

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

Fight the Tories! Rebuild the left!



Back Benn and Heffer!

# TUC: FIGHT SLAVE LABOUR!

In September of this year, the Government's new 600,000-place 'training' scheme, "Employment Training" (ET) comes into operation. It is the latest, and worst, of a long line of such cheap labour schemes, and all the signs are that the Government intends to force all unemployed people over 18 to go on it.

ET will replace the existing Community Programme, which for all its faults does at least pay the 'rate for the job': the new scheme will pay benefit levels plus £10 per week. Out of that £10, you will have to pay the first £5 of your travelling expenses plus all the other costs of going to work. In other words, for most ET 'trainees', the scheme means working full-time for dole money!

The new scheme will not provide any worthwhile training: not extra funds have been provided beyond what is already spent on Community Programme and similar schemes, most of which have no training element at all. And not a single real job will be created. ET is closely modelled on the "Job Training Scheme", which even the government now admits has been a disastrous failure. A leaked report from the Manpower Services Commission (which runs the schemes for the Government) shows that of 7,175 trainees who left JTS in January, only 7.2 completed their training and only 17% were known to have found work.

Worst of all, the new scheme will not even be voluntary. Already, unemployed people are coming under increasing pressure to go on to schemes — you are called in for 6-monthly "Re-start" interviews, made to fill in tricky "availability for work" forms (where a 'wrong' answer can mean loss of all benefit entitlement) and start to lose 40% of your Income Support for 6 months if you leave a scheme early. How long will it be before they suspend your benefit for not joining a scheme? Clearly, the government intends to move towards the US "Workfare" system and make benefit payment conditional on claimants going onto schemes.

So far the response of the trade unions to all this has been pathetic. TUC representatives on the Manpower Services Commission actually helped draw up the plans for ET and most union leaders initially supported it, until rank and file protests made them think again. The union top brass are only now waking up to the fact that these cheap labour schemes are not just an attack on the unemployed — they are an attack on all workers. Schemes like ET drive down wage levels, undermine union organisation and destroy real jobs, as properly employed workers are replaced by cheap-labour "trainees".

Now, at least, the majority of unions seem to have come out against ET. But the TUC has repeatedly put off taking a final decision on whether or not to support ET.

The main reason for the TUC's timidity is their dread of being kicked out of the Manpower Services Commission. But the government has made it clear that it intends to



Protest at JTS. Photo: Ian Swindale.

Turn to back page

# PRESS GANG

## "Poofs" frogs and reptiles

By Jim Denham

"You CAN call a poof a poof!" proclaimed the *Sun* last Wednesday, after the Press Council rejected complaints about headlines like "Runcie backs ban on pulpit poofs".

The council's decision, readers were told, meant that "The *Sun* was right to use the words 'poof' and 'poofster'."

Actually, the Press Council did not say that the *Sun* (and the *Star*) was right to use those words. They ruled that the language "was coarse and no doubt intended to be derogatory and insulting", but that such words were "commonly used and so come within the discretion of the editor".

Now, personally I tend to think that some people within the gay and women's movement often make too much of linguistic niceties, as though changing people's vocabulary is going to change the social forces that cause oppression. But there are limits...

If it's OK to use the word 'poof' because it is "commonly used", then why not... well, you know, a lot of other "derogatory and insulting" names for minority groups and foreigners.

A brief and random scan through recent editions of the *Sun* and *Star* revealed the following colourful turns of phrase, making full use of "commonly used" terms: "Push off sour krauts" (*Star*); "We can give the honourable Nips a run for their yen!" (*Sun*); and "Rocard the wet is Frog's new PM" — the *Sun*'s remarkable headline announcing the appointment of the French prime minister.

### Harmless

Stuff like this may seem harmless enough. The Japanese, Germans and French are not generally persecuted or discriminated against in Britain these days. But who can doubt that such language helps legitimise all sorts of nasty prejudices that are still bubbling away beneath the surface in Britain today?

The use of the words 'poof' and 'poofster' is a more serious matter. Gay people are discriminated against, and they do get beaten up. For a national newspaper to use such words about homosexuals is like using the equivalent language about blacks, Jews, and the biggest oppressed group of all, women. I like to think that if ever that started happening, all decent people would be up in arms — but presumably the Press Council wouldn't object, because such words are "commonly used".

Incidentally, the *Sun* is not completely without scruples when it comes to offensive language: editor Kelvin McKenzie recently took the *Independent* to the Press Council for printing the exact words (f\*\*\* and c\*\*\* will have to suffice for SO readers) that passed between Mike Gatting and the umpire during an eventful England/Pakistan cricket match. Not surprisingly they laughed him out of court. How about "Reptile chief told 'slither off'" for that one?

# Defend Ron Brown!

By Stan Crooke

Last month Leith Labour MP Ron Brown was suspended from the House of Commons for dropping the ceremonial mace and refusing to apologise.

As Ron Brown said, it would be better if the mace were sold off to raise money for the unemployed.

But the Parliamentary Labour Party backed the suspension.

Last week Ron Brown was in trouble again. He was accused by some MPs and the tabloid press of 'frolicking' with a woman in a House of Commons shower.

Then the *Sunday People* ran a front-page story in which an appropriately-named Mr Tutt tut-tutted about the "string of sexy

women" which he had seen in Ron Brown's flat, opposite his own.

So what? All this should be a lesson to those on the left who think it 'smart' to attack the private lives of Tory politicians. The same smutty moralism can be used against the left, too.

This Friday, 27 May, a 'Benn for leader' rally is being held in Edinburgh. The organisers have decided

— against the wishes of the activists doing the spade-work for this rally — not to have Ron Brown as a speaker. This is deplorable.

Ron Brown should be criticised for his political shortcomings, such as his admiration for Colonel Gaddafi and his support for Russian troops in Afghanistan, not for what he may have done in the House of Commons shower or his flat.

## After Wembley: soccer violence — who's to blame?

By Alan Johnson

"These pigs from Scotland should have no human rights. They should be treated like the evil animals they are." So said Terry Dicks, Tory MP for Hayes and Harlington after the violence of the annual England-Scotland match, which resulted in one death, one serious injury, 165 arrests and rioting in Central London.

The 'football hooligan' is news again.

How should socialists respond to football violence and to the Tories use of it to whip up yet another 'moral panic' and increase the punitive powers of the state?

We need very clearly to restate some basic truths.

That a warped society, in which profit comes before people, which brutalises through poverty, unemployment and racism, produces brutal violent people.

That increased police powers to 'deal' with football violence will only strengthen the very state which underpins that warped society.

Thatcher herself has hammered home the theme that the 'enemy within' is led by both football hooligans and strikers. Powers used tomorrow against the Chelsea 'Headhunters' would be used the day afterwards against trade unionists. Anyone who doubts this should ask themselves why Thatcher is now calling her government "my regime".

That football is a business run for profit like any other. Why did Heysel disaster happen when the British government, the Belgian government, Liverpool FC and the European Football Association knew the stadium was unsafe and had not had a full safety check since the early 1930s? Because it was the Belgian FA's turn to get the millions of pounds receipts would bring.

Why do clubs ignore the racism that pervades football? Why are better facilities, transport and seated stadiums not considered as 'solutions'? Because the game today is a multi-million dollar business and, as such, reflects the idea of profit first and profit last.

But as important as these arguments are, are they enough? Are we aware of the resonance that Terry Dicks' view (substituting 'hooligan' for the disgusting comments about Scottish fans) will have amongst working people? Are we sensible of the subtle explanation of football hooliganism deployed by Thatcher to reinforce a new moral vision.

Are there no possibilities for the left to challenge this vision and to move from a ritualised defence at a time like this to a powerful attack on Thatcherism, indicting it for the very promotion of football violence? I think these issues are worth discussing.

First the left must rid itself of any

romanticism about football violence being an 'authentic working class sub-culture of revolt', albeit misdirected. It is an ugly, squalid expression, in an extreme form, of an ugly, squalid society.

My father gave up watching Newcastle and St. James' Park when a molotov cocktail was thrown onto the West Ham supporters' enclosure. Ask any Asian family that live near a ground in London about 'the lads' out for a spot of 'Paki-bashing' after the game. Speak to those doctors who are now experts at the 'Saturday stitch-ups' of Stanley knife slashes.

So who do we blame? Here Thatcher steps in with an explanation. Unlike the Labour Party, Thatcher takes ideological combat very seriously. She has since 1979, developed an impressive repertoire in this battle of ideas. Whether the issue is unemployment, poverty, inner-city decay, single parents or football violence, she has played subtle variations on a powerful theme, and the theme is blame the victim.

You thought these were society's problems? Not so. For a start there is no such thing as 'society'. There is only the individual, with individual choice and individual responsibilities.

This view was well summed up recently: "the mother in question did not have to have her baby. Wrecked cars and old mattresses are dumped by somebody and graffiti does not scrawl itself" (David Edgar, *Marxism Today*, October 1987). Blaming the victim has been a most useful tool indeed in a society with 3 million unemployed, 12 million in poverty and periodic riots.

Now, when Kinnock speaks, as he did, of Thatcher creating 'loadsamoney' society he probably just stumbled on a gimmick for one of his speeches. But in one sense her glorification of individual greed, the creation of a society that knows the price of everything and the value of nothing, of Harry Enfield's 'loadsamoney' character writ large, could be brought into the centre of the debate over football violence.

It's not just that Southern fans have taken to chanting at Northern fans "we've got jobs, we've got jobs, you haven't, you haven't". It's that Thatcher has created a climate, a 'common sense', in which the Chelsea 'Headhunters' actually feel quite at home.

It is xenophobic nationalism. It is rubbishing of any notion of anti-racism. It is careful orchestration of a backlash against 'aliens' (lesbians, gay men, feminists, blacks). It is reassertion of reactionary, illiberal, intolerant, militaristic culture, and of course it is greed is good philosophy that underpins it all.

"Make a killing and don't worry



Police arrest Scotland fan

about the consequences" can have more applications than one.

This alternative repertoire of understandings and explanations could find a real resonance, re-write the agenda for debate and start contesting the Tories on the terrain of 'common sense'.

But what do we have? Echoes. We have echoes of the Tories' calls for short, sharp, cheap, totally ineffective but also stern, so-respectable 'solutions'.

And verging on the sick, we have earnest concern from earnest Labour Party Labour-All party Commons football committee spokesperson about whether it all means that English football clubs would not be allowed back into Europe next year.

Instead we need a wholly alternative understanding of the problems. John Williams, researcher into football violence, has described football as "the flawed product of a society scored with real divisions of race, sex and class".

Precisely.

