

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

*For Workers' Liberty East and West*

**Fight the Tories! Rebuild the left!**



**Back Benn and Heffer!**

## In Poland and Britain:

# Solidarity is the only way to win

**In the Parliamentary debate last week on the seafarers' dispute, the Tory Party, which has received money from P&O, was 100 per cent behind P&O.**

The Labour Party was 100 per cent behind the seafarers. With front bench spokespersons like Michael Meacher having been on the picket line, it was quite unlike the debates on the miners or the printers, where the front bench kept in the background.

I said it was hypocritical for the Tories to talk

### **By Tony Benn MP**

about the right to work when in fact jobs were going down. This is part of a systematic attack upon trade unionism — an attempt to destroy it.

They tried to defeat the miners. At GCHQ they kept out unions on the grounds of security. In this case they are trying to destroy trade unionism.

But you cannot do it by court action. Trade unionism does not depend on money in the bank, like a company. Trade unionism had no money when it started. It was illegal when it started.

If you take away its money, or make it illegal, now, then we'll just start again.

The labour movement should continue supporting the Dover strikers 100 per cent. Personally I'm sorry that the secondary action has been discontinued, because the only way in which you can beat the Government is by broadening it out to include all those people who are directly or indirectly affected.

Only solidarity works. That is the only weapon at the people's disposal. Support it in Poland, and support it in Britain!

# Lebanon: further down the sectarian spiral

The current fighting in Lebanon is not, as some press reports suggest, a "proxy war" between Syria and Iran.

The two Shi'a militias, Amal and Hezbollah, are linked to Syria and Iran respectively, but the war between them has Lebanese roots.

Syria, which controls parts of Lebanon and has done so since 1976, is being drawn further and

further into the conflict. The Syrian presence, and Iranian interference, make things worse. External forces of various kinds helped create Lebanon's crisis. But to understand the latest round of the Lebanese war it is necessary to know a lot more than that Syria and Iran have a stake in it.

Street gunfights started on 5 May, when the Hezbollah (Party of God) made a big push to control the

southern suburbs of Beirut, dominated by Amal. A Syrian-negotiated ceasefire only paved the way for more fighting. Since the fighting started, 200 people have been killed and 600 wounded.

Since Lebanon's civil war broke out in 1975, Beirut has been reduced to rubble and the political patchwork has completely altered.

The Shi'a Muslims were the outsiders in the early stages of the war,

fought out between Arab nationalists and right-wing Christian Maronites for control of the state. By the mid-'80s, the Shi'a groups were on top, in so far as anybody is on top in this devastated country. Now the main Shi'a factions are ripping each other to bits.

Lebanon used to be the Middle East's playground. Beirut was full of wealthy banks and popular beaches. Beside the sun and sea was

a dirtier reality: a grossly unequal society and a political structure that discriminated against the Muslim majority. The presence of Palestinian refugee camps and therefore guerilla organisations, added extra explosiveness. Israeli attacks on Palestinians — hitting the southern Shi'a population especially hard — helped polarise society, already ridden with sectarian divisions, to the point where the tension was too much.

Sections of the Palestinian movement got dragged into a conflict that degenerated fast into a sectarian bloodbath. Syria intervened to stop the Lebanese/Palestinian 'left' winning. Later Israel invaded. Then Israel invaded again, in a war of terrible ferocity in 1982 that left the country in worse ruin. A multinational 'peace-keeping' force went in — and gave up after two disastrous years.

Among the Shi'a Muslims, the worst-off of Lebanon's numerous communities, first Amal and then the Hezbollah grew out of the despair generated by this accelerating social and political collapse, and in response to the utter failure of the traditional political groups to do anything at all about it. A whole generation has grown up knowing nothing but violence on a huge scale. Some of the very young recruits were born after the first round of the war, in which 40,000 people had lost their lives by summer 1976.

Religious fundamentalism, with its commitment to martyrdom, at least offered some answer — in its way a coherent one. It offered a total view of the world, in contrast to the decaying ideologies of Arab nationalism or more traditionalist leaderships. It also offered a model of success — Iran. The Hezbollah, the newer and more extremist group, looked to Khomeini for support.

All the Lebanese parties had relied upon militias and strong men to rule their respective roosts. The civil war originally had some semblance of sense to it — the largely Muslim and Druze 'left' wanted a non-sectarian system that would end Maronite privilege. Before long it was gang warfare, as rival factions shot it out for control of suburbs.

Often the greatest bloodshed was within, rather than across, sectarian-political division: Maronite militias wiped each other out; likewise Sunni Muslims; or Sunni and Druze partners in the erstwhile Lebanese National Movement turned on each other. Now it is the Shi'a's turn.

The peculiarity of the two Shi'a groups has been their remarkable strength. It was Amal that drove Israel out of southern Lebanon, where all the secular nationalists had failed. The Israelis found that they simply could not cope with enemies who seemed to positively want to die.

The Hezbollah represents those who find Amal 'too soft' — particularly on Israel, which still has a 'security zone' in the south from which it recently launched attacks into Lebanon. Amal's ruthless sieges of Palestinian refugee camps were not supported by the Hezbollah, which aims to 'liberate Palestine'. Amal hates the Palestinians, blames them for Lebanon's ordeal.

Amal has done badly in the recent fighting, so their Syrian protection has been forced to move into southern Beirut — something they had previously promised Iran they would not do. The implications for relations between Syria and Iran — Syria is Iran's chief Arab ally against Iraq — could be far-reaching. But all of that remains to be seen.

There are no easy answers to Lebanon's ordeal. There have been stirrings of workers' unity across sectarian lines, but still very tentative ones. That is the hope for the future. For the present, the bloodletting is likely to continue.

## Stop the TUC split!

By Jim Denham

Last week's meeting of the EETPU executive set the union on what seems to be an irreversible course towards splitting from the TUC.

Eric Hammond has never made any secret of his willingness to contemplate life outside the TUC, but a series of compromises and fudges over the last three years have avoided a final showdown.

Most of the compromises have come from the mainstream 'New Realists' of the TUC, with the 'radical right' EETPU leaders making, at best, token gestures for the benefit of Congress House. On issues like accepting government money for ballots, the Wapping dispute, and — most recently — single-union/no-strike deals, the electricians' leaders have openly defied TUC instructions.

The EETPU executive meeting on 10 May unanimously rejected a TUC censure over Wapping, and voted to defy instructions to give up two of their single-union deals. Instead, the executive decided to ballot members on the union's continued membership of the TUC, with a recommendation, in effect, to split.

A continued fudge is still possible, but the fact that Neil Kinnock has allowed the press to speculate that he would allow a EETPU outside the TUC to retain relations with the Labour Party must encourage the splitters.

The TUC needs to respond with a vigour and determination that has

been sadly lacking in its dealings with Hammond to date. Most EETPU members are not dyed-in-the-wool scabs. They could be won to elementary trade-union principles, against the business unionism of Hammond — if the TUC dares to go over Hammond's head and appeal directly to rank and file electricians.

The left within the EETPU, mainly grouped around the journal *Flashlight*, must be given the support of the entire movement in their campaign against Hammond's plans. All this will require a drastic change of approach from the TUC, which has so far handled the EETPU leaders with kid gloves and is traditionally loth to be seen to interfere in the internal affairs of individual unions; but Hammond has thrown down the gauntlet, and he will only be beaten if the TUC stands up and fights.

The AEU could be crucial to the outcome of this battle. Bill Jordan, the engineers' president, has long advocated a merger with the EETPU, and is Hammond's closest ally at the TUC. He has said that the AEU will stay with the TUC; but if the AEU, Britain's second-largest union, follows the electricians out the TUC, then an alternative right-wing trade union centre will be a viable proposition.

Without the engineers, Hammond's only bedfellows will be small fry like the Engineers' and Managers' Association and openly scab outfits like the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the Professional Association of Teachers. The AEU would give Hammond's project real credibility.

EETPU



EETPU rank and file on the Wapping picket line. Photo Andrew Wiard.

Again, the rank and file needs to be mobilised. The AEU Broad Left must organise the kind of campaign that last year ensured the defeat of the National Engineering Agreement.

The National Executive must be flooded with resolutions demanding that the union stays within the TUC. If necessary, lobbies of the Executive should be called, as they were last year, by the *Engineering Gazette*.

If Hammond and his co-thinkers in the AEU do succeed in splitting from the TUC, then affiliated engineering and general unions like the TGWU, GMB and MSF must declare all-out war on 'business unionism'.

In many plants, the EETPU is a minority union, and would be vulnerable to a campaign. In Ford, for instance, the EETPU has 1823 members spread across 22 plants. In refrigeration it has 588 members; in the docks, 691; in the independent steel sector, 506.

### Labour Party

## Fight the witch-hunt in Cardiff Central!

Joyce Gould, the Labour Party's Director of Organisation, has issued instructions for a third attempt to hold the AGM of Cardiff Central Constituency Labour Party.

This is a clear response to pressure from the "Fight the Witch-hunt in Cardiff Central Campaign" (FWHCC) and the incompetence of local officials. Gould has called the new AGM,

through the Welsh Labour Party organiser Anita Gale, for 23 June.

Plasnewydd ward remains suspended and will still not be allowed to take part in this latest AGM. Wards and affiliated organisations have been told that they must resubmit delegates and renominate for officers' positions, thus giving the right wing the chance to remove delegates who have insisted the rules must be followed and that Plasnewydd

ward be reinstated.

The ward was suspended last February because of the presence of Chris Peace, an expelled supporter of the Militant, at the AGM. He had been invited to speak at the ward, which had not been officially informed of his expulsion.

Anita Gale has been repeatedly asked on whose authority the ward was suspended, and has given a variety of replies. Her latest claim is that "no-one really took the decision to suspend", but the ward was nevertheless suspended because "everybody knew the Plasnewydd AGM was unconstitutional".

Clearly, the ward has not yet been constitutionally suspended. The reality is that the ward is being victimised for campaigning against unpopular decisions by the Labour-controlled County Council and for nominating left-wingers for officers' positions in the party.

The witchhunters have not had it all their own way. The FWHCC campaign has gained support locally from wards, constituencies and trade union branches and nationally from CLPD and Tony Benn. The Campaign has issued a mailing outlining events and will also be lobbying the new AGM and Labour Party Wales regional conference in Tenby on 20 May.

Locally the campaign is taking the initiative in the Benn-Heffer candidacy, calling a meeting to set up a support committee in South Glamorgan.

For details, model resolutions, speakers, messages of support and donations contact: FWHCC c/o 22 Norwood Court, Roath, Cardiff. Tel: 0222 462582.

### Poland

## Solidarnosc is still fighting

ACCORDING to the latest reports from Poland, production is still not back to normal at the Nowa Huta steelworks, where riot police smashed up a workers' occupation on Thursday 5th.

Only half the workers are turning up for work, and the other half are still on strike.

But elsewhere the strike wave which exploded in Poland at the end of April has died down. On 10 May 1,000 workers marched out of the Lenin shipyard at Gdansk to end their nine-day sit-in strike.

