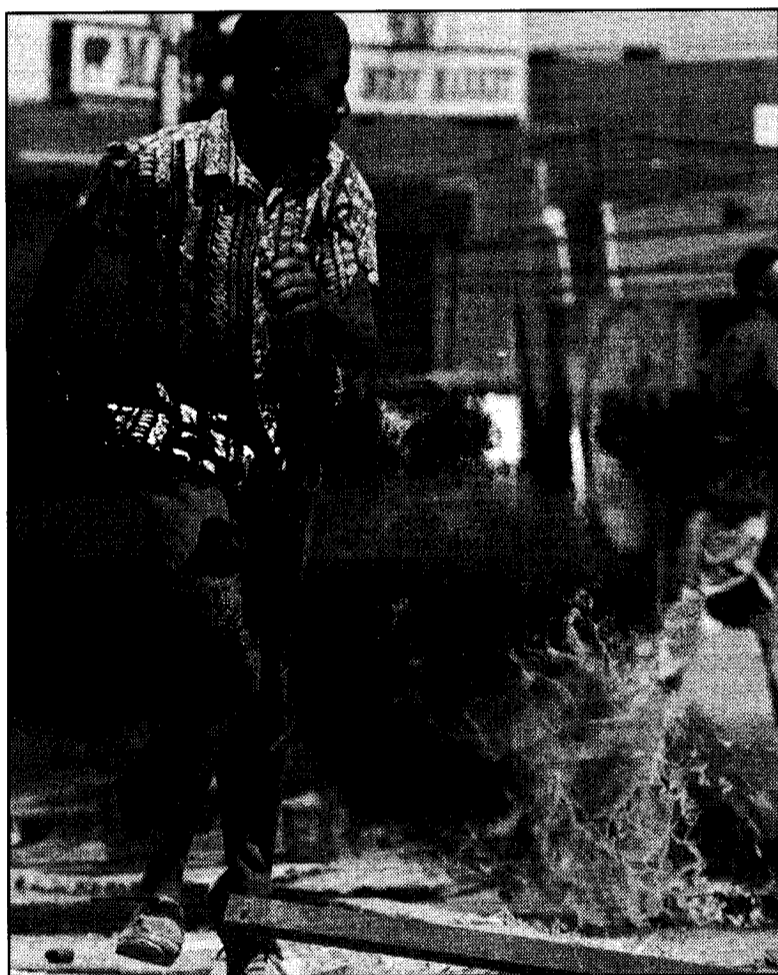




SOUTH AFRICA

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES



FORWARD TO A MASS WORKERS' PARTY!

By Jabu Masilela

THE OVERWHELMING victory scored by the African National Congress in the first 'non-racial' elections to be held in South Africa has clearly shown the black masses' determination to rid themselves of the brutal legacy of apartheid.

Despite the undemocratic framework of these elections established during negotiations, the rigging of the Natal results and the reign of terror unleashed by Inkatha, the white right wing and other state-sponsored forces, there was an 87 per cent turn-out nationally. Those radicals who advocated a boycott were ignored by the masses, who gave the ANC a 62.6 per cent vote for the National Assembly and control in seven out of nine provinces. This has demonstrated that the ANC leadership's claims that it had to compromise because it wasn't

strong enough were totally false.

But there is a huge gap between what the masses want from an ANC government and what it will deliver. The ANC has completely abandoned its commitment to the radical reforms of the Freedom Charter. Instead, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) represents a major compromise with the white ruling class and a sell-out of the masses' economic demands. Even the limited reforms the RDP promises will not be carried out consistently, for the following reasons.

First, the ANC-led Government of National Unity includes open reactionaries (the National Party and Inkatha) who will obstruct most of the socio-economic measures contained in the RDP which are supposed to redress the effects of apartheid-capitalism.

Second, the ANC has ceased to be a national liberation movement,

and has become an increasingly conservative bourgeois nationalist party, ready to give white-dominated South African capitalism a black political face. Its present leadership core is largely middle class. It constantly rubs shoulders with, and has similar interests to, the capitalists. The secretary-general, Cyril Ramaphosa, and the chairman, now First Deputy President in the new government, Thabo Mbeki, are typical examples. This grouping leans heavily on black capitalists and traders, former bantustan leaders, reactionary chiefs and headmen, the regime's former 'coloured' and 'Indian' stooges, liberal bourgeois elements, opportunistic professionals and academics, and all sorts of quacks and charlatans who are consciously striving to get their 'rightful' place in a 'non-racial' capitalism. It emphasises 'reconciliation' through the 'Sunset Clauses', gives innumerable reas-

urances to both foreign and local capitalists, and appeals to the masses to be patient and not to expect too much too soon. The working class rank and file count for very little in determining the ANC's policy.

Third, ever since negotiations began, the ANC has surrendered position after position, including the Freedom Charter and the Harare Declaration. More than four years of negotiations have not brought majority rule, but instead power-sharing with the class enemy in the form of the government of so-called national unity. The heroic sacrifices of workers and youth in Natal have been cynically betrayed by the national leadership to Buthelezi and Zweilithini. When the dictator of Bophuthatswana, Lucas Mangope, was overthrown in March, the ANC leadership recoiled from taking power and instead handed over the hard-won victory to De Klerk's man.

But the ANC leadership has not

been alone in carrying out a historic betrayal. Its chief ally, the South African Communist Party (SACP), has played a major role in ensuring that the sell-out becomes a reality. The SACP's current chairman, Joe Slovo, dreamed up the 'Sunset Clauses'; and the party supported the Groote Schuur Minute, the National Peace Accord and the agreement that the bosses should have the right to lock out strikers. In some ways its role has been even more treacherous than that of the ANC, which has never claimed to be socialist. As housing minister, Slovo will undoubtedly produce more 'Sunset Clauses' - for all those capitalists who keep millions in appalling housing conditions or homeless. Sydney Mafumadi, the minister of police, will try to make sure that the black working class really is 'patient', 'reasonable' and 'disciplined'.

Turn to pages 4-5

More analysis of the South African elections inside

EDITORIAL

UN keep out of Rwanda!

THE MASSACRES in the central African state of Rwanda have left at least 200,000 dead and unleashed a wave of more than two million refugees – more than a quarter of the population – into adjoining countries. The level of barbarism has been shocking, but the reaction of the imperialist powers and their media is the same old story. With casual indifference to the lives of Rwandans caught up in the fighting, the Europeans are airlifted out and the conflict – ignorantly and patronisingly described as ‘tribal’ – is left to burn itself out.

In fact, the present civil war is not simply a conflict between Hutu and Tutsi, and in any case it is only the latest chapter in a long history of political violence which has its origins in the cynical divide-and-rule policies of the previous colonial rulers of Rwanda and its neighbouring state of Burundi.

The two countries were grabbed by German imperialism as part of the colonial ‘scramble for Africa’ in the late nineteenth century. Prior to this the Tutsi and Hutu had lived together relatively peacefully: the Tutsi as a cattle-owning elite who, in a form of feudalism, ruled over the peasant Hutus. In typical colonial fashion, the Germans exploited these social differences and ruled through the Tutsi. After the First World War, when the colony passed into Belgian hands, the new rulers reinforced this policy. They educated the Tutsi, appointing them as administrators, and introduced identity cards giving the ethnic group of the bearer. Not surprisingly, the colonial period saw the spread of Hutu unrest, culminating in a violent uprising in 1959 which led to the Belgians pulling out.

After independence came in 1962, the Tutsi were the minority population in both countries. Hutus took power in Rwanda, driving out the old Tutsi administrators and inaugurating an unbroken period of Hutu domination which has been punctuated with outbursts of violence against the Tutsi. As a result, Tutsi forced to flee for their lives to neighbouring Uganda formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and launched a civil war against the Hutu government in 1990.

In Burundi, the Tutsi remained in control despite Hutu risings in 1965 and 1972. Free elections in 1993 finally elected a Hutu, Melchior Ndadaye, as leader, but he was killed during a Tutsi uprising three months later and another Hutu, Cyprien Ntaryamira, replaced him. Ntaryamira was with the Rwandan president, Juvenal Habyarimana, in the plane shot down on April 6 on the way back from Tanzania, where they had been attempting to negotiate a settlement with the RPF.

This event was the catalyst for the present violence. However, the ultimate responsibility for the conflict lies with colonialism and post-independence neo-colonialism. Imperialist governments and institutions keep most of sub-Saharan Africa in poverty and prevent economic development by the debt-aid system and an economic division of labour which forces reliance on a single export – in Rwanda’s case, coffee.

The conflict is not a ‘tribal’ civil war because the fighting cuts across ethnic divisions. Hutu and Tutsi are not separated by language or culture, share the same territory, and also intermarry. The main difference is in social status and the historical roots of this are reflected in the fact that, in Rwanda’s main language, Tutsi means ‘rich’ and Hutu means ‘peasant’.

The majority of the killings in Rwanda in recent weeks have been carried out on the Tutsi population by groups of Hutus (in particular, by members of the presidential guard) who want to sabotage the Arusha Accord. This was signed by the governments of Rwanda and Burundi and by the RPF, and provides for a multi-ethnic government and the partial withdrawal from politics of the Hutu-dominated army. The RPF is dominated by Tutsi but has Hutu members, including its chairman, Alex Kanayarengwe. There is a war between the government and the RPF, but there is also a Tutsi-Hutu conflict consisting of massacres of Tutsi by machete-wielding thugs spurred on by a private radio station (owned by the dead president Habyarimana’s family) which constantly proclaims: ‘The Tutsi graves are still half empty. Who will help fill them?’ Also, there is evidence of attacks by government troops on both Hutus and Tutsi who oppose the present regime. Rather than a tribal conflict, this is a conflict between those for Hutu domination and those favouring some form of multi-ethnic state with equality between Hutu and Tutsi. There is a parallel with Burundi: Ndadaye wanted to share power with the Tutsi, but there were those in both groups who did not want this to happen.

