

SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS - A VICTORY FOR CAPITALISM

The achievement of bourgeois democracy in South Africa and the election of Nelson Mandela and the ANC represent a victory for South African capitalism. The real meaning of the election is that the transition to a "multi-racial" capitalist regime is largely complete and those who opposed it have been defeated. With a Mandela/De Klerk coalition in power for the next five years the capitalists, who, as we have been saying for over a decade, include the ANC, will be able to start in earnest on restructuring industry, improving competitiveness and attracting foreign capital. For the working class most of what is to come will amount to more efficient exploitation and further sacrifices - hardly a reason for dancing in the streets.

Victory for the ANC was the culmination of a process of change started after the SOWETO uprising of 1976 and driven by the sordid needs of capitalism both inside and outside South Africa, for profit. The lofty ideals of freedom, equality, democracy and the rest, as proclaimed by our leaders cannot hide this fundamental point. Apartheid was a tolerable overhead to capitalist production during the reconstruction period of the 50's and 60's when profit rates were high, but by the 70's it had become a severe handicap. Expenditure in administering the system was absorbing over 50% of the state's budget, and the migrant labour system, which apartheid enshrined, was unable to deliver the skilled and disciplined workforce required as the economy became more capital intensive. In addition the social chaos produced by apartheid was becoming uncontrollable and in its turn producing a massive haemorrhage of capital abroad. The climax of this process occurred in 1985 when the US banks, headed by Chase Manhattan, refused to reschedule the country's debt and major disinvestment began. It was clear to South Africa's capitalist class as a whole that apartheid had to go and a multi-racial ruling class formed to broaden the base of the South African state.

Although the South African ruling class realised the change to a non racial capitalism had to be made, such a complete reversal of direction was extremely difficult to make and it has been brought about with astonishing incompetence - the length of time it has taken and the massive loss of life are witness enough. The regime has stubbornly tried to avoid a settlement based on universal suffrage and to avoid the position in which it found itself on election day. Reforms of apartheid have alternated with repressions and police massacres. The major reform introduced, that of the new constitution of 1984 was a crude attempt to draw the mixed race and Asian people into an alliance with the whites against the blacks. It amounted to an attempt to broaden the base of the regime whilst still shoring up apartheid. But it fooled nobody.

When it proved unable to control the violence and protest which erupted, the regime launched its own campaign of murder and disruption. It used its agents such as the homeland leaders,



*The Stock Exchange has an important role in the development of our country .
Nelson Mandela 24.4.94*

particularly Buthelezi, and his Inkatha organisation, to wage a low level civil war against its enemies, chiefly the ANC. This continued right through the negotiations and into the election period and was only abandoned when the whole election itself was in threat. The regime has acted like the proverbial Boer ox being goaded out of its laager, lashing out furiously at each step forward. This process has produced immense social chaos. It has also split the bloc of Afrikanerdom along class lines with the petit bourgeoisie and the working class, who economically will be in a more precarious position, deserting the National Party.

A Settlement for Western Imperialism

The settlement which has been achieved is that required by Western imperialism, and it was the West's ditching of the regime in the 80's which forced the pace of change. The region is still a vital one for Western imperialism because of both its vital mineral resources and strategic position. Once Russian imperialism withdrew from the region the apartheid regime was simply an embarrassment and its military campaigns of destabilisation in the surrounding countries like Angola and Mozambique were actually conflicting with Western capital's interests in these states. Western pressure via cutting off loans, capital repatriation and sanctions forced the downfall of the previous prime minister, Botha, as well as the settlement in Namibia. Once

progress in the internal settlement was made the Western bourgeoisie promptly awarded DeKlerk a Nobel Peace Prize. The fact that his regime was organising a civil war and murdering thousands every month didn't matter. Even as late as March this year the US bluntly informed Pretoria that it would not tolerate postponement of the elections - something demanded by Buthelezi.

Capitalism's Real Needs

The real demands of capitalism have been the driving force behind the change and have inexorably swept away the ideologies of the past and those that clung to them. By the early 70's the apartheid organisation of labour was restricting the expansion of production. Capitalism required a stable, skilled and disciplined workforce which apartheid could not deliver. To produce this workforce apartheid had to go and a corresponding change in the superstructure of society had to be accepted. South African capitalists realised that such a change could be effected by forging a class alliance with the rising black capitalist class and that they should be brought into political partnership as soon as possible. The strikes of 1973 and the Soweto uprising of 1976 sounded the death knell of apartheid. From then on the advanced sections of the white bourgeoisie set about construction a non racial capitalist future. Key events in this process were:-

- formation of the "Urban Foundation" capitalist grouping in 1976 to promote black capitalists and a black petit bourgeoisie.
- the legalisation of trade unions to control the class struggle in 1979.
- the grooming of the ANC for power by South African capitalists, headed by De Beers and Anglo-American, who were in discussions with the Lusaka leadership 5 years before the regime unbanned the organisation (See *Mandela - Saviour of South African Capitalism* in *Workers' Voice* 51).
- the unbanning of the ANC, South African Communist Party etc. and the release of Mandela as the bourgeoisie's man of the hour.
- the initiation of the Constitutional Conference in December 1991 which has led via the 92 white referendum to the present settlement and the April election.

ANC - Saviour of South African Capitalism

The ANC has never put forward a class analysis of society or supported the interests of the working class. On the contrary it supports the interests of the rising African capitalist class and it is they and the ANC officialdom who will gain most from its victory. Already these people are being integrated into the ranks of the white bourgeoisie, moving into the same suburbs and taking holidays together. The so called "socialist" elements in the ANC's programme are the state

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capitalist proposals it embraced in the 1955 Freedom Charter such as nationalisation of the mines and banks. It is these measures which the white bourgeoisie persuaded the organisation to shelve if it were to keep its support in a negotiated settlement. Such measures are noticeably absent from the ANC election manifesto. In reality the ANC aims to foster a black capitalist class through "affirmative action" using its control of the state. It is little wonder that white capitalists can make common cause with them. The delight of the bourgeoisie with Mandela's performance in calling for the ending of sanctions in September 92 and pushing through the interim constitution in November was reflected in a soaring stock market and the arrival of trade delegations from abroad. In the following important areas the ANC represents the interests of the SA capitalist class as a whole:-

- South Africa must remain a unitary state and the homelands must be reincorporated. This is already included in the new constitution.
- the massive economic wastage on apartheid must be ended and spending on the state controlled sector of the economy must be reduced.
- the present social chaos within the country must be brought to an end and order restored. The present regime with its discredited police and army is unable to do this. The only force able to carry this out is the ANC. The ANC manifesto pledges an accountable police force, gun control and rehabilitation.
- the working class must be disciplined to accept more efficient exploitation. Restructuring, cuts in existing jobs and a pay freeze are required. In addition, as the manifesto declares, training education and a programme of job creation are needed.
- a programme of government spending to regenerate the economy and reduce unemployment is required.
- foreign investment and international loans must be attracted to the country. The ANC pledges to do this.

The ANC stands for the rapid reintegration of S.A. into full relations with Western capitalism and accepts all the consequences of this. Its economic spokesman Trevor Manuel and the present minister of finance, Derek Keys, are in full agreement on most economic matters and have been jointly hosting foreign trade delegations. There is similar agreement with the general secretary of the trade union federation COSATU. It is said to be likely that Keys will remain at his post under an ANC government.

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South African Elections - Capitalist Victory

The ANC’s election manifesto will cost approximately £20 billion to implement over 10 years. Although a small part of this can be found by the savings resulting from removal of the apartheid wastages the bulk of it will have to be either borrowed abroad or generated inside the country. The country has suffered a net loss of capital every year since 1985 and still remains an exporter of capital today. To attract foreign loans the ANC has to be able to guarantee profits, interest payments and so on. This requires a submissive and controlled working class and over the last few years the top representatives of the ANC have been flying round the world trying to convince international capital that they can do this. Their efforts have been partly successful and an \$850 million loan from the IMF will be available for the post apartheid government. In addition various other funds are available in the US including those of the “Development Bank for S.A.” led by the Rockefeller foundation which the ANC helped to set up. At present the country has a relatively modest foreign debt, \$17 bn, inflation is under 10%, projected growth is 1% (although both the ANC and the national Party are agreed that 5-6% growth is needed to begin rebuilding the economy) and would be attractive to foreign capital if the ANC could restore profitability.