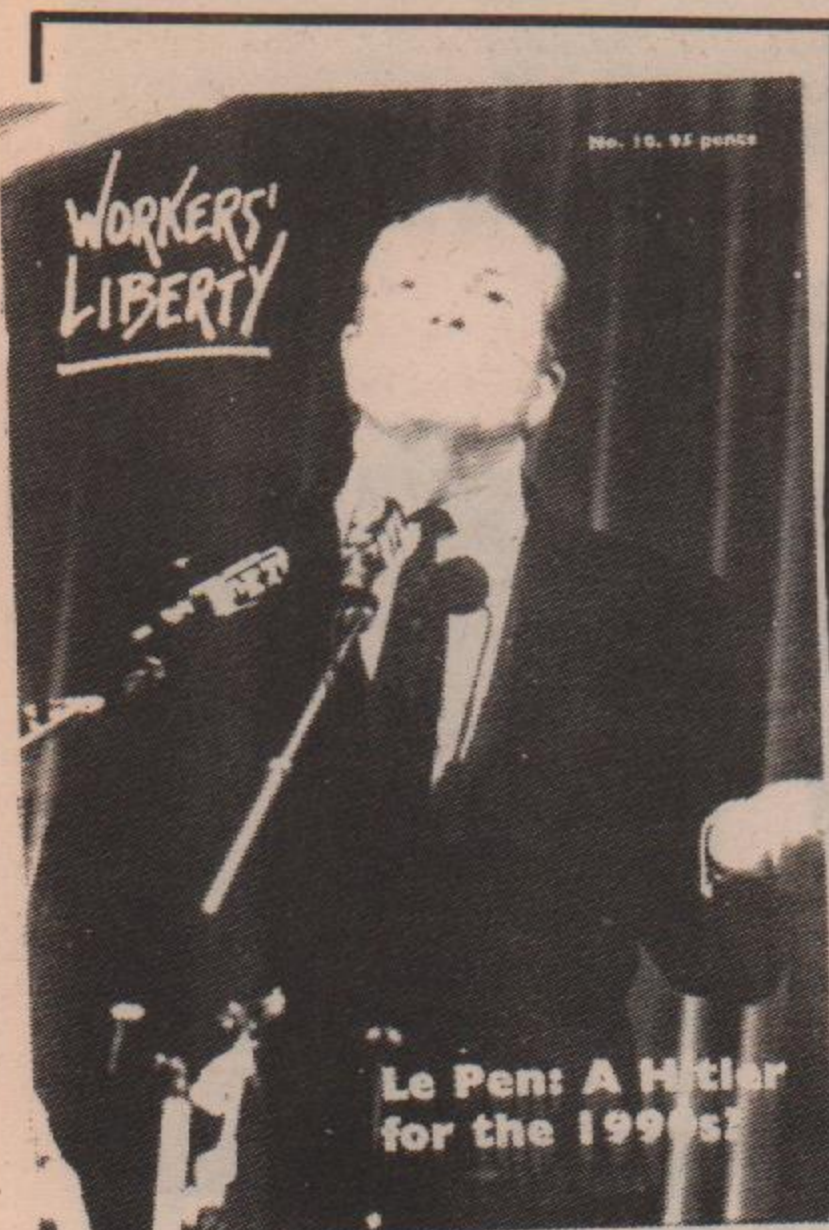
Having rejected offers of more pay, guarantees against victimisation, and freedom for some political prisoners, they ended the sit-in without an agreement. Their main demand had been for the re-legalisation of the independent trade union Solidarnosc.

The Government has taken special powers to overrule factory managers and to order cuts in spending and jobs. It backed away from plans to impose a total ban on all strikes, even by the official government-run unions.

Solidarnosc activists, and strikers arrested when the police stormed the Nowa Huta steelworks, have been jailed.

However, it is unlikely that the government has done more than temporarily check the revival of Solidarnosc. At the Ursus tractor works near Warsaw, strike leaders have demanded that the works council hold a referendum of the workers on the demands of the short strike they had on Monday 9th.

The demands include pay rises, better work conditions, recognition for unions other than the official government-run union, and legalisation of the independent students' association NZS.



## Out now!

The latest Workers Liberty is available for 95p plus 30p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA



# Afghan lessons

**The withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan must be perplexing for those on the left who supported their invasion or did not oppose their presence.**

They argued that Afghanistan was a different case from Vietnam or other battles against imperialism. The USSR claims to be socialist; and even if we reject this claim we can point to the frankly reactionary programme of the Afghan rebels and the support for them from the United States. In comparison if no more, the Afghan government and its Russian backers are 'progressive'.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) government which took power through a military coup in April 1978 did promise land reform, modern education and women's emancipation in Afghanistan, one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world. But they tried to impose these reforms through the control of the central state machine by a small modernising elite of officers trained in the USSR. The mass of the Afghan people rebelled against this 'enlightened despotism'. Under pressure of the rebellion, faction fights exploded in the PDP. Moscow became alarmed: Hafizullah Amin, the ultra-Stalinist who had come out on top in the PDP faction fight, looked like leading the pro-USSR regime to a shattering defeat.

In December 1979, Moscow invaded, got rid of Amin, created a new government from more pliant PDP members and took effective con-

## EDITORIAL

trol. It must have helped to put down the rebellion quite quickly.

Eight years on, five million people are refugees and perhaps a million are dead. The USSR has employed all the traditional techniques of modern new colonial warfare, including putting napalm fire to villages, in an effort to subdue the Afghan resistance.

The modernist programme of the PDP has been largely scrapped. Land reform has been halted, and the government loudly proclaims its respect for Islam; but all the efforts to appease the rebels have been as vain as the efforts to crush them.

The essential reality of Afghanistan is that the Soviet Union has behaved as an imperialist power trying to bombard an economically and socially underdeveloped people into submission. That the Afghan people are backward — economically, culturally and politically — no more justifies this war of conquest than the backwardness of colonial peoples justified British colonialism in the past. The Zulu kings for example, were certainly no more modern-minded than the Afghan rebels, while British colonialism could promise progressive capitalist development in southern Africa.

**Socialist Action**, twice referring to the Afghan rebels as 'scum' call energetically for 'Victory to the Afghan government' (May 1988). They do not say whether they support or oppose the Soviet withdrawal, but they do warn that a rebel victory "will wipe out... all traces of communism, liberalism, working class organisation (and) any organisation of women". What 'traces' of working class organisation, or liberalism, not to mention communism, exist now in Afghanistan, under Moscow's control? Since when have the Kremlin bureaucrats been defenders of these things?

**Socialist Action** do criticise the 'bureaucratic methods' of the Soviet Union — although 'bureaucratic' is hardly an adequate adjective — but continue their

spirited defence of the Soviet Union's puppet. "It is a matter of disgrace" they say, "that the British left has been supporting this scum", meaning, again, the rebels. In fact, many on the British left, over the last 8 years, have supported the 'scum' ruling in Moscow.

**Militant** was one of the few groups who never switched to calling for Russian withdrawal after the reality of occupation became impossible to ignore. Mike Waddington (**Militant**, 13 May) argues that Gorbachev is getting out because the 'counter-revolution' has been defeated — a thesis not supported by any other observers, or, indeed, by any evidence.

Quoting guru Ted Grant from 1979, **Militant** rails against "the confused 'analyses' of the media, which portray the Russian withdrawal as a defeat" and proudly proclaims: "As always, Marxism has shown a far clearer understanding of the processes in advance than the capitalist 'experts' have been able to develop even with hindsight!"

The relevant prediction from Grant was that Russian troops would withdraw "once the counter-revolution has been defeated". So it is somewhat surprising to read Waddington referring to Gorbachev's description of the war as "a bleeding wound", and speculating that "Gorbachev has probably whipped up anti-war stories as a warning to the bureaucracy of what could develop if the situation continues" — a peculiar calculation for somebody about to secure victory.

In fact **Militant** means that Russia hasn't been defeated, rather than that it has actually won — which renders Grant's 'prediction' irrelevant. Of course the Russians haven't literally been driven out by the rebels storming Kabul, but very few colonial wars end like that. The USSR failed to defeat the rebels: that is the truth of it.

**Militant** also are full of venom for the rebels, and praise for the current regime. Confident of Najibullah's future victory, they predict yet more glowing achievements to come. The methods employed by the USSR,

the number of Afghan deaths, all of that, receives literally not one word. Mere details, no doubt, on the scale of historical progress.

What is important is that "illiteracy has largely been abolished and the position of women improved... new mosques have been built and 1,226 mosques have been repaired". The number of mosques — or homes — demolished is not recorded.

**Militant** have defined the Russian war in Afghanistan essentially as one of civilisation against barbarism — against the 'dark masses', as they once described the Afghans. If the Afghan masses aren't prepared to accept the benefits of the twentieth century, so much the worse for them.

Now **Militant** find themselves in the invidious position of having to support Russian withdrawal after opposing the call for it all along. The logic-chopping about Russian victory is merely a device to get themselves out of a fix. Their basic attitude, reminiscent of the Fabians, who justified imperialism as the extension of civilisation, remains unchanged.

Afghanistan is no side issue. The view of the world and of socialism's place in it expressed by **Socialist Action**, **Militant** and many others on this issue is a major disease on the left. If 'socialism', 'liberation', or 'democracy' can be imposed on the mass of the people by a brutal military elite, then Marx's idea that 'the liberation of the working class must be the task of the workers themselves' is mere prejudice.

Socialists of course do not welcome the prospect of a medieval Islamic regime in Kabul. We are for progressive minorities defending themselves, and the development of a socialist movement. But we are not in favour of governments imposed on the mass of the population.

Any socialist movement must recognise that the peoples of Afghanistan, like any other have the right to self-determination. Socialism is about freedom, including national freedom. And from that point of view, the Russian departure from Afghanistan is a step towards socialism, not away from it.

## PRESS GANG

### Wreckers

**Stan Crooke reports on Pravda's coverage of Poland**

**LAW AND order reign again in the People's Republic of Poland. The paid agents of Western imperialism have been shunned by the Polish masses.**

The government's programme for democratisation and economic reform can continue unhindered.

This is how *Pravda* reported the success of the riot police in beating down the recent wave of strikes in Poland.

The current unrest, said *Pravda*, differs from 1980-1. That was an understandable protest — though one which got out of hand — against 'mistakes' by the government. The recent strikes, however, sought to "provoke a political crisis, undermine the economy, and ignore the needs of the masses".

Only in one sense, claimed *Pravda*, were the two waves of unrest comparable. Both were led by the same people "who nearly wrecked the Polish economy by strikes in 1981". Western countries, *Pravda* continued, "pay for their well-to-do life in Poland and direct their activities".

One Solidarnosc representative received six weeks in prison on the grounds that "he had recently been increasingly active as one of the main suppliers of information to the Western media which are conducting an anti-Polish campaign".

*Pravda* thought that Western countries had no right to complain about events in Poland. "Don't they constantly curtail workers' rights, don't they cut workers' living standards, don't they limit the activities of trade unions?" asked *Pravda*, ignoring the fact that different behaviour might be expected in supposedly socialist countries.

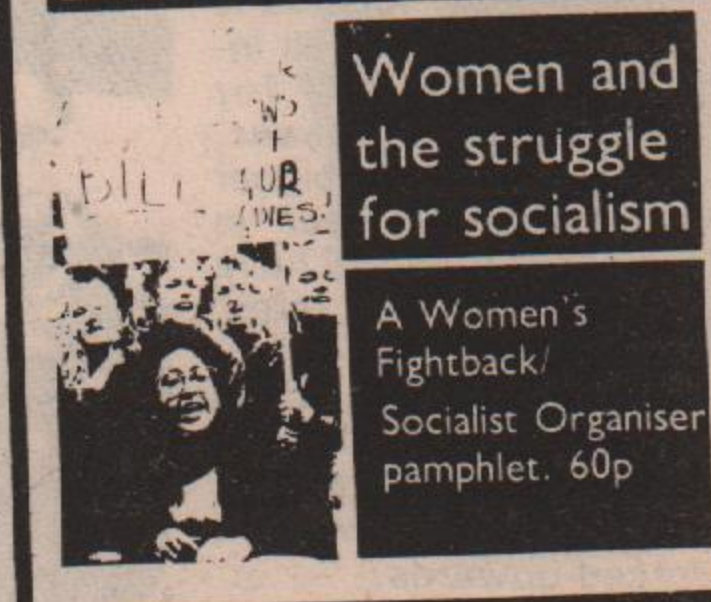
### Thatcher steps up censorship

**THE GOVERNMENT has made another move towards TV censorship with its new Broadcasting Standards Council.**

Legislation to set it up has not yet been passed, but William Rees-Mogg has already been appointed chair of the Council, and has started by warning broadcasters that they must agree to a 'voluntary' self-censorship code or have him checking programmes in advance.

He claimed his concern was with violent trash programmes like 'The A-Team', but it was Thames TV's critical examination of the SAS's killing of three IRA members in Gibraltar that made the Tories set up the Council.

**NO TURNING BACK!**



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# GRAFFITI

## Miss Moscow

Glasnost and the Soviet male: Moscow is about to stage its first Miss Moscow contest. It has already provoked a flurry of excitement among Moscow's eligible bachelors.

One young man has written to one of the Communist youth papers advertising himself as a potential marriage partner for the contest winner. He says he has a nice

mother, an interesting job, and a talking parrot. His only stipulation? She must be blonde and long-legged. So this is what Gorbachev's policies mean for Russian women...

## Pay gap widens



Rich pigs

The gap between Britain's top-paid and lowest-paid is at its widest for 25 years.

