

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

INSIDE

Todd is right!

see page 6 and 7

After the Kremlin shake-up

Will Gorbachev allow free trade unions?

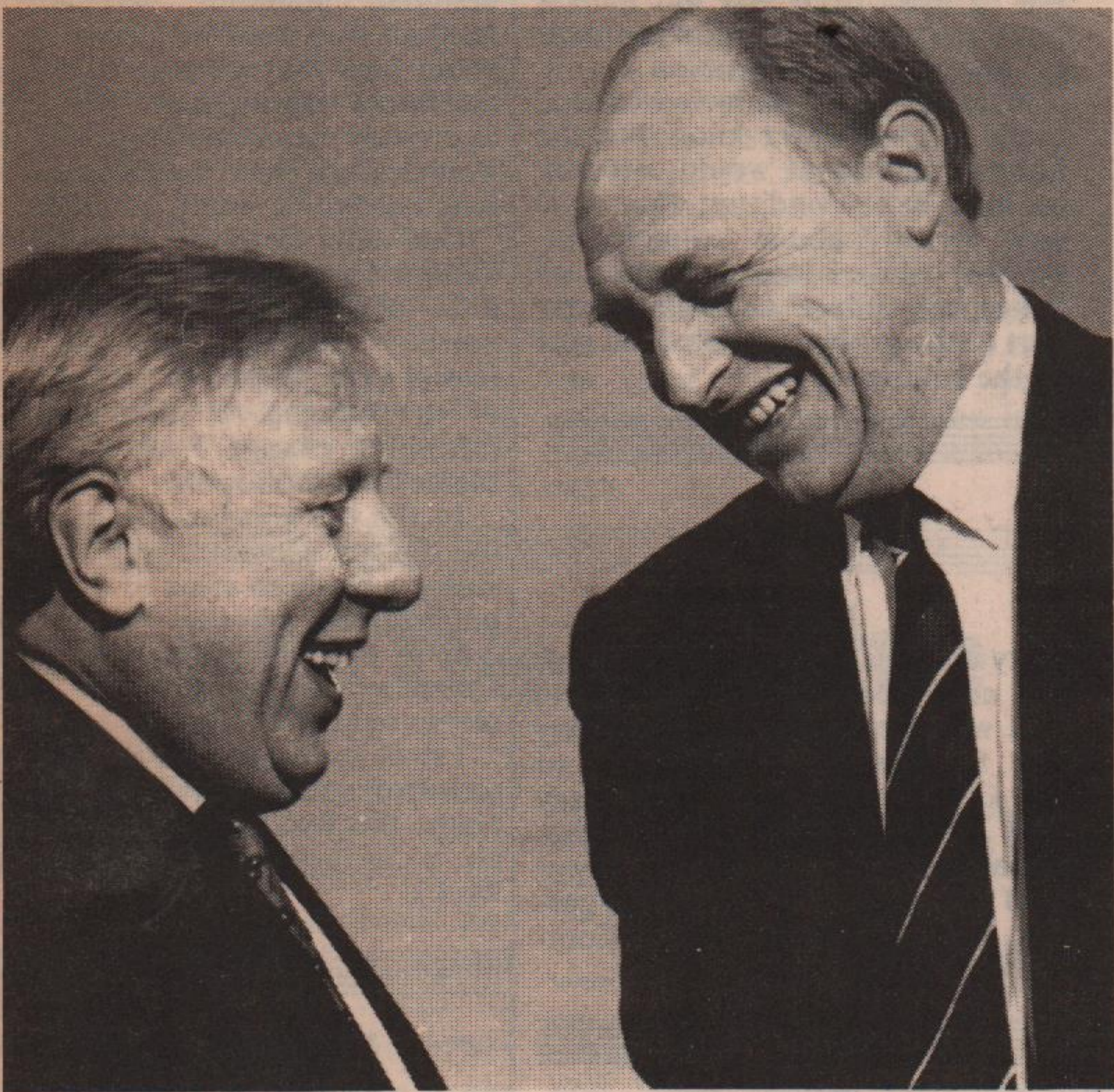


Photo John Harris

Now, unite the left!

Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley and their friends, in the Labour Party and the press, kicked up a great fuss because Benn and Heffer dared to challenge them for the leadership of the Labour Party.

It was a 'diversion' if not an outrage. It was an impudent refusal by the Left to accept defeat, if not downright lese majeste.

The Labour Party leadership rushed to change the rules so that it would be more difficult to challenge them in future.

But now that they have won the election, their tone has changed.

The election wasn't a 'diversion' after all, because it can be construed as a triumphant endorsement of everything that Kinnock and Hattersley stand for — now and in the future! This, of course, was to be expected. Kinnock and Hattersley forget what they have been saying because they want to improve on their victory over Benn and Heffer.

The danger now is that they will feel bold and confident enough to launch a new offensive, a mopping up operation, against the left. Egged on by the press, the Tory press which pours such scorn and contempt on them, they will surely be

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By Jill Mountford

Last week Mikhail Gorbachev defeated his main conservative fellow members of the leading committees of the so-called Communist Party of the Soviet Union and removed some of them from their posts of power and influence.

He had complained of entrenched bureaucratic resistance to his drive for 'perestroika' and 'glasnost' (restructuring and openness). He has been complaining about it for the three years he has been in power. The whole drive towards a comparative openness originated when Gorbachev found his efforts at economic reform blocked by the incumbent bureaucrats and decided he had to try to call outside forces into the battle against them. Thus: glasnost.

Now Gorbachev has shattered his opponents at the top of the ruling elite and made himself President. He has set up a series of new committees to help run the country. He is trying to ease the deadening vice-like grip of the elite, powerful so-called Communist Party on the state and industry.

Whether or not Gorbachev's victory at the top of the ruling bureaucracy will clear out the powerful banks of resistance at the lower layers of the bureaucracy remains to be seen. Resistance to innovation at those levels of the elite has, for over 20 years, stopped initiatives from the top for change.

How far will Gorbachev go?



How far does he want to go? Is Gorbachev — as many good socialists in Britain believe — about to usher in some variant of a democratic socialist system in the USSR? How can one judge from the distance?

There is one standard of judgement — sure and clear and precise: Will Gorbachev allow the workers of the USSR to organise trade unions to defend their interests? Will Gorbachev lessen the grip of the political police, which today force the workers of the USSR to belong to state-run pseudo trade unions? These unions are in fact mere organs of the management and not trade unions at all, not at all organs of working class self-defence against the plant management and the state which backs it.

This is surely the test. Even in vastly oppressive capitalist systems, from South Africa to Britain to Chile, the ruling class has been forc-

ed to allow — more or less grudgingly and reluctantly — trade unions. In the early '20s, Lenin fought for the right of trade unions to be independent of the state in the USSR.

When circumstances favoured them, the Polish working class in 1980 broke out of the management-serving police-state unions and created the 10 million strong free trade union, Solidarnosc.

Will Gorbachev allow those workers in the USSR who want free trade unions to organise them? Will Gorbachev stop persecuting the advocates of free trade unions in the USSR, who have been hounded, though sane, into lunatic asylums and some of them into early graves for fighting for the elementary right to working class organisation?

There is not the slightest sign that he will. Gorbachev is engaged in a limited reforming exercise. He does not want to overthrow the entrenched system of privileged and undemocratic bureaucratic rule created by Stalin, but only to modernise it and render it capable of survival in changing conditions.

If the ruling bureaucrats — who lyingly say their system is socialism — allowed the workers to organise freely, the working class would soon begin to ask basic questions about the nature of the system live in, and about the right of the bureaucrats to rule over society.

That's why Solidarnosc was outlawed in Poland in December 1981, after eighteen months of legality. Gorbachev is trying to reform the existing system.

Part of his plan is to create

turn to page 2

Glasgow: a divided city

By Ian McCalman

Glasgow has recently been the focus of a great deal of media attention, including a *Sunday Times* colour supplement and a series of four one-hour programmes on Channel 4.

The Garden Festival and designation as European City of Culture for 1990 typify what is regarded as the efflorescence of Glasgow as a City, casting off the image of brutality and poverty as depicted in *No Mean City*.

Undoubtedly over the past decade there has been a transformation of the Glasgow City Centre with extensive restoration, stone cleaning and rebuilding. Money, a good deal of it channelled from the Scottish Development Agency (SDA) has been ploughed into a new Exhibition Centre, the Garden Festival and other developments.

The result has been the creation of many new jobs in the service sector, the burgeoning of private housing near the city centre, improved shopping and entertainment facilities and a generally improved image, summed up in the slogan, 'Glasgow's Miles Better'.

At the same time, however, there has been a continued undercurrent of concern as to how far this process of change has been purely superficial, masking the reality of lost jobs in the manufacturing sector and accelerating poverty and substandard housing, especially in the peripheral schemes.

Glasgow, like so many British cities, has got not so much an 'inner city' as an 'outer city' problem in that the bulk of postwar council house building was in the form of peripheral schemes, such as Drumchapel, Easterhouse, Pollock and Castlemilk. These were often built in haste to cope with a crisis situation, consisted of rows of bleak tenements and lacked adequate community facilities. Nevertheless, they were a marked improvement for thousands of working-class families, escaping from the squalor

of the crumbling inner city tenements.

What has made life less bearable in these schemes over the past ten years has been the massive extent of the cuts in the housing budget perpetrated by the Tory government. The result has been a halt to new building, a deterioration in the repair and maintenance of property and rapidly increasing rent levels. The Grieve Report on Glasgow's housing problems, published last year, revealed the size of the problem facing Western Europe's largest housing authority, a problem requiring massive government investment for its solution.

These problems are compounded for many working-class people by the extent of unemployment over the current decade. Recent government figures suggest an improvement in this aspect but the reality is masked by massaging of the figures, ersatz 'employment schemes' and a continuing net emigration, with 14,500 leaving Scotland in 1987, mainly for the South East of England. Unrelenting government cutbacks in the social security system have also worsened the situation.

This concentration of factors underlies the growing polarisation in British society, so graphically etched on the face of Glasgow.

One is reminded of a paragraph from Lewis Grassic Gibbon's essay *Glasgow* written in the interwar period when he wrote with pardonable exaggeration:

'But I cannot play with those fantasies when I think of the hundred and fifty thousand (working-class poor) in Glasgow. I find I am by way of being an intellectual myself. I meet and talk with many people whose interests are art and letters and music, enthusiasm for this and that aspect of craft and architecture, men and women who have very warm beliefs indeed regarding the ancient culture of Scotland, people to whom Glasgow is the Hunterian Museum with its fine array of Roman coins, or the Galleries with their equally fine ar-



ray of pictures. "Culture" is the motif-word of the conversation: ancient Scots culture, future Scots culture, culture ad lib and ad nauseam.... The patter is as intimate on my tongue as on theirs. And relevant to the fate and being of those hundred and fifty thousand it is no more than the chatter and scratch of a band of apes, seated in a pit on a midden or corpses.'

Yet today we have in Glasgow a solidly Labour council, proud of their support for 'progressive policies' and almost impervious to criticism. The paradoxical situation is that they now face opportunities to redevelop the inner city area and provide decent housing in the centre of the city for working-class people. The huge site of the Garden Festival will be ready for house building when that event ends.

But already the land has become the property of Laings, the property developer who not only has had the land prepared for building by the SDA but has been compensated for

'inconvenience' over the past few years by being awarded lucrative sites across the city. In the image of London Docklands, the site, with its marinas, helicopter pads and first class restaurants and bars, will become the magnet for housing development well beyond the dreams of the working people of Glasgow.

Yet the origins of this situation do not lie in this or that property deal: they lie in the decision taken by the Glasgow Labour Council, along with so many others throughout Britain, in the early days of the Thatcher governments not to wage open war but to box clever, go for 'creative accountancy' and peaceful persuasion.

Whether we would have won that battle we will never know but the Labour movement would certainly be in a fitter condition than it is now, with Labour councils inevitably sucked into the ambit of 'enterprise culture' and increasingly part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

THIS SPORTING LIFE

A declining game

By Janine Booth

Over the last few years, many football commentators (both professional and amateur) have speculated as to the reasons behind the decline of matchday attendances.

The demise of Saturday morning working, the omnipresent TV set, the arrival of other sports, the development of alternatives in entertainment, the rise of the football hooligan and the ravages of unemployment and low pay which have priced soccer out of the price range of millions of pockets, have all been blamed for the steady fall in attendances.

But an enormously significant factor seems to go forever ignored. It is the simple fact that if as many women attended soccer matches as men, many of the games financial troubles would be over.

Yet women do not flock to soccer. Part of the blame can be apportioned to stupid social conditioning, fostered through an education system which encourages only boys to take an interest, and a society which allocates women's Saturday afternoons to shopping, child-minding or housework.

Attitudes must change, the basis of society must change but in the immediate, it is time to put the case for childcare at soccer matches. I am sick of having fat, smug, besuited, pompous, self-satisfied football club chairmen wittering on about how they want to turn football into a 'family game', but refuse to provide the means which will free women from their domestic ties for long enough to watch a match.

One club, however, is gloriously exempt from this tirade. Millwall F.C. operate a creche for supporters' children, and for this reason I am pleased to see them top of the League. It also makes a refreshing change from the usual Merseyside monopoly.

In the not too-far-distant future the Sports Column will be providing a guide to some of the better publications amongst the current crop of football fanzines. So, if you come across a particular gem, please send it in. Ta.

I shall leave you with the first in a series of sporting trivia questions. Name the five football teams with an 'x' in their names (answer next week).

A letter from Greece

By Ian Swindale

The sudden departure of Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu to a London hospital highlights once more the peculiarities of Greek party politics.

Apart from the Communist Party there is no tradition in Greece of permanent, stable political parties. None of the main political parties today, apart from the CP existed prior to the Junta.

Greek parties are often built around individual personalities and their fortunes are entirely linked to the fortunes of their leaders. PASOK is no exception. Papandreu has kept a vice-like grip over the Party and there has long been speculation as to whether this nominally socialist party would survive once Papandreu was no longer in charge.

This speculation has of course grown rapidly in recent weeks as a result of the question mark placed over Panandreu's health. Were Papandreu to be forced to retire from political life PASOK is unlikely to survive as a party even until the general election scheduled for next June. The in-fighting between the different tendencies would almost certainly result in the col-

lapse of the government and immediate elections. Already the two vice-prime ministers are vying with each other to establish themselves as the rightful substitute should Papandreu remain out of action for any length of time.

Papandreu himself however, shows no sign of relinquishing any of his power, and particularly not to any single rival. He is, in effect, running the government of Greece from St Thomas' Hospital. Direct telephones, telex and fax communications with Athens have been installed in the hospital to enable Papandreu to carry out his functions.

Papandreu has always manoeuvred to prevent any serious challenge to his leadership. Cabinet reshuffles every few months have removed from power all of the original cabinet members of 1981 with the single exception of Arts Minister Melina Mercour.

Now, with the Salonica International Trade Fair about to take place he is having to work overtime to stop any of his ministers trying to promote themselves in his absence. The trade fair is a major annual event for the Greek government and Papandreu usually uses it to make a major speech on the Greek economy.

This year he can't attend and so has divided the two main speeches and the press conference between

the two vice-prime ministers and the economic ministers.

Whatever the uncertainties arising from the absence of Papandreu from Athens one thing is clear. Health permitting Papandreu himself intends to lead the party into the elections next year.

Already it seems, he is preparing an electoral law (in Greece the ruling

party chooses the method by which the next election will take place) that will prepare for the possibility that PASOK will come second to the Conservative New Democracy next June, but which will enable Papandreu to remain in power with the support of the smaller parties, independents or even the Communist Party.

Will Gorbachev allow free trade unions?

From page 1

unemployment so as to 'discipline' the workers and push up productivity. These are plans the workers will resist.