The largest part of the capital required will, however, have to be generated within the country, which again poses the question of profitability. Sanctions and import tariffs have led to a decline in profitability. A world bank study of competitiveness rates shows South Africa as being below Indonesia and on a par with Hungary. The study shows that South Africa’s wage rates for unskilled workers, £23 per week, are too high ! While workers in the Far East can survive on wages of under half this amount the Far East will be more attractive for capital investment and its goods will be more competitive. To generate capital internally wages must either fall or productivity increase or both. It is therefore quite clear that there can be no question of wage rises or improvements in the conditions of the working class and strikes which follow the election will be fought by the ANC just as bitterly as by the Afrikaner nationalists.

The Right Wing

The right wing elements who split from the Afrikaner National Party together with the homeland chiefs and their organisations represent the petit bourgeoisie’s interests. They do not represent the interests of capitalism as a whole and they are therefore of no further use to

capitalism and destined for the rubbish bin of history.

Although these groups formed a bloc which they called the “Freedom Alliance” they had different interests and fundamentally opposed each other. The government has been able to split this bloc and marginalise these groupings fairly successfully. The sordid events in Bophuthatswana, where the Afrikaner Volksfront, the Afrikaner nationalist grouping in the bloc, sent its irregulars in to military support the collapsing regime of chief Mangope, (i.e. to support apartheid), shows the lack of reality which pervades these organisations and the crass political stupidity of their leaders. This fiasco has decisively split the Volksfront with

The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has it ... ever condemned capitalist society

Nelson Mandela, Trial Speech 1964

a section participating in the election, and with Buthelezi’s eleventh hour decision to participate in the election both the Freedom Alliance and the Volksfront have broken apart. Like Humpty Dumpty they can’t be glued together again. The government has finally pulled the rug from under Buthelezi as well. Although he has been their trusted agent he had to be ditched and this has been done by the report of judge Goldstone, which was commissioned by the government, to investigate the continual violence and murder. The hand of Inkatha officials and senior members of the police in the murder gangs and destabilisation has now been publicly exposed. However, Buthelezi may weave and turn Inkatha is likely to disintegrate and his role is now played out. These groups are now relegated to the margins of bourgeois politics though their capacity for terrorism and disruption remains.

The Working Class and the Future

The last 20 years have seen massive waves of working class struggle. From the strikes in Natal in 1973 to the general strike in 1992, millions of workers have struck in many areas of the economy, from the mines and railways to the car factories and civil service. Some of these strikes, such as the railworkers strike of 1987, pointed the way towards unity of black and white workers. However, it is generally true that despite great sacrifices and many deaths at the hands of the police, the unions have either led

the strikes to defeat or led them away from the issues of class struggle and to the issues of national struggle. This is hardly surprising since it was for this purpose that the bosses helped set up the unions, and since they are controlled by the ANC they have consistently attempted to divert strikes into struggles to further the aims of the ANC. This is equivalent to defeat for the struggles as the aims of the nationalists are opposed to those of the working class.

The CWO condemns the ANC because it is a bourgeois political force and we condemn the African nationalist struggle because it is a bourgeois struggle. The national struggle is not worth a drop of workers’ blood. Bourgeois democracy will, at the most, bring limited gains for the South African workers, but these are concessions to defuse the real struggle which is the class struggle. Just as the European workers were granted democracy in the late nineteenth century to ideologically undermine their struggle against the capitalists, so the South African workers are being handed “liberation and democracy” to stop them struggling against further exploitation. The new sacrifices demanded from the South African workers will, since April 27th, be sacrifices demanded by “their” government, which they have voted in, which represents the will of the majority etc.etc.

The new government will be able to get away with attacks which the old could not. In short the SA workers will soon get a dose of the full treatment of lies to which we are subjected in the west. The future for SA workers can be gauged by looking north to Zimbabwe where despite fourteen years of “liberation” conditions for the workers are worse today than under the Smith regime. It should also be remembered that the emergency laws have not been repealed. Nor are they likely to be repealed, The AWB of Eugene Terre Blanche represent a tiny lunatic fringe of the Afrikaner Right but their antics will be used as an excuse to continue the emergency

laws. The real victims of the laws will continue to be workers in struggle who refuse to accept the “nation-building” promises of Mandela.

The CWO has continually pointed to the need for the working class to separate itself politically from the African bourgeoisie and not to be mobilised as the infantry in their battle for political power. Unfortunately this has not happened. The majority of those killed in the ANC/Inkatha war are workers who have no interest whatsoever in killing each other. It is the rival sections of the bosses who benefit. And what is the fighting really about? It is really about who will get the spoils of exploiting the workers. Class struggle has been diverted into the campaign of the African nationalists and hence has achieved little for the workers. The supreme example of this was the 1992 general strike which mobilised the largest number of workers ever striking in the country’s history, but they were brought out to support the negotiating position of the ANC, and marched back to work before any real harm could be done to South African capitalism (See *Workers Strike for Bosses’ Demands* in *Workers’ Voice* 62).

The South African working class, despite its enormous power, is divided and largely unconscious of its interests. However, the new government will not be long in attacking it. This government was brought into power to do this, it needs to do it and it will. The material basis for class opposition to the ANC will soon be evident. With the baggage of apartheid jettisoned the road towards unity of black and white workers will also be opened. In the period following the election workers should strike for increases in pay and the improvements in living conditions which the ANC vaguely promises. They should conduct these strikes outside the ANC unions and not return to work until their demands are met. All calls for sacrifices should be resisted.

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D-DAY WHY ALL THE FUSS ?

The British establishment have decided that the 50th anniversary of the invasion of France by the Anglo-American imperialist alliance is to be commemorated (and/or celebrated depending on which politician you choose to listen to) up and down the country. Whether or not an individual attends any of the activities (about as spontaneous as a Stalinist May Day) they will have been bombarded for many weeks by the mass media. Non-Tory politicians have bleated about the inappropriateness of this or that particular event (Spam fritter contests seem to be particularly out of favour). This party point-scoring has, of course, been all about form rather than content. Indeed it could not be otherwise since all sections of the ruling-class agree that the imperialist slaughter was a "just war", justifying death and misery for millions of workers across the globe. Such celebrations of imperialist war are relatively common-place. They provide regular opportunities for workers to be reminded that, at times of crisis for the bosses, we must "all pull together" i.e. workers must pay the price. However, the present round of flag-waving parades has a greatly-increased significance.

1944-1994 - From one European bloodbath to another

The second World War is invariably presented as a struggle against a tyrannical regime - an argument which even at its most superficial level is a nonsense considering the track record of crucial members of the alliance such as Chiang Kai Shek or Joseph Stalin (both butchers of genuine Communists). Workers in Britain, in particular, are being encouraged to reflect on the need to make necessary sacrifices in the national interest whenever it is deemed necessary to tackle a foreign tyrant. It is no coincidence that the last few years have seen the reappearance of selected foreign regimes which the Anglo-American alliance (latterly with the Russians back in tow) have used as an excuse to exercise their military might. Just as in 1939-45 the choice of good tyrant or bad tyrant is entirely dependent on the needs of imperialism at a given conjuncture. Saddam Hussein is an OK tyrant, and certainly well-worth arming, when he competes with the bad-guy Iranian mullah tyrants. On the other hand if its a decision between Saddam and the feudal tyrants who control Kuwait or Saudi Arabia (but aren't immediately threatening multi-

South Africa The Last Fifteen Years

Most of our major articles on the coming collapse of apartheid were written by a comrade from South Africa. Using a marxist analysis we predicted that the African National Congress would rally to international capitalism over a decade ago when every effort was being made by right wingers and leftists alike to project him as a representative of the working class. We have now made this analytical chronicle into a compendium available from the group address for £3.

The collection contains
Democracy and Proletarian Massacres (WV69)
ANC - Shield of South African Capitalism (WV66)
A Step towards Non-Racial Exploitation (WV65)
Workers Strike for Bosses’ Demands (WV62)
Black Bosses Closer to Power - No Change for the Workers (WV61)

Who will Exploit the Workers? (WV58)
Apartheid to Go; Capitalism to Stay (WV56)
More Carnage for Capitalism (WV54)
Mandela - The Saviour of South African Capitalism (WV51)
NUM Against the Miners (WV37)
Railworkers Win Victory (WV36)
Business as Usual (WV31)
Class Struggle not Sanctions (WV30)
The Leftists and South Africa: Anti-apartheid or Anti-capitalism (WV28)
Ending Apartheid to Save Capitalism (WV24)
Class Struggle not national Struggle (WV23)
South Africa in Turmoil (WV22)
The Other Miners’ Strike (WV19)
South Africa’s Truce means more Imperialist War (WV16)
Angola and Namibia: Butchers prepare the Carve-up (WV5)
Mass Strikes in South Africa (WV1)

THE DICTATORSHIP OF DEMOCRACY

There are numerous ways of selling a product, no matter how tatty or clapped out it is. The capitalists are past masters of this and they use these techniques to excellent effect when selling us the idea of Democracy. Just as they can market and sell a dangerous or unhealthy product or a complete piece of tawdry rubbish, so too can they sell us the idea of Democracy being a healthy part of our political lives, despite the wealth of evidence to the contrary. And so we've had the Local Elections in May and we're faced with the elections for the European Parliament in June, and have to endure as a result the usual parade of politicians and media commentators trying to persuade us that it all really does matter and will make a real difference to our lives. In this they have been aided by the current euphoria in South Africa. Blacks who are getting to vote for the first time in a national election are being told that this will solve all their problems. The media here has not lost an opportunity to shout about the virtues of voting. Sob stories about waiting decades or centuries to vote (it depended on the TV station you watched) were on the screen every night. And it is no accident that Channel 4 has followed this up with a series on Democracy.

