

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

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Cyril Ramaphosa

# THE GREATEST STRIKE IN AFRICAN HISTORY

340,000 black South African miners are on strike, demanding a 30% wage increase. Their strike — the biggest in South Africa's history — promises to be a long and bitter struggle against the Chamber of Mines.

## Confrontation

It is a direct confrontation between the biggest sections of South African big business and the biggest and strongest of South Africa's independent trade unions, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

The fate of this miners' strike could decide the course of the struggle in South Africa for some time ahead. So it is vital that the labour movement internationally does everything it can to help the South African miners win.

44 gold and coal mines have been affected, and among the workers on strike are about 80,000 non-NUM members. These may include members of other mining unions.

The Chamber of Mines is claiming the strike is less solid, with 230,000 workers out. But as the union moves to ballot workers in platinum, chrome, uranium and diamond mines, the bosses are getting scared.

South African gold mine owners

last year made profits of £2,625,000,000, while coal mine owners received profits of £309,062,500.

Black gold miners earned on average a miserable £1,602 a year, and coal miners £1,806.

In other words, the gold mines together make twice as much profit every minute as the workers earn in a year.

White miners, of course, are better off than black miners. Average wages for whites in gold are £8,650 (five times higher than for blacks), and in coal £8,700 (nearly five times higher).

Yet the bosses will only offer wage increases of 15-23%. As the union's bulletin NUM News expresses it — "The bosses get richer, the workers get poorer, now is the hour."

## Strategy

In response to the failure of the bosses to give assurances not to use violence against strikers, NUM has decided to evacuate strikers from the minefields, sending them back to the homelands. This is an unusual strategy: normally strikes are kept solid by a well-organised working class presence at the workplace. It is a gamble by the union, and whether it pays off will depend upon the organisation of the workers when they return to the homelands.

The bosses have already resorted to violence. They will be training up scabs for future employment. There will have to be a confrontation. Last year mining bosses backed down only hours before a strike was due to begin. This year, tensions have been rising.

There have been rumours that troops will be used to seal off mines.

50 Anglo-Vaal workers were sacked last week and there were clashes with mine security forces.

## Standstill

Meanwhile, joint action between NUM and the second largest union, the metal workers' giant NUMSA, looms over Samancor Metalloys plant at Meyerton. 1100 NUMSA members were sacked following a two-day strike.

To win their reinstatement, NUMSA threatens to bring the metal sector to a standstill. The union, which recently called off a national strike faced with legal action, is currently involved in other disputes.

This major build-up of workers' action follows the recent Second Congress of the million-strong Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). COSATU has suffered

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# Workers fight for a living wage

**Fighting for a living wage is, like most issues, a question of power.**

The government has the power to cut the bread subsidy or raise the price of wheat, electricity or sugar. The government has the power to impose General Sales Tax and increase UIF contributions.

The bosses have the power to increase the price of goods and pass on increased costs to the consumer.

When times are difficult for the government, they can, for example, simply increase taxes.

To prevent their profits falling because of the increase in taxes, the bosses can pass on the cost to us as consumers by putting up the prices of the goods.

But the consumers (the majority of whom are working class) have no-one to whom they can pass on their increased costs. We are the end of the line and we have got nothing in our pockets already.

When we are faced by starvation wages and increasing costs we have one choice, submit or fight.

Submission needs no organisation at all. Fighting to win a living wage needs powerful organisation and mobilisation. COSATU needs to mobilise, not only our own members, but all workers and youth who are suffering the poverty and hardship forced on us by starvation wages.

Already COSATU, together with the UDF and NECC, is committed to a campaign of national unity and united action. Every mass-based youth, political and women's organisation supports the struggle for a living wage. Together, under the leadership of organised workers in COSATU, millions of people will stand and fight for a living wage and a decent life.

In our struggle, we have a choice: to fight the increases themselves (through, for example, boycotting buses after fares go up) or fighting those increases as well as the cause of the increase.

This is what the living wage campaign is about. We do not wish to



**COSATU congress 1987**

fight every individual increase in prices. We want guarantees that every worker and worker's family is secure and living a decent life. We want guarantees against the bosses cutting our wages, and against inflation eating into our wages.

## Organisation

This is also why we need strong organisation — both within COSATU and our unions as well as between COSATU and community, student and youth groups.

To maximize our power COSATU

has worked out a structure which would assist in organising, mobilising and educating all members and all unions.

This is how it will work: The living wage campaign will have a National Co-ordinating Committee (NCC) and Regional Co-ordinating Committees.

Each union will also elect a co-ordinating committee which will be represented in the NCC (2 delegates for unions with more than 15,000 members and one for unions with less than 15,000 members nationally plus national office bearers of COSATU) and the RCC (2 delegates for unions

with more than 8,000 members and one for unions with less than 8,000 members regionally plus regional office bearers of COSATU). Locals must play a very important role through local living wage committees in mobilising, education through distributing publicity material and holding general meetings. Educational work is to be co-ordinated through the education sub-committees.

The NCC is to set up a sub-committee to coordinate with mass based community, worker, student and youth groups.

At the centre of the campaign will

be unions affiliated to COSATU. Coordination will be essential to the success of our campaign. It will make sure that workers in all unions and regions, as well as people in the mass democratic organisations, are aware of the victories, difficulties and struggles of other workers.

## Part

Every wage struggle; every struggle against increased costs; ever fight for shorter hours and paid maternity leave and job security; our struggle for May Day, June 16th and Sharpeville Day; our struggles for decent education and training; for an end to tax deductions and the hostel system — all are part of our struggle for a living wage.

All are needs that millions and millions of workers and youth have. All could be fought together — instead of some of us fighting on our own in isolation, from our mass class strength.

Our living wage campaign is the place to put all our struggles together; to put all our strength together; to put all our solidarity together; to put all our energy together to say with one voice "Unite and fight for a living wage".

From COSATU News, March 1987

# Lessons of 1946 miners' strike

**In 1946 a big conference was held to form a black Mineworkers' Union. The main representatives at the conference were from the ANC, the Communist Party and the organisation of black mine clerks. At that time, the ANC and CP were not banned.**

This was during the Second World War. It was a bosses' war. Bosses from different countries were fighting to decide which would be the most powerful capitalist country. They were also hoping to bring capitalism back to the Soviet Union.

Likewise with every bosses' war the bosses used the people to kill for them — and to be killed instead of them.

In South Africa the bosses had a big problem. Many whites supported Germany while the government supported Britain. The government looked to black people for more support. To get this support they were prepared to talk about reforms.

They talked about abolishing pass laws and giving rights to black trade unions.

For workers the talk about reforms was less important than what was happening to workers. The truth was that things were getting worse and worse for workers everyday.

In the towns conditions were terrible — much worse even than today. The townships were like the resettlement camps in the bantustans. In these terrible conditions the government tried to force people to pay

more and more rent. All prices were going up much more than today.

For workers these terrible conditions were more important than any talk of reforms. In 1942 and 1943 there were many, many strikes. There was massive protest action in the townships — especially where Orlando is today. Thousands and thousands of workers joined trade unions.

There was a united trade union federation called the Council of Non-Europe Trade Unions (CNETU). On the mines there was anger. Price increases were even harder for mineworkers. They could not go into town to look for cheaper shops. They had to buy everything from special mine shops where prices were even higher. The same type of shops that miners are boycotting today.

Each year at the conference of the Mineworkers' Union, delegates said, "We must strike for higher wages". And each year the decision was "Now is not the right time".

It is true that the Mineworkers' Union faced a problem in organising a strike. It was not organised in all the mines. In some mines only the clerks were organised, not the underground workers. But mineworkers were ready to mobilise — just like other workers in the factories were doing. Many mineworkers felt that as each year passed the chances of winning a miners' strike were getting worse.

At the 1946 Mineworkers' conference the demands from delegates for a strike were stronger than ever. In April, the conference voted to organise a strike. The strike began in August. The strike was the most powerful that had ever been organised in South Africa. More than

100,000 mineworkers were on strike. But the big problem for the strike was isolation.

The wave of struggle and militancy in the factories and communities had died down. This meant that the government had more time and force to use against the miners. And it also meant that it would be harder to mobilise solidarity action in the working class behind the miners.

At first CNETU called for a general strike in support of the miners. Police came in and arrested some CNETU leaders. Some workers did start a strike in support of the miners. But then CNETU decided to drop their call for a general strike. The mineworkers were left to fight alone. The government sent thousands of armed police into the mines. Many miners were killed.

After two weeks the miners were forced back to work by the guns of the police. The government made new laws to ban strikes. In the mines they made a new law to ban all meetings. Conditions for a strike in the mines were getting more and more difficult.

What are the main lessons from the 1946 strike?

\*The strike was made stronger because it was called by a national delegate conference.

\*The strike was weakened because it was left isolated.

\*Worker solidarity action was uneven and there was confusion because of the dropping of the call for a general strike.

\*The strike came a year after the whole period of mass working class militancy.

From COSATU news, November 1986.

## SOUTH KOREA

### Workers take action

By Martin Thomas

**In South Korea, as in South Africa, the centre of the struggle against tyranny has moved to the workplaces.**

15,000 coal miners are on strike. They blocked rail and road traffic in the east of the country for 15 hours on 10 August before they were dispersed with tear gas.

The country's largest shipyard has been shut down by 24,000 workers striking, and its largest car firm is paralysed by a strike at a parts factory.

At the Daewoo shipyard, the country's second largest, workers have

seized the main office building, sealed the plant gates, and blocked the main road.

The Daewoo car firm has also been hit by a sit-in strike.

The pro-capitalist leaders of the main opposition movement have responded typically, with Kim Young Sam telling workers to be more "moderate". Otherwise the strikes "will give anti-democratic forces an excuse to hamper democratisation", and anyway "however rightful the workers' demands, they cannot be solved all at once".

The future of South Korea depends on whether its powerful working class can create its own party to lead the struggle for democracy, taking the initiative from people like Kim Young Sam.



# A QUESTION OF SOLIDARITY

During this month of August, seven years on from the days when the Polish working class created the first free trade union in any Stalinist state, the British labour movement should give some thought to the following fact about the Parliamentary Labour Party.

During the recent General Election campaign the Polish Solidarity Campaign (PSC) carried out a survey of opinion amongst candidates by sending a questionnaire to all Conservative, Labour and Alliance candidates, numbering 1900 in total.

Of those who replied, 103 were Conservative, 91 Alliance — and 54 Labour.

Although PSC was understandably circumspect in its comments on this aspect of the survey, as socialists we must express our dismay at the apparent lack of interest of Labour candidates in the civil liberties and trade union rights of people who live under the tyranny of Stalinism.

The PLP's majority attitude parallels the mood in our trade unions.

Seven years ago the TUC disgraced itself during the great strike in Poland by refusing to cancel a scheduled official visit to the fake 'unions' clamped on Poland's workers like a strait-jacket by the Polish Stalinist state.

While the chairman of the police state 'unions' Jan Sydlak publicly threatened to teach the strikers at Gdansk 'a lesson they would never forget' by sending



tanks to slaughter them if they didn't go back to work, our TUC stuck to its arrangements for a friendly visit to its Polish 'colleagues' (to quote right wing steelworkers' leader Bill Sirs).

Last March TUC General Secretary Norman Willis used his

official visit to the "Congress" of the USSR's "unions" to champion Solidarnosc. He shouldn't have been there at all to give credence to the police state "unions". But his speech for Solidarnosc registered a sort of progress, seven years late.

The indifference to Solidarnosc and to the working class throughout the Soviet bloc is reprehensible. Labour Party members should ask their candidate whether s/he replied to the questionnaire.

And if not, why not?

## PRESS GANG

### 'Today' swoops

By Jim Denham

WHEN Murdoch acquired *Today*, it was widely seen as the Digger moving into the 'middle market' to take on the *Mail* and the *Express*.

Wrong! The Digger's man, David Montgomery, has wasted no time in dragging the paper down-market so that its most obvious competitor is now... the *Daily Mirror*.

Murdoch's strategy has become clear: to put the squeeze on Maxwell's Labour-supporting *Mirror*, with the *Sun* attacking from 'below' and *Today* from 'above'.

