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Economic problems mean

Attacks on working class will intensify

By Bob Archer

New year 2001 has demonstrated the extreme nervous sensitivity of finance and stock markets, above all in the USA.

The last nine months have seen a steady series of bankruptcies of businesses hoping to exploit the new economy based on Information and Communications Technology (ICT). In the USA, 200 such companies have gone out of business, swallowing up \$15 billion worth of venture capital.

Many more companies have warned that profits will not be as great as expected. It turns out that investment in advanced technology only served to intensify a basic contradiction within capital, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. The firms involved in computer technology, e-commerce, the Internet, etc., have been hardest hit by the crisis because their share prices were most inflated.

One company, Mercata, is reported to be making losses of \$36.1 million a year. The firm's income from sales over the year has been \$6.3 million. Despite all the exaggerated claims, the technical developments around computers have failed to open up a new source of surplus value.

The social relations are not yet in place that can rescue the productive forces from stagnation. That would require a social revolution and the establishment of a socialist society.

Recent weeks have seen big falls in share prices, particularly on the Nasdaq, the exchange in New York where shares in such companies are mainly traded. The values of shares there fell by 54 per cent between March and December 2000, a loss of \$3.3 trillion.

The fact that returns on investment were less than lucrative has also led investors to tighten the conditions under which money is made available to launch new businesses. This limits economic growth and gives rise to the risk of recession.

In the first week of January, the

Federal Reserve Board unexpectedly cut interest rates by half of one per cent.

This led to a short-lived recovery in share values. However, the cut was hardly enough to allay fears in the long run, and there are rumours that a major finance company may be secretly bankrupt.

Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan introduced the cut without any of the usual discussion and preparations. Only a month previously, a rise in rates had been proposed in order to prevent inflation.

Those who run the US economy are caught between fear of recession and worries about inflation.

The frenetic state of the finance markets was underlined by the size and brevity of the reaction to the rate cut. Share prices briefly rose by a whole 14 per cent.

The effects of the crisis are global. In mid-January, share prices on the Tokyo stock exchange slumped to their lowest level in 27 years, and one business leader in Japan warned that this could cause a repeat of the 'turbulence' which affected the economies of the Pacific rim in 1997-1998.

There are very real risks that Europe too is vulnerable to the effects of the slow-down in the USA. Despite boasts that the Euro now appears in a better light, what stands out most is that the US dollar is still the standard by which the sickly newcomer currency is judged. The relative position of Europe is still determined by the strength of the dollar.

The threat of capitalist recession will intensify the ruling class' offensive against the working class as it seeks more and more urgently for sources of surplus value and hence profits. It will also lead to greater collaboration by the 'socialist' and trade union leaders.

These leaders have more and more worked to isolate, atomise and weaken workers' struggles for jobs, trade union rights and decent living standards. They consciously and openly

Fighting tube privatisation



Strike ballot over safety launched — see campaign report page 7

attack working-class consciousness and encourage opportunism and class-collaboration.

The way forward is not resistance on the level of this or that individual trade union or group of workers, but on the level of the whole working class. It is therefore above all a political question.

In turn, trade union questions have increasingly taken on political implications. Workers lives and jobs are more and more directly affected by government legislation, especially involving anti-trade union laws, social expenditure, unemployment benefits and the like.

By 'reforming' unemployment benefits, for example, governments can force workers into low-paid, marginal jobs without proper insurance, regulated hours, adequate holidays or recognised and effective trade unions, etc.

The ruling class still holds the initiative, despite its historical decrepitude, because there is no organisation of the working class with the strength

and authority to challenge it, although many millions of workers feel the need to do so in their daily lives.

Workers International turns to all the best elements in the working class, active and militant workers and young people will this appeal:

It is time to pass from words to deeds. We support all those working for a genuinely working-class party independent of the employers, of the state and of the bureaucracies which dominate in the trade unions and the socialist parties.

Those who are meant to organise the unity of the working class are engaged in creating divisions between workers in different industries and different countries.

All those in the unions who want to act should come together: that is what unity is.

Building such a workers' leadership is inconceivable without also constructing the political party of the working class.

The working class can and should

converge in a new political party which is of its flesh and blood — not some separate entity created outside of it. The Workers International is opposed to all those pseudo-Trotskyist parties which claim that they have (or they are going to) achieve this task on behalf of the working class. They have got the thing the wrong way round.

What does the political independence of the working class mean? The working class has to be armed with its own theory, aims and organisation. There must be a party which re-unites the whole class as a party of the whole class.

That is not at all the same as a 'party of the people', an amalgam of all those opposed to the bourgeoisie.

What the Workers' International to Rebuild the Fourth International proposes is explained in the Resolution adopted at our Third Congress in June last year.

We strongly recommend a study of this Resolution to all those we struggle alongside.

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WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

Free the Charleston 5

Five longshore workers — members of ILA longshore Local 1422 and clerks and checkers Local 1771 in Charleston, South Carolina — face possible imprisonment on state criminal charges.

They and some 150 co-workers planned to picket a ship in their port that was using a non-union longshore crew when the state responded with a massive contingent of law enforcement officers. An altercation ensued.

The five have been indicted for rioting, a felony punishable by up to five years in prison. They could face trial as early as this February. The South Carolina AFL-CIO, with the help of the national AFL-CIO, has initiated an international campaign to defend them and their locals — one of which, Local 1422, is overwhelmingly African American. (See Jack Hayman's report in Workers International Press No. 22, March 2000)

Besides the criminal charges, the stevedoring company that hired the scabs is suing the two Charleston locals and individual members

for \$1.5 million in alleged losses it suffered because of the picket line disrupting work.

The suit raises the issue of whether workers can be held financially responsible for industrial actions, and raises the spectre of bankruptcy for the locals and these individual workers and their families.

On 1 October 1999 Nordana Lines notified the ILA locals it was ending its relationship with the union and would begin using non-union labour to work its ships.

The local responded with picket lines. After peaceful pickets resulted in slight delays to two Nordana ships, the state of South Carolina decided it was going to break the longshore union's power.

To protect some 20 scabs working the Nordana ship, Skodsborg, on 20 January 2000 the state sent in some 600 police in riot gear with horses, armoured vehicles, patrol boats and helicopters.

"You would think there was going to be a terrorist attack on the State of South

Carolina," Ken Riley, president of Local 1422, said of the police presence.

The police marshalled at the terminal and in front of the union's hall about 150 yards away. The longshore workers stayed away from the terminal, letting the police stay out in the rain and cold by themselves and waste lots of taxpayer money.

Late in the evening the workers reassembled at the hall and then went out toward the terminal to exercise their legal right to picket.

According to Riley, the police initiated the clash, pushing back the group of pickets. Trying to calm the situation, Riley and other union officers created a buffer between the police and the pickets. At that point one of the cops ran out of formation and clubbed Riley on the head. Then a fight began.

When it was over the police arrested eight longshore workers on charges of misdemeanor trespassing. At this point State Attorney

General Charlie Condon rushed in and raised the misdemeanor charges to felony rioting charges.

At a preliminary hearing a judge dismissed the felony charges for lack of evidence, but Condon then went to the Grand Jury and obtained indictments against five of the defendants, on the same charges that had just been dismissed. Condon has made it clear that he intends to prosecute the workers vigorously and has said his plan for them includes "jail, jail and more jail."

At the same time WSI, the non-union stevedoring company that supplied the scab workers, sued Local 1422 and Ken Riley and Local 1771, the Charleston checkers and clerks local, and its president John Alvones for \$1.5 million in alleged financial losses.

The union has attempted to solve the problem through negotiation but this has proved impossible. The union is now suing the stevedoring company for infringing trade union rights.

Currently the local's attorneys figure the criminal case

will go to court in February 2001. In the meantime the Charleston 5 are still under a strict curfew that requires them to stay home between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. if they are not working or at a union meeting and travel restrictions that don't allow them to leave the state.

The South Carolina AFL-CIO and the national AFL-CIO, are mounting a campaign in defense of the Charleston 5.

