

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

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## EXPOSED:

# Coal bosses' plan to purge militants



Le Pen with NF MPs

## Picket Le Pen!

When Jean-Marie Le Pen speaks to a fringe meeting at the Tory Party conference in Blackpool on 8 October, a large protest demonstration will be taking place outside the conference hall.

Some 5,000 people are expected to demonstrate. Most of them will be young people, outraged by the fascist and racist Le Pen and by what he stands for.

The demonstration is being organised by Picket Le Pen, an emergency mobilising committee, together with Anti-Fascist Action.

The committee's secretary is Michele Carlisle, the member of the National Union of Students executive responsible for anti-fascist work, acting here in a personal capacity. Paul Frosh, another committee member, said:

"Le Pen's National Front is as near to being fascist as makes no practical difference. Its members organise gangsterism on the streets against North African immigrants — terrorising, beating and occasionally killing them.

During the election last year, a Socialist Party activist was killed by a member of Le Pen's organisation.

The National Front is anti-semitic. Last April a Jewish student was seriously wounded by a National Front member in a town near Marseilles".

Committee secretary Michele Carlisle added: "Le Pen himself is a former French paratrooper who is widely believed to have participated in the torture of Algerian patriots during Algeria's war of independence against France (1954-62). The National Front showed where its historic sym-

pathies lie during the recent trial of Klaus Barbie, when it solidarised with the 'butcher of Lyon'.

Wherever Le Pen goes in France, fairly soon after there comes a wave of violence against immigrants. Le Pen has no place in mainstream British politics — not even on the murky fringe of the Tory Party.

Against the National Front, French socialists and democrats have organised a powerful anti-racist campaign, 'SOS-Racisme'. The answer to Le Pen's intervention in British politics is to make 8 October in Blackpool a powerful and memorable anti-racist demonstration".

Contact 'Picket Le Pen' at 01-639 7967; AFA at PO Box 273, London E7.

Paul Whetton is the secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts. He was sacked for putting up union notices at work. His case sums up the reason why the miners have started an overtime ban this week against the coal bosses' proposed disciplinary code.

British Coal this month told an Industrial Tribunal that whatever the Tribunal decided, they would never give Paul Whetton his job back. British Coal chair Robert Haslam has also made it clear: the coal bosses want to root out union activists.

Paul Whetton tells the story.

I went back to the Industrial Tribunal on 9 September and we presented my case for reinstatement at my own colliery, Bevercotes.

The opening statement from British Coal's barrister was that, never mind what the Tribunal decided, and even if it ruled for reinstatement, British Coal would never let me back into Bevercotes. That was the opening gambit!

Later in the Tribunal it was suggested that national negotiations on the disciplinary code could have a bearing on the findings. The barrister then said that irrespective of any negotiations, 'we shall not give Mr Whetton his job back at Bevercotes colliery'.

The Tribunal has already found that I was unfairly dismissed. Neither re-employment at another colliery or compensation is acceptable to me, and I still want the Tribunal to come out for reinstatement.

If they come out with any other ruling they are contradicting their original findings, which were: that I was unfairly dismissed for trade union activities, and I played no contributory part towards that dismissal. Haslam's most recent statements



put the whole thing in perspective. He has said that British Coal's main aim is to get rid of 'disruptive militant trade union activists'.

If the Tribunal rules for reinstatement that will at least help us to mount a massive campaign. We can

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# Time to break with tradition

The Labour Party went into the last election believing it to be crucial. It went into the last election more united, confident and forthright in its propaganda than for a long time — yet it lost, only a bit less badly than in 1983.

Labour's election campaign itself was the best for many years. It showed something of what could be done if Labour campaigned for its policies. Yet it was far too little, and much too late. The professionally conducted election campaign was preceded by a blood-letting in which the Party leadership made it quite plain that they considered their own left wing members to be at least as bad as the Tories.

They expelled socialists from the Party, accidentally-on-purpose disavowed the 'London left' to a gleeful press, and step-by-step bowed to right wing media demands that they 'get tough' with their own party. Worse, they equivocated on the miners' strike and other struggles, and in effect helped the Tories beat the labour movement down.

This wasn't just ignoble and cowardly, though it was that. It was disastrous electorally.

Big struggles, like those of the miners or the print workers, are the best kind of challenge to the Tories, and if they had won, the labour movement as a whole would have been stronger and more confident. The accumulation of defeats, assisted by the labour leadership's utter failure to take a stand, only makes for demoralisation — and more defeats. This is true for the electoral

By Gerry Bates

front, as it is for the industrial.

Working class people are cynical about politicians of all stripes, with good reason. To turn out a Labour vote, Labour has to be seen to be worth it. It has to campaign — with demonstrations, meetings, activities. It has to spell out a clear message of opposition to the Tories and all they stand for.

Since 1983 — and before — Labour seemed more and more like a softer-hearted and weaker-willed SDP.

Labour is the traditional working class party. But we can't rest on our traditions, especially as so many of them are bad ones. Working people have experienced Labour governments. They know that in practice life isn't radically different under Labour and Tory, and that Kinnock could cut just as hard as Thatcher can. A re-run of past Labour governments was not and will never be an inspiring prospect.

So if Labour is to mount a real challenge to Thatcher it needs to break with many of its traditions, and start afresh.

Labour's last minute election raz-zamataz was not enough to make the break. Too much damage had already been done, and too many policies that offered at least a partial alternative, abandoned. The Party was not trusted.

What is needed now is a full-blooded, active campaign against the Tories. Action now can prepare for a Labour victory next time round.



## Hunger strikes in Turkey

More than five hundred political prisoners are on hunger strike in Turkey's prisons, protesting at the inhuman conditions under which they are held. The death fast of seven prisoners ended on the 52nd day, while various protest activities and hunger strikes are taking place in prisons in Ankara, Istanbul, Gaziantep, Canakkale, Bursa, Eskisehir, Erzincan, Mersin and other cities. The prisoners are demanding an end to the "transfer chain" which is used to tie the prisoners in a row during their transfer to and from prisons; an end to degrading prison uniforms; an end to limitations and bans on visits; an end to the ban on correspondence, publications and petitions; a solution to the food and health problem; an end to the use of solitary confinement, and the denial of parole and early release as a form of punishment. In London, a six-day solidarity hunger strike took place outside the Turkish Embassy, ending with a demonstration to mark the anniversary of the military take-over in Turkey on 12 September 1981. Photo: Ian Swindale.

## Reassert socialism!

As far as policy is concerned, I would hope that the first steps are taken at Party Conference to reassert our socialist ideas.

While at the moment there is no frontal attack being made on the policy of the Party, it is quite clear when you read the Sawyer document that there could be moves to change the Party quite drastically.

Tony Benn has put forward an alternative, which I think is a very good statement. I would hope that out of it the party membership will be alerted and say — we didn't win the election on the basis of retreats, and we had better get back to basic socialist policies and start going and winning people for them.

I hope that will be the first thing from Party Conference.

I would also hope that any moves towards weakening the National Executive Committee — which is already taking place — will be countered. Even in the agenda there are suggestions there should be representation on the NEC from the Regional Labour Party Committees.

Again, there is nothing straightforward, but it is all going towards weakening the position of the NEC, and increasingly making the parliamentary leadership the central body.

I hope the Party will not go along with the idea of 'one member, one vote' — not because there is no argument for not increasing democracy in the Party, but because 'one member, one vote' is part of a policy to take power away from the Party members. It will not give them power as is being suggested in the arguments in favour of 'one member, one vote'.

There is also the whole question of the trade union input, which is vital for the Labour Party.

I hope that proportional representation is slung out, and that they do not set up a committee to look at that. I hope that the Party's defence policy is not simply reiterated, but that we move to a clearer position and start talking about coming out of

Eric Heffer MP

NATO.

I hope that resolutions on public ownership are carried, and that we start fighting on the issue of the need for public ownership. At the moment we are doing very little about it. Privatisation is going on, and we seem to be mesmerised by share-owning.

I hope that the whole idea that the Labour Party is appealing to individualistic self-interest is knocked on the head, because there is no compatibility between that and the collective responsibility of looking after all the people. I am talking about the mass of working people, lifting them up, developing their rights and so on.

I hope the trade union position is strengthened and that the miners are given 100% support.

As far as the NEC is concerned, I hope we strengthen the position of the left there. I am standing again,

and although I know of strong support from the Merseyside area I have not yet got a national picture.

All sorts of expulsions are still taking place. I read the other day that people in Knowsley North are still being threatened with expulsion, together with quite misleading stories about being under Militant control. It is not true of the mass of the members there or even the main activists, who were involved in the perfectly justified argument that the constituency should have its own selection and not have one imposed upon them.

The entire Party should raise as much money as they can to make certain that our comrades in Liverpool are not bankrupted. The entire movement has got to rally now that they know what the disqualified Liverpool councillors are faced with.

In the election the Labour Party on Merseyside, and especially Liverpool, did tremendously well, and part of the reason for that was because these Liverpool comrades fought and made real gains.

## Against OMOV, for accountability

On Tuesday 15 September the Labour Party National Executive Committee decided by 19 votes to 8 to recommend that the Party Conference votes in principle for 'one member, one vote' (OMOV) in reselecting parliamentary candidates, and then decides between two constitutional amendments — one straight 'one member, one vote', the other

a local electoral college with one member one vote' for the CLP's individual members and block votes for affiliated trade unions.