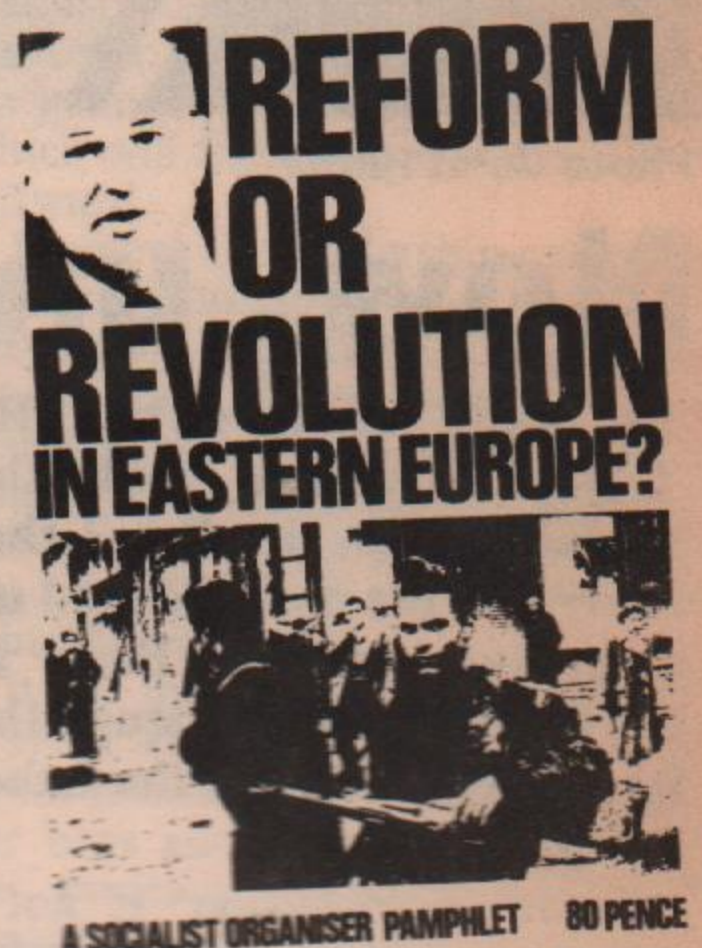
Socialists in Britain should be glad of every lessening of the iron grip of the state over people of the USSR. We should critically support Gorbachev's 'glasnost'. But we should resist the temptation to imagine Gorbachev is on our side, that Gorbachev is going to usher in working class democratic socialism. No he isn't, any more than did the other reforming Stalinist Tsar, Nikita Krushchev in the ten years he ruled the USSR.

Socialists in Britain must side with

the working class in the USSR. Just as we demand and champion democratic rights for the working class in South Africa or Chile, or everywhere else, we must do the same for the Russian working class.

And we must judge and assess Gorbachev and his reforms by what they mean for the working class in the USSR, and by whether or not they really free that working class from the rusty shackles of the totalitarian Stalinist state.

Will Gorbachev allow free trade unions? According to what we can see of what's going on in the USSR now, and in the light of 60 years of experience of how Stalinist bureaucracies rule, there can only be one answer to that question: Like Hell he will!



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Now, unite the left!

EDITORIAL

From front page

tempted to go on the offensive. The Left needs to prepare to resist it. What can we do? We can make a serious effort to unite!

We can use the limited success of the Heffer-Benn campaign to pull the left together into an effectiveness it has not known since the collapse of the 'Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Party Democracy', seven years ago.

For — let there be no doubt about it — the Benn-Heffer campaign did have its successes. It has galvanised the left, pulled together in common hope and in a united enterprise the committed socialists in the CLPs. It has shown that the socialist left is still a force in the labour movement — even in this era when Thatcher is so triumphant that the leaders of the Labour Party are determined to cast themselves in the shameful role of her pale pink understudies.

As Benn truly told an audience in Blackpool on Sunday night, the total electoral college vote for Benn and Heffer probably disguises and undervalues the real level of support for them — in the unions for example (see page 6 & 7).

But how can the Left unite? The left is fragmented, dwindled, wasted by defeat and by factionalism, and divided by important political differences, which range from our attitude to the rulers of the Warsaw Pact states to proposals for Northern Ireland. It is vastly easier to unite when the floodtide is with you, as it was with the left until the early '80s, than it is in a time of retrenchment and defeat such as now. How can the left be united? Can it be united?

First of all, enough of the left has to want to unite. The left has to understand that it is only our antagonists and outright enemies who benefit from the present fragmentation.

We have to adopt the goal of seeking unity in action where possible and of establishing a framework of honest and civilised dialogue



Scargill attacks the policy reviews Photo John Harris (IFL)

about our differences.

The Benn-Heffer campaign and the Chesterfield movement have created some unity, but not a unity broad enough to make the left the force it might be. And the Chesterfield movement is flawed: there is no way except on the level of abstract commitment to vague socialist ideals and values — agreement about ends with no possible agreement about means — that socialists who are committed to work in the existing mass party of the British labour movement can reach fruitful practical agreement with such as the Socialist Workers Party, who are, implicitly, committed to building their own labour movement side by side with the one the working class has spent well over 100 years building. No way. And the local 'Campaign groups' are still very weak.

The experience of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee may be of service here. It pulled together a broader spectrum of the left than has — to our knowledge — ever been brought together before or since. It even included the very aloof exclusive brethren of Militant — though their involvement was more token than active. The Rank and File Mobilising Committee was set up on the initiative of Socialist Organiser, which conducted the initial negotiations to bring the groups and individuals together.

The secret of the RFMC was that it demanded of no participant an abandonment of its own identity. For example, the RFMC did essentially what CLPD had been doing, but on a bigger scale, drawing much bigger forces in. But there was no conflict with CLPD — indeed people like Vladimir and Vera Derer

were among the earliest supporters of the RFMC project. We created a broad democratic structure in which every participant felt they could freely work.

All the 'confederations' of groups today — Labour Left Liaison, in which SO is involved, for example — are failed efforts to unite the left. So we need a new effort to unite the left.

What project, or political platform, could bring or hold the left, or most of it, together again?

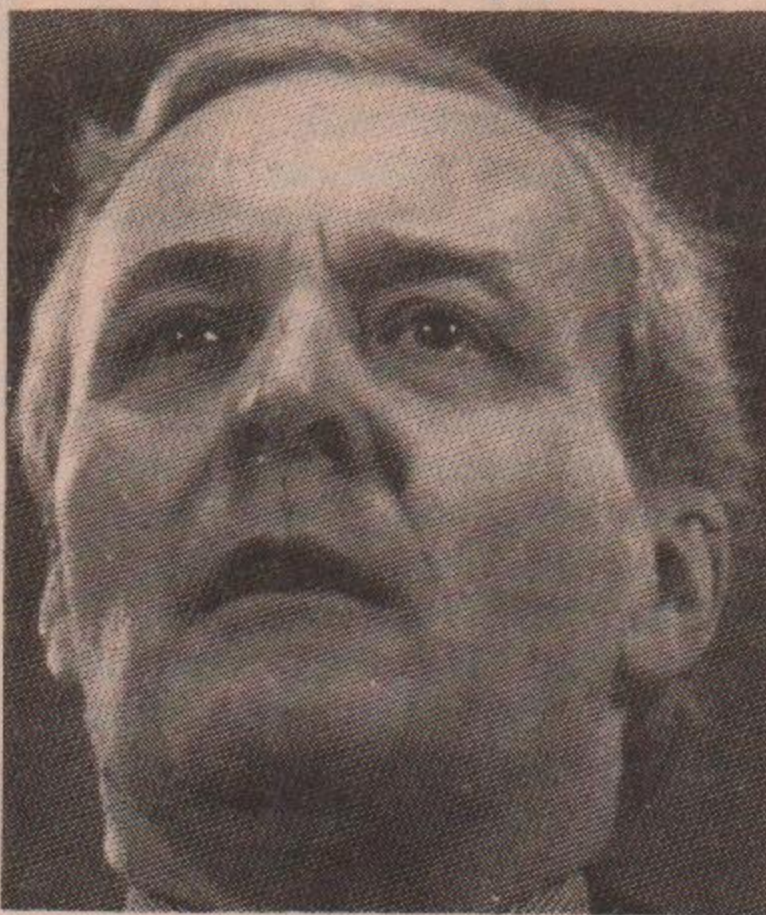
Self-defence! And defence of the basic ideas of socialism against the Thatcherising forces — from Neil Kinnock to the decadent scabs of Marxism Today and the Communist Party — in the labour movement!

Defence of the Welfare state and commitment to its reconstruction and expansion by a Labour government.

Defence of the trade unions and commitment to a Labour government ripping up the vile Tory legislation of the last seven years.

Commitment to actively support working class people everywhere in their struggle against oppressive states and ruling classes, from South Africa to Chile, to the USSR and Poland.

Commitment here and now to organise civil disobedience against the poll tax. Nothing exposes the craven legality-at-all-costs policy of the Labour leaders so sharply and pungently as their refusal to organise or endorse a drive to get people to refuse to pay the ini-



Tony Benn

quitous poll tax!

Here is an issue that could be used to drive the Tories out of office if we had leaders with guts and commitment. We don't have such official leaders, so we must manage without them. We must do it ourselves.

This suggested platform is, of course, only a possible basis for unity. Others may have different ideas.

What is very urgent now is to get a discussion going on the left about the basis for a new broad unity.

The elan and enthusiasm of the Heffer-Benn campaign must not be allowed to fade away, as it will surely fade away if we don't do something to develop and preserve it.

In the weeks ahead, SO will be approaching organised groups of socialists and prominent individuals to discuss with them what we can do to unite the Left.

'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'

Karl Marx

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Bring back the second verse...

Confound their politics, / Frustrate their knavish tricks" was once the second verse of the national anthem. George Orwell reckoned they were the only words of "God Save the King" that made any sense: "Not to have a national anthem would be logical," he wrote in 1943, "But if you do have one its function must necessarily be to point out that we are Good and our enemies Bad".

Dave Gelly's review (from which the preceding information was gleaned) of "National Anthems of the World" appeared, by coincidence, in the Independent on the same day that news of Mrs Thatcher's "Island Fortress" speech to the College of Europe broke. The Ministry of War is now the Ministry of Defence and (noted Gelly) we have quietly dropped that second verse. But it's probably only a matter of time before someone suggests rehabilitating it.

"Bring Back the Second Verse" would make a good Sun campaign, maybe accompanied by a call to "Put the Guts Back Into Our An-

them!" Certainly, it would be in keeping with that newspaper's reaction to Thatcher's College of Europe tirade:

"Once more she is saying exactly what the people think... They have no desire whatsoever to become politically involved with foreigners with whom they have nothing in common... European union is a dead duck. They can take it from Margaret Hilda Thatcher, the voice of the people."

This was not of course the unanimous verdict of the national press. The EEC has always divided bourgeois opinion, just as it has the left. Owenite Peter Jenkins in his Independent column described the speech as sounding "like a bowlerised version of wogs at Calais".

The Daily Mail accurately reflected the misgivings of the more thrusting sections of the boss-class as they limber up for 1992: "We can't stop Europe and get off. And we can't stop Europe and stay in. All that our Prime Minister can do, if she continues to clutch the nationalist card to her bosom, is to play a spoiling hand."

Similar sentiments were to be found in Thursday's Telegraph

PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR

DAILY STAR

THE INDEPENDENT

By Jim Denham

leader ("An Untimely Offensive") although the same paper had, on the previous day, carried a more approving piece by Bruce Anderson: "Over the past few years, Britain has managed her relationships with the Community by a combination of Anglo-Saxon pragmatism and swipes with the Prime Ministerial handbag. Neither tactic should be lightly discarded: both are extremely popular with the voters."

Anderson also gave us a very believable account of the genesis of the speech: "Mrs Thatcher's pronouncements on Europe owed nothing to Foreign Office draughtsmen. Downing Street knew that there was no point in asking the F.O. for help: its views and the PM's are just too far apart. So yesterday's Bruges speech was mainly written by Charles Powell, the PM's Foreign Affairs private Secretary, and when Geoffrey Howe read it, she probably wished he was back in Africa."

Peter Jenkins gave a similar account: "Sheer rage was the only aspiration of the speech... her fury with Jaques Delors, the President of the European Commission, prevailed over the advice of officials and what ought to have been her own better judgement. An important occasion which required dignity and statesmanship was used to pursue what has been for her a vendetta".

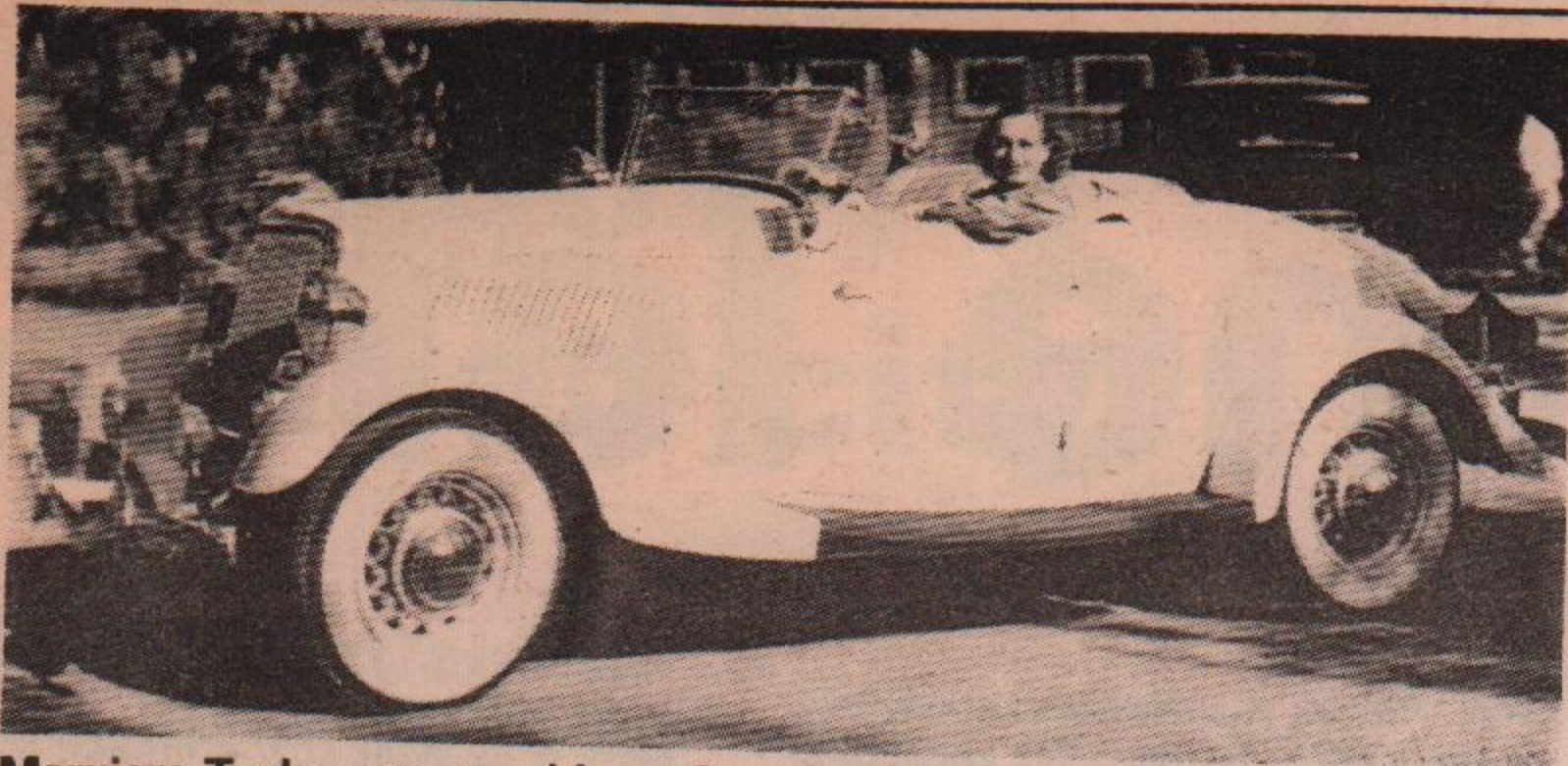
According to Jenkins, the final straw was the appearance of Delors at the TUC Congress expounding his vision of a "Social Europe", to the enthusiastic approval of delegates: "The sight of this cynical spectacle, I am told,

threw Mrs Thatcher into a fury terrible to behold".

