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ELECTION HYPE HIDES FEAR OF WORKERS

The period of national and local elections could be called the "silence of the politicians." Silence that is on the real issues facing millions of workers. Pensioners, flung a few pounds by the Tory budget, have now joined the ranks of the forgotten. The misery of the unemployed, rhetorically referred to by the party hacks, is ignored in practice and policy. As for the youth and black people - they don't even warrant a mention!

The election is taking place in a deepening economic recession and for many the slump has not only arrived, but has been here for some time.

Recent analysis by an unemployment unit in London showed the extent of the social crisis. In the inner cities like Hackney, unemployment is 30%, in Merseyside as a whole it is 21%, in Strathclyde it is near 16%. Unemployment is now the highest it has ever been at 3,714,200.

Even the New York Times says that there are no signs of recovery for Britain. It says the US has gone through a similar crisis where the market bubble of a pseudo-boom, fed on junk bonds and fictitious capital, finally burst but whereas the US can find a way out Britain shows no signs.

The US is in the worst economic crisis of the big three. Each of these major capitalist powers will attempt to save itself not only in competition with the other two but by direct economic thuggery against all other countries. As Trotsky explained in the 1920s, the USA will attempt to make a recovery at the expense of Europe and specifically Britain. US capitalism will be even more vicious on the way down than in its ascendancy. Times have changed for the so-called 'special relationship', they will, with regrets, save themselves at the expense of their British friends. That is the sentiment of the NYT.

The great international pressures of the banks and financial speculators, the deregulation of financial markets which has now lead to the collapsing housing market and the commercial property slump is also covered over by the hype of the politicians. It is in some ways also an election of fear, fear of a possible economic catastrophe and fear of

what workers may do in this situation.

Only yesterday union leaders were telling us that the way to fight the Tories and protect workers was to go into Europe. But all the countries of Europe are in crisis with increasing unemployment and a growing racist threat. The European parliament will not help workers. Such parliaments may be forced to listen and make wordy responses, but workers will defend and fight on the streets not in the plush board rooms of union officials and lofty parliamentarians. We have to combine in Europe but at the level of class struggle by mobilising against European capitalism.

For Labour the ERM is now the important factor not the rights of the European working class.

Workers want the Tories out but they also feel that the party they are supposed to support has nothing to benefit them. The starkest fact of this election is that after 13 years of Tory rule the Labour Party does not have a clear lead.

Nationally and locally the Labour Party has not only refused to fight the Tories it has, over the Poll Tax and council cuts, been even more vicious than the Tories in attacking the non-payers, part-payers and in implementing the

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**MONTHLY JOURNAL
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THE VOICE SAYS

cuts. Labour is doing the Tories dirty work for them - cutting education services, social services and sacking council workers.

Union stewards in NUPE (the local government union) are reporting that they have received more mail from their union in the last three weeks than they have in the last three months. All the verbiage says: do not expect to reach your district officer as they will be not available at this time - vote Labour.

But Labour are not going to threaten the status quo of services, like caring for the elderly and the disabled. "*we shall provide a level playing field in funding arrangements*" in other words they will provide public money to private, charity and public care. This so called choice means putting money into the hands of those who want to make money out of the old and disabled. When challenged at public meetings the normal reply is: we cannot replace the private sector we have to be realistic...(and give it money.) "Democratic provision" is used here to cover the reality: maintaining privatisation and the decline of public services.

A WORKERS' ALTERNATIVE

Because Labour has turned their back on the youth and the working class some respond by boycotting the election. The organisation for Poll Tax prisoners, for example, supported an anti-election rally. It is true that 170 people, including 11 pensioners have been or are now in jail - because they were too poor or refused to pay the tax. 3000 people have been given suspended jail sentences while they continue to pay. But what we feel personally about the Labourites who put them in jail is one thing how we help the working class overcome them is another.

Poverty is the reason the Poll Tax could not be implemented, it is also the reason why Local authorities have collected only 39% for the year 1991 to 1992 and only 36% in Scotland. This has a direct impact on the election because many people have not registered to vote to avoid paying the Poll Tax, over a million have disappeared from the electoral roll since the Poll Tax was introduced. But to turn a product of the Poll Tax into a principal of how to fight is wrong.

Such an approach does not help build an alternative to Labour and it hands the election over to the Tories. Workers want the Tories out, and as yet they do not know how to deal with the Labour leadership. The task will be easier if Labour are in power because

the working class will sooner rather than later collide with such a government. In these coming struggles we will all learn how a workers' alternative is going to be built - by actively doing it.

All those who are standing as Independent Labour candidates such as Dave Nellist, Terry Fields and Tommy Sheridan and all others in the local elections should be supported. The platform of 'Independent Labour' is not the banner of a single revolutionary party, it should become the banner of all those who wish to fight. The programme of the 'Independent Labour' should be turned towards the streets, the communities and our class. Change will come through the mass mobilisation of workers and by assisting their struggles. The points of the programme should be developed in discussion with workers and labour movement organisations. Its central point should be that nothing will be achieved outside of struggle and the desire to build a fighting alliance.

Workers will have to take direct action to solve their problems: soon children will be seen sleeping rough on our streets and the problems of racism are growing.

In Scotland the problems are posed even more sharply. For example 42% of children under five live below the poverty line. Many Scottish people and workers see poverty, closure of factories and the Poll Tax as a product of rule by London. But only the Scottish National Party is calling for an independent Scotland. The Labour Party talks about devolution for Scotland and the Scottish Militant Candidate Tommy Sheridan, who is in jail for six months, calls for a Scottish parliament within a British framework.

What the working class needs is an alternative which bases itself on the right of the Scottish people for self-determination and which would support their right to independence whilst fighting to build unity in class struggle north and south of the border.

The Tories, the stock exchange and the banks do not fear a Labour government because of what it would do, but they do fear what might follow a Labour victory as workers take advantage of the Tories disarray to re-build a movement based on their immediate needs and the fight for socialism.

The losses on the stock exchange, the Tories talk of riots abroad and the silence of all parties on many issues all point to a deep fear. That fear is the spectre of the working class, for when it begins to move no one will be sure where it will end.

ISL COMMENTS

UNJUST OTHER ADJUSTMENTS

ANDY SHANNON

Taxing people is one thing but to take unfair advantage of their legal rights and keep them in ignorance of the law and their rights is nothing less than fraud on a large scale.

Our judicial system does not protect the people who are being forced to pay the added burden of someone else's share of an iniquitous tax.

For many years under the old domestic rates people unknowingly paid more than their fair share of local taxation. This in itself amounts to large scale deception by local authorities who omitted these relevant facts when charging rate payers for services.

The reason why this malpractice was allowed to continue was simply that people were not made aware of their rights under the Civil Debt Act. In fact it was never challenged.

The introduction of the Poll Tax forced local authorities to use this discrepancy even more.

To correct this miscarriage of justice, Campaign for Justice within the Law, filed for leave of judicial review in the High Court on Tuesday 24th March.

Documentation placed before the court states that under the Civil Debt Act of 1935 and 39, which still prevails today, "*You cannot charge or force a person to pay any debts incurred by someone else unless that person has signed a contract of guarantor.*" As this is the law other adjustments on the Poll Tax bills are in violation of the Act.

It must also be put on record that courts

under the laws of this land cannot sentence or impose penalties in a person's absence. This point of law is also being challenged and the case was also accepted as a relevant point of law.

Since the campaign to stop councils charging "other adjustments" on Poll Tax bills was launched in March 1000's of people have contacted us. We call on workers throughout the country to take part in this campaign. Without your participation councils will continue to charge these extra amounts, and they will continue to operate in this way for many years. The Council Tax will have extra adjustments because the council will never be able to extract all the Poll Tax or the Council Tax that the government say they should collect.

The campaign has already had its first test in the High Court. The case was adjourned. In other words they could not throw it out but had to find time in order to marshal the legal points to defeat it.

If the judiciary is unable to defeat our arguments then all the councils will have to change their bills. Such a defeat would raise again the question of who should pay for council services.

The government wanted, through the Poll Tax, for those workers who had a little money to pay for those who had none, relieving big business and the state of having to pay for it. By charging the extra adjustments councils, including Labour ones, are making the poor pay for the poor.

It is against the poor, against the working class - so don't pay it!

JAILINGS & THE ELECTION

An anti-Poll Tax candidate in last year's local election, Tom Walmsley, was in court for committal proceedings with his wife in March. However, it never quite got to court because the council officials called the couple into a pre-court meeting. They asked them to pay £10 per week each and they are both retired.

After Tom and his wife gave them a blasting against the injustices of the Poll Tax, they offered to pay £2.50 each, which was the equivalent of the old rates.

The council officials refused to accept this

and announced that Tom and his wife would be going to jail if they did not pay up. Tom said he was prepared to go to jail, so his wife would pay £5 per week and he would pay nothing. That was his final offer.

