

Workers International Press

Monthly paper of the Workers International

July/August 2000

No 25

50p

Workers International congress discusses

How to rebuild the workers' movement

By Bob Archer

IS the political leadership that really expresses the interests of the working class a fusion of socialists with the actual leaders who arise in the working class? Or do individuals and small groups accumulate in some sort of receptacle separate from the working class? This is the main issue for socialists all over the world.

The third congress of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (London 21—22 June) exemplified the stand it has taken since its inception: that the reconstruction of the working class movement is closely linked with the rebuilding of the Fourth International and vice-versa.

The working class is betrayed and left leaderless by the very parties and trade union leaders on whom it has relied to defend its interests. Workers are forced to restore and build their trade union and political organisations while their acknowledged "leaders" railroad through the effects of imperialism's crisis in the break-up of social benefits, privatisation, factory closures, sacking, speed-up and the imposition of anti-working class laws trampling on the trade union and democratic rights of workers and the wider masses.

The congress was attended by delegates and visitors from the old world and the new, from eastern and western Europe, from Africa and from Latin America. Visitors included leading trade unionists in the building trades and on the railways. The main problem of how the working class movement can be and is being rebuilt and restored was central to all its discussions and decisions.

There was a particularly strong representation from South Africa and Namibia. These comrades, including industrial trade unionists, community leaders and young Marxists, quickly integrated with African activists living in

the UK who attended the congress. A delegation from the National Garment Workers' Federation of Bangladesh was prevented from attending by an exceptionally urgent situation at home which required the person presence of union leaders. (See report and pictures on page 12).

Activists from refugee groups and women's organisations in the UK also attended. Two visitors from the PSTU (Brazilian section of the LIT-CL) a group from the International Workers' League (UK section of the LIT-CL) and a guest from PORE (Spanish Section of International Workers' Unity) also participated fully in the work of the congress.

The problems and tasks of the working class, and therefore of the Workers' International, set out in the resolutions have since the Congress been strikingly confirmed by the Thatcherite actions of the ANC government in South Africa. (See page 7 inside).

All over the world the workers and masses respond. The mass strikes of the South Korean KTUC, the huge turn-out of Australian trade unionists against anti-union legislation, the municipal workers' actions in Johannesburg and the day of action against the new labour code in the former USSR all express that elemental need.

The same is true of the mass protests against the way the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the transnational banks and corporations plan and carry out the imperialist attacks on people's lives and on the environment of our planet.

The success of our third congress means that the Workers' International to Rebuild the Fourth International can play its role in encouraging the growth and organisation of a workers' revolutionary international leadership.



MEMBERS of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union working on the London Underground continued their campaign against Blair government plans to privatise the system with a rally in central London on 21 July. Union Assistant general Secretary Bob Crow (right) addressed their rally.



Inside this issue:

- 2 Opening report to Congress
- 3 Irish worker
- 4&5 Trade union resolution
- 6 Resolution on Africa
- 7 ANC's Thatcherite road
- 8 Resolution on ex-Yugoslavia
- 9 Workers' solidarity with Russia
- 10 Defend asylum seekers
- 11 Mumia Abu-Jamal
- 12 Bangladesh garment workers

EDITORIAL BOARD:

Hungary; Balazs Nagy, Namibia; Hewat Beukes, France; Olivia Meerson, Serbia; Radoslav Pavlovic, Britain; Dot Gibson, Bob Archer, Simon Burgess, Bronwen Handyside, Charlie Pottins, Nick Bailey

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

Bob Archer's opening report to the Congress:

The need for a world party of the working class

The draft resolution prepared for this congress starts with how the crisis of imperialism burst out afresh in Asia in 1997-1998. That followed ten years of propaganda about the "death of Marxism" and the "invincibility" of capitalism and market forces.

Bourgeois economists lavished particular praise upon the "tiger" economies of the Pacific rim, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan, Philippines, Korea, Hong Kong and of course China as the shape of the future.

1997-1998 revealed that the essence of imperialism remained as Lenin and Trotsky had understood it.

The recovery of capitalism after World War II was not the result of internal dynamism or a historical future for imperialism. Without a wholesale deal between the world bourgeoisie and the Stalinist bureaucracy, with the social democracy vying for the position of the Stalinists, it could not have happened.

But the post war boom started to fail in the early 1970s. Since then the crisis of imperialism has returned to the surface, only deeper and more intense. Many of the features Lenin identified are present now, but in even sharper form.

The specific weight of finance capital is now greater than ever. For the imperialist centres, the export of capital is a major economic activity. Giant corporations, especially banks, now dominate all aspects of life to an enormous degree.

Since the 1970's the tendency of the rate of profit to fall has re-asserted itself as a major problem. The rate of profit tends to fall because of the internal contradictions of capitalism itself. Capitalists try to overcome that problem in ferocious competition, take-overs, veritable wars to advance new technology.

At the same time they try to squeeze more and more out of the working class by intensifying labour, throwing more and more workers into unemployment, forcing them to the very margin of civilised life, brutally exploiting those who still have a job, making them work longer and more continuously and achieving higher levels of production.

They also try to claw back all the social gains that workers have made. Proper and adequate health and education services, welfare benefits, public housing, unemployment benefits, are all under attack because this "social wage" is at the expense of employers' profits.

The privatisation of many of these important activities, which on the one hand tends to mask the break-up of workers' and claimants' rights, also brings rich pickings for the bankers who cast greedy eyes on government budgets. Modern capitalism is deeply parasitic.

Bourgeois thinkers now boast that they have "overcome" the crisis of 1997-1998. But the crisis and its "recovery" have done enormous damage. They have inflicted horrific poverty and deprivation upon vast stretches of the world.

Reports emphasise the growing gulf between the wealthy few and the impoverished many.

The working class response to this crisis has been severely weakened because the working class itself does not have a party to fight for its interests on a global scale against the bourgeoisie. Indeed, the official "leaders" of the movement in the trade unions and socialist parties have given imperialism essential assistance to survive.

Millions of workers and poor people are paying a terrible price. Miserable poverty and ruthless exploitation are an experience shared by millions, but there are now huge areas where, in the absence of political leadership and in the midst of the chaos organised by imperialism, the masses are mobilised around reactionary religious and ethnic demagogues. The example of Indonesia is particularly striking here.

The lack of a political party is one which the workers' movement itself is starting to recognise. This is clear from the formation of a workers' party to fight the elections in Korea earlier this year and the Russian movement for a workers' party.

A major task of Workers' International is to make sure that such a world party is established. More and more workers themselves are expressing the need to organise their struggle against capital.

Rebuilding the international movement of the working class and rebuilding the Fourth International are one single movement, although they are also two tasks in their own right, linked together.

They whole movement has to be rebuilt, from the trade unions upwards. Every possible resource has been used by the bourgeoisie to marginalise the working class, to treat it with contempt, to claim that it is disappearing and powerless, that it does not hold the key to the future. And indeed under Stalinist and reformist leaders, the trade unions and parties have fallen into profound crisis as significant struggles have been betrayed.

That is one reason for the emergence of an anti-capitalist movement with a kaleidoscope of political demands. Working within such a movement is vital because millions actually are moved to oppose capitalism by the immediate impact of horrendous exploitation, destruction of small producers and farmers, petty proprietors and whole branches of the economy and massive damage to the planet at the hands of the banks and multinationals.

Millions start to see how the major world organisations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation are tools of imperialist domination by the US imperialists, seconded by their European rivals and accomplices. Fewer, but ever more, are starting to see the United Nations in the same light.

In this movement old liberal, petty-bourgeois distrust of monopoly rubs shoulders with extreme libertarian ideas on the one hand and the intellectuals around "le Monde diplomatique" on the other. A good number of the activists in this movement have passed through various left-wing groups.

To develop this movement, we must above all not seek to lecture it or dominate it, but find ways to turn it towards the working class and at the same

time give the initiative to class conscious workers. Our support for the "leading role" of the working class has to be real, not a coded way of telling people that they have to support this or that political group.

However, the re-building cannot stop at the limits of trade unions. Trade unions by their nature cannot at the same time be the political representatives of the working class.

Both trade unions and a political party are needed.

It is very clear now that the unions must take part in and be involved in building the party. This is very clear to us here in Britain, where all trade union activity is dominated by a political question, the vicious laws which make much trade union action illegal, and place heavy burdens upon trade unionists trying to organise the working class into action to defend its rights. The slightest demand raised by workers here comes straight up against political issues. Also, because of the increasingly international nature of trade and production, even quite modest demands lead quickly to international questions. These two characteristics are very clear and this is an experience which workers around the world are making every day.

On this basis there are political re-groupments in various countries and parts of the world and internationally.

In this general movement we have every interest in helping and participating in rebuilding the working class movement. Indeed, it is the standard against which we must judge all our political work.

Summing up the section on "The proletariat and Its Party", our draft resolution says:

"In taking the steps necessary for establishing a real workers' party, the latter has to achieve an organic fusion between the vanguard of the working class emerging from its struggles and those revolutionary elements or groups from various organisations who are fighting to defend and develop Marxism" (p.24)

The draft resolution says what kind of party workers find they need in the course of their struggles. Its class character must be proletarian; its goal

must be socialism, and therefore it must be revolutionary; it must be international to the very core of its being, and its organisational form must be democratic centralism. All party members must take responsibility for their activities in front of the working class. This is the kind of party class-conscious fighters find to be necessary when they set out to build their own class leadership.

The split in our movement over "liquidation" was over whether such a party was needed. The group which took over the Movement for Socialism was super-liberal in its relationship to all political distinctions but absolutely undemocratic in relation to the party members and the working class, whom it treated with contempt. Committees and committee members had no binding responsibilities, members did what they liked.

This congress will discuss a resolution in relation to the international co-ordinating committee (Koorkom) which takes forward the work for such a new party. This was initiated by the liaison committee of the Workers' International and the International Workers' League (LIT-CI), but it was almost destroyed by the group led by Cliff Slaughter who objected to working with the LIT-CI, above all because the LIT-CI fights for what it considers to be Trotskyism.

The Fourth International has a role in this work because it is the embodiment of living Marxism. That is why its reconstruction is an essential part of rebuilding the movement of the working class. Marxists have a history, represent the memory of the working class. We are convinced therefore of the need for the Fourth International even though the great majority of workers cannot agree and do not know much about us because they have not had any experience of fighting alongside us.

There was a long and difficult struggle in the Workers' International against the tendency to throw all this history out. That tendency, which claims to make the workers' movement itself the centre of all consideration, actually deprives the working class of its own history and of political consciousness,

blunts its ability to assert itself as a class in its own right.

Britain was the cradle of the working class movement in the industrial revolution and up to the formation of the Labour party in the early 20th Century, and Britain shows very important signs of renewal of the working class movement.

Here the decay of the Labour Party has gone further than anywhere else, but the bankruptcy of New Labour is also shaping up as the most dramatic of all the great social democratic organisations. Blair's government has continued to attack the unemployed and the pensioners, has proved unable to solve the problems of the national health service and education because it treats capitalist property as sacred.

It must therefore try to lock down the workers' movement by every device of trickery and mendacious publicity known as "spin doctoring". Huge cracks are now appearing in what was presented as a granite edifice, and this has allowed the start of a renewal in the British working class which must have significance for workers everywhere.

All problems are concentrated in a very dramatic way in the former Yugoslavia. Most of the leaders of the workers' movement around the world, including trade union bureaucrats, did nothing to oppose the barbaric bombardment of Serbia, the military occupation of Kosovo and the refusal to allow the Albanian Kosovars the right to independence. And yet these experiences clearly express imperialism's nature. (A few ex-Stalinists opposed the bombing campaign, but lined up with Milosevic's fascist government).

