

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

**Chinese Students are  
fighting for  
democracy — support  
them!**

**Picket**  
4–5pm, Wednesday 24 May  
Chinese Embassy, 31 Portland Place  
(Supported by NUS)

**Meeting**  
6.30pm, Wednesday 24 May  
Institute of Education Students Union, Bedford Way,  
WC1 (behind ULU, next to SOAS)  
Speakers include: Cheung Siu Ming; many speakers  
from Chinese organisations invited; Louise Holloway  
(SOAS Exec, personal capacity). Chair: Liz Millward  
(NUS NEC, personal capacity)  
Both events called by Left Unity  
For speakers or more details write to 133 Ashford St,  
Stoke on Trent. Or phone 01 639 7967

# Solidarity with China's revolution!

By Cheung Siu Ming

Three days after the declaration of martial law, the situation in China remains critical, with the students and workers still holding on to Tiananmen Square.

The Communist Party leadership is now in emergency session, while rumours circulate about Premier Li Peng and even Deng himself being dismissed. The Army generals now hold tremendous power as a section of the ruling apparatus, for they alone can still threaten to smash the mass mobilisations.

But even they have to bluff and not show their hand, for fraternisation between the rank and file soldiers and the students and workers is developing at a tremendous rate. Each day of inactivity by the regime gives the democracy movement valuable time to win over the soldiers.

The CP is in deep crisis. Its credibility is at a historic low, while ordinary people have gained political confidence by leaps and bounds. Their indecision has given



Chinese student protest in London. Photo: Tim Anderson

the movement valuable time to develop, and the formation of independent workers' organisations threatening to take strike action is one more blow against the bureaucratic regime.

One million people marched in

Hong Kong last weekend — that's one sixth of the population. The people of Hong Kong clearly identifying their future with the future of China's democratic upsurge.

They have no time for any paper promises from Britain or Beijing over basic rights or fake

democracy. But, they do have the power now to take general strike action to paralyse the colony's workers. Overseas finance capital, as well as the Chinese regime, is now worried about its investments. The Hong Kong stock exchange has taken a nose dive.

Support from overseas is needed. A Chinese Solidarity Campaign has now been formed as an umbrella organisation involving Chinese and Hong Kong students and Chinese community organisations in the UK. Support is urgently needed from UK student, trade union, and other community organisations.

The campaign demands that the Chinese Government immediately:

1. Immediately lift curfew and martial law;
2. Immediately lift the order of media blackout;
3. Stop all threats and the violent suppression of the democracy movement;
4. Accede to the demands of the students and workers for fair and open dialogue;
5. Implement democratic political reforms;
6. Release all political prisoners, in particular, Wang Xishe, Wei Jingshen and Hong Kong citizen Liu Shanqing;
7. Investigate and punish all corrupt bureaucrats in the Party and in government;
8. Respect the right of self-determination of all minorities in China.



# China: eye-witness report

By Sarah Ran Chen in Shanghai

**F**udan University campus on Sunday morning, 16 April: the notice boards in front of the canteen were stripped clear. Big-letter posters quickly came up: 'Though Hu Yaobang has died, his spirit is going to live forever,' one said. Another: 'Everyone knows that Hu Yaobang is the victim of the oppression of the 1986 students' demonstration'.

In the afternoon, more posters appeared describing Hu as a 'soldier of democracy'. By evening, the restlessness was palpable and male students in the East Living Area began to throw Thermos flasks and wine bottles out of their dormitory windows. The scheduled dance at the students' centre was cancelled, the cafeteria closed and all other activities halted.

Students began gathering in Room 3108, scene before of many stirring speeches by liberal intellectuals. Others followed them, eager for something to do to pass the time or pleased for the opportunity to talk. Still others found their way to another party, at the Southern Living Area.

But when the dancing ended, the boys gathered where the others were still throwing bottles. Soon, newspapers and even clothes, were set on fire and thrown out of dormitory windows, accompanied by shouting and laughter. The scene took on more of a festival air than one of mourning. The foreign press is quick to describe student unrest as evidence of another democracy movement that is using Hu's death as an opportunity to surface. But the students' lot is so terrible than any spark can set them afire.

Many students are from the countryside. Most rural families can with difficulty, driven by pride, scrape up Rmb80 (US\$20) to support their children in university and, given the inflation rate, covering basic accommodation alone would cost Rmb90 a month.

Half a year ago, the Fudan University students were feverishly involved in making money. They sold everything, including books, old English-language newspapers, jeans, socks, jewellery — even underwear — in front of the cafeteria at mealtimes. Inevitably, the desire to study took a back seat as students enthusiastically threw themselves into the pursuit of money. And so a regulation was passed preventing it.

The students now have little to occupy themselves with. Living conditions are bad — seven students pack into a room some 15 sq.m big — and so they only return to sleep. With the squeeze on education budgets beginning to affect them, they are, more and more, unwilling to spend their evenings in classrooms. With no money for an adventurous life elsewhere, they stay trapped and depressed on campus, smoking and talking.

Some can only afford to eat rice along with some preserved vegetables, or plain noodles. The quality of food is so base that hungry students often spit out big mouthfuls after finding sand, stones or some other unidentified objects inside. Some skimp on money meant for food so that they can buy cigarettes, thus further harming bodies already starved of nutrition. Insomnia is common.

Noon on Tuesday, 18 April: more big-letter posters praising Hu went up, as well as poems written in the style of Tiananmen Square posters — full of hidden accusations. A poster from the chemistry department demanded 'the unconditional freedom of press; the re-

evaluation of the 1986 students' demonstration; the referendum of the National People's Representatives; change of system to ensure the elimination of bureaucratic corruption; rule under law; revelation of the true background of Hu Yaobang's heart attack; full publicity of the content of the seventh National Congress; an exact answer from the government on the Hainan issue; a stop to the flooding import of Japanese commodities and to refuse the Japanese Emperor's visit to China'.

Another said: 'Please be fair with (senior leader) Deng Xiaping'. There were also lengthy articles against the conservative premier Li Peng. Several advocated Deng's past policies.

In the evening, the campus fell unusually quiet because students were out in the streets, a parade of several thousand of them slowly marching towards the people's square. A law student brought along a mosquito net and in firm, attractive calligraphy outlined two broad characters *Mingzhu* (democracy) on the net and held it up so it flowed with defiance in the air. All in, there were some 10,000 people in the square listening to fiery speeches.

Many students have taken heart from the classroom lessons of Zhang Guangjie and Yu Ping, two members of the liberal, intellectual elite of the university's law department.

Zhang has taught in class that sometimes disobeying the law in good faith and peaceful resistance are desirable for progress of society. Students who asked him, 'Which class can the (current) events be categorised into? Good faith or peaceful resistance?' are said to have got the quick reply: 'Both'.

Zhang had told them: 'The outcome (of these student demonstrations) might be that the liberal thinkers will be ousted and the conservatives will take full control, or seeing the opportunity for a new authoritarianism, which has been much speculated upon these past months, the military may swiftly take over. Either way, tighter rule is expected.'

That Tuesday morning, the university vice-president warned students over the public address system that the student demonstration was illegal. After his speech, the regulation restricting demonstrations which was enacted by the local people's representative congress, was recited.

Legal experts, however, question whether a local congress has the power to decide on what surely must be a national constitutional issue. According to the local regulations, anyone wishing to hold a demonstration should apply to do so five days beforehand, giving the leaders' names, occupations and addresses. The objective appears to instil in people fear for their futures



once their names have been recorded.

Wednesday 19 April: more posters were put up. The supervisor of student affairs ripped down an exceptionally anti-revolutionary poster denouncing the Chinese Communist Party 'dictatorship' as students roared in protest. Some unidentified officials climbed on to the roof of a nearby bookstore to take photographs of the students.

At 11am a poster went up saying: 'This afternoon we'll have a multi-school demonstration. We'll start from the school gate at 1.30pm. Followers of democracy and freedom, join us!' Immediately, all the campus gates were closed except one narrow side gate. Officials posted themselves there to check the identity cards of anyone going in and out.

The vice-president broadcast again, begging the students to stay in. 'We're equally shaken by the untimely death of Hu Yaobang, but we must transfer our feeling of loss into strength,' he said. Some students reported that the organisers were warned that if they took the demonstration into the street they would be expelled.

At about 2.30pm the demonstration got under way after resisting police efforts to confiscate the flags they were carrying. At the head of the parade, two students carried Hu's picture. Behind them fluttered a flag proclaiming 'Democracy and freedom'.

Three policemen stayed up with the front of the parade, still trying to persuade students to give up their banners and another videotaped the students drawing the chant, 'No pictures by the police'.

The bolder among the students unsuccessfully tried to snatch the equipment. All were aware that the tapes would be handed over to the

university authorities with the order to identify and punish the ringleaders who, even if they were not sent to prison, would have their actions entered into their files which would follow them everywhere: their family life, career, promotion, opportunity to visit or study abroad, chances of obtaining a passport, job transfer, residence and further education might all be affected.

When the Fudan students came up to Tongji University, they found thousands of students crowded at the gate. Though there was a flag with the character 'Democracy' on it in their midst, they did not venture out to join the Fudan students, who speculated that they had been warned against doing so.

After milling outside for half an hour, the parade moved on.

Whenever it came up to a crossroads, the police tried to force the students on to a less direct route and in the pushing and scuffling fewer and fewer students remained in the main parade, although many onlookers blocked traffic.

By now, they were being shepherd by police cars, as more and more trucks of policemen came up. When the parade arrived downtown, the police had lined up in a wall to prevent them entering the people's square. Some students managed to break through, but the rest were scattered and when the remnants of the parade eventually arrived in the square, only about 200 students were left.

Sarah Ran Chen is a law student at Fudan University. (Taken from *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11.5.89)

## Five thousand Chinese students march in London

By Jean Lane

**W**ell over 5,000 Chinese students marched through London on Sunday 20 May to call for the end of martial law in Beijing and to show solidarity with the students and workers who are occupying Tiananmen square.

The march was large, despite very short notice. The banners and chants of the demonstrators demanded the resignation of Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng and called for political reforms: freedom of speech and of the press, an end to

the violent suppression of the democracy movement, and a fair and open dialogue with it.

The mood of the demonstration, which went to the Chinese Embassy and then on to Regents Park for rallies and speeches, was exciting and very moving. Chants and songs rebounded from the buildings all along the route. 'We shall overcome' was taken up by large sections of the march.

Every so often people spaced along the pavement would shout out messages in Chinese to the marchers, eliciting loud and joyful responses. I was told that the messages were up to date news reports sent by fax machines from Beijing.

At the Chinese Embassy one man, Deng Zhuo, set himself up on hunger strike 'in support of the democracy movement in China which is in danger from martial law.'

He would stay there, he said, for as long as it took for the students' demands to be met.

He said that the movement was not just for the resignation of Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng, but for the removal of the whole government, for the right of other parties and movements to participate. 'The CP's policy,' he said, 'is the opposite of the democracy movement. As long as it remains in power the same situation will arise again.'

Deng Zhuo said: 'The students are heroes. It is very important that the workers and citizens support them. It is because of that support that the troops are not in Tiananmen square.'

## Countdown to revolution

**15 April:** Death of Hu Yaobang, who had been sacked in January 1987 following his conciliatory line towards student demonstrations in late 1986.

**17-21 April:** Student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, commemorating Hu Yaobang but with slogans for democracy and freedom. A few thousand demonstrators on the 17th; more than 100,000 on the 19th.

**22 April:** Official funeral of Hu Yaobang. Students remain in

Tiananmen Square. Protests spread to Shanghai and other cities.

**24 April:** Student strike begins in Beijing. 500,000 people in Tiananmen Square.

**27 April:** Defying an official ban, students march through Beijing to Tiananmen Square. All along their route, workers in factories and offices and on construction sites stop work, cheer the students, and join in. Starting with 50,000, the march is one million strong by the time it reaches Tiananmen Square.

**4 May:** Anniversary of student protests against imperialism and for democracy in 1919. Journalists join students in Tiananmen Square, demanding a free press. Protests in ten other cities apart from Beijing.

**13 May:** 1000 students start a hunger strike in Tiananmen Square.

**15-16 May:** Gorbachev visits China. Demonstrations, with many slogans supporting Gorbachev's 'glasnost', force changes in the planned official ceremonies.

