

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

**SOCIALIST ORGANISER**  
CPSA Conference Special  
Ellis fiddles while jobs burn  
**The fightback starts now!**  
CPSA Conference Special  
4 page pull-out inside

Students' struggle sparks workers' revolt

# China: all power to the workers!

"We workers labour hard and we suffer and are patient for the common good. We have been waiting until now. But our monthly income is worth less than a corrupt official spends on a bottle of wine..."

Our dissatisfaction has been suppressed until now but soon it will erupt like a volcano...we want to stand shoulder to shoulder with the students."

Poster in Tiananmen Square, signed by 'The workers of Beijing'

By Cheung Siu Ming

The student demonstrators in Beijing have so far won a significant victory in their struggle against China's rulers. They have successfully called the Communist leader Deng Xiaoping's bluff by marching around the city and again entering Tiananmen Square, over 100,000 of them sweeping aside the police and their blockades.

Workers cheered and applauded the students and shouted that the government should leave them alone.

Troop manoeuvres and dark threats of bloodshed had failed to intimidate the students and the increasing number of workers and residents joining the demonstrations.

Elsewhere in other provinces and major cities like Shanghai and Nanjing, there have also been student unrest and demonstrations, taking their lead from events in the capital.

According to western press reports last week, the protest movements in the rest of the country have not so far reached similar levels of intensity — college and government authorities have been careful to make minor concessions, while the students have not yet gathered sufficient strength and confidence, and the workers are not yet taking significant actions.

All this, however, could change rapidly, as the ingredients for the protest movement are there in all of China's major urban centres, and communications are getting better all the time, between the cities as well as with the outside world.

As student delegations from all over China have started to converge in Beijing, the regime has agreed to meet the 'official' National Federa-

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# China: all power to the workers!

from page 1

tion of Students, banned the import of luxury cars and has broadcast TV film footage showing some students reading out their demands.

However, these 'concessions' have been denounced by the students as a cheap con-trick. The students are now demanding recognition for their newly-formed movement and for direct talks, and are threatening yet another demonstration.

In any case, it is likely as we go to press that there will be celebrations to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the May 4th student demonstration in 1919.

It could prove to be the most explosive May 4th for 70 years!

There are external and internal ingredients for the present events in China.

Externally, the continuation of Gorbachev's glasnost policies in Russia and corresponding events in Eastern Europe are having a profound influence. The recent elections in Russia and the purge of conservatives from the Politburo and Central Committee, however controlled, are still unprecedented events for the Eastern bloc.

This, together with the Polish government's recognition of Solidarnosc and the events in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, etc, all help to inspire students and workers in China to start raising their voices.

Internally, the regime's economic policy is in disarray. The modernisation drive has led to sections of the peasantry enriching themselves through hoarding and speculation in the free markets, while others have left the land and entered the cities. Neglect of collective agricultural enterprises such as irrigation, flood and drought protection, pest control, etc, have made the bad harvests of the past three years a lot worse than might be otherwise.

Massive inflation in food and other prices have made workers restless, with the unemployed ranks swelled by those leaving the land.

Instead of importing western technology and know-how to modernise production, consumer goods have flooded in, accompanied by massive bribery and corruption of cadres at all government levels.

The top rulers have never been so divided before, though it now seems that Deng, who overthrew the 'Gang of Four' and set the economic reforms rolling a decade ago by opening post-Mao China to western market forces, has joined with the conservatives in applying the brakes, not just to the economy but on all fronts.

Their moral authority is at a historic low, and their threat of force has just been ignored by the students who are winning the hearts and minds of Beijing's workers, residents and even sections of the police.

There can be no doubting the ruthlessness of the ruling Communist Party, as witnessed in Tibet recently where brute force was used to suppress demonstrations for regional autonomy. However, they have calculated (correctly) that using the army now would swing the working class into action behind the students and further weaken their control. They are therefore biding their time, and waiting for the May 4th events to pass before choosing their moment to defuse and demobilise the mass movement.

The mass movement is throwing up its own leaders, demands and organisations. These appear sharpest in Beijing — the students are not starting from a blank sheet as they have before them the Democracy Movement of a decade ago (whose leaders are still in jail), and the memory of the 1987 demonstrations. They also have history on their side, as May 4th is a powerful date in Chinese revolutionary history.

Whatever happens next, this movement for political democracy deserves the support of socialists throughout the world.

The demands on the regime — which all socialists in the UK should support — include:



Chinese students read wall newspapers

- the release of all political prisoners;
- freedom of the press, speech, association and assembly;
- the right to demonstrate and to strike;
- the recognition of the new independent student and workers' organisations;
- the bringing of all corrupt government officials to account;

- direct negotiations with, and no victimisation of, students and workers involved in demonstrations and strikes;
- the political rehabilitation of Ch'en Tu-Hsiu, leader of the May 4th movement of 1919 and founding general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party. (He became a Trotskyist in the late 1920s.)

It is vital that the labour and student movement in the UK play a part in supporting the struggle for democracy in China. Resolutions and letters of support from labour movement bodies should be sent to the Chinese Embassy at 31 Portland Place, London W1, with a copy to the Campaign for Socialist Democracy in China, c/o CIAC, 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1.

## May 4, revolutionary anniversary

By Cheung Siu Ming

**M**ay 4th is the potent anniversary of the student demonstrations in 1919 against the Versailles treaty's 'reparcelling' of Chinese territory between European powers and against Japanese imperialism in particular.

It was the symbolic event of China's Renaissance — a powerful movement for modernisation, for literature accessible to the people, for science and democracy. It was led by Ch'en Tu-Hsiu, father of Chinese Marxism, and later the Chinese Communist Party's first general secretary.

To this day, the CCP leaders have failed to acknowledge Ch'en's massive contribution to the Chinese Revolution, and have instead distorted their own party's history with lie after lie. This is because of Ch'en's role in the second Chinese revolution of 1925-7, where he consistently refused to accept the correctness of the Stalin-controlled Communist International's policy of subordinating the young CCP's political independence as the price of an 'alliance' with the national bourgeois Kuomintang.

He carried out Stalin's policy "under discipline", against his own better judgement. Ch'en was made a scapegoat by Stalin after the defeat of the revolution, but he refused to go quietly. On reading Russian documents smuggled back to China in 1929 he discovered that he and Trotsky had independently drawn the same conclusions about

the fatal mistakes of the Communist International's policies.

Ch'en and 81 prominent leaders of the CCP signed a statement declaring themselves to be supporters of the Trotskyist Left Opposition. They were promptly expelled from the CCP.

After a long period of imprisonment by Chiang Kai Shek's KMT dictatorship, and subsequent illness, Ch'en died in 1942.

Both the KMT and the CCP

regimes have denigrated Ch'en and distorted his historic role.

Without Ch'en, there would have been no May 4th movement. He was the towering key intellectual figure and political leader who introduced Marxism and Bolshevism to China. It is high time that his role and the role of Chinese Trotskyism was acknowledged and his real record made available to the Chinese working class and to serious historians.

## Campaign set up

**A**s a group of Chinese residents in London we wish to express our concern over the recent demonstrations staged by students and workers in China demanding democracy.

We believe that no society can secure long term economic growth and adequate living standards for its people without genuine democracy. We wholeheartedly support the students' and workers' demands on the Chinese Government to improve their economic and social conditions as well as making fundamental changes to its political system.

The students' and workers' demands for freedom of speech, press, assembly and association are fair and just. We believe these are basic human rights. The Chinese Government should grant these rights to the people of China.

We believe that China should abolish the present one-party system and introduce a multi-party system to implement socialist democracy. China should also establish an accountable judiciary and release all political prisoners immediately.

We are opposed to the slander put forward by the "People's Daily" that the recent demonstration was "a planned anti-party and anti-government conspiracy". We believe the demands for reform

represent the wishes of many Chinese people. We call on the Chinese Government to cease its repression of students and workers and to meet their demands, otherwise can there be hope for reform in China.

**Model Resolution:**

This (union branch/Labour Party ward) supports the recent demonstrations by students and workers in China and their demands for:

- The release of all political prisoners, including Wei Jingshen, Wang.
- Freedom of press, speech, assembly and association.
- The right to strike and to demonstrate.
- Recognition of the newly formed students and workers organisations.
- No victimisation of workers and students involved in recent strikes and demonstrations.

Please show your support by:

- Passing the motion and send us a copy, and a copy to the Chinese Embassy, 31 Portland Place, London W1.
- Invite a speaker from our campaign to your next meeting.
- Send us a donation to enable us to continue our work.

**Campaign for Socialist Democracy in China**  
c/o CIAC  
68 Shaftesbury Avenue  
London W1

tel: 01-836 8291

## Students mount picket in solidarity

By Nick Clarke

**M**anchester students picketed the city's Chinese consulate on 28 April.

The picket, called by supporters of Socialist Student, was organised jointly with the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc.

As the national press reported an unstoppable tide of student protestors surging through Peking, cheered by hundreds of thousands of workers, bringing the city to a standstill, members of Socialist Student were collecting signatures and petitioning the Chinese government not to use force against

the demonstrators.

A delegation from the picket attempted to hand in a petition of 300 names to the Chinese Vice-Consul in Manchester, but he refused to accept it. He said students should be using the legal channels for protest, but refused to comment when pressed on the issue of an independent student union in China.

There are obvious lessons from China for our own struggle. Our own student movement has a good record of supporting student protest in South Africa, for example.

On the Eastern Bloc the record is not so good. We as socialist students have an obligation to raise the consciousness of the student movement to demand liberation and democracy for all students and workers, east and west.

# Ten years of Thatcher

## EDITORIAL

It has been a long ten years. But if Tory rule starts crumbling now — and there are signs that it just might — then it won't be the first time that a regime has faltered at the zenith of its self-congratulation.

Think back to 1959. The Tories celebrated their third election victory in a row, with the triumphant slogan 'You've never had it so good'. Learned professors wrote about the collapse of socialism and the disintegration of the working class.

Four years later the Tories were in chaos. The Profumo scandal was only part of it. Mass revolt against the Tories' free-market housing policies and against nuclear weapons underpinned the about-turn.

Consider De Gaulle. In early 1968, after nearly ten years in power, he still appeared to be the saviour of France. His electoral majority was unshakeable. The trade unions and student unions had steadily lost members.

Pundits praised De Gaulle's skill at extricating France from its colonial empire and reorienting it with a rapidly-expanding and technocratically-planned capitalist economy.

A few months later De Gaulle was reeling from the greatest general strike in history. He survived it, but only for a while; he had to step down the next year.

Or look at China now. A few months ago China was the one great success story of market-oriented economic reform in the Eastern Bloc. Deng Xiaoping's policy of reintroducing individual peasant farming, giving more scope to profits and free prices, and opening up China to international trade, had generated rapid growth, and grassroots pressure for democracy had been kept firmly under control. No longer!

We're not likely to see struggles



The miners were beaten because the trade union leaders refused solidarity — and the socialists who fought for solidarity were too weak

of the scope of China's, or France's in 1968, in Britain in the coming months. But there are signs of light at the end of the Thatcherite Dark Ages.

In the London Underground, on the buses, on the docks, at the BBC, in engineering, on the railways, and in the power stations, there are beginnings of the biggest wave of industrial resistance since the miners' strike. Workers are starting to regain confidence.

And all the opinion surveys

published on Thatcher's tenth anniversary confirm that, while the Tories may have cowed the working class temporarily, they have not brainwashed it.

Big majorities affirm stubbornly that they want an economy more based on social control and public welfare, not profit and private enterprise; that trade unions are necessary to defend worker's interests; and that they want more equality in place of this society

where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

An overwhelming majority oppose the Tories' poll tax.

This broad opposition to Tory policies, and the beginnings of regained confidence, could be turned into a powerful movement against Thatcher. The biggest obstacle is Neil Kinnock and the Labour Party leaders.

They are frantically steering in the opposite direction — towards conciliation with Thatcherism. In

Labour's Policy Reviews, to be finalised by the National Executive on 8-9 May, Kinnock plans to scrap almost all Labour's radical commitments — unilateral nuclear disarmament, restoration of trade union rights, renationalisation.

We can't afford this backpedalling. The new stirrings on the industrial front make it doubly urgent for activists to organise within the Labour Party to resist Kinnock's plans to swing Labour to the right.

## 400 issues of Socialist Organiser

This week we celebrate the 400th issue of Socialist Organiser. We started as a monthly in October 1978, went fortnightly in 1980, and became weekly in 1981.

Our paper was launched by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, a grouping of Labour left-wingers formed to fight for a socialist voice within Labour's 1979 election campaign. We campaigned for a Labour vote but also for support for workers' struggles against a re-elected Labour government.

Our orientation has always been towards a fight within the Labour Party rather than commentary from the

sidelines. But that has never meant submitting to the rhythms or dominant prejudices of the Labour Party as it exists.

The Tories' election victory in 1979 was quickly followed by a sharp debate in the columns of Socialist Organiser. What should Labour left-wingers do in the one place where they had real influence and real possibilities of mass mobilisation — local government?

The majority of us said that they should refuse to pass on Tory cuts — whether through direct cuts in services or through rent or rate rises — and use the councils as a platform to mobilise working class communities to fight for more money from the government.

A minority, including Ken Livingstone and the people who later

launched *Labour Briefing*, said that left-wing councils should instead 'buy time' with rate rises. We argued that it would be the start of a slide into the role of administrators within the system rather than fighters against it — and subsequent events resoundingly proved us right! The rate-raisers hived off from Socialist Organiser to start *Briefing*.

They said we were sectarians. We proved them wrong by initiating two broad campaigns in 1980 — the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy, which spearheaded the fight for mandatory reselection of MPs and election of Labour's leader and deputy leader, and Women's Fightback.

Women's Fightback, like the women's movement generally, has had ups and downs over the last nine years, but remains the only regular working class socialist women's newspaper.

Within the broad campaign for Labour democracy, we argued for a fight for a workers' government — for reshaping the labour movement so that it could hold a Labour government to account, make that government base itself on the movement rather than on the established state machine, and force it to start an assault on capitalism.

We warned that a struggle for Labour Party reforms alone would lead to a backlash and a witch-hunt; the left had to take the fight for democracy into the unions, and equip the whole movement with policies capable of tackling capitalist privilege and power. Unfortunately, our voice was too small.

In 1983 we defiantly warned against illusions in the Labour Party's new, apparently left-wing, leader: 'Not Our Dream' was our headline comment on the Kinnock-Hattersley 'dream ticket'. Since then we have fought tenaciously against the Kinnockite backlash.

In 1984-5 Socialist Organiser threw every ounce of weight we had behind the miners' strike. We campaigned for solidarity action and for a general strike against the Tories.

Our very first front page, in 1978, called for mobilisation to defend the Asian community of Brick Lane, in East London, against a fascist march. The Anti-Nazi League had a rally that day, and *Socialist Worker* and *Socialist Challenge* (forerunner of *Socialist Action*) preferred to tell people to go to the ANL pop concert in South London.

