

For Workers' Liberty East and West

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

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INSIDE

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

We won't be cheated!

Child benefit fraud
By Katharine O'Leary

4 page pull-out

Thatcher and Jaruzelski:

Enemies of the people

- Unions bashed
- Liberties suppressed
- Welfare cut

Margaret Thatcher is a hypocrite. She claims to speak for freedom in Poland while arrogantly trampling on the ordinary people of Britain.

As Thatcher visited Poland, the government published new restrictions on strikes. As TUC general secretary Norman Willis commented: "The plain fact is that the government demanded ballots and the unions won too many of them. So now the government wants to move the goalposts and change the rules for ballots." So much for democracy!

The Tories have already given their wealthy, wig-wearing friends on the judges' bench plenty of rules to use against workers' protests. No solidarity strikes! No pickets! No political strikes! No strikes without ballots!

A new "code of practice" will make things much worse. It says that:

- unions should not call action unless they get a 70% majority in a ballot, and a high turnout;
- strike ballots must be postal ballots;
- strikers must be re-balloted whenever "there are grounds for believing that significant numbers have changed their minds";

- ballot papers must effectively carry propaganda against strike action. They must state that action will put workers in breach of contract with their employers — without making any comment.

Ballot papers should be accompanied by leaflets about the risks of striking, like loss of industrial tribunal rights;

- unions cannot even call ballots unless they are definitely planning action, and the action is legal;
- unions have to observe all sorts of delays. Before balloting they must "tell the employer in sufficient time" for him to respond as he



chooses. After distributing ballot papers they must allow at least seven days for them to be returned by post.

After all that, and after getting a majority for action, they must "give sufficient time for the employer" to prepare for the strike.

The class struggle, in short, must be fought by two different sets of rules in future. Workers and unions

must behave as if they are having a polite argument at a genteel tea-party. Bosses can continue to behave like thugs and tyrants.

This "code of practice" will not, strictly speaking, be law. But it "may be taken into account" by judges. The code allows for exceptions, for example to the demand for postal rather than workplace ballots.

But who decides whether the code is relevant or the circumstances are exceptional? The same judges who battered the print unions, the miners' union and the seafarers' union!

Yes, Solidarnosc should be able to operate freely — and so should British trade unions! Free trade unions East and West!

Unite the left in NUS!

SOCIALIST STUDENT

By Mark Osborn

Socialist Outlook and Briefing seem to have left Socialist Student — again.

We suppose it's to be expected — they do it every couple of years... And then they come back.

The reason they come back is that outside Socialist Student they are left without ideas, isolated and are seen to be needlessly splitting the left.

What have they got to say for themselves? An article by Carl Taylor in the latest Socialist Outlook and a speech from one of their comrades indicate that they are wandering away from SSiN because:

- Although they can agree with Socialist Student on many of the most basic issues in NUS and NOLS, they think that Socialist Organiser's influence makes Socialist Student "soft" on imperialism;

- We are overly concerned with elections and, moreover, will make electoral pacts with right-wing Zionists and Jews (ie. the Union of Jewish Students);

- They say that SSiN is a Socialist Organiser front;

- They want to build a conference called by Manchester Poly Left Caucus on 28 November to discuss a new left vehicle in the student movement.

Now to split your small group away from the big, broad left in the student movement on issues which are less than immediate and central is stupid. The central issues for a rank and file group in the student movement are fighting voluntary membership, loans, education cuts and Poll Tax in alliance with the labour movement; and combatting the Kinnockite careerists whose control stops the NUS and NOLS from dealing with these issues.

100 at SSiN AGM

By Nick Brereton

On Sunday 6 November, one hundred student activists attended the sixth annual Socialist Student conference.

Students discussed central issues for the movement: building a campaigning Labour Students; organising campaigns for childcare provision; campaigning against cuts in education; restructuring of the national union.

Fight this sacking!

Hull University Students' Union have organised a demonstration on Thursday 10 November in support of sacked philosophy lecturer Edgar Page.

Mr Page is the first lecturer to be dismissed nationally following the removal of academic tenure, which was part of the Education Act. If there is no opposition to his sacking, lecturers will be made redundant all over the country as college authorities implement the cuts in education.

The education system is already in crisis with department closures and mergers left, right and centre.

At the Socialist Student AGM an Iranian socialist made a similar point: it would be completely wrong to split a broad alliance like SSiN over the issue of "imperialism". He added that, to him, it looked like just more sectarianism on the British left.

International issues are important and indeed Socialist Outlook could do with having more clear-cut ideas on such issues and arguing for them more vigorously. But student unionism is centrally based on its ability to fight for its members' most basic interests.

NUS is not a political party whose central plank is fight imperialism! Indeed, if a left leadership of NUS tried to make it NUS's main thing to "fight imperialism" then NUS would fall to bits.

NUS is a very broad coalition of people, from very different backgrounds. NUS should mobilise them in basic campaigns which directly affect students' pockets and students' ability to study and have a decent education system.

Because these are NUS's central issues, then they are Socialist Student's central concerns when we're building a rank and file movement. Has any trade union rank and file movement ever been built otherwise?

Even if Socialist Outlook were right on the international issues, they would be wrong to split. But they're wrong on the issues too! On Ireland, do we side with the troops? Of course not! But Socialist Outlook does applaud Sinn Fein's attempt to get a pan-Catholic electoral coalition with the SDLP.

In the Middle East, do we support the Israeli state's actions on the West Bank and Gaza? Don't be stupid! But Socialist Outlook does deny the national rights of the Israeli Jews.

We are anti-imperialist: but what we're for is not the chauvinism of the currently oppressed but consistent democracy. We're against the oppression of the Catholics in Northern Ireland, and we don't want it replaced by oppression of the Protestants in a Catholic-dominated united Ireland. No-one can believe that Socialist

Outlook, noted for its blandness and vagueness rather than any great political sharpness, has suddenly become red-hot on Ireland and Palestine.

Outlook, noted for its blandness and vagueness rather than any great political sharpness, has suddenly become red-hot on Ireland and Palestine.

All the bluster is just cover for the fact that Socialist Outlook is running away from Socialist Student.

They have not had any answers ever on strategy inside NOLS or NUS — the best thing they have managed is to grunt in agreement with what others have said.

They have had plenty of opportunity to put forward what they think to Socialist Student. The only real differences they have raised have been on international issues. They have lost the arguments — massively. And yet they have had plenty of space for their minority views in Socialist Student bulletins, for instance at the Christmas 1987 NUS conference when the Middle East was discussed.

Socialist Student has actually gone out of its way to invite people with different views to Socialist Student events and discuss with them on Palestine, the Labour Party and South Africa.

Minorities in Socialist Student are guaranteed minority rights and representation: this is still open to Briefing — or anyone else for that matter.

What have Socialist Outlook done in return? They have not built SSiN groups in the few colleges where they are central.

They lack serious intent to fight for their politics inside SSiN. They lack faith in their ability to build themselves if the students in their colleges come within a million miles

Stop these fascists!

By Claire Standing
(Convenor, NY Area NUS)

The fascist British National Party has planned a march in York on Remembrance Sunday, 13 November.

North Yorks Area National Union of Students and York University Students Union have organised a counter demonstration. However, our plans are being obstructed by the Labour-led York City Council.

Labour leaders are acting against the spirit of Labour policy, which calls for support for the counter demonstration: they are refusing to allow the anti-fascist demonstrators to use council



of the SSiN majority.

Is SSiN overly concerned with elections? Do we bloc with right-wingers in UJS to ensure that we win?

In the big debate on Palestine at NUS conference in December 1987, SSiN differed from all other factions because we argued for working with progressive groups among both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. We argued for national rights of both peoples. These were policies which we had argued for some time and which had lost us votes because we took a principled stand against the "bash the Jews"

attitude inside NUS.

The Democratic Left (and the Socialist Workers Party) cynically used this issue to gain some ground against Socialist Student in the elections at Easter 1988 NUS conference.

The "deal" consisted of us voting for motions that we agreed with — any other "conspiracy theories" are just vile rubbish.

Is Socialist Student a "Socialist Organiser front"? How absurd! The vast majority of Socialist Student supporters — people who attend our caucuses and meetings — and the huge bulk of people who vote for our policies at NUS events are not Socialist Organiser supporters.

Socialist Organiser supporters are some of the central people in SSiN. Why? Because we're good — that's all!

Socialist Student continues to be the dominant left force in NUS and NOLS. We were central to organising a 3,000-strong demonstration at Tory Party conference; there were 100 people at SSiN AGM last weekend; Socialist Student motions, in particular on the Education Campaign, dominate the NUS conference motions' booklet.

That's where the action is. If Socialist Outlook choose a quieter life elsewhere, good luck to them. In addition, some Socialist Student supporters will be at the Manchester Poly conference to see if we can work jointly on the pressing questions in NOLS and NUS.

The great boxing debate

THIS SPORTING LIFE

By Janine Booth

The time has arrived to open the Great Boxing Debate — to initiate some discussion on the rights and the wrongs, the pros and the cons.

All correspondence, comments etc. are most welcome, but what better way to launch off than with my own personal opinions?

Whatever I say against boxing has to be put in the context of the fact that yes, I admit it, I watch it quite a lot, and read about it with fascination. (Particularly Nigel

Benn's remarkable victory a couple of weeks ago).

It has to be said that aspects of boxing are macho and horrible, that the baying bloodlust of audiences can be pretty distasteful, and that people have been hurt, and even killed.

On the other hand, it is not, as some will contend, a 'bloodsport'. To label it as such is to put it on a level with such vile activities as fox-hunting, hare coursing and badger-baiting. At least boxing contestants take part willingly.

One of boxing's most distasteful aspects is the sight of big money changing hands and self-satisfied smiles on the faces of the likes of Micky Duff. But the same may be said of snooker, motor racing and many other sports.

And I'd go in the ring with Mike Tyson for three million quid.

Boxing, then, is a sport watched and enjoyed by millions worldwide, and also knitted into the culture of

Britain, especially through such institutions as East End boys' clubs.

It's also violent, escapist, dangerous and a bit of a sick thing to find enjoyable.

Ban it? No way. Banning boxing will get us nowhere, would be repressive and stupid. Perhaps it would be better to work towards a society where people would happily spend their leisure time in other ways than watching two men attempting to beat shit out of each other.

It's a bit like meat-eating really — I think it's wrong and I wish people would stop it, but banning it would be stupid.

Good luck Frank.

Last week's answer: Ray Clemence, Kevin Keegan and Ian Botham (I didn't say England soccer captains!)

This week's teaser: Who are the Shrimpers, the Cottagers, the Toffemen, the Hatters, the Hornets, the Posh, the Owls and the Blades?

Britain's not Tory

EDITORIAL

Neil Kinnock and his ideological colleagues often argue that Labour has to copy some Tory values to win back support. The Tories have been winning the ideological debate: Britain is now a society more dominated by conservative values than at any time in the past. Socialism, they say, is a thing of the past.

But a survey of social attitudes published last week shows all these arguments to be false.

The report, by Roger Jowell and Richard Topf, of Social and Community Planning Research, finds that many of the social attitudes that should go with the Tory 'enterprise culture' are missing. In fact, in certain major areas, public opinion in Britain has moved away from these Tory values since 1983.

An enterprise culture, the authors say, would include widespread support for the privatisation of health and education services, for cuts in social spending, and for private profit-making. But British public opinion does not support these things.

At least, while there is support for profit in principle, most people believe that profits disproportionately benefit businessmen at the expense of workers and customers. The overwhelming majority thinks that the City is out for a fast buck and does not serve the public interest.

Support for the basic principle of the National Health Service has never been greater. In 1983 63% of those asked wanted more spending on health; today it is 83%. Half the Conservative voters asked wanted more spending on the NHS.

But more people were unhappy with the service provided by the

NHS — 39% compared to 25%. People wanted more doctors and nurses and less queuing.

Tory ideas in education are less widely opposed. Private schools, unlike private hospitals, are not regarded with hostility. But people were concerned about class sizes, shortages of books and equipment and discipline.

So the general picture is that people don't believe in free market ideologies. Moreover, most people don't trust the government, civil servants or journalists to serve the public interest.

On 'moral issues' the survey has some contradictory findings. 74% think homosexual relationships are wrong (against 62% in 1983) but 43% are prepared to accept homosexual teachers.

People with AIDS were generally felt to be unfairly treated, although a majority felt they had themselves to blame for the illness.

Fewer people oppose sex before marriage (25% compared to 28%). But 8 out of 10 people oppose extra-marital relations.

Support for abortion on demand has grown from 37% to 54%.

40% think pornography should be banned (although whether they mean soft-core pornography is not clear).

People in different social positions have different attitudes to all these issues. On the whole, the report finds that middle class people are more 'progressive' on issues like, for example, homosexuality. Labour's middle and working class voters are divided on these issues and on nuclear disarmament.

Labour voters are of course united on issues of social equality.

Britain is not Thatcherite. The whole argument of the Kinnockite/Marxism Today right that socialists should adopt semi-Thatcherite ideas to gain support is based on a false picture of widely-held beliefs.

Of course 'public opinion' is not



Demonstration in Bradford. Photo: Paul Hermann

socialist either. But an issue like support for the NHS is extremely popular. The Labour Party should campaign energetically on this and other issues as a way to convince people of socialism. It should throw

its weight behind healthworkers fighting the government.

The Labour leaders should stop kow-towing to Tory values and fight for an alternative view of society.

A bad place to be old

Six million old people in Britain live in poverty. Out of Britain's 10 million pensioners, three million live on or below the Income Support (supplementary benefit) level, and another three million live below the poverty threshold of Income Support plus 40%.

Pensions in Britain are lower than in other advanced countries. One quarter of people aged 65 to 74, and 40% of over-75s, have an income less than half the national average. In Norway, only 3% of those aged 65 to 74, and 9% of over-75s, live in such misery.

And for many old people, poverty means illness or death. At age 65, the average man in England or Wales can expect to live another 13 years, the average women, 17 years.