This threw the official into a panic and he had to consult with someone in the council via the telephone in the next room. "*This man is prepared to go to jail, what are we going to do?*", he was overheard saying. A few minutes later he came back. "*If each of you promise to pay £3 per week we will settle for that.*"

FIVE FREED FROM JAIL IN STOKE

A Stoke magistrate is being taken to the high court after committing five people to prison for not paying their Poll Tax. Four were released and the fifth served his sentence but is now taking the magistrate to court as are the others. Stoke anti-Poll Tax activists used a model letter which was sent by those who had been jailed to the Clerk of the Justices and asks for: "*...the Magistrates to State a Case to the High Court under section 111 of the Magistrates Court Act 1980 in respect of the committal court hearing.*"

One of the reasons that they were released is that at no point in the committal proceedings were people asked for full details of income and expenditure and that the court did not, therefore, make a proper assessment of their means.

Stoke APTU managed to get to see each prisoner and issued them with a statement which they all signed and after which they were released.

They also got all committal cases adjourned and 4,000 liability orders withdrawn. But people are still turning up and the council has a room available to get people to make arrangements to pay. This is illegal. It is also illegal to adjourn court cases until the law is changed. By law, court cases must take place and the cases remitted.

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LAMBETH FIGHTS

MARTIN MITCHELL REPORTS FROM LAMBETH

In last months Voice, details were given of an internal Labour group document showing £26.1 million could be cut off Lambeth's budget for 1992/3. Well, the so-called "Labour" group went one better and on 10th March voted through budget "savings" and cuts of £29 million.

Included in the cuts were: £5.9 million off council housing projects, such as renovation schemes; the closure of public toilets, £600,000; a £1.9 million cut in the money for homelessness; £400,000 from adult education; a freeze in all staff recruitment, £32.8 million; "not replacing leavers", £900,000 and so the list goes on.

This is at a time when unemployment in the borough is at an unprecedented level. The January 1992 Unemployment Unit figures show 32,558 without a job, 24.7% of the working population.

Along with the cuts, the politicians' answer to the problems are sackings and redundancies as the council pushes on with "privatisation". A further 150 building workers are to lose their jobs, following the 41 who lost them in early March - Lambeth decided to award a £6 million housing contract to a private contractor. In neighbouring Labour Southwark, 132 building staff have been laid off - the council's service delivery committee awarded 3 contracts for estate repair and maintenance to private firms, even though Southwark's own workforce had put in cheaper bids!

The Council leader for Southwark, Sally Keeble, said the redundancies were "very regrettable" and that every step had been taken to "keep them to a minimum".

Lambeth's Community Services will be "Opting out" on 1st April.

Frontline services for some of the most vulnerable members of our society will be organized on the basis of market forces and profit, rather than on the health care needs of the community.

The mentality and way of thinking of the Labour councils and council officers can be seen if we look at a report from Lambeth's Directorate of Operational Services entitled "The Cessation of, or Alternative Methods of Providing, the Public Convenience Service".

Right at the beginning of the report is recommendation, 1A, "That the Council ceases to provide a Public Convenience Service". The only alternative, 1B, is "That the busiest of the councils public conveniences and the 2 street market conveniences be kept open, and the remaining 12 conveniences be closed".

There are seventeen public toilets and quarter of a million people in Lambeth. The report states, "there is no statutory obligation on local authorities to provide public conveniences". So it's O.K. to close them down?

Sometimes it is difficult to find out what is going on in Lambeth. Decisions are deferred, pushed to one corner, hidden in jargon or decided in cosy committee meetings. But, it appears that the public toilets will have "restricted openings" for six months, and then between twelve and seventeen, the figure isn't known yet, will close. Instead we will have a few "automatic" toilets. I think what

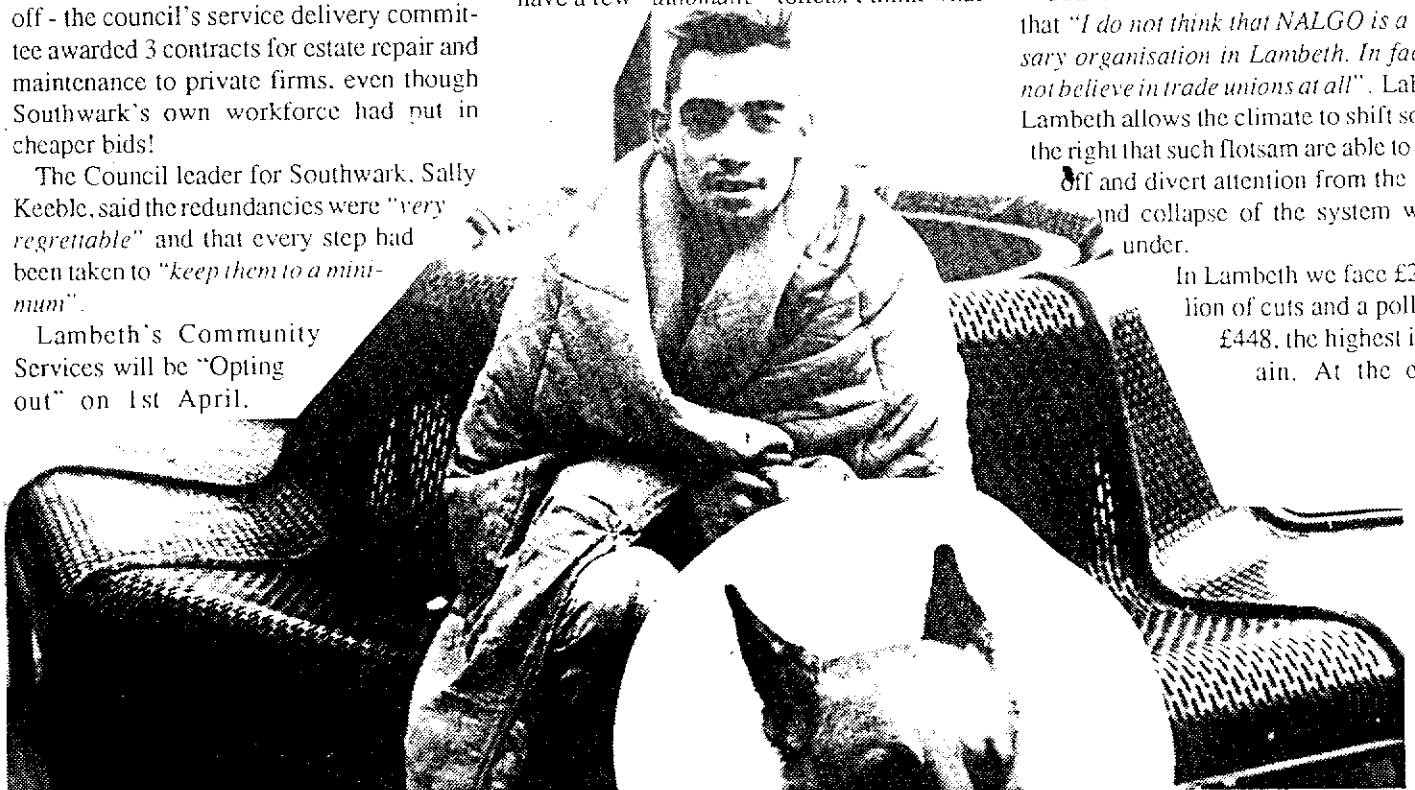
this means is paying toilets so that a private company can make profit out of people's most basic needs. Up to 50 staff will join the dole queue.

At the same meeting, councillors had "options" put before them under "Education" to abolish adult education and to close the entire Youth Service. The budget for adult education has already been halved in two years, and the most basic needs of adult literacy are not being met. "Self-financing" evening classes, at £3 per 2 hour session (employed or unemployed it doesn't matter) are already replacing council funded and subsidised classes.

This climate, and the fact that a Labour council could even consider such proposals, is a breeding ground for attacks on working people, and plays directly into the hands of the Tories. Thus at the budget meeting on 10th March at Lambeth Council, the deputy leader of the Tory group, Councillor Peter Evans, called a delegation from Lambeth Against the Poll Tax "parasites", and when a NALGO delegation came into the council chamber, shouted "...here's another bunch of parasites". It took over an hour for the mayor to exert his authority and exclude the Tory deputy-leader from the chamber because of his behaviour. Labour councillors sat impassively on their seats: it was left to the public to make their feelings known.

Councillor Evans states in the local press that "I do not think that NALGO is a necessary organisation in Lambeth. In fact I do not believe in trade unions at all". Labour in Lambeth allows the climate to shift so far to the right that such flotsam are able to mouth off and divert attention from the failure and collapse of the system we live under.

In Lambeth we face £29 million of cuts and a poll tax of £448, the highest in Britain. At the end of



Unemployment in some areas in London has reached 30%

TORIES AND LABOUR

January, the Labour council had spent £5.4 million collecting £22 million of the £68 million poll tax due for 1991/2. 70,000 non-payers have been dragged through the courts for the "crime" of not having enough money to pay the hated tax. It is estimated that this is only half the number of non-payers.