The fight against racism and for internationalism has always been one of our main themes.

When Socialist Organiser was launched, it was one of the very few voices on the left saying that 'Britain out!' was no good as a socialist response to the Common Market; instead we needed to respond to the internationalisation of capital with working class internationalism. Rejection of the idea of trying to cram capitalism back into a national framework has now become common on the left; the positive argument for working class internationalism still finds few advocates apart from us.

Other international issues have marked us off from the rest of the left

— Afghanistan, where we argued for a Russian withdrawal from the start; South Africa, where we have argued for a workers' party based on the non-racial trade unions; the Falklands War, which we said should be opposed on both sides, Britain's and Argentina's; the Middle East, where we have argued for 'two states' in Israel/Palestine.

But we haven't just marked our selves off: consistently, throughout our eleven years, Socialist Organiser has had a broader and livelier range of debate and discussion in its columns than any other paper of the left.

Three themes highlight our distinctive ideas: the fight to transform the labour movement, rather than adapting to it as it exists or trying to build our 'own' new labour movement in parallel; the call for workers' liberty East and West, rather than any sort of double standards; and the insistence on consistent democracy as the basic answer to national conflicts, rather than the search for 'good nations' to be championed and 'bad nations' to be crushed, and rather than abstract calls for socialism in the style of Militant.

These are ideas which, we think, fit us well to play a useful role in the struggles to come — on one condition. Too often in the last 11 years we've said the right thing at the right time, but to no effect, because our forces were too small, too weak to have sufficient impact.

Help make sure it's different in the next round of struggle. Join us in making the ideas of workers' liberty a real force in the labour movement!

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

Karl Marx

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## 4 LETTERS

### Racist clampdown



Campaigning against deportation.  
Photo: Lanre Fehintola, IFL

#### GRAFFITI

Last year 1,388 people were deported, 30% more than in 1987. According to the Joint Committee for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) this rise is because the right to appeal has been removed and Immigration Officers have — since last August — had their powers greatly increased.

A confidential memorandum by Home Office lawyers backs up the JCWI stating that hundreds have been deported illegally. Immigration Officers have been turning up on peoples' doorsteps with deportation orders, sometimes only hours after the end of their period of leave.

Under the 1971 Immigration Act only the Home Secretary or Home Office officials have the power to "decide to deport" and there is no provision to delegate such matters to Immigration Officers.

The government is currently contesting two test cases on the issue before the Immigration Tribunal.

**T**rain the workers without jobs to do the jobs without pay" has been a popular graffiti slogan altering in the interests of truth the government's proud billboards boasting about Employment Training.

The reaction of the unemployed to the scheme clearly backs up the sentiments of the spray painters. According to the Unemployment Unit, during the first four months of the scheme, 220,000 out of 328,100, or two-thirds of potential trainees did not join the training programme.

The drop out rate between the 'Action Plans' of the Training Agents and the placement with a training manager was 26%.

A Department of Employment spokeswoman claims that the scheme was relatively new and experiencing teething problems.

Perhaps the DoE should ask the 'potential trainees' the reason for the schemes lack of success. They would find that it has more to do with the fact that trainees receive only £10 top-up on their normal benefit, for what the Unemployment Unit calls questionable training.

But then the government doesn't want to know about such things.

Has anyone got a spray can?

**M**eanwhile on the other side of the tracks, a survey published by Dan and Bradstreet, the business information company, reports that Britain's leading 100,000 companies made a median return on capital last year of 15.8 per cent, up from 13.4 per cent. In plain English, profits are up a fair old wack.

Whilst sales are steady profits per employee have risen significantly. Translation: the bosses are making more money out of each worker.

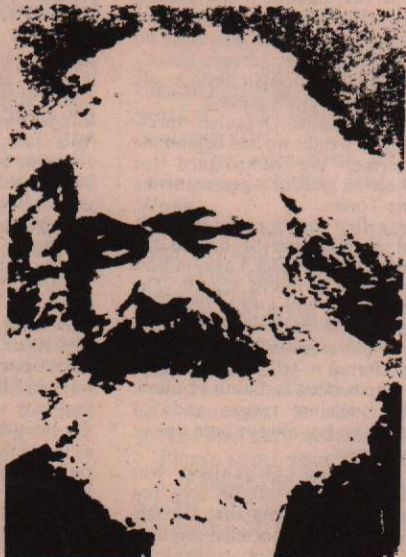
The highest rates of return were in the construction industry, services and manufacturing. But author of the report, Geoffrey Smith, issues a stern warning to all those benevolent bosses who naturally want to share the profits with the workers who created them. He warns that the level of profit could be reduced by some 30% if 5% pay increases are not tied to productivity improvements.

## Workers' Liberty '89

Saturday,  
Sunday July  
8th and 9th  
Caxton House,  
St John's Way  
Archway,  
North London

Sessions include:

- A new direction for the left?
- Glasnost: is it a revolution?
- Is there a ruling class in Russia?
- Iran: ten years after the revolution
- Solidarity forever? Trade unions into the 1990s.
- Leninism after Lenin
- A history of British labour
- Imperialism, nationalism and socialism
- Introducing Marxism



**A weekend of discussion and debate organised by Socialist Organiser and Socialism and Revolution**



## Afghanistan: we have to choose

#### LETTER

**T**ony Dale insists that there is no choice to be made between the Stalinist government in Afghanistan and the various Islamic fundamentalist groups that want to overthrow it.

We all know about the mullahs (although Tony argues that maybe a victory for the mullahs would be less ferocious than we suppose); but the Najibullah government is too responsible for the years of Russian occupation to be supported, even critically and as a stop-gap alternative. Progressives in Afghanistan have no side, and need prefer the victory of neither.

Certainly Socialist Organiser readers are familiar with the idea that in war we can oppose both sides. But I don't think it follows that such an approach is possible in any war. What did 'defeatism on both sides' mean in the Iran-Iraq war, for example?

It meant that the basic argument of Iranian or Iraqi socialists would be that the oppressed of both countries should stop fighting each other and fight their own regimes instead; it meant viewing the defeat of 'their own' regime as a small matter if it was merely the casualty of growing international solidarity. It meant also, on the Iranian side, rejection of Khomeini's claim to be 'defending the revolution' and exposure of the Iranian regime's fundamentally aggressive ambitions.

Following US intervention we argued, against for example the SWP, that the war had not really changed, and that the US had absolutely no intention of imposing a new regime on Iran by conquest (an analysis 100% vindicated, which the SWP might think about, incidentally).

But opposition to both (or all) governments involved in the war was based on concrete analysis of what the war was actually about; it wasn't a general expression of distaste for all concerned. We said that in the hypothetical event of an American attempt to conquer Iran, we'd be for the defence of Iran.

Surely, in Afghanistan the question of a temporary united front for defence against the mullahs is posed as an immediate, practical question. What would 'not taking sides' mean? In Iran, not taking sides would have meant something quite straightforward, in the first place as argument or propaganda, in the second as practical activity. Afghanistan seems to me rather different.

This is not to say that socialists have to take sides in civil wars by definition. I'm not at all sure we'd take sides in Lebanon, for example. We might ally tactically with different groups for particular short-

term objectives, but our basic approach would be to find some way to reconcile the different religious or ethnic conflicts. We are basically indifferent to whether Christian or Muslim (or different Shi'ite) guerillas control bits of Beirut, or rather we don't want any of them to have control.

In Afghanistan the question is whether we are indifferent to the prospect of Islamic fundamentalist conquest of the cities, or whether we want to see the mullahs defeated, or at least prevented from achieving such conquest. 'Not taking sides' in fact would mean surrender, in the name of political independence. In other words, while in Iran socialists would have a choice whether to take sides, in Afghanistan, it seems to me, there simply is no room for choice.

If one argues that the regime is simply a surrogate for Russian occupation, has no independent social base, and so on, the logical conclusion would seem to be not neutrality, but support for the mullahs who are leading a national liberation movement. Neutrality in that case is little more than a suggestion to however few vaguely progressive Afghans that they find the quickest route possible to some other country.

Maybe the regime has no social base at all, but I find that implausible. There must be people who both don't want to be ruled by the mullahs and are deeply critical of the regime. But I'd be prepared to bet that our line would appeal to them more than Tony's.

Clive Bradley,  
South London

## BTR: blood, tears and repression

**S**upporters of the National Union of Metalworkers South Africa (NUMSA) will stage a protest outside the Annual General Meeting of the British Tyre & Rubber Company (BTR).

The AGM will take place at the Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, London W1 on Friday 12 May. The demonstration, called by NUMSA and organised by the NUMSA Campaign Supporters Network (NCSC) will begin at 10.30am.

Protestors will demand that BTR accepts NUMSA's request to enter into independent arbitration to resolve the four-year dispute between the company and NUMSA members at BTR's Sarmcol plant at Mpophomeni near Howick.

Almost 1,000 long service employees were sacked by the company in May 1985 when they staged a lawful two-day strike for better working conditions and basic trade union rights.

The dispute has developed into the longest strike in South African history through BTR's refusal to agree to the union's offers of negotiation.

BTR is one of Britain's biggest and most profitable companies. In 1988 the company made £819 million profit from sales of products like Slazenger, Dunlop, Puma, Pretty Polly, Rest Assured and Dunlopillo.

But behind the successful corporate image of BTR lies another face. For the Sarmcol workforce, BTR means 'Blood, Tears, Repression'. BTR prefers to let the families of its sacked employees starve rather than settle this dispute. All along, the Sarmcol workforce have sought neutral ar-

bitration but BTR prefers to grind down all opposition through sheer hunger, by paying lawyers to block justice through endless court actions. The most recent court finding — in the workers' favour — is being taken by BTR to a higher court. The legal process could easily drag on for another four years!

For BTR, time means profit, but for the Sarmcol workforce, time means torture. BTR is the only major employer in the area and the workers and their families have faced gradual starvation. The rate of malnutrition in the community has risen from 22% before the strike to 40% today. Leading strikers have been intimidated and harassed and in December 1986 two strike leaders and two Mpophomeni youth leaders were abducted and murdered by Inkatha vigilantes.

The demonstration outside the BTR AGM will lobby shareholders to put pressure on BTR Directors to settle the dispute and end the agony of the Mpophomeni community. The NUMSA Campaign Against BTR has the backing of the TUC and the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

A press conference will be held immediately after the AGM when the press will have the opportunity to meet Bongani Mkhungo, a NUMSA member and Chair of the National Shop Stewards Council of the BTR Dunlop Group of South Africa. Mr Mkhungo was recently sacked by the company for his trade union activities. The press conference will be held at The Rose and Crown pub, 2 Old Park Lane, Mayfair, W1 (200 yards from the Hilton Hotel).

For further information contact NUMSA Campaign Supporters Network (London Group) on 01 274 0903 (Celia Dignan/Carlos Sanhueza).

# The opposition must reach out to workers

Zsolt Nemeth, British representative of the Hungarian Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) spoke to Socialist Organiser last week.

**F**IDESZ was launched only a year ago. At the beginning we could only meet in pubs. But now we can meet in official buildings.

Of course the Communists don't hand over their official buildings for free. We're very poor, while they have a lot of money from the central government budget. The only thing we won is our central office.

We can sell our bulletin openly now. It's not samizdat any longer. It's in a no man's land — neither illegal, or an official publication. We have a monthly and a weekly, which we sell about two thousand copies of.

We had a workers' group in FIDESZ, but now they have separated off to form their own group, Workers' Solidarity. Some of them also remain active in FIDESZ.

We also have an active workers' group in FIDESZ in the provinces — it's mainly miners.

In general Hungarian workers are not very interested in politics. Workers' Solidarity is very weak, but it is only three months old.

Most workers don't see any hope of changing their situation through politics. They are disillusioned.

Also, the Hungarian worker can get a better standard of living by corruption and jobs on the side. The Hungarian working class is being divided, and in a way corrupted, but the fact that living standards depend so much on illegal gains. Workers don't trust politics, they trust the black market.

There's also the trauma of 1956, which scares workers off politics. And independent trade union activity is the same as politics in the eyes of workers.

There is a danger that government demagogues can equate democracy, the opposition, and the market in the eyes of the workers. That's why there's an urgent need for the opposition to reach out to the workers.

I think the real danger is whether the skilled workers can be co-opted by the government. Can they be



Hungary 1956: the workers revolt

manipulated? That's crucial because the skilled workers can affect and lead the unskilled workers.

I believe in peaceful change in Hungary. I have to believe in it. That's why I'm involved in politics. If not I would be trying to organise an armed uprising rather than being active in politics. I would be talking to the CIA to get arms, rather than to Trotskyists about politics.

FIDESZ also holds to non-violence because of the trauma of 1956, when ten thousand died.

I think there will be splits in the

ruling bureaucracy, or at least I hope so. We need someone on the other side of the round table to negotiate if we are to have a peaceful process. And there are people in the ruling party who understand that too.

I think the danger of a backlash from conservative sections of the bureaucracy is not serious — on condition that the Gorbachev line remains in the USSR. If the USSR's line changes the danger is great.

Ethnic and national questions play a big role in Hungary. Two-

thirds of Hungarians live in Hungary and one-third outside. There are four million Hungarians in Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia etc, and they are seeking national and political autonomy in their countries. The government can use nationalism inside Hungary because of those minorities.

Inside Hungary there are important gipsy and Jewish minorities which suffer from prejudice. The question is whether that problem will be resolved democratically or not.

## Divest on our terms, says union

### WORLD BRIEFS

**S**outh Africa's Chemical Workers' Industrial Union is taking the American oil company Mobil to court over its plans to divest from South Africa.

Changes in US tax law have prompted Mobil to pull out; if it stayed it would have to pay tax twice on its South African profits, once in South Africa and once in the US. Six other major US companies have pulled out this year, and 190 since 1983.

But the union says: "Far from being moral or politically progressive, Mobil has seriously disadvantaged its workforce by selling to one of the most notoriously anti-union South African corporations. Gencor (the company to whom Mobil are selling) has already made its mark as the company responsible for the largest mass dismissals and the crudest industrial relations in the mining industry".

The union is demanding that the sale be halted until terms for the business's future have been negotiated.

**N**ew Zealand's Labour Party, another social-democratic party pursuing Thatcherite economic policies of privatisation, deregulation and cuts, is to face a challenge from the left.

Disgruntled Labour Party leader Jim Anderton is launching a new party. Some important unions, like the railworkers', have already broken away from Labour.

**A**fter 1992 kippers could be a deadly grey, while the sausages on your supermarket shelf will be a pasty white.

That is, apparently, how they would look if it weren't for artificial colouring in them. But a big lobby in the European Community is pressing for a ban on these chemical additives under the Single Market rules after 1992.

**N**orth Koreans got two days holiday a fortnight ago, to mark the 77th birthday of their "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung.

To judge from a recent report in the *Independent*, Koreans suffering under Kim's Stalinist tyranny could well do with a break. The average working day is extended to 13 or 14 hours by 'voluntary' overtime.

