

## Scotrail workers take on union bashers

**A**N important test of strength with implications for the whole of the railway industry is now underway at Scotrail — the company that runs all regional train services in Scotland.

RMT traincrew are engaged in a series of one day strikes for an 11% pay rise and a guaranteed break. The strikes — the latest took place on November 2nd and 4th — come on top of an overtime ban that has seen between 200 and 250 trains cancelled per day.

The train crew strikers have been joined by Permanent Way (track) workers who were out on November 3rd and 4th to win the re-instatement of Joe Morrison, an RMT rep sacked for carrying out his trade union duties.

In a clear escalation of the dispute Scotrail managers have sent home Jim Ferry, the RMT District Council's Queen Street guards' rep, for the same crime of carrying out his trade union duties.

It looks as if John Ellis, the director of Scotrail, is trying to get a reputation for himself as a tough cookie who can break strikes. He hopes this will make it easier for a management led buy-out to get the Scotrail franchise when the company is finally put up for sale.

Behind this lies the employers' offensive against all train grades. The

guards' job has been broken up into four different grades — so as to weaken and divide people. Drivers face the prospect of huge splits opening up between the terms and conditions of workers in different companies, with drivers on the more lucrative Inter-City routes on very different rates to us on the regional railways.

Management have done their best to draw the ASLEF leadership into their web. Pressure from the ranks has forced them to ballot over the issue of the 37 hour week. But it is vital that the RMT does not just wait for ASLEF before we escalate the action any further. The first strike day ASLEF are considering isn't until 25 November.

It's great to see the RMT moving to a ballot of all Scotrail workers for a 37 hour week but it's also vital that the RMT leadership don't miss the core issue in the train crew strikes, a 11% across the board payment for past-productivity. A shorter working week is vital, but so is the pay rise!

Any shorter working week must be immediate. We don't want *promises*. London Underground workers have seen that promises of a shorter working week may mean absolutely nothing.

*By a Scotrail drivers' rep*

## Glenroy Watson: rank and file challenge

**L**ONDON'S Tube workers are among the most militant and powerful workers in Britain. This summer, a series of one-day strikes saw the capital's transport system once more brought to a halt in an impressive demonstration of industrial strength. But the Tube workers face problems, too. They are divided across unions — and grades too, to some extent — and often find themselves blocked and defeated by a leadership unwilling to rely on the strength of the rank and file. Given this background, the current election for the London Underground representatives on the RMT national executive is of great importance.

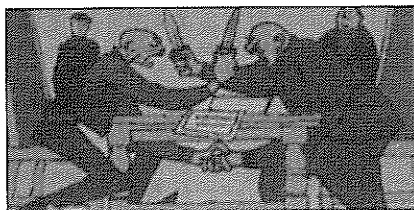
Glenroy Watson, a driver on the Piccadilly line, has made a strong challenge for the post. He told *Workers' Liberty* that he wants to see the RMT devote more energy and resources to building really effective rank-and-file unity.

"I'm standing for the RMT executive because I want to see the union backing up the people in the front line and giving a clear lead to its members. People need to feel that the union is really behind them. I don't think that is how they feel about it right now. There have not been enough resources and back-up going to the people who need them. I think some of the leadership just sit there at head office and don't think they have got a responsibility to the people in the front line, but it's us who make the union what it is.

"The biggest problem Tube workers face is disunity. We have got three different unions with different traditions. People are members of different unions, sometimes because of their grade, but often for all kinds of other reasons. People also have a real loyalty to their particular union. I don't think you can build unity across different unions by saying "join my union". You do it by concentrating on the issues, on the things that matter.

"That's what we've tried to do this summer and last summer during the strikes. We tried to build unity on the picket lines. We do need one union, but the question is always raised, which one? I'm loyal to the RMT, but

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



## The GMB's friends in the north

It seems like only yesterday that the GMB was projecting itself as the very model of a modern, successful British trade union. The "Flare" campaign was supposed to be reaching out to "growth" areas like women and part-timers. General Secretary John Edmonds was Neil Kinnock's favourite "modernising" union leader and amalgamation with the declining T&GWU was in the offing — on terms generally favourable to the GMB.