**17 May:** One million people in the centre of Beijing; demands include the resignation of Deng Xiaoping.

**19 May:** Zhao Ziyang (general secretary of the ruling party) and Li Peng (prime minister) visit the hunger strikers in Tiananmen Square.

**20 May:** Martial law declared in Beijing and troops moved to the capital. But protests continue and troops refuse to move against them.



# Revolution in China

## EDITORIAL

As we go to press (Tuesday afternoon, 23 May), the Army is withdrawing from Beijing, leaving China's capital to the students and their allies who have successfully defied China's government and faced down their martial law.

Whatever happens next, nothing will ever be the same in China again. It can't be, after this tremendous rising of the Chinese people, and in the first place of the youth and a section of the working class.

In Thatcher's Britain it is the conventional wisdom now that revolution is impossible, a daydream. The wise ones like Neil Kinnock will put their feet under the table and make the best of the world we live in. Anyone who talks about revolution is a fool.

Do you want to know what a revolution looks like? Look at China!

When millions of people say 'Enough! We've had enough! We want change, and we won't settle for the status quo any more' — and then begin to act to get what they want — that's revolution, or the beginnings of revolution.

Where did the present movement come from? China is in deep trouble. Its economy is chaotic and disorganised.

Forty years ago the Stalinist-led peasant armies of Mao Zedong conquered the whole of China. Over the following years they created an economic system modelled on that of the Soviet Union.

The state owned everything, and those who controlled the state attempted to direct everything. All the freedoms won over centuries by the working people in countries like Britain, some of which had begun to have a flickering existence in China too, were obliterated.

There was no freedom of speech, press, self-organisation, assembly, sexuality or intellect. The working class was regimented, controlled, forbidden to form trade unions, forbidden to organise politically, repressed when it tried to.

Over three decades the ruling Maoist elite tried to develop China's economy, which was very backward and poor in resources. They did develop the economy, mobilising and driving the working class and the farmers with a combination of physical police-state pressure and intensive propaganda. They said they were building socialism, though in fact the ruling bureaucracy had most of the features of traditional exploiting classes.

They developed the economy; but they bungled it. The combination of bounding population growth and great shortage of natural resources created tremendous difficulties anyway. The attempt to plan and control that development from above, by an elite giving orders, with no democratic control over economic goals or economic measures, with very scanty information — this made the difficulties vastly greater.

The group around Mao went in for irrational economic experiments aimed at achieving miracles of



Demonstration in London. Photo: Tim Anderson

economic development. They drove the people, who had no say in the matter, into economic adventures like the 'Great Leap Forward' in 1958. It led not forward but to widespread destruction and waste in the economy. As a result, over 20 million people starved to death at the beginning of the '60s.

The failure of that adventure led to serious faction-fighting inside the so-called Chinese Communist Party. At first Mao was forced to take a back seat. But in 1966 and after Mao, backed by the army, came back and organised the so-called 'Cultural Revolution'.

Students and others made a god of Mao and went on a rampage through China, destroying the culture of the past and of the world outside China, denouncing intellectuals, and preaching the miraculous power of 'Mao Zedong thought'. Though sometimes the youth got out of hand, ultimately they were controlled by the army.

To this day the Chinese higher education system is warped and stunted because it came close to being destroyed in that 'Cultural Revolution'. In 1970 there were more teachers than students in China's institutions of higher education.

lessened and weakened. Managers were allowed great leeway in deciding production targets and selling what they produced. Better-endowed areas were encouraged to thrive and differentiate from the rest of the economy.

The peasants were given back the land and allowed to grow things for their own profit, reaped by selling their produce at market. Foreign investment was eagerly sought, both joint state-foreign ventures and straightforward Chinese subsidiaries of international companies.

It worked for a while. Industrial production advanced, so did food production.

The lessening of economic controls led to a lessening of other controls. The decades of intense Chinese isolationism and chauvinism came to an end. Students were allowed to study in countries like the USA.

For some 13 years China has been introducing the sort of 'market socialism' that Gorbachev is aiming for. Like the Russian

### From Mao to the market

When Mao Zedong died, those who eventually succeeded him decided on a radical change of course. Breaking with much of Maoism, abjuring the long Maoist search for economic miracles, they went to the other extreme: "market socialism".

The central controls and commands over the economy were

## Clash of the Titans

### PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR DAILY STAR

By Jim Denham

The public feuding between Andrew Neil and Donald Treford (editors, respectively of the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer*) has got to stop. At first it was all quite amusing, but the entertainment value long since wore off.

Now that the battle has spilled over into the correspondence columns of the *Independent* and the *Guardian* I feel compelled to speak out on behalf of the many innocent newspaper readers who have no interest in the private grudges of these two professional egotists.

I can't even remember how it all started: perhaps Treford made some derisive remarks about the amount of plugs Sky TV was getting in the *ST*; or did Neil strike the first blow by suggesting that the *Observer's* keen interest in the activities of the Al Fayed brothers might not be unconnected with Tiny Rowland's ownership of that paper?

However it started, the air was soon thick with allegations and counter-allegations involving journalistic impropriety, unethical conduct, hidden hands and vested interests. All of it probably true, on both sides.

This Sunday's *Observer* carried two stories about the lack of success of Sky TV (including an opinion poll showing that most people think the owners of satellite dishes are the sort of people who probably wear medallions) while the *ST* carried no less than three pieces gloating over the Lonrho affair and Mr Treford's forthcoming court appearance.

I don't care who wins the Neil/Treford battle but with luck they will each totally discredit each other. On balance, Andrew Neil is probably the more loathsome of the two (and, given his reported comments on the subject of Ms Pamela Bordes) apparently regards the circulation figures of the *ST* as some sort of virility symbol. So it was particularly pleasing to see that sales of the *ST* and the *Observer* have slumped by nearly 50,000 each over the past month.

Meanwhile, another battle-royal looms as suave Lord Stevens (chairman of United Newspapers/the Express Group) attempts to fend off the unwanted advances of sinister Conrad Black, owner of the *Daily Telegraph*.

When his Lordship first noticed that Black was buying up rather a large number of United shares a month or so ago, he wasn't too worried. Black issued an effusive declaration of friendly intentions and Stevens welcomed him on board.

Then someone rumbled that Black was buying up considerably more shares than had first been suspected, using at least half a dozen "nominee" names. Now the order has gone out from United's HQ: fight off Black at all costs.

Stevens apparently believes that if all else fails, the Monopolies Commission will save him from the Canadian's clutches. I wouldn't bank on that if I were him. After all, a combined *Telegraph/Express* group would be no bigger than Murdoch's News International and the MC never bothered him...

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

Karl Marx

Monday or by phone Monday

Published by Socialist Organiser  
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Printed by Press Link International (UK) Ltd (TU).

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.

Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Socialist Organiser.

Socialist Organiser  
PO Box 823, London  
SE15 4NA. Phone 01 639 7965.

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## 4 LETTERS

# Poor little rich kids?

### GRAFFITI

It's not all easy being filthy rich. Apparently upper-class marriages are breaking up and posh paters are having heart attacks because of the cost of sending little Tarquin or Sophie to private school.

It can cost between £2-3,000 a term to send a little Hooray Henry to public school — plus 'extras' the cost is often as much as £10,000 a year.

According to the head of Westminster school, "Some parents are on a knife-edge and are straining every financial nerve." For some strange reason, I'm not shedding any tears.

Tory councillors in Kent have banned a performance of Benjamin Brittan's final opera, 'Death in Venice'.

The opera was due to be performed in October at a schools opera festival organised by Glyndbourne Touring Opera Company. The county education committee, however, blocked its performance, arguing that the opera was unsuitable for school children — even sixth formers!

The opera is based on the novel by German author Thomas Mann and deals with the unconsumed love of an aging writer (male) for a young man.

The council claim that their decision was not motivated by the infamous Section 28 of the Local Government Act, but by "problems of obtaining parental consent".

Members of Glyndbourne have, rather tongue-in-cheek, suggested that perhaps The Marriage of Figaro should be banned for promoting adultery, and the Barber of Seville as advocating promiscuity! Of course, that's just good, clean (heterosexual) fun.

Major High Street stores are rejecting black people-as YTS trainees.

Official training agency figures, obtained by the Youth Employment and Training Resource Unit, show that, in October 1987, 50 com-



panies had no black trainees at all. These include Safeway, Waitrose and Woolworths.

Figures from December 1988 show little improvement. Mothercare has one black trainee out of 183, Boots four out of 452.

Some firms have attempted to improve their records. Dixons had only one black trainee in 1987, but since then has had special management training sessions. Now the representation of black trainees has risen to 5.8%.

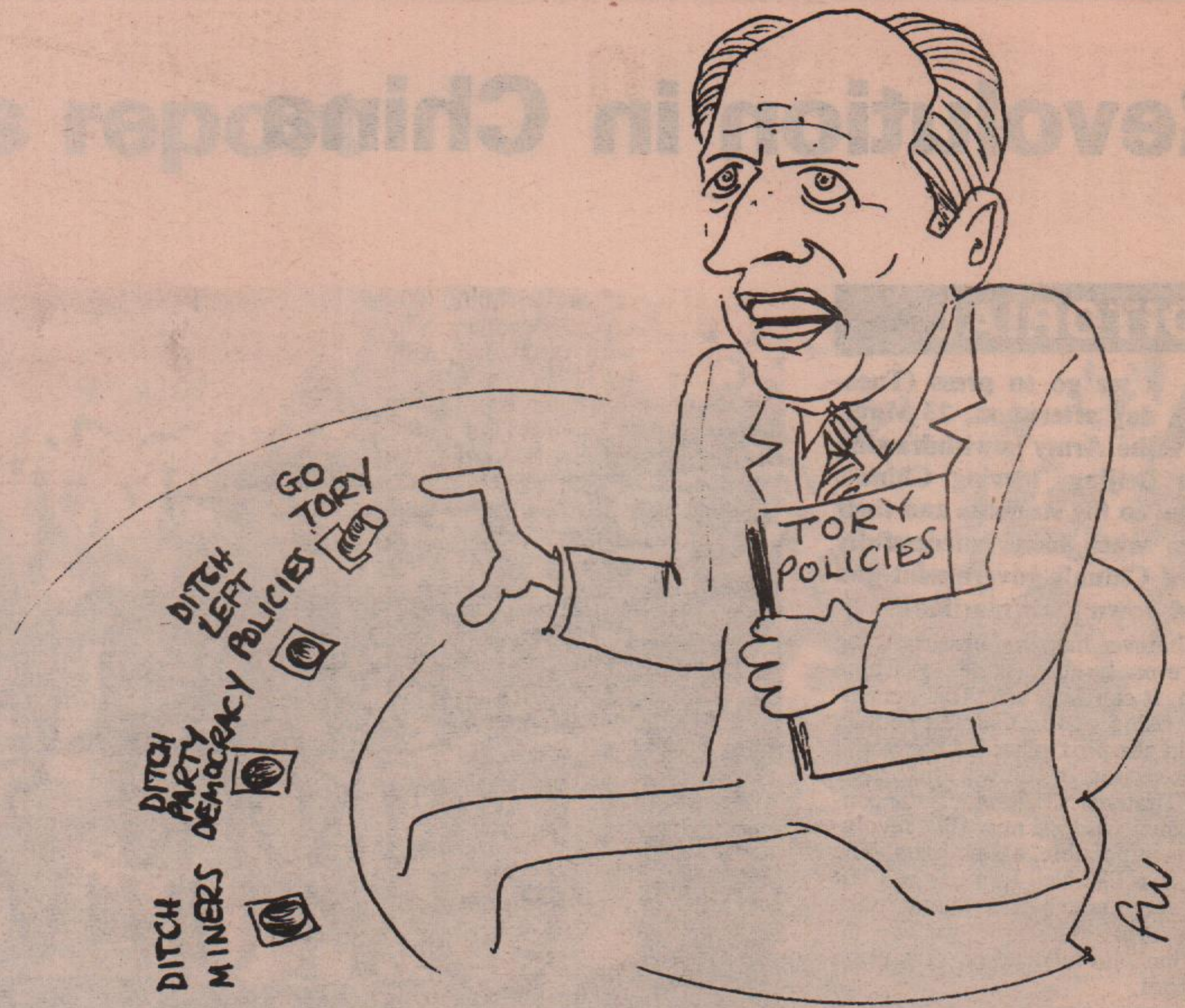
Meanwhile, from most High Street stores the message is still the same — even for cheap labour schemes only whites need apply.

