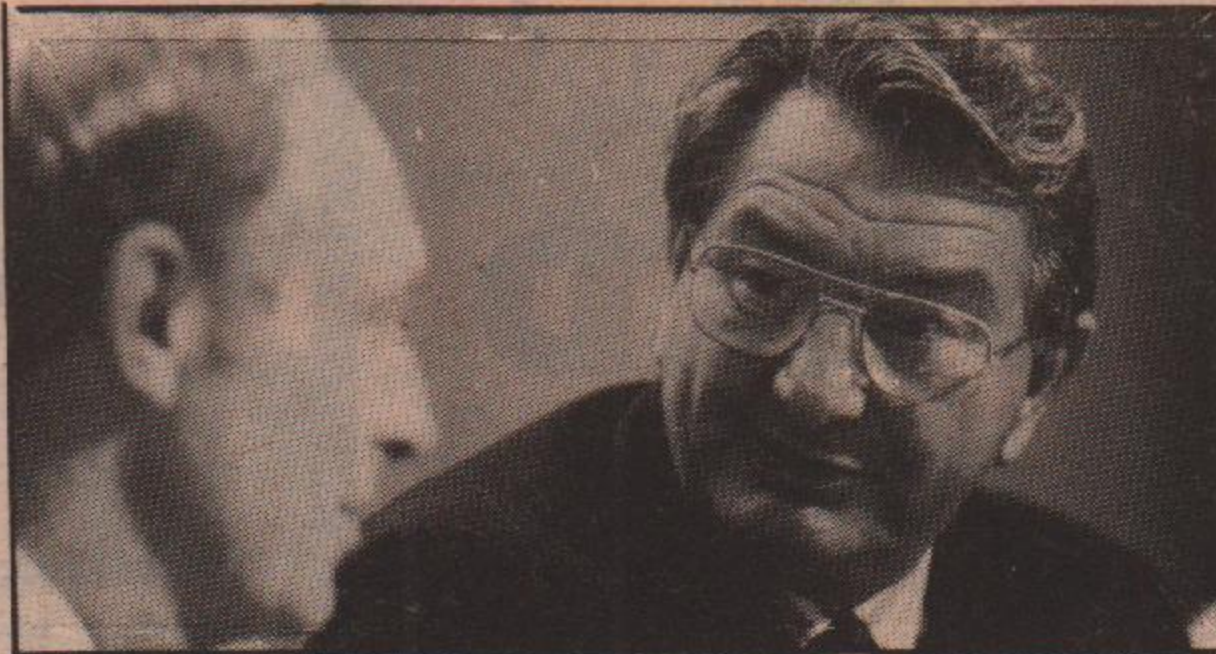


SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

LABOUR'S FUTURE



Eric Heffer's new book, centre pages

Labour after Knowlsey Page 2

The AIDS hysteria Page 5.

Thatcher's Britain

Spivs' paradise



Torture in Afghan jails

Political prisoners in Afghanistan are regularly tortured by Afghan security forces, according to the human rights group Amnesty International.

The Amnesty report details widespread arrests of government officials, teachers, businessmen and students, many of them women, under the USSR occupation. Some of those arrested are people who have violently opposed the government, but others have been taken into custody on suspicion of membership of, or contact with, parties involved in armed opposition.

Torture

Torture is said to include regular beatings, electric shocks to sensitive parts of the body, being burnt with cigarettes and hair being torn from the scalp. Women prisoners report not only physical torture to themselves, but being forced to witness the torture of male prisoners. In some cases, they report being incarcerated with the corpse of another torture victim.

In many cases prisoners state that Soviet personnel are present during torture and often participate in or direct the interrogation, but leave the application of torture to the Afghans.

One 24-year old student testified "My interrogator was an Afghan, but very often he was joined by an interpreter and a Soviet...I was never tortured by Soviets, but I saw many Soviets in the rooms where torture was taking place...I don't know if the Soviets participated in...or gave orders for torture."

Many detainees remain in custody for several months without access to family members or a lawyer and are later released without ever being charged or tried. Others are tried in special 'revolutionary courts' where they have no access to defence counsel, and are not allowed to call witnesses.

"Greed is all right, by the way. I want you to know that. I think greed is healthy. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself".

Such is the credo of Ivan Boesky, who last week had to own up to \$50 million profits from illegal deals on Wall Street.

It's an apt motto for the brave new world of Thatcher and Reagan, where the spiv is king and the profit-gouger is hero. Boesky was just unlucky: he took the principle too far, and got caught out.

In an effort to avoid jail, Boesky has agreed to pay back the \$50 million, to pay a \$50 million fine, and to be barred from share-dealing for life.

Fortune

Boesky made his fortune — estimated at over \$150 million altogether, so he won't be short even after paying back \$100 million — by gambling on the stock exchange. Using total funds of some \$2 billion, he would buy and sell shares on split-second timing to profit from slight rises and falls in price.

This business has become much more profitable in recent years, with lots of takeovers pushing share prices up. It is doubly profitable — but illegal — if you get inside information from those involved in forthcoming takeover bids.

Boesky had the finger pointed at him by Dennis Levine, a managing director of Drexel Burnham Lambert investment bankers who was found guilty of 'insider dealing' in May this year. Now Boesky in turn has promised to cooperate with further investigations and many more heads may roll.

London

London has just had its own Boesky case on a smaller scale. Geoffrey Collier, a top man at Morgan Grenfell merchant bank, confessed to 'insider dealing' and resigned last week.

According to the Financial Times of 14 November, Collier "feels aggrieved that he has been singled out for an offence which he believes has been widely committed" and "is threatening to reveal that other leading City personalities have been guilty". (Later newspaper reports have denied this).

It is very unusual for those guilty of 'insider dealing' to be prosecuted. This is a 'gentleman's crime', and so long as you pay back the profits and retire gracefully when found out, you're probably all right.

You'd think they would be satisfied with their legal pickings, which are certainly rich enough.

The Labour Research Department has just reported that one City money man, Lloyds insurance broker William Brown, was paid £1.3



Spivs in action

million salary last year. He received another £260,000 in dividends on the shares owned by him in the company he works for.

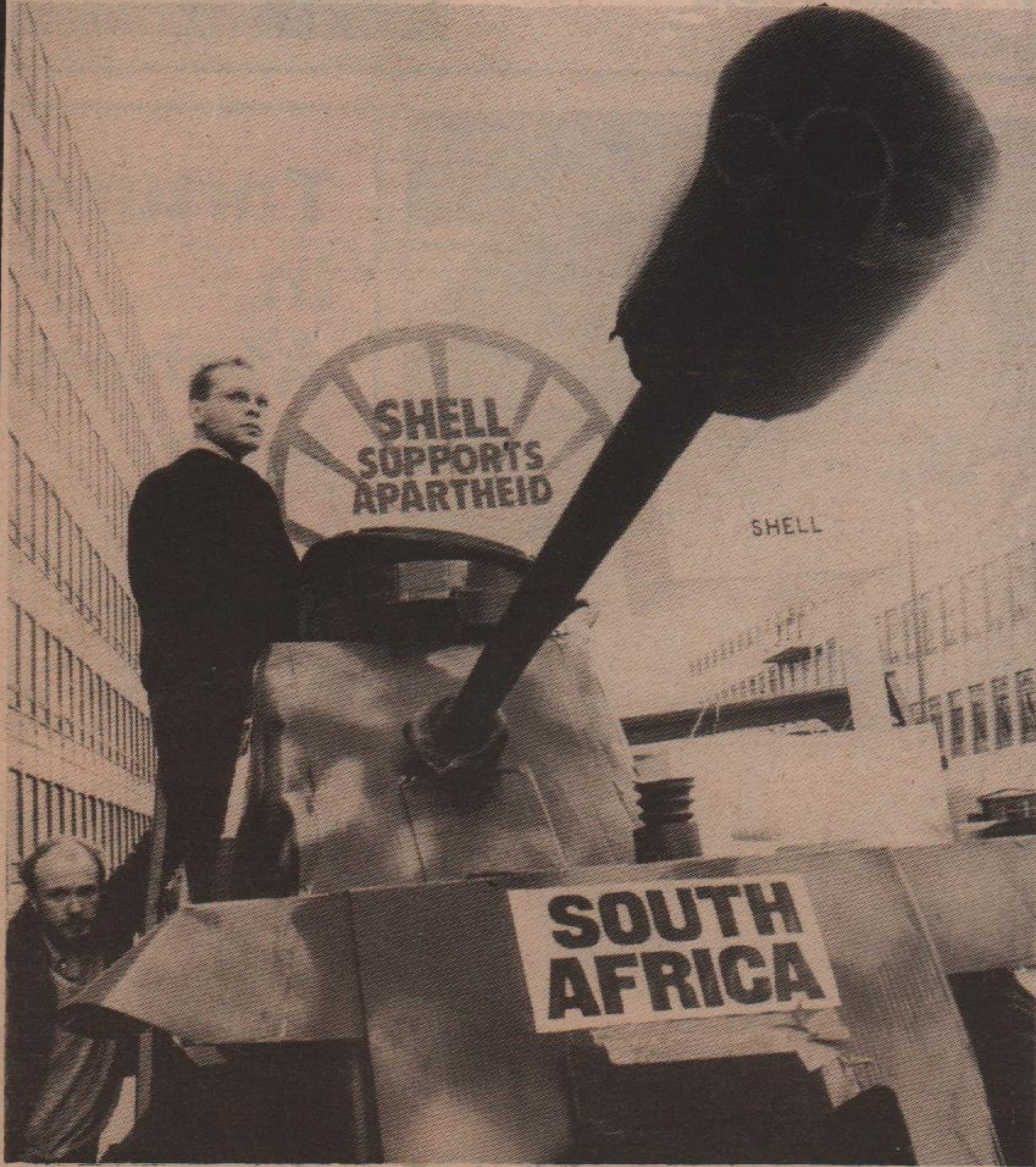
But the motto "greed is healthy" is not just Boesky's: it belongs to the whole of Wall Street and the City, and the whole capitalist system.

Collier and Boesky got caught out because they went too far in pursuing

their greed at the expense of other capitalists. But all the capitalists, legal and illegal, respectable and shady, pursue their greed for profit at the expense of the working class. And they never have to pay their millions back!

That's what the system is all about: millions for a few, while the majority rot in poverty.

WORLD Brief



Picket of Shell petrol station last Saturday (15.11.86) "Boycott Shell Day", in London organised by AAM. Picture shows a mock-up 6 foot long tank on the back of a lorry. Photo: Jez Coulson, IFL.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Loyalists and fascists

The latest issue of the Ulster Defence Association magazine 'Ulster' contains a rather embarrassed account of the links of the UDA — the legal Loyalist paramilitary organisation in Northern Ireland — with the fascist National Front.

"You seek allies where you can. In a position where all the big parties oppose us, and where to fight for Loyalist views within them would be a waste of time, what else can Loyalists do?... Whatever one thinks

of (the NF's) other policies and practices, one cannot deny that on the mainland...they are the only people who oppose Hillsborough from a Loyalist point of view."

As if to illustrate the bizarre contradictions within working-class Loyalism, the magazine also carries an article on the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War — vigorously solidarising with the Republicans of Spain against Franco's fascists.

Not only that, but the

article celebrates the workers' revolution that broke out during the Civil War — "in almost all the industries, the rank and file workers reorganised and administered production, without capitalists or high-salaried managers" — and denounced the suppression of that revolution by the liberal and Stalinist leaders of the Republic.

The author finds the workers' revolution "of far more inspirational value than being asked to remember King Billy prancing about on his white steed 300 years ago".

ISRAEL

Repressive parallels

Some of the right-wing Zionists and Israeli chauvinists who were loudest in welcoming Anatoly Shcharansky to Israel are now angry with him.

They have demanded that he apologise for "a blow against the Jewish people and the state of Israel".

Shcharansky's crime?

He met with West Bank Palestinians seeking his support for an Arab newspaper editor who is in jail and likely to be deported under the 'emergency' laws inherited from the British colonial regime in Palestine.

Shcharansky was sufficiently aware of the parallels between the position of Jews in the USSR and that of Arabs in Israel and the occupied territories to listen to the protesters. According to the Guardian, he was "shocked to hear details of Israel's repression in the occupied territories".

USSR

Moscow Bank strike

The Kremlin bureaucrats may have to face a strike by some of their employees. And this time they won't have the protection of their own savage anti-strike laws, but only of Margaret Thatcher's, similar in intent but so far much less drastic.

The workers who may

strike are the London staff of the Moscow Narodny Bank. Their union, BIFU, will call a strike ballot if — as it fears — the bank declares compulsory redundancies.

The union already has grievances against the "socialist" bank. BIFU

believes that one of its members was sacked this summer because of his union activity, and the union's assistant secretary said: "Our members are just sick of the way they are being treated. BIFU is not a Russian trade union and we will not stand for this approach."

After the Knowsley by-election

Attacking reselection

By Bas Hardy

Last Thursday's by-election will change next to nothing for the people of Knowsley North. The TV crews will pack up their equipment — apart from the stuff that's been nicked by the local kids — and head south.

The Tory candidate has waved the flag of Thatcherism in the face of the plebs enough to guarantee him a nice safe seat in the home counties to supplement his meagre income as a barrister.

George Howarth is Westminster-bound to pick up a £19,000 a year salary plus £21,000 expenses, and that certainly is nothing to sneeze at!

The only people who have been trying to do anything about the problems of unemployment and poverty — the activists of the Kirkby unemployed centre — have been branded 'Militants' by the establishment politicians and the media. The witch-hunters' steamroller is ready to run.

If you want a Labour Party card next January you will have to prove that you have canvassed for Howarth. If that isn't enough to get rid of all the troublemakers, then Howarth will sit down with the likes of Kilfoyle and Fisher and go through the membership lists expelling anyone they don't like on charges of 'bringing the Labour Party into disrepute'.

"You have done nothing. You only come round here at election time," is a lyric in a Stevie Wonder song 'Big Brother', and it is particularly apt when applied to the Kinnockite leadership's attitude to the people of Knowsley.

Working class people are nothing more than canvassing and voting fodder for the Labour leadership. You can work and vote for us but don't expect to have any say in selecting the MP.

What we have here is the start of a process to overturn the policy on reselection. There is no way the local party could get rid of Howarth before the General Election. When he comes up for reselection 2½ years after that, the local party will be so 'reconstituted' as to ensure him a majority.