"The Attorney General is planning to run for governor next time around and he's trying to make a name for himself," said South Carolina AFL-CIO President Donna Dewitt.

The 20 January incident happened about the same time as 47,000 people — mostly African Americans — marched and demanded the Confederate flag be taken down from the state capitol.

"That scared the Republicans to death in this state," Dewitt said. "And here you have a minority local union that's strong and is very involved in the political roots of the community".

The campaign will seek the acquittal of the Charleston 5 and complete vindication of the 27 targeted workers and the locals and their officers in the WSI civil case, while building a strong case for workers' rights and exposing the racist efforts of the state to limit Black power in South Carolina. The plans include setting up local defence committees in cities around the country and organising national days of action.

International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU)

Contact: Steve Stallone, 415-775-0533, steve.stallone@ilwu.org

(Checks should be made out to the "Dockworkers Defense Fund") and sent to: **Campaign for Workers' Rights in South Carolina**, PO Box 21777, Charleston, SC 29413. or to:

Dockworkers Defense Fund, 910 Morrison Drive, Charleston, SC 29403, Attn: Robert J. Ford)

They will also work to get media coverage of the issue and the local community's response to the situation.



Asylum rights campaigners demonstrated outside Harmondsworth detention centre near London's Heathrow airport over the New Year. Asylum seekers are often detained in centres like this while their applications for asylum are considered. Local trade unionists have consistently supported detainees at the centre and shown opposition to draconian refugee legislation. On this occasion, protestors again scaled the perimeter fence to try and make direct contact with inmates.

Civil rights roundup

An asylum seekers story

The following report was given by an asylum seeker who attended an adult education class run in the North West of England

K fled from his West African home because, after helping to organise demonstrations against the imprisonment of the opposition leader, he feared he too would be incarcerated.

When he was sent to Liverpool he was put, with other single men, in a hostel run by private landlords. He told us that conditions were bad, sometimes they had to wait hours to have a wash and the food was cooked centrally by the owners of the hostel.

There was never enough food and no allowance was made for cultural differences and nationalities. When the refugees complained about the conditions the owners of the hostel were hostile and sometimes the police were called in.

K gave us an example of this treatment. He said that a

resident returning from a stay in hospital, and still bandaged and weak, complained about the small amount of food he was given. An argument ensued and he smashed a plate. The owners called the police and this man was taken away in handcuffs.

After a number of group protests, the Refugee Committee — the body that oversees refugee placement — agreed that conditions were bad. Everyone was then moved out to other accommodation.

K ended up in a self-catering room, which was more suitable. But after a short stay, the Refugee Committee wanted to move everyone back to the hostel. They threatened that status would be removed if refugees didn't comply.

As far as K knows everyone went back, except him. He would rather go on the streets than go back. He remains in self-catering while waiting for his appeal to the right of asylum.

Eddie Gilfoyle appeal rejected

JUST before Christmas, the English Court of Appeal upheld the guilty verdict on Eddie Gilfoyle.

Eddie had been found guilty of murdering his wife. When his case was re-investigated by the Lancashire police, they concluded there was no evidence of a crime.

Members of the Police Complaints Authority expressed their doubts about the safety of the conviction on national television in the UK. They told the Home Office the conviction was unsatisfactory and unsafe.

The Criminal Cases Review Commission spent two years investigating the case. They found overwhelming evidence that Eddie's wife had committed suicide and referred the case back to the Court of Appeal.

Eddie Gilfoyle's friends and family in the 'Eddie

Gilfoyle is Innocent Campaign' are outraged by the decision.

'At the appeal the defence completely destroyed the case as it was put at trial and the prosecution case was left in tatters', commented spokesperson Paul Caddick.

'In case after case the Appeal Court are treating evidence uncovered by the Criminal Cases Review Commission with contempt. The whole process has devastating implications, not only for Eddie, but for countless others who are sitting in prison waiting to travel to London to sit in the dock at the Court of Appeal.

'The struggle for justice for Eddie will continue with new vigour and intensity'.

● **Eddy Gilfoyle is Innocent Campaign at Miscarriages of Justice (MOJUK)**, tel: 0121 554 6947, website <http://www.appleonline.net/justiceuk/jus.html>

Vigil for Sylvester

The Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign will be holding two events this month. The first will be a vigil outside Tottenham Police Station on Thursday 18 January from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

The second will be a Memorial Service on Sunday 21st January.

Roger, a young black Londoner, died while being restrained by the police. Recently the Crown Prosecution service ruled that no police officer involved in the death is to face criminal charges.

The Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign, the cam-

paing group INQUEST and many supporters are demanding an independent judicial inquiry into his death.

Full details are available from the Web page (<http://www.rsjc.org.uk>) under the Events section.

The campaign once again would like to thank all those

who have given support to the family and the campaign over the last two years.

● **The Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign (RSJC)**, PO Box 25908, London N18 1WU, Tel:0793 197 0442 <http://www.rsjc.org.uk>

Solidarity convoy to Palestinians

Israeli-Jewish along with Palestinian campaigners opposing Israeli repression have breached the army blockade to deliver humanitarian aid to besieged Palestinian communities.

Among the first were a group called, 'Ta'ayush-Arab-Jewish partnership', formed at the start of the current Intifada, and after the killing of 13 Palestinian citizens of the Israeli state, to launch "unconventional protests" and send people to Arab towns and villages.

This action of practical-humanitarian solidarity is reminiscent of the Workers Aid for Bosnia convoys, but with the added turn that those involved are directly confronting their "own" army and state.



Jews in London held vigil on 23 December against Israeli military brutality towards Palestinians

sum was also forwarded to bereaved families.

In Kfar Kasem, the campaign was launched by left activists of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality. They were joined by a group from Tel Aviv area.

Responses were surprisingly positive. We call ourselves Ta'ayush - Arab-Jewish Partnership. It is not mere coexistence between Jews and Palestinians we want, but to live and work together as equals.

In this case, we wanted to express our solidarity and do something to break the siege. It was a great moment for many of us, when the trucks and cars finally reached the outskirts of the village.

We are fully aware our that our action can hardly alleviate local conditions. Hares is still under siege; as the funeral of yesterday's victim was held around noon, army patrols approached the village. They prevented an ambulance from exiting the village, but gave up and let the ambulance pass when they realised that some journalists were present.

We continue collecting provisions and money. If you would like to contribute,

Write to: Dafna, dafnahir@post.tau.ac.il. Gadi Algazi

Report by: GADI ALGAZY

HARES, the West Bank, 16 December, 2000

This Saturday, a group of Palestinians and Jews from Tel Aviv and Kfar Kasem reached the Palestinian village Hares, in Salfit region, with a convoy of 25 cars and 3 trucks carrying food and provisions for the villages of Salfit area.

The situation in the West Bank and Gaza is deteriorating. Media reports about the siege imposed by Israel on the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip do not give an impression of what it means in terms of daily suffering, poverty and humiliation.

Hares is surrounded by several Israeli settlements, such as Revava, built on lands expropriated from its inhabitants. The village is situated within region "B", where the Palestinian Authority is responsible for civil affairs,

but its lands — or what has remained of its lands after successive waves of expropriations — lies within area "C", that is, under full Israeli control.

Being under siege means that army units control both entries to Hares; villagers cannot cultivate what remains of their land. This is a telling example of what retaining existing Israeli settlements, advocated by Barak's government, actually means for people's daily life. Inhabitants of Hares who dared to leave the

village were often detained or forced by soldiers to perform humiliating tasks in public. It is estimated that unemployment rate exceeds 70per cent. "We are like birds in a cage," people said to us on a previous visit.

The villagers suffer from constant harassment by the settlers of the area. In the nights, settlers come and chop the villagers' olive trees; peasants can hear the settlers' cars as they move around the village, then the familiar sound of the electric saw.