Bringing this kind of understanding centre-stage as the lynch-pin of our approach would point to two things. Firstly, to an understanding that the continuance of a society which rests upon such divisions guarantees the provisional, temporary nature of any gains made in combatting football violence.

It is an alternative explanation of causes and solutions. It allows us to relate what we say and do about football violence to what we say and do on everything else.

The Tories deal in coherent

political philosophies which help them construct majority support. But the Labour Party deals in pragmatic policy documents addressed to someone else's majority.

Secondly, it would point us towards a socialist practice in the here and now. It would mean we

\* support the Professional Footballers' Association initiative to involve communities in clubs;

\* champion the work of Liverpool City Council in its schools' educational programme to combat football violence;

\* challenge the structures of ownership, control and accountability of clubs;

\* that we spread the kind of anti-racist initiative that Leeds is taking over Leeds FC, that we take seriously for instance that black players are writing to Bernie Grant in the House of Commons about the level of racism in football (and when we do that why couldn't we tie in the racism suffered by Bernie Grant in the House of Commons and the government's indifference to that too).

This basic alternative understanding, its constant application, could provide the ideological 'cement' to hold the campaigning together and generalise it. This is to do what the Tories have done so well since 1975. As Stuart Hall put it "to speak — to define the crisis — what it is and how to get out of it".

The problem we have is that this is actually a different conception of politics to the stale, parliamentary minuet of the Labour front bench.

# Socialism or barbarism

During the General Election campaign, Thatcher said that her goal was to kill socialism.

She hasn't killed socialism, but she has got Neil Kinnock and his friends in such a panic that they are trying to do the job for her. The systematic 'reviews' of policy now being carried out by Labour's right-wing and soft-left leaders are not reviews but a clearing-out exercise.

Much that passed as 'socialist' in the labour movement for decades is being unceremoniously dumped. Labour leaders are 'Thatcherising' the party. In this issue and next week's, we print two important articles, by Tony Benn and by Eric Heffer, which expose in detail what the Labour Party leaders are trying to do. It is vital that socialists heed the call by the Left's candidates for leader and deputy leader of the Labour Party, and campaign for Labour Party conference to throw out this new 'revisionism'.

But we should keep it clear in our minds that Labour's old policy of bureaucratic statism was not socialism. Labour nationalised only industries like coal and rail, selected to service private industry as part of the overall capitalist system, and with vast amounts of money paid to the old owners. For the workers, nationalisation sometimes brought greater security for a while, and sometimes a less relentlessly greedy employer, but otherwise nothing changed. This was not socialism.

Labour's nationalisations were part of a great wave of nationalisations world-wide. Capitalism was adjusting and reorganising itself, and it used statification as one of its techniques. In vast areas of the 'non-communist' world the core of the capitalist economy is state-controlled. But the workers are still exploited — as they have been in Britain's nationalised industries.

Socialism is about ending wage-slavery and ending the tyranny of the bureaucratic state. Wage-slavery is a disguised form of slavery. Wage-slaves do not wear chains and manacles, and outside the Third World they do not work under the whip. They are wage-slaves because they own only their labour-power and must sell it to the class which owns the means of production.

The owners of the means of production make more from using the labour-power than buying it costs them. From that excess come profits, interest, and all the other forms of income of the capitalist class. The price of labour-power rises and falls. Sometimes there is a boom, and the workers, the sellers of labour-power, have increased bargaining-strength in the market; sometimes there is mass unemployment, and the buyers of labour-power can dictate their terms. Always the owners of the means of production squeeze a surplus out of the workers. Always they grab the riches of society, leaving the workers scraping to get by. Always they have the power over production, and the workers have none. In good times and in bad for the sellers



Reject the racist barbarians embrace

of labour-power, the system is one of wage-slavery.

Socialism is the abolition of wage-slavery and its replacement by cooperative labour, with the producers owning the means of production. In modern conditions that can only be collective ownership. State ownership is not necessarily collective ownership. It depends on who owns the state.

Everywhere today the state is a vast bureaucratic apparatus, bringing privilege and wealth to its functionaries and officials. It is less powerful in the countries of old capitalist development, where 'civil society' has stored up wealth and riches in the hands of private capitalist owners; it is more powerful in countries where 'civil society' is weak, and the private owners of land or industry are weak. But everywhere it is strong. Everywhere it is in the hands of and at the service of a ruling elite.

Socialism is collective, cooperative ownership, and control by the producers. Therefore it is the abolition of wage-slavery and of bureaucratic state tyranny — or it does not exist. Today it does not exist anywhere.

All the other arguments between socialists — between those who criticise capitalism and want a better life — are offshoots of the basic question: *for or against wage-slavery? For or against abolishing it?* For example, take the argument about whether or not you can have a peaceful transition to socialism.

If socialism is the abolition of wage slavery, then it must unavoidably mean taking from the ruling class what they have. The ruling class will not let us do that peacefully, however big a

democratic majority we may win. No ruling class has ever gone to its grave peacefully when it had the power to fight; and the ruling class do have the power to resist, because they control the army, the police, the top layers of the civil service, the press, and immense wealth. They will resist — like they resisted in Chile, where the army smashed a democratically elected socialistic government, and imposed a murderous dictatorship which is still in power 15 years later.

Those who want to abolish wage-slavery will face facts like this, and

## EDITORIAL

not rely on the 'hope' that in a country like Britain things might go better than in Chile. In fact, Chile had a long tradition of political democracy, one of the longest in the world until the Army drowned it in working-class blood in September 1973.

What Labour's leaders are throwing out was never socialism. At best it was a series of measures from which workers could hope to get limited benefits provided that they were strong enough to insist on them.

In the discussion now going in within the Labour Party, socialists must defend traditional commitments against Labour's pink Thatcherites and panic-stricken ex-socialists, and, at the same time, argue for the replacement of the old statist tradition with the ideas of working-class socialism.

In the middle of the 20th century, the vast expansion of statism within capitalism confused many people

who equated nationalisation with socialism into thinking that the world was 'going socialist'. We know better now. Thatcherism is part of a limited backlash against that mid-century expansion of statism. We must fight that backlash where workers' interests are threatened. We must fight those in the labour movement who keep step with Thatcher. But we must also fight for a socialist concept of public ownership.

Those who have combined public ownership with a tyrannical state have shown that public ownership is not necessarily socialist. Public ownership is only a means to an end — the end of doing away with wage-slavery. But nobody has thought of another means of reaching that end.

We live in a world which may be about to change drastically. Last October's stock exchange crash — the worst for 60 years — has yet to work itself through into the rest of the economy. Nobody is sure yet, but probably it will produce a deeper slump than we have had since the '30s. In the advanced capitalist countries, a politics of consensus between the labour movement and capitalism were stabilised in the post-war boom. That consensus has come under great strain in the 1980s. It may shatter in the period ahead. The vote of 4¼ million French men and women for the racist barbarian Le Pen in the French presidential election — almost as many votes as Hitler got in September 1930, less than 2½ years before he took power — shows that old barbarisms can come rushing back at us, barbarisms that some people thought had been banished to the lumber-

room of European history and to the Third World.

The labour movement needs to prepare itself to meet the challenges and threats that lie ahead of us. We need to rearm and recreate the labour movement. That is what the Benn-Heffer campaign is making a start at doing.

We need to do more. We need to resist the Kinnockites, and fight to arm the working class and the labour movement with thoroughgoing socialist ideas for the 1990s.

The very life of the labour movement may be at stake here, as it was in Chile in the early '70s and in Germany in the 1930s. We do not know how things will go, but the signs are ominous.

If a major new economic slump hits Europe and the world, then Le Pen's vote may be the beginning of a new wave of barbarism in Europe. The choice before the working class in this century was posed long ago by socialists such as Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin and Trotsky: socialism or barbarism.

The choice may be lying ahead of us now, again, with an urgency it has not had in Europe (as distinct from the Third World) for over half a century. We must prepare the labour movement to fight for socialism.

An immense responsibility falls on the left now. We must find the strength and the resources to rise to it. Writing in 1937 about the responsibilities of his own generation, the poet W H Auden expressed it like this:

**We are left alone with our day,  
and the time is short and  
History to the defeated  
May say Alas but cannot help or  
pardon.**

Socialist Organiser  
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA  
01-639 7965  
Latest date for reports: first post Monday or by phone Monday evening  
Editor: John O Mahony  
Typesetting: Upstream Ltd (TU)  
01-358 1344

Published by Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA  
Printed by Press Link International (UK) Ltd (TU). Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.  
Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the view of Socialist Organiser.

# GRAFFITI

## Looney Ladies

Tory party big wigs are apparently furious and embarrassed about a motion up for discussion at the forthcoming Conservative Women's Conference.

The Hereford section of the blue-rinse brigade has tabled a resolution demanding adequate non-means tested grants for all

over 16's who remain at school or go into further education.

Wonder if Maggie will now witch-hunt her ultra-left enemy within?



Buthlezi

## No justice

Six members of Buthelezi's Inkatha movement were sentenced last week in Pietermaritzburg for murdering an elderly woman. They beat and stabbed her to death they said, because they believed she was a UDF supporter and had

sheltered other UDF members in her home.

The sentences given to the murderers? 1½ to 3½ years. A striking contrast to the sentencing to death of the Sharpeville 6.

So much for apartheid 'justice'.

## A day's wages

The shooting in Zimbabwe of "A Dry White Season", an anti-apartheid film, has run into difficulties.

Black extras working on the film have disclosed they are being paid considerably lower wages than the white extras —

the blacks are earning Z\$150 a week, compared to Z\$500 paid to each white extra.

A dog (with a bona fide white owner) which has a bit part in the film is also being paid more than twice as much as the black actors.

## Dirty water

Government plans to sell off the water system to private companies may end up endangering health.

A report from the Department of the Environment setting out the requirements on firms tendering for contracts omits any reference to quality control and inspection.

By not insisting on vigorous standards of cleanliness the Tories are convinced they can make a fast buck out of the sell off.

## Fascists

The Mayor of Rome has made a public apology on Italian TV after a racist incident on a bus.

An Ethiopian woman was ejected from her seat by another woman who insisted she was sitting in a seat reserved for whites.

The incident followed shortly after a packed meeting of the Italian fascist group the MSI, which was addressed by French fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen.

There has been a noticeable growth in anti-immigrant feeling and also in anti-semitism over the past few months and with the local elections coming up next month the Italian fascists hope to see Le Pen's relative success boost their vote — they normally poll around 6%.

## A new Workers' Liberty

The latest issue of *Workers' Liberty* features a detailed analysis by Stan Crooke of the 'anti-Zionist' campaign in the USSR in the 1970s.

