

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

**Protest 7 November**  
**GCHQ**  
**DAY**  
Rally in Central London called by the TUC

### Strike for union rights at GCHQ

By Ray Ferris

# Enemies of freedom

**T**he Government's ban on trade unions at GCHQ Cheltenham is an attack on every trade unionist and on everyone's civil liberties.

The Tories hope their latest sackings will finally end the 4-year struggle of workers there to keep their membership of a free trade union. *We must prove that they are wrong.*

The civil service unions are balloting their half-a-million members on strike action on Monday 7 November. The TUC has called for a Day of Action, urging members to stay within the law.

They should have called for a one-day general strike. As it is, trade unionists must focus their attention on 7 November and try to get the widest possible solidarity strike action. Civil service militants should be invited to explain the issues and win votes for action.

The EETPU is balloting 43,000 electricity supply workers for strike action on 7 November. Their executive is recommending a 'yes' vote.

Hammond and his cronies have their own reasons for trying to outflank the TUC. But we must not under-estimate the importance of their decision.

Such a strike would throttle many industries, bringing them to a grinding halt. It would be a tremendous boost to the morale of other workers against the seemingly invincible Tories.

And it provides a powerful argument for other workers too — if the EETPU (booted out of the TUC last month) can call



**Sarah Spencer, Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties, spoke to Socialist Organiser about the Tory government's moves to abolish the legal right to remain silent under police questioning.**

**The right to silence is essential to the principle that the burden of proof is on the prosecution.**

It means that no individual should be compelled to incriminate themselves or compelled to speak with the risk of incriminating themselves. The onus, is on the prosecution to amass the evidence against you, not on you to prove your innocence.

Once you start forcing defendants to speak, you're attacking that basic principle.

It's less experienced, innocent and less able people who will be most vulnerable. It will increase the chances of them making false confessions or inaccurate confessions.

There are many legitimate reasons why people should want to stay silent other than because they've done something wrong. They may not be able to remember very clearly what happened and be frightened of making an inaccurate statement that can get them into trouble.

They may have been doing something that was personally embarrassing, or they may be protecting their child or spouse.

The assumption that the government is trying to put across that only guilty people would want to remain silent is very far from the truth.

The proposal to remove the right to silence in Northern Ireland must be seen in context. Most of the basic safeguards there have already been removed.

You can be held for 7 days before charge, under the emergency legislation. That already makes people feel under compulsion to speak, and most of them do, of course.

You have 48 hours before you can see a solicitor, as opposed to 36 over here. And then when you get to trial if you're held under the emergency legislation, there's no jury and the rules of evidence have been changed to allow involuntary confessions.

But abolition of the right to silence is not just something they've found necessary for Northern Ireland and will then extend to England and Wales.

In Britain too, the Home Secretary is under great pressure to do something about rising crime which has got considerably worse under the Conservative government although it's supposed to be a law and order government. They're looking for ways to increase the conviction rate.

**See page 3: Fight political censorship! Fight the Tories' TV ban on Sinn Fein!**

**THIS SPORTING LIFE**

**Heads roll**

By Janine Booth

**T**his week's dollop of sport departs from its usual format. Instead of a long polemic on a particular sporty topic, there follows a selection of snippets, some nuggets of news and, of course, the infamous trivia teaser.

First, I will put those of you who were fascinated and enthralled by last week's probe into the politics of the Football League out of your misery.

As you may recall, President Philip Carter and his sidekick David Dein faced calls for their removal from office, accused of sneakiness, dirty dealing and putting their own clubs (Everton and Arsenal respectively) before the interests of football as a whole. Well, at last week's Extraordinary General Meeting of Football League Chairmen, their heads duly rolled.

Personally, I was very happy about this unprecedented display of rebellion from the ranks of club chairmen. A great triumph for revolutionary socialism? Well, not quite — perhaps it is now time to completely overhaul the entire structure of the game.

**D**ean Saunders, the stupendously brilliant Welsh international who used to amaze me with his brilliance in his Brighton days, has left Oxford for Derby at the absurd cost of £1m (an amount which could have added 10p to every mother's Child Benefit). Mr Kevin Maxwell handed over the dosh to Mr Robert Maxwell, so the Maxwell million stayed in the family.

**E**aling schools have got themselves in trouble with the Schools Football Association, having committed the heinous crime of letting little girls play soccer with little boys. The Schools FA is, apparently, in favour of girls' teams (who may only play against other girls' teams) but not of mixed teams. And yet, they still continue to whinge about wishing that football was a game that 'all the family can enjoy'. 'Enjoyment', I presume, extends only to watching, not playing.

**I**t looks like Frank Bruno will have to fight Mike Tyson in Las Vegas. I'd strongly advise him against this, not because of any jingoism, but because American hospital treatment isn't nearly as good as the dear old National Health Service.

**L**ast week's solution: Liverpool, Aston Villa, Charlton Athletic, Northampton Town, York City, Dundee United, East Fife and East Stirlingshire.

This week's teaser: Name three England captains who have played for Scunthorpe United.



Five million French civil service and public sector workers went on strike last Thursday (20 October) in pursuit of a wage claim. Teachers also participated in a highly successful day organised by the six big unions, including the Communist Party-led CGT.

**Rethinking the boycott**

**T**he decision by the South African Rugby Board (SARB) following talks with the banned African National Congress (ANC) to develop non-racial rugby may not liberate South Africa. But it has infuriated white supremacists and represents an important new turn by the liberation movement.

In the past, ANC policy on such questions has been dominated by the idea of boycott — far beyond what could be considered reasonable or effective. The most well-publicised example of the 'cultural boycott' was that imposed on Paul Simon for working with (black) South African musicians on his 'Graceland' album.

'Academic' boycotts have included pickets of a lecture by a radical South African labour historian, Eddie Webster, at Warwick University.

Of course the boycott of racially-segregated sport has been of a different order. But the agreement reached with SARB must mark a step forward.

The essential problem with boycott policies is that they add to the isolation experienced by black South Africans. In some cases, this may be unavoidable if we are to show disapproval of apartheid. But sometimes it is avoidable.

Links with non-racial trade unions have always proved extremely valuable. Links in sport can be valuable too.

**Women organise on rapist threat**

By Julia Coulton

**W**omen students in Manchester are being terrorised by a rapist who has committed at least nine rapes or sexual attacks over the past 18 months.

He follows them home from the University area to student bedsits, then beaks into their homes in the early hours of the morning.

The police reaction to the crimes has been outrageous. A distinct pattern to the rapes was detected as far back as July this year, but the police only released details to the public last week — 3 months late.

At a press conference they stated that "Those who needed to know were informed" and that all the relevant people were constantly updated. This did not include the student unions concerned or the women of Manchester!

Women are fighting back against this threat of violence against them by organising a 'Reclaim the Night' march, but a lot of their anger is also being directed against the police.

**Israel's biggest boss goes bust**

**I**srael's largest company, Koor, which is owned by the Histadrut trade union federation, is on the verge of bankruptcy.

Confused? One of the many weird things about Israel is the dominant economic role played by its so-called labour movement. The Histadrut is the biggest economic power and the biggest employer. As well as a 'labour department' it has various companies. It also runs the health service.

Workers often find their employer and their union to be one and the same — a fact that warps politics in Israel almost as much as the national conflict. 'Left' and 'Right' have odd connotations in Israel.

Now Koor is on the verge of being bankrupted by an American bank, after failing to repay a \$20m loan.

As the company moves to sack workers, the Histadrut in its other capacity moves to protect them...Explosive events may be looming.



Demonstration in Tel-Aviv for Israeli withdrawal from West Bank

**Belfast shipyard threatened**

**T**he government's attempts to sell off Belfast's Harland and Wolff shipyard could well be sunk.

The potential buyer, Ravi Tikoo has pulled out, saying that "the terms that the government offered for the acquisition of the yard did not, in our view, provide a

reasonable prospect for long-term viability."

The government had offered to write off over £500m worth of losses, and to provide a £70m subsidy towards a cruise liner which Tihoo wanted to build at the shipyard.

The government is claiming that there are still four potential buyers.

Only one of these is known — Seaways Engineering — and it's not viewed as a viable bid.

If the yard closes, 3,800 workers will be thrown on the dole — a prospect which is angering Unionist politicians and trade unionists. It looks like the government will be left with little option but to continue to subsidise the yard.

# Fight political censorship

## EDITORIAL

**O**f all last week's assaults on civil liberties, the most popular was probably the prohibition of broadcasts by members of Sinn Fein.

Sinn Fein, the 'political wing' of the IRA, is to be banned from our screens and airwaves in an effort to defeat it politically.

Much has been made by the Tories of Sinn Fein MP Gerry Adams' alleged 'justification' for the Enniskillen bombing. People with such views should have no right to be heard.

Opponents of the ban have argued that it is feeble because it doesn't cover newspapers, or counter-productive because it has given the IRA free publicity. It's an inefficient method of fighting terrorism, they say. The British people are quite able to tell repulsive politics when they hear them. All true enough, as far as it goes. If Sinn Fein can be banned from the screens now because its views are considered vicious, then who else could be banned later.

But these arguments miss or obscure a more central issue. Everyone, Labour as well as Tory, says they want to 'fight terrorism'. But there is an unposed question in all this. If the idea is to undermine Sinn Fein's popular support, surely the issue that should be addressed is why Sinn Fein has popular support?

Might it not be that the Catholic grievances against Britain articulated by Sinn Fein are legitimate ones?

Sinn Fein is able to win support despite an open policy of 'armed struggle', and even sometimes for it, because the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland is oppressed. They are often bitterly socially oppressed, living in miserable slums. And they are nationally oppressed — denied their right to live in a united Irish republic.

Socialist Organiser believes the 'armed struggle' to be a futile and counter-productive strategy. Irish unity will depend upon convincing



Sinn Fein leaders — censored

Ireland's Protestant minority. Bombs won't convince them that a united Ireland would be a safe place.

The support Sinn Fein has cannot be banned out of existence. A political answer to Ireland's continuing agony is what is needed. Tom King's spate of repressive measures is an indication of the Tories' total lack of answers.

Free speech is moreover a precious right which this government is all too happy to steal. Gerry Adams represents a part of the Northern Irish people and he has a right to be heard.

### Answer

It is worth noting, incidentally, that people who are quick to slap bans on Sinn Fein would never hear of such a thing for fascists. The most vile of racists should have the right to speak — but not Northern Irish Catholics; that is the Tories' ridiculous view.

A united Ireland, giving the Protestants regional autonomy, could provide the basis for an answer. Repression will only deepen the divisions and put oil on the fire.

## Renationalise with workers' control!

**T**he Royal Ordnance sites at Enfield and Waltham Abbey were sold to British Aerospace for £3.5 million. Their estimated value now is £450 million. The land alone is worth £90 million.

Through this and other huge rip-offs British Aerospace could reap enormous profits by closing plants bought for a pittance as a result of privatisation. That's Tory Britain for you.

Yet increasingly large numbers of socialists see the traditional alternative to the private sector — nationalisation — as both old hat and irrelevant. Other forms of 'social ownership' are to be examined. The Labour Party Policy Review is full of such notions, and they don't stop there.

Nationalisation has not been a good experience in Britain or

elsewhere. State ownership by a capitalist state is not working class ownership. Bureaucratic and sometimes inefficient, the nationalised industries seem to many to be like ugly old buildings in need of demolition.

But it's not just the buildings that get demolished.

Privatisation means de-unionisation and worse conditions for workers. And some services can be better controlled when publicly-owned, even by the present state, than they ever could be in private hands. Privatised buses, for example, are bad news for people living on loss-making routes. Privatised water doesn't bear thinking about. Privatised hospitals....

The left does need a positive alternative to privatisation. If old-fashioned nationalisation isn't very attractive, we need a new view of nationalisation. Such a view must

contain two elements.

(1) Nationalisation of isolated unprofitable industries is useful more to capitalism than to the working class. Nationalisation should be linked to the idea of socialist planning: organising the dominant sectors of the economy on a new basis. Instead of profit, people's needs should rule.

(2) As a precondition for this, democracy must be at the heart of nationalisation. Of course this means democracy within industry. But it also means democracy at the level of the state. The state itself must be a democratic, socialist state, we must replace the bureaucracy and powers-that-be that run our lives at the moment.

