

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

## Tories rob NHS to pay rich

# THESE TAX CUTS WILL KILL!



Rich pig Lawson

**ALREADY, according to one leading doctor, 15 people a day die unnecessarily because of Tory cuts in the National Health Service.**

Many more will die because the Tories choose to cut taxes for the well-off rather than give money back to the NHS. Many will suffer longer and more miserably from disease that could be cured.

Already, since 1979, the Tories have given the average man on £30,000 a year **one hundred pounds a week** in tax cuts. The well-off pay about £3½ billion less in taxes than they would if tax rates were the same as in

1979. That £3½ billion is easily enough to give the NHS the money it needs.

The rich people's tax cut is the poor people's health cut. A Parliamentary Select Committee with a Tory majority has proposed to the Government that it should put £1 billion extra into the NHS. Thatcher will not do even that. Instead she will hand the money over to the rich, and use a little of it to win cheap popularity with the not-so-rich who will get a few extra pennies in their pay packets each week.

A few extra pennies in your pay packet through tax cuts are

**Turn to back page**

## Defend the NHS! Strike on 14 March!



## RACE AND CLASS

## Racism in the USA

By Payman Rezai

20 years after Martin Luther King's death how much has changed in the position of US blacks?

There is much more integration than in the '60s — blacks and whites tend to work together more, are more likely to live in the same neighbourhoods, but at a more fundamental level blacks and whites still inhabit separate worlds. An article in 'Newsweek' quotes Donald Hill, a black University professor: "After 5 o'clock at night blacks and whites retreat to their own isolated worlds".

Sadly, it seems that the main result of the Civil Rights movement was to enable a number of blacks to do well for themselves — to facilitate the emergence of a black middle class. The increase in the numbers of black managers, black businessmen and the like has been staggering.

But the average wage of American blacks is still only 57% of whites. In 1986 1 in 3 blacks were living below the poverty line, compared to 1 in 10 whites.

Unemployment amongst black youth is double that amongst whites. The infant mortality rate amongst blacks is twice that of whites. The rate of teenage pregnancy in black women is twice that of white teenagers. The ghetto still exists, its just that some blacks have been able to get out.

A poll in 'Newsweek' surveyed the attitudes of black and white Americans to the position of blacks in US society. Respondents were asked "Would the most effective way for black people to improve their situation be working less with white people and more with blacks?"

Both groups were in agreement — 61% of blacks and 62% of whites, that blacks and whites should work together. Both groups, surprisingly reported in almost identical proportions improvements in their living standards over the past 5 years.

Considerably more blacks than whites — 40% as against 14%, felt that positive discrimination should be used to help blacks get jobs or college places, but more blacks were against positive discrimination than for it.

The answers to the questions about racial attacks were the most interesting. Not unexpectedly whites considered that racial attacks against blacks were far less frequent than the black people who responded to the survey.

But when the question was asked, "How common is it for blacks to harass or physically attack whites in your city or town?" far more blacks than whites thought these attacks were very common — 13% against 8%, and 58% of blacks thought these attacks at least took place occasionally — 2% more than thought racial harassment of blacks by whites took place occasionally.

How representative the poll was is impossible to tell. The interviews were carried out by telephone and consequently it is likely that most of the respondents were middle class. That might explain the answers of the black interviewees — they viewed themselves as separated off from poor blacks.

Whatever, it's clear that the dream of the Civil Rights movement is far from having been realised in the US.

## West German steel strike

By Lynn Ferguson

On 27 November last year workers at the Krupp Rheinhausen steelworks in West Germany took action over the threatened closure of their factory.

In May Krupp announced that they intended to lay off 2,000 workers at the Rheinhausen factory. Workers in the factory fought back, but the sluggishness of their union leadership forced the workers last September to agree to job cuts.

A compromise agreement was signed consisting of:

- \*keeping open all the Krupp plants.
- \*increased investment.
- \*a 'social plan' providing for 90% of the last wage till early retirement.
- \*no further job losses until 1991.
- \*re-training programmes.
- \*2-3 year leave period for young

workers.

What the workers did not know at the time was that Krupp had already reached an agreement with the Thyssen and Mannesmann steel companies to completely close down the Rheinhausen works before mid-1988.

There was a new left-wing majority on the factory council. The workers took action.

Since the end of November the workers have had effective control of the Rheinhausen plant. Initially they stopped all production, but as the longer the machinery is out of action the more difficult it becomes to start it up again, the workers soon decided to operate a "stop-go" system. A striker describes the tactic:

"In this way, the management cannot calculate when the workers

are going to strike, and when they are going to produce. This naturally assumes that the workers are technically able to control such operations. They have shown that they can do that."

Workers have also stormed the Krupp family mansion, and have staged occupations of streets and bridges.

The strike is being run by the factory council, which for the first time in 1987 elected a left majority. The council is directly accountable to the rank and file, with all major decisions being taken at mass meetings.

The metalworkers' union, IG Metall has played little part in the strike. Days of action have been called, but that's all. The workers want to spread the action to other Krupp plants, and ultimately to the whole of the steel industry. IG Metall should be leading the way in

this, but would prefer the strikers to settle for the offer of "alternative jobs" at some time in the future.

The strike has a fantastic amount of support in the local community, with women's groups, cultural groups, shopkeepers and even churches and sections of the media standing behind the strikers. December saw a demonstration of 10,000 school students in solidarity.

Steel is central to the life of the region, where unemployment already runs on average at 15%. Without the steelworks the town would become a ghost town. In that respect the strike is similar to the miners' strike in Britain.

The strikers' immediate tasks are to draw in the workers at the Mannesmann and Thyssen factories, and to make the union use the current industry-wide wage negotiations to pile the pressure onto the steel bosses.

Middle East

## The uprising continues

By Clive Bradley

Film shown around the world of Israeli soldiers breaking the arms of Palestinian youths proved to be, in the words of one Israeli diplomat, "the straw that broke the camel's back". International sympathy with Israel is at an all-time low.

And attempts by Israel to use this week's botched bus hijack by three armed Palestinians to divert attention from repression shouldn't wash. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said that the hijack — in which three Israelis as well as the Palestinians were killed — proved the desire of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to "kill women and children. These are the same people who attack us in the (occupied) territories."

But as the Palestinian death toll in the occupied territories rises — it is now nearly 90 since 9 December — Shamir's view of it is hard to

take seriously.

It is not even taken seriously by coalition partner Shimon Peres who recognises the mass support for the PLO in the occupied territories.

Even so, the PLO would be excluded from the international conference being pushed by George Shultz in his recent round of shuttle diplomacy. Not that the conference seems likely to occur. Whatever Israel would find an acceptable basis for a conference would be unacceptable to the Arab participants — and vice versa.

Years of the official 'peace process' have failed to achieve anything — certainly as far as the oppressed Palestinians are concerned. The US's chief idea — 'autonomy' for the occupied territories, perhaps under Jordanian sovereignty — is a long way short of what the Palestinians are demanding.

Indeed, current international concern for the Palestinians is largely the result of the uprising — or *intifada* — in the occupied territories. Mass action has done more for the Palestinians than years of superpower diplomacy.

An independent Palestinian state is still a long way off. What will tilt the balance in its favour is the movement within Israel.

The forthcoming election (scheduled for November) will centre on the issue of the occupation; Israeli society is more and more deeply polarised around the territories' future. 'Peace Now' — more independent of the Labour Party establishment than in the past — can lay an important role.

The central demand has to be for a fully independent Palestinian state.

Apartheid

## SA whites move right

South Africa's ruling National Party was trounced in two by-elections in the Transvaal last week — by the ultra-right. The extremist Conservative Party of Dr. Andries Treurnicht is gaining ground at P.W. Botha's expense.

The other far right party, the NHP, seems to be on the way out — suggesting that a united neo-fascist challenge to Botha is growing.

Meanwhile reforms have been too few and too insignificant to justify black demands. So Botha could be in trouble.

The ultra-right in South Africa are terrifying and getting more so. The question for Botha is — if the ultra-right get too strong, will he turn to the army?



Labour Party

## Waiting for the Seventh Cavalry?

By Stan Crooke

The agenda for this year's Scottish Labour Party conference (in Perth on 11-13 March) suggests that the Keir Hardie House bureaucracy face an uphill struggle in their attempts to conjure up the image of an obedient and monolithic Party, cauterised of any militancy, for the dubious benefit of the Party's "media image".

The thread running through this year's agenda is the need for the Party to campaign actively against the Tories, rather than wait for the Seventh Cavalry in the shape of "the next Labour government" to come galloping over the hill.

The major issue of controversy at the conference will be the poll tax. Resolutions fall into two categories: using only legal methods to oppose the tax; or encouraging defiance of the Tory laws.

Amongst the measures advocated by the pro-illegality resolutions are: non-cooperation by local authorities in compilation of the Poll Tax Register and in collection of the tax; Scottish MPs to declare their refusal to pay the tax; a campaign for non-payment by individuals; strike action against the tax; and refusal by councils to hold warrant sales to recoup poll tax payments.

Eight resolutions — far fewer

than might have been expected for the first conference since the General Election — take up the question of a Scottish Assembly.

One resolution makes the muddle-headed demand for the creation of a "Scottish Socialist Assembly", another demands that an Assembly be created by the

Labour Party Scottish Council before the end of the present Parliament and yet another gives the game away about the futility of the call for an Assembly by referring to the fact that "this campaign (for an Assembly) will have to be sustained over the long haul to the next general election."

Labour Party

## Defend Mandy Mudd!

Tottenham Labour Party member Mandy Mudd is facing expulsion from the Labour Party. She is accused of "a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party."

A report on Mandy's activities

## Deportations March on 14 May

By Viraj Mendis

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign is planning a national march in Manchester for 14 May. In July 1987, we mobilised 4000 people onto the streets. On 14 May this year we are calling for double that number.

has been submitted to the NEC, but neither Mandy nor her CLP have been allowed access to it. The report accuses her of intimidation, and calling on Haringey residents to personally harass councillors who vote for cuts.

The real reason for the witch-hunt against Mandy is that she has been involved in Haringey Fights Back — a group committed to campaigning against the cuts in Haringey. In the Labour Party she has consistently argued for no cuts and for a fight against the government.

The witch-hunters have leaked details of their intention to expel Mandy Mudd to the tabloid press, who wasted no time in instituting a particularly sexist personal campaign against her.

Mandy has been singled out by the right-wing to teach party members a lesson — anyone who campaigns against Labour authorities implementing Tory cuts is now 'out of line'.



# All out 14 March!

## EDITORIAL

'Strike on 14 March!' is the message to the working class from many health workers as they prepare for next Monday. Health workers will strike throughout the country, and they will be joined by other groups of workers, including London busworkers and Yorkshire miners.

The enthusiasm for action on 14 March and the turnout of well over 100,000 for the TUC demonstration last Saturday, 5 March, show this is the time to fight. We can't afford to let the struggle to save the NHS fade away and peter out after 14 March.