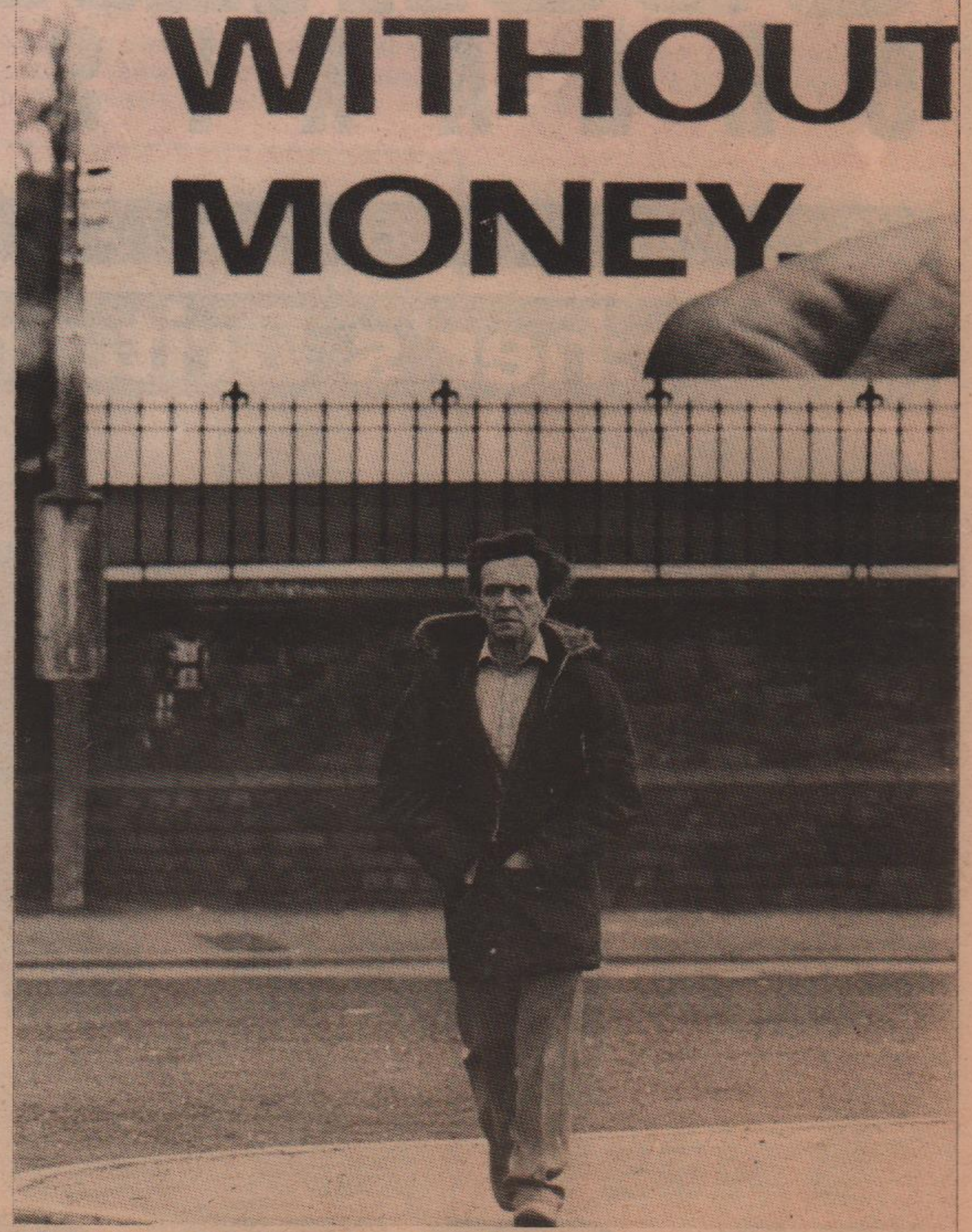
Labour Party activists would be naive to suppose that candidates aren't going to be imposed by the NEC on Merseyside and elsewhere in the very near future.

What conclusions can be drawn from the voting? "If the result were to be repeated nationally," the BBC computer tells us, "there would be 573 Liberal MPs in the next parliament." (!) Although such statements are arrant nonsense, the fact that Labour lost 8,000 votes and the Liberals increased their vote by 5,000 clearly shows that many working class people see the Liberals as a party capable of replacing a remote and uncaring council bureaucracy with a more benevolent one.

When we talk about Knowsley North (Kirkby and Cantril Farm) we are talking about a solidly working



George Howarth, the NEC's imposed candidate, managing to do some canvassing in Kirkby town centre. Photo: John Harris, IFL.



Prescott, part of the Knowsley North constituency. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

class area. 80% of the people are in receipt of some kind of welfare benefit. One in three adult males are on the dole. It has the third highest unemployment figure in the country.

Although the size of the Liberal vote will not be sustained in the next General Election it is nonetheless a reflection of the fact that 'non-political' working class people see the Liberals as a viable political alternative to right-wing bureaucratic labourism, and think that they represent the lost values of the golden age of the Labour Party.

We must also note that the ultra-left sectarian candidate of the RCP polled 664 votes — by no means insignificant when you consider that the Tories got less than 2000. The vote itself placed the RCP well ahead of the other two loony candidates, a significant protest vote, especially as far as the young are concerned, against Kinnock's cynical behaviour.

Local Labour activists underestimated their own strengths by choosing 'champions' who were ill fitted to serve them. The Ayatollah Mulhearn was the first choice, but he had to stand in defence of the abysmal record of Liverpool council, whose 'boss politics' and sectarianism has alienated many ordinary working people and has seriously damaged the present standing of all on the 'hard left'. Les Huckfield was only a marginally better choice, because his 'have constituency will travel' approach appeared to many to be carpet-bagging under a left-wing guise.

Why did the Kinnockite NEC impose a candidate? In the first instance, it was out of fear that right-winger Peter Fisher would stand as a Labour independent. Fisher did remarkably well in the May local elections as a 'Labour against the Militant' candidate.

He had been deselected as a council candidate by Gerry Beyga (brother of Derek Hatton's holiday companion Tony) at a ward meeting where 15 members of the Beyga family were present. He went on to poll twice as many votes as young Beyga.

If you sup with the devil you should expect such consequences.

Unfortunately, Derek Hatton continues on his merry way, fawning

before the media in pursuit of his own self-aggrandisement. Hatton's appearance on 'Newsnight' was an absolute disgrace. Under the mock-comic theme of 'the search for the lesser-spotted Militant' the three establishment candidates were seen in Knowsley Safari Park looking for 'our Derek' who obliged the cameras by hiding behind the odd tree and dropping the odd copy of Militant to indicate his trail. Did he donate his fee for this broadcast to the Militant fighting fund?

For serious Labour activists, two tasks are posed by the Knowsley North events, especially when we consider that the looming General Election will give strength to Kinnock's increasingly dictatorial stance within the party.

●The right of reselection must be maintained. Fresh attempts to impose candidates must be resisted.

●Secondly, a campaign must be initiated to defend and reinstate those members of the party now threatened with expulsion.

We cannot wait for another conference because it will be too late.

CLPD

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is putting forward a slate for elections to the Labour Party's new disciplinary committee, the National Consultative Committee.

The slate is as follows: for the Constituency Labour Party section, Ken Slater (Hynburn CLP and AEU branch secretary) and Mandy Moore (Tottenham CLP and Women's Action Committee), and probably John Burrows (Chesterfield CLP, and North Derbyshire NUM Treasurer).

For the Women's section: Vera Derer (Campaign for Labour Party Democracy) and Margaret Vallins (Chesterfield CLP). For the trade union section John Jones (TASS), Alan Quinn (TGWU) and Owen Briscoe (NUM).

Ballot papers have to be returned by the end of December.

Teachers: no sell-out!

The leadership of the National Union of Teachers has accepted the biggest sell-out in the history of public sector education!

After two years of industrial action, teachers have been rewarded with contempt and betrayal by their leaders. Not only will the average teacher gain very little in cash terms, but in return they will be forced to accept a significant increase in working hours.

Head teachers will be able to enforce an extra five hours of work a week beyond the school day. Activities such as parents' meetings, staff meetings and report writing will become compulsory.

But these extra hours will not in-

clude preparation, marking, administrative and pastoral work. Teachers will be expected to continue this work in their own time, though they will be answerable for this work directly to the headteacher.

At a time when new initiatives in primary and secondary education are increasing the workload of all teachers, the new deal represents little short of torture for teachers — even cover will become contractual.

Preparation time during the school day will virtually become a thing of the past.

So what can be done to stop the rot? The next few weeks will be crucial. The NUT is holding a special conference on November 29 and local associations must mandate their

EDITORIAL

delegates to throw out the deal.

The Local Associations Pay Action Campaign (LAPAC) and the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) must mobilise on a national scale. A mass lobby of the special conference would be a good start. More important still is the need for a campaign to inform members of the treachery in this deal.

Divisions and Associations must be pressurised to recommend rejection of the deal in the ballot following the

special conference.

This work must be done now. The alternative is an odious contract and the shackling of industrial action for the foreseeable future.

We can stop this deal!

If enough information and pressure reaches the members, few teachers will accept such an attack on their conditions of service.

If the ballot is lost the prospect for activists will be bleak. It is now or never. If the teachers decide to fight they will be moving into the front line of the class struggle. They will need all the support they can get and they will deserve the support of the entire labour movement.

More on teachers page 11

PRESS GANG

Down to the gutter

Thanks to the boycott of News International I have so far been spared having to look closely at the real sewer-level press.

The gutter is not the exclusive preserve of Rupert Murdoch as recent coverage of the "Heathrow Asians" by the Mail and the Express vividly demonstrated. But for sewer-level journalism, the Wapping products still have the edge.

Not that the new Sunday Sport doesn't make a real effort to get down to the level of the Sun and the News of the World. In fact its founder (a self-confessed pornographer) claims to base the Sport on the old style News of the World before it started to be a "family" paper.

The Sport went on sale in Birmingham for the first time last Sunday and marked the occasion with a full colour centre-page spread entitled "Yum Brum". This was not a guide to the Curry Houses of Stoney Lane but a tribute to the "tantalising teasers who have taken off nationwide in the glamour world — homegrown second city stunners".

By Jim Denham

In fact of the Sport's 32 pages, no less than eight contain pictures of topless models (nine if you include Tracy in the "parade" who for some reason has the word 'censored' printed across her bust).

There is not much that could honestly be described as news in this paper. The lead story ("Too tiny for sex — secret shame that drove the M4 rapist to sex crime") was merely a more plainly worded account of something which had been broadly hinted at in most of the tabloids over the previous week. It painted quite a touching picture of the rapist and his pathetic obsession.

I honestly don't know if the images of women presented in the pages of the Sport could in any way encourage rape. I wouldn't rule it out. I doubt if the Sport proprietors would have even considered the question or that they would care much even if they did.

That said, the Sport is no worse than plenty of other newspapers. Actually it's less revolting than the Sun, being entirely free from racism (to judge by the one edition I've read) and it doesn't bother with the nauseating sanctimonious tone the News of the World adopts to cover its prurience. Oh yes, I nearly forgot: sport.

Nine pages are devoted to sports coverage (including Bobby Moore on football and "tips from beyond the grave" from the late Fred Archer) which doesn't seem a lot given the paper's name. But I suppose Sunday Smut doesn't have quite the right ring to it.

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Corrugated iron fence erected to divide Catholics and Protestants on the mixed Manor Street estate, North Belfast. Photo: Andrew Moore/Reflex.

Strip searching and the Anglo-Irish deal

Tuesday 11 November marked the fourth anniversary of the introduction of the notorious British government policy of strip-searching women prisoners in the North. And while there have been many disturbing individual examples of how women have been degraded by the strip-searches, one of the most poignant examples of the traumatic effects of this policy, occurred recently when a Fermanagh woman miscarried her baby as a direct result of the psychological stress she endured.

The woman, who was arrested by the RUC on 27 October for the non-payment of a motoring fine, protested that she was 13 weeks' pregnant, but her pleas were ignored and she was brought to Maghaberry Prison, where she was strip-searched. During her short stay until her husband paid the fine the following day,

This article from Sinn Fein's weekly Republican News looks at the British government's barbaric policy of strip-searching Republican women prisoners. (Abridged)

the woman was searched going to and from the prison library and strip-searched on her release.

According to Fermanagh priest Joe McVeigh, an active anti-strip-search campaigner, the woman was highly distressed by the strip-searches and the following night began haemorrhaging and tragically miscarried.

Year

One year on since the signing of the Hillsborough Agreement, this universally-condemned policy is in its fifth year and continues unabated, with over 200 strip-searches carried out since the women moved to Maghaberry prison on March 18.

Prior to the Agreement, Foreign

Affairs Minister, Peter Barry, publicly stated his abhorrence of the practice and declared his intention to make the "strongest possible representations" to the British government to end it. Barry's position on the issue has undergone a complete U-turn over the past year whereby he now mimics the Northern Ireland Office's pathetic excuse that strip-searching is "necessary for security".

Mairead Farrell, released from Maghaberry on 19 September after serving a 10½ year sentence, believes that the Hillsborough Agreement has effectively "legitimised strip-searching instead of ending it". She continued:

"It is quite apparent that the Free



Mairead Farrell

State government not only supports strip-searching but is acting hand in hand with the British government to ensure that it will continue.

"This has come as no surprise to the women republican prisoners; even before the Agreement we didn't expect the neo-colonialists to do anything for us. But we felt that publicity and public outcry against what is clearly a moral and human rights issue would embarrass them into action."

When Barry criticised the British government on strip-searching, the women prisoners felt that this was "a completely cynical and hypocritical gesture as his government was carrying out the same degrading policy on republican prisoners in Portlaoise Prison".

There have been a staggering 4000 strip-searches since 11 November 1982, carried out on a fluctuating prison population which has never exceeded 35 women.

GRAFFITI



National Front counter-demonstration in London making their position clear on the Anglo-Irish Deal. Photo: Carlos Guarita, Reflex. See World Brief page 2



Hard-line Jewish West Bank settlers demonstrating that the land is theirs, and they will fight against any attempt to remove them.

Internationalising pension profits

Most shares on the Stock Exchange are held by institutions rather than individuals, and a lot of them by pension funds. This sharpens, rather than blunts, the profit drive as the economic regulator; individual whim, as against hard capitalist calculation, has an ever-smaller part in the allocation of money.

