

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

**Kick out the Tories in '87!**

*For Workers' Liberty East and West*

# WHAT IS THATCHER HIDING?



Neave and Thatcher



## South Africa: General Strike hits back at Botha

See back page

### Did MI5 mastermind Thatcher's rise to power?

DID MI5 mastermind Mrs Thatcher's rise to power in the Tory Party? Why is Mrs Thatcher refusing to hold an inquiry into the burgeoning tales of an MI5 attempt to bring down the Labour government of Harold Wilson in the mid-'70s?

Is Thatcher afraid that her own links with MI5, and MI5 involvement in helping her defeat Edward Heath for the leadership of the Tory Party in 1975, will be uncovered?

These are some of the most interesting questions that have emerged in the last week. On the face of it, a strong circumstantial case for Mrs Thatcher's involvement with MI5 can be made. Consider the facts.

The memoirs of former leading spy Peter Wright are still held up in the Australian courts, where the Tory government is doing everything it can to stop Wright publishing them. Wright blows the gaff on the so-called 'security services in Britain, alleging that up to 30 secret agents tried to organise dirty tricks against the Labour Party — and even against those in the Tory and Liberal Parties considered 'unreliable' or 'soft'.

The latter included Tory leader and Prime Minister from 1970 to 1974,

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### Tony Benn on MI5 see page 2



# Threat to democracy

By Tony Benn

"The Prime Minister's blank refusal to investigate the charges made by Peter Wright, that senior officers in MI5 were engaged in a series of illegal burglaries and break-ins, and attempted to destabilise an elected government, has made it clear that she does not wish the truth to come out.

"The argument that crimes committed at a time when a Labour government was in power, which have only come to light since she became Prime Minister, are not her concern, convinces no-one, and can only be interpreted as active support

for what MI5 is reported to have done.

"Moreover, one of these alleged crimes, the attempted assassination of President Nasser of Egypt in 1956, actually took place when Sir Anthony Eden was in office, and Lord Hailsham, the Lord Chancellor, was serving as First Lord of the Admiralty.

"The role of MI5 and MI6 will, therefore, be a central issue in the election campaign, now we

know that they were working directly against Labour — and hence for the Tories — in the past, and must assume that they are doing the same now.

"MI5 and MI6, and their allies in the CIA, are a State within the State, and pose a direct threat to democracy itself.

"When the next Labour government is elected, to restore full employment, improve the NHS, education and pensions, and work for peace, the Security

Services will be trying to undermine it, by putting out false information about Ministers serving in that government, as they have done in the past.

"Everybody should be ready for more false, and damaging stories about the Labour Party to be circulated during the General Election, and be on the look-out for them.

"They may come from MI5 or MI6, but the intention will be to secure the re-election of Mrs Thatcher, which is why she, personally, is so determined to protect them from any investigation now."

## Get Thatcher on the run!

**THIS SCANDAL can blow up the credibility of the Tories and Mrs Thatcher on the eve of the general election.**

**Labour should do everything it can to ensure that it does. The Labour Party should take steps to initiate a public inquiry into the affairs of MI5.**

**There is widespread public concern, and it should be possible to staff such an inquiry with people whose objectivity and integrity would count for something in British public life.**

**Even if Thatcher should bow to the growing pressure and set up an inquiry, the labour movement could have no grounds for confidence in it. The Labour leaders should act now.**

## How close to a coup?

**HOW NEAR was Britain to a military coup in the early '70s?**

The evidence is now very strong that a military coup was a serious possibility.

There was a great wave of working class militancy, strikes and factory occupations. It culminated in the miners' strike of January 1974.

Retired army officers began to organise private arms to resist revolution. The National Front grew alarmingly. The Tory government put industry on a three-day week and soon decided on an election in which the electorate was to be asked: 'Who rules, the trade unions or the elected government?'

The Tories lost the election! In February Labour emerged as the biggest party in Parliament, and formed a minority government. It secured a small majority in the October 1974 general election. Then, after a couple of years in office, Labour damped down working-class militancy.

The evidence of the relentless dirty tricks campaign against the Labour government (and against the 'soft' leaders of the Tory and Liberal parties) must be linked to other events of that period.

The then Chief of Staff, Field Marshal Lord Carver was later to admit publicly that some officers had begun to talk of 'intervening' in February 1974, the month of the general election.

Four months earlier a murderous, fascist coup had destroyed one of the oldest and seemingly most stable parliamentary democracies in the world, that of Chile, murdering tens of thousands of Chilean workers.

Carver said this in public during a debate with the pacifist Pat Arrowsmith in the late '70s: "Fairly senior officers were ill-advised enough to make suggestions that perhaps, if things got terribly bad, the army would have to do something about it". Carver and other top brass had put down the talk of military takeover.

It seems likely that the MI5 dirty-tricks squad would have connections with those officers.

Like Carver, the then top brass will mostly have retired by now. Where are those who talked in 1974 of organising a British military coup? Some of them are today's top brass.

## Did MI5 mastermind Thatcher's rise to power?

From front page

Edward Heath, Mrs Thatcher's predecessor.

A sustained effort was made over five years.

• In 1970-71 an official inquiry was launched by the head of MI5 into Harold Wilson (Prime Minister 1964-70) and into his entourage. They were suspected of having links with the Russian KGB and/or the Israeli secret service.

Wilson, who never scrupled to denounce striking workers in the '60s as 'reds', was himself suspected by MI5 of being a secret communist.

• The homes of prominent Labour leaders, such as Edward Short, then Labour's deputy leader, were broken into. Speaking of this and other incidents, Peter Wright has said of his MI5 team that they "bugged and burgled their way across London at the state's behest, while pompous bowler-hatted civil servants in Whitehall pretended to look the other way".

### Criminal

Wright lists 23 criminal actions and 12 acts of treason by MI5.

• The agents, disposing of vast material resources, believed — according to Harold Wilson himself — that the House of Commons was "subversive or ignorant", and that Britain had to be protected from Parliament and its elected government. This is the classic psychology of the organisers of military coups.

• A Labour government was returned in 1974 after the Tory government of Edward Heath had unleashed a level of industrial conflict unknown for decades. The security services set out to destabilise the minority Labour government.

Among their activities was an infiltration of the Protestant UDA, whose general strike they helped organise in May 1974. This contributed to defeating the Northern Ireland strategy of the British government (it was the Tories' strategy, inherited by the Labour government).

It is against this background that the questions arise concerning Thatcher. It is said that MI5 set out to secure strong party leaders it could rely on.

It considered the defeated Edward Heath to be weak and useless. Thatcher had been a right-wing minister in Heath's government. She emerged as a surprise victor after challenging Heath for the leadership of the Tory Party in 1975.

Her election campaign was organised and masterminded by Airey Neave. Neave had links with



## Labour's right spied

**LABOUR'S dominant right wing asked MI5 to spy on the left of the Labour Party in 1961.**

The request came from deputy leader George Brown, who lived to join the SDP, and party leader Hugh Gaitskell, who died suddenly in 1963, thereby provoking MI5 suspicions that he had been killed by the Russian KGB to open the road for Harold Wilson to succeed him as leader.

The Labour right-wingers' use of MI5 is one of the most bizarre revelations coming out in the spy scandals. It is not surprising.

It has long been known that Labour's right-wing leaders had connections not only with the British secret police. In 1961 the left had American CIA. In 1961 the left had just won the Labour Party for unilateralism (in October 1960), and the party was in uproar.

MI5 and other spy agencies going back to World War 2. He maintained those links, being responsible for 'liaison' between the Tory Party and MI5.

At the least Mrs Thatcher was the candidate for leader of the Tory Party of the anti-democratic conspirators. But more than that. The agents with whom Thatcher's organiser and manager had contact throughout the mid-'70s were running a campaign to discredit Heath with allegations that he was homosexual, etc. etc. They were the same people who were doing dirty tricks against the Labour government.

So, to put it at its lowest, Thatcher was, directly or, through Neave, indirectly, involved with the conspirators. And if she was not knowingly involved, she now knows that she benefited.

Edward Heath is said now to support the call for a full inquiry. Well he might. And well might Mrs Thatcher — from her own point of view — continue to resist it.



The country's crying out for change

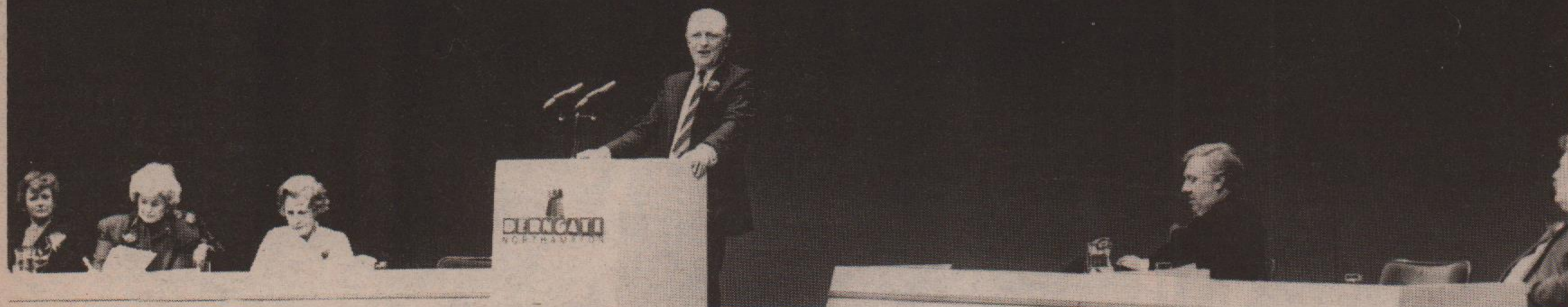


Photo: Stefano Cagnoni.

# Don't opt out!

**SHARON ATKIN, the ousted black Labour candidate for Nottingham East, has been harshly treated by the leadership of the Labour Party.**

This affair is rendered all the more repulsive by the fact that the Labour Party National Executive Committee removed Sharon Atkin in response to a vicious campaign by the Tory press — the same implacable press which bashes away at Labour day after day and month after month, uninhibited by considerations of fairness, honesty, responsibility or even decency.

What Atkin said — apparently in an attempt to pacify hostile black separatists in a Birmingham meeting — was considerably off beam. The Labour Party is a long way from deserving to be numbered among the active forces of racism in Britain today.

Rejection of Black Sections is not necessarily evidence of racism: the Black Sections' habit of denouncing those who disagree with them as 'racist' is, to put it very mildly, unfortunate and counterproductive. Even most black people in and around the Labour Party do not agree with Black Sections!

But it must also be said that



Sharon Atkin. Photo: I Swindale.

Sharon Atkin was not entirely off beam either. Despite Labour Party conference policy, Labour has not challenged the existing racist immigration laws, and a Labour government would enforce them. Those racist laws are a source of racist infection throughout British society.

One of the foulest acts of explicit and naked racism committed by any British government for decades was done by the Labour government in 1968 when it tore up the British passports of the Asians then being expelled from Kenya, barring the door

## Defeat Tories in Nottingham East despite the NEC

to them. Faced with an identical situation in 1972, when the Asian community was driven out of Uganda, Edward Heath's Tories behaved far better. They let the Uganda Asians in, despite the outcry of the then sizeable National Front and the right wing of the Tory Party.

The Labour leaders have never repudiated or denounced what Labour Home Secretary James Callaghan did to the Kenya Asians. And what will a Labour government in office do about the racist police who harass black youth?

Labour's record on racism is, on the whole, a shameful one. Sharon Atkin was not entirely off beam.

But right now the major force for racism is the Tory government. And not only is it a government of racists, it is the most reactionary anti-working-class government for many decades, hell-bent on smashing up

the labour movement.