Democratic, socialist planning, liberating humanity from the tyranny of the market place. That should be our alternative both to Tory privatisation and old-style Labourite nationalisation.

## PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR

THE INDEPENDENT

By Jim Denham

'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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Latest date for reports: first post Monday or by phone Monday evening.

## Return of the Shah

**T**he chubby features of Mr Eddie Shah have not, so far, featured in any of the pre-launch publicity for *The Post* (due out on 10 November in case you haven't noticed the ads).

I think this is a wise move on his part. Proprietors are not usually good ambassadors for their own publications; Mirror Group editors and journalists still live in constant dread of Cap'n Bob once more, taking it into his head to do his own

publicity and overnight undoing all their hard work trying to boost circulation.

The Digger knows better, keeping a low profile and relying on his house-trained editors to do his bidding. People do not generally like to be reminded that their newspapers are subject to the self-interest, prejudices and even whims of one man.

The other reason Steady Eddie is staying off camera this time is to avoid reminding people of the shambolic launch of *Today* (when Eddie definitely wasn't ready) and the subsequent takeovers by first Lonrho and then the Digger.

Actually, Shah comes over quite well in comparison with the Cap'n's ludicrous posturing and the general air of skulduggery and shiftiness that accompanies every public appearance by the Digger.

Eddie's performance during the Messenger dispute was brilliant: he looked like a man genuinely upset and bewildered by what was going on as he put the boot into the NGA. His success in the role of Plucky Little Fellow taking on the might of the union bully boys persuaded him that it would be a good idea to star in the pre-launch ads for *Today*.

As we know, however, Eddie's cherubic charm was not powerful enough to persuade people to buy

his dreary paper, and he was soon scurrying back to Warrington with his tail between his legs and his bank balance somewhat lighter.

This time, Shah is confident that *The Post* will work commercially, thanks to the wonders of new technology and miniscule starting levels: the break-even circulation is only around 200,000 (less than the sales of the *Financial Times*), which doesn't say much for the paper's pre-launch description of itself as "popular".

*The Post* seems likely to follow much the same formula as the original *Today*: lots of TV-related features, not much heavy news and an emphasis on "uplifting" stories about heroic pets, the Royals, battering grannies and so forth.

My guess is that, given the state of "centre" politics these days, *The Post* won't openly support any party and will try to avoid politics altogether. Sounds really exciting, doesn't it?

**A**s part of the run-up to *The Post*'s launch, Shah commissioned Gallup to conduct a survey into people's perceptions of the press in Britain.

On honesty, journalists scored lower than estate agents and trade

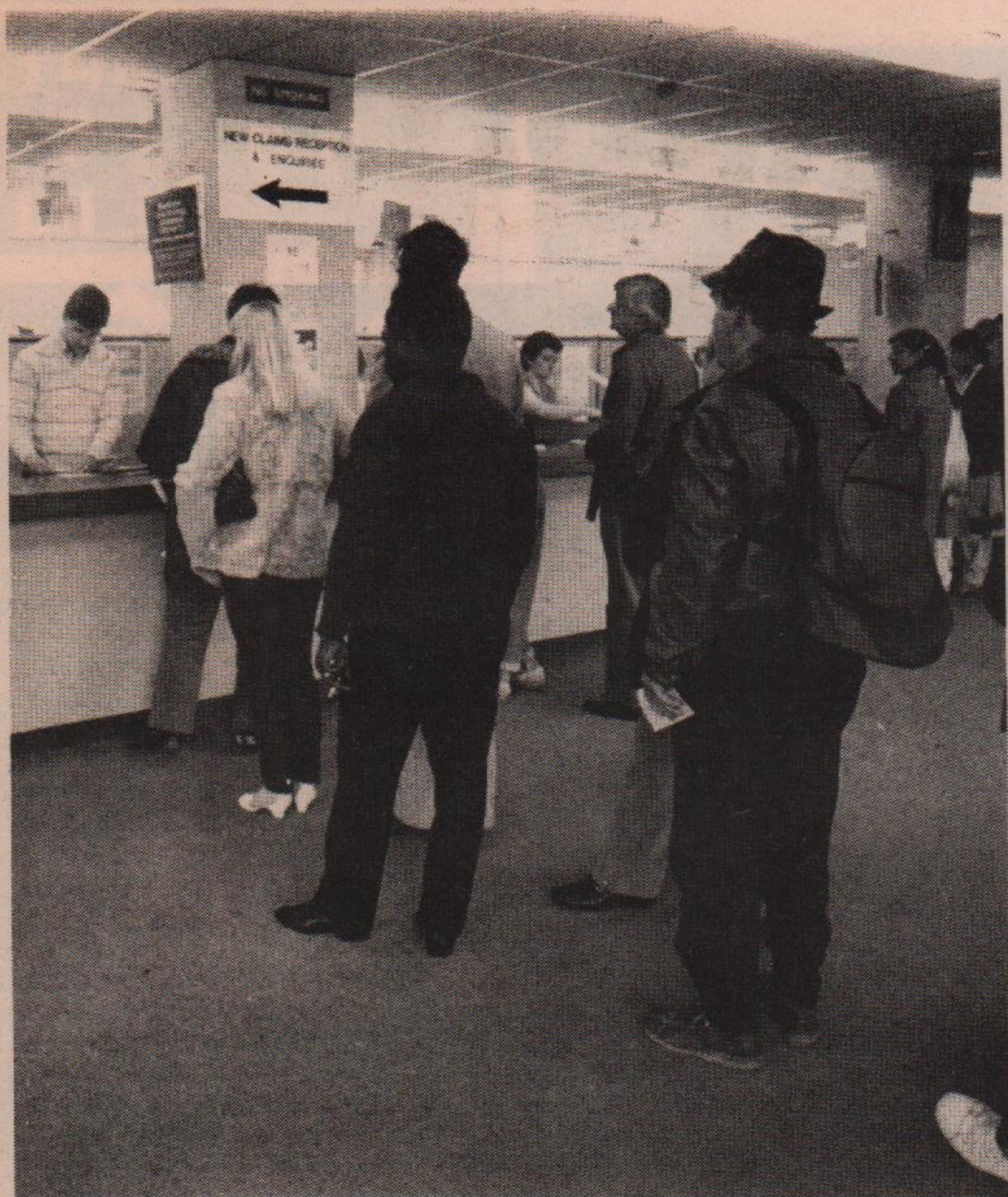
union leaders; 6 out of 10 people believed that the tabloids make up stories; 7 out of 10 favoured legislation to prevent press intrusion into people's private lives.

**T**he Digger's papers have lately become vigorous champions of the virtues of deregulated, satellite television.

*Today* recently took TVS to task for running a newspaper ad suggesting that broadcasting standards were at risk and a British equivalent of the Italian programme where housewives strip on the air could be on the way. What an outrageous suggestion, fulminated *Today*: everyone knows that there is no porn on Italian TV.

Now, the *Sunday Times* has joined in, with a self-righteous tirade by Dr Jonathan Miller against Melvyn Bragg, David Puttnam, Muriel Gray, LWT, Channel 4, the BBC and anyone else with the temerity to question the merits of a broadcasting free for all.

None of this, of course, has anything to do with the Digger's plans to beam four channels of satellite TV from February next year...



Spot the dole cheat

## One law for the rich

### GRAFFITI

The Government is stepping up its war against so-called 'social security scroungers'.

One of the ideas under consideration is a free telephone hotline for people to grass up neighbours who they think are on the fiddle.

It is estimated that £500 million a year is 'fiddled' from the dole. The DHSS Fraud Unit's policy is to prosecute wherever possible. There are on average 14,000 prosecutions a year for 'dole fraud', generally people earning a few bob on the side to clothe the kids, buy furniture, pay the bills. But the real scroungers generally go scot free.

The Inland Revenue reckon that one quarter of taxpayers under-declare by more than £500 a year. Tax fraud amounts to a lost £5,000 million a year, yet last year there were only 20 individual prosecutions.

The Government ties itself in knots to justify this inconsistency. The official line is that withholding money from the state is not so bad as over-claiming money from it. Therefore tax-dodgers are only prosecuted as a last resort, and if the fraud is considered particularly serious.

According to one tax accountant quoted in the 'Observer': "You have to be very unlucky, very stupid and very crooked to be done by the Revenue".

There really is one law for the rich and one for the poor in Tory Britain.

Nearly one in five of all children in Britain are living on or below the poverty line, according to a new Child Poverty Action Group report.

Between 1979 and 1985 the share of household income of the poorest 20% of the population dropped from 6.1% to 5.6%. In that period supplementary benefit rose by less than 1%.

Meanwhile, surprise, surprise, the rich are doing jolly nicely thank you. The top 20% have seen their share of household income rise by 3% to a massive 43.1%.

The CPAG report defines poverty as a family income less than supplementary benefit plus 40%. By this measure there has been a 91% increase in the number of children in families on or below the poverty line.

It will come as no surprise to our readers that official government figures show a drop in the number of people below the poverty line. This may have something to do with the fact that the government has recently changed the way in which it measures poverty, by comparing incomes to current average earnings.

A government fiddle? Surely not.

Mikhail Gorbachev has come out in favour of Republican candidate George Bush for the US Presidency.

According to Italian Prime Minister Ciriaco De Mita, Gorbachev when asked his view on the Presidential election, answered not so enigmatically "I am in favour of continuity in politics."

During the talks Gorbachev also heaped praise on George Shultz, the US Secretary of State.

What were De Mita's general impressions of the Soviet Union's reforming Tsar? "He is an extraordinary person, very realistic, very pragmatic, with little ideology". Seems about right.

## Give me macho men

In our occasional series on modern myths, this week we examine a creature elusive in real life but common in the pages of up-market women's magazines — the 'New Man'.

The 'new man' has been around for a couple of years now. He's sensitive, caring. He will prepare a 'Lean Cuisine' supper for his partner in a converted waterside warehouse apartment when she arrives home from her high-powered City job.

He likes babies and animals (preferably cats). He wears boxer shorts. No Paul Hogan him, he's just as likely to use Oil of Ulay as you or I.

The more cynical among us may reckon that this paragon is the product of the vivid imagination of a Saatchi and Saatchi employee.

But do not despair, gentle readers. Inexpensive K-Tel copies are available in most High Streets now.

We are fortunate, actually, in being a labour movement publication. For if a quasi 'new man' is your glass of Perrier he is likely to be found

a) In a left-ish Labour Party ward, or

### WOMEN'S EYE



By Lynn Ferguson

b) At a Nicaragua solidarity social, or

c) At the Chesterfield Conference, or one of its regional spin-offs.

This variety isn't quite so trendy as the TV commercial archetype. Paul Smith shirts are replaced by Marxism Today t-shirts and Peruvian pullovers.

If "involved in co-parenting" they will not leave the house without small baby in papoose —

'new man's' version of the medallion.

Is he really any different? Cast your minds back, if you will, to the dated "unreconstructed sexist" model. He likes leg — and lots of it. He'll spend pounds on Martini to get you tiddy.

Then — hand on the thigh, come back to my place and bingo! He'll pump away for half an hour, grunt a bit, and collapse in an exhausted snoring heap.

But compare 'new man'. He says he doesn't mind what you wear — Doc Martens and jeans are fine by him. You'll take it in turns to buy rounds. He'll talk to you till 4 in the morning about post-Fordism, Nicaragua or period pains. You'll take him to bed just to shut him up.

Then, he goes for the clitoris. If you don't have multiple orgasms he'll spend the rest of the night rationally discussing it with you. Ugh!

The difference is one of technique. If you're going to 'pull' a woman nowadays, particularly on the left, you have to say/do the 'right things'.

I may be old-fashioned but give me macho-man anyway. At least you know where you stand. Anyway, I can't stand Traidcraft coffee.

## We get no vote at all

### LETTERS

Your editorial "Kill the Housing Bill" (SO 376) contains a factual error which may make it misleading.

You describe the crooked balloting system allowed to tenants of blocks of flats where a private landlord or housing association wishes to take over from the council — where anyone who abstains or is unable to vote in the ballot is counted as voting in favour of the transfer — but wrongly state that the voting system applies to tenants of Housing Action Trust (HATs) areas.