The impending demise of the SDP will also give Murdoch the perfect excuse to jettison *Today's* commitment to the Alliance. The paper's recent editorials have given outspoken support to Doctor Death and attacked the Liberals in a tone quite unlike the old, pre-Murdoch, *Today*.

For example: "On its own the Liberal Party has dithered on the margins of politics for 60 years, a refuge for cranks and do-gooders".

How long will it be before *Today* falls into line with the rest of Murdoch's titles and begins singing Maggie's praises? Of course, that may not necessitate a complete break with Dr Owen...

### Falling star

FIRST, the good news: the *Morning Star* has sold its Farringdon Road premises, which must surely represent another nail in the coffin of that vile Stalinist rag.

In fact, the *Star* hasn't used its own presses for some time, and at present depends upon the SWP for its printing!

The bad news is that the *Star's* presses have been purchased — for over £2 million — by David Sullivan, publisher of the soft-porn *Sunday Sport*. Sullivan plans to launch the *Daily Sport* from his new headquarters later this year.

Staff and journalists at the *Morning Star* found out about the deal from an article in the *Guardian*.

### United front?

WHILE the minions of the Attorney-General charge round the world stopping the publication of Peter Wright's memoirs, no action has yet been taken against the major Scottish papers — all of whom have ignored the ban.

Of course, the Law Lords' ruling does not apply north of the Border. But if Mayhew's men can move against such publications as the *Morning Post* of Hong Kong or the *Dominion of Wellington*, New Zealand, why not the *Scotsman* or the *Daily Record*?

Could it be that even this government dares not take on a united front of major newspapers so close to home?

Then why isn't there a coordinated defiance of the ban by the English newspapers, most of which have been sounding off about press freedom and censorship?

So far, only the *News on Sunday* and *Mirror* have openly flouted the judgment. And while the weak and struggling *NoS* is being prosecuted, there have been no moves against the *Mirror*, despite Cap'n Bob's publicly-declared willingness to go to jail.

# Nicaragua's fragile peace

Martin Thomas looks at the latest diplomatic moves in Central America

THE REAGAN administration is up to its old tricks again in Central America.

Some years ago a number of Latin American governments, notably Mexico and Venezuela, came up with the 'Contadora' peace plan for Cen-

tral America. The US endorsed it. Then the Sandinista government in Nicaragua said it would accept the plan. The US promptly added new conditions to block an agreement.

Now the five governments in Central America have actually signed a peace agreement, with the support of the 'Contadora' powers. Reagan intervened just two days before the agreement was signed with his own rival 'peace plan'.

The aim of the US is not to get peace in Central America, but to protect its interests in its 'backyard'. And, as the currently dominant sections of the US ruling class see it, that means getting rid of the Sandinistas.

It is not enough for them to hem in and cordon off the revolution in Nicaragua, as the US has done quite successfully with Cuba. The way the Reaganites see it, if the Nicaraguans are allowed to get away with a revolution, then that will only encourage other nations.

The 'Arias' peace plan signed in Guatemala on 7 August calls for:

- A ceasefire within 90 days;
- All countries outside the region (i.e. the US) to stop aid to rebel groups within 90 days;
- No country in the region to allow its territory to be used as a base for groups in rebellion against the government of another country;
- All countries in the region to

establish 'verifiable democracies';

• To oversee the agreement, inter-party commissions within each country, a regional commission appointed by the five governments, and an international commission drawn from the UN and Latin American governments. There is to be another summit to check on progress within 150 days.

While Nicaragua will hardly have trouble proving that its democracy bears comparison with El Salvador or Guatemala or Honduras, the Reagan plan requires detailed changes in the government of Nicaragua alone within 60 days (during which time 'humanitarian' aid to the contras would be continued). Moreover, when Nicaragua's president Daniel Ortega said he was willing to talk to the US even on the Reagan plan, the US refused.

The chances of peace now are slight. The left-wing rebels of the FMLN in El Salvador, although they have welcomed the Arias accord, are not likely to lay down arms soon. They say that supplementary direct negotiations with the Salvadorean government are necessary.

The FMLN's fear is that if it lays down its arms, then the Salvadorean army and its notorious 'death squads' — over which the civilian government has no control — will launch a mass slaughter of leftists. Since the FMLN relies neither on

bases in nor on arms from Nicaragua, the Sandinista government's desire for a peace agreement exerts little pressure on the FMLN.

Equally, the right-wing contras fighting to overthrow Nicaragua's government are not going to disband. The government in Honduras, where they are mainly based, is not going to throw them out. The contras have over 10,000 armed men, with US 'military advisers'.

The US's current programme of military aid for the contras expires on 30 September. Ronald Reagan wants another \$130 million aid for the next 18 months, and his peace plan is designed to make it easier to get that aid approved by Congress. If it isn't approved by Congress, no doubt the CIA will find some underhand way to get the aid to the contras.

Some people in the US ruling class no doubt share the view of the Central American presidents. The rulers of Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador are no leftists, but they can't see anything to be gained from the contra war and they are sure that they can live with Sandinista Nicaragua. The EEC and Mexico have the same view.

However, there is no sign that this view is gaining the upper hand in the US ruling class. Solidarity with the Nicaraguan people against US imperialism is as necessary as ever.

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# GRAFFITI

## Monumental backtracking

The Greek government of Andreas Papandreu hit on a novel way to commemorate the anniversary of the dropping of the first Atom bomb on Hiroshima, when 140,000 civilians died.

In the early hours of 6 August, the 42nd anniversary of the mass slaughter, a police-military operation got underway in Athens to erect a statue to the mass murderer responsible for giving the go-ahead to drop the Bomb — American President Harry Truman.

The statue had been installed previously but had been damaged by a bomb.

While the statue was being repaired a number of options were considered as to its future. One suggestion was that it should be exhibited in a military museum rather than in the streets of the capital.

However, pressure from the Americans resulted in Papandreu's decision to re-erect the statue at its original site.

Responding to the enormous public outcry provoked by the re-erection of the statue, a government spokesperson claimed that the timing was purely coincidental and that the operation was carried out at night-time in order to avoid inconveniencing the



Women commemorating Nagasaki Day at the Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Research Centre. Photo: John Harris (IFL).

public during the daytime. The Greek government is due to start negotiations next month over the future of US bases in the country. If they buckle so easily to

American pressure on the siting of a statue, what hope is there for a strong stand on the avowed policy of PASOK to remove all US bases from Greece?

# Crimean Tatars demand their rights

Stan Crooke looks at the struggle of an oppressed minority in the USSR

The demonstrations in late July in Moscow's Red Square, by Crimean Tatars demanding the right to return to their homeland, are a reminder of the fate they suffered under Stalin: forcibly uprooted from the Crimea in 1944 and deported to Central Asia, Kazakhstan and the Urals.

The Crimean Tatars were annexed into the Russian Empire in 1783 and were subject to particularly brutal policies of russification in the following century, including the forced deportation inland of Tatars living on the coasts of the peninsula. Such repression continued into the twentieth century, with censorship and closure of Crimean Tatar newspapers, and attacks on Crimean Tatar political organisations.

In the aftermath of the October Revolution the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was created, as part of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, in October 1921.

"May the tiny Crimean republic become one of the torches which cast the light of proletarian revolution on to the East," said Lenin.

But the victory of Stalinism in the late twenties brought about renewed oppression of the Crimean Tatars. Under the impact of forced collectivisation, mass deportations, famine and a series of purges, tens of thousands of lives were lost. The physical terror was accompanied by cultural oppression, with the imposition of the Cyrillic alphabet on the Crimean Tatar language, and the closure of their newspapers and withdrawal from circulation of books in their language.

In 1783, 500,000 Crimean Tatars had lived in the peninsula. By the end of the nineteenth century their numbers had fallen to 300,000. In the opening decades of the twentieth century their population began to increase, reaching about 350,000 by the late twenties. By the time of the Nazi invasion of 1941, it had fallen again to some 250,000.

Hitler had originally planned to deport the entire population of the peninsula, but his plans were not carried out as they would have disrupted Crimean industries and agriculture, then being plundered for the German war-effort, and also as they would have alienated the Turkish government, from whom the Nazis were trying to win support for their war-effort.

The latter consideration also led the Nazis to make some limited concessions to the Crimean Tatars in the opening years of the occupation, which, in turn, were used to try to coax Crimean Tatars into joining

military units set up to combat the Soviet partisans. But the numbers who joined, many of them "recruited" from among prisoners of war, vacillated between 8000 and, at the most 20,000. "Muslim committees" were likewise set up by the Nazis to try to impress the Turkish government, but had extremely limited powers.

As the Nazis gave up hope of winning backing from Turkey, repression of the Crimean Tatars increased. Crimean Tatar villages were destroyed, censorship of Crimean Tatar publications was stepped up, and Crimean Tatars were shipped off to Germany to work in its industries. The Crimean Tatars fought back against this repression. 53,000 fought in the Red Army and 12,000 in the partisans. 30,000 of them died fighting the Germans. Eight were awarded the order of Hero of the Soviet Union.

By April 1944 the peninsula had been "liberated" by the Red Army. Beginning on the night of 17-18 May the entire Crimean Tatar population was deported and scattered across Central Asia, Kazakhstan and the Urals. 100,000 died in the process — more than three times as many as had been killed by the Nazis. Tatars still serving in the Red Army were deported upon their demobilisation.

The Soviet government sought to "justify" the deportation by claiming that "during the Great Patriotic war...many Chechens and Crimean Tatars, at the instigation of German agents, joined volunteer units organised by the Germans and...engaged in armed struggle against units of the Red Army...meanwhile the main mass of the Chechen-Ingush and Crimean ASSRs took no action against these betrayers of the Fatherland".

This was a bare-faced lie as the government itself knew full well. What lay behind its action, which was itself merely a continuation in more brutal form of the Stalinist pre-war repression of the Tatars, was the fear that the Crimean Tatars, inhabiting a strategically important area, might become "fifth columnists" for the Turkish government. Hence their deportation and replacement by Russians and Ukrainians, who were not regarded as potential allies of Turkey.

Having physically evicted the Crimean Tatar community, Stalinism set about denying that it had ever existed and wiping out every vestige of its former presence in the Crimea.

Rivers, mountains and village soviets with Crimean Tatar names were re-named, as too were streets in the major towns. Books in the Crimean Tatar language, from ancient manuscripts to the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin himself, were burnt. Museums and monuments were razed to the ground.

The Crimea, servile historians now conveniently discovered, had always been Russian: "The Crimea may in no way be considered a colony,

because the Crimean land was from ancient times Russian land, and therefore the annexation of the Crimea to Russia was not the conquest of foreign land but was the reunification and re-establishing of the rights of the Russian people to its own land," explained Nadinsky in 1951.

In 1940, 218 books were published in the Crimean-Tatar language; in the period 1944-60 ten were. In 1940 there were 427 Crimean Tatar schools; in the two decades following the deportations not a single Crimean Tatar school was opened. In 1939, 58 textbooks were published in Crimean-Tatar, in the period 1944-73, two were.

The Crimean Tatars fought back against this repression and demanded the right to return to their homeland, especially in the aftermath of Kruschchev's speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU (1956) when he partially denounced Stalin's crimes. A series of petitions were sent in to the Communist Party Central Committee in the following years, Crimean Tatar committees were set up to co-ordinate the campaigning, and by 1967, some 400 Crimean Tatars were resident in Moscow as official representatives of their community.

A decree of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of September 1967 accepted that the Crimean Tatars had not been guilty of collaboration with the Nazis. But it failed to recognise the right of return of the Crimean Tatars and also passed over in silence the hardships which the Crimean Tatars continued to face in their places of exile. Instead, it falsely claimed that they "enjoy all the rights of Soviet citizens".

As the Crimean Tatars continued to campaign for their own rights, so too the government continued its repression. Crimean Tatars who attempted to return to the Crimea were prevented from arriving, or promptly evicted if they managed to reach the Peninsula.

Leading Crimean Tatar activists were put on trial and imprisoned. Demonstrations by the Crimean Tatars in their places of exile were physically broken up by the police. And despite the decree of 1967, Soviet publications continued to take up the theme of Crimean Tatar wartime "collaboration".

The recent demonstrations in Moscow are only the latest stage in their 43 year struggle for the right to return to their homeland. If Gorbachev yields to their demands, then similar demands would be raised by the hundred other oppressed national minorities in the USSR. If he fails to yield to their demands, then the hollowness of his supposed "democratisation" is exposed.