The experience of the former Yugoslavia urgently raises the choice: barbarism or socialism, and urgently emphasises the need to rouse up the working class against the bureaucrats. The same is true of the Russian invasion of Chechnya.

There are many important points our congress will not be able to touch upon. But the fact that the congress has been held, the discussions it involves and the decisions it takes, will set down a milestone in the struggle of the working class for its liberation.

Youth:

Socialist Youth League's contribution to the Draft Resolution

Stalinism's ideological and political hegemony in the working class movement led to the physical annihilation of the working class and revolutionary vanguard and also their political isolation. It resulted in disorientation of the working class leadership.

The paradox exists that the working class objectively gained strength in its organisations. These organisations became part of the social organism but the older generations have suffered serious defeats and have become demoralised and cynical.

The regeneration of leadership will have to take place through the youth (young workers and socialist youth). This necessitates a serious concentration of the Workers International to

build a youth movement with the Fourth International perspective. The principles of the Permanent Revolution were confirmed negatively in each country of the world and the self-confident youth who feel nothing of the anxiety, fears and uncertainties of the tired old generations are beginning to come to grips with the contradictions and lessons of the past in which the older generation suffered their defeats.

But these lessons will be hard to assimilate and properly interpret without the guidance of the Fourth International.

The central question of the past century was the question of working-class independence. This question was fought out in blood in the popular front in

almost all countries. The inexperienced vanguard of the working class, without the guidance of Marxist theory as embodied in the Fourth International, was led into trap upon trap by Stalinism. The collapse of Stalinist bureaucracy and Stalinism as an ideological force has freed the young vanguard to come to terms with the true revolutionary history.

Flowing out of the First and Second Congress resolutions and the Third Congress Draft resolution it is necessary to include practical strategic implementation such as a programmatic inclusion of the youth in the work of the WI and in the same framework to urgently work towards an international youth conference.

Still available

Draft Resolution for Third Congress

£2.50 including postage and packing

(cheques payable to Workers International)

Available from:

Workers' International,

PO Box 735, London SW8 4ZS

The Irish Worker by John Steel

New Stormont reeling from crisis to crisis

The recent events in the north of Ireland have again demonstrated the inherently unstable nature of the social and political situation there and underlined that the restored New Stormont executive with its two Sinn Féin ministers will continue to reel from crisis to crisis.

When the IRA allowed some of its arms dumps to be inspected and sealed we were told that this was a "watershed". In union, the capitalist politicians and newspapers praised this action and trumpeted about "a victory for democracy", "the victory of the peace process" and how the way was now cleared for "all differences to be aired through the medium of parliamentary politics".

These were in the main, of course, hypocritical comments from those who wholeheartedly supported all the anti-democratic actions of the British state over the past thirty years! But taking their place among the supporters of a six-county democracy was the leadership of Sinn Féin. Its chairman, Mitchel McLaughlin, proclaimed that the sealing of the arms dumps prepared the way for a "normal society" and Gerry Adams talked about the "normalisation of politics".

But Drumcree was to prove that the statelet brought into being by British imperialism and nourished with discrimination, bigotry, intolerance and repression cannot transform itself into a liberal democracy just because Sinn Féin has been led into ministerial positions.

Across the six counties loyalists confronted the police and British army as, for the third year running, the Orange march from Drumcree along the Garvaghy Road was banned. Television showed pictures of the police and army being pelted with anything that came to

hand—stones, wood, shopping trolleys and, in one bizarre incident, a golfer hitting golf balls at them.

Barricades were erected across main roads; cars, buses and vans were hijacked and set on fire; amid intimidation and fears of reprisals, the centre of Belfast and other towns were emptied of people when the Orange Order called for a shutdown; the police and army were fired on by members of the loyalist paramilitary gangs and, needless to say, the attacks on Catholic homes intensified.

The RUC and army were attacked by nationalist youth as they attempted to restrict their movements and contain them to certain areas and the Real IRA placed a 300lb bomb at the police station in Stewartstown, County Tyrone. They followed this with a bomb in London which caused major disruption.

Rather than initiating a period of peaceful democratic reforms, the "putting of IRA arms beyond use" and the restoration of Stormont cannot bring in a situation where the deep-going differences and contradictions are resolved through peaceful, parliamentary debate. The problems for British imperialism have only been partially postponed and will reappear with greater intensity.

But, as in all things, they will not reappear in exactly the same form and this year's Drumcree incidents have confirmed the dramatic changes in Ulster Unionism and the political confusion and disarray among Protestants.

The road barricades, the mass closure of shops and offices and the shutdown of the centre of Belfast may have looked like the loyalist strike of 1974 again. But it really only showed how people feel



A familiar sight — British troops deployed in the streets in the north of Ireland

they are vulnerable to the reprisals of the loyalist killer gangs. And the closure lasted only one day.

The Portadown Orange Order were, to a large extent, isolated—not only within the general Protestant community but also within Orangeism. Only about 2,000 Orangemen and their supporters responded to their call for a mass turn-out at Drumcree.

The days when the Orange Order or the Unionist party could rely on tens of thousands answering their call for political demonstrations have gone. Paisley may bluster and fume

but Unionists are now sharing power with nationalists in a Stormont government and sitting on all-Ireland committees—which was exactly what the loyalist strike of 1974 opposed and brought down.

In contrast to the latest Drumcree demonstration, when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed in 1985 approximately 250,000 filled the streets of Belfast in protest. Ulster Unionism is now riven with splits, even to the extent that David Trimble is trying to end the influence of the Orange Order! These huge demonstrations are a thing of the past.

Unionism is an outdated political philosophy which has faithfully served the needs of British imperialism in the past. Its demise and disarray reflect the changed economic base of the six-counties and the need for imperialism to find different ways to rule.

But this does not mean that the most reactionary elements of Unionism are going to pack up their bags and peacefully go away.

The loyalist paramilitaries do not have any substantial support but the increasing marginalisation and economic deprivation of large numbers of

the Protestant working class, added to the sense of having been betrayed by Britain, is the breeding ground for recruitment.

The loyalist killer gangs have been a "normal" part of the situation in the six counties statelet since its inception. They will not gradually disappear but have to be confronted.

To spread the illusion that they — and the Protestant working class as a whole — will accept the gradual evolution into a united, capitalist Ireland is to leave the nationalist population unprepared and vulnerable.

Congress resolution:

On the national struggle in Ireland

THE restoration of the six-county parliament at Stormont with Sinn Féin taking ministerial positions on its Executive marks the ending of an unparalleled stage of the Irish national struggle. Led by the youth and large sections of the working class this stage of the nationalist revolt lasted over 30 years, causing crisis after crisis at the heart of the British state and forcing Britain to divest itself of all pretences of democracy in its response. Faced with this uprising the British state increased its repression. Its political and judicial arms colluded with its armed forces in a vicious campaign which included: killing unarmed civilians, torture (including the use of sensory deprivation methods), internment without trial, curfews, rigged trials, suspension of jury trials, indiscriminate use of water cannon, CS gas and plastic bullets, direct support for the loyalist killer gangs. Despite the many acts of ingenuity, sacrifice and heroism the nationalist struggle could not succeed while it was dominated by the theories and programme of bourgeois nationalism. The restructured Stormont is not a step along the road to Irish unification but the means through which imperialism

attempts to maintain its control in Ireland. Britain still holds on to its overall rule and will maintain all its means of crushing dissent, including the presence of the British army.

Without a political perspective which differed in its class nature from the needs of British capitalism, the Sinn Féin leadership has been easily, and willingly, led into government with the Unionists. Already they have wholeheartedly joined in attacks on the working class, including initiating hospital closures, and are preparing to take their places on the Policing Board controlling and defending a six-county police force which, despite the name change, will be the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in all its essentials. Yet again, bourgeois nationalism is confirmed as a reactionary ideology.

Above all the need for imperialism — with the aid of the Sinn Féin leadership — to channel the nationalist revolt into ministerial places in government reflects the changed economic situation in Ireland. Britain has to seek new ways to rule. Partition had its roots in the uneven development of capitalism in Ireland and since 1922 imperialism maintained its rule through unconditional

support for the reactionary and bigoted Orange and Unionist bourgeoisie who owned the manufacturing industries in the developed north-eastern part of the country.

It was a life and death question of Ulster capitalists to maintain a direct connection with the British state. They needed to have their fingers directly dipped in England's economic pie with its free access to the world's markets. If Britain had sacrificed them to the Dublin government in a united Ireland they would have had to look for a new imperialist paymaster. The primary role of Britain's garrison in the six counties had always been to protect this link and to counteract the possibility of a rival imperialism establishing a military bridgehead in Ireland.

But these traditional industries such as engineering, linen and shipbuilding have virtually vanished. The numbers involved in manufacturing have been reduced to a tiny handful. However, Britain cannot withdraw, either politically or militarily. Its occupation has fuelled the sentiments of revolt and all the resources of imperialism must continue to be used to preserve "stability". This is driven not only by the proximity of Ireland to Britain and the

constant fear that the revolt spills over to English cities but also by the need to ensure that Ireland, north and south, is safe for the monopolies to plunder.

For Britain, the Orange bosses and their political representatives are largely redundant. Imperialism now needs to rule with the direct involvement and co-operation of the Sinn Féin leadership.

The restoration of the Stormont parliament is a setback and the working class will pay a heavy price for the failure of Marxists to build a leadership and a movement independent from the political ideology of bourgeois nationalism.

The Sinn Féin leadership, foiled by the large injections of politically inspired money from the US and the European Union (EU), believes that the economy of the Northern Ireland statelet will prosper and, through the involvement of cross-border governmental bodies, the partition of Ireland will be seen to be obsolete.

This theory has its base in the growth of the Catholic middle class in the six counties. There is now no material discrimination or disadvantage for Catholics in the middle class professions. But meanwhile the Catholic working class

continues to suffer economic deprivations, discrimination and state harassment. The Protestant and Catholic working class were never more deeply divided. In Belfast the continued ghettoisation — whole communities living behind high steel walls — is a testament to the incapability of Sinn Féin to unite the Catholic and Protestant workers.

Accompanying the decline in traditional industries and the loss of Unionist privileges has been a dramatic fall in the living standards of many Protestant workers. In many housing estates the social deprivations — employment, education, housing — facing Protestant families are as bad, and sometimes worse, than those in the Catholic estates.

Against this background the loyalist killer gangs continue to operate their drug rackets, intimidation, shootings and killings. They do so with the blessings of the leaders of the police and British state intelligence who know that they will need to use them again.

Sinn Féin's accomplishment in leading the nationalist uprising into a restructured Stormont does not end the historic fight for independence. Irish nationalism is an emotion of revolt and undoubtedly

another wave of youth will come forward to challenge the British army and its political representatives — this time including the Sinn Féin leadership.

But unless the lessons of the past are taken on board these struggles will again end in failure. Marxists have always held that the national question is a social question, and moreover, one of the largest magnitude.

Without the fight to bring all the issues that flow from the unresolved national question in Ireland into the workers' movement the nationalist youth will continue to be dominated by bourgeois nationalism. More than ever this means fighting to ensure that the working class uses its international connections to assist the struggle for independence.

The fundamental tasks in Ireland remain:

- (1) The healing of the sectarian breach;
- (2) the winning of national independence from imperialism; and
- (3) the ending of partition.

None of these are attainable as isolated aims in themselves or possible except by means of the socialist revolution. **National tasks and social tasks are inextricably woven together.**

Congress resolution:

The capitalist crisis and the tasks of the trade unions

Rebuild working-class internationalism!