In a situation like this, what should be the position of revolutionary socialists? Firstly, we are against any intervention by imperialism under its ‘democratic’ figleaf, the United Nations. At the moment this may not happen as the imperialists are not that interested in Rwanda, although they may delegate the job to an African peace-keeping force as they did in Liberia. In any event, intervention would not benefit the Rwandans – look at Somalia!

The crisis could seriously destabilise the neighbouring states, ill-equipped to cope with such a vast influx of refugees. We demand unconditional aid to Tanzania and the other affected states to assist refugees with food, housing and medical supplies. Rwandans still living in their own country should be given the same kind of assistance to escape danger as Europeans, and unlimited aid should be distributed to them. We also demand the unconditional writing off of all debts owed to imperialist governments and banks by Rwanda and Burundi.

We defend all those opposed to ethnic conflict and working for a multi-ethnic society based on equality. The building of unity and equality between Tutsi and Hutu is essential for the masses of Rwanda and Burundi to have any hope of lifting their countries out of poverty and defeating imperialism’s local agents.

Since the optimism of independence, the gap between imperialism and sub-Saharan Africa has increased. There is now a daily struggle in many countries to stave off economic and political collapse, a tendency which has been made worse by IMF structural adjustment programmes and the recent GATT agreement. Zaire, Liberia and Somalia are already in ‘meltdown’. More may follow. The slogan of ‘socialism or barbarism’ has seldom, if ever, been more appropriate.

Socialists should fight age of consent laws

Tony Fox argues that the age of consent legislation is a repressive instrument of the capitalist state which does nothing to protect children from sexual abuse

PARLIAMENT has voted to reduce the age of consent for gay males to 18. The heterosexual age of consent in Britain is 16. In Ireland both are at 17, while internationally there is a wide spectrum, down to as low as 12 in Spain. A number of Labour MPs hypocritically voted against 16 but for 18, and six from Scotland and the north of England voted against both. Ken Livingstone confirmed his maverick reputation by voting for 16 but against 18! There was also a united front of reaction between the bulk of the Tory party and all the Irish MPs present.

Police have indicated that they will continue to use the new age limit to victimise and harass young gays. But socialists must go beyond a liberal/democratic position if they are to persuade the best elements of militant gays and lesbians to see that their fight for liberation is part of the struggle of the working class and the oppressed as a whole. Only socialist revolution will provide the material and ideological basis for their liberation. Only by elaborating a programme of transitional demands that provides answers to how they fight the real and

specific problems they face today – police harassment, murders and attacks by fascists and homophobes, employment discrimination, etc – will they be won to Trotskyism. Of course socialist revolution itself will not automatically liberate gays, or for that matter, women or national minorities. These struggles would still have to be fought – conceivably even against a revolutionary government.

Socialists must recognise the importance of ‘identity politics’, the right of the oppressed to self-organisation and, this writer believes, fight for the abolition of the age of consent. Age of consent legislation is not about protecting children or teenagers from sexual exploitation by adults; it is about social repression and the control and defence of one of the bedrock institutions of class society, the nuclear family. There are plenty of other laws which can be used to defend children from abuse and rape. Socialists should be putting forward a Charter of Children’s Rights, including the freedom to choose their sexual orientation free from the interference of bigoted legislation, rather than relying on the state to defend their rights.

This, of course, has nothing in common with the policy of groups like the US Spartacist League, which pushes the line that what goes on in bed is nothing to do with the state. ‘Whatever consensual sexual activity one engages in is nobody else’s business’ and ‘Government out of the bedroom’ proposes its magazine *Women and Revolution* (Spring 1994). But this fails to recognise that there is a qualitative difference between child and adult sexuality which corresponds to the difference between physical and psychological childhood and

adulthood. It ignores questions of power and dependency relations, of the impossibility of free and equal sexual relations between a child and an adult; in short, that puberty represents a real watershed in human development. Taken together with the headline in the same issue – ‘The “Date Rape” issue: Feminist Hysteria, anti-sex witch-hunt’ – the policy of the Sparts is evidently dictated by their quirky leader, James Robertson.

The removal of age of consent legislation would open up the necessity of examining each individual case as it arose; child abuse or natural sexual experimentation? Social interference in the bedroom is, of course, absolutely necessary in cases of child abuse. In recent years the scale of child abuse within the nuclear family has become clear. This strengthens the arguments for free association under socialism, made possible by the socialisation of child care and domestic drudgery.

The Revolutionary Communist Party’s position that the protection of abused children by social workers amounts to state interference in working class families represents the same cult-like attitude as the Sparts. There is no other way, at present, since we live under a capitalist society, than to support, critically, progressive social legislation in this area while pointing out that even such laws are often used for reactionary ends. But this cannot be said for the repressive anti-youth and anti-gay age of consent legislation.

● A future issue of Workers News will examine the attitude of the Bolsheviks to gay liberation. We welcome correspondence on the issues raised in this article.

Climbdown by bosses after strike threat

By Jim Dye

MERSEYSIDE Fire Brigade chiefs have backed off from a confrontation over new contracts which attack locally-negotiated conditions such as the mess managers’ allowance and detached duty payments.

After 1,500 firefighters were told that their existing contracts would be terminated on June 5, Merseyside Fire Brigades Union called a demonstration in Liverpool for April 14 and announced that it would ballot the membership for a series of one-hour strikes starting on May 5.

The 8,000-strong demonstration (see picture) effectively became a national mobilisation of the FBU, with delegations from as far away as Scotland and the south of England. Faced with this scale of militancy, the employers decided to shelve the plan to introduce new contracts, and the FBU cancelled the ballot for strike action.

Local councils and fire authorities are looking for savings in the fire service up and down the country, in response to cuts in central government funding. One of their main aims is to replace the present system of national wage bargaining with local agreements. Most brigades have suffered cutbacks, but up to now the national negotiating machinery has been defended by the actions of rank-and-file firefighters. The attempt on Merseyside to bypass national negotiations was seen as a test case. The employers will undoubtedly try again and it will take more than the threat of one-hour strikes to stop them.



Fighting racism in South Wales

By Phil Watson

OVER THE past few years South Wales has seen a rise in racist attacks. This has been officially acknowledged by Cardiff city council, which now funds a support unit for the victims of such attacks. In tandem with this, the fascist British National Party appears to be stepping up operations in the area, consistently standing candidates in council elections and recently attempting (with mixed success) to hold rallies in Barry and Pontypridd.

South Wales is the home of a cosmopolitan population, the result of immigration from Europe and the rest of the world at the turn of the century. Cardiff has Britain's oldest black community - in Butetown - as well as significant Somali, Asian and Chinese communities.

The backdrop to this rise in racism is the changing nature of the South Wales economy. Whilst of course being hit by the recent depression, it has evolved away from the more 'traditional' industries such as coal towards a service-based economy. This is dramatically highlighted by the closure of Tower colliery, the last deep mine in South Wales. Such developments have affected local working class culture, and the traditions of the labour movement seem ever more confined to an older stratum of workers. The net results of this are feelings of rootlessness, anxiety and panic, all of which provide fertile ground for the spread of racist ideas.

Parts of towns like Barry and Pontypridd, and estates such as Ely in Cardiff, are host to a wide range of social problems. It is in these areas that the BNP has built, in the process adapting to elements of Welsh nationalism. The BNP appears to be making an appeal to disaffected working class youth, who of course have

no attachment to the 'Labourite' culture of older workers. The local labour movement (as it currently stands) has effectively nothing to offer working class youth except a counsel of despair.

Much of the left's activity in South Wales is based around anti-fascism. This single-tracked approach leaves several broader questions unsolved. None of the left-wing groups or campaigns has consistently addressed the racist consensus which unites mainstream politics in Britain. As a result, racist activity in South Wales is quickly equated by the left with fascist activity. Singular anti-fascism also leaves basic anti-capitalist issues (problems of poor pay, unemployment and social deprivation) in the background. Racism and fascism cannot be defeated merely by militant marches and physical confrontation, important though these are.

The fundamental problem faced by left-wing activists in South Wales is that there is little or no consistent working class demand for the eradication of racism and fascism. Despite the short-term success of the Anti-Nazi League in mobilising the local people of Barry against the BNP, what are clearly needed are community-based campaigns which could establish a consistent response to racist activity.

The left needs to abandon its current mode of operation (bussing people into areas for rallies, the twice-yearly leafleting of estates, operating through party fronts, etc) and concentrate on building up its contacts on the local estates, in the valley towns and among ethnic minorities, constantly raising the wider social and political issues. This is a difficult task, but only when a real working class response is elicited can we drag sections of the official labour movement into the fray and turn the tide against racism and fascism in South Wales.



EastEnders: local youth on the TUC's anti-racism demonstration in east London on March 19

Criminal Justice Bill A licence to harass

By Ian Harrison

AS THE number of convictions quashed by the appeal courts grows from a trickle to a full spate, you might be forgiven for thinking that any new laws passed by parliament would impose greater restrictions on the police and strengthen the rights of their potential victims. But not so. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which should become law this year, gives greater scope than ever before to the police at the expense of the public.