The Express, meanwhile, had obviously grasped an inner meaning to Thatcher's words, which had evaded the rest of Fleet Street: "Mrs Thatcher's speech in Bruges has dispelled once and for all the dangerous myth that she is anti-European". Or maybe there had been a different speech delivered at a secret location exclusively for Express leader-writers?

It may have been interesting to have closed with the Morning Star's coverage of all this, but I'm afraid I neglected to buy it on the crucial days last week. Instead we shall have to make do with the Mail on Sunday's resident yuppie Stalinist Julie Burchill: "For the past 15 years we have lived with the very real terror of waking up one morning as boring as the Germans, hysterical as the Spaniards or as incapable of making a decent pop record as the French... the Euro-bores should stop squealing every time the Prime Minister takes a stand. A stand against having us all made into identical, individually wrapped Euro-portion." Perhaps Ms Burchill could be persuaded to front the "Bring Back the Second Verse" campaign...?

4 LETTERS



Marxism Today present 'Joan Crawford in Fordist Mode'

New times... Old ideas

GRAFFITI

Marxism Today, the Communist Party's monthly of designer theory, has its own U/non-U column in its October issue. Out are Determinism, Maxwell House and The Beatles, and in are the Arbitrary, Acid House and Bros. Also Out, one is tempted to add is Bob Dylan, (although the Times they are a-changing still) while In is Tracy Chapman, but since anyone singing popular songs dealing in such out-moded concepts as revolution contradicts the entire edifice of Marxism Today's — how shall I say, problematic — Tracy Chapman is carefully avoided throughout (except subliminally, in the shape of an advert).

If you think explanation of the rise of Acid House and Bros might be a tall order for such old fuddy duddies as the Communist Party, take heart. Marxism Today's search for the Stimulating Thought has led them to uncover the fundamental material base of our historical period (no determinism here, of course): post-Fordism.

Fordism, in case you didn't know, was the practice of putting large numbers of workers together in big factories, each doing a repetitive job in a chain of repetitive jobs. But all that has gone. What with the silicon chip, the decline of engineering and 'flexibility', capitalism has entered a new phase. The term 'post-Fordism' best describes this new phase, says MT, because it has broader implications than such other candidates on 'post-industrialism'; 'post-modernism', or (heaven forbid) 'revolution-of-the-subject'. It captures the very essence of what MT also label New Times.

The Times are without question pretty New, and getting Newer every day; but the ideas in Marxism Today are as Old as the hills. Or at least as old as landscape gardening. Indeed so filled with old ideas are the pages of Marxism Today that it would take a dictionary of Old English to list them all.

What they lack in novelty they certainly make up for in barefaced

cheek. Socialism is identified with state tyranny, bureaucracy, loss of freedom for the individual, etc etc. According to pet feminist Bea Campbell, it's also too closely associated with meetings, although abolishing meetings wouldn't sound like much of a recipe for avoiding the rule of faceless bureaucrats. Or will socialism be run from dinner parties?

While it is obviously true that socialism is identified with state tyranny, it would not be unreasonable to ask the Communist Party to consider the source of this unfortunate fact. Just old-fashioned ideas? Just too many cloth-caps and braces? Or might the USSR have something to do with it?

Our yuppie socialists have more important things on their minds. Still reeling from the praise heaped upon them by the New Statesman ("One of the most stimulating, fertile arguments about Britain's future to have come from the left in years"), they delve into all sorts of stimulating issues, such as the 'politics of the self' (Self is In: even the interview with Sheila Grant has a subheading "The Self: A True Story"). Underlying the whole thing is Post-Fordism.

Now Post-Fordist Post-Modernist Post-Industrialism really requires a new fun-filled out-of-the-Dark Ages politics, it would follow that our, male-chauvinist, tower blocked politics was perfectly appropriate for Fordist Modernist Industrialism. Thank god all those factories are shut, eh? Except MT don't really want to imply this at all: Post-Fordism isn't really so much a reason for a rethink as an excuse for one.

Both the concepts of Fordism and Post-Fordism are so shot through with holes as to resemble the Emperor's New String Vest. Fordism they say, created a Social Democratic State. Yet Mussolini's Italy, Hirohito's Japan and the general Brazil were just as Fordist as Britain, but were hardly models of Social Democracy. 'Post Fordism', similarly, has not led uniformly to a society based around Habitat and Centre Point (or Marxism Today). The 'new working class' are not a bunch of small-minded individualistic Thatcherites. Or are health workers and postal workers a peculiar social aberration?

Marxism Today's New Times is no more than familiar Old Rubbish.

Clive Bradley

Behind every great man...

Behind every successful man there is a good woman — so goes the old saying. But there's a second part to this, which is understood yet often remains unsaid — 'if he goes off the rails, it's her fault'. We're used to being made responsible for our children's shortcomings — working mother's lead to football violence! But our husbands/lovers?

Take Richard Burton and Liz Taylor. Burton's been in the news a lot recently. Melvin Bragg has just published a new biography of Burton and a couple of weeks ago there was a TV documentary on Burton's life and career. Richard, you see, wasted himself. He could have been a great ACTOR — a la Olivier. But he wasted much of his time on tacky, forgettable movies, and became immersed in the glitz of Hollywood.

Previous biographers have blamed this on his over-familiarity with the bottle. Not so, says the new wave. It was that woman Taylor. From the moment he met her, it seems, he was sapped of his greatness, his artistry and became a pathetic slob who's role in life was to earn enough to satisfy Liz's craving for over-sized, over-priced diamonds. The documentary was laden with shots of Taylor and Burton at various glam showbiz events, backgrounded with doomy music. The message was hard to miss — the evil cow ruined him.

Now I wouldn't like to speculate

WOMEN'S EYE



By Lynn Fergusson

on the Burton-Taylor relationship — or indeed any of the private goings-on of celebrities. But it does seem a little rich to lay all Burton's shortcomings at her door — and if he really was unable to take responsibility for himself, his own actions, then doesn't that say something about him? The biographers seem to have avoided asking that question. Well, they're men too.

But this sort of theorising isn't confined to the lives of the rich and famous. Cast your minds back to the press-coverage of the Yorkshire Ripper case. Once Peter Sutcliffe was on trial in the courts, his wife Sonya was on trial in the tabloids. The poor woman was stalked by photographers and interrogated by journalists. Relatives and neighbours were encouraged to spill

the beans on the most mundane details of the Sutcliffes' marriage, and invited to give their impressions of Sonya. It seemed that there could only be one explanation of a killer like Sutcliffe — his wife must have driven him to it.

In the eyes of the gutter press Sonya Sutcliffe was as guilty as if she'd killed the woman herself.

In this looking-glass world women are also to blame for child abuse. According to some 'respectable' theorists, child abuse takes place in 'dysfunctional families' — families which don't work according to the experts modal. What do they mean? Generally that the wife doesn't give her husband enough sex, or is perhaps too 'dominant', too independent. She isn't a good little wife, therefore he turns to the daughter to provide what he's missing. If only his wife had known her place, then the abuse wouldn't have occurred.

There's a conclusion were meant to draw from all this. A wife's job is to keep her man happy — feed him, provide sex on tap, submit her personality to his. A man needs a proper wife or he'll go for a Burton and self-destruct, or take his vengeance on other women or children. He can't be blamed we all know men can't handle their emotions or control their aggression without the soothing hand of a good woman. This is our main role in life. So we may need to work to help support our families — but woe betide us if anything goes wrong. Whatever happens, as far as the staunch ideologue, of the family are concerned men are always heroes — if they fall, women are to blame.

Unfair to Militant?

LETTERS

The article about Burma in last week's SO was right to point out the Militant's crazy ideas about Stalinism. They do, after all, think that Stalinism is a necessary and progressive stage for most societies on the planet to have to go through.

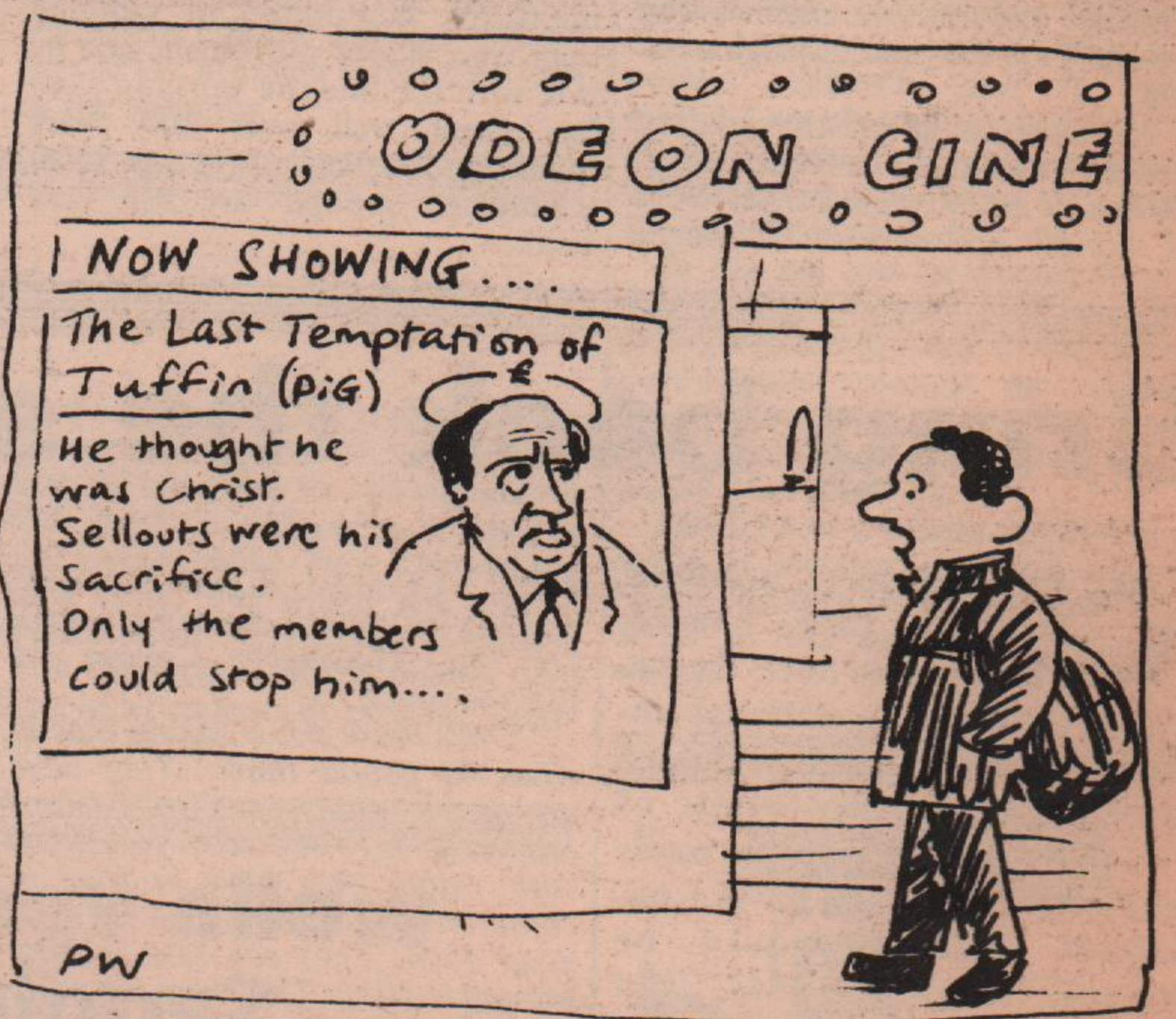
But to counter the Militant's ideas we have to clearly present their ideas and debate them through, not distort and caricature their ideas into a straw doll that's easily knocked over, because it's not what they stand for.

If capitalist profit has been abolished from a third of the globe — that's good. If the workers are oppressed and denied rights — that's bad, and it's more important. But the Militant are half right. If Burmese workers and peasants think inviting back the capitalists is a road to freedom we must say they're making a big mistake, put aside the bureaucrats and the capitalist vultures. Only workers democracy, real planning and control over the means of production offer freedom from exploitation.

For socialists anywhere there's no choice between a nationalised tractor and the workers! In Manchester, Rangoon, Melbourne or Warsaw we stand with the class against their oppressors. But we also fight against backward ideas — racist, sexist, pro-capitalist, whatever.

Socialist Organiser stands for clarity in debate and unity in action. To our comrades in Southern Asia we raise the slogan of the Bolsheviks "break with the bourgeoisie"! Take power into your own hands."

Duncan Chapple
Nottingham



A commitment to common ownership

May I direct attention to the Mid Sussex amendment to the Bristol East CLP resolution to the Labour Party's Annual Conference?

It instructs the National Executive Committee to prepare concrete plans for the socialist nationalisation of the 200 or so big and important companies which control some 80% of the economy,

as well as the structures necessary to establish a democratically drawn up socialist plan of production.

Of course it is necessary to reaffirm the need for the common ownership of the key industries as various resolutions properly propose. But that is not enough. It is time to raise and bring to the fore the need for actual plans to be made.

David Harris

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"Never lay down your cudgels"

Dennis Skinner MP talks about the tasks facing the Labour left

There is a kind of torpor that seems to rule at the moment. Of course it can change. It's not a mechanistic thing.

I remember my years in the pits — 21 years before I became an MP. 1949 I went down. I waited for a strike in my first week. I caused a few, but they never lasted long.

Then there was a period of collaboration, just like the one you are experiencing now.

21 years. I yearned for the moment we had a fortnight's strike. It was unofficial, and Joe Gormley didn't like it. And now I hear people saying: 'Have you got the stamina to carry on?' Of course we have!

And then when I got to Parliament the miners had two national strikes in a row — victories. It was a massive transformation. 21 years I yearned for the moment, like you did. And then the extra-parliamentary struggle, the struggle outside Parliament, transformed the whole scene. Of course it can change again.

I went to the picket line when those lads — the five picketing dockers — were in jail in '72. When I got back to the House of Commons and said we were going to get them out, the clever ones said, 'Don't be silly, you've not been here long enough'.

What happened? Because of the change that had taken place, those five people had to be let out of jail.

For God's sake have confidence. You have to be optimists. Never lay down your cudgels. We battle on.

Let's look at the economic background we will find next year. It is not going to be the same as when they brought in these policy

reviews. The war plans were brought in against a background of a third election defeat, so a lot of people in the leadership of the Labour Party said we will have to build on Thatcherism. That's what the policy reviews are all about.

But the background is changing. And we've got to battle on. Soon the background will be of an economy that will be different.

There is no question — the economic weather forecast of October 19 1987 is going to cast a dark shadow again.

You might say it is not going to happen just yet. But there is a massive trade and budget deficit, a deficit of gargantuan proportions. It will have massive reverberations throughout the rest of the world. There could be a trade recession. Anybody who bases a policy on that not happening is living in cloud cuckoo land.

There will be extra-parliamentary struggles. And Roy Hattersley might find he is up against another contest, if you are able to convince 20% of MPs that to have another leadership contest. So we will have to start work earlier than ever.