Meanwhile, in the increasingly run-down state education sector, class sizes look set to increase.

According to a study commissioned by the teachers union NAS/UWT, the government scheme which allows individual schools to manage their own budgets will lead to perhaps 10,000 teaching job losses.

This is because school budgets will be calculated on the basis of the average pay per teacher, even though the school will employ some staff who are entitled to more. The only way to make the books balance will be to sack staff.

And this at a time when even the government has been forced to admit that there is a severe shortage of teachers.



## Bro. bradw

One is reliably informed by Welsh speaking trade unionists that bradw Kinnock is not quite a literal translation of Bro. Kinnock, but that it is in the native tongue of his socialist compatriots, a somewhat more accurate description.

Under his leadership the Labour Party has fixed a ceiling of 50% on the highest rates of tax; spurned all moves to have a wealth tax, as also a local property tax, and retreated from its former lip service to unilateral disarmament.

All this of course is claimed to be an effort to gain the middle ground, a necessary accommodation if the Labour Party is to gain a majority. Historically that is nonsense. No Labour Government has ever been elected that way.

However little they may fulfill their promises it is a fact that following periods of Tory rule Labour governments are only elected when there is an upsurge of radicalism, and this does not happen when the Labour Party is busy diluting its policies.

When Ramsay MacDonald was elected leader of the Labour Party he was the Left nominee for the post, on the strength of his opposi-

tion to the war; and in 1924 and even in '29 he had the confidence of the Labour Left.

At the Labour Party Conference in 1944 the Left forced through — against the opposition of the party's leadership — commitment to wholesale political and social change. Ian Mikardo always used to relate that at the end of the conference one of the party's leaders had come to him saying, "You realise young man that you have lost us the election," to which he would comment that it may have escaped the Right's notice that they didn't lose that election.

Unfortunately it escaped Mikardo's attention that only a small part of the programme he proposed was ever implemented.

Wilson, the former Bevanite rebel, was elected to the party's leadership when Gaitskell died, amongst media predictions that Labour was turning its back on prospects of power and moving decisively into the wilderness where it would do nothing other than prophesy. The following year he was

swept to power.

The 1973 Labour Conference, like that of 1944, was portrayed at the time as being a time when Labour adopted an unprecedentedly near revolutionary policy. Particularly after Heath's victory and the miners' strikes of '72, the media again pontificated that the constitutional desires of the British people were such that no Labour leadership that did not disassociate itself from strikers would have a chance of office. Naturally Labour won.

Of course each and every one of these governments broke its pledges; Labour has never in fact advanced socialism, but from a purely opportunist viewpoint its leaders should learn that their sole chance of office will come when they are paying lip service to extensive social change, and have managed to enthrone a sizeable section of the electorate with this aim.

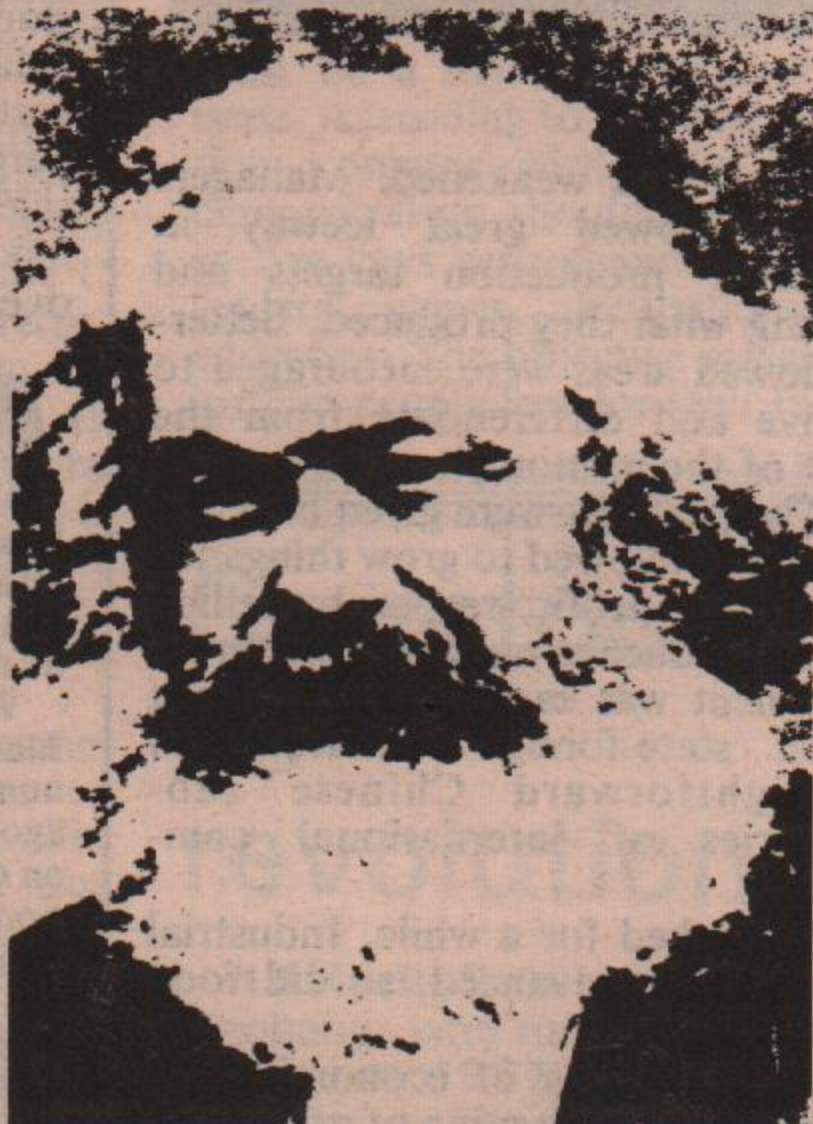
Not merely does Kinnock show himself to be no socialist, but even, qua opportunist, he is scarcely effective.

'Syndicalist'

## 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

### Paula Watson

Paula Watson, a supporter of *Labour Briefing* and a sometime contributor to *Socialist Organiser*, died on 27 April from cancer. This tribute to her from Tony Benn is reprinted from *Briefing*.

Paula Watson was a fine socialist who understood the history of the movement and used her knowledge to encourage and inspire other people who were tempted to lose heart when the going was hard.

She was one hundred per cent committed to the Trade Unions, the Labour Party, and socialism and gave strength to her constituency by her involvement in its work.

She was also a distinguished historian of the 17th century and that helped to give her a perspective which she put to good use.

She bore the pain and suffering of her last illness with immense courage and will be very sadly missed.



## TIME TO GO

17-18 June 1989 • The City University  
Northampton Square • LONDON EC1

• Weekend tickets £15 (£12.50 concessions)  
• Reduced weekend tickets £12.50 (£10 concessions) if registered before 1 June  
Send cheques (payable to Time To Go! Show) to Clare Short MP, Time To Go! Show Registration, House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA



# Revolution in China

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bureaucrats, China's rulers had no time and no thought for the best alternative to rigid state control: conscious democratic planning of the economy by the proletarians and working farmers.

Compared with the old command economy, this system at least allowed the people to have some choice and gave them some method of expressing preferences, but it is nevertheless a method which is both wasteful and brutal.

In China it has led to chaos: bounding inflation; an unevenness which means, for example, that many factories are now idle because of a chronic shortage of energy; massive unemployment, as workers are shaken out of industries where before they had some sort of security in deference to the new god of profitability.

It has led to tensions between regions, some of which are comparatively thriving while others lag behind.

In short, the changes unleashed the "war of all against all" characteristic of capitalism — but within, and as part of, a system still heavily weighted down and shaped by the gigantically inflated bureaucratic state.

The state retains final control, and has power to snuff out the capitalist growths springing up in the areas it controls. The all-powerful Chinese state licensed capitalists in the '50s and then snuffed them out, though it is unlikely to find it as easy now to stamp out the elements of capitalism that have come into existence in the last decade.

In the USSR Gorbachev first tried, three years ago, to shake up the economy, intending to use limited free-market mechanisms. He met with great bureaucratic inertia and resistance. Such resistance had stifled attempts at change in the '60s. So Gorbachev decided to purge elements of the bureaucracy and renew it. He called for 'glasnost' — openness — and political reforms which move a bit away from the old rigid Stalinist structures.

## No political reforms

In China economic reform was introduced *without any political reforms*, and has had ten years to work away, destabilising and destructuring the old formations of the Chinese Stalinist polity. There has been no Chinese glasnost.

Today the Chinese students, hailing Gorbachev as a hero, demand glasnost and democracy *from below* — or at least under pressure from below.

Two parallel but interconnected crises have come together to give China's political and social life its peculiarly explosive character: the economic crisis and the crisis of political leadership.

After ten years of reform the Chinese economy is wracked by inflation. It has a bad and worsening balance of payments problem, which means it can't pay for essential imports. The unplanned changes in the economy have created crippling dislocations — dislocations such as the disruption of production by shortages of materials and energy, at least as bad as the dislocations produced by bungling of undemocratic and bureaucratic planning.

There is widespread and growing unemployment. In Beijing there are as many homeless people sleeping out as there are in London.

Inequality has grown. So has crime and corruption. China has a peculiarly savage way with robbers and other law-breakers: the state kills upwards of 30,000 such 'criminals' each year, sometimes after parading them around the

streets as a warning to onlookers. Even South Africa is moderate by comparison, with only about 500 legal killings a year.

Corruption has eaten away at the bureaucracy like a virus. For example, the son of Deng Xiaoping, the present leader of the Chinese Stalinists, is widely believed to have sent large sums of money to a foreign bank account out of funds collected to help disabled people. (He himself is in a wheelchair, having been thrown out of a window by 'Red Guard' during the Cultural Revolution). Many officials have become rich through participation in "market-socialist" enterprises.

## Corruption

The issue of corruption links the economic and political crises of China. Corruption and nepotism in China take their present form because of the monopoly of power and patronage held by the so-called Chinese Communist Party. That monopoly used to be linked to the organising function of the party in the economy and life of the country. Now it begins to seem more and more arbitrary and restrictive, both to the organisers of "market socialism" and to the students and others who see that access to jobs is linked to patronage and family position in the top bureaucracy. They are against hereditary privileges for the bureaucracy.

The present student movement began in April, using as cover the funeral of a reputedly liberal party leader sacked two years ago after the student demonstrations of December 1986 and January 1987. The students raised seven demands. The key ones were for free speech, a free press, and an end to corruption.

The students seem to have had a central leadership in Beijing which coordinated their campaign. Denouncing corruption, they went on the streets to talk to the citizens and explain their point of view. The success of their agitation has been shown by the great demonstrations over the last month, and the paralysis it has induced in the government.

The paralysis does not just come from the problem of how to control the students. *This may very well be the key turning point in the post-Mao history of China.*

The economic reform — "market socialism" — has created serious economic dislocation, which will get worse and worse in the period ahead. The regime faces a fundamental choice: continue on the "market socialist" course, despite the chaos, or try to reimpose some sort of command economy.

Six months ago they decided to reimpose central control; but their



efforts have been half-hearted and indecisive, in any case ineffective. People committed to "market socialism" were still in control, like Deng and party secretary Zhao Zilang (who is his designated successor, due, for example, to take over from Deng as head of the Armed Forces Commission later this year).

Prime Minister Li Peng and others seem to have been the ones committed to solving the crisis by a serious attempt to recreate a level of detailed state control over the economy which has not existed for a decade.

The student demonstrations for free speech and against corruption erupted into this debate. Their explicit target has been Li Peng; they have praised Zhao. But it would be wrong to conclude that the students, and still less their working-class supporters, favour the "market socialists". They are outspokenly against Deng, Zhao's patron, but an advocate of hard-line repression.

The hardliners won in the leading circles and sent the army to clear Tiananmen Square — but the army didn't have a cutting edge against the people. Soldiers agreed with the outrage against corruption and growing inequality agitating the demonstrators. Even soldiers kept away from radio and TV for ten days before being sent to Beijing were quickly enlightened.

Behind the scenes, it looks like the commanders of the army (three million strong, half conscripts) were involved in the leadership faction-fighting. Zhao is their man. They may have balked at unleashing a civil war that would start by a sizeable part of the army going over to the people.