Much of Roy Hattersley's economic policy revolves around the complaint that pension funds invest too much money abroad rather than in Britain. Figures published in the Economist magazine last week, however, suggest that it is wrong to see this as a peculiar British problem.

Financial markets are steadily becoming more international, and pension funds are going international with them — more slowly than some other sectors, but nonetheless steadily. Britain's private sector

pension funds have 18% of their money invested abroad, as of 1985 — double the 9% of 1980. Only Belgium (30% abroad) and Ireland (17% abroad) are currently in the same league.

But the direction of movement is clear. US pension funds now have 3% of their money invested abroad, three times as much as in 1980, and it's expected to be 19% by 1990. The Netherlands is up from 4% abroad to 9%; Japan from 1% to 8%; and Australia from 0% to 5%.

Yuppies' bribe

The Tories are still enthusiastic about building a yuppie democracy through wider share-holding.

The latest poll suggests that 17% of the adult population, or seven million people, hold some shares. Three years ago only 5% did.

The new shareholders, however, who put a few hundred pounds into British Telecom or TSB instead of a building society or a bank, are hardly a mighty new social force. Individual investors accounted for only 19% of all transactions on the Stock Exchange by value this summer, compared to 28% three years previously.

But the new investors' capital gains on their Telecom or TSB shares are a handy little bribe from the Tories to the middle class. Dividend payments are also up — £2.2 billion in the second quarter of 1986, or 37% more than in 1985.

Postscript: Polls again

A postscript to our editorial last week which commented on evidence that, beneath the lack of confidence currently blighting the labour movement, opinion in Britain is shifting to the left.

Another poll, last week, found that only 22% of voters thought that a Conservative government would "listen to what people like them think". Only 26% thought that Tory rule would "give people like them a better chance in life".

Labour's scores were not brilliant — only 41% of voters reckon that a Labour government would listen to their views — but the poll indicates that something like a half of Tory voters

must believe that the Conservative Party is completely uninterested in their demands.

So then why vote Tory? 63% of voters think that the Tories will "govern Britain strongly", and only 20% think that Labour would govern "strongly".

New anti-union laws

The Tories are likely to include new anti-union laws in their next election manifesto.

According to the Sunday Telegraph, a Green Paper will be issued early next year. The major item will be a law insisting that ballots on strikes and for union positions should be postal.

At present they can be either by post or at the workplace. Workplace ballots make it possible for voting to take place after union workplace meetings at which the issues or the candidates are properly discussed, whereas postal ballots maximise isolation, passivity, and the influence of the media.



What is anti-Zionism?

Clive Bradley was one of the first two or three SO supporters to break away from the delusion we used to share with many on the left that the answer to the Jewish-Arab conflict is a "secular democratic state" in Palestine.

His comments on Mick Ackersley's review of "Pillar of Fire" are therefore significant, because, it seems to me, they are inspired by an emotional left-over from the old position and the attitudes that properly went with it.

Like "Socialism", "Communism" and "Trotskyism", "Zionism" is now a pretty decayed word with lots of different meanings: it no longer defines something clearly — today you need additional information before you know what the word is being used for and what it means.

Its original — now its historic — meaning was clear enough: the goal of a Jewish state and activity to achieve it. It's logical meaning now, developing from its original meaning, should surely centre on the state created by the original Zionists and on one's attitude to that state. Those who support the right of the Jewish state, in some form, to exist, are, logically, "Zionists" — and that now

includes a vast spectrum of opinion, including those, like SO, who are hostile to aspects of the existing Jewish state.

When we wanted to replace Israel with the mythical and impossible secular democratic state, we logically regarded all who supported Israel as Zionists of one sort or another. I did, certainly. Now we should try to be consistent and honest with ourselves.

If the word "Zionism" could be forgotten about or left in its decayed form to the reforming Israeli critics of the Jewish state as a term of abuse for the Israeli establishment, fine. But we have to relate to the word "Zionism" according to its use in the society around us, and especially its use on the left. For, though logically all who support Israel's right to existence are Zionists, 'Zionist' on the left now in fact means Jew.

It is the Jews who have the hardcore commitment to Israel and from whom come Zionism's militants. It is the Jewish Zionists who are the target of the "no-free-speech-for-Zionists" campaigns.

It was surely established in our discussions in SO that the left's "anti-imperialism-of-idiots" Zionist-bashing is anti-semitic — a new form

of anti-semitism, if you like, but anti-semitic nonetheless.

It is anti-semitic not only because of its unique proposal to destroy a nation, but also because of what it implies towards most Jews outside Israel, who defend Israel's right to exist. That being so, we can distance ourselves from certain detestable policies and activities of the Israeli state: but to distance ourselves from "Zionism" is neither consistent nor honourable.

No name, no mere word will saddle us with responsibility for the crimes of the Israeli state. But on the left now the violent repudiation of that word, when in fact it is used to mean Jew, would saddle us with some share of the responsibility for the latent, and sometimes rampant, anti-semitism implied in the left's attitude to Israel and 'Zionism' — and some responsibility for the left's vocal and active hostility to Jews ('Zionists') who refuse to break with Israel and Zionism and endorse the Arab goal of conquering and destroying the Jewish nation state.

Yours fraternally,
JACK CLEARY
London

Transforming the movement

Matt Smith (SO 291) accuses SO of political naivete on two counts. First, for seeing the Labour leaders as harbingers of militant working class action and second for "self-delusion" about the potential influence of Labour left alliances.

On the first count, Matt Smith can turn to any back copy of SO to see that we never "expected" Kinnock et al to jeopardise their 'respectable' reputations by giving full backing to the miners. Nor is it any "surprise" to SO that those same leaders have failed to seriously mobilise against the Tories. The point is this: do we, as Matt Smith advises, concentrate

on "activity and education" to persuade the rank and file of the labour movement "to adopt an alternative...mission of socialism"? Yes! But, along with that, should we not also call our leaders to account? We demand that our leaders defend our class. If those leaders do not, they are exposed and workers may say: "Well, then, we need different, better leaders — and we'll have to fight to get them".

On the second count, similarly, SO has criticised those left "alliances" which are ideologically too weak for their task. SO was born out of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Vic-

various left forces around class-struggle politics. It fought for both the return of a Labour government and for that government to stand firm in defence of workers' interests.

This is the crux. It is essential we immerse ourselves in the whole labour movement — with all its reactionary and foolish ideas — but we do so to fight for independent, working class politics. To simply spend our time propaganda-making for socialism would let Kinnock, Willis, et al completely off the hook. Matt Smith insists that rank and file campaigning be separated from the "search for alternative leadership or policies" — in fact, it's vital we make the two inseparable.

It's mighty easy to take sectarian positions like Matt Smith's. It's more difficult to take on the task of transforming the labour movement — bottom and top — and that entails challenging, exposing and replacing our bankrupt leaders.

Youth Fightback

Last Wednesday we made quite a big impact by leafleting and selling 'Youth Fightback' outside a local Billy Bragg gig.

We sold 22 copies and handed out 400 'Join the LPYS' leaflets: several people have already replied.

We will be contacting these people

and others in the hope of bringing a good number to the Youth Fightback conference in Sheffield, the weekend after next.

Comradely,
TONY JAIN,
Brent

Yours fraternally,
PAUL WOOLLEY,
Manchester

The Aids hysteria

Clive Bradley takes a look at the facts and the fiction that surround the disease AIDS.

AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, is like something out of science fiction. Indeed, it is a hackneyed plot: mysterious killer disease ravages the human race; too late, attempts are made to stop it...Most of humanity, in the end, is wiped out, leaving only a few survivors. In the pulp paperbacks, the whole thing usually starts in a germ warfare laboratory, and there may be something in that.

The facts are horrific. So far 278 people in Britain have died of AIDS, out of a total of 548 who have the disease. By the end of the decade — i.e. in the next four years — 10,000 people are expected to die of AIDS-related diseases. 10,000 have already died in the USA, where there were 26,566 AIDS cases by September 1986.

Last week, the British government set up a Cabinet committee on AIDS, and started a television advertising campaign, in an attempt to influence people's sexual habits to restrict the spread of AIDS. Newspaper ads have been around for a while now.

Is the government doing the right thing? What can and should be done to stop the spread of AIDS? Is this the end of the 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s, as a whole generation retreats into single-partner sex, or even celibacy?

The virus that causes AIDS, HTLV-3, is far more widespread than the syndrome itself. So far, only about three in ten people who have the virus have gone on to develop AIDS and then die, though this percentage does seem to be rising. HTLV-3 is transmitted by blood and semen, and so either by sexual intercourse (including, potentially, oral sex), or by the mingling of blood — via shared hypodermic needles or blood transfusions.

The peculiarity of the virus is that it destroys the body's natural immune system: it kills anti-bodies. And so, when an infection reaches the body, there is no defence, and the victim dies. The 'syndrome', full-blown AIDS, is the condition in which the infected person is seriously ill as a result of various diseases that the body is unable to resist.

Virus

Up to now, most people with the virus are still alive. General health affects a carrier's susceptibility to disease, and thus to AIDS. There are even stories of people who have developed AIDS and successfully fought for life.

In America and in Britain, the original high risk groups, along with haemophiliacs and drug addicts, were homosexual men. Elsewhere, for example in Africa, heterosexuals have always been just as likely to develop the disease. Now, in America the rate of increase in victims is faster among heterosexuals than among homosexuals. The popular image of AIDS as a

'gay plague' is thus more and more out of step with reality.

Not that this bothers the bigots, of course. The right wing of the Tory Party advocate compulsory 'screening' (testing for the virus) and then forced isolation for anyone found to be infected. In California there has recently been a big right-wing campaign behind Proposition 64, which would have barred virus-carriers from all jobs involving contact with the public or with food.

The advocates of isolation seem to believe that this would stop the spread of the disease. But as 30 to 40 thousand people are believed to have the virus in Britain alone, isolation would require vast amounts of force, and even in terms of cold calculation would be unlikely to be effective unless literally everyone with the virus was sought out, found and imprisoned.

In any case, isolation is easy to advocate if you suppose it's not you who is to be isolated.

HTLV-3 has been described as a very difficult virus to catch. Only very specific sexual activities can spread it. So the idea that somebody who has a virus which can only be spread in very specific ways should be locked up, is nothing short of totalitarianism. It is entirely possible for HTLV-3 carriers even to have sex which entails no risk at all for their partners. Imprisonment is a barbaric non-solution.

Science fiction

The virus's science fictional quality resides in its apparent resistance to medical science. There are technical problems in dealing with it in the usual way. A vaccine — that is preventive medicine — is usually given in the form of a harmless strain of a virus: a vaccination against smallpox involves an injection with a harmless strain of the smallpox virus. HTLV-3 has no harmless strains, however.

Other techniques, such as 'trapping' the virus at an early stage, are impossible because it can hide in the brain where such a technique would be extremely dangerous.

The capacity of the AIDS virus to lodge in its victim's brain and cause premature 'senile dementia' — reduce its victim to a vegetable — without causing AIDS, is one of its more recently discovered and terrifying aspects.

The response of the British government to this scientific challenge has not been very impressive. A miserable £1 million has been spent on research. When a drug was found that could, it seemed, slow down the effects of the virus, the government announced that it was too expensive to make, and only 12 people would be able to have it.

£2.5 million has been spent by the government so far on 'education' — explaining the risks to people in order to get them to change their sexual attitudes. The non-governmental Terrence Higgins Trust — named after the first person in Britain to die of



Vigil for AIDS victims. Photo: Simon Gosset, Report

AIDS — has put a lot of energy into persuading (especially gay) people to stick to 'safe sex'. In America there are 'safer sex' TV adverts directed specifically at gay men.

The argument is two-fold: have fewer partners, and do not have intercourse or oral sex to climax. The less promiscuous people are, the less AIDS can be spread.

All of this implies a radical change in our sexual lifestyles. The ability to have more than one sexual partner, increasingly free from moral stigmatisation as well as from incurable disease, was one of the cornerstones of the 'permissive society'. It had its drawbacks, particularly for women, but there can be no doubt that the 'sexual revolution', the emancipation of sex from the horrendous straight-jacket of Victorian moralism, was deeply progressive.

Liberalisation of the law on abortion, liberalisation of the law on homosexuality — small and insufficient changes, but changes nonetheless that affected millions of people: all of that is under threat.

AIDS has been a godsend to the 'Moral Majority', if you will forgive the phrase. Promiscuity, and worse, homosexual promiscuity — blasphemous, godless pursuits — have brought the wrath of heaven down upon their perpetrators. The ravings of religious nuts are echoed in the more secular claims: Peregrine Worsthorne, speaking at Marxism Today's 'Left Alive' last week, commented on the legalisation of homosexuality that "the disadvantages are only now becoming rather lethally apparent". In other words, homosexual sex is seen as the cause of the disease — which is like saying that eating causes food poisoning or sneezing causes colds.

So AIDS has been used as a stick to batter all those 'liberated' morals held by the permissive generation.

Tories

The right wing being on the offensive anyway against feminists, homosexuals, single-parent families and so on, AIDS could not have come at a better time. With the help of HTLV-3, or the threat of it, the Moral Majority may indeed find that in 20 years time, young people have only one sexual partner for their entire lives, who in many cases they will marry.

For the Tory government, there is a big contradiction in all this. As yet, the Department of Health have resisted the ultra-right wing remedies

— compulsory screening, isolation, etc. They have decided, very late in the day, to focus on a campaign of education. To their credit — and it is one of the few things that is to their credit in the whole thing — they have accepted that people will have sex, whatever Mrs Thatcher has to say, and that it is pointless calling on people not to do so. And so their campaign has to be explicit in a way that inevitably causes howls of protest from the Mary Whitehouse Brigade.

It needs to be more explicit: people need the full facts about safer sex if they are to choose whether or not that is the answer for them. And explicit talk about sex, and even particular sexual activities, and the open public acceptance that homosexuals exist, will help slow down the right wing pull of the AIDS hysterics.

As much as a campaign about safer sex, what is needed is a vigorous campaign to dispell the myths that have developed about AIDS. An Observer-Harris poll last week found that no less than 69% of people think AIDS can be caught by kissing; 49% think it can be caught from a glass or cup.

Codes of practice on media reporting need to be implemented. The National Union of Journalists has a code of practice on AIDS coverage, but you could not be blamed for never having noticed.

Safe, or safer sex is not, however, a long-term answer. The absurdity of advice against intercourse is no doubt clearer to most people now it is being given to heterosexuals. The answer to the spread of syphilis was not to stop having sex but to find a cure.