In other industrialised countries, a 65 year old could expect to live 14 to 16 years (if male) and 19 to 20 years (if female).

Old people in Scotland and Northern Ireland die even sooner than in England and Wales.

It all adds up to an unanswerable case for better state provision for the old. But the Tory government has already cut pensions (by running down the State Earnings Related Pensions Scheme) and now plans to cut benefits from the old still further.

This week they tried to backtrack from plans announced over the weekend to means-test benefits for the elderly. The denials weren't convincing, though. The government was obstinately insisting, despite demands from Tory rebels, that pensioners must pay for eye

and teeth tests — unless they pass a means-test to get them free.

Means-tested benefits are mean, bureaucratic and ineffective. Almost everyone claims universal benefits like child benefit or the old age pension. Lots of people entitled to means-tested benefits don't claim them.

The new Family Credit is claimed by only 30% of those entitled. Very few mans-tested benefits are claimed by over 75% of the people who should get them.

The recent bureaucratic change from supplementary benefit to Income Support has cut the number of claimants from 5.3 million to 3.9 million. Only a fraction of that cut in numbers is due to the slight easing of unemployment.

Old people are the most likely of all to fail to get means-tested benefits they are entitled to.

Don't get old, don't get sick, don't get poor — that's the rule in Thatcher's Britain. It's a Britain for profit-making units, not for people.

Strikes can win

Trade union action can win. That's one thing proved by the Tories' announcement of more money for the National Health Service.

The Tories say it's £2 billion. That's a lie. The government is paying out £1.6 billion extra. After allowing for inflation at 5% and earmarked items like programmes for AIDS, it comes to £352 million extra real money for health authorities.

Each one per cent of inflation above 5% cuts the real extra money available by £120 million. If inflation reaches 8%, then there's no real extra money at all.

And even if inflation stays at the government's estimate of 5%, the

real extra money will not be as much as it seems. The inflation rate in the health sector tends to be above the average for the economy; and the increasing proportion of old people in the population calls for extra money in health just to keep the same level of service.

So the real extra money is more like one per cent than the four and a half per cent claimed by the government — and even that one per cent is not certain.

One per cent improvement, however, is a big turnaround after years of Tory cuts. As on nurses' pay, the government has given way when faced with determined industrial action. As on nurses' pay, the government will try to cheat and fiddle. Keep up the pressure!

PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR DAILY STAR

THE INDEPENDENT

By Jim Denham

A modest proposal

Most people have a pretty low opinion of the popular press. A recent Gallup poll found that a sizeable majority of those questioned had no doubt that the tabloids regularly make up stories, while a similar majority placed journalists below estate agents for honesty.

Perhaps most significant, in the long term, was Gallup's discovery that 7 out of 10 of us, favour some sort of legislation to prevent "undue press intrusion" into people's private lives: if and when that particular chicken comes home to roost, the tabloids will have no-one but themselves to blame.

Fortunately for the newspaper industry, the present government does not seem too concerned about the standards of the printed media (no prizes for guessing why not) preferring to concentrate its fire upon the dangerous revolutionists who control television and to prevent us either being won over or scared out of our wits by the sight of Gerry Adams on our screens.

Most ordinary people, it seems, do not share the government's indifference to press standards (anymore, I suspect, than they go along with Douglas Hurd's patronising and illogical reasons for banning Sinn Fein from the airwaves), and should this or some future administration decide to put some legal restraint on the newspapers' ability to pry into people's private lives and print bone faced lies, it would undoubtedly be a popular move.

So perhaps it's time to consider what socialists should be saying about all this. Most of the nostoms traditionally peddled on the left (a statutory right to privacy, the right of reply, greater powers to the Press Council etc) are two-edged swords that could easily end up hurting genuine investigative journalism and radical publications at least as much as they would the sleaze merchants of the tabloids.

One obvious move would be to make legal aid available for libel actions. At the moment, the papers can abuse and lie about more or less anyone who isn't extremely rich, safe in the knowledge that their victims could never afford to sue.

I don't begrudge Ms Koo Stark her £300,000 damages from *The People* and I didn't even feel very sorry for *The News of the World* when Jeffrey Archer took them to the cleaners for a cool £500,000. These are very important people, whose reputations are obviously worth that kind of money.

But most of the trade unionists, Labour Party activists, gay rights campaigners, black militants and others who've had their reputations torn to shreds and their characters vilified in the pages of the tabloids would probably settle for a lot less: say around £45,000 (the going rate for losing an arm at work these days, I understand).

I'm not suggesting that my modest proposal would solve everything: there remains the small matter of whether the courts could be expected to look at a case brought by (say) Mandy Mudd or Derek Robinson with the same degree of sympathy that they feel for the likes of Koo Stark and Jeffrey Archer. But still, it would be a start...

'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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Hatton's farewell

GRAFFITI

The latest issue of *Militant* carries a statement — some would say a rather belated statement — by Derek Hatton that he cannot continue to be a spokesman for the *Militant's* views.

Since the 1985 debacle of Liverpool Council — when Hatton authorised sending out 30,000 redundancy notices to council workers — our Dagsy has been having a whale of a time, living it up with Page 3 girls in Stringfellows and featuring in the gossip pages of the more seedy Sunday newspapers.

Hatton's "champagne socialist" antics have been an embarrassment to *Militant* for a long time, but they have brazened it out for three years. Now *Militant* have decided they can ignore him no longer and have to distance themselves from him. Hence Hatton's "statement".

Oh, by the way, he also says he retains his socialist principles. A year's subscription to *Socialist Organiser* for any reader who can remember him having any.

Government lies about the unemployed not taking up job vacancies have been exploded by BBC's 'Brass Tacks' programme.

Norman Fowler has been claiming that there is a large stock of vacancies that the unemployed are refusing to take. But a survey undertaken by the programme, with the help of Manchester University, found that most vacancies were filled by people leaving other jobs, and that there were, on average, six unemployed claimants for every job.

The survey, undertaken in Chesterfield, also showed that most jobs advertised were for temporary or part-time work. Most were extremely low paid — £3 or less an hour, with a significant minority at less than £2 an hour. Despite this there was no evidence of jobs going unfilled.

The researchers did find real dissatisfaction with the YTS. YTS places took longer to fill and, significantly, 57% of employees said they would not consider a YTS-trained person well enough qualified.

Not surprisingly, employment ministers turned down invitations to appear on the programme, preferring the safer option of issuing a statement "disputing" the findings.

The government has failed to get private industry to come up with financial sponsorship for the new City Technology Colleges.

An article in the latest *Labour Research* shows that of the few companies that have come up with cash so far, many are committed Conservative supporters who regularly donate money to the Tories.

Originally the government said it would provide running costs of CTCs on the condition that all the initial capital came from private sponsors.

But in Solihull the government has provided 40% of capital costs (£1.45m) and is going to provide 80% (£7.6m) in Nottingham.

Interestingly, capital spending in all state schools in Nottinghamshire for 1988-89 will total a mere £2.3m.

It seems that private industry will be happy to reap the gains of CTCs but isn't too keen on putting anything in.

Think about the boycott

RACE AND CLASS

By Dion D'Silva

Last week in London, Jim McDonnell, a British boxer, fought Brian Mitchell for the world title.

Brian Mitchell is a white South African. A picket of over 200 people turned up on the night to oppose the fight going ahead.

Brian Mitchell holds one of the three versions of the world title. The other two organisations do not recognise South African boxers. Like many international sports federations they have a policy to boycott South Africans.

Sport is very important to white South Africans and the boycott is aimed to pressurise them to change. Nevertheless, some of the reasoning behind the boycotts in Britain are not only confused and mistaken by counter-productive.

Brian Mitchell publicly stated that he opposed apartheid, though he later added that he thought President Botha opposed apartheid. By fighting in Europe, Mitchell will be able to earn a lot of money. As an individual boxer it is more than stretching the point to say that Mitchell is a representative of the barbaric South African regime.

The fight took place on the property of Southwark Council. When a motion came to the full Council asking for the fight to be refused permission to go ahead, eight Labour councillors refused to support it.

Local NUPE workers voted not to stage the fight. On the night, support for the picket came from local Anti-Apartheid groups, black



groups and tenants groups. Ironically, Jim McDonnell used to be a caretaker and has been a member of NUPE since he was 17.

What was so upsetting and demoralising was the politics of the picket. Most of the people that went to see the fight were young, male and working class. Very little effort was made to explain the issues involved. No special leaflet was produced.

Most of the crowd were greeted with the slogan 'Boycott Apartheid Sport'. Some were called not only racist but fascist. A black person going to see the boxing match could be expected to be accused of being "a disgrace to their race".

I think it would be wrong to say that all this was due to a few mistaken "hotheads". It goes further than that — into how boycotts have developed and the politics behind them.

Nevertheless, it was right to support the lobby. NUPE workers were taking industrial action and tenants' and black groups were behind them. In their view, they were taking action against apartheid and were disgusted at the

Council's response.

There is general feeling that the Council is not telling the complete truth about what it knew.

It was a chance to make general propaganda against the South African regime. It degenerated into a picket whereby a quite ordinary boxing fan had to walk through a crowd of people and be accused of being a racist. It must have been very bewildering.

Many people seem to have lost sight of the purpose of a boycott. In general they should be aimed at realisable targets that hurt the South African regime directly and give confidence to the black workers of South Africa.

A thinking solidarity movement would attempt to organise united collective action based on consensus and not on appeals to individual guilt.

The boycott has taken a sectarian turn against all things South African. That means not only sport but quite ridiculously music and even direct links between the British and the South African working class. That is no way to build a mass, effective solidarity movement.

Away with Europhoria!

LETTERS

The recent change in Labour Party policy on the EEC is one of the most astonishing and rapid reversals of attitude the Party has ever experienced.

No sooner had the dust settled on the 1983 election result, than the official Labour Party line on the Common Market, ie. complete withdrawal, sank without trace and prompted hardly a sound of protest from the rank and file.

Recently, not only has any notion of withdrawal been relegated to the dustbin of history, but also the EEC seems to have been embraced as a beacon of hope for the future of socialism. Hence the effusive welcome given to Jacques Delors when he addressed the TUC conference in September, and Neil Kinnock's enthusiastic espousal of the "Social Europe" concept barely a month later.

We are told that 1992 is not only an opportunity for big business, it also represents "a challenge for the Left", for just as the trade barriers come down, so too will the disparities in income distribution and social welfare within the Community disappear.

Closer scrutiny, however, should inject some healthy caution in this new-found "Europhoria".

First, we should not that the EEC Commission — like the EEC Council of Ministers — has a centre-right majority among its 17 members, for whom the Internal Market project

is primarily a matter for the business world with a few "social" measures thrown in to keep the voters happy.

Second, the Single European Act, which constitutes the legal framework for the completion of the Internal Market by 1992, is almost exclusively concerned with the removal of trade barriers, with only the odd isolated Article dealing with such vague areas as "safety at work". Nowhere does it make provision for a comprehensive programme of social welfare at the European level, or even for the harmonisation of benefit levels.

The "Social" Europe as projected by Delors would necessitate the comprehensive revision of the Treaty of Rome and the Single European Act, which in turn requires the unanimous consent by all 12 member states. It defies belief that socialist governments will accede to power in every member state even within the next decade.

Does this mean that there is no scope for European Socialist cooperation under a Labour government? Certainly, but such joint action must be based on a solid bedrock of consensus among those taking part. The next Labour government should therefore make it clear to the other EEC member states that it intends to be selective about those areas of Community decision-making with which it wishes to be associated.

To this end, it must repeal, or at least amend, Section 2(1) of the European Communities Act which gives effect to EEC legislation in this country. As a result, no provi-

sions of the Treaty of Rome, or any Common Market legislation made under it, will be applicable in this country without the prior assent by Parliament.

Walter Cairns,
Press Officer,
Labour Common Market
Safeguards Committee

Quit EETPU!

With the expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC, we should argue that militants should organise inside and out in the labour movement to take EETPU members into other trade sections and the Flashlight-inspired organisation.

This action should be pursued vigorously on the contracting side of the industry, otherwise there is the possibility of victimisation in this area. Where the EETPU has single union deals we must actively encourage membership drives.

Hammond is already organising a bosses' TUC. Our attitude to the EETPU must parallel our attitude to the UDM. We must also ensure that no delegates from the EETPU attend any labour movement body as bona-fide delegates.

Geoff Williams,
Cardiff

Labour and the Bomb

London Socialist Forum Meeting

Monday 28 November, 7.30 pm,

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square

Speakers include:

Pat Arrowsmith, Keith Mc Clelland (co-author of END paper to LP Policy Reviews), John Bloxam

Right gains in Israel

By Clive Bradley

The new coalition government in Israel to be based around Yitzhak Shamir's Likud Party will be very bad news indeed for Palestinians.

Likud have promised harsher measures to crush the Palestinian uprising, or *intifada*; and, although Shamir has refused to bow to all their demands, the far right and religious parties with whom the government is to be formed will expect still bigger steps.

Some of the far right (including the right of the Likud itself) favour what is euphemistically called "transfer" of Arabs from the occupied West Bank — that is, deportation. And although Shamir has explicitly rejected this course of action (and the far right have accepted his rejection) the "transfer" policy is gaining respectability.

The West Bank and Gaza, occupied in 1967, are home for well over one million Arabs. They posed a big question for Israel even before the *intifada* began, nearly a year ago. Now they are the central questions for Israel.

What choices does Israel have? Shamir's policy is to maintain the status of the West Bank and Gaza as occupied territories — that is, not formally part of Israel. This is despite Likud's very clear claim that what they call Judaea and Samaria are part of the land of Israel. The effect of the policy is that the Arab inhabitants have almost no rights — for example, no voting rights in this last election. (Jewish residents in the territories, meanwhile, have full citizenship rights).

It would fit with Likud's own ideology to annexe these areas. But then what would they do about the Arabs?