Home Secretary Michael Howard has ignored the submissions of two royal commissions (1981 and 1993)

and made provision in the bill to abolish the right to silence. If the bill is passed in this form, silence on the part of an arrested person will become an admission of guilt.

The bill has been through many of its parliamentary stages but is still being strengthened by the Home Office in favour of the police. As recently as April, Home Office Minister David McLean announced an amendment which has all the hallmarks of a return to the 'sus' laws. The police will have powers to impose a local 'state of siege', stopping and searching anyone within a given area over a 24-hour period - or longer if they consider that 'violence' has broken out. The amendment refers to the need to control weapon-carrying gangs, but there is little doubt which communities will be targeted for this procedure.

The bill demonstrates the continuing preoccupation of the Tories with smashing all forms of public dissent over their policies - this time it is the opponents of their road building programme who are under attack. Stung by the cross-class protest movement which has held up plans to destroy homes, countryside and recreation areas, Howard is proposing to create new offences against property. The police will be able to arrest demonstrators for aggravated trespass and for holding, or attending, 'trespassory assemblies'.

There are clauses in the bill aimed at outlawing the activities of hunt saboteurs and the holding of music festivals in rural areas. But they could also be used to stop pickets outside workplaces or protests outside town halls. Clause 54 seeks to give the police the power to ban assemblies if the owner of the property on which they take place has not given his or her permission, and if they could result in 'serious disruption to the life of the community'.

The police will be the arbitrators of whether or not an assembly is an acceptable protest. Where the new offence of aggravated trespass is concerned, neither the police nor the prosecution will have to prove that an actual disruption, obstruction or intimidation took place, only that there was an intention to do so.

Clause 55 is designed to enable the police to stop anyone they 'reasonably believe' is on their way to join an assembly likely to be prohib-

ited under Clause 54. Had they been armed with these laws in 1990, the anti-poll tax protest in London could have been declared illegal, trains and coaches travelling from all over the country boarded, and intending demonstrators turned back.

Clauses 58 to 61 will see the abolition of the 1968 Caravan Sites Act and an increase in the harassment of travelling people. Local councils will be able to evict them from private as well as public land, and seize their caravans and vehicles - in other words their homes and the source of their livelihoods.

A campaign must be organised throughout the trade union and labour movement to defeat this reactionary bill and drive its authors out of office.

Solidarity with Bosnian workers

The following urgent appeal to the labour and trade union movement was issued on May Day by International Workers' Aid for Bosnia

SERBIAN aggression against Bosnia has left 200,000 Bosnian dead and one and a half million refugees. Two-thirds of Bosnia is under Serbian occupation and one-fifth under Croatian occupation.

The break-up of the former Yugoslavia has taken place largely at the expense of the working class and rural poor. These issues are of vital importance for the working class in Britain and throughout Europe. At stake is the principle of working class internationalism and the right of the Bosnian people to survive and to achieve national self-determination.

But the response of the leaders of the trade union and labour movement in Britain has been appalling. Those who do not implicitly support Serbian aggression have been calling for Western military intervention and air strikes.

The UN supports the carve-up of Bosnia along ethnic lines, and its air strikes are a means to this end. Workers should have no illusions in imperialist agencies such as the UN and

NATO, which can have no progressive role to play in this conflict. We call for the withdrawal of all UN, NATO, Russian, Serb, Croat and other foreign forces from Bosnia.

The working class movement in Britain supported the Spanish Republic against Franco in the 1930s, and opposed the US intervention in Vietnam. Today we must not allow Bosnia to stand alone. We oppose the partition of Bosnia and the creation of ethnically-pure states through ethnic cleansing.

The courageous resistance of the Bosnian working class to the carve-up has been hindered by the arms embargo, while the UN and NATO forces have been disarming Bosnian defenders on the ground. We call for an end to the arms embargo against Bosnia. Let the Bosnian people defend themselves!

Bosnians who have been forced to flee are denied refugee status in the Western countries. Britain has granted asylum to just five of the many thousands of Bosnian refugees here. We call for the scrapping of all racist immigration laws and the right of asylum for all refugees.

Although the media portrays the Bosnian resistance as 'Muslim', it is in fact multi-ethnic. In the working class centre of Tuzla, the multi-ethnic Miners' Brigade is a central component of the resistance.

Elsewhere in former Yugoslavia the best elements of the working class

oppose this war. Independent trade unions, women's groups and student unions in Serbia and Croatia are actively resisting their government's reactionary nationalisms. We oppose all UN sanctions against Serbia, which affect primarily the working class and generate support for the regime.

International Workers' Aid for Bosnia, a Europe-wide movement in solidarity with the struggles of the Bosnian working class against aggression and ethnic cleansing, has established contact with trade unions in former Yugoslavia, and works with them to bring material aid to the workers of Bosnia. In particular, we take regular convoys to the beleaguered people of Tuzla.

We also campaign around the political issues raised by the break-up of former Yugoslavia and for a workers' solution to this conflict.

The forces opposing this war need the active support - both political and material - of the European trade union and labour movement.

We call for affiliation to the campaign from all levels of the trade union and labour movement. We also welcome the support of all groups and individuals in sympathy with our aims.

● Affiliate to IWA! Trade union branches, local Labour Parties and other organisations: £15. Send to: International Workers' Aid for Bosnia, 12-14 Thornton Street, London SW9 0BL. Tel: 071-978 8622.

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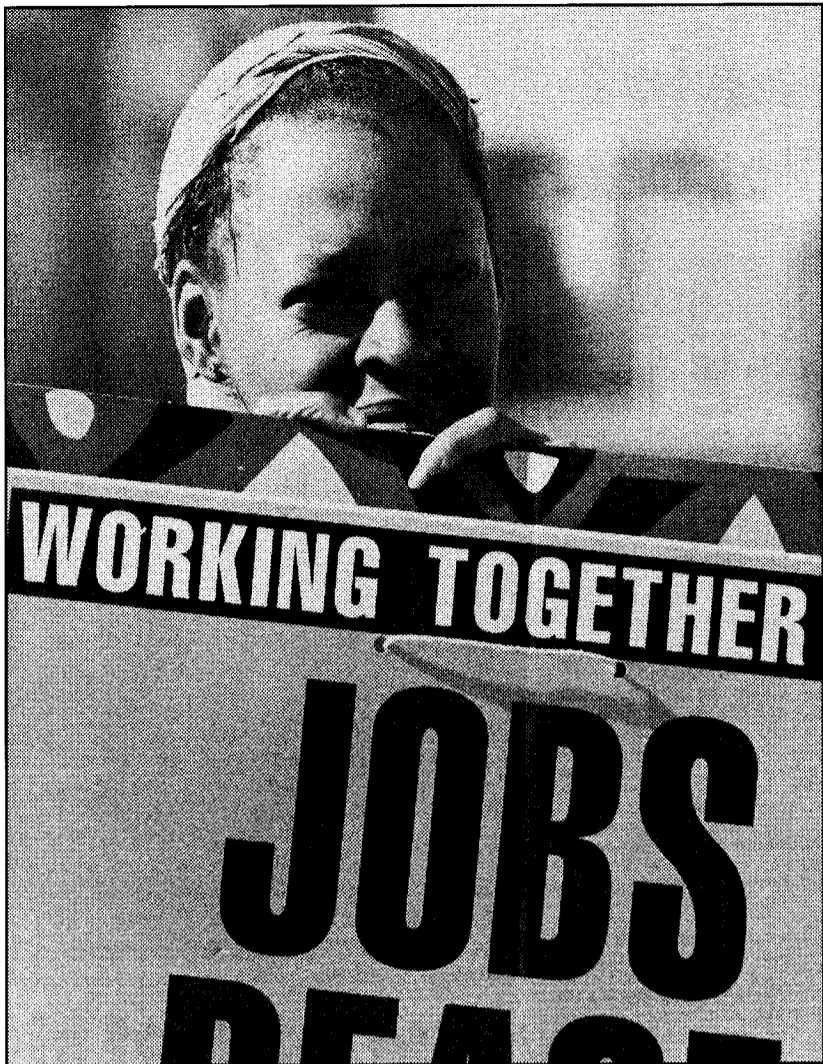
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An ANC supporter during the election campaign

The struggle continues

From page 1

The leadership of Cosatu – the junior partner in the tripartite alliance – has actively assisted the ANC and SACP in subordinating the interests of the working class to those of the bosses throughout the negotiations process. The 1991 Cosatu Congress mandated the leadership to convene a conference to map out a socialist strategy for the black working class, but it never took place. The Congress also resolved to launch a campaign to boycott PAYE, yet the leadership continuously postponed the practical implementation of the boycott. When workers saw the ANC and the SACP betraying them at the negotiating table, they called on the Cosatu leadership to represent them. Having applied to join the talks on the basis of a workers' mandate, the leadership backed down. The same leadership defused workers' anger and preparedness to go on strike against lock-outs. The result was a rotten deal which favoured the bosses.