Around one per cent of the male working population earn £29,000 a year or more, with 90 people getting upwards of £300,000 a year.

Following the Budget, half of Britain's working population earns £9,300 or below after tax. The figures, compiled by Incomes Data Services from Inland Revenue sources, do not include perks available to top earners like company cars and accommodation.

The survey indicates that there are still very few high-paid women, with one man in 100 earning over £30,000 a year, but only one woman in 700.

## Builders lives of risk

Building companies are risking workers' lives by ignoring health and safety regulations.

In London alone there have been 12 building site deaths so far this year —

the highest figure for 20 years. In a spot check of 659 London sites, 90 were served with prohibition orders — that is, ordered to stop work immediately until proper standards of safety were met.

The small firms which have sprung up over the past few years are the worst offenders. These are often non-unionised, and cut corners to cut costs.

The sites often have no toilet or washing facilities, inadequately secured scaffolding and uncovered holes. Electrical cables are frequently not checked before they are cut.

The Health and Safety Commission, who carried out an investigation of building sites in London earlier this year, say that conditions are better on larger sites where workers belong to unions and where a legal obligation exists to employ safety officers and carry out regular inspections.

## JTS flops

A survey of Job Training Scheme (JTS) trainees has shown the scheme to be a flop.

A questionnaire sent out to trainees who joined the scheme in January 1987 showed that 63 per cent left the scheme early, and that 58% were unemployed.

The survey, produced jointly by the Unemployment Unit and the South East Region TUC, argues that the emphasis in JTS

on the private sector has undermined training. Funding has been inadequate, and there is little choice for trainees.

The new Employment Training Scheme which is about to be introduced will be no better. The Unemployment Unit says it may serve to fiddle the figures, and to 'train' young workers to accept low pay, but certainly will not provide real training.

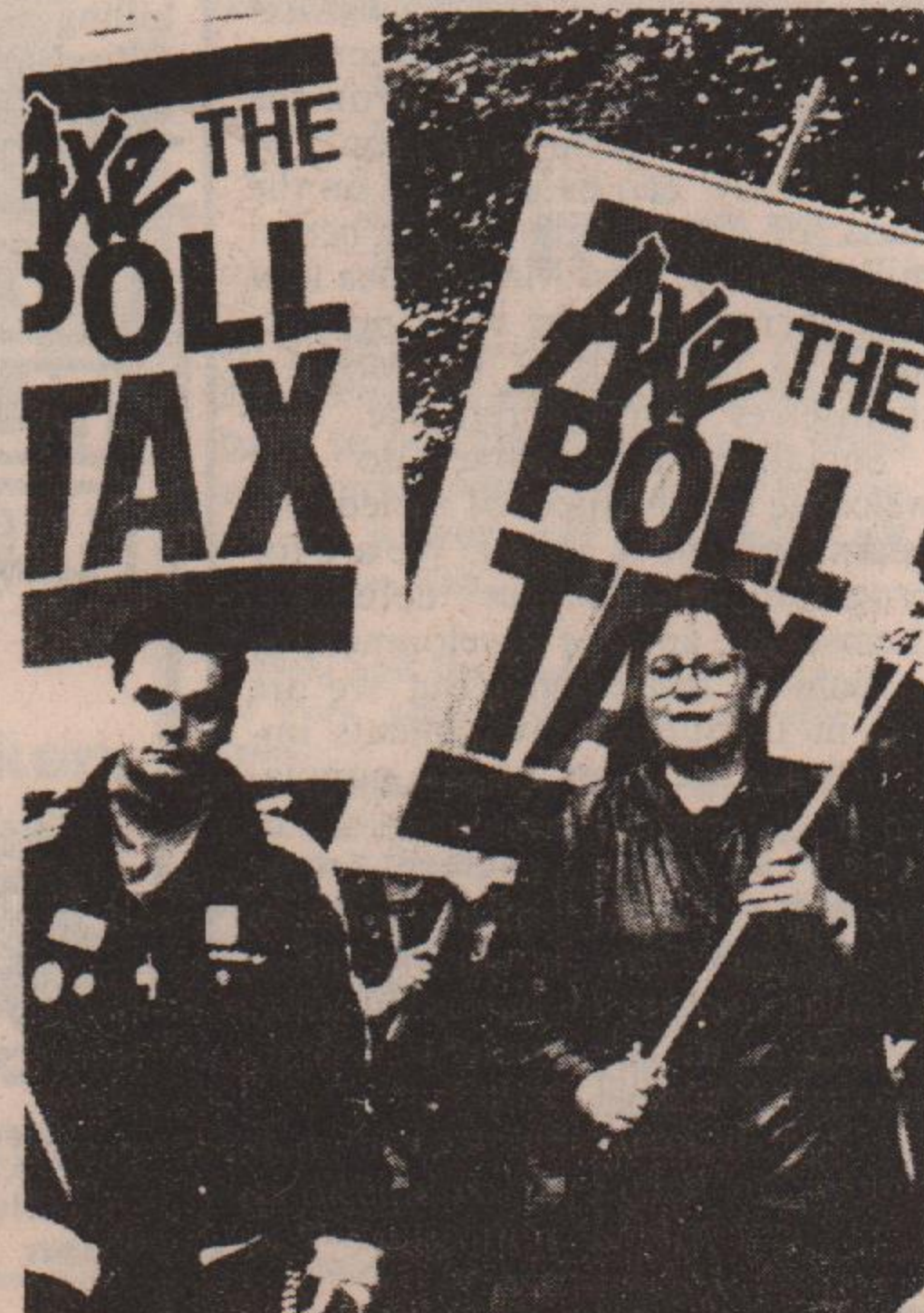
## Poll tax rip-off

According to an Edinburgh University professor, the well-off will not only gain directly from the replacement of rates by the poll tax, but also gain from an increase in the value of their houses.

House prices will go up about 17%, so the owner of a £100,000 house will be £17,000 better off.

The reason for this is that the poll tax will increase demand for houses. At present, anyone buying a bigger house has to bear in mind that they will have to pay more in rates. Under poll tax they won't. So house prices — and especially the prices of large, expensive houses — will be forced upwards.

Once again, the rich will gain at the expense of the worse-off, who will find it more difficult to buy houses.



# Harry McShane

The death of Harry McShane at the age of 96 has led to a number of obituaries hailing him as "the last of the Red Clydesiders".

Harry's political career spanned the century to date, beginning even before the 1st World War. During the war and in the years after the war he was associated with John McLean in a period of great labour turbulence on Clydeside.

McShane, an engineer by trade and an avowed Marxist, thereafter went on to join the Communist Party and remained a leading activist

until the 1950s when, finally disgusted by the adulation of Stalinism, he left to return to his trade.

McShane became increasingly critical of Stalinism and its international apparatus. In 1981, he joined the Polish Solidarity Campaign platform in Glasgow to express his support for free trade unionism in the Soviet bloc.

Latterly he was uncritically lauded by various labour movement luminaries as a good old man of the left. Most of them were light years

away from McShane's revolutionary socialism and it would be interesting to know what he really thought of them.

Unfortunately, like his mentor McLean, he has left no permanent legacy in terms of a viable revolutionary socialist organisation embedded in the trade unions and Labour Party. His contribution however, in terms of inspiring a future generation of socialists is not negligible.

Ian McCalman  
Glasgow



Paisley leads protests against Anglo-Irish deal. Photo: Derek Spiers, Report.

# Reactions to the Anglo-Irish deal

After 2½ years of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, 81% of Northern Ireland Catholics think it has brought no benefit to their community, and 94% of Protestants think it has been no good for theirs.

The most interesting results from a poll published recently in *Fortnight* magazine are, however, on what Northern Ireland people want for the future.

Among Protestants the most popular option is complete integra-

tion of Northern Ireland with Britain. 47% think it is the best solution, and another 20% find it acceptable. According to *Fortnight* support for this course is greatest in the Protestant middle class.

Among Catholics, power-sharing within Northern Ireland gets most support: it is first choice for 31%, and acceptable to a further 17%. A united Ireland comes second, with 25% backing, mostly from young

working-class Catholics.

Power sharing is the option with greatest cross-community support. 17% of Protestants think it is the best choice, and another 17% that it is acceptable. Asked to say yes or no to power-sharing, 56% of Protestants and 84% of Catholics said yes.

This level of support for power-sharing has been stable for many years. Obviously the apparent consensus covers over profound differences about what it means, since efforts by the British government over many years to install power-sharing have produced only one brief experiment in 1974, which was rapidly ended by a Protestant general strike.

7% of Catholics prefer a federal Ireland and another 6% find it acceptable. Only 1% of Protestants would choose a federal Ireland, and another 1% would find it acceptable.

George Graves,  
Walsall.

## Labour must fight

I think we can be pleased, but not complacent, about the Labour Party's performance in the local government elections on 5 May.

According to an analysis of the figures by John Curtice of Liverpool University, the results from 5 May show Labour level with the Tories at 40% of the vote nationally. In 1987 Labour got 32% and the Tories got 43%.

The Labour leaders present this as proof that their brand of yuppie 'socialism' works. It could also show that the decision by Benn and Heffer to contest the party leadership has not caused electoral damage.

But we can hardly be complacent. It is no great achievement to reach level pegging with the Tories at a time when they have been split and discredited over the health service, social security, and poll tax. Especially so, since the new 'Social and Liberal Democrats', if not David Owen's SDP, are likely to revive at least a little from the current slump caused by their splits

and disputes.

Unless we press home the fight against the Tories, they will recover from their disarray. We need a fighting Labour Party, and a fighting leadership such as offered by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer.

Erica Stephens,  
Greenwich

## From capitalism to socialism

I HOPE your journal will be discussing what should be done to turn a capitalist economy into a socialist one once political power has been achieved.

As capitalism has been built upon the limited company it will, of course, be necessary to socialise the company including the transnational corporations.

A permanent limit should be set on the return as well as the liability of their shareholders so that they are run in the interests of the workers and the community and not for private profit.

In order to achieve the "most

equitable distribution that may be possible" of incomes, it would also be useful to tax earned and investment income separately, as between 1907 and 1920 in Britain, and make the tax of investment incomes steeply progressive.

A permanent limit on the return as well as the liability of shareholders and a heavy tax on those limited dividends would help to secure for workers the full fruits of their industry.

Paul Derrick,  
Robert Owen Association, London  
SW8.



'Anti-imperialist' martyr? Photo: Kaveh Golestan, Reflex.

# Crisis on the left

From the evening of Friday 1 July to teatime on Sunday 3, Socialist Organiser will be holding our seventh Summer School — Workers' Liberty '88.

This event is a must for socialists who are sick of Kinnock's pathetic opposition to Thatcher, are eager to think about socialist ideas and are worried about the high level of braindeath on the British left.

The themes of Workers' Liberty '88 — Party and Class, Workers in Eastern Europe and the National Question — have been chosen to highlight some of the main questions the post-'68 left has failed to answer properly, and our positive alternatives.

Socialist Action are so demoralised they are looking for someone else — Daniel Ortega, Fidel Castro, whoever — to do the job of socialists for them. The Militant think that the expansion of Stalinism to one third of the world is progress and applaud the work of the Russian Army in Afghanistan. The SWP currently support 'anti-imperialist' Iran in the Gulf War — 'Neither Washington nor Moscow but Tehran!' They want to support Benn and Heffer, but will find it difficult, because the election is in the Labour Party.

Socialist Organiser is roundly denounced as 'pro-imperialist' because while supporting the Palestinian revolt, we say that the Israeli Jewish nation has the right to exist! We, apparently, are 'British chauvenists' for believing that the Irish Protestant community has rights which must be accommodated in a settlement to get British troops out and create a united Ireland.

This is a measure of how far the left has fallen. This is part of the reason that we organise Workers' Liberty — to get the left to think about its record and its policies.

Friday 1 July, 7.30.

In a rally to be held at the University College, London, we will be arguing that the British labour movement must build support for Polish workers — Victory to Solidarnosc!

The recent round of strikes in Poland has proved that the Polish workers' movement was not killed and buried by Jaruzelski's coup in December 1981.

The speakers will include Zbigniew Kowalewski (an exiled

former Solidarnosc leader); a comrade from Fighting Solidarity; Simon Pottinger (a Socialist Organiser supporter and current Vice President Welfare of the National Union of Students), and others from Britain and abroad.