The army knows it is the iron centre-piece of the Stalinist dictatorship, as it proved when it con-

trolled the chaos unleashed by Mao in the late '60s.

The army was stopped by the people, and now it has retreated. In Hungary at the end of October 1956 a Russian army was withdrawn from Budapest after being similarly affected by a mass popular movement; three days later another Russian army launched a full-scale bid to conquer Budapest and drown the Hungarian revolution in blood, which it did.

We cannot judge whether that possibility exists for China's leaders; on the whole it seems unlikely in the immediate period ahead.

The students and the workers of China have so far done earth-shaking things. The students have organised an independent student union; there are reports that workers have organised an independent trade union.

Their experience of struggle and partial victory will give great encouragement to the Chinese masses in the battles they face against the effects of the economic chaos created by the combination of bureaucratic tyranny and market economics.

In Poland a mass independent trade union, Solidarnosc, emerged in 1980 in a mass strike movement; it was the result not alone of the immediate conflicts between workers and rulers in the strikes of summer 1980, but also of a long experience — the semi-revolution of 1956, the strike movements of 1970 and 1976. In those struggles the women and men who built Solidarnosc in 1980 and after gained experience and clarity.

We cannot know how long such a process will take in China, but we can be certain that it is already underway. The economic chaos of China may act as a forcing house

for it.

There is, however, a negative side to the tremendously encouraging result in Beijing. The army wavered, but the army remains intact. It has not been split apart or broken up. It might have been, had it come to open clashes with the demonstrators.

## The state remains

We rejoice in the lack of bloodshed; but it is a tragedy that the Chinese state remains intact and able to inflict bloodshed in the future. There is no getting away from the fact that what is necessary in China is a *revolution* of the workers and working farmers, and that that can never happen without the destruction of the state apparatus through which the increasingly decrepit once-totalitarian Chinese bureaucracy exercises its dictatorship.

The economic chaos, and the class struggles that will go with it, make it probable that whichever bureaucratic clique has control at the end of the present intra-bureaucratic conflict, they will have to try to clamp down heavily on the working class, imposing the austerity policy they decided at the end of last year.

It will be far better for the Chinese working class if this present conflict — when the rulers are so plainly divided — had begun to break up the bureaucrats' chief weapon of repression.

China shows what may well happen in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Gorbachev saw the revolutionary upsurge. He has probably gone home thinking that if what he saw in China shows the future for market-oriented economic reforms, then it must be avoided at all costs. He may not be able to avoid it. The reforming Stalinists have unleashed and are unleashing forces they cannot control.

The inspiring events in China point to an important lesson for Marxists: if there had been in China a revolutionary Marxist party, a party whose militants had been educated in the history of working-class revolutions, a disciplined party fighting for a programme of revolution against the bureaucrats and for working-class power — then in the last weeks we would have seen the beginning of workers' power in China.

In the USSR and Eastern Europe, as well as China, only such organisations can prevent the ferment unleashed by the decay of the old Stalinist command economy dispersing in confusion and chaos and ending in terrible new defeats for the working class in the state-monopoly societies.

# Fascist links cause uproar

## WORLD BRIEFS

The new links of the Protestant-bigot Ulster Defence Association with the fascists of the National Front have caused some reaction in the UDA ranks.

The April and May issues of the UDA magazine *Ulster* carry a letter protesting at the links and an editorial statement.

"The Editorial Board," it says, "does not support fascism or racism from whatever quarter," but it does support "protests mounted by the National Front against subversive Republican groups and their supporters such as the Troops Out

movement."

The UDA's idea of "protests" is spelled out elsewhere in the magazine. "There is only one way to deal with IRA and INLA terrorists and that is to hunt the scum down to their cesspits and shoot them on the spot."

Vladimir Kibalchich is the son of Victor Serge, who was a leader of the Trotskyist movement in the USSR in the '20s and '30s.

Kibalchich, who lives in Mexico, joined four other anti-Stalinist socialists from the US on a delegation to the USSR in March.

They presented a letter from the family of Leon Trotsky to the Soviet government asking that Trotsky's works be published freely in the USSR, and met oppositionists.

One of those they met was Nadejda Joffe, the 82 year old daughter of Adolf Joffe, who was a Trotskyist leader in the '20s. Nadejda Joffe was sent to Siberia for three years from 1929, then to a labour camp in the far north-east of the USSR for ten years. Her husband was shot.

In 1949 she was arrested for a third time and sent into permanent exile. She was released in 1956 during the Khrushchev thaw. She still shares the ideas of her father and Trotsky.

Solidarnosc has started publishing an independent daily newspaper, the first such in the Eastern Bloc for decades.

The French daily *Liberation* produced a complete French translation

of No. 2 of the Solidarnosc paper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, as a supplement to its issue of 17 May.

*Gazeta* reports on Solidarnosc's election campaign, covers labour conflicts, calls on readers to send information to construct a reliable working class cost of living index, and has a regular column on corruption and scandals.

It allows space for controversy. Solidarnosc leader Zbigniew Bujak is interviewed on his refusal to stand in the elections — "I want above all to build a powerful trade union...I want to remain independent. To be with Solidarnosc, with the union..." — and in a column headed 'Hyde Park' *Gazeta* prints a diatribe from a small right-wing group complaining that Solidarnosc still talks of socialism — "more strikes, more class struggle, workers' councils" — and crying "Long live capitalism!"



# The dockers' case

**Gerry Bates explains why we should support the dockers in their fight to keep the job security of the National Dock Labour Scheme**

**How dare dockers want 'jobs for life'? That's the Tory catchcry as they try to abolish the Dock Labour Scheme.**

But the Scheme does not mean jobs for life. The number of registered dockers today is one sixth of what it was 15 years ago. In that time 47,000 dockers have lost their jobs.

The 1947 Dock Labour Scheme did abolish the hated system of dockers being hired by the half-day. It did give dockers some job security.

But dockers are not rich. Real dockers are not the workers on £400

a week with a villa in Spain of Neil Kinnock's imagination. Basic pay for an average docker is £149 per week. A top grade ship hand might take home £200.

Bonuses and overtime are unreliable. And if dockers have won relatively decent wages and conditions it has only been through struggle and organisation. So dockers need the protection of the Scheme.

Even now there are parts of unregistered ports, like Dover, where workers are hired by the day and paid £80 a week. Those conditions will spread to other ports if the scheme goes.

The only people in Britain today who really have 'jobs for life' are some of the Tories' best friends like judges, university professors, members of the House of Lords and the monarchy. Owners of inherited wealth also get a good income for life without even having to do a job.

Is a 'job for life' such a bad idea anyway? At the moment, our jobs and livelihoods are subject not to our needs but the bosses'. If the bosses are losing money, or want to reorganise, workers lose their jobs. But why should our lives be sub-

ject to the dictates of the market? Why shouldn't we be certain that our jobs are safe? Or that if there's no work, we can be sure of a decent standard of living until there is work?

Or why not share out existing jobs — with no loss in pay — to create work for the unemployed?

From the point of view of the bosses and their system, the 'right to work' is too expensive to be granted. If they can't afford to employ people, they won't. But it's precisely because we live in a system that works in that way, that we have mass unemployment.

In this system, profits come first, and people second.

We need a system that puts people first. But right now we can force the bosses to grant our right to work. If the trade union movement is strong, it can impose the principle of work or full pay.

The National Dock Labour Scheme is therefore far short of what trade unions should be fighting for. It should be extended to cover currently unregistered ports. And trade unions should campaign for work or full pay throughout the country.

## French dockers face the same attack

**French port employers are planning an assault on their country's dock labour scheme, similar to Britain's and also dating from 1947.**

**Representatives of 280 port employers met in Strasbourg on 11-12 May and laid out their plans.**

According to the Paris daily *Le Monde*, the bosses' thinking is dominated by "French ports' lack of competitiveness in relation to their immediate competitors, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Barcelona, or Felixstowe in England".

"Several countries neighbouring France, which used to have a similar regime protecting dockers, with a monopoly over hiring for all operations linked to the loading and unloading of ships, have recently tried to break down that regime.

"Examples are Italy, where long strikes have recently disrupted the port of Genoa, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, and above all Britain...

"In France... the state fixes the number of dockers port by port; the port companies hire workers by the day or half-day without the dockers becoming their direct employees.

"The port companies are also generally not the owners of the equipment they use, like cranes. Often they find themselves forced to employ excessive teams of workers designated by the local CGT trade union, and the workers refuse to move from one boat to another as the port company's needs dictate.

"The state fixes the payments that the port companies have to make to cover fall-back pay for dockers on the days when no com-

pany hires them...

"The companies want a clean sweep of this system, including the way the ports are administered.

"They emphasise that between 1982 and 1987 unemployment increased greatly in the ports. The situation has improved noticeably in the last year, but the excess of labour remains at about 1200 to 1400 workers out of a total of 8,800 dockers (the total was 9,700 a year ago).

"Unemployment... reaches peaks in Dieppe (56% of the dockers on the books), Rouen (44%) and Bayonne (44%)..."

A meeting has been scheduled between the port employers and the dockers' union, part of the CGT federation which is led by the Communist Party. The employers, however, do not believe that the CGT will negotiate away the dockers' job security, and they will be pressing the government to act.

The Socialist Party government

has said that changes to the docks are not an immediate priority. However, French dockers have no good reason to rely on the Socialist ministers to defend them. In the coal and steel industries, the Socialist Party has already shown itself quite prepared for Thatcherite measures.

The Common Market reforms due in 1992 will mean that goods can move more easily within the EEC, so that trade with countries outside Europe can readily be channelled through the cheapest port, and competition between the ports of different European countries is increased.

A united struggle by dockers across Europe is necessary. Without that, as 1992 approaches, the gains and job security of each nation's dockers will be wiped out, country by country. In each country conditions will be ratcheted down by the pressure of competition with the next country's ports.

## Don't believe the bosses!

**The port employers insist that there will be no return to casual labour after the abolition of the NDLB. There is little reason to believe them.**

Already the port employers have plans to prepare the ground for casualisation.

If the Scheme goes then the protection that it gives to all dockers, registered and unregistered, will disappear. A general offensive against wages and conditions for all dockers can be expected.

The employers want to break down port work into core and peripheral jobs. They aim to create

a divided workforce. A 'core' group of workers will be fully trained, skilled and permanent; and 'peripheral' workers will be employed on temporary contracts to cope with changes in trade and the seasonal nature of much dock work.

In the fish ports the trawler owners will try to unload their own ships and just employ dockers on a casual basis if and when they need them for big loads.

The employers plan to scrap the industry's National Joint Council, opening up dockers to local attacks on pay and conditions where the employers think they can get away with it.

## TRANSPORT H



## How dockers won

**The Tories have wanted to abolish the Dock Labour Scheme for years.**

If they hesitated so long, it was because of the dockers' determination to resist abolition. TGWU dockers voted last year to strike if the scheme were threatened. There were two national docks strikes in 1984 against threats to the scheme.

The National Dock Labour Board registers all port workers and guarantees that dockers will have a basic minimum fallback wage, whether there is work for them or not. The Dock Labour Board is made up of representatives of employers and workers in equal numbers. It was set up by a Labour Government in 1947 to give dockers some minimal security in employment.

By its nature port work is not steady or constant. Ships come, unload, load and go. Often there are gaps in between.

Before 1947 dockers were hired and fired twice a day, morning and midday, for half a day at a time, as the bosses needed them.

Even in good times there would always be a pool of unemployed dockers. In bad times the pool would swell enormously. Anyone could go and get a job on the docks, without training — in a trade that was extremely dangerous and accident-plagued.

The foremen would stand in the hiring pens, or on waste ground, with tallies to give out indicating that a man was hired, and gangs of dockers would mill around them. Fist-fights between competing

dockers were common and normal. So was graft and corruption. The foremen had immense power over the dockers.

They could squeeze the dockers for money in return for hiring them. They could do deals with publicans to pay out wages in their pubs, thus ensuring good trade.

Poverty, crime, demoralisation, were the results of this system.

But the workers fought back. They began to organise trade unions. A hundred years ago this year, the dockers began to fight back as trade unionists, with the strike in London — led by Marxists like Tom Mann and John Burns — for the "docker's tanner". (The demand was for a minimum wage of sixpence an hour in old money, 2½p in today's. An average male wage was then around £1.20 a week.)