In the face of the Labour party's failure to defend its people and community in Lambeth, there are fightbacks. The budget cuts were only passed on the casting vote of the mayor, five hours after the legal deadline to set a budget. Eleven out of thirteen suspended labour councillors voted against the budget, with two abstaining. One suspended Labour councillor and anti-poll tax campaigner, Anne Hollifield, put forward a motion demanding that the council adopt the 14 points of the "Poll Tax Charter", drawn up by the Poll Tax Legal Group defending and stating the rights of non-payers.

As a result the council's own officers in the legal department have produced a 14 point statement of advice on the law for members of the council, based on the points raised in councillor Hollifield's motion and the Poll Tax Charter.

It restates many of the Poll tax Charter's points and concludes "every case must always be judged on its individual facts and is subject to the applicable law of that time."

Campaigners in Lambeth Against the Poll Tax put pressure on the relevant committee at its two previous meetings and succeeded in getting a top-level enquiry into the running of Lambeth's Poll Tax department, following the (illegal) issuing of liability orders to non-payers whose cases had been adjourned, i.e. not even yet heard in court! One in the eye for head of finance, Gary Moss, who had stated he would collect the tax "by any means" he could!

Resistance at the court has meant over 32,000 cases from Lambeth and Southwark at Camberwell Magistrates Court have been adjourned or dropped since January. The news on 13th March was that all the cases for Southwark were adjourned, despite the new law allowing computer evidence, as the magistrate was not happy about the way in which Southwark presented its case. The magistrate said that he did not have the necessary complete evidence to prosecute. The pressure from the Lambeth anti-poll tax campaign is showing.

Pressure from Lambeth Unemployed Action Group (LUAG), has also achieved success. A leaked document had shown that



Campaign Against Estate Sales picket

Lambeth was considering abolishing all concessions for one year for unemployed and all other groups at its leisure, sports and entertainment facilities. LUAG petitioned outside dole offices and lobbied the council. The group circulated all councillors with its demands, backed up by nearly 1,000 signatures, and a table showing unemployment levels in each individual councillor's wards with a note underneath saying "...take note of the number of unemployed in your ward!"

The council leader asked to meet the group and no proposals appeared in the budget to alter concessions.

But pressure is being kept up as there are plans to introduce a "passport to leisure" which may link the provision of concessions to poll tax payment.

Resistance and opposition in the trade unions in Lambeth has reached a point where members are withdrawing support to the Labour party. UCATT (Union of Construction and Allied Timber Trades), TGWU (Transport and General Workers Union), NALGO (National Association of Local Government Offices), MSF (Manufacturing, Science and Finance) and EEPTU (Electricians' union), representing 2,000 council workers, have stated they no longer will "...physically or financially support Lambeth Labour party or councillors for committing their members to the ranks of the unemployed".

In the week before the budget, schoolkeepers in the borough called an indefinite strike, closing two colleges and five secondary schools, over new split shifts and proposals to make them work overtime, evenings and weekends for just £4 an hour. After a day the council offered talks and a deal withdrawing the split shifts, giving a small premium for overtime and weekends with no loss of pay for the strike action. **But, as one striker**

pointed out, "...we showed the strength we have and we could have won a lot more. During the strike, school and college teachers refused to cross picket lines. an example of what could and can be achieved if unions exert their power.

In Lambeth the General Election offers no choice for most people faced with the attacks of the Tories and a Labour Party not prepared to stand up for its community. Nobody represents the thousands of poll-tax non payers in Lambeth, or the millions in Britain as a whole; nor the unemployed, the homeless, those having their houses taken from them by banks and mortgage companies, the low paid or those threatened with losing their jobs.

With 1.4 million off the electoral register through fear of receiving poll tax bills that they can't pay and mass discontent with the trivial politics of the main parties, for millions there is no one to represent them. A lot of people will choose not to vote or will not be able to vote, others will vote for Labour because they want the Tories out.

The centres of resistance and fightback is concentrated in pressure groups, community campaigns and the trade union rank and file. If, as shown in Lambeth, these groups can achieve successes in the face of hostility from all sides they may be the key to the new forces exerting themselves. As demonstrated by the poll tax, millions are prepared to break an unjust law and defy authority in the face of attacks on them by all political parties, the judicial system and the media.

This whole system is only sustainable if people go along with it - if it is seen as the rotten, corrupt system it is by the millions who are out of work, losing their homes, and being kicked around and bullied, used and abused by all the parties- then all that can change. **Overnight!**

LABOUR LEADERSHIP IGNORES CAMPAIGN FOR LEGAL RIGHTS

CELIA JONES REPORTS ON THE LOBBY OF THE NEC AND THE SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH DENNIS SKINNER

Outside the Labour Party headquarters we met other anti-Poll Tax groups, the Crisis in London campaign, a lobby by workers from Southwark Council Direct Works and one from Wallasey Labour Party supporting Llol Duffy (the selected candidate, de-selected by Kinnock).

The workers from Southwark were protesting against the council's decision to award council contracts to higher private bidders. The council workers had put in the lowest bid for 15 of the contracts but they had only been awarded 5. One of these workers told us that a Southwark councillor was a director of one of the firms who had been awarded a contract.

During this discussion one of the Southwark councillors came out of the Labour headquarters. We gave him a copy of the Charter, which we pointed out contained 14 legal rights that were being broken by Labour councils. **He said: "I would support any Labour authority for collecting the Poll Tax by legal or illegal means. I am in favour of pursuing non-payers by any means, legal or illegal."**

The NEC had finished early that day and by the time we arrived at 12.30 Dennis Skinner, who had agreed to meet us, had gone. So we arranged to meet him later at the House of Commons.

Everyone was looking forward to the meeting. At the meeting we asked for his support to develop the campaign for the Charter of Legal Rights.

He asked us why we were so shocked that the law was being broken had not the miners, the print workers were all subjected to the same thing?

We replied that what is happening now is that millions of people are being treated in this way. It is a continuation and development of what happened to the miners and printers but also we should learn from what happened then and act against the magistrates and councils who are breaking the law.

He told us he had always been involved in the non-payment campaign. We said it is more specific than that: we wanted to discuss the question of legal rights.

He then asked us if we had been to see other MPs. The discussion became quite aggressive, at which point I asked: "Are you pre-

pared to support the Charter of not?" In the end, he said he supported the Charter of Legal Rights.

We then asked him if he would speak at some meetings. He replied that, with the election coming up, he needed to be in his constituency and he needed to look after the problems of his constituents. I said that one of the biggest problems they would have is that they have no legal rights in court and that he should raise the issue at his election meetings.

We asked him if his position was that he could not do anything until after the election and if, after the election, we arranged a public meeting would he come to it?

He said that he would be speak at a public meeting. But, it appeared to us that he did not want to wholeheartedly support the Charter of Legal Rights.

On the way home people were saying what do we do now? Why did he act in that way? Why did he not clearly support the campaign? They were shaken, shocked and very angry.

We then went on to discuss what we have to do. How do we go about it? Where do we start?

That was the discussion all the way home. There are small numbers of us but what do we do? We want to fight, we want to continue.

We discussed why the activity had fallen away in the anti-Poll Tax movement and what could have happened after the 1990 demonstration in Trafalgar Square. All were agreed that the movement is going to come back but that it may not move in the way we think it will.

We discussed that people were fighting all over the world. There was discussion on the need for an independent organisation or an independent party of labour and the standing of independent candidates who stood for the defence of workers against all the attacks.

Within a few days of the lobby, Derek, from Newcastle-under-Lyme, had sent the Charter, and other materials, to all the councillors and MPs in Newcastle-under-Lyme and, in Stoke, activists had already freed five people from jail.

Socialist Voice interviewed Alf McDermot Chair of Langley Tenants Association and also Chair of FAME, the federation of Manchester tenants.

Langley housing estate is owned by Manchester but it is in the Rochdale local authority area.

This situation means they can get the worst of both councils, what the tenants have achieved has not been given to them it has been fought for.

The Langley housing stock needs renovation but the way the two councils have acted has created more problems. This interview highlights the central issue on housing estates - tenants' control.

SV: "What are the problems over the renovation?"

Alf: "One of the contractors who came on to this estate used to treat the tenants like peasants. They used lump labour and paid £12.50 a day to kids to dig a floor out with a jack hammer. No health and safety, no ear muffs or masks. They were also, for example, injecting walls with toxic damp course treatment without warning the tenants next door. Fumes seeped through and we had people collapsing or ringing the gas board saying there was a gas escape. Two people had to be taken to hospital.

"We asked for details of what substances the contractor was using. When we were told what he was using we found that it had been banned and that the contractor had bought it on the cheap.