During daytime, settlers approach the village outskirts, trying to provoke the youth into action and then wait for the army to intervene. A pupil from Hares was shot in the first weeks of this Intifada. Yesterday, twenty-years old Muhammad Amin Dawud was shot dead by army units.

During the past two weeks, activists in Tel Aviv and Kfar Kasem collected flour, sugar, rice, baby food and money. 35,000 NIS were collected, from which 11 tons of flour were purchased; a symbolic

Turkish prisoners defy solitary cell treatment

DOZENS of Turkish political prisoners have died resisting forcible removal from dormitory-style prison wings to solitary confinement and sensory deprivation in cells.

The 12,000 left-wing political prisoners in Turkey are members of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), the DHKP-C (former Dev-Sol), the TKP/ML and the TKIP.

In the existing prison system they established the right to group together in dormitories and organise them according to the political organisation they supported.

Their position has been similar to that achieved by Irish men and women detained in the H-Blocks for supporting republican organisations, through the long and difficult blanket protest and the hunger strike which led to the death of Bobby Sands.

For over a year, the Turkish government has been trying to introduce the new system in order to break up the political organisations in the prison. They hope that once they have isolated the prisoners they will find it easier to break them down and demoralise them.

Many prisoners resisted removal, barricaded themselves into their areas and

organised hunger strike.

The eye-witness report by a woman member of the DHKP-C describes the government's actions most eloquently.

The assault on the prisoners was preceded by attacks by the fascist Grey Wolves on the premises of legal left-wing parties and trades unions.

Although most of the political prisoners have now been dispersed, some to other prisons, some to hospitals, some to dungeons and some to the new-style cells, the hunger-strike continues and has even spread.

● On Saturday 9 Dec. 2000, Turkish human rights activists held a hunger strike next to the town hall of Rotterdam, The Netherlands, to protest against torture of political prisoners in Turkey.

They were attacked by a violent gang of "Gray Wolves", Turkish extreme Rightists, who stabbed to death one person and severely wounded another one.

Sympathisers later rallied round to make a human wall to protect the hunger strikers, and there was a well-attended march to protest against the activities of the 'Gray Wolves'.

Survivor's eye-witness account

"We woke up to the sound of an explosion at around 5 am on December 19. One of our friends shouted "Friends! The operation is taking place!" We all rushed to put our clothes on. When I looked outside from the window I saw the special military units on the roofs. Before we put our clothes on, they opened fire at us and we took cover. We soaked all the towels we could find. Then they started to dig into the ceiling from various places. Meanwhile they were swearing at us. "We came here to kill you," they were saying.

They continued to dig into the ceiling. From outside, from the roofs they were continually throwing blast bombs. After opening several holes in the ceiling, the bombardment with gas bombs began. We were choking and trying to gasp for air. While covering our mouths and noses with the wet towels to neutralise the effect of the gas, we were breaking the windows of our dormitory to get some fresh air. The rain of gas bombs was continuing.

We moved from the centre of the dormitory towards the windows to get some air. Some of our friends fainted because of the gas. Those who came to carry out a massacre were continuously shouting through a megaphone, "Surrender, otherwise we will kill you all!" Our reply to this



was our marches, slogans and tililis (a Kurdish women's tradition during weddings and funerals: a kind of loud trilling noise).

Until noon we were continuously having gas bombs and nerve-gas bombs thrown at us. Approximately 700 to 1,000 bombs were thrown at us. We, on the other hand, had nothing to retaliate with. They were continuing to throw bombs, swearing at us and opening fire from the windows. They opened holes on the ceiling and they continuously carried out surprise attacks from these holes by using bombs. These bombs were dropped on us and started to burn us. While we were trying to put the fire out, we were also inhaling gas. Meanwhile the special teams tried to land at the exercising area from the roofs by using

ropes but they could not succeed. They were continuously throwing blast bombs and opening fire from the roofs. Flames started to cover the dormitory. Those who have not fainted yet were continuing to shout slogans and to sing.

The fire spread all over the dormitory. We all moved towards the door, we had to get out. The door could not be opened first. Everywhere was shrouded in smoke and fire. Because of the effect of the gas some of us lost their consciousness while attempting to reach the door. I fell too. Some of my comrades fell over me. I could not breathe and because of the fire it was hot. The threshold was as hot as hell. Nothing could be seen because of the smoke. The fire surrounded us. I barely remember being pushed outside. We were

Demonstrators outside the prisons in support of the prisoners also suffered violent treatment

in shock because of the nerve gas and we could not realise certain things.

When I was downstairs some of my comrades were trying to put out the fire on them by using water. I saw Ebru Dincer sitting on the stairs and fully burnt. She could not speak and her hands, face, hair and most parts of her body were burnt. Then our comrades Hacer Arikan, Birsen Kars and Gulizar Kesici were taken out of the flames with a great effort.

There were still some of our comrades inside. Comrade Gulser Tuzcu was on fire at the threshold. Our comrades tried to pull her out but could not succeed.

While our comrades were burning alive, the murderers were filming their creation with pleasure. They had water hoses but they were not spraying water into the burning dormitory. Those who supposedly came for "return to life" made their real intention very clearly. They came to kill or make us all surrender'.

Ayla Ozcan, First Death Fast Team Fighter. Tuesday, December 26, 2000 3:47 pm

Local elections in Durban, South Africa

Members of Workers' International in Durban, South Africa, participated in the local government elections there late last year alongside many other independent candidates dissatisfied with the actions of the African National Congress (ANC).

The Reverend Tshaka Zulu stood as an independent candidate in Folweni (ward 59200095) section of South Local, Durban Metropolitan Area. Prince Cele and Simon Mchunu here report on some experiences made in the campaign.

THE election campaign started off with mixed reactions from people who saw these elections from different angles but in a relatively calm mood.

From the outset it became clear that South Africans were approaching the elections with mixed feelings this time around, apparently because of their past experiences with outgoing local councils.

Some said they would still vote their current councillors back, no matter what. They thought they did not have any other option as they still owed their allegiance to their party (the African National Congress) as the only organisation still truly identical with the masses of poor people, as they have been made to believe.

Some said they would rather throw their votes and support behind opposition parties which were new in the field. They thought they would vote for a change rather than give their votes to ANC candidates to help them back into power and give them another five years in office to satisfy their greed.

Some preferred to withhold their votes and suffer at home rather than go to the polls and formalise their suffering at the hands of the ANC's propagandists and criminals and or all the rest of the political parties.

The last group were undecided, and included a lot who just wanted to wait and see.

As the election date drew closer, there was a lot of party-political point-scoring, which was coupled with isolated and sporadic incidents of misbehaviour, aggressive approaches, vulgar language, insults, misleading and inflammatory statements and moralistic or silly remarks.

These were levelled especially against the independent ward candi-

date in ward 95 and his supporters. This candidacy was dismissed as illegal and the supporters as being power-hungry and standing out of sheer greed.

It was said they would dump the people in the wilderness after the elections.

For Revd. Zulu it was a gruelling experience as these ANC canvassers, not content with inflicting this type of blackmail and slander on him, pried into his personal private affairs and family matters, shouting his name along the township's busy streets and opposite his home to make sure to draw the attention of his neighbours to their stinking and clumsy utterances.

After that they proceeded to the local civic (SANCO) branch chairman's area where they did just the same against him.

In the build-up to the elections, the very same people had on a number of occasions begged and appealed to us to accede to their proposal for our parties (ANC and SANCO branch executive committees) to meet and discuss a joint support for the ANC 's election campaign and consider abandoning our campaign for an independent candidate.

The Revd. Zulu was supposed to await a call from the ANC provincial office to state his position and concede to the ANC's call to withdraw his candidacy in their favour.

A day before this petty political bickering, while we were on the last lap of canvassing, Mr. Elias Mkhize, ex-mayor of the south local council, jammed our bakkie (vehicle) and ordered Revd. Zulu to stop mentioning the name of the ANC in his election address as he (Zulu) was not an ANC member.

This Mr. Mkhize is out on bail on a charge of cold-blooded murder in a love triangle while still mayor, but is also a candidate on the ANC list.