In fact the voting system will apply to council tenants outside the HAT areas. All council tenants are under threat

Tenants of HAT areas — six HATs are prepared for the first round covering 25,000 homes — will have even less chance of preventing their homes being transferred to new landlords.

Firstly tenants of proposed areas will have no ballot on whether they are transferred to a HAT: the government has stated that it will remove a House of Lords amendment to the Housing Bill which would have allowed a ballot. The Bill will then leave it up to the Secretary of State for the Environment to decide which homes are transferred.

Secondly, part 3 of the Housing Bill only place a duty on a HAT to consider the views of tenants when transferring homes to new landlords — there is no tenants vote on transfer.

David Trippier, a Junior Minister

at the DoE, has recently promised HAT tenants a vote on any transfer and has promised to make extra money available to local authorities to buy back their housing from the HAT if the tenants want it. But he has no plans to write this into the Housing Bill.

HAT tenants don't trust the promises of DoE junior ministers William Waldegrave promised us many things, his promises vanished when he went to the Foreign Office. No doubt a new post can be found for Mr Trippier if his promises prove too embarrassing for Nicholas Ridley in the future.

Our demand remains that we be given the choice of staying with the Council and that Councils be allowed to spend money on doing up our homes.

Will Adams  
Tower Hamlets

## Err on the side of liberty

Simon Pottinger argued (SO 365) that socialists should oppose extending pub licensing hours, or even advocate shorter hours.

I disagree. We should be for individual liberty wherever possible. And even if longer hours increase alcohol consumption, they may decrease alcohol damage. Drinking in a leisurely way, with food, is less damaging than gulping down four pints in a few minutes before the pub shuts.

Maybe it can't be long before rising alcohol problems put temperance back on the labour movement's agenda as it was in the early years of this century. But this is an area where well-intentioned policies can easily backfire.

Consider Sweden. Alcohol is available only from grim official government outlets, at high prices. Result: when people drink, they drink to get drunk. According to what I've read, Sweden suffers from a lot of public, rowdy, drunkenness.

Admittedly, the liberal, civilised alternative may not work either. In France, alcohol is regularly drunk

with meals at home, and available at all hours in attractive cafes where food and non-alcoholic drinks are also served. French cafes tend to be adult male preserves, like British pubs, but potentially at least their mode of business provides for women and children, and allows for the culture of brutalised all-male heavy drinking to be broken down.

All very good; and it does eliminate the sort of regular public violent drunkenness you see in

British pubs at closing time. But France has the highest rate of health damage from alcohol in Western Europe.

The basic answer is to change society so that people no longer need booze. Yes, that will take many generations, and we need policies in the meantime; but if in doubt — and we have to be doubt — err on the side of liberty.

Paul Stewart  
Camden

## Replace the phoenix!

The 'phoenix' is a bad choice as a symbol of socialist renewal.

As SO 375 noted, it is a symbol currently used by fascists. It has also been variously used by anarchists, the Fenians and so on. Our using it will give rise to as much confusion and hostility as the continuing use by many on the 'left' of the dreaded hammer and sickle. Why bother

with a symbol that can symbolise anything to anyone?

The workers movement and marxists do need a new culture — including new symbols — that is our own. But mythology is not the place to look. SO should ditch the 'eagle with its bum on fire' and open a competition, asking readers for their ideas for a better symbol.

Paul Woolley,  
Manchester



Available from SO PO  
Box 823, London  
SE15 4NA. 80 pence  
plus 20 pence P&P

# Unite to ban the Bomb!

By John Bloxam

**T**he 'Tribune left' should form an organisation somewhere between the 'oppositionalists' and 'sloganisers' of the Campaign Group and the 'pragmatists' and careerists of the Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC).

Such was the aim Peter Hain set at last weekend's conference 'Hard Labour', organised by the Tribune newspaper and attended by 250 people.

For NUPE's Tom Sawyer, the key issue was building 'trust' between the leadership and the rank and file. He couldn't understand why it didn't exist! Newly elected NEC member Clare Short summed up the rest of the message: don't look back at the past, don't call people 'traitors', don't look for 'perfect leaders', turn outwards, 'renew' the message, unite...and believe the left can determine the 'agenda' for the second stage of the Policy Reviews.

The need for the 'left' to get 'involved' in the Policy Reviews was much emphasised, but the talk was either naive or dishonest. No amendments were allowed to them at this year's Party conference!

We should argue for the

statements to be open for amendment at the 1989 Party conference — but without any illusions.

Labour Party democracy was a major theme. Details, however, were scarce, and without those the left remains in danger of being outflanked by the leadership's demagoguery about individual ballots.

Tony Benn called for the opening-up of affiliations to all socialists and a reformed Party conference (1/3 CLPS, 1/3 TUs, 1/3 MPs) to decide everything, including the Shadow Cabinet. He coupled these proposals to 'refound the Labour Party' with a call to fight for democracy in society as a whole.

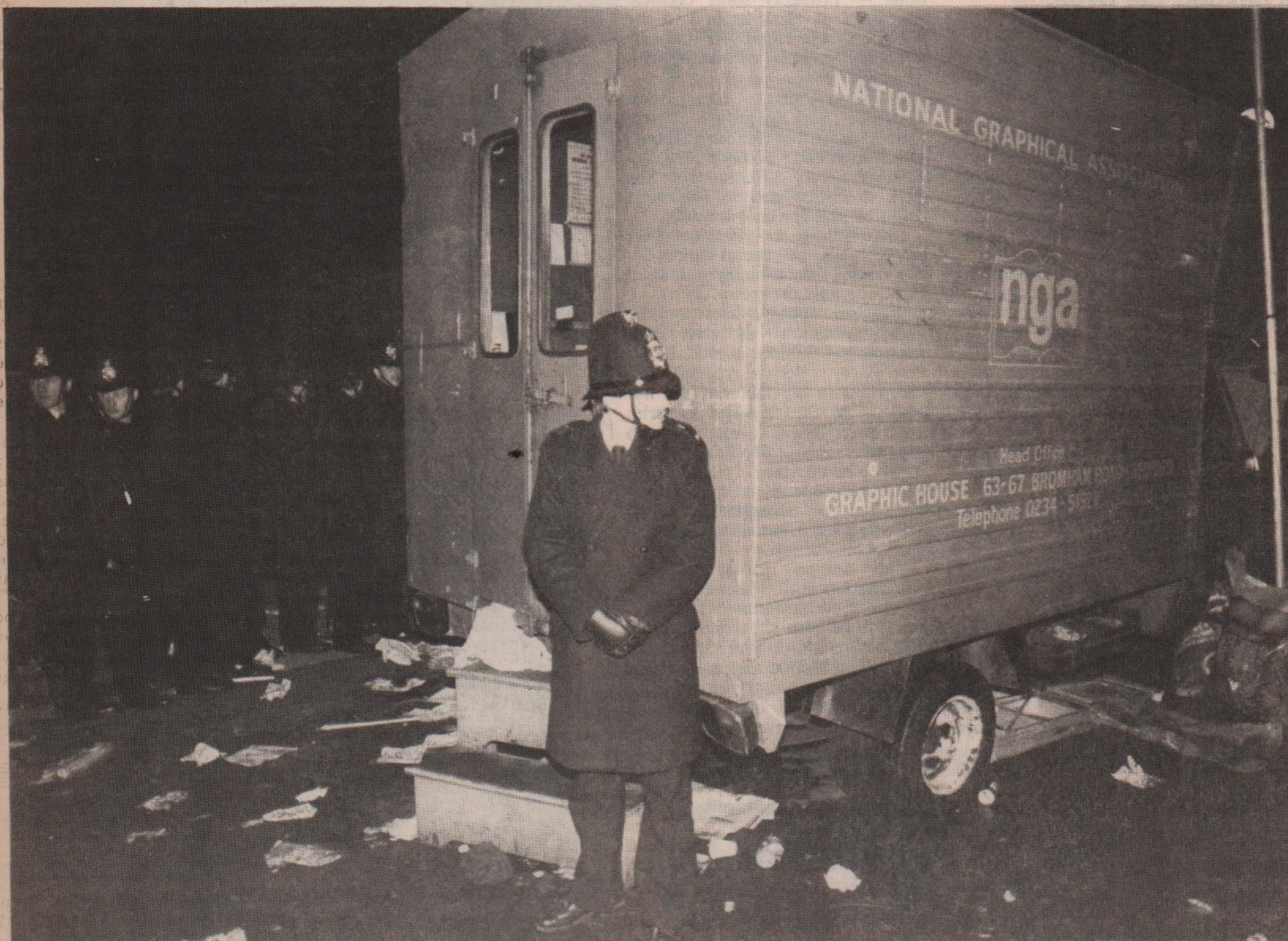
Europe was also a key issue. With multi-national capitalism organising on a Europe-wide basis, many

on the left now see the call for 'Britain Out' as backward-looking and utopian, and have started talking about building both industrial and political links across Europe. Campaigns were promised to reform the European Parliament — to make it a real Parliament — and to extend workers' rights and conditions won in single European countries to the rest.

There was a lot of defeatism and 'new realism', though. Some of the proposals for a European programme and practice did go with the idea that little could be done in Britain. And Socialist Action's John Ross weighed in with the ringing declaration that socialism was impossible in Britain in the next decade and well beyond.

It would be disastrous if, after the defeats of the last Party conference, the left were to conclude that little is possible except vague musings on our plight. Defeats can only be reversed by struggle. And on the issue of unilateralism, the 'unity in action' often mentioned at the weekend could be translated into a very powerful campaign. This was the one 'principle' agreed by most at the conference, and much hangs on it.

Already, Phil Kelly has written a Tribune editorial saying that the present leadership will lose Labour the next election if it dumps unilateralism. Action on this issue will be the bench-mark for determining who is still part of the 'left'.



A decisive battle in imposing the Tories' anti-strike laws: the 'Stockport Messenger' picket line, November 1983. Photo: John Harris.

## Laws that tie us down

**Clive Bradley summarises the laws which could be used against workers striking over GCHQ**

**T**he Tories did not introduce their anti-union laws all at once, and they were very careful about it when they did introduce them.

The Industrial Relations Act in the early '70s provoked widespread opposition from trade unionists, building up to a spontaneous strike wave in July 1972 when five dockers were jailed. The strikes made the Act unworkable, and eventually it was repealed. The Tories were anxious not to create a similar situation

this time round.

And the almost complete inaction of the trade union leaders — especially the central TUC leadership — has helped them enormously.

There are three anti-union laws: the 1980 and 1982 'Employment' Acts and the 1984 Trade Union Act.

The 1980 and 1982 Acts make it possible for unions to be prosecuted for a large number of reasons. It is individual employers or individual scabs who take the initiative to prosecute, so shifting the target for opposition away from the government itself.

The Acts mean that industrial action is now lawful only if:

- It is between workers and their own employer;
- It relates wholly or mainly to pay and conditions, dismissal, jobs,

discipline, union membership or a similar issue;

- It is to do with a dispute in the UK.

In other words, industrial action is unlawful if:

- It is in support of other workers;
- It is political;
- It is to do with a dispute outside the UK (eg. in solidarity with workers who are employed by the same multi-national company — perhaps in South Africa).

Solidarity action is, under almost all circumstances, illegal. Picketing is severely restricted. And it is up to the 'discretion' of the police to enforce legal guidelines about the size of any picket. 'Secondary' picketing is, of course, illegal.

The closed shop is also severely weakened legally by the laws. Anyone with a 'deeply held per-

sonal conviction' against the closed shop is legally protected and has the 'right' not to join the union.

Anyone who faces reprisals (from unions or employers) can sue the employer, union or named individuals.

To have any real legal status, a closed shop agreement has to have been approved by 80% of the workers covered by it, or 85% of those voting.

And 'union labour only' contracts, or industrial action in support of them, are illegal.

The 1982 Act reversed British law since 1906 by making unions liable for damages. That means fines of up to £250,000 for big unions. And if fines are not paid, all union funds can be seized ('sequestered'). Apart from the fact that this law could mean bankruptcy for unions,

it also makes it unlikely that timid union leaders will fight the bosses or their courts for fear of the cost.