Our ruling class is not stupid (although admittedly it does have within its ranks some individuals who shine as outstanding examples of how to be completely witless). As a class it has always understood the real value of Democracy. In the nineteenth century, when the extension of the vote to the working class could have made a real difference, helping workers become organised and win lasting reforms, suffrage was deliberately kept limited. It was only in 1928 that **all** workers were given the vote, since by this time the capitalists felt confident enough that democracy was their most effective method of class rule and that their control of the media could get the results which would best serve them.

More importantly the Russian Revolution had shown workers all over the globe that an alternative type of democracy was possible. But the problem the capitalists had and still have is this; how to make the democratic farce seem relevant to workers. Their favourite (and most effective) trick is to present democracy as a great prize fought for and defended by workers for generations. How else are they going to persuade workers to go out of their way for fifteen or so minutes every five years? Even though it takes very little effort to take part in the democratic process (in fact this is the whole point of it) a large percentage of the voting population simply don't bother.

At the forthcoming local elections about 40% of the electorate won't vote, and the biggest proportion of these will be workers. But it is important for the ruling class to regularly drag workers into giving them and their system some kind of legitimacy by pretending that they are there with the consent of a large section of the working class.

Since the 1920s the ruling class in this country has dragged up two old faithfuls in the arguments persuading workers why they should vote. The first has been to point to repressive Stalinist regimes, try to pass these off as communism, and give them as examples of how democratic

regimes are far better; (the lucky workers in the West have ballot boxes, in the East they have salt mines).

Now that the old Stalinist regimes no longer exist thanks to the effects of the capitalist crisis, old faithful number two is being used; the fascist threat. On this island our class is given the clear message that workers in World War Two fought for the democratic ideal. For this, as part of the electoral jamboree, they will be "remembered" by the bourgeoisie during the spam fritter contests they had lined up as part of the D-day celebrations. The capitalist class now, as then,



Russian police recruits learning the techniques necessary for western democracy

have no regard for workers lives and will use every cynical trick they can to ensure their system for profit making runs as smoothly as possible.

In this they have some unpraised allies in the Left. Organisations such as the SWP are invaluable in persuading workers beginning to see through the democratic farce that it is all part of class struggle. The argument they put forward is the old "lesser of two evils" nonsense, which has absolutely nothing to do with Marxism and everything to do with peddling the lies of our class enemies. So they try to persuade workers that the Labour Party deserves our support in elections, despite the fact that the Labour Party has proved time and again this century that it is nothing other than a capitalist party which will defend capitalism to the hilt as soon as workers threaten it. This is why it has used troops to break strikes more times than any other political party.

The simplistic nonsense of the "lesser of two evils" argument is used by the Left to justify their support for the capitalist status quo against the threat of fascism and the rise of the Right. The most important issue for them is fighting for the capitalists who can organise exploitation and class domination most kindly or efficiently. However Marx always realised that a fight for Democracy was ultimately no more than a fight for the ultimate expression of capitalist dictatorship which would have to be destroyed by workers revolution. In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx fought against the pro-democratic programme produced by the German Social Democratic Party, which was to become numerically the biggest Socialist Party ever, because its democracy was that of the bourgeoisie and not the working class:

Even vulgar democrats, who see the millennium in the democratic republic and who have no inkling that the class struggle must be fought to a conclusion, even they tower mountains above this kind of democratism which keeps within the bounds of what is allowed by the police and disallowed by logic.

This quotation could equally apply to organisations like the SWP today as it did to the Social Democrats then. For Marx democracy was developed by the capitalist class when it felt strong and secure, and it remains today the ultimate expression of powerful capitalism. This is only one good reason why revolutionaries should argue for workers to fight it, rather than get them to support it. But the SWP instead work to give the whole process some kind of legitimacy, giving life to the lie that the working class can be part of the decision making process and can have control over their lives under capitalism.

The idea of democracy being something workers should defend with their very lives is a very powerful one and is reinforced daily by the media at all levels. Democracy is extremely useful. It helps workers feel they are part of the process of government while Parliament makes decisions in the interest of the most powerful sections of the ruling class. It divides workers into individual voters and steers them away from mass action as the tool of any real change. It is put to extremely fruitful use in times of class struggle when elections are called to divert and dispel the actions of the working class. It gives the bourgeoisie vast opportunities to peddle the lie that the problems of capitalism can be solved even partially within national boundaries.

It is used as an ideological weapon to get workers to fight each other (the Second World War would have been impossible without the middle class, liberal lie that democracy was less anti-working class than fascism). Above all, it is the most effective method the bourgeoisie have found yet of class domination. As Engels said:

...it must not be forgotten that it is precisely the democratic republic which is the logical form of bourgeois rule...

(Engels to Bernstein, 24/3/1884, quoted in *Marx - Engels Selected Correspondence*).

But contrary to the carefully crafted image the bourgeoisie puts forward of democracy, the liberal democratic ideal does not exist in reality. Far from providing a forum for political consensus, democracy spawns racial hatred, anti-Semitism and ethnic violence. Evidence of this can be seen this year already in the election campaigns in Italy, South Africa, Russia and in Britain, in Tower Hamlets. Under democracy the working class faces division along racial and cultural lines and is increasingly ground down economically whilst facing ever worsening social conditions. Bourgeois democracy holds no hope for the working class. As Lenin wrote:

Economic distinctions are not mitigated but aggravated and intensified under the freedom of "democratic" capitalism. Parliamentarianism does not eliminate, but lays bare the innate character even of the most democratic bourgeois republics as organs of class oppression.

(Lenin, *Marxism and Revisionism*, 1908)

It is this fundamental point that the Left misses when it calls on us to defend democracy against the fascist threat. But it also ignores the fact that the ruling class itself gets rid of democracy when it feels weakened and vulnerable as a result of the economic crisis. Democracy and Fascism are not opposites, but are simply interchangeable methods of class dictatorship. We have seen this century the ease with which democracy can breed fascism, both by giving fascists a "legitimate" forum from which to preach and by allowing them to take the reigns of power once elected.

For Marx, democracy only ever gave workers the choice of one exploiter or another. For Marxists today there is no doubt that the defence of democracy is not worth one worker's vote. A visit to the ballot box will not give workers any real control over their lives, and will never be the real instrument of change. The choice workers have in reality is the continuation of a system which brings poverty, misery, worse living and working conditions and eventually mass destruction of life. The only real alternative is for workers to take control through revolutionary organs of workers democracy, the workers councils first discovered during the Paris Commune and later used by workers during the Russian Revolution, where workers took decisions in the interest of their own class via mass assemblies, voting for other workers who remained on a workers wage and could be recalled at any time. Until this time comes we'll watch the obscene parade which passes for mass democracy and keep intact the historical lessons our class has given us, especially that brief glimpse given to us in 1905 and 1917 of what real workers' democracy looks like. **RT**

Internationalist Communist Review 12 is the current issue and contains articles on:

The Nature of the Working Class today
The Rise of Hitler and Anti-Fascism
The History of the Italian Left
Imperialist War in Spain 1936-9

£1.50 from the group address (which can be found on page 7).

The Political Bankruptcy of the Capitalist Order

Everywhere there is widespread popular alienation and disillusionment with the institutions of government.

No, this is not a quote from a previous issue of this paper. It comes from the *Financial Times*, that mouthpiece of capitalist confidence, on April 13th. Starting with a focus on the feebleness of John Major it goes on to list the problems of "democracy" everywhere. The list includes growing xenophobia, racism, crime, social alienation and "the perceived failure of political parties and public institutions". It is not just in Britain that the Government appears weak. In France, for example, the Balladur Government, which was swept to power only a year ago is today in deep crisis having been forced to back down from a series of measures intended as the first step to restructure the French economy. And in all European countries the official opposition parties have no alternatives.