Mr. Zulu warned him not to disrupt his election campaign and ordered his driver to drive on.

Only a week before than another local ANC councilor-elect, who is not known to the community of Folweni, was present and again slandered Mr Zulu politically to make sure that Mr. Zulu was politically eliminated, first in his own neighbourhood.

We organised two last-minute election meetings in close succession at different venues.

When we arrived at the first venue, we discovered that there was a double booking. One was for our meeting, the other was for a school meeting that nobody had heard of.

After long deliberation over that we decided to back down and accepted a venue inside one of the classrooms, which would really not be convenient for a mass meeting anyway. We did not want to look disruptive.

To our surprise, however, not enough people turned up to our meeting to even fill the classroom.

We closed the meeting because we did not have a quorum, then we found many people wandering about at the main entrance not knowing what was going on or what to do.

They told us that some people had already left and gone home because of the confusion.

Since then we have learnt that a large body of our supporters had been chased away by a group of unruly youths standing by at the entrance, some of whom were reportedly carrying guns. They pretended that they were attending the other meeting. Those youths had been stationed there by Christopher Busane to threaten people coming to our meeting.

The same councillor popped into our meeting, demanded the right to speak and again behaved very arrogantly towards Revd. Zulu and the civic chairman, Mr. Thulani Gumede, and his assistant of the day, Mr. Themba Blose in front of members of the community. Most of them were elders who expressed their disapproval of and dissatisfaction with what was going on.

The next day, we had organised a final meeting with our agents to sort out last minute details, allocate their positions and shifts and organise food and drinks and transport to and from their respective polling stations and also remind them of their obligations, powers and code of conduct.

However, we were told to vacate the school premises by a teacher who found at the school preparing for the election the following day. He was employed by the independent electoral commission as a presiding officer for the station. He told us that a decision had been taken at the community meeting the day before (the one that had deprived us of our venue) to ban all sorts of activity conducted at that school, including meetings, prayers, practices, etc.

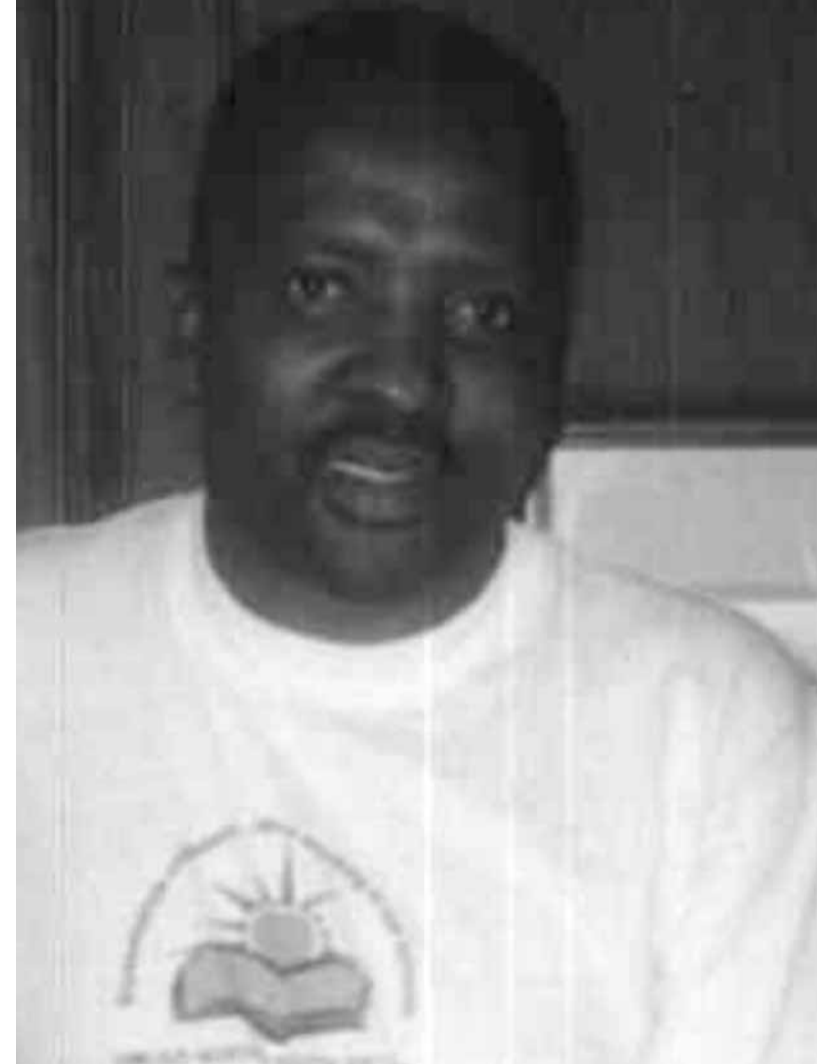
Yet as far as we could see what had really happened, nothing like a community group or even a body of parents could have held a meeting there, apart from a handful of specially-organised individuals and those misbehaved youth.

At that stage we had no option but to look for an alternative venue elsewhere, for we had a mammoth task and important jobs to do before night fell.

All in all, we had nine voting stations scattered all over the ward, and in terms of the local government electoral act, as independents, we were entitled to only one agent per voting station for the duration of the voting period and two agents per counting station during the count.

This meant 27 agents all in all plus relief stand-bys at two per station, which came to 45 all in all, who rated R100 each upon completion of their work. This cost us R4500 in all.

Beside this there was the cost of putting up election posters which was done by another group of seven peo-



ple who also cut boards to size and perforated them as well as gluing posters to the boards.

This took them three days to complete at a cost of R300 per person per complete job, which came to R1,400.

We also hired a vehicle, a bakkie, which was used to collect boards and groceries for catering, collecting a sound system from town and returning it, publicising meetings, blitzing areas and meetings, putting up posters, delivering food to voting and counting stations, transporting agents to and from the voting stations, helping the disabled, the ailing and the aged on voting day and removing posters from lamp-posts. This cost us R100a day and took twelve days to complete and landed us with a R1200 debt.

As far as we are concerned, at some or most of the voting stations the elections were not free and fair and they therefore ought officially to be declared null and void for the following reasons:

- Canvassing for the ANC was done right on the spot on election day.
- Voters were boldly told by ANC canvassers at ANC tables just outside the voting station where to go and who to vote for, especially the elderly and the illiterate.
- Some people were handed leaflets with ANC candidates' photos when joining voting queues.
- Some people were solicited into voting more than once.
- Some people were given more than one ballot paper per single vote.
- Some people were caught red-handed carrying more than one identity document per person when entering the voting station
- Incidents were reported of people being influenced to vote for the ANC.

Owing to the conditions stated above, only 48 per cent of residents cast their votes. In spite of the difficulties we had undergone, we came third with 364 votes.

We thank all comrades for their assistance.

Letter from a Durban worker

Confusion of our democratic government

Just a few years ago, the Confederation of South African Trades Unions (Cosatu), the South African Communist party (SACP) and other Liberation Movements condemned the privatisation of state assets but they were whipped by top ANC leaders for doing so.

Now it is amazing and even ridiculous to hear that the government is taking Telkom to court when privatisation has already caused a lot of suffering to the workers and whole community of this country.

Many people have lost their jobs, some are temporarily employed without any of the benefits which the people of this country gave their blood and lives for during the struggle.

Those who are fortunate enough to be permanent employed are in fear and frustration of being retrenched at any minutes due to the process of privatisation.

We have recently experienced municipal workers' marches and the unemployment of employable people such as teachers and others. These are part of the severe suffering and exploitation South Africans are experiencing under the term "privatisation".

I now appeal to all parties who are in power to do work hard to learn their jobs in order to avoid the mishaps which are seen in other African states.

Written by Maqili Prince Cele
Durban, Umlazi

Fund

A total of £500 needed to complete two fund appeals

We are pleased to announce that we received £500 for our emergency fund. Our thanks go to all those who generously donated. We certainly will not complain if - now that Christmas is behind us - our readers can see their way to help us complete this £700 appeal.