The union began to discipline the dockers around the idea of solidarity — that they would stand together to better their conditions. It also conducted all sorts of subsidiary struggles — for example, the struggle against having wages paid out in pubs, which was a good system for the publicans and their foremen friends but not so good for a lot of children hungry because there was no money afterwards for food.

Substantial changes were won by the union, slowly and painfully. The level of working-class consciousness among dockers became high.

London dockers struck in 1920 to stop a British ship, the *Jolly George*, from sailing with a cargo of guns for the Polish Army which had



HOUSE



## the scheme

invaded the revolutionary USSR. In 1936, dockers — a lot of them Irish — trooped to join those in the East End of London who fought the police trying to clear a way for fascists to march into the Jewish quarter. That was the battle of Cable Street.

1947 marked the really big change — the National Dock Labour Board. The dockers had fought their way to the point that the Labour Government set up a system guaranteeing them a small basic wage at all times. Registered dockers would get this money even when there wasn't work, provided they turned up twice a day to have their books 'stamped' (proving availability).

The system was to be jointly administered by the union — the TGWU — and the bosses. The union had 50 per cent of control over hiring and firing. This made most dockers' jobs very secure. It was not socialism, but it was a long way up the scale of social evolution from the days of drunken and starving men fighting each other for a few hours' ill-paid and dangerous work.

The Dock Labour Scheme was one of a number of gains won by the working class in the 1940s, alongside such advances as the National Health Service. Those reforms did not change the fact that workers were enslaved and exploited by capital — but they softened the exploitation.

The bosses made those concessions because the workers were in a strong position. "If you do not give

the people social reforms," declared one Tory, "they will give you social revolution".

But the working class left the bosses in overall control. They could bide their time until conditions became favourable for them to take back their concessions.

Today the bosses are on the offensive. For a decade they have

been systematically taking back the gains the working class won over many decades. They are running down the National Health Service. They are abolishing the National Dock Labour Scheme. These are similar moves in the same game.

The working class must stand against the Tory offensive wherever it is unleashed.

## Position of strength

**The dockers are in a strong position. Tory claims that they can sit out a dock strike are not borne out by the facts:**

- 95% of Britain's imports and exports go through sea ports;
- 290 million tonnes go through Scheme ports;
- Only 78,000 tonnes go through non-Scheme ports.

According to these figures — which are the Tories' own — 73% of Britain's trade tonnage will be stopped if a strike in registered ports is backed up by non-registered ports refusing to handle redirected goods.

Even if all the non-Scheme ports were forced by the employers to carry on working, a strike by the Scheme ports would still have a massive effect. Most non-Scheme ports cannot easily deal with the bulk cargoes which go through Scheme ports such as Immingham,

Liverpool, Southampton and London. And Felixstowe, the largest non-Scheme port, is already working at 95% of capacity.

This initial position of strength will only mean victory for the dockers if solidarity action is delivered by other groups of workers — both in Britain and abroad.

As John Bees, chair of the Bristol Docks Shop Stewards Committee, explained: "The miners' strike deprived businesses of one commodity, which was by-passed by nuclear power and oil. But dockers handle all imported and exported commodities.

"Solidarity between dockers and lorry drivers is a crucial factor in any dispute. International solidarity will also be vital.

"Holland, Belgium, France and Italy also have dock schemes similar to ours, and their trade unions should give support to striking British dockers."

# Dealing with domestic violence

## WOMEN'S EYE

By Lynn Ferguson

**Women wouldn't behave so stupidly if they were slapped around the face more often." Judge Pickles? Norman Tebbit? Bernard Manning? No, the purveyor of this piece of wisdom was a woman, none other than the actress Charlotte Rampling.**

Few women, of course, would share Rampling's cavalier attitude to violence against women. But most of us still, I think, find it difficult to imagine what it must be like to be trapped in a violent relationship.

Every time we hear of a woman who has repeatedly returned to a violent partner, or who has stayed with him for years, enduring escalating violence the nagging question is there — 'why did she put up with it?', combined with the certainty, 'If anyone did that to me, I'd kick him out/leave him straight away.'

Of course, life ain't so simple. Not only are there the economic factors which keep women with violent men — the need to support the kids, the lack of anywhere to escape to — there are the more difficult emotional ones.

Anyone who watches 'EastEnders' will have seen over the past few months the steady build-up of violence in the relationship between Carmel, a health visitor, and her husband.

Carmel is no 'wimp', she has a good job, she has her own flat. But...she's consistently hidden her injuries, explained them away, has consistently accepted her husband's promises that he doesn't want to hurt her, that he won't do it again.

Why? Because she loves him, because she doesn't want to believe that the man she's chosen is really like that. She wants to believe he'll stop — yet she knows that all the statistics show that violent men do not stop unless there is some sort of intervention — police or counselling. Generally the violence escalates.

But she wants to believe her man is different. The portrayal of Carmel's situation should leave no-one in any doubt that it is extremely difficult to leave a violent man, that women cannot be blamed for staying.

Should leave no-one in any doubt. However, the Panorama special 'Punching Judy' on domestic violence and police policy shows understanding and sympathy for battered women is in short supply.

In 1987 police guidelines on domestic violence were changed. Until then police were notoriously unwilling to intervene in 'domestics', considering violence perpetrated by husbands/lovers against women as part of the 'rough and tumble' of married life. But in 1987 this changed — at least formally. Police officers were to treat domestic violence in the same way as any other assault. All well and good — except the main effect of this seems to have been to boost the

sense of self-righteousness in police officers and the judiciary.

An off-duty copper filmed in the pub was quite clear: "Women encourage domestic violence because they will not break free."

90% of women end up retracting their statements — often because of threats and intimidation directed either against themselves or their children. The Michelle Renshaw case earlier this year was an example of this.

The police, convinced that they have done their job, often consider that in such circumstances a woman has only herself to blame. The question of real and continuing support for women, to enable them to break free, is simply ignored.

Not so, however, in Canada. There the Federal Government has earmarked £20m a year to a campaign against domestic violence. This includes TV adverts, courses in all schools and role play and special training for police. Women's refuges receive £100 a week per woman or child over and above basic welfare payments. Other grants provide counselling and support facilities.

In Canada, prosecutions for domestic violence are brought by the police. This cuts down threats against women aimed at getting them to retract — they simply cannot.

Men are made to join counselling groups — and evidence shows that the combination of prosecution and counselling reduces the subsequent incidence of violence.

Could this happen here? It should, but the entrenched opposition is enormous. Not only are the government not likely to shell out the necessary money, but the Attorney General, Patrick Mayhew, was quoted on Panorama as saying that the criminal justice system should not dabble in "behavioural education".

In the Metropolitan police district, reported domestic assault rose by 140% in the last year. One South London police station handles 15 domestic assaults a week. On official figures, the problem is sky-rocketing. How much will it take to shake the powers that be out of their smug complacency?

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# The local party should choose



By Eric Heffer MP

**W**e are having a re-run of what happened in Knowsley North. The local party should determine who the candidate is.

I actually said this in the House of Commons yesterday in support of Bernie Grant. I'm not arguing that the candidate has got to be

necessarily black or white, but the local party should determine who the candidate is.

In this case it probably should have been a black candidate, but that would be their choice. They have the right to make that choice, and it's quite wrong for the party leadership to impose a candidate.

The party leadership are acting under the new rules which they changed at party conference last year, and which arose out of what happened in Knowsley North.

But I think it's absolutely wrong, and I do fear it is a first step, and not just for by-elections. They could impose candidates for general elections in such cases. If they don't like the choice of the constituency they will say, "Oh, we're not having that," and choose somebody else. I think that's very dangerous and wrong.

Bernie Grant raised it in the House of Commons on Monday. He spoke on the writ and I didn't think it was right for him to be left on his own, so I gave him my support.

No doubt in Vauxhall — with the situation there, it should have been a black candidate and good on them as far as I'm concerned. We should all go out and give them our full support.

## Hoey's ward condemns NEC

**T**wo wards of Dulwich Labour Party — including Kate Hoey's own ward, Lyndhurst — have condemned the Labour Party National Executive's imposition of Kate Hoey as a candidate in the Vauxhall by-election.

By a vote of 33 to 10, Vauxhall

Labour Party's General Committee on 17 May rejected an all-white shortlist imposed on them by the National Executive Committee.

Vauxhall is asking the Executive to revise the shortlist to ensure it is more representative.

Vauxhall CLP has the policy that every shortlist should include at least one black person and one woman.

## Protest over Vauxhall

**L**ol Duffy, secretary of the CLPs Conference, said last weekend: "The National Executive's decision to impose a candidate on Vauxhall makes it more vital than ever to build for the third Constituency Labour Parties conference this autumn."

"One of the basic reasons why we launched the CLPs conference is that CLPs' rights and Labour Party democracy are under attack."

"I'm calling on all CLPs to send resolutions of protest to the National Executive and support to Vauxhall."



Glasgow poll tax protest. Photo: John Harris (Report)

## Birmingham anti-poll tax campaign

### POLL TAX

By Jim Denham

**A**nti-poll tax campaigning in Birmingham has been stepped up since the council sent out registration forms in late April — a month before most other local authorities.

Birmingham's ruling Labour Group never made any secret of their willingness to implement the poll tax and haven't even bothered much with the sort of ritual bleating that councils with more 'left-wing' pretensions have felt obliged to engage in.

But working class areas of the City are now up in arms over the tax and the arrival of registration forms has given a considerable boost to local anti-poll tax groups. In Alum Rock at the end of last month, a meeting of nearly 500 (mainly Asian) residents agreed by an acclamation to defy the tax. A march through the city centre combined with a lobby of the council, earlier this month, attracted over 300 people despite being called at short notice and taking place on a Tuesday afternoon.

Again, Asians from Alum Rock and Sparkhill were prominent. Hundreds of registration forms

were handed back incomplete (or with questions attached) to the council, while some protesters chose to burn their forms outside the Council House.

The demonstration was supported by about half the so-called 'Birmingham 21' — a group of dissident Labour councillors who periodically summon up the courage to abstain on the more outrageous of the Labour Group's attacks on the working class.

Militant cannot be faulted when it comes to energy in campaigning. Two of the more active community-based groups — Handsworth and Alum Rock — are led by Militant supporters. But Militant seem to be putting all their eggs in the basket of 'mass non-payment' as the 'only' strategy to defeat the poll tax.

Apart from some token nods in the direction of non-implementation by the council unions, Militant's orientation is entirely based upon community action.

Non-implementation by the council unions is not a pipe dream in Birmingham. NALGO workers in Housing Benefits and Rate Rebates are involved in long-running strikes over pay and regrading. Both these disputes were brought on, in part, by the extra workload resulting from preparations for the poll tax. The community-based groups must forge an alliance with NALGO members who work for the City Council, if we are to have a serious prospect of stopping the poll tax in Birmingham.

At the moment the links are tenuous: this was shown only too clearly by the tragic spectacle of NALGO strikers and the anti-poll tax campaigns holding separate lobbies of the council, simultaneously on May 16.

Birmingham Trades Council has now set up a 'co-ordinating committee' whose intention is to bring together the community groups and the trade unions against the poll tax. This initiative is at an early stage and so far has not been particularly well supported. But uniting the campaigns and the organised working class is the central task in the anti-poll tax campaign: the possibility is there in Birmingham.

## Manchester witch-hunt

### SOCIALIST STUDENT

**R**ight-wingers in Manchester University Students Union have launched a witch-hunt against the Socialist Student supporter on the Students Union Executive.

Dave Barter, the sabbatical Academic Affairs Officer, has been locked out of his office and had his mail intercepted.

Dave Barter's responsibilities were 'removed' by a meeting of the Students Union Council, a meeting having neither the power to take such a decision nor — by the time the final vote was taken — the required number present for any decisions to be valid.

The following week the Executive banned the student newspaper *Mancunian* from reporting any of the goings on, or circumstances surrounding the meeting.

Students have organised to fight the lock-out, and prominent members of campus trade unions have protested. Why has someone who has been described in *Mancunian* as "one of the hardest workers and most dedicated officers" been attacked?

It is a political witch-hunt. Already Matt Jordan, a Socialist Student supporter on the new Exec, due to take over at the end of term, has been told "You're next."

The witch-hunt reflects the state of the student movement after 10 years of Tory government.