Saturday 2 July/Sunday 3 July

Sessions include:

**Eastern Europe**

- Bill Lomax, author of "Hungary '56", which describes the role of workers councils in the anti-Stalinist workers' revolution.

- Stan Crooke on Soviet Anti-Semetism

- A discussion about Gorbachev's Glasnost programme.

- Gus Fagan on the Hungarian regime today.

- George Krasso on the Hungarian dissidents.

- Czechoslovakia — twenty years on.

- The East German opposition, with a speaker from the European Nuclear Disarmament Campaign's working group.

**The National Question**

- Lenin and Luxemburg on the National Question with Martin Thomas from the SO Editorial Board.

- The Sinhalese/Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka with Lajies Bala.

- Eyewitness from Palestine.

- Bob Fine on African nationalism.

- The Ukrainian National Question with Zbigniew Kowalewski and Marko Bojcum.

- Debate between John O'Mahony (Editor Socialist Organiser) and Martin Collins (Managing Editor, Labour and Ireland) — 'Which way forward for Irish workers?'

**Party and Class.**

- Introduction by John O'Mahony.

- Alan Johnson on the Wobblies.

- 'Back Benn and Heffer!' with John Bloxam, Vladimir Derer and other speakers.

- Women and socialism, with Lynn Furgusson.

- Marxists and the Unions.

- Who are the Sandinistas?

- Lessons from the Iranian Revolution with the Campaign Against Repression in Iran.

There is also —

- An Introducing Marxism series.

- A creche, videos, socials accomodation.

- Trade union caucus discussions.

Contact: Mark Osborn

PO Box 823,

London SE15 4NA.

## Workers' Liberty

# 88



## summer school

# Towards a socialist programme

We believe that all the historic political documents that have come out of the struggle in South Africa have played a very important role in heightening the consciousness of the workers and advancing the struggle. We believe however, that the fact that the progressive movement is divided means that if we aligned ourselves with any one particular programme we would further compound the divisions inside the mass movement in South Africa.

It is necessary to build the unity and independence of the trade union movement. Given the weakness of the workers movement in this country we believe the political position of our union should be on the basis of (1) furthering the struggle for socialism and (2) building unity.

We don't believe the union should be above politics. We are just saying that the existing groupings and documents are not adequate for our needs and for our understanding of what is needed for the workers struggle now.

What unites all our membership at this present time is the struggle for socialism and the struggle against capitalism.

That's why in our policy resolutions we have agreed to work towards a socialist programme.

We don't yet have such a programme, but we believe that if you are for socialism you don't just write socialism you need to mobilise the workers and sharpen the contradictions in the system.

The ANC's Freedom Charter does not give us this.

The Azanian Manifesto (adopted by the National Forum which includes the Azanian Peoples' Organisation and the Cape Action League) talks about socialism but doesn't tell us how.

We believe a socialist programme should include basic demands like a cut in working hours and all other demands which are necessary for the working class. We need a programme which would put workers

**The Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA) is one of the most militant and socialist of the independent black trade unions. Formed in 1975, the union has won major wage increases and benefits for the working parent.**

**In June 1986 CCAWUSA's Johannesburg branch spearheaded a wave of strikes and occupations against the State of Emergency.**

**A militant from CCAWUSA explained the politics of the union to Socialist Organiser. In our next issue we will look at the factional battle that has divided the union over the last ten months.**

in a position to understand what we mean when we talk about socialism

There have been a lot of heroic struggles by the left against those people who threaten working class independence, but we believe there is an awful lot of work still to do to sharpen our understanding and sharpen our theoretical tools to deal with the struggle.

We are not saying that we should only address workplace issues. Certain elements are slandering us and saying that we are nothing different from right-wing gradualist social democrats. We reject this slander.

We don't believe the trade union struggle is the be-all-and-end-all of the struggle against oppression. But we do believe that we have a contribution to make. We want to politically develop the workers' struggle and take it further.

However, there is a lot of extremism for extremism's sake. People need to show that they are more revolutionary than the next person. There is a lot of media playing and all kinds of games like that.

A lot of people are engaged in this struggle in a very heroic way. They put their lives on the line. But what is it for? I don't think enough questions like that have been asked within the struggle in South Africa.

The responsibilities of the exiled

movement are immense, but they are not ready to exercise that responsibility. They are not looking at the struggles inside the country critically. We are being labelled gradualist for trying to build up the workers' struggle.

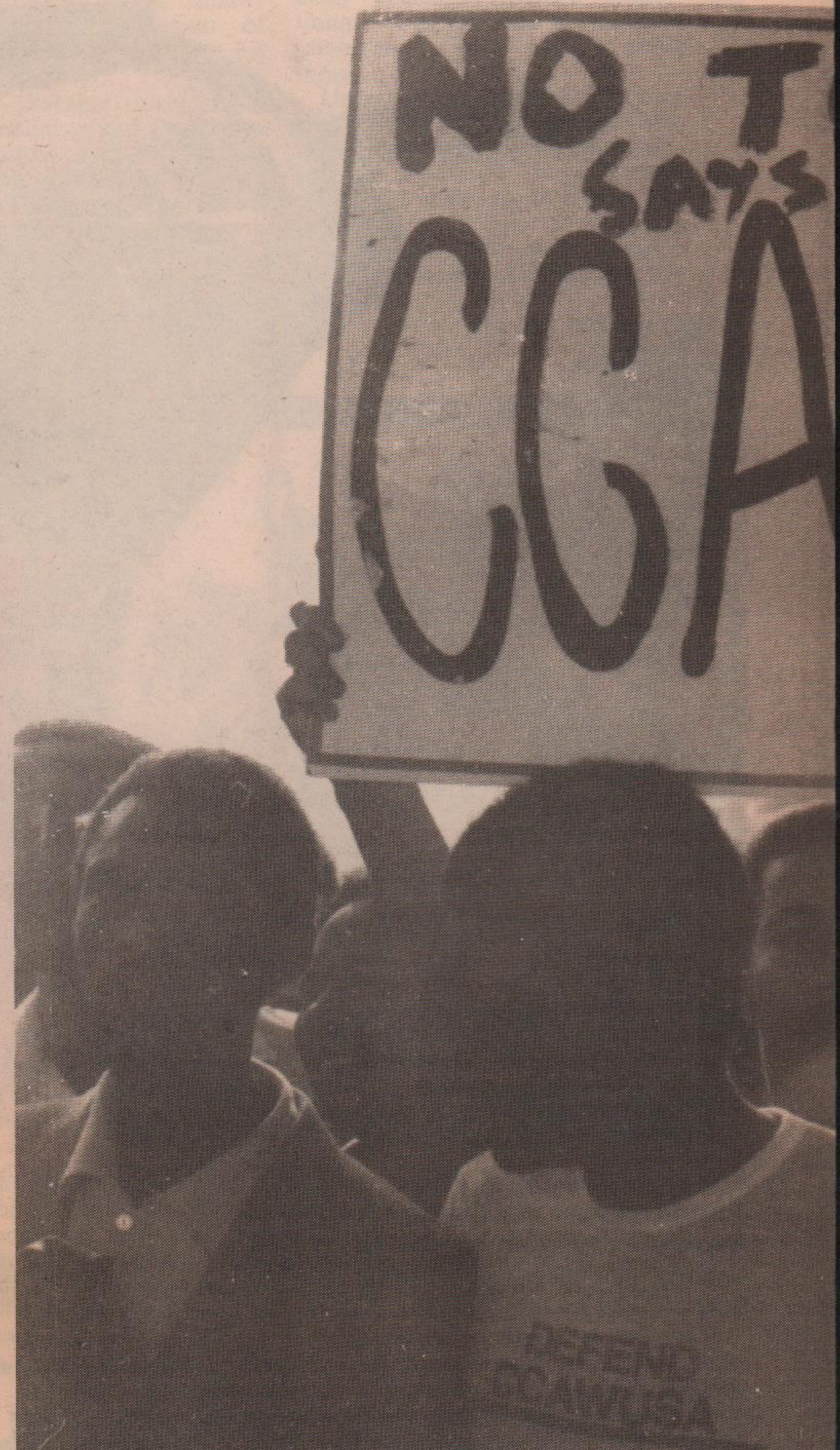
We are faced as a class with the need to oppose the current labour bills which are anti-working class, and to oppose the elections coming up in October.

All working class organisation and we mean all working class organisations, must take these issues seriously. We need a united front of all organisations which link up the working class, including petty-bourgeois-led working class organisations.

Most of our political action has been against the intimidation of the state. Certain gains have been made. But in a sense people are not making political demands.

The history of the South African struggle is such that we haven't yet developed tactics to deal with these different levels of struggle. In that sense there is an inadequacy in our political culture.

Our programme is a programme for the emancipation of the working class, but the question is how to take us there?



CCAWUSA members in Cape Town protest after their annual general Charter faction of the union.

## "This bill will s effectively expl

**A new Labour Relations Bill comes before Parliament this year. If it becomes law it will seriously and directly affect all workers and the rights which we presently have to protect ourselves as workers and to fight for better wages and conditions of work.**

It is extremely important that we understand how this Bill attacks our rights, our organisation, the trade union movement and the entire working class.

The Bill infringes on our existing rights, gives bosses the power to hire and fire as they please, allows for agreements to be made with sweetheart and unrepresentative small unions which are rejected by the majority of workers. The Bill also provides for a new Labour Court and allows Conciliation Boards and Industrial Councils to extend cases for any period of time while limiting the time period in which disputes can be declared.

The right to strike, stayaway, boycott and go slow are among the most powerful weapons that workers can use to support demands for improved wages, improved conditions in the workplace and society and for other issues. Now the bosses and the state want to better arm themselves by taking away these rights and creating laws in their own favour. These weapons that are now legal can become il-

legal.

The Bill will serve to more effectively exploit and oppress the working class so that bosses themselves can make bigger profits. The bosses have always argued that workers should use the strike as a last resort after exhausting all procedures. This has been built into many recognition agreements. Now this right can be taken away.

Workers can still be dismissed and exploited in many ways, while bosses can engage in Unfair Labour Practices virtually unchallenged. We will be prevented from withdrawing labour to support our rightful and just demands.

Stayaways will be against the law and unions can be forced to pay for the losses of the bosses.

Stayaways have been used to pressurise the ruling class to give in to our demands. May Day and June 16 have been won in many companies through stayaways. Issues like transport and high rent have been challenged through stayaways by workers and the community. Millions of workers have successfully used this non-violent form of protest. Unions like CCAWUSA which depend largely on subscription to service members will be forced to pay the costs of strikes, stayaways, boycotts and go-slows.

In the past, the Industrial Court laid down guidelines before retrenchments could be carried out. Companies had to consult with the Union over retrenchments, and where possible they could be



Protest at state of emergency. Photo: Billy Paddock, Reflex.

STALINISM  
WUSA



Meeting was disrupted by the pro-Freedom-

## serve to more exploit the working class"

**The Botha regime has put forward a new Labour Bill modelled in part on the Tories anti-union laws. This article from CCAWUSA Cape Town News explains the significance of the Bill and the need to fight it.**

prevented. Now the bosses want to trench who, when and how they choose.

With the new Bill, selective re-employment after a strike can be applied. That means that instead of all workers being re-employed or all workers being dismissed, management can choose who to rehire. Thus popular worker leaders, active members and shop stewards can be dismissed.

What does this mean to us as workers who are forced to sell our labour in order for us and our families to survive?

Under this capitalist profit system bosses want to be rich and to keep workers poor. They do this by creating unemployment. They also make bigger profits by replacing workers with machines.

Dismissals will become the order of the day and we will not be allowed the chance of fair hearings. It

means that we can never be sure that our jobs are guaranteed. The bosses want tame workers who will not speak up for their rights!

The Bill further attacks the weapon of the working class — unity. We know that as individuals each of us is powerless, but only when we are united can we achieve what we have already and more. We have united in our workplaces, unions and federations to protect ourselves as a class against the bosses.

But now the capitalists, the bosses and the state together, want to smash this power that we give to one another through our unity. We could be prevented from striking in sympathy with other workers, whether in the same company, union or in other unions. Thus we are denied the right to support and strengthen the struggles of comrades, likewise fellow workers cannot support us by strike action.

