

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

*For Workers' Liberty East and West*

## Ethiopia: 5 million face starvation

# This is capitalism



Starvation in Ethiopia, meat mountain in Europe



**FIVE MILLION** people are starving to death in Ethiopia because of the world's indifference and the brutality of their own government.

Despite all the publicity last time, despite the money that was raised, despite the aid that was sent, once again Ethiopia's land is covered in dust and its crops have shrivelled. Last time, between 1984 and 1985, one million peasants died for lack of food. For the rest, the nightmare wasn't over.

In Eritrea, Tigre, and northern and eastern Wallo provinces, virtually the whole crop has failed. Although relief agencies have been preparing for the famine since August, disaster once again has struck.

Just like last time, the EEC has tons of food stockpiled and rotting which it will not give away. Just like last time, the total aid being provided by Western governments is pitifully inadequate. The USSR, which provides the Ethiopian regime's guns, has provided even less food aid.

Aid worth \$400 million has been withheld from the Ethiopian government by the West for political reasons. They want more Western-style farming methods. Ethiopia gets only \$16.80 per head in development aid (that is, long-term aid for projects) as against \$65 for Somalia and

\$51 for Sudan.

Yet the 'Derg', the government of President Mengistu Haile Mariam (recently declared a 'civilian' government) has plenty of blood on its hands. The people of Eritrea and Tigre have been fighting long wars for national independence from Ethiopia, and the war has contributed immensely to the current crisis.

While his people are starving, Mengistu parades his bloated military force and has refused to publicise the fate of the hungry internationally. He refuses to contemplate a ceasefire with the rebels, denouncing the very idea as an 'imperialist plot'.

The people of Eritrea and Tigre should be given their right to self-determination. That would be the most effective form of ceasefire.

Western governments and the USSR should give massive immediate food aid — preferably administered directly by or in conjunction with Eritrean and Tigrean groups rather than Mengistu. Long-term aid is also needed.

And we must not forget other disasters afflicting Africa. In Mozambique, South African backed guerillas have been causing havoc for years.

Nature has contributed to Africa's

**Turn to back page**

# PRESS GANG

## The tragedy of 'News on Sunday'

By Jim Denham

The final demise of the News on Sunday was not a great surprise to anyone.

Circulation was down to 120,000 and declining each week. It was losing £90,000 a week even after drastic cuts in staffing forced through in May by new owner Owen Oyston. Incidentally, the sacked staff are still waiting not just for redundancy pay, but even for holiday money they were owed.

And it had abandoned just about all the original ideals it was set up to promote. It veered from week to week between being a "left wing" Mail on Sunday and a characterless Sunday Mirror.

Its "radicalism" was increasingly no more than a willingness to parrot the clichés of the trade union bureaucracy — and in particular, the TGWU leadership, who together with Oyston, had saved it from bankruptcy in May.

The News on Sunday's last-but-one editor, Brian Whitaker, writing in the Guardian, divided the paper's history into two phases: the Age of Innocence and the Age of Oyston.

The Age of Innocence began with "various well-meaning people who knew little about journalism but had very strong opinions about how it should be practised." Many of them came from a far left background, but by the mid-eighties they were under the influence of "Rainbow Coalition" politics as exemplified by the GLC.

Their original project of combining "right-on" politics with a hard-headed commercial estimate that at least 800,000 potential readers could be found for a radical Sunday publication proved to be wildly off the mark.

The "innocents" divided between those (like the first editor, Keith Sutton) who put the priority on circulation and those (like star 'editor-in-chief' John Pilger) who favoured a more earnest, up-market approach. The populists won, and Pilger stormed out before the paper was even launched.

But the "right-on" brigade still controlled the "Founders' Trust", an august body whose brief was to oversee the ideological soundness of the finished product, and — according to Whitaker — objected to using rounded corners on pictures for the TV pages because they were "politically reactionary".

Three weeks after issue one hit the streets on 26 April, the paper was pronounced bankrupt. It would all have ended there and then, but for the fact that the general election had been announced the day before.

The new Labour paper could not be seen to fold in the run-up to an election, and Oyston was allowed to bail it out. His staff cuts halved the losses, but the circulation plummeted as the paper became blander and less distinctive, and floundered about looking for a market.

Oyston now plans to use his links with the TGWU to launch a credit card and discount service aimed at trade union members. He also retains control of a modern newspaper production facility that can be used, at some time in the future, to launch a new, profitable publication without the ideological baggage that the News on Sunday had to carry.

By the end, it was a rotten paper. But it is still sad to see it die, if only because there is a real need for a popular, left-wing paper to offset the massive right-wing bias of the national press. The tragedy of the News on Sunday is that it will probably ensure that no-one tries to establish a serious left-wing newspaper again in the foreseeable future.

# Eastern bloc workers move

Further signs that workers in the Eastern bloc may be beginning to move in response to Gorbachev's economic reform measures came last week with the publication by SMOT (Free Inter-professional Union of Workers) of its first pamphlet for some time.

Signed by a number of individuals like Vladimir Skivirsky, who was only released from detention earlier this year, the document amongst other things, warns Soviet workers about the dramatic fall in living standards to be expected if Gorbachev's reforms go through. It urges them

not to accept the price rises and job losses envisaged by the bureaucracy's restructuring plans. Instead it calls on Soviet workers to follow the example of their brothers and sisters in Poland and be ready to go on to the streets if prices rise.

'Do not condemn your families to poverty. Be ready to go on strike against price rises. We will only preserve our rights in a common struggle for our cause,' it proclaims.

Over the last few years workers' living standards throughout the Eastern bloc have fallen dramatically as the bureaucracies there struggle to come to terms with the effects of the world economic crisis and the crisis caused by their own blundering

bureaucratic mismanagement of Eastern bloc economies. In an attempt to solve the crisis they have increased food prices, fares and other charges and kept a strict hold on wages. However, none of this has worked.

Formed in 1977, SMOT leaders drew their inspiration from the heroic struggles of the FTUA led by Vladimir Klebanov for free trade unions inside the USSR independent of state control.

Like Klebanov, SMOT's leaders have nothing but contempt for the sham, fake official Soviet trade union movement which exists to serve the interests of the bureaucracy rather than those of the workers.

In a particularly hard hitting passage of the pamphlet the group declares that the official trade unions show a cynical contempt for the working class and its needs at a time when half our people live on or below the poverty line.

The re-emergence of SMOT, despite heavy repression, coming as it does on top of recent protests by workers in Rumania, and events in Poland, must be welcomed and supported by socialists everywhere and should be a further spur to us to build an effective solidarity movement in this country to champion and side with all oppressed Eastern bloc workers.

EETPU

# Campaign against Hammond

The vote at this year's TUC conference to refer back the report on the EETPU's role in the News International dispute — in defiance of the General Council's recommendation — was a clear indication of the rank and file anger at the electricians' treachery — and the TUC's failure to do anything about it.

Amidst allegations that the union had flagrantly breached the TUC directives and cooperated with Murdoch's henchmen in Wapping, Norman Willis's recommendation to leave well alone — or at best to give the EETPU another slap on the wrist — was met with fury by the print unions.

Rejecting the argument that the EETPU could not be tried for the same 'crime' twice, SOGAT and the NGA demanded that the electricians be disciplined for their 'unprincipled, disgraceful and dishonourable' behaviour.

As a result, the EETPU instigated their own internal inquiry into the allegations made by an ex-Wapping EETPU member, Steve Seamen, that his union officials had held regular talks with News International management, had drafted the production workers' pay claim, had started a check-off system with the company (where union dues are deducted at source) and had drawn up a draft recognition agreement between the company and the white collar section of the EETPU. Such behaviour was in breach of the guidelines issued by the TUC and agreed by Hammond early in the dispute.

The inquiry is now finished and the report has been sent to the TUC. In effect it admits to the allegations brought against it but lays all the blame at the door of its national newspaper officer, Tim Rice, who has since left the union 'due to ill health'. A cop-out that Willis, although professing to be 'extremely disquieted', is keen to accept. He doesn't want to rock the boat.

However, other unions on the council are not prepared to let bygones be bygones and are demanding that the EETPU pay a heavier price for their scabbing than a simple ticking off. What the print unions want is the expulsion of the EETPU.



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).

Cuts

## Lambeth Health Emergency

Tony Benn and John Fraser MPs will join local health workers and community groups at a rally protesting against health service cuts to be held at St. Thomas' Hospital in South London on Monday 14 December.

The rally is organised by West Lambeth Health Emergency (WLHE) and will be followed by a lobby of the District Health Authority (DHA) which meets at the hospital later in the afternoon.

In a bid to meet a £2.4 million cash shortage, West Lambeth DHA recently implemented a package of cuts which included:

\*Closure of five wards (137 beds) at St. Thomas' Hospital for a six month period.

- \*Freezing many vacant posts.
- \*Closure of the mental-illness inpatient ward at St. Thomas'.
- \*Closure of one ward at Tooting Bec Hospital.
- \*Closure of Ferndale and Rose McAndrew Community Clinics.
- \*Closure of at least one ward for the elderly at South Western Hospital.

\*Delaying planned developments, particularly in community services.

\*Introduction of car parking charges for visitors and staff.

These measures will add a further 2,000 to the current waiting list of 7,700. Yet at its meeting on the 14th, West Lambeth DHA will discuss further cuts which include the permanent closure of the 137 beds at St. Thomas'.

But what would expulsion mean? Hammond would still be the leader of the electricians, still able to negotiate single union deals. Indeed, it would probably enhance his standing with employers and strengthen his hold over a powerful section of the labour movement.

It would also lose the trade union movement some good militant trade unionists. Not all rank and file electri-

cians support Hammond's company unionism stance, but isolating them from the trade union movement wouldn't defeat the right wing — it would split the working class.

And, although Hammond's 'popularity' with certain right wing sections of the trade union movement has ebbed since his Wapping days, there is a distinct possibility that some other unions would leave the TUC with him and form an alternative, right wing federation. The labour movement is not strong enough at this time to withstand such a split.

But nor should the electricians' betrayal of fundamental trade union principles go unpunished. That would lead to a further demoralisation of the movement.

Suspension could be the answer. It would prove to the movement that the TUC is not a bunch of toothless old bureaucrats more interested in their careers than in protecting the interests of the working class against the attack of Thatcher and the bosses.

However, suspension alone is not enough. To defeat Hammond's ideas the TUC should mount a campaign among the rank and file electricians on the basis of trade union solidarity, of fighting for their interests not those of the bosses. Such a campaign would encourage the left in the EETPU to fight back against Hammond, to kick him out.

It would signal to the rest of the movement that the TUC is not an apologist for scabs but that the interests of the class take priority.

It would be a chance to unite the movement to fight back against the ever increasing attacks made on their right to organise by the Thatcher government. Expulsion of the EETPU would hinder that fightback.

Lesbian and gay rights

## The Tories clamp down

The "promotion of homosexuality" in schools is to be banned by a new clause in the Local Government Bill. The clause, drawn up by Tory back-bencher Jill Knight, constitutes the most serious overt attack on the rights of homosexual men and women in recent years.

As it will ban councils from giving money to bodies "promoting homosexuality", it will also mean the closure of Lesbian and Gay Centres where they exist.

Opposition to the policy of some Labour councils on this issue formed an important plank of Tory propaganda during the election campaign. Actual legal restrictions have been impending ever since the Tories' re-election.

It is not possible for a teacher in a classroom, or anyone else, to convince someone that they are homosexual if they do not want to be, still less to force them to be homosexual against their will.

What is possible is that through education, young people could grow up less bigoted — or less screwed-up. If young people believe that homosexuality is perfectly natural

sexual behaviour, the grotesque sport of 'queer-bashing' will become a thing of the past. Lesbians and gay men will be able to walk the streets without fear. The world would be a nicer place to live in.

If young people who discover themselves to be homosexual believe themselves to be perfectly 'normal' and 'natural' — not sick, not perverted, not diseased — there will be less misery, self-hatred and ruined lives.

The Bill is the government's way of saying that it accepts bigotry and all that goes with it — and indeed encourages it. For the Bill says in effect that homosexuality is unnatural and disgusting. Violence towards lesbians and gay men, discrimination at work and elsewhere, are given government sanction.

Homosexuality is just one way to be. Homosexuals can be just as happy or unhappy, healthy or ill, as anyone else. This truth should be taught in schools.

The labour movement will need to stand firm in defence of lesbian and gay rights as the Tories clamp down harder and harder.

Scandalously, this bigoted section of the Bill is to be supported by the Labour Front Bench. So much for their commitment to equality — or, indeed, Labour Party policy.

# Summit of the butchers

**SO WE have witnessed History in the making — Gorbachev and Reagan signing their agreement on intermediate and short-range nuclear weapons.**

The Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty will eliminate medium and short-range nuclear weapons. The Russians will destroy 1750 operational and stored missiles, and the US 850.

Both sides have said that the INF agreement could lead to better things to come. Gorbachev explicitly looked forward to a world without any nuclear weapons.

The treaty may yet fail to get ratified by the US Congress, and thus never take effect, but only a wild warmonger could hope for such an outcome. Perhaps real steps will be made towards scrapping *some* nuclear weapons.

But we should have no trust in either side of the negotiating table. Neither Reagan nor Gorbachev deserves confidence as a peace-maker.

Reagan continues to back 'contra' guerillas in Central America whose aim is the overthrow of the San-

## EDITORIAL

dinista government in Nicaragua. He has gunboats attempting to impose his will on the Gulf.

Gorbachev continues to have his troops in Afghanistan conducting their neo-colonial war.

The Washington summit will not resolve these issues. Central America is not even to be discussed. A solution to the Afghanistan question will be discussed — but not agreed upon.

