

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

**Will
Solidarnosc
throw Polish
workers on
the dole?
See page 5**

Thousands won't pay poll tax

800,000 people in Scotland are still refusing to pay the poll tax, according to figures released last week by Scottish councils.

Six months after the first payment demands were sent out, Strathclyde — the largest region in Scotland — estimates that 20% have not yet paid.

Lothian, which includes Edinburgh, reports that non-payment stands at 17%, while in the Orkney Islands and Shetlands, official figures put non-payment at 43% and 48% respectively.

In inner city, working-class areas, the figures are especially high, as people simply can't afford to pay. Thousands of students eligible to pay 20% of the poll tax, have simply gone to ground in an effort to avoid the tax.

Many people who paid the first instalment of the poll tax have paid no more, encouraged by the massive level of resistance.

Councils are in disarray over what to do next. Letters threatening fines and prosecutions for non-payment, due to be sent out in June, have already been delayed for three months.

Strathclyde council attempted to start prosecution proceedings against a couple of people who had refused to register — 15 months after the supposed completion of the registration process. Sheriff's officers were sent to the home of one of them, Jeanette McGinn, to carry out a

poinding (valuation) of her goods, prior to a forced sale. Confronted by a demonstration of over 300 people from the anti-poll tax federation, they beat a hasty retreat, and the council postponed the poinding.

Actions such as these are an essential part of the fight against the poll tax, and should be taken up by all anti-poll tax groups. But while they may delay the process of prosecutions and fines, they aren't enough to defeat the poll tax. The councils will simply look for other ways to collect the money — including deductions from benefits and wage arrearments. Community resistance alone won't be enough to stop this — that can only be done by labour movement action.

We must use the massive support for non-payment to encourage NALGO workers not to send out prosecutions or fines; CPSA workers not to deduct money from claimants' giros; and bank workers not to co-operate in freezing bank accounts.

And we must organise in our local Labour Parties to put pressure on Labour councils to refuse to prosecute non-payers. In Edinburgh, all six Constituency Labour Parties have now called for the Labour council to refuse to use warrant sales to collect poll tax debts. We must campaign for other CLPs to follow suit, not just in Scotland, but England and Wales too.

Mass non-payment campaigns are an essential part of the campaign to defeat the Tory tax. But without linking this to a campaign of non-implementation involving trade unions and Labour Parties it is doomed to failure.

We must unite community anti-poll tax unions and labour movement bodies in a united campaign.



Cape Town youth flee tear gas

Solidarity against apartheid

As white South Africa goes to the polls, black South Africa protests.

The powerful one-million-strong independent labour movement has called a two-day protest strike against the racist elections and the government's vicious anti-union laws. Meanwhile, the defiance campaign continues, with many banned organisations 'unbanning' themselves.

The British and international labour movement must step up its solidarity with the liberation movement and in particular with the workers' movement.

The European Community accounts for 52% of South Africa's foreign trade. A serious campaign for a workers' boycott of South Africa, linked to pressing the demands of South African workers for union recognition and decent wages and conditions at British-owned companies, would be a practical way of extending that solidarity.

Negotiations in South Africa? See page 2

Why they're talking about talks in S Africa

Anne Mack looks at what's behind the talk of negotiations in South Africa

Negotiations are in. Insurrection is out. That's the new consensus in the South African liberation movement.

And not just in the liberation movement. Everyone is talking about negotiations — FW De Klerk, Thatcher, Bush and Kohl, Mikhail Gorbachev and the leaders of the frontline states.

But a lot of the talk about talks is just talk.

There is a vast gap that exists between the negotiating position of the liberation movement and that of the state.

The ANC and its allies have put down a series of conditions for negotiations that the state will find it very difficult to meet.

They include:

- the release of political prisoners;
- the unbanning of banned organisations;
- unconditional return of exiles;
- withdrawal of troops from the townships;
- an end to the State of Emergency;
- the scrapping or suspension of repressive laws.

For the ANC the aim of negotiations is the transformation of South Africa into a united democratic and non-racial country.

FW De Klerk is not about to accept those conditions, never mind that aim. It would mean the end of National Party rule and white privilege.

De Klerk wants to draw sections of the liberation movement into a political settlement that stops short of majority rule in an undivided state. He wants group rights and representation (ie, code for a white veto) and some kind of consensus-based multi-racial executive.

It would be suicide for the ANC to accept such a hollow offer. Even if the leadership were prepared to (which is highly unlikely), the ranks of the liberation movement would not. So a negotiated transfer of power is not round the corner.

The motives of the two sides are somewhat different.

De Klerk wants to take some of the international pressure off his government. As the journal *Work in Progress* has argued, he is more interested in negotiating the rescheduling of South Africa's foreign debt than the transfer of power. That is why he is prepared to make limited but real concessions like the release of Mandela and the de facto legalisation of the ANC.

The drive for negotiations



Workers discuss tactics in the fight against the racist state's anti-union laws

represents something else for the liberation movement. In part it reflects external pressures from the frontline states and the USSR.

Gorbachev desperately wants to disengage from Southern Africa. Some of his advisors have even gone so far as to advise the ANC to accept some form of white veto. The vast amounts of Eastern Bloc financial and military aid to the ANC give Gorbachev immense leverage over the movement. To keep that support coming, the ANC must at least appear to be prepared to negotiate.

But the ANC has its own reasons, too, to do with the crisis in liberation movement strategy following the defeat of the township revolt of 1984-6.

Negotiations and 'the struggle to force the regime to negotiate' have become a panacea thus abolishing the need for some serious strategic thinking

In the mid-'80s the ANC tailed and then managed to ride on the back of a spontaneous working-class upsurge. It responded to events rather than really initiating them. Its strategy, to the extent that it had one, was to 'Make the townships ungovernable'.

The 'people' were to create the maximum possible chaos on the ground so that the state would be forced to the negotiating table to

talk to the 'people's leaders'. Those who questioned this strategy ran the risk of being labelled 'enemies of the people'.

The powerful trade union movement ended up filing in behind the populist slogans while attempting to give them a working-class content. In fact, the most inspiring events of '84-'86 were those moments when working-class organisation was used to channel and focus the township revolt, like the Alexandra Action Committee led by Moses Mayekiso — a model of democratic and popular working-class organisation.

Nevertheless, the revolt was defeated. But the lessons of that defeat have not been assimilated.

The first lesson is that it's wrong to play with insurrectionary slogans without preparing seriously for insurrection — and not even in the heady days of 1985 did the ANC leadership seriously consider deploying their guerrillas in the township in any numbers.

The second point is that it's impossible to give a working-class content to a strategy dreamed up elsewhere to service the interests of another class, which is what the left in the liberation movement tend to do. For the leadership of a liberation movement which sees the workers as a battering ram to be used to knock down the doors of

power for themselves, treating the workers and youth of the townships as a stage army is quite natural. For socialists it's anathema.

Socialists and trade unionists in South Africa now run the risk of repeating this same error in a different form by attempting to give a working-class content to an agenda of negotiations set elsewhere.

It should be possible for the workers themselves to take the initiative and advance a socialist alternative.

Firstly, socialists are not against negotiations as such, whether between trade unions and capital, or liberation movements and oppressor states. What we are against is negotiations over the heads of the people and outside of their control. Premature denunciations of betrayal will not gain a hearing for socialism but only isolate those socialists who go in for it further.

The left — in particular the left associated with the non-racial independent unions — has advocated winning partial demands in the here and now to strengthen the position of the working class. The present day trade union movement was built in such a way. Extracting concessions from the state and capital was denounced by the ANC a few years ago as 'economism' and 'reformism'. What they were criticising was not the idea of

negotiating with the state or capital, but the idea that the union should dare to fight for limited concessions without the permission of the nationalist politicians.

The workers' movement should use the current climate of negotiations to advance a strategy of fighting for reforms like a minimum wage, upgrading of townships, repeal of the repressive anti-union laws etc, which could fuse with the reviving industrial and political militancy of the black workers to turn defence into offence.

And, finally, the workers' movement needs to define closely its basic goals. Moses Mayekiso, the NUMSA general secretary, has pointed towards a definition of those goals and the relationship between them and negotiations.

"We must go to the negotiating table from a position of power, with all our organisations — they have to be unbanned first."

It will be a battle to even go to the negotiating table. We will have to pressurise them (the state).

In all class struggles you will find people who are enemies but who pretend to be our friends and have their own tactics to buy the working class.

If we want to undercut the power of the state we might be forced to make tactical alliances with other classes and other people closely linked to some state structures. But in doing so we must not compromise our principles.

If we go into these alliances ignorant, we could betray the class struggle and socialism. Therefore we must clearly state our interests, the interests of the working class — that is, socialism. To shy away from talking about socialism because we might alienate some people is hypocrisy. To say socialism is not on the agenda, that the youth and workers are not ready for socialism, is a betrayal of the working class.

As I see it, and as the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) sees it, the way forward is to build solid organisations with a centralised structure. We must not use western or eastern models of socialism — our conditions are different. The working class here must lead the struggle and decide what kind of socialism they want. As I said earlier, negotiations should only take place on our terms, taking into account the class struggle."

Hungary's ruling party could split

WORLD BRIEFS

Hungary's neo-Stalinist ruling party, the "Socialist Workers' Party" (HSWP), could split at its congress next month.

Pro-market liberals in the party held their own conference last weekend, and openly discussed the idea of creating a new "Hungarian Socialist Party". At the other end of the spectrum, the already-established "Workers' Marxist-Leninist Party of Hungary" claims to have the support of more than 20 members of the Central Committee of the HSWP and the army top brass for its old-line Stalinist policies. The

army chiefs have denied this.

In the middle, HSWP general secretary Karoly Grosz has said publicly that he regrets not sacking the leading HSWP liberal reformer, Imre Poszgay, when he had the chance. Poszgay is a member of the four-person ruling presidium.

The HSWP also has more material problems. Talks between it and opposition groups over the rules for Hungary's free elections, due within a year, broke down when the opposition demanded that the huge property assets of the HSWP be handed over to the state.

Battles between rival factions of Afghanistan's Mujahedin are spreading.

According to the *Independent* of 4

September, there is now fighting in three different provinces. One battle is for control of the heroin routes to the West.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of the fundamentalist faction which has got most US backing until now, is refusing to take part in meetings of the Mujahedin's government-in-exile.

The position of the Kabul regime, however, remains feeble. According to Reuter press agency reports, thousands of people are leaving Kabul to avoid conscription and rebel attacks.

While Britain's Tories try to whittle down our National Health Service and move towards cash-oriented medicine, even capitalist opinion in

the US is being pushed the other way.

The US spends three times as much per head on health as Britain does, but that does not make Americans healthier. Life expectancy is no higher, and infant mortality no lower, than in Britain. In some US inner-city areas, infant mortality is at Third World levels.

The cash-oriented system in the US encourages doctors to prescribe the most expensive treatment possible for those who can pay, and neglect those who can't.

What worries the capitalists is their increasing bills for employees' health insurance — about \$6,000 per year per worker for Chrysler, for example. Repeated attempts by bosses to cut medical benefits for workers have provoked fiercer resistance than anything else, and have been largely unsuccessful.

It's not socialism the East Germans flee

EDITORIAL

Who can believe, witnessing the thousands of East Germans fleeing across the border into Hungary en route to the West, that East Germany is any kind of socialist country?

