

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

Fight the Tories! Rebuild the left!



Back Benn and Heffer!

EVERY UNION IS AT RISK!

By Eric Heffer MP

This is a real crunch dispute. The future of the National Union of Seamen (NUS) is at stake.

If the NUS is destroyed, that will undermine and demoralise the whole trade union movement.

Some people in the labour movement might think that is an exaggeration. It isn't. Think about what is happening in Britain right now. Everything in the Tory arsenal of anti-trade-union legislation is being used, or made ready for use. P&O is pouring vast amounts of money and resources into the job of undermining the union. The P&O drive to de-recognise unions has the more or less open backing of the Tory government.

Employers in other industries are waiting to follow the P&O lead. De-recognition of trade unions is already a feature of British industrial life — and on a fairly big scale. There has been a tendency to shrug it off as being of little importance. Now the Dover dispute highlights the mortal threat of de-recognition.

Obviously the NUS is breaking the law, and that means that the union can have its funds seized, even though the action is unofficial. The law is being used to protect capital against labour. There is no room for argument about that. There are as many police on the picket lines as there are pickets.

The state machinery is rolling in to back the employers against the workers. That is what the law is designed to do. It is such open class law that workers now have no alternative, if they want to defend themselves, but to break it. Everywhere workers turn now, they come up against the law. There will soon be legislation on the statute book saying unions cannot expel strike-breakers from their ranks.

Other unions have got to step up the fight. Just purely on their own, the Dover strikers are not going to be able to win. You can see what they are up against every night on TV — from the hard-faced P&O businessmen to the laws and the Tory government. The bosses are determined, and they have the full



Photo Andrew Wiard

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SUPPORT THE SEAFARERS

Benn: defend the NUS!

Le Pen can be beaten!

By Clive Bradley

The 14.4 per cent of the vote won by Jean-Marie Le Pen of the National Front in the first round of the French presidential elections should set alarm bells ringing.

The NF's rise has been meteoric. In the 1981 Assembly elections they got only 0.35%. Now they are not far short of the 18% of the vote which the Nazis got in Germany in 1930, 2½ years before seizing power.

If a major world slump results from last October's stock market crash — and it may well do — then a lot more people in France will be ruined and desperate, as people were ruined and desperate in Germany in the early '30s. The National Front may become a contender for power.

As yet Le Pen's base is electoral. There are no substantial armies of thugs who could form the armed wing of a fascist movement, to crush and destroy the trade unions. But we would be mad to be complacent.

The once-powerful Communist Party scored an all-time low with 7%; an expelled CP leader, Pierre Juquin, got 2%; and Trotskyist Arlette Laguiller also got 2%.

The widely-publicised claim that Le Pen has achieved his success by taking traditional CP voters is untrue. Voters lost by the CP have mostly gone to the Socialist Party. But the NF has taken big chunks of the once-strong Gaullist working-class vote, and substantial numbers of former Socialist voters. The NF is a growing and already formidable force.

The Socialist Party and the Communist Party between them have, by their failures and defaults, helped the NF grow. Their deeply nationalistic (and sometimes even racist) politics are the thin end of the NF's wedge. The failure of Mitterrand 'socialism' to deliver the goods to its working-class supporters has produced demoralisation and political confusion. And the CP has refused to unite with the SP in the SOS-Racisme movement against Le Pen.

French fascism can still be nipped in the bud — but action is needed fast.

I am worried to see that the TUC, up until now, has done nothing. Other seafarers have already responded to the dispute. In Liverpool, the people have responded as always. The solidarity action promised by the workers in France, Holland and Belgium is absolutely first class.

French dockers and seaman have shown real international working-class solidarity. When we talk about working for a socialist Europe to replace Common-Market Europe, we have in mind such examples of international workers' solidarity as this. We must build on such solidarity and work with European fellow-socialists to replace the present Europe of the bosses with a Europe of working-class socialism. Real international solidarity means solidarity of workers joining with each other to fight against — basically, in the long run — the same employers.

In those European countries today it is not illegal for workers to take solidarity action as it is in Britain. Britain now has the worst anti-trade-union laws in the whole of Western Europe. Ironically, you have to go to a country like Poland to find parallels for the laws which are now being operated against our people.



The seafarers who have been sacked by P&O are 100% right in their struggle, and everybody in the labour movement throughout the country should give them moral, financial and practical support.

If P&O are allowed to get away with their plan, it could be the final step towards the complete destruction of trade unionism — upon which every working class family depends to safeguard their jobs,

their incomes and their working conditions.

P&O are closely tied up with the Tory government; and they can rely on full support from the courts who seem long ago to have abandoned any sense of fair play or natural justice for working people where their employers are concerned.

Class

The BBC too has degenerated into little more than a propaganda machine on behalf of the employers and the Tory government, and most

of the press are bitterly hostile.

But there are millions of people who depend on trade unions to protect them, and who know what is at stake.

The Dover seafarers are fighting precisely the same battle as the Tolpuddle Martyrs, and we have to support them with everything we have got.

And like the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the seafarers will win.

TONY BENN was speaking on the picket line in Dover on Thursday 28 April.

'It's everybody's fight now'

Dave Suggs, of the Dover Port shop stewards' committee, and Andre Bradford, a striking seafarer, spoke to Socialist Organiser about the strike.

Andre: They've started using non-union labour on a ship, which is against all union agreements and an attack on the whole trade union movement. It's everybody's fight now, not just the merchant seamen of Dover, and needs to be fully supported by the whole trade union movement.

The TUC have been very negative in their absence.

Dave: The sailing of the Pride of Bruges has demoralised the strikers slightly. But once they found out they only had 28 on board, and 36 photographers and press, it gave them a big boost because they can't carry on a service as ragged as that.

Their pride and joy is to sail a ship to Calais, but they can't even get the Pride of Canterbury out because the French dockers won't handle it. We've sent a delegation to Belgium and set up a picket line at Zeebrugge. We've made links with the dockers here. They have said they'll back us.

I believe P&O have only got 250-300 working, not the 1100 strikebreakers they claim, because the same crews which brought them back from Rotterdam are returning on those ships. Most of the people they have are in catering, and you need ABs (able bodied seamen) to cover the jobs.

People have been rejoining the strike. When they came off those buses, some of them were in tears and didn't know which way to go. They said morale on the ships was rock bottom, the engine room is in total chaos and they haven't got enough ABs on the car decks to do the jobs.

We are ready to fight the trade union laws this time. We have got nowhere else to go. They sacked us all. We're only a little union, 19,000 strong, but Britain is an island and you need the British seamen.

We can stop the ferries. We had a report back from New Zealand today that they're blacking P&O ships in New Zealand, all tankers and cargo vessels.

Nurses back the seafarers

Helen, Bob and Mark were among a delegation of Islington healthworkers who visited the picket on Monday.

Dave: I think it's marvellous. It's everybody's fight and we really appreciate it.

Bob: We feel the fight that's going on at Dover is a fight for the whole union movement in this country. That's why we're here.

Helen: I think we need a stronger national union leadership to actually co-ordinate all these strikes. Workers are standing up and saying: look, we're not going to take



Thousands marched on Saturday 30 April against the Tories' charter for anti-gay bigotry, Clause 28. Photo Ian Swindale.

We've travelled all over the country from the top part of Scotland right down to the far west of England and we've had a great response once our case is heard properly. Donations have been flooding in. Last week we got £71 off students at Middlesex Poly.

Our local Labour Party have helped marvellously. We've had John Prescott, Dennis Skinner, Eric Heffer and Tony Benn all down on the picket line. They've been brilliant speakers and done us the world of good.

Benn and Heffer made their speech just at the back of here and they got a big round of applause from 500 or 600 members. Then they went down the picket line and gave a few leaflets out and even turned the Sealink scab bus back!

The Labour Party should be backing us to the hilt. The TUC should get off the fence, stop worrying about the 500 jobs that don't exist, and start thinking about the 1500 that do exist down here."

much more of this! The TUC has to stand up and say: OK, we accept that you've started from the grass roots, and we're going to take over some of the responsibility and co-ordinate the action.

Mark: We must force the Labour Party leadership to take a stand on the Tory trade union legislation which threatens the very existence of the NUS. We can use the Labour leadership battle to swing the party round to supporting class struggles now — and begin to turn the tide on the Tories.

Nottingham organises for Benn and Heffer

By Rosey Sibley

Nottingham had an initial Benn-Heffer campaign meeting on Tuesday 19 April.

The meeting was sponsored by trade unionists, Constituency Labour Party officers, and City Councillors, and we had representatives there from Broxtowe, Gedling, Nottingham North, Nottingham East and Nottingham South Constituency Labour Parties.

- We decided on:
- A steering committee, consisting of two delegates from each CLP and one from each affiliated union, to meet fortnightly.
 - A major event in June to rally support and discuss the issues involved in the campaign.
 - A debate between the leadership contenders.
 - Particular priority for mobilising women behind the left candidates

Fund drive

We need £10,000 by 30 June, in regular donations or special fund-raising.

South London supporters have shown the way, with a jumble sale that raised £70. They are now planning another jumble sale in a few weeks' time.

Send contributions to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

for Labour Party leadership, to counter the confusion created when some prominent women withdrew from the Campaign Group.

Heffer

From page 1

backing of the Thatcher government.

So it is a dispute about fundamental things where the working-class movement is concerned. The entire movement has got to rally and back the seafarers. So far about 150 MPs have signed a motion giving support to the NUS. The Labour Party NEC has passed a pretty good resolution. But we need much more than that.

- The seafarers urgently need financial aid.
- The rest of the movement must provide alternative resources, and make all its facilities available, to the NUS if the seafarers' funds are seized.
- The whole machinery of the trade union movement must move into action to build solidarity with the men and women who now stand in the front line of the war to defend the labour movement. If it means things like cutting off supplies, then trade unionists should be prepared to do it.
- Other workers must help on the NUS picket lines.

Poland: which side are we on?

P R E S S
G A N G

EDITORIAL

The strike wave in Poland poses once again the question: which side are you on?

On the May Day weekend, to mark the day of international workers' solidarity, thousands of workers joined a TUC rally in Alexandra Palace, and 4,000 marched on a magnificent demonstration in Chesterfield, Tony Benn's constituency. Arthur Scargill was among the speakers in both places. He spoke well and boldly in support of the P&O strikers and in solidarity with the people of Chile, South Africa and Nicaragua.

Yet in both places the tremendous strike wave in Poland got no mention and no solidarity from the platform.

There is no doubt that activists of the banned Solidarnosc trade union are leading the strikes. Legalisation of Solidarnosc is one of their demands. Yet many sections of the British labour movement are at best ambivalent in their attitude to Solidarnosc, or at worst overtly hostile. Solidarnosc is supported by Thatcher and Reagan, they say, and by the Catholic church. So Solidarnosc must be an anti-socialist force, and must be opposed — or, at the very least, it is a dubious organisation, and Polish workers' strikes do not deserve the automatic solidarity we give to workers' struggles elsewhere.