By the early years of the next century, Arabs will outnumber Jews in the whole area now ruled by Israel. Annexation would immediately put the number of Arab citizens of the Jewish state at around 2,000,000.

For most Zionists, even of a liberal persuasion, this is unacceptable. It could only be allowed if the "equal citizens" were formally denied equal rights.

Some right-wingers are already talking about taking the right to vote away from those Arabs who are Israeli citizens at the moment.

Moreover, which worries liberals, a formal declaration of inequality like that would have far-reaching consequences for the state's treatment of its Jewish citizens.

Driving the Arabs out — "transfer" — is the preferred option of the far right. The status quo (plus crushing the uprising) is seen as too short-term a policy. Shamir insists that all he wants is what was agreed with Egypt and the US at Camp David ten years ago.

The Labour Party of Shimon Peres, which has not held power independently of the Likud since 1977, does favour a partial, security-conscious withdrawal from the West Bank, following international negotiations from which the Palestinians' representative, the PLO, would be excluded. It justifies a softer Palestinian policy (although former Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin was hardly soft) more on the basis of what repression does to Israeli Jewish souls than on the basis of justice.

Anyway, Labour's ambiguous stance has helped squeeze the party out.

Those advocating a democratic policy — complete withdrawal from the occupied territories, negotiations with the PLO and the creation of an independent Palestinian state — are a small but vocal minority.

Shamir's stitch-up with the religious parties may prove a false



Most Israelis will be unhappy with concessions demanded by the religious right.

economy. He needs them to form a government; but the concessions they will expect will be deeply unpopular. For example, changes are expected in the Law of Return, defining only Orthodox Jews as entitled to immigrate and take up Israeli citizenship.

This will offend the huge numbers of Reform Jews in the United States, as well as the 70% of Israeli Jews who are not religious. Further, it is unclear if the coalition will be able to agree on urgent economic policies. A wave of strikes is about to begin.

To what extent is the rightward shift in Israel comparable to that in South Africa?

Many who see the societies as essentially similar would obviously want to identify political developments.

But in fact there are big differences. The rightward shift among South African whites is the result of alienation from a government that is seen as too moderate. In particular, the government policy to incorporate a section of the black population has caused a backlash, for example among white civil servants who are directly affected financially.

White privileges which would be lost in the event of an end to white supremacy are huge.

Jewish privilege over Arabs in Israel and the occupied territories obviously exists. But it is less substantial. Their privileges would be increased if Israel became more like South Africa. The prejudices of poor Jews against Arabs are deeply ingrained and have their roots in a number of factors, including fear of competition on the labour market.

But the objective Jewish-Arab gap is far narrower, and objectively should be easier to cross (which is not to say it is easy). In other words, Israeli Jews have far less to lose than South African whites.

So while the rightward shift in South Africa might be inevitable given the structure of the society, in Israel it is not. It is possible to win Jews from an anti-Arab, pro-Likud position.

Is Labour an alternative to Likud? Politically Labour is neither radical nor socialist, nor is it a workers' party. Should socialists

nevertheless favour a Labour against a Likud government? Or, at least, could the far left find some way to force concessions out of Labour?

The electoral system in Israel favours small parties: it is an ultra-democratic proportional representation system that many Israelis blame for political instability and

want to see changed. Maybe there is some basis for a "left united front" over the issue of granting the Palestinian Arabs' right to have their own state.

Fat cat gets the cream

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

Over the years the left have come up with a lot of pleasingly abusive epithets for union leaders: they are, variously, the "labour lieutenants of capital", the "bloated bureaucrats", the "ugly faces with scabby noses" and (in the memorable words of one IS factory bulletin), "treacherous old shitbags".

My personal favourite has always been simply "fat cats", which seems to sum up the particular combination of sleekness, sloth and complacency that characterises most national union leaders. And for the living embodiment of the "fat cat", you need look no further than Clive Jenkins, former general secretary of ASTMS.

Clive, having presided over last year's merger between ASTMS and TASS, to form MSF (which may sound like something to do with fitted kitchen units, but is in fact 'Manufacturing, Science and Finance', rumoured to be a trade union), has now announced his retirement from his position as joint general secretary (with Ken Gill) of the new organisation.

He apparently intends to spend the autumn of his life in Tasmania working for the Wilderness Movement, an organisation devoted to the preservation of rain forests.

After many years as a union full-timer (plus some shrewd property investments), the Fat Cat is certain-



ly not short of a bob or two: when interviewed recently he did not deny being a millionaire. Nevertheless, the MSF general purposes committee felt able to give him a golden handshake worth £213,000. This includes the salary he would have received if he'd stayed on another three years and retired at 65, plus a "top up". When he reaches 65, Jenkins will receive a pension of two thirds his £43,000 a year salary.

There is nothing dishonest or even unconstitutional about any of this: Jenkins is quite entitled to the money. Nevertheless, quite a few people in MSF feel that someone already so wealthy might, perhaps, have voluntarily foregone just a little of his full entitlement — especially as the union is in serious financial difficulty at the moment. MSF is estimated to be nearly £3 million in debt and is currently seeking voluntary redundancies in

an effort to slim down its staffing levels.

It may be of significance that while Ken Gill and the old TASS component of the MSF's leadership appear quite happy with the generous pay-off to Jenkins, former ASTMS members at all levels of the union are up in arms.

This is because of a simmering dispute over the structure of the merged union: ASTMS was a loose, relatively democratic organisation in which branches had a lot of autonomy. TASS, in contrast, operated a much more bureaucratic "divisional" structure that gave the "Broad Left" (ie. Stalinist) leadership almost complete domination.

The two unions' respective national conferences in 1987 reflected these very different structures: the TASS conference had just 135 delegates, whilst ASTMS had almost 1,000. Delegates to the ASTMS conference, while overwhelmingly in support of the proposed merger, instructed their NEC to defend the branch-based structure and the power of regions to elect delegates to Labour Party and TUC conferences. Many ASTMS activists felt that throughout the negotiations, Jenkins was all too eager to sell out to TASS on these questions.

At the moment, the two components of MSF (now diplomatically named "Division A" and "Division 1") operate on the basis of their old, pre-merger constitutions. The matter will be settled at the 1989 annual conference, which will be in part given over to rules revision.

In the meantime, the Fat Cat's departure for arboreal activities in the Antipodes, can only strengthen Gill's hand, making it more likely that MSF will finally emerge in the image of TASS.

Thatcher is a hypocrite!

By Eric Heffer

As someone who has supported Solidarity in Poland, I feel I must speak out in relation to Mrs Thatcher's visit to Poland and her declared support for Solidarity.

One thing is crystal clear. Mrs Thatcher has double standards concerning trade unions and freedom.

It is also clear that Lech Walesa and other Solidarity leaders are not fully aware (no doubt because they do not have a really free press) of Mrs Thatcher's hostile attitude to free and independent trade unions in Britain.

Perhaps they are influenced to praise her because she is a Western political leader who has declared support for Solidarity and has visited Poland to say so. In comparison to the lack of real political freedom in Poland and a system without proper democratic elections some of the Solidarity leaders believe that we must have real freedom for workers in Britain.

Unfortunately, they are wrong. Solidarity leaders either

have wrong information, or they have not fully understood the nature of the Thatcherite regime.

It surely cannot be an accident that General Jaruzelski praises the economic policies and methods used by Mrs Thatcher. He praises her toughness,

"Thatcher is no friend of trade unionists. In going to Poland her motive was not to assist the workers, but her hostility to a system she calls socialist."

a toughness used against the trade unions in this country. The truth is that the arguments advanced by the General against Solidarity, strikers and workers' conditions, are similar to those used by the Thatcher Government against British trade unionists.

Mrs Thatcher is being thoroughly hypocritical. In Bri-

tain, her Government has presided over wholesale closures of factories and shipyards. The postponement of the closure of the Sunderland shipyard is surely due to her Polish visit so as not to embarrass her.

In Britain, the trade unions have been hamstrung by the worst anti-trade union legislation in Western Europe. GCHQ workers have been sacked for being in a trade union and workers have been banned from membership of their unions.

Elected Labour councillors have been disqualified from office and surcharged for carrying out their promises to their electors, whilst Government Ministers are responsible for wholesale waste and financial incompetence and they remain in office with the full backing of Mrs Thatcher.

Mrs Thatcher is no friend of trade unionists. In going to Poland to say what she did her motive was not to assist the workers in Solidarity, but her hostility to a system that she misguidedly calls socialist, and perhaps believes is socialist.

Solidarity's programme, agreed at its conferences in 1981, does not accept the private enterprise system, but calls for workers' democracy in industry. That is the last thing Mrs Thatcher wants.



Thatcher and Walesa: different classes

This week, the Campaign Group of Labour MPs sent a telegram to Lech Walesa, explaining what the Thatcher Government is doing to British workers and their unions. Clearly, we have to follow that up by other representations and contact.

What is required is the unity and understanding of workers in Britain and Poland, so that they can assist each other in fighting their governments, which are both basically anti-union.

The Polish workers, because of their opposition to the regime in Poland, as a result of their living in an unfree bureaucratic

country, may be swayed to praise Mrs Thatcher, but they need to realise that to get rid of Jaruzelski and the bureaucratic system he represents and to replace it with a type of Thatcherism, would in no way solve their problems. What we need to do together is to fight for real democracy, a genuine socialist democracy, and to assist each other in building a new society east and west, as envisaged by such great socialists as Rosa Luxembourg.

Abridged from a statement to constituents issued in Liverpool by Eric S Heffer MP for Walton, Liverpool on 5 November.

Solidarnosc at the grass roots

Seven years after it was banned under martial law, the Polish workers movement Solidarnosc is still strong and active in the factories and offices.

Union organisation has been boosted by the two strike waves earlier this year. This round-up is abridged from the latest issue of the Solidarnosc news bulletin, published by Solidarnosc exiles in Brussels.

The Organising Committee of NSZZ Solidarnosc at the Ursus tractor plant has set up task groups on intervention and legality, information, organisation, education and culture. 200 new workers have signed union membership cards and over 1000 signed a letter in support of Lech Walesa.

At a general meeting, the director informed workers of his decision to reinstate union activists sacked during the August strikes.

The founding committee of NSZZ Solidarnosc at the Municipal

Transport Enterprise has sent a petition for court registration. The first issue of a union bulletin was published on 25 September.

Lower Silesia. Organising committees of NSZZ Solidarnosc have been set up in the following enterprises: Victoria and Walbrzych coal mines, Renifer textile plant, Rail Equipment Repair plant and Chemitex (in three days 600 workers signed union declarations and 20 workers left the official neo-unions).

At the Dolmel plant in Wroclaw, the Enterprise Committee which was denied registration, has become an organising committee that will no longer ask for any legal recognition. Workers signed a letter accusing management of neglecting workers'

rights and initiatives.

In Opole, an organising committee has been founded in the Industrial Construction enterprises.

In Boleslawiec, union organisations from 13 enterprises have formed an Inter-Enterprise Coordinating Commission of NSZZ Solidarnosc.

Lodz. An Inter-Enterprise Organising Committee of the Lodz region was established on 28 September, composed of 12 factory organisations. On 3 October, transport workers in Piotrkow Trybunalski founded an organising committee. A similar initiative was taken by workers at the Vera and Barlicki textile plants.

Poznan. Regional union leaders established an information and legal advice centre for factory union organisations and organising committees. At the Cegielski plant, the enterprise committee began overt activity on 22 September. In dozens of schools, teachers have signed union declarations organising a joint union structure.

Kielce. A meeting of the union's regional executive body, attended by representatives of all major factory organisations, opted to give priority to forming organising committees (local and inter-enterprise), as a way to strengthen union ac-

tivism and support union efforts at the round table. Union committees already exist in the following: Municipal Construction Architectural Bureau, Elektroprojekt enterprise, Ostrowiec Steelworks.

Krakow. Representatives of 28 union organisations in major industrial centres of the region met on 23 September with the Regional Commission (RKS) of NSZZ Solidarnosc.

It was decided that the RKS shall include representatives of every factory where our union has at least 100 openly declared members. In cases where there are more than 1000 members, another representative per thousand shall be admitted.

The founding committee at the National Museum (130 union members) petitioned the courts for registration on 28 September.

Szczecin. Workers at the Warski shipyard, Meratonik, Hydroma and Gryf enterprises as well as in the Cooperative for the Blind continue signing union declarations. Workers from several factories in the city of Stargard formed a Municipal Committee of NSZZ Solidarnosc.

Upper Silesia. 572 employees of the automotive factory in Tychy voted to establish a founding com-

mittee which has already sent a registration petition to the local court. Similar committees were set up in the Lenin and Sosnica coal mines.

Swietokrzyski Region. Organising committees sprang up in the Truck Factory and the Auto-transport in Starachowice, as well as the Rail enterprise in Skarzynsko Kamienna. The management threatened unionists with penal consequences.

Bielsko-Biala. Workers at the Automotive factory voted to set up an organising committee of NSZZ Solidarnosc.

The initiative of seeking court registration of factory-based union organisation continues. To date, petitions have been sent by organising committees in the following enterprises: Gdansk shipyard, Northern shipyard, Inco, Komuny Paryskiej shipyard, repair shipyard Nauta in Gdynia, Gdansk Polytechnic, Power and Industrial Construction in Gdynia.

17 major industrial and academic centres from the coastal region have set up an Inter-Enterprise organising committee (MKO). Membership in the MKO is open to any NSZZ Solidarnosc local on condition that it has 100 members or 50% of the workforce in its enterprise.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

INSIDE:

10p if sold separately

- Women in Russia
- Feminising the economy?
- Nursery closures

We won't be cheated!

Child benefit fraud

By Katherine
O'Leary

For the second consecutive year
the Tories have decided to
freeze child benefit.

Its present level is £7.25 a week per child. With a pair of kid's shoes costing around £15 and a warm winter coat around £25, this is obviously peanuts. But for many women it's their only independent income. It's a universal benefit, paid to all mothers regardless of their income and it is incredibly popular.