Finding a cure or vaccine does pose big medical problems, as we have seen. But it will require vastly greater amounts of money being spent on it. £1 million is pitiful; some sources say £2 million but this is hardly better.

There is always the possibility that there simply is no way to defeat HTLV-3: it is the ultimate, invincible virus. But it is far too early to make such a rash conclusion. Science has only scratched the surface. More money and more research is more likely to find the answer than little money and little research.

In the meantime we need to defend those suffering from AIDS from growing institutionalised discrimination. It needs to be repeated over and over again that AIDS victims are no danger to anyone unless specific forms of sexual contact are made or blood is mingled. AIDS sufferers are human beings who, deserve to be treated as such.

WOMAN'S EYE

Life for women in the unions

By Penny Newell

In the trade union movement you have to do a lot of learning fast if you are a woman. I'm sure the same applies to men. But the structure is built by them so it is more accessible to them.

We have to be familiar with a ton of initials and procedures which have a lot to do with aping the bosses and very little to do with the class struggle.

To become active women trade unionists we also suffer a great deal before gaining from the lessons we have learnt.

Part of that learning is not to stick the old procedural label on your opponents.

'Oh he's a hack, opportunist careerist' we are told about men within the movement. Well, that's OK then. We know what we've got to tackle, but are the labels always accurate?

Mostly these men are 'had its'. The sooner you recognise the 'had its' the better. Your confidence soars.

Had it

What can you do when you run up against a 'had it'? Speak to someone in your union who has been about for, say, five or six years. Is the name of the 'had it' familiar? Perhaps he was 'on the left' then?

They you understand; the more compromises and principles people sell to keep their positions the more personal and vindictive they become to others who expose and threaten them.

If you think you were the first woman to be subjected to male 'had its' rantings — take heart. Speak to other women and men — disarm that power. Tell tale signs are when they go apoplectic when challenged about a relatively minor issue that isn't going their way. The fear of being defeated makes them try to humiliate you in a very personal way.

So what can you do about it?

Tip

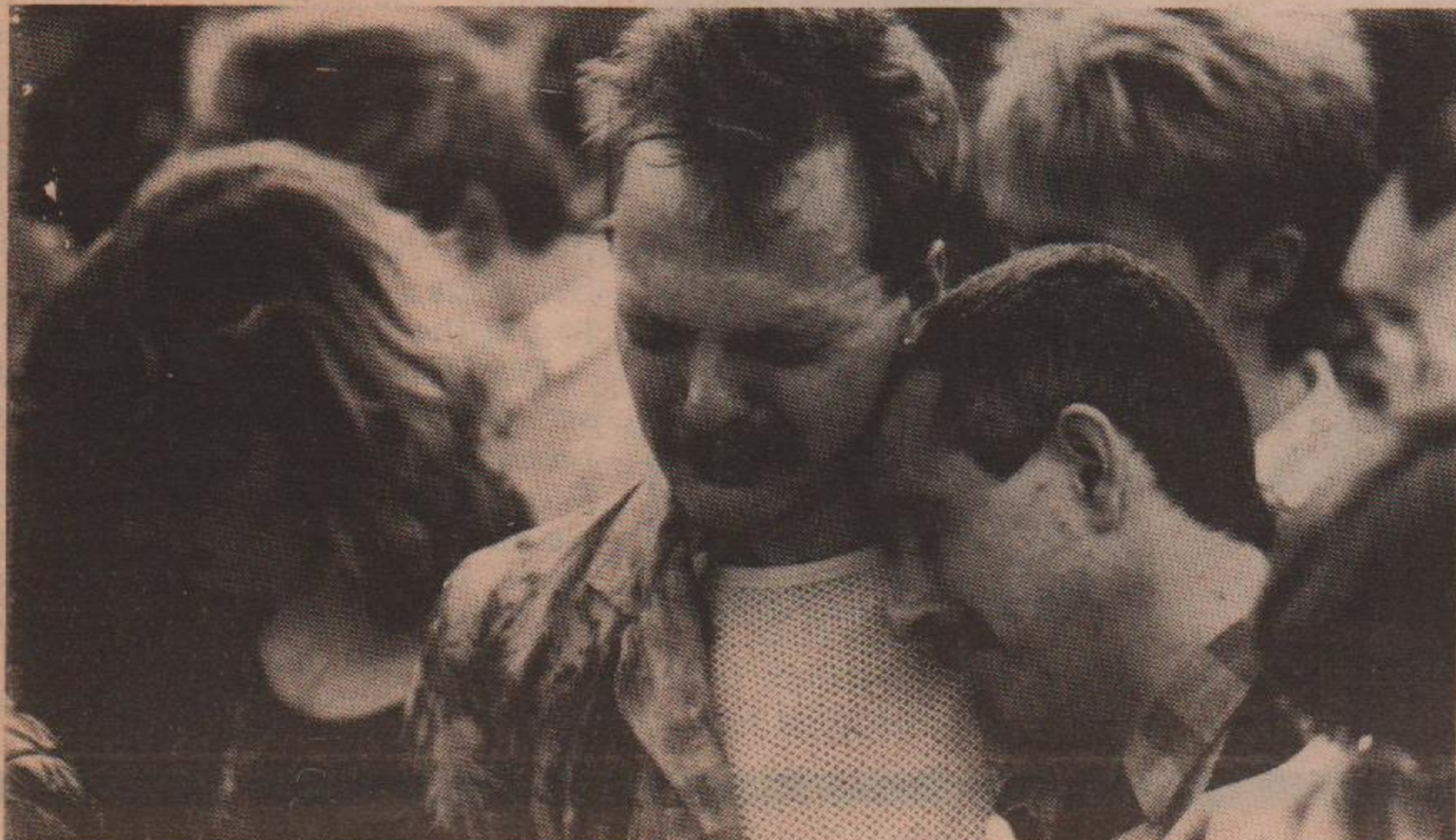
A good tip to help you overcome the fear of dealing with management is to imagine the man (manager) with no clothes on, sitting there naked. The desk moved away. It's not a sexual thing. Far from it. It's that only the trappings of the bosses make them seem formidable.

Well the same tricks are useful in handling trade unionists who play bosses' games.

Take away the toys from the boys. Take away the labels from the boys too.

I've been in several unions including CPSA, TGWU and NALGO. I've seen 'had its' in all of them. I can usually spot them now. It's very easy to forget and just see other women trade unionists as feeble if they get intimidated. We learn together.

There's no shame in being a learner revolutionary. It's when the learning stops that I worry.



Labour's

Socialism or SDP Mark 2

This then is the real choice: Are we to go forward to rebuild and develop the Party as an instrument of socialism, that will fight for a socialist Britain as part of a socialist world, or are we to be a party which waters down its socialism, and settles for managing capitalism. The argument as to what the future holds will continue for a number of years. It will not be settled between now and the next General Election. That is why we have to concentrate on winning that election, whatever our views and despite our fears.

Labour at the Crossroads

The Labour Party is at the crossroads. It has made important socialist gains in policy and organisation over the years, but those gains are now being pushed back. The difficulty which left-wing socialists face in the Party today is that they, more than anyone else, want the defeat of the Thatcher Government, and because of that are reluctant to raise legitimate criticisms of the way in which the Party is going.

I believe the best way to win the election is to be bold, to argue the socialist case unflinchingly and not to pretend that we do not want to change society in any fundamental way. It is important to remember that the Tories under Mrs Thatcher came out boldly for their type of reactionary Toryism and won. People like to know what political parties stand for and what they intend to do. The Labour Party needs to be a socialist campaigning party, not merely a party dominated by its media image. Unfortunately that is the direction in which we seem to be going at present.

There are two ways of dropping Labour's socialism. There is the Gaitskell way, open and honest like the man himself, and there is the other way, killing it off by kindness, paying lip service to it but in reality ignoring it.

That, I fear, is the danger today, and in this connection, I stand by what I myself wrote in the Labour Leader in October 1985: 'I am deeply concerned at some of the ideas that are being floated and pursued in the movement. We are witnessing a wholesale revisionism of socialist ideas, the abandonment of genuine socialist revolutionary politics and an attempt by some to turn the Labour Party into another SDP. This process has been helped by some on the so-called Left, who only a few years ago were fanatical supporters of Tony Benn, when he stood for the Deputy Leadership. Some have become arch revisionists. This is unforgivable because such positions neither give us an electoral victory short term or fundamental social changes long term...'

The Party faces two dangers. First a revisionist, reformist drift to the right, and secondly a response to that drift which is sectarian. The former problem at the moment is greater

Eric Heffer's new book, 'Labour's Future: Socialism or SDP Mark 2?' raises a number of key questions for the left today: What role can socialists play in the Labour Party? What attitude should we take to the "socialist" countries of Eastern Europe? And how can we defend democracy in the labour movement? We reprint below extracts from "Labour's Future". We invite contributions to this debate.

than the latter. If we have policies which are indistinguishable from those of the Social Democrats it will not be Labour that benefits, but our enemies. It will be the road to defeat.

Clarifying, updating, even changing certain policies is perfectly acceptable, providing they rest on basic socialist foundations. After six years of Thatcherism, a socialist programme is more important than ever.'

Against Stalinist tyranny

This break down of the authority of the Soviet Union produced a development which severely tested the commitment of the Labour Party to those struggling for freedom in Eastern Europe — the Polish workers' formation of Solidarity.

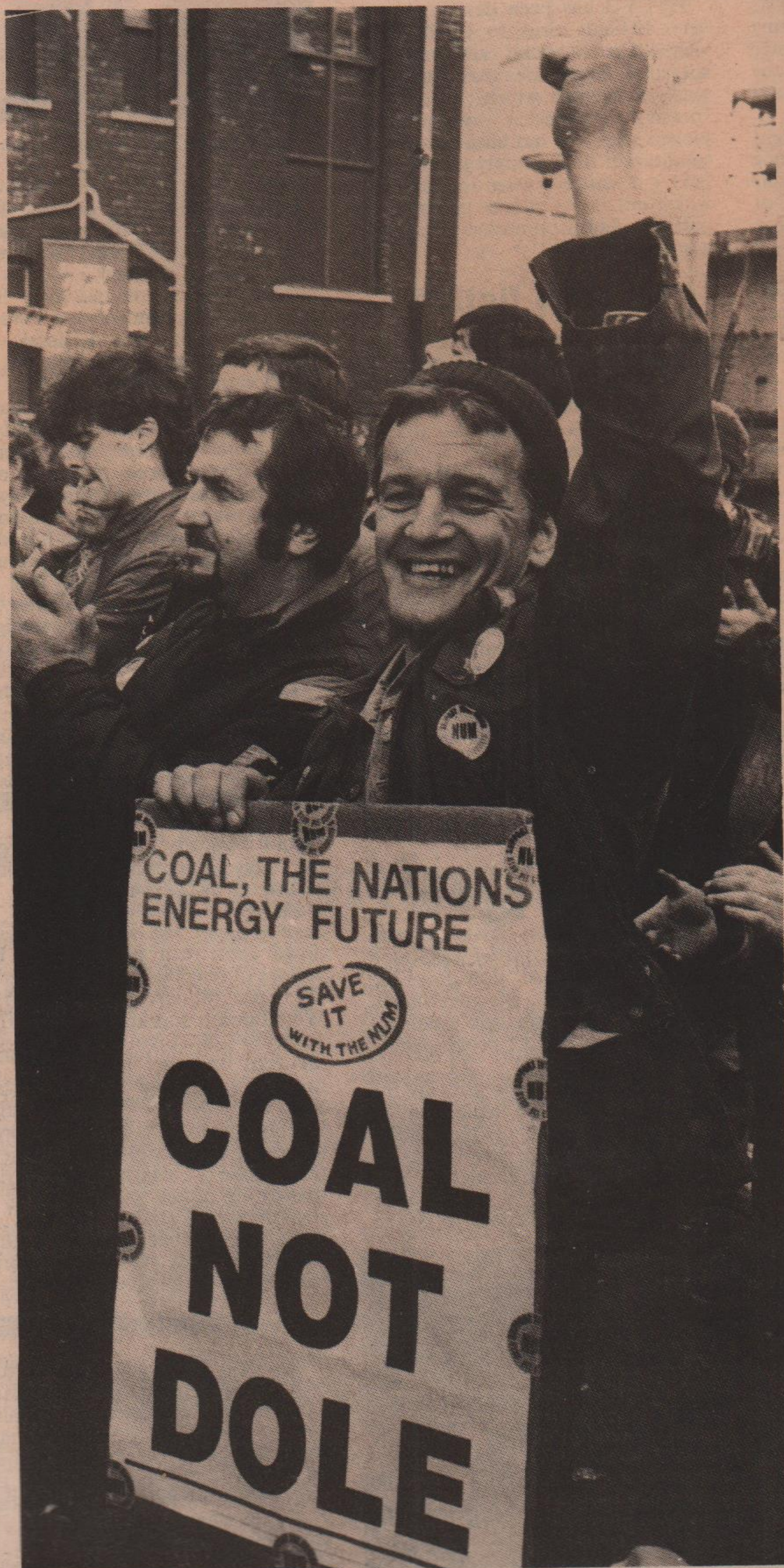
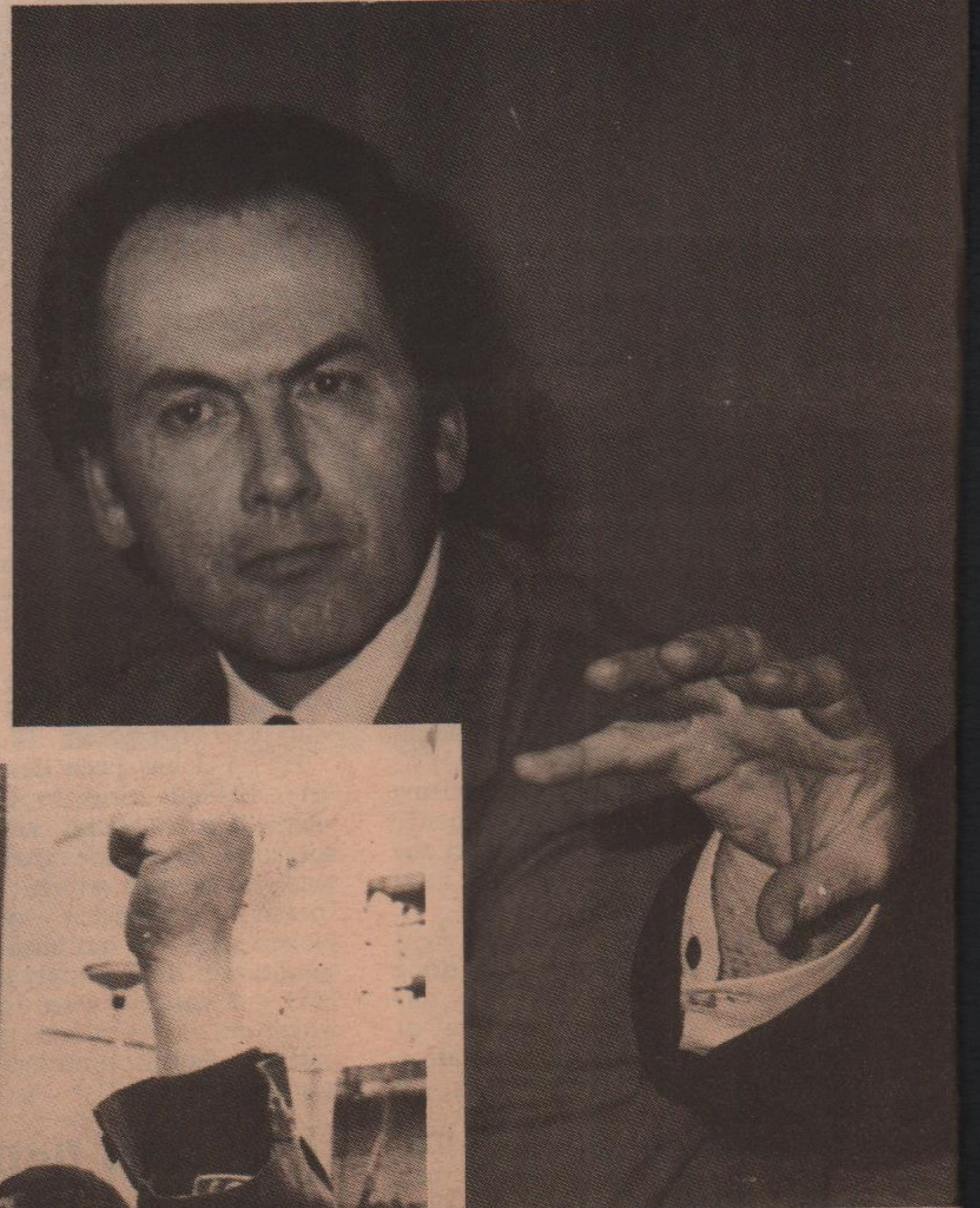
It was clear that the official trade unions in Poland were basically adjuncts of the State, and instruments of the Party hierarchy. The workers in Poland wanted a trade union organisation of their own which was free and independent of the State and the Party, and which they could control themselves.