Three or four years ago a wave of anti-'politics' swept through NUS, starting in the large polys and universities like Manchester. The bureaucratic approach of NUS' Kinnockite leadership had failed to campaign effectively and many students reacted against what they saw as 'political' student unionism.

Joke candidates, small animals, and pot plants found themselves elected to Executives of large and well-financed student unions.

Now, three years on, many student unions have been run for the last few years by exactly such people.

## Lesbian and gay breakthrough

By Steph Ward

**F**or too long the National Union of Students Lesbian and Gay campaign has been little more than two unpleasant conferences a year and a powerless and useless committee.

Last weekend (20-21 May) that began to change. Now we have policy on organisation and development, mandating our newly-elected committee to provide the back-up that can build the lesbian and gay fightback in colleges.

The conference adopted the 'Lesbian and Gay Education Charter' and made campaigning around this a priority for the coming year.

Socialist Student supporter Janine Booth was elected onto the committee along with other good activists.

At last the NUS has taken the first steps towards building an active lesbian and gay campaign. Activists in colleges need to make sure mandates are fulfilled and campaigning is taken up.

### 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.

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**It's time for Labour's rank and file to organise!**

Last Wednesday, 17 May, the Campaign Group of Labour MPs voted to sponsor the Constituency Labour Parties conference already scheduled to be held shortly before Labour Party Annual

**Conference this autumn.**

Eric Heffer MP told Socialist Organiser: "If we don't organise, we won't win anything."

Contact: Wallasey CLP, c/o Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Promenade, New Brighton, Merseyside L44 8BG.



# A manifesto from Hungary

**The 'Alternative Left' in Hungary unites some reform-minded members of the ruling party with non-party members. Despite these links with the ruling party, it calls clearly for democracy — and for socialist democracy, not any form of 'bourgeois neo-conservatism'.**

**T**he possibilities of 'state socialism' are exhausted. Its institutional forms have become obstacles to the improvement of the life of the population and to historical development.

From this starting-point we have taken the initiative to support the *self-organisation* of those forces which see the future of our society neither as any form of neo-Stalinism, nor any form of neo-conservatism of a bourgeois type. We promote those forces which fight for a society which has an efficient economic system and in which the values and the aspirations of the workers will be respected.

This charter has been drafted on the basis of our *Appeal* of September 1988 and of the *Initial Principles* of January 1988, as well as public discussions over recent months.

1. The Alternative Left wants to promote all such efforts as — while combatting all the various economic, political and cultural privileges — have as their aim to construct a society such that it will guarantee equality of opportunity and solidarity and consequently will be more free and more democratic.

Our central theoretical basis is the critical theory of society, of Marxist inspiration, which proves that it is possible to realise *social self-organisation from below, social self-government*, and that it is historically superior. We draw inspiration from this social theory, which in its orientation and its method is equivalent to the working-out of an Alternative Left for the late 20th century.

We declare that the Stalinist-based social organisation in Eastern Europe (and in Hungary) over recent decades cannot be justified by Marxism, but is rather the opposite of Marxism.

2. The autonomous efforts of the workers in the last 150 years show the need for *social self-government and democracy in production and distribution, responsive to social needs*. The success of the workers' efforts is prevented by the State as well as by Capital. We believe that the Left should commit itself to the realisation of workers' self-government. The main social tensions can only be resolved on this path.

3. The present political and economic bureaucracies — regardless of all their internal struggles to keep positions — have the same objective: *to save the basis of the old power structure* by partial reforms.

This process will preserve domination by elites, which compete with each other, and double exploitation (by the State and by private capital).

The government has long demanded repeated sacrifices from the population. Most families are at the limit of their capacity to put up with this. The situation can be characterised by the lowering of the standard of living and by overwork.

There is a *crisis of confidence*, emerging from the development of the political crisis. The way out can only be the *socialisation of economic and political power*, that is, the workers directly controlling



The Hungarian revolution 1956

social resources and the process of production.

4. The most important task of the Alternative Left is to seek out the theoretical and practical possibilities for the formation of a

society which would organise itself on the scientific and technical level of the present day, building itself up on the *cooperation of productive and self-governing communities*. We think it is necessary to em-

phasise that our medium-term ideas are the following:

a. In the given conditions of the international relation of forces, Hungary should strive to create a *mixed economy, dominated by social property, which would contain a direct social sector alongside the state and private capitalist sectors*. This direct social sector would be the domain of *direct collaboration of consumers and producers, organised from below*. Experimentation in the functioning of this self-organisation remains a task to be carried out in the near future.

b. We consider it inevitable, both in the private capitalist sector and in the State sector, that the *democratisation of the economy* requires the decentralisation of huge-scale economic units, and the radical extension of the decision-making rights of worker collectives and organisations representing their interests.

c. We work for an institutional political system which will evolve in the direction of *participative democracy*. The rule of law, rights, the liberty of the citizen, and parliamentarism are not in themselves the objective of democratisation: they only provide some protection against economic inequalities and inequalities that have become political. *Social control* over bureaucratic system and over the market is vital.

Against the power of the elites, of party systems and of corporations, we work for the creation of systems of *social movements*. This presupposes the progressive transfer of the functions of bureaucratic apparatuses to collectives, self-organised in the workplace or the place of residence.

d. In the current situation of crisis, our main task is to *avoid economic and political chaos*. We oppose measures to greatly increase and deepen inequalities, and the social degradation of the living standard of workers. We work for the *defence of the quality of the natural and social environment*.

As regards the sources of social conflicts, resulting for example from the collapse of welfare and education provision, unemployment, and inflation, we are convinced the *solutions cannot be solely economic*. We aim to offer theoretical and practical aid to the widespread building of *social self-organisation, community self-defence, and solidarity*.

e. In international relations, we consider necessary the creation of an *alliance with all social and political movements* which aim to change the present international system, still infinitely unequal and unjust, to a *new world order* which is more democratic and based on the *equality of nations*.

f. We aim to contribute to the good results which will flow from the *coming-together of European peoples* and from efforts which will strengthen the economic and political relations of peoples. We consider it important that closer and more egalitarian relations should be established between the nations of our continent.

It is in that spirit that the system of alliances of the countries of Eastern Europe should be transformed, *while progressively eliminating all forms of national hatred, especially against minorities*.

g. We seek collaboration with all those groupings internationally — organisations, movements, associations, institutions, etc. — which have objectives partially or totally identical to ours.

**Budapest, March 1989.** This translation is from a French translation of the original Magyar text.

Contact: c/o Office of the Patriotic Popular Front of the 8th district, HNF, VIII.ker. Biz., 1084, Budapest, Rakoczi ter 2, Hungary.

## Greek left fails to take its chances

**Ian Swindale reports from Greece**

**In Greece, the PASOK government of Andreas Papandreu seems to have given up all hope of winning an overall majority in the Greek general election due to take place on 18 June.**

This is the most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the draft electoral law which was finally published after months of delay in the middle of March, and voted through Parliament at the beginning of April.

In public, government ministers and Papandreu himself insist that PASOK will be returned to power for a third four-year term of office. But this is very unlikely.

The 1985 elections were held on the basis of an electoral law which reinforced the position of the two main parties and especially PASOK, who drew up the law, at the expense of the (then) two Communist Parties.

With 45.8% of the vote, PASOK took 53.7% of the seats (161) and the Conservative New Democracy party with 41% of the vote took 42% of the seats (121). On the other hand, the CP, with 10% of the vote took only 4% of the seats (12) and the CP Interior with nearly 29% of the vote took 0.33% of the seats (1).

If those elections had been held under the electoral law for 1989, the result would have been PASOK 149 seats, ND 127, CP 22, CP Interior 2 and PASOK would not have won

an overall majority.

Nobody believes that PASOK could achieve even that result now after a second period of government which has ended with the eruption of major scandals like the Koskotia/Bank of Crete scandal in which leading government figures are implicated, and as a result of which the heads of the Post Office and Telephone Company have been remanded in custody on serious charges.

There had been a lot of pressure on the government to introduce an electoral law based on full proportional representation. The CP and the Greek Left (EAR) who have formed an electoral alliance, the Left Alliance, have been campaigning for proportional representation and an end to two-party politics in Greece. New Democracy, although obviously favouring the two-party system, went along with the campaign.

The electoral system for the June elections is not, however, a full proportional representation system. The left will not take all the seats they are entitled to. If they did, then probably neither PASOK nor New Democracy could win an overall majority and the way would be opened for a possible coalition government of PASOK and the left.

By leaving open the possibility of one of the two major parties winning an absolute majority it seems that Papandreu has not after all abandoned all hope of turning the situation around during the next two months and winning a third term of office. However, it also

opens up a real danger that the right-wing New Democracy party of Konstantinos Mitsotakis will form the next government.

Undoubtedly New Democracy commands more support than any other party at the present time. But it needs to win probably 48% of the vote in order to form a government and it is by no means certain that New Democracy can achieve that result.

In a series of opinion polls conducted for the pro-CP paper *I Proti* in various towns and cities, New Democracy seemed to have lost some support since the last elections in every town.

For a whole generation of Greeks, these elections pose a major dilemma. Having grown up under the Junta and been politicised by the struggles of that period and the sharp shift to the left in Greek politics after 1974, they have voted for PASOK as the party of non-Stalinist socialism. Now, cruelly disappointed and disillusioned with Papandreu, they nevertheless remain unable to vote for a ND government which they consider would be a big step backwards.

But will they vote for the Left Alliance? The Left Alliance can't win the election although it will undoubtedly emerge much strengthened after 18 June. But the Greek Communist Party, which remains heavily Stalinised, has a terrible record of mistakes and betrayals stretching back to the Civil War and beyond.

It is also, of course, identified with the Stalinist regimes of the

USSR and Eastern Europe, although this may weigh less heavily against it now given the current popularity of Gorbachev.

The Left Alliance has held impressive rallies in Athens and Salonica and large meetings in towns up and down the country, but its main platform has been based on two demands: proportional representation and the 'cleansing' of society.

The first demand calls for nothing more than a (necessary) reform of the electoral system and the second demand, in the form in which it is posed by the Left Alliance, calls for the cleansing of the capitalist system to rid it of the worst elements of corruption. Nowhere does the Left Alliance map out a course of action for Greek workers in the struggle for socialism.

The Left Alliance has succeeded in winning to its side two former PASOK ministers. Other leading members of PASOK can also be expected to join the Alliance, though some have expressed reservations about the 'narrowness' of the Alliance's appeal and have argued that its basis should be broadened out to embrace all 'progressive' forces.

In 1985, before the austerity measures and the Koskotas scandal, PASOK won a second term of office largely because many voters, already disillusioned with Papandreu, swung back to PASOK at the last minute to keep out the right. PASOK cannot count on this happening in June.



# Birthmothers

TV

By Vicki Morris

**M**ore and more these days, watching programmes about 'social problems' makes me believe that socialism is the answer.

More than usual, this belief was reinforced in me when I watched this week's 'Forty Minutes' programme called 'Who'll Win Jeanette?'

'40 Minutes' trained their cameras on a pioneer system of adoption which is legal, although still unusual, in the United States, but which would be illegal in Britain.

"Open adoption" means that the woman given up a baby for adoption has the major, instead of no, part in choosing the legal parents of her child. In the system which currently prevails, natural mothers relinquish all say in their babies' future to professionals like social workers.

The programme makers were careful to show us the pluses and minuses of this new system, but they made one glaring omission when they didn't provide us with any mechanism for comparing it to the normal procedures. In this situation, the viewer such as myself, with no personal experience of adoption, inevitably probably wound up thinking about the fact of adoption itself.

The only conclusion I came to was that sorrow abounds all around and that there have to be better ways of solving the problems confronting the 17 year old who, for the second time, had to reluctantly give up a baby. And there have to be better ways to satisfy the needs of the childless couples who vied to be parents to Jeanette.

Liz, the "birthmother", had

been abused as a child, and herself been given up for adoption when she was 13. Since then she had sought love and approval in affairs with men who didn't give a damn about her or the children they fathered. Now she was looking for the parents and the sort of family life for her child which she would have chosen for herself.

The three couples short-listed were wealthy but, for all that, desperate and unable to have children. As she showed Liz around her house, one of the prospective mothers was aware that Liz was seeing them at their best...yet at less than their best.