But now the Tories feel confident enough not only to freeze it, but to moot axing it altogether, under the guise of "targetting" the poorest families.

Make no mistake, this is a return to the bad old days of means-testing, of going through the humiliating process of proving poverty, of proving need. It means filling in long and complicated forms designed more to put you off claiming than anything else.

The experience of all the Tories' benefit changes has been of reduced take-up rates. 750,000 families are eligible for family credit — yet at present only 242,000 are claiming. The end of universal child benefit will mean many women simply will not claim.

The Tories claim to care about children. They blame mothers for being neglectful of their duties. They pontificate about the family.

Margaret Thatcher showed just how much she cares about child welfare when, as Heath's Education Minister, she ended free school milk.

Her government have loyally followed in her footsteps. Children die because of poor health provision. State education has been cut to the bone. Nursery places are like gold dust. Now child benefit is to go. The Tories are happy to sacrifice children on the altar of self-reliance.

One in five children in Britain are living on or below the poverty line. The mean-spirited grocer's daughter and her cronies would rather give tax cuts to the rich than help feed and clothe children.

We as women must unite to stop the Tories in their tracks. We must force the labour movement to take the issue seriously, to fight alongside us for the rights of us and our children. Now is the time to mount a crusade against the party of "morality" that is prepared to see children go without.



Nurses striking in defence of the NHS, March 14 1988

The Tories have cheated the nurses. The promised regrading has been cynically manipulated — health authorities haven't been given enough money to carry it through properly, resulting in nurses being graded as low as possible.

Midwives have been put on a lower grade than sisters — despite the extra training they go through.

The promised across-the-board 15% pay increase has proved to be a shameless lie, with many nurses receiving as little as 3%, particularly student nurses.

The Tories made their empty promises to head off the industrial action by nurses earlier this year. Now they've been proved liars, the nurses' anger has exploded again.

Midwives in the North East walked out on hearing their new grades. Nurses in hospitals

around the country have been "working to grade" — working to rule.

In London nurses at the Maudsley and Charing Cross hospitals have taken strike action. Nurses at the North Manchester hospital are on indefinite strike.

The nurses won't be cheated. They are outraged at the way they have been cynically manipulated by the Tories. Strike action is the only way forward for decent pay for nurses and to halt the Tories'

dismantling of the NHS.

The labour movement must put its weight behind the nurses. In our Labour Party Women's Sections we can organise support for local action. We can invite nurses to speak at our meetings. We can organise street stalls to put their case.

We can leaflet estates, community centres, shopping precincts, explaining the justice of the nurses' case. The nurses must win, for all our sakes.

WOMEN IN RUSSIA

The revolution of 1917 promised great things for Russian women. All reactionary laws were abolished and women won full legal and political equality. Freedom of divorce was introduced. Abortion and contraception facilities were extended. Communal kitchens, laundries and creches were established to begin to free women from domestic drudgery. In the early days, the backwardness of the economy meant that facilities were often inadequate, but at least a start had been made. Seventy years on, how do Russian women fare today?

By Sarah Cotterill

Women still have the legal equality won in 1917, but — as in the West — legal equality does not mean equality in practice. 85% of Soviet women have paid employment, compared to only 60% in the West, and women are a slight majority of the workforce. However, women tend to be in the lower paid jobs and their average wage is about two thirds of men's. For example, four-fifths of primary school teachers are women, but they occupy under one-third of head teacher posts.

Women in the Soviet Union are much more likely to do heavy manual work than they would be in Britain. This is largely the result of the war, in which 15 million Russian soldiers died. Women took over

the jobs of conscripted men during the war and stayed once the war was over, because of the lack of men returning from the front. However, there is still a level of demarcation, with men taking the better paid jobs in the heavy industries of coal, iron and steel.

After their paid work is finished, Russian women face the double burden of household chores and childcare. In recent decades the number of nurseries has increased enormously, but they are generally of poor quality. Many women choose to pay private childminders or else rely on elderly relatives. Electrical appliances such as vacuum cleaners, washing machines, fridges, etc. are sometimes available but are less efficient than in the West, so more time is spent on domestic chores.

Perhaps the most well-publicised part of Soviet life is the food queues. Queuing and

food shortages, together with the total lack of convenience foods make shopping and cooking a time-consuming burden for Soviet women.

The Soviet Union is one of the few countries where women have free legal access to abortion facilities. But contraception is difficult to come by and unpleasant to use. Condoms are either "so thick they could be used as galoshes" or so thin they invariably burst. Diaphragms are available, but the absence of spermicidal creams reduce their effectiveness. Pills can be obtained on the black market, but too irregularly to be reliable.

The result of this lack of contraception is that a Soviet woman will have an average of 7 or 8 abortions in her lifetime. Abortions take place in crowded assembly-line conditions, without anaesthetic. So much for the legal right to choose.

Women are scarce in top Soviet political positions. The Politburo is made up entirely of men. Aside from Raisa Gorbachev — who emulates Nancy Reagan in her attempt to be the Soviet Union's 'First Lady' — the only prominent Russian woman is Alexandra Biryukova, a central committee secretary. However, one-third of 1500 members of the Supreme Soviet are women, which is a better representation than in most Western parliaments.

The reforms currently being proposed by Gorbachev may bring some improvements for women. In an attempt to win women's support for economic reform, Gorbachev has promised increased nursery provision, 18 months paid maternity leave and an increase in the number of paid days off for mothers to look after sick children.

In the new atmosphere of glasnost, articles are beginning to appear in the Soviet press which are critical of women's position in Soviet society. The new openness may allow underground feminist magazines to be more widely circulated.

But economic reform will also mean less job security for women and attempts to increase productivity by making workers work harder and longer. Whether real gains can be won for women will depend on the extent to which the new openness is seized upon and exploited by women.

Equality in a union branch

By Jo-ann Torton

Jo-ann Torton is Equal Opportunities Steward for NUPE Manchester City Council Housing branch

As trade unionists, NUPE branch members were aware that tackling equal opportunities issues is the responsibility collectively of the union, and individually of all members who make up the union.

But it became obvious that equal opportunities were not being dealt with upfront on our agendas, either at shop or branch meetings. NUPE nationally had equal opportunities policies and procedures that we were aware of, we had read and heard about, but there was some block to it filtering down, and being effective at branch level.

In an attempt to promote these important issues the branch decided to create the post of Equal Opportunities Steward. This post was to be established on the same basis as Health and Safety Steward, i.e. an elected post reporting both to stewards and branch meetings, building up knowledge in the specific areas.

By following the model of the Health and Safety Steward we were hoping to remove any possibility of the holder of the equal opportunities post being isolated from the other, more generalised, stewards.

There was some debate in the branch about the establishment of this post, mainly concerning the

fear that placing responsibility for equal opportunities with one person would effectively let other stewards and members off the hook, so rather than raising awareness the post would effectively quash awareness. But it was pointed out that health and safety issues had become much more of an issue for stewards after the involvement of an effective Health and Safety Steward than it had previously.

In September this year, the first Equal Opportunities Steward was elected by the branch. The role of the steward includes:

- monitoring and reviewing the branch's policies and procedures;
- acting as a resource for the branch on equal opportunities issues;
- representing members suffering from racial and sexual harassment and discrimination;
- heightening awareness of the branch on general equal opportunities issues.

In terms of current work programme, one major area that needs tackling immediately is the issue of childcare. The current timing and place of branch meetings does discriminate against people with domestic responsibilities.

One problem with debating this issue at the branch was that the people we were trying to assist, those with domestic responsibilities, could not be present to put forward their comments or ideas. A compromise position was sorted out with the branch paying any childcare costs until a comprehensive questionnaire had been cir-

culated to every member and ideas and comments pooled, with firm proposals going to the branch.

The questionnaire is going to prove an invaluable resource for the Equal Opportunities Steward and for the branch. It will provide hard statistical data on a range of issues, permitting the reviewing of policies and implementing new ones. Furthermore, it will dispel any generally held untruths, misinformation and stereotypes.

Further work that is planned is the area of 'special leave'. The proposal so far is for the current system of 'compassionate leave' for people with domestic responsibilities to be formalised. Employees currently apply for compassionate leave when dependents are ill and the leave is given on a discretionary basis. This proves time-consuming, as employees have to get doctors notes, etc. which means that many people with dependents use their own sick leave or annual leave rather than go through the compassionate leave procedure.

The union proposes that employees with dependents receive a stated number of days per year that are designated 'special leave'. Once these are exhausted the old formula for compassionate leave takes over.

A final important area for development is that issues and campaigns around equal opportunities should be promoted on an inter-union basis, so that all the unions operating within the department are working together to promote better opportunities for all members.

Promoting the socialist case for wo

Organising

By Nadine Finch

The Labour Party Policy Review process is now entering its crucial second year. The small Review Groups will be meeting to redraft the papers in light of submissions made and resolutions passed at the Labour Party conference.

They will also be holding an open Forum for each policy area to canvass the views of all Labour Party members. And they will be holding a Women's Policy Forum in London on Saturday 11 February. Contact the Labour Party at Walworth Road (01 703 0833) for more details.

However, it is likely that the real debate on the future direction for the Party will take place at next year's conference, which will be the first opportunity for rank and file delegates from the trade unions and Constituency Labour Parties to have a direct dialogue with the small groups of senior national figures drafting the Review papers.

Women for Socialism will be cooperating with the Socialist Con-



men's liberation?

ng socialist women

WOMEN for SOCIALISM

unilateralist policy with the need to leave NATO and develop a socialist foreign policy which seeks to establish collective alternatives with other socialist countries worldwide;

- Measures to restore and defend civil and political rights for trade unionists, lesbians and gay men and the Irish and Black communities, to name but a few.

Women for Socialism was launched at the Socialist Conference in Chesterfield in October 1987 and will be part of the Chesterfield Movement, providing a powerful women's input and base for socialist women.

Women for Socialism grew out of the long felt need for a broad-based political structure, responsive to women's needs through which socialist women could organise collectively.

Exciting links were made at Chesterfield between many individual women and women's groups, including Women Against Pit Closures, Labour

Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Labour Women for Ireland, Black Sections.

Women for Socialism's aims are to:

- Promote socialist feminist policies in the labour movement;
- Debate and develop such policies and campaigning initiatives;
- Develop links with the whole range of women's organisations, including lesbian and black women's groups and others challenging racism and imperialism in our society;
- Link up with organised trade union women;
- Provide an international perspective for women;
- Offer a forum where women can exchange ideas and share experiences.

If you would like to be part of **Women for Socialism**, or receive more information, contact Ruth Clarke, 7 Cumberland Park, Acton, London W3 6SY.

Ms Left and Mr Sod'em

By Ruth Cockcroft

Imagine the scene: a room is packed full of women, toddlers in tow, and two officers of Sheffield City Council. The officers have arrived to explain the council's predicament of continued funding of St Mary's nursery.

Mr 'Sod'em', wearing the necessary grey suit and bland tie, is very concerned about the cuts, indeed, he's apologetic but, as he explains to the assembled women, "it was not in the remit to the educational under-5s sub-committee, nor in the feasibility study, to allow any additional cost to the council whilst funding nursery provision."

To you and I, 'Ms Ordinaries', this means that Sheffield City Council have axed funding for St Mary's nursery completely from its budget. Of course, there will be integration with another nursery but at no additional cost to the Council.

Mr Sod'em explains that the new nursery facilities will be rationalised: children will be chosen by an admissions panel — their job will be to ensure that the child comes from an adequately deprived background and women who simply want to take a break from routine childcare, go to work, college, or simply do shopping, do not have children who fall into "priority" categories.

Mr Sod'em and his colleague look harassed as mother after mother asks impolite and inappropriate questions. Mr Sod'em's lovingly pressed suit becomes ruffl-

ed, as he tries to maintain his calm exterior, telling the women as earnestly as possible that "assistance will be given to leave".

Pressed on this matter he has to admit, crestfallen, that no arrangements have been made whatsoever for nursery places after 25 November when St Mary's will unceremoniously be closed down.

As 'Ms Angry' takes to the floor and denounces poor Mr Sod'em for using "jargonistic language with not one word of feeling" he finds he does have one saving and redeeming ally.

'Ms Left', a City Councillor, tells us all that she is upset by other women's attitudes towards the council: "I have worked hard for this city, worked hard for the council, worked hard for nurseries, done my utmost for women, etc., etc." Unlike Mr Sod'em, Ms Left has actually voted for the cuts and hers is a more dangerous justification of them because she pretended to be with us and part of the struggle. Ms Left represents radical local government politics in decline.

This is a story of a Sheffield community campaigning to keep inadequate services, but it must also be the story of the GLC era, when the Labour left accepted such notions as "socialist cuts", administering Tory policies in a paternal way, creating high-salaried jobs for women's officers, whilst, at the same time forcing the closure of nurseries and cutting the incomes of nursery workers.

Ms Left thinks she does this in a sisterly way — Mr Sod'em is at least a recognisable enemy.

Miss World at 100

By Jean Lane

Miss World is 100 this November — and she looks almost as pretty, shapely and empty-headed as ever.

Not quite, though. At the first beauty contest held in Belgium in 1888, not quite so much of the shape was allowed to be seen. Even in the first *bathing* beauty contest 33 years later in America in 1921, the cossies had to come no more than one inch above the knees. Since then, we have seen over 60 years of pure, unadulterated parading of tits, bums and empty heads.

Till now that is. The "dumb broad" look doesn't quite fit in with the new woman of the 1980s, who reads Marie-Claire (wearing what suits her whatever the cost, but still having an interest in current affairs), drives a Volvo and runs a business. Not surprisingly, the viewing figures are less than a third of the 24m peak reached in 1964.

In an attempt to keep up with the changing times, the contestants now have to show an interest in being a concert violinist or a marine biologist, instead of the old "wanting to travel and meet interesting people." There is talk of stopping the bathing costume bit of the contest. And, apparently, this year, "stereotyped beauty is out and the unusual look is in."

