

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

**Will
Germany be
re-united?**

See centre pages

Stop Labour's drift to the right!

By Eric Heffer MP

The first big issue at Labour Party conference this year is going to be the question of the Policy Review.

Clearly this is going to be of great importance for the future of the Labour Party. I don't know what the response is in every part of the country, but my own constituency and most of the Liverpool ones are opposed to the Policy Review and I trust that will be the position throughout the country.

The objective should be to oppose the Policy Review and refer it back. To vote against it altogether will be even better.

On public ownership, the policy in the Review and in the Shadow Cabinet and NEC is one of clear retreat. They also want to retreat from unilateral nuclear disarmament.

There will be a very important debate on our attitude towards trades union legislation. I don't think the trimming that's gone in and the statements by Michael Meacher are good enough.

The fact is that on a very basic issue of the rights of working people there is wholesale retreat. The idea that you can give right-wing people the opportunity of taking the unions to court through membership of the union is absolutely scandalous.

Unfortunately the scene was set for this originally by 'In Place of Strife' in 1969, and the attitude that the unions are too strong and powerful; they've got to be kept under control.

It's a lot of nonsense. The working class movement in this country, the trade unions, has never had the advantages of the employers. We need to get rid of all this legislation and get new legislation giving workers greater rights than they've ever had before. We're not going to get that with this leadership.

The whole drift of the Policy Review is like Gonzalez in Spain, or the Social Democratic Party in West Germany when they brought in the Baal Godesburg programme. It's like the French Socialist Party.

We were once the most left-wing of the Socialist parties in Europe, and it looks to me as if we are going to set the tone and the policy for being one of the most right wing.

Then there's the question of the National Executive. It's quite clear that there is now a campaign being conducted, particularly against Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner and, to a lesser extent, against Ken Livingstone.



My message to the left would be: organise! The left in my opinion has got to begin to organise, and it's got

to create an organisation through the Constituency Labour Parties and through the unions with a clear left-wing programme.

We have got to go out and fight for a left-wing programme. We've got to finalise such a programme with something like 10 points, and we've got to go out there and win support for it.

The present situation won't go on for ever — even if a Labour government wins, and a Labour government can just about win the next election in my opinion.

The fact is that Labour winning will show up the contradiction and the difficulties more than anything else. This nonsense that people are coming forward with that socialism is now dead — particularly because of what's happening in the Soviet Union — is a very dangerous thing. We have to organise on a stronger basis than we've ever organised before.

I think the CLPs Conference is very important. It's the nucleus of an organisation amongst the CLPs. That is absolutely vital. It should continue and meet more regularly.



In 1982 and 1988 miners struck alongside healthworkers. Illegal solidarity action according to the Tories. The Policy Review threatens to keep these laws on the statute books under a Labour government.

2 STUDENTS

Students and socialism

By Dave Barter (Labour Students National Committee, in a personal capacity)

We live in an irrational world. Alongside huge stockpiles of food are trenches of starving people. It's a world where billions of dollars are spent daily on sophisticated nuclear weapons — supposedly to keep the peace! — whilst essential services such as hospitals, housing, transportation, clean and safer water systems and education are starved of the necessary cash. It's a world that faces environmental destruction all in the name of profit — a system that can't think beyond making a fast buck.

In Britain too, that system exists. As with all Western countries, starvation and poverty are not of epidemic proportions, nevertheless, it is a system that demands the poor get poorer in order to keep the rich in power. A system that is racist to the core; a system that degrades and exploits women; a system that maintains itself through violence and oppression.

And yet in the Third World, the Eastern Bloc, Central America, South Africa and Britain there exists a will to resist, a spirit of solidarity to face adversity united.

This is the world we live in. Students and workers in China in their recent heroic battle for democracy, facing the tanks of the repressive state regime now continue their battle underground in fear of their own, and their families', lives. And the Palestinian Arabs fight on against the persecution and brutality of the occupying army. The *intifada* is an inspiration to all those fighting against inequality and show the resilience of oppressed people.

In Britain workers have continued to organise and fight despite major defeats, a national police

force, and some of the most repressive anti-union legislation the labour movement has known. Working class people the world over are prepared to struggle for their interests against all the apparent invincibility of governments.

Success in that struggle does not come easily, as the miners found in the 1984/5 strike; and since then the printworkers, seafarers and dockers have suffered defeat. There has recently been a resurgence of class activity around wages and conditions, and from successes we've seen a renewed confidence. And successes in the future will depend upon the extent to which we can learn the lessons of the past. It will depend upon the extent to which socialists organise themselves here and now to fight for a socialist future.

Students can play an important role in that fight.

Students are involved in revolutionary movements. In South Africa, for example, students — in schools and colleges — are a vital force in the struggle against apartheid.

But in South Africa, no more than in Britain, students by themselves do not have the power to overthrow the system. Only the organised working class can do that.

But the organisations of the working class are ill-equipped even to defend the immediate interests of the working class, never mind make a revolution.

During the great miners' strike of 1984/5, for example, it was clear to anyone with eyes that a momentous movement in solidarity was necessary to make sure that the miners won, and that in practice would mean industrial action from other trade unions. But the TUC failed to deliver — failed to deliver even the minimal promises of support that they made. Neil Kinnock failed to give the kind of support that the Labour Party should have given — although rank and file Labour Party members were the backbone of efforts to build solidarity with the miners.

That accurately reflects the state of the labour movement: bureaucratic, sluggish, with a

leadership and officialdom who are not committed to the real demands of the class struggle — who are timid and afraid of serious mobilisations of workers; and whose timidity helps to undermine the confidence of the rank and file and make them timid too.

We need radically to change the labour movement. It needs to be overhauled and completely democratised, and new leaders who are prepared to fight are needed to replace the old ones who don't fight or even betray.

But organisational regeneration of the movement needs to be combined with a new political direction. What the movement lacks is its own independent political outlook.

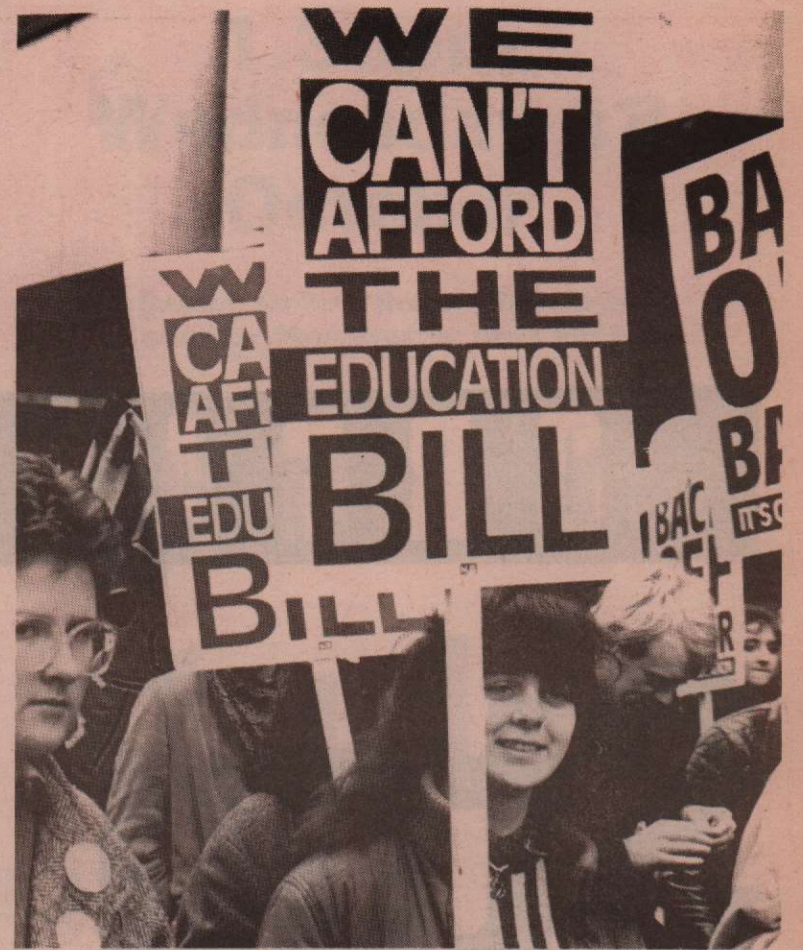
In Thatcher's Tory Party, the ruling class has a determined, ideologically committed political voice. The Tory Party fights militantly for the interests of big business. They planned, years in advance, for the miners' strike; and it was that planning that helped them defeat it.

The labour movement by contrast has no coherent political outlook at all; no worked-out ideology. The main ideas of the Labour Party are another version of pro-capitalist ideas. And so it can provide no class alternative to the Tories.

Most of the 'socialist' ideas that do have currency in the labour movement are not really socialist ideas at all. They are generally elitist — looking to bring about change from above — and are often tainted with Stalinism. A conscious socialist labour movement would be bitterly hostile to the so-called 'socialist' countries, and be the champion of the rights of workers in those countries, and of all those oppressed by their dictatorial bureaucracies.

But the main leaders of the labour movement are barely committed to even a perverted version of socialism.

A Labour government under Neil Kinnock would undoubtedly be a repeat performance of the last Labour government — it would in practice side with the bosses against the working class. In fact, given the economic climate, it would be



worse than the last Labour government.

But lacking any clear political vision, the leaders of the labour movement — trade unions and Labour Party alike — are unable to imagine anything better than such a miserable government.

Something better is possible. The labour movement could decide to ring the changes; to mount a serious fight against the Tories in defence of jobs, living standards, women's rights, the rights of black people, the rights of lesbians and gay men, democratic freedom, and against the threat of war. The movement could decide to force its leaders — in the trade unions and the Labour Party — to abide by democratic decisions and fight or get rid of them if they refuse.

It is possible to go further than that. The working class movement could become conscious of its own real strength. The British labour movement, the oldest in the world, could shake off the bureaucratic prejudices of its past and organise itself to overthrow the sick capitalist system and begin to create

socialism.

It could be part of a struggle for socialism worldwide.

But for that to happen the socialists need to be organised. We need to build an organisation rooted in the labour movement.

That means fighting to change the Labour Party. The Labour Party is the political wing of the trade unions — the labour movement's political voice.

Not to be in the Labour Party is merely to abandon it to the right wing and the soft left. If we are to see a revitalised and, ultimately, revolutionised labour movement, battles to transform the political wing of the movement are as important as battles to change its industrial wing.

The revolutionary movement of the future will be built out of the labour movement of the present or it will not be built at all.

It is to make sure that we do see the creation of a revolutionary movement that Socialist Organiser exists. Students who want to help see that future become a reality should discuss with us.

A New Model National Union of Students?

By Paul McGarry (NUS Executive, in personal capacity)

For two years now in the National Union of Students 'reform' has replaced building a strong, democratic, participatory union.

This is logical if you think, as the Labour Students leadership do, that NUS's strength comes from its ability to intervene into the parliamentary arena, rather than rely on its membership's involvement, and if your main motivation is attacking the Trots, and not the government.

The latest stage of 'modernisation' is a document about the Central Funding of Area NUS organisations. Instead of analysing how conference policy of centrally funding NUS's 43 Areas should be

implemented, it spells out a complete reorganisation of NUS.

The number of Areas could be cut to under 20, with two staff members in each of these newly constituted mega-Areas.

These new organisations could be open to arbitrary sanctions such as stopping funds if they refuse to toe the national line.

This mirrors the arrogance and authoritarianism of the Labour Party's so-called modernisers. Labour Students leadership and their co-thinkers are sneaking fundamental change in NUS through the back door.

Of course none of this was hinted at when tearful Area Convenors told NUS conference that without Central Funding their Areas would fold. Neither was there a mandate from conference to initiate a debate on boundary changes.

The motives of the Labour Students leadership are clear. For a number of years, various Areas have been critical of NUS, and have campaigned on a basis different from what the leadership would want. Unable to win politically in these Areas, the Labour Students leadership are relying on bureaucratic manoeuvres.

Now if an Area runs a 'Don't pay, Don't collect' campaign against the poll tax, it could have its money stopped by NUS HQ.

Left Unity supporters on the National Executive have pointed out that it is impossible to have an informed debate without the appropriate financial models; that there needs to be a timetabled and structured discussion

and that minorities on the Executive should have the right to circulate alternative papers. All this has been rejected.

Labour Students leadership must answer a number of questions: is Central Funding now conditional on having 20 Areas? If it is up to Areas to decide on the new boundaries, why are a number of different models already in circulation in NUS?

Who initiated the spontaneous review of Area boundaries in the NUS regions? And who will decide when an Area "deliberately undermines the National Union"?