Yet Solidarnosc in Poland is a workers' movement. Even if every individual in it favoured Western-type democracy and market economics as his or her alternative to Jaruzelski's tyranny, it would still be a workers' movement — just as Stalinist-led workers' movements in the West are still workers' movements despite their leaderships. In fact there are many socialists in Solidarnosc. If there are also many who are hostile to 'socialism' it is because they identify it with what they know in Poland — a system which is not socialist at all, but calls itself socialist.

The experience of "socialism" as a system of bureaucratic, despotic rule, imposed by force of arms, has inevitably driven many Polish workers to believe that Western parliamentary democracy is a better system. It does not mean that they are all ardent Tories, any more than workers in the West who see the USSR in rose colours all want to crush independent trade unionism and send dissidents and rebels to mental hospitals.

If the labour movement of the West turns its back while the Thatchers and Reagans proclaim their support for the Polish workers, then how can we be surprised that some Polish workers see Thatcher and Reagan as better than they really are?

When Arthur Scargill supports General Jaruzelski (despite



Jaruzelski's scab record during the miners' strike, against which Scargill protested), is it surprising that Polish workers look to Thatcher?

And doesn't opposition to democratic trade unionists in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe make it more difficult for us to convince British workers that socialism will not be a police state? In fact a victory for the workers' movements of Eastern Europe, razing to the ground the bureaucratic dictatorships and establishing a socialist democracy, will be a blow for socialism everywhere. With our encouragement, they are more likely to set socialism as their aim.

Reagan and Thatcher support Solidarnosc only to embarrass their opponents in big-power politics. They support the IMF, which is forcing the Polish government to introduce the price rises against which the workers are protesting. The US government knew about Jaruzelski's plans for martial law in 1981 and decided not to warn

Solidarnosc.

No socialist can seriously believe that Reagan and Thatcher would continue to support Solidarnosc or movements like it if it were close to winning power for the workers. Think of the example a Polish workers' democracy would set!

Reagan and Thatcher are no friends of workers anywhere.

Battle

Knee-jerk responses, saying yes wherever our enemies say no, are a bad principle for socialists. What Reagan and Thatcher say is bad isn't necessarily good. Consider Khomeini. And what they say is good isn't necessarily bad. We need our own judgements. And surely, our starting point, always, is to be on the side of the workers, whatever their illusions.

We should not forget the many socialists in Solidarnosc who have no illusions in the West, and who clearly aim for a workers' democracy in Poland. We should not forget the Silesian miners, or

the underground Solidarnosc Mazowsze region who protested at Polish scab coal during the miners' strike and sent messages of solidarity to the NUM. Arthur Scargill should not forget that at the time he was moved to say "I think I owe Lech Walesa an apology". Lessons should not be un-learned.

The situation in Poland could be explosive. And an explosion in Poland could spread. The British labour movement must take sides.

Jaruzelski is a dictator. Solidarnosc is a movement of millions of workers. The free development of that workers' movement should be far more important to us than the fact that Jaruzelski's state owns Polish industry and calls itself socialist.

With political freedom, workers can learn — even through mistakes — who are really their enemies and who are really their friends. For Polish workers to learn that it is British workers, not British bosses who are their friends, British workers must show them solidarity.

Parliament votes on Alton

David Alton's anti-abortion bill returns to the Commons this week for the crucial report stage.

Alton's supporters have made some concessions in order to preserve as much support as possible among the 296 MPs who backed the Bill at its second reading in January.

The first allows abortions after 18 weeks for foetuses likely to suffer "a severe physical or mental disability". The second allows a woman aged under 18 years an abortion after 18 weeks if the conception appears to be as a result of rape or incest.

A number of amendments have been tabled for discussion at the report stage, most of them concerned with the actual time limit for legal abortion. The Speaker of the House, Bernard Weatherill, can decide either to take them in descending order, with the first vote

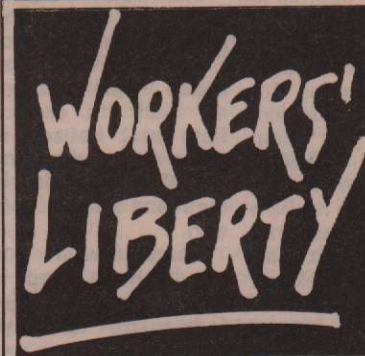
on 27 weeks, the second on 26, etc., or to take them in the order in which they were tabled.

This would mean a vote on 27 weeks, then 26, followed by the amendments tabled by Cyril Smith on limits of 18, 20 and 22, 24 weeks.

Alton's supporters favour the second alternative. There is probably a Commons majority for lowering the limit to 24 weeks. Taking 18-24 weeks in reverse order is more likely to produce a majority at a lower limit.

Only five hours of parliamentary time has been allocated for the discussion on Friday, and it is still possible that it will be "talked out". Labour MPs opposed to the Bill should do everything possible to make this happen.

Alton has clearly lost some of his majority of 45 because of an unwillingness to make concessions in the committee stages. But because the way the amendments may be taken, pro-choice campaigns cannot afford to be complacent.



The resurgence of independent militant trade unionism in Poland is one of the central themes of the latest issue of *Workers' Liberty* magazine.

Zbigniew Kowalewski, an exiled leader of Solidarnosc, has contributed a report on the present strike wave, and the magazine carries a translation of the account in his book 'Rendez-nous nos usines' of the fight for workers' self-management in 1980-1. Also in *Workers' Liberty* is a translation of the Nowa Huta steelworkers' strike

Thatcher's baying bloodhound

By Jim Denham

Having brought the BBC to heel, and installed Hussey, Checkland and Birt to sort out dangerous lefties like Kate Adie, the Government now has the ITV in its sights.

Lord Thompson, the chair of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, was clearly leaned upon by the Government to suppress the 'Death on the Rock' programme. To his credit, Thompson stood firm. Now the Government is planning to establish a 'Broadcasting Standards Council' with powers to 'preview programmes'.

What the ominous word 'preview' really means is not yet clear. Or, to put it another way, when does the power to 'preview' programmes become the power to censor them?

In this situation you might expect the press to rally round the beleaguered IBA and Lord Thompson, mightn't you? After all, if the Government can censor TV, why not newspapers?

It seems that most of the press don't see things that way. With a couple of honourable exceptions, the whole of what is still known as 'Fleet Street' has been united in baying for the blood of Lord Thompson, and in seeking to discredit the 'Death on the Rock' programme.

A government-inspired smear campaign against one of the programme's eye-witnesses, Mrs Carmen Proetta, resulted in such lurid headlines as the *Sun's* 'Carmen The Tart' ('SAS death witness is an ex-prostitute, runs an escort agency, and is wed to a sleazy drug-peddler', readers of this highly moral publication were informed.) And the *Express's* 'Trial-by-TV Carmen is Escort Girl boss'.

Even if all this is true, why it should necessarily invalidate what Mrs Proetta said about the SAS shootings remains a mystery.

On Monday, following the killings of three RAF men in Holland, the *Sun* went so far as to suggest that Lord Thompson was personally responsible for their deaths ("One man, more than any other, should be searching his conscience this morning..." etc.) and predictably called for his resignation.

Only the *Observer* and Ian Aitken in the *Guardian* came down unequivocally on the side of the IBA. Aitken summed things up in words that we may have cause to remember in years to come.

"It looks as if the pro-Tory press, in its feverish drive to back Mrs Thatcher in everything she does, is now falling over itself to assist her in fitting fetters to its TV rivals, regardless of the fact that the same fetters would fit its own ankles equally neatly".

committee's statement of its demands.

An editorial and a survey article cover the rise of fascism in France. Clive Bradley discusses the Gulf War.

Martin Thomas looks back at the events of May '68 in France, analysing the greatest general strike in history and drawing out the political lessons for today.

In a thoroughly researched feature, Stan Crooke examines the anti-Zionist campaign in the USSR in the 1970s, demonstrating conclusively both its anti-semitic content and the fact that much avowedly Trotskyist anti-Zionism today, such as Jim Allen's 'Perdition', draws its essential themes from the Kremlin's campaign.

Workers' Liberty always tries to act as a forum for debate. In this issue discussion continues on the Middle East and modern films, and Sean Matgamna replies to Geoff Bell on Ireland.

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GRAFFITI



Logo on the scalpel?

'Retirement World', a Bristol-based freesheet for the elderly, has sponsored a private operation for a 75-year-old woman on the NHS's long waiting list for

hip replacements. Tory health minister Edwina Currie was delighted, and encouraged other firms to do the same. So next time you're

in hospital, the last thing you hear before you go under the anaesthetic may be: 'This operation is brought to you by Heinz Baked Beans'.

Loony House

"Good progress is being made", according to the Home Office. It reckons that it will clear a pile of 207,000 unopened letters at the

Immigration and Nationality office in Croydon within... two years! And it reckons that by now everyone who

wrote in before 21 December should at least have had their letter acknowledged and their passport returned if they enclosed it with the letter. Only four months to open a letter and return a passport! No wonder workers at the office, Lunar House, reportedly call it Loony House.

For the Tories, however, nothing ranks higher than cutting jobs and wage costs in the civil service.

Brave new chaos

Another example of the bright, slick efficiency of the Tories' New Britain.

For years there has rarely been more than one out of four lifts working at the Angel tube station in Islington, North London.

Now they have got more lifts working. But the Tube bosses have decided to

operate only one of them in the rush hours! Reason: to discourage people from using the station, and thus cut down the risk of dangerous overcrowding on the platform.

As far as the Tories are concerned, however, the Tube is doing very well,

because it is on the way to making profits.

Wendy's hero

When some people abandon socialist politics, they don't stop half way.

On being appointed editor of the *News of the World* last year, ex-

Trotskyist Wendy Henry admitted coyly that her politics had changed a bit. Last Sunday one of the colour magazines asked her who she thought

was the best editor in Britain.

"It has to be Kelvin Mackenzie", she replied — Kelvin Mackenzie of the *Sun* and 'Gotcha' fame!

The loony right council

You have read all about the 'loony left' councils. Do you ever wonder why the press never tells you about

'loony right' councils? The Tory council in Westminster, led by Tesco millionaire Shirley Porter, sold three cemeteries for 15p and looks like having to buy them back for £5.5 million. It refused to charge for collecting rubbish from businesses until the district auditor intervened to make it fall into line with other councils. The refusal to charge had cost ratepayers £3.5

million a year.

The council spent £4 million on building a car park, at a cost of £40,000 per car space. It plans to sell off half its council flats and houses in short order, dumping homeless people in caravans in East London.

Imagine what you would have read in the Tory press if a left-wing Labour council had done any of these things.

