

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

## Democracy, not revenge!

Pull-out on socialism, Israel, and the  
Palestinians

# Cuts Kill!

**The NHS is at death's door! Take two examples of the state of the NHS, both of them from the Birmingham children's hospital.**

Six-week old David Barber urgently needed an operation to correct a hole in his heart. It was postponed five times.

But David Barber is lucky. He is still alive. His parents brought the health authority to court to try and force them to give David proper medical care. Although the attempt failed, the resultant publicity and questions asked in Parliament ensured that David was immediately treated.

While the court battle raged over David Barber's fate, another desperately ill baby was turned away from the same hospital.

He later died.

### Die

Thatcher's government believes it is cheaper to let people like this die than to provide a decent health service for everyone who needs it.

Under this government the health service has suffered cuts, cuts and yet more cuts. The nurses are the Tories' latest target.

The Birmingham Children's Hospital cases were due to a lack of qualified intensive care nurses.

Pay for trained nurses starts at a miserable £6250 a year. Nurses with special qualifications, such as Intensive Care Nurses who have to complete an extra year's training, receive no extra money.

There is no incentive to train, and specially qualified nurses often leave the NHS for better paid jobs in the private sector. The Tories have just awarded nurses a 9% pay increase, of which only 3.75% will be paid by central government. The rest will have to be found by individual Area Health Authorities, already desperately short of cash.

Government policy on nurses' pay means that Area Authorities will have to close wards and cut staffing on other levels to pay the increases.

Waiting lists for surgery have reached a staggering 650,000. Of these, nearly 200,000 have been waiting for a year. In many hospitals, essential equipment — dialysis machines, monitors, etc. are already paid for by private donations.

The latest NHS cut by this callous and dishonest government —



Four year old Amy McMullen waits for a hole-in-the-heart operation at Birmingham Children's hospital

remember the election campaign when they said "the NHS is safe in our hands"? — falls on dental and eye care. Charges are to be introduced for eye tests and dental check ups. Even some Tory 'wets' are horrified at this proposal.

Last week Tory health supremo John Moore was admitted to hospital with a chest infection. Not for him the waiting lists and depressing surroundings of the NHS. He went private. His £195 a night room has video, TV, telephone and ensuite bathroom.

But perhaps we shouldn't judge Moore too harshly. He had no

choice, if he wanted proper treatment, but to go private. Because of government cuts his local hospital now only admits acute emergencies! If he had had to depend on the NHS he would have been in a bad way. He'd have been in the same boat as those millions who can't afford private treatment.

### Specialists

This week nine eminent heart specialists wrote to the Prime Minister warning that without extra money, particularly for nurses' pay, many more people who could be sav-

ed will die. Not because the medical know-how doesn't exist to help them but because the government would rather let them die than maintain an adequate health service.

The truth is that this government doesn't care. The drive towards profit through running down the NHS and encouraging the private sector is all they are interested in.

**Profit is more important than people's lives.**

Tory ministers can afford plush private hospitals. They don't have to worry. As for the rest of us, we'll have to try to survive with the help of an NHS bled dry.



Moore the Tory minister goes private



# London councils fail to beat racism

Reports on two London councils show them to be failing to counter racism in the hiring of employees.

Wandsworth Borough Council is run by a particularly nasty Tory leadership. In the report 'White Exclusions' its policies are said to be 'racist' and 'colonialist'.

Nearly 20% of the local population are black. However since 1977 the number of black council workers has hardly changed. There are no black principal council officers.

Greenwich Council is Labour controlled. Although in the last year 13% of those hired were black — the same proportion as in the local population — still only 5% of the

total workforce is black. In the top grades, out of 3,142 black applications, only 149 got jobs.

Any council that takes the issue of racism seriously is open to the accusation of being called 'loony'.

Racism is a cancer that eats away in the labour movement. But as Marxists we believe that unity between black and white workers can and indeed must be achieved.

Labour councils have a high profile in promoting anti-racist policies. We support their aims fully and call for special measures for the specially oppressed. We expect the Tories and their press to witch-hunt these councils — but it is disgusting that Labour's leaders use the same labels. Remember Patricia Hewitt's 'loony left' letter!

## RACE AND CLASS

By Dion D'Silva

We also have views on how the anti-racist policies have been adopted. There have been negative as well as positive effects. We must learn from the mistakes, reassess the aims and objectives so that the struggle can be taken forward.

In the 1960s the importance of the working class was hidden behind talk of the student vanguard. Nowadays class issues are often submerged in

anti-racist policies. This was exemplified by the Greater London Council in the early eighties.

In May 1981 a Labour administration was elected in London. Andrew McIntosh was replaced as Labour leader by Ken Livingstone, a left-winger. There wasn't a solid left majority among the councillors, but there was a lot of left rhetoric.

The GLC manifesto pledged it to resist any cuts and demand more money from government. It would "appeal to the labour and trade union movement to take... industrial action to support this stand". Livingstone said he would "use the whole structure of the GLC to support trade unionists in struggle... and work with the unions to bring this

government down ahead of its time."

All great stuff — but what happened was quite different. In June 1981 the tube-drivers asked for a 15% wage increase. Inflation was 12%, but the GLC offered 8%. There was nearly a strike. Then the Inner London Education Authority, part-controlled by the GLC, dropped its plans for cutting the price of school meals.

The final capitulation came with the GLC voting to comply with Lord Denning's ruling and reverse its fare cuts on London Transport, in January 1982.

What was left? On issues of racism and sexism the GLC and Ken Livingstone could carry on being radical without risk of legal action or financial crisis.

These policies could be tolerated by the Tories, although naturally they made propaganda against them. (Serious official reports on the hiring policies of Haringey Council and the anti-racist education of Brent have, in fact, praised them).

The talk on the left became one of uniting a variety of oppressed groups to bring progress. This approach is popular among socialists and liberals in the US where the labour movement is weaker. They call it a 'Rainbow Coalition'.

The use of black job quotas and affirmative action started in the USA in the early seventies. It was born out of the turn of the Civil Rights movement from mass campaigning to looking towards exerting influence on the capitalist Democratic Party. Jesse Jackson was and is instrumental in this move.

These policies of positive discrimination did bring real advances — but mostly for middle-class blacks. The social situation of working class blacks has hardly improved at all.

Even today this sort of anti-racism has support from most of the American establishment. In Britain the House of Commons Select Committee on Employment has recommended that local authorities adopt targets to create a workforce mirroring the local black population.

Maybe the rainbow is now made up of OYGBIV (orange, yellow...) colours. Certainly there is no talk of red socialism anymore.

A lot of the GLC campaign on racism was informative and useful, like the publicity on police harassment.

Nevertheless, it did not build directly on the struggles of the black community itself. The GLC approached the issue in a rather propagandistic and managerial way, for example, through expensive advertising.

In the context of the Labour Councils' defeat in the rate-capping fight the nature of the anti-racist struggle changes. Unless the Tories are tackled head-on and more jobs created with better training, and more houses built, these anti-racist policies can be divisive.

The Labour leadership of Southwark Council, who have pushed through a cuts budget and an increase in rents, has recently taken action, for the first time, against one of its employees for alleged racism. Unfortunately, it has disciplined a black worker — much to the disgust of other black and anti-racist workers.

Policies of affirmative action in the USA have aided only certain parts of the black community. The percentage of black middle class people has increased from 7% in 1967 to 17% in 1980. In 25 years the number attending college has increased nearly ninefold.

Yet the number of black unemployed (and the ratio of black to white) has increased from 6.5% in 1967 to 19.5% in 1983.

Black people are more likely to be trade unionists and they have remained loyal to the Labour Party. Interestingly the Harris Poll in 1983 found that the main reason for black people supporting the Labour Party was because it "supports the working class".

We don't want a bigger piece of the cake — we want the whole bakery.

## Stop the attacks on Labour's youth!

By Mark Osborn

There were further attacks on the Labour Party Young Socialists at last week's National Executive Committee meeting.

The abolition of YS national conference followed the previous Labour Party Conference decision to get rid of regional conferences. The reason given, as the Sunday Times put it, was "a vicious bottle attack by Trotskyite thugs against two moderates at this year's party youth conference".

It is true that someone who had drunk too much and was out long after his usual bedtime did thump a right winger. Of course it is wrong and at the time our comrades protested about it. But the idea that the whole YS should lose its conference because of one violent incident is stupid.

In fact it is an argument for winding up most labour movement conferences because there are few years when there are not rows and punch-ups in bars at Labour Party and trade union conferences. Not long ago Neil Kinnock himself used to boast that he beat up a supporter of Tony Benn during the 1981 Labour Party conference.

Can the YS leadership be held

responsible for this violence?

The fact is, of course, that the YS leadership is far from perfect. There is a level of systematic intimidation which stretches from ruling opposition motions out to whipping up hysteria against left wing opponents of the present majority.

There have been times in the past when our comrades have been subjected to various forms of physical

involved in specific cases of violence. But make the whole YS suffer by losing its conference? Don't be ridiculous!

This is a pathetic cover for a witch-hunt, and a backdoor method of getting rid of the YS's annual conference.

What has been the Militant tendency's response? Far from taking up the battle inside the Party and organising

alternative to fighting within the movement, is to build the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign (YTURC) as an organisation that can keep together their base in the LPYS as YS branches are closed and members disqualified by the reduction of the age limit of YS members which will come into force in the New Year.

Militant are already pushing YTURC, as the alternative YS, in their paper and are selling membership cards. Presumably we will see a national YTURC conference next year.