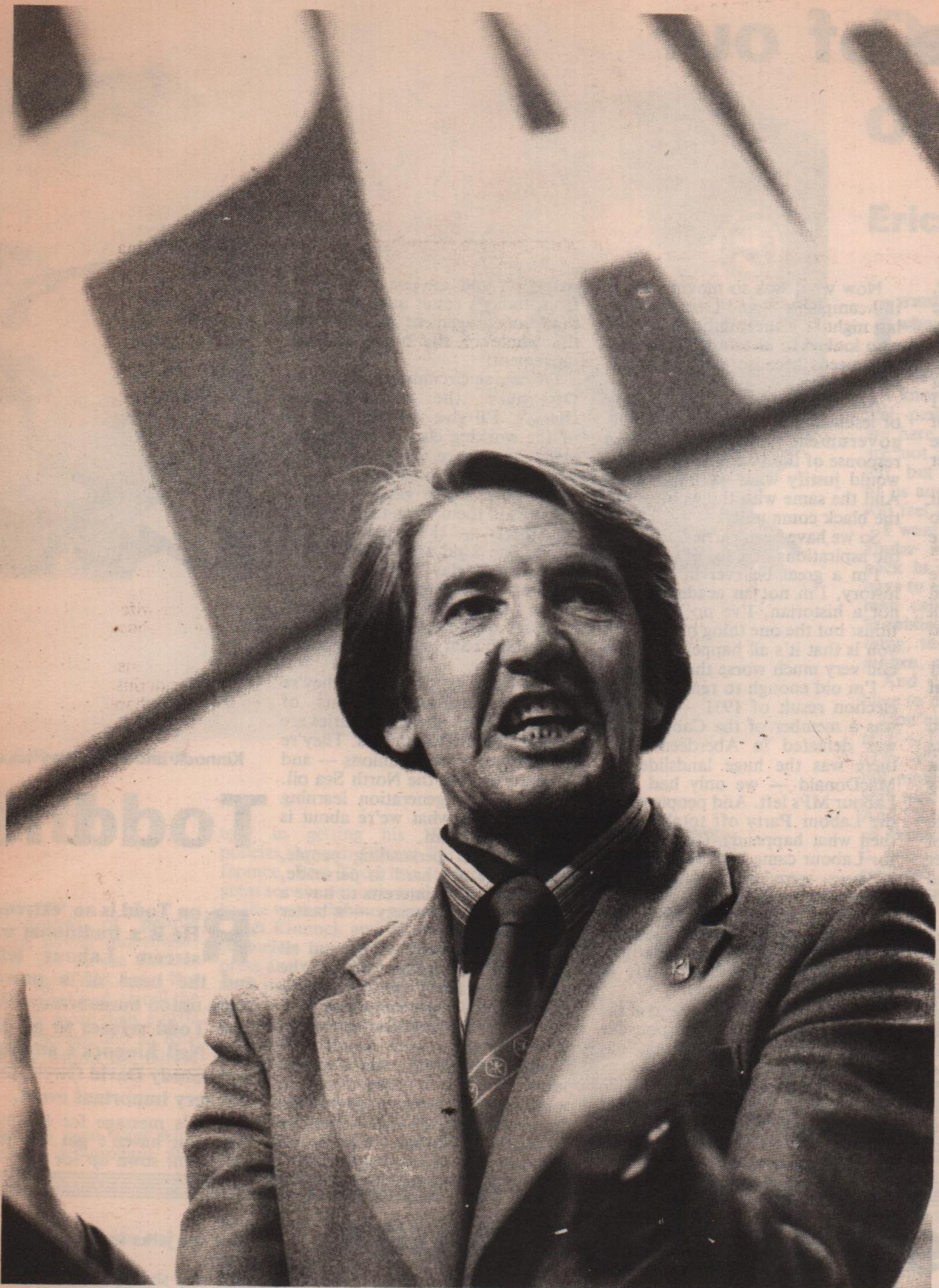
There are going to be struggles on wages. I tell the trade unionists — it's high time you made up for all the lost time. The managers and business executives got 46% last year and you got a miserly 6-10%. Why don't you start to change that?

When that happens the scene will change, with the struggle on wages, and as the economy begins to falter and with a balance of payments deficit of £15 bn this year.

Who says the scene will be the same as when they put out the policy reviews?

I see a completely different picture in front of us. It will be one where socialists will be able to propound their philosophy of collective action to clear up the mess. And we will not do that on the basis of what the right wing are telling us now.

Dennis Skinner was speaking at the LLL fringe meeting at Labour Party conference.



Dennis Skinner

Block votes and block heads

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

The trade union block vote has always been an easy target for those in the business of knocking the labour movement.

The spectacle of General Secretaries brandishing cards supposedly representing the views of hundreds of thousands of their members, can indeed be pretty ludicrous — especially when you know full well that the 'members' have never been properly consulted. It's probably no accident that one of the best remembered sketches from 'Alas Smith and Jones' is the one where union bosses decide whether to order tea or coffee by card vote ("1.3m for coffee...").

In theory, at least the block vote is an expression of the historic link between the Labour Party and the unions and a recognition that, through their affiliations, the unions largely fund the party. In the early '80s this principle was extended to the election of the leader and

the deputy leader, with the electoral college giving 30% of the vote each to the constituency parties and the MPs, and 40% to the unions.

This year, in the first leadership contest since Neil Kinnock defeated Roy Hattersley in 1983 the vast majority of the union votes were duly delivered to the door of the Kinnock/Hattersley 'dream ticket'.

Most unions did at least go through the motions of consulting their members. Some (like NUPE and the AEU) did it by postal ballot; others (CoHSE, SOGAT, UCATT) went for a branch or workplace ballot. The FBU and MSF left it up to the branches whether to hold a ballot or decide by show of hands. Circulation of candidates' election material was very patchy with only CoHSE, MSF and the FBU making any serious effort to either circulate the branches with material from all candidates, or include statements in the union's journal. The AEU leadership did, however, ensure that the members knew what was required of them: all ballot papers included a recommendation to vote for Kinnock and Hattersley.

The NUR vote was decided at the unions Annual General Meeting. There was no consultation of any sort with the branches and nothing about the issue appeared in the union 'Transport Gazette'. The AGM went for Kinnock and Hattersley, with Benn and Heffer get-

ting 22 votes out of 77.

The GMB claims to have held something called a 'branch consultation exercise' resulting in 83% in favour of the existing leadership as against 15.5% for a joint Kinnock/Prescott ticket. How such a precise result emerged is something of a mystery which no one except that intellectual giant of the labour movement John Edmunds seems to understand. Certainly, none of the GMB members consulted by Sleeper, were aware of any systematic 'consultation' beyond a circular asking branches for their 'opinions'.

The TGWU leadership knows all about the problems that can arise from 'consultation' exercises. Back in 1981 they held one of these mysterious rituals when Tony Benn stood against Denis Healey for the deputy leadership. At first the result was said to be a narrow majority for Benn. Then the T&G's well organised right wing caucus got onto their friends in the media and told them that, in fact, the 'consultation' had favoured Healey. In the end, Moss Evans had to admit that no one really knew for sure and the decision was left up to the Labour Party delegation which plumped for Benn after a lot of wrangling.

In order to avoid any confusion (not to mention adverse publicity) this time, no formal consultation

(let alone a proper vote) of any kind was held and the decision was left entirely in the hands of the delegation — which everyone knew was going to back Kinnock and Hattersley.

All of which, of course, resulted in the expected landslide of the dream ticket at Blackpool last week.

It is, though, worth noting that in the unions that at least made an effort to circulate material from all the candidates, the dream ticket came slightly unstuck: in NUPE Prescott defeated Hattersley by 63% to 31%; in MSF Benn gained a respectable 37% (to Kinnock's 63%) and Prescott defeated Hattersley by 45% to 36% with 18% going to Heffer.

The truth is, of course, that none of the union leaders were terribly interested in genuine 'consultation' with their members — and still less in a real debate on the issue within the branches and workplaces. The 'left' leaders (with the exception of Arthur Scargill, but that's another story) wanted to re-affirm their loyalty to Kinnock in the hope of keeping him somewhere near to the straight and narrow when it comes to the policy reviews and issues like disarmament, the anti-union laws and nationalisation. Right wingers like the AEU's Bill Jordan and the secretive 'Mainstream' organisation (that brings together the EETPU

and AEU leaderships plus the 'hard right' from other unions, notably the TGWU) obviously had no option but to back the Kinnock/Hattersley ticket, which they believe is irreversibly moving their way. But if the move isn't fast enough or decisive enough (especially on the defence issue) they still haven't ruled out dumping Kinnock and throwing their weight behind John Smith for leader in the near future.

All of which may sound very arcane and far removed. From the realities of day to day shop floor trade unionism. But, unfortunately, it's of crucial importance to the future of the British labour movement. When, many years ago, some of us started talking about an 'open valve' relationship between the unions and the Labour Party a lot of people on the left objected — the unions were fundamentally 'the fighting organisations of our class' while the Labour Party was irredeemably tied to capitalism and, at best, of secondary importance to workers, they sagely pronounced.

Events at Blackpool (not to mention the forthcoming policy reviews) should demonstrate once and for all the necessity of taking the fight for rank and file democracy and genuine socialism into both arenas. Not an easy task, I agree. But only a blockhead can now deny it's necessary.

The significance of our challenge

Tony Benn MP

Comrades, it was a very big decision to put up a candidate against the leader of the Labour Party, because never in history has the leader of the Labour Party ever been defeated.

The Tories worship their leaders, they polish their boots and then they stick a knife between the shoulder blades when they fail. In the Labour Party when we elect a leader we argue with them from the day they're elected to the day they retire — but they retire on a day that they decide.

So I want just to draw your attention for a moment to the enormity of what we did. The point was, it was a very big decision to take and I must tell you I believe it was the right decision to make. Because it used the democracy of the party to focus the attention of the party on the general direction of the party not just the individual resolutions.

Don't think this election disappears with the computer result announced tonight. Because actually, throughout the country, there were people in every area who put an awful lot of effort into this campaign. And they're still there.

And indeed not only still there but they've got a lot of contacts they didn't have. We had the 2 Chesterfield Conferences. Now the Chesterfield Conferences were an indication of the desire for a new direction — 90-95% inside the party. Some outside the party who were drawn by the idea that socialism would be discussed.

And so I think we should also look at some of the results in rather

greater detail — today's results. Because of course the popular vote is not the same as the vote that comes out of the Electoral College.

I'll give you a very simple example: in the ACTT individual ballot Eric got ahead of John Prescott, I think I got 46% to 54%. Now of course when the ACTT voted the whole of the vote went the other way.

Take MSF, a very big union. It had a ballot; it was 40 to 60. So don't assume when you hear the result that only 11% support us.

My belief is that it's somewhere between a quarter and a third, and that on the most unfavourable of all issues, which is whether you should replace the leader.

I don't want anyone to go away feeling that it was all a waste of time. It was not.

What I think will be remembered about 1988 when the history books are written is that it was the year when we put socialism explicitly back on the political agenda.

Previously people said vote Labour and you might get a bit of socialism. Vote Labour, it was once a socialist party. Vote Labour and if we're there for 4 parliaments it will be a socialist party.

I don't ever remember in my lifetime, though its certainly true of the pioneers, people going to meetings and arguing for socialism — saying we do believe that common ownership is better than private ownership. We do believe in industrial democracy and the best obtainable means of popular administration and control. That we do believe in the rights of people.

The reference made to the lesbians and gay men.

Now what was so moving about this campaign — and I mentioned it last night — is the number of people who looked to us to articulate their own needs because alone they felt so powerless.

And the scandalous scapegoating of lesbians and gay men under this government and the gutless response of the Labour Party alone would justify what we have done. And the same with the women and the black community.

So we have been carried along by the aspirations of a lot of people.

I'm a great believer in studying history, I'm not an academic, I'm not a historian, I've no qualifications: but the one thing history tells you is that it's all happened before and very much worse than today.

I'm old enough to remember the election result of 1931 — my dad was a member of the Cabinet and was defeated in Aberdeen when there was the huge landslide for MacDonald — we only had fifty Labour MPs left. And people wrote the Labour Party off totally. And then what happened? The landslide for Labour came back in 1945.

There were old pioneers you know who never ever saw a Labour councillor, or a Labour Member of Parliament or a Labour Government ever elected in their lifetime. And they gave their whole life to creating a fairer society.

Kier Hardie was denounced at the TUC in 1883 as "an irresponsible man bringing division within our ranks".

What did they object to? When he said there should be a Labour Representation Committee!

So you see, if you look back we are part of a long continuum of

struggle. And anyone who draws from today's result anything other than encouragement is misreading the whole of the history of our movement.

Of course circumstances change. Of course the working class changes. I'll give you one example of the working class changing: ten years ago there were no oil rig workers in the North Sea.

But you've only got to see what happens to them when the ones that are there — the 'new working class', the kind that would make 'Marxism Today' go into paroxysms of excitement: a new working class, different! They weren't shipyard workers, they were on this bright high tech oil rig in the North Sea!

And then, by God, when they're there they become victims of market forces. The beneficiaries are capital, the multinationals. They're not allowed to form unions — and we need to own the North Sea oil. That's a new generation learning socialism and what we're about is teaching socialism.

It is about persuading people, and they're not hard to persuade, that it is in their interests to have a different sort of society — a better sort of society.

And all the people here and all the other left groups around the country sustained this campaign, and I tell you when they came back to write "'88" they'll write about it very differently from tomorrow's headlines where Eric and I will be punished for our impertinence in pointing out — I won't say that the Emperor had no clothes — but that in certain important respects the Emperor was improperly dressed.



Kinnock and Hattersley triumph. For

Todd is r

Ron Todd is no 'extremist'. He is a traditional mainstream Labour leftist, and the head of a powerful trade union bureaucracy. When Ron Todd refuses to go along with Neil Kinnock's attempt to understudy David Owen, then it is a very important event.

Todd's message for Kinnock is this: you haven't got the labour movement sown up for pink That-

Our lady of the jungle sings the blues

Other papers this week can only bring you reports of the Labour Party Conference. Socialist Organiser scoops the lot of them by bringing you Mrs Thatcher's speech from next week's Tory Party Conference. With the aid of a remarkable machine constructed by S.O.'s bearded scientific genius Les Hearn, we were able to send Sean Matgamna a week into the future to take down the following inspiring confession by Mrs Thatcher of her faith in the market economy.

After the first of her standing ovations abates, Mrs Thatcher speaks to the audience and the TV cameras

Never ending war of all against all,
The law of the raw jungle since the fall,
That is humanity's highest moral code
The code of our fathers in blue-painting woad:
You do to others what they might
Do to you: don't give a shite.
Be sure you do it first
The weak and defeated are the truly cursed
"Woe to the vanquished," the Roman said,
For, my friends, in the long run we are all dead!

Freedom? The true freedom
The law of god's own kingdom
Is the freedom to sell and buy
The freedom to try or die
And the God-given freedom to prey,
Ruled by a government which says, "OK,OK,OK",
And 'anything goes' my friend,
Your means are justified by the end,
By your goal of getting rich.
All right, so it is nineteenth century Liberal kitsch!
But such true freedom, my friends,
Is the only proper human end
And necessarily it partakes
Of the raw, blue jungle, and wakes
And tears for the failures and for those
On whose gnawed bones the victors rose.

Freedom of speech, freedom to curse and damn
Everything I do? I'm a democrat, not the Great I am!
And though I may not agree with what you say

I'll let you defend to the death — yes, you may —
Your right to say the god-awful things you bray
At me and mine: whinge and whine if you dare. OK?

Fraternity? Sorority? They are good of course.
But we mustn't go from now to worse
The health of the jungle-bred species
Is paramount — it hurts, but here's my thesis:
Face it: to be poor now you must be a louse.
The weak to the wall and the poor to the workhouse!
The weak to the wall, or none of us can survive.
God has told us we must serve or thrive,
Rise or fall, be hammer or anvil, axe or block,
In this life you must either be knocked, or knock.
You must, my friend, choose: be crushed or crunch.
And Reagan has told me that there is no such thing as a free lunch!

Trade unions plot and conspire: they combine
The rabble and the feeble against me and mine.
They gang up the weak to pull down the strong
And they do most bitter wrong
To progress and prosperity and to the lords of the jungle.
In office they wither our jungle: Labour bungles
And stumbles. Oppressors and tyrants, they are perverse growers of the
weed,
Red spoilers who would stifle the rich by curbing their life-giving greed.

The Welfare state too stifles
The wholesome jungle. It rifles
The coffers of the rich and of society,
Impoverishing the strong to to give a moiety
To the feeble. It's a conspiracy of the weak
Against nature. Pity weeps when the poor squeak.
"Poor, poor creatures", we say — but it's snaring
And false: pity soon palls, money's hard — wearing.
Who needs public hospitals and cheap or free
Socialised medicine, anyway? I can't see.