Workers live in tiny flats, a single room for a whole family. Meat is rare. Most people eat little but rice and cabbage.

Every flat has to have portraits of Kim and his son hanging on the walls, and every adult must wear one of twenty badges bearing Kim's face. Between 100,000 and 150,000 dissidents are jailed in concentration camps.

**D**eng Xiaoping's policies have scored some economic successes for China, despite the political turmoil they have generated.

Latest figure show that China is

now number three in the world ship-building industry, behind only Japan and South Korea, as measured by volume of new commercial orders.

If you measure by volume of work under construction rather than size of order books, South Korea has now overtaken Japan as the leading nation in the industry

**S**pain's General Workers' Union (UGT) will not call for a vote for the Socialist Party in the Euro-elections on 15 June.

The UGT union federation was founded by the Socialist Party 100 years ago, and until recently was very closely tied to it. The split between the union and the party has been caused by the Socialist government's born-again Thatcherite economic policies.

Last December the UGT called a one-day general strike against the government, which mobilised eight million workers, and this year, for the first time, the UGT did not invite a Socialist Party speaker to its May Day rally.

## Japan's Watergate?

**F**our Japanese prime ministers since World War 2 have been forced out of office for taking bribes.

But the latest scandal may be more far-reaching than the previous three, in 1948, 1954 and 1976.

Prime minister Takeshita has announced his resignation over bribes from the Recruit company, though he will remain in office for a few weeks yet. His right-hand man has committed suicide.

Masayoshi Ito is being pressed to take over as prime minister, although he is 75 years old, sick and reluctant, because, as the *Financial Times* reports, "there is no alternative. Virtually every other senior party leader is in some way compromised in the Recruit scandal".

Approval of the government in opinion polls has fallen to less than four per cent. This could be Japan's equivalent of the Watergate scandal (after 1972), which led to a qualitative and so far irreversible increase in the distrust of Americans towards their government.

Japan's ruling party is the Liberal Democratic Party. It is, as the saying goes, neither liberal, nor democratic, nor a party. It is a great web of patronage.

MPs are routinely expected to make gifts to their voters at weddings and funerals, and to channel government money to their areas. LDP rule has been sustained by this port-barrel politics and by gerrymandering which overrepresents the conservative rural areas in parliament.

The LDP, or the two conservative parties which merged to form it, have ruled Japan ever since World War 2, bar one brief period of Socialist Party government in 1947-8. Before World War 2 Japan had a military dictatorship.

There were tremendous workers' struggles in Japan after 1945, but they were smashed, and a system of company unions imposed. That, and the rapid growth of Japan's economy, has underpinned conservative dominance.

Japanese youth today, however, are more sceptical, less willing to believe in or idealise the prospect of a job for life with a big company. If this scepticism proves strong enough to force a general election and get the LDP voted out, it will be more than a normal parliamentary changeover; it will be the end of a regime.

Japan's independent trade unions have lost ground in recent years, and the main opposition group, the Socialist Party, has declined too. The Japanese Communist Party (with politics similar to Europe's Eurocommunists) has been the main gainer from the Recruit scandal.

If the opposition is strong enough to force the LDP out, the repercussions will also be international. Japan's stock market prices are ludicrously high by the standards of any other country. A government crisis could send them crashing. And Japan's economy is now two-thirds the size of the US's — big enough that a slump in Japan could trigger a world slump.



Takeshita

# Is the *intifada* socialist?

By Clive Bradley

**T**he Palestine Liberation Organisation's firm declaration that it now favours a 'two state' solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict has put the issue of a Palestinian state securely on the world's agenda. But has it opened up socialist possibilities? What is the relationship between the PLO's diplomatic strategy, and socialism?

For many on the left, there is a clear negative relationship. The PLO, in recognising Israel and renouncing the 'secular democratic state' except as a very long-term aim, has capitulated to Zionism, to imperialism and at least indirectly to racism. November's Palestine National Council adopted, according to Socialist Worker, for example, a programme akin to Buthelezi-style acceptance of South African Bantustans. The new PLO policy is betrayal.

It is a betrayal, the argument runs, not only of general principles, but also of the *intifada*, the uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

Weight is added to it by the attitudes of the most radical Palestinian groups, which range from reluctant acceptance to outright rejection. George Habbash's view, which is effectively 'we'll give it a go, but if it hasn't worked in two years, that's it', expresses the more moderate line; the SWP and others go with the real ultra-nationalists who see the entire project as treason.

The simple answer to the 'sell-out' analysis is precisely to compare what has happened to South Africa. Do Yasser Arafat's left-wing critics really believe he is no different to Gatsha Buthelezi? If so, why is the Israeli government so irremediably stupid as to have failed to have realised it?

As Israeli socialist Adam Keller pointed out during his British tour in February, if the South African parallel was apt, it would be the Israeli government that wanted 'two states', and the PLO that rejected it. So either both the Israeli government and the PLO are out of their minds, or it is a different situation.

Yet don't socialist critics have a point? Arafat's strategy is plainly to win imperialist (including Russian) support for the two-state project. Its implementation is envisaged not via mass struggle, although that has its uses, but via superpower will. A US/USSR sponsored peace plan might help create a Palestinian state; but at what cost? The inevitable result of the current course of action is the establishment, at best, of a Palestinian state subordinated to, allied with and dependent upon imperialism. It is a strategy guaranteed to militate against independent mass activity, and in particular against any such activity that might have a socialist character.

Given the reality of Arafat's policy, is it not completely mad — not to say unprincipled — for socialists to identify with it, or support it?

This line of argument is logically separable from arguments about 'two states' in principle. Nevertheless, the thrust of the argument is generally that 'two states' is in practice inseparable from a reactionary, pro-imperialist policy. You cannot have one without the other.

There is a real problem here that needs to be addressed. The clearest way to do so is to examine the 'socialist alternative' to Arafat's line.

According to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, or anyway according to the version of it that most Trotskyists accept, the solution to the national question is the workers' revolution. This is its only solution. Without socialist revolution, there will be no lasting solution to any of the problems of the bourgeois-democratic struggle.

The only solution to Palestinian national oppression, therefore, is socialism. The alternative to Arafat's policy is socialist revolution.

For some Trotskyists (Militant for example), Jewish-Arab workers' unity is necessary for this revolution. For others (SWP) it is irrelevant. But that there should be a socialist revolution is common ground. More precisely, it is common ground that socialist revolution is the immediate, practical alternative to Arafat's policy.

In this way, would-be Trotskyists reduce the entire programme of socialist revolution to the most miserably abstract propagandism. For it is obviously not the case that

socialist revolution is an immediate practical alternative. If workers' power is ever to be put on the agenda, the socialist programme must be made far more concrete.

And concretely, what are the material forces at work in the conflict? What possibilities, and what limitations are there, to socialist struggle?

The current Palestinian struggle is of an almost exclusively nationalist character. The objectives of the *intifada* are of course nationalist ones, and so militantly nationalist that they severely limit the potential of a socialist, working class movement.

So far, there is practically no Palestinian workers' movement. There are some trade unions, which are organisationally feeble and very PLO-dominated. Enterprises tend to be small, and the national question creates a sense of solidarity that tends (obviously only tends) to blur class differences. A very large part of the Palestinian working class is the migrant labour force that works in Israel, which is very difficult to organise.

More than this, the economic demands of the *intifada* are for disengagement from Israel. This aspect has proved very powerful. Its social effect, of course, is to strengthen the Palestinian bourgeoisie.

It is difficult to see how, in the actual situation, an independent working class movement will emerge. It is certainly difficult to see how it can emerge as the dominant social and political force within the *intifada*.

Plainly, the number one task of socialists is precisely to help such a movement develop.

But to pose something which has yet to be created as an alternative to the national movement's dominant politics is deeply sectarian. Socialists need a programme for the existing mass movement, and the demand that it convert itself into a completely different — socialist — movement is not only sectarian, it is absurd.

So the PLO's diplomatic strategy needs to be approached from this point of view. If a mass revolutionary socialist movement existed and if the question of power was being posed, Arafat's wheelings and dealings would have an entirely different significance.

If the *intifada*, through its own propulsion, could drive the Israelis out, also it would be a different question. Arafat's deals would be in a context of demobilisation of the masses, negotiating over the masses' heads and so on.

It is not at all clear that the effect or intention of the diplomatic offensive has been demobilisation. For Arafat the mobilisation is secondary but that is a different matter.

Various questions should be central for socialists in such a situation but denouncing diplomacy as such should not be one of them. Demobilisation should be resisted. An International Peace Conference should not be trusted, and the organisation developed through the uprising should be maintained. Socialists should stress the need for democracy in all current organisations and in future institutions of the state.

At the same time, socialists should focus on building working class organisations, and putting for-



'The objects of the intifada are nationalist ones'

ward working class demands. This links to the question of workers' unity, of course, but that is a broader subject.

Does this mean that for now nothing is possible except two bourgeois states? Yes.

But that does not mean a classical 'two stage' policy. We don't advocate a capitalist state, we simply recognise the objective circumstances. We make propaganda for socialism, and don't argue that a bourgeois state is in principle a

necessary precondition for socialism in the future. We do recognise that we, and the working class, cannot at will bypass the actual historical processes.

A socialist movement that was able to intervene in the *intifada* and in Israel effectively could of course radically alter the material circumstances. A socialist movement that had earned respect for its role in the national struggle would be well-placed to develop specific

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# The tragedy of Lebanon

By Sam Eaton

**T**he little country of Lebanon is like a defiant slap in the face for socialism. Most communal conflicts have some rationality about them: we may regret the bitter fighting between Irish Catholics and Protestants, but at least we understand why they are fighting each other.

Yet in Lebanon, Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims, Shi'a Muslims, Druze (to name only the most important groups) slaughter one another in an apparently endless cycle of communal violence that seems no longer to have any rational cause whatsoever.

Over the last few weeks, the Lebanese Christian and occupying Syrian armies have been locked in combat. Before that, different Shi'ite militias tried to wipe each other out; before that, Lebanese Shi'ites were wiping out Palestinian refugees. There seems to be no end, and no rhyme or reason.

Lebanon has witnessed the triumph of irrational hatred on a scale rare even for late twentieth century capitalism. Young kids, born into a world of endlessly dropping bombs, foreign invasions, atrocities and counter-atrocities, join in the shoot-outs because that's all they, or those around them, have ever done.

Islamic fundamentalism has a grip over many of them (in various shades of extremism); but fundamentalism is only an expression of the total destruction of society that has taken place. One of the bigger Islamic militias is called Hope (Amal). But *amal* is one thing Lebanese don't have.

The immediate background to the last few weeks' fighting was the end of the presidential term of Amin Gemayel last September. Muslims and Christians in parliament couldn't agree a new president, so each decided on their own.

Muslims therefore recognise Salim al-Hoss as president, Christians look to Michael Aoun, head of the (small) Lebanese army, who rather vainly attempted to kick the 25,000 or so Syrian troops out of Lebanon who have been there for 13 years. As a first act, he organised a blockade of mainly Muslim Lebanese ports.

Aoun dreams of reuniting Lebanon, long since a country divided into numerous enclaves and fiefdoms with Syrian and Israeli overlords keeping watchful eyes. In fact, the fighting with Syria, which has left over 300 dead, is the first fight across the basic Christian-Muslim divide in many years; beforehand, most outbreaks had been within different camps, for dominance.

Commentators had been speculating (incredibly) that Aoun might be the man to pull Lebanon together. But there's no chance of that now. Indeed, it seems that Muslims have now been driven into Syrian arms. President Asad of Syria can present himself as Muslim protector. Initially, Aoun's call might have had some appeal for them, as it is mainly Muslims who live in Syrian-controlled areas. But several weeks of missile bombardment have put paid to that.

Lebanon's ordeal began in earnest in the mid 1970s. There were three main causes, which increasingly overlapped.

First, the Lebanese economy, which was heavily based on banking and commerce, had produced a grossly unequal class structure. Alongside the pleasure-beaches were 'belts of misery' where the country's poor lived in typical third world conditions.

Second, Lebanon had from the beginning been pieced together from disparate social elements — not only religious groups, but 'ethnic' ones too (Kurds, Armenians, as well as Arabs). The political system bequeathed by French colonialism institutionalised the divisions, thus reproducing them.

Moreover, the political system put Christians, mainly Maronites, firmly on top — the president had legally to be Christian, and the majority of parliamentary seats were allotted to Christians (although by the 1970s, Muslims were a majority in society.) To a large extent, though by no means entirely, Christians were also better off; Shi'ites were at the bottom.

Third, large numbers of Palestinian refugees lived in Lebanon. Especially after Jordan's civil war in 1970, Lebanon became the base of the guerilla organisation. That in turn led to Israeli attacks — which after 1969 drove thousands of Lebanese north, swelling still further the 'belts of misery'.

So by 1974-5 the whole political and social structure was strained to the point of collapse.

Initially, the focus of the civil war — which claimed 50,000 lives by 1976 — was a legitimate demand for equality for the Muslims, a secular state and basic democracy. But very quickly the conflict decayed into a sectarian one, on both (Muslim and Christian) sides.

It was for a while given some secular-political dynamic by the alliance formed between the Lebanese National Movement, which saw itself as leftist-Arab nationalist, and the left of the PLO. This, too, soon disintegrated, and was probably destroyed by Syrian military intervention in 1976. The Syrian intervention was motivated by Asad's dread of a LNM victory, which looked likely in the spring of 1976 and would have threatened Syrian interests.

The Lebanese left dropped its secular programme and threw itself into the communal slaughter.

The left then declined, although the Palestinian groups remained strong, until Israel's full-scale invasion in June 1982. Hostility to the PLO, Israeli bombardment, declining economic conditions and the secular left's failure led to a growth in (mainly Shi'ite) fundamentalism — which predated but was, of course, given extra inspiration by the Iranian revolution of 1979.

Amal and later the Hizbollah proved effective in fighting the Israeli occupation of the south, to the extent of forcing an Israeli withdrawal (although Israel still controls Southern Lebanon in practice).

A US-led multinational force sent in after 1982, if anything, had made the situation worse.

The Lebanon of 1989 is barely recognisable as the same 'consociational democracy' much lauded by Western pundits before 1974. Many of the old political actors count for little now, even including the Phalange party that dominated the Maronite community during the early and middle stages of the war (and which carried out the Sabra and Chatilla massacres of Palestinians in 1982).

So is there hope for Lebanon? Three years ago, there was a general strike by workers demanding an end to the bloodshed, but it would be facile to pretend that a workers' solution is on the immediate agenda.

External changes, like the fall of Asad or, most vitally, an Israeli-Palestinian settlement, would ease Lebanon's agony. But what internal rearrangement might help?

Lebanon needs a secular, non-sectarian state. Religious divisions are now so entrenched that such a programme seems a bit far-fetched. But there is no alternative. It is not a situation like Palestine, with two clearly distinct nations. It is arguable that the Maronites constitute a separate nation, but unless someone wants to argue that Sunnis, Shi'as, Druze, etc. are all also national groups, there is little to be gained along those lines. Certainly, **division** is the source of Lebanon's problems, and further division wouldn't help.