YTURC will be a Militant front in the way the YS could not be — because of the constraints placed on the Militant by the Labour Party nationally. Youth fightback and others will have far fewer, if any, rights. More to the point, we should not give up on the Labour Party at the first signs of a serious fight by the right wing. Comrades should be complaining to the NEC about its anti-democracy, but also demanding that the YS National Committee organise a national meeting of YS branches next year.

**One hundred Youth Fightback activists met in Liverpool on 28-29 November to discuss politics and campaigning.**

**The two-day event brought together youth from 20 LPYS branches that are organised as the left opposition to the 'Militant' YS leadership. We debated techniques that could be used to build bigger YS branches. This was particularly relevant, as the YS national lobby of Parliament 10 days ago only had 500 protesters.**

**We also sharpened our politics with sessions on Iran, Ireland, the Middle East, and the history of the British working class.**

threat. It is equally true that after we demanded that thuggish individuals were slung off the summer camp three years ago, that was eventually done. The YS National Committee were embarrassed about the incident this year.

Perhaps the NEC could usefully intervene to clean up YS conference — for instance it could insist that the YS has proper standing orders. It would also be right and proper that the NEC should step in to discipline people in-

a campaign against the rule changes, conference cancellations and lately the compulsory redundancy of the National Youth Organiser, Andy Bevan, the witch-hunt is pushing Militant even further away from the labour movement.

Their latest tactic, developed as an

## Anti-apartheid conference

By Mark Catterall  
(Stockport Anti-Apartheid)

**The Anti-Apartheid Movement's first-ever delegate Annual General Meeting, on 28-29 November, was generally a low-key affair.**

Some 300 delegates attended. Sadly, the conference refused to back motions calling for Anti-Apartheid to campaign in defence of the jailed South African trade union leader Moses Mayekiso, who faces the threat of a life sentence for treason.

This deeply sectarian attitude was maintained even in the face of a telexed appeal from Moses's union, NUMSA.

In the trade union debate, the platform managed to get the conference to oppose motions calling for solidarity and links to be built with all independent progressive trade unions in South Africa. One speaker from the National Committee even went so far as to say that only those anti-apartheid forces in South Africa with whom the National Committee of the AAM agrees deserve any support.

The conference came closest to defeating the National Committee when a resolution to allow conference to have a final say in constitutional matters was defeated on a card vote with 95 for and 144 against. A number of delegates expressed concern with the card vote, as the show of hands had been much closer.

Frances Kelly of the Namibia Support Committee gave an impassioned speech on the need to support Liver-

pool dockworkers in their boycott of Namibian uranium. For too long the labour movement has made polite noises of support for these workers, but has done too little to help. All T&G, NUR and other union members coming into contact with these cargoes should join in the boycott of South African and Namibian uranium.

Next year socialists in the Anti-Apartheid movement will have a hard fight to make the movement less sectarian.

The disgraceful way in which the Standing Orders Committee allows so little time for important debates will have to be challenged, along with the sectarian policy of the National Committee and its supporters, not supporting groups in South Africa that it doesn't agree with. The movement in South Africa surely deserves better than this.

**Support Iranian refugees in Pakistan!**

**Picket outside Pakistan's embassy, noon to 2pm, Saturday 12 December, at 35 Lowndes Sq, London SW1.**

**Called by the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI).**

## Scottish new realism

By Joe Baxter

**The Executive of the Labour Party in Scotland had just about everything its own way at a special policy conference in Edinburgh on 21 November.**

In what Dennis Canavan MP described as an "anodyne document", the Scottish Executive laid out a strategy firmly based on the principles of 'new realism'.

The policy document had been produced too late for the majority of CLPs and unions to consider it. No amendments or resolutions were allowed. Delegates were faced with the choice of accepting or referring back the various parts of the document.

Further pressure was applied by the request from Labour Party officials to remember that the press would be covering the Conference.

Despite this, a few delegates from the CLPs made their opposition heard, particularly over how to fight the poll tax and local government cutbacks.

The Scottish Executive wanted a campaign that would appeal to the consciences of Tory MPs, but some CLP delegates argued for campaigns to force councils not to cooperate with the implementation of the poll tax, to gain support for non-payment from tenants and to win a refusal from local government unions to allow their members to work on it.

## Springburn expulsions

**Three supporters of the Militant newspaper — Stevie Lees, Charlie Robertson and Liz Phillips — were expelled from the Labour Party by the November meeting of Springburn CLP in Glasgow. The expulsions have yet to be ratified by the National Constitutional Committee.**

At no stage in the procedure were those facing expulsion given any opportunity to present politically independent witnesses.

The members in Springburn of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee voted for the expulsions.





## Childish posturing

By Lynn Ferguson

We've seen a lot on the TV and in the press over the past months about child sex abuse.

The Cleveland case, where around 100 children were taken into care after medical diagnosis by Drs Marietta Higgs and Geoffrey Wyatt, opened up a wide-ranging debate about the causes, extent, and ways of dealing with child sex abuse.

But what of the left press? How has it responded?

The *Militant* position was set out in a centre-spread by Margaret Crear — perhaps not unexpectedly titled 'Child Abuse — sign of a sick society'.

In an article which slips and slides confusingly between child abuse in general and child sex abuse, the issues raised by the Cleveland affair itself are left untouched. As you might expect, socialism is the answer, and there is virtually no attempt to answer the admittedly horrifyingly difficult question of what can be done in the here and now.

Crear does, however, in places, show a tendency, unusual in a *Militant* writer, to think about the causes of abuse. At one point she rejects the idea of a direct relation between economic deprivation and abuse. Sadly, she falls back on the old bland generalities a few paragraphs later, asserting "Without a struggle against unemployment, to talk about reducing child abuse is wishful thinking".

Crear is right when she points to class society, and the distorting effect it has on personal relationships, as the ultimate culprit. But that's an empty platitude when it comes to helping the victims of child abuse now.

*Socialist Worker* adopts the same 'socialism is the answer' approach, though to its credit it does attempt some discussion of the immediate issues. It opposes the witch-hunt of Higgs and Wyatt, while questioning the procedures which were used in Cleveland when children were removed from their homes on purely medical evidence, and far from conclusive evidence at that.

The thrust of the article is criticism of the medical and social work professionals as middle-class people who don't understand how the working class lives. But no amount of being Marxist and working-class will magically give you better judgment on medical and social-work problems. *Socialist Worker* ends up blustering instead of thinking seriously about this immensely complex and serious subject.

I hesitate to mention *Workers' Power*, for fear of bolstering their mind-bogglingly massive collective ego. However, I find their argument disturbing enough to have to deal with it.

*Workers' Power* makes a big thing about what they delicately call 'inter-generational sex' — that's paedophilia to the rest of us. Child sex abuse, they tell us, must be distinguished from consensual sex between adults and children, which is OK.

I have racked my brains, but I can't conceive of such consensual sex. Many sexually abused children 'consent' — to please adults they love and trust, or because they are too scared, or too bewildered, or too young, to say no.

Children are highly dependent on adults, and especially so in this society. They are conditioned to 'be good and do as you're told'. It is utter nonsense to talk about 'consensual inter-generational sex'. But *Workers' Power* hysterically accuse those who favour the retention of an age of consent as providing some sort of protection for children of "scabbing on youth".

This sort of loud-mouthed 'leftier-than-thou'-ism, so typical of *Workers' Power*, ends up diminishing the reality of child sex abuse in the name of sexual liberalism.

Children do have a sexuality, which they should be free to express and discover without shame. But children's sexuality is fundamentally different from that of adults. Most children play 'doctors and nurses' and other such games, but that's a long way from penetrative sex with an adult.

The real people who 'scab on youth' are those who rate the physical and emotional well-being of children lower than their own political posturing.

# Working-class politics and the Gulf war

What attitude should socialists take towards 'anti-imperialist' movements in the world today? 'Anti-imperialism' has come to mean everything and nothing, and the Left needs to be clear about who it supports and why. The current Gulf War poses many of these issues sharply. And much of the left has simply fallen behind Khomeini's 'anti-imperialism'. A good example is the Socialist Workers' Party.

The SWP is a small organisation which chooses to isolate itself on the fringes of the labour movement. Usually it is more sophisticated and rational in its politics than are the other sectarian "Trotskyist" organisations. Here its views epitomise the worst of the "anti-imperialist" confusion you will find on the would-be revolutionary left. Its views are therefore more significant than the SWP and for that reason worth discussing.