1 Throughout the world, in every country, working men and women and their families are desperately concerned about their present conditions and their future. Today, over 150 years since the first trade unions were formed, millions of workers have no organisation. There is a crisis in the trade unions.

2 In some countries, principally the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the trade unions are banned completely, with those attempting to build them persecuted, tortured, killed or driven abroad into exile. Often forced to try to survive under conditions of illegality, they face the constant fear of deportation thanks to racist and reactionary immigration laws. Masses of workers, in countries of the former USSR, in Asia, Africa and Latin America are owed enormous sums in wages from which their employers have already profited, and China's cheap goods are produced by labour under conditions of extreme exploitation and brutal oppression, sometimes in the form of open forced labour.

3 In the metropolitan capitalist countries unemployment, short-term contracts and casualisation have brought severe falls in union membership, while at the same time official trade union leaderships collaborate ever more openly with the employers and the state against their own members. They refuse to take up a fight against the anti-trade union laws which the ruling class now has at its disposal to use against the trade union movement. This is not a new phenomenon. It is characteristic of the last hundred years that, as a general trend, the existing trade union movement is drawn ever-closer to the state, or transformed into an instrument through which the capitalist class seeks to preserve its rule. Today attacks on the working class and its organisations are intensified.

It is the crisis of capital itself that lies behind the attempt of the ruling class to destroy any effective trade unionism.

4 After the end of World War II, there was a new expansion of world imperialism. Capitalism was afforded a new, if temporary, lease of life under the hegemony of US imperialism, which had emerged at the expense of its rivals in Europe, as the dominant capitalist power. The ruling class, at least in the big capitalist countries, was able to come to a working arrangement with the official leaderships of the working-class movement. The Stalinist bureaucracy and the reformist Social Democratic leaderships disarmed and ensured the defeat of the workers' revolutionary upsurges which followed the end of the war. But, under the pressure of the working class, this "post war settlement" saw a significant expansion of welfare and other forms of spending by the state in many countries of Europe as well as in North America.

5 This new period of extended reproduction brought about a significant increase in the level of employment and in consequence trade union membership. Employers in the big capitalist countries complained of "overfull employment" where, "too few workers were chasing too many jobs". Under these conditions, trade unionism, controlled by a pro-capitalist bureaucracy, was tolerated and in their eagerness to boast a growing trade union membership the bureau-

cracy "overlooked" the seeds of the future crisis as the development of technology led to the deskilling of workers and the greater intensification of labour. "Tri-partisanship" — with the trade union bureaucracy, the employers and the capitalist state coming together in joint bodies to consider "common social and economic problems" — was in vogue. Capitalism was assisted by the state taking over bankrupt industries, compensating the former owners, unleashing private capital and creating new markets, e.g. coal, docks, railways.

6 This was reinforced and justified by an ideology which claimed that, thanks to the work of John Maynard Keynes and the Keynesians, social crises were things of the past and in consequence the conflict between

7 However in the 1970s the fundamental crisis of capitalism surfaced. The collapse of Bretton Woods in 1971 brought about a severe inflationary crisis combined with growing long term and structural unemployment that proved immune to the Keynesian measures which had supposedly made mass unemployment a thing of the past. In the colonial and semi-colonial countries, despite all the claims of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), despite the "development decade" and other such cynical propaganda, there was in truth no "development".

8 In fact it is the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organisation with their so-called "stabilisation plans" that are the chief instru-

ments for imposing the brutal rule of capital in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. This has produced growing instability and unemployment, widespread squalor and the grinding poverty with its attendant diseases which is now endemic at least for all but a privileged few. In the last resort it is these international bodies of capitalism that control

the colonial and semi-colonial countries and not their governments, whatever might be their rhetoric. **The situation in these countries reveals in all its stark brutality that barbarism is not simply a thing in prospect but an actual grim reality today for countless millions.**

12 For the ruling class the collapse of the regimes throughout the former Soviet Union and the countries of eastern Europe was both an expression of this crisis, but at the same time a source of its considerable intensification. The implications of the collapse of those regimes for the situation facing trade unions and the working class in general in the colonial and semi-colonial countries are particularly important. Throughout the 1950s and the 1960s it was possible for a series of leaders in what are now nominally "independent" states in Africa and elsewhere to balance

direct repression. **Nevertheless capitalism has not been able to escape the mobilisation of the working class. In these capitalist "enterprise zones" new trade unions have been built.**



Liverpool dockers went into a struggle of unprecedented scope and aims when they were forced into action to defend their jobs and trade union rights. They have achieved an international link-up of dock workers.

labour and capital had been overcome. Workers were told that Marxism and class struggle were dead and buried. They could look forward to the gradual improvement in their living standards as well as the steady economic and social development of what was euphemistically called the "undeveloped world".

ments for imposing the brutal rule of capital in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. This has produced growing instability and unemployment, widespread squalor and the grinding poverty with its attendant diseases which is now endemic at least for all but a privileged few. In the last resort it is these international bodies of capitalism that control

the mounting crisis, but was an expression of it.

10 This was an indication that a new stage of capitalism's crisis had opened up, and thereby a new stage in the crisis facing the working class and its organisations, including its most basic organisations, the trade unions. Trans-national companies destroyed industries in the metropolitan countries, thus virtually ending apprenticeships and skills training among several generations of young workers, opening up the wholesale loss of jobs under redundancy payment schemes, and the forcing of those lucky enough to have a job to work round-the-clock 12-hour shifts.

11 These industries were then opened up, often with IMF funding, in cheap-labour regions of the world like the Far East and Latin America. Today, despite the UN's International Labour Organisation resolutions, child labour and work bondage increase, and through a brutal neo-colonial exploitation, using worker to undercut worker, capital seeks to create divisions, using war, nationalism, unemployment, racism, religion and

between the "Soviet bloc" on the one hand and imperialism on the other, to some extent, playing one off against the other. Many such leaders presented themselves as "socialists", even as Marxists. This situation has changed dramatically. Imperialism as part of its "new world order" (in fact it is a world of chaos) has increasingly to resort to the most naked forms of dictatorship throughout Africa and much of the rest of the colonial and semi-colonial world. Take for example the brutal exploitation of people and the poisoning of their land by the oil companies which retain their own private armed militias to protect their installations.

13 Relying on the trade union bureaucracies to maintain national divisions between workers worldwide (even between those employed in the same company), and protected by anti-trade union legislation, the big companies have tied the interests of the workers even closer to their interests. For instance, over a number of years in the motor industry in Europe, such as in Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen in Germany, Ford in Britain and Germany and Opel in Belgium and Germany workers have



Throughout the world the privatisation of nationalised industries is an expression of the mounting crisis of capitalism



Even in areas where capitalism has been able to exploit child labour (as in this match factory in India) it has been unable to escape working-class mobilisation and new trade unions have been built

accepted greater flexibility and moderated their pay claims. This has not saved them from the latest "rationalisations" threatening closures and large-scale lay-offs.

14 Instead of building the international solidarity of the working class, the trade union bureaucracies strengthen these nationalist divisions, making demands which tie the working class closer to the state and the employers. For instance, faced with the undercutting of wages and conditions by cheap labour in industries like shipping and textiles, trade union leaderships in the metropolitan countries demand that "their" government pays subsidies to "their" employers to ensure the employment of "their" workers. Meanwhile poor seafarers from the Philippines and Vietnam work for a pittance in intolerable con-

ditions and poor textile workers in Bangladesh, Peru and Turkey are virtual slaves to the international clothing merchants.

15 Whereas states assisted big business by nationalising and rebuilding industries like coal, docks and railways after the Second World War, today with public funds and government legislation capitalist states are subsidising the purchase of the former nationalised industries and services for private profit by the multi-nationals. This worldwide trend to privatise basic industries and the infrastructure of whole countries means that power, water, health, transport, communications, street lighting, hospitals and even schools are profit-making concerns in the hands of the capitalists protected by the state. The consequences are far-reaching. Governments

have assisted these privatised services and industries by lowering safety standards and the protection of labour, particularly of youth, women and part-time workers.

16 In the imperialist countries this so-called "globalisation" means an intensification of the drive to subordinate completely the trade unions to the needs of the capitalist state, to suppress finally any vestiges of democracy within those organisations and in the bodies of the working-class movement generally. Under these conditions there is no possibility of restoring the "old" trade unionism that characterised the period of capitalism's rise, nor of re-creating the sort of trade unionism that, on the basis of the post-war boom, existed in countries such as Britain for the three decades or so after the end of World War II. It was (and remains) a trade unionism making a rigid distinction between "political" and "industrial" issues.

17 As far as the trade union bureaucracy is concerned, "politics" must be confined to parliamentary activities. The capitalist system is permanent, and trade unionists should be content to make small gains through the work of "their" parliamentarians. (Social Democratic and former Stalinist parties, various "socialist" national bourgeois parties and the Democratic Party in the US). Today the ruling class cannot even tolerate this sort of trade unionism. The trade union leaders' "new realism" means acceptance of capitalism's demands for a labour force that is at its complete mercy, stripped of all its means to defend wages, working conditions, safety, etc. It is this need that is behind the drive to casualisation, the main issue at the heart of the Liverpool dockers' strike. Capitalism consigns millions, even in the metropolitan countries, to permanent unemployment under conditions where it is increasingly unable to sustain the sort of welfare spending that in the post-war period made life for the unemployed at least semi-tolerable. It is the political parties which have been traditionally supported by the working class that are now unashamedly directing these attacks on behalf of capitalism.

18 This means that the building and rebuilding of the trade union movement is today possible only to the extent that the unions greatly broaden the scope and aims of their work. Today the old parties of the working class are completely tied to the neces-

sity of the capitalist market to destroy the trade unions as fighting organisations. The working class is disenfranchised! In Britain the New Labour government acts openly for the capitalist class; in Germany and France the "socialist" parties take the same road; in Brazil the most conscious workers have already broken with the Workers' Party of Lula; the workers in Russia are struggling to find their political voice; in South Africa, faced with the pro-imperialist acts of the ANC-SACP government, workers in the trade union federation, COSATU, again bring forward demands for a workers' party — to mention just a few examples. The economic struggle of the working class is more than ever completely bound up with a political struggle against the capitalist class. The existence of anti-trade union laws, as well as the state banning of trade unions in many countries alone makes this inevitable.

19 Only the united and organised working class can take up the problems of the unemployed, the low paid and those on casual work, can turn back and overcome the wholesale destruction of the world's natural resources by capitalist greed; can take up the fight of the poor peasants and agricultural workers to take back the land and to defend the right of oppressed people to national self-determination. Today we witness processes towards the establishment of mass parties of the working class, e.g. the PSTU in Brazil, the Korean Democratic Labour Party, the movement in Russia towards a new party, and the committees towards a Labor Party in the USA, to name a few.

At the heart of these processes is the struggle to realise in practice that the problems of the working class must be solved under conditions which do not offer a reformist avenue. The aim of the unions therefore must be to strengthen the struggle of the whole working class against the power of capital and this necessitates not simple solidarity, but the building of a new international workers socialist party.

20 As a first step the working class must confront the problem that the reformist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions is hand-in-glove with world capitalist institutions, and the World Federation of Trade Unions died with the collapse

of Stalinism. The main task therefore is to reconstruct working class internationalism bringing together initiatives aimed at this reconstruction, e.g. the mass strikes of the Korean workers, the factory occupations in the former Soviet Union, the conference called by the Bosnian miners, the worldwide dock workers' international link-up arising from the Liverpool dockers dispute, the Construction Safety Campaign, the South African Volkswagen workers and the left bloc in the Brazilian CUT, the Calcutta conference of trade unions in the Indian sub-continent, the international conference of trade unionists in Turkey, and the Far East campaigns against child, slave and cheap labour, and many others.