Recession or Crisis?

The *Financial Times* analysis (carried out by Ian Davidson) is that apparent government incompetence at the present time has got to be due to more than "the recession". Although we are in the worst economic recession since the 1930s he argues that what is happening is that "current unemployment surely owes as much to massive restructuring as to deficient demand." This insight is hardly new, nor perceptive, especially as it only deals with the symptom and not the cause of the problem. We have been arguing for some time that capitalism is undergoing a new technological revolution which has transformed the nature of labour and

its relationship in the mode of production (See *International Communist Review* 12 *Where is the Working Class?: An Analysis of Class Composition in the Course of the Crisis*). Davidson is correct to point out that restructuring now means permanent mass unemployment.

He is also correct when he states that this means that the old post-war capitalist assumption that the state could provide conditions for universal welfare and full employment by manipulating interest rates (and thereby investment and demand) has collapsed. Neither Beveridge nor Keynes, the architects of post-war state capitalism in Britain, thought that the mechanisms they had put in place (particularly the welfare state) could withstand high levels (i.e. over 5%) of unemployment. Indeed the whole aim of their policies was to prevent such a situation arising again.

Marxists could have told them that history doesn't stand still. The idea that capitalism could banish crises was at the very heart of what Keynes was attempting. However, the process of concentration and centralisation of capital which ultimately creates capitalist crises did not go away because Keynes hoped that it could be contained at the level of the nation state. Today we have reached a situation where even an advanced capitalist state the size of the UK or even Germany is too small to act alone as the lender of last resort, let alone the controller of sufficient capital to defend its own economy. Today, with the possible exception of the US colossus, individual states can only hope to keep some control over interest rates and currency movements by fairly close cooperation at a

financial level. Thus we have seen the central banks of Germany, Japan, the UK and the USA systematically cooperating on a regular basis to maintain some stability in a system which is in severe crisis. Where that cooperation has broken down (as, for example in the Crash of 1987 or the collapse of the ERM) the viability of the whole system of managed crisis has been near to disaster. Such disasters offer a glimpse of future chaos should the mechanisms for managing the crisis globally fail.

On a more day-to-day basis competition for capital means that states are doing everything to make investment attractive to international finance capital. Wages are being cut, social benefits slashed and part-time precarious jobs are replacing previous full-time employment. At the same time multinationals are getting tax breaks and subsidies to establishing new productive units in different countries. All in the name of the "free market"! The free market is of course a political weapon for the imperialists. A rampant US imperialism, not happy at having got favourable terms from the latest GATT talks is now rounding on peripheral countries to establish better living conditions for their workers. All very altruistic except that it is a direct attempt to undermine their cheap labour advantages and it also ignores the fact that about a fifth of US workers live at levels that would disgrace the "Third World".

The Cycle of Accumulation

It is not enough to say that the present capitalist woes are the result of a mere recession in the business cycle nor even due to restructuring. The capitalist business cycle can come and go. The root cause of the capitalist dilemma is that we have reached the end of another cycle of accumulation. Since 1973 we have seen a massive slowdown in economic growth. At first, in the 1970s working class resistance to attempts by the capitalists to make them pay for the crisis had some degree of success. However, since 1977 the bourgeoisie have slowly ground us down by attacking first this, then that sector.

Capitalist accumulation cycles in this century have only been revived on the basis of a massive destruction of surplus value, the like of which can only be achieved in a global war. This is why the First and Second World Wars became "total wars", involving the entire economy and society in every combatant (and many non-combatant) country. The massive destruction of Europe and Japan was the prelude to the biggest boom in capitalist history which lasted throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It was a boom which the capitalists boasted had consigned Marxism to the dustbin but by the end of the 1960s the old problems of profitability were returning. It was not that capitalism was no longer profitable but that its profitability was insufficient to fund renewed accumulation on a big enough scale. Nixon's devaluation of the US dollar to make US allies pay for the crisis in the USA signalled the end of the cycle.

Since then there have been short booms in the business cycle usually achieved by artificial stimulus in demand in the richer capitalist countries. This often led to inflation as governments borrowed heavily to spend their way out of the recession as Keynes had suggested they might be able to do. But inflation was then followed by unemployment as austerity policies cut off capital supplies to state industries in the

1980s. Today we have both. Whilst the Major regime boasts about controlling the dragon of inflation it should not be forgotten that prices are still rising despite the 5 millions now officially admitted as the real unemployment figure. This is the first time since the Tudors that there has been both mass unemployment and steady inflation. In all previous crises prices have fallen under the impact of mass unemployment and the consequent fall-off in demand. If we really did have a free market then prices would fall but then so too would the entire system as existing capital values would also collapse. It is the role of the state internally and internationally to try to prevent this. But the impact of the crisis is making this increasingly difficult - hence the confusion of the governments in every country.

The mainstream bourgeoisie therefore has no answers. At the moment it consciously wants to avoid war so that the most nationalist, protectionist and bellicose in their ranks have been largely marginalised. They are however getting closer to the centres of power, as the success of Zhirinovskiy in Russia showed. And the more that the traditional political parties have no answers except to let the future take care of itself the more irrelevant they appear. That is why in Italy particularly the bourgeoisie has been forced to turn the political system on its head. Lets return to the prognosis of the *Financial Times*

The global economy may mean that national prosperity slips out of the grasp of national governments; so what will political parties promise instead? Law and order, and repression of unemployed criminal classes? Exclusion of foreigners and xenophobia? Nationalist separatism? Patronage for their clients?

What is happening in Italy suggests that the answer to all these questions is yes.

There is one solution to the increasing barbarism of a crisis-wracked system but it is not within the capitalist framework. That is the abolition of the law of value which is the source of the profit system and which is the author of the misery of famine, war and unemployment. A society without money, with free distribution of all necessary goods, without national frontiers and without standing armies is technically possible. The only reason that it is not on the agenda today is because the working class either hopes for some deliverance by capitalism itself or that the cynical claim that Stalinism was socialism has meant that all visions of a new society are, for the time being at least, beyond the present consciousness of the working class. It is the task of the CWO and all communists to build an internationalist political party capable of giving back to the working class the lessons of its own history and to combat every form of bourgeois ideology from Toryism to Trotskyism. In the last resort, as Marx said over a century and a quarter ago, the working class must be responsible for its own emancipation and by that he meant that the working class had to build its own political party independent of all bourgeois ideologies. The capitalists have no solution, only the working class can free society from its present downward spiral into barbarism and all-out global war.

Jock

Continued from page 2

D-Day What is all the Fuss About?

national profitability) then its time to bomb Iraqi cities. The current dose of patriotism comes at a time when workers across Europe are being ideologically prepared for the next round of world-wide slaughter. For the first time for half a century prolonged and bloody war is taking place in the heart of Europe. The political preparations for the war in the Balkans stemmed from the various ambitions of the respective imperialist powers. In its later phases the direct participation of forces from USA, Britain, France, Italy and a host of junior partners is a real warning of what capitalism in decline has

to offer. The politicians have all said their piece about whether to commemorate or celebrate D-Day but all agreed on the correctness and necessity for imperialist slaughter. Those same shysters are preparing us for the next round when they unite to demand intervention in the Balkans but conduct their shadow-boxing about the precise form and timetable for the killings.



Don't mourn - organise

The occasional pacifist (the white poppy brigade et al) will shun the D-Day activities, wringing their hands about death and destruction and presenting universal brother/sisterhood as an antidote to wars. That is not our approach. The 20th century has not been a chronicle of war, famine and misery because humanity is evil or simply misled. On the contrary, these abominations have flourished precisely because capitalism as a world system can offer no better alternative. That is why we pose the need for international communist revolution to destroy capitalism root and branch. The development of a layer of fully class-conscious Communist militants within the working-class must be our reply to the D-Day carnivals and the bosses' other ideological preparations for the next World War. **KT**

Italy

The Farce of the Second Republic

From Battaglia Comunista 4 (April 1994)

When a Pope dies another takes his place - the important thing is continuity. When a regime dies it is reconstituted on a new basis. In this case as well it is fundamental that the system guarantees the future both in political, and even more importantly, in economic, terms. And so far that's what has happened and is still happening in the tortured passage from the First to the Second Republic.

In simple terms finance capital and the "captains of industry" have decided to change their spots by forcing the old order to dissolve, replacing it with one which can meet the severe demands of the economic crisis better. The dramatic change which has left only a few (even if they are famous) bodies on the battlefield, happened for three good reasons.