The 1984 Act makes it illegal to strike without first holding a secret ballot of all those workers involved in the action, more than four weeks before the action is due to take place, winning a majority.

The wording in the ballot must require a 'yes' or 'no' answer and must specifically ask if the individual is prepared to go on strike in breach of contract.

The intention of much of the law is to use the threat of legal action to deter strike action. In particular, they rely upon timid union leaderships to back down in the face of legal threats, or to police their own membership.

When the NGA resisted the law over the Stockport Messenger in 1983, they were abjectly betrayed by the TUC. When the South Wales NUM's funds were sequestered in July 1984, nothing was done; and less was done when the national NUM's funds were sequestered (although not under anti-union laws) in October of that year.

Since then, the laws (especially the law on balloting) have largely been complied with. The right-wing EETPU and AEU have accepted government money for postal ballots, defied TUC threats to expel them for doing so, and forced a TUC climbdown on the issue.

An attempt to get union members to vote away their right to a specifically political fund failed miserably.

Many of the legal penalties only apply to official strikes. Union leaderships can avoid legal action by refusing to make strikes official. And the enforced shift to ballots weakens and isolates militants, who can't put over the arguments in the way that they can in mass meetings.

The P&O dispute brought out some of the contradictions in the law. The NUS planned a legal ballot on strike action. The courts ruled that the action would be 'secondary' — and so the ballot was illegal! The courts went on to force the NUS to disavow and refuse support to its members picketing in Dover. Any effective action the NUS could take was ruled illegal.

We need a commitment from the Labour Party to repeal all these anti-trade union laws, and to bring in laws guaranteeing the rights of workers — the right to strike, the right to a closed shop, the right to self-defence.

To fight the laws now we need to demand that union leaders ignore legal injunctions, and do whatever is necessary to win disputes. And we need to rebuild the sinews of rank and file solidarity so that no individual union is ever left to stand alone.

# Marxism Today: New thoughts or old rubbish?

**Our world is changing, says the Communist Party's magazine Marxism Today. The Old Times of mass production, trade union solidarity and cloth caps are gone forever. New Times require New Politics. Clive Bradley looks beyond the hype.**

**A** Sunday afternoon documentary, 'On the Record,' this week added to the chorus of respectable voices proclaiming the novelty and inventiveness of the range of concepts deployed by the 'new Marxists' to analyse contemporary capitalism, with the lone voice of Eric Heffer protesting the claim of these 'Marxists' to be on the Left at all.

There can be no doubt that 'Marxism Today', which is to say the Communist Party of Great Britain, is very influential — for example with the Labour Party leadership. They have been very successful in portraying themselves as the innovators, and the Left as the 'traditionalists', 'fundamentalists' and so on.

The Labour leadership's policy review is publicised on the ridiculous basis that old-fashioned socialism has been tested and failed. In fact, it has never been tried. But there is no doubt that much of the traditional Left do appear as 'dinosaurs' while the Marxism Today inspired Right seem to be intellectually stimulating, thoughtful and profound.

Have 'Marxism Today' got a point? Robin Murray in October's Marxism Today spells out in detail the characteristics both of the dying 'Fordist' era and of the new 'post-Fordist' one that should shape socialist strategy into the Nineties. Fordism was characterised by mass production: by the huge, modern factory (the model being, of course, Ford motor cars) in which production itself was broken into a series of repetitive actions. What went with this was a process often described as 'deskilling' of each worker and a mass-scale 'collective worker' (formed into industrial unions and so on). With mass production went a market of mass-produced goods limited in variety.

'Post-Fordism' has thus seen the decline both of manufacturing on the old model and of the work practices associated with it. Choice and individuality are the new key notes: production is geared to sectional markets, and is designed to change quickly according to shifts in demand.

Along with this is a new kind of worker — less 'class conscious' in the old sense, more likely to be part-time, female and temporary.

Two ideas in particular emerge from this picture: that as a result of fundamental changes in the nature of the working class, socialists can no longer look to outmoded methods of struggle (some thinkers question the very existence of the working class, but this is not essential to the argument); and that

socialism itself must take account of the choice, individuality and personal freedom offered by 'post-modern' capitalism. Meeting the intellectual and political challenge on these fronts is the precondition for the development of any serious alternative to Thatcherism — which is nothing less than the bourgeoisie's response to post-Fordism.

The precise political conclusions of this analysis fill out a spectrum, ranging from advocacy of electoral deals between Labour and the Democrats, to a more GLC-style 'rainbow coalition' idea of drawing together the 'new movements' community organisation and enterprise boards.

There can be no doubt that much of what Marxism Today describe is real. Certainly the working class today is different from the working class of the 1950s and '60s, never mind the 1930s or before. Certainly the questions of popular democracy and individual freedoms are ones the Left needs to address.

But so much of what Murray and others say is flimsy in the extreme that it is difficult to take altogether seriously. The analysis raises various central questions that you will search the pages of Marxism Today in vain to find answered. How stable is the new culture? To what extent might economic recession disrupt it? And is not economic recession a real threat? How can a 'post-Fordist' labour movement respond to such threats?

If local councils offer something by way of a positive model, surely here are some pretty enormous questions that need to be answered. Brent council, for example, needed more than a grouping together of 'new movements', and without a policy that depended upon mobilising workers (in an allegedly old-fashioned way), the council ended up having to make huge cuts. Other councils demonstrate similar lessons.

What is the precise significance of the changes in the working class? Today, one third of the workforce is 'flexible' — part-time, temporary and sub-contracted. Union strength has declined from 12 million in 1979 to 9.2 million in 1987. Unions are starting to look for a new basis for recruiting workers, many of whom are women.

Manufacturing, of course, has declined enormously; the 'white collar' sector has grown. The traditional support for Labour has correspondingly declined.

Some socialists have spoken of a rise in a 'new middle class', and there has been such a rise.

But it is wrong to believe that the new groups of workers outside traditional manufacturing are any less working class than previous generations. Indeed, if you look at

the nature of some jobs today, they are more 'working-class', both in character and in worker-consciousness than they were a hundred years ago.

Clerical work is a good example. A century ago, most British clerks were men working in small offices. They needed quite high qualifications — probably some classical education. A clerk aspired to the lifestyle of the employers and certainly had no sense of identity with organised labour.

Clerical work has been 'deskilled', with the growth of huge offices of (often female) labour, often unionised. Today's NALGO member is very different from the clerk described above. The same could be said for civil servants.

Or teachers. In 1926, teachers helped break the general strike. Today teachers are a highly unionised and quite militant group.

Marxism Today's stress on the 'individualisation' of class consciousness is dubious as well. In the first place, collective militant consciousness in big factories did not emerge on the day the factories were built. It was a long battle to organise classically-Fordist car plants in Britain. Such consciousness depends as much upon traditions of struggle developed over the years as upon the organisation of production.

The decline in trade union organisation is not just a function of changing patterns of employment. It is also the result of big defeats for the labour movement since the mid-'70s and consequent demoralisation.

And consider the groups of workers who have proved most militant in Britain since the defeat of the miners in 1985. We have seen major disputes by teachers, telephone engineers, health workers and postal workers.

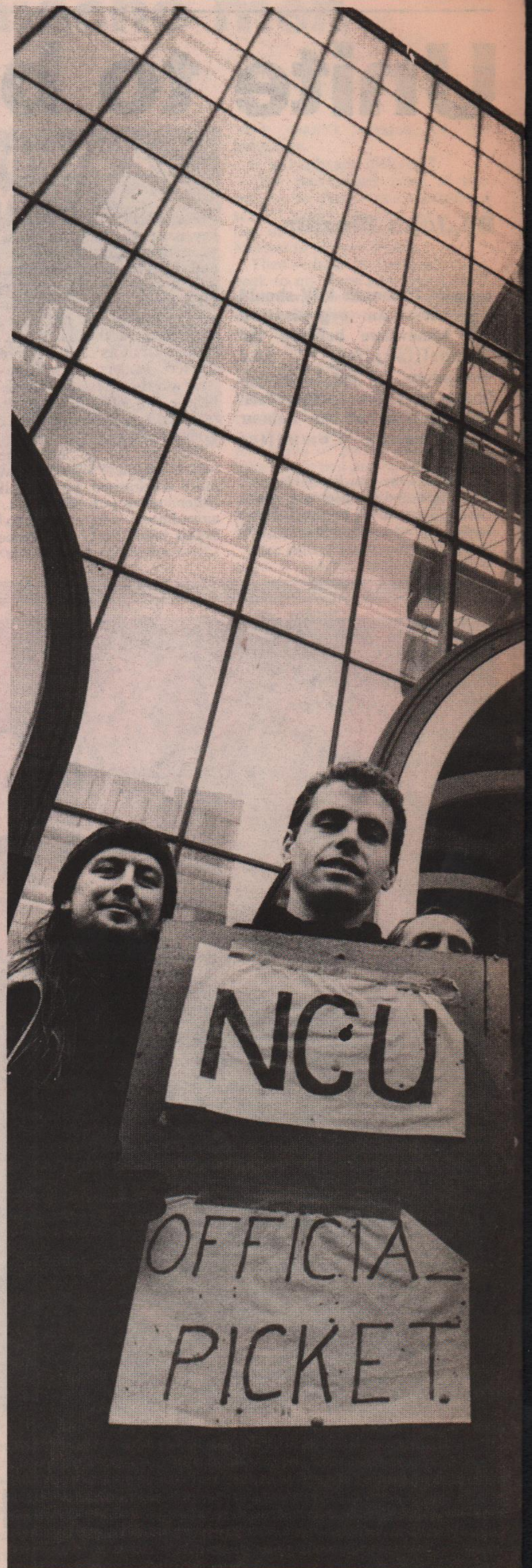
None of these are 'traditional bastions' of trade unionism. Yet the methods of militant class struggle they employ are 'old fashioned' — and end in defeat, or less than full victory, for 'old fashioned' reasons, too.

Those reasons have ranged from inadequate preparation to abject pusillanimous leadership. Postal workers, who account for 25% of industrial disputes over the past year, did not fail in their recent dispute because they were a social anachronism, out of tune with post-Fordist reality.

'Old fashioned' ideas are highly relevant for such workers — solidarity, rank-and-file strength, trade union democracy. Their problem is not that these old-fashioned ideas don't work, but that the ideas are no more than rhetoric — and as a general rule have never been more than that.

New ideas are needed, of course. Not only does rank-and-file organisation need to be rebuilt; it needs to be linked as it never was in the past to political strategy. Nothing is more debilitating than the labour movement's traditional division into 'political' (understood narrowly as parliamentary) and 'industrial' concerns.

And this raises Marxism Today's second theme: the question of the state and political democracy.



'Post-Fordist' workers on strike. Photo: Jez Coulson, IFZ

Undoubtedly, the Left has failed to link itself in the popular mind with the defence of individual freedoms, and has even allowed the Right to get away with counterposing 'individual' and 'collective' rights. But what are Marxism Today on about?

There are three issues, here. Would socialism suppress the choice and individualism currently provided by Next or Habitat? Second, is the market essential even in the long run for such freedom? Third, what is the strategic role of the expansion of democratic freedom in the achievement of a socialist society?

The issue that Marxism Today don't even seem to be interested in, is that however wonderful Next is in

providing a choice of winter wardrobe, it does so by exploiting workers — which is to say, like other capitalists, Next seeks above all to make money. As a result while some people can afford a shop up-market of Next, others cannot afford more than Help the Aged second-hand shops.

Socialism is about taking economic power out of the hands of private money-makers and putting it into the hands of working-class people. There is no reason to believe that will result in a loss of choice or individual liberty.

Nor is there any reason why the market is the best way to provide choice. In fact, it's a very bad way as it selects only what is profitable

# What Labour leaders don't think about

Colin Foster reviews 'Office Without Power: Diaries 1968-72' by Tony Benn

**I realised all of a sudden," writes Tony Benn, "that for three and a half or four years I have done absolutely no basic thinking about politics..."**

"This is how parties get ossified and out of touch...we haven't found time to think."