Socialists can only welcome this dilemma which Gorbachev and his colleagues face, and give full support to the just demands of the oppressed nationalities imprisoned in the Soviet Union.

## Criminal wages

While the Tory government has increased the number of social security fraud inspectors from 2,500 to 3,000, it has cut the number of wage inspectors from 177 to 71.

Wage inspectors investigate firms who pay workers below the minimum rates set by wages councils. The

government has made it clear that it would like to abolish the wage councils altogether.

Last year, 8,206 firms were found to be under-paying, to the total extent of £2.5 million, but only two firms were prosecuted, and only two-thirds of the amount underpaid was paid back to the workers.

## Bills

The number of people who had their gas disconnected because they had not paid their bills rose sharply after privatisation.

There were 43% more disconnections in the three months after privatisation than in the equivalent period a year before. In some areas disconnections doubled.

## Up in smoke

Electricity bills are likely to go up because of breakdowns and problems at Britain's nuclear power stations.

The most modern of the nuclear power stations — the 'advanced gas-cooled reactors' (AGRs) — are still not working properly today, up to 15 years after they were supposed to begin production.

For about a month recently none of the four AGRs were working.

Building such power stations means huge guaranteed profits for the contractors — and everyone else pays the bills.

## Whoops

"Company profits have been going up twice as fast as wages for three years" — 'The Independent', Saturday.

## Classless society?

"We are allowing a class of slaves to be created before our very eyes", according to a writer in a Soviet newspaper. And he's talking about the ordinary citizens of the USSR.

The writer is a filmmaker, and relatively well-off. He refers not to conditions in the factories and offices, nor to the fact that workers in the USSR are not allowed to form independent trade unions, but to what happens in Soviet holiday resorts. But what he writes is revealing enough.

Yalta hotels, he says, do not allow USSR citizens on their private beaches. The

beaches are for foreigners only. Soviet citizens have different colour entrance passes from foreigners, so that they are always the last to be served. The writer says that an actress he knows had her hotel bedroom raided at 5am by security staff checking whether she had an unauthorised visitor.

Most people in the USSR rely for holidays on facilities organised through their workplaces or the government-controlled trade unions. The government makes sure that anyone trying to be independent of their system has a hard time of it.

## Cuts

Six out of 16 jobs for environmental health inspectors in Merton, South London, are unfilled, and many other councils in and around London can't get qualified staff to check safety in housing, shops, offices and places dealing with food.

The government's National Advisory Body for Higher Education closed a course training environmental health officers at Bristol Polytechnic four years ago, and the shortage has built up since then.

## Fair play?

Fiddle £50 from the DHSS, and you're in trouble. Fiddle £500,000 from the Ministry of Defence and your contract will be renewed.

The Dowty Group was deliberately swindling the government on a contract for supplying aircraft parts. A Dowty worker told the press and was sacked for his pains.

Now the Director of Public Prosecutions has decided against prosecuting Dowty's bosses. Dowty will pay back the £500,000 and has had its contract renewed.



The Crimea



# Days of repression

## 1917

### YEAR OF REVOLUTION

**Saturday 22 July**

By 147 votes to 45, with 42 abstentions, a joint meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the All-Russian Soviet Congress and the Executive Committee of Peasant Deputies passes a vote of confidence in Kerensky to form a new coalition government. Kerensky agrees to form a new government and declares that party differences should be forgotten in order to continue successfully with the war and restore the economic power of the state.

A meeting of soldiers and sailors in Dvinsk resolves to stage a demonstration under the slogans "Down with the Provisional Government, Down with the Death Penalty, Down with the Cossacks!" The Askhabad Soviet adopts a resolution of full support for the Provisional Government. The Tiflis Soviet condemns both any agreements with bourgeois parties and also the resignation of any soviet representatives from the Provisional Government. The Ekaterinodar Soviet condemns as illegal the arrest of members of the Bolshevik Party and demands their immediate release. The Kishinev Soviet sends a telegram to the CEC condemning the State Duma as "the organising centre for counter-revolution, the ideologue of royalism and struggle against the Soviets" and calling for "the necessary measures required to defeat reaction and defend the local gains of the revolution".

**Sunday 23 July**

The Petrograd Soviet approves the formation of a second coalition government and declares its basic task to be defence of the country from destruction by the war.

The first issue of "Worker and Soldier" appears in Petrograd, replacing the banned "Pravda" as the central organ of the Bolshevik Party. The first issue of "Trenches Tocsin" appears in Riga after the wrecking of the offices of "Trenches Pravda". The Slutsk Soviet calls for all power to the soviets, abolition of the death penalty, and lifting of the ban on revolutionary papers.

The committee of the 109th Reserve Infantry regiment, stationed in Chelyabinsk, instructs the arrest of any soldiers agitating against the Provisional Government. A 2,000 strong meeting of workers in Sestroretsk condemns the Executive Committees of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies for conniving in the slandering and arrest of revolutionary leaders. An all-Moscow conference of factory committees adopts a resolution advocating the necessity of workers' control in every branch of production.

**Monday 24 July**

The Kolomensky regional soviet (Petrograd) condemns the formation of a new coalition government, as a coalition with the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie is impermissible. In the election of delegates to the Petrograd Soviet at the Langenziepen factory, Bolsheviks win all the places. The 2nd Reserve Infantry regiment, stationed in Petrograd, publishes a resolution demanding dissolution of the State Duma. The CEC and the Central Committee of the All-Russian Peasant Soviet approve the entry of "socialists" into the new coalition Provisional Government and pledge their support for the government. The composition of the new government is announced, including Kerensky as Prime Minister, Tereshchenko as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Skobelev as Minister of Labour. The main parties with members in the government are the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries and the Cadets.

**Friday 25 July**

On the eve of the 6th All-Russian Congress of the Bolsheviks, membership of the party stands at 177,000, including 48,845 in Petrograd, Kronstadt, Helsingfors and Vyborg; 38,428 in Moscow and the surrounding district, and 26,500 in the Urals and Siberia.

Mass meetings of workers of the Anchar and Novy Lessner factories in Petrograd condemn the new government

and call for all power to the soviets. By 363 votes to 192 with 25 abstentions, a joint meeting of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and Soldiers' Deputies pledges full support to the new government. The Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies passes a resolution declaring that agitators may enter military barracks only with the permission of the soviet and that any permission granted before 1 July is invalid.

Meetings of the Kostroma Central Bureau of Trade Unions and the Minsk Central Bureau of Trade Unions call for the transference of all power to the soviets, and condemn the reintroduction of the death penalty, and the attacks on revolutionary organisations and their newspapers.

**Wednesday 26 July**

The Sixth Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) opens in Petrograd in conditions of semi-legality, attended by 157 delegates with full voting rights and 110 delegates with consultative voting rights. The results of the elections for the Kiev City Duma are announced: the Bolsheviks win 7 seats, as against 44 for the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, and 24 for the Ukrainian Social Revolutionaries and Social Democrats.

The "Appeal of the Provisional Government to the Population of the State" is published, calling for unity in order to achieve a successful outcome to the war. The Military Bureau of the Moscow Bolshevik Party publishes its report on literature sent to the front during June and the first half of July: an average of 872 pamphlets and over 1,200 papers were sent each day.

The Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet passes a resolution calling for the release of imprisoned Bolsheviks and demanding abolition of the death penalty at the front. The Executive Committee of the Nikolsk-Ussuriysky Soviet condemns the reintroduction of the death penalty. On the South-western front a general meeting of soldiers of the 5th Company of the 63rd Uglitsky regiment passes a resolution of no confidence in the Provisional Government, while soldiers of the 105th Infantry division of the 32nd Army Corps send a letter to the Petrograd Soviet condemning its support for the Provisional Government and demanding an end to its conciliatory policies.

**Thursday 27 July**

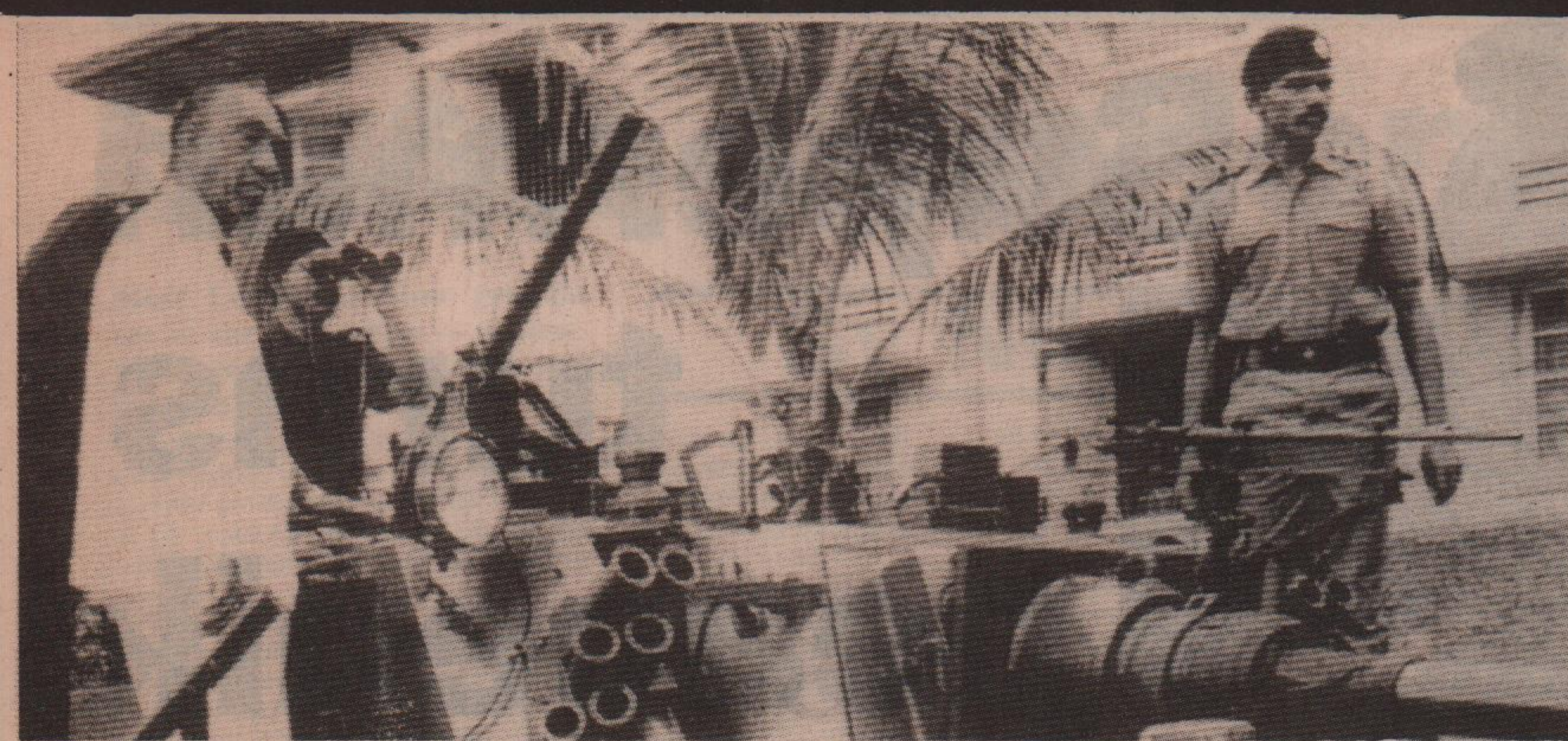
In Helsingfors the banned Bolshevik newspaper "Volna" (Wave) is replaced by the new party paper "Priboy" (Surf). In Minsk the first issue of the Bolshevik paper "Zvezda" (Star) appears. In Tsaritsyn a detachment of troops shuts down the local Bolshevik paper and arrests its editor and a number of other Bolsheviks including a member of the Executive Committee of the local soviet. In Sochi printworkers refuse to print the local Cadet newspaper, "Freedom and Justice".

The soldiers' Executive Committee of the Western front sends a telegram to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets demanding dissolution of the State Duma. The seamen's union calls its members out on strike in Rostov-on-Don after the shipping companies refuse to introduce an eight-hour working-day.