The fact that the Church, or at least some of the priests, supported Solidarity in no way detracts from the importance of the development, neither does it make the movement of workers basically anti-socialist as some, including left-wing trade union leaders, have suggested.

When I first raised the matter of support for Solidarity on the NEC, I had a tremendous struggle to get my resolution accepted. Some of my natural allies opposed it and one trade union member suggested that Solidarity was not a real union but a breakaway, and therefore it could not be supported. I reminded him that he himself had supported an unofficial movement, in the Seamen's Defence Movement, in his own union years before.

That movement had, at one stage, talked of forming a new union and I was one of those who urged them to remain in the NUS and fight to change it because they had the opportunity to do so. In Poland such opportunities did not exist and the workers had to forge new instruments to make any progress.

The NEC were proved right in giving their support to Solidarity and that was particularly underlined when the miners' strike took place. The Polish Government, like the South African government, exported coal to this country during the strike.



Labour must base itself on class struggle, not on slick presentation.

The 'official' unions (Solidarity had been suppressed) did not object and Arthur Scargill and the NUM leaders had to make a strong protest to the head of the Polish Government.

In a foreword I wrote in a pamphlet issued by the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign titled 'The British Labour Movement and Oppression in Eastern Europe', I made it clear that in my view it is impossible to create a socialist society without freedom. Socialism and freedom are indivisible. Socialism means the flowering of the human spirit, not its destruction.

Yet in parts of the world, oppressive measures have often been taken against critics in the name of socialism. Such actions are a blot on the name of socialism, and have held back the progress of the workers' movement in Western Europe for decades. Many trade unionists and workers in the West who over the years have gained hard-won democratic rights and fight to protect them, sometimes unsuccessfully, look at what happens in the so-called 'socialist' countries and say, 'If that is socialism, we want no part of it'.

Within the Labour movement there are, however, a tiny minority who continue to live in the past. They defend just about every action of the Soviet leaders, believing that in doing so they are protecting the Soviet Union from capitalist forces internally and from hostile capitalist elements outside. Because Soviet diplomats and visitors from the Soviet Union tend to meet predominantly with trade unionists and politicians who hold these views, they get the wrong impression of how their countries' policies are perceived outside. Socialists should at all times attempt to put the record straight.

Dissident groups and individuals seeking democratic changes should receive the support of socialists in the Western capitalist countries, even if we do not always fully or even partly agree with their political ideas or positions. To give such support does not mean that one is siding with those reactionaries who wish to create con-

opens a debate on

future



Photo: John Harris

Eric Heffer: Standing clear and firm

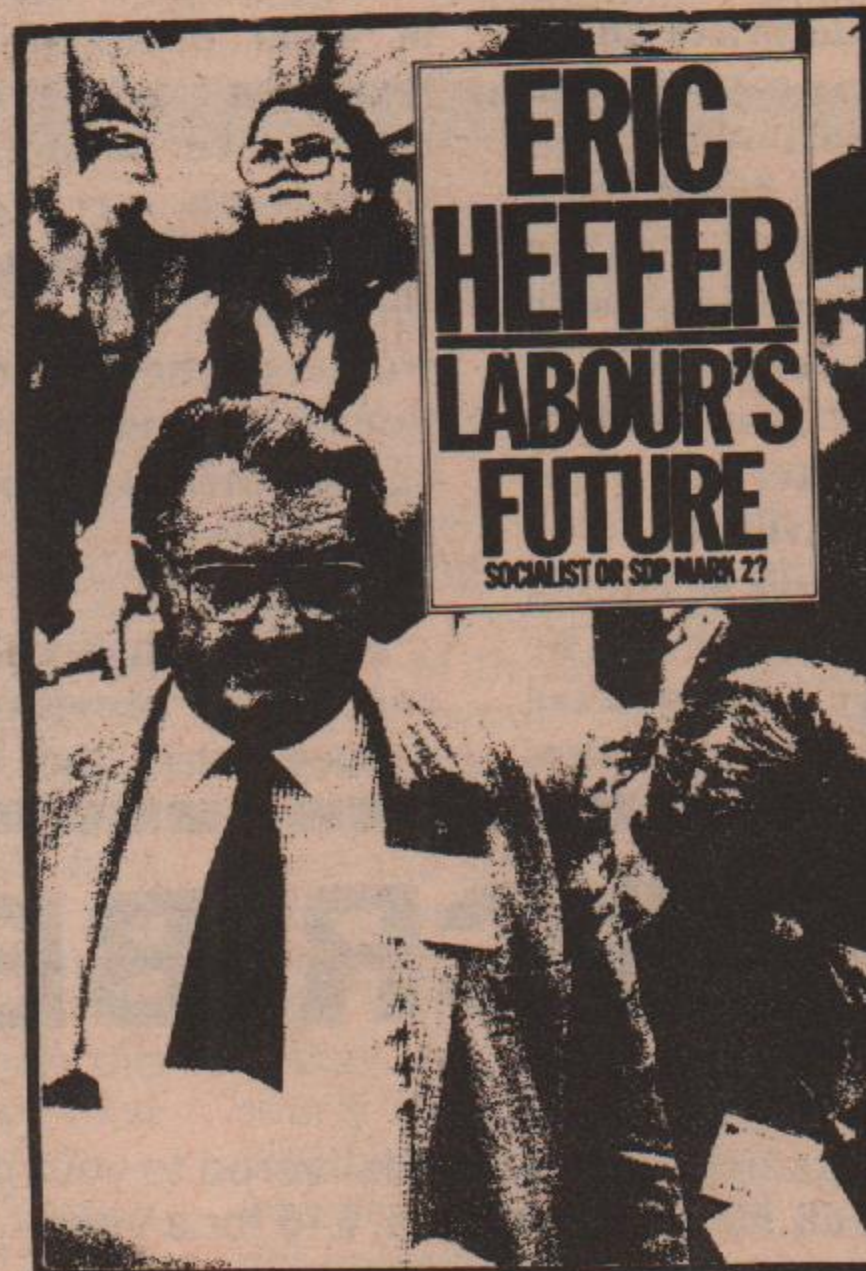
John Bloxam reviews "Labour's Future" by Eric Heffer.

When Labour's right wing and the soft careerist left got together at this year's Labour Party conference to vote Eric Heffer off the NEC they knew what they were doing, as readers of Heffer's new book, "Labour's Future — Socialism or SDP Mark II?" can see for themselves.

Few figures on the Left have better credentials than Eric Heffer has.

On central life and death questions for the working class, where many good people on the Left are confused and woolly, Heffer is sharp and clear.

Take for example the question of Stalinism. One of the most sickening things on the Left right now is the regrowth of sympathy with and illusions in the Stalinist states. It is considered no disgrace to write for the Morning Star, a "newspaper" dependent for half its sales on the good will of the East European and USSR



Available price £4.95 from Verso, 6 Meard Street, London NW1.

Socialism means something radically different from the management Welfare State...

"If we mean to constitute a really democratic society, permeated by the spirit of social equality, we shall have to find ways of replacing old incentives of fear and habit with new inducements more consistent with the recognition of equal human rights... Social ownership is only half the battle; the other half is real participation by the workers in control — not only at the top, but at every level from the work group upwards. By participation I do not mean merely consultation; I mean real control."

At the moment, despite the new NEC document on social ownership, we are neither being offered real social ownership nor real control by the workers. With the concept of 'new partnership' we are back in the realms of Gaitskell's pamphlet, 'Industry and Nationalisation', Tony Crosland's 'The Future of Socialism', John Strachey's 'Contemporary Capitalism' and the Party Policy Statement of 1957, 'Industry and Society'.

Unite European workers

Not all European countries are in the EEC, and some have no wish or intention to join. This is the case with most of the Scandinavian countries as well as Austria and Switzerland. One cannot ignore the EEC, it is a fact of life which affects our legislation and our political and personal lives. I believe we should work for socialist and working class internationalism in Europe without making the EEC a major issue of contention at the present time, even if some of the European Socialists wish to do so.

I am not saying here that the Party should abandon its position on withdrawal from the EEC, that is still essential. But I do believe that we should step up attempts to bring the left together in all parts of Europe to fight in the EEC, on the Council of Europe, and in all wider European organisations for nuclear disarmament, the phasing out of nuclear power, greater control over the multinationals, concerted aid to the Third World, and working class unity in action throughout the European trade union movement.

In 1980, the Labour Party issued another pamphlet, 'The Dilemma of Eurocommunism' which, though now bypassed by certain events, does not date in its essentials. Part of its message is that in the EEC it is important that the industrial and political working class movement should, as far as possible, join together in action to fight the multinationals, and to put forward an internationalist perspective. Though this will not be easy it must, in my view, be tackled. British socialism cannot build a wall around itself or solve its political and economic problems in isolation.

The movement should enter into discussions with all sections of the labour socialist/communist movements in the EEC at the earliest possible moment and at all levels. There are some positive discussions that can take place immediately, not on the basis of defending the Common Market by discussing the best way to operate the capitalist system which exists in the countries of the EEC, but on the basis of what actions we can take in all the EEC countries to spotlight trade union solidarity advocating socialist policies which stretch across national boundaries.

more widely available and more numerous. But whilst there are university courses in this field there has been little education, since the collapse of the NCLC, amongst working class organisations in the basics of Marxism. The various Marxist groups have helped fill the gap left by the NCLC. Socialist Action, Socialist Organiser, Militant, The Morning Star, Labour Leader and many others, do an important job of helping to teach young workers the nature of society, the character of the State, and the centrality of class struggle. It would be a serious retrograde step if such papers were banned for sale in the Party, and their supporters driven out.

The Labour Party has never been a uniform body, though some in the leadership who have opposed democratic centralism in theory have come close to carrying it out in practice.

There are other movements, apart from the Marxists, in the broader socialist body which have great merit. One example is the Christian Socialist Movement

'Revolutionary reformism'

The type of policy required is what I have described for want of a better phrase, 'Revolutionary Reformism'. To some extent Cole was the precursor of that concept, although he never used the phrase. In 1954, he wrote a pamphlet published by the 'New Statesman and Nation' in which he said "This pamphlet is about Socialism, by which I mean a society without class, and not one in which a new class structure has replaced the old. It is not about the policy to be followed by a Labour Government which is not seeking to establish a classless society, but only to nationalise a few more industries and add a few more pieces to the equipment of the Welfare State.

"It is an attempt to indicate a way of action for those socialists who feel a sense of frustration because to them

frontation and possible war. Unfortunately, the Soviet and other East European communist leaders are helping the reactionary forces by their actions against those who are critical of the regimes. They are, of course, protecting their own privileged positions. If free and open debate took place in these societies, the people would demand changes, just as they did during the Polish Solidarity upsurge, the Hungarian revolution and the Czechoslovakian Spring.

Labour Party democracy

It is frequently suggested that groups within Labour's ranks constitute separate parties within the Party. There is undeniably a grain of truth in this. Any organisation within the Party must to some extent have a membership with a dual loyalty, a commitment to both the Labour Party itself and to the organisation that is working for its objectives within it. There is nothing wrong with that provided the group takes the view that its objectives are to maintain, protect and develop the fundamental principles of the Party. We have always been a federal organisation and should not fear changing back towards a more federal, decentralised structure.

The Labour Party has never been a democratic centralist organisation and in my view should never become one. Democratic centralism is advocated by both the Communist Party and the Trotskyist groups. It is a theory which allows democratic discussion within the organisation but demands that all members present the majority position in public. In practice the centralist half of the equation has tended to dominate the democratic half.

Today, compared with the days of my youth, the books by Marx and about Marxism are

governments and which is little more than a venal propaganda sheet for those governments.

Respectworthy socialists like Tony Benn and the officers of Chesterfield Labour Party write letters to the totalitarian dictator Gorbachev as though the labour movement has something in common with him.