"Another thing that was going on with this contractor was that after he had installed a central heating system it would suddenly go missing. The blame was put on the tenants. However, we started marking the radiators and we soon discovered the "stolen" radiators being installed by the same contractor in another house. The contractor was being paid twice or even four times for the same central heating system!

"There are a whole list of complaints about contractors. But we did get that contractor



SOCIALIST VOICE SPECIAL

WORKERS OPPOSE THE RETURN OF POLISH LORDS

Socialist Voice interviewed a comrade of the International Workers League (Fourth International) who has sent regular contributions to our paper from Poland.

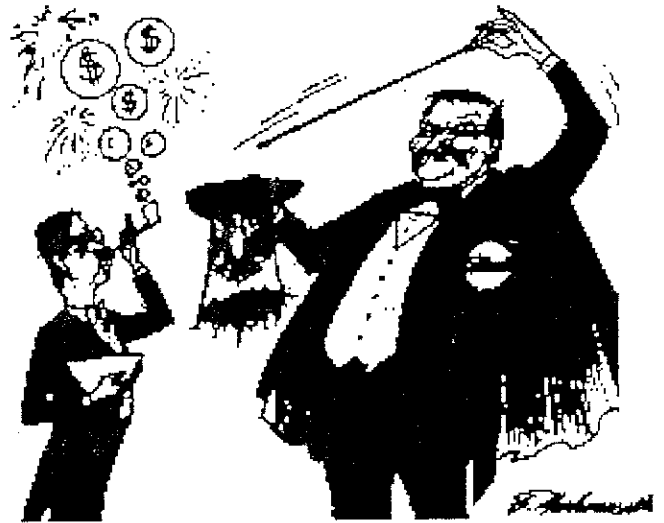
SV: How is workers' resistance in Poland showing itself?

ELIZABETH: Mainly in a general discontent with people protesting that this (i.e. capitalism) is not what they have been fighting for. Such discontent is increasingly taking the form of strikes.

The first thing is that they are losing their standards of living. They do not want to be earning more than they have been earning, they just want to be able to afford the same amount of food that they have been buying so far, as a minimum. Then there is the protest against unemployment by those who want to have a steady job. This is, therefore, not a new conquest, it is just defending the old ones. As far as their methods and organisation, they are becoming more and more radical. However, what may lead you to confusion would be to think that there is a great offensive of the masses. It is not so. The form of the struggles is becoming more and more violent, more desperate. But, all they want to do is not to be pushed further back.

The farmers strike was very illustrative of this. Most of Poland's farmers have been private landholders ever since the land reform carried out by the Stalinists. In a contradictory way, they became owners under Stalinism.

Most of the land used to belong to big landowners, although there were also some small landholding peasants. At the end of the war



most of the big landowners emigrated and their land was distributed to the poorest peasants or those who used to be landless labourers. This process took place in the late 1940's early 1950's.

These new landowners are very traditional, very religious - as most peasants are - and are very accustomed to private ownership of the land. They also were very confident in the new order which is being established. They joined the Solidarity movement and wanted capitalism, and were a sector which trusted the reforms very deeply. So when the government told them that their farms were inefficient and not technological enough, they believed it. They went to the bank, got loans they bought tractors and what happened? The bank wanted their money back and that is when the end of their expectations came.

A couple of months ago a several hundred of them went on strike and a group of them went on hunger strike in front of the parliament because they had no where to homes to return to. Their little farms had been taken away from them as payment for the debt which they owed to the banks. Now the government has lost the support of these people who were faithful supporters.

That has happened in other sectors of the population. People were told, if your factory goes private it will be productive, because private property is more efficient. They are discovering it is not like this. This wave is getting bigger and bigger. Strikes happen every single day, the problem is that most of them are lost because of the leadership.



Front page of the Christmas edition of Anti-Government Weekly

SV: Are the union leaderships the old solidarity and the old Stalinist unions?

ELIZABETH: Yes, although I do not agree that we should call them Stalinist trade unions. It does not correspond to the reality. They are restorationists, they are defending the government. People call them cowards but they are not really cowards. They consciously do not oppose the government because part of their policy is to restore capitalism and to become a new bourgeoisie.

That is their aim: they are not cowards nor heroes.

SV: How many workers are in these unions?

ELIZABETH: The official figure given for solidarity is 1.8 million, which is a tremendous drop because they were 10 million at the beginning. I do not think the real figure is more than a million. The old PZZ (state union) used to have nearly 6 million, including a lot of retired people. Although there have been elderly peoples' mobilisations recently in Warsaw, I think they exaggerate a bit. Both unions have had splits. It is probable that two thirds of the working population is not in any union at all.

SV: Do workers go on strike outside of the unions?

ELIZABETH: Yes. The bus workers strike, which I wrote about in Socialist Voice, started with a leadership of solidarity but they soon realised that solidarity had been bought like Judas. They kicked them out and formed a strike committee. After a certain time, they realised that they were also manipulating, kicked them out and created a new one. It is a struggle that is up and down all the time.

This happens in many factories. The two big trade unions exist in factories where workers have organised under a new strike committee which is independent.

SV: What sectors of workers went on strike in January and what effect did it have on the Government and its plans?

ELIZABETH: It was mostly over energy and food prices. A big turn came after the fall of the intellectuals. It was the time when Masovitch, Minister of the economy, was defeated. It actually blew his plan to pieces. So what they had to discuss was: how to continue with Masovitchism without Masovitch? And that is what they are trying to do, but in a more round about way.

They discussed distributing shares. ESOP stands for Employers Stock Ownership Property. There are two or three varieties of ESOP. It is not giving out shares, it is buying them out. But they are even considering giving them away. The main point is to decentralise everything. Their worry is not to restore capitalism as it is in the strong countries, which has a tendency to centralise, but precisely to destroy the economy in order to semi-colonise the country. So if factories fall to pieces they do not care.

SV: What do workers think of the future?

ELIZABETH: The Polish workers are beginning very slowly to realise that something is wrong and some people are already beginning to mention that we fought against one form of dependence only to form into another.

Who knows which was worse. But what is very difficult to understand is the extent of the mess. So many things they believed have proven to be false that now many do not know what to believe. **The very old still remember the times of capitalism and they are saying that the Poland of the Lords is returning. They fear it.** The question for us is: how we can develop something more positive in all the fears and doubts? It will not happen in twenty four hours.

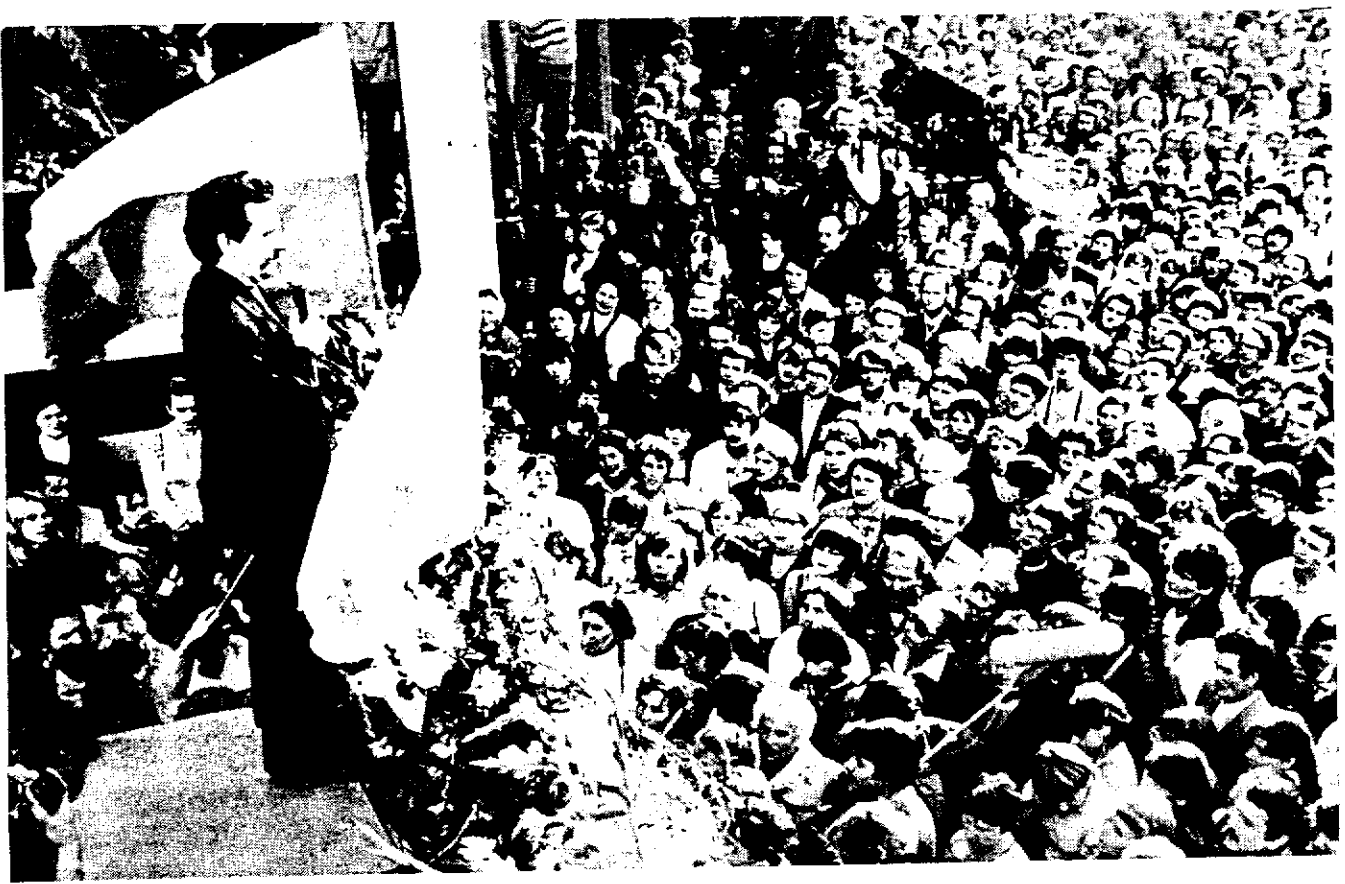
THE CHRISTMAS JOKE

What presents are you going to find in your parcels for Christmas "Anti-Government Weekly" asked?