The most glaringly obvious thing about all the couples was their self-consciousness about the sense of emptiness they felt without children to share their comfortable lives.

The programme ended with a scene of the least of the couples making off with the prize while Liz sobbed her heart out in the hospital where she'd given birth, the fees paid for by the now parents of her child. The knowledge that she couldn't provide the baby with the material security it might need, and the fear that bringing up a baby by herself might prove too great a strain on her temper, made Liz resolute in the final days before parting.

Significantly, Liz had chosen to place the baby with the couple who showed the least resistance to her keeping in touch with her baby.

It never once seemed to occur to anyone involved in the programme that Liz might be able to bring up the baby if she was only given the money to do it, and allowed some time to herself by sharing her childcare responsibilities.

The couples who wanted children clearly would have made excellent parents. So why did they have to demonstrate untold wealth in order to be able to share in the raising of a child?



Young mothers are forced to give away their children through pressure of poverty

The programme included some elements which showed that its perspectives were very different from mine but which, in any case, seemed disrespectful to all concern-

ed, in particular the tricks used to build up the sense of competition between the couples.

In the end I don't think that the audience would give a damn about

who "won". Whoever won, there were bound to be too many losers in this programme, through no fault of their own but just because they live in an irrational society.

## Pill fears grow

**M**any women will have been concerned by the report of a survey which showed a link between taking the contraceptive pill and breast cancer. They may also be wondering why this study showed a link while previous ones did not.

Let us first look at what the report, published in the medical journal, *The Lancet*, three weeks ago, actually said.

The survey, carried out by the UK National Case-Control Study Group, involved interviewing 750 women under age 36 who had breast cancer (the 'cases'). These were matched with 750 women drawn at random from the community (the 'controls'). Hence 'case-control study'.

The women were asked questions about whether, at what ages and for how long they had used the pill. The researchers were particularly interested in women under 36 because they would also have had the opportunity to use the pill from a younger age and other women. They were trying to confirm a suspicion that the longer breast tissue is exposed to sex hormones, the more likely it is to develop cancer. This theory is supposed by the circumstantial evidence that women whose periods start earlier are more likely to get breast cancer.

In summary, the survey found that there was a link in these women: those who had taken the pill for four to eight years ran a 40% greater risk of getting breast



### LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

cancer while those who had taken it for more than eight years ran a 70% greater risk.

There was also some evidence that taking a lower dosage pill carried a lower excess risk and that pills containing only progestagen (ie. no oestrogen) might actually protect against breast cancer.

These findings should be put into some kind of perspective. While there are some 24,000 new cases each year of breast cancer in women over 36, there are only about 650 in women under 36. The risk of breast cancer in younger women would rise from 1 in 500 to 1 in 300 for women using the pill over eight

years.

One major question arises from this research: *is the extra risk carried over to later life?* In other words, would these women under 36 who got cancer have got it anyway but later on? Or is this an absolute increase in risk? If the latter, we would expect a drastic rise in the rate of breast cancers over the next few years.

There is as yet no evidence to support this fear. Indeed, there is no significant rise in cancers under 36 which could be attributed to the findings of the survey.

Women will wish to decide whether to use the pill on the basis of full information. For some, a small increase in risk of breast cancer (and of circulatory disease, as previously found) will be outweighed by the removal of the fear of an unwanted pregnancy.

There are other advantages of the pill: it protects against cancers of the ovary and womb, as well as alleviating painful, heavy periods, fibroids and anaemia. Do these advantages outweigh the disadvantages, particularly with low-dosage pills?

So far, full information on these questions is not available: further research work is obviously needed.

But the survey team says that it is most likely that there is an increased risk for younger women which does not carry over to later life. However, they say there is a possibility that there will be an increased risk in later life.

Some birth control experts believe that the pill should continue to be available as before, arguing that there would be an illegal

market in them, should they be banned. It is also argued that men and women take far higher risks by indulging in tobacco smoking (not exactly comparable since cigarettes are not prescribed by doctors!)

Others recommend minimising use of the pill and adopting a more relaxed attitude to the use of barrier contraceptives, though these have a higher risk of failing to work.

Information New Scientist

## The state we're in

By Richard Hanford

Privatisation, deregulation,  
Profit placed high above safety or care,  
Huge housing and hospital waiting lists,  
Pollution, depression everywhere.

Underfunded, overcrowded trains,  
Juggernauts carrying colossal loads  
And a continuous stream of company cars  
On poorly patched-up pot-holed roads.

Tax cuts for the wealthy,  
But benefits cut to those in need,  
Workers exploited by a bosses' system,  
That squanders resources and encourages greed.

With extraditions, deportations,  
They uphold the rule of British Law,  
Under which you're innocent until Proved Irish, black or simply poor.

Mortgages shooting through the roof,  
Investment falling through the floor,  
Trade deficit ever-worsening,  
Now see again inflation soar.

No wets allowed in the Cabinet,  
Though there's lots of leaks and drips,  
And even Capitalist crises now  
Can be dismissed as merely 'blips'.

Bringing misery to miners,  
teachers, nurses,  
Attila the Hen still struts and sneers,  
Filling up the millionaires' purses,  
Threatening workers with 'ten more years'.

To make a dustman pay as much a Duke,  
They aim to replace Rates with a Poll Tax,  
It's almost enough to make you puke,  
But it's the Tories who'll face the pole-axe.



## Tube: towards a united all-out strike

The unofficial tube strike on 23 May was another great success. Only a handful of trains ran shuttle services, and most of the network was completely shut down.

This was the fourth 24-hour strike over a pay claim, without strings, of £6.43 per hour for all drivers — and increased rates for guards. Two more weekly stoppages have been called.

To keep up the momentum action will need to escalate quickly towards an all-out strike. Drivers should push for united — NUR and ASLEF — all-out official action.

Tube bosses have been putting down strike days as 'Unsatisfactory Attendance' which can lead to disciplinary action. Sooner or later they will want to raise the stakes and threaten individual drivers with the sack.

The last mass meeting voted to walk out if anybody was victimised for their role in the strikes.

All salaried NUR staff, including drivers and guards, are being balloted for strike action over the bosses' reorganisation plan 'Action Stations'. It amounts to a slaves' charter. A previous ballot produced a 7 to 1 vote for action — then was ruled unlawful by a High Court judge.

The voting should be over by the middle of June and a strike could be called from 19 June.

ASLEF leaders have been criminal in not linking up the struggle of drivers and station staff. They are helping tube bosses divide the workforce. Rank and file ASLEF drivers must support station staff over 'Action Stations'.

We don't have to raise fares to reduce overcrowding—we could just make the trains filthier!



## Busworkers: step up action!

By a London busworker

London bus workers took their first day of 24-hour strike action last Monday, 16 May, in a series of stoppages over their pay offer of 7.1% on the basic pay.

The strike was virtually solid and coincided with unofficial action by the tube workers for their own pay

demands, bringing central London to a standstill.

Since then London Buses Ltd have made a revised pay offer of 7.5% on the basic pay and some improvements on pensions and annual service awards, amounting to an 8.1% increase in all.

The union are likely to recommend rejection of this new offer, as the increase in basic pay does not reach the rate of inflation. They are also likely to re-ballot the membership to step up the action from one day a fortnight to one a week.

A year ago the idea of a strike would have got a two-fingered response from main garages. But the mood has changed. Although the strike is over pay, any picket will tell you several other grievances which have led up to this change in mood.

Over the last few years, bus workers have lost bonuses, London weighting, overtime. The break times have been shortened and the routes lengthened. The number of assaults on workers have increased, largely from incensed and frustrated members of the public at an increasingly worsened service.

And the attitude of management to sick leave, even if caused by attacks at work, is getting more and more insensitive. The health of bus workers is also getting worse: stress, heart-disease, stomach disorders being common complaints.

For the privilege of working under those conditions, they are expected to take a pay cut. The union should key in to the anger felt by its members, and step up the action to all-out, indefinite action, in line with the tube and other workers, so that they can win.

## Alas, poor Eric

### INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

Spare a thought, will you, for poor Eric Hammond. Things have not been going his way lately, what with the AEU National Committee scuppering his merger proposals and — now — the EETPU conference backing a hard-line "go it alone" resolution by a 5 to 1 majority.

Hammond and his close co-thinker John Speller privately favour a strategy by which the EETPU would return in triumph to the TUC, boasting that the majority of the trade union movement had now come round to their way of thinking. The best chance of this happening was obviously the planned merger with the AEU. Now that particular path has been closed to him, Hammond has no very convincing argument against the go it aloners led by Roy Sanderson (head of the union's white collar section) and the EETPU President Paul Gallagher.

Our Eric was full of the usual fighting talk at the biennial conference in Jersey: he denounced the AEU National Committee as a "handful of unrepresentative people" (which rather confirms suspicions that the AEU NC wouldn't have lasted long inside any merged union) and missed no opportunity to have a go at the TUC. "As time goes on," said Hammond on the subject of re-entry to the TUC, "I'm not so sure that the majority of our members would want it on any terms."

But behind the bluster, people like Hammond and Speller are in a very tricky position: they can no longer put off a major debate about the union's future and a new divide looks like opening up between "independents" and "integrationists". The likes of Sanderson and Gallagher now hold the initiative, with a clear strategy in which the EETPU effectively burns its bridges back to the TUC and builds itself into a general union risking a membership war with TUC unions in industries like engineering, electricity and broadcasting, if necessary.

Hammond and the "integrationists", however, have not totally given up hopes of easing back into the TUC via a strategy of mergers. They even proposed dropping the ban on Communist Party members holding office, only to have this section of their proposed

"members' charter" thrown out by a majority of hard-liners at Jersey. One delegate cried out, "Do you want to forgive and forget: shame on you!" The ghosts of Byrne and (Les) Cannon were even conjured up as the militant right blamed Communists for the early deaths of these heroes of EETPU history.

Hammond's other problem is that, having been left standing at the altar by the AEU, he has no other very likely merger partner in prospect. His dream of a single union in energy supply looks as far off as ever, with only the Notts UDM presently showing any interest. Meanwhile the TGWU is talking to the NUM, NACODS and even the South Derbyshire UDM with a view to establishing an energy trade group.

The only bright spot on Hammond's horizon at the moment is the extraction of an impressive 9.2% pay offer from the Electricity Council after power workers had voted for an overtime ban

and opposition to new working practices.

The overwhelming majority of the 76,000 manual workers in electricity supply are EETPU members and Hammond can now claim to have set the pace for the "going rate" in the present round of pay negotiations. It's further proof that those who want to write off the EETPU as a gaffers' union are — to say the least — premature. For now the EETPU remains a recognisable part of the workers' movement and it has to deliver the goods for its members from time to time, if it is to survive.

Hammond's central dilemma is that no amount of sweetheart deals, BUPA schemes and real estate can substitute for industrial muscle when it comes to the crunch. While he continues to deliver the goods occasionally, Hammond remains secure. But should he falter, he'd better watch out for Roy Sanderson...

## NALGO moves

Local government employers are toeing the line about pay. Their 'final offer' to white collar workers made in May is a 7% increase — a pay cut in real terms — along with strings on 'flexibility' that threaten the break-up of national bargaining.

NALGO, the main union in the sector, is being pushed into a fight. The union's Local Government leadership is calling for action to press NALGO's claim for £1,200 or 12% and is getting a big response from members.

Unfortunately, the action on offer doesn't match up to either the threat from the employers or the chances created by the 'summer of discontent'. The leadership rejected a move to ballot for all-out action immediately.

But the programme of action they plan to ballot on: escalating national strikes throughout July lasting one, two and then three days, is a step forward from previous strategies of rolling strikes in different regions.

At the end of the strike programme the leadership want to ballot on all-out action. That will be too late and lead to a break in the action they say they want to build.

Branches at the Local Government delegate meeting should press for all-out action now. If that isn't successful we need to put real teeth into the leader-

ship's plans. A further ballot on all-out action should be launched immediately after the next negotiations on 6 July so that the escalating strikes build up to further action and are not postponed while a ballot takes place in August.

## Manchester

By Tony Dale

On Friday 20 May Manchester City Council Housing Aid Section walked out on strike after a temporary worker was laid off.

He has been employed as a rent registration officer for 15 months and was the first housing department employee on a temporary contract to be laid off since at least 1980.

Temporary contracts are not new in the housing department. What is new is management's determination that temporary means just that.