The single greatest scandal in the British labour movement today is the connection many of our trade unionists — and the best of them, like the NUM — continue to have with the police-state pseudo-unions of the Stalinist states. Lots of left wingers half-approve the Stalinist state's suppression of the Polish labour movement, Solidarnosc.

Defeats

It is as though the defeats and setbacks the British labour movement has suffered in recent years have bred a new need for the sort of quasi-religious belief in Stalinist "socialist fatherlands" which was so common in the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

Where there is so much confusion and backsliding, Eric Heffer is perfectly clear in his condemnation of Stalinism and unambiguous in his support for Solidarnosc.

No less clear is his posing of the issues facing the British labour movement — socialism or Mark 2 SDPism.

Yet Heffer is a man of many sides, some of which must seem contradictory. Though his views on socialism and the class struggle are those of a Marxist, Eric Heffer is a Christian Socialist.

Though he knows very well, and says, that any serious threat to the ruling class from the working class would be likely to produce a ruling class offensive to crush the labour movement — like that which devastated the Chilean labour movement and has so far led to 13 years of brutal military rule — nevertheless, Heffer is convinced, on balance, that socialism can be achieved peacefully in Britain.

Book

Even where he is, in our view, mistaken, Eric Heffer's book poses sharply all the questions now facing the labour movement. It is a wide-ranging book delving into history as well as into current political issues.

These ideas are important, especially now that the right wing, wearing its Kinnockite mask, is on the offensive. They should be discussed widely.

We print some short excerpts from Eric Heffer's book in this issue of Socialist Organiser to stimulate that discussion.

YOUTH fightback

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

SATURDAY 29th-SUNDAY 30 NOVEMBER

On the weekend of 29-30 November, Youth Fightback, the main opposition to the Militant in the Labour Party Young Socialists, will hold its Second Annual Conference.

The workshops will include:

O Fighting racism.
O Lessons of the women's movement.

O Who were the Bolsheviks?
O South Africa.

O The Anglo-Irish Deal.

O The last Labour government and the next one.

The main debates will include:

O Where now for Socialists? with the Socialist Workers' Party.

O Which alliances for socialism? with Youth Action.

Speakers have been arranged from Anti-Fascist Action, Sheffield Asian Youth Movement, South African socialists and Women Against Pit Closures.

There will be discussions on Youth Fightback's campaigning work which will centre on women's rights and anti-racism.

In addition we are discussing a plan to run a coordinated national campaign in solidarity with worker militants and student organisations in South Africa.

If accepted we will need to batter out plans to produce campaign materials, organise a speaking tour, and coordinate a series of local activities ranging from gigs to street meetings. We must raise the issues and raise the cash!

And to do so more effectively we must discuss linking up with college activists — pulling new people into activity and into the LPYS.

We've organised a social with a couple of bands; if you have children there's a creche; accommodation is also available.

So all that remains is to get yourself organised and get down to Sheffield, preferably with the rest of your YS in tow.

More details? Phone 01-639 7967 and ask for Mark.



Price 25p plus 18p post
from PO Box 823, London
SE15 4NA.

Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

How fast food and hospitals make you ill

Canadian microbiologists have recently discovered the cause of Haemolytic-Uraemic Syndrome (HUS), the most common form of kidney-failure in children.

HUS is a life-threatening disease, causing a type of anaemia where the blood cells seem to disintegrate, plus a failure of the kidneys which allows wastes to build up in the blood.

The culprit turned out to be a form of an extremely common bacterium called *E. coli*. Every human has several billion of these in the colon (large bowel) where it causes no problems and may indeed be beneficial.

When *E. coli* gets in other places, it can cause diseases which are usually, but not always, fairly mild. It is the most common cause of infections of the urine tract, causing cystitis and kidney infections. These are more common in children, as are acute gastroenteritis, meningitis and infantile diarrhoea, due to *E. coli*.

But HUS is not caused by the ordinary *E. coli*. A few strains produce toxins or poisons which may be aimed at competing bacteria but can cause blood poisoning in humans. The HUS toxin is particularly nasty, causing the lining of blood vessels to collapse. No doubt this is what damages the kidneys during HUS. HUS toxin is so potent that one two-millionth of a gram can kill a 2 kg rabbit.

So how do *E. coli* infections and HUS get spread around? *E. coli* bacteria are passed out with the faeces in their billions and, even with the most stringent hygiene it is difficult to eliminate them from our environment. Poor hygiene in the toilet, in food preparation, with pets, water inadequately treated or contaminated with sewage, meat from factory farms or inadequate cooking can all aid transmission of faecal bacteria.

The other side of the equation is the person who gets infected. As with many infections, *E. coli* gets established more easily in those who are weak or ill — hence the outbreaks of gastro-enteritis amongst new-born babies in hospitals.

The HUS *E. coli* has been found in farm animals such as cows, and spreads to humans via unpasteurised milk and in undercooked meat such as in hamburgers. It spreads fast between people in close contact — an outbreak in a nursing home in Ontario led to 60 cases of which 18 (30%) died.

There is virtually no treatment for HUS. Antibiotics are of little use as, by the time the disease is diagnosed, the damage is done.

Once again, this illustrates how our society's practices (putting lots of ill or weak people close together; factory farming; unsound food preparation; inadequate thawing) helps spread new infections.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Why not form a Campaign Group?

A number of Labour Party members up and down the country have formed themselves into local Campaign groups.

These groups are organised on non-sectarian lines. The aim is to provide a unified left campaigning force in the constituencies.

If you have already done this and have not yet informed the Campaign Group, or if you wish to do so, please contact the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, c/o Alan Meale, secretary, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

WEDNESDAY 26
NOVEMBER at
8.00pm. Debate on the left: Which way to Socialism? Speakers Paul Convery, Labour Co-ordinating Committee, Mary Corbishley, Socialist Organiser, Andy Struthous, Socialist Workers' Party. Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road.

All TGWU and ACTSS members who support SO please contact Jim Denham at 021-471 1964, home, or 021-771 0871 (daytime).

First meeting of Brent Anti-Fascist Action. Sunday 23 November, 2.00 p.m., Brent Town Hall. Speakers from AFA and Searchlight.

Sunday 23 Nov: March and indoor rally in commemoration of the Manchester Martyrs. Speakers: Sinn Fein, Relative of Irish POW, Pan-Africanist Congress, IBRG, IRPOWCC, Irish Republican Socialist Party, Cumann NaMban veteran, Pakistani Workers' Association, Bands Alliance. Assemble 12.30p.m. Longsight Market, Dickenson Road, Manchester 13.

Wednesday 26 Nov: Lecture on 'John McLean: educator

of the working class' by James D. Young, Stirling University. 7.30 McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St. Glasgow.

Saturday 6 Dec: Action conference '86 Against Deportation and all Immigration Controls. Organised by Hackney Anti-Deportation Campaign. Speakers include Bernie Grant, Dianne Abbot, anti-deportation campaigns. 10.00, Hackney Town Hall, Mare St. London E8.

Saturday 13 Dec: Conference for trade union sanctions against South Africa. 11 to 6, Carr's Lane Church Centre, Carr's lane, Birmingham. Contact: Bronwen Handyside, 17 Porden Rd. Brixton, London SW2 5SA, tel. 01-274 7722 x2010.

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership

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Completely innocent people were imprisoned for many of the IRA bombings in Britain in the 1970s, according to Channel 4's 'Beyond Reasonable Doubt' (Sunday, 16 November).

The best known case is that of the men found guilty of the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings. The incriminating evidence against them was the result of a chemical test which allegedly showed that two of the six had been handling explosives. This, combined with the proven connection of the men to the IRA — the day before the bombing five of them had attended the funeral of Michael Gaughan, an IRA member who had died on hunger strike in Britain — was enough to send them to prison for the biggest mass murder in recent British history.

However, the forensic evidence has now been searchingly questioned. Not only was the chemical test not carried out vigorously enough, but the result itself is extremely dubious. What is supposed to show nitroglycerene could equally show nothing more than a harmless substance found on cigarette packets, table tops or playing cards. Given this, the case against the six simply collapses.

By Edward Ellis

These men have, in effect, been in jail for a dozen years because they went to Michael Gaughan's funeral!

Moreover, it seems clear that the men were severely beaten while in police custody, as well as by prison warders afterwards. Medical experts have argued this from photographic evidence. The police claim otherwise and a police inquiry exonerated the police from the charge.

Yet despite all the evidence accumulating that the men should be retried, the Home Office refuses to act. And Lord Denning, former Master of the Rolls, provides an interesting insight into the Establishment's thinking.



Denning is vehemently opposed to reopening the issue of police brutality. Why? If there is a new inquiry, it may turn out that the six men were beaten and if that happens, it will prove that the police were lying. Now we couldn't have that, could we?

The same logic seems to underlie the Home Office's obstinate refusal to allow an appeal. If they are innocent, it will mean that they were put away out of political expediency. In the hysteria following the bombings, it would have been inconceivable for no one to have been convicted. Failure to catch the culprits would have severely weakened the image, and perhaps the morale, of the police. Justice had to be seen to be done. Even if it had nothing to do with 'justice'.

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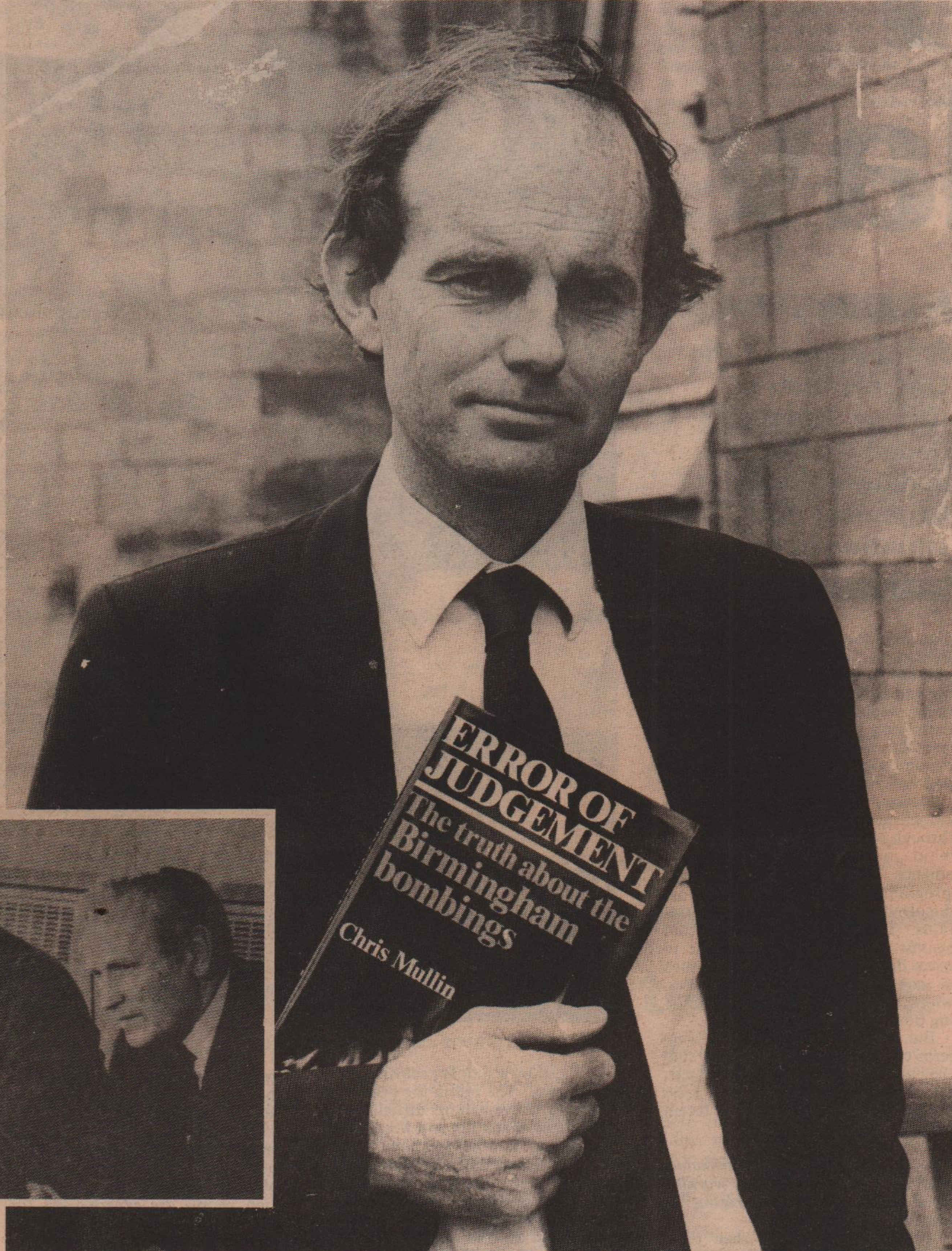
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The Birmingham pub bombings: Jailing the innocent



Chris Mullin with his book on those jailed for life for the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings, 'Error of Judgment'. (Photo: Stefano Cagnoni/IFL). The book supports the case of the 'Birmingham Six Defence Campaign' that they were wrongly convicted; the campaign is also supported by Birmingham Labour MP Clare Short. Inset: senior cops at a press conference on 2 December 1974.

Singing for revolutionary change

By Penny Newell

I have wonderful hearing. I can hum and sing snatches of songs all day. "Every loser wins", I go, and my flat, out-of-tune voice is filtered through my ears and sounds perfectly in tune to me. I know my voice is flat because so many people have complained over the years.

So perhaps I am not the best person to be raving about a singing group I saw last week — Sweet Honey in the Rock. All I can say in my defence is that the rest of the audience clearly thought the same as me.

Sweet Honey are a group of six black American women who sing a capella.

Although they have made records they are banned from the airwaves in Washington DC they told us.

They told us a great deal more. For two hours the songs poured

out. The sounds made my body tingle. The words set my mind ticking. Their clothes pleased my eyes.

Starting with a strong anti-nuclear song they made the political links by talking in between the songs. "White woman's son", a song about the 1960s was movingly explained. Black men could go missing and nothing was done. It took the suspected murder of three civil rights workers — two of whom were white — before the bodies of many murdered black men were found in the rivers there.

"More than a pay packet" was a good song. "We bring home"...then they listed all the industrial diseases, including stress, we bring home.

There was a strong international theme. Immigration controls all over the world. German guest workers — "20 years is a long time to be a guest", they observed. South America, the Malvinas to Mexico. South

Africa. African songs from Senegal. No band — just their voices. They changed style and sounds constantly, celebrating and recognising their roots in gospel music. The political history of the black church.