A regional answer, linking a democratic Lebanon to a socialist middle east needs to be looked towards. It may seem a long way off, but right now so does peace of any sort.



...the total destruction of society...

working class forms of struggle. And so on.

So solidarity with the small socialist forces that already exist is very important.

But nothing is served by an ultra-left denunciation of diplomacy as such. Whilst making it clear that it is not our strategy, and we trust none of the governments involved in it, we should welcome whatever advances are made in the direction of Palestinian statehood. What happens then will depend upon the

organisations 'on the ground', and political intervention at that level.

So it is wrong to focus on the danger of an 'imperialist solution'. In any successful national independence struggle, imperialists do what they can to protect their own interests. Our response is to prepare the workers' movement to fight under whatever new conditions, not to denounce the whole process of negotiation in the name of an extremely abstract socialism.

## Labour Parties rally against witch-hunt

By Martin Thomas

**T**he second Constituency Labour Parties conference, on 29 April, focused on Labour democracy and the witch-hunt.

The CLPs conference was launched in September 1988 after a fringe meeting at the Chesterfield Socialist Conference in June 1988. It aims to give Constituency Labour Party activists their own distinctive voice and forum within the Party.

Some 50 activists from 22 CLPs made it to this second conference, despite the efforts of Gavin Laird of the AEU. Laird cancelled the hall booking for the conference, at the AEU offices in Liverpool, and forced us to move to the TGWU offices in Birkenhead.

Reg Race led off a workshop on the complexities of Labour's new procedure for selecting parliamentary candidates, and Danny Nicol from the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy introduced one on Party democracy.

Danny Nicol's workshop generated lively debate on a number of issues, including 'one member, one vote' and Proportional Representation. The debate on PR

was carried into the afternoon plenary.

Despite a strong plea from Les Huckfield MEP for the conference to commit itself to oppose PR, we carried an amendment from Sarah Cotterill (Manchester Withington CLP) and Steve Beckett (Sheffield Hallam CLP) denouncing electoral pacts but leaving the CLPs conference's position open on PR.

District Labour Parties have been under attack recently, with Labour Party HQ insisting that they cannot have directly-elected trade union delegates. Pete Crack reported from Bristol District Labour Party and Pete Keenlyside from Manchester City Labour Party.

The conference passed a resolution calling for reform of Labour's National Constitutional Committee and heard a speaker from Merseyside docks. We declared our full support for the dockers, and called on Labour's leaders to commit the next Labour government to restore the Dock Labour Scheme and extend it to all ports.

We elected a committee of nine to take charge of producing the CLPs Conference bulletin and organising our next conference, which will be shortly before Labour's Annual Conference this autumn.

## Solidarity with workers in the Eastern Bloc

Model resolution for Labour Party Conference from Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc.

This conference:

1. Welcomes all the moves there have been in the USSR and Eastern Europe towards liberalisation and an easing of state repression.

2. Believes that socialist democracy must include:

- the right of workers to organise freely in their own trade unions and in diverse political parties;
- the right to strike;
- democratic workers' control over economic life both at workplace and at national level.

3. Instructs the National Executive Committee to offer full support to the democratic opposition movements in the Eastern Bloc, and especially to socialist and working class opposition groups like Solidarnosc and the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution).

4. Welcomes the easing of tensions and the increase of negotiations between governments East and West; but believes that the British labour movement cannot recognise the governing parties or state-controlled unions in the Eastern Bloc as genuine working class organisations or continue fraternal links with them.

## The workers should have a say

**Merseyside docker Kenny Kelly spoke at the Constituency Labour Parties conference in Birkenhead on Saturday 29 April**

**T**he Dock Labour Scheme means that the workers have had an input into their industry.

It came into being after the Second World War, under Ernest Bevin — who at the same time also took Britain into NATO, so he was a good fellow on the one thing and not so good on the other.

It's a fifty-fifty set-up, where the local Dock Labour Board has six members from the employers and six from the union. The press is saying that a docker cannot be sacked. It's a lot of nonsense. Only a fortnight or three weeks ago, a docker from the Garston area lost his book for violence.

But when a man loses his book, or keeps his book, the Board decides one way or the other. So you can do your sums: if the man loses his book, the union has voted to get rid of him.

One the shop floor, an in bus shelters, and in public houses, what

you hear is "Why are you any different from me? Why can't you be sacked?" It seems to be the slave mentality in British people. That's how I see it. When an employers, or the media, puts out that sort of story, people take it up.

Every British workers should have something like the Dock Labour Scheme. But the only workers who have really fought to get something like that protection are building workers. When a building worker puts the final brick down, he's putting himself on the dole, so that type of worker has always wanted a scheme like the dockworkers'.

Why do we defend the Scheme? Because its organised labour. We've got a say in the matter.

Now the barriers are going down for 1992. So dockworkers in Europe, Australia and New Zealand, where they have similar schemes, are all facing the same sort of attack as us in Britain.

The union has moved away from our original position that if there was any interference with the Scheme, we would have an immediate walkout in the ports. That position has been overtaken by the anti-trade union laws.

Brother Todd has guided the Executive and the docks delegate conference — these delegates are working dock labourers, and that's the ruling body — away from the old position into an industrial dispute.



## So'ton plans action

**POLL TAX**

By Andy Rathbone

**T**he left made significant progress towards a real campaign of action at an anti-poll tax conference organised by Southampton Trades Council on Saturday 29 April.

A call for the conference from the University Labour Club was adopted after persistent lobbying by local Socialist Organiser supporters. Although the Trades Council is nominally left-controlled, it actually took four months from the original call before the conference finally took place.

Publicity for the conference was poor, with no posters and leaflets, just a mail shot to local organisations. Many local community groups and tenants' associations were not informed. Despite this, the conference attracted about 50 people, including representatives from the local community, trade unions and Labour Party wards.

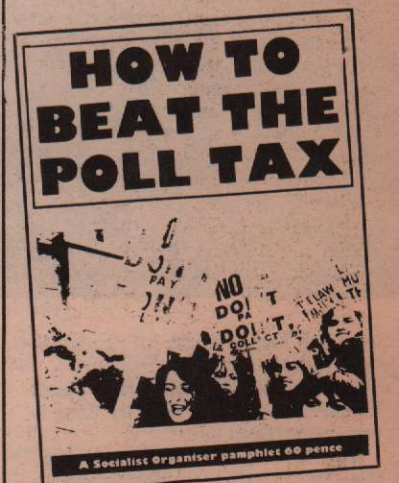
Workshops were held on trade unions and the poll tax, and campaigning in the community, the latter led by Socialist Organiser supporter Alan Fraser.

These workshops stressed the need for a dynamic and democratic campaign and the setting up of locally based anti-poll tax unions, with a federally-structured steering committee.

The campaign must be under the control of rank and file local groups, with information flowing both ways between steering committee and local groups.

It was agreed that the work must start now with publicity geared to frustrating registration when the forms arrive in the next few weeks. The importance of linking calls to the trade unions not to implement the tax with local community resistance was also particularly emphasised in both workshops.

The conference adopted a resolution put forward by Socialist Organiser supporters for a campaign of mass defiance and non-implementation, despite opposition from Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats.



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## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

**Thursday 4 May**  
London Socialist Forum 'Revolution in China?' Speaker: Cheung Siu Ming. Angel & Crown, N1. 8.00.  
**Thursday 4 May**  
York SO. 'Is the working class finished?' Speaker: Ray Ferris. Gooderike College, York Uni. 1.15.  
**Saturday 6 May**  
Yorkshire SO day school: 'Transforming the labour movement'. St John's College, York, 10.30

**Saturday 6 May**  
Morning Star conference: 'Fightback against the Tories'. Conway Hall, London WC1, 11.00. Contact Morning Star, 74 Luke St, London EC2 4PY

**Saturday 6 May**  
Irish Hunger Strike Commemoration. Assemble Broad St/Cumberland St, Birmingham, 12.00. Contact organisers c/o PO Box 540, Birmingham B11 4AU

**Sunday 7 May**  
London Labour Councillors Against the cuts conference. Tolmers Sq Community Centre. 2.00 Contact Adrian States, 01-431 2760.



# How American socialists faced war and repression

Bryan Edmonds reviews four books by James P Cannon

Fifty years ago this year the second world imperialist war began. This came as no surprise to revolutionary Marxists. Since the early 1930s the exiled Russian revolutionary leader, Leon Trotsky, and his political supporters worldwide had warned of fresh inter-imperialist conflicts breaking out and engulfing the whole world in an orgy of bloodletting and destruction.

Indeed, Lenin and Trotsky had viewed the world war of 1914-18 as ushering in a new epoch signalling the decay of capitalism — an epoch characterised as one of wars and revolutions.

One of the most important single documents in the arsenal of revolutionary Marxism, analysing the Leninist attitude to wars in the era of imperialism, was written at this time by Trotsky, *War and the Fourth International*, published as a pamphlet in June 1934.

This and other such writings are programmatic documents — ones articulating a strategic line for revolutionary groups in the lead up to, and outbreak of, war.

There is little readily available in English on how such revolutionary groups carried out revolutionary politics in practice during the Second World War.

However we are fortunate in what we do have — five books that record the history of the American Socialist Workers Party through the war period. Four of them, covering the years 1940-47, are written by one of the principal leaders of American Trotskyism, James P Cannon; the other, *Fighting Racism in World War II*, covering the period from September 1939 to September 1945, is a collection of articles, pamphlets, letters and resolutions on wartime Black and anti-racist struggles from the press of the SWP.

## 'The SWP in World War II'

This is a collection of writings and speeches — around half of them for SWP members rather than the general public — from the period April 1940 to December 1943.

It begins with an appraisal of the SWP after it suffered the major split of over 40% of the membership, led by James Burnham, Max Shachtman, and Martin Abern.

In 1939-40 there had been a six-month-long faction fight over attitudes to the USSR, but also over fundamental principles of Leninism. At the end of that fight, Cannon confidently points the way forward for the SWP's preparation for the war — the class struggle and a deeper penetration of the workers' mass movement.

Notable, and essential reading, are five contributions on the military policy adopted by the SWP (known as the Proletarian or American Military Policy). The SWP considered that the war was basically a battle between rival imperialist looters over shares of the booty. Yet the SWP also wanted to get across to workers who wanted to fight Hitler. So instead of just saying "the war is imperialist — oppose it", the SWP said: "Yes, we want to fight Hitler. But we can't trust the capitalist government to do it. We need a fight for workers' control and a workers' government."

The book includes statements on the war and on the US's entry to it

after the Japanese bombing of the colonial naval base at Pearl Harbour. Some socialists felt that the 'proletarian military policy' led to tactics overshadowing a prompt and clear anti-war, anti-US government position in the SWP's publications.

Cannon argued that more tactically-aimed articles had to be considered together with the Minneapolis Trial statements (see *Socialism on Trial*) and the earlier publication of the *Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian Revolution*. His defence of the party's "revolutionary defeatism" and what it was, makes interesting reading.

Also here are proposals for a Labour Party campaign; a speech after the formal, and cynical, dissolution of the Communist International by Stalin on the coming revolution and prospects for workers' internationalism; and articles on how to choose a new revolutionary leadership (which was necessary because 18 prominent leaders of the SWP were jailed in 1943 for supporting workers' strikes in war times). The book ends with a speech on the eve of Cannon's, and the other 17 comrades', imprisonment.

## 'Socialism on Trial'

In June 1941, acting on a request from the bureaucratic Teamster Union leaders, Democrat President Roosevelt authorised the FBI to raid SWP offices in Minneapolis.

In July, 28 SWP members and leaders of the Minneapolis branch of the Teamster Union were charged under an old 1861 Civil War statute and the newly adopted Smith Act (1940) — which made the mere advocacy of certain ideas a federal crime.

The Minneapolis Teamsters, long a thorn in the side of the union bureaucracy since the great strike battles of the '30s, had refused to abandon class struggle politics and to refrain from attacking Roosevelt's imperialist war policies.

In a trial lasting six weeks, 18 of the 28 were convicted and sentenced to 12 to 18 months in prison. The trial, applauded by the Communist Party, was the first brought under the openly anti-labour movement Smith Act.

This book is the official court record of Cannon's testimony as National Secretary of the SWP. It is a great little book, popularising the ideas of socialism and Marxist principle from a courtroom dock. Serialised in *The Militant* newspaper (successor to the *Socialist Appeal*) and sold in pamphlet form, its message reached out to the masses of the US population amid the increasing tide of patriotism and war clamour.

An appendix includes a criticism by a leader of the Spanish Trotskyists, exiled in Mexico, written in early 1942 with a reply by Cannon.

## 'Letters from Prison'

The conviction of the 18 was announced on the very day America's ruling class formally declared war — 8 December 1941.

An appeal against the convictions lasted a further two years before the 18 were finally imprisoned. Cannon was approaching his 54th birthday when he and his 17 comrades entered gaol on New Year's Eve 1943.

Throughout the 180-plus letters included here — most of them written to his partner, Rose Karsner — Cannon's irrepressible drive to build and shape the SWP shines out. Despite prison censorship and rules on letter writing and the receiving of mail, we learn of how closely Cannon and his comrades follow the war; struggles of their



Trotskyist leaders Rose Karsner and James P Cannon in the 1940s

foreign comrades; labour struggles; and the development and expansion of the SWP.

Between glimpses into his personal life, and his self-established prison educational routine, Cannon touches upon: party education, field-organising, leadership, the revolutionary newspaper, trade unionism, Stalinism and Internationalism, among others, in a necessarily concise and precise way. We also hear of some of the beginnings of what was to become another faction fight with two fellow gaoled prisoners — Albert Goldman, the SWP's lawyer, and Felix Morrow, the SWP's newspaper and magazine editor — two years later.

His last letter reiterates a task of all revolutionaries: "Our great mission, I take it, is to popularise unadulterated Marxism."

## 'The struggle for Socialism in the American Century'

Three themes dominate this collection covering the period February 1945 (from Cannon's release from prison) to June 1947: the USSR, the fight with Goldman and Morrow and relations with Shachtman's Workers Party; and the prospects for revolution in the USA. There is also an outstanding article on Stalinists in the trade unions, 'American Stalinism and Anti-Stalinism'.

The background is the ending of the war and the new relationship American imperialism finds itself in with the rest of world capitalism

and the expansionism of the USSR. The period also included a massive industrial strike wave — the largest in US history — which lasted until the beginning of 1947.

Critics with hindsight have pointed to these years as ones where Cannon and the SWP, through adherence to a rigid and formalistic framework of Trotsky's thinking begin to lose a grip on reality. However, the 'American Theses' of 1946, which are the focus of this criticism, have the purpose of restating the need and role of a revolutionary party in the immediate period — reiterating the principles of Leninism to the many new working class members recruited to the SWP since 1944.