The amalgamation fell through — much to Edmonds' annoyance — because of the hostility of the GMB's regional barons in the North. But even so, Edmonds reckoned he could come back to the T&G in a year or two with a new unity proposal and meanwhile the GMB would grow stronger whilst the T&G declined. His confidence was boosted by the 1994 "check-off" campaign (imposed by Tory legislation) in which the GMB actually gained members.

Now, suddenly, it all seems to be going very badly wrong. Membership is once more in decline and the GMB is running a £5 million per year deficit. Morale amongst officials and lay activists is at an all-time low while stories of corruption, nepotism, incompetence, patronage and bullying rise to the sur-

face like scum in a stagnant pool.

The first major scandal broke last month in the Northern region. GMB Regional Secretary Nick Anderson had constructed an extraordinary network of corruption and nepotism. Two of Anderson's daughters had well-paid positions in the union. So did his son-in-law and the partner of a third daughter. Anderson's personal assistant, Nancy Maxwell, was channelling union business to her partner (a Jarrow printer and Labour PPC called MacEvenny) to the tune of £4,000 per month. Ms Maxwell's son also worked for the union, as regional Health and Safety officer.

When reports of Anderson's nepotism and, widespread misuse of union money began to appear in the regional press and in *Private Eye*, Edmonds and the EC were forced to act. Anderson and Maxwell have now been sacked and a number of other officials are suspended, pending further investigations. There may yet be prosecutions.

But Edmonds' troubles are not over, nor are they confined to the Northern region. The union's Midlands region is presently in a state of semi-paralysis, with no less than 7 of its full-time officials either suspended, on extended sick

leave or otherwise out of action. Regional Secretary Ken Gregory (the only Regional Secretary to oppose the sacking of Anderson, incidentally) seems determined to drive out anyone who stands up to him in any way. A charge against one official was referring to Mr Gregory as a "fellow employee of the union"! This particular official was charged with gross misconduct and then offered an early retirement package. Although Mr Gregory does not go in for the bizarre nepotism that characterised Anderson's regime in the north, some of the other allegations against him and his cronies are remarkably similar — in particular, the alleged practice of "double-claiming" expenses (i.e. claiming individual expenses for all-expenses-paid jollies abroad) is exactly the same charge that finally led to the sacking of Ms Maxwell.

Meanwhile, morale in the Midlands is at rock-bottom and the region has recorded the worst membership decline in the entire union.

Edmonds has so far stayed out of the Midlands situation but it seems unlikely that he can continue his Pontius Pilate act for much longer.

*By Sleeper*

I'm not going to say that the one union must be the RMT. We should not give people ultimatums.

"I also think it is very important for the RMT to start using its link with the Labour Party properly. At the moment we have got John Prescott going round advocating the introduction of private finance into the railways and the Tube. That is not acceptable. It is ridiculous to see the party we finance in the leadership of attacks on our members. We have got to turn the link into something worthwhile. If we don't, it will go.

"I also want to see the concerns of black workers getting proper consideration from the RMT and the labour movement. Back in the 1970s, the old NUR on the Underground had a branch put up a motion to the union's conference [AGM] calling for no black workers to be promoted to any position higher than foreman. When you think about it, that's a terrible thing for a trade union to be discussing. We have moved on since then, but black workers still need a voice. It is not a question of getting me elected to the RMT executive, and that's all there is to it, but it is vital that the union takes up and fights for the rights of black workers".

## Chinese dissident jailed

CHINESE dissident Wang Dan was jailed for 11 years on 30 October on charges of "conspiracy to subvert the government".

Wang Dan, then a history student at Beijing University, was a leader of the protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and sentenced to four years in prison as a result. After being paroled in February 1993 he continued to speak out against injustice, and was arrested again in Beijing on 21 May 1995.

According to Human Rights Watch, "China's urban dissident movement, after seven years of struggling to survive and reassert some measure of influence in the country's political affairs since June 1989, has in effect been comprehensively smashed. In a series of political trials held since 1994, and similar to the one Wang Dan now faces, the authorities have driven home the message that no degree of overt political opposition, however peacefully expressed, will be tolerated."

# London hospitals crisis

A WOMAN in East London with breast cancer is told she must wait ten weeks for an urgent operation. An elderly woman from Camden & Islington who has banged her head in an accident and suffers double vision is told she must wait six months for a specialist out-patient appointment at Moorfields Eye Hospital.