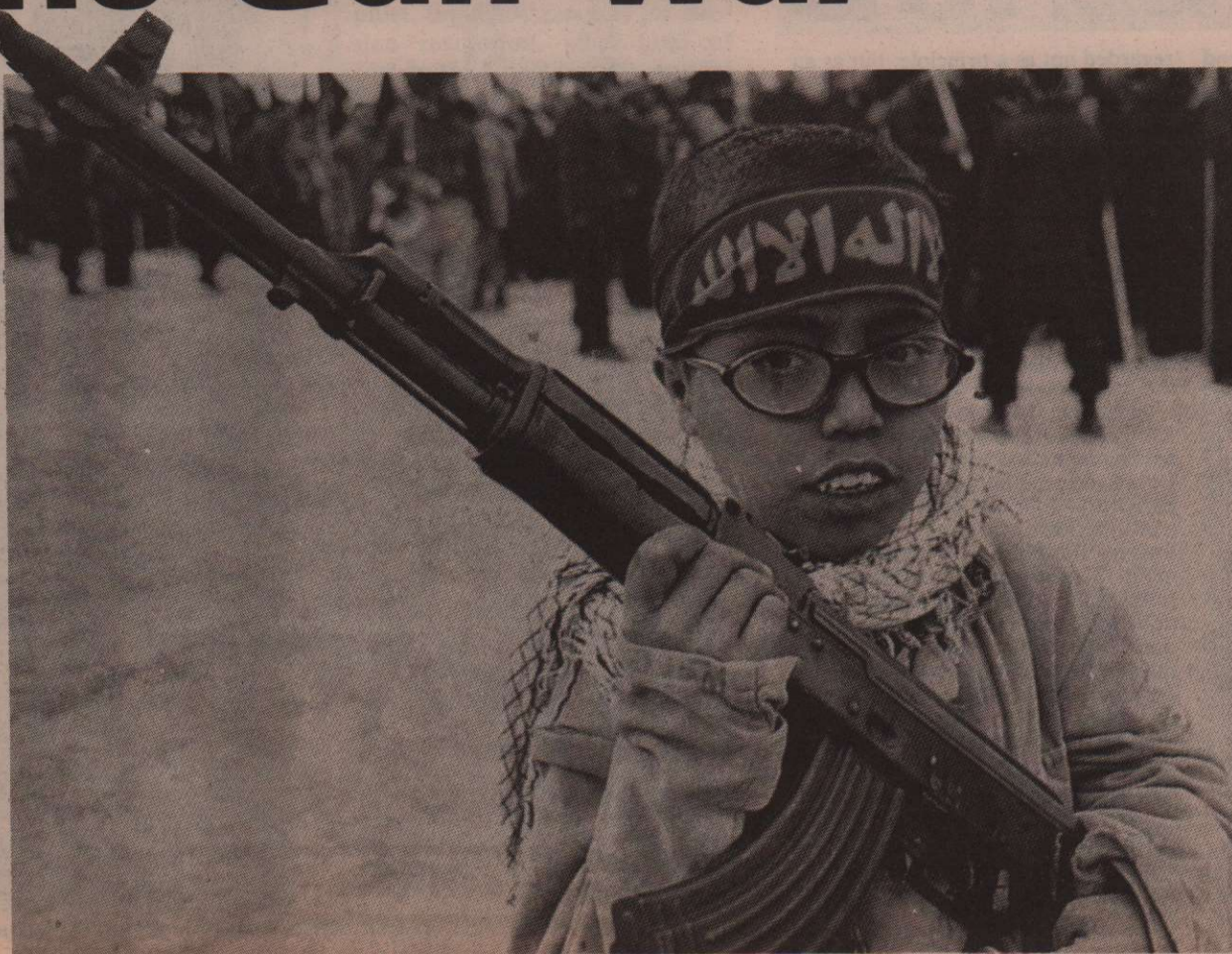
"The counter-revolution was pushed forward under the guise of Khomeini's phoney 'anti-imperialism' and consolidated with the development of the Gulf War...The war...provided a perfect cover for the regime's wiping out of any remnants of left-wing opposition".

That was the verdict of Maryam Poya writing in the Socialist Workers' Party's book "Revolutionary Rehearsals" about the Iranian experience (pp.162-3). Yet now, the SWP argue, things have changed quite drastically. Today the SWP is four-square behind Iran in the Gulf War.

"In these circumstances a victory for Iraq is a victory for imperialism", says Alex Callinicos (*Socialist Worker*, November 28). "It would be a major set-back for anti-imperialists in every part of the world."

Or as Tony Cliff argues, backing him up at the SWP Conference debate on the issue: "We are for military victory. The key question is whether or not you fight imperialism."

So what has changed to so invalidate the SWP's previous judgement? Only months ago, the Gulf War was a reactionary war they opposed on both sides. Now, Iran's war is an anti-imperialist struggle to which they give "military" support without "politically" supporting the



Fighting imperialism?

regime.

What has changed is that the US has a fleet in the area and has swung more fully behind Iraq. The US has moved in to ensure there is no Iranian victory. But can such US involvement dictate a socialist attitude to the war?

Absolutely not. If we determine whose side we are on in any conflict purely by inverse reaction, we lose all ability to make independent judgements. We write ourselves out of the script.

Often, taking sides against the US and whomsoever it supports seems a good rough guide. But it isn't in Afghanistan, or Poland — and nor would automatic support for whoever opposes the USSR be a good rough guide. We need clearer criteria.

'Anti-imperialism' is the war cry of every bourgeois and Stalinist demagogue across the 'Third World'. As the SWP themselves argue, in Iran it provided a cover for counter-revolution. Yet according to Alex Callinicos, the Khomeini regime "presents itself as anti-imperialist. This aspect of Islamic fundamentalism has made it an important force."

For socialists it is not enough that people are 'against' imperialism (still less that they "present themselves" as so). We have to know who they are, what they want, where they are going. It is possible to oppose imperialism from a *reactionary* standpoint. And Khomeini does so.

The Communist International at its Second Congress in 1920 spelt out a socialist attitude. They specified "the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends, which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the position of the Khans, landowners and mullahs."

Of course 1987 is not 1920. But the difference between the Comintern's approach and the SWP's is striking.

We do not support people because of what they oppose; we support people because we give positive support to their objectives. We support national liberation struggles, even if they are led by bourgeois reactionaries, because we support na-

tional liberation. And short of socialism, the rational meaning of 'anti-imperialism' is precisely national liberation.

But is national liberation an issue in the Gulf War? Iran is a fully independent state (Callinicos even correctly calls it a 'sub-imperialism'). It is indeed the brutal oppressor of national minorities.

If the US were seeking to invade Iran in order to conquer it, or at least in order to impose a pro-American government — if the *national rights* of Iran were really at stake — what the SWP say would make some sense.

## EDITORIAL

But the national rights of Iran are not at stake; the conflict within the US is restricted to the Gulf waters — there is no threat of US invasion or colonisation of Iran. Nor is such a development very likely.

So despite the US's direct involvement, the issues involved in the Gulf War remain what they were. **The war has not fundamentally changed its character.**

Yet the SWP seem to think that the change of character is so fundamental that Iran is no longer part of 'the world'. As we have seen, for Callinicos a US victory would be a "set-back for anti-imperialists in every part of the world". But what would an Iranian victory mean for the workers and oppressed of Iran? The war always has been used by the regime to divert internal opposition. This function of the war is *greater* now that the US is directly involved.

Even outside Iran, it is by no means clear that the 'anti-imperialism' — i.e. right-wing Islamic fundamentalism — that an Iranian victory would strengthen would serve working class interests.

Tony Cliff, continuing Callinicos's grotesque analogy with the Spanish Civil War, puts the issue bluntly: "If you give *no* support to Iran it means that you support *every* strike. (But) if arms are going to the front, railwaymen should not go on strike."

Are these guns going to the front to be used against fascists attempting to drown a revolutionary movement in blood? Are they even to be used against US marines?

Of course not. The front for which Tony Cliff feels such new-found enthusiasm is *with Iraq*. They are to be used against Iraqi workers and peasants.

In the Spanish Civil War socialists could say to the fascist soldiers: *join with us*; abandon Franco, join the revolution. Can Iranian socialists on the front call on Iraqis to join the Iranian side? The idea is absurd. They should continue to say what the SWP agrees they should have said in the past: we, the workers of Iran and Iraq, should refuse to fight each other; we should join together and overthrow both our ruling classes. A US flotilla and US support for the Iraqi government could not possibly justify Iranian socialists abandoning that argument in favour of support for the current war, no matter how 'critical' they might be of Khomeini's methods.

The SWP's argument would in reality look like this: We, Iranian workers, don't politically support our government. But, because of the presence of the US fleet, in our view we are justified in killing our brothers and sisters in Iraq. Like it or not, that is the argument.

As a group of Iranian Marxists has expressed it:

"The fact that the best way to oppose imperialism is to oppose both the Iranian regime and the imperialist intervention seems to be beyond comprehension. According to (groups like the SWP) the oppressed in Iran must...forget...their exploitation and suppression is being organised by this capitalist regime and hope for the situation in which these very same oppressors have given a "bloody nose" to the "Americans". And this is, presumably, supposed to soften the mullahs' heart against the Iranian masses."

The SWP have abandoned *class* politics in favour of a fake 'anti-imperialism' which, if Iranian socialists were to heed their advice, would pave the way for more defeats.

Socialist Organiser  
PO Box 823, London SE15  
4NA.  
01-639 7965  
Latest date for reports: first  
post Monday or by phone,  
Monday evening.  
Editor: John O'Mahony.  
Typesetting: Upstream (TU)  
Ltd.,  
01-358 1344.

Published by Socialist  
Organiser, PO Box 823,  
London SE15 4NA.  
Printed by East End Offset  
(TU), London E2.  
Registered as a newspaper at  
the Post Office.  
Signed articles do not  
necessarily reflect the view of  
Socialist Organiser.



**In this excerpt from 'The Revolution Betrayed', Leon Trotsky traces the transformation of the Bolshevik party from an instrument of working-class revolution to part of the bureaucratic and totalitarian apparatus of the Stalinist police state.**

**The Bolshevik party prepared and insured the October victory. It also created the Soviet state, supplying it with a sturdy skeleton. The degeneration of the party became both cause and consequence of the bureaucratization of the state. It is necessary to show at least briefly how this happened.**

The inner regime of the Bolshevik party was characterised by the method of *democratic centralism*. The combination of these two concepts, democracy and centralism, is not in the least contradictory. The party took watchful care not only that its boundaries should always be strictly defined, but also that all those who entered these boundaries should enjoy the actual right to define the direction of party policy. Freedom of criticism and intellectual struggle was an irrevocable content of the party democracy. The present doctrine that Bolshevism does not tolerate factions is a myth of the epoch of decline.