- 1) An unemployed person
- 2) An ill person
- 3) A loving couple
- 4) A teacher
- 5) A happy person who is still working
- 6) A farmer
- 7) Landlord
- 8) Student
- 9) A new born child
- 10) A democrat
- 11) You

(answers at the bottom of the next page)





The old Walesa addresses a meeting of Polish workers in Gdansk

SV: Tell us about the paper you help produce?

ELIZABETH: In the first place, it is an anti-government paper. The name of it is "Anti-Government Weekly". One of its main points is that it is against the restoration. It fights against bureaucracy - what used to be the Stalinist bureaucracy, the trade union bureaucracy - it is against the International Monetary Fund.

It is run by a team which hinges round a self-management workers group who consider themselves Communists and Marxists. The term "self-management" refers, more than anything, to the tradition of Solidarity which used to speak of "self-management" in the 1980's and, whenever they speak of the Stalinists, they say "Communists" in inverted commas because they say, "we are the real Communists."

SV: Is that explained in the paper?

ELIZABETH: Yes! It is being explained all the time. We call for a United Front of all the left, but we 'explode' the so-called "Communists" and we explain it very simply - to be on the left in Poland is to say no to the restoration of capitalism.

As a matter of fact a couple of days ago one of the members of the SDRP, the Polish Social Democratic Party, came to see us proposing that in the face of the advancing right the left should unite. I gave him our answer myself. I said, "We are trying to unite all the left-wing forces, but you are not left. You had the historic opportunity of building Socialism, and look what you did. Secondly, you have not learned anything from your old sins as, today, your paper does not oppose the restoration of capitalism. Therefore, until you change, we

will consider you on the right and can have no basis for unity with you.'

This point is constantly explained in our paper through different articles. It is one reason why we welcome articles from other countries explaining the actions of the Communist Parties in the West, so as to prove to workers that this is an international line, and not just an accident that happened in Poland. I think people see this quite clearly.

SV: How is the paper developing its connections with workers outside of the group?

ELIZABETH: In Warsaw we distribute it to three of Poland's main factories. One is a famous tractor factory, another is a former state owned car plant which, according to reports, has just been sold to General Motors and the other is a steel producing factory. We go once a week and sell the latest issue whilst distributing free any old copies. If workers find it interesting then they may buy the new issue next week. In this way we sell around 25 percent of the print run of 2000 copies and sales are slowly increasing.

We are also beginning to receive letters from people outside Warsaw. For example, recently we received a letter from a miner in Katowice asking for the phone number of the paper. Another letter came from a tourist resort in the mountains, where hotel workers wanted four copies of the paper.

The great thing was when Anna Walentynowicz visited us. She was one of the founding members of Solidarity and was one of its first leaders. When she was fired from her job in the shipyard in 1980 the

The answers to the cartoon

- 1) A limit on benefits and food
- 2) A rise in the cost of medicine
- 3) Possibly living for ever with the in-laws
- 4) Likely hood of working in a cold school for next to nothing
- 5) Likely of losing their job
- 6) A load of butter from countries where agriculture is subsidised

- 7) Getting rid of the tenants
- 8) Medal for "renovating" the academics
- 9) cold
- 10) Strong likely hood of being disenchanted
- 11) If you are not amongst the 10 chosen make up your own box - and out in it what you like.

whole shipyard went on strike. This is what started the workers revolt which led to the birth of Solidarity. She later decided that the new Solidarity is not the Solidarity she helped to found. As a matter of fact, she doesn't call it solidarity - she calls it the "male" Solidarity.

About a year ago she led a strike in her shipyard, mainly against slow privatisation; selling it off piece by piece. Unfortunately, the strike was badly organised and was defeated. As a result, Anna was dismissed and forbidden to enter the shipyard.

SV: So Solidarity managed to exclude her.

ELIZABETH: Yes, and this is something the Stalinists could not do. So, as you can imagine, she is very angry and feels defeated. She travelled from Gdansk (Danzig) to Warsaw to contact us and to ask for our paper.

As of a month ago, our paper is distributed in five different cities in Poland, with the main centre being Warsaw.

SV: Can you describe the group which produces your paper?

ELIZABETH: As a matter of fact, it is like a "front", although we don't give it that name, where the leading force is the GSR.

They are the self management group who call themselves Communists. They have read a lot about Trotsky and, as a matter of fact, it is their considered opinion that the worst thing that happened to Trotsky was to have Trotskyists!

We also have the help of a small group of Anarchists - Anarchism in Poland is split into a lot of tiny groups. This particular group is the most left-wing. We also have non-aligned left wingers involved. For example, three people who, until a short time ago, were members of

the PPS (Polish Socialist Party) and left because of its 'turn to the right' and joined us instead. As one of the trio put it, "we can't find an organisation for ourselves. In the PPS we were the extreme left and here we are on the far right of the organisation - what is our place in the world?" We hope to win them over to us, although it may take some time. Also, there is an old economist who we do not always agree with, although he helps us a lot. In short, it is a very heterogeneous group, the nucleus of which is the GSR.

SV: How did the GSR come across the writings of Trotsky?

ELIZABETH: It was quite a time ago. They are all around 30 to 40 years old. They were amongst the opposition wing within the Polish Communist Party (the Polish United Workers Party) when they were students, around fifteen years ago. They realised that something was wrong with Communism in Poland, so they started reading, discussing and holding meetings. Whilst most such groups have disappeared due to splits and so on, the group with us still exists and is the most positive of the old internal PUWP opposition groupings. The extraordinary thing is that, for the first time in our lives, we did not search for them - they came looking for us. They heard that someone from the IWL was in Poland, and they found me.

SV: How had they heard of the IWL?

ELIZABETH: I think they first heard of the IWL when we appeared in Poland with Josef Pinior, a leader of the PPSRD (a left break-away from the PPS). They had a deal of sympathy for the PPSRD, but the PPSRD did not have any sympathy for them!

SV: So, although the IWL agreement with Pinior did not last our connections with Pinior helped develop something else?

ELIZABETH: That is why this period is so contradictory. General chaos perhaps describes it best. Chaos is not always negative, it can be very creative, in which case if we know how to make use of it, it may be very positive for us. History does not happen according to formulas.

SV: What international assistance does the group want?

ELIZABETH: Our paper costs about \$400 per week and we do not raise that amount. In spite of the fact that we are recovering more, we cannot continue without help. We have no technological help at all.

We also want the experience that workers all over the world have. Part of their despair is that they feel unlucky. It is important for them that they realise that these problems are all over the world. They should know about the victories and what conclusion we draw from the defeats. They want the truth. Let us tell them the truth, like: we could have won the strike but we did not. Why? We can avoid this mistake in the future.

We want to know the history of the trade unions in other parts of the world. For example, I have asked the Brazilian comrades to send news about the CUT and PT (Workers Party). I think the experience with the Labour Party in England is very interesting. We have published some of the material you have sent us including material on the Independent Labour Party. All these are useful practical lessons and are of great use to us.



Polish workers are facing the same struggle for food as their brothers and sisters in Russia and other countries of the old stalinist block

THE LANGLEY TENANTS FIGHT

removed from the estate. We told the council that unless he was removed from the estate they would not be allowed into any more houses.

"However, after he had been removed from this estate we found that he had been re-employed on another estate by Manchester Council."

SV: "What problems do the tenants have with the move?"

Alf: "Compensation is the big issue: home loss, damage by contractors and finance. If tenants are forced to make a move they get a one off payment of £360 for a two-bedroomed house to help with the aggravation. If they return they get less. But if the tenant is in rent arrears they take the arrears out of the compensation. Now the Council are going to take any rent arrears off payments even if the arrears are only £100. But a tenant could be on holiday and going to pay when they come back or waiting for housing benefit to come through, or they could be a month in arrears. So £100 is nothing. We said two and half months should be the start.