The Industrial Court will lose some of its power to a new Labour Court. Also, people who do not know about labour law can be appointed by the Minister of Manpower as president or deputy president.

Cases can be brought on appeal to this new Labour Court. But this will be very expensive. The idea behind the Industrial Court was for workers to cheaply and easily solve disputes.

The bosses, who are rich as compared to workers, will have sufficient money to take cases to the

special court, which has the same powers as the Supreme Court. This is not a good thing as bosses can win cases by default because the workers or the union will find it too expensive to fight these cases and so will lose the case.

Unions can now declare a dispute and ask the Minister of Manpower to appoint a Conciliation Board (CB) where there is no Industrial Council (IC). The CB or IC have thirty days in which to solve the dispute.

Now the CB or the IC can take as long as they like. This will frustrate workers and cause them to lose confidence in the union. Workers will not be able to even strike legally because a case can be dragged on forever. There is also a new deadline in which the union can take disputes to the IC or CB. This is now restricted to 21 days. After that the case must be dropped.

CCAUSA calls on the entire trade union movement irrespective of political and trade union affiliation to unite and fight the Bill.

We call on our members to demand from their management whether or not they support this Bill becoming law. If they say they do not support the Bill they must use their influence on the government to withdraw it.

**Workers must discuss this attack on our fundamental rights and organise against it. Let us use our power and unity to defeat it.**

**And discard it on the rubbish heap of history!!**

## Opposition in Czechoslovakia

By Adam Novotny

**The level of repression in Czechoslovakia has made it extremely difficult for oppositionists to organise and work publicly, compared to Hungary or even the GDR.**

There are no free trade unions, and there has never been a women's movement. The severest repression has fallen on those attempting to organise workers, build links between workers and students or theorise about a socialist alternative. There has also been severe repression of religious activists who take an interest in social problems, or are connected to the more dynamic Polish church groups.

The most well known group in the Czech opposition is Charter 77, a civil rights group formed to demand observance of the 1977 Helsinki accords on human rights. About 1,200 people have signed the Charter, though about 22 have died, emigrated or withdrawn their signatures.

Of the remainder, several hundred are completely passive. There is little opportunity for people outside Prague to get involved. People are scared of the police or don't know how to get involved, and so on. Petr Uhl, editor of the Charter's samizdat magazine and one of the few Trotskyists active in the opposition, puts the active membership at a few dozen.

The most homogenous group of activists around Charter 77, in terms of common background and beliefs, are ex-members of the ruling party who left or were expelled after 1968.

Charter 77 has always avoided developing a defined political outlook. It focuses on civil rights and collects information on ecological and other issues. It has carried out a dialogue with western peace movements, stressing the indivisibility of peace and human rights. It has only a small audience in Czechoslovakia, mainly through re-transmission by the western media.

The dominance of a few, well known intellectual 'dissidents', and the civil rights orientation of the Charter, have influenced the ideology and politics of the opposition. Two dominant strands of opposition thought are an individualistic conception of democratic rights (that is to say western social democracy is the kind of democratic system envisaged, not control by workers over their own work and lives) and secondly, a "non-political" concentration on developing civic courage, "living within the truth" as some Chartists put it.

This means encouraging people to become active as citizens, to demand that the establishment respects its own laws and international conventions. The aim has not really been to build a political opposition, or even an organised movement.

A number of Charter and other activists reject this approach, seeing the main task of the opposition as the development of a "second culture" of independent meetings, publications and entertainment which will "grow over" into a political movement, engaging in political and trade union activity as conditions permit.

For example the Jazz Section of the Czech Musicians' Union, before it was dissolved by the authorities, had become an umbrella for a whole range of cultural activities, bringing many young people into contact with alternative and independent activity for the first time. There is general agreement that open political or trade union work is virtually impossible at the moment.

One third of active Chartists are religious, Catholic or evangelical. This is much higher than the pro-

portion of religious people in the general population.

Unlike in Poland and East Germany, the clergy almost unanimously oppose involvement in opposition activities. The Czech church has not been touched by Liberation Theology, the new social doctrines of liberal west European churches or even the teaching of the Polish pope John-Paul II. Nevertheless, events in Poland have encouraged some young Christians to take part in opposition activities, and suppressing this activity has been an increasing concern of the regime.

There is some possibility of a growing current of Christian nationalist anti-democrats, like the extremist Russian group *Pamyat* (Heritage). Religion, however, is less of a force than in the USSR or Poland, nor is there a large peasantry.

Gorbachev's reform movement has revitalised many activists, and forced a new discussion of the tasks of the opposition. Petr Uhl has argued that the real growth of a 'reform-Communist' current in the opposition will mean an increasing division among activists, in their attitude to the authorities and each other.

The central belief of the 'reform-Communist' current is that the structures of the state can be transformed to serve truly socialist and democratic purposes. The way to bring about change is for oppositionists to work with reformists inside the structures to create a new consensus for reform.

In 1968-69 there was a sizable reform current within the CP. This is not likely nowadays. The purges and mass resignations after 1969 meant the loss of half a million members, in a population of 15½ million. Those who left were probably the most dynamic, committed ones. Today democratic socialists and radicals are almost all outside the Party.

While the Party still draws some support from the working class it contains fewer worker members and bureaucrats of working class origin than ever before. Within the Party real enthusiasm for building socialism is rare. Most members join for career reasons, and realise that 'Actually Existing Socialism' is incompatible with real democratic change.

There is a real danger that the independent activity of workers, women and national minorities and the discussion of revolutionary ideas, will be squashed by self-styled leaders of the opposition in a vain pursuit of a dialogue with official reformers.

Democratic and revolutionary socialists in Czechoslovakia lack the international media coverage of dissident writers and the old 'reform-Communists'. The solidarity they need can only come from the international labour movement. We have to make this solidarity real.

## Free trade union formed in Hungary

**THE FIRST independent trade union in the Eastern Bloc after Solidarnosc was founded in Hungary last weekend.**

Over 1,000 members have joined the Democratic Union of Scientific Workers. The leadership of the union includes members of the ruling party, and they say that the union does not want to be political.

Hungary, one of the least tightly-controlled countries in Eastern Europe, has already seen votes against the platform at the congress of the official government-run trade unions, and large numbers of workers leaving those official unions.



## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

- Wednesday 18 May.**  
Newcastle Poly Labour Club meeting: debate between Socialist Organiser and Militant on Lesbian and Gay liberation.
- Thursday 19 May**  
UCL SO meeting on 'Fascism and how to fight it'. Speaker Tom Rigby. 5pm at UCL SU.
- Thursday 19 May**  
'Defend Workers' Rights in Poland!' Picket of the Polish Embassy, 47 Portland Place, London W1. 5.30-6.30pm. Called by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc.
- Sunday 22 May.**  
Leeds SO educational: Reform and Revolution. 5pm at Leeds University Student Union.
- Saturday 21-Monday 23 May.**  
Lutte Ouvriere fete, at Presles, near Paris. Socialist Organiser will have a stall at this fete, and a number of supporters will be going.
- Monday 23 May.**  
'Defend free comment in the left press!' A meeting to celebrate Socialist Organiser's victory over the libel cases brought by Vanessa Redgrave. 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.
- Tuesday 24 May.**  
Northampton SO meeting: 'Where we stand'. Speaker: Simon Pottinger. 7.30pm.
- Saturday 28 May.**  
'Viraj Mendis will stay! No to deportations!' National demonstration, 12 noon from Albert Square, Manchester. Queries: 061-234 3168.
- Sunday 5 June.**  
Leeds SO educational: The politics of racism. 5pm at Leeds University Student Union.
- Wednesday 8 June.**  
Cardiff SO meeting on Lesbian and Gay Liberation. Speaker: Liz Millward. 7.30, Gower Hotel.
- Saturday-Sunday 11-12 June**  
Second 'Chesterfield' Socialist Conference, at Chesterfield Technical College. Queries: c/o Socialist Society, 9 Poland St, London W1.
- Friday-Sunday 1-3 July:**  
Workers' Liberty 88 Summer School, at Sir William Collins School, London NW1.
- Friday-Sunday 8-10 July.**  
Conference of Socialist Economists 1988, at Sheffield Poly. Queries CSE, 25 Horsell Rd., London N5.

# Soviet workers and Solidarnosc

Towards the end of 1981, a group called the 'Democratic Front of the Soviet Union' and based in Estonia began to circulate leaflets in five languages calling for a campaign of political strikes.

The leaflets, circulated in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, called for half-hour protest strikes on the first day of every month. They demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, an end to Soviet interference in Poland, democratic elections, the release of all political prisoners, a reduction in military service, and fairer food distribution.

The members of the 'Democratic Front' explained that "Previously, everyone assumed that nothing could be changed in the Soviet empire. But they have heard... what strides have been made [in Poland]. And now it does not seem so impossible". In fact a number of workplaces in Estonia did follow the strike call on 1 December 1981 and again on 4 January 1982.

### Evidence

Apart from this heroic but isolated effort, there was, so Elizabeth Teague argues, not much response in the Soviet working class to the Polish workers' struggle. There is no clear evidence that strikes increased in the USSR during the period between Solidarnosc's emergence in 1980 and its banning under martial law in December 1981.

The Kremlin bureaucrats were not complacent. During that period in 1980-1 they conducted a double campaign, to slander Solidarnosc and to urge the USSR's official trade unions to show more activity.

They were helped by traditional Russian hostility to Poland. As far as anyone can guess, it seems that the majority of Russian workers were hostile to Solidarnosc: the Poles (so the chauvinistic argument went) were better off than the Russian workers but, not satisfied with that, they were indulging in anarchy and chaos from which they would have to be rescued at Russia's expense.

In 1977 the Ukrainian miner Vladimir Klebanov had founded an 'Association of Free Trade Unions', but by the end of 1978 Klebanov had been jailed in a mental hospital and the organisation had been smashed. In 1978 the 'Free Inter-professional Association of Workers' (SMOT) was founded: it operated more clandestinely than Klebanov's organisation, but led only a feeble existence. Some attempts to form

**Martin Thomas reviews 'Solidarity and the Soviet Worker', by Elizabeth Teague (Croom Helm)**

independent trade unions were also reported from the Ukraine in 1980. The bureaucrats seem to have succeeded in preventing the example of Solidarnosc giving any major new impulse to such efforts.

Thus the official trade unions retain their monopoly. As Teague reports, "they are not authentic workers' organisations but quasi-governmental institutions viewed by the state as instruments to mobilise workers behind its goals".

The official unions operate something like a combination of company personnel departments and the DHSS — dealing with individual workers' complaints, paying out bonuses to workers or teams that perform well, running sports facilities, and administering social welfare benefits. They also run holiday facilities, and often distribute the housing under the control of the workplace.

All this makes the unions important — but it has nothing to do with representing workers. The unions never call strikes, and

their officials are chosen by the Communist Party bureaucracy rather than by the workers — so that the head of the secret police can be moved to the top position in the trade unions as a mere shift from department to department!

Strikes, and other forms of industrial action such as go-slows, do happen fairly often in the USSR. According to Teague, the strikes usually last only a few hours, or at most a day or so, and the authorities have a standard way of dealing with them. They grant the workers' economic demands — a survey of 75 strikes found only six in which the workers had not won — they jail the strike organisers or send them to mental hospital, and they make sure the media report nothing.

Teague quotes a Russian industrial worker interviewed while on holiday in the West: "The Polish people have awoken to an awareness of their rights... Eventually the same thing will happen in our country. But it will take time, for the consciousness of our people is impregnated with fear born of the tragic fate that has always been Russia's".

Such fear can be translated and rationalised into a hostility to strikes as "chaos", rather than a direct admission that people do not dare to stand up for themselves because of the risk of repression.

Thus the reported hostility to Solidarnosc. But will Gorbachev's reforms lift the fear?

They may do, but not by Gorbachev's intention. Teague shows that Gorbachev has been associated with a group in the Kremlin leadership which included Andropov, calling for a drive for more labour discipline rather than the consensus, muddle-along policy of Brezhnev and Chernenko. Gorbachev's economic programme inescapably implies speed-up, an attack on job security and wage cuts for a substantial number of workers. But that in turn implies that the bureaucracy's traditional method for containing and limiting strikes becomes less effective.