Based upon close scrutiny of the Russian texts, the analysis shows that the main themes of what has become the general left-wing 'anti-Zionist' polemic were pioneered in a campaign that was plainly motivated by anti-semitism.

Crooke shows the remarkable parallel between the case made against Zionism by, for example, Jim Allen's play 'Perdition' and the line pushed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The latter, of course, has its quirks, such as the claim that Zionists work hand in glove with 'Trotskyites' and other wicked revisionists, but the main ideas are the same. Zionism has much in common with fascism, they say, which explains why Zionists collaborated with Nazis... and so on and so on.

At the very least, Crooke's article should provoke discussion. Debates continued in this issue of *Workers' Liberty* include one on Ireland.

An article by Geoff Bell that first appeared in *Socialist Outlook* is reprinted, with a reply by Sean Matgamna. Bell sharply criticises the policy of Socialist Organiser, condemning it as "four square with the opinions of the British ruling class". Matgamna replies by spelling out a Marxist view on the Irish national question, and drawing on other experiences, such as Sri Lanka — where the Tamils, some of whom were formerly an elite, have been transformed into an oppressed minority.

It is false, says Matgamna, to divide the world into 'good' and 'bad' nations. We need consistent democracy.

Other features include an extended analysis of the Gulf War and a further translation from 'Give us our factories', an account of the Polish workers' struggle in 1980-1 by a former leader of the left wing of Solidarnosc, Zbigniew Kowalewski.

The main editorial looks at the success of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the French elections, and sounds an alarm. France 1988 is not Germany 1930 — but there are parallels, and "we do not have all the time in the world".

# Don't dig

By Tony Benn MP

The Tory strategy is to destroy British trade unionism in order to open the way for the sort of society that would most benefit the people the Tories support.

And anyone who doubts that should look and see what is happening.

In the Budget £2 billion was given to the very richest people, followed on April 11th by the Social Security cuts. Housing benefits are cut and a loan system for the Social Fund has been introduced. The pawn broker's 3 balls will soon be hanging over the DHSS offices.

Poor people without enough money to live on, will be offered loans they will have to repay out of their benefit. That will mean that they will get deeper and deeper into debt.

Then you have the National Health Service being progressively run down in order to drive more people to private medicine. Edwina Currie says the best thing to do is to mortgage your house if you have an expensive operation.

Now anyone who knows the United States will know that half the bankruptcies in America occur because people's health insurance runs out. If you have had all that the health insurance will offer you and you still need a major operation, then you will go to any lengths to protect your life, or the lives of your mother, or father or some child, or somebody who is very ill.

You will mortgage the house. Then there is foreclosure. Then you are out on the breadline.

A few years ago all this would have seemed to be direct and clear exaggeration. People would not have believed such a thing could happen in Britain. It was not perfect, but we had built up quite a decent welfare system. I won't call it socialism because it was never really that, but it was a sort of protective cover, or a safety net, and nobody really fell below an acceptable standard of living. There were still poor people, but destitution had disappeared.

Now there are 10,000 homeless people in London and I'm sure it is the same in other cities as well. You see people utterly down and out on the streets, with nowhere to go. It is really no surprise that Mother Theresa turned up in London recently because in some respects it is beginning to show similarities with Calcutta, where she herself works.

That is the challenge, and we have to look at it dispassionately. The last thing I want to do is to frighten anybody by pointing out the awful things that are happening — but some terrible things are happening.

Wherever you look you see them tightening the screw in order to see that no contrary view is allowed to be put. In a way we are back where we started.

The labour movement began in the upper room of a few pubs where people gathered together and said what are we going to do about unemployment, about homelessness, about living conditions? They banded together and out of it came the labour movement. And the first thing the labour movement had to do was to establish the right to have trade unions, because the trade union is the first line of defence of working people and their families.

If you go to see your employer alone today he or she will say to you — 'if you don't like the conditions on offer there are 4 million people on the dole and they will no doubt



Photo: John Smith.

work at the wages I offer'. That is why they have unemployment — it used to be called the 'reserve army of the unemployed'. If you go together with others to see your employer then of course you are in a much stronger position.

Sometimes I think we take trade unions for granted, we assume that trade unions are always going to be there. Some people even say that trade unions 'run the country' — I have never seen any evidence of it myself. But she knows the importance of trade unionism because Mrs Thatcher's desire really is to neutralise it, to defeat it — and in the case of the National Union of Seamen to destroy it.

She has a special reason for that because Sir Jeffrey Sterling, the chairman of P&O, has put £100,000 into the Tory Party — you could not have a clearer example. He advised Tebbit on the legislation; he was then appointed chairman of P&O; and then the government used the law against the seafarers. The law that was passed by Parliament on the basis of Sir Jeffrey Sterling's advice.

The judges are also of course appointed by the Prime Minister, and judges apply the law and try and prevent the National Union of Seamen operating.

The first line of defence is trade unionism. Some people say that the working class has disappeared, you could have fooled me, but what is true is that the nature of work is changing very much. If we had been meeting in 1888 an awful lot of people would have still been agricultural workers. Then, as in-

dustrialisation came across, you workers going into industry larger and larger numbers into production, and into the heavy industry of shipbuilding engineering and so on.

Now, the fact is production altered again. You have two groups that are becoming very influential in the workplace. One high-tech people who are working in high technology. The other group, who are largely unskilled, low part-time women workers.

You go into the supermarket and you will find an awful lot of women working now — they are part-time workers. Their take-home pay is very very little. They work for employers who have never had to deal with a trade union and who do not want a trade union to be established.

But do not think that the working class has disappeared — quite the opposite. It is changing, and you have to start by getting the message across all over again, about the importance of banding together what is called solidarity: 'you not cross a picket line', 'an injury to one is an injury to all', you take your phrase of your choice. It is a hanging together so you do not hang separately.

The second great strength of the working class is the strength you get from voting. Do not misunderstand me, do not think that Parliament is all-be-all and end-all, or that change actually begins in Parliament. It actually begins in Parliament. If you do not have the power peacefully to remove the government that governs you, you

# up Labour's roots



Healthworkers' protest. Photo: Ian Swindale.

fighting with one hand tied behind your back.

If you look at the way in which the Chartists and the Suffragettes struggled to give working class men, and then women, the right to vote — it was not for fun, it was because if you had the vote you had the power to remove unjust governments and to replace them by governments that would allow you to buy collectively what you could not afford individually.

There is only a tiny percentage of this country, or of any country, that is rich enough to pay for their own house without a mortgage; to pay

for their children's education; to pay for health; to pay for pensions — most people, 95% of us, depend on collective provision.

Therefore democracy flowered in Britain. Local authorities built municipal hospitals, municipal sanatoria, municipal transport. These were products of the ballot box used by working people to create a better life.

We take that for granted too. But she does not take it for granted, she knows how important it is, which is why she has abolished the GLC, ratecapped local authorities, thrown councillors in Liverpool out

of local office, surcharged and disqualified for 'wilful misconduct' — it means they built houses when she said they shouldn't.

The poll tax is probably the most deadly attack on democracy because who is going to want to register for the vote if they are picked up by the poll tax officer who will come along and say — 'you are a pensioner couple with 2 unemployed teenagers living at home, that's 4 of you to pay the poll tax! The Duke of Westminster living alone in a mansion somewhere will be paying one poll tax. So the poll tax is not only a very unjust tax: it is also a way of driving the poor off the electoral register.

What we have to do is to recreate the power that gave us the sort of advances we made — and they were very limited. We must recreate that power now to defeat the government's intention of putting us back again where the employer will have all the weapons in his hand.

The Labour Party is engaging in some policy reviews. The paper on economic policy which is central to full employment and everything is really very shallow and superficial, does not offer any answers to the problems of mass unemployment or deindustrialisation, and really is pretty non-socialist in its analysis. It says nothing whatsoever about how you would deal with the IMF or the Common Market.

We talk about a 'talent-based economy' — well I do not honestly know what that means. Then the next phrase we come to is 'government agencies and local authorities

must work in partnership with firms, the CBI, Trade Associations and Chambers of Commerce, so the process of policy making is one of concerted action' — no mention of trade unionists at all. Here is a Labour government offering itself on the basis that it will simply work with business.

Then there is another one, which is even more horrifying in a way, a paper called 'People at Work', which downgrades the role of trade unions, states low levels of union organisation and so on, and then speaks of employers with great warmth. It says that 'job satisfaction is as important to the employer as to the employee' You tell that to Rupert Murdoch! Was job satisfaction at Wapping as important to Rupert Murdoch as it was to SOGAT?

It goes on to say that "workers must have a real stake in their enterprises" — does that mean if you had invested a few shares in News International you would have got a better deal? Then it talks about "works councils" — saying "works councils as used in West Germany may offer a workable model of joint manager-worker committees. Although union representatives will be influential as they are in West Germany, workers who are not members of trade unions will also be entitled to have a representative."

When you look at it all, you can see the whole destruction of the little history that I gave you of what it is all about.

The third paper I have here is about Peace. I think that a lot of

people genuinely believe that there is a better prospect now of ending the Cold War than ever before. Gorbachev obviously wants disarmament because he wants to improve the lot of his own people.

Reagan, whatever his merits and however good his astrologer, has got 30,000 troops on our territory. You wonder whether it was a woman who read about Taurus and Aries passing through Jupiter that led him to bomb Libya from our territory.

It is frightening really because Nancy Reagan might decide that this is the moment to end the world and go out with a bang. It is an awful thing that here in the Labour policy statement there is frankly no reference to the argument about nuclear disarmament. Indeed, I am quoting Neil now.

In Madrid last Wednesday, he said "Britain and its allies must maintain defence forces capable of resisting and deterring any potential military threat". It looks to me as if by next year's Conference we are going to find that the Labour Party is back with a nuclear deterrent — the opposite of what we have been working on over a long period of time, when the prospects of peace are better.

I think I had better warn you that the strategy of the present leadership is to change fundamentally key political decisions taken by the Party over a generation, and move the Party towards acceptance of the right-wing consensus that Mrs Thatcher has established.

Taken together with the 'new realism' advocated by the TUC it would transform the British labour movement — transform its function, its role — and would wipe out many of the historical lessons which I dwelt on. It would weaken the links between the industrial and political wing and blank out a real vision of the sort of society that we might build.

We dare not let that happen! My fear is that if Mrs Thatcher fails, as she will, and if there is not a broadly democratic and socialist alternative, politics can swing over to the right. Do not assume that if she fails it will automatically come to Labour: there is always Mr Tebbit in the wings, and a much harder right on offer.