The new Area arrangement is probably an attempt to grapple with the problem of Voluntary Membership. If it is, Labour Students should come clean. Either way the document doesn't answer the problems of Areas and NUS in the present political context. NUS's leadership once again is attacking its own left-wing when it should be organising campaigns against loans, the poll tax and Voluntary Membership.

And that just makes the Tories' job easier. Neil Kinnock, Bryan Gould and no doubt Uncle Joe himself would be proud.

Student housing crisis

By Matthew Guy

Leeds students are facing a major housing crisis, with 1,000 extra enrolled at Leeds University and Polytechnic.

An appeal has been put out to lecturers asking them to provide bed and breakfast accommodation to homeless students. Other students will live in caravans for at least part of the first term.

The increase in student numbers in Leeds is a direct result of pressure from the government to increase college income through tuition fees

and so meet government targets on expanding admissions.

All this means more than a miserable introduction to student life for new students. The housing shortage in Leeds will have serious effects in the whole of the rented sector.

The 1988 Housing Act, with its abolition of fair rents and tenants' protection, means that rents will undoubtedly rise. Landlords will rake in the profits, and the situation for families in the private sector will worsen.

Landlords will not rent a house to a family when they can squeeze in five students, each individually paying £30 a week.

Fight for the Right to Study — Defend NUS

Saturday 4 November
11.30-5.00

Polytechnic of Central London
Marylebone Rd Site
(Tube: Baker St)

Contact Mark Sandell, Area Convenor, Kent
Area NUS, c/o Students Union, UKC
Canterbury, Kent. Tel: 0227 766725
Tickets: £2.50 with grant, £1.00 without

The issues at Labour Party conference

EDITORIAL

Labour's leaders and their allies in the top brass of the trade unions want to transform Labour's decision-making.

The Policy Review is their model: a package carefully designed by small committees under their control, without any untidy Conference mandates or awkward commitments.

A resolution from the General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Union (GMB) in the agenda section on *Reform of Conference and Policy Making* maps out the plans of the Kinnock faction. The motion is full of fine words about "greater involvement by Party members", "more representative of all sections of the membership", "expanding the role of Conference", and so on. Its real drift is just the opposite.

The GMB wants to change the make-up of the National Executive so that it would include representatives of Labour councillors and of Euro-MPs. This would mean electing the National Executive piecemeal, from the Euro-MPs' caucus, the conference of Labour councillors, Labour regional conferences, and so on. All direct control by Party conference over the National Executive would be removed.

Then most of the Conference would be given over to considering reports from "policy commissions".

Also in this section are proposals to increase the constituencies' share of the vote at Conference from about 10 per cent to 40 per cent. Last year's Conference instructed the National Executive to prepare a constitutional amendment to that effect. The Executive has broken that mandate, but three constituencies have submitted draft amendments, and a motion from Nottingham North asks for those amendments to be debated.

The right wing will try to use the enlargement of the CLP vote as sugar on the pill of removing power from Conference. We should insist the issues are kept separate.

Other constitutional proposals to be voted on in Brighton require CLPs to decide who they back for the constituency section of the National Executive by one-member-one-vote, exempt MPs from reselection if they have fought a bye-election, and restructure Labour women's conference to let the unions dominate it. All these should be opposed.

The Brighton conference will vote on each Policy Review document as a whole, warts and all. The big trade unions will vote for the documents even where they have criticisms, so it is certain that they will be accepted.

Then what happens if conference votes for unilateral nuclear disarmament, for renationalisation of industries sold off by the Tories, or for the reversal of all Tory anti-union laws? The Policy Review scraps all these commitments.

Neil Kinnock would like the Policy Review to overrule specific conference decisions. Dozens of constituencies have submitted motions saying that specific conference decisions must be considered as

amending the Policy Review.

Will a future Labour government keep some of the Tory shackles on the unions? Or will it legislate a positive right to strike?

This will be one of the key debates at Conference, under the title *Rights at Work*. It looks as if the bulk of the motions under this heading should sort themselves out into three composites.

The General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Union (GMB) has a motion endorsing the Policy Review. The GMB wants judges to continue to have the right to rule strikes illegal because pre-strike ballots have not been carried out in the form decreed by the Tories. Solidarity strikes would also, probably, remain illegal, and bosses would have the right to sue unions for damages.

The Transport and General Workers (TGWU) have an amendment to the GMB's motion demanding "immunity in tort for trade unions". Translated out of lawyers' language, this means that bosses should not have the right to sue unions to recover the losses they suffer through strike action.

A large number of motions demand a "Workers' Charter" including the right to strike, the right to picket, and the right for unions to determine their own democratic processes free from control by the courts. The most detailed are from Wallasey, Broxtowe and Sheffield Central CLPs.

They call for Labour to go on the offensive on this issue, proclaiming and championing the right of working class resistance to the tyranny of capital.

The biggest section of the Conference agenda is on the environment.

The green-socialist magazine *New Ground* comments on the Policy Review on the environment: "[The] criteria by which...to judge Labour's environment policy...all essentially boil down to one question: do they really mean it?"

And on that one question the verdict is "mixed". The Policy Review's commitment to free-market economics will make it difficult for any green good intentions to become effective. And the Policy Review favours retaining nuclear power.

The Policy Review does say "we shall not invest in new nuclear power stations" — but as long as the Tories build enough nuclear power stations during their periods in office, on the basis of this policy Labour governments could be using nuclear power for ever!

The Labour leadership, however, wants to keep the environment debate relatively uncontroversial, so has hived off the motions calling for an end to nuclear power (from the National Union of Mineworkers and some CLPs) into a separate agenda section, *Energy*.

The centrepiece of the Policy Review is its unambiguous commitment to managing the capitalist market economy instead of replacing it by socialism.

There are three main responses from the left. *Militant* supporters in Coventry South-East and Liverpool Garston CLPs have submitted their usual motion calling on the next

Labour government to "nationalise, under workers' democratic control and management, the 200 or so monopolies which control 85% of the UK economy".

CLPs influenced by the *Campaign for Labour Party Democracy* have submitted motions which call for renationalisation of the enterprises sold off by the Tories and "taking into public ownership at least one top company in each of the major sectors of manufacturing industry and extending public ownership in other key sectors".

Unrepresented in the resolution book, but expounded in a new book (*Livingstone's Labour*) is the recipe championed by Ken Livingstone and *Socialist Action*. This proposes a cut in military spending to the average European level, forced repatriation of British capital invested abroad and repeal of Tory tax cuts for the rich, in order to give a new Labour government resources to invest.

The proposal for a forced "everything must go" sale of all British capitalist property abroad is weird. Should all other national labour movements propose the same? Should socialists really be arguing for "capitalism in one country" and redivision of the world into national siege economies?

And if we're talking about a programme for a workers' government in Britain, would it not hand over British capitalists' property abroad to the workers there, rather than selling it off to the highest bidder?

The left motions on the agenda, however, should be supported. Their shortcoming is their lack of international perspective and their view of "economic policy" as solely blueprints for the next Labour government rather than a programme of struggle for workers now.

The left has still not rallied round an adequate response to the rapid internationalisation of capital. One index of this is that too few CLPs have submitted motions or amendments on the European Economic Community to get it onto the agenda.

The agenda is weak on international issues generally. Five CLPs have submitted amendments on the Middle East, making it likely that this issue will get to conference floor.

The major motions in that section call for recognition of the PLO as representatives of the Palestinian people and "the right of all states in the region, including an independent Palestinian state and the state of Israel, to existence". They should be supported.

However, there is only one motion on China, and none on Eastern Europe. Think what the response would have been if the Tiananmen Square massacre had happened in South Africa or Chile!

Not many people on the left would be willing to side boldly with the ruling bureaucrats in China any longer. But vaguer hesitations and half-thoughts still prevail about the state-monopoly systems somehow being some, admittedly unsatisfactory, form of socialism.

Fringe meetings organised by the Chinese Solidarity Campaign and Labour Focus on Eastern Europe will allow socialist oppositionists from China and Poland to put their views.

There are only five motions and one amendment on Ireland, so it is unlikely that Ireland will reach the conference floor.

Unilateralism will be the second-biggest debate after environment, if you count by number of motions submitted. This debate will be a sharp, clear confrontation between the Policy Review which abandons



unilateralism, and CLPs reaffirming unilateralism.

The supposed good reason for abandoning unilateralism is the progress in superpower negotiations. But the conclusion does not follow at all!

The negotiations have still left 90 per cent of nuclear weapons intact. They have not removed the threat of civilisation being wiped out; they have just eased the strain on the budgets of the US and the USSR of maintaining that threat.

Unilateral nuclear disarmament by Britain would be the best possible boost to further progress in the negotiations. And in any case, socialists cannot want to "defend" Britain with the threat to wipe out hundreds of millions of working class people in Eastern Europe and the USSR!

Nuclear weapons are no defence. They should be scrapped. The warmongers should be disarmed.

Unfortunately the pattern of union conferences this year makes it almost certain that Kinnock will get his way in Brighton. But the fight won't stop there.

Proportional representation — or constitutional reform in general — will be another big debate at conference.

Some 37 CLPs, not all right wing by any means, submitted motions favouring a changed voting system. There will probably be a composite calling for Labour to examine alternatives to "first past the post".

It should be supported. "First past the post" is an arbitrary and undemocratic system, making many individuals' votes valueless.

But we should be wary of the right-wingers and followers of *Marxism Today* who want to use proportional representation as a stepping stone to a coalition or alliance with the Democrats. They are quiet now, as well they might be with the Democrats in deep

doldrums; but they have not gone away.

• **Poll tax: motions and amendments from Glasgow Govan, Bow and Poplar, and Norwood CLPs call for a mass campaign on the theme 'Don't pay, don't collect'. Several other motions call for mass non-payment but omit the call for Labour councils and trade unions to refuse cooperation with the poll tax.**

• **Women's representation: motions backed by the Labour Women's Action Committee call for a 40% women quota on the National Executive and among elected Labour representatives. An amendment from the GMB seeks to take the teeth out of these motions by reducing them to vague good intentions.**

• **Health: the health union CoHSE has a resolution, amended by NUPE, and there are 24 other motions. But will the Labour leaders give clear support to the ambulance workers?**

• **Education: a motion from Derby South calls not only for action by the next Labour government, but a Labour Party campaign now.**

• **Transport: this section of the agenda has a motion from the TGWU which includes the call for the next Labour government to restore the National Dock Labour Scheme.**

Next week Socialist Organiser will miss a week in order to enable our staff to be active around the Labour Party conference in Brighton. No.418 will appear on 11 Oct

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

Karl Marx

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4 LETTERS



One law for the rich...

GRAFFITI

More than half of London's financial institutions have suffered major fraud, according to a police survey.

In 61 per cent of cases, the fraud was carried out by an employee. In over a third of those cases, it was by a manager or director.

One in six frauds was never reported to the police, and some of those not reported involve sums over £1 million. City firms do not report these frauds because they think the publicity would harm their business.

One law for the rich...

The Tory anti-union legislation got into trouble this year.

The theory behind it was that ordinary workers only go on strike because unaccountable union barons force them into it. (That is the public theory, of course, as opposed to the real one). Limit the power of the union barons! Give unions back to their members! The Tories cried.

And then, oh dear: lots of unofficial strikes, completely disproving the theory. Tory conclusion? Sod the theory, let's just get them.

New anti-union laws will allow bosses to sack unofficial strike leaders... for leading, well, unofficial strikes, you see.

A Green Paper to be published soon also proposes a cooling-off period in 'essential' services, and making unions responsible for unofficial action by their members.

Essential sectors are likely to be defined as health, transport, electricity, gas, water and airports.

Cooling-off periods were part of

the 1971 Industrial Relations Act. That proved so unpopular that it helped lead to the fall of the Heath government in 1974. Let's hope history repeats itself.

Seventy-three per cent of people are opposed to the Tory NHS reforms.

44% of Tory voters are opposed to them. And those figures are up on previous Gallup polls.

A British Medical Association spokesperson said: "In anyone's language this is a massive thumbs down for the government".

The Tory Party gets about £15 million a year. But who from? It remains, according to Labour MP Frank Dobson, a "sordid and shabby mystery".

A Labour Party report reveals that of the top 1,500 companies, 275 gave the Tories £3.5 million in 1988. But, said Dobson, the bulk of Tory finances remains shrouded in mystery.

The survey reveals no big business gifts to Labour, and a sharp falling-off in gifts to the centre parties.

What they say:

"The CIA created, armed and financed the Contras. My father backed them with everything he had. It was my father's war, and almost everyone in Nicaragua has lost somebody as a result of it".

Patti Davis, daughter of Ronald Reagan.

"People tell me I live in a mansion here, but I tell them I used to live in a palace. It is all relative".

Imelda Marcos.