For both sides this summit is a grand political gesture, as much to do with domestic political considerations as with any desire for peace. Reagan wants to make sure his successor wins the American election this year (which also puts limits on how far peace-making can go). Gorbachev needs to break down Cold War hostilities and curb the USSR's military spending in order to 'restructure' his decaying economy.

Gorbachev has scored something of a propaganda victory. When Reagan first proposed the 'zero option' for intermediate range missiles in 1981, he knew that there would be no takers in Brezhnev's Moscow.



Gorbachev's greater 'openness' called Reagan's bluff. Last year's Reykjavik summit ended in a fiasco. But now both sides have to be seen to be making progress.

Progress can only be limited. In a world system divided into nation states and with irresolvable social antagonisms, war is a permanent possibility. The US and its Western

allies will always go to war to defend the direct or indirect profits of their ruling classes. The bureaucracy in the USSR will invade other countries in defence of its interests.

# Fight the new Tory anti-union laws!

Every two years since 1979, the government has introduced new legislation intended to weaken trade unionism.

The latest stage in this process is the "Employment Bill" published on 22 October.

Previous measures have already weakened union membership agreements, imposed strict balloting rules and put virtually all forms of effective industrial action at risk of legal penalty.

But the new Bill goes even further, and is the most blatantly undemocratic of all the government anti-union legislation. Even sections of the national press and some employers have protested at the Bill's "excesses".

The main points of the Bill are:  
\*Removal of a union's right to discipline members who defy a majority strike vote, even after a legal ballot.

\*Unions must hold separate ballots in each workplace of a multi-site employer, and minority workplaces can opt out of industrial action, even when the overall vote has been in

By Jim Denham

favour.

\*The appointment of a Commissioner for Trade Union Rights who can give assistance to any member (or even ex-member) wishing to pursue legal action against a union.

\*Dismissal for non-membership of a union is automatically "unfair", and industrial action to extend union organisation is illegal.

\*Individuals resigning from or refusing to join a union will automatically receive considerable financial compensation from the employer or the union.

\*All elections to union executives must be by postal ballot; the range of union officials and employees who must be elected will be considerably extended.

\*The Manpower Services Commission will be abolished and replaced with a new "Training Commission" with reduced trade union input.

\*Under 18 year olds refusing YTS places to be denied benefit.

No wonder the Bill has already been dubbed the "scabs' charter"!

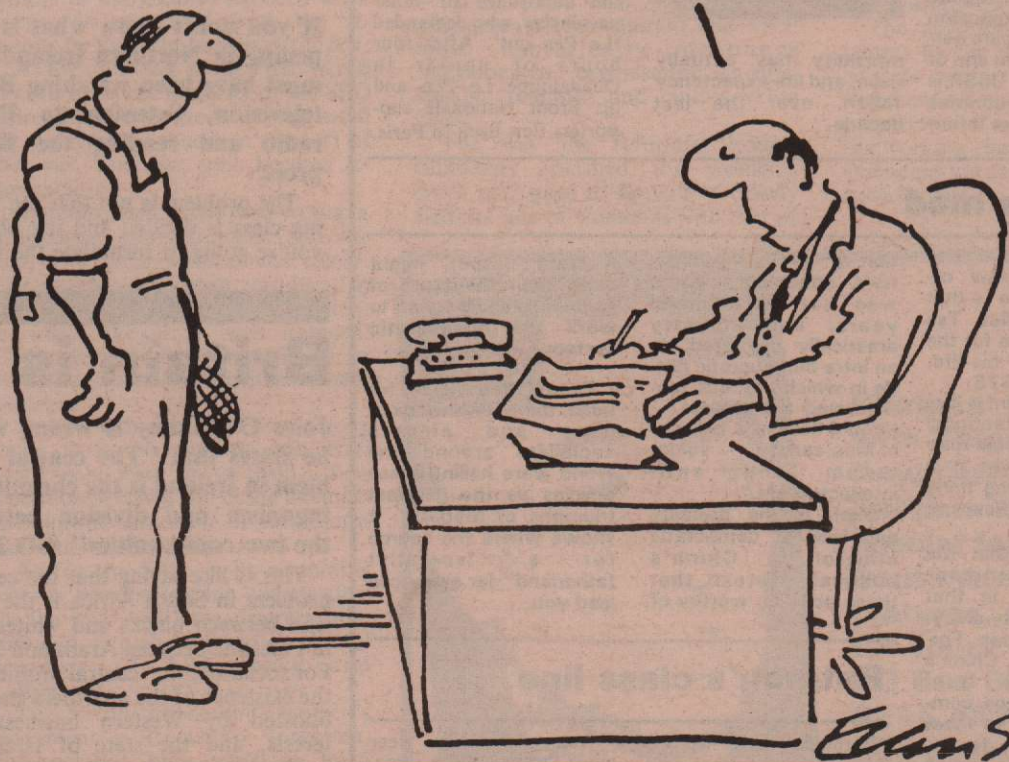
Much has already been made of the astonishing, anti-democratic proposal to give minority workers the right to ignore majority strike decisions, arrived at legally under the 1984 Trade Union Act, without fear of discipline from the union.

Less well publicised so far are the considerable financial inducements to be offered to disaffected members willing to take the union to court, the proposal to outlaw closed shops even after the 85% vote in favour required by the 1982 legislation has been achieved; and the attacks on the young unemployed contained in part II of the Bill.

So far, the response from the TUC has been pathetic. Even the empty gestures and sabre-rattling with which the union top brass "opposed" previous rounds of legislation has been absent this time.

It will be up to the rank and file to

You won't feel so bad about ratting on your workmates when you see this cheque, Smith!



make this Bill unenforceable. We can make a start by supporting the lobby against the Employment Bill to be held at 2.00 p.m. on 15 February at

the House of Commons. Labour Research Department's pamphlet on the Bill, "Breaking workplace unity", is available from LRD, 78

Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF at 70p.

For further details ring Campaign for Work, 01-341 7771.

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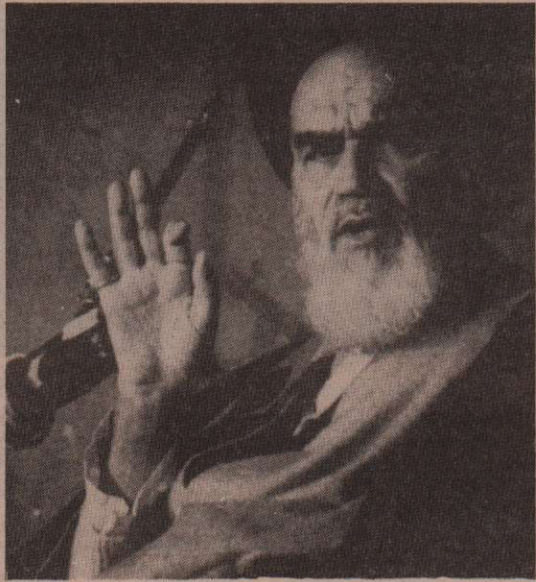
# GRAFFITI

## Dealing with Khomeini

So the French government hasn't done a deal with Khomeini? Just a week after the surprise release of a French hostage in Lebanon, reputedly on the intervention of the Iranian government, 400 opponents of Khomeini's regime, members of the People's Mujaheddin, many of whom have been living in France for up to five years, have been arrested as a threat to 'public order'. Ninety of them have been flown, less than 24 hours after their arrest, to Gabon, because they are a threat to 'national security'.

The speed with which they were removed from the country has short-circuited their right to appeal and the right of the French President, Francois Mitterrand, to intervene.

Can all this really be just a coincidence?



## Labour evicts tenants

Apparently Sheffield's Hyde Park council flats are to get a long-overdue refurbishment. Lucky for the tenants, you might think. Not so.

Sheffield is host to the 1991 World Student

Games, and the tenants are to be turfed out to make way for competitors. There are moves, though as yet nothing is decided, to sell off the flats to private enterprise once the games are over.

## Health

A survey just produced by the Association of Community Health Councils shows that in many areas ante-natal services have not improved in the last 30 years.

Women interviewed said they would like more information about birth positions, medical tests, and pain-relief in labour. A mere one in five women

had the opportunity to discuss welfare benefits or the results of tests.

The time spent hanging around in dreary waiting rooms was also a cause for

complaint. Many ante-natal units still use a block booking system, meaning that women can still be waiting for an examination as long as two hours after their appointment time.

## Gorby goes private

The USSR has just opened its first private clinic. Open and above-board charging for health care was (so the official argument went) better than a service which is theoretically free but which only gives any care if you bribe the doctors and nurses.

The Gorbachev regime plans a rapid expansion of private health care between now and the end of the century. The USSR is one of very few countries in the world where infant



mortality has actually risen, and life expectancy fallen, over the last decade.

## Le Pen

French fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen didn't receive much of a welcome when he set off on a 'working visit' of Martinique. Workers at the hotel where Le Pen was booked to stay went on strike. Demonstrators assembled at the airport, forcing the jumbo to head for Guadeloupe, much to the annoyance of other passengers, who demanded 'Le Pen out'. After four hours of uproar in Guadeloupe Le Pen and his Front Nationale supporters flew back to Paris.

## Mao was mad

According to the Observer, the new official Chinese line is that Mao Zedong (Mao Tse Tung) was insane for the last 19 years of his life, from 1957 to 1976.

Maybe this claim is just a gambit in factional struggle against old-time Maoists. Or maybe it is true. The revealing thing is that it is difficult to know.

Many things that the Chinese government under Mao did in that period were pretty crazy. In the Great Leap Forward of 1958-9, China's peasants were frogmarched into huge communes and told to meet fantastic targets for increased steel production by means of backyard furnaces. Unknown millions of people starved to death.

In the Cultural Revolu-

tion of 1967, the country's education system was set back many years, and industry drastically disrupted, in an intra-bureaucratic battle in which the Mao faction used the wildest — 'you'll believe a believer in Mao can fly' — voluntarism and anti-intellectualism.

Such is the brutality and lack of democratic control in China's political system that these policies, worthy of

a crazy despot, might have been the work of sane people just trying to work the bureaucratic system.

Even if Mao was off his head, many thousands of sane and sincere socialists around the world were hailing these policies as the greatest triumphs of Marxism. It shows where the search for a 'socialist fatherland' far away can lead you.

## Batman's class line

'Batman' fans will be pleased to hear that actor Adam West, who played Batman, refused to cross the picket line when he arrived at TV AM's studios for an interview.

Remember last year when Derek Hatton crossed a picket line to appear on BBC's 'Wogan'? Maybe Flash Harry could do with a few lessons from the caped crusader.

# Campaign for socialism

By Eric Heffer MP

Clearly a whole section of the Party is now in full retreat from socialist policies. The retreat is being put forward in terms of the need to review and update Party policy, but it is exactly the same as what has happened before.

We lost elections in 1951, 1955 and again in 1959. Books were written about whether Labour could ever win again, about our policies being old-fashioned and about how we need to live in the modern world. Gaitskell took it further by arguing for the dropping of Clause 4 altogether, and people like Douglas Jay said we ought to change the name of the Party.

The same thing is happening again now. That is what last weekend's 'Beating the Blues' conference was all about. The brochure they issued is a very strongly revisionist document that wants to move us away from the basic ideas of the Party. It is time this whole thing was combatted.

The Chesterfield Conference had some effect on them. It made them think they must do something similar from another point of view.

Bryan Gould, as far as I can see, made the same speech in the PLP, at the Parliamentary lunch the other day and at last weekend's meeting. I think he has moved slightly, and that the reaction to him at Labour Party conference has shaken him somewhat. He has clearly softened his ideas about selling shares and is now talking about having cooperative shares.

Nevertheless, the whole tenor of his speech is still that the ideas of 20 and 30 years ago are of no use to the Party.

But the crisis on the stock market is a reflection of the crisis throughout the entire capitalist system internationally. We should be explaining that only socialism can deal with these problems. Only a transformation of society and class power can begin to deal with these problems of the economy, of misery throughout the world, of extremes of wealth and poverty and the crisis of production. Yet the revisionists say we have to be accommodating.

That is all wrong. We should be explaining that the only way out is socialism.

We need to be getting that point across in very strong terms. I think the left in the Party needs to be combatting these revisionist ideas much



Eric Heffer

more strongly.

There is only one point on which they can win support. Some of the local government areas in the Party have concentrated on single issues and thereby alienated sections of the class. The contrast has been in places like Liverpool where they did not do that. They did the things that mattered to the mass of the people, at the same time as integrating the single issues.

## Learn

That is an issue the left has to learn, although not in the way that some did at the 'Beating the Blues' conference. We were not wrong in any combatting of the Tories; councils were wrong only when they lost sight of the fact that the way to do it was by mobilising working class people in the area.

Whilst all this 'review' is going on we are obviously not making any impact against the Tories, either in the House of Commons or in the country. We are disarming ourselves in the face of the enemy. Every time we put a case forward they are able to say — is that really the policy of your Party? What are you going to do about it?

We are not clear about any of the things we intend to do.

They claim they have 'new' ways of doing things now, and spend their time attacking the old National Executive Committee. When I was on the NEC and when the left had greater influence, you actually had much broader committees which included people from all parts of the country, so you got a much wider input into policy making than you are getting now.

After the Chesterfield Conference the left talked about a campaign throughout the country. But we have done nothing about that up to now. I put forward a series of proposals to the Campaign Group of MPs which were carried, but I have not seen much.

One of the proposals was for meetings in the big centres, with just 3 or 4 speakers — not masses of speakers like they usually have — to attract big meetings; and then out of those meetings for groups to be established in the areas, for educational and organisational work in the Party.