Now she becomes dreamy and starts to sing:

"Hush little baby, don't you cry
You know your mamma was born to die
All by trials, Lord, will soon be over,
If life were a thing that money could buy,
You know the rich would live and the poor would die."

Now she jerks back to reality and her

dent:
And why shouldn't it be? Why not?
Why should the rich let themselves be
By the Grim Reaper when they might p
Their way past his toll gate and stay
Alive to do good work? That's what I
Want to know? So? If you can't pay, y
Who has the right to tell the jungle-bre
Right thinking citizen he can't buy a be
To save his life? What he can and cann
With his own money? This is England!
With money in the bank? The poor hav
It to spend? Can't buy? That's their ha
But they do have a wholesome abundan
For which there is a market! They coul
If they would, sell their blood and their
To buy medical treatment. Learn the a
Of survival, and thrive in a market
Economy! That's the future, mark it.
Mark it, mark it, my friends, well.
And heed it, or we'll give you merry H
I hear it works well in the USA
Let's give it a try — that's what I say.

Now she talks in a deeper jazzy voice,

"Poppa may have,
Momma may have,
But God bless the child
That's got his own
That's got his own."

Again she jerks back to reality, and ag
becomes strident:

And it's just tough luck
On the brat who hasn't! I don't give a

Mercy? Mercy? Well, as Freddy Shakes
Put it long ago — the rich see it clear —
The quality of mercy is always strained
It comes hard, reluctant, pained.
Noblesse oblige? He's a reactionary wh
Nothing but a bleeding-hearted pimp
Serving and flattering the feeble and th
With his effeminate dos and don'ts and
To rein in the rich. This is class war!

Don't mourn, organise!

Eric Heffer MP

I want to say to some comrades who will feel very disappointed, comrades look into the actual figures.

I know some comrades will also feel, perhaps not the activists who are here, but some comrades who are not regularly involved on the left, but who are nevertheless part of us and with us, these comrades will feel like packing in the Party.

I want you to say to them: no! Under no circumstances do you pack in the Party. You know we have to remember there was a great man called Joe Hill, one of the Wobblies who died. And the best thing that he said was "Don't mourn, organise".

And comrades that's what we have to do.

Don't mourn! After all let's look at it — 11% for Tony, or just over 11%. 9% for myself — I must admit mine was a bit confused there with that fellow Prescott coming in. And I'll tell you this, the media loved Prescott coming in. They loved it, because it took the edge of the political argument. All the press was concerned about was 'could he win?'

Well I never knew he could win, never believed he could win but they wanted that. And don't you think the leadership of the party didn't want that as well. It took the edge of our political points and the media largely ignored us.

I have to say I lost my temper with the media man after the vote because he rushed up to me and he stuck a thing under my nose and he said: 'Don't you feel humiliated with the smallest of the votes?' And I said why should you be worried, you never talked to us for the last few weeks. Now you suffer concern about me being humiliated.

I said I'm not humiliated, how do you feel? I've a feeling that won't be on the programme.

But seriously, 11%. Now let's take the figure that Tony got. 11% on the basis of those who are ac-

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer were speaking at the Briefing fringe meeting.

tually recorded, that's 11% of the party membership and in the trade unions who are dissatisfied with the leadership as such.

That doesn't mean to say the same of those who didn't vote either way, or maybe some who voted for Prescott, and some of those who voted for Neil Kinnock are satisfied with the political direction.

This conference isn't over yet comrades! And I'm told already the NEC have accepted two resolutions which they wouldn't have accepted some time ago. I mean we have made advances. Hattersley believes now in the abolition of the House of Lords! He's obviously decided he doesn't want to go there.

But seriously 11%. And that means actually the constituency parties, the people who really do the work in the party.

Who wins elections? Who does the day to day work, who's going to organise the Poll Tax campaign. Who's going to be doing that. It's going to be activists within the party, at local level, they're the ones. Some will be active trade unionists but they'll be the same active people in the party.

11% comrades — we can build on that 11% and I don't want you to go away from this conference downhearted.

I want you to go away saying, right we'll build up from here. We'll organise within the party. We can do it!

The left has been defeated or knocked back in the past, but we came back because you can't get rid of the arguments.

You can't get rid of the problems, the problems won't go away because of a leadership contest in which we only got 11%.

They're not going to go away, they're still going to be there, so comrades I say let's go from this conference and organise through the Campaign Group, through the constituency parties and other ways as well and build the left much better than we have done in the past... and work harder than ever to build a socialist Britain.



Ron Todd. Photo: John Harris

tory in getting his 'Reviewed' policies through Labour Party conference, Ron Todd has rendered a great service not only to the left, but to the entire labour movement.

Let Kinnock and his toadies, the shameless panderers to the Tory press and the faithful friends of the scab leaders of the EEPFU — let them talk about 'treachery'. If there are traitors around, Ron Todd isn't one of them!

Those who feel like Todd should organise. It is one more reason why the left should make a new effort to unite (see the Editorial beginning on page 1) so that we can begin to organise them.

And we are the press, the cops, the judges and the law.

And romantic Toryism's dead and gone
With ghosts from the past it dwells among
For man must choose to either prey or save
Or join old Churchill in the grave.
Old Butskell's dead too — hold your laughter:
If you think this year's good wait for the years after!

Our social philosophy? From each
According to our need — that's it, and let 'em screech!
Do we need her in a job or not?
Does he answer to a need we've got?
Or is she just unmarketable waste?
That's our question — answer it to taste.
To each? To each according to what he
Inherits or can get by work or preying. See?
Under the law all are equal, but in wealth
Like health some get more equal by work, luck or stealth.
The great George Orwell explained that long ago, you see
To the Tory conference back in Nineteen-o-three

Equality? Do we not forbid the rich
God's own elect who've risen out of the ditch
Of common humanity, as well as the mangy poor
Young and old alike, fugitive virgin and whore,
To sleep in the warm forecourt at Euston
Station? Only at the discretion of the police is it done.
That, my friend, is our true and only equality.
Anything else is a commie sham and a nullity.

Democracy? You've got it! A five yearly ballot
Is so much better than rule by the bullet.
Every five years or so I'll let you decide
Which friends of the jungle's lords you'll abide.
Like the King's friends of old, to rule over you
For the jungle's enthroned natural lords. That is the true
And sufficient Democracy. Democracy inside industry?
Self-rule at work? You must try and try
Again to see it: that would be anarchy, a Trotty cesspit
The wreck and ruin of all our hopes. Do you get it?
We need strong autocratic leadership at work — understand that!
We need men who are clever and rampant and brutal and selfish and fat!

Our future will be secure if we mix
The spirit of the grocery shop with raw jungle tricks
You know I think we could call the TV show
The 'Little Shop in the Rain Forest' — Let's go!

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 worldwide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed na-

tionalities 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.

10 years that shaped the left

Socialist Organiser was founded ten years ago. Since then, the left has seen many changes. Thatcherism has gone from strength to strength, while the Left has suffered defeats. John O'Mahony looks at the history of Socialist Organiser and the role it has played on the Left.

Socialist Organiser is ten years old. The first issue came out in October 1978, as the monthly paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV). We went fortnightly in 1980, and weekly in 1981. The story of Socialist Organiser (SO) in these ten years is an important part of the story of the Left: it reflects and dissects the whole story of the Left in this decade, which has seen such changes in the fortunes of the labour movement.

When the Left was rising on the offensive, SO was at the heart of that Left. SO was the paper of the SCLV in 1978-79; we initiated the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy in 1980; helped organise Tony Benn's campaign for Deputy leader of the Party in 1981, when he won 83% of CLPs.

The SCLV conference of July 1978 brought together 200 labour movement activists from all over Britain. Many of them, like Ken Livingstone, Ted Knight etc, would occupy central positions in local government in subsequent years. We pledged to fight for a Labour victory and a Tory defeat — but to fight on socialist policies. We pledged ourselves to continue the fight

for socialism after Labour had won an electoral victory over the Tories. We were convinced by experience that a re-elected Callaghan government would have no socialist or working class answers to the crisis of British capitalism.

We'd seen Callaghan and Healy in 1977 and after dance to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund and pioneer — albeit timidly and half-heartedly — the sort of policies which later, in their full-blooded version, came to be called Thatcherism.

Ultra-leftism

We knew the Tories had to be stopped, but that Labour's old-fashioned right wing was not a viable alternative. So we organised to fight the Tories, recognising that while Labour was the only viable option that the working class had against them, Labour itself had to be transformed. We knew that the job was very urgent.

That was a time when semi-anarchist ultra-leftism was still a very powerful force on the Left. We fought against that ultra-leftism. The Socialist Workers Party made its general propaganda for socialism and did strike support work. But it had no immediate political answers to anything, except — 'Join the SWP'. That was its answer to everything!

For a while in 1978, it seemed that they were going to stand candidates against Labour in the election. In the event they didn't; they chickened out. Instead they mumbled a grudging and half hearted call to 'Vote Labour', while doing nothing to transform the Labour Party except trying to persuade individual socialists to abandon the fight against the right wing in the mass party of the working class and join them in sectarian isolation and irrelevance.

Most bizarre of all was 'Socialist Unity'. This was a mini-electoral alliance, held together only by the project of standing candidates in the general election. Its core was the International Marxist Group, which had perhaps 700 members, and a cluster of smaller groups such as 'Big Flame' and 'Marxist Worker'. This, they said, was the alternative to the Tories and the Labour Party!

But no, to be fair to them, they never sounded as if they believed that Socialist Unity was more than just an irresponsible stunt, whose purpose was to compete with the SWP. When they did better than the SWP in a by-election in 1977, there was no stopping them. So, led by the people who now publish Socialist Action, and by others who are today probably a majority of the committed supporters of Briefing, 'Socialist Unity' took off, a stupid side show focussed essentially on the SWP, just as the Thatcherites poised themselves to drive the party of the labour movement from office on a programme of drumming the labour movement into the ground. They stood a handful of candidates in the June 1979 election, all of which got no more than a hundred or two votes.

And beyond the more-or-less rational 'ultra-left' was the Workers Revolutionary Party, which had recently sold itself as a propagandist and spy (on dissident Arabs, and Jews) for Colonel Ghaddafi of Libya, and the vile Iraqi dictatorship. The WRP stood a few dozen

candidates. This was sick, but it was no joke. The WRP candidate in Newham North East got more votes than Arthur Latham, a leftist Labour MP, needed to keep his seat, which he lost...

The outrage that ultra leftists felt against the outgoing Labour government was shared by those who set up the SCLV. But we knew outrage wasn't enough. We knew Labour — Labour as it was — was the only alternative to the Tories. We knew that socialists could not at will by-pass the Labour Party, which had been built over many decades by the organised working class. We knew that at the heart of the ultra-leftists' posturing, strident 'revolutionary' and 'positively socialist' as it seemed, there was deep pessimism and defeatism — and on certain levels, indifference: for example the grouping that has since evolved into the Revolutionary Communist Party — about the labour movement being able to fight off the gathering Tory offensive. For, whether they knew it or not, to write off the Labour Party then was to say that the Tories would win governmental power and that their offensive would thereby gain an immense boost in strength and power to inflict damage on the labour movement.

A socialist campaign

The SCLV sought a different road. We combined the fight against the Tories with a fight to organise the left to resist a new right wing Labour government, and the fight to renew, renovate the labour movement — what Tony Benn was later to call the 'refounding of the Labour Party'. Our position was: not an inch to the Tories in the country, and not an inch to the right wing inside the labour movement.

In October 1978, the SCLV launched SO, to advocate socialist policies — and organise for them.

In the build up to the 1979 election, we put out election leaflets explaining the socialist position on the key political questions. These were circulated by local parties. It amounted to a socialist election campaign within the official election campaign.

When we began, Labour was still in power, and Thatcher just a nasty rumbling threat on the sidelines. Even after the Tories won the general election, the labour movement still seemed to possess most of its old strength and vigour, and all of its determination not to let itself be pushed around by the bosses and the Tory party.

After the election, the Labour Party immediately blew wide open. Thousands of militants said of the recent bitter experience of right wing Labour government, 'Never again!' They set out to remake the Labour Party, to equip it with policies that would be a real socialist answer to Thatcher. A majority of the CLPs took this attitude. We went on to elect Michael Foot as leader; won the electoral college for electing Labour leaders — depriving the Parliamentarians of their long-established monopoly. Tony Benn won almost 50% of the votes for Deputy leader in 1981, and 83% of the CLP vote. The labour movement did indeed seem to be remaking itself. SO took an initiative in 1980 in creating the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy, a body which for a year or so united the left in a way that it has not been united since.

Within a short time after the 1979 election, opinion polls showed that Thatcher was deeply unpopular. She remained deeply unpopular until the Falklands War of 1982. A

high level of working class militancy continued. The massive industrial slump had yet to bear down on industrial militancy, depressing and undermining it. When the Tories embarked on the first of a series of anti-trade union laws, many militants began to talk of organising a general strike, of doing to Thatcher what we'd done to the Heath government in 1973-74, when the labour movement made it impossible for Heath to rule and forced him into a general election, which the Tories lost.

A missed opportunity

Reading the articles of that period now, you find yourself wondering if we were in the grip of a delirium! General Strike! In fact we were the opposite of delirious. We were sober and true to reality when we argued for the labour movement to put itself on the alert and go all out to beat Thatcher before Thatcher could grind us down.

Today, Thatcher seems an immensely powerful figure, almost invincible. That's because she has won a cumulative series of battles with the labour movement, and because we have lost them.

At the turn of the decade, however, it not only seemed different — it was different. If the labour movement had had leaders fit for the name, men and women with guts and commitment, leaders willing to fight and win on our side of the class struggle as Thatcher and her cronies have fought for theirs — if we had had that, things would have gone differently. The general pre-'82 unpopularity of Thatcher could have been linked with industrial action, against, for example, anti-union laws, in a great anti-Tory crusade.

With leaders worthy of the name, millions of British workers — people who during the seventies were among the most militant workers anywhere — need not have allowed themselves peacefully to be thrown out of the factories and onto the lengthening dole queues. With proper TUC leadership, industrial battles like the steel strike, and, of course, later the miners' strike, could have been won. The fighting sections of the class wouldn't have, one after the other, been left to fight on alone to defeat.