If the council get away with this sacking, it will set a clear precedent. An emergency NALGO Housing meeting has been called to discuss wider strike action over temporary contracts. Only through all NALGO Housing workers saying no to temporary contracts can we win.

## NUR on its own

By Rob Dawber

The rail drivers' union, ASLEF, at its annual assembly of delegates, has decided to abandon the campaign for a ballot on pay and the Machinery of Negotiation.

The drivers voted 28 to 13 to call off the ballot; decided to consider separate acceptance of British Rail's imposed 7% pay deal; and plan to ballot on the single issue of the Machinery of Negotiation in July.

The white-collar union, TSSA, has also pulled out of the two-issue ballot, so that leaves the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) to go it alone, with the result to be declared around 11 June.

Whatever the merits or demerits of a

twin or separate campaign on the two issues, ASLEF's decision is a serious blow. The drivers have a much more militant tradition and can have a much more immediate impact through industrial action.

Gone is the opportunity through working together to organise the action, to break down old and damaging barriers between the unions. And the results of the NUR's campaign in the next three weeks will have serious effects on ASLEF's own ballot in July.

The NUR is far and away the biggest union; we can win. The only question is the leadership's ability to make maximum effective use of the action.

We need to organise strike committees now. Our concern should be first and foremost to make the action bite, rather than giving management the benefit of the doubt and treating them as gentlemen

## Moodie: rank and file must organise

Activists in the civil service union CPSA are fighting back against sabotage by the union machinery of the struggle against 'Moodie' — a government plan to move benefit work outside London and cut 2,000 jobs.

On Monday 15 May the Branch Executive Committee (BEC) of the first cluster of DSS offices to be affected by Moodie — Notting Hill, Ealing, Southall and Acton — met and decided not to ballot CPSA members in the cluster on all-out indefinite strike action.

The Branch Executive, acting on what subsequently appeared to be misinformation, decided to wait until the proposed official ballot on all-out unpaid strike action in the 75 DSS offices in Greater London. This ballot, planned by the union's right-wing Section Executive, is in fact an attempt to scupper strike action. Only 21 of the 75 offices will be affected by Moodie.

On 16 May a packed meeting of over 100 London DHSS CPSA members heard how on the previous Friday members in the first cluster offices had been prepared to take unofficial action if strike pay or levies could be raised.

The meeting unanimously agreed to support any unofficial action, to raise

strike pay and to argue for all-out strike action in their own offices.

The meeting also gave support to members from Notting Hill who hoped to be able to take unofficial all-out strike action, using this as a lever to bring the other three offices in the first cluster out on strike. CPSA members at Paddington office said they would argue to come out immediately in support of Notting Hill.

We further agreed to set up weekly London reps' meetings — one members from each of the six London branches — which will produce regular bulletins.

The next morning (17 May), a meeting at Notting Hill office decided not to strike. The main reason was the Branch Executive decision. The right-wing Section Executive met on the same day. The union's National Disputes Committee had ruled that the planned ballot of 75 offices would be unlawful, because it involved secondary action. The Section Executive are now considering whether to ballot the 75 offices on the principle of relocation.

Activists in the DSS need to work for unofficial industrial action throughout the 21 Moodie offices.

If there is an official ballot on the principle of relocation we must ensure we win it, but unofficial strike action in the 21 offices will be the only way of forcing the Section Executive to ballot the Moodie offices.

## Right-wing beats Stalinists

By a NUCPS conference delegate

The far right "Progressive Anti-Communist" faction, whose election 'platform' consisted of urging people not to vote Broad Left (independent left Trotskyist or 'hard left' (Stalinist), has made big gains in the elections for the National Executive Council of the civil service middle-grade union NUCPS.

The rights' gains have been made at the expense of the long-running Stalinist faction, called the Secret Left because they cynically deny being a faction. The right taken as a whole has a majority on the Executive.

The Secret Left and its supporters have been totally unable to draw any lessons beyond blaming the Tory-imposed postal ballot. The essence of their analysis is to distrust the membership.

Thus they successfully urged Conference to vote against individual balloting at workplace meetings for Group Executive, denouncing such elections in gobbledegook Marxism as manifestations of 'bourgeois democracy' and 'liberalism'. Conference effectively resolved to retain GEC elections by block vote.

With the support of the Secret Left, Conference passed an emergency motion calling on the EC to consider ways of stopping the distribution of unofficial material amongst members. Con-

ference was understandably angry at the Right's witchhunting leaflets, but any ban on unofficial material will hit the Left harder than the Right. The Right will be defeated by winning members to serious trade unionism and socialist politics, not by organisational measures.

The Broad Left still does not fare well in EC elections, but there are signs of growing influence. The BL conference fringe meeting and social were far better attended this year than last. The daily lunchtime meetings were also well attended, and the level of intervention on the Conference floor improved this year.

Conference passed motions calling for industrial action in the event of further GCHQ style bans, condemning the EC's wilful flouting of the pay policy, and instructing the incoming EC to prepare for industrial action if the results of the pay comparability exercise are ignored.

## Timken

Workers at British Timken in Northampton have voted for a work-to-rule and an overtime ban.

A dispute over differential payments for working a machine in the rollergrinding shop led to a deadlock. Management agreed the payment was too low — £3 per week set 10 years ago — but refused to make up basic pay.

Now, after a resounding 70 to 6 vote for action by production workers, they have two weeks to change their minds.



# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

The time to fight is now

# The dockers can win!

**R**egistered dockers across Britain have voted heavily for a national docks strike.

The majority was 3 to 1 in a turnout of just over 90%. This is a clear mandate to T&G leaders to organise a strike.

The Tories announced in April that they would scrap the National Dock Labour Scheme set up in 1947. The Scheme gives registered dockers some degree of job security.

A national strike was delayed by all sorts of wrangles over legalities as the T&G, the biggest union in Britain, tried to keep out of the reach of the courts. It made sense to make it as difficult as possible for the port bosses to use the courts to smash the strike. But the union leaders have dragged out the process, lost momentum, failed to use the time to sink feelers into the labour movement and organise solidarity.

Port bosses have used the time to prepare. They have been stocking up with raw materials hoping to ride out a long dispute. They have also been trying to divide dockers, port against port, with local negotiations.

Of course, all their talk about the union organising a 'political strike' is sheer hypocrisy. Port bosses have lobbied Tory MPs for years to scrap the Scheme. They have met with their counterparts in France to discuss breaking a strike. And they donate hundreds of thousands of



## Unite for victory

**Waiting for a taxi...Transport workers caused chaos last week when London tube and bus workers struck for the day. A ban on overtime and rest-day working by rail workers increased the pressure on London's**

**bosses. There are real possibilities for transport workers to link their actions and strike alongside each other bringing London to a grinding halt. See page 11**

pounds to Tory funds every year. They even drew up a secret document 18 months ago outlining a strategy to beat the dockers. This includes legal threats, a propaganda offensive, and plans to organise scabbing.

The Tory trade union laws are class laws — the bosses are free to plan and organise, the workers' hands are tied behind our backs.

The port bosses have asked the courts to rule the strike illegal. Ron Todd has said he will wait

for a court decision before going ahead, and that he will obey the court decision even if it goes against him.

But on Saturday 20 May, the port shop stewards committee met in London. They agreed to give Ron Todd a chance to lead a docks strike. But they also agreed to lead a national unofficial strike themselves if he refused.

This is the way to put pressure on the union leaders. But the shop stewards committee should have agreed a timetable or deadline for action.

And they must start organising solidarity from non-registered dockers. It is vital they get a commitment from non-registered ports not to take redirected cargo.

Delegations should visit non-Scheme ports to explain the issues. And they should try to build unity on the basis of extending the Scheme to cover all ports in Britain.

And the rest of the labour movement must wake up. Support groups should be set up by Labour Parties, trade union branches, student unions...

Links should be made now and dockers brought in to address meetings calling for support. A victory for the dockers will be a victory for us all. Support the dockers!

## Euro-elections: vote Labour!

**T**he campaigns for the Euro-elections have now officially started. And Thatcher's contribution so far has been to denounce the notion that British kids should have to learn foreign languages.

Old pro-Europe Tories are up in arms, and the Tory party is openly divided.

Britain is very isolationist about Europe, and Thatcher probably does no more than voice widely-held prejudices. British turn-outs for Euro-elections are the lowest in the EEC. In the past, the left too was fervently anti-EEC — and for much the same reasons (British sovereignty, foreign interference). There isn't much Thatcher is saying

today that you couldn't find in left-wing anti-EEC agitation from the 1970s.

The Common Market is the bosses' version of European unity. Their ideal is a Europe in which it's easier to exploit workers. But they have problems — which give rise to Thatcherite objections.

The workers' charter advocated by the European Commission would give workers rights — to strike, to be in a union — that they do not possess now, including in Britain. The idea of a 'social Europe' — winning, for example, the unemployment benefits currently enjoyed in Denmark for all Europe's unemployed, would be an important victory. Women for Socialism are campaigning for a

'women's charter' Europe-wide.

A really united Europe — in which national frontiers really were abolished, national distribution gradually forgotten — is not possible so long as capitalism survives. Socialism is necessary for genuine European unity, not only in the West but also in the East.

Neil Kinnock's campaign is hardly that! Indeed, the 'revamped' Labour Party can hardly manage anything distinctive; Ted Heath has done a better job of criticising Thatcher. Even so, we need to elect Labour Euro-MPs.

The Tories are vulnerable in a lot of Euro constituencies, and defeat would hurt them.

Vote Labour in the Euro-elections!

## A summer of discontent?

By Gerry Bates

**E**ver since the miners' strike, the labour movement has been depressed.

The miners' strike was our opportunity to turn the tide against the Tories, but it was wasted — by the official leaders of the trade unions

and the Labour Party, who left the miners to stand alone. Once the miners had been defeated, many workers reasoned, if they can't win, we can't.

There have been big struggles, of course — printworkers, health workers, postal workers, and others. But now the whole political climate is changing. There is a wave of disputes — strikes, threatened strikes, near strikes. Dockers, power workers, transport workers, and many others have gone on strike or come close to it.

We are heading for a 'summer of discontent'.

The power workers' pay settlement of 9.2% could create further problems for the employers, as other workers push for equally high increases. Inflation is causing the wave of strikes; and added to official inflation is workers' fear of the poll tax, and for many workers, high mortgage rates.

Lower unemployment levels — albeit higher than official ones — have helped give workers more confidence. And in certain spheres, there is an acute shortage of skilled labour, giving more skilled workers considerable bargaining power.

For a long time the law has been an immense obstacle to strike action. Now workers' confidence to ignore or go round the law seems to be growing. It remains a major problem, and it would be stupid to expect the anti-union laws to dissolve in the face of renewed militancy. But readiness to fight is the precondition for defeating them.

A new layer of militants is coming forward in these disputes — young workers who weren't around during the battles of the early 1970s. Often these workers spent a long time on the dole in the early '80s. Sometimes these new militants lack experience — but they are more open than older generations, which tended to be Communist Party-influenced.

What we need now is a way to bring the various disputes together. One idea is that the unions should fight for wage increases to be automatically linked to inflation, on a national level — a 'sliding scale' of wages. Instead of isolated wage battles, we could have a coordinated, national fight. That isn't counterposed to fighting and winning each battle, of course. But it could tie the threads together.

The growing combativeness of the working class is graphic disproof of all that has been said, over recent years, by the labour movement's prophets of gloom. All these rising struggles are traditional forms of working class action: strikes, pickets, unofficial action. The right-wing pessimists of journals like *Marxism Today* are daily being refuted — the working class is not dead, or yuppified.

Indeed, this wave of militancy is concentrated in the core sectors of the working class — engineering, railways, the docks. And with disputes in those areas, we can expect real changes to occur.

So the summer of discontent is a big opportunity. The winter of discontent, 1978-9, led to the fall of the Labour Government. It was a wave of public sector strikes over pay. We can make this the Tories' downfall.

That poses a question: if we do kick out the Tories, what do we replace them with? Neil Kinnock's policy reviewed Labour Party is hardly an alternative to match the militancy of trade union activists. So we need to take on the political battle against Kinnock within the Labour Party.

### Fighting to win!

#### Public Meeting

**Speakers include: CPUSA striker and London bus worker**

**7.30 Thursday 25 May  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq,  
London WC1**

**Called by Socialist Forum**