First of all, because the old political class which was more useful in fighting the Cold War than in looking after Italian capital's accumulation needs ended up simply satisfying the greed for personal enrichment of those whom it had chosen, paid and on every occasion had defended and excused. Italian capitalism's heart did not grieve over the wrongdoings of its political caste. The former Christian Democrats and the PSI (Italian Socialist Party) were well versed in feathering their nests inside the State institutions. They could happily rob, murder collude with the criminal underworld and use the fringes of the armed forces and secret service agencies for non-State ends. They could create a frightening system of extortion based on backhanders and physical threats so long as they carried out the task assigned to them by capital - to pass laws, oversee and administer public affairs in the interests of big business. If this declined so too did their functions and legitimate right to carry on.

Second, the seriousness of the crisis required a "new" political class, pliable, efficient and capable of responding quickly to the demands coming from the centre of the system. Since the spring of 1992 this has been loudly called for by Confindustria (Italian version of the CBI - ed.), entrepreneurial capital and the leading finance capitalists.

Third, the management of the crisis would have brought blood and tears to the working class in the form of lay-offs, chronic unemployment and wage cuts. The inevitable introduction of entry-level (i.e. lower) wages, of "solidarity" wages (i.e. where wages are cut to preserve jobs) and of fixed term employment contracts by a State faced with £200 billions of debt ruled out of the question of any gradual introduction of reforms. A political ruling class which has been totally discredited, especially in the eyes of the labouring masses, could not manage this enormously heavy policy of sacrifices. This led to the decision to wipe the political slate clean and put in place a "new" set of politicians.

But the first problems soon appeared. The old political layer disappeared covered in infamy and hatred, and we have witnessed a race towards the centre ground, defined as the place where political power is physically managed. The traditional right has begun to pretend that it is no longer fascist, whilst the traditional left has finally forgotten to pretend that it is communist. The remains of Christian Democracy has stayed where it was, in the centre but with neither power nor credibility. All parties presumed that they represented the right alternative to the old order, or rather to themselves. But the big bourgeoisie had already half-formulated an idea and it was called the PDS (Party of the Democratic Left,

the former Italian Communist Party - ed.) For two reasons.

The first is that the PDS rather than the hybrid coalition of the Right had a better chance of guaranteeing stability throughout the whole national territory, as well as having a minimum of governmental experience which the other forces did not have. The second was the worry that the austerity programme might be better managed by the Left, especially with the aid of the trades unions than Bossi (head of the Northern League - ed.), Fini (MSI or neo-fascist boss- ed.) or Berlusconi et.al.

There were plenty of signs of this. From the other side of the Atlantic, Clinton, ex-CIA boss Colby and other US politicians put in a good word for the PDS. In Italy itself both the Confindustria of Abete and the editorial board of "Sole 24 Ore" (Italian business magazine - ed.) and even Ciampi, the outgoing Prime Minister, announced that the eventual entry of the PDS into government would not pose too many problems. All which meant a preference rather than a forced decision which if it had become operative would have had some positive elements in terms of conservative management of the present crisis, and for the future carrying out of the policy of sacrifices towards the increasingly exasperated working class.

But then old elements of the former regime got in on the act and thus Il Cavaliere (the Knight, in shining armour -ed.) arrived on the scene. Berlusconi decided to go on into politics when the signals in favour of the PDS and the left bourgeoisie became too strong to be ignored. For him, ex-member of P2 (the masonic lodge made up of leading right-wing politicians linked to bombings by the secret services -ed.), of the CAF, closely linked to former Socialist Prime Minister, Craxi in both business and friendship, an entrepreneur with enormous privileges from the credit institutions linked to the centres of power, a victory for the Left could have represented the collapse of his empire and even of himself (given his £2 billions of debt and his personal isolation).

The paradox is that Berlusconi is presented as the new man of Italian politics, the free spirit capable of resolving the problems of Italy PLC, having exploited a semi-monopolistic regime in every sector in which he has operated, from finance and construction right through to the television networks. The results are obvious. Having exploited millions of pounds of state finance to fit out an empire of 40,000 employees, he has been forced to hand over his firms to Tato, the specialist in debt containment in order to reduce running costs by huge lay offs. Forza Italia! (Come on Italy!) Lets pay the Cavaliere's debts! That's the real image of the new prophet of Italian capitalism!

The Reasons behind a Victory Foretold

Whilst the big bourgeoisie expressed its preference indirectly Berlusconi was creating the conditions for his overwhelming success, aided by a small series of major factors which the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the old political order had produced.

The first of these factors was to be found in the enormous political confusion into which the electoral mechanism had been thrown by the increasing political homogeneity of the electoral manifestoes of the Right, the Centre and the so-called Left. The search for an alternative to the

old regime and a wide feeling of protest which reached hate proportions has ended up by favouring the new, not in terms of political content, but rather in the method of presenting its image.

The second factor can only be television. The "opium of the people" of modern society has played a decisive role from which Berlusconi was able to gain the maximum advantage. Never before, thanks to the proximity of, *tangentopoli*, the bribes and backhanders scandal, has there been such a parsimonious use of public funds for electoral propaganda. There have been very few posters, few meetings, no electoral debates.

The army of pollsters that went around assessing the possibilities of the candidates has also disappeared. All these were replaced by the great "mass communicator", television. For Il Cavaliere who could use both his own and the State's networks playing at electoral competition through television succeeded perfectly. The Berlusconi method succeeded in delivering to a telly-addicted electorate a sort of "virtual politics" deprived of any content whatsoever, but full of reassuring images and slogans. Choreography and music did the rest.

With a party which didn't exist he succeeded in drawing together an army of small businessmen, salesmen and lawyers. He received the electoral support of a part of the old Christian Democrats and the remnants of the Craxian PSI. He stole votes from the Northern League itself by fishing in the same consumerist pond and has conned hundreds of thousands of housewives drugged by his television programmes. But the most serious thing is that by posing as the man of providence capable of creating a million jobs he succeeded in reaching the working class. In this case he was helped by the fact that for years on the Italian political scene and in the consciousness of the working class a sullen servile conformism towards the system has dominated. For decades the Italian proletariat has not had a class organisation to act as a focus of political direction. Its political destiny has been in the hands of the most perfidious of all the Stalinist communist parties, so degenerate that, when it has smelled the first whiff of power it has forgotten even to pretend to say that it is communist. Instead it has breathed life, forty years too late, into a social-democratic grouping whose greatest object is the defence of the market economy, of exploitation of the workforce, and their institutional expression; the democratic bourgeoisie. In such conditions of political and ideological disarmament it is not surprising that not just the fringe of the proletariat but even its most solid parts have fallen into the *Forza Italia* trap.

But however things end up - whether Il Cavaliere succeeds in forming a new government, or whether a transitional government to a new constitution is set up, or even whether the bourgeoisie takes another course, one thing is certain, the road to the Second Republic will be paved with the blood and tears of the working class. A Berlusconi government with Fini and Bossi, with Fini but without Bossi, with Bossi and the PDS or whatever other alchemy you like, will have to carry out the most ferocious attack on the working class since the Second World War. The savage

crisis of the capitalist system can only be tamed by drinking the last drop of proletarian blood.

The "virtual politics" of Il Cavaliere asserts that the recovery is at hand and that within a year there will be a million new jobs. Capitalist logic teaches us that full employment or even a recovery of the jobs already lost are not compatible today with the choice of restructuring to a high technological level. And the reality capitalism shows us that for the old, even the minimum conditions of social assistance (health insurance, pensions), no longer exist. Whilst for the young, the choice is between chronic unemployment and hyper-exploitation, thanks to the new minimum wage for young workers and fixed term contracts reflecting the most perverse logic of the capitalist system - use it and throw it away. The army of have-nots is progressively growing in the face of the ever-more sophisticated capacity of capitalism to produce goods and services, i.e. to satisfy more social needs, in theory. But this capitalism cannot do, as it very well knows This is why it is politically reorganising in order to present the virtues of the profit system by adopting the most timely changes in political structure, of which the Second Republic is just one variant. **FD**

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Racism and Anti-racism at the Service of the Capitalist State

Fight Racism Fight the Racists' State

All over Europe racist attacks against minorities are on the increase. Much of this is down to the activities of neo-fascist groups like the BNP in Britain. Obnoxious though these racist scum are they are only pimples on the arse of capitalism.

The Capitalist Crisis

Capitalism is in deep crisis. It has been for two decades. Unemployment can no longer be shrugged off as temporary. It is a permanent feature of every economy in the world. In Britain up to 20-25% of the population live below the official poverty line. The social security bill is now so enormous that the capitalist state is bankrupt. Its only policy today is to attack those who are the weakest and most marginalised. Black or white, it does not matter when it comes to housing benefit cuts or paying VAT on basic needs. But if capitalism can keep its victims at each other's throats they will be no threat to the system.