These are just two of the growing number of victims of an increasingly desperate crisis gripping hospital services in London and across the country. And it's set to get worse: in London alone the combined financial shortfall facing health authorities next year is almost £100 million.

Senior NHS managers are deliberately circulating the rumour that the Tories have decided the health service is so seriously under-funded, they will not attempt to bail it out of the growing financial disaster faced by health authorities. But the probability is that a succession of scandals will explode into news headlines between now and the next election. Only a government convinced it will lose and intent upon a scorched earth policy will be able to ignore the likely consequences.

It's not only the deprived inner-city health authorities which are facing draconian cutbacks. Tory-leaning outer London districts are also feeling the draught.

So, even while health chiefs in East London debate the possible closure of Newham General Hospital's busy A&E unit, and propose to axe the only children's hospital serving Hackney, and while Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham bosses contemplate a massive £19 million cuts package, health authorities in Brent & Harrow, Kingston & Richmond, and Merton, Sutton & Wandsworth are looking at cuts of up to 80% in waiting list treatment for their local population.

Hillingdon Hospital hit the headlines when it announced that it could not accept emergency referrals of patients over 75 from local GPs.

A few days later it claimed to have solved the problem by finding extra cash and beds for the elderly. Unfortunately, these beds still have patients in them, who must die or be discharged before there is any real vacancy. The underlying problems, the dislocation of services and underfunding of community care, remain unresolved.

Meanwhile, Trust bosses from London's surviving A&E units discussed with

the hard-pressed London Ambulance Service how to avoid an embarrassing repetition of last year's trolleys crisis, in which dozens of patients at a time were stranded for hours on end in corridors for lack of emergency beds.

They decided that the best scheme is to share out the misery by a system of "rota closures" in which each A&E unit (not yet named) should close on a "semi-permanent basis."

Again, none of this resolves the underlying problem — that by implementing Tory policy and axing vital acute beds, London's hospitals no longer have the capacity to deal with the effects of a cold winter: they have become dependent upon the greenhouse effect.

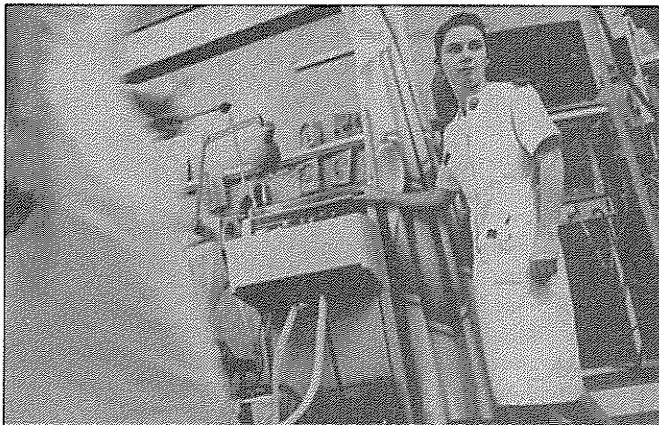
But while public anger and newspaper headlines focus on the popular areas of acute services (emergencies and waiting list treatment), health authorities are facing a rising tide of misery in the neglected area of mental health.

In East London & City Health Authority, management have proposed slashing no less than £13 million from mental health. Out of a £19 million cuts package, Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham warns that, without additional government cash to cover the soaring cost of caring for mentally disordered offenders, they will have to slash 12% from their £95 million mental health budget, effectively demolishing community-based services. Only the most severely ill would get any treatment at all.

Other mental health services admitting they are under severe financial pressure include Bexley & Greenwich, Brent & Harrow, Croydon, and Enfield & Haringey.

Earlier this year, Stephen Dorrell unveiled a new government policy on mental health, under the title "Spectrum of Care." Under the impact of the financial crisis, this 'spectrum' will range from nothing at all to the hopelessly inadequate.

Will Labour do any better? If the Tories stick to their guns, and refuse to pump in more money, the full-scale crisis of next year's funding squeeze will begin



to be felt within months of Tony Blair taking office. Britain's health spending is well below the European average. But the crisis will also coincide with key decisions on whether Labour wishes to enter the single European currency, and embark on the public spending cuts (or massive tax increases) called for by the Maastricht Treaty.

It is vital that campaigners keep up the pressure to ensure that the needs of the sick and the elderly prevail over the ambitions of the bankers and big business.