**Friday 28 July**

A 6,000-strong meeting of workers of the Putilov works (Petrograd) passes a resolution in support of the Bolsheviks and condemning the policies of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. An 800-strong meeting of workers of the Perun factory (Petrograd) calls for all power to the soviets, abolition of the death penalty, and dissolution of the State Duma and Council of State. A meeting of the Executive Committee of the Moscow regional railwayworkers' soviet condemns the reintroduction of the death penalty at the front.

The Provisional Government empowers the War Minister and the Minister of the



Jayawardene inspects the troops

## Peace in Sri Lanka?

**Clive Bradley looks at the Indian-sponsored deal to settle the conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka**

THE INDIAN-sponsored settlement to the raging conflict between the communities in Sri Lanka has been reluctantly accepted by the Tamil guerilla organisations, but is still causing anger among Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority.

As the fighters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam slowly hand over their guns to the Indian army, the government of Junius Jayawardene has begun to release imprisoned guerillas. Discontent with the deal is widespread among the Sinhalese, and has been publicly expressed by Sri Lanka's prime minister, Ranasinghe Premasada.

### Deal

The deal, to create a semi-autonomous Tamil government in the north and east of the island, has technically to be ratified — either by a two-thirds majority in the national assembly, or by a simple majority, or by a majority plus a referendum, depending on a Supreme Court ruling. But in practice it is already being implemented.

To oversee the Tamil handover of arms, about 3000 Indian troops have moved into Sri Lanka.

India's Rajiv Gandhi moved to act when the Sinhalese government began a major attempt to smash up the Tamil strongholds in the north around Jaffna. There are about 50 million Tamils in India, with hundreds of thousands of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka living among them, and Gandhi could not afford to antagonise them by failing to act in defence of the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The Indian government is already hard pressed on other fronts. It also wants to boost its already strong position as the big power in the region.

### India

India gets quite a big say in internal Sri Lankan affairs as a result of the agreement. For example, Indian military advisers have now replaced Israelis in the Sri Lankan armed forces. India has gained a veto over the use of Sri Lanka's big harbour at Trincomalee. India already has a strong economic position in Sri Lanka through its investments there.

Hesitantly, the Tamil Tigers agreed to hand over their arms — although it remains to be seen if this process will ever be completed. They were right to be suspicious of India. Although the stated purpose of the Indian military presence is to protect Tamils from Sinhalese violence, Indian troops could as easily be used to repress militant Tamils.

In the more ethnically-mixed Eastern part of the country, where part of the Tamil semi-state is to be, the transition is likely to be more fraught than in the north, where the

Tamils have a clear majority.

The conflict in Sri Lanka has cost thousands of lives and has pitted the two communities against each other, sometimes murderously. The government has committed many appalling atrocities against the Tamil minority. That is why socialists have recognised the Tamils' right to their own state.

### Agreement

Any agreement that is real and at all lasting is to be welcomed. If the communal antagonisms are soothed, working-class unity will be easier to achieve.

But it remains to be seen if this agreement will last. Among the Sinhalese, anti-Tamil chauvinism has been linked with a sort of 'anti-imperialism', because there were a lot of Tamils in the administration under British rule and the Sinhalese fear domination by the much more numerous Tamils of India. Protests against Jayawardene's agreement were led by the JVP, a Sinhalese-based group which considers itself Marxist.

Because the deal links Tamil rights to India having a greater say in the affairs of Sri Lanka, this sort of Sinhalese nationalism is likely to be reinforced. To appease it, Jayawardene is already backtracking. He has promised to campaign against the ratification of his own deal in the eastern province.

India's involvement is not benign: Gandhi is looking after his own interests as a regional power. The immediate effect of the deal is to strengthen Indian power. And a stronger Indian ruling class will not be good news for the oppressed in south Asia.

## Racist prison ship

**49 TAMIL refugees on board the Earl William immigration detention ship ended their hunger strike this week, on 10 August.**

They had been protesting at 'unimaginable suffering and distress' on board the ship, where they and others are being held until a decision is made about their right to stay in Britain.

They are fugitives from persecution in Sri Lanka, seeking asylum. Not all even want to stay in Britain. Yet they have been incarcerated on a

ship and kept in cramped conditions, denied provision for basic needs.

Despite the fact that Britain used to rule Sri Lanka, Britain has let in far fewer Tamil refugees than any other major West European country.

### Attention

The hunger strikers say they have succeeded in drawing public attention to their situation. They are a symbol of the wrongs committed under the racist immigration laws. Tamil refugees should be allowed to stay —

and so should others, like Viraj Mendis, a Sinhalese Sri Lankan who supports the Tamils and who is still in sanctuary in a church in Manchester.

## Yugoslav workers fight back

**YUGOSLAV workers struck last week to demand a freeze on prices. Some called for the resignation of prime minister Branko Mikulic.**

And they won their demand on prices. The government climbed down on plans to allow bread prices to be determined by the free market — i.e. to rise.

Inflation is already at 110%, with rents, coal, transport and postal costs rising.

Earlier this year, a wave of strikes forced the government to back down on an austerity programme.



The Earl William prison ship



**MAGGOTS ARE  
GOOD FOR YOU!**

Until world War II, when antibiotics became available, most soldiers were killed, not by weaponry, but by bacteria.

These got into their wounds and caused gangrene and blood poisoning. You might think that having blowflies landing in the wounds and laying eggs would be likely to make things worse.

In fact, as was recognised by Napoleon's army surgeons, men with blowfly maggots in their wounds were *more* likely to survive. The maggots ate the dead and decaying flesh and the men's wounds healed faster and they did not get blood poisoning. For this reason, surgeons in the American Civil War would deliberately put blowfly maggots into soldiers' wounds.

Now, clearing out dead tissue is obviously necessary when cleaning a wound but a more interesting question is *how do the maggots get rid of the bacteria of gangrene and blood poisoning?*

The latest answers to this question are to be found in the current issue of that estimable journal, *Parasitology Today*.

Earlier research had shown that blowfly maggots had colonies of a bacterium, *Proteus mirabilis*, living in their salivary glands and that this bacterium secreted a chemical that killed other bacteria. This natural antibiotic was imaginatively called *mirabilicide* but has now been identified as **phenyl acetic acid (PAA)**.

**But this is not the whole answer to the question. PAA works best in acid conditions while most wounds seem to be alkaline. So how does PAA kill the harmful bacteria?**

**The necessary acidity is to be found inside the blowfly maggot's gut and as it eats the dead flesh, it kills the gangrene bacteria within a few seconds.**

The maggot's faeces contain only dead bacteria and the infection is stopped in its tracks.

**DIET DRINK  
DANGERS**

The artificial sweetener, Aspartame (NutraSweet or Canderel) has swept the board in diet drinks and low sugar foods since its introduction in 1981. Right from the start there were health worries but, except in one situation, these seemed unfounded.

Aspartame consists of three amino-acids (building blocks of protein), one of which is **phenylalanine (Phe)**. Though natural and even essential, Phe has neurotoxic effects in high doses, i.e. it damages the nervous system. Therefore the brain must efficiently remove excess Phe. It does this with the enzyme **phenylalanine hydroxylase (Phe-OHase)**.

A small proportion of people are unable to do this. They have inherited two faulty genes for Phe-OHase from their parents. Unless their diet is strictly controlled, they will suffer from phenylketonuria (PKU), which results in severe mental retardation.

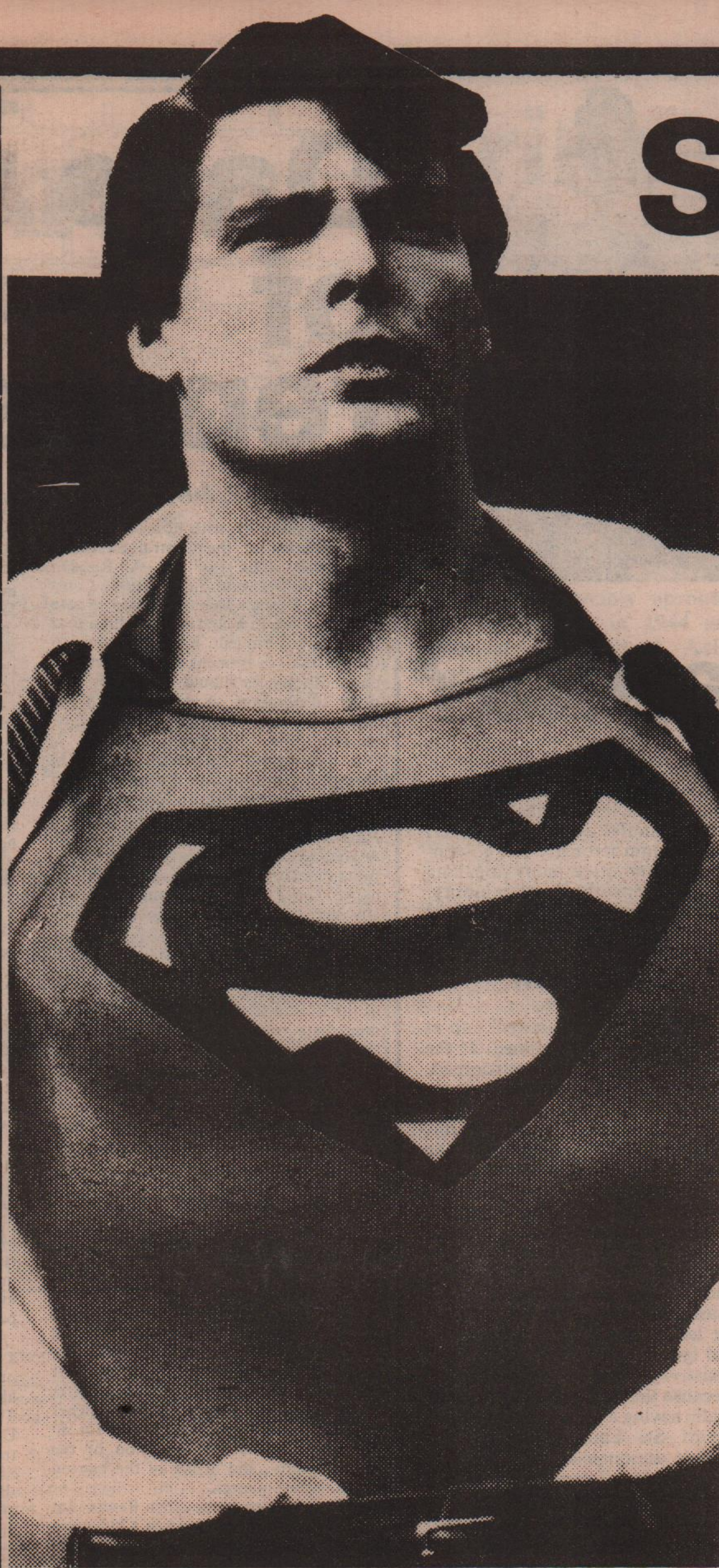
But there are also people with one normal and one faulty gene for Phe-OHase. They can cope with normal amounts of Phe but the safety margin is narrower. Up to 2% of the population fall into this group of "PKU-carriers". Worries that such people might suffer ill-effects from aspartame were originally dismissed.

Now, research shows the worries have some justification. Doses equivalent to 12 cans of diet drink per day for any eight stone person made volunteers perform worse on tests of basic brain functions. They also complained of headaches and dizziness.

In PKU-carriers, blood levels of Phe rose higher than in normal subjects and at just 8 cans per day brain waves were slowed. Maintaining high doses for weeks raised Phe levels above permissible limits for pregnant women in one-third of carriers but also in one-seventh of normal people.

The doses in these experiments are high but not uncommon and suggest that products with aspartame should carry warnings and guidance on avoiding excess intake. There must be concern for children whose lower body weight makes it easier to exceed danger levels.

(Info: Scientific American).



# Superman turns peacenik

**Mike Grayson  
reviews Superman  
IV.**

**He's back! The all-American alien from Planet Krypton, still striving to keep the world free for Truth, Justice and the Capitalist Way.**

But remove those contemptuous sneers from your faces, fellow sophisticates. For this is no mere comic-book romp dressed up with special effects: this is a film with A Message. And the message is that Peace is a Good Thing!

The plot is basically as follows: a US-Soviet Summit ends in failure, with both sides announcing a speed-up in the nuclear arms race. A worried American schoolbrat decides to do something about the crisis...he writes to Superman.