### Factions

In reality the history of Bolshevism is a history of the struggle of factions. And, indeed, how could a genuinely revolutionary organisation, setting itself the task of overthrowing the world and uniting under its banner the most audacious iconoclasts, fighters and insurgents, live and develop without intellectual conflicts, without groupings and temporary factional formations? The far-sightedness of the Bolshevik leadership often made it possible to soften conflicts and shorten the duration of factional struggle, but no more than that. The Central Committee relied upon this seething democratic support. From this it derived the audacity to make decisions and give orders. The obvious correctness of the leadership at all critical stages gave it that high authority which is the priceless moral capital of centralism.

The regime of the Bolshevik party, especially before it came to power, stood thus in complete contradiction to the regime of the present sections of the Communist International, with their "leaders" appointed from above, making complete changes of policy at a word of command, with their uncontrolled apparatus, haughty in its attitude to the rank and file, servile in its attitude to the Kremlin.

But in the first years after the conquest of power also, even when the administrative rust was already visible on the party, every Bolshevik, not excluding Stalin, would have denounced as a malicious slanderer anyone who should have shown him on a screen the image of the party ten or fifteen years later.

The very centre of Lenin's attention and that of his colleagues was occupied by a continual concern with protecting the Bolshevik ranks from the vices of those in power. However, the extraordinary closeness and at times actual merging of the party with the state apparatus had already in those first years done indubitable harm to the freedom and elasticity of the party regime.

Democracy had been narrowed in proportion as difficulties increased. In the beginning, the party had wished and hoped to preserve freedom of political struggle within the framework of the Soviets. The civil war introduced stern amendments into this calculation. The Opposition parties were forbidden one after the other. This measure, obviously in conflict with the spirit of Soviet democracy, the leaders of Bolshevism

regarded not as a principle, but as an episodic act of self-defence.

The swift growth of the ruling party, with the novelty and immensity of its tasks, inevitably gave rise to inner disagreements. The underground oppositional currents in the country exerted a pressure through various channels upon the sole legal political organisation, increasing the acuteness of the factional struggle. At the moment of completion of the civil war, this struggle took such sharp forms as to threaten to unsettle the state power.

In March, 1921, in the days of the Kronstadt revolt, which attracted into its ranks no small number of Bolsheviks, the tenth congress of the party thought it necessary to resort to a prohibition of factions — that is, to transfer the political regime prevailing in the state to the inner life of the ruling party. This forbidding of factions was again regarded as an exceptional measure to be abandoned at the first serious improvement in the situation. At the same time the Central Committee was extremely cautious in applying the new law, concerning itself most of all lest it lead to a strangling of the inner life of the party.

However, what was in its original design merely a necessary concession to a difficult situation proved perfectly suited to the taste of the bureaucracy, which had then begun to approach the inner life of the party exclusively from the viewpoint of convenience in administration. Already in 1922, during a brief improvement in his health, Lenin, horrified at the threatening growth of bureaucratism, was preparing a struggle against the faction of Stalin, which had made itself the axis of the party machine as a first step towards capturing the machinery of state. A second stroke and then death prevented him from measuring forces with this internal reaction.

The entire effort of Stalin, with whom at that time Zinoviev and Kamenev were working hand in hand, was thenceforth directed to freeing the party machine from the control of the rank-and-file members of the party. In this struggle for "stability" of the Central Committee, Stalin proved the most consistent and reliable among his colleagues. He had no need to tear himself away from international problems; he had never been concerned with them. The petty-bourgeois outlook of the new ruling stratum was his own outlook. He profoundly believed that the task of creating socialism was national and administrative in its nature. He looked upon the Communist International as a necessary evil which should be used so far as possible for the purposes of foreign policy. His own party kept a value in his eyes merely as a submissive support for the machine.

### Theory

Together with the theory of socialism in one country, there was put into circulation by the bureaucracy a theory that in Bolshevism the Central Committee is everything and the party nothing. This second theory was in any case realized with more success than the first.

Availing itself of the death of Lenin, the ruling group announced a "Leninist levy". The gates of the party, always carefully guarded, were now thrown wide open. Workers, clerks, petty officials, flocked through in crowds. The political aim of this manoeuvre was to dissolve the revolutionary vanguard in raw human material, without experience,



Lenin addresses Russian workers while Trotsky looks on. The Stalinists later painted Trotsky out of this picture.

# The USSR: went wrong

without independence, and yet with the old habit of submitting to the authorities.

The scheme was successful. By freeing the bureaucracy from the control of the proletarian vanguard, the "Leninist levy" dealt a deathblow to the party of Lenin. The machine had won the necessary independence. Democratic centralism gave place to bureaucratic centralism. In the party apparatus itself there now took place a radical reshuffling of personnel from top to bottom. The chief merit of a Bolshevik was declared to be obedience. Under the guise of a struggle with the Opposition, there occurred a sweeping replacement of revolutionists with *chinovniks* (professional governmental functionaries). The history of the Bolshevik party became a history of its rapid degeneration.

The political meaning of the developing struggle was darkened for many by the circumstance that the leaders of all three groupings, Left, Centre and Right, belonged to one and the same staff in the Kremlin, the Politburo. To superficial minds it seemed to be a mere matter of personal rivalry, a struggle for the "heritage" of Lenin. But in the conditions of iron dictatorship social an-

tagonisms could not show themselves at first except through the institutions of the ruling party.

Many Thermidorians emerged in their day from the circle of Jacobins. Bonaparte himself belonged to that circle in his early years, and subsequently it was from among former Jacobins that the First Consul and Emperor of France selected his most faithful servants. Times change and the Jacobins with them, not excluding the Jacobins of the twentieth century.

Of the Politburo of Lenin's epoch there now remains only Stalin. Two of its members, Zinoviev and Kamenev, collaborators of Lenin throughout many years as emigres, are enduring ten-year prison terms for a crime which they did not commit. Three other members, Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky, are completely removed from the leadership, but as a reward for submission occupy secondary posts. And, finally, the author of these lines is in exile. The widow of Lenin, Krupskaya, is also under the ban, having proved unable with all her efforts to adjust herself completely to the Thermidor.

The members of the present Politburo occupied secondary posts throughout the history of the

Bolshevik party. If anybody in the first years of the revolution had predicted their future elevation, they would have been the first in surprise, and there would have been no false modesty in their surprise. For this very reason, the rule is more stern at present that the Politburo is always right, and in any case that no man can be right against the Politburo. But, moreover, the Politburo cannot be right against Stalin, who is unable to make mistakes and consequently cannot be right against himself.

### Democracy

Demands for party democracy were through all this time the slogans of all the oppositional groups, as insistent as they were hopeless. The platform of the Left Opposition demanded in 1927 that a special law be written into the Criminal Code "punishing as a serious state crime every direct or indirect persecution of a worker for criticism." Instead of this, there was introduced into the Criminal Code an article against the Left Opposition itself.

Of party democracy there remained only recollections in the memory of the older generation. And together





# The left and Gorbachev

During this 70th anniversary year of the Russian workers' revolution of 1917, Socialist Organiser has attempted to analyse, in the paper and in our special pamphlet, the significance of the Russian revolution, what kind of society the USSR is today and we have focussed attention on Gorbachev's so-called 'reforms'.

These are important issues and we are still far from understanding what goes on in the Soviet economy and society.

However, Socialist Organiser has been very clear about who we side with: we stand with the workers against the Russian bosses, the bureaucracy. Other socialists, particularly those who claim to stand in the 'tradition of Trotsky' have not been so clear. At best there has been confusion, and at worst there has been the grossest kind of illusions.

The 'best' is probably represented by Socialist Outlook, the journal of the newly formed International Socialist Group. The November-December issue contains an article 'Gorbachev and the Left' by Oliver MacDonald. It is a discussion piece.

MacDonald poses the question thus: "Should socialists support Gorbachevism against Brezhnevism?" This strikes me as odd. Why should we? Gorbachev represents only the interests of a privileged caste. Although any lessening of political repression should be welcomed, it does not follow that the bureaucracy will tolerate any kind of independent working class activity. MacDonald does not take up this point anywhere in his article.

Furthermore he attempts to minimise the fundamental conflict of interest between bureaucrats and workers in the Soviet Union. He says Leonard Shapiro and other reactionaries were right when they wrote "that the working class is the most privileged class in the USSR and that the reason for so few strikes has been less to do with the police than with the sense of security and well-being among key groups of industrial workers."

MacDonald uses the example of the relatively low wages of plant managers to back up his point: the economic privileges of the Soviet bureaucracy are marginal. It is their political power that is fundamental. Hence Gorbachev's moves towards political liberalisation are of immense significance, and MacDonald concludes by saying socialists should seriously consider taking a critical but supportive stance towards Gorbachev.

But to say that the working class in the Soviet Union is a 'privileged'

class and enjoys a sense of security and even a "greater influence on public policy" than the working class in the advanced capitalist countries is complete nonsense. Lower bureaucrats are not highly paid, but they do enjoy better education and better housing. Those higher up in the hierarchy enjoy not just "perks", e.g. chauffeured cars and special waiting rooms in stations, but incomes and lifestyles that stand out starkly when compared to the frugal reality of the lives of most Soviet workers.