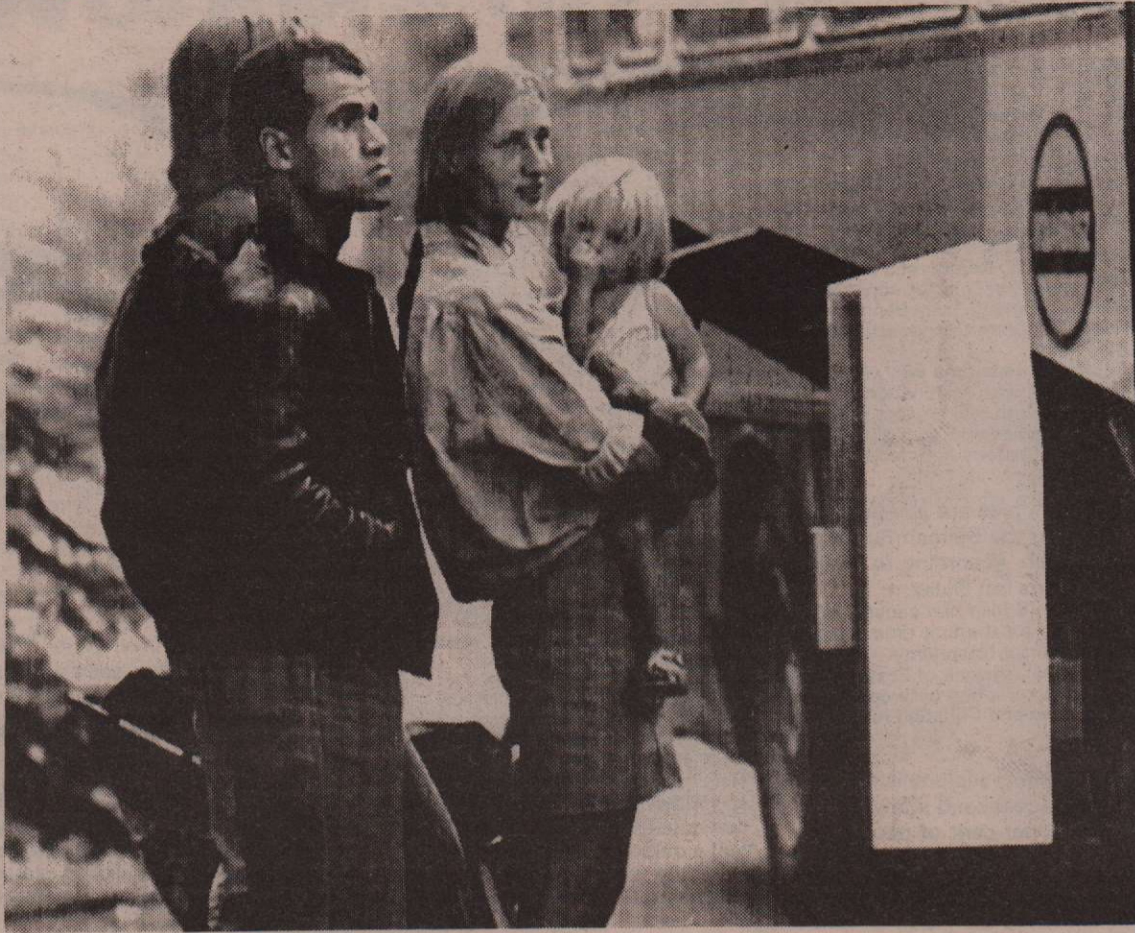
For 27 years, East Germans were shot trying to cross the Berlin Wall. Now, as Hungary has dismantled the protective fence along its borders with Austria, providing a way of escape, East Germans are flocking to get out.

What they will find in the West will be another story. The people of Eastern Europe, oppressed by Orwellian bureaucratic regimes that call themselves socialist, often conclude that Western capitalism — with its democratic institutions — is a far better place to live. On average, it probably is.

Just how bad the East Germany system is for the working class was shown dramatically a couple of years ago, when the normally sluggish West German trade unions protested vehemently against the use of East German contract labour on jobs in West Germany.

The union officials' complaint was not that these workers from a "socialist" state brought revolutionary ideas or "unrealistically" high expectations with them. Just the opposite! They complained that the East German workers had no union representation and worked in conditions that no West German trade unionist would accept, thus undermining the conditions of the West German workers. East Germany is not socialist, never has been. It is, like the West, a system where a minority ruling class exploits the workers for its own profit.

West Germany, like the West generally, is also a land of relentless profit-seeking, exploitation, mass unemployment, housing shortages, slums, misery, racism and witchhunts. The East German refugees will learn that in time, and some will conclude that the answer is no illu-



East German workers flee Stalinism

sions in either East or West, but a struggle for workers' liberty East and West.

Hungary's border decision is part of a general policy of liberalisation — that is, extension of the market and closer integration with Western Europe.

Hungary has been the pioneer of Gorbachev-type perestroika for many years. It scrapped central economic plan directives in 1968. While the official government policy is not to encourage people escaping from East Germany, the Hungarian media is full of stories of Hungarians helping Germans to cross the frontier. The Hungarian people, it seems, are wholeheartedly

sympathetic.

The German refugees are another dramatic symbol of the decay of the Eastern European systems. The new Polish government, and the fierce nationalist explosion in the USSR itself indicate a development of truly historic importance: the collapse of the Russian empire.

Gorbachev is trying to hold it together by pragmatism. But the crisis of the whole system is visibly deepening almost every day. And for Gorbachev and the various Eastern European despots that depend on him, there simply is no answer to their problems.

They can't continue to bottle up all the tensions in their societies

without risking a huge political explosion. But each step they take towards reform only creates new problems, unleashes new forces, and runs new risks.

Socialists should support the right of the East Germans or whoever else to leave their country and live in Western Europe. We would prefer East German workers and intellectuals to stay in their countries and fight their bureaucratic oppressors. But they have the right to leave.

And we should press home the lesson, that these systems have nothing at all to do with democratic, working-class socialism.

For self-determination for nations in the USSR! For full rights for local minorities!

The hardliners in the Soviet government, fronted by Yegor Ligachev, have gone on a major, if indirect, offensive against Gorbachev, seizing an opportunity as the President is on holiday.

The main focus of hardliner protest is on the overboiling nationalities question. Ligachev wants 'firm action'.

Unrest in the fringe Soviet republics is growing so rapidly now that it must be raising the prospect of the USSR's collapse. From the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, to Azerbaijan,

Armenia and Georgia, Mazakhstan and Moldavia, nationalism is proving an immense force. Now nationalist unrest is booming also in the largest Soviet Republic apart from Russia, Ukraine — which is also the USSR's centre of heavy industry.

Ligachev, speaking on Soviet TV, warned that Armenians and Azerbaijanians in Nagorny Karabakh are close to civil war. Troops have lost control, he said.

His implied solution — old-fashioned repression — is hardly a way forward.

The nationalities questions in the USSR are complex. Anti-Russian sentiment, after years of extremely

bad treatment under Russian rule, is hardly surprising. The democratic answer to the national oppression of Estonians, Georgians, Moldavians, etc, is their right to self-determination — independence, or autonomy, as they prefer.

Yet in almost all of these republics, local nationalism includes a chauvinistic current, opposed not only to Russian rule, but to Russian and sometimes to smaller minority groups. In Estonia, thousands of Russian workers went on strike in protest at new anti-Russian laws. In Moldavia, it is a similar problem: Moldavians obviously have the right to speak Moldavian (a dialect of Rumanian) and use their own alphabet, but Moldavian nationalists want to make the language the only official one, which would discriminate against large minorities of Russians and Ukrainians, mostly working class.

Gorbachev has no answer to these problems any more than Ligachev does. His policy is reform; but 'too much' reform is provoking the hardliners. What really winds Ligachev up is the prospect of even

partial concessions to the smaller nationalities; he wants a return to good old Great Russian imperialism.

In fact Gorbachev has not broken with that imperialism, he has merely tried to soften its edges. And as the leader of the whole Russian system, he can't break with it.

A prominent feature of almost all the nationalist movements is the rise of the working class. This is a result of the bureaucratic system, which makes all other forms of opposition very difficult and should not give socialists too much cause for optimism. The recent miners' strike was a different story; but general strikes in Azerbaijan, Georgia, etc, have been around purely nationalist issues and have shown no sign of breaking out of nationalist limits.

We should welcome the break up of the old system of the iron hand from Moscow; but hope than an independent working-class voice can make itself heard as the crisis unfolds. The working-class principle is Lenin's: "A struggle against the privileges and violence of the oppressing nation and no toleration of the striving for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation."

PRESS GANG

The Digger's hidden depths

By Jim Denham

Rupert Murdoch, as the hard-nosed, money-grabbing, union-busting, multi-media mogul, I can just about stomach.

But Rupert Murdoch's new-found persona as philosopher/moralist of the media is simply too much.

I refer, of course, to the Digger's now famous McTaggart lecture at the Edinburgh Festival. Did he really believe all that stuff he was spouting, about the need for a more politically independent and investigative media? Can he have been serious when he held up Watergate and Irangate as the journalistic models he aspires to?

Admittedly, the Digger was talking more about TV than newspapers (though it seems to have escaped his notice that it was the American press and not the TV that exposed Watergate and Irangate), but even so, the spectacle of the owner of the *Sun* and the *Sunday Times* berating the ITV and BBC for their excessively cosy relationship with the government was a bit rich, to put it mildly...

By contrast, *Daily Telegraph* editor Max Hastings' recent appearance on Channel 4's 'Three of a Kind' was refreshingly candid. Questioned about the *Telegraph's* notorious Page 3 (where sexual innuendo, scandal and other forms of naughtiness are dressed up as court reports), Hastings admitted: "It's basically *News of the World* stuff, but presented in a style more acceptable to our type of readers...I suppose you could say it stands in the great tradition of English middle-class hypocrisy."

Pressed on why the *Telegraph* remains party to the parliamentary "lobby system" after the *Independent* and the *Guardian* have pulled out, Hastings conceded that "in many ways it's a very corrupt system and we are reviewing it...but we are a Tory newspaper and for us to pull out now would be seen as an act of disloyalty to the government at a difficult time for them..."

First with the news of poor Princess Anne's marital break-up was, of course, the *Daily Mirror*. We have noted before how Britain's only Labour daily regularly outdoes its Tory rivals when it comes to grovelling obsequiousness before the royals.

Friday's front page lead was: "The heartache behind the broken marriage", followed by column inch upon column inch of forelock-tugging banality and tasteful colour photos of Anne doing her good works riding horses, wearing hats, etc, etc.

By contrast, the *Independent* maintained its admirable sense of proportion in these matters and confined itself to a few words at the bottom of page 2.

The *Mirror's* obsession with the Windsors can be partly explained by that old Labourist tradition of grovelling before royalty. But my guess is that it has more to do with Cap'n Bob Maxwell's dreams of one day himself donning an ermine gown.

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

Karl Marx

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4 GRAFFITI

Bosses want women workers but won't pay

GRAFFITI

Bosses' talk about making jobs more attractive for women workers is largely bullshit, according to a survey by Incomes Data Services.

There is "no evidence of any attempt to improve the relative pay of women". Workplace nurseries are still very rare, despite the fact that Britain has places for fewer than 8 per cent of pre-school children with nurseries, child-minders and nannies.

The South African Communist Party has given up Stalinism — on orders from Moscow!

Party leader Joe Slovo has now said that Stalin may have to be tried posthumously for his crimes, and SP Bunting, one of the first victims of the purges in the SACP, is to be posthumously rehabilitated.

Isn't this all a bit late? How long will it take before the trade unionists and socialists branded as 'enemies of the people' and 'collaborators' in the '70s and '80s are rehabilitated? Probably not until they are as much of an active threat to Uncle Jo and his friends as SP Bunting is.

You thought it was bad paying an extra pound on every water rates bill, and an extra pound per household on tax, for the Tories' advertising blitz for selling off water?

You ain't seen nothing yet. The ads for selling off electricity with which you will soon be bombarded will cost much more — a bill of more than £2 for each woman, man and child in Britain.

Are TV soaps a diversion from real life? Or is it the other way round?

In June an American TV channel interrupted its soap 'General Hospital' to flash news of the Tiananmen Square massacre. There was a flood of letters of complaint. "They don't rerun the soaps. If you miss something it's gone." And all for "stale news", said the irate viewers.

Tony Benn this week called for a directly elected world parliament at the United Nations, capable of legislating to curb multinational capital.

It's not a bad idea at all, certainly not if it would mean that democratic elections were held in the Eastern Bloc, South Africa, Chile and other such countries. Democratic elections presupposes freedom for opposition parties, something Tony Benn has so far been reluctant to support for the Eastern Bloc.

But in the meantime why not make a start with multinational democracy with real powers for the European Parliament, giving it control over EEC policy and decisions?

The ripples are spreading from the Salman Rushdie affair. According to newspaper reports last Friday, 1 September, British film censors are likely soon, for the first time ever, to ban a video for blasphemy.

The video, 'Visions of Ecstasy', is about the interaction between sexual impulses and Christian religious mysticism.