New assault on abortion rights

By Liz Millward

Anti-abortionists are planning yet another go at reducing the time limit for abortion.

This time 'pro-lifers' led by Tory MP Ann Widdicombe want to hang an abortion amendment onto the Embryo Research Bill. The amendment has been promised time by the government, and it seeks to reduce the upper time limit from 28 to 18 weeks.

The embryo research bill has taken a long time to get this far because of its controversial nature. In its current form the bill has cross-party support and there is to be a free vote.

The proposed amendment will change the nature of the

legislation and make it a re-run of the Alton Bill with implied government support.

This is the first time since the 1967 Act legalising abortion was passed that a government bill has included an attack on abortion rights. Other bills have been Private Member's Bills, meaning it has been possible to talk them out.

Despite some Labour MPs' efforts to do this (most recently on the Alton Bill) defeats have been aided by the massive pro-choice campaigns run by groups like the National Abortion Campaign.

Such a campaign is obviously needed again. We will also need the support of every Labour MP — not just the ones without a large Catholic constituency. We must insist on a Labour whip on this amendment in line with conference policy.

A personal story

In their Policy Review, which Neil Kinnock wants approved at Labour Party conference, Labour's leaders propose to water down Labour's commitment to lesbian and gay rights, scrapping the policy of an equal age of consent for heterosexuals and homosexuals.

Why risk bad press publicly for such a 'side issue'? the Kinnockites would say. What they don't take account of is the scale of harassment suffered by millions of lesbians and gays every day.

This article is just one personal story — more typical than spectacular

In two of the jobs I've had I would have been sacked instantly if it had been known I was having a relationship with another woman because I was working with children and young people. My lover would have been sacked too. Discrimination is com-

monplace.

When I was a student, I was the subject of a great deal of homophobic graffiti and abuse.

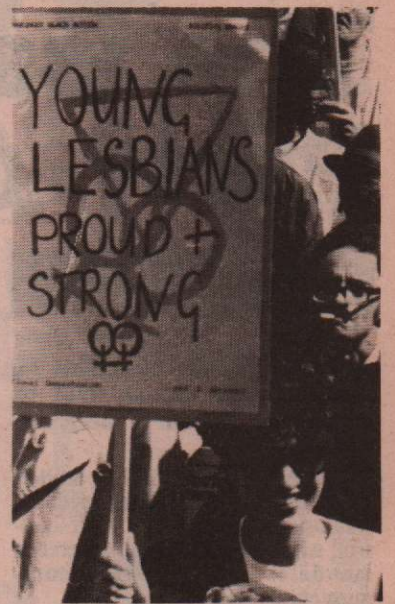
On my course I was a victim of persistent harassment from one particular tutor who objected to all lesbians on the grounds that his wife had left him on discovering feminism. At least one other lesbian I know also complained about him, but nothing was ever done.

The other staff in the department admitted he was a problem, "but we have to work with him". His marking of one of my final exams probably affected my degree classification.

Unlike many lesbians and gays, I have never been physically assaulted; but like almost all 'out' lesbians and gays, I have been subject to verbal abuse from students in colleges and by people 'in the street'.

Severe homophobia broke out in my college when I formed a relationship with someone previously assumed to be heterosexual. She was told by ever so many well meaning people not to get involved with me because 'everyone will think you're a lesbian as well'.

Then there was the flatmate who threw all the furniture around the house, breaking just about everything, and constantly threatening to break me too, because I had made 'lesbianism respectable in this house' and his girlfriend had left him for another woman. Several of his (male) friends did nothing to protect me or his girlfriend, or to stop his extremely violent



behaviour. They said we had to try to 'understand'.

Or the bloke who threatened to beat me up because I was seeing his ex-girlfriend, on the grounds that I had led her astray. (This should give some clues as to why she left him!)

I could give a lot more examples, but I—hope I never have to. The reason I have written all this that I would have had a much easier time of things if hadn't been so stupid as to be a lesbian. The problem is I never felt like being anything else.

Being a lesbian isn't something you put on a leaflet for a few more votes at a student conference. It's something which has consequences for the whole of your life.

There are mitigating factors. One of them is feeling able to stand up and say 'I'm a lesbian' and feel good about it. That takes a lot of courage, especially the first time. I got the courage to do it from the NUS Lesbian and Gay Campaign — from other lesbian and gay students.

The bosses still don't control Russia

LETTERS

Laurens Otter (SO 413) raised three points against Trotsky's analysis of the USSR.

The first point was that Trotsky argued that his theory was temporary, and that if the war did not lead to world revolution he would have been wrong.

Pardon me, but when did Trotsky say that? Certainly Trotsky did think that the war could lead to revolution, but he stressed that revolution is conditional on the strength of the workers and the socialists.

Now predicting wrong is no crime. But if a wrong prediction means you have to junk one of Trotsky's theories, why not junk the rest? Laurens distorts what Trotsky says in an attempt to refute this — and it is not convincing.

The second point is that all transitional societies are 'state capitalist'. Laurens uses a quote from Lenin where he describes the USSR as state capitalist to prove this.

Again this is dishonest. For socialists today state capitalism means a capitalist society where the boss class owns the state and the economy and controls it through the state. Now that wasn't what Lenin was describing.

Lenin meant it to describe how the USSR — under the control of the workers — could use some 'capitalist' methods. So long as they were under the control of the state it would not mean a return to capitalist power.

Lenin was talking about the NEP — a special package of economic reforms which specifically allowed peasants and farmers to sell their goods on the market.

So the USSR used some 'capitalist' methods but Lenin never

argued that the USSR was capitalist or that any transitional society could be capitalist. In fact Lenin argued the opposite — as Laurens well knows.

The third point is the argument — Lassalle's, so Laurens says — that a revolution will inevitably disappear if the revolutionaries aren't vigilant enough.

Well, I've never read anything by Lassalle — so I can't really say. There is a point that needs to be made though — nothing happens inevitably. For capitalism to be restored in a working class run state the bosses have to make a revolu-

tion to get back control of the economy. And that hasn't happened in Russia.

For all Laurens' fancy French quotations — he can't conquer facts so (like a Stalinist) he has to distort them. I think if Laurens was right he could win using honest methods. But he can't.

Finally, Laurens calls me an 'orthodox Trotskyist'. I don't know why he insists on using the inverted commas because I've never called myself orthodox. That's a word for the religious, not the revolutionary.

Duncan Chapple, Nottingham

Include Sinn Fein in debate

Reading Chris Barnes' letter (SO 414) on socialists and Sinn Fein, I feel he would restrict the debate on Ireland rather than aid it.

He says that socialists should invite only other socialists onto their platforms to speak, so Sinn Fein as nationalists should not be invited. Surely as socialists we are interested in having the widest possible discussion on Ireland, and that means Sinn Fein must be included.

It is certainly true that a major fault on the British left is its idolatry of Sinn Fein and its refusal to be in any way critical of its politics. Obviously this flagwaving for Catholic nationalism hinders the debate. But it is quite possible to give Sinn Fein a platform and still be critical.

He says that Sinn Fein's solution is simply catholic domination. This sounds like Sinn Fein are no better to talk to than Fianna Fail or Fine Gael.

But that ignores the fact that Sinn Fein represents the most oppressed

Catholics in the north. This fact alone makes discussion with them important. Secondly, Gerry Adams has said that the needs and fears of the Protestant community should be recognised by all Republicans — obviously a step away from simple "Catholic domination".

Chris also says that we should be interested in talking to real workers, not their self-appointed leaders. Unfortunately, the 'real' workers in Ireland are divided on communal lines, and look to their communal leaders to represent them. Socialists can't just ignore this.

He also seems to have forgotten the media ban on Sinn Fein and other groups. As socialists we should be fighting for the right for them to be heard, not putting extra barriers in their way.

To finish, a serious discussion on the solution to Ireland must include the representatives of the Protestant community too, in order to try to understand and take into account the fear of that community.

Nick Denton, Sheffield

Flintknappers and thatchers?

Chris Croome looks at the arguments sparked off by Prince Charles's new book on architecture

Ever since Prince Charles' 'monstrous carbuncle' speech in 1984 about a proposed extension to the National Gallery he has become increasingly vocal about the built environment.

Last year he presented a TV documentary and this summer he has published a book, the contents of which also form an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Prince Charles' outrage at the form of the built environment is a reaction to the constant re-modelling of the environment by capitalism, and it is for that reason that he has 'struck a chord' with so many people.

He condemns the London Dockland where "...indifferent commerce snubs the deprived boroughs all around" and despairs at "...the sheer, unadulterated ugliness and mediocrity of public and commercial buildings."

He deplores the wholesale reconstruction and redevelopment of city and green field sites which is taking place at an ever increasing pace. However, not surprisingly, he lacks an understanding of why such change is occurring.

For example he makes no mention of how the intervention of vast amounts of foreign capital have turned the London Docklands into Europe's biggest building site. He fails to understand that the constant dynamic transformation of the built environment is a result of constant changes in the mode of production and social relationships.

An understanding of changes in the production process of buildings is crucial, as they have a dramatic effect on the building produced. One of the main tendencies within the capitalist mode of production has been a relentless reduction in the quantity of skilled labour employed on site, as new technology and components enable more production to be undertaken in factories and the division of labour between intellectual design work and physical construction work virtually eliminates the possibility of creative input from building workers.

These are just two consequences of management's attempts to exert greater control over workers' conditions and practices in order to wring greater profits from their labours.

Prince Charles is horrified by the

results of the capitalist production process, which he fails to understand. "A factory-made world is not enough". He declares that "Beauty is made by the unique partnership of hand, brain and eye."

Prince Charles mistakenly believes that architects are to blame through "...obeying the dictates of fashion", and his vitriol is aimed almost exclusively at them. However, in singling out this elite group of people he is massively overestimating the power they have over the form of the built environment, a delusion he shares with the majority of the profession.

The ideology behind this view sees buildings as sculptures created by artistically inspired individuals, and ignores the social and economic background to their creation.

Discussion centres on debates over the style of finished buildings and in so doing totally overlooks the generative nature of the production process.

Within this framework — the debate over style — Prince Charles' preference for classical buildings puts him to the far right relative to some of the more progressive modernists and it is that which provokes the condemnation of the architectural establishment. His views on architectural style lead him directly to one of his most reactionary proposals — that architectural education should be more traditional.

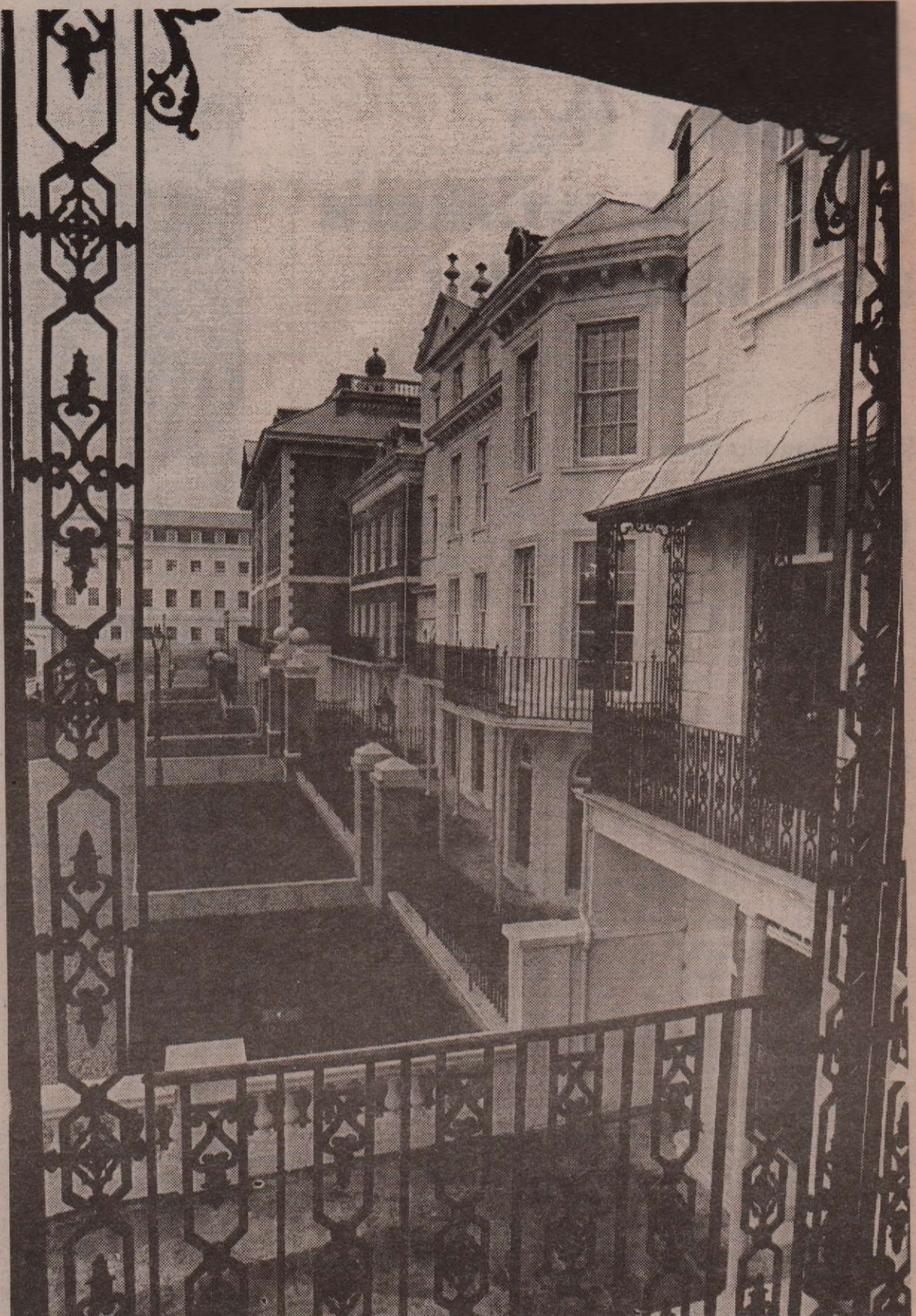
He believes that through the study of the styles of the past, architecture could once again continue the classical tradition.