In addition an important part of Gorbachev's 'reforms' is a drive for

killing of the German revolutionaries Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg and some of their companions are qualitatively different in scope from Stalin's annihilation of the Bolshevik party and his suppression of the Russian labour movement. Stalin suppressed the labour movements in Eastern Europe, too, after World War 2.

The equivalent of what Stalinism does to the working class is not what Social Democracy has sometimes done, but what fascism and regimes like Pinochet's in Chile do. Is this view 'revisionist'? Trotsky was the revisionist, then. In the programmatic document he wrote for the Trotskyist movement in 1938, he declared that Stalin's political system differed from fascism "only in more unbridled savagery".

Stalin's terror ended a third of a century ago. But the straitjacket — the social, economic, political, intellectual and moral straitjacket — that Stalin imposed on the workers of the USSR by way of that terror still exists. Gorbachev is determined to maintain it. His 'liberal bureaucratic' reforms are designed to secure that system and ensure that it can survive in the modern world.

Socialist Action's editorial gets worse. "Gorbachev is the most right-wing leader the Soviet Union has ever had," they say. Why? Because he does deals with imperialism!

The political framework that lies behind these and most other incoherent outpourings of Socialist Action is this. The world is divided into two camps: the goodies are the Soviet Union and other 'progressive' 'anti-imperialist' nations like East Germany, Poland, Cuba, Nicaragua, etc. The baddies are the imperialist West.

Gorbachev does deals with imperialism, so he is thus *objectively* right-wing. Indeed, Stalin, who put tens of millions in slave-labour camps, was 'left-wing' by comparison! So presumably are, or were, Kim Il Sung in North Korea, Enver Hoxha in Albania, and Pol Pot in Cambodia!

It also follows that "the USSR was the force that crushed fascism". True, millions of Russian workers were killed on the Eastern front. Why then was Stalin not interested in fighting fascism in 1939 when he made a pact with Hitler to jointly invade, crush and partition Poland?

It really isn't necessary to go on. The more of this confused neo-Stalinist rubbish you read, the more you realise that these people do not live in the real world at all. They live in a fantasy world of their own making. They do not know which side they are on between workers and bureaucrats.

It is time the left stopped living in a fantasy world, believing as Socialist Action evidently does, that the USSR is 'nearly socialist' and a progressive force in 'world politics'. It is time the left stopped hoping for reforms that will solve incidental problems of democracy in the Soviet Union, as Socialist Outlook do. The problem is the system — the whole Stalinist system — and the answer to that system is a new working class revolution in the USSR. We must side with the *workers* in the Stalinist states and side against their bureaucratic oppressors.

**'It's time the left stopped living in a fantasy world, believing that the USSR is 'nearly socialist' and a progressive force in world politics'.**

working class 'economic discipline'. In practice it will mean speed-ups and more intense exploitation. The ordinary Soviet workers will find their jobs less secure. MacDonald fails to mention this also — his political position is confused and, ultimately, he fails to take account of the real plight of the Russian working class and defend their interests.

The editorial in the last issue of Socialist Action is a depressing example of Stalinist tainted dross. Entitled "70 years on" it is an attempt to draw up a balance sheet of the legacy of the Russian Revolution: what the Soviet Union stands for today.

Socialist Action's "balanced" account starts thus: "It is unnecessary to recount here the crimes committed in the name of that revolution since it occurred." To suggest that it is *unnecessary* to recall Stalin's police state terror, to say that this does not affect a socialist attitude to what the Soviet Union is today is sickening. Stalin's extreme terror is a thing of the past — but the totalitarian police state is very much a thing of the present.

Why is it necessary to remember Stalin? According to Socialist Action Stalin was no different in nature from the Social Democrats who "in 1918 in Germany connived with the fascists to crush the revolution". This is goobledook. Fascists were not around in Germany in 1918. More important, Stalinism as it exists as a *political system* in the Soviet Union is *qualitatively* different from social democracy.

Social Democracy has never and will never hold state power as distinct from forming governments in liberal-democratic bourgeois state. Social democrats have committed great crimes against the working class, but even crimes like connivance in the

# what ong?

with it had disappeared the democracy of the Soviets, the trade unions, the co-operatives, the cultural and athletic organisations. Above each and every one of them there reigns an unlimited hierarchy of party secretaries. The regime had become "totalitarian" in character several years before this word arrived from Germany. Rakovsky wrote in 1928:

"By means of demoralising methods, which convert thinking communists into machines, destroying will, character and human dignity, the ruling circles have succeeded in converting themselves into an unremovable and inviolate oligarchy which replaces the class and the party."

Since those indignant lines were written, the degeneration of the regime has gone immeasurably further. The GPU has become the decisive factor in the inner life of the party. If Molotov in March 1936, was able to boast to a French journalist that the ruling party no longer contains any factional struggle, it is only because disagreements are now settled by the automatic intervention of the political police. The old Bolshevik party is dead, and no force will resurrect it.

## More about the Russian revolution

# 1917

### How the workers made a revolution



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## SCIENCE COLUMN

Space yes,  
bombs no!

By Mark Catterall

On 9 November the European space agency voted to increase funding for a number of projects. Hermes, a mini-space shuttle; Ariane 5, an improved satellite launching rocket; and Columbus, a pressurised module to attach to the US space station.

Many socialists have an ambivalent attitude to high technology, and tend to see space research at best as a waste of time and at worst as merely an adjunct of military research. What should our attitude be?

The USSR has this year put a permanently crewed space station in orbit. By the late 1980s the US will also have a permanently crewed space station.

Space research has always had strong links with military research. In 1957 when Sputnik 1 was launched, not only was it the world's first artificial satellite, but it proved to the US that the Soviet Union had developed a rocket powerful enough to send an H Bomb from the Soviet Union to America. Of the 337 functioning satellites in orbit, 49% are military.

But that is only part of the story. The lives of many ordinary people have been changed by space research. Long distance telephone calls are now commonplace. In many countries telecommunication satellites are bringing education and the outside world to isolated communities. Weather forecasting is now easier, if not foolproof, because of satellites, and doing the washing up is much easier with non-stick pans (a by-product of rocket research).

We must always look at technology closely to see where it is taking us. Chernobyl shows how uncontrolled technology can lead us to disaster, but we must not let it blind us to the benefits technology can bring us.

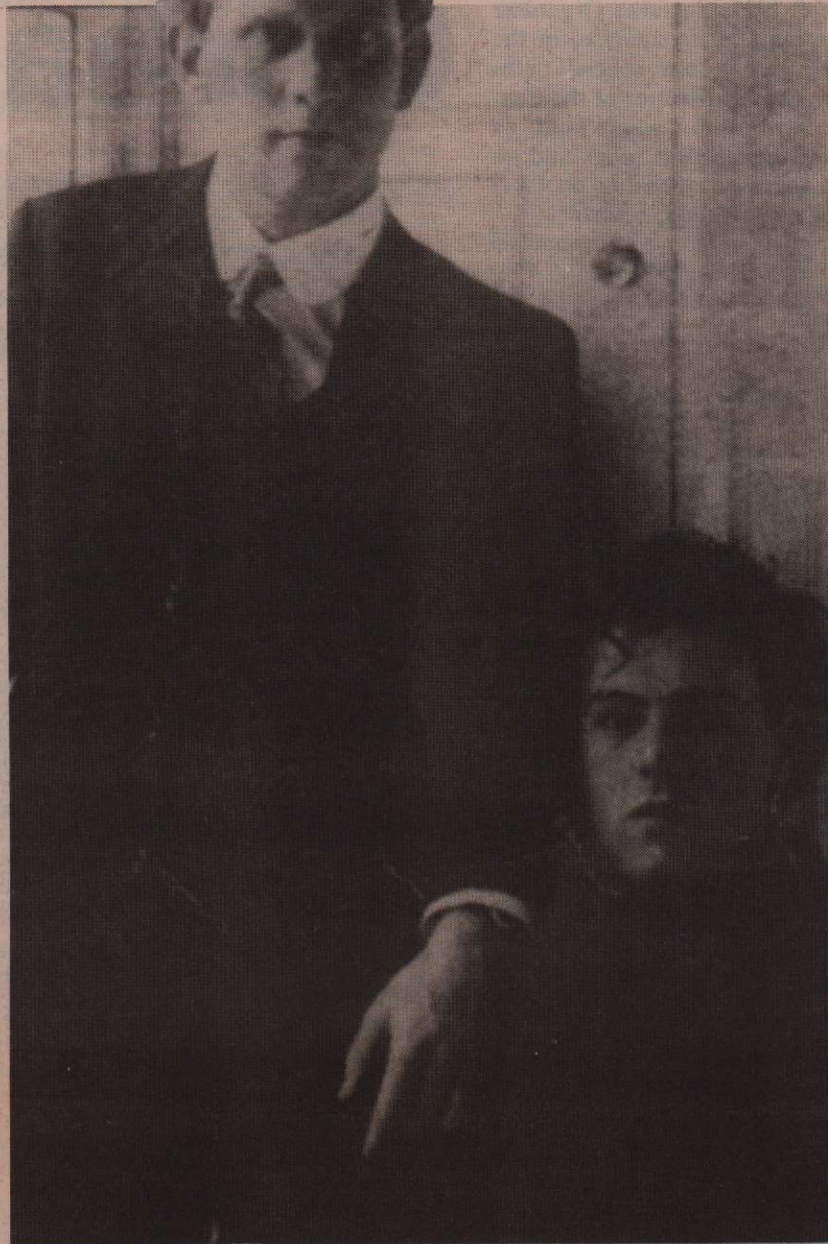
The space programmes of both superpowers are linked with the military arms race. The US space station is to be placed under the control of the US Department of Defence and will probably play a large role in star wars research.