It would therefore be the greatest illusion to think that the ANC's electoral victory heralds a process of consistent radical reforms. Even its election manifesto does not promise the masses much. The section headed 'Public Works Programme' aims to provide 'employment and training for about 2.5 million people over the next ten (!) years' – this in a country where black unemployment is running at 40-50 per cent. And the success of this lousy plan is based on such assumptions as a continuous economic growth rate of 5-6 per cent per annum, 'goodwill' on the part of the South African bosses, benevolent imperialist investment and 'aid'. Under 'Housing and Services for All', there is a pledge to build 'one million homes; provide running water . . . to over a million families; electrify 2.5 million rural and urban homes' in five years, yet the manifesto puts the present figure of squatters and homeless at seven million. The commitment to free health care for children below the age of five is totally inadequate to meet the needs of the masses as a whole, and shows how empty are the pledges to tackle diseases like TB and Aids.

Having been elected by an overwhelmingly working class vote, the ANC will face serious problems if it wages war against its own base of support. Some improvements, even if on a very small scale, are quite possible.

This has been the case in most African countries after independence or victory over imperialist-backed dictatorships. In fact, some bosses and several imperialist agencies and governments have already supplied economic aid to the new government so that it can be seen to be practically addressing the worst excesses of apartheid. This gives it some room for manoeuvre in playing off sections of the masses against each other.

This tactic has already been put into operation, with both bosses and the Congress leadership sounding off against 'selfishness' on the part of employed, unionised workers, who are being told to accept wage restraint to boost economic growth and job creation. A precedent was set in 1991, when some tripartite alliance leaders joined hands with Mercedes Benz bosses in East London in denouncing militant workers as spoilt labour aristocrats for rejecting a rotten wage deal agreed by the Numsa leadership. They even exploited the high rate of unemployment in the Eastern Cape, and the threat by the company to leave South Africa, in order to divide the township unemployed from the strikers. SACP ideologue Jeremy Cronin has even claimed that the demand for a workers' party would push Cosatu towards becoming the representative of a narrow black labour aristocracy.

Having swept away white minority rule, workers are bound to use the present situation to press home their own demands. But these must be backed up with militant mass action – the ANC is in no position to make major concessions with its project of stabilising South African capitalism. Given the scale of support for and illusions in the ANC, the demands for jobs, homes, education, health and social services, etc, will inevitably become political demands on the ANC itself. The rank and file of the ANC/SACP must demand an end to all power sharing with the National Party and Inkatha.

The task of revolutionaries must be to focus workers' demands in a programme of action which aims to split the rank and file of the alliance from its pro-capitalist leadership. This means fighting for the political independence of the working class, through the struggle for a mass workers' party based on the trade unions and for a workers' government.

By Richard Price

THE PROSPECT of a five-year coalition government of 'national unity' between the ANC, the National Party and Inkatha will unavoidably put the tripartite Congress Alliance of the ANC, SACP and Cosatu under enormous internal strain once the honeymoon with democracy is over. Before the votes were even counted, international 'public opinion' was being marshalled to warn Mandela that he must get tough with his own supporters, both on the political and economic fronts.

Cosatu leaders such as Jay Naidoo – in the cabinet as minister without portfolio – will have the greatest difficulty in justifying their support for such a government once it is clear that it will not satisfy any of the masses' demands. The fight for the building of a mass Workers' Party based on the trade unions and other mass organisations will be a decisive factor in deciding whether the 'new' South Africa, headed by the ANC, succeeds in demobilising workers, or whether a fresh period of revolutionary struggle opens up.

Comrades for a Workers' Government (CWG) initiated the call for a Workers' Party in late 1992, emphasising the need to 'take up a fight in Cosatu and all its affiliates for the idea of a workers' party and raise the need to break the alliance with the ANC and SACP' (*Qina Msebenzi* 5/6). In the metalworkers' union Numsa – the largest and most militant union in the country – the demand gained a powerful resonance. Shop stewards representing thousands of workers in the East Rand passed a motion supporting the formation of a workers' party and the fight for a workers' government in March 1993. At its conference in July 1993, Numsa passed a watered-down motion which called for the formal alliance with the ANC to be broken after the election, and 'to look at new forms of organisation' which 'could take the form of a working class party'.

The ripples from this debate spread outwards and began to affect other unions. Meanwhile two other socialist groups, the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) and the Independent Socialist Movement (ISM) endorsed the campaign and, together with CWG, formed the Committee for a Workers' Party (CWP). Differences existed however over the conception of the workers' party. WOSA, in its pamphlet *The Mass Workers' Party Debate*, argued against trade union affiliation, and thus against splitting the tripartite alliance: '... we would not support the

SOUTH AFRICA

The elections a campaign for a workers' party

idea that a trade union or a civic or even a branch of such an organisation should join the Workers' Party'.

All three groups considered the question of running workers' candidates in the elections. The CWG made its position clear in December 1992: 'In the event of a workers' party not being able to field its own candidates we would consider actively promoting a vote for the ANC in the elections.' WOSA summed up its position last year as follows: 'We think it very unlikely that a movement for the formation of the WP will be sufficiently strong and prepared by 27 April 1994 to be able to put up candidates in those elections. In the event that hundreds of thousands of workers decide to join such a movement and by thus voting with their feet, as it were, we would obviously have to reconsider this question.'

The agitation for a workers' party drew a furious counter-attack from sections of the ANC-SACP-Cosatu leadership. Jeremy Cronin, a leading SACP hack, penned a disgraceful article suggesting that it was playing into the hands of the intelligence services. The campaign was further set back by the growth of violence in many townships to civil war proportions, making even the holding of rallies virtually impossible. In the context of the impending elections, the CWG drew the conclusion that the only way to carry forward the struggle for the workers' party at this stage was to advocate a critical vote for the ANC.

WOSA however drew opposite conclusions and, reversing its previous position without any evidence that 'hundreds of thousands' of workers had defected from the ANC to support a workers' party, abruptly formed the Workers' List Party to contest the elections. As a result, a Workers' Party confer-

ence scheduled for February was cancelled. WOSA envisaged the WLP being built through a combination of publicity through the media and persuading 'notables' to stand on its platform rather than from below in the townships and through union caucuses. It is a measure of the WOSA leadership's illusions that Neville Alexander, in an interview with the *Sunday Nation* (April 10), anticipated the WLP winning three per cent of the poll – nearly 600,000 votes.

The CWG warned that with only the support of the small ISM, and without any significant base in the unions, civics or youth organisations, the WLP was a doomed adventure. This has been fully borne out by the election results, in which the WLP polled a meagre 4,169 votes (0.02 per cent) nationally and finished eighteenth out of the 19 parties running. This figure was less than one-third of the number of signatures the WLP had needed to get on the ballot.

The state of

THE ANC's sweeping victory could have been even bigger had it not agreed a deal on the KwaZulu/Natal result, which boosted Inkatha's vote up to 10.5 per cent nationally and knocked its own back from the 66 per cent it was close to achieving. In the interests of 'reconciliation' the ANC effectively accepted what it had denounced only a few days previously as 'massive and widespread' ballot rigging by Inkatha.

By accepting less than the two-thirds of the poll which would have enabled it to write the constitu-



April 26, 1994: Celebrations outside South Africa House in London

and the mass

In the short run the WLP can only have succeeded in discrediting the campaign for a workers' party, with its mixture of political opportunism and organisational sectarianism towards the Congress Alliance, whose leaders will be able to point to its result and say: 'See, these people have no support. Even the Kiss Party and the Soccer Party have more supporters!' But the task of building an independent class party is posed unavoidably by the situation which faces workers. Massive unemployment and deprivation for the black working class on the one hand; guarantees to white capitalists, generals and civil servants on the other, with a few pickings for the aspiring black middle class. For millions of trade unionists, women, youth and rural workers the only way out of the dead end of 'non-racial' capitalism is to fight for their own party on the road to socialist revolution.

the parties

tion alone, the ANC leadership is preparing an alibi for the future. It can claim that its failures are due to enforced power sharing.

Despite widespread rank-and-file criticisms of the negotiations process, workers voted for the ANC as the only viable means of ending white minority rule. The PAC's inconsistent and opportunist policy failed to convince militant workers that it represented any alternative and it polled a miserable 1.2 per cent.

Boycotting the elections was never going to be a serious option. Indeed, after the Bophuthatswana uprising, in which workers fought for the right to vote for the ANC, it would have looked like an act of treason to the liberation struggle and of solidarity with Inkatha – which up until the last moment was itself calling for a boycott. The ill-prepared campaign of the centrist Workers' List Party underlined the CWG's prediction that it would 'merely expose its complete isolation from the masses'. At 0.02 per cent, it polled considerably worse than the far left does in western Europe.

The National Party's success in the Western Cape, where it gained 53.2 per cent of the vote, was not only the result of a racist campaign which whipped up fears among the 'coloured' population. It also reflected the failure of the ANC to carry out serious work among the 'coloured' working class, and its reliance upon discredited liberals such as the Reverend Allan Boesak.

With the forces of the white far right split over their attitude to the election, the Freedom Front gained only 2.2 per cent, with other extreme reactionaries either boycotting the election or voting for the National Party. At 1.7 per cent, the white liberal Democratic Party found itself squeezed between the ANC making overtures to business and the National Party wearing 'multi-racial' colours.

THE CWG ELECTION CAMPAIGN

FOR THE CWG, the coming election is a historical turning point in the class struggle and in the political maturity of the oppressed masses. In the coming period the ANC's programme and leadership will be put to the test by the masses in a very real way – by experience itself!

We condemn the coming election because it is the product of a wholly undemocratic process. It would, however, be a gross mistake to conclude that the election should be boycotted. While it is clear to militants that the election is the end product of a betrayal, the fact is that the overwhelming majority will participate in the first ever 'non-racial' elections.