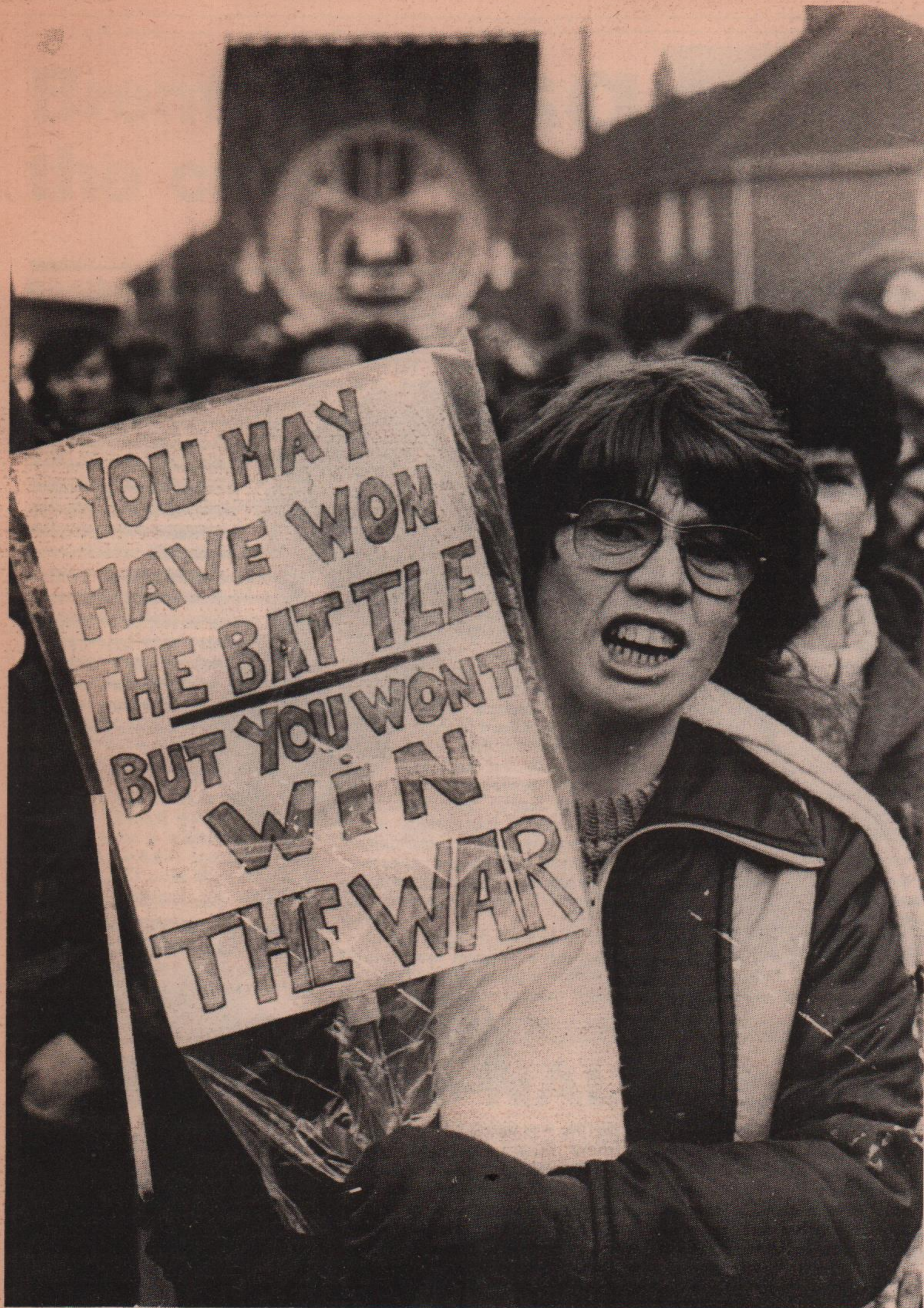
No, we were not delirious in 1980 and afterwards when we called for working class action to drive the Tories from office. That could have been done, before the Tories achieved the ascendancy they now have in British national life. That it wasn't done is one of the greatest crimes of misleadership in the long history of the international working class.

The bitter truth is that the Tories never defeated the working class in a head-on battle. They won by stealth and deception, using the economic slump as one weapon and the cowardice of most trade union leaders as the other.

The place of the Labour Party left in this saga of tragically avoidable defeat was a central one. It so happened that when Thatcher moved into Downing Street, the Labour left was moving towards taking over the town halls — Lambeth, Sheffield, the GLC etc. What did they do there? These were people who had pondered on the recent record of the Wilson-Callaghan government and concluded, 'Never again'. There must, they said, be a better way than this.

They began to take power in the town halls just as Thatcher was using her power in government to get down to radically reshaping Britain to make it more like the Red in Tooth and Claw capitalism in





The miners' defiant message

America; just as Thatcher unleashed a prolonged orgy of cuts, anti-union laws and welfare state dismantlement. How could they use local government power to thwart Thatcher and help raise up a force of working class resistance to stop her?

Two views emerged within the left that were united in the SCLV and then in the Rank and File Mobilising Committee.

The first view said that local government should be used in resistance to Thatcher. They should refuse to implement Tory cuts. They should take advantage of every Tory attempt to force them to implement cuts, to mobilise the local communities against the government. They should face the fact that the Tories were implacable, that it was all-out war which the labour movement would either win or pay very dearly for losing. Such an approach demanded that the leftwingers, taking local government 'power' should be as good as their promises and fight, going to jail if necessary, taking as their model and guide George Lansbury's Poplar Council, which in 1922 went to jail en masse in defence of the people of their borough.

The local government left

The other approach was the one followed by the local government left in power — not to fight the Tories, but to procrastinate; not to fight the Tory cuts, but to pass them on to the working class electorate by raising money from them, through

higher rates to offset cuts, not to play the part of fighters, but that of people concerned first of all, and at whatever cost to the working class, with their own well-being, including their own future careers.

Instead of the local government left controlling a series of anti-Tory fortresses dotted about the country, holding out against Thatcherism, mobilising the electorate to oppose its practice and its ideas, the local government 'left' played ball with Thatcher. It made lots of noise against the cuts, but still it passed them on.

Ultimately some of the councillors — notably in Lambeth and Liverpool — blundered into a confrontation with the government — years too late, after they had, over years, demobilised the possible working class local opposition to Thatcher.

More than anything else this experience has shaped the Labour Party today. If it had not happened like that, Kinnock's ascendancy would not be what it is today in the Labour Party — and maybe Thatcher's ascendancy in Britain would not be so pronounced either. It is unlikely that the Labour left alone could have defeated Thatcher while the broad trade union class struggle was declining. But we could have lessened the defeat and offset the decline. Instead the local government left created a new school of wheeling-dealing, naked careerism and indifference to long-term socialist goals.

Socialist Organiser, which had taken all the key initiatives when the left was rising, refused to go along with the rate-raising local govern-

ment left. We accurately pointed out what the choices were after Thatcher came to power in 1979. We were not mistaken. We pointed to the road of class struggle, of using local government to fight the Tories. We explained that Labour controlled local government would either be Thatcher's tool or a weapon pointed at her.

These were the alternatives. The ignominious collapse of the local government left proves it. The collapse didn't come about as a result of unfavourable circumstances in a fight seriously fought. It came at the end of a long period of evasion and rate rises — ie passing on cuts and procrastination whose outcome was only too easy to predict.

The worst kind of defeat

One thing is central to the story briefly outlined above. The point has already been made, but it must now be discussed in detail. It is this: the working class suffered no big defeats in an all out stand-up fight with the ruling class.

The defeat we suffered, and its consequences are still working their debilitating, poisoning way through the labour movement and the left. The defeat was a defeat without a battle, the worst of all defeats.

The heroic miners strike came very late, when the tide had been flowing very strong for Thatcher for nearly two years.

If when Thatcher and the ruling class she fights for went on the offensive we had mobilised and fought back, with the best of our strength, spirit and resources and

had, nevertheless, been beaten, then that would be clear and clean. We could analyse why, ask what we did wrong, what forces — a slump and growing unemployment for example — which we couldn't control, worked against us.

But this defeat: a slow wasting away of the strength of the labour movement; the succession of retreats following after retreats; the leaders from Len Murray to Norman Willis to Neil Kinnock who appear to have acted and to be acting under an inner compulsion to bow the knee to Thatcher and the Tories — this defeat is the sort of defeat that saps the will and the morale and the self-confidence.

This is the sort of defeat that leads those who experience it not to ask: "What did we do wrong?", but "What is wrong with us?". Trotsky long ago anatomised this sort of experience when he had to analyse the peaceful surrender of the mighty German labour movement, without a fight, to the murdering Nazis.

This type of defeat did not come only to the industrial big battalions. The defeat of the local government left was of that sort too. They didn't lose an all-out class battle. They lost out in a series of predictably — we predicted it and fought against it — foredoomed manoeuvres. By way of which they hoped to avoid an all out clash with Thatcher. It was, for the Ken Livingstones, a "Grand Old Duke of York" game — the Duke who marched his men all the way up to the top of the hill and then "marched them down again". Except that the Grand Old Duke of York of Labour local government manoeuvred under the powerful guns of the central state power controlled by Mrs Thatcher. He had no hope of survival.

It is this character of the defeats we suffered in the first half of the '80s which explain the way the left has melted away.

The electoral defeats of '83 and '87 are part of it of course — but they are more a consequence of the basic defeat than the cause of the semi-collapse of the left. It is because we were defeated the way we were in industry and local government alike that the seemingly vigorous left of 1980 has disbanded, split, divided and lost its nerve the way it has.

And on one level it is right and proper for the left which suffered this ignominious defeat to ask: "What's wrong with us?". Unfortunately the conclusion of most 1980 leftists, about the reformist, don't-take-risks, look-for-a-lesser-evil strategy is not that they made a wrong turn when they chose to go for evasion and procrastination against Thatcher rather than class struggle.

Their conclusion is that they were 'naive' and 'utopian', and were wrong even to dream and talk about the things the left dreamed and talked about in 1980 and '81. Just as they made the wrong decision about the rate rise strategy of evasion, they now make the correlated conclusion: it was our goals and 'extremism' that was wrong. They don't understand that the methods they chose were radically at odds with the earth shaking intransigent goals and postures they indulged in.

Today, the left is not in the best condition. Even if we assume, as we probably should, that the vote for Benn and Heffer underestimates the strength of the left, it is a hell of a decline from the left's peak 7 years ago.

So what do we do? What is SO's role now? What do we say the Left should do?

Today SO continues a battle for class struggle politics as the only road to socialism, that is of a free democratic working class society

with neither capitalist exploitation or the kind of state tyranny you have in the Stalinist states.

The left should unite around a basic programme of commitment to the working class and the promotion of the struggles of the working class, and hard commitment to the fight to replace the present wage-slave system with a cooperative, democratic socialist system as the central goal of our politics.

The left should learn the lessons of its own avoidable defeats. In the last 30 years we have been through an immense cycle of class struggle in this country — the healthy, vigorous left of the future will be built politically upon an analysis and discussion and assimilation of the lessons of this great cycle of class struggle including the negative lessons, part of which have been outlined above.

The hard left needs to arm itself with Marxism. Marxism isn't dead or reduced to the idiotic "shamefaced-anarcho-syndicalism for 10 year olds" purveyed by the SWP, or to the craven right wing falsetto Thatcherism of the CP and 'Marxism Today'. But Marxism too suffers from the decades of international working class defeat, from the adulteration of 60 years of state-power-holding Stalinism which has bits of pigeon Marxist phraseology as an oppressive state religion. What is and is not Marxism also needs to be hammered out in dialogue and discussion — free from religiosity and dogmatism.

The hard left needs to put the period of sectarianism behind it. Unfortunately the triumphant march of Kinnock and what he represents in the labour movement will strengthen sectarianism and push politically immature people towards organisations such as the SWP. Sectarianism is one part of the price we pay for opportunism such as that of the Labour local government left, just as opportunism is itself sometimes part of the price we pay — in a vicious circle — for sectarianism. Some of the local government left fakers and opportunists — Ted Knight for example — even came from a sectarian political background.

This is what the left needs to do. SO will try to continue to do what we have done in our first ten years — advocate the working class side in the class struggle; express our implacable opposition to the Tories and the right wing of the labour movement, and our no less implacable opposition to the totalitarian Stalinist forgery of socialism, and against those in the labour movement who champion and would replicate it.

For 10 years we have maintained an open paper which produces as a matter of course rebuffs and rejoinders to our editorial line and to our articles in the paper. We will continue to do so.

Only a fool would believe that the serious Marxist left has an easy time ahead. No, we haven't. It is most likely a very hard road ahead and there will be some who will find it too hard. Yet there is no other road.

We believe we live in a wage-slave society, in a world divided between the wage-slave system and the totalitarian state economy of the Stalinist states. If this is true, it follows that nothing will ever be right until we overthrow that system in both its Eastern and Western versions.

We remain, despite all the problems and setbacks, confident that the working class in the East and in the West will overthrow the systems of oppression and make a new world without class, race or sex oppression. In any case, for ourselves, we will do what we can to achieve the great socialist goal: the liberation of humanity from class society.

LES HEARN'S
SCIENCE
COLUMN

Seoul sex scandal

Many have found the achievements of the women athletes at Seoul inspiring but others have reacted in the spiteful traditions of male chauvinism. Of Florence Griffith Joyner, who can beat all but a few dozen men over 100 metres, Brazilian runner Joachim Cruz said 'She's a man', likening her sister, champion heptathlete Jackie Joyner Kersee to a gorilla!

The accusation of 'unfeminine' or 'manlike' has always been thrown at women who use their muscles. Some have had to endure accusations that they actually are men in disguise. This resulted in the introduction in 1966 of sex-testing only for women.

This wasn't just a quick look at the lower regions but what Mary Packer described as a humiliating internal examination to see if perhaps she had a couple of testicles hidden up her vagina. Later, a chromosome test was instituted, less humiliating but just as pointless — and devastating to the athlete who 'fails'. But modern sports wear make it impossible for a man to pass as a woman without drastic surgery — so what are the sex tests for?

In most people, sex is determined by the presence or absence of a Y chromosome — or, rather, by chemicals produced as a result of having a Y chromosome. Recent research suggests that one gene only is responsible for producing a *testicle-determining factor* which instructs the gonads to develop into testes. In its absence, they turn into ovaries. Other male characteristics are developed because a person has testes and not simply because 'he' has a Y.

Now, there are women with Y. Some probably have a fault in the TDF gene while others have the rare *testicular-feminising syndrome*. They have small testes inside their bodies, they produce male hormones but their cells are incapable of responding to these. Their bodies are indistinguishable from those of other women but they are infertile. Sex-testing is mainly based not on testing for the presence of a Y but for the presence of two X chromosomes. Most women have two Xs and the second one is visible as a small dark blob in each cell (a Barr body).

Cells are taken from a hair root or from inside of the cheek, stained and examined under a microscope.

XY women won't have a Barr body but neither will XO women, with only one X. This condition, Turner's syndrome, is unlikely to be an advantage to its possessor and it is unfair that they should come under any suspicion.

In cases of doubt, the samples are tested for the presence of a Y. This should catch the XY women but let the XO women off. Other women with a Y might get through the test, though. These are those with XXY XXY and even XXXY. They would have Barr bodies and would 'pass' the first test.

Other conditions which might or might not fall foul of the sex test include mosaicism, where some cells have a different number of chromosomes.

If possession of a Y is thought to be an advantage, it is strange that men are not tested for having an extra Y. XYY men do seem to be taller than average though earlier theories that they are more aggressive and anti-social do not seem to be well founded.

The evidence for an advantage to women in having a Y is rather scanty since male hormones are produced by the testes and XY women either do not have testes or are incapable of responding to male hormones. But pointless though sex tests are (why do women equestrians at Seoul have to take them when they compete on equal terms with men?) they can cause anxiety among women athletes, preventing them reaching their full potential and sometimes destroying careers.

A world apart

CINEMA

By Belinda Weaver

Heavily armed police move in to break up a gathering at the funeral of a murdered black South African. This could be any shot from a news programme today.

But this is South Africa, 1963, the year of the 90 Day Detention Act and the ANC's turn to armed struggle. At the funeral, defying house arrest, are Diana Roth and her daughter, Molly. They're white South Africans, but they can't live with the regime.

The character of Roth in 'A World Apart' is based on Ruth First, a Communist activist killed by a letter bomb in 1982. The screen play was written by her daughter Shawn Slovo.

The film deals with their difficult relationship as Roth becomes more and more involved in politics. Molly is just emerging from childhood, and is forced too soon to deal with a whole host of frightening changes. Her father disappears, her mother is distant and somehow under threat, her schoolfellows jeer and mock at her for her unpatriotic, black-sympathetic parents.

Molly badly wants reassurance, but her mother is too caught up in her own world to see her child's needs. In the pressure to do what she thinks is right, Roth plays the distant, impatient parent when her daughter asks her questions.

Like Molly, we're not too sure what Diana Roth is up to, but this only makes us feel Molly's fears all the more. Molly wants to know what's going on, where Daddy's gone, and why everything is changing so fast. Her mother can't give her answers, so we identify with the child's bewilderment.

Slovo's script is structured so that we focus on Molly first but shift to Diana as the government clamps down on her activities and begins to persecute her. While at first Diana seems unsympathetic, this changes as we focus on her struggle in prison. Diana herself is shown as



Barbara Hershey and Jodhi May

uncertain and at times weak and frightened. Deprived of her husband's support and uncertain of his whereabouts, she wonders whether she can bear to carry on alone.