The Tories are set on making Britain even more of a dog-eat-dog society — a society in which racism will continue to grow until British cities become like the racist hell-holes that exist in the USA.

The overriding concern of the labour movement must be to defeat the Tories in the 11 June election. Labour will be hard put to even emerge as the biggest party in Parliament, let alone gain an overall majority. Every vote and every seat is of vital importance.

Nottingham East Labour Party has rightly registered its protest at the removal of Sharon Atkin and the imposition of Mohammad Aslam, and has decided to pursue every channel open to it within the Labour Party machinery for reversing the NEC's injustice. But it should be prepared nonetheless to throw all its weight behind the official Labour candidate.

Nothing could be more short-sighted and disastrous than for the rank and file to turn their backs on the party in protest — thereby leaving it to the right wing. If Labour now loses Nottingham East the entire responsibility will lie with the NEC; but if the left boycotts the campaign and Labour loses, then part of the blame will truly be ours.

The left-wingers in Knowsley who refused to campaign for the imposed candidate there did not damage the right wing, they damaged the left — and the Labour Party.

Anger and disgust is understandable — but it can't be the decisive consideration. The time for recriminations and for attempts to hold the leadership to account will come after the General Election. It is not now. Right now everything else in Nottingham East should be subordinate to the job of winning the seat for Labour on 11 June.



"Labour's record on racism is, on the whole, a shameful one... But right now the major force of racism is the Tory government". This is the sick sign that people being deported by the Tory government face at Heathrow. Photo: Carlos Guarita, Reflex.

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## PRESS GANG

### The old codgers

**LORD Wilson of Rievaulx, 'Dunconning', Isles of Scilly, writes:**

I keep seeing newspaper articles about myself and people I used to know like Ted Short, who had the honour to be my deputy at one time, Cecil King (who was once privileged to be the proprietor of my mouthpiece, the Daily Mirror), and that slimy bastard Callaghan (to whom I graciously handed the reins of office, in the fully justified expectation that he'd make a complete cock-up of things).

**By Jim Denham**

Even my own distinguished predecessor, Hugh Gaitskell, seems to be back in the news. I thought no-one remembered him these days.

I think that it has all got something to do with that M15 plot to overthrow my government, but my old mucker Joe Haines says I'm paranoid: these are merely the 'ramblings of a sick old man, Peter Wright, consumed with a grievance about his pension', says Joe.

I don't agree. I remember that my staff were regularly burglarised between 1969 and 1976, and I'm convinced my house was bugged when I reassumed my rightful position as Prime Minister after that fool Heath was booted out. Then there's that rum business about the phoney Swiss bank account, stuffed full with Russian and Israeli gold, allegedly held by Ted Short.

To be perfectly frank and reasonable about this, I think the evidence of a plot against my good self and my glorious administration is pretty overwhelming. Haines keeps coming on the radio and writing articles in the Mirror pooch-pooing the notion as 'hysteria'. There's a fiver and a crate of Watneys riding on this, between Joe and I, so can you Old Pair throw any light on the matter?

• **A tricky one indeed sire!** After all Joe Haines was your press secretary, and trusted Kitchen Cabinet member throughout the '60s and '70s, wasn't he? And Sonny Jim isn't being much help either, refusing to contradict Thatcher's claim that his 1977 inquiry effectively discounts the Wright allegations.

On the other hand two former home secretaries, Roy Jenkins and Merlyn Rees, seem to think that Callaghan's inquiry was not the last word on the matter and have added their not inconsiderable weight to calls for an inquiry.

Barry Penrose, the Sunday Times security expert, has accused the present government of 'fighting to suppress what is, in effect, Britain's Watergate. Indeed the allegations are far more serious than anything the Nixon administration was ever accused of.'

The Independent, which first broke the story, says 'when some allowance is made for the inevitably corrupting effect of living a secret life for nearly 20 years, Mr Wright's testimony can only be described as convincing.' Even Gordon Greig, the Daily Mail's political editor writes about the plot as an established fact, not bothering with words like 'alleged' or 'so-called'.

And Peregrine Worsthorne, editor of the Sunday Telegraph, not only concedes that the plot happened, but explains why it was justified: 'Governments also get the secret services they deserve. Just conceivably this country will once again find the secret services flexing their muscles. But the best way to prevent this is not to have another inquiry into M15, but to make sure that this country is never again misgoverned as it was under Harold Wilson.'

Not very flattering to you, unfortunately. But we'd say that the weight of informed opinion is overwhelmingly on your side against Joe on this one.

What we Old Pair want to know, sire, is why Joe is so keen to dismiss the allegations and calls for an inquiry. Perhaps you could ask him this when you claim the crate of Watneys.



# GRAFFITI

## Herald of Free Enterprise

### Death comes cheap

According to the general secretary of the ships' officers' union NUMAST, ferry officers had threatened a strike to get an extra officer to close bow doors.

ing in 1981, but then that ship was replaced on the Zeebrugge run by the 'Herald', where union organisation was apparently weaker.

bow doors were left open, but to no effect.

The union's view is that Townsend Thoresen were asking two officers to do three separate jobs in different parts of the ship simultaneously as it left port. The company replied that extra staffing would cost too much.

A threat to strike by officers of a sister ship to the 'Herald of Free Enterprise' won the extra staff-

An officer on the 'Herald' did ask Townsend Thoresen to install a light on the bridge to warn if the

## Tactical errors

### Double standards

Labour's leaders have curious double standards. For a left-winger like Sharon Atkin to say something exaggerated in a rowdy public meeting is a capital offence, but for right-wingers persistently to advocate voting against Labour is a peccadillo.

Frank Field, Labour MP for Birkenhead, has called for 'tactical voting', which means that in constituencies where both the Alliance and the Tories are ahead of Labour, Labour voters should back the SDP or Liberals. No suspension, expulsion, or angry public denunciations for Field. The chief whip is going to have a quiet chat with him.

## 1983

Figures from the 1983 general election give some idea of how destructive 'tactical voting' could be for Labour.

In that poll, Labour lost forty per cent of our 1979 score in the south-east. In the north-west our loss was a more manageable 14%. Almost certainly the cause of the drastic decline in the south-east was 'spontaneous' tactical voting.

If the Alliance continues to do relatively well, and if tactical voting becomes systematic, then the Labour Party could be vir-

tually wiped out in large areas of the country.

This is not just a matter of whether the Labour presence in wealthy middle-class areas is tiny or very tiny. The south also includes much of what industrial growth there is in Britain. Manufacturing employment went up by 15% between 1983 and 1986 in East Anglia, while in the north it was still declining.

The new centres of industry and employment have to be won for Labour, not abandoned.

## JTS

The government's 'work for dole' Job Training Scheme is running into trouble.

Last week the Wales TUC followed the Scottish TUC in voting to boycott the scheme. CPSSA workers in the Department of Employment are due to ballot on a campaign of opposition to JTS. The TUC General Council is under pressure to withdraw its present support for the scheme.

However, the Tories intend to press ahead with their plans for cheap labour. Employment Minister Lord Young said at the weekend that the Tories intend to stop supplementary benefit for young people who refuse YTS places.

## Violence

One woman in every four suffers violence from a husband or partner, according to recent research.

A team from the Medical Research Council also questions Erin Pizzey's idea that many battered women tend to draw violence upon themselves. Women who leave violent men are unlikely to choose new partners who are also violent, the researchers found.

Women who start living with a man very young, or who marry after getting pregnant, are most likely to suffer violence.



Pro-imperialist?

# Ireland: the facts of imperialism

**The problem with SO's analysis (represented by Patrick Murphy in no. 310) is not that it agrees with imperialism's assessment of what is going on in Ireland but that it also agrees with its policies — the British army must stay until some sort of solution is found. That's why your programme is 'left-wing imperialism'.**

I am accused of not putting forward any arguments or facts to back up this statement. OK, let's look at the facts.

Unfortunately, Patrick, the facts do not tell us that imperialism is not the central problem.

1. It was indeed Britain who ruled Ireland for centuries.

2. The decisive factor in setting up Northern Ireland, and partition, was not the Protestant community in the north but the war Britain fought against Ireland's democratic forces (the 'Tan war') and its arming and financing of loyalist forces in the north. Partition was a British-imposed settlement.

3. The policy of British imperialism over the last 20 years has not been to 'break open' the Northern Ireland state but to save it from collapse through massive repression and a series of political offensives, (the latest of which is the Anglo-Irish Agreement), none of which changed in the least the sectarian and repressive nature of the state.

So what do we do about it? Patrick is right to say socialism won't come about without a united working class, but dead wrong to say that the most important division is in the north. The most important division inside the Irish working class is between north and south, and the most important task creating this unity. (It speaks volumes for Patrick's proposed unity that it does not mention what the majority of Irish workers have to do with creating this unity). This is not just because of the ab-

solute numbers involved, or their power. Not just because it is reflected in the strengthening of capitalist and reactionary forces inside Ireland. Not just because it led to the setting up of two repressive states. The most important reason for our present discussion is that it is the vital key to creating Protestant/Catholic unity.

How on earth does SO, and Patrick, think this last unity will come about within Northern Ireland? The British created northern Ireland so that nationalist workers would be too weak to offer an alternative to the Protestant workers' alliance with imperialism.

Let's both be clear that despite the better organisation of Protestant workers, the demand for unity has never come from them. Let's also be clear that just because Protestant workers oppose particular policies of imperialism this does not make them anti-imperialist. What they are demanding is a more vicious and sectarian imperialism. What the republicans are demanding is an end to British rule.

That's real anti-imperialism and Patrick, and SO, don't appear to know the difference.

I did not say that Protestant/Catholic unity can only come about after a united Ireland. I am saying it is only a possibility if the working class (all 32 counties of it) have a united Ireland as the centre of their programme. Patrick says republicans and socialists in Ireland have no alternative to the Northern Ireland state and that troops out now would lead to civil war and repatriation.

To use Patrick's own method — this is an argument for strengthening and supporting the republican and socialist struggle not abandoning it and writing it off (as Patrick does).

**Send letters to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. No more than 300 words, please, or we may have to make cuts.**

This sits badly with Patrick's claim that "Our main criticism of the Troops Out Now demand is that, without a political strategy or proposal for a united Ireland it will lead not to self-determination but to civil war and repatriation".

The question Patrick — and SO — have to answer is how such a democratic and socialist strategy is to be developed and organised if it does not demand Brits Out Now? Will northern nationalists support a 'democratic' programme that maintains the British army kicking in their doors, arresting them and murdering them? Will Protestant workers break with loyalism when you support the maintenance of its guarantee — the British army?

Will the British army just hold the ring while a democratic and working class unity is created? Such a benevolent view of imperialism is not possible from where I am. In reality the British army would be the most powerful force suppressing such a movement. What is needed is one strong enough to boot them out. That we do not have the power to do it yet is not a reason to politically disarm ourselves by demanding they stay until we do.

British socialists in SO cannot create this movement. They can however put the responsibility for the divisions in Ireland fairly where they belong, on Britain. They can explain that imperialism does not benefit Irish workers (Patrick in fact says it does by claiming it is "less reactionary" than the alternatives). They can demand that there is no British army to repress the democratic and socialist movements of Irish workers — by demanding Troops Out Now.

This is the only way of ending SO's terrible confusion of counterposing Troops Out to self-determination and self-determination to destruction of the Northern Ireland state. Once more I have to ask how you got yourselves into this terrible mess.