Prince Charles, in his search for a way forward, looks romantically at the past, and points to Victorian Glasgow to show that "...an economic boom can inspire handsome buildings" as a contrast to this century's monuments to capital in the city of London which he derides as "...slovenly towers of commerce..."

He believes that for various complicated reasons "sometime during this century something went wrong". He's not quite sure what, but he knows that it was better in the past.

The idealised English village and its "Extraordinarily rich tradition of regional building styles and materials" inspires him with a vision of the way forward, "we must encourage our traditional craftsmen — our flintknappers, our thatchers and our blacksmiths and involve them in the building of our future".

This is possibly his most absurd statement, and is especially bizarre when elsewhere in his book he acknowledges that in reality "concrete, plastic cladding, aluminium, machine-made bricks and reconstituted stone are shipped to every corner of Britain from centralised production lines".



Quinlan Terry's 'Richmond Riverside' office complex, one of Prince Charles's favourites. Can a retreat into the past be the answer?

It is impossible to turn the clock back. The specific social and economic conditions which for example generated superb medieval cathedrals, and beggars, starvation, hovels and filth all around them, fortunately cannot be repeated.

The unsatisfactory nature of the current built environment can only be explained through a true understanding of history and the

social and economic realities of the present, crucial to this being the undemocratic distribution of land ownership and economic power.

Prince Charles has no answers for any problems based in reality; substantial improvement in the quality of buildings produced can only come about through massive change in the process of their production and only when workers

have control can a democratic process be realised.

This in turn can only occur as a result of revolutionary change in society; only then can everyone have the freedom to care about and creatively contribute to the form of the communities and houses that all must live in. Only then will society have an architecture that is truly free.

Sanders of the Sun

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR

PRESS GANG

The twentieth anniversary of the Sun as we know it was marked by a strange outburst from editor Kelvin

MacKenzie.

It seems that poor old Kelvin is a much misunderstood figure. Contrary to popular belief, he is very sensitive to criticism of his beloved newspaper; he is deeply worried about threats to press freedom and the 'right to know'; he accepts that there is 'one in a thousand cases where if I could undo the mistake I would, because it makes us look as if we don't care.'

"But", he wails, "because we are the Sun we are expected to get things more right than the others".

I must admit that I don't quite follow that last bit. In my experience, very few people expect the Sun to get anything right — and that goes for Sun readers as much as for the rest of us.

It seems to me that there are two possible explanations for Mr MacKenzie's uncharacteristic admissions of self-doubt and fallibility. One is that he is basically a decent fellow drawn into this sordid underworld almost against his will: after eight years at the helm of the Digger's dirtiest operation, he simply can't take any more.

Tormented by remorse, he finally speaks out before cracking up altogether, a gibbering shadow of his former self.

This is, if you like, the 'Donald Pleasance' explanation.

Then there is the 'George Sanders' explanation. In this scenario, Mr MacKenzie appears in a rather less sympathetic light.

He is an unprincipled, ruthless cynic, who uses a certain native charm and wit

to do his master's bidding, however foul and deceitful. But Sanders/MacKenzie is cunning enough to see the net beginning to close around him, and to prepare to save his own skin before the game is up once and for all.

I do not, of course, know which role best suits Mr MacKenzie. There may, indeed, be other explanations. But a couple of things incline me reluctantly towards Sanders rather than Pleasance.

First, there is the looming prospect of new legislation to protect privacy. Two attempts to introduce such Bills were defeated this year, but only because the Government promised to appoint a committee to look into the whole matter.

If such restrictive legislation is introduced, it will be largely the fault of the Sun and other products of Fortress Wapping. Kelvin is obviously anxious to demonstrate that he is now busy cleaning up his act, even if that means admitting to a few past mistakes.

Then there is the matter of Hillsborough, where the Sun's eagerness to swallow the police version hook, line and sinker, and its vitriolic attacks on Liverpool fans, are still costing it dear in circulation on Merseyside.

But our hero has still not entirely shaken off his old cockiness: after all this hubris, he couldn't resist a few jibes at old enemies. "We could go and edit the Guardian, but none of you could come and edit the Sun — you haven't got the intellectual firepower".

Guardian editor Peter Preston immediately took up the challenge, and offered to swap places for a day. He even threw in a £10,000 bet.

By this time, Kelvin had pulled himself together. "Regrettably, we are going to have to reject your kind offer on commercial grounds", he replied.

As all film buffs know, George Sanders always turned out to be a coward in the end.

...ties. ...rial but ...omposition (lots ...and plastic) makes it more difficult to predict what will happen to them over time. Quantities of intermediate level wastes will increase markedly as nuclear power stations start to be dismantled. Dr Chapman argued though that

...very mobile in the environment. Thorium behaves like plutonium, so it is most reassuring that emissions from Morro do Ferro are only 1/20th of US limits for plutonium

March to support the Chinese workers and students!

By Cheung Siu Ming

On 1 October the People's Republic of China will be 40 years old.

The butchers who ordered the massacre in Tiananmen Square on 4 June will be celebrating their "victory over counter-revolution".

Their victory is hollow, and the celebration will be shortlived. Even after massive repression, they dare not end martial law.

They are still afraid that guns abandoned by soldiers of the PLA will be used by Beijing citizens to disrupt the anniversary.

What is there to celebrate? In 1949, the people welcomed the Chinese Communist Party's victory. The Maoists had fought off the Japanese invaders and ended the corrupt rule of the Kuomintang.

They had united the country after decades of warlordism and had carried out some land reform.

In 1950 they brought the US forces to a standstill in Korea. Over the '50s they took the Chinese economy into state ownership.

When Russia attempted to dictate terms, the Chinese party stood up to them and broke with Moscow.

Today the CCP regime is arguably even more corrupt and unpopular than Chiang Kai Shek's hated Kuomintang government before 1949. Freedom of expression is tolerated even less than in the days of the Kuomintang censorship, and the CCP secret police apparatus is far more powerful and efficient than the Kuomintang's was at the height of its 'White Terror' in the '30s.

The Stalinist command economy of Mao, which so many had called socialism, or some form of workers' state, ran into trouble after 1957. The reform attempts of the last decade, inspired by Deng Xiaoping, have fostered growth, but also severe dislocation of agricultural

and industrial infrastructure, inflation, unemployment, and mounting foreign debt.

Throughout the 40 years since 1949 the Chinese workers have been severely repressed and given no chance of expression as a class, let alone any control. Intellectual and artistic freedom have been repressed time and again in the various 'anti-rightist' campaigns. The revolutionary oppositionists of Chinese Trotskyism have been imprisoned without trial since 1952 — the first of many waves of political prisoners.

The CCP's foreign policy has been equally anti-working class and reactionary. From supporting the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 through to its consistent support for the barbarous Khmer Rouge.

The only cause for celebration today is the formation of the Front for a Democratic China, which has established itself as the authoritative voice of overseas exiles and dissidents. The FDC's international conference in Paris was attended by over 150 delegates from various parts of the world. It will provide a focus of opposition to the regime.

It is not yet clear what the FDC's platform is, but socialists should support its formation without hesitation. The logic of the workers' struggle in China will exert a massive influence on the development of the FDC's politics, and the task for socialists is to establish a dialogue with the FDC within the context of supportive solidarity work. This can best be done by building the Chinese Solidarity Campaign.

The 1 October Mobilising Committee has been formed from all the groups active in the UK, and for the first time the National Union of Students is supporting the action. There will be a 2pm rally in Chinatown, Gerrard St, in London, followed by a march to the Chinese Embassy in Portland Place.

Support the CLPs Conference!

The 'Constituency Labour Parties Conference' was launched at a fringe meeting at the Socialist Conference in June 1988.

In just over a year since then it has secured the support of some 50 CLPs, held three conferences, and published two issues of a newsletter.

Its purpose is to provide a framework for CLPs activists to organise together and exchange experiences.

The Labour Party leadership, around Neil Kinnock, is tightly organised. Different groups of MPs are organised. The trade union leaders have their cabals, caucuses and committees.

Even rank and file groups in trade unions have some national organisation, though it is often weak, and we still lack a unifying cross-union rank and file movement.

But CLP activists generally remain boxed off in their own areas, deprived of the means to organise jointly with the projects in other areas.

The change campaigns, pressure agencies of the left do, of coordinating ac-

tivity in CLPs. The CLPs Conference does not aim to duplicate that role, but to supplement it, working closely with the various campaigns and especially with the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy.

Its conferences are working conferences, where CLP activists can discuss how to defend CLPs' rights against the increasing pressure from Labour Party headquarters and how to promote policies strongly backed by the CLPs but suppressed by the Party leadership, like unilateralism, public ownership, and trade union rights.

Individuals are welcome at those conferences, but the core of the CLPs conference, unlike any other grouping in the Labour left, is delegates from CLPs.

It is still early days for the CLPs Conference. It could develop into a powerful force, coherent and vocal enough to stop the Labour leadership running roughshod over constituency opinion as it has done for so many years. Whether it does or not depends on you, the CLP activists. It is your movement.

Contact the CLPs Conference c/o Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG.



Will Germany be

By Bruce Robinson

Since the large-scale flight from East to West Germany began, Western commentators have been speculating about whether East Germany (the GDR) can survive, even in the short-term, and how soon the question of German reunification will again become an immediate issue.

Editorials in Europe mix gleeful prediction about the collapse of another Eastern bloc state with fears about the economic and military strength of a united Germany.

Anyone waiting for the status quo to change radically in the foreseeable future had better not hold their breath. The flow of refugees will not go on on the scale or in the way it has recently. This would not be in the interests of East Germany, Hungary — through which the immigrants pass, the Soviet Union or West Germany.

For it to make so much difference to East Germany economically that it would collapse presupposes a scale of departure that the Federal Republic would be unable to deal with. It is also highly unlikely that the Soviet Union would just let the GDR, its strategically most important ally, collapse into the hands of the West.

Before the Soviet Union would contemplate any fundamental change in the status of the two Germanies — such as neutralisation — there would have to be further major shifts in general political relations between the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries. And it is far from clear that West German political parties want a radical change in the relationship between the two German states.

Since 1945 that relationship has gone through a number of phases. The setting up of the two states in 1949 marked definite acceptance that the Cold War division of Germany would remain for some time.

In its constitution West Germany enshrined the aim of reunification and gave any German the right to citizenship of the Federal Republic.

Similar East German claims to represent the whole German people were dropped after the GDR joined the Warsaw Pact in 1955. The Federal Republic refused to recognise the GDR and also refused to accept other post-1945 borders with Poland and the USSR.

That stance was changed by a Social Democrat-led coalition in the early '70s, which pursued a so-called "ostpolitik" which involved de facto recognition of the GDR and normalisation of relationships between the two states.

The SDP hoped to use closer economic and political relations to bring pressure for gradual change which would in turn lessen the gap between the states.

Although the Conservative Christian Democrats denounced this policy in opposition, they have quietly continued it since they came to power in 1982. Economically there have been large subsidies from West to East, either through gifts from private West Germans, institutions such as an inflated compulsory exchange of currency for visitors, or through payments for direct services such as roads across the GDR to West Berlin. There is no way that the Federal Republic could cut off the economic subsidies, as some right-wingers have suggested without legal restrictions on the money sent across and a major political crisis over Berlin.