Diana's dilemma is a common one for activists — how to balance the real needs of family against the necessity to engage in political struggle. Roth is driven politically, and her family just have to understand and suffer along with her. She sees no other choice.

The direction the film takes shows that Slovo has forgiven and better still, understood what her

mother was fighting for. In the film Molly herself grows up to see beyond her own problems, and to want to understand the cause her mother believes in.

Films which show personal relationships against a historical or political background often suffer because personal issues seem like a distraction from the more interesting background. That doesn't happen in 'A World Apart'. Jodhi May, who plays Molly, is absolutely riveting, and we grow to feel for Diana as the film progresses. Like Molly we find her a little forbidding at first but the more we see the more

there is to admire.

It isn't really a political film. The South African state is shown as genuinely terrifying, with its arbitrary violence and punitive laws. But the film doesn't give a sense of the movement of black South Africans. There are demonstrations, but no strikes. The film doesn't give an indication of how South Africans can beat the regime. We see defiance and personal courage but little organisation. Perhaps the most harrowing thing about 'A World Apart' is how long black South Africans have been struggling without yet being free.

The other America

BOOKS

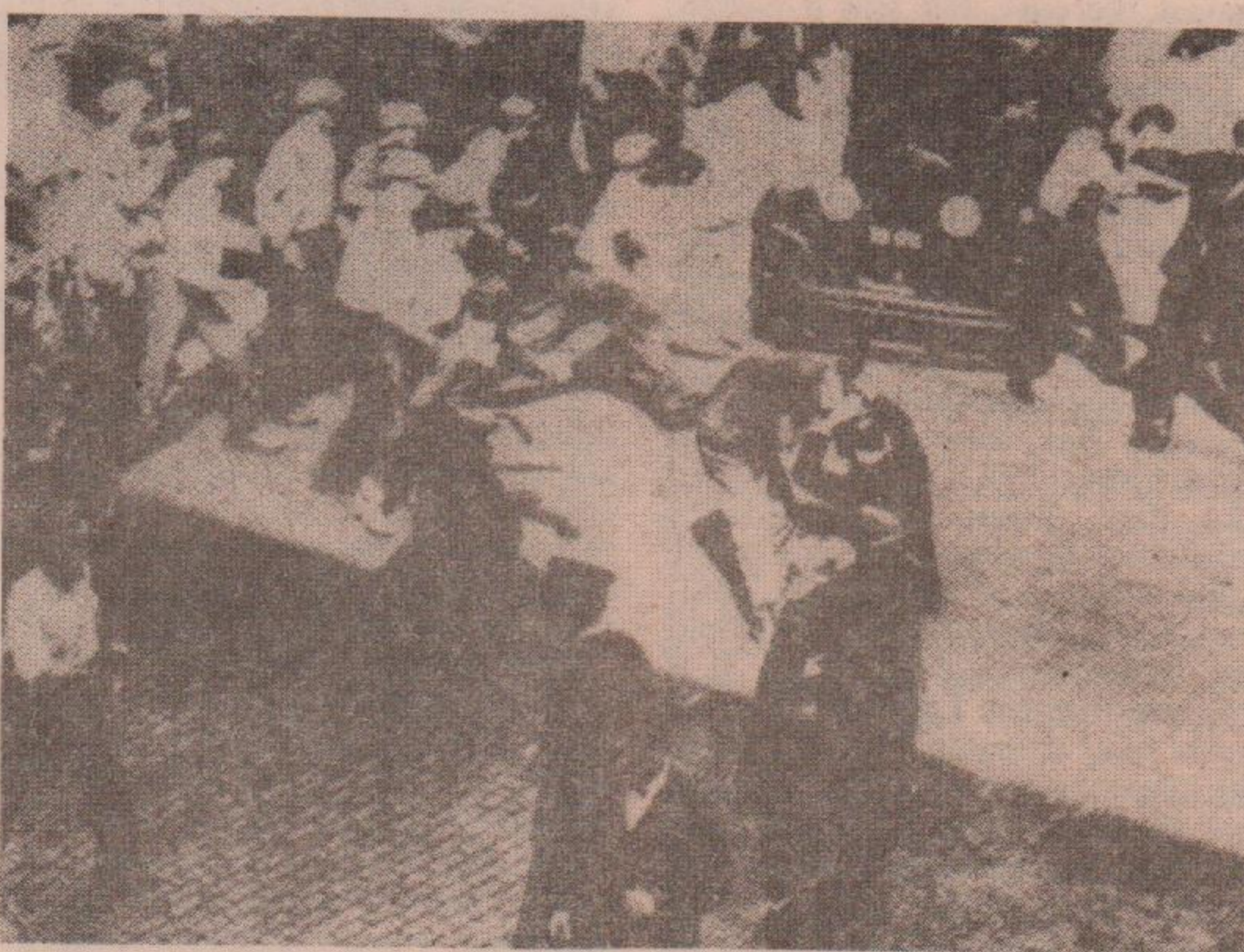
By Bryan Edmands

To most workers here America isn't one of the obvious places to look for examples of labour movement militancy. Yet there is a rich history of heroic struggle by workers all over the US — battles for basic rights such as a job, a living wage, and the right to organise, strike and picket.

Marxists have pioneered the publishing of work in this field, often playing a leading role in many of the fights. Not only histories, but also music and more recently films have championed the working class cause.

However, there are comparatively few novels, certainly of the time which are readily available here and now, that present such struggles from the side of the workers.

A notable exception is 'In Dubious Battle' by John



Teamster defence guards battle with cops

Steinbeck, first published in 1936 and now republished in paperback by Pan Books Ltd.

Set in California of the early-30s, this is America of the 'Depression'. An America of tens-of-thousands

of migratory workers seeking work; of brutal employers; and of militants prepared to live and die in the fight to organise against the exploiters and their thugs.

This is an impassioned account of

political militants — fieldworkers for the Communist Party (a CP in reality already corrupted by Stalinism yet with some thousands of sincere, motivated, and revolutionary rank and file members) — who exist to "go with the workers" to organise them, and to fight alongside them against the bosses.

The narrative remains taut yet magnificently paints the landscape and characters so well. The very essence of the times, of the struggle, of the frustration and anger and justice of the workers, calls out on every page.

This isn't just an emotional work though; it has real educational value too. Not only in the broad slice of history it provides, but also in the lessons of the organisation of workers against vicious attacks.

Steinbeck, better known for his Pulitzer prize winning 'The Grapes of Wrath', has been criticised for going overboard on "socialist realism" but as valid as this is — do read this book!

We musn't lose this record of history — a hard fought history of workers' sweat, blood, tears, that remains to us in a popular and accessible form.

Brent: defeat the cuts!

By Cheung Sui
Ming Brent NUT
(Personal capacity)

The half day strike of Brent teachers on Monday 26th September was overwhelmingly supported by NUT and NAS/UWT members. The rally jointly organised by the two TUC-affiliated teaching unions at Willesden stadium, was supported by many students and parents.

Brent now looks set to become the first local authority to sack teachers. Both teaching unions sent national speakers to the rally, because the credibility of their national policies against compulsory redundancy is now at stake.

A speaker from Brent NALGO pointed out to the rally that not only is the Council going to cut 233 teaching jobs, it is also planning to cut 7,800 NALGO members' jobs too. NALGO is in the process of balloting members for indefinite strike.

Of all the platform speakers, a parent representative received the most enthusiastic response by speaking strongly and eloquently in

support of the teachers' action. However, both national NAS/UWT and NUT speakers made gutless speeches laced with empty rhetoric, and this will be a cause for concern among rank and file teachers who want to fight these cuts.

For the Broad Left who control the NUT nationally, what is now at stake is their last remaining base in London. The present events could not have happened at a worse time for them, because this year's NUT President, Malcolm Horne, is from Brent NUT.

Trouble had been brewing even before now. At a special branch meeting on 20 September, over 500 teachers voted through a strong motion calling for no cover and extensive strike action, against the opposition of the platform. Speaker after speaker accused the Brent NUT officers of inactivity and even collaboration with the Council.

For sure, their lack of action last term over compulsory redeployment, and their virtual silence as Brent intimidated teachers into "volunteering" for retirement and severance, has resulted in over 600 enquiries in response to the Council's demands to cut 233 teaching jobs.

At one stage, it looked as if the Council was home and dry before the NUT's cumbersome machinery was brought into motion against

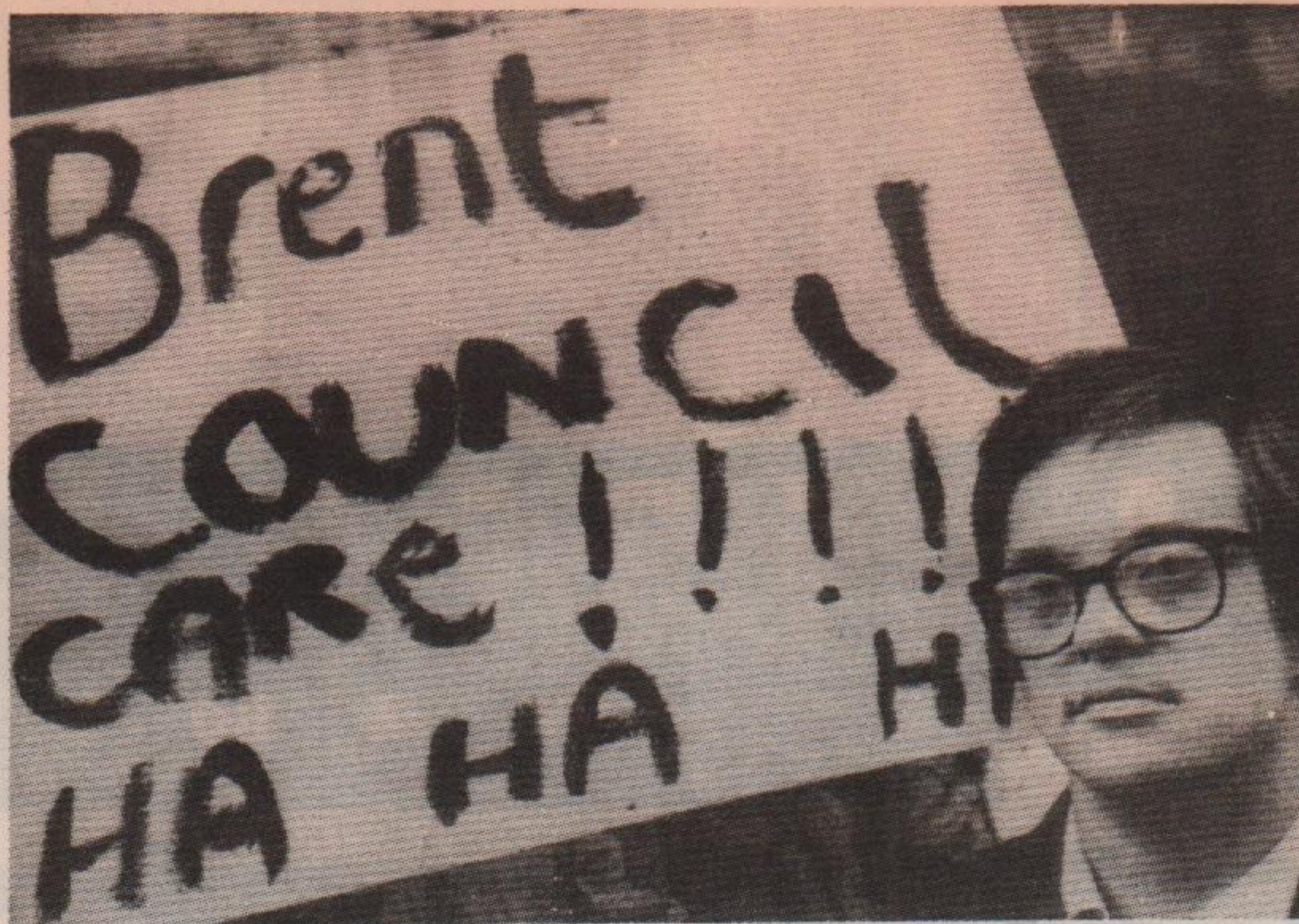


Photo Jez Coulson

compulsory redundancy. Seasoned observers may well deduce that this was exactly the outcome hoped for by the Brent and national officers — they could claim victory on the basis of a successful defence of the national union policy against compulsory redundancy, without having to wage a serious fight.

Now the Council has sent to all secondary school teachers a second 'invitation' to sell their jobs — because this is the sector where there are not enough previous volunteers of the "right type" (either not in the right subjects, or those who will cost too much).

At the same time, they have identified teachers for compulsory sacking, coupled with plans to close schools and forcibly redeploy teachers. The level of financial incompetence has angered even the most moderate of teachers, eg for 5 years running the Council forgot to

budget for teachers' maternity leave provision! This is £2.5 million alone!

These developments, and the industrial action of others such as NALGO members and parents who have occupied Crawford Avenue Respite Home for mentally handicapped children to prevent its closure, will strengthen the hand of militant teachers campaigning for a yes vote in the next round of NUT ballot for further strikes.

Now is the time for the previously disunited Left in Brent NUT to campaign and fight together, not only to defeat the cuts alongside other council workers, but to win the union elections at the next AGM — this is a crucial task, because next year the Council will be coming back for more cuts, £42 million in fact, and we cannot rely on the present officers to defend jobs and services.

Defend the GCHQ 18!

By Trudy Saunders
CPSA

In 1984 the Tory government ruled that trade unionists at the Ministry of Defence GCHQ were a 'security risk'. Conditions of service imposed on all workers at GCHQ said they did not have the right to be trade union members. A subsequent Judicial Review ruled these conditions illegal.

Since 1984, trade unionists in the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) and the National Union of Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS) at GCHQ have suffered threats, harassment, loss of pay and loss of promotion rights. Last week the twelve GCHQ workers who refused to leave their union in 1984 were given a choice by the Tories — 'Your union or your job'. The six who rejoined their unions after the Judicial Review face further disciplinary action which will undoubtedly lead to them being forced to make the same choice. But for these eighteen, who have fought for their right to be trade unionists, there is no choice.

Unless the two largest civil servants' unions, the CPSA and NUCPS can force the government to back down, the 18 trade unionists at GCHQ will be sacked.

On Friday 29 September, members of the CPSA and NUCPS all over the country took strike action in protest at this latest Tory outrage.

But protest action will not be enough. Only concerted strike action throughout the country in support of the most basic right of all workers — to join a trade union — will be enough to win.

The Tories feel they are in a strong position to get away with sacking the GCHQ 18. The CPSA has the most cowardly, bootlicking, right wing leadership it has had for years, in the shape of a National Executive Committee led by John 'I want no strikes in the CPSA' Ellis.

Once again it will be down to activists in the CPSA Broad Left to raise this vital issue among ordinary members, argue for the massive campaign of all-out strike action that will be needed to win, and put pressure on the right wing CPSA leadership to implement it.

This issue has much wider ramifications than GCHQ. Which other group of trade unionists will become a 'security risk' for the Tories? And what will happen when managers of the new style Government Agencies rule that their workers no longer have the right to be trade unionists? Ellis has already said that he is not going to lead a fight against the Agencies. If we leave the fate of the GCHQ 18 in his hands, they can kiss their jobs goodbye.

Lessons of the NALGO ballot

By Nik Barstow
Islington NALGO

Council bosses made a "final offer" of a cut in real wages to NALGO's 1/2 million council worker members... and they voted not to fight it!

The vote was close 138,000 voted for action against a 5.4% pay offer but 172,000 said no. That vote took the unions back 2 years to when it last balloted on action over pay and got an almost identical 55-45% result. Why?

It is the union's national leadership's fault that they couldn't build on the resentment NALGO members feel. Council workers are angry at steadily declining wages compared to other workers and the 'low pay ghetto' for many basic grade clerical workers which hasn't been challenged.

The national leadership wanted a

fight over pay... but they didn't have much of a clue how to do it.

* They argued for a reasonable pay claim this year of 10%. That was less than the 12% or £900 put forward for the last 2 years. The reply from the Council employers was given quickly and with 2 fingers.