JOE CRAIG, Belfast



## Nuclear fears

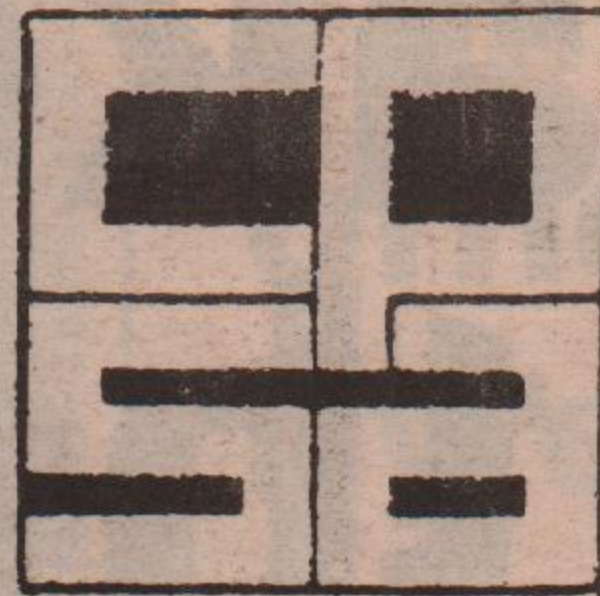
Most people agree with the basic arguments for unilateral nuclear disarmament, even if they shy away from the conclusion.

A recent Gallup poll found that 67% of people would not be willing

for Britain to use nuclear weapons even in self-defence. Only 18% thought that the nuclear arms build-up could continue indefinitely without war breaking out, and 51% feared a nuclear war starting by accident.



# SOCIALIST ORGANISER



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Joint CPSA SCPS demonstration in Southend

## Way forward for the Broad Left

\*The Broad Left must become a genuinely open and campaigning organisation. Elections are important, but must not become the chief focus for all activity. The Broad Left must be seen to give support to members in struggle, organising national publicity, fundraising, speaking tours, etc., when the official CPSA leaders won't do so.

\*All union officials, from local reps to General Secretary, should be elected annually. The salaries of full-time officials to be brought into line with those of the members they represent. These policies will break up the bureaucratic clique that dominates union headquarters.

\*Action, not lip-service, on women's issues! Reserved seats for women are needed, to counter decades of under-representation. Support the setting up of a Broad Left women's group, and support any moves to set up caucuses of black and lesbian/gay supporters. The specially oppressed must have the right to organise autonomously.

\*More publicity and action on the question of new technology. New technology has the potential to wipe out thousands of our members' jobs. The Broad Left has opposed deals aimed at "selling" CPSA's cooperation with the introduction of new technology in return for a few extra quid. But far more needs to be done: the issue has been dangerously downplayed recently.

\*Affiliation of CPSA to the Labour Party. Members recently voted to establish a political fund: we must now move to give CPSA a political voice alongside other major trade unions. Use that voice to oppose the witch-hunts of socialists inside the Labour Party and fight for greater democracy within the Labour Party itself.

If you are interested in learning more about Socialist Organiser, or becoming a supporter, contact us at PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

# PAY: ORGANISE

By Mike Grayson

Next week (11-15 May) the Annual Conference of the largest Civil Service union, CPSA, meets in Blackpool. It coincides with the final week of the planned 6-week programme of regional strikes undertaken by CPSA and two other civil service unions over their 1987 pay claim.

Activists in the region concerned — the East Midlands and East Anglia — were obviously unhappy about having to take action in the week when conference was sitting, but the National Executive Committee refused to bring forward the action.

It now appears that the NEC want to prolong the period of selective strikes, rather than move to a vote on all-out action. Part of the reason is probably to maintain unity with the managerial union SCPS, but one must also speculate just how serious CPSA's right wing-dominated leadership are about the pay campaign.

### Reject

They would not even make a recommendation to members to reject the government's miserly 4.25% offer, in an earlier ballot.

Selective action can be useful in building a mood for a serious campaign, and increasing members' self-confidence. However, as an end in itself, we know from bitter experience in previous years that selective action is most unlikely to force a government climb-down.

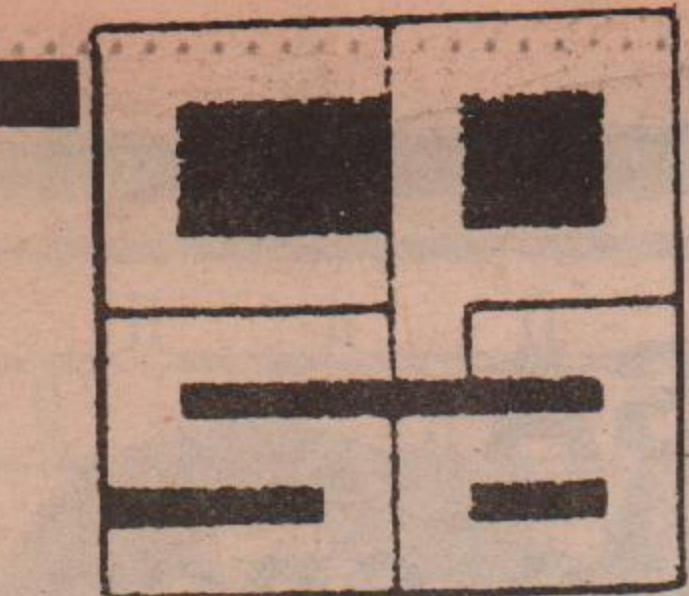
Too long a period of selective strikes can wear down membership morale, and create confusion as to where the action is going.

So far, the regional strikes have gone extremely well — tapping the bitterness that civil servants feel about their poverty-level wages — but members need to feel that there is an end in sight. An all-out strike can win the 15%/£20 per week claim.

CPSA conference should support moves to ballot soon on an all-out strike, and demand that the NEC work flat out to win the vote.

# FOR AN ALL OUT STRIKE!





# Make CPSA serve the majority!

The majority of the CPSA's members are women yet the majority of union officials are men.

The CPSA has its token "Thatcher" figures — Marion Chambers (President) and Kate Losinska (Vice-president) but these two, on the right of the CPSA, have done nothing to further the interests of women members.

The Stalinist/Kinnockite alliance grouping Broad Left '84 have always maintained that they are at the forefront of the fight for women members' interests and rights. But what have they done?

\*They have paid lip-service to demands such as work-place creches, then have done nothing about it.

\*They have feigned great concern for pregnant women, then have sold them down the river with a new technology agreement which does not provide automatic protection for pregnant women on visual display units.

\*They stand women candidates in elections, shouting loudly about the lack of women-officials — but make no effort to ensure that the union is a habitable place for women members.

\*They make a big noise about the need for women-only schools — then

By Trudy Saunders

argue against them because "they are against the law".

When they split from the Broad Left, BL '84 were able to win support from women who had had enough of Militant's often sexist and bullying attitude towards women in general — and particularly towards those who wished to organise autonomously within the Broad Left and the CPSA. However, it did not take long for many women to realise that it was mere opportunism which motivated BL '84 and that they are a sham as far as furthering the interests of women members is concerned.

The majority grouping in the CPSA Broad Left — Militant — has an appalling record as far as issues affecting women are concerned. Militant supporters are totally opposed to the self-organisation of working class women within the class. They argue that the autonomous organisation of women is "divisive" and splits the class along the lines of sex.

Militant's politics in this area are oversimplified, undemocratic, opportunist and wrong.

Women Against Pit Closures is a

glowing example of how the autonomous organisation of women actually strengthens the working class. The pit women, often called the backbone of the strike, were able to give practical and political support to the striking miners. They developed themselves politically and were able to challenge the sexism of the mining men. Women Against Pit Closures was *not* divisive.

In fact Militant supporters are active in Labour Party women's sections, yet they oppose the setting up of Broad Left women's groups.

The effect of these mistaken politics has been that the Broad Left pays little real attention to the problems of women members. It is easy to stand up at a meeting and shout loudly about abortion rights, rape and low pay. It is much more difficult to actually convince male trade union members that they should not only take these and other issues seriously, but also change their thinking and behaviour in order to ensure the union is habitable for women members.

Militant believe that once a man is

a supporter he will automatically become non-sexist, non-racist, non-homophobic, etc. Militant refuse to recognise that a working class man can actually benefit from women's oppression under capitalism. He will come home from a hard day and home is a refuge from work. She will come home after a hard day in the typing pool — and carry on working as an unpaid domestic and childminder!

Militant also refuse to examine and consider the profound and often subtle way by which capitalist society oppresses women, through religion, education, ideology and socialisation. How many times have you heard an up-front woman trade unionist described as "pushy"? How often have you heard "she only got that position because she slept with the right person"?

CPSA women's groups need to be set up as a matter of urgency. They will provide a forum for women to voice their opinions, they will give women collective strength to fight against male chauvinism in the union, and they will help to ensure that issues specifically affecting women members are raised.

Militant's opposition to the self-organisation of oppressed groups is based on a typically oversimplified view. The bosses are our biggest

enemy, so the thinking goes, therefore we must forget all our differences and unite behind the banner of the working class. Yes, we must unite as a class. But that will only be a sham of unity unless the different sections of the working class are able to understand the problems of the others.

At Broad Left conference in 1986, supporters who proposed the setting up of Broad Left women's groups were heckled. Those who dared to suggest that men in the Broad Left might be sexist received a torrent of abuse.

The motion was passed due to a change in line from the Socialist Workers Party. However it has only been put into practice in non-Militant Broad Left branches.

The last period has seen numerous attacks by Thatcher on women workers. The latest of these is the new maternity legislation implemented from 6 April this year. This legislation attacks the maternity rights fought for and won by women over the years.

There has hardly been a murmur in the CPSA about this issue. It would have been a golden opportunity for the Broad Left to organise workers in conjunction with groups such as Maternity Action. But the opportunity was missed.

Within the Broad Left, Militant supporters say that they don't support "women's groups" but they do address the "here and now" problems experienced by women workers. But the plain truth of the matter is that they don't. Militant supporters shout loudly but do not organise members at a rank and file level. For them the Broad Left is an electoral machine.

## Opposed

Militant supporters are totally opposed to reserved places for women on the National Executive Committee of the CPSA. They argue that "voting for a woman because she is a woman" is "insulting".

The demand for reserved places is based on the fact that the proportion of women on committees, nationally and at other levels, is much smaller than the proportion of women in the CPSA as a whole. This is for a number of reasons: women's position in society as a whole; the sexist and bureaucratic nature of trade unions (including the CPSA), so that many women do not have the confidence to come forward; and women's childcare responsibilities which prevent their attendance at meetings outside working hours. Fear of travelling alone after dark prevents other women from coming to meetings.

The demand for reserved seats is not an answer to these problems. But it does go some way to recognising them. It would ensure that the various factions in the CPSA would stand a certain number of women who might otherwise be passed over in favour of men. It would mean members would vote for a woman they agreed with politically, but who might have less experience or be less "up-front" than a man in her particular faction.

The introduction of new technology (visual display units, word processors, etc), among CPSA grades in the civil service affects all members in terms of worsening conditions and job losses. It particularly affects women members who tend to be those most likely to work with new technology and are most affected in terms of health and safety.

Last year a new technology agreement was presented to the members by the right wing dominated NEC. It was supported by "The Moderates" and "Broad Left '84", and opposed by the Broad Left.

It did not give a "no job loss"



GCHQ anniversary demo, Cheltenham. Photo: John Harris





Protest against the removal of union rights from GCHQ workers. Photo: John Harris

guarantee and it did not give pregnant women or women who wish to become pregnant the automatic right to be redeployed from working on a visual display unit.

The agreement was presented to the membership along with lies about no job losses and large amounts of money to be received by all! On that basis it was accepted by the membership.