Vladimir Derer of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy told Socialist Organiser:

The key thing must be to defeat both proposals on 'one member, one vote', and the tactics in the Conference must be completely subordinated to this objective.

The question of defending accountability remains exactly the same with either of the proposals.

It is also quite unprecedented that constitutional amendments will be voted on without previously being discussed by the CLPs and most probably by most of the affiliated organisations. The actual wording of the amendments we still do not know. It is a blatant way of trying to push 'one member, one vote' through.

Because the proposals have been published late they have created the procedural problem. We must defer the decision on them, preferably until 1988. That is essential even if it means accepting some compromise in the wording of an emergency resolution.

### THE SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

The Socialist Conference. Sponsored by the Campaign Group of MPs, the Socialist Society and the Conference of Socialist Economists. Chesterfield — Winding Wheel Centre, 24/25 October 1987. The conference is open to all socialists. Conference fee £5 waged, £2 unwaged from Conference Office, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. Telephone: 01-734 8501.

## Defend the LPYS!

By Mark Osborn

Labour Party conference will be asked to decide to cut the Labour Party Young Socialists' maximum wage from 25 to 22 years and to abolish the YS's regional conferences and committees.

These are both bad moves and should be opposed. Abolition of regional conferences is plainly undemocratic; slashing the age limit serves no purpose at all except to smash up many LPYS branches...The adult party is doing a job on the LPYS.

Proposals to alter LPYS structures

were presented in mid-1986, motivated by ex-left-winger Tom Sawyer in the spirit of witch-hunting.

Sawyer and others are eventually aiming to get rid of the Militant-dominated LPYS altogether by amalgamating in some way the LPYS with Labour Students and trade union youth sections. This may well come up next year. For now we are faced with the thin end of the wedge.

Unfortunately Sawyer and co. have been given ammunition by the LPYS itself. But there is no getting away from it. These are witch-hunting proposals aimed at damaging the YS, and the message of the left should be that reforms to the YS must be fought for within the YS itself.

# Back to basics

The Labour Party, both nationally and locally, often seems very detached from the lives of working class people. The national party consists of distant 'politicians', while locally the party is often seen as the faceless bureaucracy responsible for the housing shortage.

That has to change. For the Labour Party's sake it has to change, but also for the sake of the many people who will be at the sharp end of new Tory attacks and who need to have political direction for a fightback.

Both nationally and locally the Labour Party needs to begin, or increase, systematic campaigning around the issues that affect local people - housing, racism, health, unemployment. It has to establish or participate in real campaigns that involve local people, drawing them into the party. It has to couple this with education, discussion and debate.

The national Party should call at least one major demonstration in the near future - like the huge demonstrations against unemployment in 1981. It should provide assistance for local party campaigns.

The Party should give unqualified support to workers who go into battle against the Tories. A public stand by the Labour leaders in support of workers on strike would help those workers, and also help the Labour Party, which would be seen to be sticking up for its principles.

Local parties too, of course, should organise support for workers in struggle, providing facilities, helping to raise money, regularly visiting picket lines.

Especially in the inner cities, the Labour Party needs to organise at

## EDITORIAL

once to resist the Tory onslaught that is impending - on housing in particular, and in the shape of the poll tax. Linking up with trade unions and tenants' associations, the Labour Party can help give such campaigns an overall political focus.

This kind of campaigning does not mean that the Labour Party should forget or ignore the issues that have concerned the left over recent years - like racism, women's oppression and sexuality. Far from it. It does mean that the orientation of such campaigns must change.

All too often they have been obscure and apparently irrelevant in style, and 'commandist' in practice. Integrated into basic, grass roots campaigning, such issues can relate directly to local people, and involve them in activity.

Active, outward-going campaigns, 'out of the committee rooms and on to the streets', must be the keynote for Labour. If we start now, we can defeat the Tories - defeat their plans for the working class and defeat them at the next election.



# Castrate rapists?

The hot line from God, via Manchester's police chief James Anderton, is that serious and persistent sex offenders should be castrated.

While it is difficult to take the mad-eyed prophet of the North West very seriously, the subject itself is a serious one, and a lot of people agree with Anderton.

Rape is a terrible crime, and horribly common. The psychological scars inflicted upon women who suffer rape can be deep and permanent.

So why not have a permanent form of punishment? In our society, rapists in fact often get off lightly: the severity of what they have done is not matched by a severe sentence. To protect women - and to scare off future rapists - is it not fair and just to have a penalty that fits the crime?

It is not so simple. Rape is barbaric, but so too is physical mutilation by the state. Castration would be as barbaric as cutting off the hands of thieves or killing murderers. And

medieval society, with its horrific punishments, was more brutal and lawless than modern society, not less so.

There are, nowadays, forms of 'chemical castration', that is drugs whose effects are not necessarily permanent. But they can have horrific side effects. In the 1970s, some male sex offenders were injected with female hormones, which produced breasts which then had to be surgically removed. But then they grew more breasts, which were removed, and so on, until doctors refused to operate, and the offenders' bodies were horribly disfigured.

Voluntary treatment by new drugs might be different, but the drugs would have to be properly tested - and even then, the case is not a clear one.

The principle of 'an eye for an eye' is no less barbaric when used by would-be feminists than when used by Anderton. It does nothing to stop

rape. Better design and lighting of streets; women's self-defence classes; legal and police procedures more sensitive to the victim; and extending the legal definition to include, for example, rape within marriage - all these would help. Fundamentally, we need to change the position of women in society, and male attitudes towards women, to wipe out the culture from which rapists grow.

Castration would not help do any of that. It would make society more violent, more medieval in its attitudes, more brutalised. Moreover, if we agree that the state has the right to inflict physical mutilation on these sex offenders, it could be just the thin end of the wedge. What other 'sex offenders' might find that castration is the cure also for their 'illnesses'? Child molesters, all kinds of 'perverts', homosexuals...

Anderton may have done us one good turn - by showing those on the left who want heavier sentences for rapists where such ideas lead.

or anywhere else in the Eastern bloc, then Maggie Thatcher and others, would have been screaming their heads off. But it is happening here.

pessimistic attitude that says the lads are not ready for it. What happened at Frickley showed that to be wrong.

If we tighten the screw and then find that British Coal will still not relent, then we should be escalating the dispute into full-scale industrial action.

British Coal's attitude hardened when the NEC voted for the 'soft option'. It was then they started talking about breaches of contract and locking miners out. If we retreat or take the soft option, then that is the signal for British Coal to push.

I think we should push back by taking the hard line. I know that will give us problems in Notts, and no doubt elsewhere, but I do not see there is any alternative.

The UDM say they are going to put advertisements in all the papers trying to recruit to their organisation. I do not think they will have much suc-

cess. The fact they are trying to recruit miners by breaking industrial action shows exactly what they are worth.

In Notts the NUM had a 92% mandate for action, and I cannot see blokes going into a ballot, voting yes to that extent, and then turning their backs on the union. We might lose a few members, then so be it. My own personal view is that if a NUM member is going to leave the union and join the UDM because of an overtime ban, the he will not be a great loss.

The miners are taking action again, and I think the rest of the labour movement have got to look back at the lessons of 1984/5. Because other unions hung back on solidarity the miners were defeated. But it was not just a defeat for the miners, it was a defeat for the rest of the labour movement.

The trade union and Labour leaders are now talking about massive recruitment campaigns - but unless they show themselves willing to pro-

tect working class people they might as well not bother. They might as well recruit amongst the middle classes for the Liberal Party!

The Labour Party and the TUC are there to protect and advance the interests of the working class, and it is about time they started to realise that and act accordingly.

I think the Labour Party needs to realise that the distrust of it that exists amongst working class people is of its own making. Time and again it's said on the doorstep 'they piss in the same pot', 'they are all the same'. We stand there and argue with them, but in our heart of hearts we know it is often true.

People become enmeshed in the parliamentary system, and they forget about the working class people who sent them there and the reason why they did it.

The commitment I want to see from the Labour Party conference is that they will stand by the working class, both now and when they get into office.

## PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

### Whither Ashton?

How much longer can Labour MP Joe Ashton carry on at The Star?

Ashton began his weekly column back in the early '80s when The Star briefly supported Labour, and has continued it without a qualm as the paper moved ever rightwards and downmarket in its efforts to mimic The Sun.

Of course there is nothing wrong in principle with socialists contributing to capitalist newspapers, Leon Trotsky once had an article published in the Daily Express. But then he had something worthwhile to say.

Ashton's fellow columnist at The Star is Deputy editor Ray Mills whose reactionary tirades appear every Tuesday as 'The Angry Voice'. Mills was recently disciplined by the NUJ over a piece blaming African immigrants for the spread of AIDS.

Now that The Star has fallen under the aegis of pornographer David Sullivan and his Sunday Sport henchman Michael Gabbert, Ashton's position may finally have become untenable.

The Star now clearly outdoes the Sun in terms of nipples and 'bonking' stories per issue. This may not offend 'prolier than thou' professional lumpen Ashton too much, but Sullivan and Gilbert are likely to decide that the MPs folksy contributions don't fit in with the paper's new 'snap, crackle and bonk' style.