In return, the GDR has eased a whole range of restrictions, for example, on visits in both directions and a growing legal flow of people allowed to leave the GDR — in exchange for the GDR making a lot of money out of it.

Recent events have led to some embarrassment about this policy in West Germany. The GDR has also cancelled a visit by SPD leaders.

But the policy is likely to continue possibly with more pressure from West Germany for change in

the hope that a new more reform-minded leadership will emerge in the GDR with whom they can do business.

Der Spiegel describes the policy of the Federal Republic: "Will the GDR fall into the hands of a ripe fruit? Despite all their reunification speeches the rulers in Bonn consider such dramatic scenarios improbable for the foreseeable future and now less desirable than ever... The Chancellor painstakingly avoids calling the existence of the GDR in question. He certainly calls for reforms, but at the same time assures them that it cannot be the aim of a reasonable policy on Germany to call on our compatriots in the GDR to come here in the largest possible numbers."

This is not least because resources, particularly for housing, are already increasingly needed to deal with the immigrants. Equally, the CDU, if it wants to win the next election has to head off the growth of the neo-Fascist Republicans who, for now at least, are anti-immigrant first and German nationalists second.

According to polls, 46% of West Germans are against further immigration from the GDR. This seems to have overtaken racism against non-German asylum seekers, possibly because the GDR settlers are in more direct economic competition with them.

The East German Stalinists clearly have even more interest in maintenance of the status quo. The reaction of the SED (CP) leadership to the exodus has been repetition of its stock response that people wishing to leave have been led astray by imperialists. Yet they have been very careful not to shut the door on normal relations with West Germany.

This is partly for economic reasons, and partly because they have no real alternative. If they removed the rights of travel to the West or of receiving money from the West, it would remove a safety valve — however ineffective — in

Provos stuck in dead-end strategy

NORTH AND SOUTH

By Patrick Murphy

When the dust has settled on the scene of the latest IRA attack in Britain, the media will get bored with the dilemma of whether private security firms should protect the army, and certainly they will have added little to their crude assessment of Republican violence.

Beyond the ritual denunciations of terrorism, or, for that matter, the ritual explanation of what drives Republicans to violence, there are issues worth examining. Like where is the IRA going?

After some eight years in practice what is the judgement on the ballot box and bullet strategy? The Deal bombing is not unique, but its familiarity is informative.

Whatever else has modernised about the Provos, their military campaign has not. Aldershot, Guildford, Regents Park, Mill Hill — they are all part of a long stalemate in the 20 year Troubles. The Provos prove they can do it and hope to wear down the enemy.

The enemy thumps tables, looking stern and assures us it will never give in. What is sometimes surprising is why the Provos continue to

believe the military campaign will achieve anything.

It is quite possible that the bombing was partly the product of divisions within the IRA between politicians and hardliners. The Adams leadership of Sinn Fein has had to publicly disown IRA activities in recent years. The unit responsible for Enniskillen was closed down. The pay-off could be a more clearly targeted military campaign in Britain and Europe.

There are obviously very active units in Germany and Holland on instruction to deliver regular results.

Speculation usually asserts that the timing is tied to the 20 year anniversary of troop deployment or even to the first anniversary of the ban. But the evidence of Gibraltar and other such incidents suggest that these attacks are planned over a much longer period and that in the end the IRA hit when the long-awaited opportunity presents itself.

Recent reports have also played down the division between 'politicos' and 'hardliners'. It seems far more likely now that there are only minor disputes about a generally agreed strategy.

The key to it is that the armed struggle becomes more attuned to the political strategy of Sinn Fein, but on no account does it replace it. The purpose of ballot box success in Northern Ireland, efforts in the South and links with broader sections of the labour movement in Britain, is to win wider support for a national liberation struggle.

With this in mind the Provos may want a new emphasis — concentrating on high-publicity targets in enemy heartlands rather than disasters close to their own community.

The whole strategy is badly flawed, however. Political and military campaigns have different rhythms; successful liberation struggles are politically led, Irish nationalism has traditionally been led by the physical force advocates.

The Deal bombing, for example, came at the end of a week when the security forces were on the rack for their complicity in sectarian assassination. This is not a one-off problem. The Provos' campaign takes no account of the fact that their military actions create new political conditions. As a reaction to nationalist oppression, Provo action usually puts nationalism back on the defensive.

They can go on with this strategy because it has little effect on their support. Since 1981, the height of emotional support for Sinn Fein, their vote has declined but slowly and marginally. There is clearly a core Sinn Fein vote which is not shifted by attacks on 'soft targets'. So little damage is done to the Republican vote — but on the other hand there is no chance of any movement or any progress in this strategy.

Sadly, the Republicans have all the signs of a movement resting on its existing support. In Northern Ireland that goes to the heart of the problem — as Sinn Fein is based on one part of one community in a society where some communal unity is the prerequisite of progress.

There is one other aspect of last week's events which deserves a thought. It is beyond doubt that an IRA active service unit is mobile in Britain and planning high-profile targets.

In two weeks in Blackpool the Tories have their conference... is that what they want us to think?

reunified?

making life bearable for those who stayed in the GDR. Already there is talk about another 17th June (the date of the 1953 East German uprising) unless there are changes in the GDR.

How the GDR develops will depend on three factors: who replaces the aged leadership around Honecker, most of whom cannot go on much longer; what opposition forces develop; and, above all, what happens in the Soviet Union, particularly in its relations with the US.

Even if the GDR is not close to collapse there is a real crisis of the regime. Nobody knows who will follow Honecker and co. in a few years time and at present there appears to be no 'Gorbachevite' wing in the SED.

They have the problem that the existence of the GDR has no justification except as an ideologically-based Stalinist state. If they were to let market forces rip in the GDR, it would quickly both become an economic satellite of the Federal Republic and lose any reason for existing politically. So once Honecker goes, the new leadership will have to tread a tightrope.

Organised political opposition is only really beginning now in the GDR. In recent years the main movement has been the peace movement, in which the Evangelical Church played a leading role. On September 10th the 'New Forum' was founded to start political discussion outside the framework of the party, but very much aimed towards it — for example, the New Forum is applying for legal status.

Its political aims are very vague, but it sees itself as trying to provide a positive alternative to leaving the GDR. It addresses itself to the apolitical and resigned attitude of those who have remained: "the troubled relationship between state and society cripples the creative potential of our society...we dissipate our energy in bad tempered passivity."

About 4,000 people have signed

its appeal and this week a demonstration in Leipzig of 8,000 people demanded legalisation of the New Forum.

At present no specifically working class opposition exists, though any turn towards a more liberal regime may create one.

Ultimately, what happens in the GDR will be decided by the attitude of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev has not brought any pressure on the GDR to follow a path similar to his own, yet the Soviet Union has only expressed mild indignation at Hungary's allowing the East Germans to leave or West Germany for receiving them. As the *Guardian* put it: "Better, [Gorbachev] must think, for restless East Germans to leave...than to go on strike in Leipzig or sit down in protest in the Karl Marx Allee."

The Soviet Union clearly wants to keep the GDR as a stable ally, while at the same time maintaining good relations with the Federal Republic. In negotiations with the US the Soviet Union is offering to cut drastically the number of its troops in the GDR and apparently German reunification was discussed this week by Shevardnadze and US Secretary of State Baker. It is, however, impossible to believe that the Soviet Union would approve German reunification unless West Germany leaves NATO; something that is also impossible to conceive.

So the most likely outcome is the continued existence of the two German states with much the same relationship as now. Although the obstacles to reunification remain — the different political and economic systems in the two states — the issue is now back on the political agenda.

It is not just an issue of self-determination but also of what the alternatives are to capitalism and Stalinism. Our attitude should be: fight for real working class socialism within both Germanies, East and West. Without this, reunification is unlikely to happen and would in any case have reactionary consequences.



Police search suspected IRA flat

Tory panics over non-payment

POLL TAX

Panic is mounting in Tory ranks over the potentially disastrous consequences for the government of introducing the poll tax.

A report in last week's *Daily Express* warns that up to 81 Tory seats are at risk because of the effects of introducing the tax. Ever-increasing non-payment figures in Scotland, and the success of local campaigns in halting warrant sales, do nothing to calm the blue nerves.

Strathclyde Regional Council's latest figures reveal that 300,000 people aren't paying. One in three in Glasgow has failed to pay anything towards the tax since its introduction last April.

The Tories are trying to put a brave face on it. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (I wonder how much he stands to gain?) was wheeled out to claim these figures as a victory for the Tory policy: "The progress made is similar to that in collecting domestic rates". Well actually it isn't. At this time last year 21.8% had failed to pay the rates — over 10% less than the poll tax non-

payment figure for Glasgow!

Behind the scenes, the Tories aren't so confident. A major row threatens to blow up at Tory Party conference later this month, over the 'safety net' proposal whereby lower spending areas will pay a higher initial tax to subsidise higher-spending inner-city councils. Luton Smith's attack on what they call the 'inequitable' tax will attract much grassroots support.

This unprecedented revolt among the Tory stalwarts has even woobled Thatcher. "We are just going to have to look at this to see if we can deal with it in another way" she confided to the *Daily Express*.

But just what can the Tories do? If they ignore the rumblings of discontent and press on regardless they face loss of support they can ill afford at a time when their popularity is at an all-time low. And those 81 seats could well be added to...

Dropping the 'safety net' proposals would certainly please the Tory strongholds in rural areas. But the resulting huge increases in inner-city areas would not merely widen the already huge gap between rich and poor in this country, but might threaten those Tory marginals which fall within the confines of higher-spending urban councils.

Or they could increase the fun-



ding of the 'safety-net' — the remedy most favoured by Tory back-benchers. The Treasury however, is unwilling to dole out the extra £650 million that Environment Secretary Chris Patten has demanded, fearing to start a rush from all other strapped-for-cash departments and of course to be seen to backtrack on its policies.

Furthermore the £650 million asked for is, again, likely to benefit solid Tory rural areas, but hardly make a dent in most city councils' bills. To fund a 'safety net' that would buy off the dissent would take billions — thus leaving nothing in the coffers for their beloved pre-emption tax cuts.

It would be a humiliating climb

down indeed if Thatcher was forced to throw money at those very councils she has spent a decade attacking for profligacy. The Tories can't win on this one. Labour could gain enormously from Thatcher's dilemma. But instead of mobilising the massive — and ever increasing — opposition to the poll tax, Labour's leaders have taken the Tories' side and urged people to pay.

Labour councils in Scotland are already attempting to seize goods from non-payers. Wage and benefit deductions can't be far behind. It is only the organised resistance of local campaigns that has so far

stopped them.

Donald Dewar, Labour's Scottish spokesperson, devotes all his energies to rubbishing the mass non-payment campaign. If only he and his cohorts had put as much time into instructing Labour councils not to implement the tax...

Local Labour Parties must join the campaign and stand in support of working class people victimised by this Tory tax, calling on Labour councils not to do the Tories' dirty work, and making links with community campaigns and trade unionists to ensure that this Tory 'nightmare' won't go away.

Local conference in Southwark

On Saturday 18th November Southwark Community Resistance against the Poll Tax (SCRAP) and Southwark Trades Council will be holding a conference against the poll tax. The initiative was first argued for by supporters of Socialist Organiser involved in both organisations.

The idea of the conference is to bring together the two wings of the anti-poll tax campaign: the community based anti-poll tax unions and labour movement organisations. It is hoped the con-

ference will help to develop a labour movement campaign on the basis of non-implementation.

This kind of initiative is vitally necessary at this stage of the campaign, not only in Southwark but in other areas in England and Wales.

It is unlikely that a strategy of non-payment in the community-based campaign can beat the poll tax without the support of sections of the labour movement particularly workers in local government and the civil service who will be directly responsible for the implementation of the tax.

For more details contact: SCRAP 01-708 4380.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Wednesday 27 September

South London SO public meeting: 'Bankers and bureaucrats trap Solidarnosc'. The Two Eagles, Austral St, nr Elephant and Castle, 7.30

Thursday 28 September

Nottingham SO: 'What is socialism?'. International Community Centre, Mansfield Road, 7.30

Thursday 28 September

Stoke SO: 'Stalin's heirs face the workers'. Stoke Town Hall, 7.30

Friday 29 September

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

Sunday 1 October

North London SO: 'Social

Democracy goes Thatcherite'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, 7.30

Sunday 1 October

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign: 'Sandinista Sprint', sponsored run and dance for Nicaragua. Brockwell Park, Brixton, SW9, 11.00. Details from NSC, 23 Beveden St, London N1 6BH (253 0246)

Monday 2 October

Memorial meeting for Manochehr Mohjabi, Iranian socialist, journalist and playwright. Organised by CARI and Iranian Community Centre. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1, 7.30

Tuesday 3 October

Canterbury SO: 'Socialists and the Labour Party'. KJCR III

Wednesday 4 October

London Socialist Forum: 'The Chinese Revolution 40 years on'. Speakers: John O'Mahony, Lam Siu Wai and others. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1, 7.30

Thursday 5 October

Socialist Campaign Group of MPs 'Conference Round-Up meeting'.