Azapo, the Unity Movement, and sections of the international left say we should boycott the elections, or spoil our ballot papers, rather than vote ANC. But the millions in South Africa see the coming election as an opportunity to advance the struggle for a better life. The fight to participate in even this wretched election has excited millions in South Africa and the 'homelands' in particular to active political struggle. A dramatic example is the successful Bophuthatswana uprising. There can be no question of walking away from the election by boycotting!

Once the boycott tactic is dismissed, there are two options open to the left-wing organisations: either put up candidates, as the Workers' List Party and the Workers' International for the Rebuilding of the Fourth International have done, or adopt critical support for the ANC. We are in no doubt that critical support is the correct tactic for small organisations of militants to get a hearing from the masses and at the same time unmask the treachery of the ANC leaders.

Why we call for a critical vote for the ANC

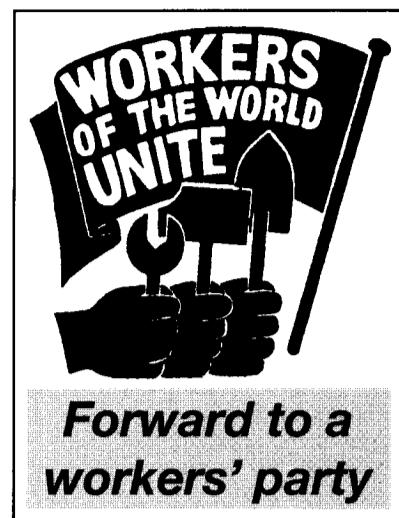
Statement by Comrades for a Workers' Government South African section of the LTT

A key reason for calling for critical support for the ANC in the elections is that no significant exodus of workers out of the ANC Alliance has happened. The Numsa resolution calling for a Workers' Party and for an end to the Cosatu-ANC alliance indicated a serious critical current in the working class. But this current did not gain enough ground and was in fact obstructed by ex-Trotskyists who believe that the ANC must be transformed.

Second, if we look outside the ANC Alliance, we do not see any credible left-wing organisation, or a coalition of these organisations, with qualitative depth and significant mass support. The absence of a mass-based centrist party and the weakness of the left in developing the Workers' Party initiative means that a direct electoral challenge to the ANC will not be supported by the vanguard of the masses. Although significant sections of workers have expressed dissatisfaction with the ANC leader-

ship and with the Alliance, they have not left the ANC in large numbers. The masses still view the ANC in the light of its militant past and have illusions that the ANC and its electoral victory can bring freedom, jobs, houses, etc. Millions have attended ANC rallies across the country and expectations in the ANC delivering liberation are still high. This is the context in which the CWG calls on the masses to critically support the ANC.

We say to the masses: 'You will be voting for the ANC, and you want the ANC to solve your problems. Although we have no faith in the ANC's leaders and we condemn its capitulation to the capitalist bosses, we will go through the experience with you. But we call on you, the masses, to advance your own popular demands and impose them on the ANC leaders. Only you, the masses, can change society, just as the masses of Bophuthatswana have done. They did not wait for the ANC leaders and



they have achieved what months of negotiations could not achieve.'

As a revolutionary minority, we believe that the ANC will not be able to implement even the most minimal social demands of its Reconstruction and Development Programme and the popular demands of the masses because the ANC leaders have in a most cowardly fashion bound themselves hand and foot to the capitalist class. The ANC fears the capitalists so its only option is to attack the working class. We support neither the leaders of the ANC, its policies, nor its programme. But in campaigning for a critical ANC vote in trade union, civic and youth meetings, we will have an opportunity to directly raise our criticism of the leaders and suggest a way forward.

The act of voting is not the only issue; it is the political work and the process of campaigning for a class struggle programme of action that will increase workers' confidence and fighting capacity, and will help to take workers beyond the ANC. Critical support is not an event, but a process of penetrating the consciousness of the masses. That is the crux of critical support, not only making an 'X' on a ballot sheet.

In the process of campaigning for an ANC vote and an ANC electoral victory, we will raise the popular demands of the masses as well as put demands to the ANC leaders and the ANC government. For example: demands such as the scrapping of all power-sharing agreements; the expulsion of the open bourgeois elements in the ANC and in the ANC-led election front; decisive action against Buthelezi; banning the right-wing reactionaries; passing laws against any retrenchment of workers, and so on. Critical support means criticising the ANC leaders before the elections, not waiting until they fail to deliver.

Critical support does not mean that the CWG gives up its own programme or gives general endorsement to the ANC. It is a tactic to separate the masses and the vanguard from the ANC. In every case we counterpose our own programme of action, and struggle to convince militants of the need for a revolutionary vanguard party. Critical support is a call for an immediate programme of mass action to enforce the political and social demands of the masses.

Workers, prepare to fight!

In campaigning for the ANC's electoral victory, CWG puts the following fighting demands on the ANC leaders. Without these demands critical support would be meaningless. These demands serve as a wedge to drive the ANC masses away from the treacherous leaders

- Majority rule and full non-racialism. No concessions to Buthelezi and the racist right wing! No power-sharing agreements or guaranteed jobs for the racists of the old apartheid order. The Constituent Assembly (CA) must not be bound by any previous agreements or constitutional principles, especially those which guarantee the protection of the property of the rich. Let the voice of the masses be heard in the CA.
- SADF out of the townships! Disband the SADF and confine them to barracks during the election. Form workers and youth militia and link up with MK.
- Public works programme with decent jobs at living wages for all! A system of public works (electrification, building schools, parks, halls and roads) under the control of the unions. Paid, state-run training schemes for the youth! An immediate moratorium on retrenchments. Not a single worker must be retrenched, now and under an ANC government. Without a stop to retrench-

ment all talk of job creation is nonsense. All available work must be shared among workers with no reduction in wages. Pay a living UIF!

- Down with endless talk in forums! The demands of the masses and even the ANC's limited RDP reforms are not going to be achieved through the consensus-based forums with the bosses who are only interested in profit. We need mass action if we want results!
- Demand a legislated living wage for all workers. The figure should be decided by workers. We demand that the ANC-Cosatu retract all talk of lowering workers' wages and cancel all promises to the IMF to that effect! All retrenched workers to go back to their ex-factories to claim a job.
- The ANC must nationalise all key sectors of the economy, as well as any company retrenching workers. Re-nationalise privatised companies and those threatened with privatisation. We must demand a single bank with cheap credit for small businesses and small farmers.
- Affordable prices on basic consumer goods, medicines and rents. VAT must be scrapped. A minimal tax on workers, double the tax on the rich who make profit out of the labour of workers. The ANC must make the bosses pay! We demand to see the books of the bosses and that all business secrets, secret transfers of funds, be made public.
- Nationalisation without compensation of all the land in the hands of monopolies, under-utilised land and land held by absentee landowners. Black farmers to be given free land and agricultural assistance.
- All employers must be legally obliged to recognise unions. The full right to strike, picket, organise workplaces and negotiate on behalf of workers must be guaranteed. Legally enforced centralised bargaining in all industries. Extend

full rights to farm, domestic, casual and contract workers. We demand the right to solidarity and political strikes, a 30-hour working week, and automatic wage increases to match inflation. Equalise the wage gap between skilled and unskilled workers.

- We demand equal, living pensions for all, with voluntary retirement at the age of 55! All pension funds to be placed under workers' control.
- All military and diplomatic relations to be made public! No arms exports to imperialists and their agents! No deals with the IMF and World Bank; renounce all debts and existing foreign agreements. Solidarity and direct assistance in struggles against Unita and Renamo. Military and economic aid for Cuba and the Palestinian masses!
- Immediate nationalisation of the building industry, the creation of a single bank under workers' control, and the launching of a crash building programme of decent houses for workers and their families. The redivision of existing housing stock through the expropriation of the mansions of the rich. The unemployed should pay no rents.
- Demand an end to deregulated transport – a state-funded, integrated transport network with low-cost, single class, comfortable travel for all!
- The right to work and training for all women! State-provided workplace nurseries and creches. Equal pay for equal work! Full maternity and paternity rights! The right to free abortion and contraception on demand! An end to domestic violence against women and sexual harassment; for anti-sexist education and media!
- Abolition of private medicine! Nationalisation of the drug companies under workers' control. A fully comprehensive, free, nationalised health service.

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The rise and fall of Gerry Healy

An assessment of the political career of the former WRP leader by Bob Pitt

PART TWENTY-FIVE

ONE CENTRAL point which needs to be emphasised in any account of the breakup of the WRP is that there was a right side and a wrong side to the split in October 1985, and those who opposed Healy's expulsion were unquestionably on the wrong side. But this doesn't absolve the majority faction of responsibility for carrying out the split so abruptly, and under conditions of such political and organisational chaos, that many honest WRP members, some of them far from uncritical of Healy, ended up with the minority.