I think the left is very very much on the defensive. It has begun slightly to pick itself up, but it has not yet got to a stage where it is clear how it should do it and the direction it should go.

## Letters

# A British view of Ireland

If you don't know what is happening in Northern Ireland, you must have been watching British television, listening to British radio and reading the British press..

The problem is not that the working class is divided and it's obvious you're going to formulate the wrong

conclusion if your starting point is a great myth "that most Catholics welcomed the British troops".

Bear in mind that England has no legitimate claim to Ireland whatsoever.

When India, Egypt and Aden were under British rule, they always bought off one section, whom they

made loyal to the Crown, with a privileged position when the ruthless brutality of the Brits against the anti-imperialists was uncovered and world opinion was against Britain.

The old story was told of ancient traditions being against each other, and Britain being there for love of foreigners.

There are over 1,000 Irish prisoners in Britain's concentration camps, 600 on the run in the Free State excluded from the north. There have been countless deaths and untold suffering since Britain invaded in 1969.

However the British justification for going in is a reactionary one. The truth is that the British media homed in on a terrified old lady in a Derry ghetto who was giving cups of tea to the squaddies from fear of the notorious and hated Loyalist police force, then B Specials, now the RUC.

The cause of the troubles in India, Egypt and Aden was the presence of British soldiers who divided the people. This was made very clear when the liberation movements forced the Brits out. The exact same applies to Ireland.

See you on the Bloody Sunday demonstration, London 30 January.

PAT McTERNAN,  
Rising Phoenix Republican  
Flute Band,  
Edinburgh,  
Scotland

# Britain is the problem

John O'Mahony is wrong when he states that "The central problem in Ireland is the chronic antagonism and division between the two communities" (SO 337).

This is like saying that the central problem in South Africa is the division between blacks and whites, or, in Palestine between Arabs and Jews. For socialists, the 'central problem' is the existence of the apartheid state — boosted by Western business interests, and the state of Israel — underpinned by massive US economic and military aid.

Withdraw support for these two racist states and they would begin to collapse. We, as British socialists, would not insult the workers and

their allies in these two countries by insisting on a system of 'federal institutions' that would reinforce racial divisions. Nor should we similarly insult the Irish.

The 'central problem' in Ireland is, and always has been, the existence of a British state on Irish territory.

To suggest that British forces should not be removed until a 'federal' settlement has been agreed is to suggest that workers in the 32 counties of Ireland are incapable of self-determination — a shameful suggestion for British socialists.

JOHN NOLAN  
Hoylake,  
Merseyside

# Women and the socialist movement

**An often-forgotten episode in the history of the international working-class movement is the mass women's organisation built in pre-First-World-War Germany under the leadership of Clara Zetkin. Lynn Ferguson looks at its achievements.**

The development of large-scale industry in the 19th century drew more and more women into factory production. The old family structures were beginning to break down, as women and children entered the labour force.

Many socialists at the time responded with horror. Surveying the misery and poverty of the urban working class, they looked back to an imaginary golden age where men were the toilers and women and children remained at home.

In their desire to 'protect' women from the rigours of the factory system, some of these utopian socialists went so far as to argue for male workers to strike against women's employment.

The attitude of the Marxists was different. Marx and Engels argued that the precondition, not only for the liberation of women but of the working class as a whole, was women's participation in factory production. Isolation in the individual home was not the answer — women should be able to develop as part of the class, to be organised in trade unions and political parties.

The biggest Marxist party at the time was the German SPD. It was a mass party, with a whole plethora of cultural organisations and publications. It was this party which provided the socialist movement with a model for organising women workers.

In 1879 August Bebel, leader of the SPD, published a book, 'Woman Under Socialism'. This explored the historical origins of women's subordination and presented a picture of what socialism would mean to women.

The impact of the book was enormous. By 1895 it had gone through 25 editions in Germany alone, and had been translated into several languages. Otilie Baader, a working class woman activist, later remembered:

"I read it right through. It was my own fate, and that of thousands of my sisters...I read the book not once but ten times."

'Woman Under Socialism' presented a powerful indictment of capitalist society, contrasted with a vision of the socialist future. It covered every aspect of women's subordination, ranging from her economic position, through to sexual relations.

Socialism will remove the economic pressures which force women into dependence on men. Domestic labour is socialised; society is organised on the basis of real, direct democracy. Sexuality is able to develop undisturbed.

"The individual shall himself oversee the satisfaction of his own instincts. The satisfaction of the sexual instinct is as much a private concern as the satisfaction of any other natural instinct."

In its day the book was a bombshell, and a milestone in the development of a Marxist theory of women's oppression. The task was now to set

about organising proletarian women.

In 1891 the first issue of Die Gleichheit (Equality) appeared, edited by Clara Zetkin. The paper was intended as an education of women party members. It was quite heavily theoretical, and Zetkin constantly argued within the SPD that it should retain this bias. Other literature should be produced for working women modelled on temperance literature — small, clear, agitational pamphlets, setting out basic socialist ideas.

In her speech to the party congress in Gotha in 1896, Zetkin summarised the existing Marxist analysis of 'the woman question' and suggested ways in which the SPD should attempt to relate to and organise working class women.

Women workers had to be organised into trade unions, and drawn towards the party. For this a network of 'vertrauenspersonen' was to be appointed — women comrades who would take on the job of agitation and organisation amongst working class women.

## Prohibited

Anti-socialist laws in action in Germany at the time prohibited women from directly joining political organisations, so this form of organisation was particularly important. Women were also prohibited from joining the same trade unions as men — one way they got around this was by the setting up of women's 'trade associations' which developed links with the corresponding 'men's' unions.

The daily party press was to produce special supplements for women. Some were doing this already, but Zetkin considered them far from adequate.

"...the daily press has regarded the proletarian woman as a subscriber, flattering her ignorance, rather than trying to enlighten her."

The women's organisation, as well as unionising women, organised discussion groups and produced masses of pamphlets. In 1908 the anti-socialist laws were repealed and women were legally able to become party members. By 1910 there were over 189,000 women in trade unions, 82,000 women party members, and Die Gleichheit had a circulation of 82,000. The circulation of Die Gleichheit peaked in 1913 at 112,000.

But the work amongst women was very much the task of the women party members themselves, and not the party as a whole. This was partly due to sexism, but there is a deeper reason. For, during this period the gulf between the right and left of the party was widening.

The party leadership concentrated more and more on purely parliamentary politics, and was suspicious of the active agitational and organising work being carried on by the women's organisation.

Politically Zetkin and Die Gleichheit were consistently on the left, and at-



Clara Zetkin

tempts to marginalise Zetkin's work cannot be separated from the attempts by the right to squash the left.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the majority of the SPD representatives in the Reichstag voted for war credits, that is in support of the war, and the split became irreparable.

Die Gleichheit attempted to put a proletarian internationalist anti-war line. The SPD censored the paper. The women, in protest, produced it with white spaces revealing the extent to which they had been silenced. Ultimately Zetkin was removed as editor, and Die Gleichheit politically neutered.

Zetkin with other leftists, among them Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht went on to form a new Communist Party and made attempts to continue some sort of communist work amongst women.

As for the SPD — its remaining women became leading cheerleaders for the war. And later, disgracefully, colluded with the state in the brutal murders of Luxemburg and Liebknecht.

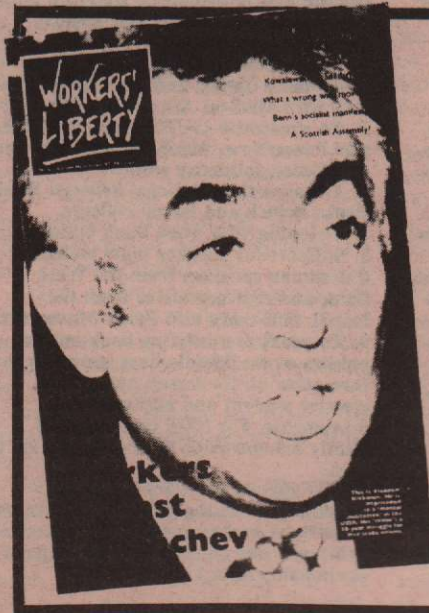
The history of Zetkin's women's movement is frequently forgotten, but socialists have much to learn from it. The pioneering use of special methods to reach working women — the willingness to be completely flexible in the forms of organisation used

— these offer vital lessons to the philistines of the Militant and SWP who hysterically denounce 'autonomous' organisation as one-sidedly feminist and anti-working class.

The way the reformist leaders ultimately smashed the women's work only goes to show how closely tied the fate of women is with that of

the working class.

The abandonment of serious attempts by the party to organise and educate women for socialism was the sharp end of its abandonment of any perspective of organising and leading the working class to fight for its own emancipation from wage slavery and state tyranny.



**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.**

# NUS conference winter '87

## A left victory

The left scored a narrow victory at NUS conference — a very narrow victory.

In the debate on education, the amendment moved by Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) was carried by 8 votes. As a result, NUS is now committed to a more militant campaign — to make the government's Education Reform Bill (known in NUS as one 'GERBill') unworkable. There are to be mass lobbies of Parliament and a national shut-down of colleges together with a national demonstration.

NUS is to try to develop an 'education alliance' together with the trade union movement.

The campaign against YTS and JTS is to be intensified, and the right of Further Education students to be on their boards of governors will be defended.

In an important step, NUS decided to integrate the education campaign

into the rest of its campaigns against the Tories.

In the poll tax debate, the left also won a narrow victory. NUS is to support rent strikes by tenants and students whose rent is increased to pay for the poll tax. In addition, conference decided to oppose all councils, which make cuts, and voted for a campaign of non-compliance with the poll tax by students, colleges and councils.

The whole of NUS Executive was censured for failing to get campaign materials sent out to colleges by the start of term.

Activists in the colleges have had enough of the current Executive — enough of their inactivity, and enough of their bureaucratic factionalism towards the opposition.

What we need to do now is to pull together all those who want to fight to make sure that in the second term we can have campaigns that are so good that the disasters of the first term will be forgotten.

## The SSiN motion

Conference believes:

1. In 1948 the Palestinian Arabs were dispossessed, in 1949 Israel and Jordan jointly occupied the part of Palestine still controlled by the Palestinian Arabs and divided the territory between them. Since then the Palestinian Arabs have been denied national rights.
2. Occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza has compounded this oppression.
3. The creation of a Jewish state was considered by most Jews to guarantee sanctuary from anti-semitism: particularly after the holocaust and the imperialist governments' refusal to allow them to emigrate to Britain, America, etc., during and after World War 2.
4. The Palestinians are denied a state, suffer institutionalised discrimination in Israel or face life in exile.
5. The establishment of Israel solved one problem but created another, the conflicts in the area during the establishment meant as a result that the fulfilment of the rights and needs of the Jewish people led to disaster for the Palestinians and the Palestinians have since been a people without a country.
6. At the moment the PLO is the chosen representative of the Palestinian Arabs and should be recognised by all governments. It is the only organisation which should represent them in international negotiations.
7. The capitalist Arab states also oppress and have massacred the Palestinian Arabs. Jordan in 1970, Syria in the mid-'70s. Bourgeois Lebanese and Syrians butchered Palestinian Arabs in Lebanon in the '80s. The Arab states have been no friends of the Palestinian Arabs.
8. After 20 years in occupation of the West Bank, Israel rules the Palestinian Arabs as a dictatorial colonial power. It maintains control by brutality and a permanent reign of terror against the Palestinian Arabs.
9. The Palestinian Arabs have the right to defend themselves against military attack by the Israeli state and the right to resist Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza.
10. Israel should withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza allowing the Palestinians their right to self-determination. Neither Israel, Egypt nor Jordan have rights to either the West Bank or Gaza.
11. The Israeli Jews are a nation and therefore have national rights; i.e. the right not to be incorporated into an Arab state against their will.
12. That the Jewish and Palestinian people have the equal right to national self-determination.
13. That the law of return is not racist.
14. Whilst standing in solidarity with the PLO, we recognise:
  - a. their formula for a democratic secular state of Palestine does not take into account the right of the Jews to a state, consequently it is either Utopian or based on the premise of conquering Israel.
  - b. The Jews constitute a people.
15. A just and democratic solution will be based on the joint struggle of the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab working class, recognising each other's individual and national rights. Such unity lays the basis for a struggle for a socialist federation of the Middle East guaranteeing democratic and national freedoms to all peoples of the region.
16. The Palestinian people have a

distinct national and cultural identity, a right to self-determination and autonomy. Neither Palestinians nor Jewish people should compromise their separate identities and aspirations by incorporating into either Jewish or Palestinian states.

17. Palestinian and Jewish students are members of NUS and expect to be represented.
18. Both the Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews have the right to a state.
19. NUS should support the right of the state of Israel to exist within secure and recognised borders.
20. Debate on the Israel/Palestine conflict within the student movement has until now been dominated by organisations committed to advocating the destruction of Israel, Zionism is racism, and the perpetration of anti-semitic myths about powerful 'Zionist' lobbies and Zionist/Nazi collaboration.
21. Meaningful solidarity work can only come through the marginalisation of these arguments.
22. Solidarity work must include working with Israeli progressives as well as Palestinian nationalists.

Conference condemns:

1. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians carried out in the name of anti-Zionism and revenge attacks carried out by Israel.
2. Treatment of Zionists as racists, and the anti-semitism (including the banning of Jewish Societies) arising from the treatment.
3. Israel's invasion of Lebanon.
4. 'Students for Palestine' and other organisations who perpetrate anti-semitic myths.
5. The previous attempts by the PSC to ban Jewish Societies in the name of 'anti-Zionism'.
6. Israel's 'anti-peace' law which makes contact with the PLO an offence.