*By John Lister, Information Director,  
London Health Emergency*

## REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

### THE ITALIAN LEFT

Through Fascism, War and Revolution:  
Trotskyism and Left Communism in  
Italy

*Includes:*

- Paulo Casciola on "Pietro Tresso and the early years of Italian Trotskyism",
- Pierre Broué on "The Italian Communist Party, the War and the Revolution", and
- Arturo Peregalli on "The Left Wing Opposition in Italy during the Period of Resistance"

*Revolutionary History*, Vol.5  
No.4, £3.95 from:

Socialist Platform, BCM Box  
7646,  
London WC1N 3XX.

# Postal workers: don't throw the vote away!

**A** 61 per cent vote to continue the strikes. The massive campaign of lies, threats and scare stories by Royal Mail and their Tory backers only proved what we all know. The overwhelming majority of CWU members still want to finish what we started last June — to achieve our demands for a shorter working week and a decent basic wage and to defend duties in Delivery without having to accept teamworking or having to wait 15 months to get anything.

Yet despite this magnificent vote the only sounds coming from union HQ have been cooing ones. Instead of using the vote to force Royal Mail to back down, they may just throw it away.

A document has already gone through the EC that is now being used as the basis for negotiations with management. The document, which has been kept secret from all but EC members, proposes that whole ACAS deal be taken off the table. In its place, joint working parties would be set up on ways of working, delivery issues and union/management relations. These working parties would have no pre-conditions and would go on as long as both parties wanted. Our leader Alan Johnson has even talked about them lasting until after the General Election. In the meantime, the negotiations on this year's pay claim will go on as a separate issue.

This is a recipe for giving up. Our best hope of getting what we want doesn't lie in endless talks with manage-



ment, despite the negotiating skills of those involved. Royal Mail won't mind. It won't cost anything. In the meantime they can try to dripfeed some of their schemes into the weaker areas. And if at the end it all breaks down, they can go on the offensive again.

What EC members need to ask themselves is this:

- Are Royal Mail prepared to concede to our demands?
- Are they prepared to scrap their ideas on teamworking?
- Are they prepared to safeguard second deliveries?
- Are they prepared to grant an amnesty in all discipline cases connected with the strike where there have been no criminal charges brought?

If the answer to any of these is no then the strike vote must be activated. Quickly.

Our best chance of winning our demands lies with the 65,000 who voted yes to more strikes and the authority we have with the rest of our

members. We've been waiting a long time for a cut in hours and decent basic pay. We want it now, not some time in the future. Attacks on the second delivery are going on now. CWU activists, including divisional, area and local reps are being victimised now.

*A Manchester postal worker*

**W**E are not alone. Throughout Germany and Europe, employed and unemployed workers are taking action:

- against increasingly brutal government cutbacks in the welfare state;
- against increasing mass unemployment,
- against the destruction of public services,
- against the more and more unbridled accumulation of wealth by the rich and the super-rich,
- against a Europe in which the banks, corporations and cabinets call the tune.

People are taking action in Spain, in France, in Italy, and the day after tomorrow there will be a major national demonstration in Switzerland. In Belgium, hundreds of thousands of people have demonstrated and struck to protest against a state apparatus which is rotten with corruption and crime.

In the steel industry, we have been in struggle repeatedly since the start of the year to defend social security and job security and against Bonn's austerity package. We have fought alone, and with others. Our struggle was strong, but not strong enough.

The employers' ruthless attack on sick pay has pushed almost every one of us into action, and has strengthened our resistance. We have been given new courage by the exemplary action of our colleagues at Mercedes and Opel.

In the past many of us had the impression that we were fighting for others, but now others have taken the movement forward. They have fought on our behalf. They have refused overtime and special shifts. Thanks to them, the Rambos on the bosses' side have got cold feet.

I'll say it again quite clearly: for heaven's sake, don't forget all this by the time of the next election in 1998! Vote the fat man out! Make sure that the Chancellor's parties are kicked out! Let's make sure that no-one dares to go into coalition with them!

Capital and the government want to rip so much out of the regional collective agreements that they will become worthless for us. Today it's sick pay, tomorrow holidays, then the thirteenth month's pay, and then weekly working hours. All is to be torn up, and agreements negotiated only at enterprise level.