Socialists should join with those who campaign against Star Wars and the militarisation of space by any of the super powers. Space research does cost a large amount of money. The Apollo (moon landing) project cost billions, but the Vietnam war that ran concurrent with the Vietnam war cost trillions.

Space research and space exploration, as with any other branch of science, its faults and purpose should be looked at, its faults criticised. But the criticisms socialists should have of current space research, should not blind us to the benefits it could bring humanity once it is liberated from the military who wish to pervert its uses.

**Workers' Liberty no.8, with Zbigniew Kowalewski on Solidarnosc in Lodz, special feature on South Africa, survey, features, reviews. Send for your copy to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 90p plus 30p postage.**

# The issue is still there, 74 years on



Maurice (left) and Scudder

## Edward Ellis reviews 'Maurice'

The success of *Maurice* is guaranteed by the huge success of its predecessor, *Room With a View*.

It is recognisably the product of the same Merchant-Ivory team. Like *Room With a View* is based on an E.M. Forster novel, dealing with the lives and sexual mores of the bourgeoisie, and is elegantly and subtly made.

Forster's *Maurice* occupies a special place in English literature. Although written in 1913, it wasn't published until after Forster's death. Forster himself was worried about the effects of its publication. For the book concerns the experience of a homosexual man in England in the early years of this century.

Forster's account, to which the film keeps very closely, is remarkably modern. Maurice comes to terms with himself at university where he begins a relationship with a young bourgeois, Clive, who initially gets his affections across somewhat obliquely by giving his friend a copy of Plato's 'Symposium'.

Clive eventually retreats from the relationship following the arrest and public humiliation of an aristocratic college friend — who in fact had been set up by a young soldier in league with the police. Recognising the dangers threatened by discovery, Clive breaks off his affair with Maurice — who is devastated — and finds himself a wife.

Not only is Clive's marriage sexually unrewarding. He himself becomes a less vivacious and interesting person as a result of the repression he im-

poses on himself. Maurice, on the other hand, eventually triumphs over his own self-denial, despite great efforts, including visits to a psychiatrist. Maurice finds emotional as well as sexual satisfaction with Clive's young under-gamekeeper Scudder.

The anger at society's attitudes, the rejection of self-hatred and the presentation of homosexuality as normal would indeed have shocked Forster's audience. Current furore over Colin and Barry of EastEnders suggests that times have changed less than might be supposed.

Is it believable? Would the wealthy Maurice and the proletarian Scudder be able to live happily ever after? In a class-ridden society, certainly not. Their plans to make a life together would backfire, Maurice would indeed face public disgrace.

That Maurice ends up with "a bit of a rough" tells you a lot about Forster's own sexual ideal. But there is more to it. The happy ending — even if it is improbable — made, for its time, a political point. It said that homosexuals could be happy.

And in 1987 that is still something that needs to be said.



Maurice's first lover, Clive

# Ben Elton is brilliant

By Penny Barnett

Let me start off by saying that I'm very partisan on the subject of Ben Elton. I think he's brilliant, so if you want an objective review of his tour, read the *Guardian*.

I've only ever been to two large gigs by well-known stand-up comics, Ben Elton recently and Alexei Sayle a couple of years ago. When I came out of the theatre after Alexei Sayle my

cheeks and stomach were in agony — I had laughed so much I felt sick.

But I felt disappointed by how little politics he included in his act. I am sure that the guys in the stalls who came to see him because they liked to have eleven pints and stagger home to watch OTT, found it all very acceptable.

Ben Elton is a different story.

Already a bigger "star" than Sayle was or will be, his comedy is no easy ride for the people who come along "because they quite liked Blackadder".

He is on stage for two and a half hours, and the whole time he is challenging society's accepted way of looking at things. Yeah, he makes a lot of jokes about shitting, and about throwing up after seven pints of lager and a chicken korma. But he also

spends a very large part of his time and energy taking up political and social issues.

Nor does he just make a token nod in the direction of the women's movement — a lot of his set is spent talking about women and issues that affect women. His passion about these issues is obviously genuine — he doesn't have to spend time expressing his outrage over nude 15 year old pin-ups in the *Daily Star*, tampon advertising and lack of women's toilet facilities in public places, but he does.

Accusations of sexism have been levelled at Elton, but I can't find any grounds for this accusation in the material he used on stage, or in his album (*Motormouth*).

He talks a lot about sex, and heterosexual male sexuality, and it may be that some people find an honest (and often self-mocking) discussion of male sexuality as offensive as Benny Hill style sexism. I don't and as Ben says on the album — if this is likely to offend don't buy it. Buy some earplugs instead for the next time you walk out of your front door.

Ben Elton's immense talent as a comedian is his ability to say things we've all thought but never dared to say, and to say them to 2500 people in a concert hall as intimately as he would in a pub back room.

This show isn't just Saturday Live plus F-words — he might go on TV and deny that he is overtly political, but he does more to put across socialist ideas in a 2½ hour gig than Neil Kinnock did in the entire election campaign. Go and see him.

## How workers fought in 1831

Performed by Moving Being, Wales innovative theatre company, this play dramatically outlines the events behind the Merthyr uprising in 1831, which culminated in the hanging of Dick Penderyn.

The play is set in a modern day classroom, full of disaffected teenagers. A new teacher sets out to give them a vivid history lesson, bringing it to life around them by showing them the similarity of their situation today and that of those who rose in rebellion against injustice.

Sounds very patronising, but it doesn't come across that way. The kids are streetwise and all-there, no easy push-over.

The story of the build up to the rising shows the role of the company truck shops which held the workers in

Mary Ireson reviews a new play, 'Gwrthyfed/ The Rising'

chains to their jobs by forcing them to buy all their goods there. When the ironmasters laid the workers off, which they frequently did, the special courts set up by ironmasters took the goods back. This resulted in much misery.

One night the workers went round the town taking all their repossessed goods back. Gradually more people joined in and things went rip.

At this point the play is very exciting and you really start to feel caught up in events. Quite a bit of the play is in Welsh, to underline the fact that 80-90% of the working popula-

tion was Welsh speaking. But there is always an immediate translation and it doesn't slow the action down.

Probably because I was watching it with a revolutionary socialist viewpoint the events seemed to me to underline the fact that the rising failed because of the lack of a central revolutionary organisation. As the ironmasters said — "divide and rule". The workers' movement was quickly broken up and the "ringleaders" who had no real leadership role, with defined goals and aims — were arrested.

Dick Penderyn was hanged. This was a very memorable part of the play, but we were left with no idea as to what he aspired to.

As a play depicting the history of the Merthyr rising, it is well worth seeing — but don't expect any great message as to the way forward from it.



# Shut down the Post Office

By Pete Keenlyside,  
UCW Manchester  
Amalgamated  
Branch, in a  
personal capacity

As we go to press (Tuesday) the UCW Executive are meeting to decide whether to begin industrial action over our claim for three hours off the working week.

The signs are at the moment that the dispute will go ahead. Not because the Post Office offer is unacceptable to the union executive, but because they do not think they could get it through the special conference that will have to be called to decide on any offer.

The problem now is going to be making sure that any action has the desired effect — stopping the mail. Apparently members of the Executive have been visiting all the large branches over the last week. The reports I have had about what they have been saying are not very encouraging.

Instead of preparing branches for a confrontation with the Post Office they have been talking about 24 hour strikes, accepting the diversion of mail, the use of casuals and non-striking members to do

the work of those out on strike. They are also going to instruct branches not to take action if members are suspended by management.

Branches must call emergency meetings now to discuss the dispute. What the Executive are proposing is disgraceful — a complete waste of time. It will not win us the dispute and it will sap the energy and morale of the membership in action that everyone knows will be pointless. We are not engaged in a publicity exercise or in an attempt to win friends and influence people. We are taking on a ruthless employer. As long as the mail is still moving they will be laughing at us, and any mail they cannot handle will be diverted to a grateful private sector.

We need to pass resolutions rejecting

the Executive's plans and calling for effective action, and we need to start making the plans for that action. **Effective action means shutting the Post Office down.**

It means making sure that not one letter or parcel is delivered and no counter staffed. It means refusing to accept diversions of mail and the use of casuals or other scab labour. It means refusing to allow management to discipline isolated individuals, and it means going out to the rest of the labour movement for support. And if that adds up to all-out strike action then that is what it will have to be.

We cannot allow the executive to sell us out on this one. If they are not prepared to do what is needed then the branches will have to do it themselves. The time for talking has gone — let's get on with the action.

## Fight to save Crispin House

By Sarah Worthington,  
NALGO shop  
steward, Crispin House.

Crispin House is a day centre in Bermondsey which provides training facilities for 175 adults with learning difficulties (mental handicap).

Originally the building was a tannery. Taken over in 1969 by Southwark Social Services, minor alterations were made to equip it for its future use as a Day Centre.

Now, nearly 20 years on, the building is decrepit, and a health hazard for clients and staff who work there. During the years, appeals have been made by clients, parents, staff and union members to the Council to rectify the many major problems people have with the building. These include drainage, sanitary hygiene, air conditioning, disabled access and the water system. Almost everything, in fact!