I don't know, they'll be calling it Ms World next. But even if they did, despite all the attempts to drag her kicking and screaming into the 1980s, the principle behind the contest remains the same. In the 1960s and '70s the women's movement protested against the contest saying it was degrading to women. Eric Morley, one of the original

organisers, speaking on Women's Hour a few weeks ago, said: "We couldn't see that. We only made them wear full-piece swim suits to show that they had a reasonable figure."

And he still can't see it. They are still being made to wear swim suits and soon it will be evening wear and the "panel" (oglers) will still be scoring on the basis of their reasonable figure. The ability to render a brilliant arpeggio or to tell an amoeba from a Coral Reef lesser spotted dog fish is nothing if you don't have the body to go with it. If you're a woman, that is.

As well as the possibility of having to wear a few more clothes and of having to carry that bit of extra weight — the brain — Miss World is spreading in unusual places. A few more viewers will be watching this year since Russia has decided to hold its own, first ever, beauty contest. Glasnost for women apparently means the freedom to be paraded in a half-dressed state of brainlessness. Well, that's an improvement, I must say!

So-called "socialism" in Russia means very little for women in terms of relief from domestic drudgery, being pushed into low paid jobs, or queuing for scarce goods for hours at a time.

So-called "freedom" in the West gives women the freedom to suffer the same drudgery, low pay and discrimination. The "beauty" we are all supposed to aspire to, whether stereotyped or unusual, whether accompanied by brains or not, are just as unachievable for the majority of women whichever part of the world they are from.

Whether Miss World becomes Ms World and whether it's in the East or the West, it is still degrading to women.

Feminising the economy?

Women and Class

Should socialists support a feminist incomes policy? Lynn Ferguson thinks not

Women earn on average 70% of men's hourly pay. Despite equal opportunity policies, the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts, women are still largely confined to traditionally "female" areas of work — caring and service jobs for instance — which can be badly unionised and badly paid.

Many women work part-time — over the past few years the biggest growth in jobs has been part-time jobs for women. In short, despite advances made in women's equality over the past 10-15 years the majority of working women are still an underpaid, underprivileged sector of the workforce.

We want to change this — but how? One strategy which has been mooted from time to time over the years and which is being talked about again now is the 'Feminist Incomes Policy'.

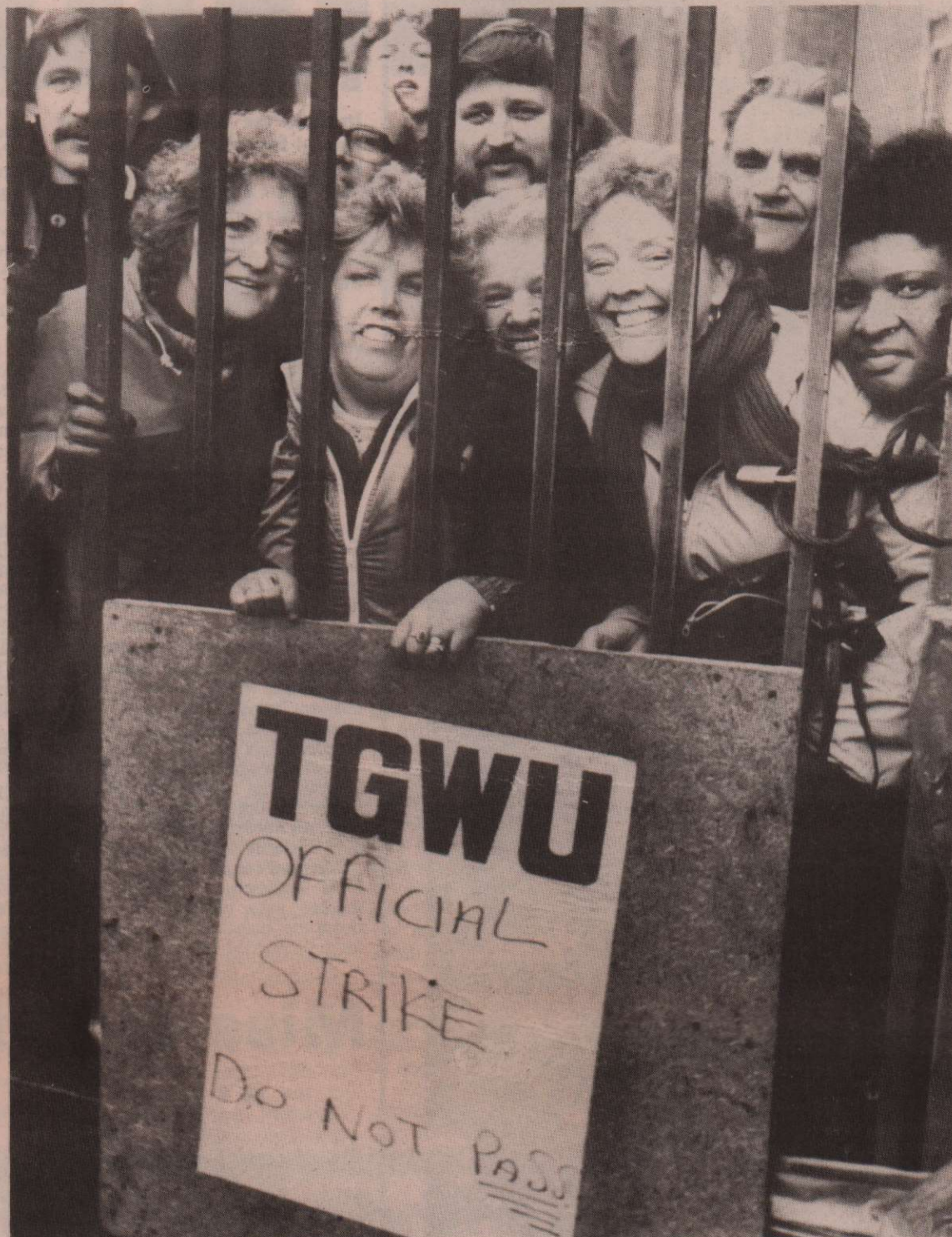
The Feminist Incomes Policy appears in many guises. For some it simply means a guaranteed real social income for women, coupled with equal pay and minimum wage legislation that really has teeth. This seems to me to be uncontroversial.

A fight for decent pay in the service sector, a fight for decent child benefits, maternity benefits and for free childcare provision could not only massively improve the lot of working women but would be of benefit to the working class as a whole.

A real fight by the labour movement for full-time rights for part-time workers would be of material benefit to many women and would also remove many of the constraints — for instance, fear of losing your job — that prevents them from participating in the labour movement, from going on strike, etc.

So far so good. But for many, the Feminist Incomes Policy means something rather different. Ex-Labour minister Barbara Castle said in the 1970s "women can have equal pay tomorrow if only men will moderate their wage demands." The sort of clever comment you'd expect from a Labour minister, I suppose.

But her sentiments are echoed by some feminists. The argument goes roughly as follows: men get paid a "family wage" — their wages are determined by the assumption that



they need to keep a wife and a couple of kids. Women's wages are lower because of this — they earn less because it is assumed that they have a man to "keep" them, they work only for "pin money".

Therefore, men are being paid extra money which by rights belongs to women. The answer — hold down men's wages to pay women what they're really due.

The two different versions are cobbled together in Irene Bruegel's article on 'Women and Economic Policy' provided for the Chesterfield Socialist Conference earlier this year. Bruegel proposes real demands on the state to improve the lot of women, demands with which we would agree.

But her argument is suffused with the idea that the real shift of power

that has to take place is between women and men. Her criticism of past economic strategies is that they "have not been designed to attack the division of work, income and power between men and women..." She argues that we need "a redistribution of working hours and income from traditional male areas of work."

But is the real division between women and men? Is there a limit to the amount of money available for wages? Do we have to rob Peter to pay Pauline?

Marxists — and Bruegel claims to be some sort of Marxist — think not. For sure the myth of the family wage has been used ideologically as a justification for paying women less than men. But it's essentially just that.

Men aren't paid "higher" wages out of the pockets of women. Employers pay all workers less than the value of the work they do — otherwise they wouldn't make any profits. Employers use the justification that women don't need as much money as men to pay them even less — and thus extract more profit.

It is bosses, not male workers, who benefit from women's low pay, and it is to the bosses' profits that we should look as the source of higher wages for women, not male workers.

Bruegel thinks this is pie in the sky: "The left has tended to shy away from facing up to choices and alternatives of this kind, on the grounds that we want the whole bakery, not a choice between slices

of cake. That might be justified if we knew for sure that revolution were just around the corner; otherwise it sounds suspiciously like an excuse for irresponsibility."

Revolution won't happen tomorrow. But if we take Bruegel's point of view we take united class action against the capitalists off the immediate agenda, let alone revolution!

If well organised, relatively well paid sections of male workers strike for and win higher wages it provides a boost to the working class as a whole — including women workers. To attack or depress male workers' wages would be an attack on the class as a whole. The bosses would be happy — more profits for them. Men would see women workers as the enemy. Sex divisions in the working class would be accentuated, the possibility of a united fightback would be set back.

The way to improve the wages and conditions of working women is to organise women in the labour movement to make the movement as a whole accessible and responsive to our demands, but also to organise the class as a whole in a fight against the bosses. In the here and now we should make demands on the state for real equal pay, etc. But centrally we should support anyone who strikes for higher pay — women or men.

The way forward for women lies in fighting alongside men, often fighting for our right to fight alongside men, not in demanding that they share their economic power with us. That's just ignoring the real enemy — the capitalist profiteers.

STUDENT WOMEN

Tory plans to cut nurseries

By Emma Colyer (NUS Exec, personal capacity)

The Tories have slashed childcare provision — many full-time nursery places have been cut, nurseries closed and jobs lost.

The general lack of childcare provision in society prevents women from fully participating. It is a barrier to women in employment, the labour movement, education and student unions, etc.

Inside education, the lack of childcare provision is an issue of access. The vast majority of students with childcare responsibilities are in the public and further education sector. It is young women, mature students and working class women who are excluded because of the lack of decent childcare.

The funding of childcare provision in education should be the responsibility of the institutes and not the students' union. In many colleges ad hoc childcare provision is set up by the students' union. Whilst such provision is undoubtedly useful on a temporary basis, it is no substitute for proper childcare run by professional people. After all, childcare should meet the needs of children as well as their carers.

What we need inside the student movement is a nationally coordinated childcare campaign — a campaign that's part of the broad framework of a campaign for education for all.

The campaign should draw together students and workers on campus; it should be run in conjunction with trade unions, workplace nursery campaigns, etc. The campaign must work with and through Areas to gain the commitment of local education authorities to childcare provision.

Childcare should be the responsibility of all. For too long inside NUS there's been a consensus that childcare provision is fundamental to women's liberation and access for all in education that never moves further than glossy leaflets and an NEC speaker at the odd General Meeting.

Children must be placed high on the NUS agenda, but for childcare to be a serious campaign with demands that can be won it must be part of an integrated campaign for education for all.

Running individual and isolated campaigns on single issues is not the way to build strong campaigns that can be won. Only by involving the majority of the membership in a campaign that is democratically organised and nationally coordinated can NUS build a serious fight for childcare provision.

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A secret speech

General Jaruzelski's secret speech — exclusively reported by Socialist Organiser.

Do sit down, Mrs Thatcher. Now at last we have a chance to speak freely.

I understand that for your own purposes the appearances with the Solidarnosc men were necessary — a very clever touch, I think. Still, that need not stand in our way. We both know our relationship need not be damaged by such thing.

Despite our apparent differences we're learning a lot from each other. The miners' strike I found very instructive. I must say you chose your ground well — using the issue of uneconomic pits, to pick out your major enemy was a stroke of genius.

Gdansk

We're putting that one to good use in Gdansk now. You well know what trouble that place has been to us.

We have our own union, of course. That will help us along — I suppose much the same as

your UDM.

We learned long ago how troublesome the press can be. I've never understood in particular why you still allow such scurrilous criticism of your government by your state broadcasting network — the BBC.

We have always made sure that our media put our point of view firmly. Anything else is a recipe for anarchy. Why should enemies of the state be given a platform?

You are very wise to learn from us on this on the Irish terrorists, thought I don't understand why you haven't gone all the way and banned their organisations or re-introduced internment — that always seemed to me a sensible approach.

The move on the right to silence is a step in the right direction. Criminals are criminals — to allow them to remain silent is to threaten the very security of the state.

Bans

Perhaps we also could learn from you on the question of the unions. Your piecemeal restrictions and bans — like your present move with the Cheltenham mob, and your new code of practice have been most successful. It amazes me how your 'free' union leaders will accept these restrictions without a struggle.

Maybe we could deal better with the Solidarnosc people by giving them some sort of limited freedom. Who knows? There's still a long way to go.

What we think

Thank you, Mrs Thatcher, for crushing Scargill", "We love Thatcher", "Commies out", "You keep Lenin, the shipyard is ours". The slogans shouted by Polish workers when they greeted Margaret Thatcher in Gdansk last Friday have confirmed much of the hostility and suspicion towards Solidarnosc which exists in the British labour movement.

We in Socialist Organiser are as sickened as anyone by the sight of workers cheering Margaret Thatcher. We think leaders and members of Solidarnosc who see Thatcher as representing a positive alternative to the system they live under are wrong.

But Solidarnosc is the Polish workers' movement. Socialists should support Solidarnosc, unequivocally and without reservations, against Poland's ruling bureaucrats.

Last Friday was not the first time workers have shouted reactionary slogans — not by far! America's trade unions have been overwhelmingly right-wing and pro-capitalist for many decades, but we still support them against the bosses and the government.

And think back to the years before 1956. Millions of the most militant workers in the West carried the portrait and hailed the name of Josef Stalin — the man who imposed a reign of terror on the USSR's workers.

Stalin stripped the workers of any rights to organise or to speak out. He drove down their wages by fifty per cent between 1928 and 1935. He decreed laws under which workers could be, and were, jailed for being late to work. He put ten million people in forced labour camps.