Those who argued for the agreement said "it was the best we could get", and argued that pregnant women would be safe as management had agreed to treat them "sensitively and sympathetically". But in light of the fact that thousands of job losses will occur due to the introduction of new technology, this "agreement" is a joke.

If management can redeploy pregnant women they will. But if they can't (and this will become more and more common as time goes by) they won't. Then a pregnant woman will have the choice of staying on a VDU and increasing her chances of a miscarriage or giving up her job.

The agreement also means that a pregnant woman has to go through the stressful business of negotiating with her manager for work away from a VDU. As more and more of these machines are brought in, these negotiations will get harder and harder.

At Broad Left DHSS Section Conference in 1986, some members of Militant (notably men) argued

against going for a firm agreement regarding pregnant women and VDUs. They, too, believe that a "sensitive and sympathetic" attitude from management was the most CPSA members could hope for.

It was noticeable that many women Militant supporters did not vote for "the line". Perhaps if they were organised as *women* Militant supporters, the male Militant supporters might not have been arguing it!

The Broad Left of the CPSA needs to be turned into a campaigning, democratic organisation, whose representatives are accountable to the Broad Left rank and file.

### Machine

For women it is particularly important. It is women who are carved out to the greatest extent when any organisation is heavily bureaucratised. It is also women who are left out when a body is turned into an electoral machine.

It is essential that the Broad Left is made habitable for all women. It should be an arena where all groups feel confident and able to debate their views freely.

There needs to be more thought and energy put into the organising of creches, babysitters and lifts home etc to ensure that women are free to participate.

But such demands are not enough in themselves. Most urgent is setting up regular and functioning Broad Left women's groups at branch and

local level.

This would help to ensure that women make their demands known and feel a collective force in combatting the sexism of their fellow male union members. It would also help to draw women into the Broad Left who might otherwise stay away. The group could also be used as a means of drawing the link between women's oppression and capitalism and the need for a united working-class to overthrow the system.

We call for the Broad Left to:

- \*Support the setting up of functioning Broad Left women's groups in *all* workplaces.

- \*Campaign for reserved seats for women on the CPSA NEC, and on the Broad Left's own NEC slate.

- \*Campaign among members around issues like the new maternity laws, affiliation to the National Abortion Campaign and low pay.

- \*Elect a Broad Left Women's Officer to coordinate campaigns around issues affecting women.

- \*Campaign vigorously for a new technology agreement which gives automatic rights for pregnant women, and women wishing to become pregnant to move away from VDUs.

Such measures will not solve the problems faced by women in the CPSA but they will go a long way to ensuring that the Broad Left attacks the problems more vigorously. In the long run it will be beneficial towards the struggle of the working class as a whole.

# Full time officials should be elected yearly

By Gary Scott

The Broad Left has failed adequately to address itself to two central problems facing the CPSA — a layer of full time officials with a life-style alien to the members they are supposed to represent — and a membership that often doesn't see the union as being particularly relevant.

Full-time officials invariably see it as being more important to maintain the resources of the union and their position in the union than providing the leadership required to defend the jobs and living standards of the members who pay their wages. The 1984 shift workers' strike was an example. We often see full time officials actively trying to sabotage or sell-out strikes.

### Gap

There is a huge gap between full-time officials and the ordinary member. Measures are needed to close that gap.

All senior full-time officials should be elected annually receiving no more than the wage of the highest paid CPSA member. No full time official should be brought in from outside the civil service. The CPSA should not have a career structure: the full-time officials, including the General Secretary, should have the same status in the union as NEC members. If they are not re-elected they should return to the workplace.

Some branch officials are on 100% facility time. This should be seen by the Broad Left as a problem. Being permanently ensconced in the union room means that pressures come not from the workers but from management, particularly through the system of Whitleyism operating in the civil service.

The building of Broad Left workplace branches can be useful in providing a link between Broad left branch officials and the workers and,

more importantly, holding the officials to account.

It is apparent from the low percentages of members voting in union elections and other ballots that a lot of the members are not involved in the decision-making processes of the union. In the recent political fund ballot, for example, only 53% of the membership voted.

The Broad Left has done little to combat this level of apathy. The Broad Left has traditionally relied too heavily on organising a minority of the membership to vote for their motions at AGMs and mandating meetings. Motions have been carried at conferences but remain merely paper victories because campaigns usually *end* with the passing of motions. Campaigns need to be continued after conferences, taken out to the wider membership.

The replacement of the block voting system for the NEC elections with individual ballots at workplace meetings was a step in this direction, as it forced the Broad Left to campaign among the wider membership to get Broad Left candidates elected instead of just getting sufficient numbers to a small meeting.

This open, campaigning approach needs to be applied to other issues such as the introduction of new technology in the civil service. The resources and the organisation can be found — they were found for the election campaign of John Macreadie.

The Broad Left needs to be transformed into a movement that can develop a programme out of the existing struggles taking place in the civil service, linked to a more general programme to transform the civil service unions into organisations that act solely in the interests of the membership — a programme that questions the nature of the civil service — in whose interests does it act?

Woman in a "man's job"

EXPERIENCES OF A WOMAN BUILDING WORKER

'A Woman in a 'man's job'' by Socialist Organiser supporter Jean Lane describes her experiences as the only woman working on a demolition job. It is a vivid portrayal of sexual harrassment at work, and points towards a working-class answer. Available from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, 50p + postage.



# Ten years of the Broad Left

In April 1962, a government commission headed by Lord Radcliffe published its findings on the question of state security in the Public Service. The Radcliffe Report expressed concern 'at the number of Communists and communist sympathisers who are holding positions in the Civil Service unions.'

By Mike Grayson

organise openly. The founding conference of an open Broad Left was held in March 1977.

By this time, Redder Tape was past its heyday, due to the increasingly sectarian attitude of the SWP, a sectarianism that was confirmed by the SWP's refusal to enter the new Broad Left. Instead the SWP continued to run Redder Tape as its own 'front'.

Some others on the hard left maintained joint membership of the Broad Left and Redder Tape, arguing in the latter for entry into the Broad Left. But the SWP were not to be moved.

The Broad Left grew rapidly after its inception, especially in the DHSS and Department of Employment. Politically it embraced all shades from the Communist Party and middle-of-the-road Labour supporters through 'Militant' to the smaller revolutionary organisations. No single tendency had control, though some tensions existed between the various factions — held in check both by the urgent need for a united front against the CPSA's vicious right wing, and by an optimism sparked by the Broad Left's swift growth.

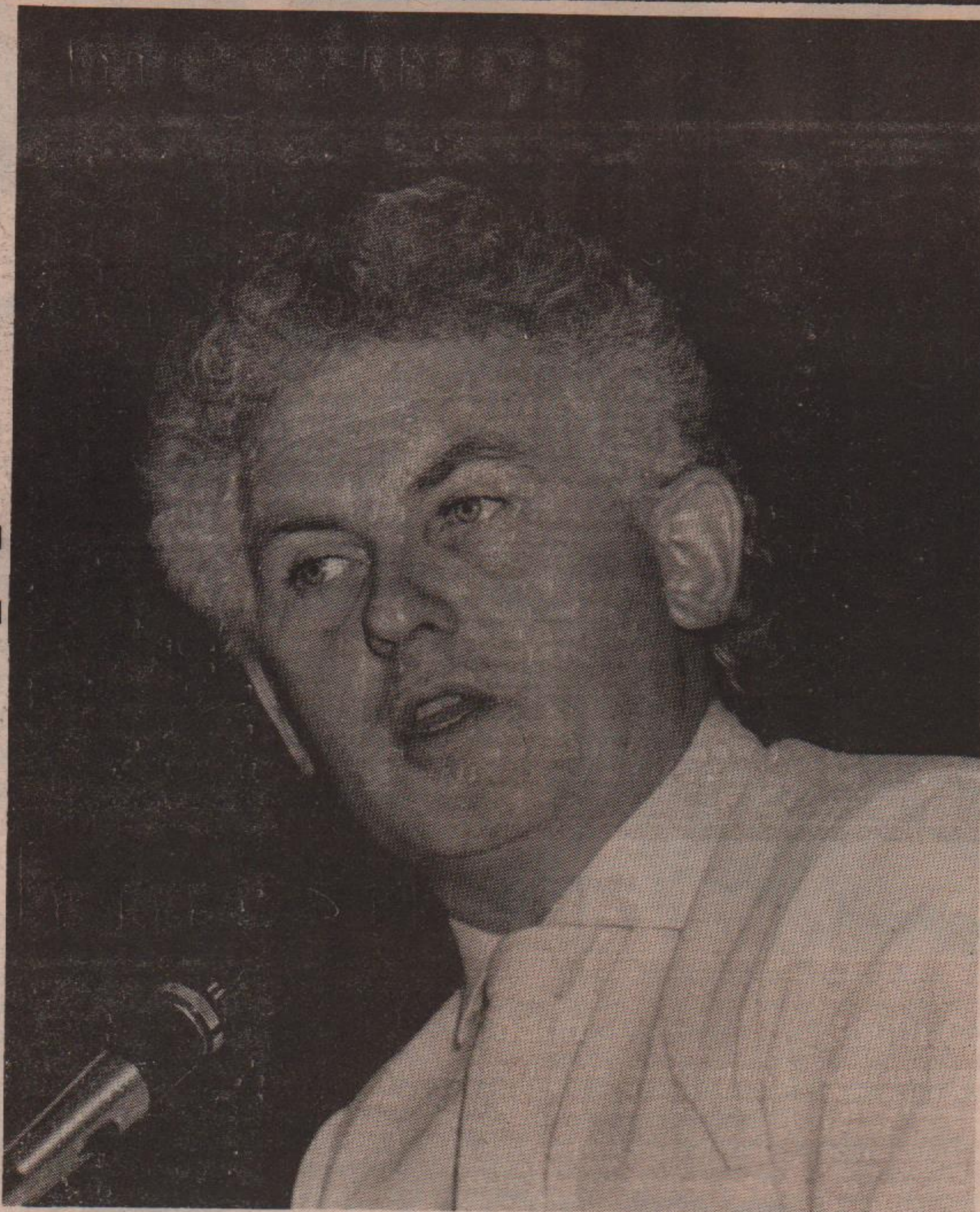
## Hard left

In early 1978, a small group of London-based activists set up a hard-left 'Socialist Caucus' within the Broad Left. It included supporters of Socialist Organiser and of some other groups, though many people attracted to the Caucus were not in any organised tendency. The Socialist Caucus began to push issues such as women's rights, which other sections of the Broad Left tended to ignore or pay lip service to.

The left picked up support from its fight for union democracy. With the notable exception of Militant, the whole Broad Left supported a successful campaign to do away with the old system of block votes and replace it by individual ballots at workplace meetings.

Then in 1980, conference passed the principle of membership election of the senior full-time officers (who had previously been appointed without consultation); and in 1981 the necessary constitutional changes to implement this principle were carried. These senior officials were now subject to election every five years.

However, after these successes, the cracks in the left began to show, and some of the impetus of earlier years



John Macreadie. Photo, John Harris

was lost.

Some on the left felt that democracy had now gone far enough: it was time to start thinking about their own careers and electoral prospects. Militant had grown faster than the other tendencies, and conflict between themselves and the soft left became more apparent: at the same time, both these blocs were content to see the Broad Left become more of an electoral machine.

There were Broad Left majorities on the National Executives of 1979-80, and again in 1982-3, and winning elections was becoming the priority for many leftists. But when the Broad Left was in power, it often failed the membership.

In late 1982, Oxford and Birmingham DHSS offices struck for increased staffing. Instead of giving a strong lead to these struggles, the Broad Left NEC twice recommended a settlement on a pathetic offer from management. The basic argument of Militant (by then very influential in the Broad Left) was that it was the wrong time and wrong issue for a fight... 'save the union's strength for the 1983 pay campaign'. In other words, the same approach and same arguments that have always been used by bureaucrats to stave off rank and file action.