Democratic Racism

Remember Joy Gardner? There are many more like her, killed by the democratic state. The state has many more racist deaths to account for than any neo-Nazi gang. And where it does not resort

The police murderers of Joy Gardner will soon be on trial. Since her death we have seen further murders, not only by the racist state, but also by racist individuals and gangs. While the state continues to practise its own racist violence it also continues institutionalising racism in its social policies. To disguise all of this it is quite prepared to use the law to try its own agents.

With elections due every section of the ruling class (including their would-be members, the Trotskyists) wants to declare their own anti-racist credentials. The leaflet below, originally distributed at last October's London demonstration against the BNP has been the basis for subsequent interventions by the CWO at local anti-racist rallies sponsored by the Left-wing hangers-on of the Labour Party. Nobody who regards themselves as 'progressive' or of the 'Left' will disagree with 'anti-racism'. What the left-wing apologists of capital fail to do, however, is make the connection between the growing racism of present-day society and capitalism's deepening economic crisis. It may be a truism to say that the only way to fight racism is to get rid of the conditions which engender it. It is a truth which is seldom spoken by those who are more interested in winning support for capitalist democracy by jumping on populist bandwagons and moral posturing. Our stand is totally different. It is for the independent action of the working class against the democratic state.

to violence its political tools (of all parties) play the race card in order to win votes, thus creating a climate of racism. The racism of the democratic state should not be forgotten.

Workers' Self Defence not Democratic Demos

The present campaign against the BNP is a great democratic bandwagon for all to jump on. The BNP cannot be tolerated. However, petitioning the state which everyday arrests blacks who try

to defend themselves against racist attacks is not the way to get rid of them. Instead of lining up alongside media-hungry politicians, the task of revolutionaries is to encourage the united action of all workers, black and white, and especially in any local community like Welling where racists organise. Such action has been successful in uniting workers in the past. Whilst anti-racist marches might look good on telly they do not halt racist attacks. The defence of black and Asian workers is best carried on by the united force of all workers in any area.

There is no denying that racism is growing with capitalism's crisis but anti-fascism today is also a massive diversion which is useful to the capitalists. The truth is that, despite all the hype about the Isle of Dogs, the main threat to workers doesn't come from the BNP but from the capitalist state whether it is democratic or not. The capitalist system is crumbling worldwide. It has no future to offer any of us except more hardship and barbaric wars. By their alliances with capitalist politicians the anti-fascists make out that democratic capitalism is worth supporting. It's not.

The Real Way to Fight Racism is to Fight Capitalism

It's time for class conscious workers to come together in an independent political movement dedicated to fighting for a real alternative to capitalism. In the final analysis only an end to the profits system and the misery it brings will open up a new society from which racism is banished for all time. This will take some time to achieve and there is a long and difficult road ahead but this is the only goal for the working class today.

**Smash the racist and capitalist
state!
For workers internationalism!
For an end to exploitation!**

Bosnia

Americans and Russians behind the Projects for Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia

Translated from Battaglia Comunista 3, 1994

The conflict in ex-Yugoslavia between the Serb, Croat and Islamic bourgeoisies, the explosive result of the dissolution of the central state as the consequence of the economic crisis, is allowing ever greater evidence to emerge concerning the imperialist patrons who are behind this extremely dirty war. While the power play over the division of Bosnia continues, the civilian population has to pay all the consequences. The fragmentation of Yugoslavia has inevitably caused the great powers to enter the field.

First, the separation of Croatia and Slovenia was recognised with great solicitude by Germany, with the strategic aim of enlarging the Mark's economic area. This could not be a matter of indifference to the other European countries or to the US. Despite the much proclaimed European

unity, they all sought to carve out a sphere of influence for themselves and obstruct German expansionism. But now the ball seems to be in someone else's court.

The recent Washington accord, under American direction, between the Muslims and Bosnian Croats for the creation of a federation in Bosnia, at the same time in confederation with Croatia itself, shows how devoid of scruples the bourgeois vultures are. Whilst they were shooting at each other until yesterday, now everything is just grist to their mill just so they can take something back home. On the opposing side, the Serbs, now more than ever under the protection of their Russian big brother, aim to get as much as possible to add to the 70% of Bosnian territory they have already conquered by force of arms.

Once again there is a repetition of the bipolarism that the end of the cold war appeared to have disposed of once and for all. In reality, the imperialist brigands remain such, and, even if they are in crisis or in agony prior to shuffling off this mortal coil, they are ready for any and every vile deed. As if the centuries have passed in vain, on the ashes of ex-Yugoslavia there rises again among the two largest contenders the myths of Greater Croatia and Greater Serbia. Just as the secret pact between Tudjman and Milosevic foresaw in March 1991.

Once the partition of Bosnia has been blessed on the diplomatic level by the guarantees of the world's principal powers, the second objective is substantially to get credits and become integrated into international markets. After years of massacres, these gentlemen hope to present themselves at the cash desk for their reward. The Serb and Croatian bourgeoisies are rubbing their hands as they probably believe capitalism's future to be rosier than it actually is.

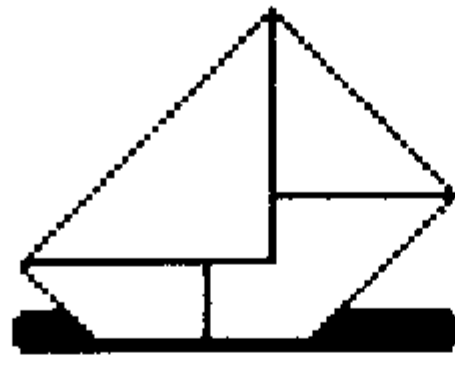
This pious illusion will soon be disappointed by the facts, as the crisis in the capitalist accumulation cycle is irreversible, and, moreover, their great imperialist protectors will not delay in presenting their bills to their vassals. If the various factions of the Yugoslav bourgeoisie have been able to propose and dispose at their leisure, this is due

to the insufficient response of the proletariat.

The present weakness of the class is worrying against the background of the bourgeoisie's spiralling warmongering which is manifesting itself in various parts of the globe. If capital enters into this vicious circle of crisis and war without there being any resistance, the situation seems very bad for the proletariat. Without the revival of class conflict, beginning in places of work, without the revolutionary programme for communism which only revolutionary vanguards can carry into the working class, there will be no possibility for putting an end to capitalist barbarity. Starting the construction of the revolutionary party on a solid class basis means preparing the indispensable instrument of the working class, and failing to do this means being unprepared when the struggles recommence. It means preventing sterile bourgeois pacifism and social democratic reformism from putting down roots leading to inertia or to the events which lead to workers lining up with their own bourgeoisie, as has happened too often in the past and continues to happen now. **CG**

Notice to Readers
Due to the space devoted to South Africa in this issue the second part of the Class Consciousness text which we began in **Workers Voice 71** has been held over and will be published in our next issue.

Letters to the Editor



Political debate and discussion are the lifeblood of any organisation which wishes to be part of the formation of a revolutionary class consciousness. *Workers' Voice* appeals to all readers to become an active part of that process by sending in their comments and criticisms. All will be printed (with initials only) and where necessary replies furnished.

The Dangers of Sectional Struggles

In our last issue we published a letter from sympathiser engaged in Employment Training who had become involved in a struggle against the conditions under which that "training" was given. The workers involved had tried to link up with other workers and not just those on ET but eventually found themselves isolated. Although the ultimate failure of the initiative was predictable, we are printing this letter as the author intends it as a warnings of the dangers of sectional struggles which try to utilise the so-called Labour Movement. We will take up the issue of sectional struggles in a future issue.

Dear Workers Voice,
Comrades,

Thank you for printing my letter. It is a pity that more workers do not air their views in the revolutionary press, bringing an idea of the everyday experience of ordinary proletarians to a wider audience. I can only agree with each point you made. Since my previous letter I have witnessed and had a small involvement within an attempt by some unemployed workers to strike back against their continued and increased exploitation.

Here in Sheffield a group sprang up - WIT - Workers in Training, an initiative coming out of the experience of people on training schemes. Unfortunately its only successes were minor and marginal. Those involved in the dispute were largely reabsorbed into the mill of the training scheme. The experience, though, provides a number of lessons:

- **first of all**, that workers here remain generally demoralised and atomised, consequently, they fall easy prey to either intimidation or petty bribery, after long periods of demoralising isolation and poverty it is easy to be bought with a few pennies, pitiful promises and the like, all of the lessons of the years of working class defeat seem to be borne out in this;

- **secondly**, where reformism takes the lead in such matters, WIT was largely tied to and so shaped by an unemployed centre funded by the union movement, the lack of political experience of workers coming together is not capable of

resolution in a revolutionary way, reformists breed reformist organisations;

- **thirdly**, demands which begin and end with the specific, the local, the immediate, without gaining any substance from demands which properly address the problems of the proletariat within the crisis of capitalism, gain no proletarian perspective, as a result they are easily turned into a capitalist perspective.