Double standards

Morning Star, 3 May, front page: A bold statement of support for the P&O strikers, totally rejecting everything that the employers and the media and the Tories say about the strikers just causing trouble and chaos.

Back page: "Shipyard workers in Gdansk and employees at the Dolmel electronic works in Wroclaw went on strike yesterday as leaders of the outlawed Solidarnosc tried to recreate the economic chaos of 1980-81".

Chinese Thatcherism

If the Tories press ahead with replacing student grants by loans, one place they can look to see how it is done is China.

Some Chinese university students already depend on loans or part-time jobs, and the government plans that within five

years 70% of them will.

Other measures introduced in the government's enthusiasm for market economics are payment-by-exam results for teachers and forcing universities to rely for money on selling research to business.



Reflex.

Gibraltar and 'shoot-to-kill'

After the IRA's killing of three British soldiers in Holland, any debate opened by last week's Thames TV programme on the Gibraltar killings is likely to be closed again.

The Tories may even make headway with their view that TV should never investigate such matters. Thatcher hinged her argument on TV's alleged interference with the inquest on the three IRA members shot in Gibraltar on 6 March, but the Tories' real drive is to censor any media coverage embarrassing to them.

TV programmes on Ireland have been censored before, the police raided the BBC to seize tapes of Duncan Campbell's 'Secret Society' programmes, and the Government has done all it can to stop the press reporting Peter Wright's allegations about MI5.

The labour movement should fight this censorship. We should also insist on full public investigation of the issues raised by last Thursday's TV programme.

The Tory press has tried to discredit the TV programme. The most substantial counter-blast was in the Sunday Times on 1 May. But it did nothing to undermine the essential points made in the programme.

The British authorities, in collaboration with the Spanish police, knew about what the IRA was planning from mid-November. They kept watch on the IRA team for much of the 3½ months until 6 March. They knew where the IRA team planned to put their bomb, at

By Martin Thomas

the site where a regular military parade finished.

On Sunday 6 March, Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Daniel McCann were watched by Spanish police, Gibraltar police and the SAS all the way from Torremolinos into the centre of Gibraltar, and out again to the place where they were shot.

The SAS obviously could not risk shooting the IRA members in Spain, or before they were confident of the evidence that the IRA was planning a bomb, or in the crowded streets of Gibraltar city centre. They shot to kill as soon as they could get them in a relatively deserted spot. According to the Observer on 1 May, the SAS's original plan was to kill the IRA members nearer the border, but a blunder by the Gibraltar police forced them to shoot earlier, at a place where some people could see what was happening from nearby flats.

One witness says that Daniel McCann and Mairead Farrell had their hands up when they were shot. Maybe it looked like that because their hands flew up after they were shot. In any case, McCann, Farrell and Savage were all unarmed, and they were all shot repeatedly when they were already down on the ground, to make sure that they were dead.

The SAS shot to kill because it wanted to shoot to kill. It made itself judge, jury and executioner. No other explanation makes sense.

The SAS had been watching the IRA members for hours. As trained

men, they must have had a pretty good idea that the IRA members were unarmed. They must have had the necessary skill to shoot to immobilise rather than to kill — if they wanted to.

The official excuses make no sense. They say that the SAS men challenged the IRA members, and only shot when it looked as if the IRA members were reaching for guns. "Farrell put her hand in her shoulder bag, McCann reached into his pocket," according to the Sunday Times. But they had no guns in their bags or pockets: so why would they possibly want to reach for them?

George Styles, a retired army bomb disposal expert interviewed in the programme, saw the killing like this: "It was two active service units, one against the other, and I'm glad our lot won." In other words, the shooting was an act of war, not a police action.

Styles is a realist. But his realism raises uncomfortable questions for the Government. If what's happening in Northern Ireland is a war between the British state and the IRA, not just a conflict between "law and order" and criminal terrorists, then what is the war about?

Isn't Britain fighting for an untenable and reactionary aim, to sustain the unviable Northern Ireland state against the Catholic revolt? Why doesn't Britain obey the rules of war in relation to the IRA? Should the war be ended, by negotiating with the IRA and the other forces involved, and establishing a federal united Ireland with regional autonomy for the Protestants?

Tories back down on benefit

By Tim Anderson

The government's climbdown over housing benefit will affect an estimated 100,000 people.

Raising the amount allowed in savings before benefit is affected from £6,000 to £8,000 will cost about £100 million in benefit — and

between £25 and £28 million in administration costs!

Mrs Thatcher claims she was persuaded to make the 'adjustments' not by the revolt of Tory backbenchers but by her own constituents in Finchley. There are over 12,000 pensioners in Finchley. Before the latest concession 2,000 would have had benefit cut and another 1,000

would have lost it completely.

Despite the concessions, about five million people will have lost some or all of their housing benefit and most of the new benefit structures, such as the freezing of child benefit which takes away £15.60 per child from 7,000 households in Thatcher's constituency alone, remain intact.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

CPSA conference special 10p

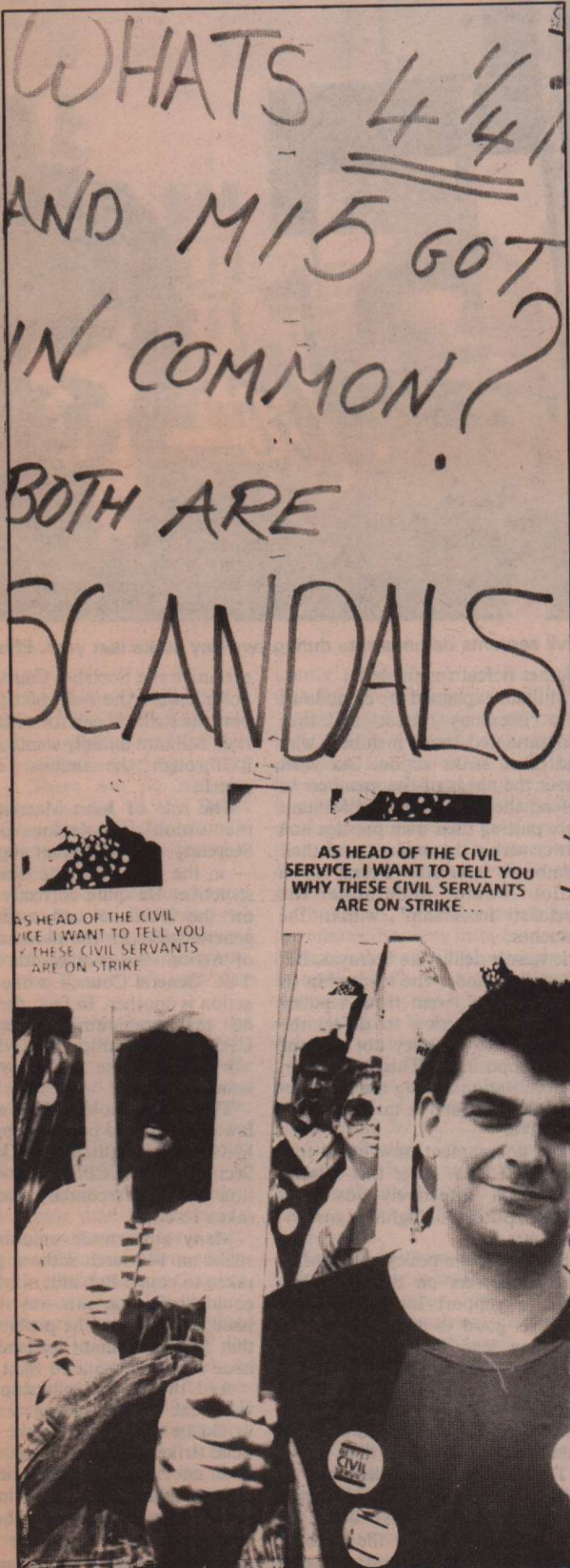
Public Meeting
Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc

Speakers: Rod Bacon, Terry Liddle, and an East European socialist.
Thursday 12 May, 1pm, Wessex Hotel, West Cliff Road, Bournemouth.

Public Meeting
Socialist Organiser South Africa: an eyewitness report

Wednesday 11 May, 7.30, Wessex Hotel, West Cliff Road, Bournemouth.

CPSA: NOW IS THE TIME TO FIGHT!



The next move forward in the Tory plans for the civil service is a major assault on pay, jobs and conditions of service. The Tories have laid the groundwork radically to alter the shape of the civil service.

Their plans include:

Local, regional, and merit pay

The Tories are cock-a-hoop that, with the help of ruling right-wing executives, they have persuaded the membership of the IRSF (tax workers) and IPCS (technicians and scientists) to accept long-term pay proposals which include regional and merit pay. There is no doubt that, if free from the shackles of a Broad Left executive, CPSA general secretary John Ellis would have a similar deal stitched up in record time.

The Tories have already insisted that local pay additions will be imposed from June. Local pay additions are the Tories' answer to the problems of recruitment and retention of staff in and around London (and possibly other major cities), mainly in DHSS and Unemployment Benefit offices. For the Tories it is a cheaper alternative than paying all civil servants a decent wage.

Casualisation and YTS

The Tories prefer casual and cheap labour to permanent staff.

By Steve Battlemuch (DHSS Section Executive)

They cost less, have fewer rights, and are more difficult to organise into CPSA.

Casuals have been a feature of the civil service for years, to cover peaks of work in some departments, but more generally to mask staffing deficiencies. There has never been a serious national campaign against casuals. The issue has been left to each section.

Only the Broad-Left-led DHSS section has done any serious work on the issue, with many disputes in recent years, the most notable being the five-month strike at Caerffili in early 1987.

The Tories have introduced a new type of casual over the past year — Limited Period Appointment staff, or LPAs. These were introduced into DHSS last summer on one-year or 15-month contracts to help bring in the social security changes.

The Tories argued that extra staff were only needed for a short period to bring in the 'reforms', therefore permanent staff were a waste of money.

Despite having said that LPAs were only intended to be a 'one-off', management now want to stop permanent recruitment into the DHSS, and replace it with more LPAs in every region, because of intended staff cuts as a result of

new technology. Over 15,000 jobs are to be cut by 1992.

YTS has also reared its ugly head over the past year, in the Department of Employment. The Tories are planning to bring 40,000 YTSers into the civil service. However, over the past year only 121 have been taken on. If the Tories push ahead, no department will be exempt. DHSS management already have formed plans for YTS from June onwards.

New technology

The Tories are using new technology purely to cut jobs. Departments are left to devise their own systems, but they only get the go-ahead from the Treasury if the system pays for itself with staff cuts. Major projects are under way in most departments, including the total computerisation of the DHSS network in the Local Office Project (LOP).

What is CPSA doing to fight back?

Over the past year, with a Broad Left executive, CPSA has talked a good fight, but action has been harder to come by. When substantial action did take place, for example in the DHSS over LPAs, the Broad-Left-led section executive committee, influenced by Militant, gave initial support but then backed

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How 'Militant' has fa

The CPSA — the union which organises clerical workers in the civil service — has had a Broad Left majority on its National Executive Committee for the last year.