Cannon did not waver from the view that revolution was not a perspective for war-torn and devastated Europe and Asia alone, but also in victorious America — the heartland of capitalism — and in the so-called (by the bourgeois media) 'American Century'. And it was the fundamental duty of revolutionaries in the USA to fight for this.

We can criticise his judgement now, and regard his analysis of the political and economic factors of the time as wildly over-optimistic, but we should not forget that the world 40 or more years ago was characterised by uncertainty.

The American ruling class was uncertain of the road to restabilise world capitalism — to clamp down on workers' struggles — and to contain the USSR. Remember, this was the period when the USA poured billions of dollars into Europe and

Japan to prop up capitalism (the Marshall Plan); the Cold War began; Mao's peasant armies defeated the bourgeois nationalist armies of Chiang Kai Shek; and, by 1950, American and other Western armies were fighting in Korea.

## Conclusion

War and repression are a litmus test for any revolutionary party. We have in these volumes a heritage of revolutionary thought and practice to aid us in struggle today.

The SWP stood up to our class enemy through the war, despite the heavy blows of chauvinistic hysteria and capitalist repression, retaining the banner of proletarian internationalism.

All of Cannon's writings are accessible, written in a straightforward and often emotive manner. All of the above mentioned books come with notes and introductions giving the background to the period covered (and, particularly interesting for regular readers of *Socialist Organiser*, the bare bones of Goldman's and Morrow's views on the USSR).

## Notes

The four books above, by James P Cannon, are published in paperback by Pathfinder Press. 'Fighting Racism in World War II' is published by MONAD. 'War and the Fourth International' and the 'Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian Revolution' can be found in 'Writings of Leon Trotsky' 1933-34, and 1939-40 respectively, published by Pathfinder Press.

## 10 REVIEWS

# On and on...and on?

TV

By Vicki Morris

**T**he avalanche continues... of Thatcher decade programmes, that is. I'm not sure any more if they are meeting a public demand, or merely providing the TV companies with cheap programmes, as politicians of all persuasions queue up to praise or pillory. If you take care not to overdose, some of them are worth watching.

But not 'On The Record', which is given over almost exclusively to Thatcher reviews at the moment.

This week, presenter Jonathon Dimbleby talked to Norman Tebbit, John Biffen and Sir Ian Gilmour in a posh restaurant about the possible incongruity of 'The Quality of Life' as Thatcher's new campaigning slogan.

Is this promotion a logical progression from her previous policies, or merely a media trick to soften her image now that she's smashed public services, state education, local government and trade unions and trodden on our civil rights?

Tebbit consumed most and spoke least.

Michael Heseltine was elevated to the programme's habitual one-to-one interview slot, whereas, for all he said that was distinctive, he might just as easily have been thrown into the luncheon party with the others.

Watching 'On The Record', with all its fussy components, made me regret the demise of LWT's boring old 'Weekend World'. But Brian Walden is back! He is chairing a two-part TV trial of Thatcher's government on her economic record — miracle, as the Tories claim, or mirage? At least ITV concedes that there is some public doubt about the matter.

In his case against, counsel for the prosecution, Peter 'Toady' Jay, called as witnesses various 'respected and eminent' economists, who said that the economy had done slightly worse under Thatcher than might have been hoped from studies of long-term trends since World War II; and various academics who said they would mark her achievements with a 'C' or 'D' grade.

Jay also proved with statistics what we had all, in our subjective way, suspected — that most of us pay more tax now than we ever have, and that the top 20% of earners have got richer quicker at the expense of the rest of us.

In his cross-examination, counsel for the defence, Norman Tebbit, floundered gratifyingly. The only



evidence he was able to cite for his claims of an 'economic miracle' was a quotation from *Fortune* International magazine (who?) that 'Britain is back'.

Tebbit has a quotation for every occasion. He shed crocodile tears for the plight of 150,000 homeless young people, and then stabbed them in the back by sanctioning the opinion of a Salvation Army chief that most of the homeless took pride in a distinctive way of life they had chosen for themselves. The same Salvation Army chief probably believes a lot of other wacky

things with which Tebbit would have more trouble agreeing.

Next week it is Tebbit's turn to batter the case for the prosecution, I don't think. That will be on Sunday night on ITV.

Of course, the programme to watch of the current jamboree will be 'The Thatcher Generation' (Wed, BBC1). Hopefully, we can leave the political hacks behind in the studio, bickering politely amongst themselves, and find out what Thatcherism has meant for young people who have never known anything else.

## Exploring Russian anti-semitism

CINEMA

**M**ade in 1966, 'The Commissar' was the first and only film made by Alexander Askoldov. It has been banned for over 20 years.

'The Commissar' was inspired by a story by Vasily Grossman, a writer who was classed as an 'enemy of the people' by the neo-Stalinist regime. Made for the Gorky Studios, the film was considered a 'political and aesthetic failure'. Askoldov was never allowed to make another film.

During the 1987 Moscow Festival, someone had just finished speaking about the virtues of glasnost, when Askoldov stood up and suggested that a true trial of the new spirit would be to release his film which had lain in cold storage for 20 years. Within a short space of time, a screening of 'The Commissar' was arranged and the release of the film promised.

The film went on to the Berlin Film Festival where it won four prizes and extraordinary acclaim, being compared to the classic Soviet silent cinema of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko and Trauberg.

'The Commissar' is set in the early 1920s during the Civil War between the Reds and Whites. Clavdia, a woman Commissar in the Red Army, finds herself pregnant. Her lover has been shot by the Whites.

She is reluctant to give up life on horseback, but finds herself billeted in the home of a poor Jewish artisan and his family to await the birth of her child.

At first there is mutual resentment — the Commissar at having to leave her unit and the family at having her foisted on them. But gradually, Clavdia comes to appreciate the warmth and closeness of the Jewish family who end up by adopting her. After the birth, Clavdia leaves her child with the family and goes off to rejoin her unit.

It was the Jewish elements of the film that caused its troubles. It was finished just after the six-day war of 1967, when Israel inflicted a terrible defeat on a block of Arab states and occupied the West Bank. The USSR broke diplomatic relations with Israel.

The authorities at the Gorky Studios insisted that Askoldov remove the premonition scene where yello-starred Jews are led off to the concentration camps and that the family in the film should not be Jewish. Askoldov refused, whereupon he was locked out of the editing room, the film confiscated and Askoldov expelled from the 'Communist' Party.

It was the end of his career as a film maker.

The film probably draws on Askoldov's own experience of being sheltered by a Jewish family (later shot by the Germans), during the period of the Stalinist purges. His father was liquidated by the secret police in the year of his birth and his mother imprisoned when he was five years old.

Because of the post-war surge of anti-semitism in the USSR and Eastern Europe, Askoldov's researches into Jewish tradition were hampered: the USSR state archives had destroyed most of its Jewish material!

The film was set in the past, when the Whites were the anti-semites, but its exploration of Jewish experience was simply too much for the authorities to bear.

'The Commissar' opens at the Lumiere, St Martin's Lane, London WC2 on May 12, followed by screenings around the country at selected cinemas.

## AIDS research on the wrong track?



### LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

**A** book full of untruths, offending against orthodoxy, whose publication may lead to deaths? No, not that one! This one, entitled 'AIDS: The HIV Myth', by journalist Jad Adams, argues, against virtually all scientific and medical opinion, that the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) does not cause AIDS.

Since much effort in the fight against AIDS is focused on preventing the spread of HIV and in finding ways of hampering its progress inside the body, this claim is not trivial.

Adams' book supports the assertions of Peter Duesberg, a biochemist at the University of California, Berkeley, that there is no direct evidence that HIV causes AIDS and that evidence that it doesn't is ignored by an 'AIDS establishment' of scientists and doctors whose reputations and livelihoods presumably depend on the links between HIV and AIDS.

Duesberg has claimed that HIV cannot be detected in everybody with AIDS and neither can antibodies to HIV. He thinks the immune systems of AIDS sufferers are suppressed by something else and HIV is just one of the various opportunistic organisms that infect people with depressed immunity.

Duesberg says that HIV has the wrong structure to cause the damage found in AIDS. He has even said that he would be willing to infect himself with HIV, so confident is he that it doesn't cause AIDS (he hasn't done so yet!).

Duesberg's views were formed some time ago, being the subject of a television documentary about two years ago. But if he was correct, we would find ourselves right back at the stage where AIDS was first recognised.

The consensus among AIDS experts ('the AIDS establishment') is that Duesberg's theories and, still more, Adams' book, are dangerous nonsense. Journalist Duncan Campbell of *New Statesman and Society* has scrutinised the book and recently debated with Adams the claims made in it. Writing in *New Scientist*, Campbell identifies several unfounded claims in the book.

Adams claims that the 'AIDS establishment' has conspired to avoid investigating the real cause of AIDS. As evidence, he states that 'since 1985, less than 7% of AIDS cases in New York and San Francisco have been tested for HIV.'

This is based on a circular from the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta which says that 'less than 7% (in New York and San Francisco) have been reported with HIV antibody test results, compared with greater than 60% in other areas.'

But it is the reporting that is faulty, not that the tests are not done. Three leading AIDS treatment centres in San Francisco said a couple of weeks ago that they had tested all their 5,000 plus patients and knew of none without HIV antibodies.

Adams then claims that most US AIDS cases are not checked for HIV and that therefore 'we cannot be sure what they are carrying. Vir-

tually anything could be causing their disease.' Once again, the claim is untrue.

Adams uses research data from five years ago to show that HIV can be found in only 50% of AIDS patients. But far higher rates of detection (up to 100%) are now reported, indicating that earlier failures to detect HIV represented backwardness in techniques rather than absence of viruses.

Adams himself ignores evidence contradicting his theory. Thus, there is much evidence that development of immune deficiency follows HIV infection, though Adams would predict the opposite. For the record, Adams thinks AIDS is a 'behavioural disease', probably caused by a virus.

He told the audience at the debate with Campbell that he did not plan to check the accuracy of what he had written. What I find more disturbing than Adams' standards is the behaviour of his publishers, Macmillan, who have ignored all requests to correct inaccuracies themselves.

Macmillan originally claimed that they had had the manuscript checked by a specialist nominated by the respected science journal *Nature* (owned by Macmillan). They told Campbell the specialist had approved publication. *Nature* said this was untrue and that they had not even seen proofs of the book.

Retracting this claim, Macmillan then said that neither *Nature* nor *Nursing Times* (another Macmillan publication) had seen the book before publication.

This was also untrue. NT had seen the book and got a report on it from a cancer specialist. This report had contained criticisms of the book.

In Macmillan's publicity for the book, they went even further than Adams, claiming for example that 'many AIDS patients have no trace of the virus HIV...or even of antibodies to it.' Once again, these assertions were not checked and would appear on current evidence to be untrue.

Macmillan have attempted to present publication of the book as a

public service. Their editorial director denied that the book was an exploitative one, telling *New Scientist*: 'I don't believe that the public should be kept totally in the dark about debates going on in the scientific community'. As a Macmillan leaflet claims, 'it is believed by an increasing number of scientists that HIV is the wrong type of virus to cause a fatal disease.'

But the argument is spurious. There is no debate. The scientists believing that HIV does not cause AIDS are a tiny static minority. Adams, when challenged, could name only six, none recent recruits to the view, only one of whom, Duesberg, actually supports the thesis of Adams' book.

AIDS experts and others have expressed concern at the possible effects of the book. Charles Farthing, a leading AIDS researcher and doctor at St Stephen's Hospital, London, said: 'There is no valid science in these claims. If people are foolish enough to believe this, then it will lead to more deaths. It causes distress to patients, because they are led to distrust doctors and...may refuse medication and treatment.'

Chris Smith MP, a founder of the all-party Parliamentary AIDS Group, said he was 'deeply concerned about the accuracy of the wild allegations and errors that appear in this book'. Tony Whithead, founder of Britain's leading AIDS charity, the Terrence Higgins Trust, described the book as 'totally irresponsible'. It 'makes up the news that people want to hear' in order to give them false hope. The book was 'an undisguised attack on people with AIDS.'

Macmillan have gone on the offensive against the book's critics, demanding, for instance, right of reply to Duncan Campbell's forthcoming review for *New Scientist*. Incredibly, Macmillan have met calls for the book or for their publicity material to be checked for accuracy and corrected with the hypothesis that, in the wake of the Salman Rushdie affair, such calls were a threat to 'solidarity in the cause of freedom of expression'.

## Bus workers must fight!

By a busworker

The derisory offer from management in answer to our pay claim of £5 per hour minimum/35 hour week shows their total blindness to the strength of feeling amongst London bus workers.

Their offer represents a pay cut when you look at the rate of inflation and the cost of housing in London. If the poll tax is imposed on us along with the privatisation of the water service, the offer is not just derisory it is an insult.

Last week it was decided to call off a planned ballot for industrial action of our members when management agreed to fresh talks. Their 'improved' offer was no less insulting than the first one. The ballot must go ahead, whether management offer talks or not, and should be backed up with mass meetings in the garages to gauge the strength of feeling for a fight against the offer.

It has been said in the press that the LBC now plan to ballot for a series of 24 hour strikes across the fleet. This is good, but it will not be sufficient to win. 24 hour stoppages must be seen as steps towards building confidence and solidarity across the fleet and must lead rapidly to all-out indefinite action for the full claim. Otherwise 24 hour stoppages become a drain on the unity and the willingness of the workforce to fight.

The LBC has also stated to the press that it intends to bring our action in line with that of the tube workers who are coming out on indefinite strike on May 8th over their own pay claim and over the introduction of flexibility in their working conditions which amounts to a 'slaves charter'.

This too is good. The motivation of the tube workers' bosses in attacking their wages and conditions is the same as our own: privatisation. We should all fight together because we are fighting the same thing, but also because that is the way to win.

The dockers, the railway workers, the electricians and the power workers are all holding ballots for action over either their pay or over specific attacks on their conditions at the same time as the

tube workers action and our own ballot. It is crucial that our action is seen not only to coincide with these workers but is specifically in solidarity with them.

If we fight together we are strong. Just between the tube and bus workers we can bring London to a halt. With the dockers, rail workers etc, we can bring the country to a halt.

And although we are all pursuing our individual industries claims, it is important that it is in solidarity that we come out together. When we are united and strong the government does not use its laws against us, as was shown by the health workers and by the unofficial action of the tube workers.

We must back up our action by asking for solidarity from the workers in other bus companies. Although they could not cover all of our routes, it is essential that we fight scabbing by other bus workers. We must build solidarity links with other bus workers with whom, under the threat privatisation, we are expected to compete for jobs, wages and conditions. Use the pay fight to build this solidarity. Approach those whose claims are still to be made to bring them into line with ours, and those that have already gone to refuse to cover our work while we are on strike.

We must build the action up to all out for the full claim. No compromise with new offers from the management. When we can win the lot with joint action between us, the dockers, the tube workers etc. We must not accept a better offer on the backs of the tube workers.