21 It was for this purpose that the Workers' International initiated the International Conference of Trade Unionists in London in April 1991 which founded the International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign (ITUSC). This was independent of the Workers International and based on three principled aims:

- trade unions independent of the state and employers;
- democracy in the trade unions;
- workers' internationalism.

We propose an additional point:

- a common international fight against the anti-trade union laws.

22 But the ITUSC came under attack from the same group that wanted to liquidate the Workers' International. This was no accident. From the outset the Workers' International understood that those who want to rebuild the Fourth International are in the same movement for reconstruction as the working class itself. It was inevitable therefore that those who attacked the Fourth International would also attack the ITUSC. In general they used their offices on the ITUSC to prevent the work of the committee; they refused to launch initiatives and to assume responsibility, but they clung to office; later they refused to call meetings, and cancelled meetings that were called. The majority of the ITUSC international committee decided to take forward the fight for its principled aims by breaking with this group and joining the initiative of the Moscow conference of internationalists held on 1 June 1998. This formed the Koorkom (Committee of Co-ordination)

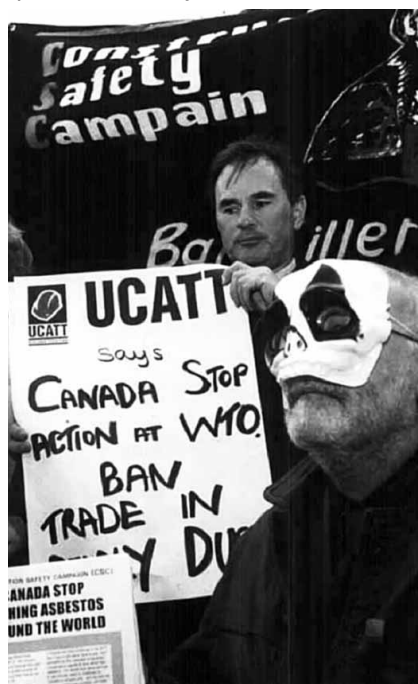
which reached an understanding of the need for an international link-up of trade union activists and leaders for the development of actions of solidarity and joint struggle.

23 The trade unions must defend the future and the fight must be an international one. The Liverpool dock workers and their international supporters showed what kind of movement is needed in respect to every struggle of workers. They won international action on four continents and established direct contacts across the globe. This was based on weekly mass meetings of the rank-and-file dockers, which discussed and ratified every decision. The dock workers were unable to win, but they established a strategy of workers' democracy and internationalism. Their fight is a contribution to be taken forward in future battles.

24 We welcome the invitation sent to trade unionists internationally by the left bloc in the Brazilian CUT for an international seminar in August this year. We will do everything possible to ensure the maximum number of delegations to take part in this seminar, which can further the aim of establishing an international co-ordination of trade unionists. We propose a widespread discussion for an international programme of action, based on the four points set out above, around which trade unions, strike, occupation and workshop committees and all workers can unite. Further we propose an International Conference of Trade Unionists in the Spring of 2001, to launch an international trade union alliance based on this programme of action.

25 Without this fundamental change of relations within the trade union movement the working class cannot overcome its divisions. The development of this international trade union co-ordination involves a determined fight against the trade union bureaucracy that increasingly usurps power from the membership of the movement in order to subordinate the interests of the working class directly to the needs of capital. If these tasks are accomplished then the trade unions will be transformed into a big force for the creation of genuine working-class parties, a powerful weapon for the struggle against capitalism and a mighty instrument for the socialist revolution.

The building trade unionists in the UK Construction Safety Campaign have joined with others in international mobilisations on questions of major social concern



'The trade union leaders' "new realism" means acceptance of capitalism's demands for a labour force that is completely at its mercy'. These Hillingdon hospital cleaners fighting against the wages cuts and sacking that followed privatisation were abandoned by their union leaders

Congress resolution:

On Africa



Ex-fighters of the Peoples' Liberation Army of Namibia accuse Njomo's SWAPO government of ignoring their plight

IT is not possible here to develop a detailed discussion of the African situation evolving and its full integration into the capitalist world economy over the past century. The resolution, which has been developed jointly by Namibian and South African comrades within the framework of the general Draft Resolution of the Third Congress of the Workers International, must be cursory and general by its very nature. It therefore has to guide our theoretical work to be done on the African history and revolution.

Four million South African workers came out in strike in May this year against the Government's GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme) which promotes casualisation and constitutes an attack on the already low standard of living.

It was only in 1998 that Mandela had warned the unions to stop their criticism of the GEAR and they backed down. Hardly one-and-a-half years later the working class again begins to move forward.

This incident signified a flexing of muscle this time in the class' own name and not subordinated to populism. It is highly significant in the African context in that it reflects the general direction of events in sub-Saharan Africa.

Africa began to be really fully integrated into the world economy only over the last hundred years when capitalism had already developed into imperialism. In the 1884/5 Berlin Conference the European imperialists decided to carve up Africa and use it for mineral and cash-crop exploitation. The mode of production and profiteering was therefore by and large extractive. Capital

accumulation was therefore slow and in most countries insignificant.

However, the Boer war against British imperialism at the turn of the 19th century significantly changed the parameters for capitalist exploitation in Southern Africa. It had to come to terms politically with a developing indigenous Afrikaner bourgeoisie. Tens of thousands of landless whites became mineworkers. During the first three decades of the twentieth century white mineworkers waged a bloody resistance against the mining bourgeoisie's attempts to reduce their standard of living to the level of a pariah black working class. Although they defeated their own struggle through backwardness and racism, they still forced the pace of industrialisation in South Africa upward.

And when they were liquidated into a labour aristocracy by-and-large the rising black working class took forward the struggle that would conclude many intermediary outcomes such as political independence for Namibia in 1989 and universal franchise in South Africa in 1994 amongst many others.

Nevertheless, while a series of booms expanded the industrial base of the working class the general standard of living was not raised, for example, real wages of mine workers dropped from 1910 to 1970. The salient development was the development of an organised working class that is now capable of putting its indelible stamp on political developments and the potential strength to challenge for power.

These developments were mirrored, although far less spectacularly and with varying intensity, in the rest of Africa. The post World War II liberation

movement that swept from east to west and north to south was a direct consequence of a developing urban proletariat or its embryo in the process of organisation beginning to stake its claim.

But, the revolutionary movement in Africa like in South America and Asia developed within the ideological hegemony of Stalinism in the world's working class movement. Therefore, these movements took the form of populist fronts in which the petit bourgeoisie dominated. Like in China and Spain these fronts became a death-trap both physically and politically for the vanguard of the working class in each country. These experiences revealed a deadly world-wide connection between Stalinism, Christianity and imperialism.

A few examples of these were ZANU (1974), MPLA (1975), SWAPO (1976), and ANC (1984) when organised revolutionary challenges within these parties were decisively crushed by bourgeois nationalists with the combined help of the Stalinist regimes, the world's churches and the western imperialist regimes.

The inexperienced vanguard did not have access to the theory of the Fourth International which maintained revolutionary internationalism and class independence as its basis. Therefore, they suffered crushing defeats.

As expected, political independence in Africa did not solve a single democratic question. The land question remained unresolved and has become the burning revolutionary question of the day as is illustrated in Zimbabwe.

Nevertheless, the working classes on the whole emerged objectively stronger at independence as illustrated by the pro-

democracy movement which eventually toppled dictators such as Kaunda of Zambia, Banda of Malawi, Mobutu of Zaire and is now threatening Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

In countries like Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa the new bourgeois regimes sought to neutralise this strength through tripartite alliances between the state, capital and the trade unions. But, this has not taken long to run into crisis as illustrated by the GEAR crisis in South Africa. In Zimbabwe the trade unions have already disaffiliated forming their own political party, the Movement for Democratic Change. In Namibia the question of disaffiliation has surfaced over the past five years and in South Africa the question of an independent workers party is a serious point of discussion.

The rising strength of the African masses has also put paid to the direct military and political interventions of the imperialists. The Francophone comprador states for example were formerly protected by the brutal French Foreign Legion which for example suppressed the Katanga Rebellion in 1976.

But now the imperialists are forced to opt for the armies of the African countries themselves. For example, in 1998 the armies of Zimbabwe, Namibia and MPLA amongst others were sent into the Democratic Republic of the Congo to suppress democratic demands there.

But the rising clamour of the masses for radical land reform and against imperialist relations are time and time again headed off by bourgeois opposition movements. The vanguard of the class has not yet found its feet again for a complex of reasons: the collapse of the workers' states in eastern Europe has

destroyed a main beacon of hope and confidence; the defeats suffered during the liberation struggles have taken a serious toll.

For these reasons bourgeois parties are able to head off the struggles of the masses into tribal and national strife and through other diversionary methods. However, the rising intensity of the masses for urgent and immediate solutions to revolutionary questions are straining these parties to breaking point.

It is not surprising therefore that the South African working class are pressing for a discussion of an independent workers party. This mirrors the same question as it arises in Britain, South America and Russia.

For this reason we have already begun to organise an All-African Conference of Workers, Peasants and Students to take further the question of an internationalist workers' socialist party. This conference must direct its attention to an internationalist intervention against the imperialist-sponsored wars in Africa and a radical solution to the land question. It should take forward the debate for working class independence and internationalism against reactionary pan-Africanism and other petit bourgeois ideologies. It should put the principles of the permanent revolution on the agenda in relation to the history of Africa in the imperialist epoch.

Socialists everywhere should give the greatest attention to the above conference and given the enormous material constraints in Africa do everything in their power to raise the necessary resources to realise its urgency.

During November 1998 a Steering Committee was formed at the Durban pre-conference to co-ordinate the work of national

groups to organise the All-African Conference. This is an alliance of socialist groups, trade unionists and worker-activists.

We now resolve:

1. This Congress confirms its full support for the All-African Conference of Workers, Peasants and Students to take forward the debate for an internationalist workers' socialist party in the working class. We now call upon the Steering Committee to carry forward the decisions of the November 1998 Preparatory Conference to:

b) raise the necessary resources to arrange a series of pre-conferences in preparation of the All-African Conference;

c) invite and work with socialists to strengthen the Steering Committee, bringing together workers, poor peasants and students in preparation for the conference;

d) work to establish an organising paper for the All-African Conference.

2. This Congress sets up a commission to meet in the next week to further discuss this resolution.

Additional Resolution:

That those members of the Movement For Socialism who are participating in the All-Africa Conference of Workers, Peasants and Students be invited to a meeting of the Commission to discuss the common work for that conference.

The website in the name of the Conference must be organised and controlled by the Steering Committee.

Congress delegates:

A fighter for homeless

MARIA GERBER was born on 5 November, 1944 in Maltahohe a village in the South of Namibia. She has two sons.

She married in 1980 with Louis Johan Frederick Gerber, a welder and boiler maker by trade. In 1985 he became ill with thrombosis and could not work any more. He was pensioned off in 1986 by the Department of Home Affairs and Manpower.

At this time, she and her husband were still living in a housing Parastatal's house. As soon as the Parastatal came to hear that he was disabled they evicted the family. She made a case against them in the Regional Court on the grounds that she had the right to shelter. She started to squat on municipal land together with a widow with six children who was her former lodger. She had to care for her severely disabled husband under impossible conditions. The municipality for their part started legal proceedings against her for illegal occupation of municipal property.