"Another thing affected by the split between the Councils is the adaptations to houses for the disabled. These are Rochdale's responsibility. Manchester have done the work in the past and because it's government funded they would charge Rochdale. It went through automatically, putting in handrails, stairlift etc. But if someone moves who is disabled, who is going to move the adaptations to the new accommodation? Rochdale say: 'Well we didn't put them in, Manchester put them in, go and see them,' and Manchester say: 'We don't get paid for it'.

"A telephone is as much a disabled adaptation as anything else, but the Councils have said if you're in arrears they won't reconnect your phone. The Project Officers interpret the rules the way that's best for them.

"The council did not want to install things like a temporary shower because they said it was only a temporary move. I pointed out that a 'temporary' move lasts for twenty weeks.

"The elderly and the disabled need help to pack their bags. I set up a scheme so that

some unemployed lads can do the moving. One elderly person was left without any heating, water or lights for a whole weekend because someone lost the notification. Manchester have now agreed to pay £15 towards each move. I think Rochdale should pay £15, which will give an unemployed person £30 - a day's pay.

"There was no homes provided for the elderly in the past, as people become old they were being shipped off to Manchester away

We get starved of money. The money is allocated, but when it comes to getting hold of the money - no chance. It is the missionaries and failed academics who take it. They keep us away from controlling the money.

from their families. I fought for 3 years to make them build some accommodation for the elderly. Rochdale are supposed to look after the elderly and the homeless but because it is a Langley problem they do not."

SV: "Do tenants have control over any money that goes into the estate?"

Alf: "We get starved of money. The money is allocated, but when it comes to getting hold of the money - no chance. It is the missionaries and failed academics who take it. They keep us away from controlling the money.

"For example they spent £20,000 on a survey for the unemployed on the estate a few years ago. It was to give them some statistics on areas of high unemployment. They did not use people off the estate to conduct the survey, outsiders did the survey - we are full of professionals up here.

"Nothing happened after the survey but they use it now for the 'dream factory' over the road. It is a training centre which cost £250,000. Most of that money goes in wages for the staff and when the local people finish where will be jobs for them?"

"The training centre told us that training would be tied into local employers. We thought that was great, but where are the employers? There are three employers in Middleton: Macbrides, Aerospace and Vialfoam. They are all shedding labour. Middleton, at one time, was full of little engineering factories, to get a job at that time was easy. All that has gone.

"Macbrides take workers for six months and then sack them. They employ people so that they are just under the limit for sickness benefit."

SV: "If the tenants were in control of the money what difference would it make?"

Alf: "We could employ and train a 100 youngsters to help rebuild the estate: building, fencing, gardens etc. More could be employed in furniture renovation, which is a small business receiving a grant from Rochdale. It takes old furniture and either sells it or gives it away, for people who have no money. There is a second hand clothes shop and a launderette.

"We have developed our own services. Old people could ring here and ask for help in their house or gardening, we had a team of young lads. After a while we set up a proper working team, it ran for six months, then the council withdrew the money.

"Now Rochdale are saying that the training centre can take on the gardening."

SV: "Is there much homelessness?"

"There is a lot but it is difficult to see. The young ones sleep on the floor of their mates house or they sleep in an empty house and move on. When they go to Rochdale which is 7 miles away, they are told to go to Manchester 5 miles away because housing is their responsibility. In the summer time they go to Blackpool."

SV: "What can be done to change the situation?"

Alf: "What we need is a newspaper on every council estate, a proper monthly newspaper that will give facts to the people. It should not be censored by anybody. It should tell things as they are."

CHINA'S CAPITALISM

JIM STEAD

Visiting Hong Kong last January, Deng Xiaoping promised that the Chinese rulers would maintain the capitalist system there for a hundred years, and called on the special economic zones of southern China to follow Hong Kong's example and "...create several Hong Kongs".

Hong Kong is now the leading investor in China (accounting for 65% of all foreign investment). Shenzhen, to the north of Hong Kong, is the "show case" of China's "open door" policy for foreign capitalist firms, ushered in by Deng in 1979 when he created the special economic zones. Hong Kong finance-capitalists exploit a million of the much more than two million workers employed by foreign capitalists in China, under appalling conditions.

In March, the Politbureau of the Chinese Communist Party announced an "economic reform" programme which would make "...proper use of capitalism". This is what Deng calls "...socialism with Chinese characteristics".

Carrie Grace of the "Guardian" reported on 5th November about one of the "...sleazy capitalist outposts" which was "thriving in mainland China". She wrote: "...With its sweatshops, prostitutes, and teeming entre-

preneurs, Xiamen is beyond all known definitions of socialism.

"It is also slipping beyond Beijing's control. Instead of looking a thousand miles north to the capital for leadership, this coastal city looks a hundred miles east, to Taiwan." Taiwanese industrial investment in China is \$2bn to \$3bn.

In March, it was reported that a new free port zone was being developed by a Hong Kong led consortium on Hainan Island off the south China coast. The aim was to create a "second Hong Kong", the "Yangpu Development Zone", with development costs over 15 years of £1.3bn. The free port is to be controlled by a group of overseas investors on a 70 year lease.

Financiers and industrialists who have invested in China and Hong Kong, which is to become part of China in 1997, see a perspective of increasing capitalist enterprises, the decentralizing of political and economic power in China to the areas in Shanghai and the south and the increase of supporting agents for more capitalist development.

The US financiers have already found that China is a source for profitable returns, both of loans and profits from the capitalist enclaves which the bureaucracy have set up. In fact, the profits seemed more stable than in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union where

the discontent of the population forced the stalinist rulers to make concessions and increase the economic crisis. As to the British Government: "Its admiration for democratic values does not quite extend to revolts against governments with which it happens to do business". ("The Independent", May 22 1989).

The Chinese bureaucracy is expecting to continue an already profitable partnership with the Hong Kong capitalists. Since last September the opinions of the rulers of Hong Kong on civil rights have been expressed in identical terms to those of the Chinese tyrants and executioners.

Last September, in face of the long expressed demands for universal suffrage in the British colony, the voters of Hong Kong were given the right to vote for 18 candidates for the Legislative Council which, formerly, had been nominated by the Governor. The concession did not mean that the colony ceased to be run by rich Hong Kong financiers, business men and women and the British Government. The elected members comprised less than a third of the Legislative Council and the liberal United Democrats, who comprised their majority, were refused their demand to be given a majority of seats in the Legislative Assembly and the Executive Council, the governor's "cabinet" which runs the colony.

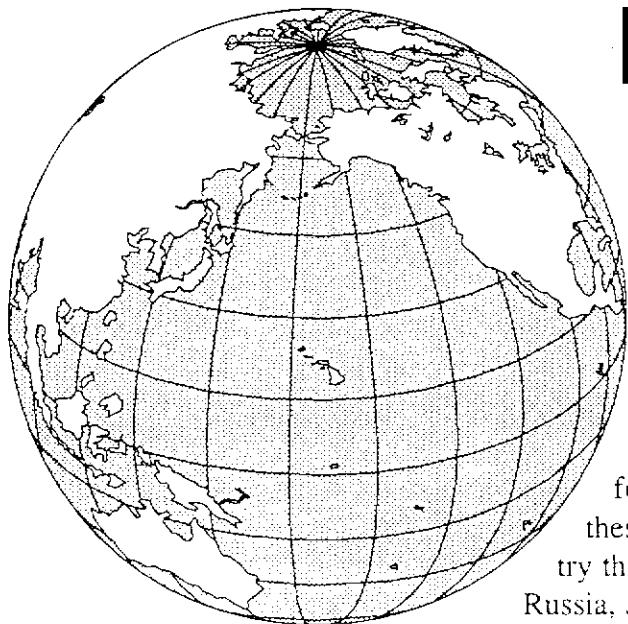
The United Democrats have popular support in demanding democratic rights. The closest friends of the Chinese bureaucracy, however, are the financiers and businessmen of Hong Kong who continue to run the Legislative Council. Stephen Cheong, an appointed representative on the Legislative Council and spokesman for the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, criticised the United Democrats for "insisting in interfering in Chinese political affairs and undermining the Hong Kong government through their opposition to its policies". He accused them of having a "welfarist approach" which "could dampen the territory's laissez-faire atmosphere".

An article in the "Financial Times" of 28 January, analysed the opinions of conservative politicians and the Chinese leaders. Beijing, it says, is alarmed by the debates which now take place in the Legislative Council. It "...has no interest in seeing an alternative centre of power establishing itself before 1997" when it is due to take over Hong Kong as a special administrative region. "It has made plain its desire to inherit an "executive-led" government from Britain's colonial administration."