Therefore, the debates that take place in the Party in the next few months must be around those issues, and concentrate on them. We should just use the leadership election as a peg to hang a comradely discussion on, with goodwill towards people with a different point of view.

And when the Conference comes, do not think it is the beginning and end of life. Whatever happens on Sunday when the electoral college announces the result, in the week after, Conference is going to have to decide whether we are going to accept the policies being put forward.

Our most important function now is to advocate hope. They are trying to terrify people — that it is only them preventing Gorbachev and Reagan landing paratroopers in Bournemouth; that there are a lot of revolutionaries waiting to overthrow all decent values and so on.

And people can be frightened. Those who are committed to their mortgage repayments are frightened that, if they lose their jobs, they will lose their homes.

They use fear to control us. Our job is to lift people's eyes a little bit above the horizon and show that it does not have to be as it is; that if we get together we can make it a very much better country in which to live, and a very much safer world.



60p

**Back Benn and Heffer!**

**Available for 60p plus 30p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.**

**Fight the Tories! Rebuild the Left!**

# Greed and the good capitalist

Edward Ellis  
reviews 'Wall  
Street'.

"Greed is good". The key-note speech of Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas) in "Wall Street", just recently echoed (or almost) by Margaret Thatcher, sums up the philosophy of the 'new breed' of soulless financial sharks. Greed will make America great again, says Gekko. And for a while young brother Bud Fox (Charlie Sheen) has a wonderful time in this profit-boosting paradise — until things go sour.

Wall Street is at once a tale of an ambitious young man being taught a stiff moral lesson, and an indictment of the inhuman face of capitalism. Director Oliver Stone has a history of radical film-making ('Salvador', 'Platoon'), but this is by far his weakest. It is precisely an indictment of 'bad' capitalists; there are also 'good' capitalists who are altogether different.

The turning point in Buddy's voyage around the facts of life is the discovery that he has been used by Gekko to convince gullible union leaders at Blue Star airlines to accept a deal that in fact will result in the company's closure. The only union rep. not taken in is Daddy Fox (Martin Sheen), and so pa and



Michael Douglas (right) and Charlie Sheen: greed is good.

son have a bit of a row. Still, it all turns out more or less for the best thanks to the benvolent interven-

tion of Good Capitalist (Terence Stamp).

The good capitalist, indeed, is a

bigger fish than Gekko, and an English knight with an altogether more honourable attitude and a thoroughly traditional concern for fair play.

So Gekko gets his come-uppance from a 'real' bourgeois, in comparison with whom he is a grubby nouveau-riche upstart

It's all quite silly really, and not at all deserving of the Oscars it won, either in its intellectual content or the quality of its acting. Michael Douglas is very good — don't get me wrong. But the part of Gordon Gekko is not, I wouldn't have thought very taxing: it simply

requires being smarmy and satanic. I could do that myself for a few quid.

And I could have lived without the tearful father-and-son-make-up in hospital torture ("I really love you dad", "I'm really proud of you son (choke)"). I'd be embarrassed if my father behaved like that even taking a cardiac arrest into account.

Silly as it is, 'Wall St' is entertaining enough. I suppose you would expect a hit film maker to think capitalism is basically okay if you eliminate the law-breaking wide-boys, so it's unreasonable to criticise it for not being Marxist.

## Loadsamoney prejudice?

By Jim Denham

Have you noticed a strange man on the telly, standing behind a kebab shop counter and singing the praises of the Sunday People in a sort of Greek/Cockney accent? Or loud people in your local pub, waving fivers about and braying about having "LOADSAMONEY"? If you're familiar with the work of Harry Enfield, these phenomena will hold no mystery for you. Stavros the kebab shop man has been entertaining the audiences of the "alternative comedy" circuit for some years. Loadsamoney is a more recent creation, which has propelled Mr Enfield from the relative obscurity of the "alternative" scene to national fame, almost overnight. LOADSA threatens to join WC Fields, Peter Lorré, James Cagney and the dreadful Frank Spencer as one of those standard impressions that people do at office parties.

Harry's newfound success has, of course, provoked a backlash: some people accuse him of anti-Greek racism because of Stavros, while others have suggested that LOADSA is a thinly veiled attack on the working class. Comedy, as they say, is a serious business and lefties like Harry must tread the boards carefully. There is a long and still-growing list of people who you mustn't offend. But all comedy is based upon a degree of stereotyping on portraying characters, situations and human responses that we recognise or share. If generalisation and caricature were outlawed, there would, quite simply, be no such thing as humour.

This argument, of course, could be used to justify stand-up nazis

like Jim Davidson or Bernard Manning. It is not intended to. You don't need to theorise about the nature of comedy to be repelled by the crude racism and sexism of so-called "comedians". The problem arises when radical entertainers make jokes or devise characters that inevitably, deal with questions of race, class and gender. There is the risk of the Alf Garnett syndrome setting in. Alf, you may remember, was the character invented by Jonny Speight and portrayed by Warren Mitchell, who was the living embodiment of every bigotted reactionary opinion imaginable. Both Speight and Mitchell are socialists, and both claimed that Alf was intended to be a preposterous figure of ridicule - to be laughed at not with. The trouble was, it didn't always work out like that. At the height of Alf's popularity, it was clear that a lot of people were laughing with approval at his tirades, and regarding him as a mouthpiece for their own prejudices. And if anyone objected they could easily be accused of having no sense of humour.

I don't believe that sort of problem exists with Stavros. For a start, there is no anti-Greek racism in Britain (that I am aware of, anyway) for Stavros to tap into and bolster. He may have a funny accent, but then so, to my ears, do the Cornish, the Welsh and Geordies. There's surely nothing offensive about utilising that for comic purposes. If Welsh people or Greeks were being beaten up simply for their racial origins it would be a different matter. In any case, Stavros despite his accent, is a shrewd, worldly-wise character and we are obviously intended to agree with him as he passes judgement on such diverse matters as the state of the NHS and the foolishness of TV quiz shows.

Loadsamoney is a bit more difficult. He's a cockney wide-boy called Mick who drives an Escort XR3i and makes an enormous amount of dosh as a plasterer.

There is a school of thought that contends that Loadsamoney's initial popularity was due to the anti-working class sentiments of yuppies who'd been ripped-off by cowboy builders. Loadsamoney, this theory goes, represents the trendy, middle class view of just how vile the working class becomes once it gets its hands on real money. He's boastful, selfish, sexist and totally tasteless. The newspaper that sticks out of his jeans is unquestionably the Sun. He might even be Neil Kinnock's legendary docker with a villa in Marbella.

And there is no denying that the Alf Garnett syndrome has set in here: some people identify with Loadsamoney precisely because he articulates views and values that they hold, but wouldn't dare come out with quite so brazenly. The Sun has even taken to using headlines and slogans that clearly evoke Loadsamoney's war-cry: LOTSAMONEY LOLLY! was the headline on the day after Chancellor Lawson's budget. (Loadsamoney himself on Friday Night Live, greeted Lawson's bonanza by amending his catch-phrase to "Loads MORE money!")

I personally don't think Harry Enfield can be blamed if some people take his creation the wrong way. All comedy that tries to make a political point by utilising parody runs the risk of being misunderstood. Harry made his own position quite clear by wheeling out Loadsamoney (free of charge) to be jeered at by health workers and their supporters at a CoHSE benefit on April 14th. My main objection to Loadsamoney is that he's essentially a one-joke character and is thus in danger of becoming a bore. And he's so easy to impersonate, as a visit to your local pub will confirm. If I was Harry Enfield, I think I'd put Loadsamoney into semi-retirement and concentrate on the much more interesting Stavros. The trouble is, of course, that Loadsamoney's rap record is now soaring up the charts and these things can take on a momentum of their own...

## WOMAN'S EYE

### Sexism in Japan

By Lynn Ferguson

Of the advanced capitalist countries, Japan is probably the most backward in terms of women.

Anti-women attitudes are deeply embedded in Japanese culture. Take language for instance. There is no word for feminist in Japanese. The nearest approximation means a man who is kind to women! The Japanese character for 'woman' is implicitly derogatory. Repeated three times it means 'wickedness'. Combined with various other characters it makes up meanings like 'disturbance', 'obstruction', 'repugnant', 'offensive', 'jealousy'. Makes our arguments about chairperson and the like pale almost into insignificance. Many women's names end with the sound 'ko'. This means child.

The qualities valued in Japanese women are modesty and subservience. In 1985 Japan, under pressure from the United Nations finally passed the Equal Employment Opportunities Law. All the employers federations vigorously fought against the introduction of the bill, though it's hard to see why. The law merely requires employers to 'strive towards' equality of treat-

ment for women.

Some discriminatory practices are actually outlawed, but there are no penalties for employers who break the law. A woman who has a grievance can in the last instance approach the three person Arbitration Organisation. However this body has only an advisory role — it cannot force an employer to do anything! Hardly the sort of law to strike fear into the heart of a sexist employer.

Japanese women are desperately in need of decent equality legislation. The average pay of a working woman in Japan is half that of a man — and the gap is actually widening. About 5-10% of jobs advertised actually specify that women need not apply. Strict barriers between 'clerical' jobs and 'general/managerial' jobs also works against women.

The clerical grade is almost completely staffed by women. Promotion out of this grade is by examination and, surprise, surprise, until 1986 virtually no companies would permit women to sit the examinations. This is slackening up a little now, recent estimates show that 30% of firms have now decided to allow women to sit the exams. Promotion in Japan often depends on length of service with the company rather than on skill or talent. Taking time out to have children handicaps women here too.

But Japan is going to have to change. Japan has an ageing population — the economy is going to need women workers and to develop and use their skills. But whatever changes cold economics forces on Japanese employers, Japanese women will still have a massive edifice of sexism and oppression to fight.

# Stop BR sell-off

By Lynn Ferguson

The Tories are planning to sell off British Rail.

Thatcher's think tanks, the Centre for Policy Studies and the Adam Smith Institute, have prepared three different options for discussion by the Cabinet. The network could be sold in one piece; the track, signals, etc could be kept public and the services sold off; or the Tories could turn the clock back to the days before nationalisation, and sell off regions as competing companies.

If BR is sold off, then the experience of the privatisation of bus services will be repeated. Less profitable rural routes disappeared, staff were employed at lower rates of pay, and often old, unsafe vehicles were brought back into service.

The Tories' plan is to include the sale in the next Conservative Party manifesto, and to sell off immediately should the Tories win the next election.

The privatisation would for sure mean the closing down of many unprofitable but socially essential lines, job losses, and worse pay and working conditions.

The rail unions and the Labour Party must start a campaign now to nip these plans in the bud. Stop the Tories in their tracks!