In that way, they reckon, they can put us under more pressure and

## Workers' Liberty

Incorporating Socialist Organiser

### THE WORKING CLASS WILL RISE AGAIN!

"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of race or sex." Karl Marx

Editor: Sean Matgamna; Assistant Editor: Helen Rate;  
Design: Tom Rigby; Business Manager: Martin Thomas.  
Published by WL Publications, P O Box 823, London SE15 4NA;  
phone 0171-277 7217, fax 0171-277 8462, e-mail awl@gn.apc.org. World Wide Web  
<http://www.gn.apc.org/labournet/awl>  
Printed by Upstream Ltd (TU).  
Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Workers' Liberty.





The banner reads: "Hands off sick pay"

**German trade unionists say:**

**"We are not alone"**

force more concessions out of us. They can play us off against each other, and fear and resignation will play into their hands. They have already taken a lot from us, especially from women, the unemployed, and youth. But they want to take more from us, and we still have a lot to lose.

Unfortunately one or two of us are still of the opinion that these ongoing attacks can be beaten off with days of action such as today's. A bit like a shower from which you get protection by putting up an umbrella. This is a mistake. What we face is not just bad weather. The climate has changed. After Bonn voted through the cutbacks, they smelled blood. The demands become even wilder: increase taxes for the mass of the population, tax pensions, increase the age of retirement, cut disability benefits, make more and more cuts, and then things really get going.

So that everyone understands that from now on wealth is to be redistributed only from the bottom to the top, the leader of the FDP in Hamburg has now demanded a tax on beggars!

The way forward is: join the unions! No moaning and waiting for others. Above all, get involved and work together. Only in that way can we change things in the trade unions which don't suit us.

Colleagues, we go forward on the basis that reason, morality and justice have not died out in this country — not, above all, among ourselves, the majority of the population. One sentence from our history is relevant today as seldom before: "Whoever does not share the struggle, shares the defeat!"

● Speech made by H Dierkes and J Schuring at the IG-Metall union rallies on 24 October in Duisburg. Abridged from a text provided by the German Marxist fortnightly Sozialistische Zeitung. Contact: SoZ, Dasselstr. 75-77, 50674 Köln.

# Class struggle in Germany

**C**LASS war is once again a feature of German life. On Thursday 24 October, after the breakdown of the negotiations on sick pay between unions and bosses, 400,000 metal workers demonstrated their anger and determination.

In Sindelfingen (near Stuttgart) a banner read: "It's high time for class struggle!" Probably only a minority of workers identify as yet with such slogans, but there is real potential for important mobilisations, and not just for the defence of 100 per cent sick pay. Everywhere trade-union spokespeople linked the conflict with the employers to the general government attacks on the welfare state.

A new law passed in September allows employers to pay only 80%, and the big car, truck and steel companies want to take advantage.

The union leaders lack any strategy linking the current conflict to the wage round, unemployment, and austerity. But even partial movements against the increasingly hard-line attitude of the capitalists, who are going to attack the whole system of collective bargaining, to reduce the "costs of labour" in the name of competition in a "globalised" world, may lead to a major confrontation.

Socialists are relaunching the debate on interprofessional action, on general strike action, on demands against unemployment, on the reduction of working hours without loss of pay, and on public investment according to social needs not profitability.

On 14-16 November the DGB (German TUC) meets in Dresden. Probably a revised version of its statement of aims will be put to the congress, eliminating any reference to alternatives to capitalism. A (rather heterogeneous) trade-union opposition has been formed which demands that the vote on the draft should be postponed. But also on the agenda is coordination in struggle against the continuing offensive of the employers and the government.

*(Adapted from an article by Manuel Kellner, of Sozialistische Zeitung. Contact: SoZ, Dasselstrasse 75-77, 50674 Köln).*

# Racist backlash in Australia

**S**INCE winning government seven months ago the conservative Coalition has used a scare campaign about the size of the Federal deficit to make deep cuts to social spending.

Despite Australia having a low deficit as a proportion of GDP by international standards, and the second lowest rate of taxation in the OECD (behind Turkey), the government refused to consider raising revenue to reduce the deficit.

Instead it focused its attack squarely on those least able to resist and in the process fostered a climate of racism and intolerance that has been seized upon by the talkback demagogues and the two openly racist independent MPs.