The date of this entry in Tony Benn's diary is 14 June 1968. The previous entries confirm his comment. The diary is all about politics, in one sense — it is the diary of the Minister of Technology in the 1964-70 Labour Government — but it is a very narrow sort of politics.

June 1968: the greatest general strike in history was still in progress in France. The Vietnam war, and the international movement against it, were at their peak. In Czechoslovakia Alexander Dubcek was pursuing his liberal experiment, soon to be snuffed out by Russian tanks. Northern Ireland was falling apart under the impact of the Catholic civil rights struggle.

All that scarcely appears in the diary. The politics that preoccupied Labour Ministers in 1968 was the politics of crisis-management, of administering a rickety capitalist system, and of personal intrigue and rivalry.

Why do Labour Governments so consistently betray even their most limited reformist promises? Here is part of the explanation. The day-to-day pressures of running the system swamp everything else. The Labour leaders just *don't think* about how the day-to-day stuff relates to any socialist ideas they still have in parts of their minds.

In quiet moments later, they may reflect and readjust their ideas. Most readjust their ideas to fit what they have done. What's exceptional about Tony Benn is that he did the opposite. He criticised what he had done in the light of his ideals.

In the period covered by these diaries Tony Benn was still middle-of-the-road in Labour politics. He supported wage controls, and he supported the Labour Government's project for anti-strike laws, 'In Place of Strife'. A couple of years before he had suggested to Harold Wilson that Labour should present itself as "the natural ally of the managers and the people who run industry."

But he was beginning to rethink. His diary entry that "I have done absolutely no basic thinking about politics" was prompted by a visit to a student-run 'Free University' in Bristol.

After 1970, when the Tories returned to office, he was influenced by the workers' struggles against the new government — the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders' sit-in of 1971, the miners' strike of early 1972 and the mass strike wave in July 1972 which freed five dockers jailed under the new Industrial Relations Act.

In September 1970 he published a pamphlet calling for workers' control — "not just a respectful

request for consultation before management promulgates its decisions. Workers are not going to be fobbed off with a few shares — whether voting or non-voting. They cannot be satisfied by having a statutory worker on the board or by a carbon copy of the German system of co-determination.

"The claim is for the same relationship between government and governed in factories, offices and shops as was finally yielded when the universal adult franchise brought about full political democracy..."

And in August 1972 he exclaimed: "'Wedgie Benn' and 'the Rt Honourable Anthony Wedgwood Benn' and all that stuff is impossible. I have been Tony Benn in Bristol for a long time."

Others, of course, were moving in the opposite political direction. One entry in this volume describes Benn attempting to restrain some fiery left-Labour MPs who wanted to stage a demonstration in the House of Commons against the Industrial Relations Bill in 1971. The leader of the firebrands? Neil Kinnock. There are many other such ironies.

The previous volume of these diaries recorded frequent and consistent visits to parties and receptions at Eastern Bloc embassies, and private meetings with Eastern Bloc diplomats. Benn, though not uncritical, clearly regarded those Eastern Bloc officials as authentic voices of socialism and Marxism.

Such contacts feature again in this volume. They are much more scanty, however. The book gives no clues about why.

*Office Without Power: Diaries 1968-72 by Tony Benn (Hutchinson, £16.95)*

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

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster

system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

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

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

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

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

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

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But it is true that socialism is not about an immediate destruction of the market. It is about gradually replacing the principle of the market-place with the principle of democratic planning.

That aspect of getting socialism is necessarily gradual. But Marxism Today advocate a more general (dare one say 'old-fashioned') gradualism — like a long list of others before them declaring revolutionary socialism to be out of date.

Rosa Luxemburg, a long time ago, commented: "people who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place of and in contradistinction to the conquest of political power and

social reform do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal."

Socialism is necessarily about working class people taking power, in the first place state power, then economic power, out of the hands of the present ruling class. The new, workers' power will have to be fully democratic. And democracy now will help clear the road to that much richer democracy in the future. But there is no other way to achieve that future than by mass, collective action. Marxism Today has declared not only the impossibility of the methods, but the impossibility, and even the undesirability of the objectives.

# The State against the workers

In *Socialist Organiser* no.371 we opened a discussion on the nature of the bureaucratic state-monopoly societies of the Eastern Bloc.

We never thought these societies were *socialist*. In the past we have subscribed to the thesis — which has been "orthodox" Trotskyism since 1951 — that their nationalised economies define them as "degenerated and deformed workers' states". But that thesis looked increasingly unviable; we need to examine the idea that these state-monopoly societies are new exploiting class societies, not superior to capitalism but essentially parallel to it in the development of the forces of production.

How did these statised economies develop? What different forms can they take? This discussion article by Martin Thomas reviews some of the factual evidence.

Since 1945 the role of the state has increased everywhere. In most capitalist countries, however, state spending is mostly on the military and on public services. The state usually plays a secondary role in investment, having only a 15%-30% share in the total.

"The public sector in most developing countries," however, "accounts for...some 50-60% of total investment." (1) The role of the state in Third World economies varies. Some countries have strong private capitalist classes: Mexico and India are examples. In India, public sector investment rose to 60% of the total under the Third Five-Year Plan (1961-66) and is still more than 50% now. (2) An Indian Marxist comments:

"The trend towards state capitalism, true in general for the advanced capitalist countries in the 20th century, manifested itself with particular keenness in the underdeveloped countries after they became formally independent in the post-Second World War period.... The government just could not leave the matter in the hands of individual capitalists because, first, they were ill-equipped for those investments that were essential but least paying, particularly in the short run and, secondly, they lacked, in general, funds, initiative and experience.

"In other words, those segments of the economy that needed huge investment, modern and sophisticated technology and a long gestation period before being able to provide a strong base for massive industrialisation were brought under the direct purview of the state. Hence in almost all underdeveloped countries the government, irrespective of the particular 'ideology' it professed, took a significant part in the functioning and controlling of the economy." (3)

India remains relatively pluralist; but the pattern of a one-party state: mass organisations controlled by that party; Five-Year Plans; and a heavy state role in the economy applies to Third World governments which are vocally pro-capitalist. Two examples are Tunisia and the Ivory Coast.

In Tunisia state-owned enterprises account for 60% of value added in manufacturing. (4) In the Ivory Coast 61% of investment is by the public sector. (5) The state controls marketing of agricultural produce. It owns the biggest plantations and ancillary factories. Its share of total industrial capital rose from 10% in 1976 to 53% in 1980. Almost all the rest of industry is foreign capital operating under detailed conditions imposed by the state. Researchers could find only five Ivorians who could be described as private industrial capitalists. (6)

The state plays a qualitatively bigger role in countries where the

present regime was established through a revolution sweeping out the old rulers.

In Algeria the FLN (National Liberation Front) took power in 1962 after a long and bloody war for independence from France. Most of industry and large-scale agriculture had been owned by the French state, or by European settlers, who quit. Workers took over many enterprises and estates. The new regime moved in to nationalise and establish state control.

By 1968-9 the government controlled foreign trade, banking, and most major industry. The takeover of oil and gas — now the country's major earners — was completed by 1971. FLN political control was also made complete. The previously independent though sympathetic trade union federation, the UGTA, was brought under government control.

In 1967-9 the public sector made 92% of industrial investment. In 1986 its share was estimated at 95%; another estimate, for 1978-81, gave state-owned enterprises (that is, not including the government's own projects) 68% of investment in 1978-81. (7)

The private sector continued to include a lot of small-scale enterprise. In 1983 it employed 33% of the workforce, including agriculture. (8)

A tremendous drive was launched to build up heavy industries and

**"In the USSR major industry was nationalised in 1918 — not by a middle-class group seeking national economic development but by the worker's government put into power by the workers' revolution of October 1917."**

modern technology. "The landscape looked like a vast building yard." (9) 60% of agriculture is in state farms, and the state has a monopoly on buying agricultural produce; the prices are set low by decree so as to siphon surplus value into industry. (10)

Until the early '80s, all state company profits went direct to the government, and all investment was financed by state credits. Since then state enterprises have been allowed to keep some of their profits. All their investment projects are controlled by the state banks and the supervising ministries. All prices are theoretically subject to state control, though — apart from agricultural and food prices — not all in fact are controlled.

Despite strict controls on paper, in practice, it is said, "The central political power's control over the



Troops try to hold back a protest in Yugoslavia

(state) corporations is very loose." Foreign capital is quite active in Algeria, under deals arranged with the state. (11)

An Algerian Marxist comments on the regime: "The omnipotence of the state, the overwhelming weight of the superstructure in relation to the infrastructure, is itself a fundamental class fact, quite apart from the goals of the state's actions...When the simplest of problems, at whatever level of social life, needs in order to deal with it a formal procedure, haggling, an administrative decision; when the press, publishing and cinema are only state monopolies run by officials concerned above all to consolidate their privileges; when the unions are only transmission belts of the single party, which itself is only an annex of the State, all questions are overshadowed by the basic one: the total domination of society by the State..." (12)

Here the State is more than a powerful agency and partner of the private profiteers.

"The State domination which here precedes, protects and accompanies the development of capitalist exploitation cannot be considered as an episode of that development, leading at the next stage to a liberalisation, or 'Sadatisation' to take the example of Egypt, but is the basic characteristic of this development..."

"Here is no longer a question of a State which provisionally administers the interests of the dominant classes, but of a structure which partially substitutes itself for them...There is no point looking behind this State for a dominant class which is using it, as...in France.... A fraction of that dominant class, to be precise the state bureaucratic fraction which is also the hegemonic fraction, only exists through and thanks to the State." (13)

As well as the countries where there was a foreign bourgeoisie, or virtually no bourgeoisie, before the state took control of the economy, there are also ones where a bourgeoisie existed and was ousted by revolution: Yugoslavia, China,

Cuba, and others. China between 1958 and 1978, Yugoslavia in 1948-50 and partially to 1955, and Cuba from the early '60s to now, all followed the economic model of Stalin's USSR, whether closely or less so. What is that model?

In the USSR major industry was nationalised in 1918 — not by a middle-class group seeking national economic development but by the workers' government put into power by the workers' revolution of October 1917. From 1918 to 1921 the economy was run on a makeshift basis of 'war communism', without planning but without normally functioning markets either. Goods were requisitioned and allocated according to immediate availability and immediate need.

From 1921 to 1928 the market was the chief regulator. A state planning organisation, Gosplan, was set up in April 1921, but outside key sectors of heavy industry the nationalised enterprises generally guided themselves by the market. Private enterprise was given wide scope in trade.

In the 1930s a centralised command economy was imposed by the Stalinist bureaucracy which had usurped power from the workers. Peasants were herded into state-controlled farms. Private traders were banned. All trade union independence was crushed, and total domination of society by the state bureaucracy established.

Enterprises now received detailed instructions from central government about how many workers they would have, what wages they would pay, what inputs they would receive, and what outputs they must produce. Prices were also decreed by central government. It was like a war economy, only more detailed and permanent.

The command system never quite snuffed out money and market forces. Workers were paid wages and had to buy what they needed on the market, free markets in food and various black and grey markets played a big role. The command system did, however, make the USSR's economy operate different-

ly from a market system in many ways. It grew very fast in the '30s and '50s, but in a lopsided way. In the 1980s it has grown very slowly.

This is the system which Gorbachev is trying to reform by shifting enterprises towards making profits on a market where prices move fairly freely and investing out of their profits or money borrowed at interest. Some attempted reforms along Gorbachev's lines were introduced in the early 1960s but did not get very far. Gorbachev's programme is still at an early stage.

Other 'command economies' have, however, changed substan-

**"As well as the countries where there was a foreign bourgeoisie, or virtually no bourgeoisie, before the state took control of the economy, there are also ones where a bourgeoisie existed and was ousted by revolution."**

tially. Yugoslavia scrapped all detailed plan directives for enterprises in 1955, and has decentralised more and more since then. Central government there now spends only 6% of national income.

Yugoslavia is still a nationalised economy. In 1983, 83% of all output and 95% of industrial output came from state-owned enterprises. But each of those enterprises is run by a management committee elected by the workers and more or less free to pursue maximum profit for the enterprise and maximum income for the workers.

Surveying the price structures of 31 underdeveloped countries, the World Bank found that Yugoslavia's was one of the least 'distorted' by subsidies, controls and decrees.