But the November 1982 Broad Left conference refused to condemn the NEC's actions over the Oxford/Birmingham dispute.

## Tensions

By 1984, internal tensions in the Broad Left reached a critical level, and rumours began to circulate about an impending split. Two events then took place which were rendered almost comic by their ironic coincidence. Redder Tape had folded

some time before, and the SWP had been declining as a visible force in the CPSA. The SWP suddenly joined the Broad Left... just in time to see the Kinnockites and the Communist Party depart! In a carefully pre-arranged walk-out at the very start of the 1984 Broad Left conference, these elements left to set up the group called 'Broad Left '84'.

The excuse used by this group for leaving was the heavy-handed domination of conference that had then been achieved by Militant, an argument that carried some weight with activists. However, it did not take long for BL '84's real face to appear. Attacks on Militant's style and tactics soon developed into a blanket condemnation of the hard left. In short, it became a Trot-bashing organisation guaranteed to warm Kinnock's heart. Radical policies were ditched in favour of a 'realism' that had a lot to do with furthering a cosy relationship with the bureaucracy.

## Split

The split in the left was followed quite shortly by a split in CPSA's right. A group calling themselves the Democratic Moderates pulled out of the National Moderate Group, repeating the accounts of the latter's corruption and undemocratic workings that the left had been making for years. To date, however, this new group has achieved little electoral support.

So what is the position within the CPSA and its Broad Left now? Since the left split, the right wing have won the 1985 and 1986 elections to the NEC. But despite attacks from the media, the 'Moderates' and BL '84, the Broad Left has remained more influential than its soft-left rival.

For example, in the recent election for CPSA's General Secretary, John Macreadie (a well known supporter of Militant) gained 20,424 votes compared to 14,740 votes for Geoff Lewtas of BL '84. Militant remain the single biggest tendency in the Broad Left, but there has been growth of an opposition.

The SWP have increased their influence since entering the Broad Left, but many long-time activists view them with suspicion (or derision!) because of their frequent 'turns' — most recently, their approaches to Militant for unity: curtly rebuffed, and now abandoned.

Socialist Organiser, working with other activists and groups in the Socialist Caucus, tries to build a campaigning organisation that combines a rank and file approach with consistent, principled policies.

## 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 of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.



**The Broad Lefts**  
What they are and



what they must become  
Socialist Organiser 35p

A detailed account of the struggle by the NCU (then POEU) against privatisation of British Telecom and against Project Mercury when the Broad Left got a majority on the union's National Executive in June 1983 concludes: "For any trade union caucus, electoralism, the practice of struggling to gain leadership positions, is necessary. But when it becomes, however subconsciously, the exclusive or main priority, it can lead to fatal errors..."

And a survey of the history of the CPSA Broad Left concludes by stressing "the need for much more political clarification within the Broad Lefts" and the need to combat "a routinism where positions in the union loom larger than the class struggle".

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# Sisters under a cloud

**Belinda Weaver reviews 'Crimes of the Heart'**

It's not easy to describe *Crimes of the Heart*. I laughed till I cried in parts of it, so I'm sure it's funny, but it doesn't really have any plot to speak of. You'd have to tell the whole film, funny bits and all, to give a sense of what it is like. And that would spoil it!

So, I'll tell a little, and leave it to you to find out the rest when you go to see it. It's a big star movie. Jessica Lange, Diane Keaton and Sissy Spacek play three sisters from Hazlehurst, Mississippi, a small Southern town.

The girls grew up under a cloud — their father was a stinker, their mother achieved notoriety in the national press when she hanged herself and her cat. The girls grew up under the domination of Ol' Granddaddy, a bullying type who wanted to dictate the girls' lives to them.

## Maidish

Oldest sister Lenny, played by Keaton, has become shy and old maidish and, at thirty, has donned the gardening hat and gloves of their grandma. Meg (Lange) started drinking and going wild after finding their hanged mother. She left town to follow a singing career, pushed into it by Ol' Granddaddy. Babe (Spacek) stayed and married a bullying senator.

It is Babe's trouble that starts the film. She has shot her husband. He isn't dead, but he's mighty mad, and determined to make Babe pay. He doesn't want to send her to jail (think of his career!), but he is thinking of having her 'put away' in an asylum.

Babe returns to the family home in her time of trouble, and she is joined there by Meg, summoned back by Lenny. The three girls (or rather women, though they act so much like little girls that it is hard to think of them as grown up) are alone in the house — Ol' Granddaddy is ill in hospital.

Once reunited, the sisters' old childhood rivalries and antagonisms come out, as does their affection for each other as well. Each sister has been frustrated in life, through following her grandfather's wishes rather than her own. Without the bullying presence of the grandfather, the girls act more freely, and through the bonds they re-forge, each finds the strength to override the past and change her course in life.

That might sound soppy, but it isn't. The film is so full of odd behaviour played absolutely straight



Jessica Lange

that you find yourself laughing all the way through, even at such wildly inappropriate things like skin diseases and Granddaddy's coma.

Each sister has her quirks and oddities. Lenny has become shy and frightened of life because she has a shrunken ovary. Ol' Granddaddy has convinced her she'll never get a husband. Meg took to staring at pictures

of skin diseases and cripples to prove how tough and unfeeling she was. Babe, the most wacky of them all, is terrified of going crazy, like their mother.

Babe keeps an album full of pictures of all the sad things in her life, rather than the happy things — it's more like life that way.

The film is only about the sisters —

it wobbles a bit when other characters take the centre. Keaton, Lange and Spacek play their roles with such gusto, and such feeling for the oddities of each sister, that you are carried along, believing in them. It's only later that you realise their achievement — because there is no real plot, no story, just the actresses living their roles with conviction.

## Pollution

In our industrial society, attention has been increasingly focused on the effects of metal pollution on people.

Substances like lead, cadmium and mercury are known to cause nasty illnesses in large amounts but what about the effects of small amounts on such sensitive individuals as babies? Do many apparently normal newborn babies actually bear the evidence of mild poisoning by say, lead?

Small effects can more easily be detected statistically. Large numbers of babies need to be examined to see how much of the pollutant they have in their bodies. The results are compared with such factors as birth-weight which may be evidence of ill-effects.

Surprisingly, such work has only just been done though the debate on lead has been going on for years. A survey of 100 live births in Barnsley showed a clear link between high levels of lead and cadmium in the body and low birth weight. This would seem to indicate that the development of such babies had been slowed down. Such babies tend to be at more risk of illness and death.

A possible explanation of this effect is provided by another finding. Levels of zinc in such babies were also lower. Now, zinc is an essential element for normal growth and health, but, in the presence of the lead and cadmium, the body cannot absorb as much as it needs. One way of counteracting this problem might be to monitor lead and cadmium in pregnant women and given them extra zinc. A better way, however, would be to cut out lead and cadmium pollution. But that might interfere with profits.

## NEW GROUND

The Spring issue of the green socialist magazine *New Ground* carries several articles of interest to SO readers.

On *public health* there is an indictment of the appalling state of British beaches. These are frequently polluted with "faecal solids" released from sewage pipes either too short or damaged. This is against European Community law but to get round this and thus save money the Thatcher government simply refuses to designate such places as Blackpool as "an area where bathing is traditionally practised".

The result is a serious risk to bathers of diseases such as diarrhoea, hepatitis and polio. The article includes a form of *complaint* to be sent to the European Commission if your favourite beach is also "undesignated".

Also on *public health* is a report on Northern Ireland, detailing some of the environmental insults the people have to endure. In one West Belfast estate, dampness and faulty sewers caused many cases of gastro-enteritis, hepatitis, chest diseases and polio. These were initially blamed on the tenants while the SERA member advising them was denounced as a trade unionist, socialist and Fenian. Eventually independent experts recommended replacing the sewers at a cost of £70m.

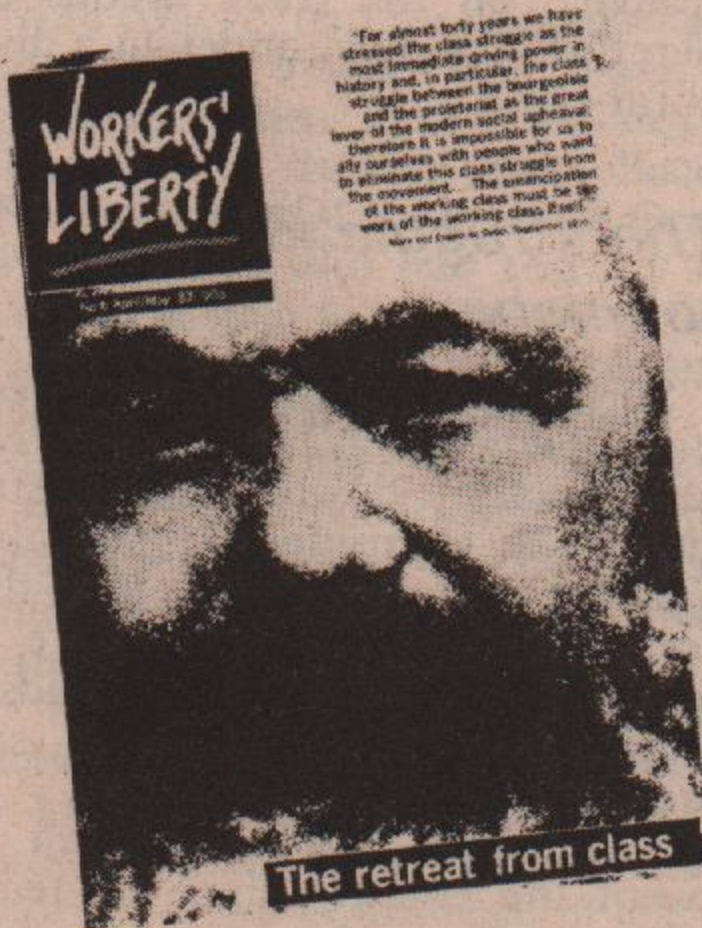
The SERA member also set up *Community Environmental Services* which tested for asbestos, advised on the health of the travellers and is surveying stress levels on the people due to all aspects of their environment, including the "troubles".

Other articles include a *Charter for Renewable Energy*, explaining how the gap left by nuclear power and oil can be filled, and on *land*, arguing that Labour's plan for housebuilding need not conflict with saving the countryside and making the cities greener.

*New Ground* is available from 9 Poland Street, London W1 at 60p plus postage. Send 4 18p or 5 13p stamps for an introductory copy.

## Why is the working class going out of fashion on the left?

Workers' Liberty No. 6 provides an answer. Plus Bob Fine on the Freedom Charter, Vladimir Derer on the Labour Party, Martin Thomas on the Third World and much, much more. Workers' Liberty No. 6 is available from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 90p plus 20p p&p.