Opinion polls published at the weekend showed that 70 per cent of people say that unions have "a perfect right" to press for wage rises which keep up with inflation, and a three-to-two majority blaming bosses rather than workers for this summer's strikes.

More than twice as many people think the Tories anti-union laws have gone "too far" as think they have gone "not far enough". 58% thought the bosses were more to blame for Britain's economic problems than the unions, and only 19% blamed the unions. Meanwhile, researchers at the London School of Economics have reported that productivity has grown faster in unionised firms than in non-union ones.

Isn't it about time the Labour Party leaders stopped being so nervous about supporting strikes and trade unions?

TUC general secretary Normal Willis welcomed the poll results as showing that the trade unions are "back in business".

But more general sympathy for trade unions does not automatically translate into stronger union organisation. Another recent survey shows that union derecognition is accelerating.

Researcher Tim Claydon found 58 cases of derecognition in the last five years — but only 9 happened in 1984-6 and 49 in 1987-9.

Why nationalism is exploding in the East

By Stan Crooke

Decades of national oppression in the Soviet empire have made nationalism a powerful force for political mobilisation. Wherever there has been national oppression, the oppressed have fought back. And the Stalinist empire is no exception to this rule.

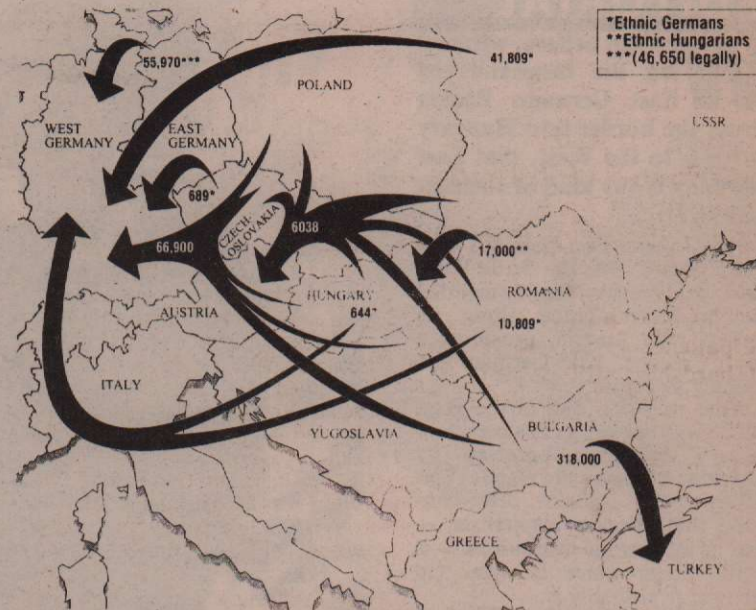
Like the Tsarist autocracy which preceded it, the Soviet Union of today is a "prison-house of nations". The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 tore down the Tsarist autocracy; but Stalin rebuilt the prison-house.

Non-Russian cultural traditions were denigrated and suppressed. History was re-written to portray Russia — the Russia of the Tsars — as the bearer of civilisation to the peoples it conquered and oppressed. Nations were uprooted from their homelands and scattered across the Soviet Union.

In 1940 the Baltic states were incorporated into the Soviet Union. Phoney "Popular Assemblies" were set up on the basis of rigged elections and obediently voted to surrender the right to national self-determination. In less than a decade half a million people were deported.

In the post-war years, puppet governments were imposed upon the Eastern European states occupied by the "Red" Army. The equivalents of the Labour Party in these states were forced to "fuse" with the Moscow-loyal Communist Parties. The policies pursued by the governments in these "People's Democracies" were determined by Moscow, not by the people.

As the Soviet bureaucracy — for its own reasons and in its own interests — relaxes its oppressive grip on Soviet and Eastern European society, suppressed national aspirations of the oppressed peoples burst out into the open. But nationalism in the Eastern Bloc states is far



Recent months have seen mass surges of refugees in Eastern Europe — especially national minorities

from being merely the expression of legitimate national aspirations.

The bloody clashes between Armenians and Azeris are the latest chapter in a long-standing history of national antagonism between the two peoples. In the Baltic states hostility to the policies of the Soviet government has led to calls for immigration controls and to discussion about possible "repatriation" of Russian immigrants.

Nationalism is a powerful force in the Eastern Bloc states not only because of the level of national oppression. It is powerful also because of the weakness of any potential alternative.

For most inhabitants of the Stalinist empire socialism is equated with the politics pursued by their oppressors.

The Western "socialists" and labour movement leaders of whom they know are often admirers of the

Stalinist bureaucracy and servile administrators of capitalism. And, as a result of Stalinist oppression, indigenous organised labour movements are non-existent, except in Poland.

But genuine socialism, as opposed to the Soviet counterfeit, incorporates into its programme the recognition of legitimate national aspirations. Socialists support the right of nations to self-determination — not to compartmentalise off one people from another, but in order to lay the basis for a free and voluntary federation of peoples.

Unless the struggle for national rights is pursued within such a perspective, then, however legitimate the grievances, the outcome will be heightened national antagonisms, cutting across the workers' unity without which socialism is impossible.

Day of action for framed-up prisoner

LETTERS

Thanks for your coverage of the Martin Foran case. We are planning a day of action calling for Martin's release on 11 September.

We want to link the call for Martin's release with the start of some serious campaigning around the issue of police framing. A press conference will be held which will hopefully involve one or two people who have recently been released from jail after recent police malpractice was exposed.

Also, some of the police evidence against Martin will be tested out. Part of their case against Martin was that they arrested him at Hurst St car park in Birmingham after holding a conversation with him. They then 'proceeded slowly' to Bradford St police station and recorded his coming into custody.

The police claim that Martin was stopped at Hurst St at 3.05pm on his way to plan a robbery with an alleged accomplice, and was booked into the station at 3.12pm. The police records, it later transpired, had been altered and the 3.12 time had been added later.

Martin maintains that he was arrested an hour earlier, on his way to see his lawyer. Martin's family want to show that the police falsified this record as the journey and the conversation they said took place could not have taken place within the span of seven minutes. The scene will be re-enacted in front of local

media and timed.

In London there will be a picket of the Home Office calling for Martin's release at the same time, starting at one o'clock.

More information: for Birmingham, Martin Foran Defence Campaign, PO Box 7, Zebedees Cafe, 190 Alum Rock Rd, Birmingham 8. Tel: Rus, 021 327 1187.

For London: BCM/Foran, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: Louise, 01-274 0370.

For other areas: Mike Shankland, 13 East Mount Rd, York YO2 2BD. Tel: 0904 647253.

Mike Shankland
York

Sinn Fein aren't socialist

On the question of whether Socialists should talk to Sinn Fein (SO 412) I would like to make a few comments.

Socialists should of course discuss politics with both the Catholic and Protestant politicians on the rights and wrongs of the National Question in Ireland, but while doing so must not be seen to condone Nationalism.

We must use such discussions to further the cause of International Socialism not to give Nationalists and bigots respect or adoration for their prejudices.

The leaders of Sinn Fein should not have been invited to speak on a platform of a Socialist Conference as if they were Socialists or even left-wing. They should have been billed as Sinn Fein v Socialism, because giving them the credibility of Socialists puts the cause of Irish people back not forward.

There is no part of Socialism which says that one creed, religion or nationality is more important

than another, and that I believe distinguishes it from Nationalism.

All political parties have something in common: the leaders are divorced from the rank and file. Gerry Adams is therefore not so important for Socialists to talk with compared to the working class rank and file within the party (whose numbers may or may not be small).

Let's take the arguments for Socialism to the real workers instead of the reactionary self-appointed spokesperson for them. Do we talk to Kinnock in the Labour Party or the rank and file members? I see great parallels.

Patrick Murphy's statement that Sinn Fein are among those working for a just settlement in Ireland is appalling — Catholic domination is not a just settlement, total equality is! To say "many are Socialist" is a great error and to describe them as "revolutionary Nationalists" is a prostitution of the English language when you study their overall politics.

Christopher Barnes
Newcastle

Which way forward for the left in the unions?

A national conference for the left in the trade union movement organised by the Socialist Conference

Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 November
Sheffield Polytechnic Students Union
Pond St (opposite rail station)

Saturday: registration 10.30am, conference 11.00am-5.00pm; Sunday 10.00am-4.00pm

Credentials: £6 waged, £4 unwaged from The Socialist Conference, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3DG

Will Solidarnosc throw Polish workers on the dole?

Martin Thomas discusses the prospects for the new Solidarnosc-led government in Poland

Only Solidarnosc in union with the Catholic Church has enough spiritual power to convince the people that patience is necessary and that hardships will pay off in the end," says Josef Ruzsar, former personal secretary to Poland's new Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

The comment is an index both of the disarray, discrediting and demoralisation of Poland's ruling class, and of the real meaning of Solidarnosc's move into a coalition government with the Stalinist "United Workers'" Party (PUWP).

Poland's ruling bureaucracy is in a mess. Its foreign debt to Western banks stands at \$39 billion. This imposes a strain on the economy similar to that which many Latin American countries have suffered since 1982.

Prices are running out of control. In July they were 85% higher than a year previously. Production is dwindling. Fuel, energy, and several other major industries are turning out 12 or 11 per cent less than a year ago. Meat deliveries are 20 per cent down.

Demoralised bureaucrats and managers try to push exhausted, alienated, ill-fed and ill-housed workers into increased production. They fail; production dwindles; inefficiency increases; the economy spirals downwards.

In 1988, great strike waves warned the bureaucracy that its attempts to crush Solidarnosc had not worked. The bureaucrats tried a political gamble. They legalised Solidarnosc and called quarter-free elections.

The gamble failed. The election results were a crushing defeat for the Stalinists. Solidarnosc won every freely contested seat bar one. The PUWP won none. Many of its leaders even failed to win uncontested seats, by failing to get 50% of the vote.

The failure has pushed the bureaucrats into a further gamble — bringing Solidarnosc into a coalition government. Generally, the PUWP leaders have little use for Marxism, but like any practical politician they have kept a Marxist view of the state when proposing the terms of the coalition. Solidarnosc can have the parliamentary majority and the Prime Minister's job, but the PUWP insists on keeping control of the core of the state, the army and the police.

As we go to press there is still haggling over who will get what ministries, but it looks as if a coalition will be formed.

Not only the bureaucrats' desperation, but also the evolution of the Solidarnosc leadership, made the coalition possible.

In 1981 Solidarnosc called for a "Self-Managed Republic". The details of this weren't clear, but the broad drift was — an economy regulated by workers' control and democratic planning, rather than by state-monopoly bureaucracy or private profit.

Defeat in 1981 drove the movement back. As martial law relaxed, the activity of the rank and file grew less fast than the links of the Solidarnosc leaders with Church dignitaries and Western bigwigs.

Lech Walesa is no longer an unemployed electrician living in a cramped high-rise flat. He is a world statesman with a comfortable house in a posh suburb. When Solidarnosc negotiated with the government in 1980 thousands of workers watched suspiciously on television. Now all the deals are done in private.

The Solidarnosc leaders now call for the rule of private profit in Poland. Unemployment? Inequality? The harsh inhumanity of the free market? All necessary prices to be paid for efficiency, they say. And on that programme they have agreement with PUWP leaders, who find that bureaucratic command no longer shifts the Polish economy, and have turned to market mechanisms as the alternative.

Solidarnosc's main economic adviser now is a Harvard professor, Jeffrey Sachs (the PUWP tried to get him first, but he turned them down). Sachs' claim to fame is his economic plan for Bolivia, which reduced inflation from 40,000 per cent to 15 per cent — and pauperised and almost destroyed the Bolivian working class. Wages were cut by 40 per cent in little over a year. 19,000 tin miners were sacked, and unemployment rose to 30 per cent. Workers who lost their jobs ended up growing coca plants for the US cocaine trade as the only way to survive.

Sachs says that Poland needs shock treatment. Slow, piecemeal moves towards a free market are no good. He wants the scrapping of all trade barriers and exchange controls, and privatisation of the economy, all at once. He says this will produce "six months of chaos" then recovery. And it must be done now, while the new Solidarnosc Prime Minister's credit with the people still stands high.