Should they decide that an unprincipled, boorish, discredited Labour MP really is essential to the success of the paper, I predict that they will ditch Ashton and make an offer to the boastful Mr George Galloway.

### Just in time

Conrad Black, the mysterious Canadian owner of the Daily Telegraph is said to be unhappy with editor Max Hastings. Believe it or not, Black regards Hastings as a closet leftie, and has been looking for a more reliable Thatcherite/Reganite replacement.

Ironically, the row over Sir Alfred Sherman's invitation to French fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen to come to the Tory Party conference may result in a reprieve for Hastings, one of his first acts as editor was to sack one of the Telegraph's long standing chief leader writers - Sir Alfred Sherman.



### Back to basics

The lessons of Wallasey's election campaign 50p

Wallasey's socialist candidate Lol Duffy came very close to beating Tory MP Lynda Chalker. Read how they built an active, campaigning Labour Party. Available from PO Box 823, London SE15. 50p plus postage.

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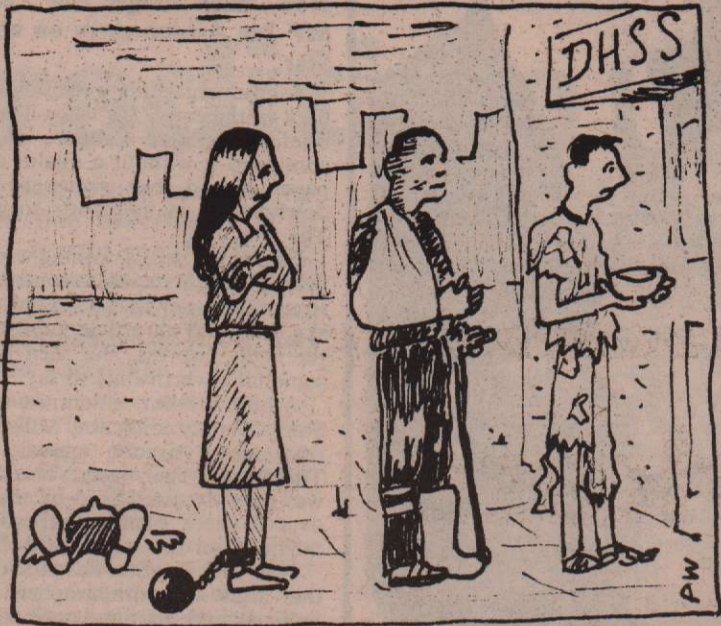
I think there will be tremendous pressure from the rank and file on branch, area and national officials saying the 'soft option' version of the overtime ban is not on. From talking to miners in many other coalfields I know the feeling is very militant - they are ready to have a go.

For the overtime ban to mean anything it has to be considerably tightened up. I do not believe in the point out British Coal's hypocrisy. If they claim the right not to go along with Tribunal findings they disagree with, what then about the hundreds of sacked miners who British Coal say are outside the gates because of Tribunal findings? Of course the whole thing is loaded against the workers.

This whole system is just not justice - it's a travesty. If these events had been happening in Poland

# GRAFFITI

THE BEST ADVERT FOR YTS...



...IS THE PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN ON ONE...

## Workers stir in East Europe

The official press in the USSR has just reported a strike for the first time in many years.

In Yugoslavia, strikes have been an accepted (if illegal) fact for some years. But twice in recent months strike waves have forced the government to back down on austerity plans.

At the same time, according to the Financial Times, 'Hungary

forecasts a sharp rise in bankruptcy proceedings... (Workers are)

worried about the effect of the planned VAT and income tax'.

## End of Olliemania

There are signs from Washington that the mania surrounding the person of Colonel Oliver North is dying out.

Huge stocks of 'Ollie for President' t-shirts lie unsold, and books and videotapes of the All American Hero's

testimony have hit the market with a soggy splat.

While sales managers count the cost of the Reagan era's latest failed fad, an opinion poll by Louis Harris finds that 65% of Americans think that North was wrong in his arms trafficking escapades. 73% think that he committed a crime. Even the 'Army Times' has denounced him as portraying "a travesty of military values" while handwriting expert Charles Hamilton has commented on North's script that while he may be a perfect soldier, he is probably 'very disturbed'.

It seems that the US ultra right have bought yet another bad bargain.

## 29% for them, 5% for us

A Labour Research Department study has revealed that the highest pay increases in 1986-7 went to company directors. The average increase was 28.5%, up from 17.6% last year.

Those same company directors have awarded workers only 5.5%, down from last year's 7%.

In two major companies, Allied Lyons and Woolworth, the highest paid directors were given increases of more than 100%.

Ford UK's top director has increased his pay by 74.5%, taking him up to £222,105 a year. Workers for Ford had to make do with 6%.

The same study has shown that the UK is now the only country where workers have no

legal right to holidays. Previously, wages councils could set holidays but can now only fix a single hourly rate.

French workers get five weeks holidays by law. In West Germany workers get three weeks and in Spain 30 days.

## Women move left

A recent study of women trade unionists concludes that they are moving to the left.

While women have traditionally been less left wing than men, poll evidence from the 1983 and 1987 general elections (supported by a large amount of evidence gathered from opinion polls and local election results) shows that female trade unionists are more

likely to support Labour than female non-trade unionists, and that among non-trade unionists women are to the left of men.

The study shows that while there has been little change in men's attitudes since 1983, women trade union members have swung five percentage points away from the Tories and seven towards Labour.

It seems that eight years of life under a woman Prime Minister has done little to convince women workers that life is better under the Tories. The British figures are in line with international trends: in the most developed capitalist economies, in Scandinavia and the US, women are now generally more left wing than men.

## Wages

A statutory minimum wage would reduce unemployment, according to a report to the TUC. A minimum of half the average wage would increase the national wage bill by less than 1%, but reduce unemployment by at least 10,000.

THE BEST ADVERT FOR YTS...



...IS THE PEOPLE WHO USE IT.

# SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY NOW



The way forward?

## SW and Scots Assembly

I wonder if any of your readers could possibly clarify for me the attitude of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) towards the demand for a Scottish Assembly.

The SWP leaflet on this issue is headlined 'Yes to the Assembly' and declares that "it's a demand which any socialist should put themselves fairly and squarely behind".

But such apparent enthusiasm for an Assembly is undermined by the leaflet's subsequent statement that "the multinationals and big banks...

would dominate an assembly in Edinburgh as easily as they do Parliament in Westminster", and its advocacy of a "real" campaign against Thatcher's policies.

The SWP has also been very busy flyposting. One poster proclaims 'Poll Tax No! Scottish Assembly Yes!' Does this mean the way to fight the poll tax is to campaign for an Assembly?

The other set of posters, advertising public meetings, asks 'Scottish Assembly - Is It The Answer?'

These posters do not specify the

question, but surely slogans like 'Yes to the Assembly' indicate that the Assembly is indeed the answer.

Then a recent *Socialist Worker* tells us that "many people in Scotland think that the answer to the ravages of eight years of Tory rule lies in a Scottish Assembly. It doesn't".

I sought clarification of this matter from a member of the SWP on the 12 September demonstration in Glasgow. She told me: "The Scottish people are fighting for independence from capitalism, and socialists must support them in this fight". This made me even more confused.

The more usual response I have had from members of the SWP is that workers have illusions in an Assembly and it would be 'sectarian' to oppose them.

But I always thought that socialists were meant to combat illusions, not share them. And where does this line of argument lead you on issues such as import controls and immigration controls?

Could any of your readers shed any light on this matter? The SWP certainly seems to be unable to do so.

STAN CROOKE, Edinburgh

## Whose democracy?

No doubt Socialist Organiser's original intentions on the question of 'no platform' were to iron out the problems this policy has given rise to. But it has ended up as one more stage in your paper's collapse into petty bourgeois 'democracy'.

SO stands for "free speech for those with whom we profoundly disagree, or even those whom we detest". A good liberal sentiment, that. But what was the view of the Russian working class in 1917? In the following week's *Socialist Organiser* (no 327), your day-by-day account of the Russian revolution notes:

"1 September. The Vyborg regional soviet (Petrograd) bans the sale of bourgeois papers ... and the sale of (bourgeois) humorous-satirical magazines... The sale of bourgeois papers is likewise banned in the Moscow-Narvsky region (Petrograd)..."

Horror of horrors! By SO's logic, this act by the Petrograd proletariat would 'play into the hands' of the bourgeoisie, who could pose as the custodians of free speech. 'Banning is folly', says SO; strike at your enemy said the Russian workers.

It is the difference between an approach based on class struggle, and one based on metaphysical concerns for democracy.

Of course, anti-Zionist plays or groups or whatever should not be banned, and although SO's defence of our right to see 'Perdition' is (to

put it mildly) a bit backhanded, it does make a change to see SO defending the rights of anti-Zionists. But the basis for that defence is miserable. Instead of standing up for the rights of socialists, the left and anti-Zionists, SO stands up for 'democracy'. Marxists always ask as Lenin said: democracy for which class? SO has abandoned or forgotten class criteria.

NIGEL JONES, London

## Defend Viraj Mendis

Recently the Home Office have changed their position with regard to Viraj Mendis, and the Sanctuary in the Church of the Ascension, Hulme, Manchester. They have stated that they are reconsidering the possibility of entering the Sanctuary and removing Viraj.