24 hour NUR strike by guards over refusal of management to allow workplace collection for the miners. John Smith IFL

# NUPE debates NHS

By Tony Dale

This week the annual conference of the public employees' union NUPE condemned the union leaders' handling of the fight for the NHS.

The conference voted two-to-one to refer back the Executive Council report. The report had not even



By Emma Collyer

For the third time in two years, the Directors of Newcastle Poly are attempting to remove courses from the City Centre site to Coach Lane, several miles away. This campus is not adequate for the courses already sited there.

Last time the Directorate changed its mind after an occupation. This time students blockaded the Poly boardrooms on 27 April to stop the Social Sciences Faculty Board rubber-stamping the proposals to move social science courses. That Board meeting was adjourned, and so was the next one.

By this time the Business and Professional Studies Faculty Board had voted to reject plans for a reorganisation linked to the plans to move social sciences. But it looks as if the Academic Board on 25 May will let the Directorate impose a move to Coach Lane. Students plan to lobby the meeting; realistically, the only way to block the move will be an occupation.

Socialist Student have argued for involving as many students as possible in the protests. And student union president Sigrid Fisher has been in contact with campus trade unions from the beginning of the campaign to discuss joint action and a half-day strike.

Messages of support to NPSU, 2 Sandyford Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

mentioned the regional days of action in February or the strikes on 14 and 15 March, and its only proposal was a round-Britain relay run with Olympic torches.

The only composite passed, however, called "on the TUC to coordinate a national campaign among affiliated unions against the rundown of the NHS". The union leaders will probably use the lack of a clear position to try to ignore the vote against their report.

NUPE members must keep up pressure on the EC to go back to the drawing board and come up with new proposals in line with the mood of conference. There are many obvious dates that can become the focus for a renewed offensive — 6 July, NHS day; October, Tory Party conference; and so on.

The local government debate at NUPE conference was depressing. No motions were passed critical of councils making cuts. The idea of a ballot for a one-day strike against privatisation, to be followed by further strikes, was heavily defeated.

The conference opposed the introduction of YTS into the NHS, and condemned Tom Pendry, a Labour MP sponsored by NUPE, for voting for the Alton Bill. He was warned that NUPE sponsorship will be withdrawn if he votes similarly again.

Workers' Liberty

88



summer school

# CPSA strike against Nazi

By Trudy Saunders

CPSA members throughout London have been balloting for a one-day strike on 26 May against the employment of fascist organiser Malcolm Skeggs in the civil service.

The ballot results so far look good. Skeggs is still employed at Hither Green DHSS office, where CPSA members have been on all-out strike for seven weeks. Management are now looking for a job for Skeggs at DHSS headquarters. He was refused a job at HQ library after library staff walked out in protest on 6 May.

If Skeggs is given another job at

DHSS HQ, we need to pull out the building where he is put on all-out strike immediately. We then need to spread the all-out strike to other London HQ and South London DHSS buildings, and, if that does not force management to back down, to the rest of London.

This dispute has opened a can of worms. Organised fascists have been pinpointed in offices in Tottenham and Edmonton. We need to mobilise the members on this issue, and say once and for all that we will not work with organised fascists and racists. The newly-elected 'moderate' NEC and 'moderate'/'84'-dominated DHSS Section Executive will undoubtedly try to hold members back. We must not let them get away with that.

London, 2-3 July

Special courses on:

- The national question
- Party and class
- Workers in Eastern Europe

There will also be an Introducing Marxism series for those new to socialism.

More details from Mark Osborn, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

On the whole the EC managed to drag the union further into the camp of 'new realism', though on some issues they were defeated, and on others they had to rely on emotional appeals from General Secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe.

Although the Broad Left meeting and the Manchester Health Shop Stewards meeting were both small, 200 people turned up to a packed fringe meeting to back the Benn-Heffer ticket and to applaud Tony Benn when he attacked the swing to the right in the labour movement.

# Manchester strike on cuts

By Sarah Cotterill

Manchester City Council's Cleansing Department has been brought to a standstill as action by workers at Water Street depot has spread to most other depots.

The dispute was caused by a lack of staff in the department. Voluntary Early Retirement and the jobs freeze have meant that there are not enough workers to sweep the streets and empty the bins.

The crunch came with the drivers being expected to cover both the street-sweeping and the refuse collections.

The strike quickly spread from Water Street throughout the city. At the time of writing 200 GMB members are out. There are pickets at the Manchester tips, and Salford Council drivers have refused to cross them.

On Thursday 19 May the council resorted to strike-breaking. Direct Works were used to clear rubbish from the Town Hall. But Direct Works unions have stated that they will ensure that none of their members shift refuse in future.

The strikers' anger spilled over into an occupation of a Committee Room in the Town Hall on Friday 20 May. The GMB is demanding that vacancies be filled.

A victory for the cleansing workers will be an example to other council workers faced with low staffing levels and deteriorating conditions.

## Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

# Star frauds

President Raygun's Strategic Defence Initiative ('Star Wars') has been going through various sticky patches right from the start.

Five years ago, Raygun 'launched' SDI (it had already been going for years), claiming that it would make nuclear weapons out of date.

But, according to Dr Robert Bowman, director of an earlier SDI and now an opponent, it had nothing to do with defence. It was really a drive for supremacy through the development of new offensive weapons, disguised as defensive.

In support of this theory, more and more evidence is accumulating that the SDI can never fulfil its supposed task of shooting all Russia's nuclear missiles out of the sky. The Congress Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), in a study of the SDI system, concluded (in a report leaked nearly a year after its completion) that it would suffer a 'catastrophic failure' if it was ever employed. The missiles would get through!

It would not be possible to program computers to destroy all the thousands of missiles. And the system could not cope with counter-measures which might include anti-satellite weapons and thousands of decoy warheads.

The problem is that software (computer programs) would have to be unbelievably complex and *totally* free of 'bugs' (errors). This is virtually impossible to achieve, even with exhaustive testing. Just such a bug aborted an earlier space shuttle launch. Two computers refused to talk to each other because their internal clocks were a fraction of a second out from each other.

The OTA thinks it unlikely that the situation will improve in the 'foreseeable future'.

The OTA also looked at the proposed space-based lasers and found that it will take ten years just to design an effective system, and another ten years to get the 100-plus lasers necessary into space. Even a space test of a prototype chemical laser is some three years away.

The American Physical Society has also been studying the feasibility of missile defence systems. A notable feature is the wide gap between the predictions of Star Wars optimists and pessimists.

## Mirror

Optimists assume that a space-based laser and mirror system would need to concentrate energy of 1 kilojoule (kJ) on a square centimetre of a rocket's metal skin to melt a hole in it and destroy it. (A one-bar electric fire gives out this energy each second). The system would need to destroy one missile per second.

Pessimists calculate that 100 kJ would be needed, and that 10 missiles a second would need to be destroyed. This is a thousand-fold difference.

The optimists' system requires 5 megawatt (MW) lasers and 4 metre mirrors. Mirrors of the necessary quality are available at this size, though the most powerful laser is described only as 'greater than a MW'. So the optimists' system is perhaps within sight.

But the pessimists' lasers would need to produce 320 MW with mirrors 15 metres across — 200 times more powerful, and 14 times bigger, respectively, than at present available. Worse, if the Russians were to coat their missiles in a heat-resistant layer of carbon, it would require lasers 10 or 20 times stronger.

More trouble with the SDI computers — they've been invaded by a German 'hacker' who didn't have to leave Germany to do it. Hackers are computer enthusiasts who enjoy 'breaking into' computer systems and 'looking around'. This one used a university computer to get in.

Once in the system, he searched the files for anything with the words 'nuclear', 'SDI' and 'Star Wars'. He failed to get hold of top secret information, but may have got valuable non-classified data.

Last year, the Chaos Computer Club, a group of German hackers, got into NASA's computers. Have the Russians also succeeded?

In another scandal, cold warrior *par excellence* and father of the H-Bomb Edward Teller (ET to his friends) has been accused of making incorrect and exaggerated claims for the feasibility of another Star Wars weapon — the X-ray laser. The result had been loads of money for ET's pet project. His critic was demoted as punishment, but the Congress General Accounting Office is investigating.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Kick out all the bureaucrats

# Safety before profits!

By John Bloxam

Monday night's fire on Sealink's freighter ferry, "Freeway" which killed one crew member and seriously injured another, tragically highlighted one of the main issues of the dispute between the National Union of Seamen and P&O ferries.

Time and again the union has insisted that the strike is over safety on the ferries. P&O bosses denied it, determined to push through savage cuts in manning levels and working conditions on their ships. For them it was profit first. As much profit as possible, whatever the consequences. The union rightly pointed this out. The P&O bosses' brutal lack of concern for safety in their drive to push up profit, risks "a repeat of the Zeebrugge tragedy."

Monday's tragedy shows how real the risk is. Last summer, months after Zeebrugge, P&O sailed passenger ferries without enough seafarers on board to form back-up fire crews.