Despite support for Sachs from both the PUWP and Solidarnosc, it must be doubtful whether such a complete change to a private-profit economy is possible peacefully. A lot of PUWP bureaucrats have been bailing out and transforming themselves into private capitalists, but there must remain a substantial core of the bureaucracy whose class privilege depends on their position in the central state machine and that state's heavy control of the economy. Will they give it up peacefully?

Even if they are restrained by the interests of the central state bureaucrats — and Mazowiecki has declared that he will work with the *nomenklatura*, not try to dismantle



Walesa wants to tie Solidarnosc to Jaruzelski's programme of market reforms, factory closures and unemployment. But will the workers let him get away with it?

it — the Solidarnosc leaders and the PUWP will certainly attack the working class, with unemployment and high prices. The PUWP's calculation must be that they can use the Solidarnosc leaders' credit with the workers to get such measures through, then throw aside Solidarnosc, its credit exhausted, like a squeezed lemon.

The PUWP's plans may well go wrong. The workers will fight back and the bureaucracy itself may split and consume itself in conflicts between rival factions. But Walesa and his friends are betraying and misleading the Polish labour movement.

Already Solidarnosc's new "statesmanlike" pro-capitalist line has kept its membership down to two million — one-fifth of what it was in 1981, and much less even than the government-sponsored union organisation, OPZZ, which has seven million members.

Walesa's promise of the Farming Ministry to the Peasant Party (long a stooge party for the PUWP, now showing some autonomy) has raised the prospect of a split by Rural Solidarnosc, the farmers' wing of Solidarnosc. Walesa's call for a no-strike agreement to accompany the new government's economic programme must raise the prospect of workers' splits from Solidarnosc.

Such splits would gladden the PUWP. They would weaken Solidarnosc and free the Solidarnosc deputies in parliament from working-class pressure. They would isolate the militants from the millions of workers who feel intense loyalty to Solidarnosc; and probably the PUWP could count on the support of the Walesa faction for repression against militant splinter groups.

What positive programme could socialists in Poland advocate within Solidarnosc? They should oppose the coalition.

Every worker can see that the state is in crisis, that thorough economic reconstruction of some sort is urgent, and that the prospects for local and partial struggles for wages and conditions are poor. It must be doubtful whether just ad-

vocating that Solidarnosc go into opposition and defend wages and conditions is adequate. Socialists should consider some such slogan as "Break the coalition! All power to Solidarnosc!"

This would mean demanding of the elected Solidarnosc deputies that they declare themselves the sovereign elected representatives of the Polish people, convene the "Self-Management Parliament" demanded by Solidarnosc in 1981, and call for workers to take over the factories, offices, mines and shipyards.

The programme of a workers' government in Poland would have to start with dismantling the *nomenklatura* — the system whereby thousands of top jobs are reserved for PUWP members appointed by the PUWP machine. Top officials, managers, and army and police chiefs, should be elected, and paid only workers' wages. The army and police hierarchies should be replaced by reorganising these bodies as democratic militias.

Economic reconstruction must start with decent conditions for the workers. A network of workers' control should be set up, monitoring production and distribution, keeping precise accounts, curbing privilege and corruption, and directing goods and services where they are needed. More scope for free markets and small private traders is probably necessary in the transition from state-monopoly bureaucracy to a self-managed economy, but it must stop short of allowing rich profiteers to fleece the working class.

Poland's already sizeable layer of private capitalists should have their enterprises taken over by the workers' government or subjected to workers' control and heavy taxes.

A "sliding scale" should protect wages fully against inflation. Poland's millions of small farmers should be guaranteed necessary supplies at reasonable prices, but also encouraged to band together in larger units, as cooperatives, with greater productivity.

Detailed workers' monitoring of

production and distribution will enable the Polish workers to decide democratically which enterprises are indeed obsolete and needing to be replaced by more modern industries. A big programme of training and re-training at trade union wages, and a drive for needed public works like house-building will ensure that workers are not thrown onto the scrap-heap of unemployment.

A workers' government carrying out such measures should appeal to workers everywhere else, especially in the Eastern Bloc, to show solidarity, to oppose any military intervention against Poland, and to follow the Polish workers' example. It could appeal to workers in the West to force our governments to decree the cancellation of Poland's crushing debt burden.

Such are the policies that socialists should argue for. Obviously the present leaders of Solidarnosc has no intention of doing anything like that. At present, there is not even any pressure on them from the workers to do anything like that. The workers probably are not as keen as Lech Walesa on Jeffrey Sachs' ideas, but after 40 years of being told that socialism is state-monopoly bureaucratic rule, few of them have a clear alternative.

But — depending on what Polish socialists do, and depending on what help we in the West can give them — that could change quickly in the turmoil of the coming months. Demands will become more and more relevant for a recall Solidarnosc congress, to call the leaders to account, and for the democratisation of Solidarnosc.

In December 1981, after martial law, Lech Walesa declared: "Confrontation is inevitable and confrontation will take place. Let us abandon all illusions." Walesa himself has now gone back to the illusions; but illusions they remain. Confrontation is inevitable between the Polish workers and their ruling class. Whether or not the Polish workers can win depends on their organisation and leadership.

Support the Polish socialists!

The Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) is a left-wing political party active in Poland. It is highly critical of the Walesa leadership of Solidarnosc — and calls, for example, for a new Solidarnosc congress. It opposed the elections in Poland earlier this year, calling for workers to boycott them. The PPS(RD)

held that these elections were an undemocratic force.

They include militant workers and students, and are active in all aspects of the Polish opposition movement. If Solidarnosc splits as a result of the actions of its new, governmental component, the PPS(RD) will be an important element in the radical wing.

The real history of World War Two

The Second World War wasn't about democracy and fascism.

After Germany was defeated in the First World War, the British, French and US left it ransacked, bled dry and stripped of its colonies. As a result, capitalism developed in Germany with even more severe crises than elsewhere, which drove the German bourgeoisie first into fascism and then into war, to gain new territories and new markets.

It was joined by Japan, the latest-developing great capitalist power, which wanted to challenge the US-European monopoly of colonies and spheres of influence in the Far East.

The biggest imperialist powers, Britain and the USA, were not prepared to let Germany and Japan expand at their expense.

The Second World War was about the rival economic interests of the big international exploiters, not democratic or fascist ideology. Britain went to war to defend the military dictatorship in Poland, not Czech democracy.

Among the Allies were Chiang Kai-Shek's China and Vargas' Brazil, both extreme right-wing regimes. The governments-in-exile supported by the Allies were also often very right wing: for example, the Greeks, the Yugoslavs and the Poles. South Africa, too, was on the supposedly 'democratic' side.

Italian fascism was courted by the British and Americans — "even when the issue of the war became certain", wrote Churchill, "Mussolini would have been welcomed by the Allies" — and the US made agreements with the Petain government and worked with the Petain administration in the French colonies in North Africa.

All this time, Britain was maintaining regimes of more or less open racist military dictatorship over hundreds of millions of peoples in its own colonies. And whatever your view of the economic base of Stalin's USSR, politically it differed from Nazi Germany, as Trotsky put it, "only in more unbridled savagery."

The Allies denounced the Nazi's slaughter of the Jews. Yet they themselves refused to admit Jewish refugees.

The war was not mainly a battle between democratic and fascist powers. The USA kept out of it until Japan attacked its bases in the Pacific in December 1941; both Britain and the USA refused to open a 'Second Front' until June 1944.

Up to 1943 Britain did no more than defend itself against bombing and defend its interests in North Africa and Asia — and watch with secret glee as the German army despoiled and decimated the Soviet Union.

The Nazi forces were sometimes welcomed when they first entered the USSR. Workers, peasants, oppressed nationalities, battered and famished by Stalin's dictatorship, reckoned that the Nazis could not be worse.

The Nazi's wholesale racist massacres of civilians — in the first place Jews, but also others — changed that. The USSR's resistance became bitter and stubborn.

20 million Russians — including seven million soldiers — died in the

war. American and British casualties were much smaller: 405,000 American and 375,000 British soldiers killed.

Britain has fought many, many wars. Almost all have been wars of subjugation against overseas peoples. One war seems different: the 1939-45 war in which Britain fought Nazi Germany.

But why were strikers jailed in wartime Britain? Why were miners who struck at Betteshanger, Kent, witch-hunted? Why was so much of Britain's war concerned with defending not Britain, but Britain's control of the Suez Canal?

For sure the Nazis had to be fought. But what was Britain's Tory government fighting for? Colin Foster looks at the history

From 1943 it became clear that Germany would lose the war — mainly as a result of the resistance of the people of the USSR. Britain and America became interested in a more aggressive strategy — not so much to defeat fascism, or even to defeat Germany, as to gain themselves a good share of the spoils of victory and suppress the danger of revolutions following on the war.

The first example of this policy was Italy. In July 1943 the Fascist Grand Council and officers led by

councils had taken over as Hitler's power collapsed. The councils were dissolved, trade union organisations were suppressed and a total ban was imposed on political activity.

There was the same sort of clash between the Anglo-American armies and working class anti-fascists in Belgium. In November 1944, the Belgian Resistance, defying their Stalinist leaders, refused to obey orders from the occupying forces to hand in their arms. The Resistance leaders re-established their control only after Belgian police, supported by British troops, had shot down demonstrators in the streets of Brussels.

In Italy, too, the working class resistance had been disarmed mainly through the efforts of the Communist Party — whose preaching of "anti-fascist unity" gained weight from the prestige of the USSR. After Italian CP leader Palmiro Togliatti returned to Italy from Moscow in April 1944, the CP gave full support to Badoglio and the monarchy.

In Greece, the CP was less directly under Moscow control — and the clash between the armed anti-fascist workers and peasants and the Allied armies reached the point of open war, despite all Stalin's efforts to sabotage the Resistance.

In October 1944, 23,000 British troops entered Greece. They came not to fight the German army, which was rapidly leaving Greece, but to suppress the ELAS Resistance militias which had effective control of the country.

The setbacks for fascism which followed owed nothing to the democratic good intentions of Churchill, Roosevelt and Truman. Their causes were the partial refusal by the working class to be duped into 'anti-fascist' or anti-German unity with their bosses — and the economic recovery of capitalism.

The drive for freedom of the colonial peoples had become too powerful to be suppressed.

Despite Winston Churchill's vow that he would not preside over the dissolution of the British Empire, the old empires — for whose preservation the war had been fought did dissolve, over the next 20 or 30 years. But a new colonial empire was built.

Stalin provided vital aid to Britain and the US in stifling all social revolutionary movements throughout Europe after 1943. In

"[The Trotskyists]... fought for the overthrow of Roosevelt by the American workers, of Churchill by the British workers, of Hitler by the German workers and of Stalin by the Soviet workers."

Marshal Badoglio overthrew Mussolini. Badoglio bargained for terms with both Germany and the Allies. He reached agreement with the Allies, but meanwhile the German army had seized most of Italy.

In the Allied-Badoglio controlled areas, all publications, meetings and political activity were banned. Resistance partisans were disarmed and often imprisoned; the north, where the Resistance was strongest, was left in the hands of the German army.

In Germany, too, after the Anglo-American victory, a fascist government was initially kept in power under Doenitz. The Doenitz government was soon disposed of for the sake of appearances, but 700,000 German troops were kept in military formation by the British for possible use against Russian forces.

In many parts of Germany the British and Americans found that spontaneously-created workers'



The bodies are counted after one of the RAF's raids on Hamburg, in which 42,000 people were killed. According to the estimates compiled by Germany's Federal Statistical Office, the total German civilian losses due to bombing between 1939 and 1945 were 593,000.

return, the Kremlin bureaucracy was allowed to grab new territories, revenues and power in Eastern Europe.

Some British socialists still say that it was, for all that, a better outcome than the victory of Hitler would have been.

Hitler's regime was more brutal than Roosevelt's. If you can see no options beyond Hitler's domination of the world or Roosevelt's domination of the world, then maybe it makes sense to opt for Roosevelt. But the revolutionary socialists active during the war — the Trotskyists — did see another option: the revolutionary overthrow of all the imperialist robbers.

They fought for the overthrow of Roosevelt by the American workers, of Churchill by the British workers, of Hitler by the German workers and of Stalin by the Soviet workers.

They pointed out that those who opt for apparently 'lesser evils' within capitalism usually end up enduring not only those 'lesser evils' but also the 'greater evils' — as the French workers suffered first the betrayals of the Popular Front, then the repression of the Nazis and Petain.