To justify this change in stance they have sought to use statements made by Justice Mann, the presiding judge at Viraj Mendis' Judicial Review hearing. There have also been suggestions that, with the signing of the Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Agreement, it would now be safe for Viraj to return to Sri Lanka.

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign have produced a dossier containing our assessment of the situation, and explaining why now, more than ever, it is important to defend

Viraj's right to remain in this country.

The campaign has a march every Friday at which links are made with other groups in struggle. Please contact us if your organisation is interested in coming on the march and speaking at the end of the march.

The campaign urgently needs money to maintain the Sanctuary, and to continue to fight for Viraj's right to remain in this country. Please give as much as you can afford. Could you please send all correspondence to:

VDMC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester, M15 5AL. Tel:061-234 3168 (24 hours).

Hoping to hear from you soon, Pauline Harris Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign.

# Moses Mayekiso, workers' leader

**Brian Williams, national education officer and Cape Secretary of the Electrical and Allied Workers' Trade Union of South Africa (EAWTU) explains why socialists should campaign to free the jailed black South African metal union leader Moses Mayekiso.**

new order in the country based on the paramountcy of the working class.

Moses' political position is founded on the independent workers' movement — independent of populist control.

I've known Moses personally for quite a few years. He's a very warm and concerned person, a very good person. I remember the first time we went to the national negotiations in the metal industry. I also met him when he came to the funeral of one of our members who was shot and killed in September 1985.

He also attended a funeral at which five of us from Cape Town were detained. While we were in prison he constantly tried to find out if we were OK.



Moses Mayekiso

On a human and political level Moses is really important to the development of an independent working class movement in the country.

It's a blow that he is on trial and if he is convicted I think the movement will suffer a large blow.

On a personal level he has suffered a great deal. He has been detained before and has been subject to security police and state harassment.

Of all the townships in the country, Alexandra was a glowing example of workers' control, principles taken from the workplace into the community. The solid organisational skills that were developed within the trade union movement and factories were transferred to the community, so that Alexandra township had the best organised system of elected street committees and community

structures.

As an acknowledgement of this, in their attempt to destroy these revolutionary structures, the state has pumped millions of rand into Alexandra.

People of Britain and throughout the world can contribute by sending consistent messages of solidarity to Moses's family and also to his trade union, NUMSA. It is especially important to the family that they get messages of concern from all over the world.

Moses is facing very serious charges and he could be executed if found guilty. We mustn't underestimate the seriousness of the state's attempt to silence him.

I think there will be an international outcry if he is executed, but that depends on the political situation at the time.

Moses Mayekiso represents that generation within the liberation movement that is committed to a

# Developing the workers' voice

**Russell Sabor, national vice-president of EAWTU, and Brian Williams spoke to Socialist Organiser.**

**Russell Sabor:** The reason we are in Britain is to get solidarity from workers here, either financial or moral, for workers in South Africa and especially in Cape Town. We had invitations from several places to come and speak.

We would like to get in contact with Plessey workers here. We've got a Plessey factory in Cape Town and since we have some problems there we'd like to hear how Plessey workers handle situations here and take it back to our members in Cape Town.

There have been dramatic changes in Plessey South Africa as a result of the solidarity that we received from Plessey workers here in 1986.

The negotiations with management this year have produced quite exciting results.

**Brian Williams:** They have agreed that any member of our union who is detained under the State of Emergency will receive full salaries and wages for the period of the detention, and will be re-employed on release.

Another important victory for the workers is that we've been able to win 16 June (Soweto Day) as a paid holiday. It is the first agreement in the country where 16 June has been won.

Another unique piece of negotiation is the emergency distress fund at the factory which any workers can use to tide them over.

We are the only union in the country that has managed to have that kind of fund established, so the direct and indirect solidarity work has made it possible for us to make important gains in the factory.

**Russell Sabor:** One other important thing we'd like to mention is that Plessey also considered 1 May as a paid holiday. There is a direct link between what happens in South Africa and what happens in Britain. It is the solidarity chain that has allowed us to make these gains. We've shown workers in other factories in South Africa something they can strive towards.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank British Plessey workers for their support, because it is through this support that we've managed to achieve these things in South Africa.

By way of traditional organising of workers, the white collar, ad-



Cape Town children play 'Union Farm'

ministrative and clerical workers are largely ignored. But in Plessey we have organised the office workers and have managed to score quite a high wage increase for them and a wide range of benefits.

All these things were not accidental. They have not happened without a fight. If workers in South Africa aren't organised, then all the solidarity in the world is quite meaningless. It is ultimately the unity of the workers in South Africa that will swing the scales in their favour.

Sections in the Plessey management have been fairly far sighted, but the Afrikaner managers are really strongly opposed to awarding any real wage increases or benefits for workers. We know that if they can they will break the unions. We're not fooled or lulled into a false sense of security. We recognise that it's vital that the unity of workers within the factory remains really strong.

Earlier this year workers in Cape Town voted to join COSATU, but the union nationally voted to join NACTU, and we've fallen in line with the national democratic decision.

If you look at our union in Cape Town in comparison with all the others, our union is acknowledged as by far the most militant and well organised. The number of strikes organised by our trade union in Cape Town is by far the highest of all the unions in the region, whether in COSATU, NACTU or independent.

For instance, earlier in the year we had a strike at Lightway Electrical. We had a great experience of building unified structures within that factory. We've had other strikes we've also won.

We had a strike at Firefite which was very important because it was organised and to a large extent run by women. It was the longest strike in the history of Cape Town in that industry. It ended on 17 September and began as far back as 13 April.

It proved to us that women workers are by far the most skilful in terms of organisational ability — these workers developed at an incredible pace. The things they learned have been passed on to workers in other factories and they've been able to show them that it's possible to win.

Some of them had husbands who had been unemployed for two years. They managed to stay together. Only one woman out of 55 broke away from the strike. It gave them not only great difficulties but great experiences. They benefitted as a result of their experience in the strike. It was a very small factory but 25 police were called in.

The union's basic policy is not affiliating to political organisations. This does not imply that the union does not have a political position.

The essential politics of the workers and the leaders within the union is centred on working class politics based on the non-

parliamentary struggle of workers to liberate the country.

We are presently involved in the formulation of a workers' charter which will make clear the position of workers. A regional conference is being held in which the whole issue of the workers' charter will be discussed, and delegates from the Southern Region will be putting forward resolutions.

The workers' charter will reflect the workers' position and the centrality of workers' leadership being translated into concrete political

terms in relation to a worker-controlled society, a workers' government.

The solution to the problems that workers face will be reflected in the charter — what workers feel, not what the middle class feel or think workers should feel. It will come from workers, not be imposed on them.

With regard to solidarity, messages of support are very important. But these will be meaningless without financial support — putting bread on the table.

We are encouraged that workers on the factory floor in Britain have held collections. It is a practical show of support from workers in one country to workers in another. It cuts out all the bureaucrats and the middle men.

The nature of capitalist society isn't different in any part of the world. In South Africa the local circumstance can be used to its own advantage. Apartheid has been a useful base to accumulate greater capital. They use the system. There's a very strong relationship between apartheid and the capitalists in our country.

We've seen recently a very strong attempt by capitalists to distance themselves from apartheid. They read the warning lights, so capitalists want to see the dismantling of apartheid. They're pumping money into those organisations which don't threaten the existence of capitalism but which contribute to the downfall of apartheid.

The capitalists are looking for a new people to manage South Africa who don't want to threaten the system. Whether it's black management or white management, they don't mind as long as the local wing of the imperialist system is allowed to function without any threat to the accumulation of profits.



Solidarity from Plessey workers in Merseyside

# Women wo



These pictures show members of the Electrical and Allied Workers' Trade Union (EAWTU) in Cape Town, South Africa. Last year, solidarity from Plessey workers in Britain forced Plessey in South Africa to retreat on its heavy handed treatment of the union.

In the pictures: workers at Firefite, Cape Town, who were on strike between 13 April and 17 September this year, when they won an important victory.

Top right: workers demonstrate in Cape Town. Bottom right, workers celebrate victory. Top center: workers demonstrate a few hundred yards from the Parliament building where protests, placards, etc., are forbidden.

Representatives of the EAWTU are interviewed on page 5 of this week's Socialist Organiser.

AFRICA

# orkers win



# Wins for free-market Labourism

The Labor parties in Australia and New Zealand have recorded historic election victories. Bob Hawke led the Australian Labor Party to its third consecutive term since 1983, the first time this has happened in Australian history.

In New Zealand, David Lange led the New Zealand Labour Party to its second consecutive term, also a first.

These are not the only similarities between the two parties. Both have consciously set out to systematically change the popular understanding of what Labor stood for. Both have implemented policies that Thatcher has made the hallmark of her government.

Despite a national swing of 1% against Labor, it increased its majority to 24 seats. Large swings were recorded against the ALP in safe Labour seats, while in the marginal seats that ultimately determined the result, there were either very small swings to and against Labor.

This is all the more remarkable considering that household consumption declined in Australia by 1% over 1986/87, the first such decline in thirty years.

A number of protest candidates stood on either single issues or as part of an attempt to establish the groundwork for a 'new party'. They hoped to capitalise on the disillusionment felt by many Labor voters, but failed dismally. In only two seats did protest candidates to the left of Labor poll more than 5%.