The government will be concerned not to take on more than one group of workers at a time. They are determined to smash the Dock Labour Scheme. They have already miscalculated by attacking the tube workers conditions and the railway workers unions negotiating rights at the same time. We must all fight together and win together and show the Tories that they have bitten off more than they can chew.

**Stop press: The London bus conference voted on Tuesday to propose a series of fortnightly 'rolling' one-day strikes. Every second Monday starting on May 15th.**



## Rail: in the mood

By a railworker

**Aslef, NUR and the ATSSA General Secretaries along with representatives of the CSEU have just finished a series of meetings around the country.**

They have been campaigning over BR's decision to withdraw from the railway's Machinery of Negotiation from the end of October this year. BR want to establish sector and local bargaining while the union leaderships want to retain a national structure with a role for themselves.

The aim of the meetings has been to 'test the water' according to ASLEF's General Secretary Neil Milligan while Jimmy Knapp of the NUR has been quoted in the press speaking of possible industrial action to defend the Machinery of Negotiation.

The final meeting took place in Sheffield on April 26. But if this was the finale the rest must have been pretty disappointing. "Confused" as one speaker from the floor described it. What, he asked, was he going to tell people at work the next day who wanted some sort of guidance, a lead. But all that was being said was confusing. This about sums the message up.

Knapp denied talking about action as likely he merely said that it was a possibility that was going to be con-

sidered like all possibilities by the NECs, he had been misrepresented by the press. He wanted a national structure and wanted to persuade BR of the sense of this also. Milligan let slip the concessions BR had been offered. A letter of representation of the membership by the LDCs (Local Departmental Committees) of two reps votes to 100 members (it is currently 2 up to 35 and 4 above that).

No one defends the current cumbersome machinery but activists feel there should be no concessions on representation, and the aim should be to get the local branches directly involved in negotiations.

The attitude of the leadership however, is clearly to compromise, hoping to retain a national structure. But BR, from their point of view, cannot concede that without abandoning their whole strategy. The aim is to divide BR operations into 5 separate self-financing, self-sufficient areas. They have invited the unions to discuss with each 'Function Director' separate bargaining procedures to work out pay and conditions of service. Only pensions and health and safety are to remain the subject of national discussions.

I am told that the BR Board hope that by producing a BR that has so much 'internal competition' the Tories will accept keeping BR as a whole when selling it off. Of course the 5 separate sectors are at the same time 'ripe' for separate sale. So much so that it really makes very little difference to the workforce whether we are in a 'whole' or 'separate' BR. Either way the Tory aim of braking

up national bargaining and making worker compete with worker will have been achieved.

The unions have rejected this and refused to talk to the five 'Function Directors'. But the campaign around this has been too high level — all about what people said and did at national levels of the Machinery of Negotiation. For example, "BR refused to abide by a minute of the RSNT" — this will mean as much to the reader as it does to the average railworker.

Speakers from the floor of the Sheffield meeting stressed time and again the need to relate to the situation of ordinary railworkers: the increasing use of disciplinary procedures to get rid of people; threats over sickness such as letters saying anymore days off sick as you will be "deemed to have rescinded your contract"; reduction of the amount of free travel for people who run the railways; lousy wages; management lording it over staff; removal of any money allowance they can avoid paying.

Meanwhile the union leaderships are hanging back on accepting BR's pay offer. The 'final 7%' has been rejected much to the surprise of most railworkers who have seen the union rush to accept 3.5% in the past even when the miners were out.

The aim seems to be to make pay an issue at the same time as the machinery — although no one has officially said that. There is a sullen mood among railworkers as far as can be judged — 'low morale' is the usual phrase, the result of long years of management hanging it all their own way.

The mood is ripe for turning into generalised opposition to all BR are doing if the union leadership get their act together and put forward a clear message about fighting back on all the issues that affect ordinary railworkers.

So far Knapp, Milligan et al do not seem to have grasped this and the Bro Left has failed to show any life on the issues. But 1989 could yet be the year we get even.

## NALGO pay lobby

By Dave Burn  
(Secretary Islington  
NALGO)

Islington NALGO agreed, at its branch meeting of 12th April, to organise a lobby of the NJC negotiations on the 1989 Pay Claim which will take place on Wednesday 17th May.

The national employers are likely to make a 'final offer' at that meeting which looks certain to both be a derisory response to our £1,200/12% claim, and to contain all or most of the strings on 'flexibility' that they have been pressing for.

The lobby will aim to show the strength of feeling among NALGO's

local government members about low pay and at the attack on our conditions through 'flexibility' and the undermining of national agreements. Our branch is urging the Metropolitan District and National Local Government Committees to support the call for a lobby as a way to develop membership awareness and involvement in the 1989 Pay Campaign before we, almost certainly move to a ballot on industrial action in June.

**Lobby of NJC  
Pay negotiations  
Wednesday 17th May  
9.30am at  
Belgrave Square, SW1  
(Tube: Victoria)**

## Merseyside SO Dayschool Britain's Revolutionary Heritage

Sunday 14 May  
11.00am-5.00pm

TGWU, 2a Price St (off Hamilton Sq), Birkenhead

Sessions include: Can British workers fight for socialism?; Unions, strikes and solidarity — with workshops on Red Clydeside, the 1984-5 miners' strike; the Labour Party; the Left — workshops include the early years of the Communist Party, British Trotskyism in the '50s. Final plenary: From Thatcher's Britain to the British Revolution.

## Docks strike timetable

As we go to press the situation with the docks dispute is unclear. The TGWU have sent out ballot forms to registered ports. Voting, on Monday 8 May, will be at workplaces. The whole process will last almost three weeks — the result is due on Friday 19 May.

We can expect the next week to be filled with legal wrangles over the working on the ballot form. Port bosses will try to use the law as a club to beat down the dockers before they even vote on action.

It is vital that the TGWU resists such pressure and pushes on with the ballot. It is already almost a month since the Tories announced their plans to scrap the scheme. Port bosses have been given ample time to respond, negotiations have undermined their legal position. There must be no more delays.

The next two weeks must be used to organise the strike; to sink feelers into the labour movement for solidarity; to get commitments from other workers not to undermine the strike. This way the union can avoid further demobilising dockers.

Port bosses are getting nervous. They always said they would use the Tories' class laws to stop a strike.

Now they want to stop the dockers even voting for a strike. The dockers can't allow this to happen.

## Transforming the labour movement

Socialist Organiser  
Dayschool

Saturday 6 May, 10.30am  
Ripon & York College of St John,  
Phoenix Block

Workshops

- Marx's Communism, Marxism and the Labour Party, Ireland: Time to Rethink • Lenin & the Bolsheviks, Marxism and Trade Unions, Two States: A defeat for the PLO? • Trotsky: A tragic figure?, Marxism & Women's Oppression, Eyewitness Report: Poland • Stalin: Totalitarianism or Leninist?, Marxist Economics, Gorbachev's Reforms • Transforming the labour movement and the fight against New Realism.

Registration £1.50/E£1. Creche and food available. For more details ring Richard on 0904 626529

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

# Tube workers need unity!

**T**ube workers have planned an all-out indefinite strike from Monday 8 May. Tube bosses have tried to impose new working conditions in a package called 'Action Stations'. It is a slaves' charter. NUR members voted by 7 to 1 for strike action, TSSA members by a 2 to 1 majority.

'Action Stations' represents a massive attack on conditions and must be stopped in its tracks.

Under the proposals, crew managers will have the right to hire and fire people on the spot. New 'Unsatisfactory Attendance' procedures mean that time off sick is a disciplinary offence — even with a doctor's note! This will frighten people into coming in when they are ill. It is bound to worsen safety.

Promotion will no longer be on the basis of seniority. So managers will put their favourites in for the best jobs. Staff will have to re-apply for their own jobs. And they will have to pass psychology tests to prove they are 'passenger friendly'.

Seniority does not, and never will, mean unqualified people get promoted. Everyone put forward has to pass all the relevant exams and prove suitable at interviews.

Finally, all demarcation for station staff will go out of the window. One day you might be told to work on the platform, another day in the booking office. Workers will have to do whatever job they are told to: management will save on staff costs and boost profits.

The defiant mood amongst tube workers is caused by the scale of the attacks. But also by the militancy shown by tube drivers recently in two unofficial one-day strikes over a claim for £6.43 per hour pay.

This has put tube bosses on the defen-

sive. But they will try to drive a wedge between drivers and guards and station staff. They will want to see trains running to undermine the strike. NUR drivers have been balloted on strike action but not ASLEF drivers. So it is vital that tube drivers are picketed out and that ASLEF puts its backing behind the NUR and TSSA.

Tube workers have tremendous power. Around 3 million passengers a day use the system. They can bring an already heavily congested capital to a grinding halt.

## Strike together!

**U**nofficial strike action by tube drivers has put management on the defensive.

Two 24-hour strikes over a £6.43 per hour claim for all drivers, with no strings, have paralysed most of the network. Linking the claim to guards, too, through differentials, helped close down the Northern line on the second strike.

Now tube bosses appear to be offering money on the table. As we go to press negotiations are taking place. The

bosses are afraid of the whole network closing from Monday 8 May when station staff begin indefinite strike action.

So drivers must hold out for the full claim — with no strings. And any deal must not stop a united fight against planned station reorganisation.

Station staff will bear the brunt of the charges initially. But changes in promotion, Unsatisfactory Attendance and new management powers will affect drivers and guards, too. Now is the time to strike together and beat back the bosses' attacks.

## Empty these hell-holes!

**P**rison officers at Risley Remand Centre considered calling in the army to deal with rioting prisoners this weekend, as the terrible conditions in British prisons erupted once more into a major crisis.

Prisoners protesting at overcrowding and poor living conditions staged an occupation of the Remand Centre's roof, in what has become the typical means of prison

protest. 'Grisly Risley', near Warrington, Lancashire, was designed to hold 514 men, but now houses 600 male and 140 women prisoners.

It is not a prison, but a remand centre for people awaiting trial. No-one there has been convicted of any crime; many of them will never be convicted.

Several inmates escaped during the weekend's disturbances. After rioting had been 'pacified', 250 prisoners had to be moved due to damage to cells.

Last year, prison officers were involved in a long dispute over bad, overcrowded conditions.

Britain has more prisoners than any other Western European country, three times more in proportion to population than Holland. Prisons are so badly overcrowded because there are simply too many prisoners. People who shouldn't really be sent to prison, even according to current laws, are bunged in, often for non-violent or petty one-off crimes.

In fact prisons are used as a social 'clearing house', and many prisoners are there for social, rather than legal reasons. They have been thieves because they have no money (or have got into the habit of petty crime for related social reasons). Violent crime also often has a social cause.

The Tory solution to all these problems is 'law and order'. But this is no answer: in the short-term, cramming people into prisons just causes scenes such as at Risley; in the long-term, it simply avoids the reasons for crimes.

Worse, some 'crime' has political roots — like the case of the six men jailed for the Birmingham bombings in 1974, almost certainly unjustly.

'Private' prisons, which the Tories are talking about, are a disgusting idea. They would be little more than 'comfortable' prisons for well-off criminals — who have been caught 'insider dealing' in the City, or tax dodging. They would not at all address the situation faced by most prisoners.

One of society's problems is its attitude to prisoners. Punishment is used as a substitute for making society work. An altogether different attitude could be taken from the South African Alexandra Action Committee, whose leaders, including Moses Mayekiso, were recently released from detention.

"We do not believe in corporal punishment...If the person listens then we don't need to implement any punishment. We have been discussing punishment for the person who does not listen...we believe that the (popular) courts have an educational function."



Tube strikes could cripple London

## Time for a flare-up?

### INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

**S**omewhere in the deepest recesses of my wardrobe lies a pair of flares and a tank-top. Hang on to your old clothes long enough and they're bound to come back into fashion.

I reckon this Spring could be just the time to bring the gear out of mothballs, what with inflation topping 8%, a national dock strike on the way, and a series of disputes in engineering, the power industry, the fire service and the BBC either already underway or very likely.

Of course, we mustn't get too carried away. About this time last year a lot of people (me included) were talking about a "new upsurge in industrial struggle" in the wake of the Ford strike, disputes in the NHS, and the Channel ferries confrontation. In the event, the "new me .A" rather petered out and the P&O strike-ers were left to fight on in heroic isolation.

This year, largely because inflation has doubled and mortgage rates continue to soar, there is real reason to think that things could be different. The exaggerated, but real, decline in unemployment has also boosted confidence.

There are signs that even right-wing union leaders like the AEU's Bill Jordan and the EETPU's Eric Hammond, have decided that the time has come to flex their muscles a little.

So far, the most noticeable result of the new, "new mood" has been the disappearance of Terry Wogan and world snooker from our TV screens, described by one pundit as a "cynical attempt by the unions to whip up public support". But even the BBC dispute demonstrates the fact that good old fashioned wages militancy is all set to make a big comeback now that nobody believes Chancellor Lawson's talk about rises in inflation and interest rates being merely a "blip."

At British Rail, the London buses and in the power industry, strike ballots are being prepared after pay negotiations have broken down with offers of around 7%. On the railways, an additional element is the employer's attempt to dismantle the existing negotiating machinery. Jimmy Knapp of the NUR has been stomping round the country making militant noises about strike action, then telling the press that he was misquoted and wants to avoid disruption at all costs.

In the power industry, Eric Hammond means business this time: these negotiations are the last before privatisation and the EETPU must demonstrate that it is not a pushover in order to hang on to its 70,000 members in the power supply industry. These are Hammond's shock troops, and if he loses them no amount of BUPA

schemes and credit cards will save the EETPU as a credible organisation. This fact also accounts for Hammond's strike ballot over GCHQ last year (where he took a stronger line than the TUC) and should be borne in mind by those simplistic people on the left who try to portray the electricians as merely pawns of the bosses.

Another 'moderate' union leader who has decided the time is right to put on a more 'militant' face is Bill Jordan. For the second year in succession, Jordan's attempts to negotiate a 'total flexibility' package with the Engineering Employers Federation, in exchange for a phased reduction in hours, has been thrown out by the rank and file of the AEU and the other Confed unions.

Jordan decided to put a brave face on his humiliation and has presented the AEU National Committee with proposals for "selective action" in pursuit of the original claim for 35 hours and a national minimum time rate that keeps pace with inflation. This will have to be put to a ballot of all Confed unions and Jordan may well be calculating that it will be thrown out. But it is worth remembering that the last successful series of national engineering strikes (that secured a significant improvement in the minimum time rate and a 39 hour week) took place 10 years ago under the 'leadership' of the late Terry Duffy — compared with whom Bill Jordan looks like a fire-breathing militant.

Finally, we come to the two Big Ones: the dispute that could bring back '70s nostalgia with a vengeance. If you don't

know what's going on in the docks, you shouldn't be reading this. Despite all Ron Todd's ducking and diving (and I for one wouldn't condemn him out of hand for attempting to minimise the danger of the union's funds being sequestrated), a national dock strike and court action by the port employers now seems inevitable.