The Council did very little to improve the already poor state in which clients, many of whom have medical or mobility problems, had to work.

In the last few years, NALGO have been pressing for change.

Before the budget crisis hit Southwark, a new Day Centre for 70 adults with learning difficulties, with an attached six-place short-term residential unit, was being built in Queens Road, Peckham. It was intended for those without current day care, for example school leavers.

The residential unit was to be the only such provision in Southwark. Before the Queens Road unit was planned, clients had to go to the Isle of Wight or Wales for a placement.

The social services committee proposed to use this vital provision for extra day care. Parents were furious. The committee also recommended selling the Crispin site with none of the profits going back into the service.

Then in May, the budget crisis upon us, everything changed. The Council, knowing full well of the health and safety problems, decided to close Crispin House and move the unit as a whole to Queens Road, cutting the service for at least 100 adults.

This move was immediately opposed by union members, staff, clients and parents. The social services committee met on 8 July and decided that consultation would take place; a decision would be made on 26 August. Again, the terms of reference were not satisfactory to the people concerned with Crispin. Clients planned and took part in their own demonstration.

A public meeting was held. All demanded consultation. The August committee meeting was postponed to October. A consultative group was set up by management. The majority of the group decided the terms of reference were too restrictive. We opposed the cuts in service and questioned the reason for the move.

On 27 October, a mass march, demonstration and lobby organised by the Crispin NALGO members, was staged around and outside Peckham Town Hall on the evening of the committee meeting.

The final recommendations were good in some respects. Clients were to move to Queens Road and Evelyn Coyle Residential Unit (an ex-home for the elderly next to Crispin House), while the Queens Road Residential Unit would not be used for day care, and Crispin House would not be sold off, but be improved when money became available.

NALGO funded an independent survey and stated themselves that Crispin must be closed and repaired.

Yet the fight is still on. The fight for decent health and safety at Queens Road and Evelyn Coyle, adequate staffing levels and new and usable equipment, must continue.

We must also ensure that working together ensures that Crispin House is not sold, to be improved adequately for future use, and that the much needed Queens Road Residential Unit is opened as soon as possible. People with learning difficulties demand a decent service themselves so we must support them.

## Haringey council sacks 700 workers

By a Haringey council worker

A Haringey mother took her toddler to nursery only to be told that if the cuts go through the nursery would be closed — because the classes would be so large that the children would be better off at home.

Ring up Area 3 Social Services and hear the recorded voice: 'This office is closed because of staff cuts. For emergencies phone...'

The combined cuts in education amount to £17 million. The budget for primary education is £11 million.

On Monday last it was announced that the capitalised section of the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) involving over 700 workers, is to be phased out. That is they are to be sacked as the jobs end.

Some weeks ago at the joint stewards' committee NUT representatives put forward a call for strike action by all council workers. This was rejected by the manual and craft unions as up until then the cuts had fallen exclusively on the white collar staff.

Following this there was a one-day strike by NALGO and NUT workers, and the NUT embarked on the road to official strike action.

This call was carried at an NUT branch meeting after a heated debate with the

SWP who wanted to see the maintenance of unofficial no cover action which is being carried out at certain schools. Quite rightly, the branch leadership, when faced with the choice of continuing with this action or calling it off as a precondition of getting official backing, opted for getting official backing against the SWP's juvenile posturing.

An NUT lead for strike action (and 75% of the membership have to vote yes) is crucial and will put them in the forefront of the struggle against the cuts. Kinnock's yuppies, who now inhabit the ruling Haringey Labour Group, will find they have a fight on their hands. A teachers' strike will show the way to other groups of workers, and most crucially at this stage the building workers.

At present, on the sites, the workers are stunned that a Labour council could do this. It is balanced on a knife edge whether this feeling will turn to anger or apathy. Which way it goes is largely dependent on the local leadership. The stewards' committee has a breathing space in which to organise a fightback, because the decision to close the capitalised section of the DLO has to be ratified by a special meeting of the Labour Group on 10 December. They have already started lobbying ward councillors. While

this is an important preliminary in the fight the stewards must start planning for strike action, which includes bringing out the unaffected maintenance section and militant tactics such as occupations.

NALGO can also step up the action. They already have some members out over the sacking of a worker who refused to cover for the cuts. This action must be spread to the rest of the Social Services as a prelude to all-out action against the cuts package.

Haringey at present is one of the hardest-hit of the Boroughs. The picture

it presents is what the very near future holds for many other workers. It was inevitable that the fight back would begin in a very bitty, ad hoc way. For instance, the craft committee has now found out with a vengeance that they were not immune to the cuts, and it is surely a matter of time before the rest of the manual workers have the same rude awakening.

However, the unions have now stirred themselves. The unions in Haringey are poised to give Thatcher's errand boys and girls a bloody good hiding.

## The action escalates

By John Bloxam

Monday 23 November saw the biggest action yet by Ford workers against the company's attempt to push radical changes in working conditions. Over half of Ford's workforce struck on the day management resumed negotiations with the national union officials.

Ford supervisors also voted to continue their strikes against the same proposals. Supervisors at Dagenham, Dunton and Averly are striking this Monday and Tuesday.

Supervisors as much as production workers are threatened by the 'quality circles', 'group leaders' and other job changes the bosses want to introduce. Both groups of workers are threatened with job losses, speed-up, a great increase in 'flexibility' and a threat to the unions' position in the plants.

The strike on the 23rd follows three weeks of unofficial guerrilla action in most of Ford's British plants. Similar action on the shop floor has not been seen for many years and is unprecedented

amongst the supervisory staff.

At the resumed talks, Ford bosses offered some changes to their package, increasing this year's pay offer by 1.25%, improvements in pensions and lay-off pay. But these improvements were marginal and double-edged.

The increase in lay-off pay is conditional on acceptance of the company's right to introduce temporary labour onto the tracks when they need the extra production! And the central part of their package remained intact. It is still a three-year deal, with only cost-of-living rise pay increases in the second two years, and the package still includes 'quality circles', 'team leaders' and the rest. Ford also want negotiations on these changes at plant rather than national level.

Negotiations are due to resume on 7 December.

Ford workers are still in a strong position. There is a real militancy in the plants and a unique chance to fight together with the supervisors. But this will not exist for ever. It urgently needs to be built on, and preparations made for all-out action.

Ford workers can start to take the initiative, demanding not only that the company's package is thrown out as a whole and the rejection of all strings, but also the union's own claim: a one year deal, 10% wage rise and a shorter working week.

disgust at my treatment.

Privatisation is in the air again, with the main focus being on the electricity industry. We need to keep repeating what is at stake with privatisation — seven pits going immediately to the wall in Notts, for a start.

They will not only reduce the coal they buy from Notts pits, but also try to import more coal from places like South Africa and Colombia. It will hit us all, including Lynk and the UDM.

What are they going to do about it? The answer, of course, is nothing.

Those working miners who thought they would be safe if they stuck by the bosses and the Government are going to be treated with exactly the same contempt as everybody else. The Coal Board and the Government will do what they can get away with, and to hell with anybody who scabbed in 1984 and 1985.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

LAST Saturday the Notts sacked miners had one of our regular meetings. We voted unanimously to offer whatever help we can to Arthur Scargill to ensure his re-election, and we will be writing to him to offer our services.

Meanwhile Johnny Walsh has said he is willing to stand as the right-wing candidate. The South Wales leadership is talking about legal action to stop the ballot. The Scottish Area leadership refused to make a recommendation to their branches. But if the Scottish leadership are not prepared to come out, the rank and file are. There are already reports of a campaign to re-elect Scargill being set up, and a meeting of sacked miners there voting 20 to none to support Arthur Scargill.

Last week I was hunting through one of my drawers, and I found an old campaign badge from five years ago which said 'Scargill for President'. I put it on straight away.

WHETTON'S WEEK



### Campaign for Scargill

On Monday I went into the Ollerton and Bevercotes Miners' Welfare, and the Chairman told me to remove the badge because it was 'offensive'. I refused and he immediately stopped my drink. I was hauled in front of the Welfare Committee and they suspended me for a week.

I will have to appear in front of them again this Monday on the charge of 'wearing an offensive badge'. We will have to see what happens then, but already many people, including UDM members, have voiced their

## What the Tories plan

By Mike Grayson

Last Wednesday's Guardian carried a front page 'exclusive' on the topic of a Cabinet Office report which threatens the job security of tens of thousands of civil service workers.

In fact the report, entitled 'Working Patterns', has been in circulation since September but the Guardian is not alone in being late with the news: many trade union activists were totally unaware of the report's existence until the news broke in the media. At the time of writing, there has been no information from union headquarters telling members of this potentially devastating document.

The report's political starting point is stated quite baldly: 'the recession has influenced the supply side (of labour) by causing high levels of unemployment which have strengthened the position of employers both in the external labour market and in dealings with their existing workforces.'

They are able more easily to obtain workers prepared to accept irregular working patterns; and it has become easier to persuade existing workforces to accept changes in working practices on the argument that continued commercial viability (and thus less threat of redundancy) depends on the reduction of costs.

And what is good enough for private industry is now seen as a model for the civil service. 'Regulatory constraints' — such as maternity leave and superannuation — are seen as barriers to 'the efficient management of working time.' The report discusses the prospect of a big increase in part time and temporary staff contracts. Such contracts are seen as a way of making savings in national insurance and pension costs.