In the Senate only two protest can-

## Tony Brown reports from Sydney on the big Labour election victories in Australia and New Zealand

didates were elected, the anti Nuclear candidates Jo Vallentine in Western Australia and Robert Woods in New South Wales, and both of these were the last elected after an exhaustive distribution of preferences.

Expelled Labor members George Georges and Bill Hartley both polled extremely poorly. The new party proponents have learnt nothing from the results.

The SWP (Socialist Workers' Party — like Socialist Action in Britain, but more Stalinist), retreated from their shrill denunciations of Labor and ALP members in the last week of the campaign. They had earlier called for a vote for protest candidates, Australian Democrats and then Labor. But three days before the election headlined their editorial with "Return Labor and prepare to fight". The SWP weren't alone in this change as the CPA and International Socialists also changed their tune in the last week of the campaign.

Within the ALP there was no questioning of the government's record or platform. The parliamentary left have either become complete captives of the right wing majority or in some cases latter day converts.

Hawke and Keating have not only hijacked Labor party policy but also stolen much of the Coalition platform. Since March 1983 they have dramatically changed the face of what many still believed to be a refor-

ming party in the style of Whitlam's 1972-75 government.

In that time they have changed party policy to allow for the mining and sale of uranium, deregulated the finance system and floated the \$A, launched a comprehensive restructuring of the tax system with the biggest cuts going to companies and salary earners above \$35,000/year, massively cut back social spending reducing the government deficit from \$10 billion in 1983 to balance in 1987/88, and cut real wages by 3% in that same period.

This has all been done in order to let the market determine economic priorities. An almost mystical belief in market forces has led to open hostility on the part of Labor ministers to unions and working conditions and wages. The steel, vehicle and textile industries have been restructured with the loss of thousands of jobs. Legislation has been introduced to restrict the right to strike under the threat of massive fines.

Working days lost in the year to May 1987 are the lowest since 1968. The 1.3 million days lost were 20% lower than in 1986 and 71% less than the last year of the Fraser government.

Now Hawke has indicated that he wants to privatise large sections of public enterprise in order to reduce

the call on capital funds by the public sector, and introduce a compulsory national identity card. Included in the privatisation list is Qantas, the Commonwealth Bank, the profitable sections of Telecom, Australian Airlines and others, all of which were established by Labor governments.

The experience in New Zealand has been much the same. Lange has used the banning of US nuclear powered ships from NZ ports as a cover to a massive attack on working class living standards.

The goals have been the same as in Australia although the method has varied. Whereas Keating failed to introduce a VAT style consumption tax, Lange's Finance Minister Roger Douglas managed to introduce a 10% tax. Douglas has also managed to privatise a number of NZ public enterprises, and cut into social spending and wages.

Underpinning these policies is an ideological offensive aimed at arguing that this is in fact the traditional Labour Party. Keating and Douglas have been the main 'theorists' in their respective parties pushing this line.

Douglas in his book *Toward Prosperity* argues that living standards would fall if the economy continues to rely on large scale public works. He argues that the social goals of the old Labour Party which set up the NZ welfare state in 1931 are still the same today.

Keating argues that the period between 1950 and 1975 was an aberration. He wants to recast the pre-World War II Labor governments in his own image. Central to his theme is that the ALP between 1950 and 1975

took wealth creation for granted, whereas previously its creation was the fundamental issue. Therefore measures aimed at ensuring profit and growth are the cornerstone of the Labor programme and only then can some redistribution occur.

The parliamentary left have been disarmed. They have no alternative. They also believe that restoring profitability is the foundation stone. They only disagree on the method. They simply argue that more government spending is the cure without recognising that many of these areas are seen as being inefficient, impersonal and bureaucratic.

Keating on the other hand has offered a 'radical' alternative to the large internal and external debt. While it has been largely at the expense of working people, many see it as being necessary. The lack of fight by the left and the unions has left workers believing that there is little alternative.

At no time have the left questioned how the social surplus should be increased or how it should be distributed. More importantly there has not been any questioning of how decisions about this surplus or production itself should be made.

The ruling class are comfortable and confident with both Hawke and Lange. While New Zealand almost knocked off the Nationals in the richest north shore Auckland seats, Douglas' majority in his blue collar seat of Manurewa was nearly halved.

In Keating's working class seat of Blandland there was a 6% swing. Labour's traditional supporters are not yet as convinced as the rich.

# Act now to axe the poll tax!

On Monday 14 September local authorities throughout Scotland began preparations to implement the poll tax, due to come into effect in Scotland on 1 April 1989.

The poll tax is a straightforward case of making the poor poorer and the rich richer. It is a flat-rate tax to be paid by each adult. The rich industrialist living in a mansion will pay the same amount as his employee on poverty-level wages in a slum.

Households with an income of £558 or more per week will benefit. In other income groups there will be more losers than winners.

Young householders aged 18-24 will be worse off by an average of £3 a week. Unemployed householders will suffer by £3.71 a week. Pensioners will lose £1.62 a week on average.

The Tories claim that the poll tax will be a popular replacement for the current rates system. In fact, they think it will be so popular that their legislation provides for fines of £200 for anyone providing false information in an attempt to avoid payment of the poll-tax!

But the poll tax is more than just a redistribution of income from the poor to the rich. It is the latest stage in the Tories' attacks on local government democracy.

## By Stan Crooke

In the last decade central government grants to local authorities Scotland have been cut from 75% of their expenditure to 55%. Local authorities already face penalties if the government considers its rates too high. Now central government has the power to intervene and fix the level of the community charge if the Tories consider it too high.

Moreover, control over business rates will be lost by the local authorities to the government, who will thus end up having control of 80% of local authority income.

Business rates are to increase at most by the rate of inflation. The net result will be that local authorities will end up with less control (because of the Secretary of State's powers) over less of their income (because of loss of control over the business rates).

This means that even a small cut in central government revenue support grant (the new name for rate support grant) will need a big increase in the poll tax to compensate. A 5% cut in revenue support grant at a time of 5% inflation, with council spending standing still in real terms, would



need a 55% increase in the poll tax to compensate. The Tories claim that forcing each individual adult (instead of each householder, as under the present system) to pay the poll tax will lead to more accountability. "Many electors are indifferent to how much their local council spends," claimed the Tory Green Paper on the poll tax, on the grounds that so many of them pay no rates at all or only part of their rates.

By this logic, MPs are unaccountable as well, given that only half of Scotland's adult population pays income tax.

In fact, introduction of the poll tax will provide an incentive for people to deprive themselves of the right to vote, by keeping their names off the Electoral Register. Although the Community Charge Register will be separate from the Electoral Register, cross-checks will be made between the two.

In the aftermath of the General Election, the Labour Party in Scotland has made much of its

"Scottish mandate". It is a pity that they have not done anything with it to fight the poll tax.

Despite all the hot air rhetoric about fighting the poll tax to the last Council Chamber desk and form-in-triplicate, the meeting of the Labour-dominated Convention of Scottish Local Authorities of 28 August agreed to open talks with the Scottish Office on implementation of the poll tax.

Some local authorities had not even made a pretence of putting up serious opposition to the poll tax. Labour-controlled Strathclyde Regional Council, for example, has long since had detailed plans drawn up for compilation of the Community Charge Register — right down to the minutiae of where the desks of the team which will compile the register will be sited in which offices.

The poll tax is unpopular. Refusal by local authorities to help compile the register, and a pledge not to cooperate, could raise the level of opposition to the poll tax and make it

unworkable.

So, too, would public declarations by all Labour MPs and councillors in Scotland that they would refuse to pay the poll tax themselves.

To raise slogans such as "Poll Tax — We Won't Pay" instead lets the local authorities off the hook, and transfers the burden of fighting the poll tax from the councils to the individual electors. It is the equivalent of expecting council-house tenants not to buy their own homes after their councils have failed to oppose Tory-imposed rent increases and Tory legislation that councils should sell off their houses.

Labour Party activists should therefore be campaigning for: withdrawal of local authorities from co-operation in drawing up the Community Charge Register; local authorities to refuse to pay the bill from the Secretary of State; elected Labour representatives to pledge to refuse to pay the poll tax; local authorities to pledge to refuse to collect in the poll tax in April 1989.

## March from Broadwater Farm to Downing Street. Saturday 3 October.

Organised by Broadwater Farm Youth Association, Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, Broadwater Farm Residents' Association. We demand a public enquiry into the uprising on 6 October 1985. The immediate release of the innocent youths framed and convicted after the uprising. Fight state racism and oppression. March leaves Broadwater Farm at 10.00 am. Rally in Hyde Park. 3.00 p.m.



# On the side of struggle

**Belinda Weaver**  
reviews 'Business as Usual'

Instead of going to the pub or watching telly as usual, get out of the house and see 'Business as Usual'. It'll only cost about as much as two pints, and it won't give you any of the side effects.

I didn't want to leave the cinema at the end — I wanted to stay with the story and the characters a bit longer. It's well worth a look.

It's political in the best way — it's not a preachy documentary that you feel worthy (but not stimulated) watching, nor is it overly simplistic. We're not expected just to cheer on the heroine. The film tackles quite a lot of issues that overlap, and it's thought-provoking.