From the standpoint of politically educating the membership, the Central Committee's October 13 decision to begin expulsion proceedings against Healy was decidedly premature. Although the CC had already agreed to set up a control commission into Healy, it now charged him with the very crimes that the commission was supposed to be investigating - before the commission had even begun its work! The decision was then presented to the membership as a fait accompli, and those who refused to endorse the CC's action were denounced as supporters of rape - a thoroughly dubious characterisation of Healy's sexual abuse which the majority itself would later reject.¹ Dave Bruce observes that many rank-and-file supporters of the minority simply 'didn't believe the charges against Healy, they found it unbelievable, and I don't think that we satisfactorily proved it to them . . . So they didn't support rape, it's absurd to say that, but they didn't believe the charge, and they believed Healy that we were a right-wing group'.²

This latter accusation wasn't effectively refuted either. The document Bruce had presented to the CC at the end of August had outlined an essentially correct position on the united front which Torrance/O'Regan had proved unable to answer. And this exchange had been followed up by a surprisingly good contribution from Simon Pirani, defending Bruce and demolishing Torrance and Healy's ultra-left sectarianism. Further documents attacking Healy's philosophy and politics, written by US Workers League leader David North in 1982 and 1984, were selectively issued by the majority shortly before the split. But little of this material had been widely circulated in the party and none of it properly discussed by the membership.

As a result, the specifically political origins of the party crisis were barely touched upon before the organisation split. Indeed, the majority subsequently declared that the WRP had broken apart 'not on tactical and programmatic issues, but on the most basic questions of revolutionary morality' - in other words, solely over the issue of Healy's sexual abuse.³ Under these circumstances, as Gerry Downing has pointed out, 'Torrance's assertion that the "sex thing" was being used to move the party rightward was obviously believed by many members, who were required to make up their minds on whose side they were on in the midst of very highly charged emotional appeals and very little political debate. The side many took was decided by accident, where they lived and who their friends were rather than any political assessment'.⁴

During the week following the October 12-13 CC, two London area aggregates were held at the WRP's Clapham headquarters to discuss the crisis. The first of these, on October 14, was notable for a particularly disgraceful contribution from Corin Redgrave, in which he rejected point blank any disciplinary action against the WRP's glorious leader (who was by this time in hiding). 'We are neither for or against corruption,' Redgrave declared, 'we are for the socialist revolution'.⁵ With Healy's victims and their relatives present at the meeting, this remark can only be seen as a conscious provocation. It produced understandable fury among supporters of the CC majority, and Redgrave only narrowly escaped be-

large brazier which was permanently blazing in the yard cast a pall of smoke over the centre, giving an appropriately apocalyptic air to the proceedings. Harrison recalls commenting to Corin Redgrave on the pervasive smell of burning. 'Those are the fires of the Spanish Inquisition,' Redgrave replied!⁷

In the course of this second aggregate, Banda went completely to pieces and it was left to Cliff Slaughter to make the main speech for the CC majority. Borrowing his political and theoretical arguments against the Torrance-Healy minority almost entirely from David North, Slaughter attacked Healy's philosophy as a form of Hegelianism and the WRP's politics as 'Pabloite revisionism'. But instead of trying to calm down the atmosphere in order to facilitate discussion of the political issues, Slaughter chose to raise the factional heat even higher. Picking on Corin Redgrave's provocative statement at the first aggregate about being neutral on the question of Healy's corruption, Slaughter declared that, by

Simmanca, and about half a dozen others, and they would constantly heckle throughout the entire meeting, "Rape! Rapists! Pol Pot!" over and over, and all of them were red in the face, they were wild . . . The only person who was trying to calm the Banda group was Richard Goldstein. He clearly wished to have some more serious reckoning. But it was clear that by then they had decided there was absolutely going to be no discussion. They were going to prevent all the people who were getting up and opposing them, whether it was Mitchell or Corin Redgrave, they were going to prevent all of them from speaking'.¹⁰

By dismissing the minority as one reactionary mass, fit only to be denounced and hounded out of the party, Slaughter and Banda destroyed any chance of opening up the real contradictions that existed in the Torrance-Healy camp, which was essentially a bloc between two groupings who sought to defend the WRP's existing programme. In fact many of Torrance's supporters (as distinct from the real gun-ho Healyites) did not in principle reject disciplinary action against Healy. A resolution adopted by the minorityite Islington WRP branch after the first aggregate, while containing its fair share of political nonsense, nonetheless insisted that 'we are not defenders of rape' and called for a control commission into Healy.¹¹ Ian Harrison was mandated to put this position to the second aggregate, but couldn't get to speak.

Harrison concedes that if rank-and-file minority supporters had been allowed to participate in a free discussion 'we would have been saying things like, this is the immediacy of the struggle for power, you lot are turning away from the class . . . you've got to restore the *News Line*, the *News Line* is the decisive paper, we'd have been saying all these kinds of things . . . But even if what we had to say was wrong, and handicapped by all of our sectarian training, ultimately if we'd continued with *comradely* political discussion, things would have started to flow'. Harrison believes that the arguments put forward in majority documents like Dave Bruce's would have had an impact on many minority supporters.¹² As it was, hardly anyone was given the chance to consider these arguments before the organisation split.

The next CC meeting on October 19 formally expelled Healy, on the grounds that he hadn't appeared to answer the charges against him, and then agreed to hold a special congress on the weekend of October 26-27. The CC thereby pre-empted any decision the congress itself might take regarding Healy's expulsion. There was a certain poetic justice in this for, as the historian John Callaghan has pointed out, Healy traditionally expelled his own opponents on the eve of party congresses.¹³ But it also shows how the fight against Healy was carried out using some essentially Healyite methods.

Demonised as near-fascist defenders of rape by the majority, and howled down when they attempted to argue their political position, the minority refused to attend the October 19 CC meeting because they feared violence would be used against them. They boycotted the majority's special congress, organised their own alternative conference and declared themselves a separate party. The Slaughter-Banda congress, for its part, went on to endorse Healy's expulsion. The forces mobilised by the rival factions nationally have been estimated at 450

for the majority and 320 for the Torrance-Healy minority.¹⁴ Healy's 'party', with its claimed membership of 9-10,000, was revealed for the fraud that it was.

Almost immediately after the split, the Banda-Slaughter grouping itself began to fragment. In February 1986 supporters of David North, led by Dave Hyland, were kicked out with all the WRP's usual contempt for democratic procedure. Adopting the name of the International Communist Party, the Northites quickly relapsed into sectarian ultra-leftism - they now hold the Bordigist position that the trade unions are no longer workers' organisations and have been entirely incorporated into the capitalist state. Mike Banda and his supporters soon decided that the WRP's collapse was due to fundamental flaws not in Healy's politics but in Trotsky's, and went over to Stalinism - just before it entered its own terminal crisis. Bad timing, Mike!

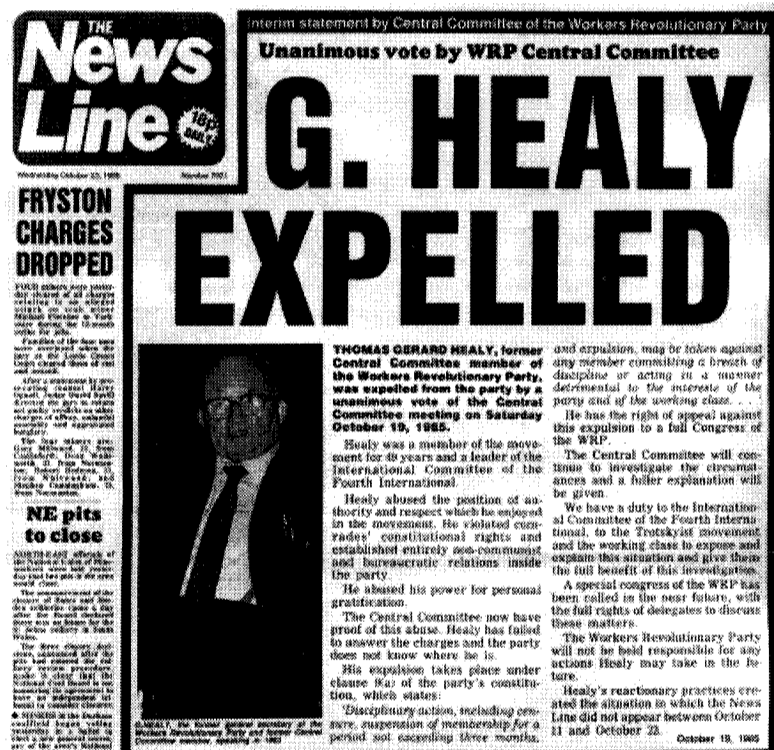
As for the Slaughter-led WRP, under Dave Bruce's editorship its paper *Workers Press* did for a while become a forum for serious political discussion, and the organisation briefly showed at least the potential to reassess its own Healyite traditions and make some positive developments. Any such potential was destroyed, however, as longstanding Healyite hacks like Pilling and Slaughter reasserted their domination over the group. The WRP/*Workers Press* now proclaims itself and its co-thinkers to be the sole legitimate continuation of the Fourth International, publishes fatuous contributions concerning 'the struggle against Pabloism', answers its political critics with slanderous attacks and demonstrates general contempt for Trotskyism's basic programmatic positions - Healyism, in short, without Healy.

Could things have turned out any differently? It is doubtful. The organisation Healy had built possessed no tradition of internal democracy - oppositional minorities were simply anathematised and driven out. Consequently, nobody in the WRP had the slightest experience of conducting a principled factional struggle. And the party's actual politics were so far removed from Trotskyism that informed political debate was virtually impossible. Indeed, the Healyite movement was so rotten that there was no real prospect of the organisation as a whole being regenerated. The most that could be hoped for was that some elements might emerge from the wreckage and evolve in a politically healthy direction. They turned out to be painfully few.