The Trotskyists earned themselves the hatred of all the imperialist powers and of the Stalinists too. But they were the only people

British forces help sectarian assassins

NORTH AND SOUTH

By Patrick Murphy

There are demonstrations in Northern Ireland every August. The two dominant political traditions have major events to commemorate.

The Loyalists remember the successful resistance to James II's siege of Derry in 1689, the Nationalists remember the introduction of internment in 1969.

This year was an exception only in as much as the Catholics had an extra event to commemorate, the 20th anniversary of the introduction of British troops in 1969. The Loyalists remember ancient victories against those out to destroy their faith and freedom, the Nationalists remember the latest chapter in their long oppression by John Bull.

Every August a culture of besieged triumphalism meets one of violated martyrdom.

This year's August events should have been bigger and more impressive, at least in the Nationalist community. In fact they were pretty low-key.

Illustrative of this was the main story of the 'protest' week. Foreign journalists apparently paid young Catholics to hurl missiles at soldiers to create a photo opportunity. The British press and government ministers milked the story with all the indignation they could muster.

They had argued for years that outside interference encouraged the Nationalist rioters and here, at last, was proof. Of course, most of the stones thrown in those riots were

nothing to do with journalists and the alienation of Nationalist youth is real enough, but the stories were true and it was a piece of cynical exploitation by sensation-seeking reporters, reminiscent, in fact, of the type of journalism pioneered by the London tabloids.

There have been much more important events in Northern Ireland recently, however, which make the government's indignation sickeningly hypocritical.

In February this year Patrick Finucane, a Belfast solicitor and Catholic, was assassinated by a Loyalist paramilitary group, the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF). This was not just another sectarian killing.

Shortly before this attack Douglas Hurd, the Home Secretary, told a House of Commons select committee that some solicitors in Northern Ireland were becoming too clearly identified with the IRA. Patrick Finucane was widely known for his work in defending Republicans charged with 'terrorist-related offences'. Douglas Hurd encouraged the sectarian kills to act. He did it in a different way but with more tragic and brutal effect than those reporters who encouraged youngsters to abuse soldiers.

Last week came another, far more worrying part of this picture. Loughlin Maginn, a Catholic father of four, was killed at his home in Rathfriland, Co. Down, again by the UFF. Again they claimed they knew he was in the IRA.

When condemned for sectarian murder the UFF arranged a meeting with a BBC reporter and showed him the source of their information. They had been leaked an RUC classified intelligence document with names, photos and personal details of all the suspected IRA activists in Castlewellan, South Down.

The idea that this information makes the killing any less sectarian

is nonsense. The RUC's files are notoriously based on the instinct and prejudices of individual officers. They will include most people active in Republican politics or causes. Once again, however, the incitement to kill came from within the state and it is an incitement much more than the antics of any 'outside reporters' because it is regular, systematic and leads down the road to sectarian civil war.

These events point to broader problems. There is a big political undercurrent in the Protestant community which claims that the "real terrorists" are known to the "security forces" and that they should be eliminated without fuss. The diplomatic term for it is "tougher security". When this powerful undercurrent is frustrated, it expresses itself in other ways, eg. the shoot-to-kill policy of the RUC in 1980-1.

In addition there is an overlap between membership of the RUC and the loyalist paramilitaries which is almost inevitable in such an overwhelmingly Protestant force. The position in the UDR is even worse. Many loyalist paramilitaries use it as a training ground.

The fact is that in arming the RUC and UDR the British state has created forces which they cannot be sure to control. As government policy has switched to take more account of Nationalist alienation, so the likelihood of Loyalist freelancing may increase. They will take 'anti-terrorism' into their own hands and they will have support from elements within the police and UDR. In a real crisis they could neither be relied upon nor disarmed by the British government.

The media and government in Britain never publicly face up to that and yet while they are outraged by a few rogue foreign journalists, they cannot understand the complete lack of confidence in the "security forces" amongst Catholics.



RUC stops Loyalist demo, but does it help the assassins?

who fought for a policy which could have saved humanity from the 35 years of wars, poverty for two-thirds of the world, and the threat of nuclear annihilation, which we have faced since then.

Their policy was simple: willingness to join any real fight against reaction, but complete political independence of the working class, and resolute insistence on workers' power as the only way out from the crises of capitalism.

Joseph Heller's book 'Catch 22' describes an American soldier facing his officers:

"These three men who hated him spoke his language and wore his uniform, but he saw their loveless

faces set immutably into cramped, mean lines of hostility and understood instantly that nowhere in the world, not in all the fascist tanks or planes or submarines, not in the bunkers behind the machine guns or mortars or behind the blowing flame throwers, not even among all the expert gunners of the crack Hermann Goering Anti-aircraft Division or among the grisly connivers in all the beer halls in Munich and everywhere else, were there men who hated him more."

And that's true for us all. Our 'own' ruling class is our deadly enemy, just as much so as British fascists and more so than fascists of other nationalities.

We need a united campaign

By Vince Brown

Last weekend saw attempts to set up two national anti-poll tax federations.

On Friday 1 September, some 20 federations from England, Wales and Scotland attended a meeting initiated by Terry Fields MP, pre-empting a conference on Sunday 3 called by the longest-established of the three London Federations. This conference was attended by over 200 activists, representing 80 anti-poll tax federations and groups.

The Militant-dominated meeting on Friday declared itself as the representative body of the national poll tax campaign, and decided to call a conference on 25 November at Manchester Free Trade Hall to launch the national federation.

Although the conference itself will be open to trade unions, Labour Parties and youth groups as well as community-based anti-poll tax unions, no labour movement bodies are represented on either the organising committee or the provisional national steering committee, on the grounds that they are not democratic, representative anti-poll tax bodies.

Ironic, when you consider that many of the federations represented at the Friday 1 meeting, and, in the main, dominated by Militant, have often been set up in opposition to already existing and often long-established federations, deemed unrepresentative solely because

Militant don't control them!

A plea for unity with the Sunday 3 meeting and for a jointly-organised, broad conference in November was rejected by Militant. The meeting on Sunday, while expressing anger at the hi-jacking of the national campaign by Militant, agreed, in the interests of building the fight against the poll tax, to support the November conference, to press for it to be organised jointly by both groups and for it to have broad labour movement involvement.

It committed itself to building an open, democratic federation of labour movement and community-based anti-poll tax unions around a clear strategy of non-payment and non-implementation.

At this stage of the campaign our priority to be organise a united campaign, and the divisive, sectarian tactics of the Militant show that, for them, beating the poll tax is less important than building their tendency. Controlling the local and national organisations is more important to them than building a mass campaign of resistance. They did the same with the Labour Party Young Socialists — and destroyed it.

Those of us who really want to build a broad, fighting campaign capable of defeating the poll tax, must organise to make this conference in Manchester as open, democratic and representative as possible.



Protesters in Scotland

Organising in Nottingham

By Martin Walker

The anti-poll tax campaign is pressing on in Nottingham, with another large group about to be formed in the Sherwood area.

Twice a week local 'Robin Hoods' go out petitioning against the poll tax, and after five weeks we have close to 700 signatures.

Sherwood is by no means one of Nottingham's "inner city" areas. It is a large estate. Less than half the homes are council property. Even

so, 73% of adults living in households in Sherwood expect to lose out after the poll tax is introduced.

The DSS is using a national average to work out rebate allowances (for the unemployed, students, low income families, etc) and as Nottingham's rate is expected to be above the national average, people claiming rebates will be hard hit.

Subsequently, 'No Poll Tax Here' posters are appearing everywhere, and petitions are being snatched out of our hands by peo-

ple supporting our call for a mass campaign of non-payment and support for workers who refuse to implement the tax.

The first Sherwood anti-poll tax meeting will be held on 20 September at the Sherwood Community Centre. It promises to be a lively affair, with up to 100 people expected to attend.

We will also be bringing people to the lobby of the District Labour Party on Friday 8 September (7pm outside the T&G office, Mansfield Road).

Together we can stop the poll tax!

Resist this hi-jack!

By Steve Battlemuch

The fight against the poll tax took a step back in Nottingham last Saturday, 2nd, at the inaugural meeting of the Nottingham Federation of poll tax groups.

The committee elected 9 officers, all of whom were nominated by Militant supporters. Two nominees of the Trades Council (its Secretary and President)

were defeated by 22 votes to 16.

Militant supporters seem intent on running the campaign in Nottingham by themselves, along with one or two hand-picked individuals.

This policy will lead to disaster by alienating the rest of the left in Nottingham. However, the serious left should not give up yet on the Nottingham Federation. We should get new affiliations from Labour Party and trade union branches and new poll tax campaigns, and force Militant to work together or stand aside.

Rushdie and South Africa

You would have thought that the South African liberation movement would

have no trouble in finding common cause with other victims of intolerance and oppression. Salman Rushdie for instance.

If only things were so simple. Doctor Fatima Meer, biographer of Nelson Mandela, associate of Winnie and a leading figure in the UDF's 'Indian' affiliates, has launched a vicious attack on Rushdie.

According to Meer, Rushdie plays the role of 'coloniser': 'In the final instance it is the Third World that Rushdie attacks, it is the faith of the Third World in itself, and in its institutions that he denigrates'.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Meer was explaining why two components of the supposedly non-racial UDF — the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses — were pulling out of a Progressive Book

Week because Rushdie had been invited.

This attack was combined with death threats from Muslim groups, including one that has links with the black consciousness movement. As a result of this campaign, the Congress of South African Writers, another component of the democratic movement, withdrew its invitation to Rushdie — though, to their credit, many cultural workers associated with the UDF protested.

In the end Rushdie was allowed to take part in an international phone-in discussion towards the end of the festival.

It says something about the self-designated leadership of the democratic movements — the ANC and SACP — that they remained completely silent throughout this whole affair. They seem more concerned about appeasing the 'leaders of the Indian community' than in defending democratic rights.

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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ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Thursday 7 September
Canterbury SO: 'Gorbachev the Great?' Speaker Geoff Ward. Canterbury Tales pub, 7.00
Sunday 10 September
North London SO: 'Stalin's Heirs Face the Workers'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, N1, 7.30
Tuesday 12 September
Chinese Solidarity Campaign mass rally and overnight vigil to mark 100 days since the Tiananmen Square

massacre. 7.30 outside Chinese Embassy, Portland Place, London W1.

Thursday 14 September
Leeds SO: 'How to beat the poll tax'. Coburg pub, 7.30

Sunday 17 September
North London SO: 'In Defence of the French Revolution'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, 7.30

Thursday 21 September
Newcastle SO: 'The Alternative to the Policy Review'. Moorside School, 7.30

Friday 29 September
Leeds Socialist Organiser and Socialist Outlook debate: 'Where is the USSR going?' Leeds Poly Student Union, 7.30

Japan: end of the capitalist miracle

Japan has been a success story for capitalism for four decades. But the end of that era could be approaching. John Maloney reports.

Since the war Japanese industrial production has increased several thousand per cent. Its wealth has increased at a faster rate than any other country in history.

No magic ingredient X in the Japanese character or in Japanese society explains the country's phenomenal success. The reasons are much more mundane and down to earth.

The success was built on the backs of the workers. The working class was decisively defeated in the '50s. Capitalists have gained a real social control over their workforces. Everything follows from that.

But that victory didn't come cheap. It was a long hard battle.

Immediately after the war, with low industrial output (one tenth of pre-war levels), rapid inflation (reaching 42% a month in early 1946), and chronic food shortages, Japan didn't have the look of a 'miracle' country. For self-protection — and in some places guided by the few remaining Communists and Socialists who had survived the war — workers banded together.

By the end of 1946, union membership had grown to 5 million (about one third of the workforce). Major battles were fought to link wages to the cost of living. Equally fierce struggles took place over jobs.

For example in 1946, when the government tried to sack 43,000 seamen and 750,000 railworkers, a 10 day seamen's strike and the threat of a rail strike made the government back down.

Characteristic of this period were the disputes over 'production control'. Workers took over their workplaces and refused to hand control back to the employers until they had agreed to the workers' demands.

For instance, workers in the Toyo Gosei chemical plant, faced with the threat of plant closure, kicked

the company executives out. The workers borrowed money to expand capacity and bartered the chemicals the plant produced for food with a farmers association. They took on extra workers and introduced a new pay system which gave everybody a 50% pay increase.