A squatter camp grew up around her and in 1997 the Municipality brought in the army, the KOEVOET (a special task force) and the police to remove them by force of arms. Maria defended herself by grab-

bbling the mayor's necktie and trying to fend off the army and police with stones. The special task force eventually left the camp without success.

In 1987 the Court found that the Municipality was unreasonable and it was their duty to provide shelter.

In that same year Maria founded a homeless organisation "SAAMSTAAN" (Stand together) to campaign for the right to land and shelter. This was however taken over by various NGOs and the churches.

In 1990 her husband died and she acquired a municipal welfare house from which she was evicted in 1997 in contravention to the Welfare Act. She again had to fight a running battle with the municipality.

The municipality expelled her to a shanty town in a shack one and a half metres high.

During this time she teamed up with Erica Beukes who was a longtime fighter against speculation herself. Erica had fought corruption in the municipality in which speculators bought welfare and other council houses for more or less R8,000 from which people had been evicted and after patching them up sold them for R100,000 and more.

In May 1999 Maria put up her shack next to the prestigious

Rossing Uranium Zinc building in protest with the help of Erica. Homeless people flocked to support her. The Municipality removed her shack with all her belongings and Erica put her in her own home in solidarity.

In October last year Erica found her a garage to rent and paid her rent every month. In June this year Erica lost her job, one of the charges being the time that she spent on the homeless. She can therefore no longer pay for Maria's rent.

In May, 1999 they formed the Housing Committee for the Homeless and disrupted Council meetings until the Council started to recognise them officially and worked with them on a number of workshops to change municipal policies. For instance for cheaper-than-freehold title.

The Committee bought two large pieces of serviced land. A town-planner and land surveyor subdivided them into 43 units. The cost per unit was R4,700 (£470) as against the average price of R25,000 (£2500). The Committee researched cheaper housing methods which are 40% cheaper than conventional methods. This is the project that is now in process. Houses will be built incrementally.

However, although Maria has brought about such massive progress for the homeless in Namibia she herself is still in crisis. She works full-time to advance the cause of the homeless in Namibia. She visits government, municipality and private companies to solicit assistance. She gets very little in contributions from the homeless themselves.

She is an incredible fighter by any standards. In private unguarded moments when her tough exterior gives way to the need to confess, she tells of the vows she had often to make to defend her family. When she saw the moral depravity to which people were often subjected to in poor surroundings she vowed that she would never allow her family to become victim of a lowering of value and standards.



Maria Gerber and Prince Cele at the Congress

Prince Cele was a member of the Community Policing Forum (CPF) in Umlazi township about 13 km. from Durban. The CPF played a very important role, for example solving problems between teachers and their students, but it has been replaced by an elected councillor, a member of the ANC. Prince explained the effects of new charges introduced for water supply in the township.

"Metro Council in Durban have introduced payment for water. But what is amazing is they don't take into consideration the unemployed and people whose earnings are below average income, pensioners who have to look after their children, some of whom are well-qualified but because of unemployment are not working."

"Now they disconnect the service to those who cannot pay. Personally, I have consulted the Council and they say there

is no provision for people who fall under this situation. They told me the government has not made any provision."

"I am working on one person now. She lives next to my house. She cannot pay. She earns around R300 a month as a school-cleaner. She has four daughters who are not working because of unemployment. Two of them are terribly sick. She also has four grandchildren she must support out of this money."

"How can she keep them out of this money? Apart from this, people must pay rates. The government is threatening to repossess the houses of people who fail to pay rates."

"I went to the mayor and he said he can do nothing. I went to the Metro Water Executive and they have re-connected for the time being, up to the end of July. After that, either she must pay or the authorities must tell the water executive to maintain supplies."

Appeal

We appeal for solidarity support for the following and we ask people to contribute towards the following:

1. Maria's personal needs of rent and personal income
2. Maria's own house estimated at £7000.00
3. A centre for homeless estimated at £15000.00

Jacobus Josob Treasurer
3 June 2000

Housing Committee for Homeless P.O.
Box 70072 Khomasdal Windhoek
Namibia Tel: ++264 61 214982
e-mail: hewat@mweb.com.na

ANC council takes Thatcher road

THE Africa National Congress (ANC) - dominated Johannesburg City Council has obtained a Labour Court interdict to stop council unions from striking against the "iGoli 2002" restructuring and privatisation plan.

The plan was largely drawn up by private consultants and a tiny group of executive bosses and involves "corporatising" the Johannesburg Zoo, the Metropolitan Bus Company, the Fresh Produce Market and the Civic Company as a preparation for privatisation.

Many other trade unions around the world have had the same experience — a cash strapped council that cannot even provide basic services to the poor finds enough money to pay a top executive group millions and private consultants millions more. Councillors, and people who live and work in the city, including municipal workers, have been ignored.

The techniques were pioneered in the UK in the 1980s by the viciously anti-working class Thatcher government.

The SA Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) and Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (IMATU) took to the streets on 3 July, erecting barricades and demonstrating through central Johannesburg when it became clear corporatisation would be forced through unilaterally.

SAMWU members had participated in a mass rally on Wednesday June 28th where they were informed not to sign any letters authorising their own transfer to any private company, and where a petition protesting at the proposed pension rules changes was signed.

On 29 June, a special plenary of the Bargaining Council met. This meeting was supposed to ratify a moratorium on all iGoli implementation.

The moratorium had been proclaimed on June 22nd by the Provincial Minister (MEC) in charge of Local Government, Trevor Fowler and only happened after workers occupied Council bosses offices for 24 hours, refusing to be moved until the MEC met with them.

SAMWU greeted the moratorium as a victory.

Unfortunately, Council bosses decided not to recognise it and refused to ratify it in writing in the Bargaining Council. A deadlock was announced.

Because there is also a parallel process where SAMWU and its federation, COSATU, are negotiating with the ruling party, the ANC, it was agreed that the Bargaining Council would reconvene on Wednesday July 5th after further discussions had been held at that level. It was agreed that in the meantime both parties would take whatever steps necessary to implement their mandates.

SAMWU was forced to go from the Bargaining Council to put a stop to a Johannesburg Municipal Pension Fund meeting, which was seeking to change the rules of the fund to allow workers to be unilaterally transferred out of council and to any private company. The shop stewards put a decisive halt to that meeting.

About 100 shop stewards then invaded the council's glitzy "jamboree" showcase at 2pm, which then had to be cancelled. That Friday, notice to strike for July 11th was tabled.

In terms of South African



SAMWU members rally against 'iGoli 2002'

labour laws, public service workers must give at least 7 working days notice.

A work stoppage was planned for 5 July so that all workers could participate in the reconvened Bargaining Council.

However, Johannesburg metropolitan council labour

relations specialist Makgane Thobejane insisted the council did not "really need" the unions' consent for the transfer. "Some form of anarchy has been going on here, which we think should be stopped", he

added. "We are not running a banana republic here". The South African masses whose struggle and sacrifice paved the way for the ANC to enter government are increasingly coming into conflict with it. This is reflected in growing tensions within the ANC itself.

One ANC leader in Soweto, councillor Trevor Ngwane, tried to start a dialogue over the merits of "iGoli" but was promptly thrown out of his leadership role by what "Business Day" news service called "a dogmatic Johannesburg clique".

"Business Day" also warns: "Though not always in the news, politics in Johannesburg's townships do often degenerate into yet another global phenomenon, the 'IMF riot': uprisings of angry people who take to the streets when subsidies are withdrawn, services are cut or prices soar."

The union has appealed for international solidarity and messages should be sent to:

The International or Media Officer:
intern@samwu.org.za; and
samwu@wn.apc.org
Fax: +27 11 3332000.
For background and updates on the situation see:
<http://www.cosatu.org.za/samwu/igolmain.htm>



TO MARK the fifth anniversary of the barbaric massacre of over 8,000 Bosnian muslim men and boys in the UN 'Safe Haven' of Srebrenica by Serb nationalists, the Bosnia Solidarity Campaign held a picket outside Downing Street on Saturday 15 July. The action, part of a campaign co-ordinated by Srebrenica Justice International, was well supported by Bosnians resident in London (right), and others, many of whom have participated in the ongoing campaign on Srebrenica since 1995.

Earlier that week the Women of Srebrenica had overcome opposition from UN administrators and Serb nationalists to run a convoy of buses in a symbolic visit to their hometown for the second time since they were expelled in 1995. The UN had disarmed their menfolk with the promise they would be protected, but UN forces stood idle while Mladic's thugs carried out their slaughter. The Bosnia Solidarity Campaign handed in a petition to 10 Downing Street, the names of the 8,000 massacre victims, and a letter demanding to know what the Blair government planned to do about its unfulfilled promise to representatives of the Women of Srebrenica of assistance with their demands.



Congress Resolution on the Balkans

THE Third Congress resolution of the Workers International declares that the European bourgeoisie:

"...are united in a common opposition to the self-determination of small nationalities, always favouring the nationalism of those oppressors whose strength can provide a guarantee for future exploitation... In this respect particular emphasis must be placed on imperialism's shameful policy in ex-Yugoslavia. Here they do and have done everything they possibly can to stabilise and strengthen the jingoist Milosevic regime because they hope that, in association with fascists, it will be able to secure the capitalist order against the 'turbulent' peoples of Bosnia and Kosovo fighting for their self-determination.

"The united European imperialist powers, acting slavishly under American leadership and accepting the blackmail of the rotten Russian regime, put a stop to the liberation movement and now occupy ex-Yugoslavia in order to prevent its peoples form fighting for their freedom and national rights."

NATO's bombing and occupation of Bosnia and of Kosovo was carried out with the express purpose of preventing an armed independent struggle of the peoples of those regions.

The 1996 NATO bombing of Bosnia took place at the point that the Federation (Bosnian and Croatian) army began to regain territory previously lost to the nationalist Serbs. NATO "diplomacy" towards Kosovo (actual-

ly, naked arm-twisting), and the subsequent bombing and occupation of that region was carried out with the purpose of disarming the Kosova Liberation Army.

The imperialist nations unite against these small nations and peoples because above all they fear a united, armed people struggling for independence will claim the wealth of their regions for their own.

In order further to disarm and weaken these peoples, they take advantage of the reactionary politics of Milosevic to impose—and enforce—ethnic divisions. The one provision of the Dayton "peace agreement" in Bosnia enthusiastically pursued is the demand for elections. The right of return for internal refugees is not enforced, and the vast majority of war criminals are left to strut free throughout ex-Yugoslavia, and run the government of Republika Srpska—preventing many through fear from returning to their former homes. Thus a nationalist majority is assured in the elections and the ethnic divisions perpetuated.

The Workers International was founded on the principle that the re-founding of the Fourth International, the party which expresses the independent interests of the working class against the bourgeoisie, can only be carried out in and through the reconstruction of the workers' movement itself—above all through the reconstruction of its internationalism.

As part of this reconstruction of internationalism, the Workers

International launched the Workers Aid for Bosnia initiative, to take material aid from the workers of Europe to the workers of Bosnia, as a step towards the unity of workers of the East and West. Workers Aid was hijacked by the members of the Movement for Socialism, and the result was seen during the Kosova conflict, when the MFS declared the defence of the Serbian working class against the NATO bombing to be of secondary importance to the assertion of the right to self-determination for the Kosovar Albanians. In their actual practice, which more accurately reflects their theoretical position, during this period, they engaged in no activity which upheld the defence of Serbian workers against imperialism.

In carrying out such a practice during this period, they in fact perpetuated the divisions between Serbian and Kosovan workers imposed by imperialism and its agent, Milosevic.