ELECTIONS HIDE THE WORLD CRISIS

PETER WINDELER



When the Chinese bureaucrats, around the time of Deng's visit, recruited forty four "advisers" from Hong Kong for a period of two years, their list was of Chinese businessmen, political figures and academics. The list excluded any members of the United Democrats.

Douglas Hurd, the Tory Foreign Secretary, up to last September murmured phrases about democratic guarantees in Hong Kong. However, now, according to the "Guardian" report on the subjects to be discussed with the Chinese Foreign minister in London on 9th March, "there will be no attempt to re-open the contentious issue of increasing the number of directly elected members of the legislative council." The Financial Times' article, declared that the business and financial establishment of Hong Kong "stand for stability, a reasonable relationship with China, no hurry on democracy, and keeping the economic environment favourable for business. In short, the maintenance of the status quo as it existed before September's elections."

Since Tienanmen, rulers of the capitalist countries have been in no way enthusiastic over civil rights in China. The imperialists feared the way this incredible mass movement could develop. Hong Kong Stock Exchange dropped 15%. Meanwhile the population of the British colony showed its solidarity with Chinese students and workers. Great demonstrations were being held in the city and growing in numbers - from 1 million to 1.5 million (one third of the population).

In China, the support of the imperialists for democracy can be seen for what it is - support for a facade under which the economic domination of capitalist relations can develop. In China capitalist relations are mushrooming under the corrupt bureaucratic regime and the imperialist governments join with the Chinese leaders in countering the movement for democratic rights and civil liberties.

In the West attention in both the US and Britain is focussed upon elections. But these events, which ever country they are held in, whether it is Russia, Japan or France, are merely the surface activity behind which enormous class forces are gathering as capitalism follows stalinism into grave crises.

Crises which may or may not prove fatal.

In the US the strong showing of Pat Buchanan against George Bush in the fight for the Republican nomination is, by and large, the result of the problems of the US economy which, as Bush said recently, is in "free fall". The downturn in the US is the longest since the 1930's. Buchanan captured 40% of the vote in the New Hampshire primary with his promise of tax cuts, neo-isolationism and "America First" rhetoric. Bush is now losing the confidence of the electorate and his lack of response to the recession has caused a collapse in his ratings. The latest polls show that the Democrats will now beat whoever runs for the Republicans. Buchanan is playing the protectionist card for all it is worth accusing Europe of attempting to destroy US high technology industries, particularly aerospace. At the same time, US columnists in Washington have identified Germany and France as the economic enemy number one because of the dispute over farm subsidies.

Whilst Buchanan concentrates upon this theme, Bush's own camp is not immune. The Vice President, Dan Quayle, recently threatening to pull out of NATO if trade concessions were not granted.

Now the election campaigns have started in both the US and Britain each incumbent government is talking of a recovery from recession. This is based exclusively on wishful thinking. In Britain the Managing Director of the T&N Engineering Group told the Financial Times that UK industry is at its wits' end! Whilst in the US the economy is in no shape for a recovery with jobs still being lost.

Not so very long ago capitalism was to get a shot in the arm from expanding into eastern

Europe. Now this option is drying up rapidly. Instead of embracing the return of capitalism the Russian workers are poised to send it back from whence it came. The St Petersburg proletariat who in turn supported Gorbachev and defended Yeltsin are about to explode against the market economy with a series of strikes which will halt the reforms in their tracks.

In the US Japan is never far from the thoughts of politicians intent on shoving the blame for domestic economic problems onto someone else. They say that an economy that grows by an amount equivalent to the Gross Domestic Product of Canada every four years has no problems. However, Japanese industry is now also in recession. Its economy grew by 2.1% last year which was the slowest rate for five years. Even the mighty Sony corporation made a loss last year. But, at the same time, its trade surplus with the US has grown to an embarrassing \$40bn (£22bn).

Output is now decelerating and growth rates slipping throughout the world despite monetary policy being eased in the US, Japan and Britain, and no recovery is in prospect.

In Britain the Tories have gone into the election trailing in the opinion polls. The budget forecast of a Public Sector Borrowing Requirement of £28bn has unnerved the City and foreign investors. Whilst in the US Bush is hamstrung with the \$400bn budget deficit - unable to spend his way out of the recession. With US economic policy paralysed by the burden of federal debt is it any wonder that 56% of all Americans favour protectionism to protect jobs. The recent trip to Japan by Bush was to be an act of reconciliation upon the anniversary of Pearl Harbour instead it only resulted in heightening trade tensions between the two nations.

What must be evident to all workers is that pro-capitalist governments are incapable of providing the security that ordinary people need for themselves and their families. Be the governments Labour or Tory; Republican or Democrat, at first they will be given the benefit of the doubt but their time will inevitably run out and, like the workers of St Petersburg, workers be they in Manchester, Chicago or Tokyo will cause pro-capitalist governments to crumble.

"LIVING EXPOSURE"

"Past Exposure", by Greg Dropkin and David Clark, is available at £6.95 in bookshops, or £6.95 + £1.95 postage (UK and Europe), or US\$ 18 including postage outside Europe, from the Namibia Support Committee, 37-39 Great Guildford St., London SE1 0ES.



Fresh controversy has erupted around the notorious Rossing Uranium mine, a key export industry in newly independent Namibia, after "The Namibian" newspaper published a summary of a new book, "Past Exposure", containing detailed evidence of risks to workers and the environment. Rossing's Manager of Corporate Affairs, Clive Algar, condemned it as "...a collection of distortions and half-truths cunningly woven together into a plausible text", while Cleophas Mutjavikua, Acting General Secretary of the Mineworkers Union of Namibia said "from our experience we know that it is true".

"Past Exposure" was launched in London on 5 March with a press conference addressed by Tony Benn who signed the original contracts in 1968 leading to British purchases from Rossing, controlled by the UK transnational Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ). The book analyses a dossier of confidential company documents dating back to 1982, which slipped out of the mine during the South African military colonial era. They contain data on radiation, dust, and water pollution as well as medical statistics.

The morning after the launch, "The Namibian" ran their story having previously handed Rossing the book. Soon Mr. Algar was in print, denouncing "Past Exposure" whilst admitting he hadn't actually read it though he was familiar with the publishers, the Namibia Support Committee and Partizans. The NSC is unpopular because of the 1988 uranium blockade by Liverpool portworkers, imposed after an appeal from the then General Secretary of the Mineworkers Union of Namibia and leading to media coverage, panic stations at British Nuclear Fuels, and the non-renewal of sev-

eral Japanese contracts. Partizans regularly disrupts the London shareholders' AGM of parent company RTZ, and has contact with mining campaign groups all over the world.

Rossing told "The Namibian" they were looking at "all the options open to them" and complained that the newspaper had gone to print without a company response. Under threat of legal action, the paper then published a 1,800 word company "rebuttal": predictable attempt to blind the readers with a bit of science and quotes from a consultancy firm, whilst evading almost all the direct evidence quoted in "Past Exposure". The newspaper added an editorial lecture on democracy and press freedom, ticking off Rossing for threatening writs. The saga is unlikely to end there.

Namibia achieved political independence on 21 March 1990, but most workers' hopes for improvements in wages, conditions, housing etc. have not been met. At Rossing, 800 redundancies (one third of the workforce) were declared last September with the company blaming the world recession, the glut as Soviet and East European supplies entered the uranium market, and the aftermath of sanctions. Many other Namibian mines have either closed, cut back, or threatened to do so over the last year.

In 1990, the Mineworkers Union of Namibia (MUN) adopted a strong resolution on mining hazards at their national congress. It resolved to fight for the right to negotiate and conclude health and safety agreements and the repeal of all existing colonial laws on compensation, etc.

With Rossing's policy of benevolent paternalism, the company has cleaned up the mine since the early 1980's but there is no

health and safety agreement. Instead, the company is willing to "discuss and clarify" such issues with the union branch, which is recognised for wage bargaining. An agreement drawing on the achievements of Canadian miners at Rio Algom, another RTZ uranium mine, is the immediate industrial priority proposed in "Past Exposure".

The book stresses that early radiation exposure at Rossing presents a continuing cancer risk for workers despite more recent improvements. "Past Exposure" proves that while the mine claimed to adhere to International Commission for Radiological Protection (ICRP) standards, their uranium dust standard was 6 times weaker than the 1979 ICRP limit and 36 times weaker than the limit implied by the US National Academy of Sciences 1990 cancer risk estimate. Rossing were not correctly calculating Whole Body Dose because they failed to measure the dose from inhaling uranium in the early years. "Past Exposure" estimates the lifetime risk of death from radiation induced cancer as ranging from 1 in 20 to 1 in 9 for workers in the final stages of uranium processing. As to the environment, tens of millions of gallons of highly radioactive liquid waste seeped out of the Tailings at Rossing before the company started in 1980.

Those who oppose the mining industry and still believe that the working class is the power to bring change - in Southern Africa and Britain - should buy "Past Exposure".