We also want to thank all those who responded to our letters asking for assistance to send a donation to help the campaign of the Durban independent socialist candidates in the South African local government elections. Added to the sum donated by the Workers' International, these contributions enabled us to send a total of £750.

The Durban comrades need another £300 to meet their expenses. So perhaps you can help with that?

Please send your donations to:

**Workers International Press
PO BOX 735, London SW8 4ZS**

From resistance to alternatives:

Dakar conference demands: 'cancel debts'

MARIE THERESE SANTANA, of the African Liberation Support Campaign (ALISC) reports on a conference held in Dakar in December. Under the heading "From Resistance to Alternatives", Jubilee South and the Senegal Campaign organised this assembly to hear reports and exchange experiences on the worldwide debt campaign. In attendance were delegates representing non-governmental organisations (NGOs), campaigning groups, trade unions, grassroots organisations, including women's groups from many countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Workers International Press welcomes this article and invites discussion on the issues raised.

The Dakar Africa manifesto begins:

"THE TOTAL AND UNCONDITIONAL CANCELLATION OF THE AFRICAN DEBT is a demand based on economic, social, moral, judicial and historical undisputed arguments, because the debt problem is not a financial or a technical issue as the World Bank and the IMF are tempted to demonstrate. It is fundamentally a human, social and political problem. Debt service and conditionalities linked to it have contributed to the aggravation of poverty. Moreover, debt has been widely remitted: for the past few years, Africa has been transferring more resources to developed countries than she receives."

Above all the debt crisis has to do with the structures of international trade and finance. Let us take Africa as a prime example — the most indebted continent of all in relative terms.

Africa is made to be an exporter of raw materials and an importer of manufactured products. In the late 1970s and 1980s the already unequal system intensified whereby resources like cocoa, coffee and cotton crops were exported at a price far lower than was required to buy back both the products of these raw materials or the machinery and other necessities required to develop indigenous industries; but most of all — necessities for the well-being of the people. The need therefore arises to make loans.

For the "privilege" of receiving these loans African countries are required to sign contracts to import seeds and fertilizers from internation-

al consortia centred in the West. These seeds are now genetically modified, meaning that the resulting crops are incapable of producing seeds themselves, thus necessitating the purchase of new supplies each year. Not only that — the local crops, developed and hardened in local conditions over generations, gradually disappear, meaning that the people become reliant on western manufacturers.

Despite vastly increased production of these crops and other raw materials the income received for them is decreasing. Prices have plummeted against the ever-increasing cost of imports. And so the African countries find themselves in a spiral of indebtedness and impoverishment, unable to develop their infra-structure. The people are rendered unable to feed themselves — there is famine with the resulting malnutrition, epidemics and death.

African countries not only find themselves "indebted" to the west for drugs to treat the sick people, they experience even further suffering because the people are so debilitated by hunger that they have no resistance to the illness itself or to the cocktails of drugs administered — sometimes as experiments by the large drug companies. Treatments are so expensive that only a minority ever receive them, and even they often find it impossible to complete the course. Most readers will remember Nelson Mandela's comments that he could buy the drugs for his complaint cheaper in Germany than in Africa!

Despite objections by the multinational drug companies the Brazilians have begun to produce less expensive drugs at a far lower cost, often using natural resources. This development is proving very successful in fighting the Aids epidemic, and it is giving hope to African people who are now demanding resources to set up local production units for such drugs. If Brazil can flout international law by producing such treatments without an official licence, then it can be done elsewhere!

The same can be said of other problems facing the mass of the people, but not without a determined fight. For the imposition of debt removes Africa's sovereignty and the possibility of governments to decide their own way to finance the develop-

ment of their countries. Conditions imposed by the West through their financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) include cuts in the civil service, in social services: education, health etc. The West decides what is essential and unessential. Massive unemployment follows, adding to the spiral of impoverishment.

This leads to the claim by the so-called "international community" that "African countries cannot organise themselves, therefore private companies must be brought in to do it for them". Consequently there is the wholesale privatisation of state-owned infra-structure services and industries. This process increases the burden of crisis on the Africans as international consortia take over the companies and their resources, but not their debts.

The debt remains the responsibility of the impoverished people! Thus the ever-growing mountain of debt is burying both present and future generations.

The problems are then exacerbated by corruption on a large scale. Distorted lending and borrowing processes mean that western governments will make loans only on the basis of particular purchases from the donor countries. The effect of this on agriculture has already been mentioned. It is also true in other fields. Local politicians and civil servants are courted by western companies to accept hand-outs for ensuring contracts to particular companies. Thus Africa is littered with "white elephants" — the results of construction company contracts. For instance: unused and often unfinished hospital buildings in inaccessible locations, when what is actually required is many local, easily reached clinics.

Finally it is impossible to trace the original money. The economy is distorted, and the whole corrupt system provides the background to the suppression of democratic rights. It maintains in power repressive regimes, and opens the way for governments to carry out proxy wars, such as in Angola and Congo, in which those who suffer most are the impoverished people caught up on both sides and in the middle.

These wars, and internal social unrest are an excuse for the even more sinister and destructive trade in arms. Western politicians unleash the



Marie-Therese Santana. The women's banner reads: 'Women of the world, let us march together for a debt-free millenium'

"merchants of death" on Africa and other indebted countries in a kind of "buy-back" system. The loans are described as humanitarian gestures to assist the "developing" countries to overcome impoverishment. However, in practice they give rise to horrendous barbarity.

They are accompanied by the suggestion that, in view of the unstable situation on the continent, it would be in the interests of the recipients to look favourably on the donor country's "self-defence" industry. What follows are the seemingly unconnected delegations of arms salespeople with plenty of money in their pockets to hand over to corrupt politicians and civil servants willing to ensure lucrative contracts for planes, tanks, shells and guns.

The people are faced with double destruction: debt and war.

The result is extreme poverty, malnutrition, sickness, powerlessness. It is against this background that the Dakar conference took place and realised that the only meaningful process is when the people themselves take responsibility for their own future.

First and foremost that means understanding that debt is above all an instrument of the domination of global capital. On that basis the debt campaign is becoming a big anti-imperialist movement with great potential on a world scale.

However there are many who see this simply as a protest movement. It is fine to see big demonstrations in Seattle, Prague and Nice. However we cannot simply move from one demonstration to the next, simply as part of our calendar of activities. Anti-imperialism cannot remain an abstract notion. Socialists cannot stand aside. Fundamentally we have to build the resistance.

We have to establish and build the means to fight. Concretely this is an international question involving building and rebuilding the organisations of the working class. It means that in the countries of Africa the workers' movement must lead the fight to tackle such questions as food, clothes, health, education, welfare, the environment etc. and it means that the workers movement internationally must join them in this work.

The mass of people in the indebted countries cannot fight while they are so impoverished that they are reduced to skin and bone. As far as capital is concerned these people are surplus to requirement. They produce no surplus value. They are in the way. They are written off.

There can never be real meaningful and independent structures against capital unless the working class is strong, understands the ramifications of imperialism, and leads the fight. For socialists the anti-imperialist struggle is part of the struggle for the transformation of society.

What is lacking nowadays is the

building of real alternatives. By offering leadership in the movement as it is today, and not standing outside of it, socialists can be in the forefront of the anti-imperialist movement providing clear alternatives to capitalism and organising the masses under the leadership of the working class.

Towards this end workers, trade unionists and socialists should welcome and support the decisions of the Dakar conference:

- to put the entire debt issue in the context of the anti-imperialist struggle;
- to build up national and regional grassroots movements and campaigns;
- to link these anti-debt campaigns to other struggles of protest movements nationally and internationally;
- to develop global mass information and education on the issues;
- to mobilise human and financial resources to sustain the struggle;
- to demand accountability on the part of the support aid agencies, many of which — it was realised — have become a replacement for government and local independent civil society, and thus part of the problem in the process of indebtedness.

