 839 0428

BURY RESIDENTS PUBLIC MEETING

7.30, 16th MARCH

METHODIST HALL

BURY

WE DEMAND :

**THE BURY COUNCIL FIGHT THE GOVERNMENT
NOT THE PEOPLE OF BURY**

**THE BCCI MONEY BACK
NO CUTS IN SERVICES**

**SPEAKERS INCLUDE NALGO BRANCH SECRETARY, BURY LABOUR COUNCILLOR,
A RESIDENTS ORGANISER AND CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE WITHIN THE LAW**

ANTI-POLL TAX STRUGGLE IS INTERNATIONAL, OR IT IS NOTHING

Struggles against oppressive taxation are not restricted to the struggle here against the Poll Tax. In the West bank and Gaza Strip, occupied by Israel since 1967, resistance to the imposition of unfair and illegal taxation has been part of the civil disobedience of the Intifada, now in its fifth year. Beit Sahour, a town near Bethlehem on the West Bank has been in the forefront of the development of new tactics of resistance, and of suffering for their stand. Early on in the Intifada they

started a programme of 'victory gardens' to become self-sufficient from the occupiers and resist their attempts to starve the people into submission. The Israelis responded with harassment of the participants, cutting off their phones and jailing a number without trial. Since the start of the Intifada, hundreds have been killed and tens of thousands injured by the Israeli army.

The people of the town then started a campaign of withholding taxes from the oc-

cupying authorities, which spread throughout the territories. On July 6th 1988 the Israeli army raided the town, taking away property supposedly in lieu of taxes. The next day 1,300 marched on the town hall and handed back their ID cards forced on them by the authorities.

Four pharmacists from the town, who in November 1988 were jailed for 10 days without trial and had medical stock (much needed in the area) seized and spoiled despite a High



SUPPORT THE POLL TAX PRISONERS

This cartoon is the front page of the latest Poll Tax prisoner information paper. For a copy write to Avon Defendents Campaign: clo: 84 Colston St. Bristol BS1 0272 248 274 or 0272 772648

POLL TAX RACISM

Two black people, Tim Donaghy and Brian Tavares received three years in prison which are the heaviest sentences for those charged in connection with the Trafalgar Square anti-Poll Tax demonstration of 1990. Of 120 prisoners they are the only ones to lose their parole.

Information from Avon Defence Campaign

Court injunction, are now fighting the case in the courts. Their case is that the occupying forces have failed to follow international law which states that taxes must be returned to the occupied territory, so the taxes are not legally valid. Taxes have increased massively under the occupation while education, health and other services have been cut. The most recent tax introduced since the start of the Intifada is being used to pay for shatter-proof windscreens for Israeli settlers (whose settlements are themselves against international law). The bailiff activities of the soldiers are also against the Geneva Convention, apart from the fact that property is taken without regard to value or tax 'outstanding', and soldiers are reported to be taking their own souvenirs.

The struggles of the people of Beit Sahour show that everywhere tax is one weapon in the armoury of oppression and one element in the struggle against it. Any history of the Poll Tax and any movement against it must take into account the Poll Tax and other taxes imposed by Britain and other colonisers across the world, and the resistance to it, not just 1381 [the Peasants Revolt] and 1990 [Trafalgar Square] here. We have much to learn - while the increase in VAT here last year (to 'cut' the Poll Tax) was greeted with a few whimpers, the extension in VAT in South Africa led to mass strikes and angry demos. The Anti-Poll Tax movement is international, or it is nothing.

Myk (Kentish Town North Anti-Poll Tax Group) in a personal capacity

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WORLD GOES FROM RECESSION TO SLUMP

BY PETER WINDELER

It already seems long ago when, in January, Finance Ministers from the 7 major industrialised countries (the Group of Seven) met in one of the plush suburbs of New York telling the world that all will be well with living standards, jobs and the like.

What they didn't say was that they *hope all will be well* but they don't think that it will be - least of all for workers and their families!

Whilst in the UK and Europe businessmen *hope* that the US will lead the way and encourage growth, George Bush told voters that the US economy was in "free fall". The US economy has officially entered the dreaded second dip of the *double-dip* recession.

The capitalist world economy is moving from recession to depression. The difference between recessions and depressions is that recessions are relatively common and occur every 5 or so years as part of the economic cycle associated with capitalism: Business expands, too many goods flood the market, firms go bust, but generally, things pick up - although often with more workers out of work than before.