Some features of the 'command economy' remain. A loss-making



# Yes, boycott ET!

**Last week Bob Fine queried Socialist Organiser's support for a labour movement boycott of the government's ET scheme. Mick Cashman replies.**

**The first half of Bob Fine's article 'ET, against the boycott' in SO 376 reads like a Department of Employment PR job for the scheme.**

The Employment Training Scheme was created as part of the Tory government's strategy to create a low wage economy and to fiddle the unemployment register. It is clearly an attempt to introduce Workfare into Britain.

It is also part of the government's campaign to absolve themselves of any blame for unemployment. It strengthens the myth that the reason people are unemployed is not because there are no jobs but because the unemployed are not trained.

Bob Fine believes that the basic difference between ET and CP is that the money used for wages on CP is all put into training on ET. Tremendous! Except that he leaves the most important point out.

The CP scheme employed roughly 230,000 people for 12 months each, and formally paid the rate for the job. In fact the overwhelming majority of workers were only part-time working 3 days a week and earning a gross weekly wage of about £56.

ET on the other hand will employ 600,000 people for 6-12 months, supposedly giving training. It's nearly 3 times as many people as on CP, with the same budget. Where is the money coming from for the training?

The real training element on ET is training a generation of people to expect poverty wages. A single person on supplementary benefit who is under 25 will receive a princely sum of £36 for a 5 day week on ET, £20 less than they would have received for 3 days on CP. It's 16

extra hours for a £20 pay cut.

People who are forced onto ET, earning £36 a week are going to be much more likely to take scabby low-paid jobs in non-union sweatshops for £40 or £50 per week. That is the whole idea of ET.

Bob Fine waxes lyrical about the possibilities for training on ET. They could all become beauticians and organic farmers! The reality of course is that 'trainees' will be used 3 days a week for 6 months as farm labourers or sweeping up in hair-dressing salons.

Bob urges us to organise a labour movement campaign to kick out the cowboys involved in ET in favour of local authorities and non-profit making agencies. The record of these people with CP does not recommend them too highly as employers responsible for training.

Under CP many local authorities substituted CP workers for real jobs, whether it was DLO work fencing council estates or social services doing the jobs of home helps etc.

The non-profit making charities involved in CP like NACRO and the APEX trust never impressed many of the workers with their caring approach or their formal equal opportunities position — and the fact that they are willing to take part in the repugnant ET scheme does not recommend them as trainers.

Bob also tells us that the unemployed will blame the movement if we don't take part in ET. Where have we heard that one before? On the contrary most unemployed people are completely opposed to ET, as are most CP workers who have experienced the 'benefits' of community schemes. A survey done by the Merseyside Unemployed Centre of 1,000 unemployed people showed that 91% of them opposed ET. On the Wirral, where we have succeeded in unionising CP workers, we could find only 2 workers who opposed the boycott. The unemployed would have nothing but contempt for a labour and trade union movement who supported ET or allowed it to go ahead without a fight.

Bob tells us that the scheme is unlikely to be made compulsory as long as real training goes on in ET. Tell that to YTS trainees! In fact although the scheme is not yet for-

mally compulsory, Restart interviews are used to threaten and coerce people onto the scheme.

The 'availability-for-work' test is available, as Thatcher pointed out, to remove benefit from anybody who objects to working for £10 per week.

Bob also tells us that the boycott was taken as an easy option and that what will happen is that ET will survive in a worse form. The fact is that rank and file trade unionists fought hard within their organisations to make their unions adopt this policy.

It was not the easy option of a bureaucrat, it was achieved by the struggle of CP workers. In my own union, the TGWU, it was only achieved after a hectic campaign.

Is the boycott an easy option? Can we defeat ET? The boycott will only succeed if it is organised on a grass roots level. We've already started this on the Wirral.

Although our council is controlled by a Tory-SLD coalition, which is supporting the scheme, the three main council unions, the TGWU, NALGO and NUPE, have made it clear that they will not allow it to take place on council property. We're organising regular leafletting of retail shops such as Mothercare, and Burtons who plan to use ET labour, asking people not to shop there.

The boycott can work, but it is no easy option. It means forming boycott committees in the localities to make it effective.

JTS was the government's first attempt to bring in Workfare, and it was defeated. The unemployed would not go on the scheme and the trade unionists made sure that JTS was not allowed in their workplaces. JTS was an embarrassing flop for the government.

As for the 'good old fashioned protectionism', I am sure that Bob Fine, NATFHE and the AUT would welcome ET doing their lecturing jobs in colleges and universities, 3 days a week for their dole money.

ET is a major threat to the wages and conditions of trade unionists.

Occasionally we may find a good scheme here and there. But the aim of the scheme is to lower wages and conditions and destroy the self-respect of the unemployed. It can be defeated, it can't be reformed.

enterprise does not generally close down; it just gets more in debt and it may have a temporary manager appointed from above. Conversely, a successful enterprise cannot take over and asset-strip other enterprises.

The hallmarks of a market economy are there too. "The ability to grapple with factors external to the success of the individual enterprise and small region has disappeared," comments Granick. "The Yugoslav economy is run along Adam Smith (free market) lines to a degree that is quite unusual for Europe as a whole." Yugoslavia has roaring inflation and high unemployment — made higher because it is in the interest of each enterprise to keep its workforce small.

Yugoslavia is extremely open to the world economy, exporting 30% of its production, and 54% of that outside Eastern Europe. In 1985 it had 187 joint ventures with Western capitalists, and seven Free Trade Zones in which multinationals can do business free of usual tariffs and formalities.(14)

China has moved towards a market economy almost as far as Yugoslavia.

Some other East European economies also show paths away from the Stalinist model.

In Hungary, plan directives to enterprises from central government were scrapped in 1968. The economy has been made much more open to the world market. Exports increased from 19% of output in 1966 to 40% in 1986; the proportion going outside Eastern Europe increased from 34% to 51% (1983). Hungary, like some other Eastern European states, has joined the IMF (in 1982) and borrowed heavily from Western banks.

On paper, Hungary is almost as market-orientated as Yugoslavia. Most prices have been freed. Enterprises are supposed to aim for profits and to find money for investment from profits and bank loans at interest.

In fact, bureaucratic string-pulling still plays a big role. Bargaining with central government

over taxes and subsidies is as important for enterprise bosses as commercial profit. A study in 1982 found that loss-making firms engineered subsidies to cover their losses; firms making big profits got them taken in tax — so that there was almost no relation between profits after tax and profits before tax.

Market mechanisms have flourished in Hungary not so much in the official economy as in the semi-legal or illegal 'second economy'. Officially only 7% of industrial output comes from private enterprise. In fact maybe 70% of Hungarian workers have second jobs in the 'second economy'. Two-thirds of all dwellings are built by the 'second economy'. As in Poland, the visibly rich of Hungarian society, with their BMWs and Mercedes, are private capitalists.(15)

In a recent article in the New York Review of Books, Timothy Garton Ash raises the idea that the main benefit of 'economic reform' for Hungary's rulers may be to create a private capitalist class which will back them against workers' revolt. "Capitalists and Communists united against the workers" — is that what the future holds?

(1) World Bank World Development Report (WB WDR) 1983, p.48  
 (2) P Chattopadhyay, State Capitalism in India, Monthly Review March 1970; Financial Times 18.2.85  
 (3) Chattopadhyay  
 (4) In 1978-81. WB WDR 1983, p.51  
 (5) In 1980-5. WB WDR 1988, p.47  
 (6) H S Marcussen & J E Torp, Internationalisation of Capital  
 (7) T Benhouria, L'conomie de l'Algerie, pp.256-8; J P Entelis, Algeria: the revolution institutionalised, p.126; WB WDR 1983, p.49  
 (8) R Tiemceni, State and Revolution in Algeria, p.119  
 (9) Tiemceni, p.114  
 (10) Entelis, p.142; Benhouria, pp.69, 117  
 (11) Entelis, p.126; M E Benissad, Economie du developpement de l'Algerie 1962-82, pp.200, 220; Tiemceni, p.161; Benhouria, p.228  
 (12) Benhouria, p.330  
 (13) Benhouria, p.430  
 (14) F Singleton & B Carter, The Economy of Yugoslavia; WB WDR 1983, 1985, 1988; D Granick, Enterprise Guidance in Eastern Europe; A Nove, The Soviet Economy, pp.310-314; Wall Street Journal 4.8.83; Yugoslav Economic Review; Yugoslav National Bank Quarterly Bulletin  
 (15) Financial Times 10.5.83; J Kornai, in G Tidrick and Chen Jiyuan, China's Industrial Reform; P Hare, H Radice & N Swain, Hungary: A Decade of Economic Reform; L'Alternative, May-August 1982.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

**Tuesday 25 October**  
Leeds SO meeting 'The New Realism Assessed': Leeds University Student Union.

**Wednesday 26 October**  
'Sisters of the Long March': Sheffield Trades & Labour Club.

**Wednesday 26 October**  
London Socialist Forum, 'Reassessing the Eastern Bloc': Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq 7.30 pm.

**Thursday 27 October**  
Northampton SO meeting 'the ABC of Marxism' with Ray Ferris: 25 Queens Rd, 7.15 pm.

**Thursday 27 October**  
'Sisters of the Long March': Halifax, St Marys Community Centre.

**Thursday 27 October**  
Merseyside SO 'Ireland — what's the answer?' with Pat Murphy.

**Friday 28 October**  
'Sisters of the Long March': Barnsley, Northern College.

**Saturday 29 October**  
'Sisters of the Long March': Hull, College of Higher Education.

**Saturday 29 October**  
Sheffield SO day school, Discussions on Eastern Europe;

Which way forward for the Labour Left; What is socialism; Debate with Workers' Power. All welcome. £2.50 waged £1.25 unwaged. Cheap food available. Sheffield University SO.

**Sunday 30 October**  
'Sisters of the Long March': Huddersfield, St Paul's Poly

**Monday 31 October**  
West London SO meeting 'Arabs, Jews and Socialism': Hammersmith Town Hall 8 pm

**Wednesday 2nd November**  
Lobby of Parliament in support of an Early Day Motion submitted by Chris Mullin calling for an independent review of the Birmingham Six's case. 7.30pm.

**Saturday 5 November**  
Socialist Conference, 'Trade Union Solidarity Conference': Leeds Trades Council Club 9 pm. Fee £2 to J Seymour, 3 Hill St, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancs.

**Sunday 6 November**  
SSiN AGM: PCL, Marylebone Road 12 pm.

**Monday 7 November**  
Nottingham SO meeting, 'The Struggle for Socialism': Int'l Comm. Centre 7.30 pm, Mansfield Road.

**Thursday 10 November**  
Northampton SO meeting 'Stalinism' with Geoff Ward. 25 Queens Rd., 7.15 pm.

**Saturday 12 November**

Socialist Organiser AGM. For details contact SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

**Saturday 19 November**  
'Time to Go' Conference on Ireland: Camden Centre, Bidborough St,

WC1. £5 to Clare Short MP (TTG), House of Commons, London SW1.

**Saturday 19 November**  
Socialist Organiser: two-day school at Hollinsclough: White Peak District. Phone 0602 624827.

**Sunday 20 November**  
South London SO meeting 'Chile — an end to the repression?': The Station Pub, Camberwell New Rd. 7.30 pm

**Thursday 24 November**  
Northampton SO, The Left Today, Clive Bradley: 25 Queens Rd., 7.15 pm.

**Saturday 26 November**  
London Socialist Conference, day school on Imperialism: Sir William Collins School, NW1.

**Saturday 26 November**  
Socialist Conference, dayschool on 'Socialism and Democracy': Civic Centre, Newcastle. Details: Tessa Gray, 4 Normanton Terrace, Elswick, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

**Saturday 10 December**  
Socialist Conference — Conference on the Poll Tax  
Newcastle Medical School: Fee £10 (delegate) £5/£3 to Terry Conway, 10b Windsor Rd, London N7.

## View from the inside

## CINEMA

Edward Ellis reviews  
'The Fruit Machine'

**T**he *Fruit Machine*, written by Frank Clarke of *'Letter to Brezhnev'* fame, has not generally received good reviews.