After Budget Day we need:

\*The health service unions to call an all-out strike — with emergency cover — in defence of the NHS. Strikes by health workers can win. The nurses in Australia showed that in 1986. What went wrong in 1982 was that militancy was dissipated in dribs and drabs.

\*The TUC to organise a one-day general strike.

A clear lead would quickly start to break down the divisions between the more advanced and the less militant groups of health workers.

What if the health union leaders and the TUC won't act? — and they won't until great pressure is put on them.

The stewards' committees, strike committees and action committees that have sprung up around the country should be linked together.

A national stewards' conference will be a start to getting the organisation needed to force the officials to take action.

A national stewards' conference would also provide a forum for working out the kind of action and policy needed for focusing the anger that exists amongst health workers.

After the 14th, activists have to discuss and prepare for the maximum possible action at local level over issues such as privatisation, cuts, closures, and pay. There should be a campaign of rolling strikes, building up to all-out action.

An overall policy is needed to unite and focus such local battles, and link pay and conditions to the defence and extension of the NHS.

\*Support the health unions' demand for a 20% wage increase for nurses.

\*For a £70 across-the-board increase in all health workers' wages and a minimum wage of £150 per week.

\*Demand money to meet all pay increases. Wage increases must not be paid for with cuts in other areas of health service spending.

\*Demand money to meet all costs increases, to deal with new diseases like AIDS and all new technological advances.

\*Take the money from the rich! Trident will cost as much as building 550 new hospitals. Before last October's crash, shareholders



Health workers demonstrate on 5 March. Photo: Ian Swindale

were coining gains at twice the rate of the entire NHS budget. Tory tax cuts for the rich amount to more than the whole NHS hospitals budget.

\*No privatisation. Re-nationalisation of all privatised an-

cillary services.

\*No charges on glasses, drugs and dental care. No two-tier health service.

The Labour Party could help by putting itself at the head of a big political crusade against the Tories

and in defence of the NHS, with demonstrations, pickets, lobbies, rallies and stunts.

Strike action to defend the NHS is now very popular. Labour has nothing to lose and a lot to gain by backing it.

## Victorian values

The man who — revealingly — accused gays of "swimming around in a cesspool of their own making" was a major suspect in the hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper.

James Anderton's unhealthy obsession with what he sees as sin and vice led colleagues in the Manchester police force to pay a personal visit to the officer in charge of the Ripper inquiry, to persuade him to investigate Anderton.

Private detectives were hired to tail Anderton. His bedroom was

bugged.

These revelations are made in a new book on Anderton, excerpts from which appeared in last Sunday's issue of Murdoch's scab News of the World.

The investigations turned up nothing. All the bugs picked up were domestic tiffs between Anderton and his wife! But the similarities between Anderton and the man eventually convicted of the murders, Peter Sutcliffe, don't just end with the photofit. Both are obsessed with sex as dirty and sinful. Both claim to receive messages

from God.

Anderton is the most vociferous propagandist for Thatcher's return to "Victorian values". Victorian society's overt sexual repressiveness and obsession with moral degeneracy masked a world where pornography and prostitution flourished, and a syphilis epidemic of incredible proportions. Victorian values are nothing but disgusting hypocrisy.

It's not surprising that someone like Anderton, with his warped and sick ideas about sex and morality should have been a Ripper suspect. Would you like to meet him on a dark night?

## PRESS GANG

### Gorbachev's twin?

By Jim Denham

The editor of the Sunday Telegraph, Mr Peregrine Worsthorne, is a remarkable specimen in all sorts of ways. Uniquely for the editor of a national newspaper, he writes his own leaders and puts his name on them. Unusually, for a Tory, he is an avowed admirer of the writings of Karl Marx. But what is most surprising about Mr Worsthorne (bearing in mind both his profession and his political allegiance) is that he is honest.

Last Sunday this strange man chose to muse on Margaret Thatcher's habit of comparing her mission of creating an 'enterprise culture' in Britain with Gorbachev's 'reform programme' for Russia. "The danger", noted Worsthorne, "is not that we may find the comparison far-fetched and incredible so much as that we may find it disturbingly accurate in ways that she did not have in mind".

What Worsthorne is referring to is a "certain worrying proclivity" of both leaders to pretend that a "reform process designed to promote modernisation is really designed to promote freedom". Even the true blue editor of the Sunday Telegraph finds this a bit hard to swallow: "For there are quite a lot of recent signs that Mrs Thatcher is not much enamoured of freedom as an end in itself or unduly anxious for individuals or institutions to do their own things if that happens to contradict the over-riding aim of wealth creation". Thatcher and Gorbachev both tolerate individual freedom and institutional autonomy only in so far as they lead to the right results. But what if they don't? Worsthorne is in no doubt about Thatcher's response in such circumstances: "She will squirm. She will start talking about retrograde elements impeding progress; about the need to use state power initially to force people to be free... First the people must be re-educated, given the ideologically correct entrepreneurial set of values (ie the party line) and rescued from the wrong values which have been instilled into them by enemies of the people". At this point a vision of thousands of Telegraph-reading colonels choking on their Sunday morning muffins obviously passed before Worsthorne's eyes. He feels it wise to explain himself more plainly. "But steady on. Isn't that the kind of language Mr Gorbachev might use? Precisely so, and had not Mrs Thatcher gone out of her way to compare herself to him I would not be going out of my way to use his language. But once used, the worrying thing is that this totalitarian-type language does not sound all that wildly inappropriate".

Worsthorne is not, of course, the first person to note either the limitations of Gorbachev's "reforms" or the patent hypocrisy of Thatcher's claims to champion individual freedom. Nor is he the first to note the parallels between the two. But he is, as far as I know, the first editor of a Tory paper to make the point quite so clearly in print, and to put his name to such heresy. He closes by advising the Prime Minister to forget about "capitalist social engineering" and to wait instead for the "cultural fruits of your economic transformation to ripen". He even advises her to "pay more attention to the writings of Karl Marx"...

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# GRAFFITI

## NHS cuts

Yet more health cuts...The government is planning to sell off NHS cancer screening laboratories. Particularly affected will be the already inadequate facilities for cervical cancer screening.

Cervical cancer is one of the biggest killers of women in Britain. Yet if it is caught early enough, it is completely curable.

But the government has consistently refused to put more money in for a proper screening and recall service.

Women in the North West already have to wait up to four weeks for a smear test. The selling off of the laboratories will seriously worsen the situation.



## Frank Jesus freaks

There is going to be something a little different about our post for the next six weeks. Virtually all the letters posted in Britain are to be franked with the message "Jesus is Alive".

The message cost £50,000 and was commissioned by a member of the group "Intercessors for

Britain", who have vowed to pray for an hour a week about the moral state of Britain.

The message, not surprisingly, has provoked an outcry. The Director of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, has called it an "infringement of my rights", and the

Humanist Society has issued a statement condemning the Post Office for printing the slogan.

Some of the letters franked with the message will be going to Israel, and Muslim countries. The Rev. Ray Borlase, one of the people behind the scheme, says he finds this idea "very exciting".

## 20p an hour

Fancy a babysitting job at 38p an hour? Or maybe assembling soft toys at home at 20p a toy?

If you live in West Yorkshire these are the sort of jobs you'll find advertised in your local Jobcentre. A survey of ten Jobcentres and five local newspapers in West Yorkshire undertaken by the West Yorkshire Low Pay Unit, has found that many of the jobs advertised offered illegally low rates of pay.

Cleaning jobs were being advertised at £1.20 an hour, and carers for ill old people were being offered £1.75 an hour.

## Ferry deathtraps

A year after the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster, passengers are still travelling on ferries

## Frenzy

So much for those who assure us that Clause 29 won't lead to a frenzy of book-burning. In a recent Hammersmith council debate, a Labour member read an extract from a book. On gay relationships it said:

"I honour and practice the mysteries of love in an especial degree myself and recommend the same to others."

The Conservative councillors all agreed the book would fall under Clause 29. They were a little taken aback when they discovered the author was Plato!

which are potential deathtraps.

New regulations have led to cosmetic changes — warning lights and TV monitors — but all the proposals for real change have been dropped.

Ferry-owners, who incidentally are amongst the major contributors to Tory Party funds have got a commitment from the Transport Secretary Paul Channon that they will not be forced to introduce costly safety measures that could put them at a "commercial disadvantage".

Safeguards which have been rejected include:

\*Emergency escape doors to be fitted to the side of ships.

\*The modification or scrapping of older and consequently more un-

safe vessels.

\*The fitting of handrails and steps on the walls of walkways to facilitate escape.

\*The hardening up of Marine Inspectors' powers.

Cuts in staffing levels and the increase of working time onboard ship also threaten to further undermine safety. Striking seafarers in Dover have made the question of safety a central part of their campaign against job losses and new work practices. P&O plan to reduce crew on cross-channel ferries by one-third, and sailors will be entitled to only six hours sleep a night. NUS stewards argue that this will mean "people will be too tired to carry out their jobs properly."

# Life or death choices

The catastrophic state of the health care system in Poland is already legendary. Even the authorities no longer deny that the situation has reached frightening dimensions.

On numerous occasions Solidarnosc sounded alarm that the official policies contribute to the virtual collapse of health care at a time when the severe economic crisis is accompanied by rapidly deteriorating health standards.

In a dramatic gesture underscoring the gravity of the situation, the union leaders decided to set up a Solidarnosc Social Foundation which would extend medical assistance on the basis of funds donated from abroad.

In general, the health care system is plagued by acute shortage of everything except patients. Even necessary surgical operations have to be routinely cancelled due to the lack of anaesthetics.

Patients seeking medical care are required to procure their own medical supplies (from bandages and adhesives to syringes and antibiotics) as hospitals and clinics don't have them. Vitamins are practically unobtainable in the country.

Charitable medical donations and gifts from abroad have become the life-line of the Polish health care

system. In these despicable conditions, health became a virtual hostage of an access to the black market and western currencies, as most medicines are no longer available on the open market.

Another aspect of this grim reality are the conditions prevailing in hospitals. Nowadays, tales about people paying huge bribes to obtain a bed in a room rather than in a corridor, or patients being left unattended for days, no longer shock anybody. Just as terrible dirt, falling plaster and broken plumbing have become permanent elements of the hospital reality.

Recently, the Catholic press published an interview with Dr. Roza Nowotna-Walcowa from a Warsaw hospital, who candidly admitted that, a period she remembers as favourable to quality health care existed before the last war.

"Never since have I seen a hospital so clean, or not plagued by unending renovations which, these days, are a veritable torture for doctors and patients alike...Some time ago in this hospital we were not permitted to close the ophthalmology ward during repairs and so the walls were being scraped and painted with the patients nearby..."