It's the story of Babs, a dress shop manager in Liverpool. She's had to go out to work ever since her shop steward husband was made redundant. They're managing, just. Kieran has had to get used to being a 'housewife'. He also minds his baby granddaughter during the day, so that her mother can work. In this family, it's the women who go out to work.

Babs isn't political. When Kieran got his redundancy pay, they moved off their council estate and bought a house. She wanted a better life.

This is utterly threatened when she loses her job. Her area manager has been touching up one of her girls, so she tackles him. Outraged, he gives her the sack.

## Appeal

Babs is prepared to appeal to the company management but, egged on by her *Militant* son Stevie and his girlfriend, Paula, she decides to try the union too.

The T&G has an unemployed branch (also brimful of *Militant* supporters) who are happy to picket the shop, and soon Babs is in the thick of a fight.

Babs, played by Glenda Jackson, is totally believable. It's a brilliant performance. She's all too human — indecisive, angry, frightened. The fight teaches her rather a lot — what sexual harassment means ('I thought it was just a man misbehaving himself'), what the police will do to pickets, and what words like 'unity' and 'labour movement' are all about.

Because Jackson is so good, all these revelations work. And that's saying a lot, because the film puts across quite complex ideas.



Dilemmas of real life

Not only Babs is believable, either. Kieran, played by John Thaw, conveys well the bewilderment of a man whose role is changing. His advice to Babs is too cautious for Stevie, who wants an all out confrontation with management, rather than negotiation. As the fight goes on, Babs tends more to Stevie's view, leaving Kieran isolated.

## Drawn

Stevie and Paula are well drawn. Also very good is Cathy Tyson's Josie, the sexually harassed shop girl. Josie is furious and offended by the attack, but her initial rage carries her further than she's really prepared to go. She can't afford to rock the boat

in 1980s Liverpool. Her boyfriend's already on the dole; she doesn't want to lose her job. She's torn by what happens to Babs, but she's scared to act.

The film shows the dilemmas people face in times of high unemployment. And it's good that the film is sympathetic to Josie, who is shown as a victim rather than a villain. But even so, the film is plainly on the side of solidarity and struggle, which are shown to be powerful weapons.

The film is a bit of a plug for *Militant*, but it's not offensive. There are a few shots of Millies selling papers, and Stevie and the other picketers all seem to be *Militant* supporters. The film is structured so that their views win out, but since they are, for once,

concentrating on winning a struggle instead of telling Babs that socialism is the answer, it's bearable.

What the film shows is that politics isn't something outside of life, run by people in Whitehall and Westminster. Politics is everyday life — where you live, the right to work, to picket, to be free from harassment by co-workers or the police, and so on. What Babs comes to realise is that politics is all around her, that she can be part of it, and that she can change things by joining in action with others.

That's the message you leave with. The film was made on a pretty tight budget, but it's recently been picked up by Cannon, so it should appear in more places than expected. Go and see it.

# 1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

## Towards Soviet power

### Friday 8 September

The Central Executive Committee of soviets votes down a Bolshevik resolution advocating a change in the basis of representation at the Democratic Conference, to give more weight to Soviets, army organisations, and Trade Unions. An inter-regional conference of Petrograd Soviets calls for the re-election of the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee. A general meeting of members of the Petrograd Union of workers in the paper manufacturing industry supports the resolution adopted by the Petrograd Soviet on 31 August.

**Red Guards are organised in the major Tagankog factories.**

### Saturday 9 September

By 519 votes to 414, with 67 abstentions, a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet adopts the Bolshevik resolution calling for re-election of the praesidium of the soviet. The Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet condemns the conciliatory policies of the Provisional Government and calls for all power to the soviets. The Bolshevik fraction walks out of the Tula Duma after one of its members is ordered out of a session of the Duma for attacking the policies of the Provisional Government. The Gomel Soviet adopts a Bolshevik resolution advocating a purely socialist government, containing no representatives of bourgeois parties. On the South Western front soldiers in the 125 regiment of the V11th Army refuse to take up fresh positions and demand to be sent on leave.

### Sunday 10 September

The all-Petrograd conference of factory committees demands an end to coalition government with the bourgeoisie, and condemns the Democratic Conference as an attempt by the defencist parties to pervert the will of revolutionary democracy. The Provisional Government publishes an appeal outlining proposals to restore the military capabilities of the armed forces and to restore the trust of soldiers and sailors in their officers.

On the Western front the 63rd Siberian rifles regiment refuses orders to take up a new position. Soldiers of the 74th infantry regiment, stationed in Orel, refuse to obey orders.

### Monday 11 September

The plenum of the Petrograd Soviet adopts a Bolshevik resolution criticising the basis of representation for the Democratic Conference, for under-representing soviets, trade unions, factory committees and soldiers' organisations. On the Northern front a meeting of the regimental committees of the 70th infantry division of the Vth army declares its support for the resolution adopted by the Petrograd Soviet on 31 August. A meeting of soldiers stationed in the Peter the Great fortress calls for a socialist government answerable to the Soviets. The Borovichi Soviet Executive Committee calls for the creation of a revolutionary parliament, to which the Provisional Government should be answerable. The Moscow District Soviet of Workers' Deputies calls for an all-Russian congress of soviets, and declares that the Democratic Conference will not fully represent workers' interests.

### Tuesday 12 September

By 119 votes to 101, with one abstention, the Central Executive Committee of Soviets approves in principle the formation of a coalition government. At a meeting of the Moscow Soviet of workers' deputies, **Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries announce their withdrawal from the soviet's praesidium and Executive Committee**, as their response to the Soviet's adoption of a Bolshevik resolution on the question of state power. In Kaluga soldiers and workers demonstrate under the slogan "All power to the soviets!" in a demonstration jointly called by the local Bolshevik committee and soviet.

Turn to page 11

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# 'Trotskyists' turn Stalinist

Trotsky often described Stalinism as a cancer in the workers' movement. Since his death many 'Trotskyists' have also succumbed to this disease, judging political issues, not by their impact on independent workers' activity and interests but by the interests of the 'revolutionary' or 'socialist' bureaucracies against the imperialist bloc.

A recent experience with Socialist Action shows that they are further down this road than most. At my ward of Islington South Labour Party, I proposed we support the November conference on workers in the Eastern bloc.

The most vociferous opposition came from Jude Woodward, a leading supporter of Socialist Action. While Jude Woodward assured us, that she too had supported Solidarnosc in the past, and that a con-

## Bruce Robinson reports on why Socialist Action, who claim to be Trotskyist, are opposing efforts to rouse solidarity with workers in the Eastern bloc

ference on the Eastern European peace movements was a good idea, she gave a fantastic range of semi-Stalinist reasons for not supporting the conference on Solidarnosc.

SO had "nothing good to say about Poland and the Soviet Union" (in relation to independent workers' organisation there is nothing good to say about the Soviet state!). The conference was part of the "knock the Soviet union and Poland campaign". Listing the sponsors, she excused Eric Heffer and Vladimir Derer as "people on the left who have long held this view" (and whom SA have been cour-

ting in other contexts), but denounced other signatories such as David Blunkett as part of the "anti-soviet current in the British labour movement".

What the argument boiled down to was that we shouldn't support Solidarnosc too much because Reagan, the Pope and Eric Hammond do and they don't like the Soviet Union. In 1981 SA refused to support Solidarnosc's call for a boycott of Polish goods in protest against martial law for the same reason.

This not only lets the right wing determine (negatively) what we think, it also drives all those who really are concerned

about workers' rights in the Eastern bloc into the hands of the right by leaving them as the only ones who raise the issue.

Socialist Action sees the world and the British labour movement as divided up into blocs of 'goodies' and 'baddies'. The goodies include Eric Heffer and Vladimir Derer (as part of CLPD and Campaign Group). This is the "class struggle left wing" which has included — according to SA — the Morning Star, Cuba, Nicaragua, Sinn Fein, Ken Livingstone, Arthur Scargill — all supported more or less uncritically.

Anyone who supports them is left wing, anyone who doesn't is condemned to the outer darkness.

Where does this then leave the 10 million members of Solidarnosc? For Socialist Action today, on the side of the 'baddies' who "have nothing good to say about the USSR".



## Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

# Food poisoning is chicken feed

Cases of food poisoning from Salmonella bacteria were virtually non-existent in the 1940s. Last year, they were running at 15,000 cases reported, with, according to the Director of the central Public Health Laboratory at Colindale, the real figure possibly 100 times higher.

This discrepancy is due largely to misdiagnosis by doctors or to victims not going to see doctors. In the last ten years alone, cases have trebled.

The cause is to be found in the practice of intensive "factory" farming of poultry and cattle. Nowadays virtually all frozen poultry in Britain is contaminated with Salmonella.

Salmonella food poisoning occurs 12 to 36 hours after a person has swallowed about 100 million bacteria. These multiply rapidly in the gut and invade the gut lining. The infection causes vomiting, diarrhoea and fever, extremely unpleasant symptoms which may incapacitate a person for several days. It is rarely fatal, though with deaths running at an average of about 40 a year.

Salmonellas are killed by thorough cooking and many cases of food poisoning arise because frozen birds are not thawed properly. Thus the centre of the bird might be just pleasantly warm for the Salmonellas when the outside is cooked. Other cases occur when cooked food is contaminated anew from uncooked food.