**Wimp**

The Wimp from Krypton agonises briefly — should he use his mighty powers to interfere in human destiny? — before flying to the United Nations to declare that he's decided to save the world by unilaterally wiping out all nuclear missiles. (The UN delegates give him a standing ovation).

Not everyone is thrilled to bits, however, by the prospect of world peace. Corrupt arms dealers unite with Superman's arch-enemy Lex Luthor, to thwart the Caped Campaigner's noble efforts. An evil duplicate is cloned from a strand of

Superman's hair (!?!), and the two superpowered stereotypes start knocking the stuffing out of each other. I will leave it for you to guess which — Good or Evil — triumphs in the end.

It's easy to knock a film like Superman IV. It's simplistic escapism, to be sure. On the other hand, I for one would rather watch something like this than any of the ever-popular Rambo/Rocky/Jaws blood-and-spilled-guts epics.

At least in Superman IV the audience is led to believe that nuclear weapons may not really be a very good idea. And that international cooperation is better than a never-ending arms race. These ideas aren't new to the world of cinema, and they've been put across better, but Superman IV is none the worse for that.

**Amusing**

The film also has several quite amusing moments (I liked the scene where Superman saves the lives of the members of the Politburo — does he have Stalinist tendencies?), and takes a subplot swipe at media barons trying to turn a 'quality' newspaper (the Daily Planet) into a 'Sun'-style tabloid.

Who knows — if this political trend continues in future adventures of the Big S, perhaps we'll see Superman V — Defend the Nicaraguan Revolution!

To conclude: when none of your trendy yuppie friends are looking, sneak off to your local Odeon and treat your brain to a 90-minute break. You'll believe a CND member can fly!

## Pacifism turned upside down

**Emile de Antonio tracked down leaders of the Weather Underground, who had spent years in hiding from the US police for their bomb attacks on big corporation and government buildings, and made a film with them. He then defied US government pressure to stop him finishing the film, and it was shown last Thursday on Channel 4.**

The Weather Underground (its name came from Bob Dylan's line "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows") came from a split in the US radical student movement around 1970.

"Students for a Democratic Society" had been formed as an offshoot of the feeble and very unrevolutionary US Socialist Party in 1960. Through the '60s, with the Fair Play for Cuba campaign and the black civil rights protests, it became bigger and more radical. From February 1965, the US started bombing North Vietnam, and 'The Movement' went onto the streets in ever-greater numbers.

In many other countries industrial militancy grew around the same time as the student radicalisation and the

**Colin Foster reviews  
Emile de Antonio's  
film 'Underground',  
shown last  
Thursday, 6th, on  
Channel 4.**

Vietnam movement. But in the US much of society remained politically as it had been in the Cold War '50s. As radical students progressed from protesting about single issues to wanting a social revolution, they talked a lot about the working class, but doing anything about it was difficult.

From the early '60s, SDS had been active in community projects. But still the US bombed Indochina. Still racism flourished. The methods of liberal protest politics were helpless, and the mass of the working class was apathetic or hostile to the radicals.

SDS fell apart. Some gathered round Progressive Labor, a Maoist group which wanted to 'go to the workers' and 'serve the people'.

Others found this approach one-dimensional, and anyway so *slow* as to be a cop-out.

They wanted to "express their anger" (as the Weather Underground leaders explain it in this film). They bombed monuments, corporation headquarters, official buildings. They were soon on the run.

In the film — in 1976 — Bernadine Dohrn and the other Weather Underground leaders are subdued and reflective. They insist that being underground is not just a regrettable necessity, but a positive part of their strategy. They say it will be a long haul, and they criticise some of their own previous approach as too hectoring, strident and sloganistic.

They express complete faith in 'the people' (usually it is 'the people' though sometimes they say 'working class'), and draw inspiration from the Vietnamese victory against US imperialism in 1975.

Trotsky once remarked that a revolutionary terrorist is a liberal with a gun. SDS was targeting 'corporate liberalism' as its hated enemy before it had got beyond liberal aims itself. One of the Weather Underground leaders in the film explains how she visited Cuba shortly before the US invaded (the 'Bay of Pigs', April 1961) and found herself applauding a military parade. She

was shocked, because before then she had been a pacifist; but the 'Bay of Pigs' invasion convinced her that the weapons were necessary.

To a large extent the politics of the Weather Underground were pacifism and liberalism turned upside down — into armed-struggle-on-principle and rejection of all constitutional politics as complicity with the 'racist pig power structure'. It was a blind alley: the leaders interviewed by de Antonio do not know how to connect with 'the people' (and I think they know they don't know), and they must have suffered bitterly when post-revolutionary Vietnam disillusioned them (700,000 refugees to date).

Revolutionaries in Britain have it easier than in the US. We have a relatively open and left-wing labour movement. It's not difficult in Britain to avoid the blind alley that the Weather Underground ended up in.

But British left-wing politics has its own blind alleys. Just as US radicals angrily rejected pacifism and liberalism without fully understanding them, and thus ended up saying no where the pacifists and liberals said yes, and yes where they said no, so some British radicals end up as negative images of reformism. The 'Revolutionary Communist Party' and (less consistently) the Socialist Workers Party are examples.



# Cuts: London fights back

Most London Labour councils are in the same state — a mess. They are in a financial mess and they are in a political mess.

Council leaders who had placed all their hopes on the election of a Labour government now feel helpless at the renewed Tory onslaught on the inner-cities and they are prepared to give in.

The financial mess is clear-cut. Camden Council has an £11 million 'gap' between its income and planned expenditure for 1987-8 and a 'leasing' deal to plug it has fallen through. Islington has a £12 million gap, and a

## By Nik Barstow

leasing deal still to complete. Lambeth and Brent are both £7 million short and Greenwich has closed an £8 million gap with a 'deferred purchase deal'.

The financial tricks to find the extra cash for this year haven't come cheap, though. Like all the 'creative accountancy' of the last four years, the day to pay back the — overpriced — loans is coming.

It means the London Councils face

almost insurmountable financial problems for the next four years. Islington's expected deficit doubles every year from now on — £30 million in 1988-9, £60 million in 1989-90 and a huge £120 million the year after — which would leave virtually no money to run council services.

Despite the threat all the councils are talking about plans to 'survive',

to 'limit the damage'. What that all means is that they plan to carry out at least part of the Tory plans to cut spending, to cut jobs, to raise rents, and to flog-off estates and services...hitting council workers, tenants and the people of their boroughs.

For all these councils a key to 'surviving' is pressuring their workers to agree to job cuts and then to 'work flexibly' to fill the gaps left. Often these plans are dressed up with talk about 'improving service delivery' and 'prioritising front-line services' — as if you can run better services with fewer workers!

Though the London councils are all talking about the same things — and making roughly the same plans, they are all going about it at different paces and in slightly different ways.

Camden Council, with the most acute financial crisis, leapt straight in to attack its workforce through job cuts. In services already hit by vacancies not filled, they froze them — with near collapse now threatened for some. But a large part of the workforce — in NALGO — voted to resist these cuts and there has already been an occupation of the Housing Department by workers in the Homeless Persons Unit to demand jobs are filled.

Others, like Southwark, have the same plans but hit the tenants first with a £3 a week rent rise half way through the year. The Tories have delayed their plans to make subsidising rents out of the rates illegal — which would have doubled London council-house rents next year. But Labour councils know that when it happens in 1989 there will be an explosion of anger — and instead of helping organise it and build it, they are planning to head it off by raising rents bit-by-bit themselves.

The one thing that plays no part in the Councils' plans to 'survive' is campaigning against the Tories. The campaigning is being organised in boroughs by council trade unions, and across London too.

The borough campaigns, which can draw in local tenants and community groups, show the threat of the Tories' attack on the inner cities; organising very local campaigns on estates or to save particular services are vital.

But so is building an all-London unity to show people they are not fighting alone, that struggles like the busworkers against privatisation, starting from one small base of opposition, can grow.

**Camden NALGO and London Bridge Conference: London Fights Back! Sunday 20 September from 10 am to 5 pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. For further details contact Camden NALGO, 278 4444 x 2431.**

## MINERS

# South Africa: a common struggle

I think the decision of the South African National Union of Mineworkers to take industrial action is one of the most momentous in the history of trade unions in that country.

I hope it is going to be the signal to the other unions there for a major onslaught against the South African government. So, unless there is a sell-out — which I cannot see the South African NUM being involved in — the stage is set for a very momentous and possibly bloody battle.

As a mineworker in this country, I hope that their namesake here — the NUM — is going to give every bit of support that it possibly can. Moral support, solidarity, finance. It might be difficult because we have a major struggle of our own, but I am sure we will do everything possible to support our comrades in struggle.

Despite their major difficulties, the South African NUM helped us in our strike in 1984-5; we must now repay that solidarity.

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The recent suspension of four NUM branch officials at Sherwood colliery in Notts fits the pattern we have seen since my own sacking from Bever-

## WHETTON'S WEEK



cotes.

NUM officials in the coalfield are being suspended or sacked at those pits where there has been the best recruitment to the NUM: Bevercotes, Ollerton, Bolsover and now Sherwood.

I am not surprised about Sherwood, because it must be the colliery nearest to achieving majority status for the NUM in the coalfield. I only hope that the men at the pit are able to turn this latest victimisation to their advantage, and become the majority union at the pit.

The Coal Board realise they have another 4-5 years of Tory government, and their aim is still to smash the NUM in Notts and through that weaken the national union. They have refused us facilities to hold the ballot on the disciplinary code on Coal Board premises. They are still refusing to talk to the NUM at Bolsover pit, where we are in an overwhelming majority. And I am sure their dirty tricks department has many more attacks up their sleeve.

Since my last diary, we have had the tremendous response of the rank and file in Yorkshire in coming out in solidarity with the five miners victimised at Frickley under the new disciplinary code. I was very disappointed to see that dispute strangled, rather than spread throughout the Yorkshire coalfield.

Now we are waiting for the result of the national ballot. As soon as it comes through I hope that the national union does not hesitate but takes the fight to the Coal Board.

When I hear that the Coal Board are showing the South Wales miners a 2½ minute video urging them to vote against action in the national ballot it reminds me very much of two earlier episodes: the way they sold the major pit closure programme of the Labour government during the 1960s and the way they introduced the continental shift system at Bevercotes at the same time. Pep talks, videos, the lot.

But on the issue of the disciplinary code I think they have seriously misjudged the mood of the men, and will get a black eye on this one.

If there is a big majority against the code that will give the men some confidence, so that we can go forward and settle some old scores — like the victimised miners, longer shift patterns and six day working.

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The case of Ted Scott, the branch secretary at Stillingfleet in North Yorkshire, is still up in the air and waiting for the union's response after the holiday.

We should understand clearly just what is at stake when management uphold his sacking for doing union duties and offer to re-engage him at a short-life neighbouring pit if he signs a statement promising not to lead industrial action. We are going back to the days of the 'docket', when a man had to sign a statement that he would not be involved in the union or industrial action.

And the Coal Board want to follow on from the precedent they are trying to set in my own case — 'deporting' NUM officials from their own pits to

completely different ones, or from one area to another.

The Coal Board is trying to get miners to accept the disciplinary procedure by pointing out that they would have a right to appeal and after that have recourse to industrial tribunals. But both Ted Scott's and my own case show clearly what that is worth.

The Coal Board rejected Ted Scott's appeal out of hand. Industrial tribunals? I won mine after 12 months' dismissal, but after a further 6 months I am still waiting for my job back.

We are going back in September to insist on reinstatement — the same job at the same pit.

Ted Scott's and other cases have to be fiercely fought. I hope a stand is made the minute the result of the ballot on the disciplinary code is known — that we down tools and are out.

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Next week the Notts sacked miners and their families are off on a week's holiday to the Derbyshire Miners Holiday Camp at Skegness. I cannot praise Kate Lees, the wife of one of our victimised miners, enough for the organising and fund-raising work she has done to enable us to have the week's holiday. We are all looking forward to it.

Paul Whetton is the secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

## NORTH STAFFS

# Turning the tide

In an attempt to rally the forces of the working class after Labour's defeat in the General Election, the North Staffs Trades Council is organising a local labour movement conference for September. North Staffs Trades Council President, Arthur Bough, explained why the conference had been called.