Love wasn't left out either — women's love for women. The audience was 80% white women. I felt good and strong as I always do when I have the rare treat of seeing a stuffy bourgeois place like Sadlers Wells filled with radical women.

But, as a black woman I was with sourly observed at one of the standing ovations full of Greenham whistles, "these women are part of my oppression". Going home on the bus I gave it some thought. Of course change isn't brought about by two hour music concerts. But it's a valid part of the process.

I'm still singing in my flat voice, "I bring home more than a pay packet".

We must add singing lessons to the revolutionary programme.

The ABC OF MARXISM

New forms of power

By Martin Thomas

Over the last few weeks I've tried to outline the nature of Marxism as a theory. It is not a pre-conceived set of ideals, a 'model', a dogma, or a mystic vision of 'iron laws of history' leading to predetermined conclusions independent of human will and action. It is a method of understanding society as it changes and develops.

Take the issue of the form of government after a workers' revolution. In the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels could say nothing definite about this.

After the experience of the revolutions which swept Europe in 1848, Marx wrote that:

"The executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organisation...this appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores, sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy...All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor".

The workers' revolution would have to be different, breaking up the old state machine. But what sort of administration and government would the workers put in its place?

Marx could not begin to answer this question until the Paris workers showed the way by seizing power in their city for nine weeks in 1871. Their commune:

- Suppressed the standing army, replacing it by a people's militia;

- Its members could be recalled by their electors at any time, thus allowing a more rapidly responsive democracy;

- "The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time". Instead of sitting in a parliament and debating while the old bureaucrats still ran things, the workers' representatives took direct control.

- "From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workers' wages". Real democracy was substituted for the rule of a privileged bureaucracy.

- "Like the rest of public servants, magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible and revocable".

- The Commune proposed, for France, radical decentralisation.

But the Paris Commune was, despite all this, *in form* only the old city council, though its substance was different.

In 1905, in Russia, a new form of working class power emerged — the workers' councils or soviets. (Soviet is the Russian word for council).

At first neither the workers themselves nor the Marxists were aware of the full significance of the soviets. The first soviet was just a joint strike committee from different factories. The Bolsheviks started off with a sectarian attitude, going into the soviet and demanding that it adopt the full Marxist programme, though later they corrected themselves.

Not until 1917 did the Marxists develop the idea 'All Power to the Soviets', and the appreciation of these workers' councils as forms of working class power of world (not only Russian) significance. They developed their theory by learning from class struggle, not by deductions from ideals in their heads.

Interview with an Iranian socialist

Iran today

Is the regime in a stable or unstable situation at present?

It is unstable and for two important reasons: the war and the worsening economic situation, both of which have enhanced internal contradictions.

Because of the war, oil exports have dropped considerably and as a result, the economy is in a very bad state. This has sharpened the arguments within the government. One faction favours state capitalism, the other strongly advocates a free market economy.

In the past Khomeini has intervened to reconcile the two factions, but in recent months his interventions have failed.

What is the regime's motivation in continuing the war?

The government continues the war because it sees no other solution. It blames the current economic problems on the war and can appeal to a sense of patriotism as long as the war continues. It wants to keep on the war to delay a final reckoning, but it cannot do that forever.

On a practical level, there are a lot of arguments between the army and the Pasdaran, Khomeini's revolutionary guards, with regard both to the length of the war and day to day tactics.

The Army is in favour of not risking too much, of making small advances and then holding peace talks. The Pasdaran are in favour of "conquering" Iraq and carrying on from there.

To what extent does it make sense to argue in terms of 'the revolution (of February 1979, which brought down the Shah's regime) being undefeated'? This suggests that February 1979 was a vaguely or potentially socialist revolution, rather than what was arguably a seizure of power by the mullahs who effectively functioned as a political party.

It is true to say that before 1979 there were a lot of genuinely revolutionary forces who were fighting against the Shah. The strikes, for example, were not planned by the clergy, but once they happened, then everyone tried to build their own base in them. And there were many demonstrations, especially the more violent ones towards the end of the Shah's regime, which the clergy had not hoped for and did not welcome.

Khomeini and Bazargan, his Prime Minister, hoped to be able to achieve a smooth transfer of power. But by February 1979 two different movements had emerged: a genuine revolutionary movement which did not have a clear strategy or programme; and the clergy and bourgeois elements, such as Bazargan, who looked towards a limited and peaceful transition.

These forces were in contradiction to each other before February 1979, and the contradiction became more acute thereafter.

The mullahs had the opportunity to develop their forces, due to their links with the bazaar, their degree of organisation, and also because they did not face repression as much as the left. This was meant to set the scene for a peaceful transfer of power in January.

But what did not go according to

A supporter of the Organisation of Iranian People's Fedaii Guerillas spoke to Socialist Organiser about the situation in Iran.

plan were the events of January and February: the development of political strikes and the attacks on army and airforce barracks, which partially weakened the state without destroying it. The clergy, however, were able to stop such actions by calling on people to hand over their arms and return home.

Hence the revolution is unaccomplished, it has not been carried through to the end. The Left made a major mistake in going for a broad alliance. It was not clear about the programme for socialist change and dissolved itself in mass demonstrations. The idea of a united front against the Shah blinded people to more determined class politics, such as continuing the political strikes, which had no goal other than bringing down the Shah.

But the events of 1979 had a long-term effect — people remember that they have the power to change things, they remember the power of a mass movement. And this is still recent history.

Insofar as information is available, what is the form and level of working class opposition to the regime at present?

There was a period when there were only sporadic strikes, rather than a continuous series of strikes. But in the last 18 months there have been a lot more strikes and go-slows.

Previously, the government could buy raw materials and thereby buy time for itself. But in the last year this has been almost impossible — a lot of European firms are not giving credit to the government, and European firms are not even sending spare parts because they know that they cannot be paid for.

The severe shortage of raw materials has led to closures with huge numbers of workers being made redundant, or forced to work a shorter working week — or factories operating only six months of the year — in other workplaces.

Unemployment is the worst thing that can happen to anyone in Iran. Prices have risen because of the war, so if you are out of work there is no way that you can live. So there is now more widespread opposition to the regime than there was two years ago.

There have been many strikes, with cases of occupations and sit-ins. In some cases the government has not gone in and created confrontation. This shows that the government is scared. Some strikes have achieved their goal, such as the strike by workers in the Tehran bus company for better pay and conditions. The basis for working class opposition to the regime is very strong. The regime



"The government can appeal to patriotism as long as the war continues".

is not faced by a simple problem that will go away. The fall in the price of oil makes it even more difficult to provide raw materials and keep factories going. Rations are now being put on fuel, and this will affect production as well, especially in winter.

But there is not any form of coordination between workers in the different factories. This would require a more open organisation, which is not possible under present repressive conditions.

As an alternative to the current regime, last year's Labour Party conference agreed to support the National Council of Resistance (NCR — set up by the ideologically Islamic Mojahedin organisation, and consisting largely of the Mojahedin alone) of which the programme proposes severe limitations on, among others, the rights of workers, women, and national minorities. This year's conference adopted a more ambiguous position. But how much support is there in Iran now for the Mojahedin and their NCR?

The Mojahedin lost a lot of support around 1984, mainly because they had encouraged people to believe that they would soon come to power, but then people realised that nothing was happening. So the Mojahedin turned to trying to gain support abroad.

Resentment grew because the Mojahedin sought support from anyone, irrespective of their politics, and the government used that to discredit them — anti-imperialist sentiments are still very strong in Iran. The Mojahedin were further discredited by claiming that organisations which had left the NCR were still in it.

The NCR never had much popularity in Iran. It was mainly

known through the Mojahedin, and as they lost credibility, so too did the NCR. The programme of the NCR, which advocates a series of reforms to maintain the capitalist system, did not aim to mobilise the people for revolution. On the other hand, the Iranian people are experiencing for the first time a religious state, an Islamic state, which interferes in everything, both private and public. A lot of people have lost interest in religion, and even those who maintain their beliefs realise that this religious interference is bad for religion. So not many people will support another Islamic Republic, as advocated by the Mojahedin and the NCR.

CODIR (formerly Committee for the Defence of the Iranian Revolution, now Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights) enjoys considerable support from sections of the trade union bureaucracy in this country, especially those sympathetic to the Communist Party, presumably because CODIR is merely the mouthpiece of the formerly pro-Khomeini Tudeh Party (Moscow-loyal Iranian Communist Party). But how active is the Tudeh Party in Iran?

A few weeks ago Kianouri and Tabari (Tudeh Party leaders who repented after their arrest) spoke to all imprisoned party members who had refused to repent and Tudeh prisoners expressed their hatred of the party and its leaders.

The Tudeh Party does not have many people outside prison. Up to March 1983, when the regime turned against the Tudeh Party, they saw themselves as allies of a "revolutionary government", so they did not

leave anyone underground. But now many of them are abroad, either in Europe or in the Eastern European countries.

The name of the Tudeh Party is now synonymous with treachery. The Iranian Left cannot survive unless it isolates the Tudeh Party. It is not simply a difference of ideas, it goes well beyond that. The Tudeh Party and the majority Fedayeen helped actively the Islamic authorities in the most severe period of repression against revolutionary and socialist forces in 1980-1 and 1982 as well as the first month of 1983, prior to their own arrest. The only hope of the Tudeh Party is to get support outside Iran, because inside Iran people just don't want to know about the Tudeh Party.

What is the likely course of developments in Iran over the next few months?

It is very difficult to say. Everyone believes that the next stage of the war will be very important. The Iranian government has accumulated vast forces but has delayed the attack — the pressure from inside the government is increasing, to win the war or stop it.

If it is not victorious in the offensive, which is likely, given the conflicts in the government, and between the army and the Pasdaran, then dissatisfaction with the regime will gain a more open form.

The opposition will then hopefully no longer be passive but a revolutionary movement against the war, because that has become the crucial issue now, and the present government cannot obtain, and does not want, peace. So the only way out is the overthrow of the Islamic Republic.

Stop this sell-out!

By Liam Conway and Cheung Siu Ming

After eight continuous days of talks, negotiations between teachers' unions and employers finally reached a conclusion.

The unions were negotiating under the threat of legislation announced in the Queen's Speech. Baker proposed to scrap the Burnham Committee, established to negotiate only about pay, and to replace it with a new council which will negotiate both pay and working conditions.

The key point however, is that Baker and the Labour-led local authority negotiators share the same central objective — of extracting from the unions a contractual commitment to a long list of duties.

The differences between the Tory government and the Labour-led local authorities were minor, especially since the deal now fell within the overall sum of 16.4% over two years set by Baker. This is hardly a case of "Baker backs down over pay" (The Observer, 16 November). A more apt headline would have been "Baker wins hands down over teachers' contracts".

The main conditions of service imposed are as follows:

- 5 extra working days per year — i.e. one week less holiday.
- A contractual obligation to cover for absent colleagues — one day in primary, and two days in secondary schools. (Cover work is never paid for, and during this dispute teachers have refused to cover at all).
- Class size maximum set to 33. Most well organised areas of the union have already pushed this to below 30, so this is a step backwards.
- The hours of the working week sharply defined and extended by six hours to include five hours of non-teaching supervision and five hours of staff and parent meetings. This breaks up the 1968 school meals agreement whereby teachers can have a full hour's lunch break.

The pay structure creates a two-year entry grade, originally opposed by the NUT. New teachers will be assessed and kept on this entry grade unless positively vetted to proceed onto the new main Professional Grade which starts at £9970 a year and goes up (eventually) to £15,058.

The pay deal goes nowhere near restoring the real purchasing power of teachers' pay which has fallen over 12 years by at least 33%.

Keetons

THE KEETONS strikers in Sheffield are still solid. Their latest strike bulletin reports:

"Shop stewards asked management to settle the dispute and start to negotiate a return to work. Management's reply was: if the new terms were not accepted, then talks would cease until 20 January 1987.

Management want 20 people of their choice to go back as new starters on a three-day week, 18 people to accept an undisclosed payment which will fall well below true redundancy and severance pay, a total end to demarcation (any worker/any job, including staff), and semi-skilled to have a lower pay structure.

The threat of a three month lapse between talks means that we may well be on strike over Christmas. We will not be swayed from our course, and if we must man our picket line on Christmas Day, then so be it".

Donations and messages of support to: Keetons Strike Committee, AEU House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield. Telephone: 769041.

By abandoning its long opposition to pay talks being linked to negotiations on working conditions, the NUT leadership has sold out on the most important point of all. By agreeing to cover for absence, it has given up one of the union's most potent weapons in the last dispute.

The Left in the NUT had argued that we should never have to cover even when there is no dispute, and that extra supply staff should be employed instead.

There is no doubt that a majority of NUT members and NAS/UWT members oppose this deal. Not only is the pay inadequate, but more importantly, we will be tied to a tight

contract, and every time a pay deal is negotiated, the employers will want extra contractual duties in return.