And any easing of central control on the media must increase the chance of workers becoming aware of successful strikes by their comrades in other workplaces and cities. Teague points out that the areas of the USSR where Solidarnosc got most sympathy were the Baltic states and the Transcaucasus, the areas least under Moscow control and most open to the outside world.

Teague's book is informative, but politically not perceptive. Although she can see that an official 'trade union' in the USSR is not the same as the organism of like name in the West, she is unable to recognise that 'union', 'soviet' and 'party' meant something very different in Lenin's day from what they denote in the USSR today.

## WHERE WE STAND

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

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

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

anti-socialist bureaucracies.

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

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and

gays.

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

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

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

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

**SOCIALIST ORGANISER**

**Britain's death squad exposed!**

Ulster cops did shoot to kill

The Tories new homeless

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# Travelling North

WOMAN'S  
EYE

**Belinda Weaver reviews 'Travelling North'**

When better-off old Australians retire, they seek out the sun. They move from Australia's temperate south to its tropical north.

*Travelling North*, a new film from Australia starring TV's Rumpole, Leo McKern, is the story of one man's retirement to what should be paradise — a house in the tropics with a beautiful view, fish in the estuary, and a happy relationship with a younger woman.

What Frank makes of it is comedy and tragedy. He has been a successful civil engineer. Not too successful — he's an ex-Communist Party member who has stayed true to his ideals, and has suffered blacklisting — but he has done all right. He can afford to retire to paradise, and slow down from his frenetic Melbourne pace to the more leisurely mode of the North Australians.

As he travels north, he is looking ahead, with no regrets. His companion, Frances, has more ties, and she feels torn. Two daughters claim her attention in Melbourne.

Both are married women with children, but they seem hardly grown up at all. They cling to Frances. One of the daughters, Helen, can only dish out poison or self-pity. The corrosive rivalries of childhood still have real meaning for her. She constantly whines about the rotten deal she got as an eight year old.

Her sister Sophie is a little better-adjusted, but her husband is a pompous windbag who puts her down for not having a university education. She has a chip on her shoulder, too.

Frances feels responsible for this unpromising pair. She knows her own past shortcomings as a mother, so she tries to make up for it, by helping out, in her calm, detached way.

But we can see what attracts her to Frank, who is the very opposite of the girls. He frankly enjoys life, likes food and music and beauty and sex; he is strong-willed, independent, outward-looking and positive.



Leo McKern as Frank

But he is also getting older. Will Frances have to become his nursemaid? What will their lives be like? Will the daughters cope with Mumma two thousand miles away?

There are lots of laughs along the way. The film's writer, David Williamson, is Australia's best-known playwright, renowned for

his clever one-liners. Williamson has put in the odd bit of political comment — Frank and his new neighbour Freddie argue about the Vietnam war, South Africa is discussed.

But it's not really central to the plot. The film's main concern is Frank's adjustment as he grows

older, realises his dependence on others, and faces truths about how he behaves to those he loves. It's also a celebration of Frank's determination and love of life.

It's a touching story. Frank is a living, breathing creation, who commands our sympathy and respect.

# Pure energy pollution

The age of electricity and electronics has given us a new form of pollution — not from nasty chemicals but from pure energy. And this is not energy in the form of X-rays, ultra-violet etc, the dangers of which are well known. Unlike these, the energy pollution from electricity is harmless (on the whole) to humans.

It is also undetectable unless they have a special instrument known as a radio! This pollution is in the form of radio waves. It can be a severe nuisance and even, sometimes, a danger.

All electro-magnetic radiation is caused by the movement of electrons. At the speed they move in ordinary electric currents or sparks, radiowaves, radar or microwaves are produced. The process is reversible — radiowaves cause electric currents in suitable bits of metal which are then behaving as aerials. Unfortunately, any piece of metal can act as an aerial.

Nowadays, radiowaves are generated by all sorts of equipment — radio, radar and TV transmitters (including two-way radios, radio



telephones, CB radios), lightning, fluorescent lights, car ignition systems, dimmer switches, overhead power lines, microwave ovens, electric motors. The result of all these is "electronic smog", generating electric currents in all sorts of "aerials". Some effects are just irritating — poor reception and interference on TV and radio, a rhythmic crackle from an electric drill, taxi firm messages on the hi-fi, blips on the screen from air port radar).

More seriously, electronic smog can cause currents in a computers' circuits. Such unwanted currents can cause malfunctions, ranging from 'corrupting' information in memory, 'crashing' (halting) a program in mid-run or causing the computer to "freeze" and ignore commands from the keyboard. In one case, computer printers were switched on by impulses generated by fluorescent lights.

Incidentally, radiowaves from

computer VDUs can be picked up as far away as several hundred meters, leading to the possibility of electronic eavesdropping.

When computers are controlling complex machinery, the results can be catastrophic. Modern fighter aircraft rely greatly on computers to control the engines and wing and tail flaps. In 1984, a West German Tornado crashed after flying too close to high power transmitters beaming "Voice of America" and "Radio Free Europe" to the USSR.

Military equipment is generally designed to resist electronic smog but civilian equipment is not, as TV crews found in the Falklands. Their video cameras and recorders would not work on the Task Force ships. Pictures and sound were blemished by blips and bleeps from ship's radar. Sound recorders fused as their transistors were burnt out.

In Britain, proposed high power transmitters near Stratford-upon-Avon for the BBC World Service were scrapped after complaints from the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Simulating the effects of these transmitters resulted in the electronic stage lighting stopping working. Programmed data for lighting changes were lost (and electronic typewriter memories were

wiped).

Elsewhere, highpower transmitters in Saudi Arabia electrified the King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh. It contains 20 km of steel wire on steel masts 60m high. Such high currents were induced that sparks jumped to cranes, burning several construction workers.

Scientific research can also be affected. Leaking microwave ovens can interfere with radio telescopes kilometres away. Electronic smog can interfere with British Telecom's new digital telephone exchanges. A new cause of worry must be electronic systems in cars. Where these are controlling anti-lock brakes, sudden failure could be fatal.

Potentially most disastrous are the effects of electronic smog on military computers. Where missiles or missile detection systems are computerised, accidental or deliberate interference could be critical. The US's latest missiles are not very reliable at the best of times!

An atomic bomb causes a massive electromagnetic pulse capable of fusing transistorised equipment over a large area. Would military computers be immune? Would they start doing their own thing?

## Designer women

By Lynn Ferguson

Are you a 'post-feminist woman'? Otherwise known as 'new woman', post feminist woman (pfw for short) is the current obsession of advertising executives, the editors of women's magazines and daytime TV presenters.

The Mail on Sunday considers the whole phenomenon so important that it devoted a 28 page supplement to her (oh, that important?)

But who is this pfw? According to the editor of Femal she is "modern, thrusting, refreshingly direct", "The modern Cleopatra, stylish, clean, and sharp"... The adjectives gush on and on. She's a member of BUPA, wears Calvin Klein underwear and Alain frocks and subscribes to Vogue and the Economist.

Examples include Shere Hite, Alexis Carrington and Margaret Thatcher. Yes you get it, the essential point is she's filthy rich.

Post feminist woman doesn't need feminism and doesn't give a damn about other women. She'll be a combination of overt sexuality and hard-headed determination to get to where she wants to be. Echoes of Edwina Currie here.

If other women can't do it — well that's their fault, isn't it? They clearly aren't presenting their assets appetisingly enough. The message is clear — forget all this silly fuss about women's liberation — you can jump your way to the top.

Post feminist woman isn't really that new, of course. Remember the previous incarnations — Superwoman, Cosmo woman, and their go-getting sisters — women who glide through life with a career, designer kids (should they be the appropriate accessory at the time) hold lavish dinner parties (viz the notorious Gold Blend advert) and only have truck with men who can provide multiple orgasms.

So what's the difference? Part of the hype is obviously that its an advertising angle. Research showed that most women were sick and tired of being depicted as strange creatures who go weak at the knees over a box of Persil.

So, enter post feminist woman in stilettos and designer dress, dumping her man but keeping the car, whizzing off on business trips, taping business reports into her portable Amstrad. She doesn't have anything to do with the lives of most women — but then neither did the happy smiling housewife with the gleaming kitchen.

But there's a political background too. It's ten years since the disintegration of the British women's movement. Apart from a few one-off campaigns there has been no collective organisation of women for a long time.

This has gone hand in hand with a shift in feminist writing towards personal growth, away from changing the world towards individual women making it within the system.

Meanwhile the workforce is changing — more women are going out to work than ever before. Only a tiny minority are in top-paid jobs. In the main the growth has been in low-paid, part-time jobs in the service sector. Most women are juggling responsibility for kids and husband with a boring job.

On one level the pfw does reflect the real world — the myth that most women are just wives and mothers can't be sustained any longer. Pfw is of course another myth — but then realism won't sell the goods will it?

# Fight back in CPSA!

By Trudy Saunders

The annual conference of the civil service union CPSA, last week in Bournemouth, was a disaster for the left and a disaster for all CPSA members.

We return to our branches, to build support against the Tories and their vicious plans for the Civil Service, in the shadow of a newly-elected right wing (so-called 'moderate') National Executive Committee who have no intention of supporting members in struggle.

The Broad Left won policy debates at both Section and National Conferences for example on bringing full-time officers pay in line with that of the members. But some damaging right-wing motions were also passed.

We took a massive step back when the Special Pay Conference was dispensed with. Motions passed on a Long-Term Pay System are likely to mean the new NEC will agree to Performance and Regional Pay.

More serious than the defeat on the NEC was the defeat on the DHSS Section Executive Committee (SEC) — the largest SEC in the CPSA and a Broad Left stronghold for the last seven years. The most serious Tory attacks will take place on members in the DHSS.

The newly elected SEC, which is dominated by 'moderates' and the mis-named 'Broad Left', have told members they can negotiate away all our problems. They are lying and they know it.

Clearly, in the coming year, it will

be up to the rank and file to organise. It will be up to activists on the left to take the lead. We cannot allow the right-wing to scupper industrial action in defence of our jobs and conditions of service.

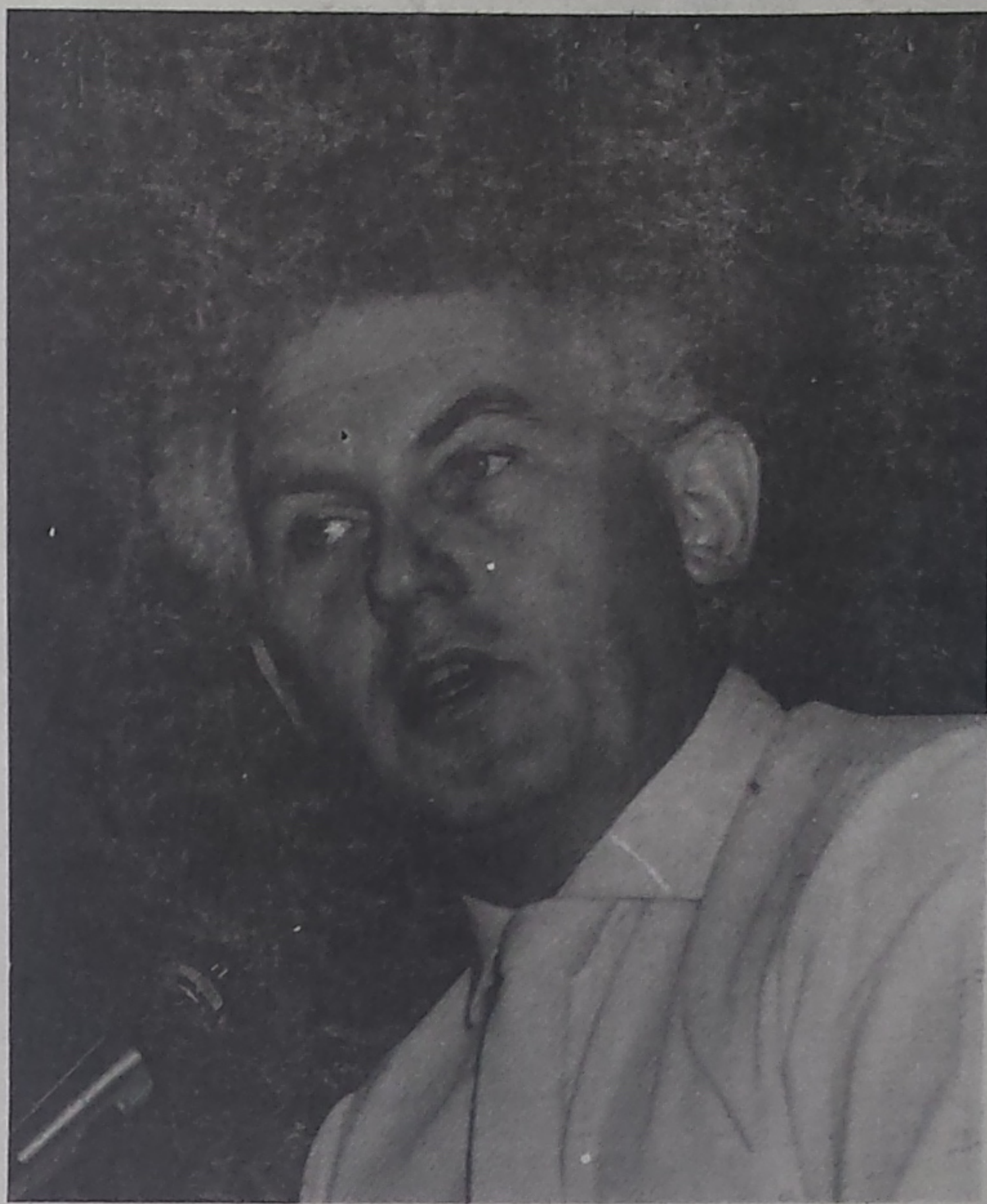
So why did the Broad Left suffer such a crushing defeat? The answer lies partly in the alliance between the 'moderates' and the 'Broad Left '84'. It also lies in the lack of any real fighting alternative offered to members by the outgoing Militant-dominated NEC and DHSS SEC.