Workers not only took action over economic issues, they also took up political demands. The Communist and Socialist parties led mass demonstrations. On May Day 1946 half a million workers came on to the streets of Tokyo, demanding a democratic government and control of food by the people.

The American Occupation Forces began to intervene against the workers. A general strike called for 1 February 1947 was banned. Helped by American troops at times, company thugs were used to break the more militant workshops.

The left back-tracked. In December 1945 the Communist Party had called for workers' control over essential services, although it was very reluctant to support 'production control'. Like all Stalinist parties, the CP mistrusted independent working class action.

By 1946 this call had changed to 'the heightening of the general efficiency of industry by employing a system of management councils'. Class collaboration was the order of the day. The Socialist party, in return for a coalition with a right-wing party, dropped its demand for nationalisation. History had shown yet again the crucial importance of a true workers' party.

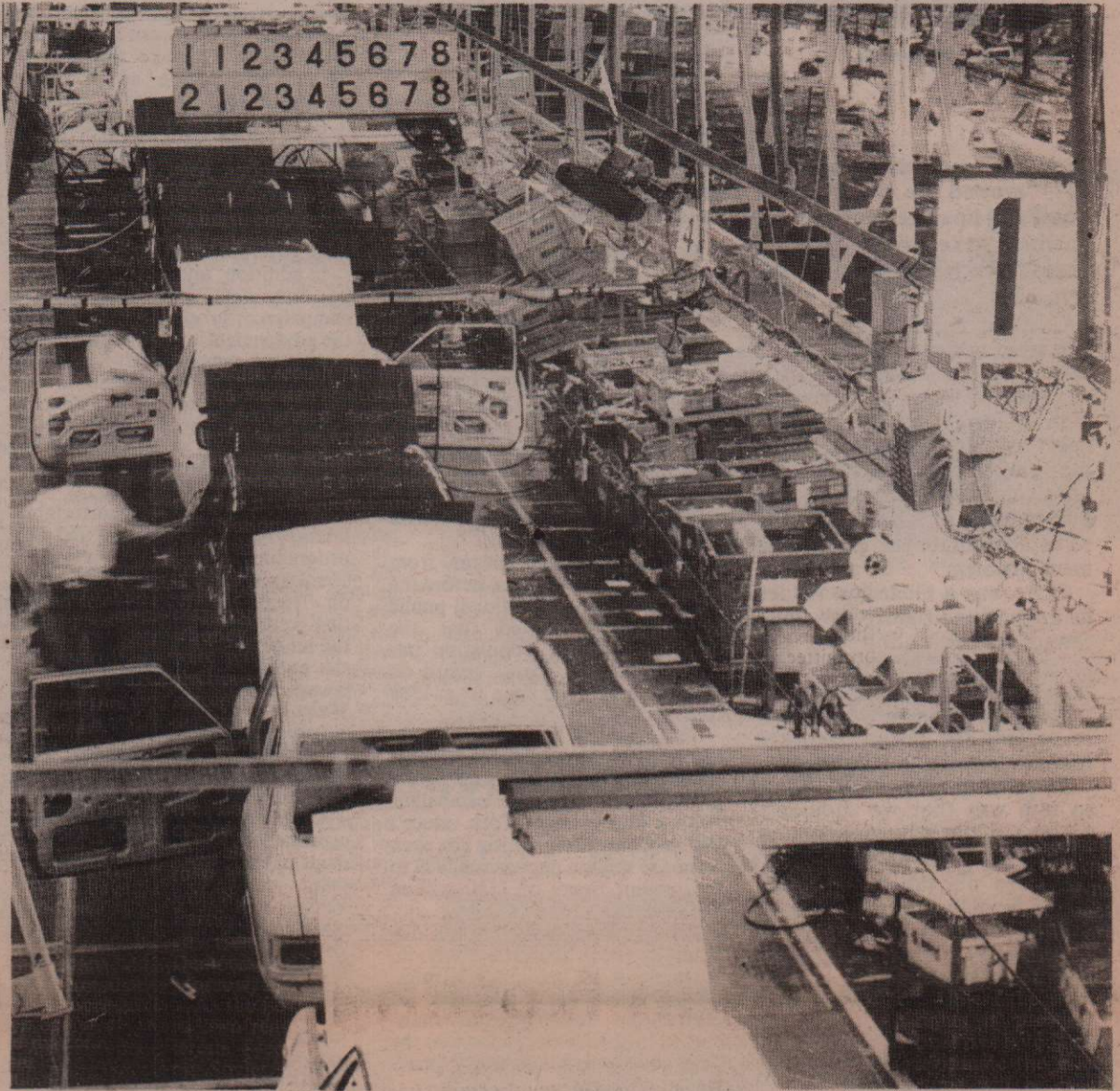
By the end of 1947 there was stalemate. Although the unions had been defeated, they still retained great strength. The Americans broke the deadlock.

Under the guise of an economic stabilisation package, mass sackings took place. In capitalist terms, the factories were over-stuffed. Only the strength of the workers had prevented redundancies.

Between 1949 and 1951, 700,000 people were thrown out of work. Japanese employers took up the cry 'down with communism' and purged 'reds'. 25,000 Communists and militants were sacked. Production increased, wages were held down, profits jumped.

But the capitalists had a problem. Japanese industry was still backward. Only 7% of machine tools were less than five years old.

The employers' plans was: scrap old machines, replace with new ones, keep wage levels low, and make lots of money. To do that re-



The secret of success? Exploitation

quired finishing off the unions (by now the CP was no threat).

By 1951 the bosses had made a good start. The next 9 years would see the systematic destruction of union strongholds.

The usual tactic was to provoke a strike or to lock workers out and then set up a rival union, a bosses' union.

Some examples to show the process:

In 1958 Oji paper makers demanded an end to the closed shop. The workers in this company were amongst the best paid and organised in the country. After a 145-day strike, with much violence

on the picket lines, the union was broken. Thousands of workers joined the bosses' union.

In 1959 the Mitsui Mining company tried to sack 1300 workers, 300 of whom were union leaders, for sabotage. The union took selective action. Management locked them out. Mass pickets with up to 100,000 strikers and their supporters faced similar numbers of police. One worker was killed, hundreds were injured, and finally the union was defeated.

There was no real attempt to link the various fights together, no adequate political leadership. The whole labour movement was weak. It had been systematically suppressed during and before World War 2. There was no cadre of experienced revolutionaries who could have influenced and moulded the emerging workers' movement in the '40s.

The labour movement's lack of deep roots partly explains why the employers were able to persuade tens of thousands of workers to join the company unions. Physical intimidation also played a role. Owners hired gangsters to act as union recruitment officers.

Another important factor was the wages system. Wages have large elements determined by length of service, age and ability. It is not uncommon for a 20-year old to be paid half the money of a 40-year old, even if they do the same job. And ability is usually defined by how loyal and co-operative the worker is.

It is clear how employers can manipulate the wages system to reward some, punish others and to divide the workforce. The rapid expansion of Japanese capitalism gave them scope to buy off selected workers.

By the early sixties private sector militancy was all but dead. Although there remain some fairly strong public sector unions, the effects of the defeats in the '50s linger to this day. In many workplaces

management and the company unions still keep an iron grip on the workforce.

Will this last? No. Japanese workers' standard of living is not as high as their wages would suggest. The vast bulk of people cannot afford decent housing, food prices are high, and working conditions are harsh. Social provisions are still rudimentary.

After the recent scandals, there is a possibility that a Socialist-led coalition will gain power. While we can have no illusions in the Socialists, any shift may give just enough room for workers to begin to fight back.

Obviously the same question marks about leadership will arise as in the '40s and '50s. But that the Japanese working class will move again is certain.



Japanese dole queue

IRELAND: The Socialist Answer



With contributions from Sam Finn, Tony Benn, Geoff Bell, Stan Crooke, Patrick Murphy and John O'Mahony

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Blue rinse, rose coloured spectacles

TV

By Vicki Morris

Cast your mind back to around the end of 1987, and imagine your average business executive arriving home from working late at the office.

Gin and T in one hand, the television remote control panel in the other, he might have settled down to watch ITV news at Ten. Before it started he probably saw an advertisement for the government's Action for Jobs campaign, promoting one of a number of schemes designed to ameliorate the unemployment problem.

If he was a Guardian reader he might quite rightly have guffawed at the notion that the schemes were anything more than an attempt to massage the jobless figures downwards and to provide the Tories' business friends with cheap labour.

What probably didn't occur to him was that we shouldn't have seen the advertisement at all. At least not if the Tories' had been playing by the rules which for a long time have been taken to govern the supply of information to the public about new legislation.

Those rules are principally that you get the best possible value for public money by targeting information at the people who most benefit from it, and you try to keep party politics out of it.

Panorama asked one group

of advertising experts to examine the broadcasting schedule of this particular information campaign. They discovered that it had not been targeted at the unemployed or likely imminent school leavers, but at principally social groups A, B and C1 — sociologists' shorthand for the very well-to-do and the comfortably off.

What could have been the possible motive for this?

Coincidentally, the Tory Party was wrestling with the knotty problem of how it would present its record on unemployment to the electorate in time for the June '89 General Election. At the time jobless figures were falling, it is true. But the Action for Jobs info campaign also probably has a part in creating a remarkable turn around in public opinion about the Tories' record on unemployment.

The media campaign ran from July '86 to May '87; just before the General Election, a national public opinion poll showed that the percentage of the population impressed with the Tories' record on unemployment had risen from 15% to 30%.

This was just one of the shady histories of the present government spending public money to promote government policy by campaigns 'with a blue rinse of Tory values'. It's an expenditure which has risen from £35 million per year in 1979 to the present figure of £150 million per year.

Panorama admitted that it is difficult to prove that the Tories in government are breaking the rules, but wheeled out a number of disgruntled 'ex-Whitehall mandarins' to give their opinion that the Tory government is certainly 'probing the defences'.

In characteristic style, Panorama tried to appear evenhanded in painting the background to the government's actions, especially the

massively increased sophistication in advertising techniques.

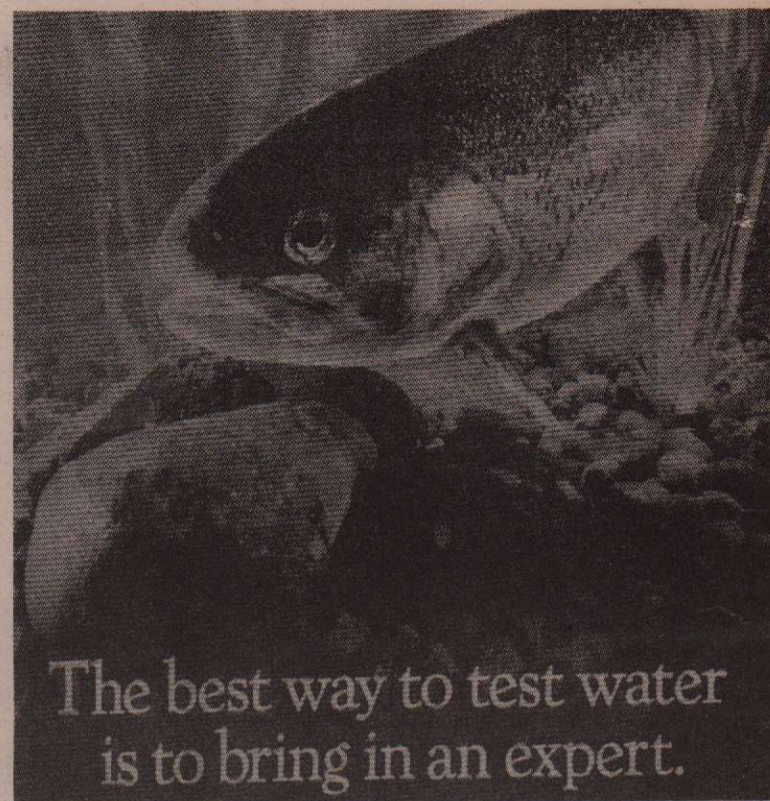
They also commissioned one advertising firm — not Saatchi and Saatchi — to make the sort of public information advertisement which might be made under a Labour government to promote free comprehensive health care on the National Health Service. Indeed the end product did appear remarkably like self-congratulation on the part of the fictional incumbent government.