The dominant force in that Broad Left is 'Militant', an avowedly Marxist tendency. As the CPSA approaches this year's conference, on 7-13 May, and awaits the results of this year's elections for the NEC, what is the record of the year of Broad Left leadership?

The first major issue confronting the new leadership in June last year was the ballot for all out strike action over the pay claim. It took place in extremely difficult circumstances. The right had refused to hand over the leadership; the Broad Left didn't take over until the beginning of June. The call for all out action did not come until 14 June, with two weeks of selective action still to go. CPSA members were tired after the long drawn-out selective action under the old right-wing leadership. The SCPS (now the NUCPS) had withdrawn from the joint action after Thatcher's victory in the general election. The vote went against an all-out strike, although there was a substantial minority for action.

Probably the vote could not have been won even if the Broad Left had run the best campaign imaginable. But it did not. The Broad Left machine was set into operation as if this was another election. It was assumed that left branches would deliver the vote. The arguments for the strike were simply not put.

That ballot defeat led straight in to an important climbdown in the DHSS section.

There was a seven month struggle in the DHSS around the introduction of the Tories' social security changes (the Fowler Reviews) and of Limited Period Appointments (LPAs). February 1987 saw the beginning of staff training for the new system. The policy of the CPSA's DHSS Section conference was for non-cooperation and limited industrial action. Departmental management said they would apply for a writ as the action was political.

The Section Executive was split between the Militant majority and a left-wing minority including the Socialist Caucus (a left grouping within the Broad Left which includes SO supporters), SWP and others. Militant argued for a retreat. The DHSS was only one section of a right wing dominated union. Any action would therefore be unofficial. The only course open was a 'political campaign'.

Victory for the Broad Left in May radically changed that situa-

A balance-sheet of the Broad Left NEC, 1987-8

By Mick O'Sullivan

tion. Here was an opportunity for the left under the leadership of the 'Marxists' to put into practice what it preaches about the need to turn back the Tories' offensive. The left could use its new position as leadership to mobilise against the Tories.

In June the Fowler issue was shelved in favour of the campaign for an all-out strike on pay — even though by this time the second stage of the reform was being implemented, the introduction of Limited Period Appointments or casual workers.

The union was told that LPAs would only be introduced to help get over the initial work on the Fowler package. But in fact these casual workers have been earmarked, are central to the Government's strategy for undermining the unions



John Macreadie Photo: Nigel Clapp

and reshaping the civil service. For instance they will be used to help the introduction of new technology, which will result in the loss of 20,000 jobs in the DHSS alone.

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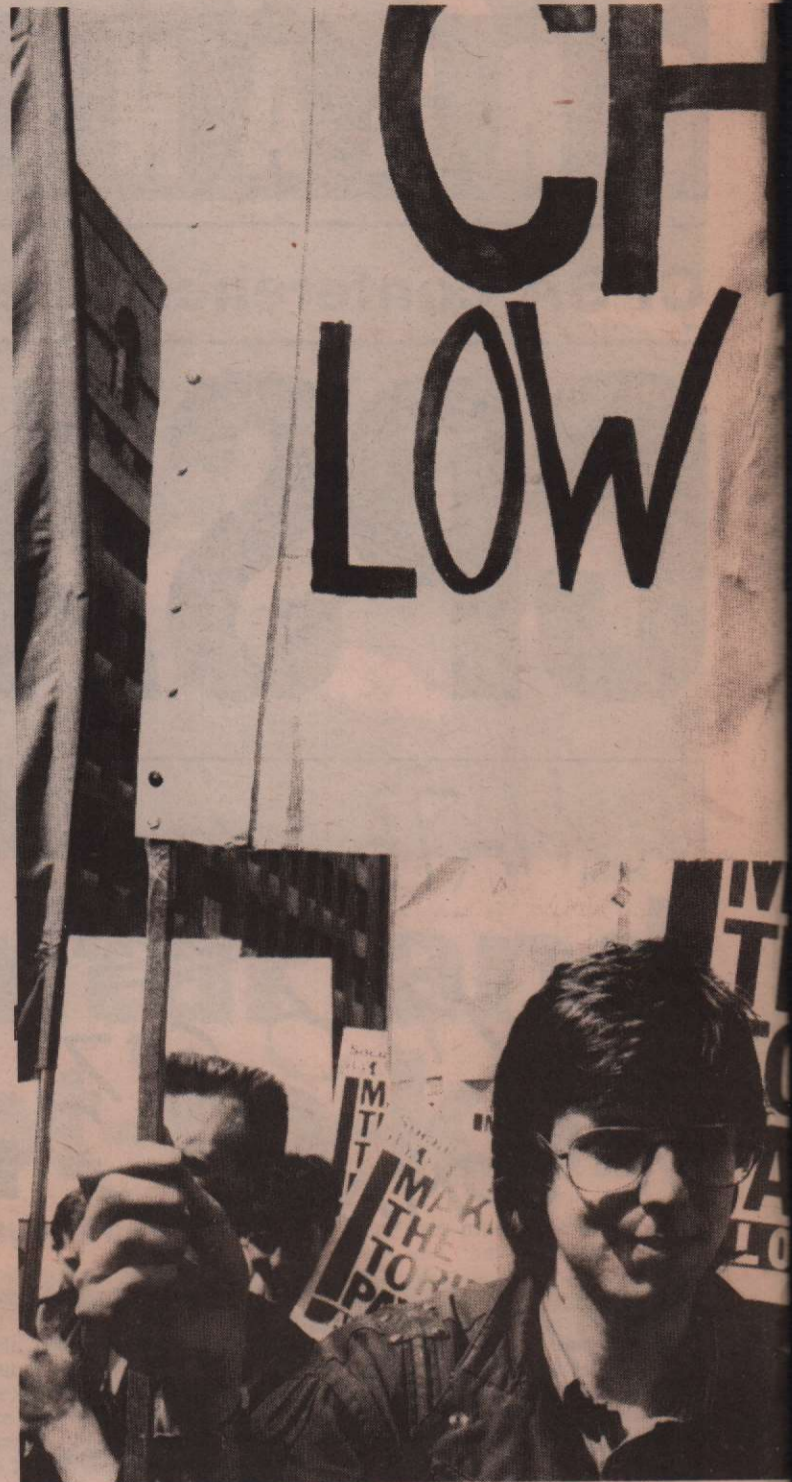
In early June the Section Executive agreed to launch a campaign over LPAs. No clear strategy was adopted; they just wanted to get something going.

The July Quarterly Executive reviewed the situation. The left wanted the fight against LPAs to be linked to a fight against the whole Fowler package, due to come into effect from April 1988. But now Militant argued that the union was in no position to break the law... They had moved the goal posts. The conclusion — no industrial action — was the same as before; only its justification had changed.

A campaign was launched around LPAs. The Section Executive decided on a four-week campaign leading up to a ballot on all-out strike action. And there was a militant response from the members: over 70 offices took action 4 or 5 all-out strike action, the rest taking regular selective strike action.

Within two weeks, Militant called an Emergency Executive which overturned the strike call.

What had changed? According to Militant, losing the earlier ballot over pay would mean losing on this issue as well — and we must avoid



Civil servants demonstrate during two-day strike last year. Photo: And

another defeat for the left.

Militant explained the climbdown as a 'necessary retreat' and they congratulated those members who had taken strike action. But what about the needs of the members to defend their jobs? In fact Militant were putting their own prestige and power within the union above their members' interests. Defeat in a ballot would undermine the 'socialist leadership' within the branches.

It wasn't deliberate betrayal. But the union, under the leadership of the 'Marxists', went from a policy of industrial action to defeat the legislation to a policy not even of paper opposition. This resulted in demoralisation among the most active members and a management offensive.

The government now has a toe-hold for LPAs. After this debacle the union effectively lost any overall strategy of fighting government attacks.

Since then the policy of the Militant supporters on the NEC has been to support local strikes — which is good — but to refuse to give any lead themselves. Meanwhile they are busy trying to fill the union's appointed full-time official positions with Militant supporters — and they do not want to take any risks which could upset that.

The Camden DE strikers had to fight to overturn the Militant's position that the strike could be won in one office. At the national

executive the Socialist Caucus supporters were the only two to support the strikers' call for official action. Militant initially wanted to put it through the unions' dispute panel.

The role of John Macreadie — the union's Assistant General Secretary, and a Militant supporter — in the health dispute is also instructive. He quite correctly called on the TUC to call a one-day general strike for the 14 March Day of Action. But propaganda on the TUC General Council is one thing, action is another. In fact, there was no real commitment from the CPSA leadership to winning workers to strike action over the issue.

The central problem here was the law. The left had been told by John Ellis, the right-wing General Secretary of the CPSA, that the action would be 'secondary' and so be taken to court.

Many other trade unionists did strike on 14 March without getting taken to court. But still, maybe you could argue that this was not the issue to fight on. The problem was that for the Militant leadership no issue is the right one to fight on.

And the union leadership's line was weak even if you agree that it would be too risky to make an official strike call. There wasn't much of an unofficial campaign, either. A circular calling for local ballots was put out. The right wing on the NEC blocked them getting the ballot

We need accountability

One of the most important issues to be debated at this year's Conference is the election of full-time officers.

The non-elected full-time officers in question are currently appointed by the NEC. We recently saw controversy surrounding the appointment of Militant supporter Kevin Roddy as National Organiser. The NEC appointed him. Right-wing President Marion Chambers refused to ratify the appointment. The long-drawn out battle is still unresolved.

This incident illustrates not only the need to elect rather than appoint, but also the glaring need to curb the power held by the Presi-

By Colin Foster

dent of the CPSA.

To talk of democracy without talking about annual elections, accountability and similar rates of pay for full-time officers is a sham.

The Broad Left '84/moderates alliance argues that the election of full-time officers is impractical, and that paying full-time officers the same as ordinary members is an attack on wages. "What trade union cuts its own employees' wages?" a recent BL '84 DHSS HQ circular asked.

A strong united union is one which is run from the grass roots up. It is one where the rank and file

truly make the decisions and the leaders carry them out. It is one where the leaders genuinely have the interests of the rank and file at heart — because those are their interests too.

A trade union bureaucrat, not answerable to the members and earning wages more than double that of most members, is not such a leader.

Militant supporters argue for 5 yearly elections. This is a concession to extending democracy within the CPSA, but does not go far enough. Our aim must be for the greatest democracy possible. Only yearly elections of all full-time officers and pay comparable to that of the rank and file, will achieve this.

Failed to lead

DEFEATED!

PAY-NO WAY



ew Ward.

papers out.

A circular went to branches a week before the 14th which said that if the branch wished the Executive would give backing to take action. There was no real co-ordination, no use of the Broad Left to plan for unofficial action. It was just left to individual branches to organise.