"Most hospitals occupy buildings from the 19th and early 20th centuries, but the new ones, whose

average construction period exceed 15 years, are built so shoddily as to require major repairs before opening..."

"Generally, the health care system is deteriorating...and working in such conditions generates psychological discomfort which also affects the quality of our service."

Asked about the reasons for this crisis, Dr. R. Nowotna-Walcowa pointed to the fact that "health care was named 'a service' and treated like a drudge. Very little was invested in it but a lot demanded from it. As a result, a horrendous underinvestment was combined with equally enormous expectations that cannot possibly be fulfilled."

In such circumstances, reminiscent of wartime reality, doctors are forced to make dramatic choices of whom to save and whom to let die, as one patient can obtain necessary care only at the expense of another.

"In the kidney dialysis department we established a cardinal rule — everyone awaits his turn, no matter what. This may seem cruel, but it is morally right since everyone is equal...yet not all can survive."

Reprinted from *Solidarnosc News*, bi-monthly publication of the Coordinating Office Abroad of NSZZ *Solidarnosc*.

## Letters

### Don't challenge Kinnock or Hattersley

A leadership, or deputy leadership campaign this year, as a knee-jerk reaction to the stance taken by the Party Leader, is a waste of time.

It will get the left nowhere, other than perhaps to isolate it.

What we have to recognise is that an atmosphere has been created that makes it difficult for anyone to contest for the party leadership without risking some damage to the party.

We feel that it would be the wrong approach therefore to insist on an election now. It would not even present a real political challenge. The important thing is for the left to challenge the idea that elections are somehow inherently damaging and therefore to be avoided. This development can easily become a means to further marginalise the left.

The hostility that the Labour leadership displays towards any suggestion of a challenge can only condition the public's perception of the party and undermine the prospects for elections being seen as normal. In this way democratic processes are being transformed by party leaders into acts of left wing disloyalty and sabotage. Denouncing elections as being electorally damaging becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

But whatever we decide to do, we have to recognise that the electorate has been made electorally sensitive to divisions in the party.

We have to temper our political anger with realism. We have to seek to re-establish the automatic right to contest elections, but we have to do it with the minimum political injury either to the party or the left.

In this way the left cannot be accused of rocking the boat. Quite the contrary, we are asking the party leadership to undo the harm that has been done. We should ask them to show a clear willingness to improve the political climate so that the party and the public come to see elections as healthy and legitimate.

Should the leadership fail to do so, then they will bear the responsibility for any damage that results.

BARRY WINTER  
Political Secretary,  
Independent Labour Publications



## Israel, racism, and the Law of Return

Tony Traub asks: is Israel's Law of Return racist? (SO 344). Yes and no.

Like any other piece of legislation dealing with nationality and naturalisation, it is discriminatory in a general sense that it excludes one group of people from rights granted to another group.

Is it any more racist because it gives preference to Jews, than any other such laws? No, I don't really think so. Other such laws have as their criteria birthplace, parentage, wealth, etc — all of which as socialists we reject.

In this particular case the criterion is one of Jewish identity. But if any other capitalist state decides you don't meet their criteria you are excluded.

In these terms the Israeli law is no different in its content from other such exclusivist laws. Or are we trying to establish a hierarchy of such laws where the laws of those states you particularly abhor (for whatever reason: your own prejudices?) are classified as more racist than others?

"Self-determination"? Of course this applies to oppressed nationalities. Do we also say, though, that any nation that has been an oppressor then loses its rights to self-

determination in the future? Of course not. Consistent democracy means insisting that unconditional support is given to the Palestinian Arabs, but at the same time saying that the Jewish people also have a right not to be oppressed themselves.

"Economic viability of an independent Palestinian state"! Well, is Israel economically viable? If so, then only by virtue of the fact that it receives more aid per capita from the US than any other state. Would an amalgamated Jewish-Arab state in all Palestine be 'economically viable'? Put in this context the question doesn't really get us very far.

Politically, if there is a desire, a demand by the Palestinian Arabs for a physical embodiment of their national identity, and if it offers the beginnings of a solution to the conflict in Palestine, then as socialists we should support it. The only way to achieve peace — and Socialist Organiser's position recognises this and attempts to affect the situation accordingly — is by promoting mutual recognition, eventual co-operation, and collaboration between the workers' movements of Jews and Arabs.

Yours fraternally,  
BRYAN EDMANDS,  
South London.



# Loans threat in Baker Bill

In a story leaked to the Times last week the government has in effect announced that student loans and "voluntary membership" of the NUS are to be included in the Education Bill.

This move is the biggest threat the student movement has faced and it would put in question the viability of NUS as a student organisation able to represent and campaign for students' rights.

The government's plans centre around a £1,000 non-means tested loan available to all higher education students in exchange for a renunciation of all rights to benefits and loss of £100 off the grant. Few students would actually get access to more money over a three year course of study, and all would be left with a £1,000 debt on graduating.

The fact that the grant has been allowed to fall to such an inadequate level since 1979 may make £1,000 seem an attractive proposition to some students but we have to be clear in our opposition to the plan.

Any top-up loan is only the first step to a full loans system, and education as a privilege for those who can afford to pay for it.

Unless we can organise students to defend themselves against loans there's no way students are going to be organised to defend the NUS.

Six years of decline and failure to involve the membership in either the activity or the political ideas of the union mean that NUS is out of touch with the membership and can't assume that the support is automatically there.

We need urgent and decisive action to see off the threat of loans. The NUS must start planning action now.

Call emergency executive, council, Labour Club meetings now.

Organise pickets of Tory MPs, occupations, shut-downs, or whatever immediate action can be achieved.

Call on NUS for the following programme of action:

• Immediate week of action with appropriate local actions.

• Week long, possibly 24 hour picket of DES in London.

• Culminate the week of action with a mass rally in London.

• Build labour movement support for our campaign. All out on the picket lines on 14 March.

## NOLS conference fiasco

# Cabbage patch kids rule OK

Last weekend's NOLS conference proved once more that the Labour student organisation (NOLS) is in serious decline. But the conference did nothing to stop it. Very much the opposite in fact. Under the control of the "Democratic Left" (DL), this conference was a symptom of the NOLS disease, not the beginning of a cure.

True, conference did vote to adjourn itself so that delegates could go on the health workers' demonstration. That was good. It happened when the "Democratic Left", who had previously opposed such a move, caved in to pressure and made a u-turn. The bad side of it was that the DL refused to reconvene the conference for a compensating evening session.

This meant that much business was lost and there were only three policy debates. No emergency debates were allowed.

The DL liked it this way: it gave them an easier ride.

The nature of the disease NOLS suffers from was exposed to delegates when the DL chair opened conference with a speech lamenting the still dwindling number of NOLS members but then sagely commented, in the spirit and manner of a fatalistic and demoralised old man, that you can't expect anything else in a third Thatcher term! So you won't be so sinful as to blame the dispirited would-be careerists who run NOLS for the organisation's decline, will you comrade?

This irresponsible and feeble-minded refusal to take any responsibility for the decline of NOLS sums up the 'Democratic Left' in NOLS right now.

They feel that their continued rule in NOLS will only be possible if they can sustain a blindly obstinate rejection of any criticism of their stewardship, however valid. This means that they are utterly unable to learn the lessons of the decline or to work out policies for rebuilding and expanding NOLS.

Their attitude resembles nothing so much as the dimwitted factional pigheadedness of Militant (over the Liverpool fiasco, for example). But then the 'Democratic Left' and Militant have always been the terrible Siamese twins of the youth and student movement.

The ineptitude and irresponsibility of the 'Democratic Left' — the

By Sandra Cartlidge

self-proclaimed left-wing leadership of the student movement! — was evident again when they refused to take an emergency discussion on organising immediate action against government plans to bring in student loans.

The sad truth is — and even some of the DL supporters must know it — that after six years of gruesomely ineffective NOLS leadership the Tories are confident that they can safely introduce loans and later on a "voluntary membership" rule designed to destroy the NUS.

The 'Democratic left' refused even to discuss the issue at con-

The three policy debates at conference were:

On the NHS (but there were few students on Saturday's NHS demonstration because neither of the two organisations run by the Cabbage Patch Faction have done any work to organise students to defend the NHS.)

On Poll Tax, where a compromise position was passed against the NC. At least the compromise mentioned the possibility of the labour movement organising a refusal-to-pay campaign rather than sitting back and expecting working class people to stand on their own against the government and individually to refuse payment.

On the Alton Bill, where the NOLS NC opposed mandating Labour MPs to vote according to Labour conference policy over abortion. The DL-controlled NC was defeated.

ference, thus throwing away an opportunity to organise a swift and decisive response by Labour activists. How pathetic and irresponsible can you get!

As usual the DL had ruled out enough opposition delegates to ensure themselves a safe majority in electing the NOLS NC and to rule out any serious challenges to their factional rail-roading of Conference procedure.

So while changes to NOLS constitution which the NC don't like such as allowing part-time FE students to join have to pass through a priority ballot procedure to be debated, other constitutional amendments simply "come up"