It is a pity that a possible response from unemployed workers has effectively become an empty shell. There is still a chance though for the unemployed to fill it and give it a meaningful content and so to do something on their own behalf against the ongoing attacks by the boss class and its state. It is interesting to note that in France, demonstrations and eventually a riot, admittedly largely involving the unions, spelt the end of the Balladur plan to reduce the minimum wage for young unemployed workers. Whereas, VW have forced through an enforced restructuring plan and Air France also forced through a referendum of workers. In one instance workers have shown some sort of response to the state attempt to aid capital in its crisis, whilst workers elsewhere are being drawn into participation in their own increased exploitation.

I can only say that this patchy response by the working class must come to an end some time. Workers, must wake up to the fact that capitalism offers us nothing. Training schemes mean half-baked skills for half-baked wages. The bosses can only offer us redundancy, shorter hours, less pay, increased rates of work, higher taxes, reduced benefits - every means at their disposal to increase our poverty and their wealth. Unions, the social democrats of whatever party, stalinists, liberals can only give us unsatisfying and unsatisfiable promises. We have to wake up to our own class interests. I hope that in the future other initiatives like WIT will spring up with some blood, spine and breath, the unemployed need to organise and find ways of fighting back against it all.

Yours in solidarity,
with revolutionary greetings,
A. Juggler.

continued from back page

Attacks on the Working Class - A Communist Response

workers experience when confronted by the capitalist stranglehold. Our analysis of Trade Unions as agents of capitalist discipline does not allow us the luxury of ignoring the day to day reality of how the Unions act to bind workers within the bosses' frameworks. All over the planet there are flickerings of resistance to the capitalist onslaught. That resistance is partial and uneven. The lessons of those struggles must be analysed and incorporated into a communist response.

Fundamentally, communists must deepen and extend our presence inside the working class.

We are not know-alls with a book of pre-prepared glib answers to the type of questions raised above. On the contrary the lessons of all workers' struggles should enrich our theoretical understanding of capitalism in decline and how our class will put an end to it. We continue to argue for generalised class response as the first step to a communist future - the only antidote to the power of the bosses and their Trade Union allies.

SD/KT

Life of the Organisation

Who are we?

The Communist Workers Organisation has existed since 1975 but the political origins of our positions are much older. We regard ourselves as heir to a common tradition which goes from the Communist League of Marx and Engels through the First, Second and Third Internationals to, most recently, those left currents which were expelled from the Third International in the 1920's as the process of Stalinisation developed. We have always been opposed to Stalinism, Maoism, Trotskyism and all the other counter-revolutionary distortions of Marxism.

Since 1984 we have formed part of the **International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party** initiated by **Il Partito Comunista Internazionalista** (*Battaglia Comunista*).

Our Basic Positions

- 1. We aim to establish a stateless, classless, moneyless society without exploitation, national frontiers or standing armies and in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all (Marx): COMMUNISM.**
- 2. Such a society will need a revolutionary state for its introduction. This state will be run by workers' councils, consisting of instantly recallable delegates from every section of the working class. Their rule is called the dictatorship of the proletariat because it cannot exist without the forcible overthrow and keeping down of the capitalist class worldwide.**
- 3. The first stage in this is the political organisation of class-conscious workers and their eventual union into an international political party for the promotion of world revolution.**
- 4. The Russian October Revolution of 1917 remains a brilliant inspiration for us. It showed that workers could overthrow the capitalist class. Only the isolation and decimation of the Russian working class destroyed their revolutionary vision of 1917. What was set up in Russia in the 1920's and after was not communism but centrally planned state capitalism. There have as yet been no communist states anywhere in the world.**
- 5. The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party was founded by the heirs of the Italian Left who tried to fight the political degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern in the 1920's. We are continuing the task which the Russian Revolution promised but failed to achieve - the freeing of the workers of the world and the establishment of communism. Join us!**

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Il Partito Comunista Internazionalista,
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Appeal to Readers

Twenty years of capitalist onslaught have left communist groups as tiny minorities compared to the tasks in front of us. Our resources are inadequate to fight the lies of the capitalists (both free market and state varieties).

We therefore appeal to all contacts, readers, sympathisers and subscribers to help in the struggle to give an authentic internationalist communist voice to the process of self-emancipation of the working class.

You can help by sending for bundles of leaflets or papers. The essence of political organisation is debate so you could also help by sending us letters (however critical), either about articles in previous issues or about your own experiences or ideas.

The continuation of capitalist rule depends on the passivity of the exploited class. Help us to break that cycle.

Publications

The Platform of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

This is now available, in an updated version in English, and will shortly be translated into French, Spanish, Italian, German and Farsi. Each price £1.

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Readers' Meetings

Sheffield

The Sheffield section of the CWO meets every third Tuesday of the month (next meeting May 17th) in Moseleys Arms, West Bar Green (opposite the Fire Museum). All welcome.

London

These will be held regularly in Conway Hall. Write to group address for details.

Public Meeting

Sheffield

Which Way to Socialist Revolution?

Debate with the Socialist Party
Thursday, May 26th 8pm.
Three Cranes Hotel, 74 Queen Street

Capitalist attacks and working-class responses

Capitalism is in deep crisis worldwide. Internationally the capitalist answer is to try to make the working-class pay. This situation is global - in Germany VW workers were made to take pay cuts. In France young workers have had to fight against their wages being lowered and in Italy such cuts have succeeded. In India a mass demonstration of some 300,000 workers was attacked by the police on the streets of Delhi. And these are just a few obvious examples.

In Britain bankrupt capitalism is attacking workers' living standards across a wide front. Real unemployment is about double the Government's official figures taking into account those on phoney schemes or removed from the count by one of the many ploys. More and more workers, in both the state run and private sectors are "encouraged" to accept pay cuts usually agreed by the Trades Unions. The cutbacks in services which workers have previously used have meant further hardships for those employed in the services as well as those who are actual or potential "consumers".

These varied attacks come from a ruling class which is solidly united but they are launched on the working-class section by section in turn generating a section by section response. As far as the cuts in Council services are concerned Labour Councils deliver the same cuts as Tory Councils, although they also deliver extra doses of hypocrisy and humbug.

The working class' response to these attacks remains trapped within the boundaries set by the Trades Unions and the capitalist leftwing activists. What follows is a report from a sympathiser of the CWO on the response of the Sheffield Council workers to the attacks being carried out by the Labour City Council. This report highlights the continuing attacks which capitalism (via the Council) has carried out against the working class. It deals particularly with the anti-working class role of the Unions and of the leftists who play key roles in the local leadership. It concludes by outlining the questions which have been repeatedly raised in discussion with Council workers and attempts to draw the necessary lessons.

The Sheffield experience

During the 1980s Sheffield City Council was held up by many left Labourists as a flagship Council showing the benefits of "municipal socialism". As the crisis has deepened such claims have been exposed as the nonsense that they always were. In fact, one result of the play-acting in this particular patch of the much-vaunted "Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire" is a number of former leading councillors (David Blunkett, Clive Betts and Helen Jackson) now getting fat pay-packets in the House of Commons.

The more tangible outcomes for workers in Sheffield is the level of services provided by the Council has been slashed backed each year. The Labour Council has pushed through a seemingly endless series of school closure plans resulting in schools for all age groups being shut-down. Similarly whole areas of welfare provision have been reduced while facilities including Sports Centres and Libraries have all been chopped away. For the workers who work for the Council the other side of these cuts in services has been the lopping of jobs and attacks on the pay and conditions of the remaining workers. The graph below shows the fall in the number of council employees in the last 6 years.