The other problem about the way the Militant has led the union has been the lack of accountability of the Broad Left members on the NEC to the Broad Left rank and file.

In August the left leadership did begin to develop closer links with its base in the Broad Left. Under pressure from the Socialist Caucus and some Militant supporters a two day meeting took place in Liverpool with all the Broad Left Convenors and left NEC members.

The meeting set out a programme for the coming year. For example a programme was agreed for a campaign around Labour Party affiliation which would start in October, with the ballot held in March.

It still hasn't happened. Meetings between the leadership and the Broad Left have been minimal. At the November Broad Left Conference, a censure motion over this put by Socialist Caucus supporters was passed. The NEC lefts' defence for loosening their links with their base has been lack of time.

Meanwhile, they are losing precious time for the union by constantly postponing a serious fight with the Government.

The Tories' plans are clear: large-scale job cuts, attacks on working practices, and privatisation. Either the unions capitulate, and just try to regulate job losses and changes in working practices; or they realise that they are going to come into direct confrontation with the government.

The CPSA, like other public sector unions, has very little economic power in the individual workplace. In order to win on a major issue, the union must see it as a national struggle rather than the concern of only one section.

A national strategy very quickly merges into a struggle against the government. For example a national strike by the CPSA against the introduction of a privatised labour force is not only a defensive struggle around jobs and services; it also is a direct challenge to government policy.

How has Militant squared up to this task? Their record is not one of this or that error, this or that mistake, but a consistent pattern of evasions and climbdowns which stem from their basic understanding of the struggle for socialism.

Central to this is a division between propaganda for socialist ideas and the day-to-day struggles within the working class.

For Militant the most important thing is to be in a position of power within the movement, to make pro-

Now is the time to fight

From front page

off rather than have a real fight.

On YTS, a good paper campaign of opposition has been run by the NEC, but the issue has been ghettoised into the Department of Employment section. Strikes against the introduction of YTS trainees have been given full support and full strike pay, but the strategy has been one of trying to sit it out rather than go for quick escalation. This led to long-drawn-out strikes at Bolton and the Manpower Services Commission headquarters in Sheffield.

There has been no national campaign on new technology — the work has been left to sections, with very patchy results.

On pay, good glossy leaflets have been issued, arguing the case against the Tories' plans, but no strategy has been developed for opposing the introduction of local pay additions in June. As for this year's pay campaign, the question of action against the offer of four per cent has hardly been raised. Maybe, one might suggest cynically, the Broad Left leadership did not want it to get in the way of their re-election campaign.

What can be done?

Over the next year the left in the CPSA must set itself the task of building a willingness and mood to take on the Tory attacks. Building up union organisation in the

By Steve Battlemuch (DHSS Section Executive)

(In a personal capacity)

workplace and supporting and spreading disputes must be the key, whoever wins the elections.

It will be easier to do this under a Broad Left NEC, because, if the right wing wins, the left's energies will be taken up in fighting a rearguard battle against an NEC keen to stitch up deals with the Tories.

However, if the Broad Left do retain control, we must insist on changes to what we have seen this past year. Leaving decisions to a handful of 'leading comrades' on the NEC is not good enough: there must be more accountability to the wider membership of the Broad Left — some 800 members.

Campaign

Campaigns must be launched on technology and job cuts which cut across section/departmental boundaries. The Broad Left and Militant should show the same commitment and energy in fighting and spreading disputes as they do in fighting election campaign. This last year we have had 50,000 leaflets on the NEC elections, nothing on the Camden DE strike.

If the emphasis is changed from rows in the boardroom with right-wing general secretary John Ellis to campaigning in the workplace, then we have a better chance of stopping the Tories.

Hither Green strike against fascist

CPSA members at Hither Green DHSS office in South London are on strike against the employment of a fascist at their office.

By Tim Anderson

would be through harassment!

Since the strike started only two members of the CPSA branch have crossed the picket line. The management have kept the office running by bringing mobile scab squads ('regional reserves') and Skeggs through the picket lines.

One woman has had her fence burned down, and has been verbally abused. The shop stewards have been sent racist literature 'documenting' the role of blacks in spreading AIDS. BNP graffiti have appeared in the area.

The SWP have responded in typical fashion by calling for all-out regional strike action. Should a ballot be held on this proposal — and lost, as it would be — then the strikers would be left isolated and without support.

Our response should be to build support for the pickets, held every day between 7.30 and 9.30am; to send messages of solidarity; and to pass motions of support through trade union and Labour Party bodies.

In this way we can provide immediate active solidarity while also laying the ground to spread the action further. Messages of support to: Labour Club, Limes Grove, London SE13 6DD. The pickets take place at 303 Hither Green Lane, London SE13.

In December last year the DHSS employed Malcolm Skeggs, who had previously been sacked by Lewisham Council for photocopying membership lists for the fascist British National Party (BNP) on council property.

Skeggs applied to join the CPSA, who refused his request for the following reasons. Skeggs used to run the National Front (NF) bookshop; he used to be on the directorate of the NF; he is currently no.5 in the BNP. (Source: *Searchlight*). The CPSA approached management to inform them that they were not prepared to work with Skeggs.

On 5 April, Skeggs finished his initial training. The workers again informed management of their position, and were told that anyone refusing to work with Skeggs would be disciplined.

The CPSA branch went on all-out indefinite strike until Skeggs was removed.

A local office manager agreed that Skeggs should not be employed by the DHSS, given the difference between BNP and DHSS policy. The same manager also suggested that the best way to remove Skeggs

paganda for Militant. In their brain-damaging 'Marxist view of history' the class is driven ever-onwards towards 'Marxism'. They see themselves gradually 'becoming' the labour movement. Until that day 'the Tendency' has got to be defended first and the class second. This is the core of their conservatism and timidity.

They cut out the central question of self-activity: the implicit power of the working class which finds expression in the trade unions and which socialists attempt to unleash. The question of being part of that struggle is never posed. The struggles are just another vehicle for propaganda for Militant; so ultimately they are secondary.

Militant's view of the unions allows them to inhabit the higher echelons without fundamentally challenging the bureaucracy. Their central project in the unions is to win the leadership — so that they can make propaganda for 'socialism' (ie the Militant). In this way they are beginning to fill the position once held by the Communist Party.

They are becoming the left wing of the trade union bureaucracy. How far they will go down this road is still an open question. However, the failure to bring Derek Hatton to account in Liverpool has led to a further decline into evangelism. Their record in the CPSA all points to the 'machine' dictating the politics to the supporters.



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

Back Benn and Heffer!

By Vince Brown

The recent upsurge in industrial action and the mass anger against the poll tax and social security cuts have handed Labour a golden opportunity to drive the Tories from power.

The present leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions have wasted such opportunities time and again. Tony Benn and Eric Heffer offer Labour a fighting alternative. Their challenge for the Labour Party leadership is more than a matter of votes cast at Labour Party conference, important though those votes are. This contest asks the whole labour movement the fundamental question: should the Labour Party attempt to make peace with capitalism, or should it mobilise workers in a fight against the Tories and for socialism.

Kinnock's road of peace with capitalism is clear enough. It has been well signposted by the Wilson/Callaghan government in 1974-9 and by the Town Hall Kinnockites of today. Kinnock's own

record of failure to support the miners, printworkers, health workers and seafarers speaks for itself.

Local campaign committees for Benn and Heffer, uniting the different groups of the Labour and trade union left, should be set up immediately. Trade union caucuses for Benn and Heffer should be organised as ad hoc campaigns free from narrow factionalism.

Such groups should go out to the picket lines, the tenants' associations, the campaigning groups, anywhere there is a working class platform.

By organising for the leadership contest we can rebuild and unite the left.

CPSA members need a fighting Labour leadership as much as any other section of the working class. Militant let us down last year over Labour Party affiliation by backing down to the government and putting off the campaign.

We need to organise an affiliation campaign now, and argue within it to support the Benn-Heffer leadership challenge.

Why we support reserved seats for women

By Trudy Saunders

The argument over reserve seats for women on the National Executive Committee of the CPSA has been going on for years. It is raised again this year.

The current Broad Left dominated NEC is no different from other NECs in that only a very small percentage of its members are women. In contrast, over 70% of CPSA members are women. All socialists should ask themselves how we can remedy this situation.

While the labour and trade union movement continue to reflect the rest of society, and the majority of activists are men, there is little hope for the working class uniting sufficiently to become strong enough to overthrow this rotten capitalist system under which we live.

Women make up over 50% of the working class, but have little say as to what goes on. We need to encourage working class women to be politically active and to take a lead alongside men in all labour movement institutions.

In the short term working class men benefit from women's oppression — for while he is free to go to meetings and picket lines she is probably looking after the children and doing the housework. In the long term it is in the interests of the whole working class for working class women to be as politically ac-

tive and powerful as working class men.

Where does something as seemingly bureaucratic as reserve seats for women fit into the picture? As socialists we argue for all sorts of measures to enable women to be as politically active as possible — creches, escorts home etc.

But if it is mainly men who run things, then they will not always ensure that these measures actually happen: and anyway they are obviously not enough to ensure women are on an equal footing with men in the labour and trade union movement.

In addition we need some institutionalised measures to ensure women are not left-out of the decision making bodies in the labour movement.

This raises a number of questions. Firstly, the question of leadership bodies being the decision making bodies. As socialists we argue that it should be the rank and file who make the main decisions, and the elected leaders should be accountable to them. So is it not purely bureaucratic to argue that women have reserved places in these bodies?

No, not so. It is simply a mechanism to ensure women actually get on to these bodies. It is also vital for all other women. Women are more likely to raise issues specific to women and to push for measures to improve the

everyday lot of women.

Some women argue that the idea of reserved places is 'insulting to women' and that we should be judged on our individual merits. This would be all well and good if we were on an equal footing with men in the first place. Implicit in this argument is the statement that we are not as able as men and that a creche here and there will solve the imbalance!

Finally an argument used in the Broad Left against reserve places for women in the CPSA is the belief that it would automatically mean a majority on the NEC for the right wing. This is clearly nonsense.

What it should mean is that all factions in the CPSA would be forced to stand more women. The political balance between factions would be unaffected. Those in the Broad Left who use this argument are obviously not prepared to see more women put up. Is it possible they are concerned about their own careers?

Motion 917 calls for an investigation into the GMB and NUPE, where the Executives do have reserve seats for women. In the case of the GMB this policy has been a success. Women are generally more involved in the union, and issues specific to women have been brought much more to the fore. The CPSA should follow their example.

anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

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

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and

gays.

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

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

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

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

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

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own



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Broad Left '84 spend an extraordinary amount of time and energy telling CPSA members not to strike, applaud loudly and congratulate themselves when strike ballots fail and then tell us that we are 'unrealistic' when we argue for strikes.