In addition, and most importantly, Panorama showed the BMA campaign of propaganda to counter the government's NHS White Paper promotion campaign. Unfortunately, they weren't explicit about the fact that the BMA are not directly using public money to fund their campaign... and they said in an interview, it was not them who began the propaganda war.

Apart from this uncomfortable attempt to 'balance' the debate, programme maker, Vivian White seemed to know whose side he was on. The programme had, as its starting point, the public concern about the amount spent on 'explaining to the public what the 10 water and sewage businesses of England and Wales do' and the widespread suspicion that it's got something to do with helping to sell shares after Water Privatisation, which hasn't even been passed in Parliament yet.

Correctly, the programme concentrated mainly on a lucid statement of the case against the government. It was a case which Lord Young and Kenneth Clark the masterminds behind some of the government's controversial advertising campaigns declined to answer.

From that point of view, it was an interesting programme. I enjoyed it also because Vivian White naughtily gave his story a pink rinse of distaste for the flourishing yuppie culture of the Tory Party in the government's advertising friends enjoying their champagne nights out at the dog track.



The best way to test water is to bring in an expert.

According to top scientists the advert above is very misleading. Trout are no experts on water purity, in fact they take far too long to cotton on to chemical pollution. However, the fact that all the trout introduced into the Thames in a recent publicity stunt died very quickly surely tells us something about the ten water and sewerage businesses of England and Wales.

Growing up in baseball

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Bull Durham'

Set in the world of minor league American baseball, 'Bull Durham' is a comedy about growing up and letting go.

In it, the three main characters, Annie, Crash and Ebby Calvin (nicknamed 'Nuke'), learn to put away childish things.

Crash, a baseball catcher who's only briefly cracked the big time, has to admit he never really had the stuff. Nuke, the player with "a million dollar arm and a five cent head", has to learn to respect the gift of his talent.

And Annie, who has worshipped at the "Church of Baseball" for years, has to learn to deal with a man on equal terms, instead of the succession of younger men she has bullied and bossed over the years.

Annie has always hooked up with one player each year, usually the most promising player on the team. Over the 142 games in the season, she reads him poetry and hones his technique, trying to develop both his mind and talent, so that he can escape the second string world of the minor leagues and get into the Majors, what the players call "the show".

Crash has briefly been in "the show", the baseballer's dream world where "you practice with white balls, the hotels all have room service, and the women all have long legs and brains". It is Crash's job to get Nuke into that world, just as it is Annie's.

The film has a very sure tone, and the jokes aren't slapstick and obvious. They come out of the plot itself, and the telling detail with which the small town baseball milieu has been portrayed for us. It's an eccentric world that takes itself absolutely straight, and that's where the comedy comes in.

When the ball players gather together in the middle of the game to sympathise with a player whose girlfriend has put a curse on his glove, we laugh at the craziness of it. But the players aren't laughing. For them, it's a deadly serious matter.

They live by a set of changing hexes and superstitions — if I sleep with my girl when we're on a winning streak, we'll start to lose, if I touch my bat with a voodoo charm, I'll get a home run in the game.

The film has been made with an affectionate eye for the eccentricities of the game, and for the people who play it and follow it. Few movies get the incidentals so right.

Unholy alliance against science

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Research on human embryos has been a topic of much debate, much of it ill-informed.

In Britain, such research is now banned after 14 days, at which point embryos normally implant in the mother's womb, ending their independent phase. This point was chosen for largely emotional reasons.

Now, in Germany, a law is about to be debated which will make embryo research a criminal offence, as well as making in vitro fertilisation even more onerous for the women who need it.

A particularly unsavoury feature of the campaign to draft this law has been the nature of the coalition pushing it. This ranges from anti-abortionists, conservatives and some religious groups, to some feminists, the Greens and the Social Democratic party (SPD, the German equivalent of the Labour Party).

Rightly or wrongly, any debate about research on human embryos is inevitably charged with emotion. It is easy to forget that such research has helped alleviate infer-

tility and perhaps may help prevent repeated miscarriage. It has also resulted in tests for some devastating genetic and congenital disorders and will no doubt result in tests for others. Many Germans justify their opposition to embryo research by referring to Nazi "eugenics" programmes, which involved sterilising those considered "inferior", followed by experimentation and extermination.

Eugenics, the study of ways of "improving" the "quality" of the human species, is a most dubious science since what one regards as an improvement depends largely on one's prejudices. The Americans also practised eugenics, though not going as far as exterminating the "inferior".

But, despite the impression given by the Greens, such practices are not planned by embryo researchers. Many want to carry out in vitro fertilisation (IVF) and find ways of making it more successful. Others are trying to find tests for foetal abnormalities and genetic disorders. Such research has already led to tests for Down's Syndrome, spina bifida and sickle cell anaemia. Tests for haemophilia, Huntington's chorea, Duchenne muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis would also be of incalculable value in preventing suffering and early death.

The German draft law, soon to be debated in their parliament, ignores such possibilities, merely making a set of blanket prohibi-

tions:

- It prohibits researchers from inserting genes into eggs or sperm. Presumably, the bill's supporters imagine that it might be possible to insert genes for intelligence, film star looks or obedience to authority.

Without doubt, these fears are misconceived. More likely would be the insertion of a working copy of a faulty gene to prevent a genetic disorder in the child resulting from the cell. It is extremely unlikely that it would be worth doing this but, if it were, I can't see why it should be illegal.

- It bans cloning of humans, taking a cell from an embryo and growing another embryo from it, genetically and, while it might be undesirable to have lots of identical people, I can't see why the law should threaten an identical twin-maker with prison.

- It prohibits research which will damage or destroy human embryos, regardless of the aims or merits of such research. This would presumably ban removal of a cell to test for a genetic disorder.

- It would make IVF considerably more difficult. Only five embryos could be produced at a time, all of which would have to be implanted immediately. Since the success rate is quite low, a woman would be likely to require several goes to become pregnant. At present, extra embryos are frozen for future use. Under the new law, the woman would have to undergo hor-

mone treatment and an operation for each batch of 5 eggs. In any case, only married couples would be eligible for IVF.

- It would be illegal to donate eggs or sperm (how do they propose to stop that?) or to become a surrogate mother. I accept that surrogacy should be regulated as there are opportunities for exploitation, but why banned? And why ban donations of eggs and sperm?

The proposed law in Germany will make criminals of scientists trying to reduce the scourge of genetic diseases and trying to alleviate the burden of unwanted infertility.

Incredibly, the Greens and the SPD don't think the draft law goes far enough! The Greens have already made common cause with the Christian Democrats in Baden-Württemberg against research on babies born dead. Now they want to ban IVF completely, while one SPD MP criticises the bill for not excluding the selection of offspring with desired characteristics, since a woman could choose to be inseminated by a particular consenting male. But ordinary fertile women can do this anyway. Why should women seeking IVF be treated differently?

The fears behind this bill are largely groundless, but also behind the bill seems to be an assumption that an embryo of perhaps a few dozen spherical cells is a human being. Surely the next logical step is a bill banning abortion. Where will the Greens and the SPD be then?

South Wales miners are battered but unbowed

On Wednesday 23 August British Coal announced the closure of a further two South Wales collieries. Mark Thomas, a miner at Tower colliery, South Wales, told Socialist Organiser about the impact of the closures

The two pits closed are Oakdale — the last pit in Gwent and one of the biggest pits in South Wales, one of the largest employers of miners — and Merthyr Vale, situated in the village of Aberfan, a village that paid a high price for coal with the disaster in 1966.

These two closures have devastated the South Wales coalfield — most of the men that worked these pits are men that have moved from other pits when they've closed.

The men knew the closures were in the pipeline, but they'd been given reprieves and targets to reach. Merthyr Vale reached targets but the Coal Board just upped the targets again.

The employers steamrollered the men into taking redundancy by announcing that the big redundancy schemes would be finishing on the Saturday of the week they announced the closures!

Merthyr Vale Lodge put a policy to management to save the pit but management weren't having it. If the Lodge had gone in and said we'll work seven days week and take a cut in wages they would still have said no, we don't want Merthyr Vale, it's closed!

It doesn't matter how much of a case you put, if they want to close a pit they close it. South Wales is not even a British Coal Area as such now, it's a 'Group'. They have actually closed down the Llanishan offices (the Coal Board Area offices) so we're now working under a total stranger who doesn't

even know the area.

But it's not only South Wales that's under these conditions — if they want to shut a pit in Yorkshire they'll shut it. They've proved that with a number of pits that have closed.

The union is having to take each pit individually, formulate a report each time with independent assessors and so on. In the case of Oakdale they had a manager in from another pit in South Wales who did a report but the Coal Board didn't want to know. When they went into the meeting they just thanked the union, thanked the management for doing the report, and didn't even look at it.

At Merthyr Vale the vote was close over whether to fight the closure, but you're in a Catch-22 each time a closure is announced. The men are sickened by it, and of course you've got the stalwarts who want the pit still working, but then there's the others who would be quite happy to leave the industry because they're getting to the point that they don't know what the future is.

The older element see it as their opportunity to get out. People haven't got the will to work in the collieries any more, because management are bringing you down, day in, day out, with bully tactics and what have you, deliberately slowing down on developments, saying we haven't got a market for our coal. People in the end are getting so they don't want to go in to work any more.

The older element — boys that have given perhaps 20 or 25 years of their life to the coal industry — remember the bad times and remember the good times. Now it's bad times again they're thinking maybe now is the time to get out, thinking if I don't get another job soon I'll end up unemployed for the rest of my life. There's not many miners over 50 years of age in South Wales now.

Then you've got the diversity of men working in the collieries in South Wales now — they come in from far and wide. Tower colliery is probably the most cosmopolitan pit in the country now!

They've arrived at Tower colliery from as far as the Llynfi valley in the West to Maesteg to Gwent in the East. Now there's men probably being coming over from Oakdale collieries, Marine collieries. They are travelling vast

distances to get to work. It's harder to have a meeting.

South Wales is now down to something in the region of 4,000 miners. There are probably more teachers now in South Wales than miners. Prior to the strike there were twenty six or twenty seven thousand miners in South Wales.

So of course NUM membership is dwindling rapidly. It's going to come to the point that South Wales is not going to have a president. At the moment they have to pay a General Secretary out of their own funds. If it drops below 4,000 we'll have one rep on the National Executive and that'll be about it.

There's no major organisation now as far as the left caucus is concerned. After the loss of Cynheidre and other collieries that were involved, Tower now seems to be the only one left.

The left caucuses in South Wales have died the same sort of death as the joint lodges in the Cynon Valley. There's only Tower colliery left that was taking part in the joint lodges.

There are no UDM pits in South Wales. Margam is supposed to be organised now around the UDM, but whether or not it will be, we won't know. It'll be ten years before Margam gets any coal out of the ground anyway.

The feeling of most rank and file members in South Wales now seems to be that they don't want the UDM. I still don't think we should sit with the UDM, but it's a Catch-22. If the rank and file start telling you to sit with them then we'll have to think about it, but at the moment I don't even want to be in the same room as them.

Management are trying to bring down the hardcore that want to defend the industry, but what they're actually doing is whittling out those who wouldn't fight. The ones that are left are the ones who are prepared to fight to defend the industry. So it's working against them.

For example, I've been heartened to see how people have stuck together in the various disputes that have taken place. You've had a lot of sectional disputes in South Wales. Mostly it's over management's heavy-handedness where management are ruling by the sword, threatening people.

You've had sectional disputes where they've taken money off the boys. Management are being sent in from outside the area to do a job on us.



Dozens of mines have closed since the miners' defeat in 1985. Photo: John Smith (IFL)

During disputes in Tower colliery you've had men from all over sticking together. You've had men from Abernant collieries, Marine, Penrhawceiber,

Maerdy and everywhere. It's really heartening to me to see the boys are not going to be walked over. They will stick together — that nucleus is still there.

More pit closures, and worse to come



WHETTON'S WEEK
A miner's diary

With the shutting of Betteshanger colliery, the Kent coalfield is finished.

The Coal Board was after Kent for some years before the strike. The Kent coalfield has a tradition of militancy and has been a thorn in the Coal Board's side, so they've been looking for any and every excuse to close it down.