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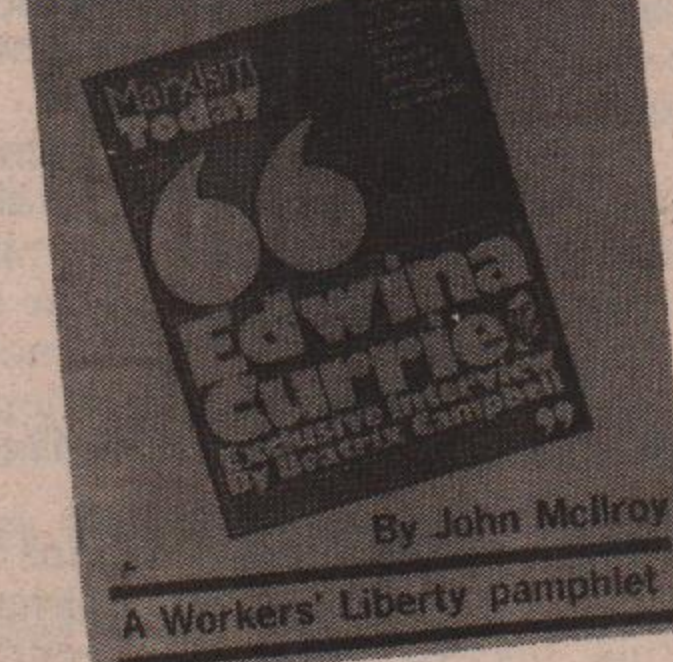
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Eric Hobsbawm and SDP Communism By John McIlroy. Price 50p



# 1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

## Women workers organise

Thursday 4 May

A meeting of women workers convened by the Bolsheviks' "Woman Worker" newspaper resolves to organise a school to train agitators for work among women. The Bolsheviks' "Soldier Pravda" carries an article defending the formation of Red Guards and criticising the opposition of the Petrograd Soviet to them. In Petrograd the first all-Russian congress of peasant deputies begins. It declares its support for the formation of a coalition government and the continuation of the war.

The Helsingfors Soviet passes a resolution opposing the formation of a coalition government. The Ekaterinburg Soviet adopts a resolution describing the decision of the Petrograd Soviet to allow its members to enter the government as "mistaken". In Vidibor on the Western front soldiers arrest General Krasnov for advocating continuation of the war and send him to Minsk to be put on trial; in Minsk, however, he is freed by the intervention of General Gurko.

Friday 5 May

At 2.00 a.m. delegates of the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet reach agreement on the composition of the Provisional Government.

The formation of a coalition government is approved at meetings of the Petrograd Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies; Petrograd college lecturers; the Moscow regional bureau of soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasant deputies; the Voronezh Soviet of workers' and peasant deputies; the Ufa regional congress of teachers.

The Tiflis Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies opposes the formation of a coalition government, as does a mass meeting in Karkov of electricity workers and a mass meeting of soldiers and peasants in Kiev.

The Archangelsk Soviet informs owners of local woodworking factories that no worker may be sacked without the approval of the trade union. The Samara Soviet calls for state control of all banks.

Saturday 6 May

The coalition government publishes a declaration rejecting a separate peace and pledging a continuation of war with Russia's allies. The Executive Committee of the Minsk Soviet of workers', soldiers' and peasant deputies appeals for an end to fraternisation at the front. On the Northern front delegates of the 43rd corps of the 12th Army adopt a resolution declaring that soldiers will not undertake any offensive, no matter who calls for the offensive. In Kazan a meeting of soldier-peasant deputies from the local garrison calls for continuation of the war and condemns fraternisation. Of 4,866 soldiers travelling from Bender on the Rumanian front to Odessa, 1,000 desert.

The Vervy Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies sets up a commission to seize cereal and grain stores from wealthy sections of the local populace and redistribute them amongst the needy.

Sunday 7 May

The all-Russian congress of officers of the army and fleet opens in Petrograd. It calls for continuation of the war, for the launching of an offensive, and for support for the Provisional Government. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tereshchenko, sends a telegram to Russia's allies pledging to continue the war.

A 10,000-strong mass meeting of sailors and soldiers in Kronstadt calls for the confiscation of all printing presses and printing works used to produce literature undermining the gains of the revolution, and for their redistribution among political parties and trade unions. A general meeting of the Kazan metalworkers' union instructs local factory owners that they can neither hire nor fire workers without the approval of the union. The Vervy Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies, noting the failure of the local administration to fulfill its functions, declares that all power is now in the hands of the Soviet.

By Stan Crooke

# Support Cape Town Firefite strikers

Over 70 women metal workers have been on strike at Firefite, Cape Town, South Africa since April 13. An activist from the Western Cape explains the background to the strike.

"The Firefite workers are in revolt at the starvation wages they earn and the primitive working conditions they

face.

The workers are particularly angry about the racist abuse they receive from the factory manager.

This strike is very important. It is the first strike by Cape Town women metal workers in 1987, in fact the only strike by women metalworkers in South Africa today.

Last Monday, 27th, the company dismissed the strikers and they have refused to negotiate with our union, the EAWTU.

The Firefite strikers received sup-

port from the 7,000-strong COSATU May Day rally in Athlone and also addressed mass meetings in the townships of Manenberg and Langa.

Other EAWTU members at Plessey and Cathalan engineering have held solidarity strikes in support of the Firefite workers.

We are hoping for solidarity from workers in Britain where Firefite has an office.

This Wednesday and Thursday the union will be joining with COSATU and NACTU, the two main pro-

gressive trade union federations in organising solidarity meetings and protests in sympathy with the striking railway workers in the Transvaal and in protest at the whites-only election."

The Electrical and Allied Workers' Trade Union has set up a fund to help finance shop steward and worker education and training projects.

Get your union/organisation to make a donation. Transfer funds to: South African Perm, account no. 3 0 2 4 9 0 6 2 - 0 0 1 0 4 .

# The crisis facing Botha

By Anne Mack

PW Botha's ruling National Party (NP) will win this week's whites-only general election in South Africa. But the end of the election campaign will not mean the end of the profound economic, social and political crisis facing the country's racial-capitalist rulers.

The economy is in a mess. South Africa is currently going through the most severe recession since the 1930s. Inflation at 16% is a major problem, unemployment is soaring, the balance of payments is in crisis and the Rand is doing very badly on the international money markets. The economic crisis is now affecting whites, for whom unemployment is at a record level. Soup kitchens have opened up in white areas and the worst off white workers are now digging trenches shoulder to shoulder with black workers in central Johannesburg for £30 a week.

This situation is aggravated by the monetarist solutions preferred by South African capital which threatens many of the 'sheltered' positions of white state employees. And this risks provoking a white backlash.

For blacks, things are much worse. In Port Elizabeth, which used to be the centre of South Africa's car industry, black unemployment stands at 50%. In the bantustans around 15% of the population are destitute.

Internationally the regime is under pressure. The trickle of 'disinvestment' has turned into a flood. Though much of this 'disinvestment' has been purely 'economic' as opposed to 'political', and South African monopolies have gobbled up the spoils, the impression of isolation remains. More importantly, Botha has not got away with the latest state of emergency totally sanctions-free as he may have hoped. Botha's attempt to use the emergency to prove that he could "get tough" with the liberation movement and avoid any kind of sanctions has backfired.

Botha has failed to draw in a large enough number of middle class blacks to make his reform strategy work. Added together, all the collaborators, stooges and gangsters in local government, the tri-cameral system and the bantustans do not amount to a stable, national force in the black community on which to base a serious restructuring of white rule.

Even the most potentially powerful like those who run the mineral rich Bophutatswana bantustan don't represent a 'third force' in the black community that could at the moment undermine the black opposition and provide a safe partner with which to negotiate.

However, given time, money and arms, forces like Chief Buthelezi's Zulu Inkatha movement could well help beat down the liberation movement for Botha.

Reforms fan revolt

Small scale reforms are all that Botha can offer the black majority. Passes may go, but the whole gamut



Botha's answer: repression

of racist legislation which controls the movement of black people — influx control, group areas, and forced removals remain. These attempts to update the facade of apartheid have not succeeded in their purpose, rather they have fanned the flames of revolt.

Botha is unprepared and unwilling to give up white power. Even the 'liberal' Progressive Federal Party (PFP) stops well short of the basic demand of the liberation movement for one person, one vote in an undivided South Africa.

But reforms put the system out of balance. Lenin writing over 70 years ago could well have been describing South Africa today when he outlined one of the elements of a revolutionary situation as "a crisis in the policy of the ruling class which causes fissures, through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth".

The government's trade union reforms represent just such a 'fissure'. The registration of black trade unions has not, as Botha intended, led to a pliant and co-opted labour movement or to the consolidation of a black 'labour aristocracy'. On the contrary it has created a space for the opposition to organise and to construct a powerful and militant labour movement.

It is clear that the National Party government has no clear policies and no clear answers. All Botha can offer, right now, is 'township upgrading', i.e. small improvements in roads and amenities — plus large scale repression.

In the long term South Africa's racist rulers have to re-order white rule to cope with a skilled black working class and a rising black middle class. In a very general sense they can't go on ruling 'in the old way'.

Yet right now it is precisely through ruling 'in the old way', i.e. through direct and bloody repression, that the regime maintains itself.

Those who argue that the military have already taken over in South Africa are wrong. Yet through the structures of the President's Council, which makes national policy, and the Joint Management Committees, which actually run the black townships, the military has certainly got a larger say in affairs than ever before in South African history. As the South African socialist Duncan Innes has argued: "It is not a long way between the current levels of repression and filling a football stadium full of people."

The dismissal of 16,000 striking railworkers and the shooting dead of six strikers two weeks ago has meant that Botha can project himself as "tough" on the trade unions and therefore, for now, undercut a divided far right.

The struggle in the townships

Since the declaration of the present state of emergency last June there has been a definite downturn in the struggle in the townships. Organisations have been forced underground, street committees are under pressure and murderous black vigilante squads are gaining the upper hand in some areas.

The urban uprising which has swept the country since September 1984 appears to be petering out, the only focus remaining is the rents boycott. The main reason for the decline in the township struggle is crude repression. However the strategy (or rather lack of strategy) of the main forces in the liberation

movement has not helped to stop the struggle unwinding and turning in on itself.

Though the African National Congress has around 2,000 cadre inside the country it does not control or direct what goes on. The uprisings have been uncoordinated and isolated. Strategic switches, like the decision to end the schools boycott, have been difficult to execute.

In part, this is because the ANC uses the struggle to boost itself as the credible black alternative government. As a result it makes different signals to different forces. To the black youth in the townships it is ultra-militant and confrontational. But it adopts a more disciplined approach when attempting to address more "responsible" bodies like the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee. In the same vein, when the ANC want to talk to George Schultz, Joe Slovo (head of the South African Communist Party and until recently leading figure of the ANC's armed wing) announced that he may well have been wrong, Stalin wasn't such a good guy after all, and that maybe there is a "middle road" between repression and revolution in South Africa.

But when they are trying to influence the best activists in the independent trade union movement the SACP stresses its socialist credentials and the 'uninterrupted' character of the democratic and socialist revolutions.

The ANC is not about to opt for a Zimbabwe-style Lancaster House agreement with the white regime. But such a deal is by no means ruled out. Large sections of South African capital want such a settlement and forces exist that are organising for it.

The unions

Today the black unions are undefeated. Their democratic structures have allowed them to cope with and respond to repression far better than weaker, community-based organisations.

Since 1 November last year, when some 300,000 mineworkers took strike action in protest at the Kinross mine disaster, a powerful wave of strike action has been building up. Nearly every important sector of the economy has been affected: the mines, steel, engineering, motor, food, chemicals and retail to name but a few.

Today there are over 24,000 public sector workers on the railways and in the Post Office on strike in the Johannesburg area alone.

The trade unions now face a greater threat of repression than ever before.

As the township struggle has declined the unions have become the central focus of opposition, but that also means that the security forces hands are not completely tied down by the township revolt anymore. They can devote more attention to repressing the trade unions.

The priority for the unions at the moment is physical defence. As COSATU has argued: "The attacks are getting so serious, so many people have died, that we must organise self-defence in every workplace and every township to consolidate and protect the gains we have made."



# Fighting privatisation

Proposals by Westminster City Council to withdraw from the National Joint Council (NJC) and to privatise 13 council services so angered its workers that NALGO organised a day of action on Wednesday 29 April.