To be continued

NOTES

1. The WRP Women's Commission later argued that Healy's abuse was a form of incest. To accuse Healy of criminal rape, one of his victims pointed out, was 'to denigrate and patronise the large number of women cadres . . . who were persistently sexually abused by Healy. It is to say they accepted being raped - some for 20 and more years' (*Workers Press*, March 7, 1987).
2. Interview with Dave Bruce, October 6, 1993.
3. *News Line*, November 2, 1985.
4. G. Downing, *WRP Explosion*, 1991, p.7.
5. *News Line*, November 16, 1985.
6. *Marxist Review*, September 1986.
7. Interview with Ian Harrison, January 13, 1994.
8. *News Line*, November 16, 1985.
9. Bruce interview. For Downing's view, see *WRP Explosion*, pp.6-7.
10. Harrison interview.
11. Islington WRP branch resolution.
12. Harrison interview.
13. J. Callaghan, *British Trotskyism*, 1984, p.83.
14. *Workers News*, April 1987. These figures are based on the numbers attending area aggregates around the country, with some allowance for those unable to attend.



Front page of the WRP paper on October 23, 1985

ing physically assaulted. Yet such was the confusion caused by the lack of political preparation for Healy's expulsion that at this first aggregate the Torrance-Healy faction was able to win a narrow majority. After the meeting, an enraged Mike Banda reportedly stamped around the yard at the Clapham centre bellowing: 'Everyone in the country supports me except this rubbish in London'.¹⁶

A second aggregate was set for October 18, however, and here the Banda-Slaughter group succeeded in imposing its control. 'They'd been bringing in more people from outside London,' minority supporter Ian Harrison recalls. 'They had people who had been out of membership for a long time . . . There was no proper credentials check on the door as people went into the aggregate, and in fact they had a lot of their very heavy people lining the corridors as you went into the warehouse, so there was a very intimidating atmosphere.' A

defending the rapist Healy, the minority stood for 'the imposition of a near-fascist ideology in our movement'.⁸ 'When Slaughter called Corin Redgrave a fascist,' Bruce comments, 'of course it cut the discussion off, as it was bound to . . . because you can't discuss with fascists politically, can you? It's not possible. So he shut the discussion down. We didn't see it that way at the time, but I think Gerry Downing pointed it out and he was absolutely right. I think that with hindsight Slaughter's aim was to cut off the discussion, to cut and run, because it was getting too difficult, and he had to be on the side of the angels.' Between them, Slaughter and Redgrave thus succeeded in irrevocably polarising the situation and stampeding the party into a split.⁹

This second aggregate swiftly descended into complete hysteria. As Harrison recalls: 'At the back, and in the main alleyway, there was Geoff Pilling, Matthew Nugent, John

**LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR**

**Workers Voice replies
to RCL slanders**

THE NOVEMBER 22 issue of the US Workers League's paper, *International Workers Bulletin*, carried an article vehemently attacking us by Wije Dias entitled 'Hobnobbing with traitors in Sri Lanka'. As usual, the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL) has taken up completely wrong positions.

As far as we are concerned, we have nothing to hide. We have very close and fraternal links with the Workers International League in Britain, and as Trotskyists we are for building the basis for the formation of an international party. We will always be guided by the Trotskyist principles of workers' democracy and democratic centralism, internationalism and dialectical materialism.

On our part, we have never built any opportunist connections, unlike the RCL and its International Committee allies. The RCL grew out of the Virodhaya group. It in turn had its origins in the Sakthi group led by Karalasingham, which split from the LSSP(R) to rejoin the LSSP. Tony Banda intervened in the Sakthi group and was able to win over some members to the IC. But this intervention was carried out in a very opportunistic way. Even after joining the IC, they did not want to drop the name 'Sakthi' or the political positions associated with it, and wanted to maintain their petty-bourgeois politics. Those who joined the IC were mostly students, with little experience among workers. As a result, they took easily to the method of lying about their political opponents.

Wije Dias begins his article with a series of insults to Workers Voice. These will not prevent us from continuing to base ourselves upon Marxist theory and Trotskyist politics. Then he goes on to question how we finance our paper, and suggests that we receive money from Non-Governmental Organisations. We do not feel at all obliged to open up our accounts to the RCL, and we are well aware as Marxists of the nature of NGOs. We have built up our paper, *Workers Voice*, mainly with the assistance of our members and supporters. We have not had any connections with Libya and Iraq—unlike the IC. We have built our resources with the sweat of our brows.

Thirdly, Wije Dias tries to claim that our paper is unobtainable. Anyone can buy our paper from our pub-

lisher. We do not prevent anybody, including our political rivals, from obtaining it—unlike the RCL. Although we are working on a very limited budget, we are now able to publish articles in Sinhala, Tamil and English. How long after it began producing *Kamkaru Puwath* did it take the RCL to publish a Tamil paper?

Before 1991 we worked as members of the Revolutionary Workers Party. We explained our break with the RWP in the first issue of *Workers Voice* (May 1991) as a break from discussion group politics. The RWP has proved unable to intervene in the Sri Lankan working class. In *Workers Voice* (January 1992) we wrote: 'Today we have to build a working class movement in Sri Lanka as part of a world working class movement.'

Our position on the Tamil ethnic question is very clear. We have always unconditionally defended the right of oppressed minorities to self-determination. At the same time, we have argued that the Tamil working class can only win through socialism, and that the capitalists offer no solution. We have criticised the LTTE's dual strategy of armed struggle plus negotiations (*Workers Voice*, March 1993).

Consequently, we have a clear position on the LTTE and the Tamil struggle. Originally the RCL was opposed to Tamil self-determination. Later they changed their position. However, today their position is very ambiguous. Even on the questions of the PLO and Libya they could not take a firm stand.

We have explained clearly why we broke with the RWP. But we will not lie about the RWP. Even during the JVP uprising, the RWP was active. It did not surrender to the JVP. The RCL put forward the slogan of the 'united front', but did not take any action. Even at such a time, the RCL acted in a sectarian way. However, the RWP never rejected the proposal for a united front, as Dias suggests.

From such facts the Sri Lankan working class can decide what the RCL is. They build their party in an opportunist way, without real Marxist principles. However, we Trotskyists will show them how to build a party based on Marxist principles.

**Workers Voice
Sri Lanka**

**Police dragnet after
attack on meeting**

A MEETING called to defend the rights of immigrant workers in San Rafael, California, on April 6 was closed down by police after nine racists had showed up and demanded to be allowed in on the grounds that it was a 'public meeting'. They came with picket signs and it was clear they planned to disrupt. We refused to let

**Obituary by
Ellis Hillman**

Frank Ridley 1897-1994

FRANK RIDLEY, who died on March 27, was one of the last links in the chain going back to the formative period of British Trotskyism. In 1929 he founded the proto-Trotskyist Marxian League, which was the first organisation in Britain to disseminate the writings of Leon Trotsky after his expulsion from the USSR. He introduced Trotsky's ideas to those who were later to pioneer Trotskyism both in this country—Hugo Dewar, Dr Worrall and Reg Groves—and in Ceylon—Colvin R. de Silva and Philip Gunawardena.

Ridley advocated the formation of a Fourth International some years before Hitler's victory in 1933—the event that finally convinced Trotsky that the Communist International was no longer reformable and that a new International had to be proclaimed and built. Ridley's arguments were possibly influenced by the Gorter-Pannekoek school of the early twenties, which had already come to the conclusion that Lenin's Third International was unreformable.

Gravitating towards the ILP, where he led the left tendency, Ridley complained that while the leadership of Brockway, Maxton and McNair regarded him as a Trotskyist, the Trotskyist factions in the ILP regarded him as a left centrist covering up for the pacifist leadership of the party.

During the war and in its immediate aftermath, Ridley believed he had pushed the ILP as far left as was possible. Advocating an anti-war policy and campaigning for a United Socialist States of Europe, he took the lead in opposing the ILP's re-affiliation to the Labour Party. Some years later, after the ILP leadership had liquidated into the bosom of the Labour Party, Ridley himself eventually joined the Holborn and St Pancras branch. He remarked that his earlier opposition to re-affiliation might have been mistaken, even if for different reasons.

In 1960-61 he supported John Lawrence, Hilda Lane and David Goldhill in the struggle against the Holborn and St Pancras council's rate and rent increases, but did not follow them into the Communist Party.

Despite his many differences with Trotsky, he kept in close touch with the various 'branches' of the movement, actively supporting the magazine *Revolutionary History* and attending the launch of the Sam



Frank Ridley

Bornstein/AI Richardson book, *The War and the International*, at Conway Hall in 1986. Two years later, he sent greetings to another meeting at Conway Hall—the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International.

With some 50 works represented in the catalogue of the British Library covering a broad range of historical and humanist studies, a full assessment of Frank Ridley's contribution to secular, republican and revolutionary history has yet to be made. Many of his major contributions remain unpublished. As the first to found an organisation which raised the banner of Trotskyism in this country, his name will always be remembered.

them in. After several fist fights, the police arrived and decided to close the meeting down. A total of 30 police then proceeded to sweep the streets where workers live. One Salvadorean worker told me that the police acted the same as they do in Central America.

The important fact was that we had the support of 2-300 workers and community people versus nine racists and 30 police. No one ran, and for most of the workers present the cops were just ridiculous.

'Illegal' immigrants are being blamed by both the Democrats and Republicans for unemployment, crime, drugs and almost everything else that's wrong. The 'free trade agreement' with Mexico gives merchandise the right to cross the border, but not workers. The border has become a Berlin Wall between Mexico and the United States.