LIFE ON TORY'S DOLE

Socialist Voice interviewed Jerry Over, a 29 year old from Liverpool, who has not had a job since he left school in 1979, about his experiences living under the Tories.

JO: "GEC and Fords visited my school when I left in 1979, they encouraged people to apply for apprenticeships. They only took six. When I signed on as unemployed I was told to go on a training scheme.

"We went 5 days a week, 9 am until 4 pm. We were paid £19.50 a week. I gave my mother £5 which meant, after fares, I had about £10 for clothes, going out and everything else.

"Most people who left school with me went on a scheme. Some people left but most stayed in the area doing odd jobs. Others got into trouble: thieving, and many of them were in jail by the time they were 18 or 19.

"Some of us went back to school to do "O" levels. One lad got a City and Guilds qualification in catering but he could not get a job as a chef. He went to work with his brother in Surrey. Another friend has not had a job for 9 years and gets by playing in a band.

"When not on a scheme we got about £16 a week which is less than on a scheme but on a scheme you were worse off because you had to pay your own fares up to £4.

"In 1982 when I had finished my "O" levels, I went on another scheme. It was called horticultural skills. It was for 12 months and you were paid £25 a week. We went to get the dole off our backs: there was always the threat of having your dole stopped if you did not go on a scheme. We did public gardens and private gardens."

SV: "Did you learn anything on the scheme?"

JO: "Yes, not to touch roses without gloves on!

"There was a strike when I was on that scheme. We had been organising ourselves, over the provision of protective clothing, like gloves for the roses. A lot of us joined unions. I joined the Transport and General Workers Union. When we had meetings with management we went to see them en masse. The big question was protective clothing and health and safety. We had meetings of 200 to 300 people which drew up a list of demands. We won a lot of them.

"It was not a good scheme but it was not the worst. The worst was clearing beaches of driftwood and debris, especially in the winter. There was no shelter, nowhere to go. It was dangerous as well; all sorts of things got washed up. One day there was a load of mercury washed up - but we got a warning as there was a lot of dead seagulls.

"None of the trainees got a job at the end of the scheme. The only way to get any work was to work on the side: delivering papers, caddying on the golf course or something

like that.

"I still could not get a job and I helped organising on the People's March. Then there was the miners strike. I helped arranging meetings for speakers from the support groups, leafleting on the estates and gaining support for the strike. We raised money in pubs and had discussions with people about the strike. Nearly everyone supported the miners despite the big campaign about the violence. We collected a lot of money. People were always asking what else they could do and offering all kinds of assistance. The difficulty was in organising all the offers.

"After the strike I went on the Justice for Mineworkers march. It was really good. It took people out of their own area. I marched all the way from Liverpool to London. We started with about 60 people. Different people kept joining the march and others would leave it. When we arrived in London, there was about 5,000 people at Alexandra Palace to welcome us.

"After that, in 1986, I went on a few more courses. Photography at the Unemployed Centre was one. Most of the courses were for a couple of months. The last scheme I went on was for computers, working for the RSA I qualification in computer literacy. That was a one year scheme. But generally, on all schemes, the staff ratios are so poor that, unless you know something already, you will not get on."

SV: "Are the schemes used as cheap labour?"

JO: "Yes, people were sent on placements at firms and were used to replace people on wages. When you are on a placement you are still on Employment Training and get your dole plus £10. The employer will then pay you some cash, say £10 or £20, to do extra hours. But they will not take you on as permanent staff. They will just let you go and take on another trainee. People do the extra work because you cannot live on what they pay you. People under 24 get £27 a week. I get £37. Out of that I have to pay up to £8 a week electricity, I have one electric fire, and £15 on food. Then there are water rates, over £5 a month, fares, something like £7 a week, then Poll Tax at £1.40 a week. Everyone is in debt. I go to a job club 4 days a week, 3 hours a day. You go just to get your fares paid.

"I have been to 3 interviews lately. At one of them the employer set out to find which one of us would take the lowest wage. He started at £55 then went down."

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TO CP WORKERS PAST AND PRESENT

We are making an appeal to those fighters and comrades who were members of the Communist Parties in this country. Since the crisis in the Soviet Union has led to open capitalist restorationism and the Communist Parties in Europe and elsewhere have blown apart we do not wish to see the militants of the old CPs disappear into political oblivion.

Recently, we have had discussions with some of them, many are going through crisis. We have fought alongside a number of them in the anti-Poll Tax struggle and in other areas of the class struggle. We also know that they had a class consciousness born out of the experience of harsh struggles. United Fronts were built in the past between members of the CP and Trotskyists, for example in the struggle against anti-trade union laws in the mid 60s and over common struggles in Liverpool.

We respect their fighting capacities. Our current of Trotskyism has never under-rated their ability to fight.

We know that what kept them in the CP was the knowledge that a Communist Party had to be built in Britain if capitalism was going to be defeated. The loyalty to this Marxist-Leninist idea held them tight. We are of the opinion that a party worthy of the name has to be built in Britain as part of a workers' international.

That is why we would wish to discuss with these comrades how we struggle for socialism now! When many of the older generation of CP'ers fought class battles in communities, they never imagined that their parties could be destroyed without a great fight, but that is what has happened.



We want to discuss joint actions with them and class perspectives for a Socialist programme. We want to discuss with them how a revolutionary party is going to be built in this country. We know that some have been jailed because of their struggle against the Poll Tax. Their bravery is not in question. But it never was.

Trotsky always held the hope of winning workers away from the Stalinist parties even those who went to kill him in the first attack in 1940. He outlined his approach in a discussion with leading members of the American Socialist Workers Party in June 15 1940. (Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939-40). Trotsky said:

"In France the Stalinists show courage against the government. They are still inspired by October. They are a selection of revolutionary elements, abused by Moscow, but honest. If they are persecuted in the United States and remain anti-patriotic because Moscow delays its new turn, this would

give them considerable political authority. Our revulsion from the Kremlin will not destroy this political authority. We must consider them objectively. We must consider them from the Marxist viewpoint. They are a very contradictory phenomenon. They began with October as the base, they have become deformed, but they have great courage.

"We can't even let the antipathies of our moral feelings sway us. Even the assailants on Trotsky's house had great courage. I think that we can hope to win these workers who began as a crystallization of October. We see them negatively; how to break through this obstacle. We must set the base against the top. The Moscow gang we consider gangsters but the rank and file don't consider themselves to be gangsters, but revolutionists."

If the CP fighters believe that the shattering of the Soviet Union shattered the bureaucracy but not the struggle for socialism then we have begun an agreement.

The end of the one party dictatorships was not the end of socialism, of Marx or any of the great Marxist fighters. Neither socialism or the working class is dead as Bush and sections of the middle class try to tell us. We believe the struggle for socialism continued in the anti-Poll Tax movement, in the Spanish, Italian and Greek general strikes of 1991 and in the miners strikes in the Soviet Union.

Stalinism dealt hard blows upon the development internationalism and international organisation. The movements of workers from Nicaragua to Vietnam have been betrayed by their leaderships. Nevertheless the plans of imperialism have been disrupted time and again.

Since the 1970s world imperialism has been going from one crisis to another. Their most advanced centres are in crisis and the USA has entered a great decline. And of great importance for us - Britain has entered a rapid decline.

Our programme is based on internationalism and the struggles of the working class. How do we assist in workers' struggle? It is building connections with all the layers of workers who need defending and who are moving into struggle. It is by developing with them a leadership that is prepared to develop as they develop and ready to go the whole way, at least as far workers want to go in the heat of the battle.

We are at the beginning of a new stage in the epoch of wars and revolutions. Our Communist and ex-Communist comrades can make a contribution in furthering the development of workers and in uniting with us in advancing the class struggle for Socialism.

LIFE OF OUR MOVEMENT

The PST (Workers' Socialist Party) of Columbia is campaigning to maintain its registration as a political party. The new constitution under the slogan of "democratic participants" demands that 50,000 signatures be collected as evidence of their "existence".

A statement issued by the party in March declared that: *"The 8th March ended the first phase of our national campaign for the defence of the registration of the PST. It had collected 11,670 in all the country by that date."*

They had support from Electrical workers, who in the middle of a strike had given great support, from telephone workers, porters, engineering workers, car workers. Greatest support came from Bogota and Medellin. School teachers from all parts of the country, public workers and students in universities

and from the communities.

The second stage of the campaign aims to get another 25,000 signatures. The PST declares, we *"are conscious that we are in a political battle with a bourgeois regime and against the government of Gaviria and all their parties."* and states, *"as socialists we defend our registration by the side of workers and with them. We are defending the right of workers to organise in their political parties and to struggle for the victory of socialism with democracy. That is the only alternative to capitalism which under the hands of Gaviria and his associates brings ruin to the country and drives it deeper into misery. For these reasons in the next stage of our campaign we make a call for sympathisers, workers and fighters to help build the instrument which is necessary for workers: a big political party of workers themselves."*