Conference instructs national executive:

1. Full national and democratic rights for Palestinians now, against the military presence in the West Bank and Gaza.
2. Recognition of the PLO.
3. To fight anti-Arab racism as part of the fight against all types of racism and fascism and to produce a study on anti-Arab racism, its effects and positive ways of combatting it.
4. To sponsor and support the Gaza trade union appeal and sponsor the support with Medical Aid for Palestinians.
5. To work with GUPS, UJS, the PLO and Peace Now, MAPAM and YPZ in developing solidarity work.
6. Trinational 'twinning' between West Bank, British and Israeli colleges.
7. Twinning with West Bank colleges.
8. Support for speaker tours including Palestinian speakers from the West Bank and representatives from the Israeli Anti-racist and Peace Movement.
9. To produce a briefing pack on the politics of the Middle East including information on the Israeli peace, progressive student and anti-racist movements. For NUS campaigns to clearly acknowledge the right of Israel to exist.
10. To approach GUPS about the possibility of taking part in a visit to the West Bank and to meet with progressive anti-racist and student Israeli groups in conjunction with UJS.

# Unite for Palestinian rights!

Dear comrades,

As you know better than we, the recent history of the Arab people of Palestine is one of unrelieved tragedy and suffering.

Your people were defeated in the 1948 war along with the armies of Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq which invaded the territory allotted to the Jews under the UN partition plan on 15 May, the day after the state of Israel was proclaimed. The Palestinian people were the great losers in that anti-Jewish war.

Between half and three-quarters of a million Palestinian Arabs fled or were driven out of Jewish-held territory. Those people and their descendants — who now number over four million — have been scattered over the Middle East or left to languish in refugee camps. Another 300,000 were made refugees by Israel's advances in 1967, and many were made refugees a second time in 1982.

The Palestinian Arabs in the refugee camps have been subjected to frequent, savage and indiscriminate reprisals against the PLO by the Israeli air force. They are used as a political football by the Arab bourgeois regimes, which pursue their own interests. They have been betrayed and massacred by those regimes.

It was Jordan which joined Israel in 1949 to divide up what remained of the territory allotted to the Palestinian Arabs in the 1947 UN partition plan. It was Jordan which massacred your people, up to 30,000 of them, in September 1970. Syria massacred your people in Lebanon in the mid '70s. Lebanese groups, both Muslim and Christian, have massacred them in the '80s.

It is a terrible and heartbreaking story. There is no end to it in sight.

What can socialists and activists in the labour and union movement do to help the Palestinians? Organise for medical and similar practical help; but what else? This question seems to us to translate into another question: what political solutions are possible?

For it is no longer a question only of the Palestinian Arabs. There is also a Palestinian Jewish nation, the Israelis. Right now the Israelis oppress the Palestinian Arabs, both inside pre-'67 Israel and in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, which have been ruled by a repressive colonial regime for 20 years. But Israel is surrounded by numerous hostile Arab states, of which only Egypt even has diplomatic relations with Israel. Any solution has to take account of both the nations in Palestine.

For ourselves, we think that the only solution will be one which allows each Palestinian nation to have its own nation-state. Two nations, two states, as our slogan at the recent NUS conference put it.

In practice the PLO, the organisation which has the support of the ma-

## Open letter to the General Union of Palestinian Students

majority of Palestinians and to which you are attached, also advocates two states. To win this solution means, immediately, winning the right of the Palestinian Arabs to set up their own nation-state in Palestine side-by-side with Israel, on a basis of mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO. The Israelis have a state already — and, for now, more than their fair share of self-determination.

As you know, we support the setting up of a Palestinian state, and we advocate the recognition of the PLO by Israel and everyone else concerned. We support the struggles against discrimination and oppression of the Arabs in the occupied territories and in Israel itself.

It was painful for us, therefore, to find ourselves in sharp conflict with you at the NUS conference. You allied yourselves with the incumbent leadership of the NUS. You allowed yourselves to get drawn in to NUS faction-fighting to the extent that, if we may say so, you forget where your best interests lie.

The NUS leaders are a crowd of Stalinoid reformists, who are not very interested in Palestine. They put the subject on the agenda, not because it would help the Palestinian Arab people but because they wanted to punish the Union of Jewish Students for opposing their control of NUS.

## Discussion

They did not organise a serious discussion on the issue. That would have required a drive to educate students so that they could make up their own minds on the issue. Instead they imposed the debate on a conference that was not ready for it. The inevitable consequence was a debate dominated by emotion instead of reason, and by slogans instead of coherent ideas. Even so, they didn't have things all their own way.

You allowed yourselves to get drawn into conflict with people — Socialist Students in NOLS — who support your demands while at the same time opposing and campaigning against the vicious Zionophobia which is a large part of the stock-in-trade of some 'pro-Palestinian' activists in the NUS.

More than that, you proved unable to see what was going on at conference. You were not just in conflict with the sympathisers and supporters of Palestinian Arab rights in SSiN. More importantly, you continued to be in sharp conflict with the Union of Jewish Students, despite the fact that the UJS had a resolution *advocating the right of Palestinian Arabs to have their own state.*

This and other parts of the UJS

resolution (amendment 2) far outweighed those parts of their resolution which we would not agree with and you naturally find intensely objectionable, for example, the definition of Zionism as a 'national liberation movement'. Comrades, if you had not been following the lead of the irresponsible and unprincipled factionalists who lead the NUS, you would have recognised that a new situation had taken shape at the NUS conference.

For 11 years the NUS has been 'pro-Palestinian'. For 11 years the Jews in NUS have been ghettoised. For 11 years the ultra-left phrasemongers have held sway at NUS conferences, calling for the destruction of Israel. And what has it got the oppressed Palestinian Arab people? Nothing!

The pseudo-left have repelled reasonable people and substituted mindless slogans for effective politics. At this year's conference a possibility existed for you to join in forging an alliance ranging from the hard left — Socialist Organiser — to the UJS which would champion the right of your people to have their own state as part of a general settlement and recognition of both Palestinian Arab and Israeli Jewish national rights.

Instead of seizing the chance, you preferred to dwell among those who have shown themselves unable — even at the head of an organisation 1,200,000 strong — to build anything in support of either the Palestinian Arabs or in support of a settlement that will do justice to both Palestinian Arabs and Jews.

In a sense you were caught in the cross-fire. But there were political reasons why you let that happen. We suggest that one of those reasons is a deep ambivalence about what your own politics are.

The PLO now wants two states, but it still says its long-term objective is a secular democratic state. It defines it as a single *bi-national* state in Palestine. All your traditional definitions of the secular democratic state have defined it in effect as an Arab state with rights for 'Muslims, Christians, and Jews'.

You were politically disoriented at conference because you are not clear yourselves which version you want. Saying you supported the right of the Jewish Israeli nation to have its own nation state, you talked at the same time of the right of 'return' of the descendants of those who left or were driven out in 1948. You can't have both two states and the right of the Palestinian Arabs to possess all of Palestine.

We, like you, would *choose* a single bi-national state. But we have to take it as a fact that we cannot change that there are two antagonistic nations in Palestine, and that they cannot be simply merged.

You allowed yourselves to see the secondary things — like, for example, whether or not Zionism is racism



## Manoeuvres foul debate

The conference of the National Union of Students was dominated by the Middle East debate.

Unfortunately there was no clear discussion. The entire three days of debate were marked by the opportunism and unprincipled ganging-up of the 'anti-Zionists'. In the end, all the positions fell.

Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) was accused of both opportunism and racism. But in fact it is the National Organisation of Labour Students, the Socialist Workers' Party, Campaign Student and 'Students for Palestine' who displayed the most pathetic opportunism, fired by factional hatred of the twin devils — SSiN and the Union of Jewish Students.

In fact all the motions called for two states in pre-1947 Palestine — a Palestinian Arab state alongside Israel. But the oh-so-principled Campaign Student and SWP — who *don't support* this position at all, and who favour one democratic secular (or 'socialist') state in Palestine — managed to support one of the two-states motions as if they agreed with it. All the motions explicitly recognised Israel's right to exist — a point lost on the oh-so-principled Campaign Student and SWP who denounced SSiN precisely for that!

SSiN's position (Amendment One) was unique in one respect: *it alone wanted to work both with the PLO and with progressive Israelis*. SSiN's position specified clearly both Palestinian and Jewish rights. It was SSiN's opponents who used the issue as a political football — NOLS, the Communist Party, Students for Palestine, and Campaign Student.

The fact is they couldn't stand Amendment 1 purely because it was supported by SSiN and UJS. They couldn't stand Amendment 1 because it recognised the need for work with progressive Israelis.

In the same leaflet they made that clear. The "one force in the Middle East that can really take on imperialism and the Israeli state is the Arab working class". So for the SWP the entire Israeli Jewish proletariat has been written off as a class potentially capable of bringing about social change. For the SWP the Israeli Jewish working class are inherently reactionary. They are part of a "bad nation".

That is either downright stupid or anti-semitic. In any case, the SWP cannot claim any credit for their part in the debate. Despite their denunciations, it is they who are the opportunists.

Students for Palestine argued in an initial version of a leaflet later altered: "A group of Jews had the idea of setting up a Jewish nation towards the end of the last century. They were convinced that Jews were so different from other Europeans that they could not live together in peace. This is just what the Nazis believed and they tried to make it come true."

Whether the authors of this passage understood or intended its implications, this direct equation of Zionism and Nazism is grotesque and reinforces popular anti-semitic stereotypes (Jews as conspirators, underhand, etc).

As with the SWP, Students for Palestine sometimes supported Israel's right to exist and sometimes didn't, depending on who was proposing it — SSiN/UJS or NOLS.

NUS shouldn't work with Students for Palestine. For one thing there is nobody in it. And its politics stink.

NOLS supported the main motion — Israel's right to exist. They opposed the SSiN position because it had "some nice phrases but no action". Yet the 'action' in the SSiN motion — the 'instructs' section — was substantially the same as that in the main motion.

NOLS's 'hidden agenda' was simply to 'do over' SSiN and UJS. Politics were secondary, or even irrelevant.

NOLS could not stand the idea of the SSiN position being passed; they couldn't stand the idea of working with progressive Israelis, and more than that, they needed to write UJS out of the political equation.

So much so that when the UJS-backed Amendment 2 (which was indeed unbalanced) was passed, they proposed to extend the debate only long enough to take the amendment about academic freedom and not long enough for that on the PLO. The latter would have corrected the UJS motion's imbalance.

NOLS preferred NUS to come out with no policy rather than have Amendment Two passed with additions on academic freedom, women and support for the PLO.

Instead they wanted to move on to censure SSiN supporter Simon Pottinger.

This brings into doubt the actual content of the main motion. Although it acknowledged the right of the Israeli Jewish people to a state, much of it was attuned to the 'destroy Israel' school of thought.

### By Jane Ashworth

And there was no mandate to work with Jews either in the diaspora or in Israel. But it is not possible to have a genuine two-states position, without seeing a role for progressive Israelis.

It was not an adequate two-state position: perhaps that was why Campaign Student, Socialist Workers Party and NOLS could vote for it.

Two incidents illustrate the underlying sentiments of some delegates. During the discussion on Amendment 2, a delegate who had been called a 'fucking yid' tried to protest about it to the conference. President Vicky Phillips spoke against the Jewish delegate making a statement to the conference, in case it 'influenced' the debate.

Perhaps it would have influenced the debate — it would have shown that some opponents of the Israelis are purely and simply anti-semitic and perhaps it would have made other people think carefully about their own attitudes.

In refusing to allow the Jewish delegate to speak, Vicky Phillips was absolutely out of order; it is not surprising that she was called anti-semitic by another delegate.

What was an *absolute* disgrace was that Vicky Phillips, in her capacity as president, has announced her intention to sue the delegate who declared her comment to be anti-semitic!

Another example from NOLS was Pauline McNeil's speech on the composite motion on Soviet Jewry. Defending a Communist student for failing to do anything, Pauline alleged that criticism of him came from people who had a vendetta against him because of his position on the Middle East.

So who were the real opportunists?

SSiN voted for the UJS-backed motion. In doing so, SSiN made two real concessions. First, there was a clause describing Zionism as the Jewish national liberation movement, a view SSiN does not hold to. Second, the motion called for the PLO to recognise Israel as a precondition for participation in the peace process. SSiN believes Israel should recognise the PLO as the chosen representatives of the Palestinians immediately. (In fact in practice the PLO does recognise Israel's right to exist anyway).

SSiN had hoped to clarify this through the incorporation of an amendment calling for support for the PLO. But this was never discussed. The real opportunists were the SWP and Campaign Student, calling for one thing and voting for another.

Nor will being seen to have 'lined up with Zionists' be much of a vote-winner for SSiN, as the accusations have it. Possibly the reverse. Where NOLS, for example, were voting for purely factional considerations (revenge on the UJS, who voted for SSiN in the Executive elections last year, hatred of SSiN), SSiN stood by its principles. SSiN also did its best to explain its principles, which is more than can be said for most of its detractors.

The SSiN motion lost by ten votes. This represents a big step forward. The shift of the UJS from publicly uncritical support for Israel is equally significant. Next time the debate comes up — at next year's Christmas conference, perhaps — SSiN will win it.

— as being of equal or greater importance than the political fundamentals in the situation: the right of the Palestinian Arabs to have their own state.

We found the conflict with you regrettable and painful. We found the leaflet you put out about us on the last day of conference in which, among other things, you called us fascists, simply farcical!