These protocols face us with the necessity to challenge every conscious worker in the countries of the west to take steps to build unity with their brothers and sisters in Africa and other "developing" countries. That usually entails a fight against the official leaderships. For instance in Britain the Trades Union Congress is part of the status quo. Resolutions appealing to western governments to make concessions to African and other indebted countries are often to be seen on conference agendas and usually they are carried overwhelmingly. However, resolutions are cheap and it is not a question of asking capitalism to be kind and generous! The challenge is to do away with capitalism.

Therefore the conscious workers in the west must struggle against the conception that solidarity simply means humanitarian hand-outs. It is not charity that is needed. The political issues involved place on all of us the need to build a movement in which the workers in the developed and under-developed countries are equal. We must move away from the situation in which the struggle is understood to be one of workers in the West supporting the "poor workers". The problem is that workers in the metropolitan countries are only as radical as is necessary to deal with their own problems. There must be a serious campaign to assist western workers to understand that internationalism is necessary for their own survival.



John Archer 1909-2000

VETERAN British Trotskyist John Archer died aged 91 on 23 December 2000. We print here the personal tribute his son, Bob Archer, paid at the funeral. John left his own lively epitaph in the form of his speech to a 90th birthday meeting in London on 30 October 1999. That speech is published as a pamphlet entitled 'John Archer: Events from my militant life in the working class'



My father, John Archer loved life enormously and packed a huge amount into the life that he led.

A young colleague at Hillcroft Comprehensive School in South London in the late 1960's remembers the gusto with which he would approach lesson time — an enthusiasm that few teachers ever feel so keenly.

Dad was born in Walthamstow, then a leafy suburb to the East of London, in 1909. His parents had

come from West Yorkshire and his father was an Inland Revenue official. Dad always felt a great attachment to West Yorkshire, and later more or less became an adopted Yorkshireman.

He was a very bright boy, and won a scholarship to the Merchant Taylors' School in London. He was well liked by his teachers, and did very well at classics: Greek and Latin. He went on to win an open exhibition to Peterhouse College, Cambridge. However, his parents'

marriage was breaking up and Dad had a resounding fall-out with his father. The result was that no money was available to finance his studies.

I must emphasise here that there was nothing superficial or perfunctory about Dad's love of the classics. They were very much part of his character. Where Horace in his odes praises 'Justum et tenacem propositi virum' — the just man who sticks to his principles in the face of frowning tyranny and the mob demanding bad things — Dad strove to be such a man.

This culture was very important indeed to Dad, but it was never a prison. For him it was a key to unlocking all knowledge. His curiosity was unquenchable, although it was never idle. He made himself an expert in a number of different fields. Remarkably, this grew rather than diminishing throughout his life. He never stopped learning, and never stopped taking a fresh look at old subjects from a new angle. He never stopped thinking and learning until his final illness.

His career was always subordinated to his politics. Indeed, he made a success of three careers. He taught himself geology and became a deputy chief technical officer in the Ministry of Agriculture. He left that job to become a tutor-organiser for the National Council of labour Colleges in Leeds. He became a successful secondary-schoolteacher and later a Principal Lecturer at the Polytechnic of Central London, finally achieving the rank of Doctor of Philosophy for his study of the history of the Labour Party in the 1930s.

In order to study as a young man, he had to work at Peter Jones' department store in London. Meanwhile he studied part time at the London School of Economics (LSE) and gained the degree of Bachelor of Commerce.

While a student at LSE, John met my mother Mary and also Margaret Johns and Stuart Kirby, who introduced him to the Trotskyist movement. For the rest of his life, Dad was a convinced socialist and follower of Trotsky. He threw himself thoroughly and wholeheartedly into struggle and sacrifice to put these beliefs into practice.

This was consistent with his education and culture. Like Shelley, he saw a world where:

*'All things are sold: the very light of heaven
Is venal; earth's unsparring gifts of love,
The smallest and most despicable things
That lurk in the abyss of the deep,
All objects of our love, even life itself,
And the poor pittance which the laws allow
Of liberty, the fellowship of man,
Those duties which his heart of human love
Should urge him to perform instinctively,
Are bought and sold as in a public mart
Of undisguising selfishness.'*

Dad stood in opposition to all of that. He stood up for:

*'The consciousness of good,
which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
Can purchase: but a life of resolute good,
Unalterable will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness.'*

(Shelley, 'Queen Mab')

An old friend, Don Bateman, wrote to me when he heard that Dad had died that Dad embodied a quality of moral courage. Don showed physical courage in a public meeting in Leeds in 1939 when Dad challenged a Stalinist speaker and the heavy mob was moving in to silence him.

Although we rarely had two half-pennies to rub together, these qualities made Dad an excellent father. He taught us all the time about everything around us, but he never made learning a chore or a burden. Learning was a joy in his presence. Intellectual curiosity became a challenge and a way of life. Politicians talk a lot about life-long learning nowadays. Dad was a lifelong teacher and student quite naturally.

He taught us a love of literature and art. Even when relations between us were quite strained, he discovered that I was interested in music, and went out of his way to obtain good recordings and a good stereo system for me. For him it was part of being human.

And being human also meant physical exertion. He was exception-

ally fit all his life. As a young man he swam and played rugby. Later he enjoyed walking, especially in the Yorkshire moors, which for him was a competitive sport, as many acquaintances found out to their cost. When he was in his late eighties he took me and his grand-daughter Rachel for a long walk around Denby which left us both gasping. He hardly broke into a sweat.

He brought a similar energy and enthusiasm to his lifelong commitment to the movement of the working class. Leon Trotsky's papers are lodged at Harvard University, and among them is a letter from Dad in French. He had enclosed a number of press cutting from the Manchester Guardian so that 'The Old Man' could keep up with world events while in exile in Mexico. In his note, Dad wrote: 'We are deeply involved in the mass organisations of the working class'. He meant the Labour Party and the trade unions.

While Dad was very welcome in these circles for the special gifts he brought, he often seemed a little eccentric for the very same reason. Quite a few of his close comrades could see both sides of this, and no doubt there will be many stories to tell over a drink afterwards. Whatever the stories, nobody ever doubted Dad's intellectual strength or his sincerity.

Dad's life was a life of struggle for a cause, with all the sacrifices and fierce joys such a commitment brings. All the sweeter, then, were his years of marriage to Winn. This was something that he enjoyed thoroughly, and he told me often that it was a love match. I know it made him very happy, and I know one of the really pleasing things about it was the circle of Winn's friends and acquaintances to which he gained access. He deeply appreciated the friends he made in the PROBUS group and the creative writing group and the Huddersfield Labour Party, and they in turn rallied round tremendously to help the family during his last illness. Typically, he became the area's oldest adult education student and enjoyed the contributions he was able to make to the group.

John Archer was a unique human being. We will all miss him very much.



ON November 14, 1999, John was a platform speaker at a meeting held in London to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the Fourth International.

Leading docker was stool pigeon

SECRET government papers released to the public under the 30-year rule reveal that a right-wing dockers' representative, Brian Nicholson, was a stool-pigeon who passed information to MI5 agents during the national docks strike in 1970.

Prime minister Edward Heath was moving to crush working-class militancy with plans for an anti-union Industrial Relations Act and a wage-freeze.

Dockers also knew of employers' plans to use the introduction of containerisation to destroy dock-side jobs and union organisation. The 'stuffing and stripping' (loading and emptying of containers) was to be done by non-union labour well away from the ports.

Militant dockers organised a two-week national stoppage over pay. Shop stewards had put in years of hard work to organise a National Shop Stewards Committee to co-ordinate workers' struggles in ports around the country.

The newly-elected Heath government declared a state of emergency over the dock strike and troops were kept on standby to break the action.

Meanwhile F Branch of Military Intelligence was gearing up under Stella Rimmington, who later became the head of the whole of MI5 in the 1990s. The role of this department was to counter political subversion, particularly left-wing militancy in the trade unions.