President Clinton is hiring more immigration police to deal with the 'problem'. We believe instead that what undocumented workers need is unionisation. The AFL-CIO and Chavez's Farm Workers' Union are not interested in organising undocumented workers.

We believe that we are facing a kind of incipient fascism with a 'liberal' face. The racists say they are not against all immigrants, just 'illegal' immigrants. They exist in a paranoid world where they think that everybody wants to come to the US and take away 'our' jobs and destroy 'our' culture. Actually, most undocumented workers spend a few years in the US to save up some money and go back to Mexico and Central America. And, of course, most of the jobs the 'illegals' do—yard work, dish washing, domestic labour—are those which most white Americans don't want to do. The 'liberal' racists are now trying to get propositions passed in California which would deny education as well as free health care to 'illegals'.

Fraternally,
Earl Gilman
San Francisco

Workers International League

The WIL is the British section of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency. Together with comrades in South Africa, Belgium and Germany, we fight to rebuild Trotsky's Fourth International. We are for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with a worldwide federation of workers' states, based on workers' democracy and planned economy. Only by workers taking power can the unemployment, poverty, starvation and war bred by capitalism be ended.

In Britain, it is necessary for revolutionaries to fight within the mass organisations of the labour movement, as well as participate in the struggles of all those oppressed by capitalism. We aim to build rank-and-file opposition to the trade union and Labour bureaucrats who stand in the way of any serious struggle to defeat the Tories. Only in this way will a genuine revolutionary party, rather than a sect, be built.

We support all struggles against imperialism, without endorsing the politics of any nationalist leaderships. In wars waged by imperialist powers such as Britain against oppressed countries, and in inter-imperialist wars, we are for the defeat of our own ruling class.

In the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, which are no longer deformed/degenerated workers' states, we are for the defence of those gains of the working class that still exist. The remaining deformed workers' states in Cuba and Asia must be defended against imperialism, and the Stalinist bureaucracies overthrown before they too open the door to capitalist restoration.

For more information about the Workers International League and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, write to: WIL, 1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE

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Labour misses an open goal

LOCAL ELECTIONS

THE MAY 5 elections saw the Tories go down to their worst ever local government defeat. Down to third place in terms of seats overall, and fourth in Scotland, losing 429 seats and control of 18 councils – it should have added up to a massive Labour victory.

As it was, the Liberal Democrats ran neck and neck with the Tories at 27 per cent, picking up a swathe of disillusioned Tory voters, particularly in the south and west. Although Labour at 41 per cent polled respectably, it was a

night of missed opportunities, given the close resemblance between Tory MPs and lemmings in recent months.

Labour's failure to capitalise on the Tories' crisis must be firmly placed at the door of the party's right wing, which ran a campaign centred on outdoing the Tories on law and order and cost effectiveness. But this failed to win over wavering Tory voters, who preferred something even more like the Tories – the Liberals. It wasn't only in the middle class suburbs and country towns that the Liberals did well; they took seats off Labour in London boroughs such as Islington, Waltham Forest and Lambeth. In Lambeth, a massive

witch-hunt of left-wing councillors and attacks on council workers succeeded in turning a once safe Labour borough into a hung council.

Elsewhere, Labour's results were patchy. Apart from the Liberals' spectacular implosion in Tower Hamlets, and victories in Enfield and Croydon, the gains were mostly modest. Labour held on as the largest party in Liverpool, but only as a result of smashing the left. The Liberals were again the chief beneficiaries of a witch-hunt, winning five seats. They also succeeded in taking seats off Labour in Oldham and Pendle, with both councils now under no overall control.

Militant Labour's 30 candidates polled around 300 votes each, although only Wally Kennedy, who had begun the campaign as an official Labour candidate, was elected. But while Militant claims the results as a great success, the further erosion of its once powerful Merseyside base shows an organisation with serious problems. North of the border, the Scottish National Party picked up seats and beat the expiring Tories into fourth place.

With so much latent anger against the Tories, it is essential that the Labour right wing's 'wait and see' policy is defeated and replaced by a political and industrial offensive.

Lost leader

INTEGRITY... a man of principle... passionate concern for social justice... a great parliamentarian... a nation stunned, etc, etc. In polite society it is not the done thing to speak ill of the dead. The House of Commons lived up to its reputation as the best gentleman's club in the world as fulsome tributes to John Smith poured in from Major, Thatcher, Ashdown and even James Molyneux, the leader of the Ulster Unionists.

Let's recall how the House treated the death of another MP in 1981 – Bobby Sands, the member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, who died on hunger strike. It withheld the customary condolences to his family. At least for once the club wasn't being hypocritical.

The reason that politicians of all the parliamentary parties were 'united in grief' as the saying goes is because John Smith was one of them. It's hardly surprising that after calling Major 'the devalued leader of a devalued government' by day, the two could meet up later for a friendly afterhours mug of Horlicks. Such are the rules of 'public life'.

Smith's lasting reputation will not be that of a great leader, but as the Shadow Chancellor who managed to lose Labour the 1992 general election. His taxation plans succeeded in scaring the middle class, while appearing to give workers nothing. He was a Presbyterian lawyer with all the charisma of a bank manager, and specialised in forcing prawn cocktails down the gullets of reluctant city types. Always a man of the right, he ran a marginally more tolerant regime than Kinnock but only because he had less to prove in the safety and reliability stakes. And he left behind him a long-running 'jobs for the boys' scandal on his home patch in north Lanarkshire.

He was a more effective debater than Kinnock – although that was scarcely difficult. Politically, however, there was nothing to choose between them. Among Labour's right-wing 'modernisers', there were accusations of policy drift. Smith was shrewd enough to know that there wasn't much to be gained from shifting much further to the right in the face of widespread anti-Tory feeling. The left had already been routed, and OMOV shoved through last year's Labour Party conference with the support of former opponent John Prescott.

Smith's philosophy came down to waiting and saying as little as possible on policy, in the hope that the Tories would carry on shooting themselves in the foot. Under Smith, Labour came to stand for sound money, law and order and Europe. Whichever team the right wing now puts up – whether it is Blair and Prescott, or some other combination of men in suits – the rank and file must be rallied to fight the heirs of John Smith.

TOWER HAMLETS

Fascists lose seat but 'will be back'

By Andrew Mills

DESPITE the defeat of BNP councillor Derek Beackon in Millwall, there is still work to be done to crush the threat of fascism in east London and in other parts of the country.

The BNP, National Front and Third Way stood, between them, 68 candidates nationally with 22 of those in London. The BNP concentrated its forces on the Isle of Dogs in Tower Hamlets and south Newham. Although they failed to win any seats, the fascists picked up significant support.

In Millwall, Beackon's vote went up from 1,440 in the by-election on September 16 when he won the seat to 2,041, although his share of the poll dropped to 28 per cent. The two other BNP candidates obtained around 25 per cent each. Labour's candidates polled between 3,446 and 3,547. In south Newham the BNP picked up 33 and 25 per cent in the Beckton and Custom House wards. Labour got 43 and 50 per cent to beat them.

The NF had some significant votes in the Midlands where they won over 10 per cent of the vote in the Lye and Wollescote ward in Dudley and around 9 per cent in some wards in the Sandwell area.

During the election campaign racist attacks in the areas where the fascists were standing dramatically increased. Fascists attempted to intimidate black and Asian voters, as they did last September. The high turn out in Tower Hamlets suggests they were less successful this time.

The BNP concentrated on whipping up racism among disoriented and backward white workers, encouraging them to vent their frustrations on minorities whom they portrayed as 'taking our jobs and homes', despite the fact that the black and Asian populations are smaller on the Isle of Dogs than in surrounding areas, and in general get worse housing and fewer jobs.

But the BNP's failure to win any seats is not the end of the matter. Fascists will not be demoralised by their results and will actually see it as progress since they increased their vote in Millwall by over 40 per cent. Beackon declared: 'We were very pleased, we increased our vote here and right across east London... but we'll be back.'

Most of the left campaigned throughout the election against the BNP, although there was little co-ordination between groups such as the Anti-Nazi League and Youth Against Racism in Europe. ANL



Bethnal Green, east London: A BNP supporter becomes acquainted with the pavement on the evening of the local elections

posters and leaflets declared 'Don't Vote for Nazis!', but did not explicitly call for a Labour vote. Other groups were far worse and opposed voting Labour without explaining how else the BNP could be defeated at the polls.

However, the mass campaign against the BNP by the left and local activists brought out a large class vote for Labour in Millwall. This was an impressive achievement, more than doubling Labour's vote last September.

But simply having Labour in control in Tower Hamlets won't solve the problems. Socialists must follow up the election victory by demanding Labour reverses all anti-working class and racist measures carried out by the Liberal Democrats, such as the 'sons and daughters' policy which discriminated against blacks and Asians in housing and fuelled racism.

The new council must provide

funds and facilities for black and Asian self-defence groups, and evict racists who intimidate and attack ethnic minorities (rather than only transferring the victims, which is the most many councils will do).

However, in order to tackle the roots of racism in an area of high unemployment with a chronic housing shortage, it is essential that Labour carries out a programme to defend jobs and services, fights cuts, and launches a campaign to build affordable, good quality housing for all.

Labour cannot achieve this while the Tory government controls the purses of local authorities. This must be challenged. Labour councils must prepare to set their budgets according to local needs, and, if necessary, break the law. They must join with the trade union movement to kick the Tories out.