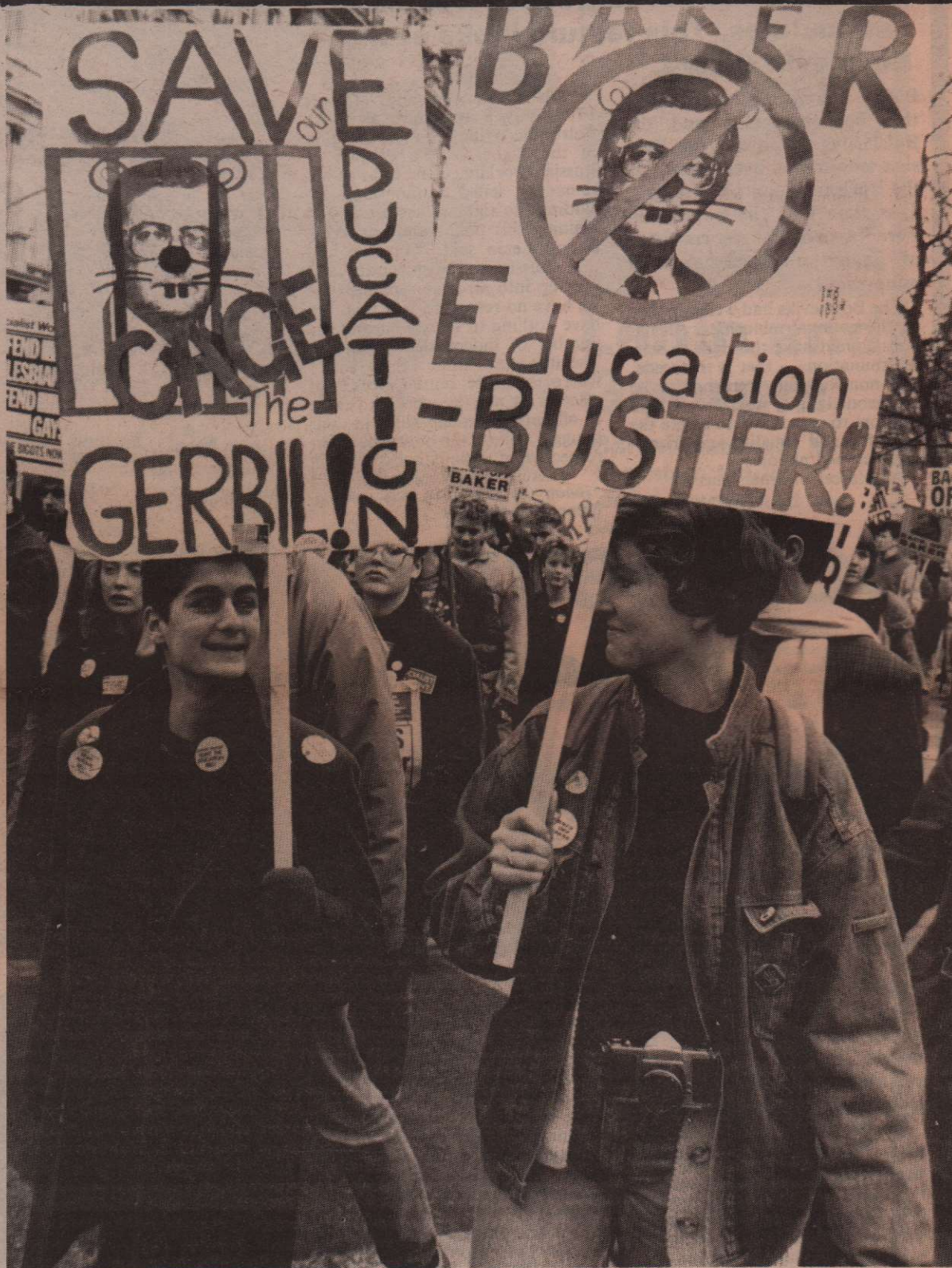


Photo: Ian Swindale

without being passed by a single Labour Club or even being tabled on the order paper. This at least has the advantage that we can be sure we know what they consider important!

Building and rebuilding NOLS isn't, that's for sure. Look at their attitude to Further Education students, for example.

The 'Democratic Left's' contempt for FE students in general was evident in a written answer to a question submitted to the Vice Chair, Adrian McMerriman. With breathtaking arrogance he excused NOLS' appalling record in the FE sector as being not due to the rule barring part-time students from NOLS membership but to "the anti-politics atmosphere" in FE colleges and to "the fact that many of these students do not see themselves as part of the student movement".

According to Adrian it is a "misunderstanding of the FE sector" which leads to "organisational remedies for what is a political problem". So, let me put it to you once

more comrade: you wouldn't be so trotish and sinful as to blame the DL leaders of NOLS for anything, would you?

These people think that building a youth organisation is the same thing as growing cabbages: it all depends on the soil and the sun and the rain, and, really, it's all in the hands of God. For sure it's not in the hands of the Cabbage Patch Kids of the DL. Unfortunately these Cabbage Patch politicians are running NOLS. Into the ground!

## Proper

A proper NOLS conference, for which delegates were freely and democratically elected and seated would have taken a long hard look at the state of the organisation and, maybe, called the outgoing leaders to account.

But not this conference. Exclusion of FE students, artificial — factional — restrictions on the organising of Labour Clubs and the bureaucratic exclusion of properly

elected delegates all combined to make this a rump conference controlled by the Cabbage Patch Kids of the DL.

No assessment was made of NOLS' failures or of NOLS leaders. Packed pretend-conferences don't come up with answers to difficult questions, because by definition a packed conference is designed to protect those in charge from difficult and embarrassing questions.

And those who don't dare to raise the necessary questions will never arrive at answers to the difficult question NOLS must answer.

The Cabbage Patch Kids can rig NOLS conferences, but NOLS can't rig the outside world. The student movement is going to want answers to legitimate questions about NOLS' failure to tackle issues like student loans and voluntary membership.

The labour movement should also be seriously asking how Labour's "official" student section has got itself into such a mess.



# The greatest jail

Recent events in Armenia have highlighted the situation of national minorities in the USSR. Today they face severe repression. Yet the Bolshevik revolution set out to free the oppressed nationalities. This feature looks at the Bolshevik record.

Before the revolution of 1917 that brought Lenin and the Bolsheviks to power, the Russian empire had been known as the "prison house of nations". Less than half the population were Russian. The rest consisted of many different national minorities.

The Bolsheviks had a clear policy on the national minorities. All nations should have the right to self-determination — that is to secede. The non-Russians were not to be bludgeoned into socialism. Real freedom to secede would create the basis for real equality and friendship between nations.

As Marcel Liebman puts it:

"On November 2nd (15th)\*, 1917, only a few days after the Bolsheviks' triumph, a 'Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia' proclaimed the right of nations to self-determination, including the right of secession. Explaining this policy and answering critics, Lenin said: "We are told that Russia will disintegrate and split up into separate republics but we have nothing to fear this. We have nothing to fear, whatever the number of independent republics. The important thing for us is not where the state border runs, but whether or not the working people of all nations remain allied in their struggle against the bourgeoisie, irrespective of nationality."

(Lenin under Leninism, p.272)

\* After the revolution, the calendar dates were changed.

## Bolshevism vs. Austro-Marxism

Among socialists before World War One, the dominant alternative view to that of the Bolsheviks was the 'Austro-Marxist' call not for self-determination, but for 'cultural-national autonomy'.

Later, when it was a way of giving support to their governments in the War, these socialists were to take up the slogan of self-determination.

In the "History of the Russian Revolution", Trotsky described their view.

"In order to understand the real character of Lenin's policy on the national question, it is a good idea — following the method of contrasts — to compare it with the policy of the Austrian social democrats. Bolshevism based itself upon the assumption of an outbreak of national revolutions continuing for decades to come, and instructed the advanced workers in this spirit. The Austrian social democracy, on the contrary, submissively accommodated itself to the policy of the ruling classes; it defended the compulsory co-citizenship of ten nations in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and at the same time, being absolutely incapable of achieving a revolutionary union of the workers of these different nationalities, fenced them off in the party and in the trade unions with vertical partitions.

### Renner

Karl Renner, an educated Hapsburg functionary, was never tired of probing the inkwells of Austro-Marxism in search of some means of rejuvenating the rule of

the Hapsburgs — until one day he found himself the bereaved theoretician of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

When the Central Empires were crushed, the Hapsburg dynasty again tried to raise the banner of a federation of autonomous nations under its sceptre. The official programme of the Austrian social democracy, based as it was upon the assumption of a peaceful development within the framework of the monarchy, now became in one second the programme of the monarchy itself, covered with the bloody filth of its four years of war. But that rusty hoop which had bound ten nations together flew to pieces.

Austria-Hungary fell apart as a result of internal centrifugal tendencies reinforced by the surgery of Versailles. New states were formed, and the old ones reconstructed. The Austrian Germans hung over an abyss. Their problem was no longer to preserve their dominance over other nations, but to avoid falling themselves under a foreign yoke.

### Bauer

And Otto Bauer, representing the "left" wing of the Austrian social democracy, considered this a suitable moment to bring forward the formula of national self-determination. That programme which during the preceding decades should have inspired the struggle of the proletariat against the Hapsburgs and the ruling bourgeoisie, was now brought in as an instrument of self-preservation for the nation which had dominated yesterday, but today was in danger from the side of the liberated Slavic peoples".

(p.910-911)



1. Estonia
2. Latvia
3. Lithuania
4. Belorussia
5. Ukraine
6. Moldavia
7. Georgia
8. Armenia
9. Azerbaijan
10. Turkmenistan
11. Uzbekistan
12. Tadzhikistan
13. Kirghizia
14. Kazakhstan

## Self-det

Rosa Luxemburg criticised the Bolsheviks for granting nations the right to self-determination, arguing that the policy was a gift to the counter-revolution. In fact, important as they saw it, the Bolsheviks did not see self-determination as more important than the class struggle.

Marcel Liebman describes events in the Ukraine:

"Ukrainian nationalism had borne an almost exclusively bourgeois and intellectual character before the revolution, and between February and October 1917 the Rada (the Ukrainian Central Council) never demanded anything beyond autonomy in a decentralized Russia. As soon as the civil war began, however, the Rada showed partiality in the struggle between 'Reds' and 'Whites', the latter being helped while the former were subjected to systematic hostility, and workers armed by the Ukrainian soviets were attacked by the troops of the Rada. The Rada negotiated with a French military mission with a view to an agreement that caused the Bolsheviks concern.

Since nationalist Ukraine owed its precarious existence only to the protecting presence of German forces, and, after the armistice of November 1918, to that of French ones; since the Georgian Republic, proclaimed independent in May



Demonstration in Latvia



# break in history



Friendship of the people?



## Lenin and Georgia

Marcel Liebman, in 'Leninism Under Lenin', explained the Bolshevik policy towards Georgia

Lenin showed a similar attitude in connection with the problem of relations between Soviet Russia and independent Georgia. Despite well-founded grievances against the Menshevik regime in that country, the Soviet government recognised Georgian independence in May 1920. In February 1921, however, the Red Army occupied the country and put an end to this independence.

The invasion of Georgia was decided on behind the backs of Lenin, Trotsky and the Political Bureau. Shortly before the invasion began Lenin had expressed his opposition to any such move. It was Stalin who overruled him.

Once the occupation of Georgia was a *fait accompli*, Lenin sought to mitigate the consequences of a policy that he regarded as harmful.

Writing to Ordzhonikidze, who was in charge of 'Soviet Georgia', he said: "it is of tremendous importance to devise an acceptable compromise for a bloc with Jordania [the former president of the Georgian Republic, M.L.] or similar Georgian Mensheviks, who before the uprising had not been absolutely opposed to the idea of Soviet power in Georgia on certain terms."

In a telegram to the Soviet army of occupation he called on them to "observe particular respect for the sovereign bodies of Georgia" and "display particular attention and caution in regard to the Georgian population."