Rimmington led MI5s 'counter subversion' operations against the British miners' strike of 1984 — 1985.

This department paid close attention to the activities of leading dockworkers, many of whom were members and supporters of the Communist Party.

Detailed reports about the discussion among rank-and-file leaders were passed to Heath by MI5 director, Sir Martin Furnival-Jones. They were based on agents' reports and intelligence gained by tapping shop stewards' phones and bugging their discussions. Nicholson's name comes up regularly in the daily reports.

In an interview with *The Guardian* (1 January 2001) he tried to make light of what he had done. 'They used to play games with me and I used to



play games with them. What I told them was not significant, unless to tell them things to let the other side know'.

He said (probably truthfully) that government agents 'flitted round the docks posing as left-wing activists and dogooders'. Some such agents were also working with avowedly right-wing groups like Catholic Action and Moral Rearmament.

(These groups had a record of trying to subvert trade-unionism into right-wing class-collaboration going back over decades. Trotskyists in the Socialist Labour League in the 1950's and 1960's

publicly warned about their activities over a number of years. Their links with the state are now once more clearly exposed.)

Whatever he says now, Nicholson's testimony undoubtedly helped the MI5 agents to build up their very detailed and intimate understanding of the differences among leading dockers, and this information was rushed to Heath.

Nicholson was later a supporter of Labour leader Neil Kinnock in his campaign to defeat left-wingers and militants in the Labour party and the trade unions.

The historic banner of the London Royal Group shop stewards on a recent outing in support of the Liverpool dockers' struggle

Despite clear decisions by Labour Party conferences and a special Trade Union Congress, leaders of the movement like Kinnock made sure that firefighters, steel-workers, miners, printers, sea-farers and finally the dockers themselves fought in isolation as they came to oppose Thatcher's attacks on the working class one-by-one in the 1980s and were driven back.

'Workers Press' the daily newspaper of the Workers Revolutionary Party in the 1970s, was able at the time to reveal the identities of one group of informers who testified against militant London dockers and published photographs of these state agents. The real service to the workers' movement is to take penetration of the movement by employers and the state seriously.

Fred Green 1937-2000

By Dot Gibson

FRED GREEN died on 25 November 2000 at the age of 63. Surgery and preventative treatment in the previous year had convinced him to take early retirement on 31 August 2000. His quality of life was excellent at that time and he was looking forward to having time to carry out political research, translation and editorial work for Workers International.

Unfortunately cancer of the liver overtook him. He died peacefully with friends and family at his side, in Denmark where he had lived and worked since 1993.

Born and brought up in Surrey (in the south of England) he was educated at grammar school and Nottingham university from which (his diary tells us) he 'dropped out' in 1959. He became a trainee journalist and print worker for New Park Publications, the publishing company of the Workers Revolutionary Party and its forerunner the Socialist Labour League.

However in October of that year he was required to do his two-year 'national service', but ended up joining the Grenadier Guards for three years. Following that he worked in the wages department of Westminster



HERTELIG JULYKKE PÅ
60 ÅRS FØDSELSDAGEN

City Council and then in 1966 he started work at APVs, an engineering factory in Crawley, Sussex. He remained with this company until he retired, transferring to its Derby factory in 1989 and then to its Danish establishment.

While at university from 1956-59 in Nottingham he joined the National Association of Labour Students and the Labour Party. He keenly followed the political discussions arising from the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Khrushchev 20th Congress exposure of Stalin in the same year and became a Trotskyist in association with Ken Coates who was, at that

time, a member of 'the group' of Trotskyists inside the Labour Party, led by Gerry Healy. From then on, apart from his years in the army and for a short time afterwards, Fred remained a member of the organisations which developed out of 'the group' for the rest of his life: the Socialist Labour League, the Workers Revolutionary Party and the Workers International. He was conversant with the history of the Fourth International in a way that made it seem that he had actually lived through all its struggles.

It was a political decision that made him change his job from Westminster to APVs in Crawley, a 'new town' with a large factory estate and thousands of working class families. Here and in his home town, Burgess Hill, working from a flat he shared with his brother Peter at that time, he assisted with the development of (Trotskyist) Labour Party Young Socialist branches in Crawley, Burgess Hill, Brighton and Oxted. He was an active trade unionist.

Fred was a linguist, an archivist, a historian. He could speak fluently in French, German, Danish, Spanish and could read other languages. Before he even went to work in Denmark he was known by the workers there as the unusual Englishman who would converse with them on the telephone in their own language. He would pick up the telephone at work and speak to the caller in his or her own language quite naturally.

He could converse with anybody of a serious intellectual nature on a wide range of subjects, including anthropology, geography and archeology. His interests included a love of walking and he joined with other rambblers to campaign against the closure of public footpaths across the English South Downs.

Fred was well liked by his work colleagues, who saw him as a friend and a bit of an eccentric. Never a 'natty dresser' he would wear his clothes till they almost fell apart. Amusing stories are told about how he finally bought a pair of trousers in a supermarket for £8. His friends understood that although he would only spend this modest sum on the trousers, he would not think twice about spending double that on a book.

On his 60th birthday one of work colleagues sketched him in typical mode — cycling to work. This card

was signed by all the others, who presented it to him when they turned up singing outside his house on the morning of his birthday. In these last years of his life he spent many happy hours with them on works outings.

For 40 years Fred built up an enormous archive of his family tree, and could fascinate us with tales of his ancestors. His brother Peter remembers the time when his two children were singing 'Good King Wenceslas' at a family Christmas party when uncle Fred pointed out that they were related to the murderer of the 'Good King' who lived around 1,000 years ago! He also discovered family connections with Vitus Baring who travelled from Alaska to Siberia in the mid 18th century, and after whom the Baring Straits were named.

We, in the Workers International, knew Fred best as a principled fighter for the Fourth International. He always took his decisions on the basis of independent study and research. When the Workers Revolutionary Party exploded in 1985 after the corrupt practices of Gerry Healy, the main leader, were brought to light Fred did not hesitate in joining those who moved Healy's expulsion. Subsequently he enthusiastically took part in the work of the Steering Committee for the organisation of an international conference of Trotskyists. He worked alongside Paul and Polly Henderson in the Midlands branch of the WRP after he moved to Derby in 1989. When the Workers International was launched in 1990, Fred assisted its executive committee as a translator.

With his move to Denmark Fred continued to maintain his connections with the party through the Midlands branch. He never failed to meet and discuss with his old comrades on his visits to England, especially George Ellis, now in his nineties and a Trotskyist for over 60 years. From his home in Denmark he kept up a lively correspondence with a number of comrades.

When the executive committee of the Workers International split in 1997, Fred could not at first understand this. Unfortunately he had not received any of the internal discussion bulletins, and did not know why we had founded the Workers Internationalist Faction. He had not



realised that the Cliff Slaughter tendency was liquidationist. At that time he was being invited by John Robinson and Jim Smith to join them in support of the Japanese Revolutionary Communist League (JRCL), and some of his old friends and comrades were calling upon him to oppose the Faction.

True to form on his way back to Denmark after one of his visits, he took with him a huge file of internal bulletins. About six weeks later he telephoned to say that he was uncompromisingly on the side of the Faction, and we received his re-registration form and a bankers' order for his monthly subscription and fund

donation. At the same time he made up his mind that he could not support the JRCL. He especially confirmed this when he found that this organisation supported Milosevic in the Kosova conflict.

Fred was non-judgemental. He took everybody as they came. He did not break off relations with those who did not agree with him. However, he took clear decisions and knew where he stood. He died as he had lived: a Marxist, a Trotskyist — a fighter for the Fourth International. We are proud to have known him as a comrade and a friend and to have received in trust his extensive political archives and library.

Campaign launched for underground safety action

A WELL-ATTENDED public meeting in central London early in January launched a campaign for a 'yes' vote by London Underground railway staff against management changes which affect safety on the network.