Yet in Italy, France, and many other countries, many of the best and most thoughtful working class fighters saw Stalin as their hero. They had read reports of terror and suffering in the USSR, but dismissed them as capitalist lies. Stalin represented an alternative to the private bosses' exploitation they suffered under, and so they supported him.

Today everyone admits that Stalin was a tyrant. But even today many left-wingers, like Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn, see the rulers of the Eastern Bloc as some sort of socialists.

The Polish workers who cheer Thatcher are a mirror-image of the workers in the West who cheered Stalin or who cheer Gorbachev. "Communism", to them, means not democratic workers' control but the state-monopoly tyranny which oppresses them. Thatcher seems to represent an alternative.

The Polish workers hear about exploitation and oppression in Britain — but they dismiss most of it as lies. After all, for years Poland's official media told them that workers' conditions in Britain were still the same as in Dickens' day. Why should they believe anything those media tell them?

In the West we condemn workers' illusions in Jaruzelski or Gorbachev, but we still support those workers against the bosses. The same principle should hold in the East.

If disgust at the cheers for Thatcher mekes us oppose Solidarnosc, then we are making the same mistake as those Polish workers whose disgust at Scargill's support for Jaruzelski turns them against our miners' union. Indeed, we are making much worse mistakes than most Solidarnosc activists do.

Whatever their illusions, underground Solidarnosc committees did send messages of support for the British miners in 1984 — while Jaruzelski's government was sending scab coal to help Thatcher beat the strike. And whatever Lech Walesa's words of appreciation for Thatcher, diplomatic or sincere as they may be, he has come out publicly against the Tories for the rights of the workers at GCHQ and for the shipyard workers in Sunderland fighting closure.

When we see a picket line, we don't ask what the religion of the workers on that picket line is, or which way they vote, or what they think of international politics. We see workers in dispute with their exploiters, and we support the workers. And that should hold for Polish workers too.

WHERE WE STAND

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

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

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The

workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed 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.

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Workers' states 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.

Here Clive Bradley and Martin Thomas examine the most influential of the theories produced to underpin the idea that these societies are "degenerated and deformed workers' states" — the theories produced by the co-thinkers of Ernest Mandel and Joseph Hansen in the USFI (United Secretariat of the Fourth International).

Michel Lowy has produced a detailed theoretical exposition of Mandel's views entitled 'The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development'. Lowy confronts the theoretical problem — that the old capitalist order has been overthrown by forces other than the working class led by genuine Marxist parties — in such a way as to define it out of existence rhetorically.

Did these revolutions (Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam), Lowy asks, occur "under the leadership of the proletariat... and more precisely under the direction of a proletarian (communist) party"? (p.107). He answers yes. 'Communist' equals proletarian party equals proletariat. The real problem — that the Chinese revolution, for example, was carried out by a peasant army — is thus not confronted but avoided.

"The parties", Lowy claims, "were the political and programmatic expression of the proletariat, by virtue of their adherence to the



The Sandinista revolution: is it socialist?

historic interests of the working class (abolition of capitalism, etc.)...the parties' ideologies were proletarian and the membership and periphery were systematically educated to accept the values and world view of the international working class movement" (pp.214-5, emphasis in original).

For a Trotskyist to conclude that Stalinist parties, like the Vietnamese, which massacred the Trotskyists in 1946-7, or the Chinese, which suppressed all independent working-class activity on its entry into the cities, were politically, programmatically and ideologically proletarian is to retreat into mysticism. If this is how to defend 'orthodoxy' then better be revisionist!

What this 'orthodoxy' amounts to is a chronic inability to deal with reality without suffering gross illusions in 'revolutionists of action'. But it has to be theorised. Lebanese Mandel's Salah Jaber has performed the task.

In a long article in 'Quatrième Internationale', 'Proletarian Revolution and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat', Jaber spells it out. Paraphrasing Engels, he writes:

"Of late, the philistine Eurocommunist has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at Nicaragua. That is the dictatorship of the proletariat" (November 1984, p.114).

Jaber surveys working class history since the Paris Commune. His essential point is that the class character of the state is determined by the 'armed bodies of men'.

"The destruction of the armed forces of the bourgeoisie by the armed force of the workers marks the birth of a workers' state" (p.63).

Whether or not the state carries out nationalisations is, he argues, completely irrelevant. And by these criteria Nicaragua has been a workers' state from the moment that the Sandinistas took power.

Previous USFI positions are, Jaber states, absurd. The SWP's notion that China, for example, became a workers' state around 1955 — after the final wave of na-

tionalisations — is a theoretical confusion. There was a workers' state in China from 1931 when the Maoists established a regional government in Kiangsi.

On Cuba, Jaber is yet more forthright.

"A movement of the masses as proletarian, if not more, than those of the Paris Commune, endowed with an ideology at least as radical as that of the Commune, which totally destroyed the bourgeois army, to the gain of a rebel Army, as proletarian if not more so than the Federation de la Garde nationale, what is that? A 'Government of workers and peasants'? A 'dual power sui generis'? No, comrades: it is the dictatorship of the proletariat" (p.101). Moreover, "In this sense...Fidel better understands the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state than Mandel [or] the SWP".

To square the circles of his theory, Jaber must eventually resort to the same fiction as Lowy: that the Yugoslav, Chinese, Vietnamese etc. Communist Parties were politically workers' parties.

Jaber emphatically rejects the idea that a nationalised economy, in and of itself, can define a workers' state. But his alternative is no better.

Indeed it makes no sense to see the nationalised economies as the "workers' element in the state-monopoly societies. These are nationalised economies controlled by a despotic bureaucracy, which give the workers worse conditions than a market economy and do not even develop the productive forces faster.

But "the armed forces of the workers"? This is fantasy. In China, in Vietnam, and in Yugoslavia the revolutionary armies were based on the peasantry and when they won power they established states which stifled or crushed the working class! These are states which allow the workers no right to form their own trade unions and parties, and not even individual liberties. Even Cuba, initially more open, is now of that type.

Another exercise in squaring the circle

A more prudent version of the "deformed workers' state" thesis was put forward by Joseph Hansen, a leader of the American Socialist Workers' Party who died in 1979.

From July 1960, first in relation to Cuba but then applying the same analysis retrospectively in relation to China, Yugoslavia, etc., he developed the notion that the 'workers' and peasants' government' in the sense discussed by the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (1922) was the key link in processes where petty bourgeois leaderships had overthrown capitalist states in those countries and created deformed workers' states.

"By recognising the new Cuban government (after the removal of Urrutia and Pazos) as a 'Workers' and Farmers' Government' we indicate its radical petty bourgeois background and composition and its origin in a popular mass movement, its tendency to respond to popular pressures for action against the bourgeoisie and their agents, and its capacity for whatever immediate reasons and with whatever hesitancy, to undertake measures against bourgeois political power and against bourgeois property relations". ('The Character of the New Cuban Government').

Hansen also described the Ben Bella government in Algeria in 1962-5 as a workers' and peasants' government, and cited its fate as:

"Proof that the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government does not automatically guarantee the subsequent establishment of a workers' state". ('The Social Transformations in Eastern Europe, China and Cuba' August 1969).

Hansen based himself on a passage in Trotsky's Transitional Programme:

"One cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances...the petty-bourgeois parties including the Stalinists may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere and some time becomes a reality and the 'workers and farmers' government' in the above-mentioned sense is established, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat."

The 'workers' and peasants' government formula had been used before for the Chinese revolution, by some writers (eg Ernest Mandel). But Hansen systematised the

theory.

It was surely, a case of scissors-and-paste theorising. The Fourth Congress of the CI advanced the ideal of the workers' and peasants' government as the highest form of the united front. The Communists would fight to force the parties based on the workers and peasants to break with the bourgeoisie, and under the control of their mass base to take serious measures against capitalist power. Such agitation would in any case by useful educationally. And in the event of the opportunist parties going so far as to create such a government, its first clashes with the bourgeoisie would spark off huge mass struggles which could only end victoriously in the full rule of the working class.

In the cases Hansen was describing, it is rather a matter of clashes between a petty bourgeois apparatus, based on a victorious armed struggle, and the bourgeoisie. It is not inconceivable that such clashes should provide an opening for working class revolutionary action: in the actual cases they did not. The Fourth Congress reference to a workers' and peasants' government is to a condition of flux in state power where the alternatives are the workers mobilising and going over the head of the petty bourgeois leaders in the government, to create a workers' state, or

capitalist counter-revolution.

Hansen's reference is to a state of flux where these two alternatives may exist, but so may (and crucially did) another: the victory of the petty-bourgeois revolutionaries, and the creation by their leaders of a bureaucratic state-monopoly system. Hansen implicitly equated this outcome with the outcome of workers' power, blurring the equation only with a few comments about bureaucratic deformation.

Politically Hansen's theory was more prudent than the Mandel's theory. It maintained a political distance from the leaders of revolutions like the Chinese and Vietnamese, calling them Stalinist. It raised the notion of independent working class initiative in the revolutionary turmoil. In however limited a way, it recognised the bureaucratic nature of the revolutionary regimes.

As an account of reality it was nonsense. The Chinese or Vietnamese Communist Parties were not pushed by the workers to go further than they wished. Their leaders were bold, decisive — and very much in control. They overthrew the old order — and simultaneously stifled or crushed the working class.

They did lead mass movements — but those were not workers' movements. According to Hansen's

theory, the workers are supposed to have been strong enough to force reluctant Stalinist leaders to overthrow capitalism — yet not strong enough to establish the most minimal trade union rights for themselves.

Hansen's theory, like the Mandel's theory, is an exercise in scholasticism. It is more evidence that to try to square the "deformed and degenerated workers' state" thesis with Marxist theory is to try to square the circle.



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Britain's gulag

Janet Burstall reviews 'The Fatal Shore: a history of the transportation of convicts to Australia, 1787-1868' by Robert Hughes (London, Collins Harvill, 1987).

Australians have a collective loss of memory about the convict origins of our country. For a century after transportation ended, the topic was barely discussed. Now Australians have a mythologised, sanitised version of those convict beginnings.

Robert Hughes sets out to contradict some of the myths about modern Australian society, which he says are attributed to the convict experience.

One myth is that the convict experience left a legacy of egalitarianism and anti-authoritarianism, based on the common experience of the convicts who had come into conflict with authority. Hughes argues that only a small percentage of the convicts were transported for political offences, explicitly rejecting authority. And even the political convicts generally became conformers, and dropped their political activities when they reached Australia.

There was only one attempt at mutiny in New South Wales, at Vinegar Hill in 1804, by a group of Irish Catholic convicts. He points out that the Emancipists (former convicts, who completed their sentences and remained in Australia), far from identifying with the convicts, were eager to cast off their convict past to become respectable citizens and law-abiding people.

Hughes also examines the myth of spontaneous solidarity among the oppressed, particularly the relationship between convicts and Aborigines. He claims that racist attitudes developed as a sort of comfort to convicts, who felt elevated by being able to kick someone lower in the social heap than themselves.

The authorities soon found that they could win the help of Aborigines in tracking escaped con-



victs. Convicts attempting escape, or just personal gain, were ready to steal from Aboriginal people and to kill them. Antagonism developed rather than bonds of solidarity against the colonial master.

Hughes says little about the meaning of the myths of egalitarianism and anti-authoritarianism in Australia today. The Australian ruling class certainly likes to sell the myth of mateship and egalitarianism. Anti-authoritarianism has been translated by some Ocker businessmen, such as John Elliot of Elders IXL, into policies for deregulation. He's as 'anti-authoritarian' as Margaret Thatcher.

More compelling than Hughes' view of Australians' conception of their history, is his exposition of 18th and 19th century English views on crime and punishment, and their implementation in Australia. Much is of modern relevance, when we see those who want a reduced role for government in the economy simultaneously tub-thumping about law and order, deterrence, punishment, and even capital punishment.

Hughes traces white Australia's origins to the British government's wish to export as much as possible of the 'criminal classes'. The criminals should not be allowed to breed and multiply in Britain. Reform or 'correction' was considered impossible, and so was building enough jails to keep the criminals in Britain. America was no longer available, and Australia had the advantage of being remote.

Hughes describes the horrors of transportation, from the wait on the diseased and rotting hulks in the Thames, the journey, and near-starvation in the first years of the colony, to the extremes of punishment in New South Wales, in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), and especially on Norfolk Island, deliberately set up as a place of terror for transportees who crossed authority once in Australia.

Only a minority of convicts suf-

fered the worst brutality, but Hughes argues that fear of such treatment was used to enforce the rules of the system on the majority. He describes the brutalisation of convicts by floggings, chain gang labour, isolation, solitary confinement and the arbitrary sadism of many superintendents in sickening detail. This treatment drove convicts to greater depths of self-hatred and desperation, and did nothing to make them more cooperative with authority.

Hughes also tells the story of Alexander Maconochie, who was commandant of Norfolk Island for a short time. He espoused reform rather than punishment of convicts, and caused an outrage by providing books for the education of the convicts. Modern jails seem to have at least as much in common with 18th century ideas of punishment and deterrence, as they do with Maconochie's ideas of treating prisoners as human beings so that they may act as human beings.

Convict labour was essential to establishing the infrastructure of the young settlement — the construction of buildings and roads —

and increasingly to the growth of sheep farming. The Emancipists and convicts were the only source of many vital skills and professions, as free immigrants were few. The shortage of labour and skills forced the Governors and employers to concede some conditions to labour, free and convict.

Early Governors often had to resist pressure from the sheepfarmers who favoured the harshest treatment of convicts and the exclusion of Emancipists from professions, administration and political considerations.

As the economy grew, and more free migrants arrived, the deterrent value of transportation diminished. During the 1850s goldrushes fortune seekers would pay to get to Australia. The growing free population demanded an end to transportation because of the shame of the convict 'stain'.

And so the British Government did end transportation, because of the sheer cost. Mainly transportation to NSW ended in 1840, though it trickled onto Van Diemen's Land till 1853 and to Western Australia till 1868.