Most of the Social Services, Housing, Environmental Services, Leisure Service, Libraries and many from the traditionally conservative City Hall supported the day, which ended with a branch meeting, march and lobby of the full council meeting.

Westminster is ahead of even the government in its plans to privatise 13 services, including cleansing, portering, social service catering and ambulances and refuse disposal. They hope to achieve in 12 months what Wandsworth council took six years to do.

NALGO quickly decided that we would go on all-out indefinite strike should the Tories bring their proposals to withdraw from the NJC to a council meeting. The Branch Executive sought to strengthen this with the day of action. But they did not prepare it adequately, instead adopting a fairly passive 'wait and see' attitude to the council.

At the branch meeting on the day

By Lawrence Welch

of action there was very little time for debate, so when the SWP proposed a previously defeated motion that NALGO comes out on all-out strike if the council does not publicly reject its proposals at the next council meeting on May 26, the general mood of exhilaration and defiance resulted in the meeting adopting this motion. An amendment to ballot the membership first was accepted by the SWP but it made a nonsense of the motion which called for action on the day after the next council meeting.

This, however, is the least of the problems with it: NALGO NEC have to approve any ballot and this they are unlikely to do. While the motion

could win over an enthusiastic meeting, it will have great problems winning a ballot. A strike based on the demand that the council 'do not consider' withdrawal from the NJC will have little clear focus, and even if we win, will not prevent them preparing their plans for future implementation.

On the other hand, the Branch Executive position which appeared to consist of taking no further industrial action, demobilised the workforce and put no pressure on the Tories. Further days of action are crucial to prepare the workforce for indefinite strike action. We would have been far more effective, for example, had we set up local shop stewards groups which included NUPE.

## Tower Hamlets council

From page 12

people have been charged by the police.

The Homeless Families Campaign has met to draw up a list of demands on the council. These include:

- \*Rescinding all current decisions and stopping further decisions to evict families from bed and breakfast accommodation.
- \*Allocating 50% of lets of council

housing to homeless families, as other London boroughs have done to bring down the number of families in bed and breakfast.

- \*Bringing the 3,000 empty flats and houses in the Borough back into use, stopping the disposal of council estates to private developers and using them for fair rented housing.
- \*Adopting policies to overcome racist practices within the council's housing department.

The Homeless Families Campaign have been preparing for a judicial review of some of the cases.

A meeting last Saturday of a new campaign, "Unity Against Racism", heard an update on the protests so far. Representatives of the homeless families stressed that they didn't want to see the campaign used for Party political advantage which in part reflects a wariness of white anti-racists still felt by many Bangladeshis following the events of 1978 when large demonstrations against the National Front in Brick Lane were followed by the NF smashing up Bangladeshi shops which were not protected.

The meeting called on NALGO members in the Homeless Persons Unit to refuse to process any more cases, and agreed to organise a march to the Housing sub-committee meeting this Wednesday.

## James Blake strike

27 workers at the James Blake and Co factory in Leith (Edinburgh) have been sacked after going out on strike for a pay rise.

Wages at the factory are £23 below the agreed national rate. In response to demands for a £10 a week increase, management first offered £7.50, and then, under the impact of an overtime ban, increased their offer to £8.50. Management's refusal to agree to a decent pay rise comes on top of its consistent refusal to improve working conditions at the factory — ventilation is inadequate, the toilet facilities are atrocious, the roof leaks, the lighting is poor, and there are no canteen facilities.

Strike action started after a meeting of the workforce — members of the

AEU, GMBATU and AUEW TASS, voted to reject the £8.50 offer, and a majority voted for industrial action in a secret ballot. Management's response was to carry out a policy of threats and intimidation, coupled with pleas of poverty.

When the strike remained solid, management sacked all the strikers and advertised for new workers in the local evening newspaper — offering wages at the new rate being claimed by the strikers.

The strikers at Blake's are appealing for industrial help and financial support for the dispute. Messages of support and donations can be taken to the picket line, or sent to: Blake's strikers, c/o Edinburgh and District Trades Council, 12 Picard Place, Edinburgh EH1 3JT.

# Sacked miners picket out Doncaster

By Paul Whetton

For a long time there have been attempts to get together sacked miners from every coalfield, and we have experienced great difficulties in bringing that about. However, we have now got a national victimised miners' group off the ground, with a national meeting recently, which considered the situation where the Coal Board have said to the 300 plus remaining sacked miners that we will never work again. We reject that and have decided to carry out a type of guerrilla warfare. The first result of that decision was last Friday when sacked miners from different parts of the country picketed the Doncaster panel pits in Yorkshire.

The action took place on May Day, international workers' day. Wherever was picketed the pits came out to a man. Press reports say 6000 miners refused to cross. The rank and file were saying to us 'don't just fetch us out for a day; fetch us out and keep us out'. We explained to them that this guerrilla tactic might very well lead to a massive escalation and that if the union is not prepared to take the initiative then the victimised miners will.

Similar action to last Friday's will be decided at future meetings. Nobody will be told where and when it will happen. But it will continue

until the Coal Board sits down and has meaningful talks with the national union about reinstatement of all the victimised men.

There has been resistance to this from within the union. Certain Area leaders are upset. But the sacked men do not in any way apologise for what has been organised.

There must be a two-pronged attack — both the official and unofficial response. At the end of April 8,000 Midlands miners went on 24 hour strike demanding reinstatement of miners sacked during the 1984-5 strike, and that included many who had crossed picket lines three years ago. The strike followed a ballot vote for the action. So much for those Area leaders who say the men are not ready for action!

For many miners the number one issue is the sacked miners rather than the question of the pay rise. It is the spark that is bringing together all the other forms of attack the Coal Board is undertaking against the NUM.

Ollerton is still hanging in the air. Warning notices have been served on the men; they are now seeking legal advice.

## NUJ

# Picket against sackings

By Kate Saunders (NUJ, personal capacity)

With some resort to journalistic cliché — 'sacked hacks want jobs back', 'oh heck new tech' — members of the North West Area NUJ are taking industrial action.

21 reporters from ten newspapers are on the picket line to support two colleagues who were sacked for refusing to train on new technology. Managing Director of Trinity Weekly

Newspapers, Alan Powell attempted to coerce journalists into using a 'direct-input' system before a proper agreement on pay had been reached.

Throughout Britain journalists have had pay rises with the introduction of new technology; Trinity Newspapers offers its reporters and sub-editors an increase of £6 and £8 respectively — to be split over two years. This is one of the lowest pay increases offered in provincial newspapers, and journalists consider it to be an 'insult' and an indication of the low regard for editorial standards.

Provincial journalism is already an underpaid profession and trainees in the Trinity group take on considerable responsibilities with often little help.

The NUJ has also released information that Trinity Holdings International Plc, which also owns the Liverpool Daily Post and Echo, has made substantial profits recently so no excuse of lack of funds can be given.

Journalists on strike work for titles including the Southport Visitor and the Wirral News.

## HFW

# Strike solid

By Nigel Hopper

The strike against 50 sackings at HFW Plastics in Gateshead, now in its 8th week, remains solid.

The strikers have started a programme of mass pickets three times a week to stop scabs entering the plant, and despite heavy police presence these have had some success.

Six pickets were arrested outside the factory last week.

Efforts are also being made to spread the action to suppliers and boss Paul Jackson's other factory in Tyneside.

Despite the fact that 50 scabs are still getting into work every day, the mood among the strikers is still good and the response of the local labour movement has been to mobilise for the mass pickets. A support group is being set up at the University, and the strikers have been speaking to various labour movement meetings appealing for support. Donations and messages of support should be sent to HFW strike fund, c/o SOGAT, 119 Jesmond Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2.

# Students suspended for protesting at cuts

By Colleen Fairbrother, Convenor, S.E. Wales area NUS (personal capacity).

Three students have been suspended for protesting against cuts at University College, Cardiff.

By the end of 1986/7 the college will have a deficit of £7.5 million, and it is being forced by the government to make cuts. Unless the college clears its debts it will have a deficit of £16,731,000 by the end of the decade.

University College Cardiff has been held to ransom by the Tory government. It was threatened with the prospect of not receiving its block grant if it did not cooperate and allow its finances to be monitored. So financial consultants were moved in to scrutinise its accounts, led by the registrar of Warwick University, Michael Shattock.

The Shattock Financial Plan for UCC included a proposed cut of 30% in the funding of UCC students' union. In protest at this, the impending cuts in UCC, and a further cut of £10.5 million in the University of Wales as a whole, students went into occupation on 12 March. They occupied the finance office of the college because that was where accounts were being prepared for Shattock's team.

## SSiN

After 20 hours of a peaceful occupation, college secretary, Gareth Lewis asked students to leave under the college regulations. Lewis had previously served an injunction on the students' union to prevent them from occupying on 4 March in protest against the cuts.

When requested to leave the students did so, and yet Lewis insisted on suspending three students from college, two for allegedly saying that they would not leave the premises when asked individually. The third student was Socialist Students in NOLS supporter Graeme Fairbrother, who had recently been elected as next year's President of the students' union. He was a target for allegedly being the ringleader. All three students are being charged with "wilfully and persistently disrupting the administration of the college", although the occupation was mainly after working hours anyway.

The students have tried to get joint action with the campus trade unions.

Unfortunately, the lecturers' union, the AUT, has instead passed a motion of no confidence in the college principal, Bevan, who had resisted cuts. Bevan has now been forced to leave before he was due to retire.

Only the students' union protested against this blackmail.

It is argued that the college needs to reduce its spending by about £2.6 million in the next academic year. Of course it does, if the college accepts its cut in funding from £17 m in 1985/6 to the level of £14.7m in 1989/90. A cut in funding of 13.5% leaves little room for manoeuvre.

The college administration is now not opposing the cuts at all, just arguing about where the cuts are to be made and how best to implement them.

If lecturers refuse voluntary retirement or redundancy, they will be forced to leave unless their department can earn sufficient income to pay them. Compulsory redundancies are opposed by the AUT but it is going to take a lot more than fine words to prevent them.

One plan was under discussion to close six departments: Applied Mathematics, Microbiology, Home Economics, Theatre Studies, Welsh and Music. This has now been rejected but the picture remains grim, with cuts envisaged across the board.

The Music department will lose ten lecturers out of 17 by 1990. Microbiology will lose 12 lecturers out of 30 and be amalgamated with other departments. Applied Maths will also be amalgamated resulting in the loss of three staff. The Education department will be sliced in half. Civil Engineering will lose four of its 17 lecturers. Sociology will be amalgamated and lose six of its 16 staff. The Law faculty will lose five lecturers out of 29 by the end of next year. Hispanic studies will lose three

lecturers out of a staff of four!

The AUT is bitter about the prospect of compulsory redundancies but how are they going to realistically oppose such measures if they accept this package? As for non-academic staff, NALGO has passed a policy to oppose compulsory redundancies, but if the lecturers accept such a programme of rationalisation where does this leave NALGO members? Similarly, once the cuts are being implemented regarding lecturers what will the situation be for cleaners, porters, technical and catering staff, who will not receive the same redundancy terms as members of the AUT?

The three students have now had their suspensions lifted. They still face a college disciplinary hearing, with the threat of expulsion hanging over their heads. A date has still not been fixed for the hearing.

Students will not take victimisations lying down, and the AUT have also condemned the heavy-handed approach of the college.

**Socialist Students in NOLS weekend school in Manchester, 23-24 May. For details contact Jane, 01-639 7967.**



## Boom? What boom?

Boom at last? The Tories' claims are a fake. Far from bringing reward in the end for us all from hard but necessary sacrifice, the Tories have been sacrificing the livelihoods of the majority to short-term profit.