Effective action by the registered dockers (i.e. picketing unregistered ports) will certainly be declared unlawful. If you haven't got your Dockers Support Group off the ground yet, then get moving!

Less well publicised, but potentially just as explosive is the second attack on the firefighters and the FBU. Back in 1977, the firefighters won a famous victory against the Callaghan government: their pay would, henceforth, be directly linked to the 'upper quartile' of industrial wage levels.

Douglas Hurd has now announced a 'special inquiry' into the firefighters' pay arrangements: the intention is obvious. In 1977 the FBU was considered a right-wing union (despite its CP-influenced leadership). But they fought like tigers. As a result, the rank and file of the fire service is much more union-minded. There is no doubt that they will fight to defend their pay arrangement if it is attacked.

It looks like, despite all the boasting of the government and the pretentious articles about 'the end of the working class' from *Marxism Today*, the Greedy Worker is back. Give thanks, and get out your flares!

## May Day

**M**ay Day was celebrated by the ruling bureaucracy of Czechoslovakia by violently repressing a demonstration calling for 'glasnost'.

One hundred people, calling for human rights and the release of jailed dissidents, were arrested — and beaten.

In South Korea, thousands of workers were attacked by riot police in Changwon. Nearly 3000 workers and students were arrested in the capital Seoul, on Saturday. Last year, Korean workers formed independent unions.

Spanish workers held big demos in the big cities, called jointly by the two union federations — the UGT and the Workers' Commissions. This follows a growing wave of strikes, including big strikes last Thursday (28 April) which brought public transport to a standstill in Madrid and Barcelona.

In the Philippines, workers demanding higher wages were dispersed by riot police.

Internationally, the picture this May Day was of growing worker confidence and combativity.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

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Ellis fiddles while jobs burn

# The fightback starts now!



**P**rivatisation, Agencies, re-  
location of work, mass  
computerisation. These  
have been the Tories' plans for  
the Civil Service for many  
years. For CPSA grades these  
plans are a threat to our jobs,  
wages, conditions and union  
rights. The next year will be  
crucial in our battle against  
these Tory attacks.

However, we look set to face  
another year of right-wing rule in  
the form of CPSA General  
Secretary Ellis and Co. Our leaders  
will sit back, raking in their enor-  
mous wages and union expenses  
while the rest of us struggle to keep  
our jobs.

Ellis has already said he won't  
fight Tory plans to turn the Civil  
Service into Agencies — Agencies  
where the bosses can scrap the long-  
term pay deal which the right wing  
keep telling us is so wonderful.  
Privatisation threats have been  
made — the NEC has not even  
squeaked. The DSS Operational  
Strategy has been fully accepted by  
the right wing DHSS SEC who lied  
in order to get DSS CPSA members  
to accept it in a recent ballot. The  
DHSS SEC look set to accept the  
Moodie proposals lock, stock and  
barrel unless we do something  
about it.

Never has the need for a strong  
united fighting union been more  
pressing. Sadly, CPSA leadership  
falls well short of this model.

We need to begin serious cam-  
paigns amongst the rank and file  
membership to fight Tory threats to  
our livelihood. And these struggles  
must not be taken on in isolation.  
We need to establish links up and  
down across the many groups

Tory attacks.

We need to build on moves such  
as the Socialist Caucus initiative to  
build a branch-based rank and file  
movement in the London offices  
against Moodie proposals. We need  
to link the Moodie offices with  
other DSS workplaces. We need to  
launch a mass campaign against  
fascists in our union and in the civil  
service — linking this to the broader  
issues of union democracy and  
struggles against racism. We need  
to organise now to bring the dif-  
ferent fights together in a strong,  
united force which can take on the  
Tories and win.

---

**Socialist Caucus  
public meeting  
Organising the  
rank and file  
Speakers: Socialist  
Caucus  
Andy Dixon (NUT  
Executive, Socialist  
Teachers Alliance)  
Anti-Fascist Action  
Tuesday May 9th,  
7pm, The Carlton  
Hotel, North  
Promenade**

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## The CPSA's silenced majority

By Trudy Saunders,  
DHSS HQ

**W**hatever else happens at this year's CPSA Conference, one thing is guaranteed. The vast majority of faces in the conference hall will be male — both on the conference floor and at the top table. Yet the vast majority (70%) of CPSA members are women.

Men dominate throughout the CPSA — from branch level to the National Executive Committee. This state of affairs reflects and replicates wider capitalist society. Under capitalism, women's oppression will always exist.

With capitalism came the sharp separation of 'housework' from social labour. Seizing upon the subordination of women which it had inherited from older societies, capitalism imposed this 'housework' on women. The burden of housework has become

the basis of the whole elaborate structure of women's disadvantage in capitalist society, including the relegation of women to low-paid jobs modelled on their domestic roles and the organisation of labour without regard for women's special needs and problems.

It is in the interests of the ruling class that the working class remains divided. A divided working class has less chance of challenging capitalism — a divided trade union where the majority of the members are unrepresented and inactive is less of a threat to the bosses.

Our aim as trade unionists must be to build a strong, united, fighting union which can take on the Tories and win. To do this, one of our priorities must be to bring the vast majority of the membership into activity, ie. women.

Yet many male trade unionists refuse to accept this — some deliberately, many because they do not see the need. The male shop steward who refused to leaflet his women members about a strike

because "they don't read them — they just put them in their handbags" is not alone in his contempt for the ability of women to fight.

Yet women are often the best class fighters — we have less to lose — look at the Russian women textile workers in 1917, and the women who fought for trade union recognition at Grunwick in 1977.

'Women Against Pit Closures', without which the miners' strike of 1984-5 would not have lasted for as long as it did, proved that the autonomous self-organisation of women within the working class strengthens the class as a whole.

Women's groups within the CPSA must be actively built. Women's groups aren't, as some argue, divisive — the working class is already divided — but they do give women the collective strength to actively challenge the sexist attitudes held by men in our union.

It is vital that the CPSA campaigns around issues specifically affecting women. On a practical level we need to fight for

demands such as workplace nurseries and workplace cervical cancer screening. It will also help to activate a new layer of women trade unionists.

We need to ensure that the union itself is habitable for women. Not just through practical measures such as childcare provision and lifts home after late meetings. Women self-organising within a union branch or workplace can give us the strength and confidence to challenge the often off-putting behaviour of some male trade unionists — put-downs, sexual innuendos, patronisation, use of jargon.

Many women feel they have no 'right' to challenge for positions when they see men tend to 'run the show' throughout the CPSA. Men hold these positions often not on their own merit, but because of the divisive nature of capitalism which ensures that women are disadvantaged.

We need to redress the balance by arguing for positive discrimination for women — such as reserved seats

for women on the NEC. This is not insulting to women. It is necessary, to give women role models and ensure campaigns specific to women are launched.

But it does not cut across politics. It does not mean voting for a right-wing woman rather than a Broad Left man. Positive discrimination will not solve the problem of a male-dominated trade union, but combined with campaigning around issues specifically related to women and the self-organisation of women within our union, the CPSA could begin to look very different.

The Broad Left has consistently failed to address the problem of a male-dominated union. Militant and SWP supporters do not recognise the need to fight around the issue of women's oppression in the here and now. The Socialist Caucus is the only grouping on the left which has consistently fought for positive discrimination and positive action. It is vital that all socialists act now on this question and don't just sit back and hope things will change.

## Kick out the fascists

Dave Armes, DHSS HQ, looks at why we need to drive the fascists out of our unions.

**I**t is true that British fascists despite their attempts to achieve respectability, belong to the same political tradition as the Nazis responsible for the murder of six million Jews.

If we are to successfully oppose the threat posed by fascists in the unions, first we must understand exactly the nature of fascism and why we must fight them. Not to do this is a disaster for trade unionists and our bitter experience of Moderate/BL84's handling of

Malcolm Skeggs and the Nash brothers confirms this.

Fascism is a particularly brutal form of capitalism. Its major aim is to maximise profits for the benefit of a fascist ruling class, to achieve this aim it merely extends the existing exploitation of the working class.

By creating bogymen out of Jews, blacks, gays, socialists and other identifiable minority social groupings it attempts to divide the class which quite correctly it sees as the greatest threat. Hitler understood this when he said "only one thing could have stopped our movement — if adversaries had understood its principles from the very first day had smashed with utmost brutality the nucleus of our new movement". The true class enemy of fascism is the organised workers in trade unions and political parties. Fascism is the trump card of a ruling class who

fear the organised workers.

The first act of the Nazis was to ban the trade unions, socialist and communist parties. The NF say this about trade unions and trade unionists. "Be ready to embark on a campaign of repression of the left in the unions", "win the battle in advance by winning control of the trade union movement by the normal democratic process". "The names and addresses of known left wing activists active in promoting anti-NF activity within trade unions should be supplied. Organisers should keep their own cross reference filing system". I wonder what for?

The CPSA right-wing 'leadership' refuse to take fascism seriously. They used the issue of the employment of known fascist, Malcolm Skeggs at Hither Green DSS in an opportunist manner, supporting the Hither Green strike for fear of alienating black and Asian

members. For the right wing the issue of fascism is akin to Equal Opportunities! The fact that the right-wing Branch Executive Committee in DHSS HQ have buried the issue of Skeggs, and the fact that the branch chair, Mike Duggan, lumped fascists and Trotskyists together at an all members meeting on the issue, is evidence enough of where the right-wing stand on the issue.

National Front directorate member Paul Nash, has worked at Tottenham DSS for over ten years. When his identity was revealed to the CPSA members at that branch last year they voted to expel him from their union drawing on the CPSA constitution which states "membership shall not be open to a member of a fascist or racist organisation" (Rule 3.1(b)). The right-wing National Executive Committee withdrew Nash's CPSA membership only to return it the

minute he threatened legal action. Paul Nash's brother Robert (also NF) understanding this as a signal that the CPSA tolerates Nazis, stood for and won a position on Edmondton DSS Branch Executive Committee.

There has been and still is a real mood amongst rank and file CPSA members to rid our union and workplaces of fascists. The Broad Left must begin the task of building on this mood to create a movement capable of getting rid of these scum who seek to destroy us. We must have and win the political arguments about fascism. The all-out strike action by Hither Green CPSA members should not have taken place for nothing.

CPSA members should learn the lessons of the present leadership which fights the left more actively than it fights the fascists and more vigorously than for the interests of us the membership.

### WHERE WE STAND

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

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under

workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

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

workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

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

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

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

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

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

## CPSA and the poll tax

By Vince Brown,  
DHSS HQ

**T**here is widespread anger against the Poll Tax (Community Charge). This tax, which so obviously benefits the rich at the expense of the rest, hitting the poorest hardest, is universally hated by the working class. The task that faces us, the labour movement, is turning that mass anger into mass opposition.

Clearly it is not enough just to issue leaflets telling people the Poll Tax is bad. They know that already. What people want to know is what do we do to stop it.

The Poll Tax is vulnerable. Its introduction relies on agreement of public sector workers to implement it and for everyone to pay it. Council workers and post workers are organising in their unions to cut this tax dead. The CPSA must play its part too.

We must call for our union to put pressure on the TUC and Labour Party to take the lead in a "Non-payment, Non-implementation" campaign. Bodies at all levels should be encouraged to make links with local anti-poll tax groups.

Above all the union must clearly state as policy that it:

- Calls on CPSA members not to pay the tax.

- Calls on CPSA members in pay sections not to deduct at source fines and payments for the tax.

- Calls on CPSA members in the DSS not to deduct at source from claimants refusing to pay the tax.

There is every reason to be confident. The anger exists to defeat the tax but it needs to be organised. Poll tax campaigns are flowering all across the country. DSS branches such as South East London have already passed policy refusing to implement this disgusting tax. However, as in so many other battles we are being stabbed in the back. The CPSA president has refused to allow our union to debate Conference motions to defeat the tax. Any motion supporting the type of action we need to win has been ruled out of order.

We can't give up just because of the antics of our so-called 'leadership'. This issue is too important. We must organise now to encourage and support all CPSA members prepared to fight the Poll Tax.

If you want to contact Socialist Organiser CPSA activists write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA or phone 01-639 7965.

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## Mean and Moodie

By London DSS workers

**T**he Moodie judgement rolls ever on with no sign of resistance from the apparently comatose DHSS SEC. In fact the only resistance from the SEC has been to DSS CPSA grades who want to fight Moodie.

The implementation of Moodie in the first 21 London offices is clearly the thin end of the Operational Strategy wedge. Without the computerisation of those offices, Moodie is a non-starter and once live the "Moodied" offices will be a large-scale pilot for the OP Strat destruction of the DSS local office network.

It might be London today but its going to be every office in every town in the country within the next 2-3 years.

That's the scale of the struggle, it's not just a big fight to defend the London offices it's the to be or not to be question for the DSS Section and the union as a whole.

If the Tories can succeed in job cuts (an estimated 1,200) on this scale in the DSS then the prospects for the rest of the CPSA grades in the country don't bear thinking about.

If the right-wing SEC has got off lightly so far its because little of the actual introduction of Moodie has happened yet. But that's going to change and sooner rather than later.

In Ealing ILO, one of the first cluster of offices affected, 30 staff are to be selected to be sent to Glasgow for computer training on May 8th.

From the start the right-wing led SEC has made it clear that it will do all it can to prevent CPSA members from fighting Moodie. The walkout of DSS workers on 15 Jan this year indicated that the rank and file members can be mobilised to fight. Yet it was not until 6

March that the SEC — under extreme pressure from London DSS workers — called an all-London reps Conference.

The SEC's next stab-in-the-back for DSS workers was to ignore the decision of the Conference to ballot for all-out strike in the 21 Moodie offices followed by an immediate ballot for GLC offices.

The SEC's announcement that DSS CPSA grades should co-operate with Moodie while they held "emergency talks" with management has left no-one in any doubt as to where they stand.

The right-wing SEC never had any intention of carrying through the wishes of the all-London Reps Conference — unless of course they won. The SEC "options" paper produced soon after included a "damage limitation" strategy (no strike action). No-one remembers this being passed at the Conference!

Rank and file DSS CPSA members have shown they are prepared to fight Moodie. The SEC has used every trick in the book to prevent it. For its part, the Broad Left has failed to build on and mobilise the will to fight. "Unofficial" rank and file London DSS meetings have been held, but the nitty-gritty work of uniting CPSA members in the London Offices has not been done by the BL.

This makes the task of building for the unofficial strike action it will take to defeat Moodie more difficult. But it can and must be done. London North Regional Committee began the move when it passed a Socialist Caucus motivated motion calling for a London-wide network of rank and file activists to be built which will hold regular meetings and produce regular bulletins for all London DSS members. It is vital that such a rank and file London DSS network is built now. We must ensure DSS CPSA grades in Ealing Office are not isolated and have the confidence to take strike action from May 8th — then we must spread this strike action quickly. Too much time has been wasted — we must fight now.