Preston Suite, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton, 12.30

Saturday 7 October

Socialist Lecturers' Alliance: 'NAT-FHE 1989 Pay Claim Action Conference'. New Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Details from Barry Lovejoy, 25 Philip Victor Rd, Birmingham B20

Sunday 8 October

Socialist Platform Memorial Meeting for Harry Wicks. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1, 3.00

Sunday 8 October

Canterbury SO day school: 'Workers' Liberty 1989'. Keynes College, University of Kent, room JCR111, 9.30am

Monday 9 October

Sheffield SO: 'Stalin's heirs face the workers'. SCCAU, 73 West St, 7.30

Wednesday 11 October

Cardiff SO: 'After Labour Party Conference'. The Comet, Moira St, near Cardiff Royal Infirmary, 7.30

Wednesday 11 October

Manchester SO: 'Stalin's heirs face the workers'

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.

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

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Sigmund Freud

Neil Stonelake surveys the life and ideas of Sigmund Freud, who died 50 years ago this month

In the late 19th century there were great leaps in human knowledge, with scientific methods being brought in to solve the problems people face.

Marx revealed the scientific basis of the exploitation of the newly-formed working class. Darwin's Theory of Evolution exposed the roots of the human race itself and cut through the superstitious mumbo-jumbo peddled by religion.

Last but not least, Sigmund Freud took the first steps towards unravelling the mysteries of the human mind. Like Marx and Darwin before him, Freud met with great hostility from his contemporaries. His theories provoked ridicule at first, ridicule based on fear of what he had to say and its implications.

For, in his investigations of the roots of human behaviour, and particularly of human sexuality, Freud seemed to be striking at a relationship which lay at the heart of capitalist society — the family.

Freud was born in 1856 in a town which is now in Czechoslovakia, but from the age of four to one year before his death in 1939 he made his home in Vienna. In 1939, when he was in his eighties, and dying of cancer, he was forced to seek asylum in London from the Nazis. They disliked both his theories and the fact that he was Jewish.

In his youth he studied medicine, qualifying as a doctor and specialising in the study of the nervous system. He became more interested in the treatment of nervous disorders by hypnosis. Working closely with Dr Josef Breuer, he developed a treatment for hysteria which involved free association — the discovery of underlying emotional traumas by means of relaxing and saying whatever came into a patient's head.

Freud's association with Breuer came to an abrupt end when Freud noted that neuroses were often associated with feelings of guilt. He developed the theory that different types of neuroses were the result of the patient participating, actively or passively, in sexual activity with an adult while they were still children. From this time on, Freud developed theories about unconscious motivation, repression and human sexuality.

Freud was always prepared to refine or change old theories if they seemed to be unsubstantiated by research. For instance, he originally thought that neuroses were due to repressed memories of actual sexual abuse in childhood. Later, he came to realise that in many cases the patient seemed to have made these stories up. This led to the development of his theories of infantile sexuality.

Briefly, these rested on the concept that humans pass through various stages of human development while still children. These were the oral stage, related to the period when the baby is at its mother's breast; the anal stage, when the child learns to control its bodily functions as part of the process of growing up as a member of society; and (at about 3 years old) the phallic stage when boys become very interested in the penis.

This argument caused great uproar against Freud. For he claimed that at this stage boys develop an intense sexual attraction to their mothers and (later) a hatred and fear of their fathers. He called this the Oedipus complex after a Greek king who (unwittingly) killed his father and married his mother.

An aspect of this theory which has also caused great controversy is that of 'penis envy'. Freud held that at the same age as a boy becomes interested in his penis, a girl develops a corresponding interest in her clitoris. But since, Freud said, the clitoris was a poor substitute for the penis, the girl became intensely jealous and only develops an attachment to her father — the Electra complex when she has accepted her sexual state.

Freud argued that neuroses occurred when the patient had failed to successfully pass one or another stage of development. Therefore a frustrating experience at one stage would lead to a regression to an earlier, more successful stage. So, a hysteric is said to have regressed to the phallic stage and an obsessional to the anal.

These theories led to the most savage attacks on Freud and his followers. Freud himself was the target of a scurrilous campaign of abuse and in England his follower Ernest Jones had his clinic closed down.

Freud's concentration on the sexual origin of neuroses led to splits within his own movement. The Swiss psychologist C J Jung split from the psychoanalytical school, as did Alfred Adler, who saw Freud's theories as too exclusively concerned with sex to the exclusion of power.

Adler argued that social circumstances led to feelings of inferiority — the inferiority complex — for which the individual strug-

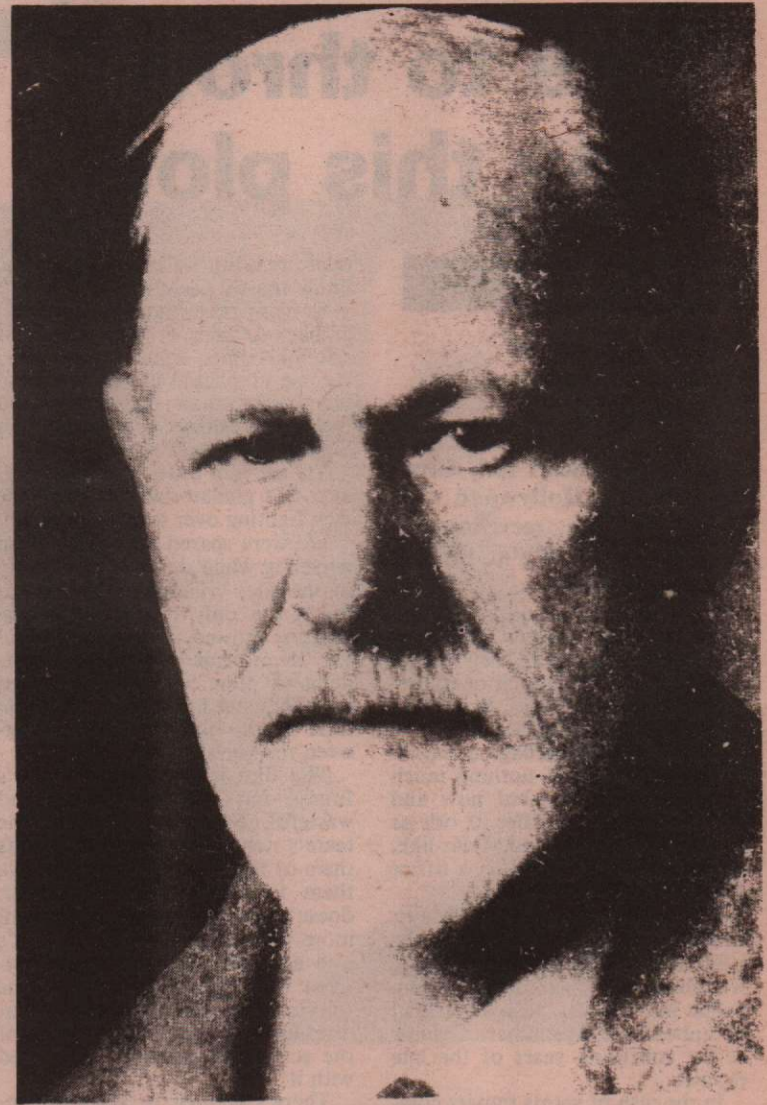
gles to compensate. So people develop a public 'persona' whose aim is to beat feelings of inferiority and gain superiority. Thus far such strivings are natural but when they become exaggerated, maladjustment takes place and leads to personality disorders. Therefore a neurotic develops symptoms because they cannot attain the goal of superiority by normal means.

Freud's theories were a huge scientific breakthrough. For the first time it became possible to see such sexual phenomena as homosexuality as a product of the social environment (instead of as a sin or a crime). Freud's emphasis on the social was particularly progressive in a society which placed strict taboos on discussion of sex, which was seen as 'dirty'.

There are few orthodox Freudians about nowadays. Freud himself did not generally see his theories as fixed or static. He was generally open minded and scientifically objective.

Freud was not a revolutionary in a political way, despite the nature of his theories. His politics throughout his life were left-liberal rather than socialist.

It seems that the greatest weakness of Freud was his insistence on the individual rather than on society. For instance, while his views on homosexuality were very progressive for the time, he still saw it as primarily a dysfunction rather than a separate form of sexuality. His theory of infantile development now seems very rigid



and mechanistic — unable to take the total environment of the individual into account.

But Freud stands as one of the

great scientific geniuses of the age, whose views were more complex and flexible than those of his moralistic detractors.

Unpleasant deposits



LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

How can we dispose of the highly radioactive waste from nuclear power stations? If we bury the stuff, what will happen to it over the many thousands of years that will pass before it is no longer harmful?

Dr Neil Chapman of the British Geological Survey spoke on this topic at the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Sheffield a fortnight ago. Earlier this month, he spoke in more detail at the Open University's summer school at Keele. My agent was there to take notes.

At the moment, some 2-3,000 cubic metres of high level waste (mainly spent fuel rods) are stored in cooling ponds at Sellafield. The government's nuclear waste disposal quango, NIREX, plans to vitrify the waste (turn it into glass blocks). This will produce the equivalent of a 2½ inch sphere of vitrified waste per head of population!

The waste will be put into concrete containers, surrounded by bentonite, a clay mineral that will resist water penetration, and buried in granite tunnels several hundred metres deep.

Favoured sites for repositories will be coastal with hard basement rocks, such as granite, overlain with sedimentary rocks (eg. in Scotland) or offshore sites with sedimentary rocks (eg. East coast). NIREX were surveying several sites, most of which were vetoed by the government just before the last election as they were in Tory seats. NIREX's Multi-Attribute Decision Analysis for Site Selection (MADASSI) was then focused on Dounreay and Sellafield. Planning permission for exploratory boreholes at Dounreay was refused so that left only Sellafield.

NIREX's risk assessment is concentrating on:

- looking at the permeability of rocks to groundwater to see if substantial amounts of radioactivity will be able to get into the environment;
- looking at the possibility of future intrusions (eg. drilling) into the repositories. Future generations may not know of the repositories and if there is an attractive mineral near the site they might inadvertently dig up the waste;
- assessing the pace of corrosion and the likelihood of gas generation, leading to high pressure (fountains of waste?);
- assessing the likelihood of earth movements disrupting the stores. For instance, would another ice age (due any time in the next few thousands years) result in erosion of the rocks covering the repositories by glaciers?

If the risk assessment comes up with the right answers, testing will start at Sellafield in 2005.

So how long will the waste be kept away from the environment if all goes well? The concrete containers should last 300 years. As

they deteriorate, they should make the surrounding clay more alkaline and hence less permeable to water. This chemical containment should work for 5000 years. The geological characteristics of the rocks should then keep the waste in for perhaps 50,000 years. By this time the more soluble radioactive elements (ie. those most easily leached out by water) should have decayed to very low levels.

The goal, as defined by the Department of the Environment, is that escaping radiation should cause no more than one extra cancer death per year per million population.

But sooner or later ground water will penetrate the repository. Do we have any guidance as to how fast it will wash out the still highly radioactive waste?

Well, there are some naturally occurring repositories of radioactive material. One, Morro do Ferro ("hill of iron") in Brazil, is perhaps the most radioactive spot on the Earth. 30,000 tonnes of the radioactive metal thorium lie buried a few feet below the surface and a stream runs through the deposit. Plants growing there have picked up so much radioactivity that when laid on wrapped photographic film they X-ray themselves!

However, and this is very encouraging, there is very little radioactivity in the stream so the material is not very mobile in the environment. Thorium behaves like plutonium, so it is most reassuring that emissions from Morro do Ferro are only 1/20th of US limits for plutonium.

At other sites, such as uranium mines at Koongarra, Australia, and at Oklo, Gabon (a natural fission reaction nearly 2 billion years old), very little radioactivity escapes.

At Cigar Lake, northern Canada, a 1300 million year old uranium deposit at 450 metres reveals no trace of its existence at the surface, despite being saturated with

groundwater for a billion years. Closer to home, sediments in Loch Lomond include a layer of radioactive clay containing uranium, radium and iodine. The sediment has remained undisturbed for over 5000 years and the radioactivity seems quite firmly locked up.

The evidence from these natural deposits "provides considerable reassurance to those modelling a waste repository", concluded Dr Chapman at the BAAS meeting.