Later, when the brutal and chauvinist attitude of Stalin and Ordzhonikidze brought about a crisis between the Russian and Georgian Communists, Lenin intervened with desperate insistence on behalf of the latter. It was through this episode that Lenin, who, though already incapacitated by illness, hurled his last reserves of energy into the battle, became aware of the extent to which the policy of Russification had developed. It was then that he launched his last anathemas against "that really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a lover of violence" and wrote that disillusioned sentence: "If matters had come to such a pass...we can imagine what a mire we have got ourselves into."\*

(Liebman, p.275-6)

## termination and class struggle

1918, 'in a sense, had come into being on German initiative' and accepted the protection, successively, of German and of British imperialism, and since this tutelage from outside linked these non-Great-Russian nationalities with states that were intervening in Russia on behalf of the counter-revolution, it was inevitable that the entire 'nationalities policy' of the Soviet Government should be profoundly affected. It must be added that in a number of cases the demand for independence was more a reaction against Bolshevism than an expression of genuine nationalism. The Georgian Mensheviks, for example, had been opposed before the October revolution to the idea of independence for Georgia, and between February and October had ignored the affairs of their own little country, preferring to devote themselves to the problems of Russia as a whole, in the ministries and streets of Petrograd." (Liebman p.272-3)

### Trotsky

Years later in 1939, Trotsky spelled out his attitude to Ukrainian independence, replying to critics who said self-determination was less important than 'defence of the USSR'. Trotsky argued:

"What does a revolutionist say to the woman? 'You will decide

yourself whether you want a child; I will defend your right to abortion' against the Kremlin police". To the Ukrainian people he says: 'Of importance to me is your attitude toward your national destiny and not the 'socialistic' sophistries of the Kremlin police; I will support your struggle for independence with all my might!'

The sectarian, as so often happens, finds himself siding with the police, covering up the status quo, that is police violence, by sterile speculation on the superiority of the socialist unification of nations as against their remaining divided. Assuredly the separation of the Ukraine is a liability as compared with a voluntary and equalitarian socialist federation: but it will be an unquestionable asset as compared with the bureaucratic strangulation of the Ukrainian people. In order to draw together more closely and honestly, it is sometimes necessary first to separate. Lenin often used to cite the fact that the relations between the Norwegian and Swedish workers improved and became closer after the disruption of the compulsory unification of Sweden and Norway...

The slogan of an independent Ukraine does not signify that the Ukraine will remain forever isolated, but only this, that she will again determine for herself and of her own free will the question of her interrelations with other sections of the Soviet Union and her western

neighbours. Let us take an ideal variant most favourable for our critic. The revolution occurs simultaneously in all parts of the Soviet Union. The bureaucratic octopus is strangled and swept aside. The constituent congress of the Soviets is on the order of the day.

The Ukraine expresses a desire to determine anew her relations with the USSR. Even our critic, let us hope, will be ready to extend her this right. But in order freely to determine her relations with other Soviet republics, in order to possess the right of saying yes or no, the Ukraine must return to herself complete freedom of action, at least for the duration of this constituent period. There is no other name for this than state independence.

Now let us further suppose that

**Today's Russia is a far cry from the democratic traditions on the national question of Lenin's day. Huge numbers of people are oppressed within the USSR itself by Great-Russian chauvinism. The Ukraine, with 60 million people, is the largest oppressed nation in the world.**

Russian troops intervened in Hungary in 1956 to crush a workers' uprising, in

the revolution simultaneously embraces also Poland, Rumania, and Hungary. All sections of the Ukrainian people become free and enter into negotiations to join the Soviet Ukraine. At the same time they all express the desire to have their say on the question of the interrelations between a unified Ukraine and the Soviet Union, with Soviet Poland, etc. It is self evident that to decide all these questions it will be necessary to convene the constituent congress of the unified Ukraine. But a 'constituent' congress signifies nothing else but the congress of an independent state which prepares anew to determine its own domestic regime as well as its international position."

("Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddleheads")

## A prison house today

Czechoslovakia in 1968 to stop the 'Prague Spring'. And in Afghanistan since 1979-80, the USSR has been waging a colonial-type war.

Socialists today need to revive Lenin's policy. Gorbachev, for all his 'reforms', is unlikely to do so. Yet the Russian people would do well to remember Lenin's comment — following Marx — "Can a nation be free if it oppresses other nations? It cannot."



This week's banning of the United Democratic Front and 16 other organisations is clearly designed to prepare the way for the local authority elections in October.

The state's repressive reform strategy is premised on the assumption that local government can be legitimised without the UDF's participation and that the effects of the election boycott can be outflanked. State strategists in the National Security Management System don't want the UDF to participate because they know this will protect the UDF from direct full-frontal blows like those delivered this week. One top official said to me: "What the security guys fear most is that the UDF will participate."

The boycott tactic is being debated in opposition circles because the state has recovered from the delegitimising consequences of previous boycott campaigns. It has recovered because it believes it can effectively counter the boycott by using two tactics.

Firstly, it has initiated a repressive reform strategy that does not depend on legitimation to succeed. Secondly, this strategy is premised on the premeditated assumption that the extra-parliamentary organisations will choose once again to use a boycott tactic. In other words, included in the state's strategic planning is not how to break the boycott but how to outflank it.

The state's game plan is the "bottom-up" approach to reform. This involves the creation of "multi-racial" ethnically based local government structures with each "group" having its own "primary local authority" which then sends representatives to the Regional Services Council.

Using the secretive Joint Management Centres to pilot this process, the state intends using simultaneous local authority elections for each "group" to consolidate this first stage of the "bottom-up" reform process.

The point is the legitimising mechanism in these elections is not intended to be mass participation and high polls, but rather the electoral process itself will be heralded as a necessary and sufficient condition to ensure legitimacy no matter how low the polls.

The outflanking of the effects of the boycott involves: Firstly, the continuation of prolonged detentions and maintenance of the State of Emergency. Secondly, using a disciplined fiscal policy to prevent the economy from overheating again, Finance Minister Barend du Plessis hopes to diminish unemployment, thus pacifying the youth. Thirdly, the upgrading of townships will continue apace so that basic grievances about daily living conditions cannot be exploited by "agitators". Fourthly, clampdowns on the press will continue to remove the "alternative" voice. Finally, when the local government structures are in place, to sell these to an increasingly sympathetic international audience of conservative governments.

Using this combination of strategies, the state believes it has found a formula that will deliver what Deputy Minister of Information Stoffel van der Merwe calls a "critical mass" of moderate support. At that crucial moment, the revolutionaries will have been outflanked and the reformists will have won the war.

The banning of the UDF and other "radical" organisations is designed to eliminate pressures that might prevent the "moderates" from participating. In this way, a collaborative class dependent on state repression can be created.

The October elections are the beginning of the long-term reform-cum-legitimation process. This is why the government does not call on popular organisations to participate but rather calls on the "black", "brown" and "Indian" communities to exercise their "democratic right to vote".

The stakes are now very high. The government is counting heavily on the success of this formula to resolve the problem of "constitu-



Police riot unit outside UDF offices in Johannesburg. Photo: Morris Zwi, Reflex.

# Behind the bannings

**Mark Swilling looks at what lies behind the latest clampdown in South Africa. Examining Botha's overall strategy, he raises the question of whether or not the left should reassess its attitude of boycotting the state's ethnically-based local government system.**

ditional reform". If it succeeds at the local level then the National Council can proceed on the same basis. The question is, can it be countered?

Much depends on the extent to which the terrain of struggle has been transformed. If it has been fundamentally altered by new material conditions of struggle, then the boycott tactic as applied to local government may need to be reassessed. This tactic is the lynchpin: given the state's capacity to insulate itself from the effects of an election boycott, what are the alternatives?

At least four positions have been articulated in response to this question. The first argues that even though the balance of power has changed from what it was in 1984-6, given the state's refusal to countenance any real dissent and given the general repressive conditions, participation would serve to legitimise rather than undermine state structures. Under present con-

ditions the state stands to gain more than it will lose if the boycott is called off.

The second position argues that as in the past, there are times when the best form of offense is to use participation in state structures as a cover for the continuation of mass organisation and mobilisation. There are a few local organisations within the UDF fold that have unilaterally decided that the only way their struggle can be taken forward is to take over the local authority. These are organisations engaged in bitter housing struggles against corrupt patronage networks

that can only operate by virtue of the fact that the patrons control the local authorities.

The third position can best be called conditional participation. It would amount to democratic organisations saying they want to participate in the local elections — on condition all detainees are released. If they are not released then the moral high ground is won and the election is declared unfair and unfair. If they are released then the lead-up to the election is used to strengthen organisation. Upon being elected, the candidate then refuses to take his or her seat. (This

strategy has been used by the Palestine Liberation Organisation on the West Bank and by the Irish Republican Army).

At this stage the first option appears most likely and probably the most feasible given the recent clampdown. Even if the UDF decided tomorrow it wanted to participate, the bannings effectively prevent this. This position will be justified with the argument that the repressive reform strategy will not fundamentally alter the terrain of struggle. At this moment not many will disagree with this largely sound conclusion. However, as in previous phases of resistance, there is no reason why the boycott strategy will not be reassessed if this conclusion proves untenable in the future. This will be possible because the boycott strategy is a tactic, not a principle.

•Mark Swilling is a Research Officer at the Centre for Policy Studies, University of the Witwatersrand. From the Weekly Mail

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# The limits of glasnost

**Tony Brown reviews 'Gorbachev' by Zhores Medvedev, published by Basil Blackwell, Oxford.**

Medvedev's biography of Gorbachev, first published in 1986, has now been re-released in paperback and revised to include Chernobyl and the Reykjavik Summit.

It covers Gorbachev's party history from collective farm in the prosperous Stavropol region during Krushev's rule through years to the Kremlin.

Unlike Krushev, Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko, whose political careers were shaped during Stalin's lifetime, Gorbachev's early career coincides with the relative liberalisation under Krushev.

After completing Law in 1955 Gorbachev returned to Stavropol and worked his way up the local hierarchy from Komsomol official responsible for 'ideology' to Stavropol First Secretary in 1970.

He moved to Moscow in December 1978 as a Secretary of the Central Committee and co-ordinator of the cumbersome but crucial collection of 13 inter-related Agriculture ministries. Agriculture is the most important sector of the domestic economy, accounting for 35% of the State budget. State subsidies of meat alone accounted for 20 billion roubles in 1986.

The four years of Gorbachev's period in Agriculture were disastrous. In his first year, 1979, the grain harvest of 179 million tons was 60 million tons less than 1978. Production of other crops and meat and milk remained static.

In 1980 the grain harvest of 189 million tons was worth three billion roubles less than 1979. The potato harvest was 40 million tons below target, the lowest figure since the 1930s, and oilseed, milk and meat were all lower than in 1979.

But these minor setbacks didn't jeopardise his rise through the ranks. In 1979 he was promoted to candidate membership of the Politburo, and in 1980 to full membership.

The 1981 harvest was so poor (estimated at 160 million tons) that it wasn't reported in either the Soviet statistical reports or in the annual official records. Grain statistics have been classified information ever since.

No reason has been given. And this in what some on the left call a 'planned' economy! Here is a good starting point for some glasnost.