The Fatal Shore is full of painstakingly assembled extracts from convict letters, government records and other original documents which provide a vivid picture of convict experience. Hughes also presents an argument which stimulates the thought processes, even if you don't always agree with his point of view.

The book has been criticised as sensationalising history, and some may consider it a thinly disguised opportunity to appear intellectual while indulging a ghoulish fascination with human pain and suffering. Flogging and brutality do not dominate every chapter, but they were institutionalised in a colonial, penal system, and we should try to understand that.

Hughes is determined to imprint the minds of Australian readers, at least, with an image that will make historical loss of memory impossible from now on.

The Fatal Shore is a gripping, and thought provoking read, for all its 600 pages. You don't need to know much about Australian history to enjoy it, and it has much broader relevance than that.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Saturday 12 November
SO AGM. Manchester

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
Nottingham SO weekend. Discussions, walks, good food. Hollinsclough, White Peak District. £12 waged, £6 unwaged: contact Ivan or Rosey 0602 624827

Sunday 20 November
North East London SO meeting: 'Fighting Imperialism: Under Whose Flag?' with Clive Bradley. Lucas

Arms, Grays Inn Road, 7.30 pm

Thursday 24 November
Northampton SO meeting: 'The Left Today' with Clive Bradley. 25 Queens Road, 7.15 pm

Saturday 26 November
Socialist Conference day school on 'Socialism and Democracy'. Civic Centre, Newcastle. Contact Tessa Gray, 4 Normanton Terrace, Elswick, Newcastle-on-Tyne

Saturday 26 November
Anti-Apartheid Movement Annual Conference. Sheffield

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

Monday 28 November
London Socialist Forum: 'Labour and the Bomb'. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1, 7.30 pm

Saturday 3 December

CLPs conference organising meeting. Merseyside TUCURC, Hardman St, Liverpool, 12 noon. Contact Lol 051 638 1338

Saturday 10 December
London Socialist Organiser day school. Contact Mark 01 639 7967

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

Sunday 11 December
North East London SO Social, 7.30 pm. Contact Belinda 354 3854

Saturday 25 February
Women for Socialism 2-day conference. Wesley House, WC1.

Saturday 1 April
Campaign for Non-Alignment: 'Out of NATO, into the world' 2-day conference

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Drama in the desert

CINEMA

By Edward Ellis

I had expected *Yeelen* (The Light), a film from the African country Mali, to be artistic and visually stunning, but I had not, in all honesty, expected it to be entertaining.

So I was pleasantly surprised. Although it isn't exactly fast, *Yeelen* is a fascinating and gripping story.

A young man is being pursued across the arid wastes by his father, who has sworn to kill him. To aid his search, the father has a magic pole, manically carried by two servants. Indeed, both father and son possess extraordinary powers, as an unsuspecting tribe, who succeed in capturing the son when he is distracted by the heat, discover.

He bewitches those who try to kill him, sends swarms of bees against his enemies, and is persuaded by the chief, who unsurprisingly chooses to befriend him, to cure his wife of barrenness. Unfortunately, the young man's "penis betrays him" and he and the chief's wife are cast out.

They eventually find his uncle, who gives him a magic weapon, so that he and his father can do final battle.

Not only his father is against him. The circle of mystics he hails from are all out to get him. Why is almost a mystery. It seems he left the circle at too young an age; but the young man himself is unaware of the sin he has committed.

Perhaps the father and his circle



represent, in some way, evil, or at least injustice.

So *Yeelen* is a story of magic spells and demons told against a background of vast African scenery. It is a timeless story, evoking the distant past, yet containing certain modern elements. The scenery is extraordinary: virtual desert punctuated by sparse trees; swamps where the young man's

mother covers her head in milk; high mountains where waterfalls spring out of the rock. There is a sense of people close to nature.

Yet no one seems to work. The men sit around taking natural drugs or fighting their enemies. The women wash the men's feet. But apart from young boys herding cattle or making bread, society seems very relaxed — despite an apparent-

ly crippling drought.

There is a lot of symbolism in the film which I presume is taken from tradition: at the end a child uncovers large eggs in the desert. This was more or less lost on me, although the visual impact was still considerable. What is clear is that we are witnessing some kind of primordial conflict between good and evil.

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN



Nuke fission

Thatcher's and Ridley's new enthusiasm for saving the world from acid rain and the greenhouse effect has given them a new stick to beat the nuclear industry drum with.

Nuclear power, they say, doesn't release clouds of sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide. They neatly steer round the problem of what to do with the mounds of highly radioactive waste deposited by their nuclear hobby horse.

Meanwhile, there is more encouraging news from the world of nuclear fusion research, which offers the prospect of (fairly) clean nuclear power.

Nuclear fusion is the process by which the sun produces its energy. All energy resources based on solar power (like fossil fuels, wind and wave power) ultimately rely on nuclear fusion. In this process, hydrogen atoms under extreme temperature and pressure at the centre of the sun join together to make helium atoms.

Each helium atom is made from four hydrogen atoms but weighs a tiny bit less. The missing mass has been converted to energy according to Einstein's equation: Energy = mass x speed of light squared.

So much fusion is going on in the sun that it is losing 4000 tonnes mass per second and putting out some 360 thousand million million million watts of power.

Fusion researchers on earth would be happy with a gigawatt (a thousand million watts) from their fusion reactors, corresponding to the conversion of a hundred thousandth of a gram into energy each second. Unfortunately, they are having a lot of difficulty getting the hydrogen atoms to react.

First, they have to heat a charge of hydrogen to over 100 million degrees Celsius. Then they have to keep it at the right density for about a second, long enough for the atoms to react.

This is not easy. As a gas gets hotter, it expands, because its particles are moving faster and pushing each other away. Also, at these temperatures, the atoms lose their electrons, becoming a plasma of positively charged ions which repel each other even more.

But this makes it possible to trap the plasma in a strong magnetic field. One such field is shaped like a ring doughnut or torus. Called a tokamak, such a design was invented by one of the world's top nuclear physicists, Russian dissident Andrei Sakharov. It is employed in the Joint European Torus at Culham in Oxfordshire.

Researchers there report the closest approach to the breakthrough point where the machine produces more energy than was put in to get it started. They have achieved acceptable levels of the three factors needed for fusion to take place but not all at the same time.

They have to improve things by about 20 times, a large disparity but not as bad as when they started designing JET some 15 to 20 years ago. Then they needed to improve things by 25000 times! In fact, they are not keen for fusion to start taking place in JET just yet. This is because the neutron radiation that would result would make the machine highly radioactive and inaccessible to humans.

It is thought that a reactor 2½ times the size of JET would be definitely capable of achieving a breakthrough and could be ready by about the turn of the century. Time enough for consideration of what to do with the radioactive waste that would be produced, though in smaller amounts than from fission reactors.

Out of the doll's house

TELEVISION

By Jean Lane

Out of the Dolls House (Sundays, 8.35 pm, BBC2) is a series of programmes each dealing with a different aspect of women's lives. The programmes follow their themes through from the beginning of the century to the present day, showing how class, poverty and opportunity affects them.

I have seen two of the five programmes shown so far, and wish I had seen the rest. Both of them "Musn't Grumble", about health, and "Just a Girl" on education — showed what capitalism means for women. Despite advances in technology and ideas, benefits are less for women and even less again for those who cannot pay.

"Musn't Grumble" showed how women in the early '20s could not afford medical treatment. They lived in damp, overcrowded, bug-infested houses and were forced into a cycle of pregnancy, childbirth and pregnancy.

Having a baby was four times as dangerous as working down a mine, men's most hazardous job. In 1924 alone 3000 women died in childbirth. Women resorted to taking dangerous concoctions, making themselves very ill, or — at the rate of 100,000 women a year — to back-street abortions.

When the NHS was set up in 1948 and doctors' visits and prescriptions became free for housewives for the first time, surgeries were swamped with women who had lived in agony

for years and could not afford treatment.

The contraceptive Pill helped to release women from the tyranny of childbearing. By the end of the 1960s, 400,000 women were taking it. By this time, some of the ill-effects of the Pill, such as headaches, depression and loss of interest in sex, were beginning to be recognised. But more women were now free to go out to work and have some measure of independence.

Many were still isolated in the home. One GP on the programme said: "Twice as many women as men suffer with nerve problems. They are under more stress. With the house, the job, and the kids, they are really doing three jobs. So much for the weaker sex."

The answer? Tranquillisers. In the '60s they were considered a wonder drug. Only now are they being recognised as a problem.

For many working class women today not a lot has changed — or rather they have come full circle. With prescription charges going up, women cannot afford to go to the doctor. With cuts in nursery provision, many women cannot get out to work and are again being isolated. Stress is still one of the major health problems for women.

"A man can go down the pub, sink a few drinks, and forget his problems. How can a woman put her kid in the cot, go out the front door and sink a few drinks in the pub?" as one Merseyside single mother put it. "A single mother with three kids, in a high-rise block, living on £30 a week from the social security cannot afford to take the weekend off".

Just a Girl" showed how and why it is that women are still left holding the baby. From

the beginning of the century, when it was considered dangerous to teach girls too much, women had to fight to get into education. Those who did had to pay, and the lessons for girls both at school and in play at home were geared to teach them to serve other.

Marriage and motherhood were the greatest things they could aspire to — or maybe a role like Florence Nightingale, giving up their lives to the service of others.

Even when compulsory, free education was introduced in 1944, the teaching of girls concentrated on the domestic and child-minding role. Boys were taught to serve industry; girls to serve men.

Not getting married was still a disaster. The single woman teacher was a joke figure. Teaching girls was a waste of time.

Both in the fee-paying public schools in the teaching of social etiquette and in the working class state schools girls were taught not to be assertive; not to demand but to wait to be asked. This made ambition impossible.

The only way to survive it was to take the attitude which shrugged off failure: "I never really wanted that anyway".

Then came the swinging '60s, the time of independence and assertiveness, when jobs were for the asking and young women had money to spend on clothes. Even then young women who wanted to go to university ended up in secretarial colleges or working as machinists because of social attitudes.

There were some changes. The Sindy Doll, the manufacturers' response to the changing times, was

a doll not to be mothered, but to be dressed up and sat on a horse or in a racing car. A working class girl could dress up the doll to do things she would never herself be able to afford to do.

Today, 85% of girls from public school will go to university and get a career. Those without the money and privileges, in working class comprehensives, will have lower opportunities and expectations.

Their attitudes about marriage are more enlightened than in the past. Given the choice between having a job or a boy friend, the girls from one comp all plumped for the job. When asked about marriage, one replied: "I want to be myself. I want to enjoy myself".

But the education they are getting is still not equal. Girls tend to do badly in 'boys' subjects and often drop out. Domestic Science is still considered a 'girls' subject. Young girls still tend to want to be nursery nurses, secretaries, English teachers. In other words: to provide a service.

The Sindy Doll is being relaunched to keep up with the children of the '80s. She can do anything. But not, in the words of the manufacturer, "too brash or too overt. The type of girl every father would like for a daughter-in-law".

'Out of the Dolls House' is a brilliant series: well researched and put over, and it talks to real women about real problems in a way that every woman watching, of whatever age, will catch herself nodding in recognition.

Next week's programme is on the changes in women's fashions, so if you want to see how we got from crippling corsets, through back-crunching high heels, to the shape-enhancing shoulder pads, watch that space.

Nurses strike

Nurses are bubbling with rage at their regrading. Nurses at Springfield Hospital in North Manchester called an indefinite strike and they have now been joined by nurses at nearby Prestwich.

Elsewhere nurses are "working to grade" — or working to rule. It is a powerful tactic guaranteed to cause disruption across the country.

In the same week that Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke announced that gradings would not be revised, he has been contradicted by events. Nurses in a Birmingham maternity hospital and in Hertfordshire have been regraded, or had their grades withdrawn.

Nurses are working to grade in the North East, South and West Yorkshire, the Midlands and North West. In Bir-



Photo: Ian Swindale

ingham they struck for two days, nurses in London will strike for two days from 10 November.

Where action is strong, nurses have proved they can win concessions. But rank and file militants must begin to link up and put pressure on their leaderships for a national campaign of working to grade.

It was strike action earlier this year

which forced the Tories to promise the pay rise. Strike action now can force the Tories to keep their promises.

Though concessions can be forced out of management at a local level through strong organisation only coordinated national strike action will force a general retreat.

The COHSE and NUPE leadership should call that action.

EETPU left reorganises

By Tom Rigby

The first steps towards re-organising the left in the EETPU were taken last weekend.

Around 50 rank and file electricians and plumbers gathered in Manchester and voted to set up a campaign within the union for re-affiliation to the TUC on the TUC's terms.

7 November round-up

Manchester: About 3,000 people turned out for a march on Piccadilly to a rally at the Town Hall. Manchester City NALGO called a half day strike (met with an uneven response) and a delegation of striking healthworkers attended the march and rally.

Liverpool: Around 5,000 marched from Pier Head to Central Hall. Trade union banners included Vauxhall car workers and Liverpool NALGO.

Reading: Action included pickets on the Receivers Office for the first time in ages. Around 350 people attended the lunchtime march and rally.

Southampton: Around 500 people rallied at the Mayfair Suite. Trade union banners included NALGO (who marched to the rally), MSF and NUR.

Sheffield: 4,000 people marched to a packed rally at Sheffield's Memorial Hall. Frickley colliery came out on 24 hour strike and several other pits had banners at

the rally. Other banners included the Fire Brigades Union, Keetons (who have been on strike for over 2 years) and an NUR delegation. There was also an EETPU banner.

NALGO urged council staff to go out on strike for the day, and COHSE urged members to attend the rally.

Outside the Memorial Hall a Stalinist Morning Star supporter ascended a soap box and shouted abuse at Solidarnosc and its relationship with the Catholic Church — as if this should forfeit the right of Polish workers to be a free trade union.

He was booed and shouted at by workers who rejected his double standards on Poland as much as they objected to Thatcher's.