Most cases are confined to individual households but there has been an increasing number of multiple outbreaks in institutions such as prisons, hospitals and old people's homes.

One approach to the problem has been to tackle it at source by trying to reduce levels of Salmonella in live birds — with little success so far. Salmonella spread fast in intensive farming with large numbers of birds kept in small places. Chicks and adults can carry the bacteria with no signs of infection. Their faeces contain billions of Salmonella and can contaminate litter and drinking water. The bacteria can get into eggs as they incubate and chicks can pick out infection from the outside of the egg-shells as they hatch.

Use of antibiotics has proved

unreliable as birds are easily reinfected from a variety of sources.

Manufacturers have tried heat treating and pelleting of food but Salmonella can get back in from contaminated dust, feed bins and vehicles. Rodents (rats and mice) and insects also spread the bacteria. Insects such as the lesser meal worm beetle concentrated the bacteria in their guts, making an infectious snack for a peckish chick.

Some of the techniques of intensive rearing designed to improve hygiene actually make birds more susceptible to infection. If newly-hatched chicks are put in a clean disinfected environment, they are less likely to pick up Salmonella straight away. However, they are also less likely to pick up other harmless bacteria that normally colonise their guts. These bacteria normally hinder invasions by pathogens (harmful bacteria) so chicks without them are more prone to colonisation by Salmonellas once they meet them, as they do before long.

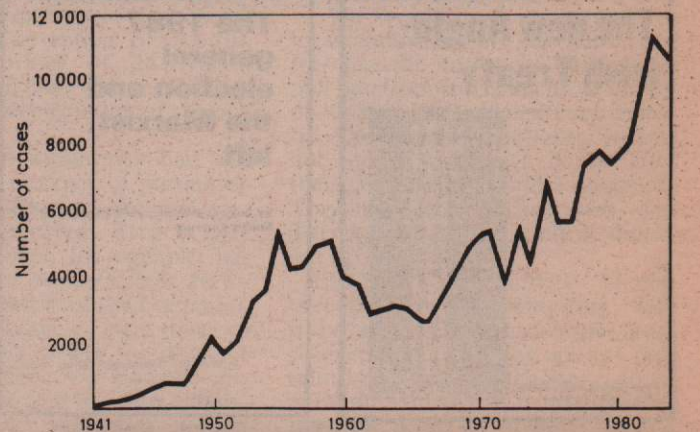
The discovery of this fact opened up another line of attack on Salmonella. Veterinary scientists in Finland extracted and cultured (bred) bacteria from the caeca (pouches in the intestines) of chickens. They found that giving a dose of these to young chicks allowed them to quickly establish a community of harmless bacteria like that of adults. They were indeed better able to resist an attempt to infect them with Salmonella.

This phenomenon, known as "competitive exclusion", is able to prevent Salmonella bacteria sticking to the gut lining so they are presumably swept out the other end. First attempts at applying competitive exclusion commercially did not work and ten years of further research followed.

Some workers tried using exactly defined mixtures of types of bacteria — 48 in some cases — to protect their birds. These were less effective, though, than the "undefined" mixture obtained from birds' guts, once a more effective way of administering this had been found.

Competitive exclusion has now been tested and found fairly successful in Sweden and in Bristol. The question apparently not asked is whether Salmonella infections could be lessened by going back to free-range non-intensive methods of rearing poultry. These give better-tasting eggs and meat from birds who have a happier life. Such considerations are of little consequence to an industry ruled only by the pursuit of profit. If this means a few thousand cases of Salmonella food poisoning per year, then that is hard luck. After all, they can always blame the cook.

All information — New Scientist.



Reported cases of Salmonella food poisoning. Latest figures go off the top of the graph — and hundreds of thousands more go unreported.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Manchester Socialist Organiser public meeting

'Permanent Revolution': Sunday 27 September. 7.30 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Socialist Organiser Labour Party Conference Fringe Meeting Tuesday 29 September at 12.45 p.m. The 'Sea Horse' pub, Middle Street, Brighton. (5 minutes walk from conference centre).

Campaign Against Repression in Iran. Fringe meeting at Labour Party con-

ference. "The Gulf War". 5.00 p.m. Monday 28 September, Queen's Hotel, King's Road, Brighton.

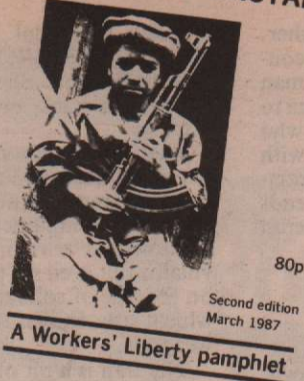
Wallasey CLP Conference Fringe Meeting. 'Back to basics'. How the party should be campaigning for socialism. Speakers: Eric Heffer MP, Lol Duffy, Wallasey CLP. Monday 28 September at 5.30 p.m. in the 'Sea Horse' pub, Middle Street, Brighton.



The record of the local government left. 60p plus 20p postage from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

'Marxism and Afghanistan', 80p plus 20p postage from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

### MARXISM, STALINISM AND AFGHANISTAN



## WHERE WE STAND

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

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges. Socialism can never be built

in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-

socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

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

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

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

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

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

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# Yorks miners want more action

A stronger overtime ban started a week earlier in Yorkshire, the largest coalfield. It came from the militant reaction there to British Coal's new disciplinary code.

In July half the coalfield was stopped by flying pickets, after the suspension of five miners at Frickley colliery. The strike was called off only after pressure from the Yorkshire NUM executive, who

## SHEFFIELD

### Autostart strike

After the success of the mass picket of 10 September, with about 70 trade unionists present including the Keetons strikers, a lull has followed in the Autostart strike in Sheffield.

The Labour Party Young Socialists organised a trip to Bradford to try to cut off one of Autostart's main suppliers, but so far they've had no success. They found workers divided up into small shops on a new industrial estate with no unions — a capitalist paradise.

John Dale, the Autostart TGWU shop steward, told Socialist Organiser: "The visit wasn't too good. We tried to talk to the workers who were fairly supportive, but not prepared to do anything."

Since then Autostart has employed solicitors to threaten the strikers, who are out against wages of between £37.50 and £42 for a 40 hour week, and for improved conditions, sick pay, more than ten days holiday pay and trade union recognition.

This is only one of no-one knows how many sweat shops in Sheffield and throughout the country. But despite its importance, despite the fact that its victory would act as a beacon to all young workers everywhere faced with these kind of wages or working for your dole, the TGWU is doing very little.

Messages of support plus donations to John Dale, shop steward Autostart, c/o TGWU, Transport House, Hartshead, Sheffield 1.

## NHS

### Low pay

Over 500 health workers struck and demonstrated in Manchester last Wednesday.

The action was in support of NALGO's £20 a week pay claim for NHS administrative and clerical workers. 250 marched through Manchester, stopping at the DHSS and Regional Health Authority to protest.

The action was initiated by Manchester Health Branch NALGO, many of whose members are women clerks and typists bearing the brunt of NHS low pay. NALGO and CoHSE have been recruiting a lot of new members on the basis of taking action.

## SSiN

### Two demos on 8 October

As the new term begins, Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN), supporters are organising for the demo which has been called by Manchester Area NUS for 8 October.

At 2 o'clock thousands of students will be demonstrating against Thatcher and the governments' plans for youth, students and the whole of the education system. Later on the same day Jean-Marie Le Pen is due to speak and SSiN is asking students to stay on to take part in a picket due to start at about 5pm.

A social is being organised to round off the day, and crash accommodation is being looked into. For more details ring MANUS on 061-273 5947.

"Back to basics: campaigning for socialism in the student movement" is the theme of the SSiN AGM on Sunday 25 October in London.

As well as the usual business of an AGM, like elections and forward

argued to wait until the national ballot on industrial action.

Shortly afterwards, British Coal bosses announced the sacking of Stillingfleet branch secretary, Ted Scott. At the end of August he rejected the bosses' offer of re-employment at Wheldale colliery — a pit with only 9 months life left. The offer was also conditional on a signed undertaking to refrain from 'disruptive' activities.

Strong reaction against this led to the Yorkshire representatives on the NUM NEC voting against the 'soft option' overtime ban, and pressure for immediate action.

When the NUM NEC voted 12-9 last Thursday for the 'soft option' (only stop coal cutting in overtime), the Yorkshire Area decided to scale down their own ban to fall into line, but then hold their own ballot about stepping it up again.

The Durham Area will also be meeting on 5 October to review the present ban.

Socialist Organiser spoke to Johnny

Stones, the Frickley branch delegate:

"There is a lot of confusion. We applied an overtime ban from 14 September, which was given token respect with not all applying it as it should have been.

The NEC then came out with theirs. So Yorkshire's came off, to get five normal shifts in and avoid cutting coal in overtime. Now Yorkshire is balloting members on various forms of industrial action. When we get a result we are back to an overtime ban in some other form. The cause of discontent is the NEC

## LONDON

### Showdown for teachers

Last Thursday a meeting called by the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA) of the NUT voted overwhelmingly to continue to refuse to cover for absences in London schools.

It defied a letter from NUT secretary Fred Jarvis warning school reps that such action is contrary to the Baker legislation and unofficial.

## THE CUTS

# Conference sets campaigns

Last Sunday, 20 September, a Fightback Conference heard reports from London boroughs on the local government cuts. All had the same story: capitulation by Labour councils, disunity in the union and Labour Party ranks.