They fear democracy like the plague. They do not support election or parity of wages for full-time officers.

Their small amount of support lies in branches where membership participation is very low, such as DHSS Headquarters where only 300-odd out of a membership of over 1700 voted in the recent branch elections.

They are full of contradictions. When Militant supporter John Macreadie (wrongly) dragged the CPSA into the courts to contest the re-run of the General Secretary elections in 1987, BL '84 denounced the use of the courts to solve union disputes. Yet only a year earlier one of BL '84's members had the lawyers in to close down 'Viewpoint', the DHSS Section newspaper, alleging slander. Viewpoint did not appear for a year and the case was dropped!

BL '84 have no understanding of the potential power of the working class. For them every situation is a hopeless one, and the more deals they can make with management, even if they mean selling out members' jobs, the better as far as they are concerned.

BL '84 use anti-Broad Left press reports in newspapers known for their fairness and pro-working class slant, such as the Express and the Mail, as evidence of the 'evil' of the Broad Left!

But everything they accuse the Broad Left of, BL '84 do a thousand times worse! In their apolitical and hysterical hatred of the Broad Left, BL '84 have been moving closer and closer to the 'moderates' — and look set to disappear up their backsides altogether!

South Africa: 'The left must work together'

A leading activist in the Cape Action League, a South African socialist group, talked to Socialist Organiser

How would you characterise the situation in South Africa overall?

It's difficult to generalise. However, there is a lot of tiredness. It's not so easy to call on the community to take action like consumer boycotts, stayaways, etc.

There is a growing realisation amongst people that the South African government is not going to topple in the next couple of years.

The fact that the miners could pull off such an impressive strike and sustain it was a really important victory for the miners and the working class generally.

However, there is a lot of demoralisation. I think 30,000 miners have lost their jobs. There is a lot of dissatisfaction about how the leadership of the NUM resolved the dispute with Anglo-American and the other mine bosses.

The same goes for the railway strike. The workers had to go back to the same conditions that they went out on strike against.

A large part of the reason for the downturn now is related to the way the Congress movement operated. They didn't build strong structures on the ground, they didn't consolidate. The mass consciousness was very superficial, people didn't understand the serious nature of the struggle.

What did consolidation mean?

Part of the answer can be provided by looking at the way Moses Mayekiso and other comrades in Alexandra township went about building democratic, accountable structures to help organise the townships and link together the trade union and community struggles.

The building of street committees only happened in a few areas. It was very difficult to do. An even more basic form of consolidation was needed — to develop inside the working class clear leadership and a clear understanding of the struggle and the fact that it's a long struggle.

One of the problems was that the black working class was told that revolution was round the corner and that all was needed was a final push and we would acquire power.

There was a lot of misleadership, and this can only happen when class consciousness is low.

When we talk about consolidation we need to look at how we can advance black working class leadership and infuse socialist ideas and consciousness within the working class.

How do you see the political line-up inside the unions, in particular inside COSATU?

From the beginning of the '80s right up to '85, the trade unions isolated themselves from the populists and from popular struggles and the democratic demands that workers were putting forward.

At this time the bulk of the unions refused to join the UDF.

At one time it looked as though the populist UDF unions were going to resurrect SACTU. Instead they were for unity. They got involved in the unity talks which led to the formation of COSATU. Some of these people got themselves involved in the major unions, took up positions and got themselves entrenched



The black working class has the power to destroy apartheid and capitalism. Photo David Lurie (Reflex)

there.

It would also be wrong to believe that the wave of populism that swept the country did not affect the workers in the unions.

The left in the unions didn't come together, didn't put over a coherent argument and didn't create an alternative pole to which workers could gravitate.

What form would such a pole take?

Various forms were put forward. Some people said we needed to build a mass workers' party, a popular socialist movement. People were talking about a mass workers' party on Brazilian lines.

Others were putting forward the need for a vanguard party, a Leninist organisation.

Why should the need for a Leninist organisation be counterposed to building a mass workers' party?

The argument against the mass workers' party revolved around the question of how do you seize power with such an instrument? People also pointed to developments in the Brazilian PT and asked, do we really want to follow this?

Other people on the left were worried by the idea of a vanguard party. How do you stop such an organisation turning into a Stalinist party? I don't think that the two ideas need to be mutually exclusive.

We as the Cape Action League should be very critical of ourselves. Especially in this last period, the socialists in South Africa have been very fragmented. We have not come together to decide as a policy or programme for the road ahead.

We have not sorted out our differences. In '83-'87 we tailended the populists. We need to correct this.

We also need to solve the problem of sectarianism, and encourage democratic debate and build accountable structures. We need to take on the bureaucracy in the mass movement.

It was very important that we organised outside the UDF. What was a weakness for us is that we didn't have a national organisation. We had problems in trying to formulate a clear strategy around the national question and class struggle.

Often our slogans were too high pitched so they didn't mean much to people. We weren't able to formulate a mass line. We ended up with slogans like 'Smash capitalism, build socialism!' but it meant nothing to most workers. We failed to win a sufficient base within the so-called African working class. We were also weak initially in trying to organise student youth.

We are now trying to correct these errors. I think it is important to say that we are barely four years old.

We have also made important gains, we have started to put socialism on the agenda. The first congress of the National Forum [an alliance of groups loosely associated with 'black consciousness'] adopted socialism as its perspective. We believe we've done a lot to help this development.

We could have been more bold about our politics. At various turning points we correctly predicted what was going to happen and we adjusted our tactics to entrench ourselves inside working class communities and to consolidate our base when we saw increased repression coming.

For a whole period we were a federal organisation with different groups affiliated. We only changed that recently and became a central organisation. This has helped us to consolidate and take steps forward.

We are in alliance with AZAPO. But AZAPO is not a homogenous organisation. We have had many problems with AZAPO. At this point in time they are quite marginalised and have suffered many defeats, partly as a result of sectarian attacks.

Within AZAPO, unlike the ANC, there is no Communist Party. That means they are more open and we can argue for socialist politics. AZAPO have moved from a position of anti-whitism, and we can win them over to a position of non-racialism and anti-liberalism. So we have made some gains. AZAPO has put forward a position of socialism.

But what kind of socialism does AZAPO support?

I think you should ask AZAPO

about that.

What is your attitude to the trade union left, the so-called 'workerists'?

We have argued with the 'workerists' over the years. Often we have shared similar criticisms of the workerists with the Congress movement.

I think we must see them as an important group of people who have played a major role in strengthening the trade union movement. At the moment we share a similar position in fighting for the independence of the working class. There are times when we share similar positions, there are times when we differ. At the present time we need to work together.

How do you assess COSATU and NACTU as trade union federations?

We passed a resolution at our AGM which said that it is important to recognise that there are two federations in our country and also independent non-aligned unions.

We think that it is important to fight for the unity of the working class. There should be plenty of issues on which the two federations can unite. The ruling class can exploit a divided trade union movement. At the moment the two federations won't even share the same platform.

What attitude should socialists in Britain take to the struggle in South Africa?

Firstly, non-sectarianism is an important issue. We need socialists in Britain to popularise the left and what it does in South Africa, and not to play up one group against another group.

The left needs to intervene very actively in the Anti-Apartheid movement and to break down the AAM sectarianism which means that only Congress people [supporters and associates of the ANC] get a hearing.

We need to strengthen links between the left in Britain and the left in South Africa. We need solidarity and criticism.

Workers' Liberty

88

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summer school

Pompous and boring

Belinda Weaver
reviews 'The Last
Emperor'

The hot air from the Oscars might keep 'The Last Emperor' afloat a bit longer, but it's a very leaden balloon, I wasn't the only person squirming in my seat during the long, long hours of watching it. I wasn't just bored; I was stupefied.

It is a film bristling with 'production values' — the sort of stuff that gets the producers interested in bankrolling movies. The sets and the costumes and the cast of thousands probably are a marvel, but they wear very thin after several hours of the stuff. You need a story to push things along, and this pretty set is overpopulated with everything but a story.

On paper, the subject of the movie must have sounded irresistible. Pu Yi was crowned Emperor of China at the age of three; he ended his life humbly as a gardener in Mao's China. In between, he lost his autocratic powers, became the tool of Japan as Emperor of Manchukuo, then lost everything again after the Second World War when Japan fell.

But Bertolucci, the director of this mess, isn't interested in Pu Yi. He doesn't make the man or his story live. All we get instead is a pageant with as much animation as the pictures in 'National Geographic'.

Pu Yi grew up in the Forbidden City in China, where he ruled over a

huge household of eunuchs and other hangers on. The city was totally cut off from the outside world. When China becomes a republic and Pu Yi loses his powers, we find out about it through a conversation. There is no sense of the world outside the walls of the Forbidden City.

This is a mistake. Once you've seen all the costumes once, you long to get outside to see what is going on, but like Pu Yi, you can't. Absolute power doesn't mean much if you can't get outside your front door. Pu Yi's life is a series of theatrical tableaux but, like tableaux, it is nothing like life.

When Pu Yi gets his freedom finally, he wastes it, becoming a silly playboy, scheming with the Japanese to get a new throne in Manchukuo (Manchuria). From there, he falls into the prisons of the People's Republic of China, whence he emerges, supposedly re-educated and resigned, to take up his gardening duties.

None of this carries any conviction at all. We never get to see Pu Yi at all; all we see is a mask. The infant Pu Yi is the liveliest. As he ages, he becomes less and less interesting.

Perhaps Bertolucci is trying to show what a hollow man Pu Yi was, how he reflected his surroundings and adapted to them, chameleon-like. But it is a grave mistake to centre your film around a blank. If there is no other character to seize the audience's sympathy, interest drains away. Since Pu Yi is the only character on screen for any length of time, we rapidly get bored with



simply seeing his surface. Even his revelations in the prison camp are lifeless.

We hardly get to see Pu Yi in his daily life as a gardener either. It's as if Bertolucci found the Mao jackets a visual insult after the gorgeous reds and yellows of old imperial China.

What is totally lacking in the film is any context. We never see the China beyond the imprisoning walls of the Forbidden City. That is the contract that could have brought the story to life. As it is, it's like a retrospective episode of "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" — quaint

but unmemorable, dullish.

Bertolucci is supposed to be a Marxist, so one wonders about his motivation in making this film. If his aim was to show the nothingness of the emperors, then his aim got buried under brocade and ceremony. If it was merely to provide glamour junkies with a series of inside peeks, then it is reprehensible.

If I were Bertolucci, I'd be a little worried about that clutch of Oscars. When the Hollywood mafia call you a lion, it's generally because your teeth are no longer sharp. Is 'The Last Emperor' really 'The Taming of Bertolucci'?

Disaster in USSR

Gorbachev's government is presiding over a scarcely credible ecological disaster in Uzbekistan.

The inland Aral Sea, previously the fourth largest in the world, is disappearing fast, together with the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Uzbeks.