You say you were responding to a leaflet we put out. But we find it difficult to believe you really think we said — or meant to say — that because the Jewish majority in Israel has a right to its own nation state, it is therefore right for the Jewish majority to treat the Arabs within Israel as 'aliens' or anything less than fully equal citizens. No, we don't think that, and we said nothing that could reasonably be construed as meaning

it, either!

Nor is it reasonable of you to accuse us — because we support the right of the Palestinian Jews as well as the Palestinian Arabs to have their own nation state — of advocating an exclusivist Jewish state. No, we don't advocate that!

What we advocate is the right of the small Jewish minority in the Middle East not to be forcibly incorporated into an Arab state. Once that is agreed, then the struggle for individual rights for Arabs and Jews in each others' states takes its proper place in the picture. It is something that can be taken for granted among socialists and democrats.

Your casual allegation that we are racists is itself a typical example of the wild and often senseless epithet-mongering that does service for serious and honest discussion of the

issues among those on the left with whom you choose to ally yourselves.

Comrades, people writing polemics sometimes get carried away with themselves, and maybe that is what your leaflet-writer did. We suggest that you should now take stock of where things are in the NUS.

There is no NUS policy on the Middle East now. Presumably the matter will come to conference again a year from now. Between now and then, you should help us forge the broadest possible alliance, an alliance that could include both the Union of Jewish Students and the General Union of Palestinian Students, to advocate two states and recognition of each other by Israel and the PLO.

Jane Ashworth  
Dave Brennan

## The Union of Jewish Students motion

Conference believes

1. That Jews and Palestinians have an equal right to self-determination and national liberation.
  2. Palestinians and Jewish students are members of NUS and expect to be represented.
  3. Zionism is the authentic expression of the national liberation movement of the Jewish people derived from the historical, cultural and religious links with their homeland and as such is an integral part of their identity for the vast majority of Jewish people.
  4. That Zionism is not racism.
  5. That the Palestinians have suffered from a great injustice, having been deprived of a right to a homeland.
  6. That the key to a lasting and just solution to the conflict is the mutual recognition by the Palestinians and Israelis of each other's right to national self-determination within peaceful and secure borders free from the threat of military pressure.
  7. Zionism and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination are not mutually exclusive concepts.
  8. That solidarity work must include working with Israeli progressives as well as Palestinian nationalists.
- Conference further believes:
1. That the Israeli government must accept that the Palestinian people have the right to self-determination and a state of their own.
  2. The PLO should take part in the peace process when they recognise

- Israel's right to exist and the right of the Jewish people to self-determination.
3. That the setting up of an international conference encompassing the views of all parties concerned, would be a positive initial step to any realistic peace negotiations.
4. That the law of return is not racist.
5. The role of non-Jews and non-Palestinians is to encourage open discussions of all areas of interest regarding Israel-Palestine, within parameters defined by Jewish and Palestinian students, whose liberations and autonomies, directly affected, are under discussion.

6. The constructive approach to this issue will look at ways to peace, recognition and reconciliation and will incorporate balanced discussions around the Israeli peace movements, academic freedom in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the PLO and its role, and the projects for peace such as Neve Hashalom.
- These should be organised in conjunction with both GUPS and UJS.

- Conference condemns:
1. Indiscriminate violence against Jews worldwide, including the oppression of Jews in Syria, Iraq and Iran on the grounds of 'anti-Zionism'.
  2. Those Middle-Eastern states who refuse to recognise Israel's right to exist or the Jewish people's right to national self-determination.
  3. The PLO's Covenant which advocates the destruction of Israel and denies that the Jews are a People.

4. The equation of Zionism with racism which has led to the anti-semitic attacks on Jewish students including the banning of Jewish Societies.
- Conference resolves:
- To stand firm against attacks on autonomous Palestinian and Jewish student groups in constituent unions.
  - That any other initiative taken on by NUS must include the opinions and beliefs of parties concerned.
- Conference instructs national executive:
1. Recognition of Israel's right to exist.
  2. To work with GUPS, UJS and Peace Now, MAPAM, and Young Poalei Zion in developing solidarity work.
  3. The NUS should facilitate a fact-finding trip to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

- a. For the trip to be under the auspices of representative Jewish and Palestinian student organisations in Britain.
- b. That the itinerary of the tour should be in accordance with the aim of this motion.
- c. This will include meetings with Israeli government officials and Palestinian representatives on the West Bank.
4. To encourage constituent members to twin with Jewish-Arab Centre at Haifa University which brings together Palestinian and Jewish students.
5. To prepare briefing packs for Constituent Members on the Middle East in consultation with representative Jewish and Palestinian student organisations.

# The view from the whites' farm

**Belinda Weaver reviews 'The Kitchen Toto'.**

'The Kitchen Toto' could be better, but it's not bad. It is also a start. We aren't deluged with films about the black struggle for independence in Kenya in the 1950s, so this one is welcome as breaking the silence.

It doesn't tackle the issues in any depth, and some of the most important information is in throwaway lines, but it packs an emotional punch and gets you thinking.

The film is set in 1950. The Kikuyu tribe are attacking the British as and when they can. They see the British as usurpers who have the pick of the land, and who hold on to their privileges through force of arms. It's a little too sympathetic to the British. Director Harry Hook presumably sympathises with the Kikuyu, since he allows the Kikuyus' claims about the land and their reasons for struggle to stand. However, he doesn't convey any real sense of the Mau Mau movement. What we see is a rather nasty gang going round terrorising blacks who don't sympathise with their cause or don't like their methods, rather than a legitimate struggle for freedom and independence from colonial rule.

As they're portrayed here, the Mau Mau wouldn't be out of place as the baddies in 'The Untouchables'!



The kindly colonial policeman tortures young Mwangi

The whites don't get it all their way, of course. The Memsahib, into whose kitchen poor Mwangi, a young Kikuyu boy, is sent to work, is joyless and stiff; her son is a comic book horror. Both bullying and cowardly, he exudes a sort of matter-of-fact brutality. Hook claims the sketch is part-biographical — at least he's learned to laugh at himself.

His father, though, the police chief, is just the kind of pillar of the Empire Brit we've been seeing on the screen for years. To bring him up to

date though, he's portrayed as kindly and sympathetic — the finest type of Englishman. It's his job to deal with the marauding Kikuyu.

## Middle

The story really deals with young Mwangi, who's caught in the middle. With good reason to fear the Mau Mau, Mwangi still has no real pull towards the whites. The police chief treats him kindly, but Mwangi is a very lowly servant in his home in-

deed.

Mwangi's youth is no protection against fear, brutality, violence and the consequences of political struggle. He must make decisions about his actions that will have life or death repercussions.

Perhaps the most eloquent line in the film is one that flashes on at the end. The Mau Mau struggle claimed 14,080 lives — 80 European, 14,000 African. It would be good to see a film that told the side of those 14,000.

# Revolutionaries imitating oppressors

**Ian Swindale takes another look at George Orwell's famous novel, Animal Farm.**

When George Orwell went to fight for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, he found himself, by chance, not with the International Brigades, but with the forces of POUM, a party which included some former Trotskyists.

Six months later he was wounded in battle and forced to withdraw from the conflict, but he was there long enough to witness the repression of the 'Trotskyist' POUM and the non-Stalinist left by the Communist Party.

Indeed, although wounded by a fascist, Orwell considered himself lucky to escape with his life from Republican Spain.

During his short time in Spain, Orwell saw for himself the falsity of the monstrous lies used by the Com-

munist Party against its left opponents to 'justify' repression.

However, back in England he found that many socialists were unwilling to believe anything negative about the Soviet Union or the role of the Stalinists in sabotaging the international class struggle.

So, it is perhaps not surprising that eventually he should turn his attention to writing on the subject.

The result was his short allegorical novel Animal Farm.

The book tells the story of a revolution carried out by the animals of an English farm against their human exploiters and oppressors.

The story follows, though not in strict chronological order, many of the developments in the Soviet Union and many of the problems that led to its ultimate degeneration.

The isolation of the revolution, the alternatives of international revolution and socialism in one country posed by Trotsky and Stalin to overcome the problems faced by the Soviet Union, the bureaucratic manoeuvring of Stalin to defeat Trotsky and the gradual growth of bureaucracy and eroding of the ideals of the revolution are all there in allegorical form.

It would, I think, be inappropriate to criticise the novel for weaknesses in its analysis of the Russian Revolution, for this clearly was not Orwell's main aim. It seems to me he was trying to make people think about the issue rather than providing a detailed political analysis of the degeneration of the revolution.

Nevertheless, there are some chilling moments as the pigs, who having

led the revolution are now usurping power, begin to imitate more and more the oppressors they have overthrown, aping them in a way that is at the same time ridiculous and frightening in the intensity of their determination to emulate their former oppressors.

The novel is short and an easy read, so it would make ideal reading material for the Christmas period.

# Thinking about films

**Belinda Weaver reviews 'State of the Art', by Pauline Kael**

You don't have to know a lot about movies to enjoy Pauline Kael's film reviews. She isn't one for the casual namedrop of some obscure film-maker, and you don't have to have seen every film ever made just to get started on her latest review.

Her latest book, 'State of the Art', is the seventh of her collections. Like the rest, it's very readable. Her style is easy; she uses no big words where simple ones would do. She's out to inform, not impress. She can even be slangy.

It's like talk rather than writing, though it's talk with all the boring bits cut out. Her reviews are often complex, full of ideas, but it's all so clearly put that the ideas can be easily understood.

All of Kael's earlier collections had titles with a slight sexual tinge — 'I Lost it at the Movies', 'When the Lights Go Down', 'Reeling', and so on. But in her latest book she breaks with that. "It seemed time for a change; this has not been a period for anything like 'Grand Passions'".

"I hope that 'State of the Art' will sound ominous and sweeping and just slightly clinical. In the last few years, the term has been applied to movies as the highest praise for their up-to-the-minute special effects or

their sound or animation; it has been used to celebrate just about all the technological skills that go into a production. But what I try to get at...is the state of the art of moviemaking."

Kael has been reviewing films for the 'New Yorker' for almost thirty years. She is respected and feared in the film world.

What makes her readable and welcome is her readiness to puncture pretension of any kind, her championing of film-makers trying to make good films in a market obsessed with commercialism, and her ruthless attacks on the overblown mediocrity of many Hollywood movies today.

She is sharp but she isn't spiteful. There's usually plenty of evidence to back up her more unwelcome (to the film producers) comments.

Kael takes pains over her work. So many reviewers dash off their columns with little thought. Reading them, one often wonders whether they sat through the films at all. Kael is passionately interested in the movies.

She pounces on any ray of hope, and enthusiastically promotes promising actors and directors. Even when you don't agree, her reviews are worthwhile. They're stimulating because they are considered; they take a point of view. And they're funny too.

After Sylvester Stallone had built up John Travolta's physique for the abysmal 'Stayin' Alive', Kael queried the need for change. "Dancers don't need big body builders' muscles. What would they do with them — lift ten-ton ballerinas?"

# House of Games

**Edward Ellis reviews House of Games**

David Mamet wrote the script for the unspeakably bad 'The Untouchables'. But 'House of Games', his debut as a director, is very good indeed.

Its subject matter is con-tricks and con-men, and the games within games that people play with each other. A successful psychologist is gradually drawn into the sleazy nocturnal underworld of illegal money-making, centred on a night-club called the 'House of Games'. She is cool and intelligent and determined to explore the psychological possibilities

opened up by this new experience. She gets more and more involved...and things get more and more complicated.

There have been one or two films lately with an unpleasant, nightmarish quality ('After Hours', 'Blue Velvet') with which 'House of Games' shares much in common. It too centres around a puzzle that needs to be solved.

But 'House of Games' is less bizarre and more 'intellectual'. It seems in many respects like a stage play, although I don't think it is; and Mamet has directed it in a deliberately stilted theatrical manner, emphasising his point that all of life is a game of one sort or another.

Well acted, atmospherically filmed and compelling, 'House of Games' is worth going to see.

# A modest cost-benefit analysis

Parliamentary report by Jim Denham

Parliamentary Debate (Hansard). Prime Minister's Question Time. 2.45pm.

**Sir Reginald Eyreslicker (Slithy-Tove, Con):** Will the Prime Minister please be good enough to give the House, if she would be so gracious, full details of the latest wondrous expansion of National Health Service facilities, for instance the opening of the new Portakabin at Upper Tove General Hospital?

**Mrs Thatcher (Compleat, Con):** I concur entirely with the points raised by the Hon. Gentleman (Tory cheers).

**Mr Neil Windbag (Flanelli, Lab):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I would like to say that we on this side of the House strongly and resolutely and with all the strength and resolution at our command bitterly object to, and indeed, find utterly sickening and repugnant, the effrontery of the Prime Minister in coming before this House today to boast of the opening of one so-called Portakabin facility, when, up and down the breadth of Britain every man, woman and child, regardless of age, race or creed, knows that our National Health Service is being deliberately and systematically dismantled, and that people, regardless of creed, age or race, are literally dying as the direct result of the utterly repugnant and sickening policies of her Government with regard to this matter.

And furthermore, I would like to state categorically that... (Tory cries of 'Sit down, Pillock!')

**Mrs Thatcher (Con):** The Hon. Gentleman is obviously unaware of the fact that under this Government expenditure on the Health Service, measured in per capita terms, has risen by over 5p per head of the population since 1979, representing a 131% increase in real terms over the record of the last Labour administration. (Ecstatic Tory cheers).

But even our largesse is necessarily constrained. Allowing everyone, irrespective of their status, unlimited access to services which cost nothing at the point of delivery, is inevitably impossible. Thus there will always be excess demand for health care.