Trade Union Congress (TUC) general secretary John Monks joined London's Mayor Ken Livingstone and the national leaders of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT), the train drivers' union ASLEF and the Transport Salaried Staff's Association on the platform.

Mayor Livingstone condemned the break-up of the network management into a series of 'interfaces', prejudicing efforts to prevent accidents. He warned:

'I don't want to be standing outside an Underground station in a few years' time explaining why 30 or 40 people have been crushed to death in an appalling accident'.

He went on: 'If I were a tube worker, I would vote 'yes' to strike action. If underground workers do

vote for strike action I will join them on the picket line'.

John Monks was considerably less forthright. He contrasted the run-down state of London Underground with the resources that have been ploughed into the Paris Metro, and went on: 'Public ownership is a key element in a first-class transport service'.

TSSA spokesperson Richard Rosser said that his union's members in London Underground were very opposed to the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) which would place management of the network into private hands. He mocked the record of the privatised surface railways and the private pension schemes now enmeshed in 'mis-selling' scandals.

Rosser was barracked by some of the Underground workers in the meeting because the TSSA has not decided to associate itself officially with the strike ballot. RMT speaker Bob Crow quickly came to his defence, pointing out that the keynote of the evening was unity

between workers in the three unions. 'Don't start ripping arms and legs off people', he demanded. 'The question is: are you going to fight for the right decision? The RMT and ASLEF will sent out 10,000 ballot papers'.

He went on to say that the London Underground was a more dangerous service now that management had been broken up. He concluded by calling for 'every single inch and corner of the former British Rail to be brought together into an integrated transport system'.

ASLEF leader Michael Rix pointed out: 'The last thing London needs is a collapse in public confidence in the Underground like we have seen in the national railways at the moment.'

'If it were not for the workers in the mainline system over the last two months the system would have collapsed.'

Rix insisted: 'Our action is based on what is needed for the safe operation of the Underground. I want every member in ASLEF to resoundingly vote 'yes'.

'If we lose the ballot we will lose the whole system of the Underground. Won't it be great on the first day of action to see ASLEF and RMT members standing side by side



to put aside the skeletons of the past?' The horrible safety record of the privatised railways and the virtual collapse of the service provoked by

frantic attempts to replace cracked rails after the Hatfield crash last year have shown many people in the UK what privatisation means.

Highlighting the safety issue guar-

At a fringe meeting at the London Labour Party conference in November last year, Ken Livingstone joined transport experts and rail union leaders to call for London Underground privatisation plans to be dropped. The conference later adopted a resolution opposing privatisation.

antees the greatest unity among different grades of Underground worker and their union leaders and with the long-suffering users of the system.

Build the International Network of Active Solidarity

In August 2000, three trade unions in the left bloc of the Brazilian CUT organised an international conference which founded the International Network of Active Solidarity (INAS). This established a coordinating committee in Latin America, and took a decision to develop this committee in other parts of the world.

Workers International believes that this initiative must be based on four principled aims:

- Trade unions independent of the state and employers;
- Democracy in the trade unions;
- Workers' internationalism;
- A common international fight against the anti-trade union laws.

We propose a second conference this year in Europe to build INAS, and invite trade unionists to take part in a discussion to establish our common aims in order to organise such a conference.

The first contribution to this discussion comes from YADOLAH KHOSHRASHAHI, a leader of the Iranian oil workers, imprisoned and tortured for his trade union activities and now living in exile in Britain.

It is an article dated 28th November 2000, setting out demands on the Iranian government in line with its responsibilities as a signatory to the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Iran: Workers rights are human rights

According to reports in Iranian daily and weekly papers, the current economic situation in Iran has led to major job losses and non-payment of wages to hundreds of thousands of workers, causing poverty and homelessness for large sections of the population.

● Sayyari, Iran's deputy Minister for Health reports that 20 per cent of Iran's population do not get enough food and 15.4 per cent of Iranian children suffer from malnutrition.

● Iranian newspaper Kar va Kargar, reporting a Seminar on the future employment in that country says that Officials of the Iranian Ministry of Labour admit that at least 4 million workers are unemployed.

● According to Alireza Mahjoub, the director of the

government sponsored Khaneh Kargar (workers' organisation) some 80,000 industrial workers have not received any wages for three to 36 months.

● In Hamadan around 150 small and medium size factories, in Kermanshah 292 factories, in Mazandaran 102 units and in Semnan 100 factories and production units have closed down.

● In Karaj (near Tehran) the director of the Labour Office (Edareh Kar) puts the number of those unemployed at 110,000.

● In October 2000, the Iranian press reported 38 major workers' protests all demanding unpaid wages, amongst them workers in: Behshahr textile, the Alaedin plant near Tehran, Kouh Fard in Istfahan, Sivan Road Construction Company in Oroumehyeh, the Kafsh Seh

Setareh and Kafsh Azadegan shoe factories, textile factories in Ghaemshahr, Fars province and Parvin in Istfahan, the Naghsh Iran carpet factory and the Jian Construction Company.

Clearly non payment of wages has become part of a concerted policy by sections of Iranian industry to increase profits — all this in a country where there is no unemployment benefit and no public health care for the majority.

The Iranian government has taken no steps to reduce the large number of job losses and indeed in the current atmosphere of factional fighting within the government, it is unlikely that any attention will be given to issues such as retraining workers, intervention to stop largescale unemployment. The policies of the govern-

ment are a contributory factor in the current rise in the rate of unemployment.

The absence of independent trade unions has weakened Iranian workers in defending their rights. In Iran, although the Labour code grants workers the right to establish unions, there are no independent unions.

The government does not tolerate any strike deemed to be at odds with its economic and labour policies. In 1993 the parliament passed a law that prohibits strikes by government workers. Workers do not have the right to organise independently and negotiate collective bargaining agreements.

No information is available on mechanisms used to set wages. On the Status of Child Labour Practices and Minimum Age for Employment, the Labour

Law prohibits the employment of minors under the age of 15, and places special restrictions on the employment of minors under age 18.

However the law permits children to work in agriculture, domestic service and some small businesses. Also a government decision in February 2000 exempted all workshops with five or fewer employees thus legitimising the employment of children full time in the smaller workshops.

In February 2000 the paper Sobh Emrouz reported that the rate for "renting" a child's labour for one year in the carpet industry is 20,000 to 150,000 tomans (i.e. \$25 - \$180).

The Iran Human Rights Working Group condemns the violation of the basic

rights of millions of Iranian workers and wage earners who are deprived of the right to organise themselves in trade unions, the right to negotiate their wages and the right to go on strike. The employment of child labour in the carpet industry and other workshops in Iran is a violation of the human rights of these children and should be universally condemned.

We demand that in accordance with its responsibilities as a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations, the government of Iran immediately takes steps to ensure that workers are remunerated fairly for work that they have performed and to retrain workers who are losing their jobs.

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Iran's Labour policies are in contradiction of Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, yet Iran is a signatory to this Covenant.

Article 6

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he/she freely chooses or accepts and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right.
2. The steps to be taken by a State Party to the present Covenant to achieve the full realisation of this right shall include technical and vocational guidance and training programmes, policies and techniques to achieve steady economic, social and cultural development and full and productive employment under conditions safeguarding fundamental political and economic freedoms to the individual.

Article 7

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work which ensure, in particular:

- (a) remuneration which provides all workers, as a minimum with:
- (i) fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind, in particular women being guaranteed conditions of work not inferior to those enjoyed by men, with equal pay for equal work;
 - (ii) a decent living for themselves and their families in

accordance with the provisions of the present Covenant.

Article 8

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure:

- (a) The right of everyone to form trade unions and join the trade union of his choice, subject only to the rules of the organisation concerned, for the promotion and protection of his economic and social interests. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public order or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.
- (b) The right of trade unions to establish national federations or confederations and the right of the latter to form or join international trade union organisations.
- (c) The right of trade unions to function freely subject to no limitations other than those prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public order or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.
- (d) The right to strike, provided that it is exercised in conformity with the laws of the particular country.

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