The attacks have been carried out in such a way that the full effect can only be seen in retrospect. Each year the Council and Unions have presented

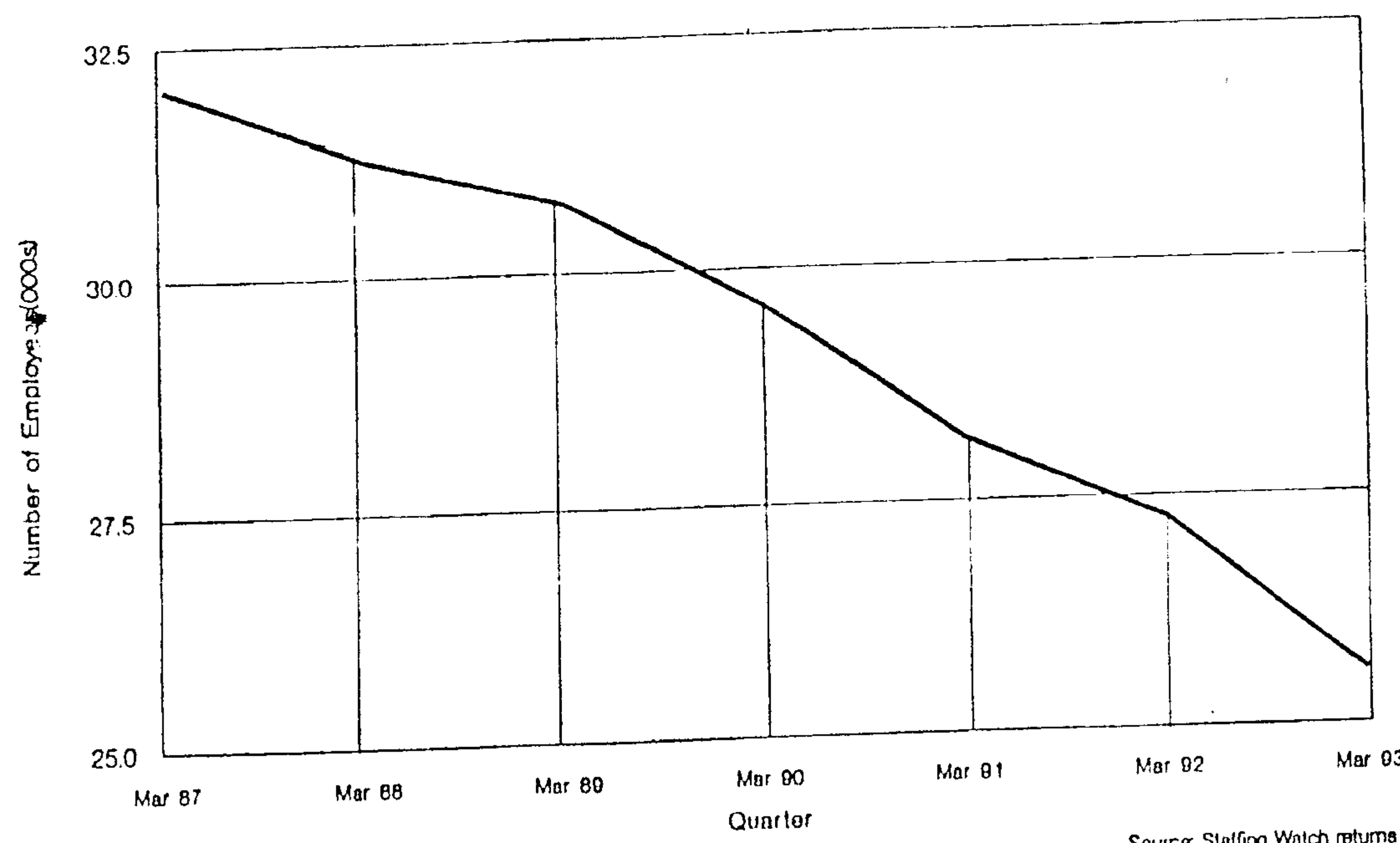
one or more packages including a range of cuts and in the last 3 annual budgets real reductions in pay. This included the loss of 3 days pay during 1992-93 and of 7 days during 1993-94. As well as the job losses which have affected every significant section of the workforce there have also been specific reductions aimed at segments of the workers, such as the reduction in the long-established system for certain workers receiving mileage allowances. Successive attacks have also been deliberately targetted on different sections of the workforce to reduce the likelihood of a united working-class response.

Each year the Council has come back time after time to make further attacks, to drive home the lousy deal agreed by the Unions at the start.

The latest round

It was no surprise when the Council came up with another package of cuts and redundancies for 1994-95. As in previous years, many workers could see no alternative to accepting some such package. On the other hand there are a large number of workers who have learnt from the experience of the last few years. These workers are fed up carrying the burden of the Council's

Total Numbers Employed 1987-1993



financial problems. However there is no generalised consciousness amongst the workers that the Council's problems stem directly from the wider crisis of capitalist profitability and the desperate scramble to restructure. Consequently the Trades Unions have been able to keep control of the workforce and prevent any independent class action expressing itself and reaching the kind of consciousness mentioned above.

A new factor in this years situation has been the fact that the leadership of one of the main Union branches (Unison 2, Sheffield) has been taken over by leftists, particularly the SWP. For any workers looking to the Trotskyists to provide a real alternative to capitalism the events in Sheffield should serve as a warning.

Naturally to keep their left credentials the SWP (and their fellow Trots, particularly *Socialist Organiser*) have to put a left gloss on the Union and Council negotiating round. On this occasion the Union branches dominated by the left called a one day strike on March 10th. Since then the Union's campaign has disappeared into thin air with separate departments agreeing another round of depressingly familiar cuts and other "money saving" schemes. A look at what happened before and after March 10th is a useful lesson in understanding the way in which the Unions in general and the left in particular

mislead workers who attempt to defend themselves.

The Role of the Unions and the Left

At any meeting where ordinary Union members were entitled to intervene the main lines of discussion were established in advance by the various layers of the Trade Union machine. In practice this was usually the shop-stewards who, far from the independent role fantasised about by the left, act as the local agents of the Union machine. More than once individuals wanting to argue for actions which might have threatened the Union stranglehold were told that "its against national policy" - hence out of order. Similarly where tactics or strategy were debated the main lines of discussion were already decided by the various blocs who were represented on the various Union committees. This stranglehold resulted in the time-honoured mish-mash of long complex motions, confusing amendments, addendums etc. making it almost impossible to argue for action outside the Union straitjacket.

The Unions, irrespective of their leaderships, went out of their way to comply with the laws which proscribe how and when strikes can be

Council elections on May 5th!

This reinforcing of Labourist illusions came to a peak at the anti-racist rally in Sheffield on April 30th at which many of the leading lights in the Council Unions were also present. There for all to see was the real role of the left as upholders of the capitalist system. All the Trotskyists who had peddled the variations on a theme on and around March 10th were there in force. In the week before the March the SWP had supplemented their no votes for Nazis ("but there's no BNP or NF standing in Sheffield" - "Ah, that shows how successful our no votes for Nazis campaign has been" etc. etc.) posters with appeals to vote Labour on May 5th "but build a socialist alternative". The local "Workers Power" group scheduled a meeting for 26th April on "Why socialists should vote Labour" while "Socialist Organiser" were busy collecting volunteers to canvass for Labour candidates.

Problems facing Communist Militants

No two sets of union manoeuvres will be identical. Nevertheless the successive "campaigns" amongst the Sheffield Council workers are not untypical examples of how the Unions maintain their grip on the working class and ensure they stay within boundaries safe for capitalism. In discussing with Council workers there are a series of points which we will continue to encounter until the class starts to seriously challenge the power of capital and all its agents.

- Both the bosses and the Unions have bombarded the workers with propaganda saying that the Council is not to blame. The real enemy is the Tory government. This smokescreen is even further increased with the Left's open pro-Labour campaigns. When your boss is a Labour council the Number One problem is getting a largely pro-Labour workforce to see that this is their enemy.

- The need to reach a "reasonable" and "acceptable" solution. Any talk of taking on the bosses' system is at best hidden in the more obscure pages of the left's papers after thousands of words extolling the benefits of democracy and Trade Union activity. This all obscures the fact that the economic crisis is a capitalist crisis and there is **no reason** why it should be the working class who pays.

- Sectional strikes are still a key means by which the Unions undermine any possibility of more generalised class action. Many workers recognise that such strikes are futile but cannot see an alternative way to fight.

- Similarly with the legal restrictions. Workers see that they affect our ability to act together but do not challenge their existence. It is also possible that in the future the left will campaign against the laws in order to hide the fact that the Unions are against the working class.

- The power of the Unions enables them to entangle workers in arcane and Byzantine procedures whereby it is difficult to argue for class politics.

- Often the Union's campaigns are actually part of the bosses' own immediate strategy. This can be open (campaigning with the bosses to save this or that plant) or more covert (one day strikes to reduce the wage bill).

- The Union negotiating machinery encourages workers' passivity and enables the Union to use them as a "stage army" to be wheeled on and off as pawns in the bosses' game.

- Last and by no means least - There still remains a deep-seated pessimism in the class in Britain dating back, at least, to the defeat of the miners' strike some 10 years ago.

How do Communists Respond?

Communists cannot ignore the difficulties which

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