I can't see a great number of Kent miners moving to other parts of the country. I think it's an attempt by the Board to kill any militancy that still exists. One or two might go on travelling the length of the coalfield, being what we used to call in the 'sixties' 'industrial gypsies'.

There have been stories about a group of miners wanting to buy the pit and run it themselves. But I don't think they've got much chance of success. It's a token exercise.

There's nothing wrong with a nationalised industry, so long as it's put into the right hands. If the workers buy it, they'll find themselves under very fierce competition, and the Coal Board would see to it that they had no markets, that their prices were undercut, and so on. I understand the basic feeling, but I think they're doomed to failure.

I'm not surprised by the South

Wales closures, either, and I think there's worse to come. 'New realists' must surely see that the only way to protect our jobs and industries and communities is to stand up and fight.

Past mistakes must not be repeated. There's only one way we can fight — take industrial action to defend what we've got.

For years we've operated a 'check-off system' and now the Coal Board are talking about abolishing it. There have been miners who advocated that we should have abandoned it and made sure people paid their money into the union.

The last few years have been a severe period financially. The problem is not insurmountable. What we've enjoyed for years has made us lazy and idle, and we'll have to sharpen up, which may not be a bad thing.

I want to say something about Solidarnosc in Poland, because there's a disagreement between me and Socialist Organiser.

Anything that the Church has got its dirty little paws in, I am suspicious of. And I retain those suspicions of Solidarnosc. I believe it's created by Western economics, the Church, the CIA maybe. I see Lech Walesa as Poland's answer to Jimmy Reid.

I'm suspicious when I see Thatcher praising Solidarnosc or Walesa condemning Arthur Scargill. I have to ask myself, is this what it's all about?

I have a great deal of sympathy for people who've joined Solidarnosc to protect and extend the rights of working class people. But I think at the back of it all they're being used.

I don't think Poland should return to the Stalinist era. But what they're trying to do now is reintroduce capitalism. It seems to me Solidarnosc should aim to keep Poland socialist as opposed to Stalinist. I may be wrong, and if I am I'll be the first to apologise. But I have these suspicions.

I vowed during the miners' strike never to trust the media again. So I don't trust what they say about Poland. I retain my suspicions.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, S Yorkshire.

NALGO comes up against Tory laws

By Nik Barstow

Get rid of these scabs" — that's what 1000 NALGO delegates decided, with only five votes against, when they settled the union's 1989 pay claim.

The anger against the tiny minority of NALGO members who scabbed on the union's six days of action in July was clear and widespread — and hardly a surprise in a situation where many branches reported 99%-plus support for action that won a bigger pay rise.

The delegates knew their decision meant taking on the new Tory laws, and it was smaller branches which knew they couldn't carry out a legal fight on their own who led the moves.

The threat they face is from the Employment Act 1988 which tries to stop unions imposing their own,

democratically agreed, rules that allow them to expel strike-breakers. The Act lets scabs challenge disciplinary action at an Industrial Tribunal — and they can claim compensation of up to £13,420 from the union if they win.

NALGO members want to get rid of the scabs who try to stay in a union that has now 'grown up' and started to use its industrial strength — not give them a big payout.

That's why the delegates voted to give branches full national support — with legal and financial backing — so they can go all out to win any legal battles, in tribunals, the courts or the European court.

Branches, however strong the feelin', have to be cautious about how they handle expulsions: to make sure they do it properly and aren't open to huge legal costs so that the net effect is to strengthen the union.

Just making grand pronouncements and then not following it up is no use at all.

Where branches have turned around members who scabbed, getting them to make hefty donations to strike funds, etc, and the members who took the action think that is sufficient, then that is as good a way of strengthening the union as expulsion.

NALGO's leadership didn't like the decision — Alan Jinkinson, the union's deputy general secretary, immediately went to the press to say NALGO's NEC weren't bound by the decision.

Under the union's rules, he's right. But in the real world he's doing a great job for the left by cutting his own throat as a candidate for general secretary by refusing to take any notice of the views of delegates representing over half a million of NALGO's 750,000 members!

Activists in NALGO need to keep up the pressure and campaign to make NALGO a 'real union', not a staff association representing the views of top council officers. The pay strikes this year have been a huge step forward to doing that. Showing the 'free riders' that we're not going to carry them any more will help even more.

But if NALGO's NEC are slow off the mark about tackling anti-union laws they're quick at getting round to the lawyers when it comes to threatening to sue other unions!

Just before the start of the TUC congress this week, NALGO threatened legal action against the General Council for ruling a motion on restructuring the TUC's leadership out of order.

The NALGO motion is better than the General Council's — it provides for a more democratic way of electing extra women members. But it's a pretty shameful way to go about it!

And, not surprisingly, NALGO's own conference never got a chance to discuss the motion that NALGO is proposing! Union democracy has to go all the way through our organisations — and won't be secured by judges!

IN BRIEF

Union leaders at British Telecom have agreed to a 9% pay rise and will ballot on the offer. The union claim was for 13.5%.

Both Granada and Thames TV have failed to agree conditions with unions following the end of national pay bargaining in July. Bosses at both companies have threatened to impose new job contracts.

Workers at the BBC voted to accept their 8.8% pay rise.

Over 150 NALGO members are on strike in Tower Hamlets after council bosses pressed picket line assault charges against their branch secretary during the union's pay campaign.

Following the collapse of the national docks strike local deals have been signed at many ports. One, at

Hull, replaces a 5-day, 35-hour week with 7-day working, including compulsory weekend work. Dockers will be expected to work wherever they are told to by management.

The non-TUC electricians union, EETPU, has amalgamated with the P&O scab seafarers union set up during the Dover strike last year. Hard-nosed P&O bosses derecognised the NUS seafarers' union in their battle to break the strike.

A recent report by Full Employment UK, a non-aligned policy group, shows that even many bosses regard ET as providing low level training. ET, set up a year ago, has around 200,000 people on it — well below the original target figures of 45,000 per month.

A Bank of England report shows that the recent falls in unemployment have more to do with government measures — schemes and harassing people to stop signing on — than people getting proper jobs.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Greedy bosses block 35 hour week

Engineers' leader Bill Jordan told the TUC this week that "We have seen

engineering bosses pay themselves instant fortunes out of record profits. We have witnessed the biggest display of greed this century."

Chairs of big engineering firms have awarded themselves rises of up to 65 per cent this year, while insisting that the industry "can't afford" the workers' demand for a 35 hour week.

John Clark of Plessey got £392,000; David Plaistow of Vickers, £296,000.

Roland Smith of British Aerospace got £240,000, or nearly £5,000 per week. Alex Jarratt of Smiths Industries raked in £168,000, which is £460 a day, seven days a week.

For these top capitalists, such figures are just the start. On top of their salary they have more and more fringe benefits — company cars, cheap shares, medical insurance, and so on — and their dividends from shareholdings.

Engineering unions are preparing for strike in selected engineering firms to win the 35 hour week and other demands. A levy of an hour's pay a week is currently being collected to cover strike pay for the strikers.

The companies selected for strike action should soon be announced, along with the response to the levy. The plan, modelled on the IG Metall strike in Germany, is to take a few thousand strategically placed workers out on indefinite strike with full strike pay.

The plan is full of potential pitfalls — from local deals or divisions between strikers and laid off workers, who will not be paid. However, the mood is there for a fight. And problems can be overcome with maximum rank and file involvement and a drive to escalate the dispute as quickly as possible.



The Thatcher years have seen NALGO transformed into a more militant union

Workers move, TUC leaders stagnate

By Ray Ferris

The age of Thatcherism is ending. We all know it is ending: you can feel it in the air, and the European elections demonstrated this most spectacularly," announced Tony Christopher, TUC President, to this year's conference.

Now, he said, the trade union movement must set its own agenda. Norman Willis, TUC General Secretary, cheerfully declared that the tide had turned and a "tidal wave" of union recruitment was in

order.

There is plenty of reason to be optimistic. Half a million local government workers in their first national strike forced council bosses to cave in and offer 8.8% without strings. Both railworkers and BBC workers won 8.8% rises after bosses had imposed 7% in April.

During the NALGO strike workers were queuing up to join the union so they could take action. The union increased its membership and consolidated branch organisation. The NUR recruited railworkers who wanted to join the

fight against low pay and for negotiating rights.

These disputes showed that trade unionism works. It is popular — when leaders show the mood for a fight. It can attract public support when the issues involved are spelled out. And a victory by one group of workers boosts the morale and confidence of other groups. This has knock-on effects in terms of "the going rate" and willingness to stand up and fight back.

These are the examples the TUC should look to if they want to build the movement — not credit card schemes or discounts on life insurance.

A whole series of studies have shown that many workers are not in unions because nobody has asked them to join! If the TUC wants to recruit young, part-time, women workers then it must co-ordinate an onslaught against the discrimination these workers face.

This involves setting the agenda. So does the issue of the Tory trade union laws. The national docks strike was sunk by these laws. It was delayed for months by legal wrangles. And an effective national strike would have clashed with the laws.

If the TUC was serious about ending the 'Thatcher period', it would call for the repeal of all these anti-union laws. It should call on the next Labour government to pass a Workers' Charter — a series of positive rights for trade unionists. Instead, conference only voted on a motion to remove all civil liabilities for damages from trade unions and removing the threat of sequestration.

Labour are ahead in the polls — a lead they have kept since June. So what better time to demand a future Labour government takes the side of the working class in its daily battle with capital? Instead TUC leaders are anxious to equate their demands with those of the 'Policy

Reviews'.

As prices continue to rise so do wage claims in a race to keep up. The TUC should try to coordinate a fight for higher wages across industries — perhaps a call for a sliding scale of wages based on a working-class cost of living index.

As engineering workers continue preparations for a fight for a 35-hour week, the TUC could launch a national campaign for 35 hours. This would immediately cut unemployment and end the scandal of record overtime whilst millions are on the dole.

These demands could link the struggles of today and generalise them. They could also straddle the boundary between the political and economic wings of the labour movement.

Instead the TUC leaders have opted for a quiet and mundane conference. It is out of step with both the recent revival in the class struggle, and also with the optimism of Willis and Christopher. If they really believed the tide had turned then the central task for the movement would be setting the new agenda and preparing political perspectives. They have simply opted to drag behind the present Labour leadership.

Even contentious issues like the dispute between the T&G and the pilots union, BALPA, have been scrupulously avoided.

Perhaps we should bear in mind the judgement of the bosses' *Financial Times*: "The congress is likely to suffer from boring predictability as delegates sweep through a stream of uncontroversial motions on issues such as the EC, nuclear energy and social ownership, which would have been hotly contested some years ago."

Certainly as you turn on the TV this week it would be hard to believe you were gatecrashing a party celebrating the end of 'Thatcherism'.

Labour's left organises

North West Campaign for Socialism, CLPs Conference, Campaign Group of MPs, CLPD and the Socialist Movement

Pre-Conference Briefing The Socialist Alternative to the Policy Reviews

Saturday 16 September 1989 10.30am to 4.30pm Sheffield City Polytechnic Totley Hall Lane Sheffield

For further information contact: John Nicholson, 33 Birch Hall Lane, Manchester M13 0XJ — 061 225 5356 or Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG — 051 638 1338

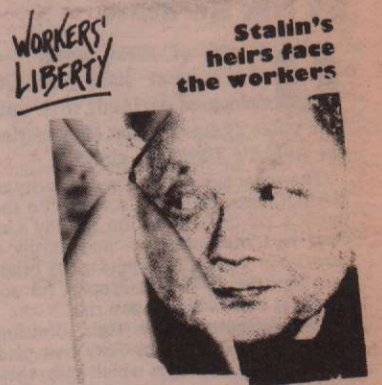
Labour's Socialist Alternative Pre-Conference Rally

Friday 15 September 1989 7.30pm Sheffield City Polytechnic Totley Hall Lane Sheffield

Speakers: Alice Mahon Audrey Wise Tony Benn Eric Heffer (others invited from NEC left slate)

The Rally is organised by the North West Campaign for Socialism and the CLPs Conference and supported by the Campaign Group of MPs, CLPD and the Socialist Movement

For further information, more leaflets or to book accommodation and transport contact: John Nicholson, 33 Birch Hall Lane, Manchester M13 0XJ — 061 225 5356 or Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG — 051 638 1338



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