There can be no half-way house between the 'moderates' policy of lying-down and dying in the face of Tory attacks and the alternative put forward by Socialist Caucus (the left in the Broad Left which includes Socialist Organiser supporters), or organising the rank and file to take on the Tories and win.

This year's results have proved beyond all doubt that it is not enough — as Militant supporters believe — to simply win positions for left-wingers in the union. Substituting electoralism for campaigning and building among the rank and file can only lead to defeat.

With the present leadership and Government attacks, the fight to rebuild the left in the union and win struggles on the ground will be an uphill battle.

Militant supporters are talking about the inevitability of the membership moving to the left to ensure a victory next year. It will not be that easy. Activists should join the Socialist Caucus and build a real fighting alternative both to the current leadership of the Broad Left and the 'moderate' leadership of the union.



## Support for Hither Green

By Cate Murphy

CPSA conference last week voted overwhelmingly to support the Hither Green strikers in their fight to kick out the fascist Malcolm Skeggs from their workplace.

27 of the 28-strong branch have been out for over five weeks after refusing to work with ex-NF member Skeggs, now no.5 in the British National Party hierarchy.

At a meeting two weeks ago the strikers voted to organise a one-day strike on 26 May of all South London CPSA members and three weeks of selective two-day strike action at South

East London DHSS offices. They saw this as the first step in their campaign to mobilise all London CPSA members for all-out indefinite strike action.

They rejected the call from the SWP for immediate all-out indefinite strike action, because any immediate ballot for such action would be lost. The strikers would then be left isolated, and open to victimisation by management. And Skeggs would still be in the workplace.

The SWP's response was to stay away from the picket line, and, at CPSA conference, to put out a petition calling for support for their line, in opposition to that of the strikers. Anyone refusing to sign their petition was called a 'scab'.

### UCW

## Exec must be called to order

By Pete Keenlyside

This year's UCW conference in Bournemouth is likely to be dominated by two main issues — pay, and the debate over the shorter working week campaign.

There was a real possibility that this year's pay negotiations were going to remain unresolved by conference. This would have given delegates the chance to discuss the issue and decide tactics.

As it is, barely a week before conference the executive have cobbled together a new deal which they are recommending for acceptance and which is going to a branch ballot.

The deal itself consists of a £150 lump sum, to cover the period from 1 April to the beginning of September, a £6 a week

increase from September, plus £2.50 a week that will not be consolidated into basic pay, and a 2.75% increase from next April to last until October.

We've had some complicated pay deals over the years, but this one is ludicrous. The main effect will be to hold basic pay rates down, saving the Post Office money on overtime and shift payments, and to move the pay date from April to October. The deal should be thrown out, but because of the branch ballot delegates probably will not be given a chance to discuss it. If that is the case, then a fringe meeting on the issue should be arranged to give delegates the chance to say that they think.

What is going to be discussed is what happened to the shorter working week campaign. Rather than put up a fight, the executive simply ignored what conference last year told them to do.

The deal they finally rammed through

was so shoddy that many members are unlikely to see any improvement in their hours and conditions at all, and some may even end up worse off. As a result, there are four motions of no confidence in the executive, and 15 amendments to the Annual Report, censuring the executive for their conduct during the dispute.

Conference should pass these, if only to show the executive that they can't get away with it. There is no point in having a conference if its decisions are ignored where they go against the wishes of the leadership.

Unfortunately, even if they are passed, the practical effects of these resolutions will be limited. The executive for the coming year has already been elected, and for the most part it is the same old shower as last year. Until there is an organised opposition capable of replacing them, very little will change.

Another issue that has attracted a lot

of amendments — 22 in all — is the so-called team briefings. These are the monthly pep talks that management give us to make sure that we're all behaving.

During the shorter working week dispute they were used to put across anti-union propaganda, so the vast majority of the amendments are calling for UCW members to refuse to take part in them. As refusal would threaten the happy family atmosphere that exists in the Post Office at the moment, these amendments will no doubt be opposed by the executive.

Aside from the shorter working week, probably the sharpest debate will come over the leadership's views on share ownership. They seem to believe that the way forward for unions is for all their members to buy shares in the company they work for. The leadership can then hold all these shares in proxy, go along to the shareholders' meeting, and bingo! socialism.

Of course this is nonsense. All it would mean is our 'leaders' sitting around the table with British Telecom directors without having to bother about giving a lead to the membership. Even more dangerously, it would disarm any campaign against Post Office privatisation before it got off the ground.

Delegates should therefore support composite 1B, composite amendment 3A, and the motion from Twickenham and Richmond Amalgamated which argue against this policy.

On the issue of amalgamation with the NCU, a number of amendments welcome the initiative taken by that union and call on the executive to make every effort to bring the merger talks to a speedy conclusion.

These talks have been going on for years without getting anywhere, but merger in the near future would be a big step forward for communication workers. The big danger is that the merger could take place at the expense of the members, leaving the new union even more bureaucratically run than the two existing ones. Composite amendment 2B seeks to put the negotiations into some sort of democratic framework, including the election of national officers every five years and Executive Council members annually.

### Seafarers

## 200 jobs lost in Scotland

Asked for their comments on the situation in Scotland after the decision of the NUS National Executive to call off 'secondary' action, members of the Leith (Edinburgh) NUS Strike Committee told SO:

MOST companies in Aberdeen, where the North Sea supply vessels operate from, had agreed to take back the sacked men. This morning, though, it turns out that most of them are now refusing to take them on again. None of them are ever going to recognise the union.

The Maersk company has flown in three Cape Verde crews from Amsterdam for their supply vessels. One Star Offshore vessel now has a Cape Verde crew, and so too has a Bue supply vessel. We believe that the Cape Verde crews that have been flown in are non-certificated.

P&O has brought up officers from Newcastle for some of its Scottish ferries. It's a case of members of NJMAST (the officers' union) doing the jobs of NUS members. And P&O is

also using a Danish vessel and crew to take cargoes to the Orkney and Shetland Isles, work normally done by P&O ferries.

To replace sacked NUS members P&O has started employing people who have been sacked before for things like fighting or fiddling the till. The adverts in the papers did not even say they needed qualifications or anything.

The situation in Scotland is back to normal for those guys who can go back to normal. But the situation in Aberdeen, Fraserburgh, Montrose, and Peterhead, where the offshore supply vessels operate from, is serious because of the companies going back on their word.

The feeling in Scotland is that we are angry at what's happening, angry about the action being called off.

We've gained nothing out of the strike. We came out in support of our colleagues in the South. But now the situation in the South is the same as before and we've lost 200 jobs in Scotland.

There's a lot of anger throughout the

country. Members in Leith are angry, and that's where the Executive had its meeting yesterday. We've had a phone call from Liverpool and they're very angry there as well.

It's not the union we're blaming, it's the courts. The union was forced to take the decision it did. Fear of reprisals and court action lay behind it.

The union has already been fined £300,000, with companies taking us to court for secondary action.

Why wasn't P&O prepared to go to arbitration? Because they knew they would lose.

We still need as much support as possible, because the Dover campaign is still going on, and Aberdeen is in a serious situation. We've had donations from Labour Party and union branches.

In the Leith docks, TGWU dockers refused to cross picket lines until the secondary action had been called off. We'd like to make a point of thanking them for this.

Donations, in cash, to NUS office, East Old Dock, Leith, Edinburgh, or to Edinburgh Trades Council, 12 Picardy Place, Edinburgh.

## NUPE: NHS is the key issue

By Tony Dale

The Health Service will dominate the conference of the public employees' union NUPE, to be held in Blackpool from 22 May.

Last year's conference, taking place a few days before the general election, pinned all its hope on Thatcher being defeated at the polls. 1988 sees the Tories back in No. 10; but the run-up to conference has also seen health workers fighting the cuts.

The Conference ought to be an opportunity to organise our forces to take on the Tories over the NHS. Will it?

The Executive's proposal for the next stage in the campaign is a "round Britain relay" run! Olympic torches will be carried from 4 regions to London for NHS day on 5 July. All very nice, but there is no plan of action for the mass of the membership.

The report very selectively mentions events in the campaign so far. No mention is made of the regional days of action in February or the action around budget day. On these days thousands of NUPE members, other health workers and wider sections of the trade union movement took strike action to defend the NHS.

But according to the Executive the only events worth mentioning in the campaign were the January strike by North Manchester nurses and the TUC rally on 5 March.

It is no wonder the Executive doesn't mention the action in February or on 14 March as their role was downright disgraceful. As NUPE and CoHSE stewards, in the absence of any national lead, tried to keep the ball rolling, NUPE officials were ignoring, undermining or directly opposing the action.

Around budget day both NUPE and CoHSE called for a day of action. The problem was each had the day of action on a different day! CoHSE wanted 14 March, so NUPE then said 15 March!

The NHS debate promises to be lively, with resolutions criticising the role of the union leadership, calling for backing for strike action by health workers and supporting wider solidarity action.

The conference must call the leaders into line. The one lesson we must not miss is that we can't rely on a lead from NUPE nationally. The conference could be an important arena to organise a national health workers shop stewards movement to mobilise a rank and file campaign.

Local government is the other main sector where NUPE members are facing service cuts and job losses. Again, the Executive report is inadequate. General opposition to the Tory plans for privatisation, poll tax, educational bill and housing bill is not enough.

The problem for many NUPE members is that the cuts they face have been voted through by Labour councils. How we fight privatisation and our attitude to Labour councils making cuts are the real issues conference needs to discuss.

Many resolutions do point the way forward — backing industrial action against privatisation and opposing Council cuts. General opposition to the Tory plans is good, but needs to be combined with a fight against the cuts on the ground.

Finally, many delegates will be discussing the Labour leadership battle. Tony Benn is due to speak at a fringe meeting. If we need NUPE to change direction and adopt a more active, campaigning fight to defend jobs and services then we need to get the same in the political wing of the movement.

That means a change of course for the Labour Party — a switch from chasing after the mythical yuppie vote to backing an all out fight against the Tories.

Remember Neil Kinnock's lukewarm support for the health workers — mobilise a NUPE vote for Benn and Heffer!

# NUS leaders responsible for P&O climb-down



## Strike over sacking

By Peter Bird

NALGO members in the Inner London Education Authority have recently staged walkouts in protest over the sacking of a shop steward in the Careers Service.

The steward concerned is a careers officer with seven years experience in local government, who joined ILEA last November. He has been dismissed for supposedly "failing to reach the required standards of the service". NALGO totally rejects management's claims of poor performance and views the sacking as victimisation of a trade unionist.