It has been compared unfavourably both to *'Brezhnev'* and to another recent Liverpoolian effort, *'Distant Voices/Still Lives'*. Even the kindest critics have been bemused by its mixture of realism and fantasy.

Leaving the cinema, various people near me were complaining that the film was 'corny' and 'tacky'. But this is all a bit odd, as *'The Fruit Machine'* is an excellent film.

Two 16 year old lads witness the murder of a gay bar owner in Liverpool and run away to Brighton — hotly pursued by the murderer.

One, Mike, works off and on as a rent boy and is street-wise and tough. The other, Eddie, is sensitive ("camp as a row of tents" in Frank Clarke's words) and given to fantasy — a characteristic he has inherited from his mother, who claims to have been Maria Callas' best mate.

Their escape to Brighton is aided by a lascivious retiring male opera singer and his equally lascivious female manager. While Mike, poor

thing, stays in the hotel being seduced, Eddie is off talking to dolphins, trapped unnaturally in a dolphinarium.

One of the dolphins, Sootie, occasionally transmogrifies into Eddie's ideal man. (It is this boy-dolphin bit that has so bewildered reviewers. Have these people ever heard of surrealism? Ever read a book?)

The sword-wielding maniacal murderer, who personifies AIDS and perhaps bigotry in general, does catch up with them, and here is a nail-biting climax.

To complain that this is 'corny' is like criticising *'Platoon'* for having too much blood. I think the only possible explanation for critical indifference is the overtly gay storyline. *'Letter to Brezhnev'* had far less to it but was universally loved.

This is not because the critics are prejudiced, necessarily: rather they just don't understand it. Robbie Coltrane minces about in drag ("love your dress," says Eddie, "fits you like a glove") as club-owner Annabelle, and most critics see nothing more than a fat Scotsman poofing about in a dress. Unattuned to what I suppose is 'gay humour' (probably not completely dissimilar to Jewish humour in its self-mockery), the critics simply couldn't see what *'The Fruit Machine'* was about.

For it is far 'gayer' than, say, *'My Beautiful Launderette'*, in which the characters' sexuality is more or less incidental. *'Prick Up Your Ears'* is about famous people and so



Eddie (left) and Mike, played by Emile Charles and Tony Forsyth

they don't really count. *'The Fruit Machine'* is far more a product of the British gay sub-culture, in so far as such a thing exists.

In a sense this is a problem, certainly commercially, as some audiences may leave it feeling colder

than they might if Eddie, say, had been a girl.

It is witty, exciting and excellently acted: Emile Charles as Eddie is an absolute star. It's a 'gay film', in the year that brought us Section 28, with the obvious message — be what you are and be free. Yet what is unusual is that this message is not

intended as propaganda to a 'straight' audience, it's not a 'look at us, we're normal' movie, or a 'why you should not be prejudiced' movie or anything like that.

It's an *insiders* film — which may prove bewildering to critics, but is pretty important for those on the inside.

## Fair? It's murderous

## TELEVISION

## By Jean Lane

**T**he World in Action programme *'A Dream Betrayed'* (on Monday 17th) should have been seen by anybody who still thinks that the capitalist system is fair.

You know how it goes: do your job, keep your nose clean, take the opportunities that come and you'll go places. If you don't you must have done something wrong.

The people who went to work in a new town set up around a mine in 1945, Wittenoom, in Australia did just that, and are still feeling the affects today. The mine was asbestos. Its discovery gave birth to a town and a work force, and to death and horrible illness still continuing today.

So far more than 200 people have died from diseases of the lungs related to asbestos. It is expected that at least 1000 will die overall.

The mine was closed in 1966, but the company, CSR, had been told of the dangers long before then. In 1952 a doctor had warned the company of the risks they were taking with workers' health. But the company refused to take any notice and failed to inform the workers of the danger.

It wasn't until the '70s that the deaths began. One woman Val Dogle, lost her step father, her

mother, her husband and two brothers-in-law. A third brother-in-law is dying and she herself has only a short time to live.

Even though she and all those members of her family worked in the mine, their claims for compensation have failed like all the others. The mining company's wranglings over technical details and over where the fault lies, coupled with the insurance company's have gone on so long that the claimants have died before their cases could be solved.

Many of the dead and dying did not work in the mine but were just born in the town and played in the dirt and in the streets.

A 35 year old woman, Barbara Taylor, who has two children herself, has the lung disease, mesothelioma, and is dying because she spent her childhood at Wittenoom.

CSR refused to compensate her or her family. They say there is no legal obligation. "She didn't work for us — the government should look at it."

While CSR, the insurance company and the government wriggle and squirm, people are dying. That's your fair system for you.

**A**nyone watching *'On The Record'* (BBC1 Sunday afternoon), which is a weekly political discussion programme, will have seen that the Communist Party now accepts the system that does that to workers.

They have thrown completely out of the window any idea of class struggle and any notion of the need for workers to confront the capitalist state, smash it and create a system based on need rather than profit.

In fact, they have crawled so far onto their bellies before profit, the market and individualism — the

ideology that Thatcher has turned into a fine art — that they resemble in politics and programme the Social and Liberal Democrats.

The class struggle is out, and 'citizenship' is in. They call the Labour Party old-fashioned because it won't wholeheartedly embrace this sell-out of the working class, despite the efforts of Kinnock, Gould and Co. They are por-

trayed as 'modernisers', 'forward thinkers'.

Eric Heffer and the far left who stick to their principles and who remember as far back as the heady days of the miners' strike are looked on as 'dinosaurs'.

But, it's not old fashioned to stick to class struggle politics. It's essential, as stories like Wittenoom should continue to remind us.

## Belt it out, sing and dance!

Rob Read reviews  
*Shikisha, a musical group from South Africa.*

**I**t is a year or so since I was first introduced to the Gum Boot Dance. Then it was performed by ex-BTR Sarmcol workers in the play *'The Long March'*.

On Thursday I was treated to it again by Shikisha. They are three Zulu women, best known as the backing group for the very wonderful Miriam Makeba.

Shikisha literally means "Belt it out, sing and dance like you've never sung and danced before". This they certainly appeared to do despite the somewhat embarrassing-

ly small crowd gathered in the Mandela Bar at Ealing College.

The first half of the set was taken up by the three women accompanying themselves on drums, performing traditional songs, chants and dance alongside a few contemporary songs. The highlights were Makeba's *'Soweto Blues'* and a solo performance by the lead singer called *'I Walk Alone'*.

The set was completed by the Gum Boot Dance. For those not yet lucky enough to have seen such a display the Gum Boot Dance is one in which the dancers create their own rhythm by slapping the boots and various parts of their body providing a surprisingly musical beat.

In the second half Shikisha were joined by Zablaza, four musicians from Soweto who performed on Paul Simon's *'Gracelands'* album.

Called Mbaqanga, the music in the second half was a mixture of captivating rhythm and raw driving

beat combining to give a sound which makes dancing a must. Complementing Shikisha's harmonised vocals and dance, it made a mockery out of the current chart tracks of safe pop and mind-numbingly dull Acid House.

African music is enjoying increasing popularity in this country. In part, no doubt, this is due to Simon's *'Gracelands'*, but also to the increasing interest in so-called 'world music'.

Moreover, air play is still fairly restricted to minority interest slots. The commercial success of the likes of the Bhundu Boys and Youssou N'Dour may well begin to change this.

Shikisha may not be the best band around playing African music — this performance will inspire me to seek out others — but they are certainly lively, exciting and musically invigorating.

Catch them if you can.

# Why Hammond calls an illegal strike

## INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

**E**ric Hammond is nothing if not a stirrer. Last week's decision to recommend a 24-hour strike of EETPU members in the electricity supply industry, in solidarity with GCHQ trade unionists, was plainly intended to embarrass the TUC.

The EETPU executive's unanimous decision to ballot electricity supply members, with a recommendation to take strike action, is far more decisive than the TUC's vague call for a national Day of Action on 7 November, accompanied by the advice to stay within the law.

If the EETPU members back the executive's recommendation, their action will clearly breach the government's employment legislation, outlawing 'sympathetic' (ie. solidarity) strike action. Hammond continues to defend the EETPU's policy of staying within the law, but attempts to square the

circle with statements to the effect that the issue is one of "civil liberty and human rights, rather than industrial relations".

However vacuous, this kind of talk is certainly more stirring stuff than anything Norman Willis has yet to come out with.

What can possibly have got into Brother Eric, champion of no-strike deals and embodiment of 'moderate', 'responsible', etc. trade unionism?

Certainly, a large part of the motivation is sheer devilment at outflanking the TUC. But Hammond has other, less frivolous, reasons as well. The tag of 'Maggie's favourite union leader' (which will be lost overnight if Hammond succeeds in pulling the plug on the nation's domestic and industrial power supplies on 7 November) is not just personally hurtful: it's also bad for recruitment.

People simply won't join a union if they know that it is in the bosses' pocket. The AEU's failure to sign up more than 7% of the workforce at Nissan's Sunderland plant, despite a single-union deal and full cooperation from management, is living proof of the lack of enthusiasm that exists on the shop floor for company unionism. The UDM's lack of progress in the coalfields and the relative

insignificance of outfits like the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT) is further evidence.

Hammond needs to demonstrate that he is not simply a tool of the bosses and the Tories and that he can deliver the goods — for his own members and, indeed, for other groups of workers fortunate enough to find themselves in good favour with him.

The existence of 43,000 EETPU members in the electricity supply industry is thus crucial to Hammond's project: they are potentially the most powerful single group of workers in Britain today. They can literally pull the plug on every one of us. They are Hammond's Ace in the Hole.

But if the Tories can attack trade unions at GCHQ on the grounds of 'national security', then why not in essential public sector areas like the health service...or electricity supply? Hey presto! Suddenly, from holding the power to bring the entire country to a candlelit, grinding halt, Brother Eric would find himself the impotent figurehead of a useless 'trade union' that no-one who wants some effective representation, backed up by the threat of real clout, would have any reason to join.

That's why Hammond's call for an illegal solidarity strike isn't just bravado. And it's why people on

the left who advocate giving up on the EETPU and who compare it with organisations formed solely in order to scab — the UDM or the P&O company union — are fundamentally mistaken in their understanding of what the EETPU represents in terms of current British trade unionism.

Sure, its leadership is very right-wing (so is the CPSA leadership) and sure, it has been responsible for systematic scabbing (so has the AEU), but it isn't simply a creation of the bosses. It's still recognisably part of the reformist British workers movement.

Being inside the TUC is not a matter of principle, and even before the EETPU's expulsion there were certain instances (in multi-union plants, where the presence of an EETPU minority could undermine united action) where socialists right-ly encouraged electricians to join other unions.

But that's very different from a general policy of urging all anti-Hammond electricians to get out, leaving 300,000 or more EETPU members in the unchallengeable grip of the present leadership. That would only make sense if you seriously believed that the 83% vote to leave the TUC meant that Hammond has (as one commentator who should know better recently put it) successfully "educated his

members in the principles of business unionism". In other words, that the majority of the EETPU members are dyed-in-the-wool scabs and that nothing can change that.

If that is really true, then how do you explain what Hammond's doing? If his GCHQ strike call succeeds, then all his "educational" work on his members has been in vain. If he is turned over, then he has simply exposed his own weakness.

The reality is that Brother Eric needs to flex his muscles to prove to the government, to his own members and to potential members that the EETPU carries real clout and is not to be messed with.

It's a contradiction that the left can exploit — if the siren songs of the defeatists are resisted.

Finally, two straws in the wind: the London Press Branch of the EETPU, which a few years ago defected to SOGAT before being handed back under the Bridlington rules, has voted to stay in and fight...

Meanwhile, we see the bizarre spectacle of Manchester City Council using its power as an employer to de-recognise the EETPU and force its electricians into the EPIU. Still more bizarre is the sight of some very silly lefties applauding this!

## How the sell-off fight was lost

By Stan Crooke

**O**n 24 February 15,000 workers marched through Edinburgh on a Scottish TUC Day of Action in opposition to the privatisation of ancillary services in the NHS in Scotland.

The demonstration in Glasgow was even larger. Across Scotland, over 70,000 workers demonstrated that day in defence of the NHS.