The problems of the Aral Sea were detailed starkly by the Guardian's USSR correspondent, Martin Walker, last week. In the last 30 years:

- the Aral sea has lost 60% of its volume,
- the sea level has fallen by 12 metres;
- the port of Muinak, once home to 10,000 fishermen who used to provide 11% of the USSR's catch, is now 30 miles from the sea. To keep the canneries and fish processing plants going, frozen fish is brought in by train from the Arctic port of Murmansk.

The dried-up sea bed is now a salt desert. Vast dust storms whip up 50 million tonnes of salt and sand each year, depositing half a tonne on each hectare of farm land. This extra salt is damaging such crops as fruit, rice and cotton. Since Uzbekistan produces 35% of the USSR's fruit, 40% of its rice and 95% of its cotton, the effects will be far-reaching.

What has caused this? Why has nothing been done? What can be done?

The Aral Sea needs 43 cubic kilometres of water per year to avoid shrinking further. The two great Asian rivers Sir Darya and Amu Darya (Oxus) used to supply much more than this, but that was before the massive expansion of irrigation in the 1950s, from 2 million hectares to 7 million hectares. One of the crops is cotton, requiring water ten times a year.

But it is the other things that happen to the irrigation water that turn the story into a disaster.

First, because the water is not recycled into the Aral Sea, it runs off into a huge new salt lake in the North Turkmenian desert.

Second, the thousands of kilometres of irrigation canals, dug hurriedly and unlined, allow vast quantities of precious water to seep away.

Third, excess fertilisers and the natural salt in the ground are making the land too salty, harming crops and even affecting deep artesian ground water.

A leading Uzbek scientist believes that the Aral disaster could have wider effects on the climate of Asia, even harming the food supply of India.

The solution, according to a leading Russian ecologist, is a massive change in Uzbek land use, a shift to factories, and 'redistribution of the population' (i.e. mass evacuation). The other solution mooted is to resurrect the plan to reverse the flow of the Siberian rivers, only recently dropped after Russian and international protests.

The present idea would only involve 7% of the Siberian water, but environmentalists are still worried that it could upset the Arctic balance, perhaps triggering a new Ice Age!

The disaster is a direct result of bureaucratic police-state-style 'planning'. With a priority of production at all costs, protests would be brushed aside or discouraged by the means available to all-powerful bureaucracies. The notorious corruption in the Uzbek 'Soviet Socialist' Republic would see to it that attempts to control the waste of water would fail.

This is the very opposite of open, democratic socialist planning.

What sort of anti-racism?

By Ivan Wels

Well-intentioned official anti-racism can backfire — and those who suffer are not the official anti-racists, but working class black people.

Such is the conclusion of a report commissioned by Manchester's Labour City Council and leaked to the press last week. The report, written by a committee of two white anti-racists and two black people, was asked for after a 13-year old Asian boy was murdered by a white fellow pupil at Burnage High School in Manchester, 18 months ago.

The gutter press has leapt on the report as a justification for not having anti-racist education in schools at all because "it is divisive by showing divisions", "it goes against the tradition of British tolerance", or it is even "black racism."

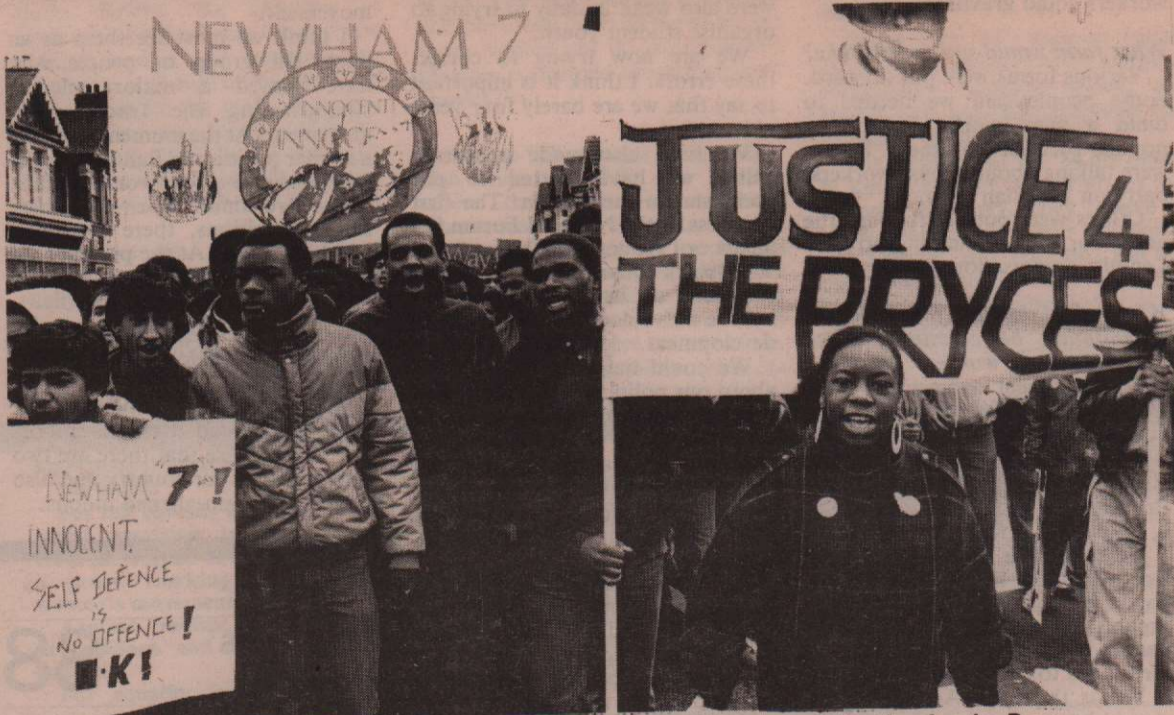
As Unmesh Desai pointed out in a letter to 'The Independent' this week,

"In fact, the type of anti-racism criticised in the report — principally that which is based on racism awareness training (RAT) — has been strongly attacked from within the black community for years, in particular by A. Sivanandan and the Institute of Race Relations.

For black people, racism awareness training and similar doctrines trivialise the issue of racism and undermine the struggle against it."

This official anti-racism sees the issue as bad ideas in people's minds, rather than structures in society, and thus ends up trying to push liberal self-condemning guilt to white people and corrupt ethnic pressure-group politics to black people.

For working class people, black or white, it is irrelevant — or indeed



Can some anti-racist education fuel racism and racist attacks? Newham 7/Justice for the Pryces demonstration. Photo Andrew Wiard, Report.

harmful. It leads white working class people to see anti-racism as a middle-class fad and sheer hypocrisy — for the concern about racial disadvantage goes together with lack of concern about class disadvantage. It offers black working class people nothing concrete and leaves them to face the backlash.

At Burnage School, according to the report:

• White students were "lumped into the same camp as Darren Coulburn", Ahmed's murderer, even though Darren had been recognised as highly disturbed and should have been removed from the school after he burnt down the Arts Block in 1985.

• White students were prevented from attending Ahmed's funeral which "helped to reinforce a feeling among white pupils that they were somehow to blame for his death."

• In March 1987 nine white 5th year boys were locked in the school kitchen for their own safety and smuggled out in a van. They never returned to school. The school neither saw the grievances of the Asian pupils, nor resolved the position of the white boys.

The report puts it very well when it says: "The basic assumption behind many policies is that since black students are the victims of the immoral and prejudiced behaviour of white students, white students are all to be seen as 'racist' whether

they are ferret-eyed fascists or committed anti-racists. Racism is thus placed in some kind of moral vacuum and is totally divorced from the more complex reality of human relations in the classroom, playground or community."

We do need education in schools to understand other cultures and also the need to fight against racism, both institutional and personal. We do need to ensure equality of opportunity for black pupils. But to try to do this at the expense of mobilising for a general white and black fight against racism by guilt-tripping white people and halting free discussion on race issues is bound at some point to backfire.

Sects save the status quo

By Jane Ashworth and Sandra Cartledge

At the National Union of Students conference in April, the Kinnockite 'Democratic Left' faction fought off a left-wing challenge from 'Socialist Student' (SSiN) to retain the leadership.

The blame rests with Militant and the SWP. Their votes went to the 'Democratic Left' rather than to SSiN — and those votes were enough to secure the right-wingers' victory.

For National Secretary the 'Democratic Left' supported a Communist Party candidate rather than having their own, and the Militant and the SWP voted for SSiN candidate Michele Carlisle, who won easily. But, with the aid of the sects, the 'Democratic Left' took all the other full-time positions on the executive.

On fighting cuts or making them; on supporting Benn and Heffer or supporting the witch-hunt; on recognising the Solidarnosc student union NZS or supporting Jaruzelski; on supporting direct links with workers in South Africa or not — on all these issues, Militant and the SWP agree with SSiN against the 'Democratic Left'. They were also forced to line up behind SSiN's support for the strike by the NUS staff trade union ACTSS against the 'DL'-controlled management team who are refusing to negotiate seriously on a pay claim.

Attack

But for Militant and the SWP none of these political issues could outweigh factional spite.

Since NUS conference the Government has announced its intention to 'review' a sample of student unions to investigate their expenditures and their democratic channels. In particular, this 'review' will investigate the procedures for colleges affiliating to NUS. The Tories want to see how to make membership of NUS, or maybe even of college student unions, voluntary — and thus to destroy student unions' strength.

As a result of the irresponsibility of Militant and the SWP, the NUS will face this major challenge under the non-leadership of the

Middlesex Poly fights closure

STUDENTS at the All Saints site of Middlesex Polytechnic went into indefinite occupation last Tuesday, 26 April, at 2pm.

We are occupying over the Directorate's proposed closure of the Humanities Faculty on financial grounds.

Our fight is not in isolation. This Government has systematically attacked on all fronts, from the major trade unions to the NHS. An attack on one is an attack on all, and we must build for support among our comrades if we are to have a strong, active and committed fight back against this Government.

We have the support of 18 Labour MPs and 30 colleges around the country, and of NATFHE, NALGO, NUPE, COHSE, NUS (the P&O strikers), and local trade unions. Our cause has been publicised by the local press, BBC TV News, and IRN, and has been raised in the House of Commons by Bernie Grant.

We have decided to take the lead in this struggle, but we cannot win alone. We need the support of students and trade unions around the country if we are to be victorious in our fight against this monetarist Tory Government.

Donations/messages of support to Simon Barwick, Student Union, All Saints, White Hart Lane, London N17 8HR. Phone: 01-808 1533.



Photo: Ian Swindale

'Democratic Left'.

On the first night of conference SSiN received a Government paper leaked from Baker's office which told us about this 'review'. We demanded that NUS recognised the review for what it is — a preparation for some form of political control of student unions — and refuse to participate.

NUS should give students the back-up to be able to prevent the Tories sending snoopers into union offices and going through the files. There needs to be a campaign among the membership to organise resistance to this attack.