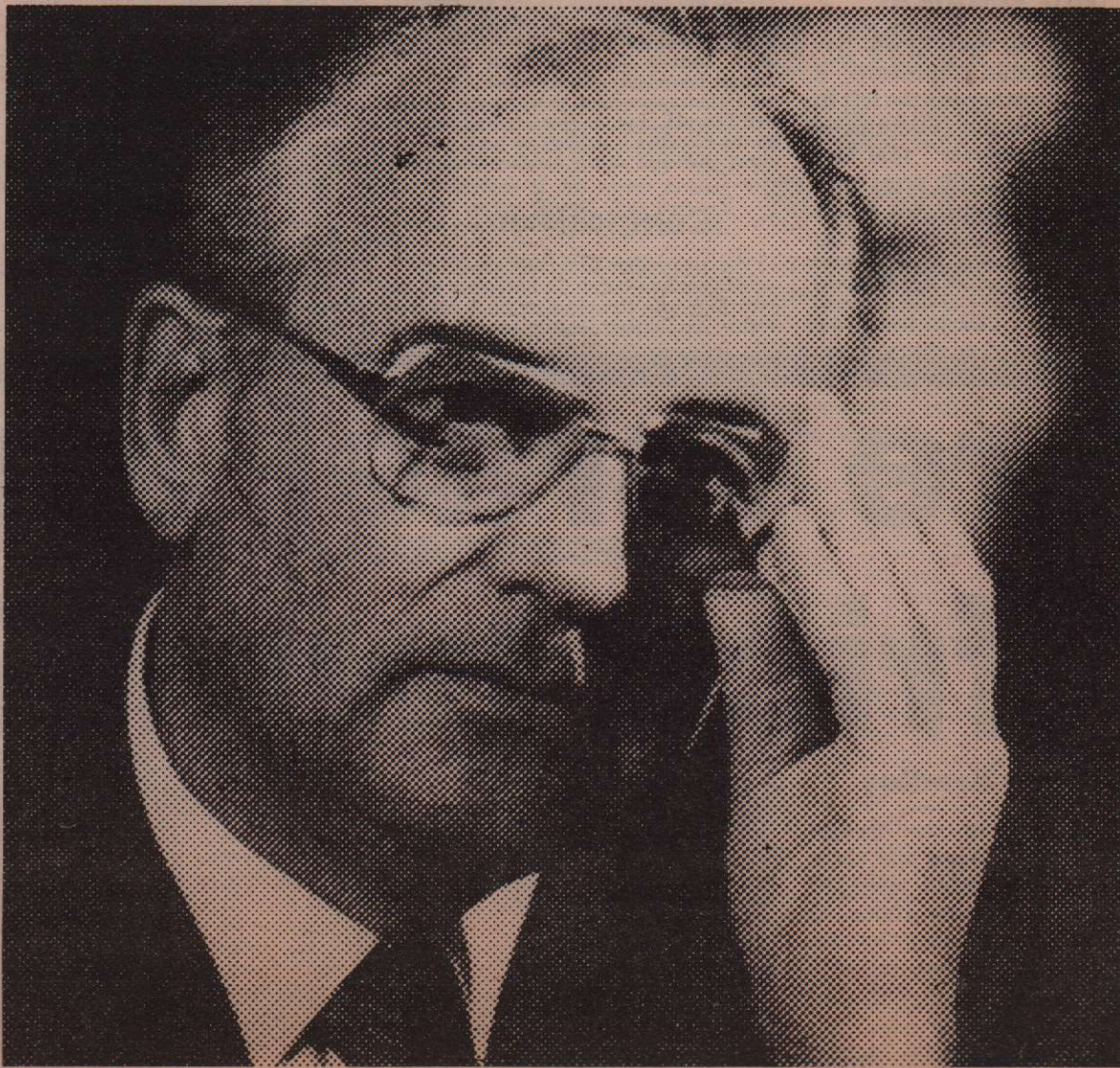
By 1982 Andropov had begun to challenge Brezhnev's faction with charges of corruption and incompetence. Gorbachev lined up behind Andropov who had sponsored his rise to Moscow. The risk in doing this was great if the harvests failed again. And so they did. An estimated 32 million tons of grain had to be imported from the West. But Brezhnev came to the rescue. He died on 10 November 1982.

## Involved

As a Politburo member Gorbachev was intimately involved in the making of Soviet foreign policy after 1979. He supported the invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Throughout Solidarnosc's legal existence in 1981 the Russian leaders made it clear to the Polish CP that if they couldn't squash dissent in Poland then they would, as they had before in Hungary in 1956, Poland in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. In 1983, because of Andropov's failing health, Gorbachev was left to oversee the crisis surrounding the shooting down of the South Korean jet, KAL 007.

And in 1986 in the wake of the Philippine elections, as the Filipino masses were marching to bring down the military dictatorship, Gorbachev congratulated Marcos on winning a fair election. Not even Reagan went that far!

Every new Russian leader has brought 'reforms' with him. Krushev attempted to decentralise Stalin's system, Brezhnev tightened it up, Andropov tried to make it less corrupt. So it was no surprise that



Gorbachev announced yet another model for economic recovery.

After the aged Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko, Gorbachev appeared as an energetic and even charismatic leader.

Medvedev details the early steps taken by Gorbachev to counter alcoholism, (alcohol sales accounted for 15% of total trade turnover), link wages to productivity, introduce new technology and win over the intelligentsia. Steps that he concludes have been more cosmetic

than substantial.

He has failed to overcome the central contradiction of the regime. To free up the economy means to introduce genuine democracy and control over production, distribution and information to the workers, peasants and intelligentsia. And this is just not possible without threatening the bureaucracy's survival.

Nowhere is this better shown than in the plans to increase production of video cassettes, word processors, home computers or computer games. The long term plan for the year 2000 will not satisfy the demand for even one big city. There is no provision for producing photo copiers or equipment to make video films. Clearly access to this technology makes communication and distribution of unofficial ideas the province of anybody, and as such must be prevented.

## Yeltsin

Since the book was released Boris Yeltsin has been sacked from the Politburo for criticising the lack of reform. Interestingly though Medvedev reports the first clash between Yeltsin and his protagonist Boris Ligachev at the Central Committee meeting in February 1986. Ligachev had criticised Pravda for printing letters critical of the bureaucrats' special privileges, and Yeltsin had supported the articles.

Quite clearly Gorbachev's dominance within the heart of the bureaucracy is not complete. Those around Ligachev, Chebrikov and Ryzhkov have no desire to liberalise the system and with Yeltsin's dismissal have claimed a significant factional victory.

But let Zhores Medvedev have the last word on the Gorbachev style and content:

"It was a change designed for public relations...It did not denote democracy. Despite the intensive decision-making during Gorbachev's first year in office, most of the new decisions and decrees were imposed on the country without either proper democratic discussion or serious analysis. There was no democratisation or liberalisation. Gorbachev's measures resembled those of other leaderships" (p.186).

## Making movies

**Mick Ackersley reviews Barry Norman's TV series 'Talking Pictures'**

**Before TV came along to put it in the shade, the cinema was by far the most powerful of the mass media.**

In the heyday of the cinema, Hollywood, USA, was the 'dream factory' supplying much of the world with prefabricated dreams and theatrical excitement. And how was it organised? Like the world it served, only more so.

In fact, big finance had the final say in what the studios did. But inside the dream factories the little Caesars ruled like Gods. Famous writers like Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner were bought and trampled on.

An unquestionably great cinematographer like Orson Welles could have his career choked off before he was 30 and find himself effectively on the scrapheap before he was 35 — all at the say-so of the ignorant boors who had immense power over their star performers and treated the lesser actors like cattle.

Then 'the inmates took over the asylum'. Last week's episode of Barry Norman's TV series 'Talking Pictures' described the breakdown of the studio system.

Future — socialist — generations will marvel over the monopoly which a crowd of ignorant hucksters had over the minds of vast millions of people. Just as they'll marvel in disbelief that we let other tinpot tyrants control the factories and other places where we work ...



## Pentagon capers

The central character in 'No Way Out' is put in charge of a murder investigation which can lead to only one conclusion. He is hunting for himself.

Naval Commander Farrell (Kevin Costner) is employed by the Secretary of State (Gene Hackman) as a liaison officer with the CIA. Farrell is having an affair with a young woman (Sean Young) who, it transpires, is also having an affair with his boss. When the Mr. Secretary realises he has competition, he flies into a rage and accidentally kills her. The cover-up involves pinning the murder on 'the other man' — whose identity is unknown but who, they try to make out, is a Russian spy.

It's all highly implausible, with even wilder and more incredible

**Edward Ellis reviews 'No Way Out'**

moments to come. Yet somehow it holds together, and despite the absurdities, 'No Way Out' is a gripping, nail-biting thriller with an exciting climax and a surprising conclusion.

The film has its weak sides. Hackman's top aide (Will Patton) is a ruthless psychopath, determined to save his boss's career, but motivated not so much by loyalty as lust. He is a **weirdo** — a disappointingly stereotypical baddie/pervert.

Although retrospectively justified, Costner's and Young's hearty sexual encounters got on my nerves a bit. Oh no, here they go

again, I began to think.

But from the moment she is killed the tension rises. The sensation of being trapped in an uncontrollable and nightmarish situation is handled skilfully and effectively. Kevin Costner — Hollywood's latest heart-throb (and deservedly so) gives a good performance as the cornered sailor and appears to enjoy leaping about in his bright white uniform. Gene Hackman is excellent as the underneath-it-all weak and cowardly politician with the weirdo sidekick.

There seems to be plenty of good thrillers being churned out these days, and this is one of the best. Apparently it's a remake of 'The Big Clock' (the title also of the book upon which they both are based), though by all accounts it's pretty different to the original.



# T&G — symbolic victory for left

By Jim Denham

The result of the TGWU executive election represents a significant victory for the left in the union, but not the dramatic "hard left takeover" that sections of the capitalist press have been ranting about.

Candidates associated with the broad left (which, in reality, means anyone fractionally to the left of Neil Kinnock) won a 23-16 majority of the 39-strong General Executive Council, overturning

the previous 22-17 right-wing majority. The left versus right battle within the TGWU has been raging for the last two years, but the political differences between the two sides are vague and have often seemed less important than various personality clashes. Both sides, for instance, proclaim their loyalty to Neil Kinnock, and the new left majority on the executive is unlikely to back any direct challenge to the Labour leadership.

## Composition

The composition of the new executive could even turn out to the advantage of Neil Kinnock. The old right wing majority was bitterly hostile to general

secretary Ron Todd and his deputy Bill Morris. As the Financial Times noted, "Mr Todd has a close relationship with Mr Kinnock. If Mr Todd can stabilise the executive and exert his influence over it, the swing could bring benefits for the Labour leadership."

Symbolically, at least, the most important result of the election was the defeat of the union's former chair, Brian Nicholson as Region One (London and the South East) territorial representative, by Ford shop steward Steve Riley. Nicholson was the leader of the "hard right" on the TGWU executive and made no secret of his hostility to the union's long-standing policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament, as well as his lack of enthusiasm for the "Link-

Up" campaign, aimed at recruiting part-time workers, women and workers on government schemes.