Workers International organised around the fact that the imperialist diplomacy was designed, as always, to deprive an oppressed people of its only guarantee of independence—its arms—and that therefore the bombing must be resisted on behalf of both peoples. Furthermore, the best ally of the Kosovar people in their struggle for independence against imperialism and Milosevic will be the workers of Serbia. To encourage the Kosovar Albanians' (understandable) confusion on NATO is to divide them from their—poten-

tially—most powerful friends. We reject the petit-bourgeois contempt manifested by the MFS for the rights of Kosovars, and along with Adam Demaci rejected the alliance with imperialism made by the majority of the KLA leadership in 1998 and Flora Brovina a doctor, writer and humanitarian activist, jailed by the Serbian regime along with 1,500 other Albanian Kosovars.

Workers International therefore will support the Workers Aid for the Balkans in its joint endeavor with three Catalanian unions in organising support for a joint tour of Spain, France and Germany by a representative of the Mitrovica miners, and a representative of the engineering metal workers' section of the independent Nezavisnost union of Serbia at the end of November. We will also participate in the ongoing campaign to assist the Mitrovica miners in their efforts to retain their ownership of their mines and refineries.

We will also actively support the campaign to free Albanian

Kosovar student leader Albin Kurti, who rejected sectarian hatred of Serbs in his struggle for the rights of Kosovars, and along with Adam Demaci rejected the alliance with imperialism made by the majority of the KLA leadership in 1998 and Flora Brovina a doctor, writer and humanitarian activist, jailed by the Serbian regime along with 1,500 other Albanian Kosovars.

As part of the struggle against ethnic divisions imposed by imperialism and its agent Milosevic, Workers International has since the fall of Srebrenica supported the demands of the Women of Srebrenica — relatives of the 8,000 men and boys handed over by United Nations soldiers to be massacred in 1995.

We are participating in the initiatives organised by "Srebrenica Justice Inter-national", a group of

French, Dutch, British and American organisations campaigning for the demands of the Women of Srebrenica. This year there will be a demonstration in Sarajevo, organised by the Women of Srebrenica, and a demonstration in London outside 10 Downing Street.

Workers International understands that justice will only be brought about for the Women of Srebrenica, and all the victims of war crimes in Bosnia when the organised working class, particularly in Bosnia and Serbia, takes up their cause — and we will orient our work for their support on this basis towards the trade unions.

Workers International has already initiated and organised two major unifying conferences for workers of ex-Yugoslavia. We will work towards the organisation of further such conferences in the near future.

Congress call on Peru

The Third Congress of the Workers International adopted the following letter, which was sent to the Peruvian authorities.

To the Peruvian authorities,
To the Congress of the Republic of Peru,
To the Peruvian people
25 June 2000

THE congress of the Workers' International adds its voice to the people of Peru

and all those many voices in the world who oppose the illegitimate assumption of power by president Alberto Fujimori for a third term in office.

In this way we show our support for the days of protest organised by the workers', popular and democratic organisations of Peru and to the march to Lima on 26 July to demand new elections on a free and just basis.

We undertake to demon-

strate outside the Peruvian Embassy to show our solidarity with the Peruvian people and call upon the British and other governments to refuse to recognise any attempt by Mr. Fujimori to carry out a third term of office.

We want to show the people of Peru that they are not alone and that they can count on the sympathy and solidarity of the international working class in their fight against an arbitrary abuse of power.

Solidarity with workers struggles in former USSR

'Only united can we break the machine of capital'

Speech made by Oleg Shein to the Astrakhan electorate during his 1999 election campaign to the Russian Duma (lower house of Parliament)

Comrades!

I, Oleg Vasilyevich Shein, am addressing you as a candidate for the State Duma. I am co-chairman of the Alliance of Workers' Unions "Defense", a member of the regional parliament and a chairman of the regional committee of representatives on law and order. As such, I can see why the present State Duma has passed a bill which allows a candidate to be registered for elections by paying 83,000 rubles, instead of having to collect thousands of signatures. This is not accidental. The State Duma has now only seven members who are workers, not a single doctor, not a single teacher, but 443 bosses. You know very well what kind of laws they pass.

I am absolutely convinced that we must have the right of the electorate to recall those representatives who fail to make good on their election promises.

I believe it is absolutely abnormal when the entire country works for the benefit of the tiny group of our new capitalists who are building a paradise for themselves and pump from our country billions of dollars to the West. They think of themselves as masters of life. They robbed the people of affordable health care and medicine. They made it impossible for the children of working people to have good education. They profit even from war. Now they are preparing to achieve absolutely unlimited power which would allow them to squash all those who have preserved their human dignity and who are fighting for their rights. I have in mind the new Labour Code, presently discussed in the State Duma, that introduces a 12-hour work day.

I represent the workers' union Defense which carries on the struggle against this Code of Slavery, as well as many other struggles. Allow me to give several examples of our work.

In 1996 we succeeded in abolishing the fines for late utilities payments. Last year we were able to prevent the introduction of time-based payments for telephone usage. As the result of my parliamentary inquiry, Governor Gushin is now preparing a decree increasing subsidies for utilities payments.

Last summer we began the struggle for the rights of elderly people, for increasing their pensions. The fact is that the pensions paid in our region, as those in the rest of the country, are smaller than postulated by the Federal law. They are 100-150 rubles lower. This money is needed by elderly people to buy bread. Last week we won our first court cases. And the Regional Court has decided that state pensions must not be less than 70 per cent of the average pension. We are ready to provide legal consultation to every pensioner.

We chased away a number of directors who stuffed their pockets while their workers starved. But behind all these managers and bureaucrats there stands the gigantic machine of Capital. Only united can we break this machine.

Our struggle does not go easily. Many of our comrades have been attacked. My closest friend and comrade, Oleg Maksakov, was shot in the back and killed while investigating the financial crimes of "Promstroj" directors. Not surprisingly the police never found the murderers.

On the instruction of workers, doctors, teachers, pensioners, my comrades in the people's movement, I, Oleg Shein, begin my election campaign for becoming your representative in the State Duma. Regardless of the result, I will continue working to defend your interests. But as your representative in the State Duma, I will be able to do more.



Oleg Shein (above, right), a socialist member of the Russian Duma (parliament) and leader of the "Zaschita" ("Defence") union of workers' trade unions, toured Western Europe this summer to meet workers and socialists. With him at a meeting in London in July were Stephen Kerr (translator, left) and Graham Cee (centre), representative for the black section of rail workers in London's Underground for the RMT union, who chaired the London meeting. The tour was organised by International Solidarity with Workers of Russia. It provided useful contacts with a number of groups of workers in the UK and laid the basis for practical solidarity work with Russian trade unionists opposing the imposition of a new labour code.

Appeal to TU's and worker's parties:

Investigate Maksakov's murder now

A year ago, the 13th march 1999, the workers' leader Oleg Yurievich Maksakov, co-chairman of the Union of Workers' Trade Unions "Defense" from the Astrakhan region, was murdered.

Oleg Yurievich Maksakov was shot in the back at a time when he was engaged in investigating financial crimes by the managers of the "Promstroj" company. Of course the competent authorities have still not found the murderers.

Oleg Yurievich was rightly appreciated as the best strategist and organiser of social protests. Oleg knew how to lead workers, the majority believed in him and followed his lead. He was an audacious and brave fighter, who fearlessly pointed out the way to workers.

Oleg always thought about his comrades' security and aspired to organise self-defence squads in Astrakhan province. He had even started to put that project into practice. Maksakov's activity and that of the "Defense" Union was a thorn in the flesh for many prominent people. Oleg Maksakov's death is only useful to the capitalists and authorities in the region. Oleg Yurievich Maksakov's murder was a treacherous and premeditated political murder.

As with the murder of any class brother, it is a question of principle that his murder should not be allowed to pass without an exhaustive investigation and that his murderers and those who instigated it should be punished.

We call on all workers leaders, all workers' and trade union organisations, all groups and parties of the workers' movement to join together to organise the widest possible protest campaign demanding the immediate investigation of Oleg Maksakov's murder.

A modest step has already been taken in this direction. On March 11th the Moscow Co-ordinating Council of the Movement for a Workers Party (DZRP) decided to call on all the workers and trade union organisations in Russia, the Community of Independent States (CIS) and throughout the world

to supporting the protest campaign, to start a massive collection of signatures demanding the investigation of Oleg Maksakov's murder, and to co-ordinate their actions with the comrades of "Defense", the Union of Workers' Trade Unions, of the Astrakhan region.

March 2000

**International Workers Party;
Worker Faction of the Movement for a Workers party (DZRP);
Committee for a Workers**

**International;
Kirov Committee of the Union of Marxists;**

"Defense" Trade Union Committee, Arzamas-16 city;

Russian Workers Communist Party Committee, Arzamas-16 city;

Moscow Committee of the Union of Marxists;

"Centre Defense" Trade Union;

Kozlov E.A., Secretary of the Communists Regional Party;

Fighting Union for Working Class Liberation, Ufa city;

"Defense—Worker's Resistance" Trade union, Bashkortostan Republic;

Marxist Workers' Party Council; Komsomol Committee, (Communists Youth Union) Kiev city;

O. Torbasov, CC Secretary of the Russian Union of Communist Youth (Bolsheviks);

"Workers Resistance" (CIO—Ukraine);

Marxist Platform of the Russian Union of Communist Youth (Bolsheviks)

Appeal by Gazprom Vega workers contaminated by radiation

Dear Comrades,

We are workers in a department of the Russian "Gazprom" corporation. For ten years we have been working at an underground repository for radioactive waste left over from nuclear tests in the early 1980s in the Prikspiystaya lowlands.

During all these years we have been subject to constant radioactive emissions. We have had no protective clothing although the radiation levels were 600 times higher than the maximum safe level.

In the summer of 1998 we demanded compensation for work related illnesses. Since then we have been under unprecedented pressure from the management. First they tried to dismiss us. But thanks to the "Zaschita" trade-union which we had joined the attempt

failed. Then we were locked out of work and we have not been paid for 18 months.

Our situation is getting worse. The Russian courts refuse to hear our case. We have been told that there is no law to force our bosses to compensate us for the damages to our health and that we should try to persuade our company to pay us. The Russian state itself is paid by big companies and run by big businesses.

We need your help. Please send telegrams and letters of protest to the Kremlin, to (president Vladimir) Putin so that he and his administration feel under pressure from western workers.

WE DEMAND

- that our case should be tried in court.
- that those responsible for the

destruction of our health be punished.
● compensation for the illnesses we have suffered as a result of Gazprom's unsafe working conditions.

**Workers of the Vega department of Gazprom
23 July 2000**

Send protest faxes to President Putin at: +7(095)206-02-66.

Please email a copy of your letter to RUSSIA INFO-LIST: ISWoR@aol.com.

For more information about workers' struggles in the former USSR, try ISWoR web-site: <http://members.aol.com/ISWoR/english/index.html>.

(Workers International Press would like to thank International Solidarity with the Workers of Russia for the text of the appeal.)

Defend asylum-seekers!



Two faces of protest



On Saturday 15 July 2000, up to 100 demonstrators picketed Harmondsworth Detention Centre at Heathrow Airport, London, to protest at the internment of refugees by the Blair Labour government. Contact was made with the refugees inside by people climbing onto the top of the fence surrounding the detention centre. Demonstrators ignored pleas by the police to come down and stop damaging the fence.

Three days earlier a group of prominent actors and writers had gathered in Whitehall opposite Downing Street in a dignified commemoration of the deaths of 58 Chinese immigrants who suffocated while being smuggled across the channel into the UK in the back of a truck.