Permanent guaranteed employment would be replaced by staff on so-called 'annual hours contracts' (i.e. people are employed on the basis of the number of hours needed to perform a job over a one-year period). A reserve of former civil service workers would be held on retainer fees, ready to be called in to cover up periods of staff shortage. More direct



# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Five million to starve in Ethiopia

"To give food aid to people just because they are starving is a pretty weak reason." So once said a US secretary for

### agriculture.

He expressed very sharply the attitude of the big capitalist powers towards the starving people of the Third World.

Once again scenes of famine in Ethiopia have reached our television screens, recalling those we saw in 1984 that prompted 'Band Aid' and a host of other efforts to raise money for food. Five million Ethiopians face starvation.

The underlying problems did not go away after 1984-5. Fundamentally the problem is the massive inequality in the world's distribution and use of wealth. In a world based around profit, the poor can starve to death without the governments of the world lifting a finger to help them.

The US and the EEC still have mountains and lakes of food and drink that is not profitable to give to the starving in Ethiopia.

Another African famine, in Mozambique, has been exacerbated by South African-backed right-wing guerillas. In Ethiopia, too, part of the problem is political — a continuing state of war directed against the national minorities of Eritrea and Tigré.

The answer is to change the economic basis on which the world is organised. In the meantime, western governments should cancel Africa's debts.

## Solidarnosc lives on

The 'reform referendum' in Poland has ended in a debacle and setback for the dictatorship of General Jaruzelski.

Only 44% of those entitled to vote favoured the economic reform programme on offer from the regime. Only 46% favoured the political reform programme. Jaruzelski had hoped for 51% support.

About one third of those entitled to vote chose not to. The underground trade union movement Solidarnosc had called for abstention.

So Poland's version of 'perestroika' has run into difficulties. Although Jaruzelski declared earlier this month that the referendum's result would be binding on his administration, he will in fact implement his programme anyway.

The reforms offer some political liberties in return for economic changes including huge price rises and increases in rents and heating costs. So the Polish people were asked: do you want a bit of freedom... plus price increases? What the result has shown is the continuing level of political resistance in Poland six years after Solidarnosc was outlawed.

It is unprecedented for the bureaucratic regime in a country like Poland to allow such a low poll. The result can only be interpreted as a political success for the opposition.

Jaruzelski's difficulties fit into a growing pattern in Eastern Europe. The sacking of Boris Yeltsin in the USSR was seen as a blow against the 'glasnost' reformers.

And President Nicolae Ceausescu in Romania has faced even greater difficulties. Workers rioted in the city of Brasov on 15 November, and demonstrated under slogans like 'We want bread!' and 'Down with dictatorship!'

The violent street protests followed wage cuts and severe food and energy cuts.

Now Ceausescu has ordered sharp punishments. But he won't get out of his difficulties so easily.

Romania, like Poland and the USSR, faces immense economic problems deriving from bureaucratic mismanagement. All these countries have to try to make reforms. Yet the only reforms the bureaucrats can think of have a double problem: they anger workers by cutting into their living standards and job security, and at the same time they open chinks and cracks for workers to express their anger.

We don't know which country of Eastern Europe will see the next workers' revolution. But the signs are that such a revolution is coming. The labour movement in the West must make sure that it is ready to give solidarity.

# NUS: dare to fight!

The National Union of Students conference starting on 4 December comes at an important time for the student movement.

The Education Reform Bill is going to decimate higher and further education. It will smash up the school system we have and lead to a two-tier education system — one tier for the rich, and one for the poor.

NUS has done little to fight the Bill. It has failed to build an opposition capable of taking on the Tories.

The campaign against the Bill will be debated at Conference. We need to come out of that debate with a commitment to fight.

Not only that. The NUS leadership

By Simon Pottinger (NUS Executive, in personal capacity)

must be forced to take responsibility for this term's failures. They are guilty of holding back the militancy that exists in many colleges. They have not dared give a lead to those students prepared to take action.

Art students, in particular, have been mobilising against the Government. They need NUS support, and they should have it.

NOLS must listen to these students and start responding with a coherent, active campaign.

Conference will discuss student

financial support. It seems likely that the Tories plan to introduce 'top-up' loans, and the Government will abolish most welfare benefits for all students on 1 April.

Further attacks are being made on students and the working class through the poll tax.

Here too, the NUS leadership has to start fighting back. These issues are connected in social and political life. Unfortunately, they are not connected in the minds of the dominant Democratic Left faction on the Executive!

The Tories are making a series of concerted attacks on young people's rights — from the poll tax through compulsory YTS and student loans to

the Education Bill.

NUS has to organise opposition to these attacks. We must join up with those trade unionists who are also affected.

The NUS leadership must dare to fight the Government. The fight back must start now. We have wasted enough time.

Students and young people who every day of their lives face the sharp end of the Tory attack can't afford to wait indefinitely for the NUS leadership to get up enough bottle to stand for students' rights and student interests.

If they won't lead a fight, then they should get out of the way and make room for those who will!

# NOLS needs democracy

This year's conference of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) was tiny — membership was down by 400. In the National Union of Students, NOLS have formed a *de facto* coalition with the right wing Communist Party "Eurocommunists". NUS campaigns have been virtually non-existent, and NOLS has lost much of its credibility with students.

The 'Democratic Left' leadership of NOLS have transformed the Labour Students organisation into a bureaucratic rump and have stupefied NUS into a deep sleep.

There was a time when NOLS was a reasonably democratic and open organisation. It was possible to have genuine debates at the national conference. Minority speakers were heard out, and minorities gained representation on the NOLS National Committee.

There were instances of undemocratic practices, of some minority clubs being carved out, but this was by no means the rule.

By 1983 things had changed. The opposition — Militant and Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) had over 20 delegates to national conference ruled out. The Clause IV ('Democratic Left') majority was 19.

More than half the delegates from Manchester University Labour Club were SSiN supporters. The SSiN delegates were ruled out — it was said their membership cards were incomplete. They were replaced by two supporters of Clause IV — one of whom himself objected, pointing out that he had in fact forgotten to rejoin NOLS that year!

When challenged, John Mann, (NOLS NUS Officer) and John Dennis (Labour Party student organiser) said they would send photocopies of the cards, proving their allegations. The photocopies never arrived. NOLS office then claimed they had lost all the SSiN supporters' membership cards!

A panic meeting of NOLS National Committee ultimately reinstated the delegates — a tacit admission that they had been caught red-handed cheating.

By Sandra Cartlidge

At the same conference Abdul Sheir and Phil Davidson, the two SSiN delegates out of Birmingham University's delegation of four had their cards ruled out of order. Again it was claimed they were incorrectly filled in. The cards had been sent to the NOLS office by Dave Mason, the Club's reserve delegate and a member of the NOLS officers' group.

When Abdul and Phil were allowed to inspect their cards it transpired that Abdul's was indeed 'incorrectly' filled in — it was a forgery, with Abdul's name signed by Dave Mason. Abdul was reinstated as a delegate, and Mason went home red-faced.

In 1984 Clause IV did their sums wrong and failed to carve out enough opposition delegates to assure themselves of a comfortable majority. The conference passed three censure motions against the NC and referred back the NC report. Then the first of the elections took place. SSiN won two, Militant one, and Clause IV three.

Funnily enough, the total votes cast was eleven more than on the resolutions. Opposition delegates demanded a roll call vote, to see where the extra votes had come from.

John Dennis (the returning officer) refused, and moreover he demanded that his report be accepted or he would close down the conference. Militant pressed on with allegations of ballot-rigging, and sure enough the conference was summarily closed down.

After half a day the conference was restarted. The credentials report took 2½ sessions to complete. Conference was later suspended for a session because John Dennis refused to accept a conference decision to give Clubs appealing against his credentials ruling the right to reply.

The next year saw a very quiet NOLS conference. The Labour Party National Executive Committee had imposed new Standing Orders after an 'inquiry' into events at the 1984 conference. The credentials report was no longer taken publicly at the conference but by a mysterious 'Credentials Committee' of which members knew virtually nothing,



who was on it, when it met, etc.

In 1986 Dave Brennan, a SSiN supporter and one of NOLS' two auditors, was not allowed to scrutinise the accounts. He tried to appeal to conference. Outrageously, conference voted against hearing him speak. The conference was well and truly stitched.

This year's conference saw the same old story played out, but even more viciously. Opposition clubs were sent ridiculously small numbers of membership cards, limiting their potential delegations. Newcastle Poly were rung by NOLS office and instructed to change the date of their selection meeting. They did so — and were then ruled out for changing the date of their meeting!

NOLS conference used to be something of a haven for those of us who are also YS activists. We thought it would be hard to find a more carved-up and undemocratic youth conference than the YS.

We were wrong. The born-again

Kinnockites of the Democratic Left/Clause IV have reached mind boggling levels of blatant carving. Bureaucratic manoeuvring has replaced any idea of building an outgoing, campaigning Labour Students organisation. Labour Clubs have been given no central direction to their activity.

The Democratic Left want control of NOLS and NUS for its own sake, as a rung up the ladder to future careers as MPs or trade union officials.

NOLS needs a leadership which actively helps and resources new clubs. We need rules which aid participation in NOLS rather than restrict it. Further Education students should be allowed to join NOLS.

If we are to build a lively Labour Student organisation out of the wreckage which is now NOLS we need democracy.

We challenge the Democratic Left to explain to us why they oppose these changes.