The government has tried to sell the idea to workers that their Budget cuts are simply removing 'middle class welfare' entitlements. Today the incomes of 70% of households are less in real dollars than they were in 1976. The Liberals are banking on many people being prepared to accept these cuts as making sure no-one else gets a better deal.

This climate of fear about job security and falling living standards is proving to be the right one for breeding racism against Aborigines and Asians. While most of the media attention has been on

newly elected MP Pauline Hanson's maiden speech in which she talked of rivers of blood in Australia, the real campaign attacking Aborigines was begun by prime minister John Howard and his Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Herron.

The very first actions of the government was to accuse ATSIC (the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, an Aboriginal elected body which distributes government funds to Aboriginal community organisations) of financial mismanagement and appoint an administrator. Since then the Minister has refused to use his legislative powers to protect Aboriginal cultural sites and has refused to make a submission to a Human Rights Commission hearing on the 'stolen children'.

This hearing is reporting on the practice, which continued up until the 1960s, whereby white social workers, police and others could forcibly remove Aboriginal children from their parents and relocate them hundreds of miles away. The parents were never told of their children's whereabouts nor were the children told of their parents.

To add insult to injury the Minister, supported by Howard, announced that it was all in the past and anyway many of the children were better off getting a

white education than they would have been if they had stayed with their families.

Hanson's speech, in which she called for all Aboriginal funding to be reviewed; an end to Asian immigration, Australia's withdrawal from the UN, and the cutting of all foreign aid, and predicted an Asian invasion of Australia, has drawn no comment from Howard except to say he supports her right of free speech.

However, alarmed at the support she has received from talkback radio and opinion polls, every State premier and four of Howard's back bench have condemned the speech.

Conspicuous by their silence are the ALP, where no Labor politician has responded to the speech in Parliament, and Howard.

The tactic, if that is what you can call it, of the ALP appears to be to remain silent and let Howard take the heat. If that is the case it is doomed.

Remaining silent in response to this ignorant garbage will not build the support necessary to claw back the massive Coalition vote, many of whom were workers suffering from Labor's economic restructuring.

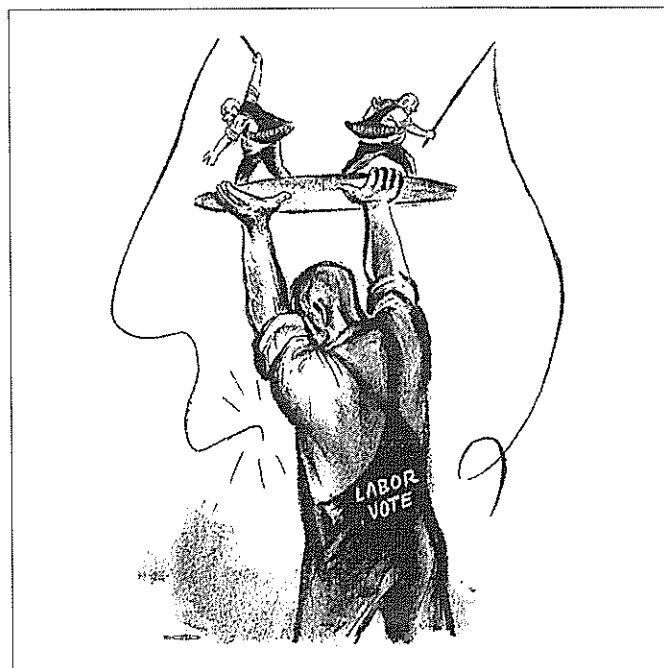
*Tony Brown*

## US Labor builds

**T**HE new-formed American Labor Party has "set a goal of training a cadre of 1,000 workers to put on workshops throughout the country", according to the new issue of its paper, *Labor Party Press*.

It has established an economics educational programme, "Corporate Power and the American Dream", which is "designed to help promote debate and discussion on alternative economic programmes for working people", and scheduled a three day "train the trainers" session at the Rutgers Labor Education Center on January 16-18, 1997.

The Labor Party, established at a conference in Cleveland, Ohio, in June 1996, and has decided not to contest the 1996 presidential election, but is working hard to build rank-and-file support. It has now been endorsed by nine unions, including the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, the United Electrical Workers of America, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, the International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union, and the United Mine Workers, as well as numerous local branches of other unions.



This working-class view of the two-party system is coming back into fashion in the USA!