Like other European Union governments, the Blair New Labour administration in Britain is

cracking down on asylum seekers. Huge sums have been set aside to speed up the processing of applicants and yet more detention centres are to be built to intern refugees while their cases are pending.

Despite anti-refugee campaigns whipped up by politicians and in the gutter press, there is obviously a spreading spectrum of opinion in Britain which rejects the scape-goating of refugees and is prepared to show active solidarity with asylum seekers.

Information on the Harmondsworth demonstration courtesy of National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, website <http://ncadc.ncadc.demon.co.uk/>

Photograph of the Harmondsworth protest by Stalingrad O'Neil. More pictures are available e-mail stalingrad1@yahoo.com

Passenger revolt halts illegal deportation

Several arrests were made early in the morning of 18 July 2000 on a BA flight from Heathrow airport, London, to Frankfurt in Germany. Passengers resorted to civil disobedience to prevent the forced deportation of 23 year old Salim Rambo, a Zairean refugee.

Due to take off at 7:15am the flight was delayed for over 2 hours. Mr Rambo was taken of the plane and his forced deportation was prevented. Several passengers were held at Heathrow police station.

Mr Rambo was caught up in the Civil War in the Republic of Congo (Zaire) and now fears for his life from both government and rebel forces.

He was among over 11,000 people detained by the immigration service every year, and has been held in Harmondsworth detention centre and given no legal advice since the decision for his removal was made.

Germany had already refused his asylum application, so return to Frankfurt that morning would almost certainly have meant deportation to Zaire and death.

The removal to Germany was taking place under a little-known but often-used clause of the Dublin Convention, which provides for removal of immigrants to a "Safe Third Country". As it is almost impossible to arrive in the UK without passing through a "Third Country", thousands of asylum seekers are deported with no consideration of their case.

By deporting Mr Rambo in this way, without access to legal representation, the Home Secretary may have been in

breach of international law. This is being taken up in court.

Before boarding the flight passengers were given leaflets by the anti-prison network, CAGE, informing them about Mr Rambo's presence on the flight.

The leafleting was part of a long weekend of actions by CAGE. This included the occupation of the site of a proposed women's prison in Surrey and scaling the fence at

Harmondsworth detention centre—which is how CAGE first came to communicate with Mr Rambo.

Passengers were also encouraged to delay the flight by refusing to take their seats until Mr Rambo was allowed off the plane. Similar actions in Belgium have led to commercial airlines refusing to deport asylum seekers.

A spokesperson from CAGE said: "It is unbelievable that BA

and its shareholders are profiting from the forced removal of people from the UK. This is the ultimate in putting profit before life, and it is nice to see that people here are standing up to it ... literally!"

CAGE is a network set up to support and create resistance to the growing prison industry, of which the immigration detention complex is a part. For more information see website www.veggies.org.uk/cage

Crawley hospital fight continues

Crawley Hospital Campaign have decided to intensify the campaign against cuts in beds and services and for a new hospital in the Crawley area.

There has been enormous public anger at the recent decision by Blair's government to support the local Health Trust's cost-cutting programme of bed cuts and the destruction of essential services.

The campaign has now decided to stand, in principle, in a forthcoming local by-election.

Crawley now joins many other campaigns throughout the country who are being forced into a fight for political representation. Including Kidderminster where the hospital campaign there now has 19 members elected to the local council and is the largest group on it.

Join the civil rights caravan

Starting mid-September 2000, the Civil Rights Caravan will begin travelling throughout England for one month in solidarity with asylum-seekers, migrants and black victims of racist attacks and murders. The Caravan, a form of grassroots resistance, is demanding:

- Full rights for asylum-seekers, undocumented workers, migrants, and victims of racist attacks
- The right to asylum and an end to detention, deportation, vouchers and dispersal
- An end to racism and racist violence

The Caravan will bring together black families, asylum-seekers and those working to defend their rights. The Caravan will link up with a series of events being planned across the country, such as protests at Campsfield Detention Centre in Oxford on 17 September, the demonstration for asylum rights in

Newcastle on September 30 and the national demonstration against racism in London on 14 October. Civil Rights

The 'Caravan movement' started in Germany in 1998 as a form of resistance organised by refugees, migrants and their supporters to raise awareness and fight anti-asylum measures.

The idea of the Civil Rights Caravan in England was initiated in a meeting following the National Civil Rights Movement (NCRM) and the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF) 'Behind Closed Doors' conference.

What you can do to support the caravan

Give a donation; we need to raise money to pay for this project (please make all cheques payable to 'CARF' and post to the address below)—Help organise locally; we need people in each town on the route to help provide accommodation, food, entertainment and publicity—Add your organisation's

name to the list of supporters—Become involved more directly: come to our weekly meetings and maybe even join us on the caravan itself

Caravan Route:

15-16 September:
Coventry, Birmingham, Leicester
17 September:
Oxford
22-24 September:
Dover, Margate, Brighton
29-01 October:
Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle upon Tyne, Liverpool
06-07 October:
Exeter, Plymouth
08 October:
Bristol
14 October:
London

For more information contact: Nana Odoi or Arun Kundhani at CARF, BM BOX 8784, London WC1N 3XX; 020-7837-1450 email: info@carf.demon.co.uk Fax: 0870 052 5899.

The Civil Rights Caravan's ongoing list of supporters are:

National Civil Rights Movement (NCRM)
Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF)
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC)
Dover Residents Against Racism
Europe-Roma, Federation of Iranian Refugees (FIR), Committee of Refugees from Turkey
Satpal Ram
Michael Menson Family Campaign
Justice for Ricky Reel Campaign
Farhan Mire Family Campaign
Mubarek Family Campaign
Gareth Pierce
Christopher Alder Campaign
Hillsborough Justice Campaign
Statewatch
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)
Campaign to Close Campsfield
Fight Racism Fight Imperialism
Southwark Day Centre for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees
Kurdistan Information Centre, Bristol
Defend Asylum-seekers Campaign
Kebele Kultur Project,
European No Border Network,
Hackney Refugee and Migrant Support Group,
Frances Webber, Imran Khan, Mike Mansfield,
Ladislav Balaz, Narayan Bhattacharjee

Oakland Labour Conference calls for action:

Justice for Mumia!

**Based on a report posted
on Labournet by Howard
Keylor on 17 July 2000**

The cause of death-row activist Mumia Abu-Jamal — the "voice of the voiceless" — has been a leading force in exposing the deep-seated racism and unfairness of the death-penalty and criminal injustice system generally, sparking widespread protests in the US and around the world.

Over 100 delegates representing 32 different unions and labour councils came together for a first-ever conference of labour for Mumia in Oakland on May 12, 2000. The conference, which was initiated by the Labor Action Committee To Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and sponsored by the San Francisco Labor Council, brought together a wide range of rank-and-file activists and union leaders who pledged to continue and broaden this critical fight in the labour movement.

The flyer for the conference said: "Mumia is an award winning journalist, author of 3 books and a proud member of the National Writers Union (UAW). When the television company ABC sent Sam Donaldson with a strike breaking '20/20' crew to interview Mumia, during a recent CWA-NABET strike, Mumia sent them packing. Mumia has stated that he'd rather die than cross a picket line."

We, in the organized labor movement must launch a massive campaign to demand justice for this union brother."

The conference was endorsed by the Alameda, Contra Costa and Santa Cruz County and South Bay Central Labor Councils. Attendees came from several maritime unions, including the longshore unions of both east and west coasts; teachers were also heavily represented, as well as communication workers, postal workers & letter carriers, bus drivers, plumbers, the National Writers Union, and 5 locals of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), including California State Employees Association.

Less than two weeks after the conference, the SEIU—the largest union in the US with 1.4 million members—voted without dissent at its national convention in Pittsburgh to demand justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal, in a resolution spearheaded by members of CSEA. The delegates also voted to support a moratorium on the death penalty.

Greetings to the conference were presented by Judy Goff, representing the Alameda County Central Labor Council, and Sal Roselli of SEIU Local 250, which hosted the conference at its Oakland offices. The conference was chaired by Karega Hart, president of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1574 and co-chair of the Black Radical Congress (BRC) in the Bay Area.

Gerald Sanders of the Labor Action Committee To Free Mumia Abu-Jamal presented a brief overview of the case and why labour needs to come to the defense of one of its own. Sanders, an electrician and

member of the IBEW, is a former member of the Black Panther Party.

Greetings to the conference from Mumia were read by Berkeley Federation of Teachers member Tyrrah Alafa Young:

"I thank you, fellow workers, for your impressive support shown this Friday, and your remarkable support demonstrated in the past. Truly it can be said that workers make the world go round, for the labor and toil of working people the world over [feeds the global] economy by actually producing the many and varied products that serve the public needs, public wants and public tastes. The power therefore that labor wields is truly immense, if somewhat latent. I'm therefore quite thrilled to have your support, to have you join us in this titanic struggle with the state to make your presence known on the side of life and liberty. For as we have learned in the recent battle in Seattle and the anti-IMF demonstrations, the rights of workers is also a core human right and an important part of a movement that is reshaping social and power relations. I thank you for being a part of this movement. Ona Move! Long Live John Africa!"

From Death Row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal."

The conference then heard reports from several sectors of struggle in the labour movement. Leonard Riley, representing longshore workers from International Longshore

Association (ILA) Local 1422 in Charleston, South Carolina was a part of a delegation that came across the country to be part of this conference. Local 1422, which has been involved in the struggle to remove the confederate flag from the statehouse in South Carolina, recently beat back a union busting attack which included violent police assaults.

During the struggle, the local received solidarity delegations and monetary support from the west coast International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). Local 1422 has concluded that the union's struggle to survive, opposition to the confederate flag, and the continuing struggle of Mumia Abu-Jamal are "all part of the same fight."

Larry Wright of ILWU Local 10 (San Francisco/Oakland) described the ILWU's historic action in shutting down all West Coast ports to free Mumia on April 24th 1999. Hundreds of ILWU members turned out to lead the march, organised by the Mobilization to Free Mumia, through San Francisco on the same day.

This action was one of many the ILWU has conducted over the years, protesting apartheid in South Africa, the Chilean military coup and other issues, in a tradition of social activism which serves as an inspiration to the whole labour movement.

Bob Mandel of the Oakland Education Association (OEA) reported on another action, one



that garnered significant public and media attention: the teach-in on Mumia and the death penalty conducted by OEA teachers in the Oakland Schools early last year. Subsequently teachers in Los Angeles, Chicago and other cities have held similar teach-ins. D'andre Bitter from the East Bay Postal Workers Union (APWU) described developments in his union locally. He also described Morgan for Mumia, a group in the Morgan postal facility in New York that developed a button wearing solidarity campaign that culminated in lunch-room discussions of Mumia's case and support for the broader campaign.

Al Weinrub, Chairman of the National Writers Union Local 3 (UAW), explained how the writers union locally placed a series of ads in papers throughout the Bay Area, signed by 300 writers in defence of Mumia, as part of their organising drive. The Writers Union has also spearheaded a campaign in its parent organisation, the UAW, centred in Detroit, to get UAW locals to pass a resolution demanding justice and a new trial.

Ralph Schoenman, also of the Writers Union, reported on some of the many international efforts to free Mumia, including the delegation to Washington DC, which met with officials of the Justice Department on

January 12, 2000. The delegation, on behalf of the International Committee To Save the Life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, included trade unionists from France, Britain, Spain, Martinique and other countries.