Profits certainly have boomed under the Tories. But a new survey from the Labour Research Department shows that the benefits have gone to a very small minority. The UK economy has grown somewhat faster than the other biggest capitalist economies (except

Japan) since 1981. But that was after a specially drastic slump in 1979-81. And:

\*Counted on the same basis as in 1979, unemployment is now about 3.7 million. It was 1.3 million in June 1979. The government has introduced one fiddle after another to reduce the count.

\*The increase in unemployment has given drastically greater scope to racism. In the days of relatively full employment, jobless rates were more or less equally low for black people and for white. Now the unemployment rate for black people is twice the rate for whites — even when their qualifications are the same.

\*The bottom 50% of households have suffered a real cut in living standards since 1979, and the number living in poverty (below or at supplementary benefit level) has risen from 6 million to 10.5 million. But the real income of the top six per cent has gone up by 20%.

\*Housing, schools, roads, public facilities of all sorts, and industrial plant, have systematically been allowed to run down. Despite the huge bonanza from North Sea Oil, investment in Britain has fallen as a proportion of output.

Research and development expenditure has fallen since 1981, and is lower as a proportion of all spending than for any other big capitalist economy. Education has suffered: the proportion of young people in higher education in Britain is lower than for any other rich capitalist country, and lower than for many Third World countries too.

\*Britain's capitalists have built up huge overseas assets since 1979, and draw big profits from them. But working class people do not benefit.

\*The prospect is not steady growth but new crises. As North Sea Oil dwindles, the trade deficit in manufactured goods which Britain has developed since 1983 will become the basis for balance-of-payments crises.

To reconstruct Britain's economy on a basis that will guarantee a decent livelihood for all, the spiralling accumulation of wealth in the hands of the top few per cent will have to be brought under the control and ownership of the majority, and directed to social need. To make that possible we have to kick out the Tories.

# BLACK WORKERS HIT BACK AT BOTHA

By Tom Rigby

As we go to press on Tuesday night well in excess of half a million black workers are on strike in South Africa in a heartening display of working class defiance of the racist regime.

The workers are protesting against the detentions, beatings and murder of trade unionists; against attempts to evict rent boycotters and against the whites-only general election.

This is the biggest working class action since Soweto Day, 16 June last year. It comes after nearly eleven months of the state of emergency, in which at least 40,000 people have been detained.

It is living proof that the black trade unions are undefeated.

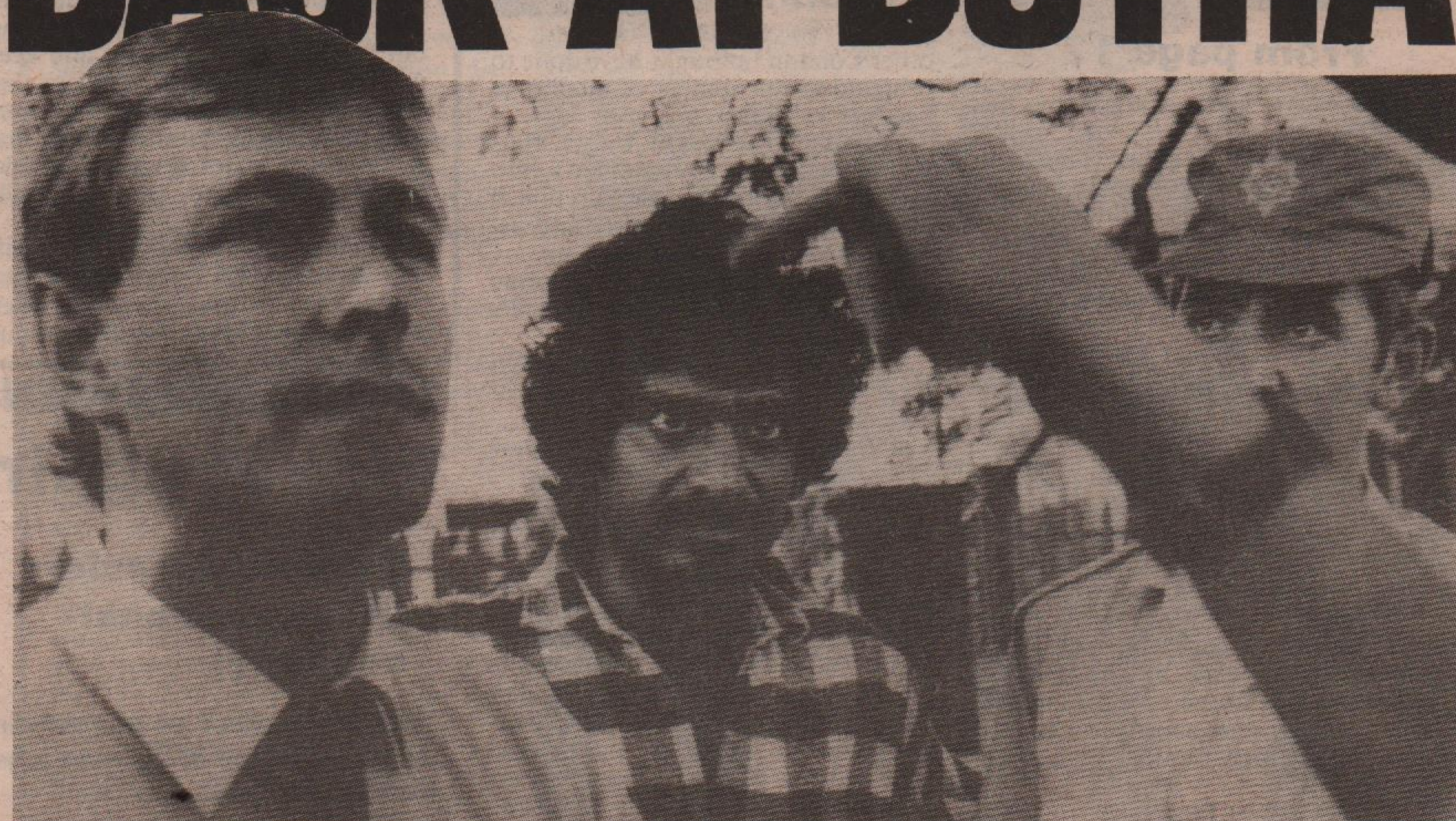
According to provisional figures from the Johannesburg based Labour Monitoring Group (LMG), a conservative estimate would be that half a million organised workers have stayed away from work.

In the Eastern Cape, a traditional stronghold of the popular movement, around 99% of 'African' workers are on strike, whereas 35% of 'coloured' workers support the action.

In the Transvaal, the industrial heartland of South Africa, in excess of 43% of workers are on strike. In Natal, despite the strike breaking thuggery of Buthelezi's Inkatha movement at least 60% of organised workers are out.

Figures are much lower in the Western Cape where just 12% of 'African' and 2% of 'coloured' workers are on strike. This is because the majority of black workers in the Cape Town area are trapped in bureaucratic collaborationist unions.

According to the LMG the overall number of workers taking action is probably much higher than half a million, as the two largest employers in South Africa — the state and the mine bosses — refuse to give any



Police confront COSATU general secretary Jay Naidoo and lawyer Peter Harris after they shot dead rail strikers in Germiston

figures for the number of workers taking action.

The last few weeks have seen a sustained offensive by the government of PW Botha against the black opposition and the trade unions in particular.

Two weeks ago six striking rail workers were shot dead by the police. The offices of the giant union federation COSATU have been raided by the police several times, at one stage over 400 people were detained inside the building. Files have been confiscated, telex and telephone lines

have been cut.

Many trade union organisers have been picked up. Quite a few have to keep on the move, never sleeping in the same place two nights running. Meetings are banned, public activity is difficult if not impossible in some areas. The unions have been forced to retreat into the factories.

The government has tried to brand COSATU's living wage campaign as a "communist plot".

Striking black miners have been driven back to work at gunpoint by mine police and dozens have been

killed by vigilantes armed and encouraged by the state.

Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of MAWU and a committed socialist, faces the threat of the death penalty for his role in organising the black township of Alexandra.

Botha's turn against the unions is an attempt to beat down the industrial revolt of black workers which has broken strike record after strike record in industry after industry over the last few months. He hopes to catch the unions off balance and overstretched.

Repression has also helped the ruling National Party undermining the electoral threat from the far right.

The defiance of the black working class in the face of Botha's butchery deserves the support and solidarity of the entire international workers' movement.

More on page 10

Support SARWHU, support the railworkers! Send messages of support, donations etc., to the South African Railways and Harbour Workers' Union, Room 22, 3rd Floor, Tudor Mansions, 78 Troye Street, Johannesburg 2001, South Africa.

Free Moses Mayekiso! Free all detainees! Send messages of support to MAWU, The Metal and Allied Workers Union, 4th Floor, COSATU House, 268 Jeppe Street, Johannesburg 2001, South Africa.

Send letters of protest to: The President, PW Botha, Union Buildings, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa.

## I won't accept deportation

As I reported last week the Coal Board have offered me redeployment at either Manton or Shireoaks pits, in the Yorkshire coalfield, and not at my own pit, Bevercotes.

I am not prepared in any way, shape or form, to accept deportation from the Nottinghamshire Area. I am totally innocent; the Coal Board lost the tribunal and we are sticking on reinstatement at the Bevercotes colliery. That is the message we are going to take back.

The issue does not just affect me; affects all NUM branch officials and activists in the Nottinghamshire coalfield. What the Coal Board are after is a situation where they can sack on any pretext; let it go to a tribunal and even if the man wins they can turn around and say — 'yes, you can have your job back but it is in the middle of Yorkshire or Derbyshire or wherever'. That is the precedent the Coal Board are trying to set — anybody who sticks their head above the water here is liable to be shipped out, deported.



Last week the press reported moves to increase production of open-cast coal. It is not surprising when you consider that the NUM is not strongly represented in that sector, and that the pits are privately owned.

I just see it as another part of the general attack to spread privatisation in coal mining and make the idea more acceptable. Their policy, for the moment, will continue to be privatisation by the back door, rather than push the issue head-on. They are still worried that a wholesale privatisation proposal would meet with fierce resistance so the tactics at the moment are to keep it low-key, getting private mining companies into the deep-mined pits and by hiving off whole tracts of land for open-cast mining. That is not only an issue that

affects miners.

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I still believe that the results of next Thursday's local elections will show that the Tories have not got the massive lead they and the opinion polls are claiming. Having said that I was still devastated by last Wednesday's NEC decision to suspend Sharon Atkins. Are our leaders out to destroy the Labour Party? Perhaps, after all, MI5 and MI6 infiltration was more successful than we thought!

The Kinnock-Hattersley 'dream ticket' is turning into a nightmare. They say Sharon Atkins and her ilk have got to go. I think the lesson of the whole affair is that Kinnock and Hattersley have got to go, and that we have to return to a basic socialist programme.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts

## Council's racist evictions

Tower Hamlets Council have stopped paying for at least six families from temporary bed and breakfast accommodation, causing them to be evicted by the hotel owners.

Over 100 more families are under threat of similar treatment. The Liberal-run council argues that these families have homes elsewhere and so are "intentionally homeless" and the council is not legally required to rehouse them.

For all but a few of the families, the homes they are supposed to return to are family homes in Bangladesh. All of them have a right to reside in this country.

This attack on homeless families had led to a fightback from the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets. The council's annual meeting on 27 April was lobbied by protestors, including many of the families from bed and breakfast accommodation who will be affected by this new ruling. The council refused a request from Labour councillors to discuss the issue. When the protestors occupied the council chamber to try to force a debate the Liberal mayor closed the meeting and called the police to clear the chamber. Three

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