SO supporters argued for a better claim, a flat rate claim of £1,250 a year that could have mobilised both low paid members and the higher paid. This was adopted by a number of the union's districts and narrowly rejected.

* The national leadership didn't know how to build a real campaign. They pumped out hundreds of thousands of leaflets but...the main slogans were things like "Fair play APT&C staff". Precious few NALGO members know they are 'APT&C staff' but bemused members of the public and supporters would have even less of a clue! It has to be branches not bureaucrats who run the campaigns, in any pay campaign we need rank and file activists to take con-

trol.

* The leadership divided up the issues that matter. Whilst saying that we should fight on pay they said we should roll over and play dead when job cuts are planned by 'caring' Labour Councils. That policy makes no sense at all, if we are sacked 10% of nothing is nothing.

Small wonder that in London, where the largest cuts are being pushed through, that there was one of the lowest votes for action.

Victimisation stalled

By Tony Dale

Manchester City Council on Friday 30 September dropped its attempt to victimise two housing

workers. The two workers were suspended four weeks ago. They were accused of helping to organise a tenant's occupation of a Council office in Hulme.

Even though the disciplinary action has been dropped, the council have still got away with suspending a union steward for 4 weeks. Should the same happen again, it is vital that the union activists are not left suspended sitting at home isolated. A plan of action is needed to respond to similar attacks. If management suspend workers for trade union activity the immediate response must be a walkout by the workforce.

NUPE got away with a cautious 'wait and see' attitude this time, but the next time it could be a recipe for disaster.

The price of trade unionism

We've got to stand up to the threats against the GCHQ 18 who face the sack for staying loyal to trade unionism.

The potential for solidarity action in their support is there if only the TUC taps it.

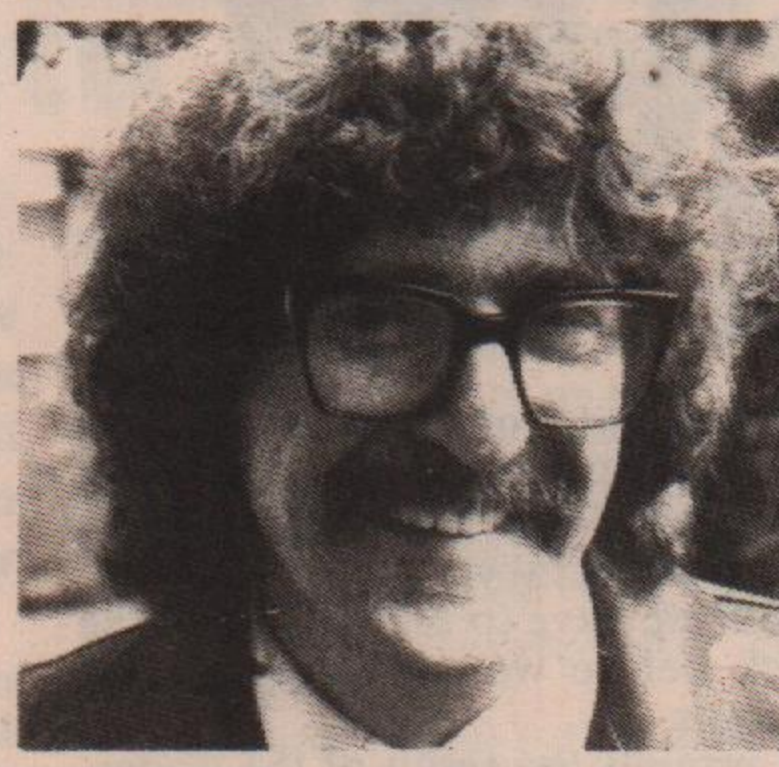
Trade unionists have been looking downwards since the defeat of the miners — there has got to be an upturn sooner or later. GCHQ could be just the kind of issue to lift people's heads back up again.

Because what's at stake is a basic right: the right to belong to a trade union. If we stand up and fight on this issue then we can turn the tide.

I'm not surprised nor am I dependent about the result of the Labour leadership elections. All it means is that the left lives to fight another day and Benn and Heffer's campaign has helped give the left something to organise around.

There's some talk that Kinnock

WHETTON'S WEEK



A miner's diary

might go for a further purge as he now feels more confident. But that would be very counter-productive for Kinnock, he'd be grabbing a

tiger by the tail and giving the Party's rank and file something to go for.

I think that it's more likely that he'll go for a 'softly, softly' approach and quietly chop away at what he sees as dissidents.

Whatever happens we need more unity on the left to resist Kinnock's drift to the right.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that the Gibraltar verdict gave the Tory government the stamp of approval that they wanted.

Seeing as they've got away with it in this case what's to stop the security forces taking such methods onto the streets over here at some stage in the future.

I'm not surprised that the Labour leadership have failed to respond clearly over this issue.

Kinnock and his kitchen cabinet see themselves in No 10 some day and having to deal with the same set of problems. They think the Tories are basically right and that a Labour government would do the same thing in similar circumstances.

S. Yorks poll tax campaign

By Karen Waddington

After an information day on the Poll Tax at the Alocal Centre Against Unemployment where Council officers told people how much the Poll Tax would cost and where to pay it, a few people got together and organised a different meeting. One about fighting the Poll Tax.

We invited a Poll Tax campaign theatre group, a speaker from Shelter and a speaker from

Scotland. The meeting was held in a local club. About 90 people came along which is pretty good for meetings around here.

Many people did not realise the full implications of the Poll Tax but they soon found out after watching the play and hearing the speaker from Shelter.

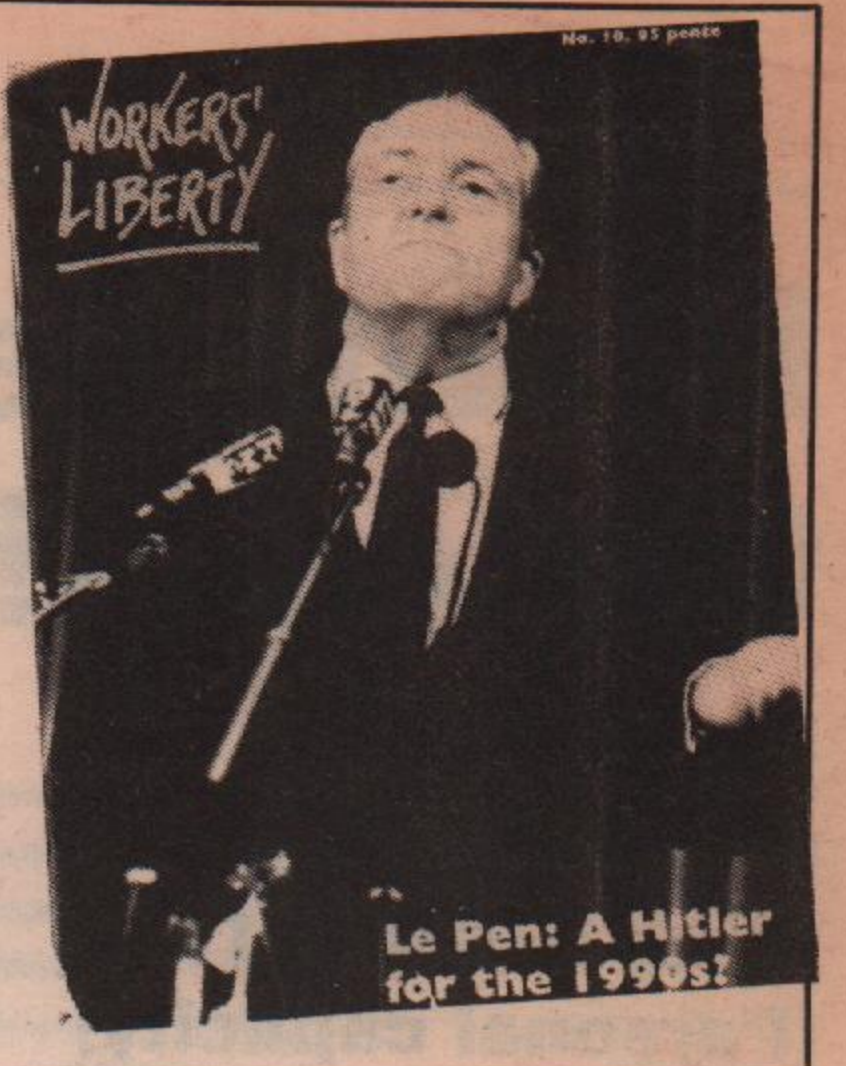
The speaker from Scotland outlined the tactics used and experience of Poll Tax groups there. Afterwards the debate ranged from: 'What is the Labour Party doing?'; 'What does the council stand?'; 'How do we fight the Poll Tax?'

The local vicar stood up and pledged not to pay his Poll Tax.

SOCIALIST

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March on the Tories!

SOCIALIST STUDENT

By Liz Millward

Next week's demonstration in Brighton should be the beginning of a term of fighting the Tories. We have major battles on our hands — not only on the 'student issues' of loans and individual membership but on the Poll Tax, the Housing Bill and the government's so-called training schemes.

Let's make no mistake about who is responsible for these attacks. No matter how long you talk about 'Post-Fordism' or any other daft theory the truth is that Thatcher wants to turn Britain into a society of even greater exploitation, even fewer rights for the oppressed and even larger profits for her friends.

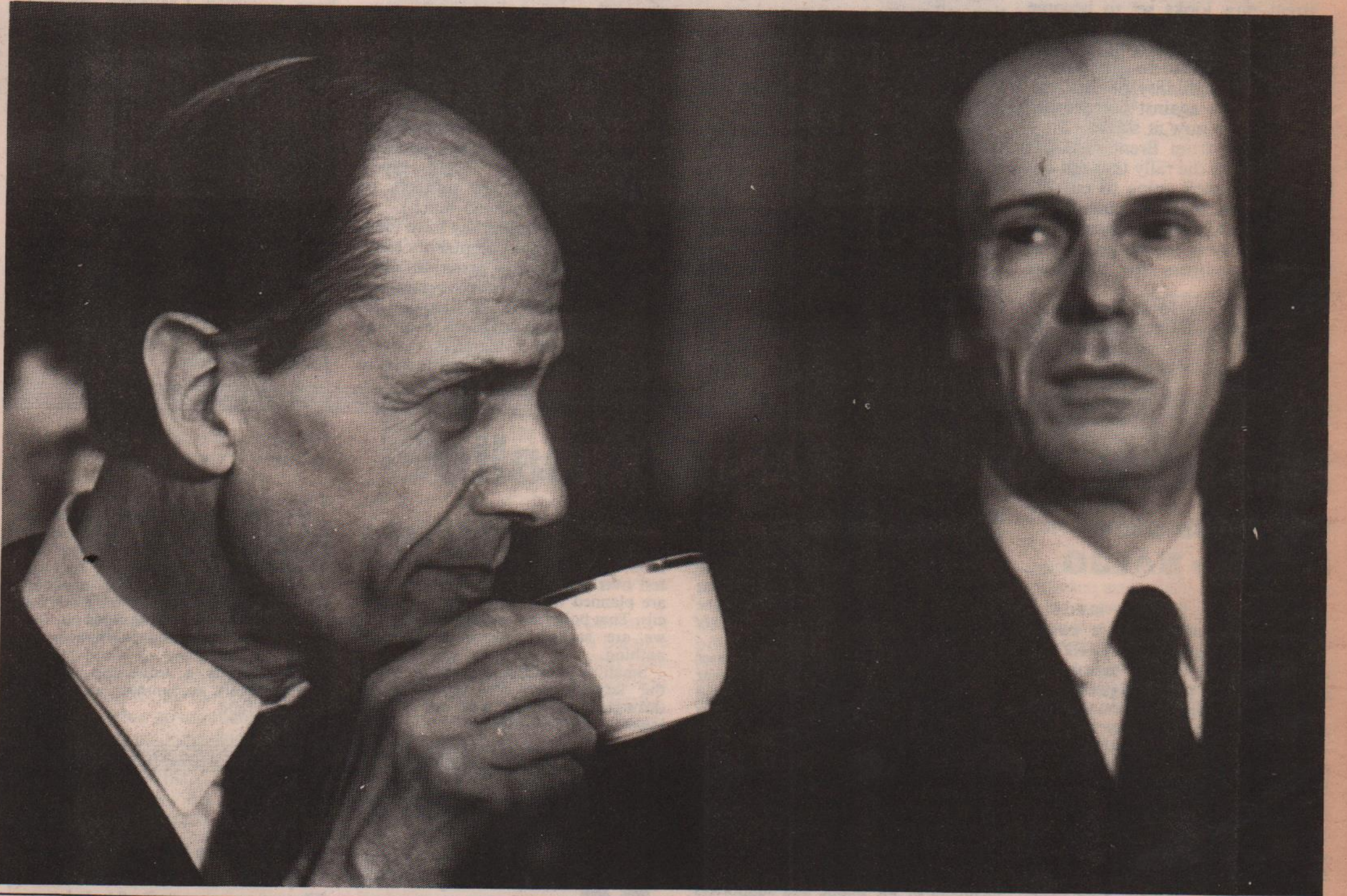
She has a huge majority in Parliament, with a bunch of unelected old dodderers to back her up, and the forces of law and order (police to you and me) in case we don't take our punishment quietly.

Students are beginning to find out that it's our turn next. The GERBill, benefit cuts and constant erosion of our financial support are only the beginning. After all we have had our union to organise the fightback (even if it hasn't been very effective!). Without NUS the struggle for decent grants and a fair, accessible education system will be a million times harder.

NUS's leadership is dreadful — but the union is something worth fighting for. We have to link that fight to the struggles of young people on YTS and we have to pursue our fight everywhere we are able to.

The Brighton demo should be the start of that fight.

Assemble: The Level, Brighton 2pm Thursday 13 October. There will be a rally after the demo and a meeting in the evening with speakers from Stop the Section, NUS and campaigns against YTS.



Left must organise, says Heffer

By Eric Heffer MP

The results of the leadership contest has not turned out very differently from what we expected.

Clearly the edge was taken off the

left's political campaign with the intervention of John Prescott. I have to be quite honest — I am not certain there wasn't a certain amount of collusion between Prescott and the leadership. The minute he appeared in the contest he was hyped up as the man who could win. After that the politics took a back seat.

But we didn't abandon the politics — in my view we did a very good job. We now have a good embryo of a left wing organisation throughout the country.

But we must recognise the fact that we now have a lot of work to do

In Conference votes have gone against the left. The voting on 'Aims and Values': I would have said it had been defeated on a show of hands. But then there was a card vote. I don't think it reflected the feeling in Conference.

The passing of "Aims and Values" and the other documents on the economy has been a real set back.

The policies being put forward in those documents are very little different from those being advocated by Paddy Ashdown of the SDLP.

The really serious problem is the new centralisation of power in the PLP, and in the leadership. Here —



the opposite of what Gorbachev says is happening in Russia! — they are centralising power in order to crush democracy.

But we have to see the rest of the week before we can make a final analysis.

Certainly the result of the leadership election has revealed that the left is not as strong as we should be. But we were right to stand, if we hadn't stood, it would have been a total rout of the left — without any opposition or any fightback.

By fighting now we have created a new spirit amongst the left in the Party, the country and the unions. We have to concentrate on the

unions in the time ahead. We have to work very hard in the unions — and that doesn't mean just amongst top-line officials, although I'm not against that. It means working very hard at grassroots level and building up genuine left wing organisations which will fight to move the unions leftward.

I believe the leadership campaign of Tony Benn and myself has been a very useful campaign. I have met a lot of good comrades all over the country who now feel that it was vital that it was done, that we made the stand — and some of them were not at all sure about it when the campaign began.

It has inspired me personally. What would now be wrong would be for leftists to say — let's pack up our bags and go home. That's not the position. We have got to organise more strongly than ever in the Party and build a good left wing organisation throughout the country — a left organisation, a serious organisation.

And various groupings on the genuine left have got to recognise that there will be differences amongst themselves, but that they have got to work together. That is absolutely vital, it is of immense importance for the future of the movement.

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