It is presently NALGO policy not to cooperate with any form of probationary assessment or staff appraisal until a negotiated code of practice has been agreed with the unions. Systems of staff assessment currently operating within the Authority are open to all sorts of abuse by managers, especially in the present climate of cuts and redeployment. The steward has effectively been sacked for following union policy.

NALGO is outraged by the failure of management to follow any agreed procedure for disciplining shop stewards. In addition, grievances invoked by the steward have been completely ignored.

In response, members in the Careers Service in Tower Hamlets took a day's strike action, and workers in other shops walked out in support. A Branch meeting has been called for this Thursday (19 May) to call for widespread action.

Resolutions of support have been received from ILTA, East London Teachers Association, Tower Hamlets Trades Council and some Inner London Labour Party wards. Your union or LP ward can help by sending resolutions to Neil Fletcher, ILEA leader, Deirdre Wood, chair of Staffing Committee, and Herman Ousely, chief executive, calling for the immediate reinstatement of the steward and an inquiry into management's conduct.

By John Bloxam

Last Thursday, 12th, the National Union of Seamen (NUS) Executive decided to call off all solidarity action. It was a major climb-down.

It left the union with large fines to pay and nothing in return; and it left isolated the P&O strikers at Dover and the seafarers — particularly in Liverpool and Aberdeen — who have been victimised for sympathy strike action.

The Executive say they had to climb-down to prevent the union being 'split in two'. The solidarity action by Sealink workers was beginning to crack. Fishgard seafarers were on the point of doing the same. The lorry drivers' action had also been called off.

Certainly the striking seafarers were under considerable pressure. The shipping bosses were trying to drive them back to work by threats, victimisations and organising strike-breakers. On the Thursday itself Sealink strikers all received a letter threatening the sack if they did not return to work.

But the vast majority of strikers out in defence of their union were determined to withstand the pressure and would have continued to do so, given a clear lead.

The NUS leaders must therefore bear a heavy responsibility for the climb-down.

The NUS leaders had used the threat of additional fines to justify a 'softly, softly' approach to spreading the action. Strikers were left marking time, and the initiative was handed back to the shipping bosses. Little if anything was done to push other unions — in particular the TGWU and NUR — to organise solidarity action in the ports.

Indeed, the union leaders spent the first three days of last week trying to win a majority for the sell-out 'Sealink deal' at the national ferry ports committee. Although they were stopped there by the militants, the signals had clearly been sent out that the union leaders wanted to throw in the towel and call off the solidarity action.

It is not surprising that the waverers stated to crack almost immediately afterwards.

Once the NUS had called off its own solidarity action, solidarity from other workers became more difficult to get. By Saturday 14th, P&O had been able to start a skeleton strike-breaking service to Calais for the first time.

On Monday 16th militants put an emergency resolution to the NUS Conference in Hull calling for the resignation of all EC members who had voted for calling off the solidarity action. They were defeated 43-15.

So large a minority vote for most of the union leaders to resign, in a traditionally hierarchical union and with the Dover strike still on, showed the depth of anger at the EC's climb-down.

The TUC and Labour Party leaders suddenly found their full voice after the solidarity action was called off. Up to then they had combined often very effective propaganda for the seafarers with behind the scenes moves to stop solidarity action.

Last Thursday's Financial Times (12 May) reported:

"Initial hopes of securing wider support are believed to have been damped early on in the meeting by Mr. John Monks, TUC deputy



Photo Andrew Wiard

General Secretary. According to the NUS, hardline ship stewards were none too pleased to hear the TUC deputy General Secretary Mr. Monks tell them that they could not realistically expect other major unions, such as the NUR and TGWU transport union to stage strikes in their support given the legal restraints on secondary action."

Now the TUC and Labour leaders feel safe — and are happy to support the NUS's 'commercial war' against P&O, urging trade unionists to sail Sealink!

The core of the Dover P&O strikers are still solid. At a mass meeting on Saturday 14th only one striker voted to give up. After 15

weeks on strike, they deserve the full support of the labour movement, particularly financially and on the picket line.

A mass picket, march and rally has been called by the Joint NUS Support Groups (Dover): Saturday May 21st. Assemble 11am Elmsvale recreation ground, Elmsvale rd, Dover. Speakers include Arthur Scargill, Dennis Skinner MP, John McCreadie, Sam McLuskie, Paula Hanford (Chair LPYS) and Betty Heathfield. Bring your banners!

- Send money to the Seafarers Hardship Fund, c/o Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1 and local support committees.
- Aylesham Support Group, 61 Castle Drive, Whitfield, Dover, Kent. Tel: 0263 840202.

Kent. Tel: 0263 840202.

- Canterbury Support Group, 75 Tenterden Drive, Canterbury, Kent. Tel: 0227 66768.

- Deal Support Group, Magness House, Mill Hill, Deal, Kent. Tel: 0304 367840.

- Dover Support Group, 210 London Road, Dover, Kent. Tel: 0304 214113.

- Folkestone Support Group, 7 Tennyson Place, Folkestone, Kent. Tel: 0303 51997.

- Thanet Support Group, 147 High St., Ramsgate, Kent. Tel: 0843 587990.

- The London support group can be contacted at 33 Acton High St. or at the Hackney Trade Union Support Centre. Tel: 01-249 8086.

## Butty system back

from back page

that has happened there might then be no union tolerated in the pits.

It is still very difficult for the NUM to make headway against the UDM in the pits today. Management are making us fight every inch of the week. Following the recent dispute at Harworth, the manager there removed all NUM men from faces and headings. NUM membership still brings both threats and actual victimisations.

Even at Bevercotes, where the NUM is relatively strong and we have been able to retain our membership, we are all the time running just to stand still.

In my own case, we wrote a few weeks ago to the Coal Board saying that I am willing to start at Manton colliery, just give me a date. Since then we have heard nothing. What they do not understand is that, the more they put the screws on, the more it stiffens my resolve.

There was much speculation last week about the EETPU leaving the TUC and setting up an alternative trade union centre with organisations like the UDM. There is a lot of hostility to the EETPU from trade unionists, but the first thing to remember is that there are some damn good militants in the union.

What is needed is a campaign amongst the rank and file of the union to stop what their leadership is doing. The trade union movement is under major attack by the Tories — and the EETPU are talking about walking away from the TUC at the very time when inter-union solidarity is needed now more than ever.

Paul Whetton is a member of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

## CP scheme strike victory

By Sarah Cotterill

After a three week strike, 45 Community Programme workers in Wythenshawe, Manchester have returned to work with important gains.

Management at Wythenshawe Agency for Community Service (WACS) wanted to cut the workers' hours. As they are paid at an hourly rate this would have meant a wage cut of between £6.50 and £20.50 a week.

Director Bryan Southern wrote to workers giving one day's notice that the scheme was due to finish before time, but that they could continue working if they agreed to sign new contracts, including reduced working hours.

If they failed to accept they would be "deemed to have ter-

minated their employment" and therefore lose entitlement to benefit.

Southern claimed cuts had to be made now or the scheme would be in deficit. He is reported to have said "We're guessing. We don't know how long the money is going to last. But we're really good at guessing: we've done it before."

The strike followed an on-going dispute over union recognition. When it was set up the WACS scheme was agreed by the MSC, including reps from NALGO and NUPE.

Most of the workers joined the Transport and General Workers Union, but management refused to negotiate with the TGWU, claiming that NALGO and NUPE are the only recognised unions, even though they have few members on the scheme. Throughout the strike management continued to refuse to meet with TGWU reps.

Management were forced to back down when workers occupied the wages office. They won an increase on what management were offering though the pay will still be between £1 and £7 a week less than what it was before. Management have agreed to recognise both the TGWU and the local elected shop steward.

As a result membership of the T&G has gone up. The union is now pressing for an enquiry into financial irregularities on the scheme.

NUPE and NALGO officials have played an interesting role. They claim they were hoodwinked into accepting the wage cuts in the first place. They had few members on the scheme and didn't have a clue what was going on. Both unions are now calling on management to reject the deal reached with the TGWU, claiming that NALGO and NUPE should have sole negotiating rights.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Butty system back

WHETTON'S WEEK

Last week Tory minister Michael Spicer publicly admitted the government's aim to privatise the pits.

Already the Tories are talking about removing obstacles to open-cast coal production; allowing private investment in large colliery developments; and insisting that British Coal breaks even. They want to get a bill through Parliament for the development of deep-water berths at East coast ports like Immingham, which will give imported cheap coal direct access to many of the big Midlands power stations.

We have known for a long time that privatisation was their goal, and I am not at all surprised that they have publicly admitted it now. After privatisation of the electricity supply industry, privatisation of what pits remain when that happens is a logical continuation. We will have 45-50 super-pits, competing with cheap coal from places like Columbia, South Africa and 'Red China', with 9 hour shifts and 7 day working!

Coal Board boss Haslam is singing the same tune. In the latest issue of 'Coal News' he says the industry must break even by the end of this financial year, and couples this with a plea for no industrial action. It's like asking the condemned man in his cell to be silent while they are hammering the gallows up.

If the Coal Board really wants industrial peace, then they should do something about the 250-plus sacked and victimised miners still outside the gates. We need to line up with unions in power stations, and others faced with the same threat of privatisation. Without the support of other trade unionists we are not going to be able to fight it seriously.

Open-cast mining is one of the most profitable areas for the Coal Board. The work is generally subcontracted to private companies. The government want to see this expanded, immediately by removing some of the powers of local councils to hold up such developments on environmental grounds.

On this issue, the NUM has a great deal of public sympathy and awareness — because it involves great tracks of land being ripped up and convoys of coal lorries thundering through small rural villages.

There has been publicity over the last week about the system of contract working that is developing in some of the Notts pits, where teams of miners agree a price with the pit manager for doing a particular job, with large cash incentives for doing it before the allotted time. The inevitable result is extended shifts and weekend working. It is basically ad hoc weekend contracts and a return to the 'butty system'.

The 'butty system' was dreaded throughout the coal fields. The 'butty' did the deal with a particular manager and then organised a group of men to do the work, and he paid them at the end of the job.

Large bundles of cash are being dangled in front of men by the manager who wants to get particular jobs done. And there are many dangers. The men are virtually self-employed and the question of insurance is raised. Also, who is responsible for health and safety? It is a very dangerous precedent. Of course, the UDM support it — they will take anything on board, and dance according to any tune the management wants to play.

The UDM are so obviously being used by management. They are quite happy to see a return of the 'butty system', even though management is laying down the law for them more. Now UDM officials are being made to work down the pit, whereas before they were allowed to swan around on the pit top.

The UDM will exist as long as management requires them — certainly up until privatisation. Once

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Dover pickets: photo Andrew Wiard

# Judges try to murder a union

By Lynn Ferguson

The courts are trying to murder the seafarers' union. And P&O bosses are getting away with murdering passengers.

On a ship like the *Herald of Free Enterprise*, if P&O's plans go through, there will be 15 fewer crew members to avoid disasters or save passengers from drowning. Once again, P&O boss Jeffrey Sterling is sacrificing safety for profit.

Just how little P&O cared about the Zeebrugge disaster was exposed

last week in the *Daily Mirror*, when a sacked seaman revealed P&O's cover-up over another incident of a ferry leaving Zeebrugge with its bow doors open, several months after the sinking of the *Herald of Free Enterprise*.

Only yesterday, 16 May, came the news that a hero of the Zeebrugge disaster has been sacked by P&O.

Earlier in the strike, the courts were used to stop the National Union of Seamen organising a national strike ballot. So much for the

Tories' verbiage about trade union democracy! This dispute has shown up Tory trade union legislation for what it is — laws to stop unions making strikes effective, and a charter for union-busting bosses.

The NUS has had its assets of £2.8 million seized, and now faces fines and costs of £2.3 million even after its climbdown on secondary action. To fight for the union members' jobs and safety, and for passengers' safety, is illegal!

Thatcher shed crocodile tears over the loss of life in the Zeebrugge disaster. But P&O boss Jeffrey

Sterling is a Government adviser at the Department of Trade, and P&O is generous in its financial support for the Conservative Party; the Tories and P&O are hand-in-hand.

Tory law means that Sterling gets off scot free when people die because he puts profit above safety, while the NUS is stamped on. Ruling-class law puts profit before lives. If the seafarers are defeated and there is another disaster, the Government and P&O will have blood on their hands.

More on seafarers page 11