However, in a depression factories remain idle because of a massive disintegration of the world's economy. Instead of just too many goods flooding the market - there are too many factories. This was the case in the 1930's. The depression in the 1930's was such that the US financial system collapsed.

Since the Second World War industrial production has steadily increased. But even whilst certain older sectors such as cars, chemicals and steel began to experience varying degrees of difficulty the newer industries such as electronics and aviation/aerospace were able to keep industrial production expanding. Now even these newer industries are being hit by slower growth.

A feature of the world economy since the last World War has been the expansion of Japan under the political umbrella provided by US imperialism. Now the growth of tension between Japan and the US means the continued growth provided by the Japanese economy is in doubt.

The US superseded Britain early this century as the most powerful imperialist power. After the Second World War it consolidated its grip and began the arms race which helped create the bankruptcy and break-up of the Soviet Union. As part of its strategy NATO was formed, over which the US had direct

control. This gave the US and Canada a permanent presence in Europe and promoted Britain to the status of an agent for US interests. The forty year old NATO structures put a British general in charge of defending the north German plain, and gave this country diplomatic influence within its ranks second only to that of its principal; the United States. For this reason both France and Germany wish to see Britain cut down to size.

Presently Britain within the EEC is resist-

WAR MONGERS IN RECESSION

What were the true figures for the Iraqi casualties in the Gulf War?

Dilip Hiro the author of 'Desert Shield to Desert Storm' in a letter to the *Independent* gives a calculation of 90,000.

Hiro gives the breakdown as: 30,000 from air raids, of which 7,500 were civilians; 25,000 Iraqi soldiers and men, women and children of various nationalities slaughtered on the Basra road as the Iraqi army retreated in defeat; 8,000 buried alive in trenches by earthmovers and ploughs mounted on tanks of the attacking US mechanised division and finally 27,000 Iraqi troops killed as they fled inside Iraq.

It appears that US imperialism is now preparing the ground for another military offensive against Iraq - this time for domestic political reasons. The original war was fought to secure cheap oil supplies for the west.

ing moves for the creation of a European army which both France and Germany wish to see alongside changes in the structure of NATO.

The mounting tensions between European states as they attempt integration within the EEC, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the continued failure to secure a new world trade deal under the auspices of GATT foretells a period of heightened turbulence.

At the moment the banks, especially in the US and Japan, are in precarious states. Bankers and big business men know exactly what the score is. They know that a repeat of the 1930's could leave them without a shirt on their backs. This is why there is now a

drive to destroy worker's living standards - only by this means can the banks be preserved and the rich stay rich.

Amongst employers' groups in Europe, such as the British CBI, there is a call for workers to be squeezed. In Germany interest rates were increased with the threat to jobs to intimidate members of the IG Metall trade union to accept a lower pay rise. In Britain banks are attempting to implement pay cuts in the form of re-grading and profit related pay. In the case of Lloyds Bank the clerks successfully organised to prevent the cuts. In Germany IG Metall has just called off a strike after employers conceded to their demands leaving the field open to the four million engineers and the three million public service union members who are fighting for pay rises of 10%.

A sure indication of the onslaught against workers is the level of unemployment throughout the world. In France it is now over 10% whilst in the US it is at a five year high of 7.1%. In Britain unemployment is 9% giving a total of 2.55 million - a rise of an astonishing 704,000 in 1991. Britain is now only second in the world, after Finland, for having the highest rate of increase in unemployed.

The increase in unemployment also indicates that companies are failing to make profits. To highlight the fact, in the US after years of bashing the unions, costs are 30% lower than in Europe and Japan. But companies are suffering from a drastic decline in profitability. On Wall Street profit margins have shrunk from 4.4% last year to 3.4% this year. The crises in the US resulted in Black Friday which saw a 12 point collapse in the Dow Jones index on 15th November. Here in Britain the recent collapse of the kjhn group revealed that shares are often not worth the paper they are printed on. Norwich Union one of the largest and shrewdest investors on the stock exchange is now systematically reducing its holdings in equities and buying government securities or just keeping the money in cash thereby earning interest and not risking the chance of a collapse in share values.

The intractable and deep seated nature of the crises afflicting the world economy means that radical measures are required. Election of a Labour government will not solve the problems of British banks or the problems facing the working class any more than the "socialist" government solved the problems of France.