Newcastle: About 1,000 people rallied at Grey's Monument in the city centre.

Leeds: 800 people marched to a rally at Civil Hall. Banners included NALGO, MSF, NUPE, AUT and the local student union.

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about the 4000 trade unionists in Notts that are denied the right to be recognised as a trade union within the NUM. Nobody can tell me he doesn't know about GCHQ. I understand placards were shown saying 'Thankyou for crushing Scargill'

It's ironic that shipyard workers have told Solidarnosc that they're in the same boat. It's a load of bullshit. If it hadn't been for Thatcher having to go to Poland and to the Lenin shipyard, the shipyard in the north-east would have been shut a damned sight earlier.

We're not in the same boat. Shipyard workers will go to the wall in this country because of a crisis of capitalism. In Poland they'll be thrown out of work because of the state trying to impose its will on workers — which is an entirely dif-

ferent argument. They are part of a 'socialist' system: there's a lot wrong in Poland, but to try to compare the two is a load of bullshit. We need to recognise the root causes. It's not a question of saying one's worse than the other. But there are different root causes and different solutions.

The NUM in Britain has a difficult period ahead, not just the problem of the Coal Board refusing to negotiate and shoring the UDM up as puppets, but also deeper into the future, the threat of privatisation.

The easiest way to minimise those attacks would be to stand up and firmly show the Coal Board where we stand. I think it's a tragedy that at the NUM delegate conference the resolution from Derbyshire, calling for all out strike action, wasn't carried.

The overtime ban may be a tactic leading to industrial action. But I was told by some of the delegates that last year when we had the arguments about the disciplinary code, South Wales and Scotland were both arguing that we were

campaigning on the wrong issues: we ought to be campaigning on wages.

This year we are campaigning about wages, yet South Wales and Scotland are saying that we're campaigning on the wrong issues again — we should be arguing about old age pensioners' coal.

It's remarkable that in this difficult situation such inane arguments are thrown into the pot. It's a major tragedy. What we need to do to Thatcher and the Coal Board is declare war. They've declared war on us, and we're still playing cricket. We should be declaring war on them. Sharp, hard industrial action is what is really needed.

Someone in Sheffield today quoted Mick Mc Gahey: "While we keep running, they'll keep chasing. We need to stop and give one short sharp blow into the throat of those chasing after us." The TUC itself should recognise this.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire

CPSA left meets

By Trudy Saunders

Activists from the Civil and Public Servants Association Broad Left (CPSA BL) met in Liverpool last weekend, 5-6 November.

The CPSA now has the most right-wing, dictatorial and undemocratic leadership it has had in years; but, unfortunately, this year's conference showed that the BL has a long way to go before it will be in a position to beat the right-wing.

A step in the right direction was made when conference passed a motion from Socialist Caucus (a group within the BL which includes Socialist Organiser supporters) calling the BL to task over GCHQ. The motion censured the BL for failing to take up the campaign over GCHQ within the union by failing to mobilise CPSA members around a call for all-out strike.

The motion called for combining a campaign for a re-ballot for official all-out strike action from 18 November — the day the dismissal notices expire — with the Broad Left preparing to spread unofficial strikes from the 18th. A Militant motion which ruled out any unofficial action and an SWP motion which called only for unofficial strike action were defeated.

Conference debated a number of issues — the proposed merger between the CPSA and the National Union of Civil and Public Servants, racism and fascists in the CPSA, the Poll Tax, union democracy, self-organisation, EETPU, South Africa and Ireland. Conference also voted to affiliate to the Campaign Against Repression in Iran.

These debates are important, but conference again failed to address the main issue for the BL — how to turn it into a mass rank and file organisation. The one group within the BL who are serious about doing this is the Socialist Caucus. The Socialist Caucus has consistently put forward strategies to fight Thatcher — and, most importantly, ways of mobilising members around these strategies as the debate over GCHQ showed.

On the Operational Strategy (a Tory plan which will result in thousands of job losses in the DHSS), Militant refused to give support to offices taking unofficial action. On pay, the BL bulletin 'Broadside' (edited by a Militant supporter) called on CPSA members to accept the Tories' offer of 4.5%.

The editor later admitted that this was wrong but refused to accept a censure from the conference! Militant supporters refuse to learn from their mistakes.

Motions on union democracy, self-organisation of black members and BL women's organisation, came from the Socialist Caucus. Militant supporters and the SWP should work with us to build the sort of BL which can really take on the right-wing.

IN BRIEF

Jaguar: a mass meeting of Jaguar's 9,000 manual workers refused a 2 year pay deal by an overwhelming majority — Jaguar offered 3% this year!

On Monday 7 November 2,000 Jaguar workers were laid off when 80 struck against the sacking of a senior shop steward.

Industrial relations are strained at Jaguar and many unofficial stoppages have broken out recently. This is exacerbated by management's attempts to boost productivity in the face of an unfavourable exchange rate of their luxury cars.

Lucas: the six week strike over pay at Lucas in Coventry is over. Although the lump sum payable by management was increased by £120, the strikers went back for the 5½% pay offer they rejected 2 weeks ago.

2,500 workers at Lucas automotive components plants have begun an overtime ban to increase their pay offer of less than 6%. Lucas management are trying to impose individual plant level pay bargaining.

Ford has agreed an equal opportunities policy with its unions.

Thomas Cook: have introduced merit pay. The next pay settlement will be entirely related to performance with no guaranteed minimum.

TSB management face an overtime ban and work to rule from Monday 14th over pay. Management wrote to staff proposing individual pay settlements.

BBC trade union journalists have called off their one day strike planned for Thursday 10 November over the ban on N. Ireland reporting. A lobby of parliament will still take place.

BBC and **ITV** officials have agreed to make it clear when broadcasts are made under the new government restrictions. The NUJ was threatened with legal action if the strike took place.

The NUM is to ballot 90,000 members on an overtime ban, with minimum cover, over pay. The ban is due to start in early 1989.

Post Office: management are to review their industrial relations in the letters business with a view to stopping local unofficial actions. Talks over recruitment bonuses which sparked the strike in September are reaching a dead lock.

EETPU and **AEU:** leaders are having problems in their merger talks, over the structures of democracy and accountability of a new union. The EETPU favours an advisory conference, and appointment of officials.

The irony of GCHQ and Poland

In spite of the weak call over GCHQ by the TUC — lunch time demonstrations etc — I was quite pleased with the response on November 7 in Sheffield, where I went with the sacked Notts miners.

Many pits from the Yorkshire coalfield were present, and from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. A lot of people had actually gone on strike — but the TUC itself didn't take the lead.

But the weaker our response to these attacks, like GCHQ, the worse these attacks will get. The four individuals in GCHQ who've been denied trade union rights are in themselves an irrelevance. We need to fight to give the bosses the message that we're not prepared to back down before this sort of attack. The only way we can do that is massive industrial action, not lunchtime demonstrations.

When I went into my union branch to ask what we were doing about November 7, the first thing that was shoved under my nose was a TUC circular which had gone to

all unions and eventually came down to branches — and it really played it down. With that sort of leadership we can't hope to generate the sort of response we should be getting. They should be giving a clear lead.

It's ironic that at the same time as we're on the streets demonstrating for the right to be in a trade union, Maggie Thatcher is over in Poland talking to Lech Walesa and the Polish government demanding the right of Solidarnosc to be recognised. It's incomprehensible that Thatcher can be presented as representing freedom and liberty in Poland — but you can't have it here in England.

I have always had my suspicions about Solidarnosc, and those suspicions have been reinforced. I don't see Solidarnosc's Lech Walesa and the church as representatives of the workers' movement but as an anti-revolutionary movement. I suspect there are more CIA officers who are members of Solidarnosc than real workers. To see Walesa and Thatcher arm in arm! Nobody can tell me that Walesa does not know

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The NUM in Britain has a difficult period ahead, not just the problem of the Coal Board refusing to negotiate and shoring the UDM up as puppets, but also deeper into the future, the threat of privatisation.

The easiest way to minimise those attacks would be to stand up and firmly show the Coal Board where we stand. I think it's a tragedy that at the NUM delegate conference the resolution from Derbyshire, calling for all out strike action, wasn't carried.

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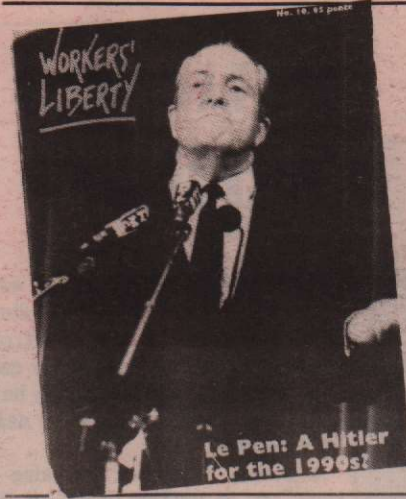
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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER



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



GCHQ: keep up the fight

By Vince Brown CPSA

Last Monday, 7 November, saw tremendous solidarity with the sacked trade unionists at GCHQ Cheltenham.

More civil servants came out on strike than bothered to vote in the low-key ballot called by the unions and some CPSA branches like that at the British Library balloted for and won illegal strike action despite instructions from the NEC not to ballot for strike action.

Other workers broke the Tory trade union laws and struck in solidarity. Miners in South

Yorkshire struck, dockers in Bristol, Hull and Tilbury did likewise. In Hertfordshire 1,000 workers at Rolls Royce walked out en masse and NALGO members across the country took action — backed by their union executive's last minute decision to authorise such strikes.

But all this was the palest reflection of what could have been

achieved if the TUC and Labour Party leaders had acted decisively. The TUC should have called a one-day general strike. And the Labour Party leaders should have come off the fence and argued for solidarity action — the very basis of trade unionism.

Instead we were served up rousing speeches. The campaign is to revolve around rallies before Christmas, a march next year and the election of a Labour government in the 1990s which we are told will reinstate the sacked workers.

This is no way to make the Tories back down. We must keep the pressure on.

CPSA members should call for a re-ballot for indefinite strike action from the day the sacking notices expire — 18 November. In the meantime we must argue for unofficial action from the 18th, link up with other branches prepared to fight and force our leadership to make such a strike official.

This is now CPSA Broad Left policy — pushed through by the Socialist Caucus (the left wing of the Broad Left which includes Socialist Organiser supporters). We must begin organising meetings to discuss the issues and call for all-out action.

There is no time to lose.

Solidarity and hypocrisy

By Dave Armes CPSA

Magnificent solidarity shown by workers across the country on 7 November, protesting against the sacking of GCHQ trade unionists, was mocked in hypocritical speeches from Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis.

The two, who have done most to stifle the GCHQ campaign, openly applauded secondary action taken by strikers at the 3,000-strong rally in Central Hall, Westminster. They denounced the hypocrisy of Thatcher's jaunt in Poland, where she defended Solidarnosc whilst denying trade union rights at GCHQ and attacking the labour movement in Britain.

Over a month has passed since sacking notices were received by GCHQ trade unionists. Only days before the strike would Kinnock give it his tacit approval. This kind of too little, too late leadership does nothing for the campaign and is an insult to those of us who took action on the 7th.

Reports of strikes by miners, dockers, healthworkers, teachers and local government workers raised the confidence at the rally. John Ellis, general secretary of the CPSA, however, couldn't tear himself from his sunbed in Israel to address CPSA strikers. It's rumoured that he suffers instant immobilisation at the thought of his own members taking industrial action. Luckily, he wasn't missed.

Willis, who has consistently refused TUC backing to a general strike because of the legal consequences of secondary action, proved himself the biggest hypocrite by leading the rally in 'Solidarity Forever'.

The programme that Kinnock and Willis argue will restore trade union rights at GCHQ is a lobby of Parliament, a march in Cheltenham in January, and electing a Labour government. This really is pathetic. The only way to restore trade unions at GCHQ is an all-out strike in the civil service — unofficial if necessary.

Move this motion

This branch condemns the Tory government for their attempt to outlaw trade unionism at GCHQ. This attack is part of the overall Tory offensive against the labour movement and it must be defeated.

Further this branch believes that the support for the 7 November strike shows the anger that exists amongst civil servants and other trade unionists over this issue. If we are to win this battle then the full power of our union must be mobilised.

Therefore this branch resolves to:

- (1) Call on the National Executive Committee to run a ballot for all-out indefinite strike action from 18 November, the day the GCHQ dismissal notices expire.
- (2) To take unofficial strike action from 18 November and to contact like-minded branches in the area/region to discuss coordinating this action.

Edinburgh action

By Stan Crooke

Some 4,000 trade unionists marched through Edinburgh on 7 November in support of the victimised GCHQ workers.

Jobcentres, Unemployment Benefit Offices, and Department of Social Security offices throughout the city were shut down, along with the Sheriff Courts and the Registrars of Scotland office, as a result of the civil servants' action.

24-hour strike action by Lothian Region NALGO members had also been authorised by their branch executive.

At the concluding rally, speakers such as Bill McCall (general secretary of the Institute of Professional and Civil Servants) and Edinburgh East Labour MP Gavin Strang competed with one another in their assurances that there's no conflict between "national security" and basic trade unionism, and that a more patriotically minded person than the average British trade unionist could not be found this side of the Iron Curtain.

Much was made by all speakers at the rally of Thatcher's hypocrisy in Poland. Sad to say, but not surprisingly, no reference was made to the hypocrisy of those trade union leaders who claimed to defend trade unionism in this country while

allowing it to be trampled over in Poland, and this paved the way for Thatcher's Polish exploits.

The organisers of the demonstration and rally certainly did not see the event as a springboard for further action. Apart from the rather lame suggestion from the rally's chairperson that those present might like to stay out for the rest of the afternoon, there was absolute silence by all the speakers as to the next stage in this campaign.

Gavin Strang and other speakers pledged that the next Labour government would reinstate the victimised GCHQ trade unionists. But GCHQ workers, and the rest of the trade union movement, cannot afford to wait that long.