And, remember, these services have to be paid for by the taxpayer. Thus, further improvements in the quality of health care depend on the further strengthening of the nation's economic position. Unfortunately, most of the users of the Health Service are unproductive and often unworthy and feckless individuals who contribute nothing to the well-being of the nation and are a constant burden on the taxpayer (Labour cries of 'Shame! Disgraceful!' etc).

The party opposite may protest, but the facts speak for themselves: what contribution do babies with defective hearts make to the economic recovery of our nation? Of what productive value are kidney patients lying in bed all day with their expensive machines? How can we justify subsidising, from the public purse, the maintenance of unlimited numbers of disgusting incontinent old geriatrics?

If my Chancellor is to fulfil his commitment to reducing the basic rate of income tax by 2p in the pound next year, then economies will have to be made, and, to be frank, passengers cannot be carried in this great journey of national regeneration.

A long-term solution must await not so much the injection of more cash, but reform of the nation's health care system and a realistic setting of priorities for hospitals. To this end we have produced an expensively researched set of guidelines, 'How To Avoid Wasting Money on Sickly Kids and Old Coffin-Dodgers', to be issued to all Regional Health Authorities in the New Year. (Uproar in House, Labour cries of 'Shame! Disgraceful!', etc.)

**Mr Speaker:** Order! I will not tolerate this unruly behaviour and continual interruption. Will Honourable Members please have regard to the procedures of the House? I call the Hon. Member for Flanelli, so long as he is brief (Tory laughter).

**Mr Neil Windbag (for it is he):** The Hon. Lady's statement will, and we on this side of this House have absolutely no doubt on this one, send shock waves of utter repulsion and repugnance resounding through the four corners of the land as the people of Britain recoil in utter revulsion from the repugnant implications of her utterances on this one. Let me say categorically that... (Windbag drones on ad nauseam; House drifts into slumber).





# Deutscher's 'Trotsky': a flawed classic

Isaac Deutscher's three-volume biography of Trotsky, recently reissued, remains the classic work on Trotsky's life and thought.

Thirty years after its appearance, Deutscher's trilogy is still an excellent study not only of Trotsky, but of the whole generation of the Russian Revolution.

Deutscher was a Polish communist who supported Trotsky's Left Opposition and was Trotsky's comrade until 1938, when Deutscher rejected the project of a new, 'Fourth' International. Thereafter, Deutscher moved away from revolutionary politics, and in particular from Trotsky's views on Stalinism in Russia. Deutscher shared many of Trotsky's criticisms of Stalinism, but considered it possible that the ruling bureaucracy could reform itself: revolution was not needed. He would no doubt have looked kindly on Gorbachev.

Many contemporary critics of Stalinism on the Left have been influenced directly or indirectly by Deutscher rather than Trotsky — Ralph Miliband is one. So Deutscher's work is important in its own right.

The Trotsky trilogy shows both the best and the worst of Deutscher. It is beautifully written — the more so when one remembers that English was not his first language — and as fascinating and compelling to read as first-rate fiction. A whole historical period comes alive in Deutscher's writing.

For Deutscher Trotsky was a tragic historical figure, almost in the classical sense that his undoing was caused by a fatal flaw in his own personality. Thus Trotsky's rise to power created conditions that were to lead to his fall: there was an aspect of 'Defeat in Victory', that was to undermine not just Trotsky personal-

By Clive Bradley

ly, but the whole programme of workers' democracy for which he stood. To carry through the revolution, the Bolsheviks were forced to make choices that unwittingly paved the way for Stalin.

Conversely, for Deutscher there was in Trotsky's death an element of 'Victory in Defeat': in a moral sense Trotsky had triumphed over his Stalinist murderers.

Vivid and readable as Deutscher's account is, it reveals a political approach seriously at odds with Trotsky's, despite its apparent warm sympathy to Trotsky and his ideas. Essentially, Deutscher considered Stalin — and his mass-murdering bureaucratic tyranny — to be historically inevitable. It was unpleasant; and those who fought it were morally laudable; but historically, they were wasting their time.

He therefore presents Stalin's rise to power — the bureaucratic counter-revolution — as following from the same inevitable historical process that forced the Bolsheviks to make their difficult choices in the early period after the revolution.

Deutscher's trilogy can be read as an indictment of Stalin and a vindication of Trotsky. That is certainly how it was perceived when it was first written. And up to a point, it is. But only up to a point. Beyond that, it is a depiction of Trotsky's struggle against Stalin as a futile endeavour — sad, even poignant but pointless.

And so Deutscher's account becomes more detached the further it goes. Trotsky was defeated in Russia, expelled from the party, and then exiled from the country. The Trotskyists were defeated internationally. And then the triumph of Stalinism brought with it the triumph of

fascism, as the German Communists failed to fight Hitler, then failed to criticise their own passivity and sectarianism. The Trotskyists decided they had no choice but to start afresh — to refound the Marxist movement.

Deutscher opposed the creation of the Fourth International at the time. In his biography he gives a spirited and polemical defence of the stand he took then. But he does more than that: his essential verdict is that Trotsky should have given up the effort of political activity and devoted himself (like Deutscher) to commentary, journalism, literary criticism and so on. It is a perverse and philistine judgement, and undermines the merits of Deutscher's trilogy.

The defects are central to the trilogy as *politics*. But as literature and as biography, they are still, combined, a classic. There is still for example, no biography of Lenin even vaguely to compare with it in quality.

Deutscher is scrupulously concerned to present and assess Trotsky's ideas. So often biographies ignore (or worse, completely falsify) the ideas for which Marxists have fought. Even where Deutscher's own politics led his assessments off the rails, his presentation of Trotsky's view is clear and honest.

And so as a result, despite its defects, Deutscher's trilogy is a work every Marxist should read. It is particularly useful for younger or newer comrades — it covers a huge subject matter in an extremely entertaining manner, and introduces not only the historical context, but various relevant theoretical issues (like the role of the individual in history).

Other books could supplement Deutscher's — in particular Trotsky's own 'My Life' (which is also as exciting as the raciest of novels). But Deutscher's three-volume epic deserves to be considered a masterpiece.

## An AIDS blind alley?

A recent programme in the Channel 4 documentary series "Dispatches" advanced the notion that the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is not the cause of AIDS, and that research into other possible causes is being obstructed by a drug and health care industry with a massive vested interest in the HIV business.

Ever since HIV was identified, there has been controversy over its status. In the early days it was called Human T Leukaemia Virus type 3 (HTLV3) or Lymphadenopathy Associated Virus (LAV) depending upon whether you supported Robert Gallo or Luc Montagnier in their claim to ownership of the considerable academic and commercial benefits of its discovery.

The influential gay magazines 'New York Native' and 'Christopher Street' gave much space to publicising the theory of microbiologist Jean Teas that the cause of AIDS was African swine fever virus (ASFV). The CIA had used a form of ASFV in the mid-1970s in an attempt to ruin Cuban agriculture, and the virus had spread by 1979 from Cuba to Haiti, one of the countries in which AIDS first became established. The US Department of Agriculture and New York State Health Department announced plans to test the connection but the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institute of Health (NIH) dismissed the ASFV hypothesis, and such is their control over AIDS research in the States that nothing has happened.

Many commentators linked such inactivity to the political influence of the farming lobbies; the \$10 billion pork industry facing destruction if such a hypothesis entered popular consciousness, let alone if it was proven.

Theories that AIDS has resulted from genetic manipulation of viruses — either for military or commercial purposes — have been advanced by a variety of sources, from the US "scientific Trotskyist group" Communist Cadre to a variety of establishment figures.

There is in reality little support for these theories (and even the New York Native has stopped referring to AIDS as ASFV disease as it did for a while), but the way they are handled reflects upon the control which is maintained over AIDS research.

At a meeting a few months ago in London Gallo made an extraordinarily impassioned plea for "British physicians to join with their US counterparts and dispose once and for all of the myth that the virus was created in a laboratory."

The Channel 4 documentary, and a US book "AIDS and syphilis: the hidden link" by Harris Coulter (which isn't yet available in this country, and I haven't read) suggest that the real cause of AIDS is the spirochaete bacteria *treponema pallidum*, the micro-organism which causes syphilis.

The symptoms of tertiary syphilis can be similar to those of AIDS; this is particularly true of AIDS-related dementia and the dementia of tertiary



Les Hearn's  
SCIENCE COLUMN

syphilis. Some people with AIDS are positive on blood tests for *treponema*, and it is known that the currently used standard tests can often fail to detect that contact with the micro-organism has occurred when in fact it has.

Some doctors in the US are treating people with AIDS with the appropriate therapy for syphilis, penicillin.

Clearly there is little profit for drug companies in this: penicillin is no longer a registered, i.e. patented drug. Any company can produce it. It is consequently cheap and a source of little profit when compared to a patented, exclusive drug like AZT.

One vocal protagonist of penicillin treatment, Dr. Stephen Caiazza, claims to have been assaulted by an agent of a West Germany pharmaceutical company. Other, less direct, ways have been used to limit research into putative treatment for AIDS offering low or no profits (e.g. AL-721).

In truth the evidence for syphilis as the cause of AIDS is not convincing, though untreated syphilis in people who also have HIV may be a serious problem. However important issues are raised about why alternative hypotheses are advanced and the way they are dealt with.

There is great uncertainty about why transmission rates are different in different groups and why some people with HIV go on to develop AIDS and others don't. It seems certain that factors besides the mere presence of HIV are involved in the development of AIDS — these are referred to as co-factors.

For other infectious diseases, nutritional status, the presence of other infections or co-existing disease and stress have been identified as co-factors. In the case of AIDS the presence of other infections, including venereal diseases, have been implicated in this role.

However compared to virological and pharmaceutical research, investigations in this area have been scant.

Megaprofits clearly do not lie along this route. Even in universities, research is now often funded by business and industry concerns — a process which the present government is encouraging. Academic departments are to be rated on their ability to attract external funding. Researchers, increasingly on short-term contracts, are finding themselves in the situation of either finding such external funding and engaging in research in areas which are well-sponsored or collecting a UB 40.

The uniformity in the direction of research that this produces — with drug 'cures' for AIDS and recombinant HIV vaccines being the main target of investigation — reduces the chance of exploring other, perhaps more fruitful, approaches.

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# Fight back in Haringey

By Mick O'Sullivan, Haringey DLO, in a personal capacity

Haringey branch of the National Union of Teachers has voted by over 75% of its entire membership to take strike action against

the huge cuts planned by Haringey's Labour council.

And a fightback has also begun among building workers in the Direct Labour Organisation who are under the threat of 800 redundancies.

The lead has been taken by women workers, who have put their brothers to shame with their capacity and energy.

The package which includes the DLO closure goes to the joint Local Government Committee-Labour Group meeting on 10 December. As a run-up to that all the Labour Party wards have been lobbied by DLO workers and pro-cuts councillors have had building workers lobbying their houses at 7 am.

On the 10th, a mass meeting for all DLO workers is to be held, followed

by a march and lobby of the Labour Group meeting. This will join up with workers from other sections of the workforce.

If this fails (and victory against the present leadership can only be a temporary lull in hostilities) then the stewards must start immediately organising for industrial action and join the teachers in the battle to save jobs and services.

## Haringey

# Teachers forced to fight the council

By Tony Brockman, branch secretary Haringey NUT and secretary, Haringey Joint Trade Union Committee.

On the first round of the cuts that the council is planning, each primary school will lose one teacher, and each secondary school will lose ten.

There will be massive cuts in special education. There are plans to compulsorily merge every separate infant and junior school — to make 23 schools out of the existing 46. There is a 10% cut already in the budget for books and equipment, to be followed by further cuts. Other cuts include closing the Teachers' Centre and an education resource centre, and they have already made at least 50 supply teachers redundant.

The result of the cuts would be an increase in class size in primary schools to above 35, and in secondary schools to above 30.

The council has withdrawn its commitment to no compulsory redundancies, and its equal opportunities policies will be in shreds.

At the same time they have refused to negotiate an agreement that limits teachers' obligation to cover for absent colleagues.

We have balloted this week for official strike action, and we have obtained from the national union a degree of support that they promise will achieve the objectives we are seeking. These are: an agreement that limits the amount of cover and guarantees supply teachers' jobs; no compulsory redundancies; and no increase in the workload of our members. We want the reinstatement of all our members who have been made redundant.

We have already had an impact even before taking action. The council has withdrawn £5 million of planned cuts. But the remaining cuts are still totally unacceptable.

We sent speakers into every school to campaign for the ballot. Many people came out with the kind of arguments that have been going on in the Labour Party, saying the council had no choice but to make cuts, and we should be directing action not against the council but against the government.

Even before the ballot we decided to refuse to cover for posts that become vacant at Christmas. If a teacher leaves at Christmas and is not replaced, we will not take on other classes.

For strike action, the crucial date is Thursday 10 December, when there is a meeting of the Council Labour Group and the Labour Party Local Government Committee to look at a further list of cuts. We plan selective strike action — where members will be called out in a number of schools but not every one — in the days before that.

Neither we nor the national union see this as the end of the matter. We have a commitment from the national union for additional strike pay if we have to continue the action next term. The signs are that it will go on well into next term.

Before this dispute the branch was taking unofficial action, which I supported, of refusing to cover for absences. But the national union then made clear that they would only give official backing and strike pay over the cuts if we called off the no cover action. There was a major debate in the branch on that, but there was a decisive vote for dropping the unofficial action in order that we could take the official action. We also knew that the 'no cover' action had already stopped in primary schools, and was only continuing in secondary schools.

## STA

In Haringey the Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA) is not a particularly broad body, as it is largely dominated by secondary teachers. I think they took the wrong position here. However, it was not so much them arguing against dropping the unofficial action as people who were not in the STA.