Nicholson has hinted that he might challenge the election results because of alleged "irregularities" (i.e. ballot-rigging), but this is unlikely to come to anything. Whereas in the past ballot-rigging has been widely practiced by both left and right within the TGWU, these elections have been conducted quite scrupulously, and Ron Todd says that no complaints had been received from TGWU members.

The change in the political complexion of the TGWU may not be as drastic as some reports have suggested, but it does offer the serious left within the union considerable opportunities. In

particular, the new executive should prove more receptive to rank and file pressure to give the "Link-Up" campaign real teeth in the regions. It should also increase pressure upon Todd to reverse his backing for the government's new adult training scheme. Within the Labour Party the TGWU's considerable influence (its 1.25 million block vote represents one-fifth of the total voting power at annual conference) could be decisive in making or breaking Kinnock's efforts to shift party policy to the right.

But the serious left in the TGWU must organise at rank and file level — otherwise the new executive could yet prove to be a blessing in disguise for the Labour leadership.

# Are Israel and South Africa twins?

By Clive Bradley

The uprising in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza readily calls to mind township upheavals in South Africa. It has been spearheaded by the youth. The refugee camps, overcrowded slums that are "an affront to civilised values" according even to David Mellor, resemble South African black townships.

The bare-faced brutality of the Israeli Army (like the South African, called a 'Defence Force') is not so different from the activities of the South African soldiers with their sjamboks whom we used to be able to see in television news reports.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation and the African National Congress openly identify with each other, and the Israeli and South African governments are on such good terms that they have developed nuclear weapons together.

The similarities and links are there for all to see. But they are not a sufficient foundation for a socialist policy. In making solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, socialists need a firm analysis, a clear, materialist understanding of what is going on. And despite the undoubted similarities, Israel is a very different society to South Africa.

It is important to look at these differences, because for many socialists a failure to do so has led to confused and confusing political positions. If you think that Israel is essentially identical to South Africa, then the slogan for a 'secular democratic state' in Palestine seems the same as that of a 'unitary, non-racial South Africa', with one person, one vote. Proposals for an independent Palestinian state seem like the 'bantustan' policy of the South African government.

## Analysis

Socialist Organiser does argue for a 'two states' policy in the Middle East. Our opponents often argue that logically, if we favour the right of the Israeli Jews to self-determination, we should equally support the South African whites' right to a separate state. But this argument — the direct parallel between Israel and South Africa — is utterly superficial and lacking in historical analysis.

The Israeli Jews are a nation; the South African whites are a ruling caste. This is a material fact, which affects the dynamics of conflict in



the two cases and the expressions of this conflict ideologically. It determines the political attitude of socialists: in general we accept the right of nations to self-determination but call for the destruction of caste-systems. Moreover, it affects the attitudes of participants in the two conflicts.

## Distinct

That the Israeli Jews are a distinct nation is now commonplace among Palestinian nationalists and Israeli radicals. Not everyone accepts it as a fact: but those who do, that no fully formed nations or nationalities have yet emerged in South Africa. The situation is still fluid. But that it is radically different from Israel/Palestine is obvious. Would anyone argue that the development of capitalism had created one nation in Israel/Palestine? It would be absurd to do so.

One of the peculiarities of Israeli capitalist development has been the attempt to exclude non-Jewish labour. Today, Arab labour is important in the Israeli economy — but Arabs are a marginalised, super-exploited minority layer of the working class — a 'sub-proletariat'. In South Africa the exploitation of black labour has been the essential basis for capitalist development, and black workers constitute the vast majority of the working class.

This distinction is important. Consider a parallel. The PLO has been prepared for many years to accept an independent Palestinian state next to Israel; the secular democratic state they see only as a

long-term objective.

Certain forces do support on the Palestinian side as well as on the Israeli, are by no means a small minority. The South African whites — or even the Afrikaners — are a fully-fledged, distinct nation is not coherently argued by anybody on the South African left.

Indeed, since the 1950s (when the Congress Alliance was organised on separate white-African-Coloured-Indian lines) the general trend within progressive forces in South Africa has been towards a more consistent 'non-racialism'. As COSATU's founding conference expressed it, "the development of capitalism in South Africa has created one nation."

Now maybe it could be argued 'independent African states' (i.e. the homelands) in South Africa — but not the ANC or any serious force in the liberation movement. If the parallels are direct, Yasser Arafat must be worse than Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. Yet the real equivalents of Buthelezi, or other tame black leaders, are pro-Jordanian or Israeli-sponsored 'quislings' in the occupied territories, who far from wanting an independent Palestine are prepared to accept Israeli (or Jordanian) rule.

In real terms there is no 'compromise' that the South African equivalents of the PLO could accept that is comparable to a West Bank-Gaza state. They might accept compromise on the question of one person, one vote in a unitary South Africa; but they would not be territorial compromises — they would not result in an independent 'black' state alongside a white South Africa.

'Two states', from the narrow nationalist point of view, is a sell-out position — not because it compromises on the issue of equal rights for all, but because it compromises on the nationalist claim on every inch of Palestine.

So the political content and significance of the slogans for the 'unitary, non-racial' South Africa and 'secular democratic' Palestine are completely different. Why? Because the historical and material realities of the two cases are different, and the dynamics of class and popular struggle are different.

## Struggle

Fundamentally, in South Africa there is a struggle for equality within a single state that already exists (or rather, within a historically economically and socially constituted unit that already exists). This struggle is often described as a national liberation struggle, but in a strict sense it is not. 'Self-determination for South African blacks' is not a rational slogan. The struggle is against white caste rule.

The Palestinian struggle is fundamentally for national liberation, while it includes elements of a struggle for equality (i.e. of Arabs and Jews in Israel). But it is not a struggle against 'Jewish caste rule' in a unit that already exists.

The distinction lies primarily in the existence of a fully-fledged and distinct Israeli Jewish nation. Its existence structures and shapes the conflict, class struggle and popular consciousness, in ways that have no parallel in South Africa. To draw an equals sign between the two is in fact to blot out reality — and to make incomprehensible the forms and ideological expressions of popular struggle.

None of this implies that the Palestinian case is 'less just' than that of the black people of South Africa. But no aid is given to the Palestinian struggle by mystifying it.

## Palestine: two nations, two states!

The new issue of 'Workers' Liberty', out now, discusses the conflict in the West Bank and Gaza, and carries, for the first time in English, two articles by Trotsky on the socialist approach to disputes between nations.

Also in this issue: a feature on the Crash, Kowalewski on Poland, and debate on Ireland, Scottish nationalism, South Africa and the movies. 90p plus 30p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.





# Thorn/EMI bosses back down

300 people gathered on the morning of Tuesday 8th March at the gates of Thorn EMI, Stretford in Manchester to demonstrate in support of the 3 shop stewards victimised after Thorn workers took solidarity strike action on February 19th, Manchester health workers' day of action. The demonstration was called by the joint shop stewards committee (JSSC) of the 3 Manchester District Health Authorities after a disciplinary hearing the previous Tuesday deferred its decision on the 4 until the following week. Banners were brought from Stretford Labour Party and NUPE and COHSE branches from 9 Manchester

hospitals.

The demonstration was addressed by one of the victimised stewards, nurses, a student from Manchester University Health Workers support group and a representative of the JSSC. Tony Lloyd, Labour MP for Stretford, told Socialist Organiser on the demonstration: "These people have got my support because they have stood up for the NHS and for basic trade union principles. The Tories have rigged the laws to prevent people defending themselves as a class. Secondary action is made illegal. I hope the Thorn stewards get full support from the labour movement."

Kevin Frisby, victimised AEU steward at Thorn EMI told SO: "The solidarity action we took should have been taken by more workers. We were picked off because we were isolated. These laws against solidarity action should have been challenged from day one. If this is the start of challenging them, then this is the start."

Thorn stewards' convenor Dave Hodgkinson, told the demonstrators: "Thorn management are waiting to see

how much support we have got. You have done the business this morning if management back down then they are admitting they are wrong. If they go ahead then they are wrong and we expect 10 times, or 100 times as many people outside this gate if they do."

Telephone support to: Dave Hodgkinson 061-865 1181 ext 305 or write to G. Jones, GMB, 60 Talbot Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0VN.

## Stop press

ON TUESDAY 8 March a show of solidarity forced Thorn-EMI management to back down.

Their original threat was:

- A £40,000 fine;
- Dismissal for AEU steward Kevin Frisby and GMB stewards Keith Devonport and Dave Hodgkinson;
- Withdrawal of the full-time convenor's position and all three shop stewards' credentials.

After Tuesday's demonstration, they retreated to just giving a written warning to Kevin and a final written warning to Dave and Keith. The stewards are still being blackmailed with the original threat if they do not accept the warnings.

Thorn-EMI management released a

press statement straight after the demonstration congratulating their employees for going into work 'under difficult circumstances'. If only demonstrations of 300 nurses holding placards saying 'Thank You' were the only problems Thorn-EMI workers faced!

The bosses' statement also claimed that it was "sad" that "so much trouble" has been caused to them by a dispute "unconnected to Thorn-EMI". What do they mean? Are Thorn-EMI workers immune from illness? Or is it that Thorn's management have private health schemes?

The partial victory at Thorn-EMI shows that solidarity action can be taken and can be defended through further solidarity. Victory to the health workers!

## 8,000 march in Scotland

Over 8000 people marched through Stirling (Constituency of Scottish health minister Michael Forsyth) last Saturday, 5 March, on a Scottish TUC demonstration called in defence of the NHS.

The numbers participating in the demonstration — which included contingents from practically all sections of the labour movement in Scotland — were a sign of the readiness of trade unionists to mobilise in defence of the NHS rather than the reflection of a well-prepared mobilisation. The organisation of the demonstration was often chaotic.

The STUC produced leaflets only a week before the event. Stirling Trades Council received notification about the march only five days before it took place. And as late as three days before the demonstration, the Edinburgh Health Service Campaign (part of the STUC health service campaign) was informing people that it might be cancelled due to confusion over the arrangements for it.

Despite such problems, nearly 10,000 trades unionists turned up to maintain the momentum of the opposition against efforts to privatise hospital ancillary services in Scottish hospitals. Unfortunately, though, there was no sign of what the next stage in the campaign would be.

"Tell Michael Forsyth Scotland wants health care" was the only proposal contained in the STUC leaflet distributed during the demonstration, a theme taken up by Noel Speirs (STUC Assistant General Secretary, and one of the march organisers), who expressed the pious hope that Forsyth would back down in the face of the extensive support for the demonstration.

And the only leaflet distributed on the march by COHSE — whose decision to call a day of action on 14 March would be the logical next stage in the campaign — was a recruitment leaflet aimed at nurses. Of the 14 March day of action there was no mention.

While the leaders of the STUC and the NHS unions in Scotland vacillate, the Health Boards are pushing ahead with plans for privatisation. Tenders for ancillary services have already been put out for four hospitals in the Greater Glasgow Health Board Area.