The Trades Council has represen-

tatives on many local bodies like the District Health Authority. Every month our delegates' reports have detailed the extent to which the policies of the Tories have devastated basic services. Even within the poor financial state of the NHS nationally our District Health Authority is substantially underfunded. Hospitals in our area are now quite regularly put on 'Red Alert'.

The other feature that comes out of the reports of our delegates is that there is a total lack of organisation on the part of the labour and trade union delegates to these bodies which results in delegates having to think on their feet at the meetings, and has resulted in a lack of co-ordinated campaigns to win more resources.

The Stoke District Labour Party has just completed its Policy Document after three years of discussions. It comes out firmly in favour of confrontation with the Tories, if necessary, to prevent a deterioration in services. However, if such a policy is to be pursued effectively it requires a campaign which will win the backing of local trade unions, tenants' groups, etc.

It is on that basis that we are organising the conference. If trades councils and Labour Parties were to do the same elsewhere we could begin to forge a powerful unity of both wings of the movement which could turn the tide on the Tories, and which would provide the best framework for the return of a Labour government at the next election.

## SSiN

# Business control

Sandra Cartlidge reports on the Tories' plans for business people to run Further Education colleges

THE government's plans for changing education from a public service to a sausage machine for the demands of industry continue apace.

The Department of Education and Science has now published proposals about the make-up and powers of governing bodies of Further Education colleges. Business and industrial interests will have half the places on governing bodies, rather than one-third as at present.

There are to be "not more than two" representatives from trade unions. Local Education Authority representation will be limited to one-fifth.

The Tories want colleges geared to value-for-money production of value-for-money employees with value-for-money training in science and engineering or secretarial and administrative skills (depending, of course, on sex).

Arts, social sciences and humanities have little place in such a perspective. Community use of colleges, by people other than the value-for-money 18 year old potential workers will be dropped.

Mature students, women with children, disabled students and less

employable black students will find it more difficult to get on courses. The access courses and creches designed for them will go.

The powers of college governing bodies are to be increased, at the expense of Local Education Authorities. The business majority on these governing bodies will decide on planning courses, expenditure, and even hiring and firing of staff.

Local Education Authorities will not be able to stop colleges tendering out service contracts and running private courses, nor will they be able to finance student unions directly. Money for student unions will depend on them toeing the line of the governing body and not offending the local business people.

What chance of a union running a lesbian and gay campaign, let alone a campaign for disinvestment from South Africa, to support a local strike, or to unionise YTS students?

The proposals give governing bodies the power to sack college workers — to replace cleaners by private contractors, or to get rid of teachers who are union activists or gay. This aspect could provide the impetus for a concerted fightback by students and college workers.

Hoping for a Labour government was never enough. Now it is clear that we have got to be as serious as the Tories and fight them with everything we've got. Student union autonomy, college workers' jobs, and education for need rather than profit are all, more clearly than ever, part of the same fight.



# SOCIALIST ORGANISER



## Democracy in danger!

### LONDON BUS STRIKE

# Fight to win!

By John Payne

All of London's 15,000 bus workers struck on Monday 10 August, closing down every one of the 51 garages for 24 hours. It was the second one-day stoppage in the last three months against the tendering out of bus routes and the resulting attacks on wages and conditions.

The workers at Norbiton garage had been out from the previous Wednesday and have been threatened with the sack by the management of London Buses Ltd (LBL).

The strike centres on Norbiton, where the workers were told to accept a £30 to £50 a week cut in wages and a lengthening of the working week from 38 to 43 hours, after LBL won the routes tendered there.

#### Cuts

Since then, workers at Harrow in North West London and at Bexleyheath in South London have also been told to expect new contracts involving wage cuts and longer hours. Wimbledon is the next in line after that.

Each area is being offered separate contracts with rates of pay differing from £4.21 an hour in Harrow, to £3.20 an hour in Norbiton, with "market forces" being given as the



reason. At Harrow there are plans to close the workers' canteen. In the Bexley area, Sidcup garage is to

close.

LBL's plans are London-wide. They plan to cut £30 million from their running costs in preparation for the de-regulation of London's bus service. But their strategy is to pick off one garage after another, starting with the small, weaker ones in the outlying districts.

#### Contrary

Contrary to what some busworkers' leaders in the TGWU have been saying, the fact that LBL have been 'winning' most of the routes put out to tender has been no defence for London busworkers. They are proving worse cutters than some of the potential competition.

The union leadership's general response to LBL's attacks, which threaten to turn the clock back decades on workers' wages and conditions, has been very timid.

After a 9-1 vote in favour of industrial action by all London's membership, they took LBL to court and said that any industrial action would influence the judges' decision it could not go ahead. The next ballot, held after the union lost its court case, was for 24-hour or lesser action only. They still got a 5-1 vote in favour despite the unions' timidity and despite the lack of a campaign of information amongst the members.

And in fact the membership proved themselves less than willing to be split and played off against each other as LBL would like. Not one red bus went on the road on Monday's day of strike action, and last week, at some garages when union meetings

were held, resolutions calling for all-out, indefinite strike action were carried.

#### Doubt

This was no doubt fuelled by management's threat to sack the workers at Norbiton who have proved to be less timid or weak than LBL expected. It is unlikely that LBL were prepared for a battle at such an early stage in their overall strategy.

The mood of solidarity and militancy among the bus workers must be built on by their union. The action must be spread to indefinite, fleet-wide action, particularly if any of our members are sacked at Norbiton or anywhere else.

#### Support

The union must also call on the London Underground workers who also face privatisation, wage cuts and job restructuring, for support. They must be persuaded to take their action at the same time as us. At the very least, when the bus workers are out, they must be asked to refuse the extra traffic onto a system that their own management have said is overcrowded and could become unsafe.

If the bus union is going to fight privatisation then it must fight to win — not just put a good face on things as it has done up till now. The members have shown their willingness to fight. The union should build on this, rather than try to tie it down.

Tony Benn MP gave his views last week about the implications of the 'Spycatcher' affair for democracy in Britain. This is his speech.

Democracy in Britain must be vigorously defended to prevent the government from crushing everyone who opposes their policies. Ministers are already tightening their control of the British press by prosecuting editors who have reported the contents of Peter Wright's book Spycatcher.

Fortunately, this campaign of repression has failed to prevent the key information contained in the book from becoming public, and we now know about other — hitherto secret — threats to democracy.

First, that the security services in Britain are a state within the state, operating outside the law, enjoying complete freedom to break into the homes and intercept the telephones, of those whom they dislike politically.

To help them keep us all under surveillance, they are directly connected to all the DHSS, and all other public records in this country, and anyone who fills in any form to register for a pension, for supplementary benefit or any other social benefit must expect that this information will be passed on to the secret police, by a direct computer link, whenever they ask for it.

#### Control

Second, that MI5 is, in effect, under the control of the United States Central Intelligence Agency, as part of the price we have to pay for acquiring the Polaris and the Trident.

These American nuclear weapons, and access to the US satellite system which, alone, allows them to be fired, far from giving Britain an independent role in the world, actually makes us totally subordinate to the USA, and explains, in part, why MI5 and MI6 worked so hard to destroy an elected Labour Government that was unacceptable to the White House.

Third, the British State has itself been guilty of terrorism, as with the plan, approved by Sir Anthony Eden, the then Conservative Prime Minister, to assassinate President Nasser at the time of the Suez War, thirty-one years ago.

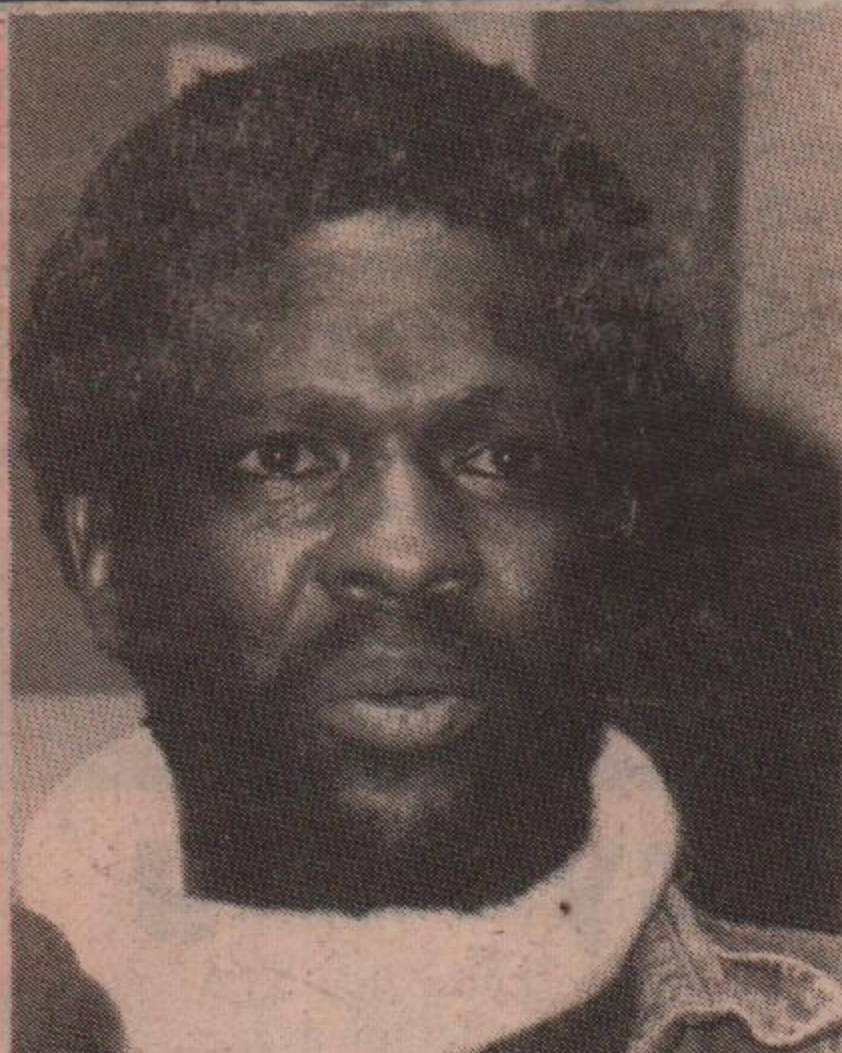
None of this will come as a surprise to anyone who has followed these issues closely over years, but, now we know how close Britain is to becoming a police state, a determined political campaign to dismantle it must be mounted by all thoughtful people.

Obviously we must continue to oppose the censorship, imposed by Judges who seem to be prepared to clamp down on freedom whenever Ministers demand it.

But much more than that is required.

The British people must consciously resolve to liberate themselves from American domination; to bring the security services under full democratic control; and to make the entrenchment of civil liberties and the extension of democracy the major theme in all our political campaigns.

## Defend Moses Mayekiso



Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of South Africa's second largest independent trade union, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) is on trial for treason. If found guilty, he could go to prison for 20 years — or even hang.

His 'crime' is to have helped organise the working class for freedom in his home town of Alexandra. He is on trial with other union officials.

The 'March for Mayekiso' Committee is organising a national demonstration in support of Moses on 10 October. The march will assemble at 12 noon at Clerkenwell Green and will proceed to the South African Embassy.

Free Moses Mayekiso! Release all South African and Namibian detainees! Hands off COSATU! End British collaboration with apartheid!



# WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

Inside: Child Abuse; Equal Pay; Engels and Women's Oppression; The Tories and the Family.

New series no.3. August 1987. 10p.

Published by Women's Fightback, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, and printed by East End Offset (TU).

# A woman's place is in the Labour Party!

**The Tories' victory in the recent General Election dealt a vicious blow to the working class and in particular to working class women.**

Working class women have been the victims of the Tories' evil policies over the last eight years and will face further attacks over the next four.

Tory policies have been deliberately planned to force working class women to be cheap labour with two jobs. The cuts in welfare services mean that more and more old, young and sick people are pushed back into the home — to be looked after by unpaid women. At the same time more and more women have been taking waged jobs, usually low paid and often part-time. What's more, in 1984 the Tories made parents pay extra income tax if they had use of a workplace nursery.