The conference then divided into industry focus groups — including maritime trades, teachers, communications, postal, journalism and service — where lively discussions were held about past actions and future plans for trade-union work in Mumia's defense. Topics of discussion included forming a Mumia defense group or committee in local unions, inviting guest speakers to discuss the case in union meetings, and getting an article into the union newspaper.

After the focus groups, the conference reassembled into a plenary session, in which five different resolutions were discussed and passed. The first, titled "For a Broad Labor Campaign to Win Justice for Mumia," was presented by Randy Christensen, a member of CWA 9415 and head of the planning committee for the conference. It encouraged unionists to undertake a variety of activities, such as adopting Mumia as an honorary union member, hold shop floor discussions, distribute literature, and mount a major media campaign using ads and articles in

The cause of death-row activist Mumia Abu-Jamal sparked wide-spread protest in the US and around the world

big-business press and radio and TV as well as union newspapers.

There was some controversy over a clause in the resolution calling for the US Justice Department to "launch an official investigation into Mumia's case." Some delegates expressed the view that this was tantamount to having the fox "investigate" the raid on the chicken coop.

Bob Mandel presented a resolution condemning the appointment of Ed Rendell as the General Chair of the Democratic National Committee. Rendell was the Philadelphia District Attorney when Mumia was railroaded, and has continued to play an active role in seeking his execution.

Rendell also turned a blind eye to the systematic exclusion of African-Americans for Philadelphia juries, and helped plan and execute the aerial bombing of the MOVE house which resulted in the deaths of 11 people, and the destruction of an entire city block.

Rendell's ascent to power in the Democratic Party (he also aims to be governor of Pennsylvania) is emblematic of the pro-death penalty racism entrenched at the top of both capitalist parties. Without in any way endorsing support for the Democratic Party, the resolution

on Rendell was amended to ask unions to call on any of their members who are delegates to the Democratic Party's August convention in LA to raise motions calling for a new trial for Mumia as well as condemning Rendell's appointment.

The motion was further amended to read "that all locals and union members be urged to join the protests that will be held outside the Democratic Party Convention". The resolution passed as amended.

Gerald Sanders presented a resolution on behalf of the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal that called on the AFL-CIO to act on an earlier resolution in Mumia's defense which is already before it. This earlier resolution, which came from the San Francisco Labor Council last year, and was tabled to the executive board by the last AFL-CIO convention, calls for an immediate, nationwide day of labor action for justice for Mumia. The LAC resolution also called on the California Federation of Labor (which meets in July in Anaheim), to implement a statewide 2-hour stop-work action for Mumia as part of the nationwide day of action. Finally, the conference resolved "that in the event that execution becomes imminent, we call on the AFL-CIO to organise open-ended strike action, to stop the execution and free Mumia Abu-Jamal." One delegate wanted to substitute "new trial" instead of "free" Mumia, but, as was pointed out, there is no guarantee that a new trial will ever happen, or, if it does, that it wouldn't be a repetition of the same frame-up as happened the first time around.

Resolutions were then passed in solidarity with the Charleston, South Carolina longshore workers and conference voted "full support and mobilization for the national march and rally in Charleston, South Carolina on Labor Day, September 4, 2000 against the union busting conspiracy against the ILA 1422, the flying of the confederate flag at the South Carolina state capitol and for the defence of Mumia Abu-Jamal."

The conference ended with an evening cultural session with singing, poetry and video presentations from local artists and Mumia activists. The next day conference participants could be found, many marching behind their union banners, in the labour contingent at the head of the march for justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal in San Francisco.

Workers' International Press

£700 Emergency Fund

This month, in the middle of the production of this exciting issue of *Workers International Press*, some of our essential computer equipment suffered an untimely death. We urgently need to raise the money to pay for its replacement. Please rush whatever you can afford to:

Workers' International Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 4ZS

Unity Trust Bank Sort Code: 08-60-01

Account No.: 20059400

Bangladesh union fights factory relocation



By
Amirul Haque Amin,
General Secretary,
NGWF

**THE National
Garment
Workers'
Federation of
Bangladesh
are fighting a**

**conspiracy by the management of the
Jikon Garment plant to relocate to a new
factory 60 km away.**

**Management did not discuss the move
with Jikon workers and has not offered
any compensation for those who did not**

wish to make the move.

**Workers have worked at the Dhaka
plant for more than seven years. Three
hundred of them are not interested in
working in the new factory. They have
demanded compensation from the man-**

**agement, but so far there has been no
response.**

**NGWF organised a protest demonstra-
tion on 30 June and again on 7 July. On 7
July they set up a human chain to show
that the firms should stay in Dhaka.**

Asian schoolteacher cleared of assault

LONDON: Arvinder Singh Paul, a schoolteacher from Goodmayes near Ilford in Essex, UK, walked free after magistrates threw out charges of assault brought after he rescued an 11-year old girl from a racist attack in August 1999.

Mr Paul had just returned from work when his eleven year old daughter, who been playing with her friend to Goodmayes Park, came rushing home to get help, because the two girls had been victims of a racist assault by around 20 youths.

Although Mr Paul's daughter had escaped, her friend was still at the park and was still being attacked. Being extremely concerned that his daughter's friend was in grave danger, Mr Paul had asked his wife to call the police and direct them to the park. He then drove there with his daughter.

Upon seeing Mr Paul arrive, many of those involved in racially abusing and assaulting the two girls ran off, although the ringleaders remained. As Mr Paul anticipated the imminent arrival of the police, he waited at the scene of the attack so that his daughters' friend could identify those involved.

By the time the police eventually arrived, Mr Paul and the girls were surrounded by a large threatening crowd of adults and youths. The police officers witnessed Mr Paul being racially abused and threatened and had to intervene in order to prevent Mr Paul from being attacked.

The large crowd were becoming increasingly abusive and this made the girls very frightened. As soon as the attackers had been identified by the girls, Mr Paul suggested to the police that he take them home and that they should come to his house to inform him of the action they had taken against the racists. Incredibly, when the police came to his house some time later, rather than assure him that action had been taken against the attackers, they arrested Mr Paul.

Mr Paul is a highly respected member of the local community who, like any parent, was concerned for the safety of his children and their friends and for their right to be able to play in a public space without fear of violence. The decision of the police to pursue his prosecution—and in particular the actions of Ilford's Community Safety Unit, set up by the Metropolitan Police to supposedly tackle racist crime—has been condemned by members of the Asian community in Redbridge and Newham.

Hundreds of letters and a petition with over 2000 signatures were sent to the Crown Prosecution Service demanding that the charges be dropped, but concerns that this case should never have been brought were ignored.

Mr Paul has suffered for almost a year following the attack, not least because, as a teacher, his career could have been destroyed by the mali-

cious allegations made against him. Commenting on the case, Tanuka Chokroborty-Loha, Mr Paul's caseworker at Newham Monitoring Project, said:

"No-one can understand how, in the aftermath of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, the father of a child who has been the victim of a racist crime can be treated in this way. This case nails the lie that the police have learnt lessons from the Inquiry and have changed. The involvement of the Community Safety Unit (CSU) in pushing the prosecution flies in the face of the promises made by senior officers, that CSUs would provide sympathetic support to victims of racist crimes. We will be making a formal complaint about the way that Mr Paul has been treated and believe that Deputy Assistant Commissioner John Grieve of the Racial and Violent Crimes Taskforce should apologise personally to him."

Newham Monitoring Project (NMP) is one of the leading grassroots anti-racist groups in the country, which since 1980 has been providing advice and campaigns in support of black people suffering racist violence and police harassment.

**NMP can be contacted at:
Suite 4, 63 Broadway, London
E15 4BQ
Tel: 020 8555 8151
Fax: 020 8555 8170
Email: nmp@gm.apc.org
24-Hour Emergency Service:
0800 169 3111**

Fraternal greetings to WI Congress

Dear Comrades of Workers International,
As members of the Koorkom, our organisation is attentive to the advances and difficulties of each of the other members and organisations near by. That is why a positive result of your congress will be a step forward for us too. May this greeting be useful to strengthen our contact and reciprocal support. The process of class struggle and of the international regrouping of Marxists require that from us.

We wish you success in the discussions and to make the correct resolutions in your Third Congress!

**The International Workers Party,
Viacheslav Vasin, Pavel Slutzky.**

Dear Comrades,
Please receive our fraternal greetings to your Congress. We are sorry we could not be there to follow this important event directly, but be sure that we are following your development with great interest, especially since recent events in Great Britain show an intense and hopeful movement of re-groupment and strengthening of wide layers of the working class. The crisis of New Labour, the struggles that widen that crisis, struggles that constitute the basis of a positive solution for the question of the leadership of the working class, the movements of the so-called extreme left that made possible alliances and agreements for joint intervention, are in essence the expressions of a phenomenon that we, from WI as from LITCI materials have been remarking in recent years, what we call the process of the political and trade union reorganisation of the working class in progress.

Struggles like those of the Tameside carers, the London Underground workers and the Liverpool dockers some time previously, the development of working class consciousness with the experience of Tony Blair's New Labour, have generated political re-groupments like the standing of workers'

candidates outside of and to the left of the Labour Party as with the CATP in London and the local elections in Tameside. It was also the basis for the votes gained and the subsequent development made by the London Socialist Alliance, a front of left organisations which achieved a higher vote in the London elections than any previous attempt along similar lines. In this sense the actual election of Livingstone as mayor was a distorted expression of the same process.

Now you will face new challenges, some complex and difficult realities. It is necessary to stimulate this process of struggles and re-organisation, building, in the heat of battle, a party based on solid revolutionary Marxist principles, on a clear programmatic and strategic definition.

We are sure that, without the leading role of a party armed with a revolutionary programme, of a party that is part of a revolutionary international, which means a Leninist party, all this effort and all this ultra-progressive movement of important vanguard sectors which reflects the best of the working class can be lost.

The complex task you have ahead will also demand a political fight against the extreme left organisations that still act with the old sectarianism or enter into this process with an opportunist political approach, i.e. a fight simultaneously to strengthen the process of the re-organisation of the working class and for the programme and for party.

In this struggle we believe that our common mark, the Koorkom and its political and programmatic fighting for the rebuilding of the Fourth International can help your work and so we would like, as a part of it, to put ourselves modestly at your disposal in whatever way you need in this complex but exciting struggle in which you are involved.

We send our best wishes to your congress and wish it every success.

**Revolutionary greetings,
IS of LITCI**

Letter

In the last issue of *Workers International Press* Bob Archer in "New Economy" on roller coaster ride addresses the fundamental issue at the centre of the crisis of capital.—That of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

The idea that "new technologies" or "knowledge" (information held on computers) can ameliorate capital's fundamental contradictions is not a new concept and has its own history within the marxist movement e.g. Bernstein and Mandel.

It finds precise expression in the work of (former state-capitalist) J.F. Lyotard in his book *The Postmodern Condition*, where (distorting Marx in the *Grundrisse*), he declares

"...that knowledge has become the principle force of production".

Bob points out that only human labour creates value and that machinery does not itself create new value, but only passes on its own value. Also by increasing the proportion of fixed capital and consequently reducing variable capital, ie that which pays for living labour, the rate of profit is depressed.

However, I disagree with his formulation that surplus value equals

the new value added to the product "...the amount of surplus value, the new value added to the product, tends to fall".

The new value added comprises: the new socially necessary labour used in producing the commodity plus the proportion of the value of the new machinery and the raw materials used in the process. The surplus value is that which remains over the cost of labour.

Simon Burgess

Send your letters and articles to:

Workers' International Press

**PO Box 735, London SW8 4ZS
UK Tel: +(0) 0208 627 8666
email: wirfi@appleonline.net**