**This was before they tried to impose the new manning levels.**

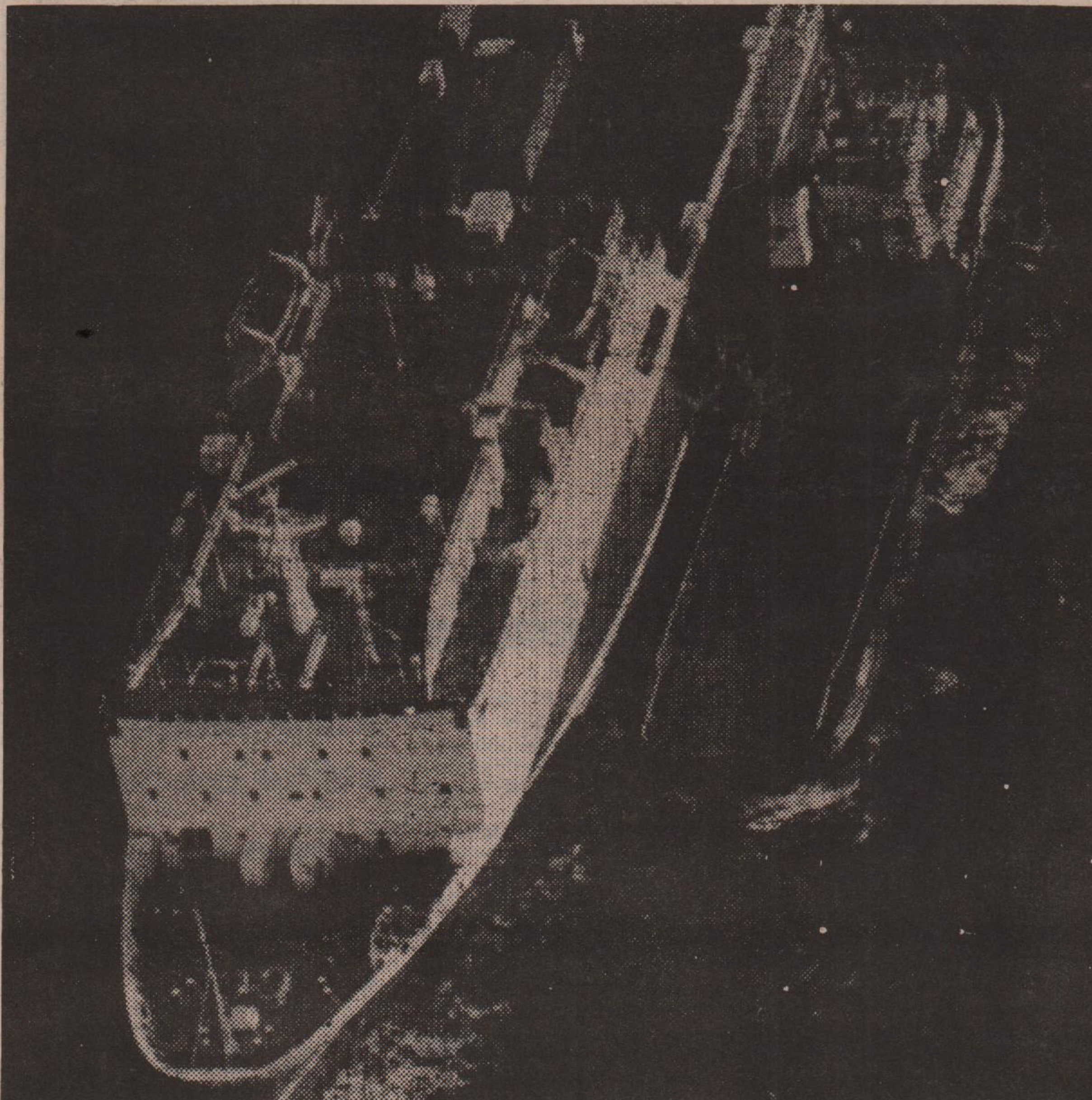
Fire is a major hazard because ferries often carry dangerous cargoes. The "Freeway" was reported to have been carrying 3 container loads of dangerous chemicals. Sealink claim they were using the existing manning levels on the ship, and not the new P&O style ones. But Sealink have also admitted before that they will have to rapidly go over to the new levels as part of their 'commercial war' with P&O. It requires little imagination to guess how much more tragic the results of Monday night's fire would have been if there were not enough seafarers on board to fight the fire.

Dover's NUS's strike is now in its 17th week. Last Saturday 3,000 trade unionists and labour movement activists marched through Dover in solidarity with the strikers. Solidarity is needed because P&O bosses are intent on bringing in as many strike-breaking ferries as possible, on aiming to demoralise the strikers. The company continues to rely on the courts to keep the union in a legal strait-jacket.

Unfortunately, the national NUS leaders continue to back down in the face of the hostile courts. They obeyed the courts and called off all solidarity action. Last week 200 striking Scottish seafarers on offshore oil supply vessels were presented with a company ultimatum — you will be re-employed if you sign a statement disavowing the union. On Thursday the NUS voted nationally to instruct these seafarers to sign the contracts and return to work on that basis.

The Dover strikers need all the help the labour movement can give them. Send donations and messages of support to:

• Send money to the Seafarers Hardship Fund, c/o Transport



House, Smith Square, London SW1 and local support committees.

• Aylesham Support Group, 61 Castle Drive, Whitfield, Dover, Kent. Tel: 0263 840202.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## TUC: Fight slave labour!

### From front page

wind up the MSC anyway — and the unions have already lost whatever influence they once had there. It would be much better for the union to pull out of the MSC in a principled protest against ET than to attempt to stay in, and be compromised by appearing to support (however 'critically') the new scheme.

This Wednesday the TUC General Council should finally take a decision on ET. The signs are that it will vote to oppose the scheme — though a further postponement of

the decision cannot be ruled out. But whatever the TUC decides, rank and file trade unionists, workers on existing schemes, and the unemployed must set about defeating ET now!

The TGWU Community Programme National Shop Steward Combine have called a national one day strike of CP workers and a demonstration against 'Workfare', outside the MSC's headquarters in Sheffield on Wednesday 1st July. We must ensure a massive response to this call, and make it the start of a great crusade against cheap labour schemes.

By Clive Bradley

The shake-up at the top of Hungary's ruling party could have far-reaching consequences.

Long-time boss Janos Kadar has been replaced by Karoly Grosz. Kadar was put in power after the crushing of the Hungarian revolution of 1956. Since the early 1960s he has pursued a policy of 'Gorbachevism before Gorbachev', but now he has been ousted by younger, keener Gorbachevites.

Hungary already has much more market economics, and a less tightly-controlled political system, than any other country in Eastern Europe except Yugoslavia. Votes against the platform are now being recorded at official 'trade union' and party congresses, and East Europe's first independent trade union since Solidarnosc has recently been set up in Hungary.

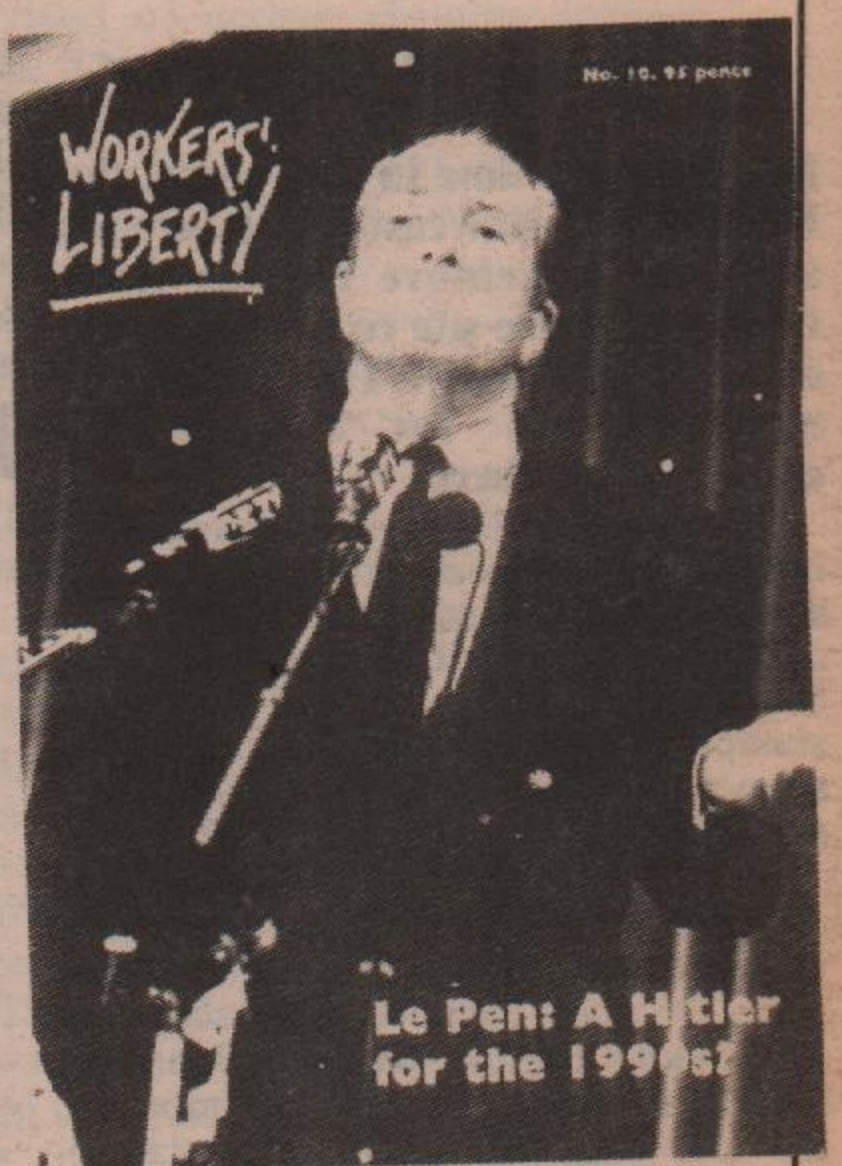
But the Hungarian economy is in trouble. Those who have ousted Kadar conclude that they must go faster and further along the road of 'reform'.

The old system of total planning from the top is too unwieldy for a modern economy. It leads to huge imbalances, generated by the vested interests in each sector of the economy, and enormous waste.

It can be replaced only by working-class democratic planning or the capitalist market. Workers' democracy is no option for the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe, so they shift towards the market. The problem in Hungary is that repeated 'market-oriented' reforms have still not created a market-oriented system: wherever the hard logic of the market would cut into vested interests, bureaucratic inertia has been strong enough to stop it.

For the labour movement, the key issue is our own attitude towards these developments. 'Glasnost' (openness) and 'perestroika' (restructuring) may create space within which independent workers' struggles can develop. We must support those struggles.

Neither Gorbachev nor Grosz — nor, of course, their 'traditionalist' opponents — is a friend to the working class.



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



# WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

# Back Benn and Heffer

# THATCHER IS A HYPOCRITE!

By Jean Lane

Margaret Thatcher is a hypocrite.

When health workers struck earlier this year to defend a free health service for all regardless of ability to pay, she accused them, of being heartless, of holding the lives of their patients to ransom for their own selfish ends. Now, it seems, not satisfied with starving our health service of funds, the Tories are preparing to allow people to jump the health queues if they can pay £300 or £400.

In November last year 30 people died in the Kings Cross tube massacre which happened as a result of the loss in jobs, cuts in funding and the private tendering of the public transport service. On the day of the fire some Kings Cross workers were disciplined by their management for handing out leaflets which warned passengers of the risk of fire on the tubes.

In March last year almost 200 people were drowned when the P&O ferry, The Herald of Free Enterprise, rolled over because profit was put before safety. Since then the owners of that same company have been trying to force a new contract on the seafarers which lengthens their hours, reduces their pay and cuts staff and safety standards aboard their ships. The workers from those ferries of the P&O company have fought and still are fighting after 18 weeks against these measures which must put more people's lives at risk.

As a direct result of Tory philosophy which puts profit first, people are dying and more people are at risk.

Yet last weekend in Edinburgh, Thatcher, speaking to the Church of Scotland about her religious beliefs, has the nerve to put herself up as the guardian of the country's morals.