Cuts in the National Health Service and a tightening up of the 1967 Abortion Act have meant that it is increasingly difficult for a woman to get an abortion — unless, of course, she can pay for one and how many of us have £150 to spare?

Tory changes in the benefit system have also eroded women's independence. Child benefit, a major item paid directly to women,

has steadily declined in real terms. Under Norman Fowler's latest proposals, Family Income Supplement is to be replaced by a Family Credit paid through the pay packet of the main wage-earner in the family — usually the man. And these are only a few examples.

The Labour Party is the only party which can take on the Tories — and win. But if it is to do this at the next General Election and make policies which really do benefit us, then it will need to be a party which is somewhat different from what it is now.

Glossy pamphlets and clever party political broadcasts weren't enough to win Labour the last general election. It must become a party which campaigns on the council estates on policies which affect all sections of the working class, a party which can draw large numbers of working class people to it and above all a party which really fights the Tories and all they stand for.

But the Labour Party leaders won't change it. It is up to us ordinary members. Women have a particularly vital role to play. We do make up half of the working class after all. We need to make sure the Labour Party really does represent us. We need to ensure that creches, babysitters and escorts home are provided so that we can attend meetings. We need to make sure that at those meetings, issues which affect us as women are raised



and discussed — seriously. We need to make sure that meetings aren't dominated by (usually) men talking in code, and that women don't feel intimidated at meetings.

To do all this women should join the Labour Party and become involved in Labour Party women's sections. Unfortunately the Labour Party and the men in it won't change themselves. We will have to do it — and it's easier to do with other women who feel the same way than by yourself. Women's sections in the Labour Party have

helped ensure that many questions specifically affecting women — rape, childcare, equal pay — which might otherwise have been forgotten, have been raised.

A Labour Party which energetically campaigns against Tory attacks on working class women and which draws working class women to it, will be able to defeat the Tories at the next General Election. We need to be in the Labour Party to make sure it happens. Working class women cannot afford another Tory victory.



# CHILD ABUSE: Beyond the hysteria

The last 2-3 years has seen an increase in the number of reported cases of child abuse — both physical and sexual. The ages of children treated by paediatricians, psychologists and psychiatrists range from infancy to adolescence. (An NSPCC spokesperson recently announced that babies as young as 3 months old can be victims of sexual abuse).

Abused children not only suffer from the actual abuse itself, but can also suffer further physical and health problems such as VD, drug and alcohol problems and severe psychological problems.

Childline, with all its faults and limitations (that I don't intend to go into here) receives 8-10,000 calls a day and helps to support the NSPCC's claims that three or four children a week die from child abuse. (The NSPCC claims that 3-4 children die each week from abuse yet because of misdiagnosis it goes unnoticed. In July it announced a 137% increase in reported cases of sexual abuse).

It is clear that child sexual abuse in the family is far more widespread than the sex exploitation, like child prostitution and pornography, that the media has always tended to highlight. Sexual abusers are nearly always portrayed as predatory lunatics, hiding in alleyways, whereas in actual fact most sexual abuse takes place within the home and the family.

The Cleveland affair shows just how adept the media is at taking away attention from one issue and making another issue paramount. In this case, making individual social workers and doctors look incompetent and overzealous, and child abuse within the family, a small problem.



Dr. Marietta Higgs

Dr. Marietta Higgs ends up looking like a sexually frustrated, warped individual, in need of penis therapy herself, instead of a (probably) caring, experienced, specialised worker in child abuse.

The media chose to ignore the fact that, since the Jasmine Beckford Report, 16 extra social worker posts for specialists in child abuse were created in Cleveland in the last year; that those workers set about clearing

a backlog of suspected cases and as everyone knows, the harder you look for something the more likely you are to find it.

For most of the children involved there were signs of sexual abuse. The really worrying thing, though, is that the most common forms of sexual abuse are fondling, masturbation and oral sex, which leave no outward signs. This would suggest that, in reality, the Cleveland workers have

really only uncovered the tip of the iceberg.

## Care — a form of abuse

Taking children into care can be very damaging in itself — even if the child is a victim of abuse. Those children are usually scapegoated by their families, who deny and cover up their own emotional and sexual problems. The child blames itself for the problems — otherwise why have they been taken from the family home?

Taking children into care can then be seen as a form of abuse in itself. Clearly it is better for children to build on relationships they have got rather than break up families, but what are social workers to do?

It is ironic that on the very day that Greenwich social worker Martin Ruddock (Kimberley Carlile case) faced an inquiry as to why Kimberley was not removed from the home sooner, Teesside social workers were being accused, in the courts, of intervening too soon in suspected child sex abuse cases. Nothing illustrates more clearly the dilemma facing social workers.

But need care be such a 'bad' thing? The rich have always had access to care for their children. They can afford to employ nannies and au pairs or pack their children off to boarding schools. It doesn't appear to do their children any harm (well I suppose that's debatable).

The fact of the matter is that taking children into care is used as a form of punishment for those erring families who happen to have been found 'lacking', instead of care being seen as a service to which families and children are entitled. Many families actually ask for their children to be taken into care, hoping to protect their children, only to find they are unable to get them back afterwards.

At the moment, social workers are

faced with the dilemma of choosing between the lesser of two evils — whether the effects of taking a child into care outweigh the effects of abuse.

Personally, I think we have to argue for the care option. But as socialists we have to raise the issue of free state care being a right to which all families are entitled: to use as and when they feel they need it — not as now, as a form of punishment to families and as protection for children.

The Cleveland affair is likely to have increased the stigma attached to care and will put families off even more. By raising the issue of free state care, linking abuse with poverty, unemployment and bad housing, we can start to remove the guilt from parents and social workers and thus make capitalism responsible for child abuse.

## Parents' rights

More resources need to be put into training social workers, doctors, etc., in order for them to be able to accurately diagnose child abuse. Because one of the factors that has come out of the Cleveland affair is that specialists have disagreed on diagnosis. It is still, so I am told, very difficult to distinguish between buggery and the effects of a severe case of constipation.

Many parents claim they have been wrongly accused of battering their children. Brittle bone disease was once thought to be a rare disease, but due to research carried out by Dr. Paterson, a bone specialist in Dundee, it has been shown to be more common. It is thought to be induced by highly modified baby foods, which contain unnaturally high iron content which prevents absorption of copper.

Parents, with the help of Dr. Paterson, have been able to regain access to their children.

Parents who have voluntarily sought care or medical help for their children have found themselves being forced to admit to child abuse, as this is the only way, so they have been told, that they will ever get their children back. In reality, admission of guilt usually results in the loss of children.

The issue here seems to be that social workers, faced with what appears to be signs of physical abuse, genuinely believe that abuse has taken place. Without the back-up of the expertise of doctors such as Paterson, they take the only course open to them in order to protect the child.

Capitalism here is not only responsible for creating disease, by mass production of food for profit instead of healthy eating, but then denies the resources to enable social workers and the like to make genuine diagnosis.

## Sexuality

At the moment the public has tended to focus on the more serious cases of sexual abuse. But there is a danger amidst all the public curiosity, fanned by the media, that even ordinary physical interactions, in families, will become suspect — bathing with mum and dad for instance.

All children are sexual beings and as such parents need to respond to this need. Most mothers will have experienced the young male toddler

# Happy families!

**"Many more families now enjoy the pride of ownership — of shares, of homes and of pensions."**

**Margaret Thatcher  
Conservative Party  
Manifesto, 1987**

**The Tory Party have successfully managed and manipulated the myth that somehow they represent Christian values, that they are caring and protective of the old, sick and the young — in fact that they are the party of the family.**

This being the case what image do they portray of the family? Well, it is true to say that Mr and Mrs Taxfid-

## Talking Point

dle — he is a bank manager and she does charity work — are the Tories' media package and dream — clean living, law-abiding shareholders.

However, in reality not even the Tory Party holds up to this pristine image — what about Cecil Parkinson? Harvey Proctor? Jeffrey Archer?

Despite everyone forgiving them and despite the fact that the jury didn't believe good old Jeffrey was caught with his underpants well and truly round his ankles, even they prove that the ideal Tory family is nothing more than hypocritical, and a sour joke from an afternoon soap opera.

Anyway, this ill-named "party of the family" have done nothing, and I mean nothing, for working class families over the last eight years. Now, just when we thought things

couldn't get any worse they are introducing reforms and cutbacks that will further demoralise and devastate working class families.

Mr and Mrs Povertystricken, — he's unemployed, she's low-paid — are not untypical. Some working class families are better off, it's true, but some are even worse off. What effects do poverty, unemployment and bad housing have on families? The consequences are dire and desperate — physical ill health, mental illness, diseases, bad diets, fighting, etc. — and still they expect us to believe they are caring. They are liars — bloody liars — but the catch is they're good liars.

The Tories propose to force parents and families, no matter how poor they are, to take full financial responsibility for their social and physical needs in the form of private

housing, private health and private education. Their proposals from the 1987 manifesto include:

- \*An end to child benefit paid to families receiving unemployment and sickness benefit.

- \*The wholesale sell-off of council estates above the heads of tenants.

- \*A stop to local authorities providing home helps and meals on wheels to those in need.

- \*The end of all cash benefits for unemployed teenagers.

- \*Abandonment of Wage Council protection for three million low-paid workers.

- \*The introduction of a poll tax.

- \*NHS hospitals sold off to private health-for-profit companies.

The list is a gruesome one and the list is endless — it is a plan for a national nightmare that all families will face. One fine day we will wake up from the nightmare. But in the meantime we should organise and fight to protect the old, the sick and the young and prove to the Tories that it is *we* who are the carers and it is *our* party which is the party of the family.





A mother weeps on the steps of Middlesbrough General Hospital

proudly showing off his erect penis, or the young females' curiosity of dad's penis. All this is quite natural but there's a danger that with the increase in publicity, normal responses to children may be mistaken for something more sinister.

How parents react to their children's sexuality is not only a personal but also a cultural thing. In some societies mothers are encouraged to regularly stimulate their daughters, from birth, endeavouring to ensure a good sex life in adulthood. Other societies use the gentle stroking of an infant's genitals to soothe and pacify fretful babies. In our society both things would probably be seen, by many, as fondling and as such be construed as child sex abuse.

The furore created by Cleveland provides the ideal arena for, not only warring neighbours etc. to get back at one another, but for the moral right wing and the radical feminists.

For the crusaders of the right-wing moralists, the family has priority and has to be defended at all costs. Promiscuity, 'abnormal' sexual practices, i.e. gays and lesbians, sex education, etc., will all come in for a battering with calls for a return to traditional patriarchal values.

The radical feminists on the other

hand will use it to break what they see as the male power of patriarchy, which is symbolised by the nuclear family, with all the abuse of women and children by men in general in society.

It is therefore crucial that when we raise the issue of child sex abuse that it isn't done in isolation. While we need to call for the socialisation of child care as of right; for more resources to be put into providing and training social workers and specialists in child abuse; for more sex education for children to enable them to understand and be able to talk to adults about what constitutes abuse etc., we have to be clear that capitalism is the root of the problem.

Because of the strains, stresses and antagonisms that capitalist society generates, the family can appear to be a haven from the cruel world outside. Whereas, in actual fact, the very 'qualities' needed to 'succeed' in a society based on inequalities and power are learned and reinforced within the family.

Capitalism requires that the family 'cares' and socialises children to be the next generation of workers, ready to submit to the hierarchies in the workplace and in society as a whole.

Children, like women, are tied economically to the family — there is

nowhere else for them to go. In fact adult power over children is so absolute, that in a sense all children are abused and all adults abusers.

All the while children are dependent and the property of the family and not the responsibility of society as a whole, child abuse will continue.

As Trotsky said: "The most compelling motive for the cult of the family is undoubtedly the need of the bureaucracy for a stable hierarchy of relations and for the disciplining of youth by means of 40,000,000 points of support for authority and power".

Until we succeed in establishing a society based on total economic equality; a society that provides free education and child development facilities right down to infancy; that uses science and technology to provide food for healthy consumption and not profit; that provides decent housing for all; that socialises housework, cooking and laundry; that provides jobs for all; in other words a society where individuals are free from the stresses and strains of present-day society; who are able to develop and grow as individuals, will we be able to begin to eradicate the horrors (and reading about child abuse I can assure you it is horrific) of child abuse.

part at all levels. We fight for the implementation of the TUC Charter of Women in the unions.