Some even abstained on the vote for official action, although they had already lost the vote on unofficial action. And they call themselves on the left!

What is going on in Haringey has national implications. Tory councils started making cuts long ago — slowly in comparison with what this alleged Labour council is doing. Big cuts are now being planned in Labour areas — Brent, Ealing, Waltham Forest, ILEA, Manchester. Haringey is coming first.

The battle here will determine, I believe, the way things will go elsewhere in the country. If we lose this one then the national union will have an excuse not to back other areas. We have to demonstrate to the national executive that members in Haringey are able and willing to take action, and we have been successful so far in doing that.

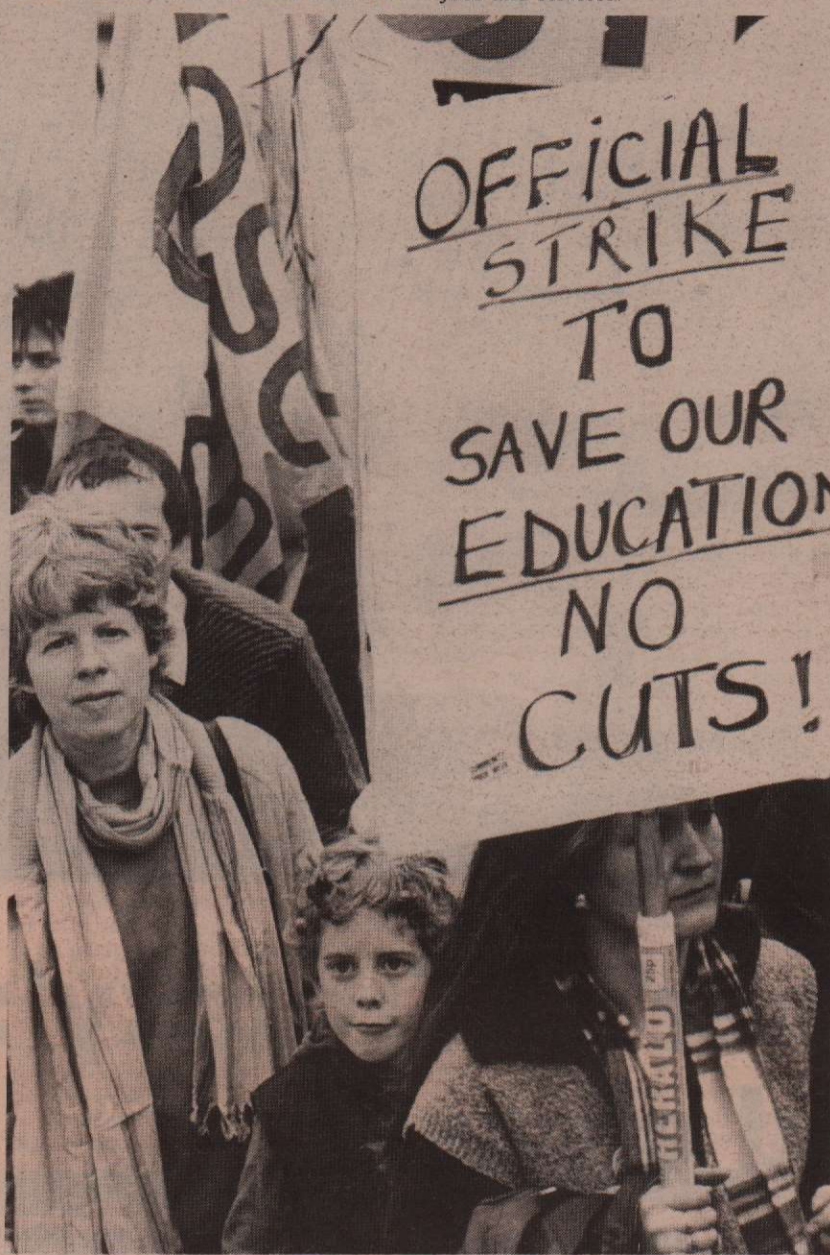
We have been trying to work closely with all the council unions. In reality most of the cooperation has been with NALGO. The manual worker unions have followed the lead of their full-time officers in trying to come to a deal with the councillors.

But now the council's plan to close the Direct Labour Organisation, cuts in school meals service, and cuts in school lettings will have immediate repercussions for UCATT members and NUPE members.

The other unions are beginning to realise that they are going to have to join in the campaign, and we are happy to stand with them. We are definitely not going into this on the basis of 'don't cut us, cut somebody else.'

None of the unions affiliated to the joint union committee have opposed us — all have supported the three demands that we have put.

Some of the manual unions have said the council must cut equal opportunities in order to preserve their



jobs. We don't go along with that, even though we don't think much of the equal opportunities so far. Some equal opportunities posts are needed to create equal opportunities, but the real issue is transforming the consciousness of the workforce — and whether you do that with the unions, or in a way that appears to a lot of unions as being aimed at them.

The council is clinging to the verbiage of an equal opportunities policy, and no more.

What does it mean to talk about equal opportunities when you are cutting special education? Or when you have just sacked supply teachers, who are mainly women and many of whom are from ethnic minorities?

For the last couple of weeks we have been having regular meetings with the borough-wide organisation representing parents — the Central Council of Parent-Teacher Associations — and we have asked every school rep to hold meetings for parents, to go to parent-teacher meetings to explain what is going on, and to ensure that leaflets and information are given out to parents.

We have had some difficulties. A lot of headteachers have refused to allow those leaflets to go out, and have threatened members with disciplinary action. The council has started refusing to allow us to use school halls to hold meetings to explain the issues to parents. Labour Party school governors have been told that if they allow discussion of the cuts at governors' meetings — if they vote or speak for such a motion — they will be removed from the governing body.

We have affiliated to Haringey Fightback. I believe it has to be a delegate body, with people there

representing their organisations rather than just going along and mouthing their own set of principles or party line. You cannot expect trade unions to be given second place in it.

From other NUT branches, we want messages of support. We have already had a few and it does help. We also want motions to the National Executive that insist they do not drop this fight. At this stage we are not asking for money because we will be getting official strike pay.

Our struggle has implications for the Baker Bill on the issue of opting out. There is a real danger if we are defeated. If parents see the council cutting provision, they may be driven to see opting out as attractive.

Initially schools and parents might think they will get more money by being directly funded by the government than they will out of the council.

## Choice

The opting out provision of the Baker Bill was specifically aimed at Haringey, particularly because of the Positive Images policy. We have approached the council for direct cooperation in a campaign against opting out, explaining to parents that opting out will not mean schools are better, it will reduce rather than increase choice, and that the level of provision will be worse rather than better.

The council's cuts undercut all that. The argument will appear phoney.

We are being forced to fight the council rather than fight with it, which is what is needed.

In a personal capacity

## Manchester Lobby the Council!

By Tony Dale

On 16 December Manchester's Labour City Council will meet to vote on proposals which — if passed — will mean the loss of thousands of jobs.

The council leaders plan to disestablish 3,750 posts, on top of 1,300 jobs which have been cut since July.

A jobs freeze which started in July has seriously hit services. The very public near-collapse of social services led to the Council scapegoating the Director, Irene Walton.

The new restructuring proposals will push many services back to the days when the Labour right wing ran the city. The Labour left, which was formed in the fight against that right wing, is now carrying out just the same sort of cuts as the right wing.

In July, Graham Stringer, the Labour council leader, got backing for his cuts package from all the council trade unions. The unions pledged support after being told by their leaders that they had the ear of the councillors.

At the time the union leaders stated that "the trade unions will expect to fully participate and to secure agreement with the present leadership in all measures proposed to achieve this aim."

The union leaders told their members that compulsory redundancies could be avoided and the financial situation solved by a temporary job freeze.

But no real consultation or meaningful negotiations on the restructuring proposals have taken place. Leading Labour councillors have made it clear that they intend to ignore any union opposition. As a result, NUPE has condemned the restructuring proposals.

The promised rational reorganisation of services has turned into a bizarre game of Russian roulette. Each day different and contradictory restructuring documents are written. Various sections' fortunes vary from being closed down one moment to having no cuts the next!

The proposals will cut thousands of jobs. In education over 2,000 jobs are to be chopped. Among teaching staff 1,000 are to go.

Alongside the restructuring proposals, the council is putting forward a new redeployment scheme. Those workers who are in jobs "at risk", i.e. about to be cut by the Labour council, are to be given two offers of alternative jobs. If the worker finds the two offers unsuitable then he or she will be sacked!

Forced redeployments and compulsory redundancies could come fast on the heels of any restructuring.

Manchester Fightback, the anti-cuts group, has called a lobby of the council meeting on 16 December to say "enough is enough, no to the restructuring proposals."

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# UCW: Organise the rank and file

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

**It is a sell-out. That was the way my workmates reacted to the deal agreed between the UCW leaders and the Post Office. Somebody coined the slogan 'Tuffin wants stuffin' and that is about the only one of the many comments made fit to print in this paper.**

We went in for three hours. We got one and a half, and when you think we were offered one in May that means after six months our executive has managed to get us a magnificent thirty minutes extra.

That translates into five minutes per day. And to add insult to injury we do not even get the cut in hours straight away. Parcels will get the reduction next September and the Letters side not until November 1988-February 1989.

Counter staff, who were originally part of the claim, get no reduction at all. So instead of uniting the membership the settlement will leave us more divided than before, something of obvious advantage to the management.

The other supposed concession the Post Office have offered us is a pledge to look at creating five day duties within a six-day delivery pattern. The 5 day Monday to Friday week has long been a dream of most delivery staff. I doubt if this offer will make it come true. It will probably be achieved either by having one day off in the week — no use to anyone — or by the increased use of part-timers and casuals.

In any case, if we change from six day to five day duties with only one and a half hours off the present 43 hour week, we will have to work longer shifts. This could mean two deliveries on the Saturday instead of the present one which would be a great step backwards.

## Strike against YTS

**By Jill Feathers, DE, MSC, Merseyside in personal capacity**

**Last Friday, CPSA members in the Department of Employment voted to take national one-day strike action over the introduction of YTS in the department.**

Over the last few months various JobCentres and training groups (VETGs) have taken strike action, most notably in West Bromwich JobCentre and Bolton and Coventry VETGs.

Management had imposed the scheme, without the agreement of the union, in parts of the department. However, they will not be paying 'top-up' to the trainees to give them the minimum rate for the job as is usual with large employers.

### Demands

The union has eight demands which include: extra permanent staff; a guaranteed job for the YTS trainees at the end of the scheme; trade union rates of pay and the introduction of the scheme only with union agreement.

It is unfortunate that the CPSA has agreed to the concept of YTS, but since it has these demands must be adhered to.

The majority for taking action on Friday was about 500 nationally, a little depressing for the start of what should be a major campaign. Nevertheless a number of benefit offices, JobCentres and training groups were closed which obviously shocked management.

This fight must be taken up now by other civil service departments. If YTS is implemented in DE, then DHSS will follow early next year and others will inevitably follow them.

This is the most important dispute this union has to fight. If we lose, it could

The other part of our claim is that it should be at no cost to us. As the Post Office are now loudly boasting that the deal has not cost them a penny that has hardly been met. In fact, as usual we are picking up the bill.

The IWM productivity scheme is being wound up and although that is a good thing in principle, the way it is being done is very divisive. Those presently earning large bonuses will get lump sums over the next three years, which it is claimed will average about £1000, and weekly payments will be pegged to £20. Those earning less than £20 a week will remain as they are, and those presently on nothing will get a weekly payment of around £7. IWM will be replaced with a performance-based productivity scheme which will no doubt be much worse.

The deal allows for the scrapping of overtime premium payments. At the moment double-time is paid for anything over 13 hours and on Saturdays and Sundays. In future there will be a flat rate of time and a third. The increased use of part-time and casual labour and a willingness to look at more flexible work practices have also been agreed. They must

think we are made of rubber.

The fact that our executive have behaved in exactly the way I predicted in an article in Socialist Organiser in June is not really much consolation for what has happened. They spent the last six months doing nothing, dragged things out to the last possible moment, and then came up with something that is an insult to the membership.

They told us nothing about what has been going on. We did not know what the Post Office were offering, or what they were conceding. The details of the offer have still not been made available to the membership. This article has had to be written on the basis of press reports.

They obviously think that with Christmas coming up fast most members will conclude that there is no point in carrying on and accept the offer. If the press are to be believed they are even prepared to scrap the annual conference resolution calling for a special conference in favour of a membership ballot to decide the issue.

They may be right but that should not stop us campaigning for a 'no' vote on the deal. It does not come anywhere near our original claim and it has got more strings than the Mup-

pet show.

If we wanted them to negotiate on IWM, overtime payments and working practices we would have told them so. In fact resolutions calling for the winding up of IWM were defeated at annual conference.

As well as voting 'no', branches should also be moving votes of censure on the executive. We cannot let them get away with this. They had no mandate to sign the agreement they did and their willingness to give in has been a disgrace. The Guardian, in an article on the settlement, was absolutely right in saying that Tuffin all along had no intention of starting any action.

The tragedy of all this is that it could have been avoided. A rank and file organisation worthy of the name could have mobilised members against any sell-out. It could have organised limited unofficial action while the negotiations were going on, and when the deal was announced brought out enough people to force the executive to withdraw it. If the feeling of those members who I have spoken to is at all general this would not have been impossible. No such organisation exists at the moment and once again we are paying for this omission.