A fighting Broad Left would have done much more over GCHQ

## For a fighting Bro

By Mike Grayson, British Library

**T**he Broad Left in CPSA is the largest such body within the present British union movement. Membership of it is easily accessible to any individual member of the union.

At times it has been able to collect enough electoral support (in a democratic system of individual workplace balloting) to see its candidates — standing openly as members of 'Marxist' tendencies — be voted into the highest positions of the union. Such facts might well appear astonishing to left-wing activists within many other unions today.

But there is another side to the coin. Though large compared to some other Broad Lefts, the organisation in CPSA is still a small one. Its successes have not been sustained: control of the union's National Executive Committee has tended to yo-yo between left and right, both sides receiving protest votes against them after a year of uninspired and unsuccessful leadership.

The left, as well as the right, has been ready to sell out strikes (the

notorious staffing disputes of 1982 in Birmingham and Oxford DHSS are still remembered by many activists). To many ordinary members in the offices, there seems little difference in a year of 'left' control and a year of 'right' control. The result, too often, can be apathy and cynicism.

What, then, is the nature of the problem? And what needs to be done to build a genuine rank and file movement in CPSA, capable of overcoming the problems and shortcomings of the present Broad Left?

The biggest single group within the Broad Left consists of supporters of the Militant newspaper. Militant places great emphasis on capturing the apparatus of unions, and a good deal of effort and money goes into this: ie, into winning elections.

Supporters of Socialist Organiser also believe that elections are important...but not the all-important aspect of a left-wing movement.

Militant have their mirror image in the Broad Left too, in the form of the SWP. The comrades of the Socialist Workers Party are not too concerned about winning elections. They wish to organise at a rank and file level, quite often being ready to preach pessimism about what can be achieved during a period of

'downturn' in the class struggle. Their aim can, however, be more narrowly pinpointed as the expansion of their own sect. Their activities are geared towards this, rather than a genuine effort to create a broad-based movement.

Between them, as they pull in their own separate directions, the Militant and the SWP stifle the prospects of a healthy broad rank and file movement. Nor is this some tragic accident, but the inevitable result of the politics pursued by these two organisations.

The problem is that both the Militant and the SWP start from their own political projects rather than internal developments within the union. They are both building white elephants.

Rather than working in the real movement as it exists, both attempt to build a movement in their own image.

As a result, neither really take on the power of the bureaucracy. The SWP explicitly, because they refuse to challenge for positions, the Militant implicitly because they actually work to take over the existing bureaucratic machine with just a few minor alterations, and use the machine as a platform for rapid propaganda. In this, the Militant are very reminiscent of the Communist Party in the '60s and '70s.

The effectiveness of the Broad Left is thus reduced by the way in which it is regarded by some of its major elements: it is a machine to be set running at election time; and/or a pool in which to fish for recruits to one's own tendency.

If the Broad Left at the moment is a poor substitute for the type of organisation we need, are there any historical examples of how the left can better organise? It is interesting to look briefly at the Minority Movement of the 1920s, organised in an adverse economic situation of high unemployment and declining union membership.

They got the name 'Minority Movement' because of the complaint of some bureaucrats about 'the minority of troublemakers'.

The guiding force behind the Minority Movement was the Communist Party, which worked to establish rank and file groups in various sectors of industry — coming together in 1924 to create the National Minority Movement.

The programme of the movement began for improvements in hours and wages, the spread of trade unionism, the democratisation of the unions and the building of fac-

## Op Strat — DHSS SEC does management's dirty work

By Steve Battlemuch, DHSS SEC (personal capacity)

**O**ver the next 3 years the largest computer system in Western Europe, costing £1.7 billion is being introduced in every DSS office. The aim of the Operation Strategy (OP Strat), according to DSS management, is to improve the service to the public. However, DSS workers know different. OP Strat (combined with "Moodie") will mean a worse service to the public. It will also mean the loss of 15,000 plus jobs by 1992.

In the face of the threat to CPSA members jobs, wages and conditions and the prospect of a worsening service to claimants, the right-wing led DHSS SEC is colluding with management to avert any action against the OP Strat.

DSS workers are facing the prospect of OP Strat and all that the system entails as a result of the union's failure to fight Fowler's Social Security Reviews in 1986-7. At that time the Broad Left controlled the DHSS SEC and Militant supporters made up the majority.

Despite the real possibility of mobilising DHSS workers against the Social Security Reviews, Militant SEC members backed down in the face of threats of legal action from the Tories — this at a time when the Tories trade union laws were still in a 'test period'. Out of this failure to even attempt to lead a struggle the union was seriously weakened and the way was opened for the introduction of Limited Period Appointments, Moodie and OP Strat. Repeated failure by the SEC to lead battles caused disillusionment among DSS workers which in 1988 led to the right-wing "Charter Group" (a coalition of "Moderates" and "BL84"

members) taking 22 of the 30 SEC seats. The Broad Left could not have lost the election at a worse time.

Since coming to power, the right-wing led DHSS SEC has ridden rough shod over the wishes of CPSA members.

- In July 1988 a Special New Technology Conference voted for a Socialist Caucus motion calling for all-out action in the six trial offices followed by a ballot for all-out action in every DSS office. The SEC totally ignored the democratically agreed conference policy and did nothing.
- On 31 October 1988 the first trial offices began work on the new system. The BL controlled Liverpool branch, which includes two 'trial' offices, countered with a one-day unofficial strike across Liverpool. The SEC condemned the Liverpool members!
- Five months of inactivity followed until CPSA DSS workers were balloted on OP Strat. The SEC gave 2 options — accept management's proposals or go on immediate all-out strike action. The SEC recommended acceptance. In addition they lied to CPSA members, saying compulsory redundancies would be the result of rejection of management's proposals and that NUCPS supported the sell-out — which they don't.

On the basis of lies, smears and scare tactics, the SEC managed to win the ballot 8,600 to 7,300 on a 40% poll.

The re-election of the "Charter Group" to the SEC will mean DSS CPSA grades face the prospect of compulsory transfers to other offices.

The SEC will sit back and say "you voted for it". The truth is DSS CPSA members were conned into voting for OP Strat.

Broad Left controlled branches and regions must prepare now to defend members. We need to plan for the unofficial strike action it will take to defeat OP Strat. We have to recognise that the ballot result was a set-back, but we must organise protest strikes immediately in the most militant regions as a sign to both the Tories and to the treacherous right-wingers on the SEC that we will not allow 15,000 jobs to go without a fight.

## 'Moderates' smash democracy

The current right-wing CPSA NEC and DHSS SEC would not look out of place in Stalin's USSR or Pinochet's Chile. All are undemocratic, corrupt and enjoy nothing better than a good witch-hunt followed by a kangaroo court.

The NEC — who call themselves 'moderates', and I suppose they are, compared to Ghengis Khan — have spent the last year firmly stamping on anyone who disagrees with them.

DHSS Newcastle Central Office (NCO) branch has been closed down, North Fylde Central Office was temporarily shut down for campaigning against YTS, a 'BL 84' member of the DE SEC was threatened for the same 'offence' and BL supporters in the DSS are facing disciplinary action for their part in arguing against voting for

Op Strat.

The latest anti-democratic outrage by the right-wing has been to 'suspend indefinitely' the investigation into a number of BL supporters from NCO. No doubt the right-wing are unable to produce any evidence against the accused — who have been branded 'guilty until proved innocent' — and are taking the only option left open to them by telling the NCO members "we aren't going to give you a chance to prove your innocence".

If the right-wing win again this year, we will see more attempts at silencing dissenting voices. A Broad Left campaign around the issue of internal union democracy is something we must put into motion now. The loony right must not be allowed to gag us.



## ad Left!



ry committees. It worked for the election of lefting trade unionists to office, but ever acted solely as an election-winning machine, and did not shy away from broader politics — cognising that “trade unionism is not enough”. At the height of its development, the National Minority Movement could claim seriously represent a quarter of the total membership of the trade unions.

The Minority Movement was to be derailed by the defeat of the General Strike and the degeneration of the Communist Party, as it blindly followed every turn of Stalin’s policy. But it showed at its best hour a large, campaigning rank and file group can be built even in the most hostile-seeming situation.

The NMM organised across the trade unions: today the only similar left-wing umbrella organisation is BLOC (Broad Left Organising Committee), set up in 1981. BLOC is very much the creature of Militant, and has left a very sporadic existence, occasionally lifting its head out of the grave when Militant

deem it opportune. As a serious cross-union organiser of the left, BLOC is a non-starter.

In complete contrast to today’s Militant-dominated Broad Lefts, the Minority Movement was a serious fighting organisation. It set out to be more than an electoral machine or a ginger group. Its aim was rank and file control over the unions, to turn them into militant organisations of working class struggle.

The establishment of the Minority Movement represented a step beyond the previous ‘vigilance’ work of earlier rank and file groupings who tended to confine themselves to making propaganda for militant policies and warning of the danger of a sell-out. Just like today’s SWP.

Today’s CPSA BL is at best nothing more than a body for such ‘vigilance’ work. It is not an effective fighting machine.

Turning back to the CPSA today, we see a right-wing that is confident and on the offensive. They have been able to push through a

long-term pay deal that introduces regional and merit pay into CPSA — and receive a massive membership vote in favour of it.

Look at the motions submitted to this annual conference: the NEC have tabled no motions advancing union policy on any basic issues, but it is very interesting to see what they have submitted.

They are attempting to move away from the annual election of the National and Section Executive Committees (motion 663a), and are trying to change the constitution of the union to suit themselves (eg. motion 1229 would delete the entire rule setting out how Presidential rulings can be challenged). It is probable that they will not be able to convince conference to go along with such proposals, but it is now clearer than ever the right-wing want to lead us.

The Broad Left must become a campaigning organisation, rather than one that simply reacts against the latest right-wing proposal or sell-out. A campaign on union democracy would be a good start, given the present moves to turn the clock back. It would focus not just on preserving the status quo, but would present ways of going forward, to ensure that the union is firmly under the control of its membership.

The left must show to members that we don’t just want their votes at election time, in order to capture positions for our own candidates: we have a conception of the union, its purpose and its workings, that is different from the turgid bureaucratic and alienating structure we live with at present.

Is the left capable of running this kind of campaign? If it fails to move out of its present electoralism, and the sectarianism of Militant and the SWP, it is likely to stagnate — at best picking up support from those reacting against right-wing capitulation. It will not draw active support from the thousands of members willing to vote for Broad Left candidates in the yearly elections.

Socialist Organiser supporters believe that the left in CPSA needs to change course. Along with other activists in the Socialist Caucus grouping, we campaign for the widest possible extension of democracy, for support for all groups of the workforce in struggle, for positive action to ensure that the 70% of members who are women are represented at every level of the union. We urge all those who believe in these aims to join us.

## Join the Socialist Caucus

Socialist Organiser supporters are members of the CPSA Socialist Caucus. The Socialist Caucus is a broad-based group which aims to build a mass, fighting rank and file

movement in the CPSA. Such a movement is vital if we are to take on the corrupt right-wing leadership of the union and fight the Tory attacks on our jobs, wages and conditions.

## Where Socialist Caucus Stands

Support for all members in struggle.  
For full union democracy: all officials to be subject to annual election by the membership.  
For the right of oppressed groups to organise themselves to

combat their oppression, both within the CPSA and in the wider labour movement.  
4. For a Civil Service workers’ union. No merger with managerial unions.  
5. For affiliation of CPSA to the Labour Party.

## TCS privatisation — build the fightback!

By John Maloney, PSA St Christophers

In our everyday working lives we are all surrounded by products bought by the Crown Suppliers (TCS) — our desks, chairs, carpets, filing cabinets, fuel etc.

This is big business. TCS has a turnover of £240 million. So it comes as no surprise that the Tories want to flog it off. Sadly, it also comes as no surprise that the Broad Left is doing little to stop this privatisation. This despite the fact that privatisation is a serious threat to the jobs, wages and conditions of CPSA grades.

Failing to mobilise the rank and file against Tory attacks is nothing new for the Broad Left which has two standard excuses for not doing so — “We weren’t in control, it’s the right wing’s fault” or “we didn’t have enough time to mobilise”.

Neither of these excuses apply to the Department of Environment SEC (TCS is part of the DoE) where the BL have controlled the SEC for the past 10 years or so. Militant supporters are the majority group in the DoE BL. In true Militant style winning elections is the most important thing. Of course, winning elections in conjunction with building a strong base amongst the rank and file is necessary to turn the union into a strong, fighting body.

Unfortunately, Militant are happy to win elections but see no need to win the membership.

This state of affairs, bad enough at any time, has become crucial now the Tories are looking to privatise TCS. A strong fighting rank and file is needed to take on the Tories and win. Militant supporters on the DoE SEC have failed to even attempt to build this. In the last 10 years — while Thatcher has been mobilising against civil servants — the DoE SEC has become complacent and lazy. With no organised right wing groups in the DoE, Militant supporters have a free run in the elections.

When privatisation of TCS was announced in 1984, the SEC did not hold one meeting or produce one leaflet about it! Not one all-members meeting has been organised. When members walked out in protest, the SEC did nothing. When 90% of the workforce signed a petition against privatisation, the SEC, again, did nothing. It has sat back and watched TCS branches wither away, then used the poor state of the branches as an argument against taking strike action.

The state of the DoE SEC is the logical conclusion of the electoralism of Militant supporters. Activists in the DoE rank and file have the task of turning around the last 10 wasted years and building a rank and file branch based fightback — a fightback against the Tories and to elect a leadership which wants to help build that fight.

## A wasted year

At last year’s CPSA conference, Militant supporters boasted “we’ll be back next year”. This looks unlikely.

Not because CPSA members overwhelmingly support right-wing policies — look at the YTS vote — but because the Broad Left has failed to do the campaigning work amongst the rank and file.

On many occasions the Broad Left has not even attempted to organise action of win important political arguments among the mass CPSA membership:

- On the issue of GCHQ, the Militant-dominated BL National Committee and the BL’s elected officers failed to implement a Socialist Caucus-motivated motion to fight, democratically passed at BL National Conference. The right-wing sold out the GCHQ trade unionists — but the BL failed to even seriously attempt to stop them.
- On the question of Moodie, the Militant-dominated London

BL Committee has failed to build opposition in the London DSS offices. An initiative for a branch-based rank and file fightback came from Socialist Caucus supporters.

The rejection of YTS in a national ballot should have been a sign for the BL to mobilise CPSA members around the issue. But the BL missed the opportunity. Once again, it failed to capitalise on a mood of resistance. This will make our struggle against YTSers being brought into DSS Regions more difficult to organise.

Militant supporters in the BL have consistently failed to carry through democratically agreed BL conference policies. They have also failed to intervene amongst the mass CPSA membership in any significant way.

Will it take another defeat before Militant supporters learn that building a genuine mass base goes hand in hand with winning elections?

## The Activist

The Activist is the bulletin of the Socialist Caucus. If you would like to know more about the Activist, or if you have any articles, write to: Trudy Saunders, c/o 29 Osney Crescent, Kentish Town, NW5