The demonstrations of 24 February had been the largest in Scotland for many years. What went wrong?

Scottish TUC and NHS union officials made no attempt to take forward the campaign after 24 February, and,

indeed, were hostile to attempts to do so. Trade union activists on the ground were not strong enough to provide an alternative to the demobilising surrogate "campaign" of the trade union officialdom.

Confronted with calls that the Day of Action should be followed up by a campaign to win all-out strike action, the response from Edinburgh NUPE full-timer John Lambie was to argue that other unions would not back NUPE on such an issue, and that the members would not come out on indefinite strike.

Union activists at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital organised a ballot on an all-out strike, revealing a massive majority in favour of such action. Instead of taking a lead from the results of the ballot, union officials dismissed it on the grounds that it had been organised unofficially and therefore did not conform to the Tories' anti-union legislation.

The NUPE Scottish area committee

voted in favour of holding a ballot on further industrial action. The union full-timers simply ignored this decision.

The officials' follow-up to 24 February was to call for "selective industrial action" — one day here, one day there, half a dozen workers here, a dozen workers there. This was obviously a recipe for frittering away momentum.

Then in March the Scottish TUC's privatisation sub-committee announced that all industrial action in the NHS in Scotland had been called off, in order to facilitate talks between the unions and the Health Boards on the mechanics of tendering for hospital ancillary services.

This meant abandoning the fight to stop tendering and privatisation. Instead, it was now a matter of trying to beat the private contractors at their own game, by submitting lower bids (at the expense of the working conditions of the employees) than the private contractors.

The readiness of the NHS union leaders to endorse in-house tenders — drawn up, it should be stressed, by management not the unions — was another blow against the prospects of organising direct action against privatisation. Management was now in a position to warn employees that any further disruptive action would reduce the chances of a "competitive" in-house tender being submitted and possibly eventually accepted.

The officials' strategy did not even work in its own terms. Despite the offer of a reduced wages bill contained in Glasgow in-house tenders, despite the

offer of "changed" (ie. worsened) working conditions contained in Lothian in-house tenders, the bulk of the contracts went to outside private agencies.

All ancillary services in the Lothians for which private tenders had been submitted were privatised. Only the catering service in the Eastern Unit hospitals went to an in-house tender.

The announcement of the Health Board's decision resulted in a series of protest strikes in a number of hospitals in the Lothians. Again, the officials failed to give any direction to the anger over the Health Board's decision, and instead returned to their already failed tactic of "selective industrial action".

Workers are now faced with the dole or much worsened working conditions with the private contractors. In one of the worst cases Dysart Cleaning Company (which submitted a successful tender in Glasgow) has cut the hourly rate of pay from £2.12 to £1.60, cut holidays from 25 days to 10 days per year, and cut the number employed by a third. That is how it managed to undercut the in-house tender by 47%.

The privatisation of NHS ancillary services in Scotland does more than show up the futility of attempting to "fight" privatisation by submitting in-house tenders. It underlines the need for a rank and file movement in the health unions which is strong enough not only to organise action independently of the officials but also to bring officials under the control of the members, or replace those officials who refuse to be brought to account.

## IN BRIEF

**Post Office:** One-day strike closed 40 Post Offices in SW London. The strike was part of a campaign against management closing half the Crown Office network with the loss of 5,000 jobs.

**Teachers:** Over 12,000 teachers in Inner London struck last Thursday, 20th, over cuts in supply teaching jobs. The NUT is calling for a 20% pay rise this year.

**Royal Ordnance:** Senior shop stewards at ROFs met in London and urged workers to boycott any work transferred from plants threatened with closure.

**Banks and Finance:** Eagle Star Insurance have reinstated a suspended employee but are still refusing to recognise BIFU. Workers at Lloyds Bank banned overtime from Monday over management extending opening hours without consultation.

**Lucas workers, on strike now for 4 weeks over pay, overwhelmingly rejected management's "revised" offer and voted to continue on strike.**

**Ford:** There have been a series of unofficial daily stoppages at Dagenham since the shutdown in August. Next month workers will see if management intend to honour the second half of their two year pay deal — inflation rate plus 2%.

**NUJ members are being pressurised to sign individual contracts by management at The Star, Daily Express and the Sunday Express. The union is telling 60 senior journalists not to sign them. NUJ has already been derecognised by Today as management continue their assault on print unions.**

**Docks:** There have been two one-day strikes at the Port of Liverpool recently. There is growing anger over working conditions and drawn out pay negotiations.

**Councils:** Over 1,000 NALGO members struck for a day against the latest privatisation plans from Westminster Council. Council workers are prepared for a half-day strike in Bradford on Tuesday 25th against similar plans. Council workers throughout Brent are still resisting cuts imposed by the Labour Council after its cuts budget in August.

**Steel:** There have been a series of one-day strikes over pay by AEU members at Shotton steel plant, Deeside.

**Mines:** The scab UDM signed their second two-year pay deal with British Coal — the deal included a framework for 6-day working in some pits. NUM delegates meet at the beginning of November to discuss details of a ballot for industrial action over their 1988 pay claim.

**Socialist STUDENT**

## FIGHT for the RIGHT TO STUDY

Introducing the sixth annual Socialist Student activists' conference.

Sessions include:

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- Student union development in the FE sector
- Stopping the Poll Tax
- The struggle of free Polish student unionism

**Main Event: Poly of Central London, Marylebone Road, London (Tube: Baker Street). 12:00 — 5:00. Sunday 6th November.**

More details of Socialist Student or this activists' conference: write 133 Ashford Street, Stoke-on-Trent; phone 01 639 7967

## EPIU wins

**T**he pro-TUC breakaway electricians' union, the EPIU, has won recognition at the Ford Dagenham body plant.

They say they will take the vast majority of the 200 EETPU members there with them. Initially they will join an MSF holding branch.

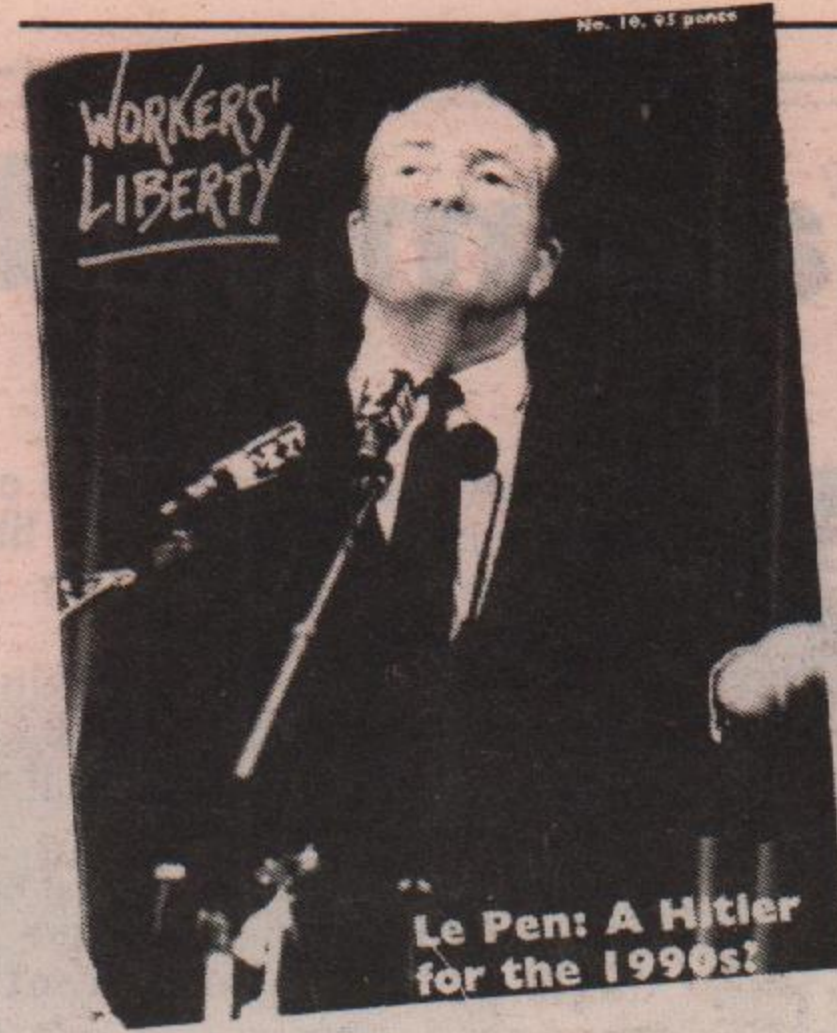
After two months, however,

such developments are still very much the exception, and all the evidence points to the overwhelming majority of EETPU members remaining in the union. Hammond's manoeuvring over GCHQ will probably convince some wavering EETPU members to stay put.

The best policy for EETPU militants remains, we believe, to stay inside and organise the fight against Hammond and his business unionism from within.

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER



**Workers' Liberty No. 10** includes articles on the Stalinist roots of left anti-Semitism, the Gulf War, France in 1968, Zbigniew Kowaleski on Poland. 90p + postage, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

# GCHQ: The way to win

By Mike Grayson

**C**ivil Service workplaces up and down the country are balloting this week on strike action on Monday 7 November in protest at the sackings of trade union members at GCHQ.

The one-day action called by the leadership of the civil service unions is obviously too little too late, and activists must work to ensure that 7 November is the beginning of a campaign, not a one-off protest that will lead nowhere and achieve nothing.

At a meeting in London called by the CPSA Broad Left on 20 October, the motion submitted by Socialist Organiser supporters was passed. It recognised that "the only way our union will overturn the sackings is by indefinite all-out strike action".

Branches must urgently forward motions to the National Executive Committee, calling on them to re-ballot the membership for such all-out action to commence on 18 November. This is the date on which the dismissal notices served on the GCHQ members run out.

The Broad Left also discussed the need to involve other groups of workers in the day of action. Already some branches are making contact with other workplaces in their locality. But this action must be generalised and stepped up on a massive scale.

As usual, it will be left to the rank and file to organise in the face of a leadership that talks a good fight but in practice does little to win. An example of this is the way the civil service unions have decided not to include in the ballot those workplaces which are out of the civil service proper.

This has been done because strike action in these areas could, it is claimed, be deemed 'secondary' action. The unions are terrified at the prospect of legal action being taken against them, and so have decided to back down without a fight.

This is a pathetic example for the civil service unions to set to the wider labour movement. It allows a dangerous precedent for future disputes within the civil service. Already individual managements are threatening legal action against branches which decide to ballot their members in spite of their own union's faint-hearted advice.

If the union leadership were serious about winning back trade union rights for their members in GCHQ, they would be organising now for all-out strikes in every workplace where there are unions represented. They would be calling on all TUC-affiliated unions to take action alongside them.

The GCHQ sackings are a threat to members of all trade unions. We must fight for a response that is commensurate with the seriousness of the government's action.



The GCHQ trade unionists under threat. Photo: Jez Coulsen, Insight.



## Strike on 7 November!

### From front page

strike action then why not us?

If workers across the country take industrial action the Tories will not be able to use their oppressive trade union legislation.

The Tories under Thatcher have tried to steal the banner of freedom from the labour movement. They claim to be the party of choice. But they are the enemies of free choice and champion a phoney freedom.

Over the last nine years they have strengthened the British state. They have reinforced the police, attacked local democracy, and extended the state into the affairs of the

labour movement.

When they cannot win votes they simply change the rules. They have abolished the GLC and Metropolitan counties. They will fix votes on delivering council estates into private hands (so no vote at all counts as a 'yes' vote!) and they banned trade unions even voting to come out in solidarity with the P&O seafarers.

They have abolished the centuries-old right to silence and now they are banning trade unions altogether in the interests of 'national security'.

But where will it end? The

Tories have refused to rule out extending this ban. First to other civil servants, then to other industries — the NHS perhaps, water supply, gas supply, electricity supply...

We must stop them in their tracks. Every Labour Party member and trade unionist should build for all-out action on the 7th, and to call on our Labour Party and TUC leaderships to stop dithering and support this campaign.

We can expose the Tories as fakes and tyrants — beginning with a crusade for the right to join free trade unions.

Stop the Tory union busters. Strike on 7 November!