**The All-London strike coordinating committee has called a national shop stewards' conference of health workers. The conference will be held in Sheffield. For details, contact Mark Nevill, for the Organising Committee, c/o 23 Compton Terrace, Upper St, London N1; or 01-354 7470 (24-hour answering service); or 01-226 1234, and ask for the T&G office.**

## Rover

# Bosses try to 'tough it out'

"The dispute is at a crucial point. The next day or so will be make or break for us.

If we can hold out this week, then we'll be OK, and we can then start talking about stepping up the action and going out to other groups of workers for support.

But the company is pulling out all the stops to whip up a 'back-to-work' movement, and some of the top officials on the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) have

begun making noises about finishing the strike".

That was how one member of the Land Rover strike committee described the situation to SO as the dispute entered its third week. So far the strike has been completely solid, and the Solihull plant has been picketed round the clock, with hundreds turning out every Monday morning for the regular mass picket.

The bosses are clearly under instructions from the Government to

'tough it out', and Rover boss Graham Day seems to have taken over from Land Rover boss Tony Gilroy in handling the dispute. When the union officials met the company at the Government arbitration service ACAS last weekend, there were no concessions on offer, and even ACAS officials are said to have been surprised at the intransigence of management.

The Land Rover 'dirty tricks' department has been working overtime to undermine the dispute. Workers have been phoned up at home and offered inducements like a free company car and free petrol for the duration of the strike if they will come into work and bring three workmates with them. White collar staff have been 'given' completed vehicles with trade plates and told

to drive them to Banbury, where they are picked up by dealers.

The local press is being fed stories about workers supposedly demanding a second ballot and wanting to go back to work. A company-inspired 'back-to-work' mass meeting has been called for Wednesday morning, 9th.

In fact the strike remains remarkably solid, but regular mass meetings of all the strikers need to be called to counter the company's strike-breaking offensive. The other urgent tasks for the strike committee are to stop the movement of vehicles to Banbury, to approach all dockers for a boycott of Land Rover products, and to formulate a clear set of pay demands which must be met before a return to work.

## Vauxhall

# Strike from 11 March

Workers at Vauxhalls on Merseyside are to go on indefinite strike from Friday, 11 March, demanding a better pension deal.

A mass meeting on 9 March is to ratify a ballot that has already been taken for all-out strike action.

76% of the Transport and General Workers' Union voted in favour of the strike, 80% of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, and 80% of staff and supervisors.

£214,000,000 surplus is floating about in the company's pension fund. But as the TGWU's National Pensions Coordinator told the Liverpool Echo, "when 20,000 people vote to go out on all-out strike over pensions something has to be radically wrong."

Eric Smith, shop steward at Vauxhall's told Socialist Organiser:

"We've tried talking for two years but it's been no good. We've tried half-day stoppages, but got nowhere. People

are enthusiastic to get out and get this done. Even the staff want to have a go."

## Mines

# The vote to end the overtime ban

I was not surprised at the result of the ballot on the continuation of the five month-old overtime ban. There was a 58% majority for calling the extremely limited ban off.

It was quite obvious that most of the men were pissed off at the way certain people have handled this overtime ban. It was not what they were demanding when 77% voted for action against the disciplinary code last year, and it ended up affecting the men worse than British Coal.

I was still pleased, though, to see that the areas returning a majority to con-

## WHETTON'S WEEK



tinue the ban included Notts. The other two were South Derbyshire and Scotland. Certainly as far as Notts and South Derbyshire were concerned, it was the operation of the code in those areas that must have been uppermost in the minds of the men when they voted.

I think the point needs to be made absolutely clear that despite the calling off of the ban, we are still completely opposed to the discipline code. The bottom line must be that we will not accept it.

I do not regard it as a serious defeat. In fact, the decks are now cleared for demanding a no-strings pay rise. I think that British Coal will come back at us and say — yes, you can have your pay rise but there will be strings attached to it, perhaps acceptance of the new conciliation machinery or flexible rostering. For our part, we would then have to have either a special delegate conference or a straight national executive pronouncement that we want a pay rise, no strings attached, backed up by serious industrial action if British Coal persists, and certainly nothing like the mess-up we have seen over the last five months.

If the 'new realists' in the NUM regard the ballot vote as some kind of victory, then they should remember two things. A substantial minority voted to continue the overtime ban, despite all the problems with it. And it was not very long ago that a clear majority voted to re-elect Arthur Scargill as President.

The NACODS leadership took their pay claim to the national reference tribunal, who ruled in favour of British Coal! But the dispute is still simmering on underneath, largely because British Coal is continuing to pressurise the deputies at the different pits. As far as I know the overtime ban is still on in Notts.

Yesterday, miners and deputies at Kellingly Colliery walked out side by side to get the manager to back off. I would

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

### Wednesday 9 March.

Canterbury SO meeting, 'Support the Health Workers', 1pm Keynes College JCR 3. Speaker: Tom Rigby.

### Saturday 12 March.

Lambeth Against Alton benefit, at the Old White Horse pub, Brixton Road. All welcome.

### Wednesday 16 March.

Glasgow SO meeting. 'How to unite Arab and Jewish workers'. 7.30 at Glasgow University. Speaker Martin Thomas.

### Wednesday 16 March.

### Canterbury SO meeting.

Debate with 'Militant' on women's liberation. 1pm. Keynes College JCR 3.

### Saturday 19 March.

Fight Alton's Bill. National demonstration. Assemble 11.30, Embankment.

### Sunday 20 March.

South London SO meeting. 'Health workers show the way to fight the Tories'. 7.30, the 'Station' pub, Camberwell.

### Saturday-Sunday 16-17 April.

North London Socialist Conference, at North London Polytechnic, Holloway Road, London N7.

For further details of SO meetings, contact 01-639 7965.



# SOCIALIST ORGANISER



## Murder in Gibraltar SAS death squads strike

THREE PEOPLE were shot dead, probably by the SAS, in a Gibraltar street on Sunday 6th.

They were members of the Irish Republican Army on a mission to blow up soldiers in British Gibraltar. It is by no means impossible that something would have gone wrong and there would have been a slaughter of civilians in Gibraltar like the one at Enniskillen last November.

### Facts

Many people in Britain will be inclined to shrug at the killings by the SAS and say 'good riddance'. Yet consider the facts.

None of the three people shot were armed. They did not pose any immediate threat to those who shot them down; and most likely the killers knew that.

The three IRA members had been tracked and watched for weeks by the Southern Irish police, the Spanish police, and the British intelligence services.

This is an eyewitness account of how they were killed.

"I was watching a couple walking down the road in the direction of the [Spanish] border, when I saw a blond man come up behind them and, without any warning, he shot at them. The woman, who was carrying a large shoulder bag, fell to the ground immediately.

The young man, who was in a white tracksuit and running shoes, staggered towards the service station. The man fired at him four or

By John O'Mahony

five times more and he collapsed with blood all over the place.

A police car roared up to the gunman, who immediately jumped in. The car did a U-turn and sped away".

The three IRA members were shot and killed in cold blood by people who knew they were unarmed. The SAS acted as judge, jury and executioner.

They did not even find explosives in the car used by the IRA members, according to Geoffrey Howe in the House of Commons.

### Endorse

The Labour Front Bench has fallen over its own feet in the rush to endorse the killer squads of the SAS. Eric Heffer, MP for Walton, disagreed:

"As someone who has always opposed terrorism, whether of the IRA or anyone else, and who still condemns terrorism, and like everyone in the House would have been affronted if anyone had been killed in Gibraltar, can I ask the Foreign Secretary why three people, although accepted as members of an Active Service Unit of the IRA, were shot and killed even though it was admitted they were not carrying guns, and had not planted any bombs, in Gibraltar?"

There is now a great — and justified — international outcry against Austrian President Kurt



Waldheim because he knew about and colluded in Nazi atrocities in German-occupied Yugoslavia during World War 2. Among his crimes was collusion in the killing of three captured British commandos, who should have been treated as prisoners of war.

Waldheim deserves to be hounded out of public life. But those who condemn Waldheim and yet applaud the Gibraltar killings are double-dyed hypocrites.

The IRA three, too, were soldiers. Mairaed Farrell had spent ten of her 31 years in jail, part of that time on hunger strike. Those

who shot her and Daniel McCann and Sean Savage down in Gibraltar are murderers. They are not made any better by the almost unanimous agreement in the House of Commons to denounce their victims as 'terrorists'.

Eric Heffer spoke for thinking people in the labour movement when he cut himself off from the Labour Front Bench's belly-crawl before the Tory apologists for the British Army policy of execution without charge or trial.

The labour movement should demand an inquiry into the events in Gibraltar.

## Tories hit housing

The Tory Government has announced new measures to stop more council houses being built.

Already it has barred councils from borrowing the money to build houses. Now it is going to force them to sell off the sites where they might build them if they get money in future.

Pressure on councils to sell off land is one of the major parts of the Tories' new 'Action for Cities' plan. They are also redirecting money from central government straight to businesses in inner cities, rather than via local councils, and setting up a new Urban Development Corporation in the Lower Don Valley in Sheffield.

These Development Corporations — like the one in London's Docklands — are unelected bodies which take over the rights and duties of local councils and provide money and facilities for new business development. As London's Docklands show, they can sponsor spectacular new factories, offices, and luxury housing; but they offer nothing — no jobs, no houses — to the local working-class people.

The sell-off of council land, if it is forced through ruthlessly, will be the biggest privatisation so far. Thatcher's avowed aim is to place the future of the inner cities in the hands of private enterprise, aided by cash from central government but unimpeded by any control from the elected local councils.

We know where this programme can lead. We can see it in the cities of the United States today, where private profit rules more unrestrainedly than anywhere else; or in the cities of Victorian Britain, cited by Thatcher herself as her model.

Frederick Engels described those cities 140 years ago: "Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on the one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law..." That is the Tories' 'new Britain'.



15,000 demonstrated on 8 March against the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority and against cuts. ILEA workers and several NALGO branches struck in a successful day of action. Photo: Ian Swindale.

## These tax cuts will kill

From front page

better than none at all. Taxes should be cut for the majority. The money to provide a decent Health Service should be taken from the rich and the super-rich.

We know the Tories won't squeeze the rich for the benefit of the majority. But for them now to choose further handouts to the well-off in place of extra money for the NHS is an insult — and an insult they can be made to regret!

Throw it back in their faces! Strike on 14 March, and make the Tories pay up for a decent NHS!

## Our fighting fund

In an effort to reach our £10,000 target by 31 March, we have asked supporters to give the paper the equivalent of one day's wages this month, on top of any regular contribution they make.

"Day's wages" from Belinda Weaver and Vince Brown, and a £9 donation from Dave Russell, have helped bring us up to £6097.69. We need £3902.31 in the next three weeks.

Send money urgently to: SO, PO Box 823, London SE15.