She — the most steadfast Tory leader that the selfish, greedy, corrupt, profit-making owners of big business have ever had — whose policies have led to the murder of babies for want of an operation, left thousands in poverty and homeless because there's no profit to be made in council housing, deported members of families, splitting children away from their parents for the crime of being black, unleashed a police force onto workers, the black and gay communities which is virtually out of control and which can kill and maim with impunity, she has the gall to preach about good and evil.

And what does she preach? "We must work to use our talents to create wealth". Ha. Chance would be a fine thing. The miners wanted to work, but the pits were closed. The nurses want to work, but the hospitals are being padlocked.

She conveniently does not mention the talents that are wasted by being refused work. Nor the talents that are wasted by creating wealth for a few greedy bosses rather than for the good of society as a whole.

Hold on though. "The only way we can ensure that nobody is left without sustenance, help or opportunity, is to have laws to provide



By Michelle Carlisle

Women should support  
Benn and Heffer!

Tory policies over the past nine years have severely affected the lives of women. More and more cuts in local government spending have meant job losses for women and cuts in home helps, in nursery provision, in social services generally.

Tory housing policies force local authorities to sell off council housing while women struggle to bring up kids in cramped bed and breakfast hotels run by shady profiteers or in squalid, run-down private rented housing.

The new Income Support system means that the poorest in society — single women with kids — will lose out.

So what is the record of Kinnock and Hattersley? What has the Labour Party under their leadership done to put forward a real alternative?

They have refused to support healthworkers' strikes in defence of the NHS. That is a slap in the face for the overworked and underpaid NHS workers, and for all the women who will have to travel miles on public transport to visit kids in hospital because the local hospital has been closed.

It is a blow against all the women who will die because of inadequate cervical cancer screening, and against all the women who won't be able to get abortions on the NHS because facilities have been axed.

The Labour leaders are witch-hunting socialists in the Labour Party who join with their local communities in fighting cuts implemented by Labour councils.

Not only have the Labour leaders refused to put a three-line whip in votes on the Alton Bill, but Roy Hattersley actually *abstained* on the second reading of the Bill.

Clearly Hattersley has not just contempt for Labour Party policy on a woman's right to abortion, but also contempt for women.

No wonder many women have little faith in the Labour Party to do anything for them. At best we get bleeding-heart speeches in Parliament, at worst stabs in the back. What we certainly do not get is a positive fighting lead.

Benn and Heffer have stated that they stand firmly on the side of working-class struggles — on the side of the health workers and of those who fight against local authority cuts. Women should support the challenge by Benn and Heffer as part of a fight to reorient the Labour party back towards those whom it is supposed to represent — the poor, the oppressed, the working class.

Four women MPs have left the Campaign Group in protest at the decision to run Benn and Heffer. Clare Short has said that it's just another macho battle.

We must say loud and clear that she is wrong. The interests we have as women in supporting a left-wing challenge to the present leadership far outweigh any quibbles about the fact that the challengers are men.

Kinnock and Hattersley have consistently scabbed on women. We deserve better. Support Benn and Heffer!

Turn to back page

# Women against the

## Housing

Tory housing policy has two strands — selling off council housing (initially to individual tenants, now whole estates to property developers), and the deregulation of the private rented sector. They want more home-owners — creating a new layer of people who think they have a stake in the status quo — and more opportunities for profiteering by property developers and private landlords.

In many areas, council waiting lists now mean waiting forever. Many women have to live in cramped and squalid bed-and-breakfast accommodation with their kids. At the end of 1987, over 23,000 families were in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Private rented housing is insecure, overpriced, and often in disrepair. Women are particularly vulnerable to harassment by racketeering landlords. If you're a single mother on the dole, then you have virtually no chance of privately renting a house anyway. Most landlords simply won't take you.

In London it would cost £7,000 a year to build a house for a homeless family — and it costs £10,900 to keep them in bed and breakfast. The Tories prefer to pay money to the bed-and-breakfast landlords so that they can cut back publicly-owned housing. In terms of damage to health, human misery, and suffering, women are footing the bill.

## Lesbians

Section 28 of the Local Government Act became law on 24 May. Despite all the opposition to it — including the largest-ever demonstrations in this country for lesbian and gay rights — many people are still not sure what Section 28 will mean.

Many of its most worrying consequences will be for women and lesbians. It forbids the 'promotion' of so-called 'pretended family relationships'. In other words, lesbian mothers and their children can face persecution if they become visible.

Already lesbian mothers face ostracism and violence, and their children are bullied and jeered at in school by other children and by teachers. How is a young child supposed to cope with the suggestion that her or his mother is only 'pretending', and how is a lesbian mother supposed to react when the courts take her child away because their relationship is only 'pretend'?

This legislation will smash up families just because a lot of Tories don't like the idea of lesbianism.

Lesbians without children will also be at risk. Lesbians and gays have very few facilities, despite the fact that we pay rates and taxes like everyone else. Now helplines, nightclubs, bookshops and lesbian and gay centres which are funded by local authorities will be prohibited. Lesbians will lose out even more than gay men because women have far less access to alternative sources of money than do men.

And lesbians and gay men are now not allowed to 'promote' themselves under this law! But how can lesbians and gay men not promote themselves — unless they hide away and deny what they are?

With Section 28 enshrined in law, bigots and queer-bashers have an open door to persecute lesbians and gay men. Young lesbians and gay men will be isolated, and depression and suicide will increase.

Smash Section 28!



Barking hospital domestic staff strike against privatisation

## Local government and the cuts

The Conservative Government's deliberate cuts in money for local government since 1979 have meant the slashing of services in most local authorities.

Cuts in social services mean job losses for women workers, and put the responsibility for looking after the old, the ill and children back on to the shoulders of individual women.

Women who work for local authorities are under more and more pressure as posts go unfilled. Women wind up doing more work for appallingly low pay. Women with children under five become more and more isolated as nursery places dwindle and playgroups and creches close.

Local government cuts deprive women of essential services, and mean poor wages and worsening conditions for women workers.

## Benefits

Under the new social security rules payments for essential household clothing have gone. Maternity benefits have been axed. Now only women on Income Support can claim a lump sum of £80 — with single payments for expensive items like prams.

Child benefit — at present frozen at £7.25 a week — is under threat.

For the poorest families, and for the new social security rules are many women — even those with children — child benefit is their only independent income. And yet the Tories are planning to cut it.

Thatcher doesn't give a damn for women or their kids. What she and her cronies are after is women desperate to get their kids clothed, and prepared to work for a wage which is more than the dole.

# e Tories



Evicted squatter

## Women and work

In 1979 many of us assumed that the Tories would 'drive women back into the home' and out of the workplace.

We were wrong. More and more women are going out to work. Women are now 44% of the waged workforce, and it is estimated that women will get two-thirds of all the new jobs over the next five years.

But that's not the whole story. The growth in women's jobs is mainly in the service sector and in low-paid part-time work. Six million women in Britain are officially 'low-paid'. Part-time workers in Britain are among the worst-paid in Europe. They are excluded from the benefits and protection that full-timers have.

The bosses need a cheap and flexible workforce — and women fit the bill.

The decimation of social services and child-care provision means that women need part-time work to fit in with caring for children or elderly or sick relatives. The Tories need women's unpaid labour in the home, and cheap labour in the workplace — to boost capitalist profits.

## Abortion

Abortion facilities have been particularly badly hit by the health cuts. Day care abortion clinics have been closed, and waiting lists have got longer. Several Health Authorities have imposed their own time limit on NHS abortions — the 12th week of pregnancy.

As a result, a growing proportion of abortions are done privately. It is about 55% now. A private abortion can cost anything between £120 and £300. How many working-class women can easily lay their hands on that sort of money?

We've got rid of the Alton Bill — but it looks as if the Tory health cuts could still drive women to the backstreet butchers.

## How can we fight back?

Time and again women have organised both against Tory attacks and against the sexism which infests the labour movement.

What we need is a movement to knit these struggles together, a mass working-class-based women's movement which can fight on all the issues which affect working-class women, and which seeks to involve the mass of women who suffer under the capitalist system.

Women's Fightback aims to set about building such a movement. Join us! Contact: Women's Fightback, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

# After Alton Where next?

Women's Fightback held our "After Alton" conference last month and about 70 women from different Labour Party women's sections, Women's Fightback groups and student unions came along.

**By Trudy Saunders**

The theme of the conference was "Where next after Alton?" Many struggles are and have been going on involving women: the teachers, the health workers, the miners, the P&O seafarers, the women fighting Alton's attack on abortion and the Government's attacks on lesbians and gay men through Clause 28 of the local government bill. And yet the women's movement as a movement, has disappeared, and each of these struggles are being fought singly. The government are picking off one group after another. What we argued at our conference was that links must be made between the women involved in different struggles. We are all fighting the same enemy. We must join forces and build a working class based women's movement that can both unite the forces against government attacks on women and also build a serious campaigning women's section in the trade union and labour movement; forcing that movement, our movement — to organise a fightback.

So, we heard how women have organised to fight government attacks in the workshop on "Women and the miners' strike". We also discussed how women at work can organise around the issues that con-

cern them, such as porn and sexual harassment. There were workshops which discussed the past experience of women organising in the Labour Party and particularly in local government, getting sucked into the municipal socialism which side-tracked so many women in the Labour Party from the real struggle. And there was a very lively workshop on how to set up a campaigning Labour Party Women's Section where the women from Leasowe in Wallasey explained how they got their section off the ground by campaigning on local estates about the basic issues which affect working class women.