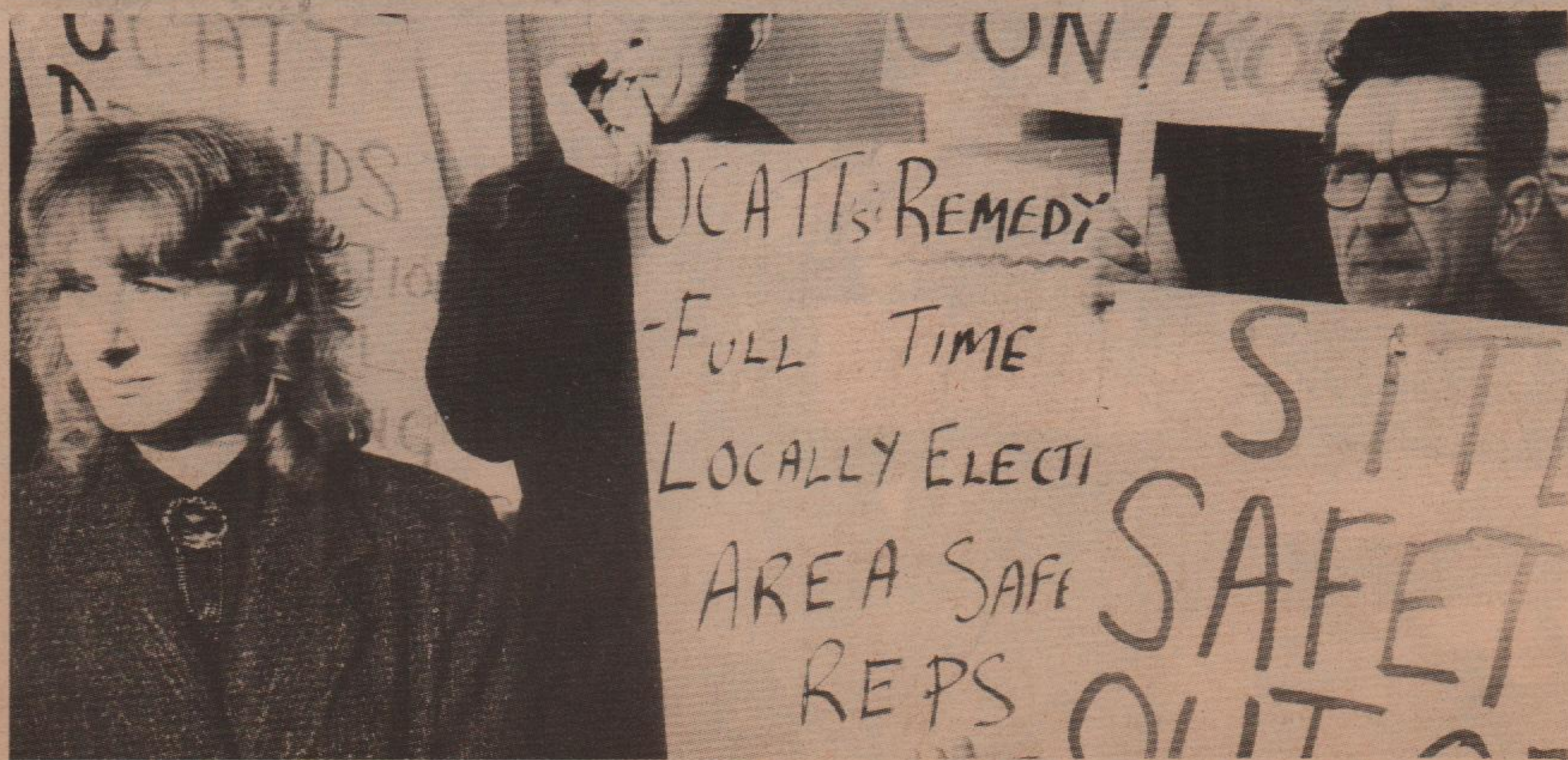
The problem is winning the votes at the Special Conference and in the ballot of members to follow.

In order to win, we must tackle the political question head-on — should the union settle for the "lesser evil" of an unsatisfactory agreement with Labour-led authorities, or should it fight the Tory government head on, and challenge Baker to a battle in the run up to a general election?

The Kinnock-influenced NUT leadership thinks that by this agreement they are helping the election of a Labour government. We say that

this has exactly the opposite effect — industrial peace in the classrooms in the next period hands the publicity and credit over education to the Tories on a plate. It would be better to take industrial action when a government is at its most vulnerable — just before an election.

Next LAPAC meeting: Saturday 6 December, 10.30am, in Coventry.



On 12 November the building workers' union UCATT organised a lobby of Hitchin Coroner's Court, where a hearing was taking place into the death of Patrick Walsh. Mr Walsh, aged 26, not a UCATT member, was killed on a building site at Fairland Way, Bedwell Crescent, Stevenage, when he was buried beneath an excavation cave-in as a result of there being no supporting structure. Four charges under the Construction Industry Regulations have been laid against the Barnet-based firm Thomas Carey & Son. The photo by Jez Coulson (IFL) shows Mr Walsh's widow joining the lobby.

Unite with Scots teachers

By Ian McCalman

A Special General Meeting (SGM) of the EIS, the main Scottish teachers' union, voted unanimously on Saturday 8 November to reject Rifkind's package on pay and conditions and to proceed to further industrial action. This recommendation is being voted on by EIS members.

The SGM also voted to reject the Main Report, the basis of Rifkind's offer, and any recommendations based upon that report.

These are all very welcome developments which hopefully will be endorsed by the overwhelming majority of EIS members.

Unfortunately the majority on the National Executive are still in search of some formula embracing pay, conditions and resources. This was clear in the SGM debate on the Glasgow/Morayshire motion to proceed to a straight pay claim which they argued against and which was defeated 244 to 176.

Clearly, however, the scope for such a deal is narrowing and will be narrowed further by a resounding rejection of Rifkind in the ballot plus the obduracy of the Tory Cabinet who appear to be prepared to contemplate continuing strife in Scottish schools in the knowledge that Scotland is electorally a lost cause.

The possibility is emerging that the majority on the Executive will embrace the pay claim strategy while separating out the fight on conditions and resources for negotiation over a much longer period of time.

A key factor will be starting up strike action, both paid and unpaid, from early January onwards, culminating in very intense action by

early April.

The result of this new stage of the campaign may well be a more modest settlement than that hoped for at the outset of our fight over two years ago, but we will not have sold our conditions nor tied our hands for the future.

Settlement of a pay claim in April does not mean ending the curriculum development boycott and work to contract which must remain levers to extract better conditions and more resources.

The possibility is also now emerging of a closer identification of the campaign in Scotland with that in England and Wales on the axis of a

pay claim, escalated action to secure that and a separation of the pay issue from conditions and resources.

It would be foolish to expect that both campaigns should be identical either in terms of salary distribution or in methods of industrial action, as there are distinctly different conditions prevailing on both sides of the border.

What is important is that the strategies remain similar and recent exchanges between Glasgow Local Associations and ILTA can only strengthen that development, as also the presence of representatives of left Scottish teachers at the LAPAC conference.

Fighting fire cuts

By Stan Crooke

2,000 firefighters marched through Glasgow last Friday, 14 November, to lobby Strathclyde Regional Councillors in protest at their plans to cut staffing and funding for the Fire Brigade.

The Labour-controlled Regional Council wants to reduce the 2,000-strong fire service by 98, and to cut some £1.2 million from its annual budget. Such cuts cost lives.

The Regional Council of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has been mandated to take industrial action, and the first one-hour long lightning strike took place on Saturday, 8 November after talks broke down the day before.

The Labour Group leader on the Regional Council, Charles Grey, responded by pledging to use troops as strike-breakers in the event of further strikes, bringing back memories

of the last Labour government's use of troops to break a national firefighters' strike in 1978.

However, the FBU has rightly rejected pressure from the Regional Council to take the matter to arbitration, either through ACAS or the Scottish TUC. It has also countered the Region's argument that Scottish staffing levels in the fire service are above the national average by pointing out that the death-rate from fires in Scotland is the highest in the world, apart from South Africa.

The Regional Council's threat to use troops to break the firefighters' dispute is only the latest act in a long-standing record of savaging its own employees, whether they be firefighters, railwayworkers or teachers. Preventing implementation of the fire service cutbacks must therefore be the first stage of an ongoing campaign to bring the Regional Council Labour Group to account.

Make NUS fight!

By Jane Ashworth

'Building a campaigning national union', an unofficial campaign plan, has been produced by Simon Pottinger, Vice-president Welfare of NUS and Kevin Holdridge, President of NUS Wales.

The plan, if implemented, would mark a radical change in NUS.

Kevin's and Simon's central argument is that NUS, its structures and ways of thinking, prevent it from becoming an effective fighting force.

Traditionally, NUS divides up its campaigns into the anti-cuts campaign, the SFS campaign and so on. Different executive members are responsible for this or that campaign and where there is an overlap it is usually accidental or superficial.

Kevin and Simon argue that this compartmentalisation makes NUS weak; leaves activists directionless and makes it virtually impossible for FE students to get their voice heard in NUS.

Because the two most important issues facing the student movement are grants and cuts, and because this term's campaigns on these issues have been disastrous, the plan centres on uniting these two campaigns. (In fact these campaigns have superficially met this term, for one day of action). But the plan stands as a rough model for all NUS work.

The right to education links the issues of cuts and grants; fighting for "access" also raises questions about the deal that black, women, disabled and mature students get from the education system in general and under this Tory government in particular.

The plan suggests that the national union draws up Access Charters which are flexible. To the national core of, say, £35 a week minimum grant, no cuts, adequate childcare provision, an end to institutionalised sexism and racism, etc., local demands would then be inserted, ideally with the cooperation of college unions.

Area organisations would take on the responsibility for coordinating the work of the different colleges under one banner.

Lively outgoing Area campaigns, organising for positive demands against both college authorities and the local council would allow FE colleges to fit in far more easily and give added weight to their demands for funding and union autonomy.

The pamphlet gives a step by step guide to organising this type of 'new look' campaign and deals with the arguments for a nationally coordinated HE rent strike — a tactic which is denounced by the Democratic Left. Such a rent strike — for the demands of the Charter, including reducing college rents — would be an enormous source of pressure on college authorities. It would also be a backdrop for the type of outgoing campaign that Simon and Kevin propose.

The difference in the political outlook of Simon Pottinger (a Trotskyist) and Kevin who has a Liberal Party political background does come through in the section on the Wales campaign. Kevin sees there being some value in NUS pressurising the Alliance and Plaid Cymru. He also thinks of education provision as being necessary for the nation.

But there is clearly an enormous amount of agreement and it says a lot about the Democratic Left leadership of NUS when a Liberal criticises it from the Left, and is organising a 'Tories out' campaign through Wales NUS in the run-up to the next election while the Labour leadership of NUS won't.

Contact SSiN (Socialist Students in NOLS) at 54A Peckham Rye, London SE15.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

TIME TO RALLY LABOUR

PREPARE now for the general election!

That's the message coming out shrill and clear from Tory big-mouths like party chair Norman Tebbit.

Tebbit's attack on 'the poison in the red rose' — he named Hackney parliamentary candidate Diane Abbott and Bernie Grant, leader of Har-

ingey councillor and candidate for Tottenham — tells us that the Tories are revving up to be ready to go all out when Thatcher gives the signal.

The labour movement must be ready too. Is it? The victory in Knowsley North was won **despite** the Labour leaders. In the circumstances it was a pretty miserable result.

The Labour leaders acted in the affair as if they would rather see the Tories or Alliance win the seat than let the local Labour Party choose the candidate.

The Tories are gearing up. The labour movement must tell Kinnock to get his finger out, stop attacking the Labour Party, and fight to win the election.



Protestant demonstrator attacks RUC. Photo: John Arthur/Reflex.

Northern Ireland: 200,000 demonstrate against Accord

'Loyalists' still say no

200,000 people demonstrated in Belfast last Saturday to show that they 'still say no' to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which was one year old on 15 November.

There was sporadic rioting in which 70 shops were damaged and some of them looted. Later that night a police land-rover was fired on in the Shankhill Road, the heart of Orange working-class Belfast.

In the mainly Protestant town

By Paddy Dollard

of Carrickfergus, near Belfast, a 69 year old Catholic woman — 30 years resident there — died of a heart attack after a brick came through her window. This followed a late-night demonstration by Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party, which ended when some of the demonstrators

went through the town damaging the property of Catholics and of Unionists less militant than themselves.

The new umbrella paramilitary organisation, Ulster Resistance, has held a number of parades.

There was a spate of sectarian attacks on Catholics all across

Northern Ireland in the run-up to the big demonstration of continuing Orange anger.

To put the Belfast demonstration into perspective, you need to translate it into British population terms. There are a million Northern Ireland Protestants and about 55 million people in Britain. In British population Saturday's Belfast turnout would mean a demonstration in London of 12 million people! Or 8 million, if you take the half-a-million Catholics into account.

Speakers at the rally, including James Molyneux of the Official Unionist Party, talked of a full-scale Orange withdrawal from all the institutions of government in Northern Ireland.

The previous day, only 300 Harland and Wolff shipyard workers took part in a planned walk-out and demonstration. Thousands ignored the call.

A major attack on our rights

The Public Order Bill to be presented to Parliament this session, is a major attack on democratic rights, yet to date it has not met with serious opposition from the labour movement.

The legislation will ban all marches which may, in the opinion of the police, disrupt traffic of interfere with the public. Spontaneous protests will fall outside the law, and anyone involved in them, or not complying with police instructions, could face three months imprisonment.

Police will have the power to dictate the place and duration of any

pickets, and determine how many people can take part. Again, failure to comply could lead to imprisonment. The effect of this will be to make picketing illegal, or at best on police sufferance.

The bill defines new offences, too. Most serious of these are the offence of 'riot' which will carry a ten year prison sentence; 'violent disorder' — five years; and 'affray' — three years.

The effect of these legal changes is to give major new power to the undemocratic, uncontrollable police force, and to remove important democratic rights to free assembly.

We could have got a better deal

Last week the executive of the NUM decided to accept the final offer of the Coal Board on the back-dating of the pay rise and pension rights.

Obviously the NUM executive was in a difficult position, concerned that the lads should get their back pay before Christmas. But the deal also means that pension rights will now be affected by strike action. I'm very disappointed that the executive has surrendered on this. They should have stuck out for a better deal.

WHETTON'S WEEK



Paul Whetton is the secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

The limited action still going on in the pits, Durham, South Wales, won't be affected. Overtime banks, 1, 2 or 3 day strikes and any strike up to 3 weeks will not affect our pension rights.

But after three weeks on strike pension will be deducted.

It will trigger a debate amongst the lads about their future pension rights.

Coal Board boss Haslam showed in his speech last week that he is fully prepared to cooperate with a future Tory government over privatisation. He wants it to be sold off all in one go. He is closing unprofitable pits (he has announced another 13 pit closures and 10 mergers). He then hopes to put the whole lot up for sale so that private mining companies and oil companies can carve it up between them.

It comes as no surprise to the rank and file. The Queen also signalled their intentions when she talked about "the rationalisation of the mining industry" in her speech.

McNestry of NACODS has commented in the Press that change in mining safety regulations is part of this drive to privatisation.

When private employers take over they don't want a mass of regulations that protect the workers.

The Queen's speech also referred to the Bill the Tories intend rushing through Parliament to make the industry "profitable" by 1989-90. They will buy out more miners' jobs, recognise the UDM, cut social welfare, etc.

Putting the UDM onto the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, etc., in a few years time won't be of any benefit at all to them because it probably won't exist by then.

Recognising a minority nationally, — the UDM — the Coal Board will also have to recognise a minority locally — which will benefit Notts NUM. Despite the concessions made to them as a reward for scabbing, I don't think the UDM will be around in a few years time anyway.

My tribunal case against victimisation has been adjourned until December 11.