The conference saw two major defeats for the platform on policy — over Clause 28 and over organisation in Further Education (FE) colleges.

Against the wishes of the NEC, conference voted for NUS to support local authorities which refuse to implement the anti-lesbian/gay Clause 28.

FE students' anger at being treated like the poor relations in NUS finally won results, with votes for parity in NUS for part-time students and for a serious drive to develop student unions in sixth form colleges. Both were opposed by the 'Democratic Left'.

Campaigning round basic FE issues like autonomy, funding, and YTS should be a step forward for NUS, but FE work will continue to be marginalised until NUS has a serious reorientation towards the development of the FE sector and away from the Higher-Education-gear 'priority campaigns'.

Cut

But in many ways the tone for the conference was set by its first debate, on the reform or otherwise of NUS. SSiN argued that NUS's current constitution is democratic, and any structural reforms needed are insignificant compared with the political job of trying to rebuild NUS into an organisation which enjoys the confidence of its membership, demonstrated in mass participation in outgoing campaigns.

This never really became the issue in the debate. The 'Democratic Left' put itself over successfully as the leadership which listens, 'takes on board' criticisms, and responds constructively. As a result, there will be no real changes coming out of the 18-month consultation on this issue.

The same lack of campaigning drive affected the NUS women's conference, held a few days previously. Heavily dominated by delegates from Higher Education

colleges, its only real debate was between those happy to remain in the rarefied atmosphere of 'NUS women's politics' and let the outside world pass them by, and those who could recognise the nonsense of talking about women's liberation but doing nothing about sexism and women's oppression on our own doorsteps.

Between the bureaucrats and the ultra-left antics of the SWP, anyone with a serious commitment to fighting for women's liberation had a pretty lean time of it. In the elec-

tion for NUS Women's Officer, SSiN candidate Liz Millward was defeated by 'Communist Student' Gill Lewis. A campaigning perspective for women cut less ice than facile platitudes like 'Autonomy Equals Strength'.

Unfortunately much of the tone of the NUS conference was to be like that: and Militant and the SWP helped the 'Democratic Left' to get away with it. But SSiN increased its representation on the executive, and at a 200-strong fringe meeting made it clear that we will be back next year, fighting harder than ever.

Nurses

'We need a recall stewards' conference'

Chris Race, NUPE branch secretary for South Manchester Health, spoke to Socialist Organiser. He is involved in the fight against NHS cuts and the Greater Manchester Health Workers' Stewards' Committee.

The Health Authority want to close ten beds in the alcohol treatment unit and ten in psychiatry at Withington Hospital. There is more chance of a fight in psychiatry — the nurses have more control over it. Elsewhere, they have been dependent on the consultants continuing to refer patients to a ward, otherwise it is easy for the Authority to close it.

Poplar Ward is next to close. We are making plans to fight that closure. Nurses were surprised by the Authority's decision. The chair of the Authority used his vote as chair, then his casting vote, to force through the closure.

In North Manchester, they were disappointed over Budget Day. They were divided. NUPE officials were telling people to go in to work.

In South Manchester, some unions

worked, contrary to a joint union decision. But we are working towards solving that problem for the future. It has since been recognised by all unions that we should have stuck to joint decisions.

I believe we should go for a recall national stewards' conference. Without the national stewards' conference, we would not have any basis for the future, but with the conference and with the Manchester committee we have got the basis for future organising.

We need a call for national action. Rodney Bickerstaffe of NUPE came up to speak at a Labour Party public meeting this week. There were rank and file health workers at the meeting, but it was closed as soon as the speakers finished — the platform was obviously worried about Bickerstaffe being put on the spot.

There is talk that 'the nurses have won their battle' with the pay award. Ancillary workers say we cannot do anything, that the nurses have been bought off. The Tories' plan to divide health workers with the pay award has had some success. I think there should be a nationally called day of strikes in support of the NHS on its 40th anniversary, 5 July this year. The TUC should call a general strike.

A divisive pay deal

By Mark Nevill

Overall, the nurses' pay rise looks fairly good. However, nurses will soon realise that it is a good increase for a few and nothing for the majority.

The whole aim of the pay deal is to divide nurse from nurse and nurses from the rest of the health workers. The worst of it is that this increase will be at the expense of other pay rises and other Health Service spending.

The Tory Government thinks that by providing a 'good' pay rise it will buy off the nurses and stop

the militancy in the hospitals. The trade union leaders of both CoHSE and NUPE are quite relieved by the pay review results; they think that a satisfactory pay increase will remove the pressure on them to have further strike action in defence of the NHS.

What nurses and other health workers should do now is make it quite clear that the past, present and future action is not just over pay increases, let alone just pay increases for nurses, but about providing a decent Health Service for working class people.

Miners back the seafarers

Last weekend some of the Notts sacked miners and their wives went to Norwich, where we built up strong ties during the 1984-5 miners' strike.

We had a sacked miners' stall at their May Day celebrations, to raise money for a holiday for sacked miners' kids, and at the night-time social we had a raffle and auction of strike plates and things like that, with all the proceeds going to the National Union of Seamen as an act of solidarity from the sacked miners of the Notts NUM.

There are very strong similarities between the present seafarers' dispute and the miners' strike. It is not only the use of the law, and a full-scale assault by a hard-nosed employer backed to the hilt by the government, but also the same issue at stake — the existence and continuation of a union.

I am sure that the government see it in the same way — if the shipping bosses can defeat the NUS, then the working class as a whole will be that much weaker and less able to resist all the other attacks like the social security cutbacks.

Class

One reason why I am sure the government and the ruling class would like to see the NUS smashed is that it would strengthen their hand over the power industry. They want to have a go at the miners, privatise the electricity industry and make sure that coal is imported on non-union ships.

Obviously mineworkers, with their backs against the wall, are not in the best position to whistle up and say 'everybody out'. But I still think we need to be working for that to happen, along with other groups of workers, in solidarity with the seafarers. I am also sure that if rank-and-file seamen call on rank-and-file miners to support them on their picket lines then we will be there.

I was disappointed recently to hear Terry Thomas pledge South Wales miners' support to Kinnock and Hattersley in the Labour Party leadership contest. I have also heard that Yorkshire will be nominating Kinnock and Prescott. I am continuing to argue strongly for Benn and Heffer.

In relation to the present strikes in Poland, I view Solidarnosc with suspicion because the Church has its dirty little paws involved. But I also see a genuine attempt by workers there to make their voice heard.

Paul Whetton is a member of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

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SOCIALIST ORGANISER

CAMPAIGN FOR SOLIDARITY WITH WORKERS IN THE EASTERN BLOC

A conference to discuss solidarity with workers in the Soviet Union. Discussions include: Gorbachev's reform programme; The oppressed nationalities; Free Trade Unions and the jailed activist Vladimir Klebanov.

The Octagon Centre, Sheffield University
Saturday 7 May
12.00 — 5.00
Creche provided

Organised by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc. (CSWEB), 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15.
Advance tickets £5 per delegate or waged individual; £1 unwaged individual; £2 students.

POLISH WORKERS RISE AGAIN

Zbigniew Kowalewski spoke to Socialist Organiser

Monday 2 May

Today the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk has struck in solidarity with the Nowa Huta steelworkers. A strike movement has also started at Warsaw University. And today, too, a strike has started at a big factory in Wroclaw, in Lower Silesia, called Dolmel.

There is something very important in the Nowa Huta workers' demands. They demand two things for all workers, not just for their own works — an immediate pay rise, and a sliding scale of wages for the future [automatic cost-of-living increases].

The strike committee is demanding negotiations with the minister responsible for economic reform, Sadowski. In other words, they are demanding to negotiate with the government directly, not with the local management.

The strike at Dolmel in Wroclaw

is also important. It must be a result of the initiative taken by the leaders of the newly-recreated Polish Socialist Party in the city. Last Wednesday they organised a demonstration at the factory gates at knocking-off time. They organised a meeting in solidarity with Nowa Huta.

Also, the PSP, with the Independent Association of Students, the pacifist movement Liberty and Peace, and the Confederation of Independent Poland [a nationalist group] organised the first meeting in solidarity with Nowa Huta among students in Cracow. It was a meeting of about 1000 people.

Today, French television showed film from Nowa Huta for the first time. It showed a delegation from Cracow arriving to show solidarity at the factory gates. They arrived with big Solidarnosc banners, and a Mass was celebrated by a priest who had gone in to the factory.

At least three of the four historic Solidarnosc leaders at the Nowa Huta workers who were sacked after December 1981 are now in the works, helping the strike committee. The reinstatement of these four is one of the demands of the strike.

How the workers have organised

At the Nowa Huta steelworks, each of the three shifts is staying in the works for 16 hours out of 24, and going home for 8 hours. So there are more or less permanently 20,000 strikers in the works.

The strike began in a department of 500 workers. A strike committee was set up for the department. As the strike spread through the works, each department elected a strike committee, and the central works

strike committee is elected by the departmental strike committees.

The workers set up a democratic structure of representation right from the start, and the negotiations with the management were carried out in the same way as the negotiations of August 1980 at the Gdansk shipyards, that is, under the supervision of all the strikers. I don't know what way they did it.

The strikers are demanding the reinstatement of four Solidarnosc leaders from the works who were



Polish steelworkers' strike committee statement

Statement of the Nowa Huta strike committee

On 26 April, at 9am, we began a strike at the Lenin steelworks. We demand an increase in the compensation for the price rises [introduced

by the Government from 1 February] to 12,000 zlotys for all workers in industry, in health services, and in education, and also for pensioners. [The Government allowed 6,000 zlotys compensation.] We also demand an automatic and permanent sliding scale of wages in line with price rises for the necessities of life.

The economic policy of the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland has brought millions of workers and their families to the brink of poverty. We refuse to tighten our belts under compulsion. Our faith in the reforms promised by the Party is exhausted.

Struggle

By boycotting the November referendum [on 'economic reform', i.e. price rises], we paid back the authorities in kind. To their distrust of us we responded with distrust of them.

We demand an increase in the basic wage of 50% for all the workers in the works. Through this

we want to regain our right to an eight hour working day, which we won a long time ago. We want our wages to guarantee us and our families a decent life and our deserved rest after work.

We will not give up on these demands, for they reflect the will of the workers who elected us as their representatives. Experience has shown once again that the delegates elected by the official steelworkers' union do not represent the interests of the workers as a whole.

Our negotiations with the works management are difficult, but we have high hopes of reaching an agreement. We declare that the attempt by the authorities to intimidate us with the threat of an intervention by the security forces is an expression of the arrogance of the administration...

We thank all those who are supporting us actively with their solidarity action. We thank you, Lech, for the support you sent us at the beginning of our struggle. Be with us, as we are with you, for better or for worse.

Nowa Huta, 27 April 1988.