We fight against the labour movement's reflecting in any way the oppressive ideas about a woman's role, which can undermine women's ability to fight back, and dangerously divide the movement. We ally with all those fighting for rank and file control, democracy and accountability, against those who hold back and sell out our fight. Never again a 'Labour' government that ignores party decisions, serves the bosses and bankers, and beats down workers' living standards and struggles.

4. We aim to co-ordinate and assist those women in the Labour Party, and the trade unions, who are fighting for these aims.

5. We are for direct action, solidarity as women and as workers, and for maximum mobilisation for all actions against the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses us.

## Where we stand

ment, and to involve women who do not relate to these movements.

3. We aim to strengthen the position of women in the labour movement, and fight for it to take our needs as a priority. We will encourage and aid the organisation and consciousness of women as women in the labour movement, and fight for the aims and demands of the women's movement in the unions and labour organisations.

We fight to change the sexist atmosphere in the labour movement, and for positive discrimination and changes in arrangements and practices to enable women to play a full

## Work A woman's place

If you're alive to complain about your pay then you can live on it. Good morning.



## Equal pay for equal work

By Cate Murphy

Four years ago an amendment to the Equal Pay Act of 1970 was passed. In theory this meant that women could claim equal pay for work of equal value to higher-paid male workers. This was an important victory in the fight against devaluing women's work.

But, as is often the case when it comes to the question of women's equality, the actions fall a long way behind the promises.

A recent survey published by the Labour Research Department\* shows that, although progress has been made towards equality of pay for women, it's a very slow, long drawn out process.

On average, women making an equal pay claim through an industrial tribunal, have to wait 18 months for their case to be settled. This obviously means that many women are deterred from making a claim, and therefore stay on low pay. For the year June 1986-June 1987, only 19 new claims were made, whereas from March to June 1986 — when the average waiting time was six months — 26 new cases were accepted. At that rate, the last year should have seen 140 new cases coming before a tribunal — not a mere 19.

It is highly unlikely that these delays are accidental — it's the system's way of telling women that they are a low priority in society. By putting off women making a claim, and keeping their pay low, it ensures a large, cheap, pool of labour for the bosses — which increases their profits!

The report also highlights just how low paid women are in comparison to male colleagues: the average pay differences are £25 a week. And in one instance, Sheffield women school meals organisers were claiming an £80 a week pay differential from male supervisors!

Even if a case does reach a tribunal

fairly quickly, further delays can be expected with the "independent experts" allocated to adjudicate the case. Often these "experts" are academics with little knowledge of workplace matters. In the case of Lloyds Bank, where women print finishers are claiming parity with male printers (worth £16.50 plus bonus a week), the first "expert" resigned before finishing the report and the successor will have to start all over again.

Additionally, a substantial number of claims presently lodged with a tribunal are being sat on until the resolution of the Freemans' case. Women packers at the Almatex company (claiming £20 per week) and secretaries at Coventry Climax (also claiming £20 per week) are just two groups of workers whose cases have been delayed.

But it's not all doom and gloom! The encouraging factor highlighted by the LRD report is that more and more unions are taking up equal pay for equal work cases, and fighting furiously against the delays experienced by their female members.

The NUM, for example, is currently pursuing a parity claim for its women cooks, canteen assistants and cashiers, worth between £20 and £31.85 per week.

A further positive result has been the settlement negotiated by council workers' unions for a job evaluation scheme to regrade women home helps and others in "caring" jobs. This will benefit thousands of women workers in traditionally low-paid, undervalued jobs in local authorities throughout the country.

Such schemes do benefit the low paid — usually women — and other unions should fight for similar moves.

We must keep pushing our unions to fight for equal pay for equal value for their women members. A positive commitment to fighting for equal pay would mean supporting and encouraging women throughout the long delays, as well as pressuring for more tribunals to shorten waiting times.

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# Why women are oppressed

Lilian Thomson looks at how it all began, and what that implies for fighting oppression today.

LAST MONTH we looked at the history of women's struggles against their oppression, at how women began to organise to fight back against their lot. But we didn't look at how or why women came to be oppressed in the first place.

As long as recorded history has lasted, so too has women's oppression. To many people, it just seems natural that women are worse off — it's because of women's smaller size or their capacity to bear children. Men comfort themselves with the thought that women need looking after.

It's hard to combat that when history shows that not just the present capitalist system is to blame: in feudal society, and in earlier societies too, women occupied second place to men.

But late last century, the work of anthropologists began to question that assumption.

## Engels

Early anthropologists began to speak of an earlier time when women, not men, ruled society. Friedrich Engels gave a Marxist, that is, a materialist, analysis of the 'woman question' in his pioneering work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

Engels wanted to trace the prehistoric roots of women's oppression, so he could prove wrong those who claimed women's inferior status was 'natural'. Drawing on the work of anthropologist Lewis Morgan, Engels argued that a 'predominance of women generally obtained in primitive times'. Its 'material foundation' was the 'communistic household' headed by women.

In these times, descent could only be traced with certainty through the mother, since women were not tied to any one man, and indeed, men's role in procreation was for a long time unknown.

This household became threatened, according to Engels, when domestication of animals developed. The breeding of herds meant that human groups no longer had to live hand to mouth. They could now possess fixed wealth, in the form of animal herds.

'But to whom did this wealth belong? Originally, undoubtedly, to the gens (kin group). But private property in herds must have developed at a very early stage... On the threshold of authenticated history, we find that everywhere the herds are already the property of the (male) family chiefs.'

## Divisions of labour

Wealth came into these men's hands because of a sexual division of labour that had existed previously. A division of labour by sex alone does not mean oppression will follow. Probably the earliest divisions of labour occurred for reasons of convenience — men and women did different jobs because of different physical capacities.

But, 'according to the division of labour then prevailing in the family, the procuring of food and the implements necessary thereto, and therefore, also, the ownership of the latter, fell to the man... Thus according to the custom of society at that time, the man was also the owner of

## Women and class



the new sources of foodstuffs — the cattle...'

The fact that human labour could produce a surplus above what was necessary for bare survival also gave an impetus to making slaves of prisoners taken in war. These slaves belonged to the men who had captured them, thus further raising their status and power.

This power gave men more status than women in society. The desire by men to pass on their wealth and power to their descendants led to men's overthrow of the female order of inheritance in favour of father to son inheritance.

## Class

Engels saw this overthrow of 'mother right' — inheritance through the female line — as 'the world historic defeat of the female sex. The man seized the reins in the house also, then woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of man's lust, a mere instrument for bearing children'.

Women thus became the world's first oppressed class.

'However, within this structure of (primitive) society based on ties of sex, the productivity of labour develops more and more; with it, private property and exchange, differences in wealth, the possibility of utilising the labour power of others, and thereby the basis of class antagonisms... until, finally... the old society, based on ties of sex, bursts asunder in the collision of the newly-developed social classes; in its place a new society emerges, constituted as a state... a society in which the family system is entirely dominated by the property system...'

'Recorded history — the history of class struggles — shows the continuing effects of the "world historic defeat of the female sex" interwoven with and subordinated to class relations of exploitation.'

Engels was aware that there were gaps in his account. He could not explain *how* 'mother right' had been replaced by domination by the father. His work can also be corrected on at least three other points.

Later researches by Marxist and other anthropologists alike have established that a system of tracing descent through the mother does not necessarily mean female dominance over men. Most researchers now think that no period of female dominance over men ever existed.

The development of society from primeval horde to kin group to family is also unsatisfactorily explained by Engels. Following Johann Bachofen, Engels saw this as primarily brought about by women, who found sex with many different men 'degrading and oppressive', and who thus wanted marriage with one man only. This seems to be a case of applying contemporary morality retrospectively. After all, biologically, women's capacity for sexual enjoyment is greater than men's.

Engels also cannot explain why the sexual division of labour developed the way it did, or even at all. *All* known societies have some division of labour, though what it is, and how rigid it is, varies. But the point is — why have one at all? Engels cannot explain it.

## Knowledge

Later writers and theorists have tried to fill in the gaps and have come up with different theories. What distinguishes Engels's account is that he tackled it to prove that women's oppression was not 'natural'.

He wasn't just trying to increase the store of human knowledge for the hell of it. He was trying to arm people with knowledge they could use to fight back against oppression.

Later writers have built upon that work and gone further. But if they have seen further, it was because they stood on the shoulders of a giant — Engels's pioneering work pointed the way.

The emergence of men's domination may never be clearly understood, since the evidence available for study is so fragmentary, and is often clouded by the prejudices and beliefs of those interpreting the data. But Engels's work did establish that women's oppression is not dictated by nature.

He also showed that it was not the result of a male conspiracy or of a cataclysmic sex war, as some people would like to believe even today. He showed that women's oppression arose out of the development of early societies in the same way that classes, states, and private property emerged from those developments.

Since then, class and sex oppression have been so closely intertwined that teasing out the strands has become impossible. For sure, the underpinning of women's oppression in most societies has been the family plot of land, handed down from father to son. The woman is an indispensable part of the family, for children are an economic necessity, but her role is a secondary one.

## Subordinate

Jewish, Hindu, Chinese and Christian ideologies all defined women as subordinate. Traditional Chinese usage bound women's feet. Ancient Greece was particularly ruthless at imprisoning women in the home.

Ancient codes of law punished female adultery severely, while not touching male adultery.

Probably feudal Western Europe was, of all major pre-capitalist civilisations, the least harsh in its oppression of women. The sexual division of labour was not rigid. Women workers were frequently paid the same as men for the same work. Women, though their economic activity was more centred on the home, played a large role in social life.

Women dominated important trades, such as ale brewing. A widow could engage in trade as the equal of men. Women at the head of convents were important people.

Still, women were clearly subordinate. They could not hold any public office. Generally, they could not appear as independent persons in court. Rape, for example, was not treated as a crime against a woman's body, but as a crime against a man's property. Lords could rape peasant women with impunity.

Women's property was likely to be seen as dowry to attract a husband. The household was headed by the father. Women were advised to try to

get a 'good' husband as the best available course for them.

Oppression does not always mean rebellion and women's oppression in feudal times produced no women's rebellion. There was no arena where women could gather collectively. Instead of rebellion, oppression of women meant women sought consolations for their lot, such as the mediaeval cult of the Mother of God.

The growth of industrial capitalism did not abolish women's household drudgery. But it changed the nature of it. The home became a sphere sharply cut off from social labour. In earlier times, the household was the basic economic unit, with most production done in or around the home. In the new capitalist order, the factory became the centre of production, and it brought together people from thousands of different households.

## Liberation

Capitalism continued women's oppression, but it changed it. Women were brought into the work force as independent individuals. However underpaid or overworked the woman factory or office worker may be, in the workplace she is not part of any man's household, but an individual, independent worker. In this way, capitalist laws have given a slight measure of formal equality with men.

Capitalism did not create women's oppression, but it did create the conditions for the rise of the women's liberation movement. Women now had an arena for organising collectively, so the possibility of winning equality through change in society became realistic.

Women will never be liberated while class oppression exists, since so many women suffer from class oppression as well as sex oppression. Middle class women do suffer from general sexism too, but their compensating class privileges — greater wealth, better access to education and health care, freedom through wealth from sole responsibility for child care or housework — force them to side with their class rather than with working class women struggling for liberation.

## De Beauvoir

The knowledge that women's oppression has not always existed, and thus that it can be overthrown, may seem old hat today; we may take it for granted. But many women today draw the wrong conclusions from that knowledge, so it is important to reiterate the ideas first expounded by Engels so that we can use those ideas positively, to fight for change.

Many women today still blame men solely for women's oppression. They see the answer in men voluntarily giving up their power over women. Others see the only solution as living in complete separation from men. Even more drastically, some women see women's oppression can only be gained by the 'final solution' of eliminating men altogether.

Simone de Beauvoir thought that was a bit drastic, and she was right. All the above 'solutions' provide no way for women to fight back against their oppression. Waiting for men to give up their power is passive (and utopian). Lots of women don't want to live separately from men. And mass extermination of men is not an option.

The ideas of Engels state that women's oppression comes from societal structures. These can be fought. Women are oppressed in this society, and have been oppressed in earlier societies, because it suits society economically that it should be so.

To change that, we have to fight to change society.