However, in his OU talk, he raised the question of human interference. Given that no human society to date has had a continuous history of much more than 2000 years, we have to consider the possibility that some future society with no knowledge of us and our wastes will reinvent the science of geology.

They will then discover, say, in the region of what used to be Sellafield, an unexpected magnetic field. If they know about nuclear power, they may suspect a radioactive deposit but otherwise they may dig down to see what's there and find our still highly dangerous wastes.

The above deals only with high level waste. There are also intermediate and low level wastes, less radioactive but in larger quantities. These also require safe burial but their more varied composition (lots of paper and plastic) makes it more difficult to predict what will happen to them over time. Quantities of intermediate level wastes will increase markedly as nuclear power stations start to be dismantled.

Dr Chapman argued though that people should try to put the risks of nuclear waste into some sort of realistic context. He thought people should be just as concerned about the disposal of toxic chemicals, much now in unlabelled sites. He also somewhat mischievously pointed out that more people die from using contraception than from nuclear power!

10 REVIEWS

Time to throw away this plot

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Major League'

Eat your heart out, *Green Party*; Hollywood has been into recycling for decades. Nothing's thrown away in Tinseltown.

Old plots get reworked every few years, and the studios milk successful formulae for all they're worth, as the onward march of the sequels (*Police Academy*, *Star Trek*, *Lethal Weapon*, etc.) shows.

Sometimes the garbage is recycled as garbage, and nothing much can hide the stink, but now and then Hollywood justifies its title as the Dream Factory, and Midas-like, turns garbage into gold, box office gold.

The new sports movie, 'Major League' did good business in the USA, and it's not hard to see why. It's about winning, about turning defeat into success, so it's the kind of upbeat message America wants in the confusing years of the late eighties.

In the rash of sports movies coming out of the States now Americans can enjoy the thrill of competing, and winning, without the guilt and the complexity of all those Vietnam War films.

'Major League' has an American Dream plot. The baseball team that's been bottom of the League for thirty-four years learns how to win, and does it in spectacular style.

Hollywood loves this plot. I must have seen the same story hundreds of times by now — in showbiz settings, in army settings, in high school settings — you name it. The losers who learn how to win — box office gold.

Grafted on to this emotional rollercoaster is the story of Jake, the ageing catcher of the team, and his moves to win back his wife, who thinks she loves someone else. The someone else is well off, stable, and

interested, but we know, we simply know (partly because we've seen it in so many other movies) that she'll go back to Jake. From the dawn of celluloid time, women have gone for the unreliable but exciting bad boy rather than the stable (and therefore sexless) Mr Goody Two Shoes. No contest.

Yet the film poses it as a contest, almost a gladiatorial one, with the men fighting over who gets the girl.

We were spared a scene of them wrestling while she stood helplessly to one side, wringing her hands, but that's the only restraint the film makers showed. Someone should tell them that recycling has its dangers; plots can't just be dusted off. They need to be up-to-date on little details like the relations between the sexes.

The film is a comedy, and it's funny, but it's also sloppy and wasteful. Margaret Whitton, the team's rich bitch owner who wants them to finish last so she can move them from Cleveland to Miami, doesn't have enough to do; we want more of her than we get. There's also a muddled bit of rivalry between sleek player Dorn and the rookie punk pitcher Vaughn that dribbles away into nowhere, as if the screenwriter simply got bored with it.

There's enough to keep you interested though; it's a cheerful, comfy ride. But after the high comes the hangover, the inevitable let down. What were you really laughing at, what were you cheering on?

You were cheering on the myth, the cruel, soul destroying myth, of the American Dream, where anyone, with hard work and perseverance, can supposedly be a winner. Not that it's really your fault. Even if you know it's bull, the damn swelling soundtrack and the roar and excitement of the crowd suck you in, and before you know it, you're swept away by it all.

Maybe that's all too serious, and it's really just a movie, and a fun movie at that, but all the same, it comes charged with a message, and the message is a lie. Sure losers can become winners, sometimes, but it



The underdogs making good

doesn't happen that often, and seeing other people win isn't much comfort to the losers (and there are many more losers than winners in the USA today).

You'll probably see this plot another few dozen times in your

lifetime, so be warned. It only seems harmless. Repeated exposure could do serious damage. No matter how they dress it up and try to disguise it, it's still a lie. Films like 'Major League' may turn myth into gold, but it's fairy gold.

Comrades and sisters

TV

By Vicki Morris

As the *Independent* pointed out in their review of 'Inside Story', the Miss USSR documentary, this programme might have been simply an excuse to demonstrate, in the most salacious way, the important truth that Russian women are not the ugly creatures of popular myth.

Or it could just have been an excuse for poking more, admittedly well-documented, fun at the miseries of Soviet life.

Well, the programme was a little bit of both of those...but, thankfully, it was also a lot more.

The camera crew could not resist focusing on women's legs and bottoms negotiating the usual tortuous sets of Miss Nationality contests. But, after all, they are only men...

And there were plenty of examples given of the hopelessly impoverished and boded nature of the whole enterprise — the Miss USSR competition which Mikhail Gorbachev so grandly promised but which received no state funding. Private enterprise ran it so much more efficiently, I don't think.

Just like in Miss World, women were being bribed into making big bucks for businessmen.

Any contrast with Morley's operation was in the question of degree: the extent of the desperation of the participants, and the technical obstacles in staging such an event — very nearly a fiasco — in the hopelessly inept USSR. But the former of these themes was the most important, and the best conveyed.

The programme's big saving grace was its concentration on what the competition demonstrated about the position of Soviet women.

The programme began with visions of Russian life which have become familiar. Many women do what are traditionally men's jobs in the West: manual labour which is badly paid and undervalued.

In that respect they have equality with men in Russian society. But with that go the following: childbearing in appalling conditions, scant contraceptive provision, barbaric methods of 'family planning' — Russian women have on average 12 abortions in their lifetime — all the responsibility for housework, hours of queuing, and practically nothing to buy with the little money they do earn.

There is also an appalling indifference towards women on the part of Russian men, something which has been chronicled less here in the West and which this programme brought out through interviews with a woman journalist, and an actress.

However, it was not just the observation of the women who despised the Miss USSR competition, but also of many of the competitors, who took time out from the gruelling preparations for the competition to talk about sexual relations in the USSR: Russian men don't hate women, they largely ignore them, except as sexual objects.

Some of the competitors, desperate to get away from their degrading lives, and hoping to win the prize of travel and some wealth, were unhappy they had to do it by parading around semi-clad.

This was especially true for women from the Islamic states in the USSR, some of whom risked ostracisation by their families for taking part in the compulsory swimwear section of the competition.

And what is Gorbachev doing by encouraging the display of the feminine charms of his nation? Only setting up a glamorous model hardly any Soviet women can hope to live up to.

It's not enough for Gorbachev that a woman queues for hours to feed her kids, or that she labours to rebuild the inert Soviet economy, which Stalinist bureaucrats have mismanaged for decades. Insultingly, she is now encouraged to get up that little bit earlier in the morning to put on a full face of make-up for her unappreciative man.

The most impressive aspect of the programme was the references to the camaraderie which can exist between Soviet women, largely forgotten during the cut and thrust of the Miss USSR competition, but re-emerging afterwards to unite all the losers — and Soviet women in general. Camaraderie, after all, is about all they have got.

A big post-modernist novel, completely uninspiring

BOOKS

Gordon Macmillan reviews 'London Fields' by Martin Amis (Jonathan Cape, £12.95, 470 pages)

London Fields' is a novel. It is the end of the millennium, the world is in nuclear crisis and heightened ecological gloom.

But the right-on "bigness" of this book is akin to tacky name dropping ("Get Green" and "CND") and stands merely as a backdrop to the Amisian world of low life.

'London Fields' is really a murder story, but no ordinary one. It's a killing Amis-style. It's also a love story, maybe. But it's probably more accurate to say a love-death story, or simply a story of the death of love that is a recurring image about 'London Fields'.



Sam Young is our American narrator, a writer writing a book called 'London Fields'. This allows Amis to take a mask and at least pretend to be elsewhere, giving him the space to slip into his favourite American slacks and let the story be uncovered. This device tricks the reader, allowing Amis under cover of narrator to lead fair chase, holding out until the end.

Nicola Six plans her own murder.

She is the constructor, selector and the murder victim of her own crime-creation scheme.

Like Amis's past women, she remains primarily laconic in her nature; she is as obvious in her absence as she is in her presence. She chooses three men to join her scheme and she plays them for all their worth.

She builds them up, before taking the wicked joy in kicking their legs away and watching them take the fall. But only one of them will be driven to finish the deadly couplet and join Nicola Six as her murderer.

Keith Talent, even larger than his predecessor John Self, lives booze and porn but hungers for darts and TV fame. This is where his road begins and ends, as Nicola plays her hand in his world of darts.

All things in 'London Fields' come in twos and Keith is no exception. He is mirrored in every way by rich chappie Guy Clinch.

Where Keith is loud and vital, a dominator of women, Guy is lacklustre, and dominated. Guy gets little sympathy and a rough deal, not bad for a man who has it all. Amis empathises with Keith, the underdog and the one who gets the roughest deal out of life.

Engineers name target plants

The leaders of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering unions (Confed) have at last named the seven key plants to be balloted for strike action over the 35 hour week.

They are:

British Aerospace: Preston, Chester and Kingston upon Thames;

Rolls Royce: Hillington, Glasgow, and Parkside, Coventry; NEI/Parsons Newcastle, and; Smiths Industries Cheltenham.

The plants are all hugely profitable, and the firms are all influential in the Engineering Employers Federation.

But there are problems with the Confed leaders' strategy. According to Bill Jordan, "Our objective is to compel individual companies to negotiate a settlement with the CSEU. We don't want strikes, and we have worked too hard to revitalise our industry to want to see it destroyed."

Jordan has also taken it upon himself to tell the employers that he will accept a 37 or 37½ hour week as a 'first step' towards the 35 hour week.

Holding up the prospect of local deals on hours could be dangerously divisive in the current climate.

At present the overwhelming majority of engineering workers are

united by sharing the same normal working week of 39 hours.

It would seriously fragment the unity of engineering workers if wide variations were allowed to open up.

Militancy on the wages part of the national claim is already difficult to generate because of the wide variation in local pay deals.

Before the dispute started the employers' federation had already made it clear that they wanted to see an end to national bargaining to prepare the way for local flexibility deals.

According to the *Financial Times*, the Engineering Employers Federation are even considering altering their constitution to allow companies wishing to withdraw from national agreements to retain affiliation to the Federation. So pressing for local deals with a few key companies could be very divisive.

Engineering workers must maintain the unity that national agreements make possible.

The prospect of local deals and the delay in naming a day for the strikes to start have caused problems for stewards and activists on the ground trying to collect the levy to finance strike action.

Nevertheless, collecting the levy and building interest in the campaign through mass meetings are still vital tasks for all engineering activists.



Photo: John Smith, Profile.

Support the ambulance crews!

Rank and file must control

The 'Drive for 35' has the potential to generate enormous solidarity amongst engineering workers.

If strike action is opened up wide enough and the maximum number of workers are involved in the action this dispute could radically alter the mood and the balance of forces in every engineering plant.

But for this to happen rank and file control is the key:

- Regular local Confed stewards'

meetings should be held which could act as local strategy committees. And consider ways of building the dispute such as unsubsidised solidarity strikes.

- National Confed stewards' conferences should be held on a regular basis to control the overall conduct of the dispute. Jordan's willingness to talk down the unions' claim in public without a mandate shows clearly that he and the other Confed leaders cannot be trusted.

No loans! Fight for the right to study!

From back page

government. But just what will a Labour government deliver?

Under Kinnock we'll see a softer version of the Tories. The Policy Reviews give no commitment to the vital public spending that's needed in education, they talk boldly of introducing a graduate tax to replace at least part of the student grant as if this is some great alternative to the Tories' loans. Even some members of the NUS National Executive Committee support the idea of a graduate tax as an alternative to loans!

These issues have to be taken up. We have to start a debate on education that will carry over its demands to any future Labour government.

The NUS leadership has a mandate to organise a first term national demonstration. The NUS leadership is breaking that mandate. Running scared of the Tories after last year's battle on Westminster Bridge will give a strong indication to Thatcher and Co. that pushing loans through parliament and smashing NUS will be easy.

The 'Fight for the Right to Study — Defend NUS' demonstration in Manchester on 18 October, two

days before loans are discussed in the Commons, should become a national focus to show the Tories just what they're letting themselves in for if they continue to pursue their attacks on education.