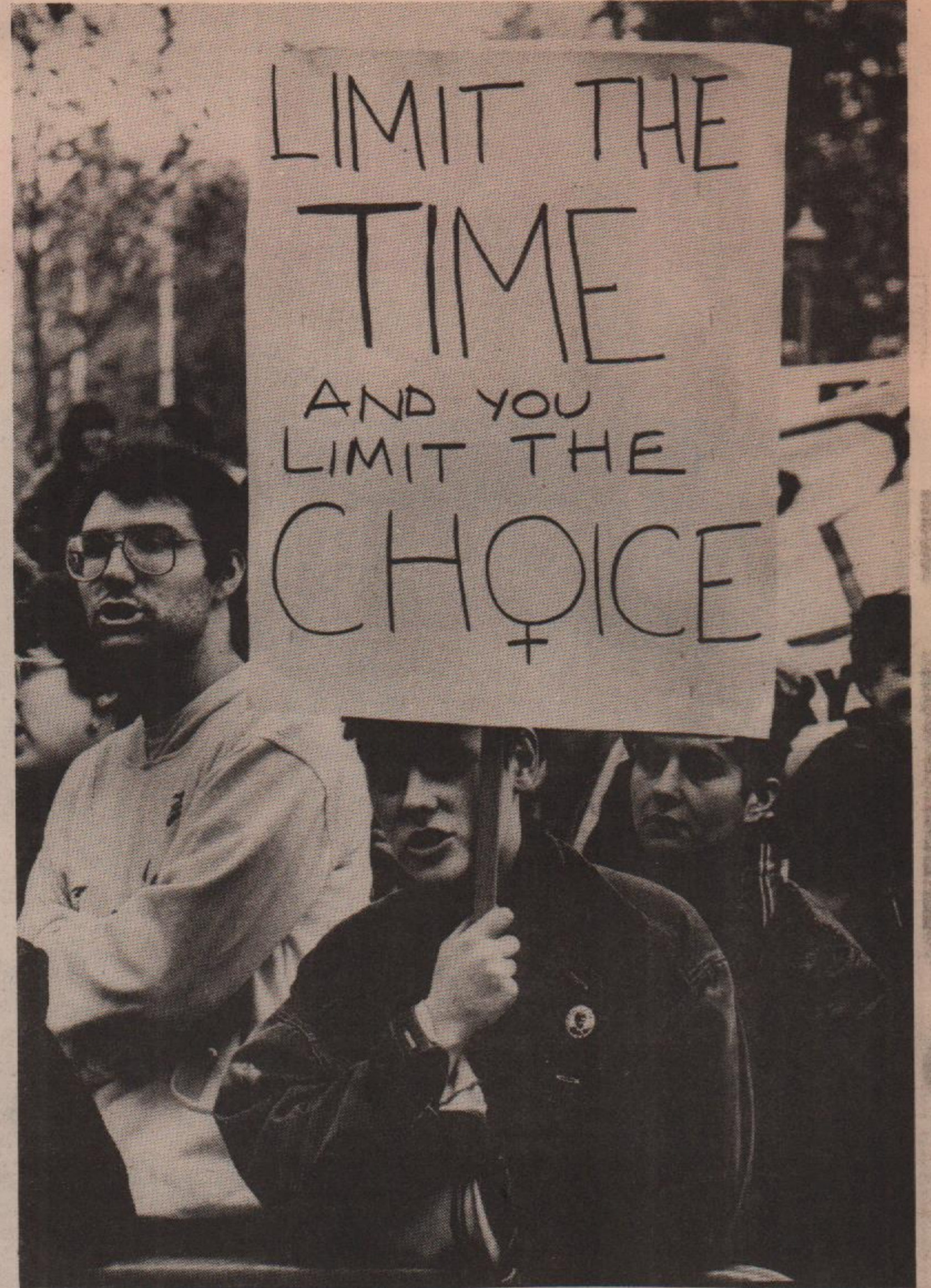
It was argued that the women's movement should be based on the politics of socialism, because, ultimately real freedom and equality cannot be gained within the capitalist system which thrives upon the divisions within the working class. The struggle for women's liberation, like the struggle for socialism is international. Women all over the world are fighting attacks on them as women and as workers and these struggle too must be linked together. The conference heard a speaker from the women's section of CARI ( Campaign against Repression in Iran) who told us of conditions under which many women in Iran live and how, despite them, women are positively involved in the fightback against

the Khomeini regime and against the war with Iraq.

She also told us that it was important that the Alton Bill was defeated and that women unite for this purpose, because if it succeeded and abortion in Britain was further restricted this would be a step backwards for women everywhere. But its defeat and the uniting of women for this purpose would be a boost not just for women in Britain but also for women in her own country and other parts of the world too.

Finally, the conference discussed the need to build support for the Benn-Heffer challenge for leadership of the Labour Party, through the setting up of a Women for Benn and Heffer campaign. If women are to play a full, active and equal part in the labour movement then that movement must be made more open and less bureaucratic. It must also be prepared to back the struggles of workers such as the miners and healthworkers, and place itself firmly on the side of the class it is supposed to represent.

And it must be prepared to challenge head on and to reverse the cuts and privatisation policies of the Tories which are designed to make our class pay for their crisis and which have an even more drastic effect on the lives of women who end up having to pick up the pieces. We must have a Labour Party which is prepared to stand by the policies democratically decided by its membership at annual conference — for example, free abortion on demand — and to act on those policies



without letting MPs off the hook by giving them the right to vote according to their consciences. This is the kind of movement that Benn and Heffer's challenge represents. It opens up the way for democracy, political debate and accountability in our Labour Party and union movement.

It is unlike the witch-hunting, personality politics of the likes of Kinnock who showed his allegiance

to his class and the class struggle by turning up to a miners picket line once in 12 months in a chauffeur-driven limo, and who throws his hands up in horror at the thought of breaking the Tory laws.

A democratic movement can only benefit women who are given space to organise, to demand an equal voice inside it and to call to account those who do not take their concerns seriously.

# NUS Women organise

Chrissie Dixon and Lynn Richardson are two of the women NUS (National Union of Seafarers) members who have been sacked by the P&O ferry company and have now been on strike against the company for 18 weeks. They are members of two of the women's support groups, **Dover and Deal**, that have been built in the area to help raise funds and solidarity for the strike. They spoke to Women's Fightback about their dispute.

**WF: Why were you sacked?**  
Chrissie: We've been sacked since 17th March because we wouldn't sign the new contract.

**Chrissie:** Whereas we did 24 hours on ship and 48 hours off, they now want us to do 24 on and

24 off and for less pay.

**Lynn:** Not only that, but we cannot leave the ship until our replacement comes. I work in the perfume shop. Now, if my replacement doesn't come to relieve me I've got to stay on board for another 24 hours and then follow on with my own watch again. So I could be on board for 3 days.

**Chrissie:** Also in that 24 hours on board you're not guaranteed any sleep time. You're on call. And it's hard enough to sleep on board anyway because it's so noisy. But they expect us to do 24 on and 24 off and still come back into work all perky and fresh to carry out our duties and it's impossible.

**Lynn:** You have to work like that for three weeks on and one week off all year round.

**WF: What support have you been getting from the Labour Party and Trade Unions?**

**Lynn:** They're really 100 per cent

behind us. We're getting lots of big donations. The local Labour Party gave us this building when our union buildings were taken off us as part of the sequestration. The media have done nothing for us.

**Chrissie:** They don't tell the truth.

**Lynn:** That's probably because they're in P&O's back pocket. They'll interview you and when you come to read it, it's all changed. Even on the TV they don't publish anything that is really going on.

**Chrissie:** Like, for instance, how on those ships at the dock now they've got 15 bankers where they would normally have one. The P&O management are taking on any scab with a ticket that they can get to make up the numbers, but it doesn't mean they have a crew or that the ship is safe. And they've got five assistant pursers when there are usually only two. The media says they've got enough crew. But

they haven't really. They're all in the wrong jobs.

**Lynn:** And they try and say that the union is crumbling since they took our funds away. But we've just got back from Bournemouth and Southampton and the response we're getting is fantastic.

**WF: Can you tell me about what women's support groups have been set up and what they are doing?**

**Chrissie:** There are two in Dover, one in Deal and there's one in Ramsgate and one in Canterbury too.

**Lynn:** They include women strikers and wives of the men strikers. They are to look after the strikers' families.

**Chrissie:** They go out fundraising and use the donations to keep the food kitchens going.

**Lynn:** You get a few women on the picket lines as well.

**WF: What do you want supporters to do to help you in this dispute?**

**Chrissie:** Well, send money. Tell

people what is going on. At Bournemouth yesterday different women came up to us and said they were going to set up support groups and to start collections which would be sent to the women's support groups down here.

**WF: Have you had help from the women organised during the miners strike?**

**Lynn:** Yes, we've got the support of the miners wives who've done it all before and they came straight round and said 'You've got to do this' and 'You've got to do that'. So we were boxed off straight away. **WF: Have either of you been involved in any kind of women's group or politics before?**

**Lynn:** No. Only I had 20 years in the army so I used to run the wives club and things like that. But nothing like this, you know, nothing political.

**Chrissie:** I didn't realise how militant I was until this strike.

# HYPOCRITE!

From page 1

health and education, pensions for the elderly, succour for the sick and disabled." Is this another U-turn? No. "But intervention by the state must never become so great that it effectively removes personal responsibility".

St Paul apparently knew a lot about personal responsibility. She quotes him: "If a man will not work he shall not eat." And there we have it. If you're out of work, homeless, hungry, sick or in prison it's your own fault.

It should not surprise or concern us that Thatcher is religious, that she believes in God. That does not

make her better than us. It does not put right on her side. Religion has never been in the interest of the working class. It tells us that if we suffer in this world we will be rewarded in the next. But the suffering in this world is unnecessary. It has been caused by real, living people who believe in the subjugation of the working class so that they can live in luxury.

We should not be content to wait for this mythical paradise in the next world, but to create it in this one. We can do that by fighting for socialism, fighting the evil of capitalism and profit.

Thatcher should be careful. She should not be God-fearing. She should fear the working class.

1. We aim to build a mass campaign of action against the major attacks being mounted on women's rights, such as the right to control our own fertility, the right to health and childcare facilities, the right to work, the right to live in this country with the partner of our choice, the right to maternity leave and job security for mothers, the right to wages, benefits and legal status independent of a man, the right to organise as trade unionists and as women.

These rights and many other, many not yet won or consolidated, must be defended and extended in face of the onslaught against women by this government.

2. Such a mass campaign has to be part of a labour movement response to the Tory attacks. We aim to provide a focus for united action by women already organised in the labour movement and in campaigns and groups of the women's move-

# Where we stand

ment, and to involve women who do not relate to these movements.

3. We aim to strengthen the position of women in the labour movement, and fight for it to take our needs as a priority. We will encourage and aid the organisation and consciousness of women as women in the labour movement, and fight for the aims and demands of the women's movement in the unions and labour organisations.

We fight to change the sexist atmosphere in the labour movement, and for positive discrimination and changes in arrangements and practices to enable women to play a full

part at all levels. We fight for the implementation of the TUC Charter of Women in the unions.

We fight against the labour movement's reflecting in any way the oppressive ideas about a woman's role, which can undermine women's ability to fight back, and dangerous divide the movement. We ally with those fighting for rank and file control, democracy and accountability, against those who hold back and sell out our fight. Never again a 'Labour' government that ignores party decisions, serves the bosses and bankers, and beats down workers' living standards and struggles.

4. We aim to co-ordinate and assist those women in the Labour Party, and the trade unions, who are fighting for these aims.

5. We are for direct action, solidarity as women and as workers, and for maximum mobilisation for all actions against the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses us.

Published by Women's Fightback, PO Box 823, London