## Edinburgh shows will to fight

**Edinburgh's Mechanised Letter Office (the central sorting office) was at a standstill last Thursday, 3 December, as some 700 UCW members gave 100% support to the union Executive Council instructions for a 24-hour strike.**

It was the same story at the postal transit buildings at Edinburgh, railway station: after management brought in private lorry drivers to take mail from the sorting office to the station UCW members based in the railway station were pulled out on

strike as well.

In any case, by early morning only one of the lorry drivers brought in by management had gone through the heavy picketing at the sorting office. All others had been turned back.

### Frustration

Tom McGee, secretary of the Edinburgh outdoor branch summed up the frustration of his branch members at the failure of Post Office management to meet the union demand:

"This is an official 24 hour strike called under the authority of the union general secretary. Support for it is 100%, which shows the depth of feeling of workers in the Post Office. We have not had a shorter working week for 22 years, we have been negotiating for one for 13 years.

The membership feel that they have had enough. The Post Office is being broken up into separate businesses and the public service which we would like to provide is be-

ing decimated. The only thing that management seem to understand is the rule of the budget."

While the Edinburgh sorting office pickets were reluctant to criticise the union leadership, Andrew Duffy, shop steward for clerical workers there, said:

"We have learnt since our 1971 strike. Our aim now is to cause as much disruption as possible, while ensuring that at the end of the day our members lose as little as possible. As regards talks between union and management, we are just getting media reports, but we can get as much information as we require at the moment from union headquarters."

What was clear on the picket lines was the determination of UCW members to win their demand for a shorter working week. Any failure on the part of the union leadership to achieve that certainly cannot be attributed to a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the membership to fight for their demands.

## Reject 'unity at any price'

**Nominations have still not closed in the election for President, but I suspect that the only two runners on 14 December will be Arthur and Walsh.**

Johnny Walsh has said that he will have talks with the UDM, and that he will look to take them back en bloc. Of course it has always been official NUM policy to take back individual members to the NUM and we welcome that opportunity. But I believe that certain people should not come back at any price. If Walsh thinks that Lynk, Prendegast and Greatorex are coming back, then it will be over my dead body.

Of course the union would be much stronger if it was united. We have been making that point ever since the breakaway. We need unity like we have never needed it before, with all the attacks coming on: privatisation, six day working and all the rest. But it cannot be unity at any price.

We will continue to recruit, but we will have no truck with the UDM as an organisation.

Johnny Walsh says he is also prepared to talk about six day working. If he does that it will be in breach of national policy, and if anybody wants to talk about six day working it will have to come from annual conference first, the supreme decision making authority of this union.

Last week the 1000 strong Leicestershire Area NUM announced the result of their own ballot on whether to discuss flexible working with British Coal. 81% voted in favour.

I think they have been misled and should remember that six day working

### WHETTON'S WEEK



and continental shifts have already been tried in an experiment at Bevercotes. It cost a lot of pain and suffering. When it finished, miners at Bevercotes colliery stood in the pit yard and burnt their roster cards, thinking we would never ever see the like of it rearing its ugly head again.

I see that a newspaper did an interesting poll at the weekend that came out with two interesting results: that many miners were dissatisfied with the present overtime ban, and that Scargill was heading for a victory with a two-thirds majority.

The reason why miners are pissed off with the overtime ban is that the vast majority of miners, when they voted for action against the disciplinary code in the first place, were thinking of a full overtime ban with a minimum of safety cover as a first step.

Rather than thinking about removing the existing ban, we should be thinking about stepping up the action. I can well understand the frustration of many rank-and-file miners with the way the overtime ban is going — it is so weak as to be virtually ineffective.

But they should remember how vicious the disciplinary code is, and I believe that calling the present ban off would be virtually tantamount to accepting that code. I have no doubt that British Coal already

has plans laid for the rank-and-file men it wants sacked as soon as the union backs down on the code, and that is something that we cannot contemplate.

I am quite sure that Arthur Scargill will be returned, but I would urge all miners not to be complacent about it. The press will launch a vicious campaign against him right up until the day of polling. So will the government and British Coal. They will try to present Johnny Walsh as the great hope for all miners. The issue is not one of personalities, but it is vitally important that we give a massive mandate to the policies represented by the President of this union and send him back into that national executive and to meetings with British coal with that mandate: No to 6-day working; Get rid of the disciplinary code; Reinstatement of the victimised miners.

My industrial tribunal appeal was in September but there is still no movement on my claim for reinstatement. Negotiations are still going on, but British Coal are deliberately dragging them out.

Before the tribunal they told me that if I accepted a job at the nearby Yorkshire pit of Manton arranging transport from my home in Tuxford would be no problem; since the tribunal ruled that I should get a job at Manton they have decided there is a problem.

The position is putting tremendous pressure on me and my family, and we want a speedy resolution to it — but not at any price. I will not accept a settlement that will be to my disadvantage or which will set a bad precedent for the union.

**Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.**

## Pay vote victory

**By Gary Scott**

**Like his notorious predecessor Alistair Graham, the current General Secretary of the CPSA — John Ellis — obviously has little regard for the democratic decisions of his own union.**

The day after the CPSA's special conference on 3 December, which met to decide our 1988 pay claim and strike strategy, Ellis was being quoted in the press as saying that the union had "once again made itself look absurd", and that members wouldn't vote for an all-out strike.

The pay conference voted to go for a flat rate pay increase of £25 a week, and a minimum wage of £134 a week. Long-standing CPSA policy of a 35 hour week with no job loss, and six weeks' annual leave for all, are also to be part of the claim.

Although the basic claim may seem very high, research shows that this is what would be needed to bring Civil Service workers' pay back in real terms to the levels enjoyed around 1980.

The debate on the strategy required to win this claim proved extremely heated. The first motion on the subject was put by the National Executive Committee, dominated by the Broad Left. This stated that the "programme of action may include limited action for a short period linked to the need for all members in all departments to stop work together — i.e. all out strike."

This motion was opposed not only by the right wing, but by their born-again moderate allies in the BL '84 faction. BL '84 argued instead for a motion lower down the agenda, which said very little except that "unity in action with other unions must be the overriding priority".

When the NEC motion was put to a card vote, it was lost: 60,041 votes to 69,955. The BL '84 motion was then debated and voted on — and also was lost (this time by a bigger margin — 56,341 votes to 70,377).

The time allocated on the agenda for the 'strategy' debate had by now been used up, and it took a two-thirds majority vote of the delegates to suspend Standing Orders and allow the debate to continue.

The next motion was moved by Socialist Organiser supporter Mike Grayson, on behalf of the British Library CPSA branch. This motion drew out the lessons of the failed 1987 pay campaign, and recognised that "only all-out action will enable us to achieve our demands". Any period of selective action prior to an all-out strike should be of short duration and used only as a way of building towards all-out action.

In a tense atmosphere, conference waited for the card vote on this motion to be counted. Finally it was announced that the motion was carried — but by the slenderest of margins: 63,837 votes to 62,478.

Although the result was a victory for the left, the small size of the majority cannot be ignored. A lot of work must be done over the coming months to convince and unite the membership behind this strategy.

The final debate of conference was on the vexed question of emergency payments, i.e. whether, during an all-out strike, the union should make provisions for payments to be made to claimants. This is an issue on which the left in CPSA is divided. After a too-short debate, CPSA's present policy of *not* making such payments was reaffirmed.

Most Socialist Organiser supporters would disagree with this position, which reflects a militant trade-unionism, but not a socialist consciousness.

The campaign for the 1988 pay claim must begin now. For too many years CPSA members have had to accept lousy pay increases, whilst at the same time facing job cuts and deteriorating conditions. The fight back is long overdue.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## FREE OUR PRISONERS!

# FIGHT THE POLL TAX!

By Stan Crooke

This Saturday, 12 December, sees the first major demonstration in Scotland against the Tories' poll tax, due to be implemented in Scotland in 1989, a year earlier than in England and Wales.

The poll tax will replace the current rates system, and is a straightforward redistribution of income from the poor to the rich. All adults will pay the same amount — no matter whether they're a company director living in a country mansion or a low-paid worker living in a high-rise flat.

Student nurses, for example, will have to pay the full amount. Residents in Church of Scotland old folks' homes (also currently rates-free) will have to pay 20% of the poll tax. The National Council for Civil Liberties has produced evidence to show how compilation of the poll tax register will involve a major attack on civil liberties.

Taken together with Tory plans for privatisation of council services, and for forcing councils to charge fees for those services which are not privatised, the poll tax is a major attack on local government democracy. The secretary of state will have the powers to fix the level of poll tax in each Region.

This Saturday's demonstration has been initiated by Edinburgh Trades Council, on the basis of a resolution passed by its November meeting which also called for support for trade unionists who boycott work on the poll tax and for non-payment by individuals of the poll tax. The Trades Council also agreed to circulation of a petition containing these demands, and to hold a conference in the New Year to launch a broad-based campaign against the



poll tax.

An amendment demanding non-implementation of the poll tax by local authorities was defeated on the casting vote of the chair, in a confusing situation of procedural wrangles. It is likely, however, that the Trades Council will soon reverse this position.

But trade union and Labour Party leaders in Scotland have already been active in trying to put the skids under any real campaign against the poll tax. They have launched a rather misnamed "Stop It" campaign

(sponsored by the same council leaders who are currently overseeing compilation of the poll tax register) which just moralises about the evils of poll tax without offering a viable strategy in opposition to it.

In Edinburgh itself, Labour Party right-wingers have prevented the distribution of leaflets by Labour Party branches advocating non-implementation of the poll tax by the local Regional Council, whilst the NALGO Regional Executive successfully opposed a resolution advocating a boycott of the poll tax at the NALGO Regional Annual General Meeting of a fortnight ago.

But the question of building a campaign capable of defying and ultimately wrecking the poll tax cannot be reduced merely to the idea of a gutless leadership holding back a rebellious rank-and-file.

What must be won is the argument that there is nothing sacred about Tory laws, that the Tory anti-working class laws should be defied, and can be successfully defied. Tory laws are equal for all only in the sense that they prohibit the rich as much as the poor from stealing bread and sleeping under bridges at night.

As one stock exchange scandal after another has demonstrated, the Tories are quite prepared to break even their own laws when it suits them. And in the early seventies, mass trade union defiance of Tory anti-union laws not only made the laws inoperative but also brought down the government and paved the way for the return of a Labour government.

The period since then, however,

has seen a relative weakening of the labour movement, softened up first by the Labour government of 1974-9, and then ruthlessly attacked by the subsequent Thatcher regime, while the TUC and Labour Party leadership, the enemy in the home camp, combined to drag the movement to the right.

The issue of the poll tax provides an opportunity for reversing the retreat of recent years.

The truth is that the right wing of the labour movement has *no strategy at all* for fighting the poll tax. Kinno's "dented shield" strategy, which was always doomed to defeat in any case, is simply irrelevant in a situation where local government is effectively being abolished.

And to believe that a government which faced down the miners for a year can be swayed by "public opinion" plus a couple of vicars and philanthropic lords is positively perverse, though this is the assumption upon which the "Stop It" campaign rests.

Whatever short-term successes the right wing may enjoy in undermining a real campaign of defiance of the poll tax, their lack of an alternative will become increasingly apparent.

If the Left wins the argument about illegality and successfully links up the Labour Party, trade unions and tenants' groups on the basis of defiance of the poll tax at all levels (implementation by councils, collection by trade unionists, and payment by individuals), then it will be possible not only to wreck the poll tax but also to inspire defiance of other Tory attacks.

MOSES MAYEKISO and Vladimir Klebanov are both class-war prisoners stuck in the jails of oppressive regimes. They symbolise the fate of the working-class movement across the world, East and West.

Moses Mayekiso is general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), one of the country's largest independent, non-racial trade unions. He is on trial for treason. His crime? To have organised working-class people in Alexandra township in democratic committees. And to have wanted to replace apartheid with a democratic, socialist system.

For the crime of being a socialist and militant trade unions, Moses could be in jail for the rest of his life.

Vladimir Klebanov is a Ukrainian miner being punished by the Soviet state. His crime? To have tried to organise a trade union independent of the state, controlled by the workers instead of by managers.

For his crime, Vladimir is in a mental asylum. The USSR's government pretends that it is a sign of madness to want a real trade union movement!

Campaigns to free these two trade unionists should be high on our priorities in 1988. To fight for the freedom of Moses Mayekiso is to fight for freedom for all victims of apartheid. To fight for freedom for Vladimir Klebanov is to defend the rights of workers in the fake-socialist police state of the USSR.

But we should also not forget workers' rights closer to home. There are still 326 sacked or jailed miners throughout the British coalfield.

Paul Whetton, victimised secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts, says: "I would urge people to remember that this is not just a struggle at Christmas — it is every day of the year. So when Christmas is over, do not just put this issue of the victimised miners out of your minds".

Let's make 1988 the year of justice for class-war prisoners across the world.

## This is capitalism

From page 1

tragedy over the past few years. The form of economic development — unplanned and causing soil erosion — has made it worse. Ruthless local regimes and indifferent foreign powers have sealed the fate of millions.

We will get more Band Aids. But what is needed is urgent surgery — the complete transformation of the world economic system.

Socialist Organiser will be taking a break over Christmas. The next issue will appear in January.

## DEMONSTRATE AGAINST THE POLL TAX!

12th December 1987

Assemble Hillside Crescent 10.30am

Leave at 11.00 for a march to the Mound for a rally. There will be brief speeches from representatives of the Regional Council, the Trades Council, the Stop It Campaign, and Community, Tenants and Students organisations.

THIS WILL BE A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION .... PLEASE TRY TO COME YOURSELF - AND PERSUADE YOUR FRIENDS, WORKMATES AND NEIGHBOURS TO DO THE SAME.