The 'Fight for the Right to Study — Defend NUS' demo should be the spark to ignite a term of action the likes of which has never been seen before. We have not time to waste! Left Unity proposes the following action:

- Support the MANUS demonstration on 18 October.
- Come to the conference on loans and voluntary membership organised by Kent Area NUS on the 4 November in London.
- Come to the lobby of Parliament on 20 October (the day loans is being debated in the Commons), also called by Kent Area NUS.

- Co-ordinate a wave of occupations in response to the Queen's Speech, linked to a national demonstration. This is central to building a national campaign that is adequate to beat the Tories.

This perspective must be closely tied to the work of building activists' networks in the colleges, links with workers in campus trade unions and the pressing task of replacing the grossly inadequate leadership of NUS.

Industrial action by ambulance crews is solid. The ban on overtime and rest day working by 19,000 ambulance crew workers is over this year's 6.5% pay offer.

Ambulance crews want parity with the other emergency services.

At some stations — Bromley, Greenwich and Isleworth — ambulance officers and control staff have joined in the action. The result of their national ballot for an overtime ban over pay is due at the end of September.

The rank and file support given already — including a commitment not to cover for crews — suggests a 'yes' vote for action. This would put further pressure on the government to make concessions.

Even a Tory backbencher — Richard Holt — has called for a better pay offer!

But the Tories want to test the support for the action before giving any ground. They will be worried at the unprecedented solidarity of all ambulance workers.

The service is in crisis and held together by vast amounts of overtime. In Deptford, London, one out of four vacancies lies unfilled. And vital equipment such as defibrillators is paid for by charity events.

Cover has been down by up to half in London because of the overtime ban.

Ambulance workers need to hammer out the basis of their claim, which ranges from 10.8% to parity with firefighters (around 20%) or binding arbitration with no minimum rise. It is also vital that action is not called off till management are forced to make concessions.

Some Tories are calling for the army to be used to break the ambulance crews' action. Other health workers must make it clear that they will answer such attacks with solidarity strike action.

Propaganda is vital in this battle. The Labour leadership should make the ambulance workers' campaign central to an anti-Thatcher crusade. Kinnock should use the media spotlight on

Labour Party conference next week to press home the justice of the ambulance crews' case, to call for support for their action and to denounce the threatened use of troops.

Keep death off building sites!
Lobby of Parliament
Thursday 19 October
3pm-6pm
Starts with meeting in Grand Central Committee room
Called by the Construction Safety Campaign

TV bosses attack across the board

Earlier this month sacked TV-AM technicians were offered compensation for their dismissal.

It was a shoddy deal — nobody got their job back. The technicians were sacked after an official 24-hour strike over Christmas 1987.

The dispute between TV-AM and the unions is formally over. But the sackings set a precedent.

They signalled a wave of attacks on working conditions across the industry. TV bosses would use the example of TV-AM as a threat to force deals through. Within months Tyne Tees pushed through worse conditions.

This process has been given an extra boost by the end of national bargaining in July. And TV companies must soon compete for their franchises.

Bosses at Granada TV threaten to impose new contracts on 2 October. They want to get rid of overtime payments and make it easier to rota workers at their convenience.

Both the NUJ and Liverpool ACTT say they will ballot for industrial action

if new contracts are imposed.

Unions at Thames are to ballot for action over the right to joint talks with management. Thames bosses want to play one set of workers off against another — and they too are threatening to impose new contracts.

Anglia, Yorkshire and ITN have introduced an annual hours system to cut down overtime pay. At Yorkshire workers are expected to turn up on

shifts at only 5 hours notice.

TV bosses have also scrapped jobs. 100 have gone at TVS this summer alone. And workers who survive the cuts must be prepared to cover for several different jobs if necessary.

Only strike action can repel these attacks. And the fight must be organised on an industry-wide basis to succeed in the long run.

IN BRIEF

Around 5,000 white collar workers at 20 regional airports have been offered a 9% pay rise.

ICL bosses at Gorton, Manchester, have dropped plans for union derecognition under the threat of industrial action.

Workers at another ICL factory, near Stoke on Trent, have voted for action against their performance-

related pay system. Large numbers received only a 5% rise this year.

The college union NATFHE is to ballot on an exam boycott at 80 polys and colleges of Higher Education. College bosses want to rip up existing contracts and have offered a pay rise of less than 6%.

A survey researched by MORI showed that over half the people asked were not in a union because nobody has asked them to join. And over half joined to win better pay and conditions. NALGO commissioned the survey.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Demonstrate!
1.30pm,
Wednesday 18
October

All Saints, Oxford Road, Manchester.
Called by Manchester Area NUS.

No loans! Fight for the right to study!

By Emma Colyer

During the next two months the Tories will announce their latest plans for Higher Education.

Loans look certain to be introduced by September 1990, and it's very likely that some attack on the National Union of Students will be made in the form of Voluntary Membership.

So far we've seen the Great Education Reform Bill turn higher and further education into enterprises that compete on the market. Education as a right is gradually becoming a thing of the past.

The Tories have the nerve to claim their intentions are to improve access for all in education, and yet at the same time as talking about this they actually introduce a financial support system for students that will definitely and inevitably lead to a greater reduction in access.

The top-up loans system due to be discussed in the House of Commons on 20 October (two days after the 'Fight for the Right to Study — Defend NUS' demo in Manchester) will mean that the already greatly diminished student grant will be frozen and the top-up loans part of the financial support will increase annually until grants are completely phased out.

It is those already discriminated against in society who will suffer most if loans are introduced. It is women, black people, mature students, the working class, and lesbians and gays who will be excluded from Higher Education.

A recent survey shows mature students are already considerably worse off than students under 26 years old. One fifth of mature students are forced to borrow large sums of money not only from banks but also from family and friends.

A loans system will mean even greater debt for these students. And of course many are likely to be denied loans by banks because their age reduces their future earning power.

A loans system exists in the United States, and there 53.7% of all students between 16 and 24 years old hold down full-time or part-time jobs and 10% work at least 35 hours a week and almost three quarters of all mature students are working their way through college. People from already impoverished and disadvantaged backgrounds are having to divide their time between work and study.

How will the Tories loans system differ from the American? Well, according to Robert Jackson, Minister for Higher Education, there are important differences: "The number of people eligible to borrow is lower, and the social and educational level is very much

higher." So much for the Tories' claim to improve access for all!

The privatisation of education will not benefit the majority. Education becomes a commodity bought, sold and controlled by the whims of the market. The student movement faces a major challenge over the coming months.

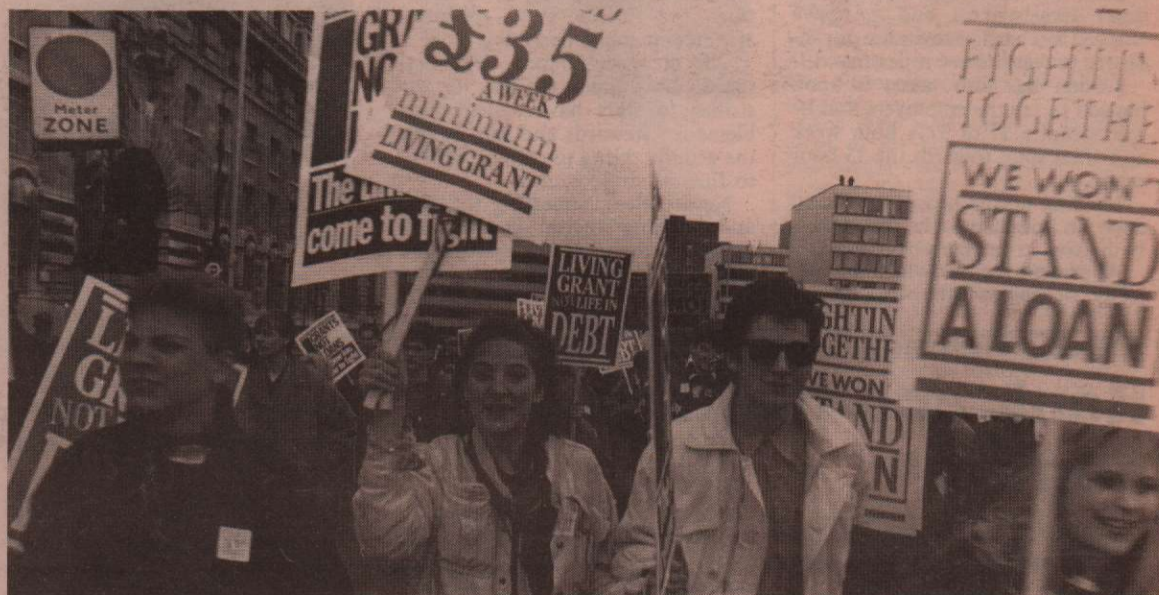
We have to defeat loans, but we have to go beyond this. We have to make positive demands for further and higher education.

For too long the Tories have hacked away at education — the defeat of loans is vital, but a decent living grant for all in post-16 education is a necessity if the issue of access to education is to be tackled seriously. Adequate childcare facilities, unemployment benefit/Income Support and Housing Benefit paid during all vacations have to be fought for and won.

For too long NUS has been on the defensive fighting single issue campaigns of Stop this, Defend that, No to the other. We need a set of positive demands and we can win them. NUS has to:

- Meet the Tories head-on in the battle of ideas;
- Mobilise its membership beyond 'No to loans';
- Involve the Further Education Sector in the battle, fighting for a living grant for all in post 16-education.

The defeat of loans is central to



every campaign a college or NUS Area runs. Calls for the defence of NUS have to be linked to and indeed are conditional on a real struggle against loans.

NUS only becomes worth defending when it proves it can deliver in the fight to preserve our living standards and rights to education. The fight against loans is central to the battle to defend NUS against voluntary membership. Only this way will the mass body of students be drawn

into the fight for education.

The slogan 'Fight for the Right to Study — Defend NUS' should be taken up nationally. This slogan is positive and immediately applies to all students in all sectors.

How do we win positive demands and defeat loans?

Organising demonstrations, occupations, strikes and other forms of direct action around the time of Tory Party Conference and the Queen's Speech will focus on the

need and power of self activity. The NUS leadership's idea of a campaign against loans is a letter-writing/lobbying campaign. The Tories have never made retreats, changed policy or given concessions as a result of large mail bags at NO.10 or from lobbies alone.

The NUS leadership seems to be content to wait for a Labour

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Labour must scrap all anti-union laws



WHETTON'S WEEK
A miner's diary

Next week's Labour Party conference should be interesting if the delegates are allowed to speak their minds.

But I fear it will be a steam-

rolling conference to ensure that the leadership continue to control.

All this about the Policy Reviews, it's old stuff but with a different name on it. All it means is that the leadership pick the policies on which they think they can achieve power, put a fancy title on it, and railroad it through conference.

I'm sure that plenty of delegates will have things to say against that approach.

Anti-trade union laws will be a central issue at the conference. I can remember in 1971 marching behind a banner that said 'Scrap the Industrial Relations Act! Return to free collective bargaining!' The march was led by Jack Jones and other stalwarts of the trade union movement.

Now the unpleasantness of the Industrial Relations Act has been re-enacted under the Tories — again with a different title, but it's the same employers browbeating the trade unions with the government's and the law courts' cooperation.

We've got to make a stand. We risk facing another five years of Thatcherism and to fight back we have to raise people's expectations

and hopes. We can't do that if we intend running capitalism better than the capitalists and better than the Tories.

Unilateralism will also be an issue. The Time the Greens really took off was shortly after Neil Kinnock announced the abandonment of unilateral nuclear disarmament. The Greens, who stand for unilateral nuclear disarmament, picked up millions of votes. There's got to be a message in there somewhere.

If we are seen to be abandoning the principles on which we've stood in the past, people are going to say 'Can you trust this bunch?'

The way that they are fiddling and shennaniganing, the answer will be no, you can't trust them. And where does that leave us when it comes to going round on the knocker?

We have to take these issues onto the floor of conference and we have to beat Kinnock. It can be done. That was shown at the TUC Conference over the issue of nuclear power stations, and it can be done again on the floor of Labour Party conference. It will be a way of lifting the rank and file, and telling

the leadership that we are not going to allow them to hijack our party and our movement.

I would also urge conference to remember that there are still 150 sacked miners.

We've seen printworkers, dockers, seafarers go down, we've seen thousands of trade unionists' jobs thrown out onto the scrapheap because of their failure to understand that when people go out onto the streets to fight they're not just fighting for themselves, they're fighting for the movement.

Next time it comes to a struggle, don't think you're untouchable — because that's what happened last time. A lot of people thought it didn't affect them. And those people who thought they were untouchable were the next ones to be touched.

If that Tory legislation is left on the statute book, it'll be used against us, whether by Tories or indeed by a Labour government. Remember that, and remember the sacked miners, too.