## Lambeth fights back

The Labour Group on Lambeth Council seems set to proceed with cuts of £60 million despite an overwhelming vote against such a course of action by a 'Borough Conference' of Labour Party, trade union and community group delegates.

Council leader Linda Bellos and her deputy leader Dave Morgan are proposing to freeze all but 25% of job vacancies, increase rents and service charges, and cut back in other areas of spending in order to produce a balanced budget by the legal deadline next April.

The freeze on filling job vacancies will reduce the council workforce by almost one thousand over the next 18

months. The council unions are already organising protests at the current level of unfilled vacancies. The borough conference voted 62-16 against this strategy and in favour of an alternative proposed by 11 Labour councillors advocating a campaign for increased resources from central government.

Representatives from the council unions, tenants associations, community groups and Lambeth Labour Parties all spoke against the Leader's proposals, as did Ted Knight, representing the 31 councillors surcharged for resisting Tory cuts two years ago. Resolutions were passed outlining a campaigning strategy for the next six months, including the setting up of a campaign group, Lambeth Fights Back.

This body held its first meeting last week, to build for a lobby of the Labour Group meeting — taking place as we go to press — which is to decide on the cuts proposals.

If, as expected, the Labour Group opts for cuts, Lambeth Fights Back will be central to any resistance that is put up locally by the council unions, tenants and Labour Parties against the implementation of the Council's cuts plans.

However, the councillors have not had it all their own way. Camden NALGO and Lambeth trade unions have come out against these attacks. The leaders of Haringey council Labour Group resigned when the group insisted on a cuts budget.

## Strathclyde cuts

Strathclyde Regional Council (SRC) is intent upon undermining nursery education and the conditions and wages of nursery teachers.

Under the guise of re-organising pre-5 provision, the council leaders aim to reduce educational input into that area and to change teachers' pay and conditions to the much worse APTOC status.

This could well be the prelude to inroads upon salaries and conditions of primary and secondary teachers along similar lines.

Nursery teachers are fighting back, and on a second lobby of the Education Committee last week were joined by delegates from primary and second-

ary schools in the region. At a meeting following the lobby, the newly elected General Secretary Designate of the Scottish teachers' union EIS, Jim Martin, pledged continuing full EIS support for the nursery teachers.

Willie Hart, convenor of Strathclyde Regional Executive of the union, said that the lobby had pressed the councillors into "continuing" the matter for another six weeks, giving the union more time to build a more effective campaign. He advocated a public meeting to highlight the issue and more widespread action at the next lobby.

No time must now be wasted in building the widest possible support in the schools by inviting speakers from the nursery sector and by preparing for strike action to coincide with the next lobby.

Earlier, on 10 September, the London Bridge stewards' committee held a conference of over 150 stewards from 19 London boroughs. It agreed to fight vacancy freezes, cuts and attacks on trade union rights. The conference was smaller than hoped, but it could be a beginning.

Since 1979 the left has seemed to cry wolf about cuts. Despite retreats by the councils, no major job losses or cuts have taken place in the Labour boroughs. This time, however, it is different. There is no rate rise option, no mortgaging option. It may take a while, but this time council workers and the communities are going to be hammered by their councils.

Since the election, council after council has pushed through cuts. Councillors and some trade unionists have said that with the Tories in again for five years, we can't hope to win — and pressed for voluntary redundancies, freezes on recruitment, cuts in services and rent rises.

A London-wide coordinating committee has been set up. The Democratic Conference opens in Petrograd; members of the Provisional Government appeal for the formation of a new coalition government. A general meeting of soldiers of the 53rd Siberian rifles regiment on the Northern front calls for the re-election of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets and for soviet power. The Shchelkovsky regional soviet adopts a resolution calling for soviet power.

35 soldiers are sentenced in Minsk to up to four years hard labour for agitating in opposition to a new offensive in the war. Workers and soldiers demonstrate in Kharkov in support of transfer of all power to the soviets. The Astrakhan Soviet assumes full powers as unrest over food shortages continues.

A meeting of trade union representatives at the Democratic Conference votes against a coalition government involving bourgeois representation; a meeting of peasant representatives votes for such a coalition government. Kerenky and other members of the Provisional Government meet Moscow industrialists to discuss the formation of a new coalition government. Kerenky orders the despatch of armed troops to Tashkent to overturn soviet power.

A meeting of the Zamoskvoretsky regional soviet (Moscow) resolves to organise Red Guards. A meeting of factory committees of the Rogozhsky region (Moscow) calls for the dictatorship of the proletariat; speakers complain of the lack of weapons for Red Guards.

By 118 votes to 47, with three abstentions, a joint meeting of the Samara Soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies adopts a Bolshevik resolution on state power.

In the Novoderevensky Duma elections the Bolsheviks win 19 of the 40 seats. The Executive Committee of the workers' section of the Rybinsk Soviet resigns after the Soviet adopts a resolution advocating a government consisting of socialists only. A conference of factory committees in Ekaterinoslav demands introduction of a minimum wage within two weeks by local industrialists, or else all factories in the town will be placed under workers' control.

The Buguruslan Soviet secures the reinstatement of sacked mill-workers after threatening to arrest the management of the mill. The Saratov Soviet condemns the Democratic Conference and calls for Soviet power. The Executive Committee of the Tiflis Soviet approves plans to set up a workers' militia.

The Western Siberian conference of print unions opens in Omsk and adopts Bolshevik resolutions on all questions on the agenda.

# 1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

From page 9

## Wednesday 13 September

The soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet re-elects its Executive Committee; the Social-Revolutionaries win 10 seats, the Bolsheviks 9, and the Mensheviks 3. A meeting of Petrograd regional commanders and commissars of Red Guards takes steps to strengthen the organisation of the Red Guards throughout the city.

Soldiers in the 60th Reserve Infantry regiment, stationed in Tambov, arrest their officers, seize weapons, and secure the release of imprisoned soldiers. A joint meeting of the Executive Committee of the Kiev Soviets of workers' deputies and soldiers' deputies resolves to arm workers' militias. The Sumy Soviet resolves not to disband the revolutionary committee set up at the time of the Kornilov mutiny. The Konotop Soviet adopts a Bolshevik resolution of no confidence in the Provisional Government. Unrest continues in Astrakhan over food shortages. Bolsheviks win a majority in new elections to the Tomsk Soviet.

The Tashkent Soviet assumes full powers and takes over the headquarters of the Turkestan regional soviet; the regional soviet, dominated by Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries and bourgeois nationalists, condemns the measures taken by the Tashkent Soviet; the Chernayev and Auliye-Ata Soviets support the Tashkent Soviet.

## Thursday 14 September

The Democratic Conference opens in Petrograd; members of the Provisional Government appeal for the formation of a new coalition government. A general meeting of soldiers of the 53rd Siberian rifles regiment on the Northern front calls for the re-election of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets and for soviet power. The Shchelkovsky regional soviet adopts a resolution calling for soviet power.

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Reagan and Gorbachev agree to cut 3% of nuclear arsenal

# Now scrap the other 97%

The arms deal promised between the superpowers shows that the peace movement has been right all along.

Cruise missile were put here for a political reason, and now the superpowers appear to be willing to withdraw them. Of course the deal covers nowhere near all nuclear weapons, and we still have a job to

Joy Hurcombe, chair Labour CND (in a personal capacity) spoke to Socialist Organiser.

do. Its the superpower blocs themselves that we need to get rid of. The intermediate weapons systems

are not redundant, and so they are prepared to scrap them. But we mustn't misread the situation. Tensions still exist, for example in the Gulf. And Reagan can say that he's developing Star Wars anyway.

In fact I wouldn't be surprised if part of the motive in getting rid of certain weapons systems is that America needs the money for Star Wars. In think the USSR does have a more of a commitment to arms reduction but quite honestly both sides are doing the same job.

Its very wrong for the Labour leadership to keep so quiet on the issue. We should be jumping up and down, saying 'we told you so'. We said that Cruise missiles were here for a political reason, and nothing to do with security. So there's no loss in security if they go. The deal proves it.

But this shouldn't stop the Labour Party supporting unilateral nuclear disarmament. In reality, arms negotiations achieve very little. And we can't sit back and leave it all up to the superpowers. What we need to do is to get rid of nuclear weapons and bases, and to get out of NATO to start the ball rolling.

Thatcher, of course, is miffed about Cruise missiles. She's responded by saying 'we'd better not go too far, and we still need Trident' — which is what you'd expect from a warmonger.

But now the Tories are virtually alone in seeking further arms and opposing reductions. The Labour Party could seize on this to marginalise the Tories.

The right wing can use it to oppose unilateralism and support arms negotiations. So what we need to do is keep up the pressure in our campaigning.

## The Gulf: playing with fire

US intervention in the Gulf, ostensibly to defend merchant seamen, will only pour water on the burning oil of the Gulf war.

It will do nothing to help bring peace, and nothing to help free the oppressed peoples of Iran and Iraq.

The Iranian regime has promised the United States that the bitter consequences of its attack on an Iranian vessel allegedly laying mines will not



CND demonstration against US bombing of Libya.

## A labour movement conference SOLIDARITY



with workers in the Eastern Bloc

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