

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER



**10,000  
march  
against  
student  
loans  
see  
centre  
pages**

# Why Tories locked out lifesavers

## Tories risk lives

"An ambulance crew were called out from Hillingdon to attend to an unconscious woman. Management ordered their immediate recall before they could pick the woman up, leaving her stranded. When the crew drove back to base they were told they had been suspended."

"Management have even gone so far as to remove ignition keys from ambulances to stop us doing our job."

Mac McEndoo, North West London Ambulance convenor

**T**his Monday and Tuesday, 23 and 24 October, the people of London were without an ambulance service because the bosses, egged on by the Tories, locked out the ambulance workers!

Ambulance men and women were on standby. They said they would answer emergency calls — without pay. But those who run the service wouldn't let them!

They removed keys from ambulances to stop them, and redirected SOS calls to Scotland Yard, which sent unqualified police officers in ordinary police vans or cars to do the job of the skilled ambulance workers!

When the workers decided to work to rule in their four-week wage dispute, management suspended some of them. A rash of sit-ins then swept across most of the ambulance stations in London.

When the workers offered nevertheless to provide an emergency service, the bosses weren't having any. In the background rumours circulated that the Army had been put on the alert, ready to take over the service.

In the House of Commons, Health Minister Kenneth Clarke said on Tuesday afternoon that the Army had indeed been put on alert.

When it looked as if sit-ins would spread throughout the country in response to the London lockout, the bosses backed off. They announced just before we go to press

(Tuesday evening) that they had reinstated the suspended ambulance workers with pay, and that the ambulance service would be operated again while talks on the wage dispute were held under the auspices of the government arbitration service ACAS.

The bosses continue to refuse the union demand to put the dispute to binding arbitration. Plainly they have no confidence in their own case. And the Tories don't dare risk defeat in this dispute because if the ambulance workers win it could open a flood of workers' demands.

### A London ambulance driver reports:

As of Tuesday 24th, 62 stations out of 71 in London were off the road. The crews are in the stations. They will go out for 999 calls even with no pay.

Management have said "no way". They won't let the crews go out. So you've got all the crews on stations, and our management won't let us go out.

Management say they haven't suspended people. But when they say to someone: sign off and you will not receive any pay for the rest of the shift, to me that means you've been suspended.

We were keeping the 999 system running. We were contacting the controllers by phone and on radios, they were contacting us if they had a call. What management have told the media is a pack of lies. They said they couldn't get in contact



St George's hospital on Monday

## What to do

- Invite an ambulance worker to your Labour Party or trade union branch. Discuss setting up a local support committee.
- Demand the Labour Party gives full support to the ambulance workers' action and their full claim.
- Demand the TUC calls a day of action in support of the ambulance workers and in defence of the NHS.
- Link up the ambulance workers with other NHS workers

fighting over pay, cuts and in defence of the NHS. MSF is already balloting members in the health service for strike action over a pay claim: it should hasten the action to help ambulance workers. Other unions should also join solidarity strikes, following the example of Smithfield meat porters, who recently struck in protest against cuts at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. If there is strong solidarity action, the Tories and the bosses will not dare use the law against it, any more than

they dared use the law against the strikes in support of the health workers last year.

- In the event of the police being used again, leaflet the police calling on them to refuse to scab. They are being asked to cover vital jobs for which they are not trained or qualified when the trained and qualified staff are willing to do the work and are being stopped only by the bosses' lock-out.
- The dispute should be under the control of regular union reps' meetings in each area.

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# What next after Friday the 13th?

By Martin Thomas

In about one hour on the afternoon of Friday 13 October, share values on the New York Stock Exchange dropped by about \$200 billion — a loss equivalent to \$1000 for every child, woman and man in the USA.

Within a couple of days the stock markets stabilised, and now the money men are laughing off the crash as a momentary blip of no importance.

Friday the 13th, however, may well have been the forerunner of much graver difficulties for world capitalism.

The trigger was the collapse of an attempt by the managers and employers of United Air Lines to "buy out" the company. They wanted to raise enough cash by borrowing from banks to buy the company's shares and gain control of it.

British Airways also planned to have a share in this buy-out. Such buy-outs, either by managers or by stock market sharks, have been common in the US in recent years. The new owners sell off bits of the companies they have bought ("asset-stripping") and restructure the rest for higher profits, often attacking workers' wages and conditions.

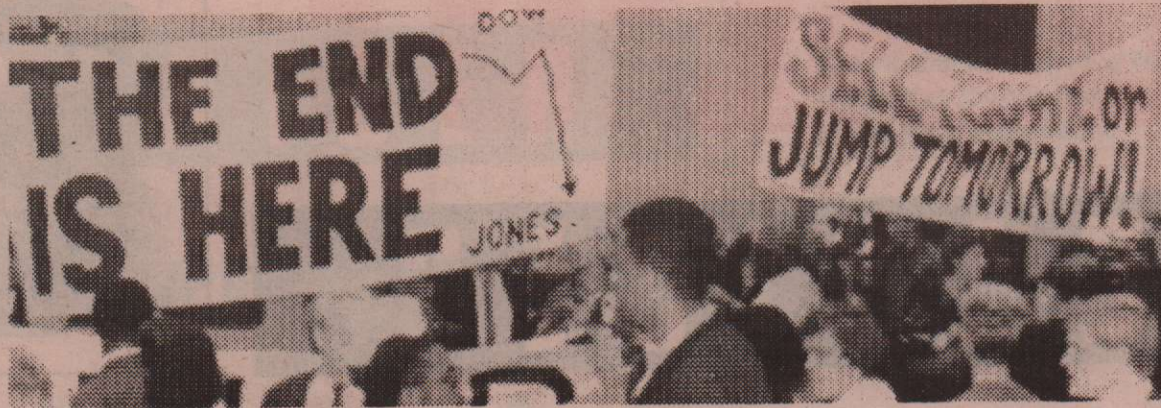
The United Air Lines buy-out failed because Japanese banks refused to lend enough money to cover it.

Stock-market speculators calculated that the failure might signal the end of the vast takeover boom of recent years in the US, and thus of the boost that takeovers have given to share prices. That is why they hurried to sell shares.

Then the stock markets calmed down. Nigel Lawson declared that "there is no need for sharp fluctuations in the stock markets to have significant effects on the real economy."

The two years since the great world stock market crash of October 1987 seem to prove him right. It is true that stock markets are parasitic on the business of production and distribution rather than integral to it.

There are three ways in which a stock market crash can cause a slump in production and consumption: by cutting consumer demand (because consumers who have lost out in the crash spend less); by cutting companies' investment



Wall Street on Monday 16 October

(because it's harder for them to raise cash by floating new shares); and by triggering a chain of business failures. None of these is automatic, and none of them happened on a large scale after October 1987.

Nevertheless a stock market crash can signal economic maladies. October 1987, essentially, signalled the grave instability in the world capitalist system caused by the huge expansion over the '80s of uncontrolled international credit, coupled with the US's big trade imbalance.

That malady is not cured. After falling slightly, the US trade deficit rose again last month, and was \$113 billion over the last 12 months.

Friday the 13th signalled a different, though related, malady: the huge increase in US businesses' debts.

More and more businesses have been borrowing money to do buy-outs like the United Air Lines one. At present US banks hold some \$100 billion in debt on these "leveraged buy-outs". Banks and other institutions and people also hold about \$200 billion in so-called "junk bonds".

"Junk bonds" are bits of paper on which companies promise to pay very high rates of interest, but without guaranteeing the security of the investment.

For seven years now, "junk bond" selling, bank lending, and share prices have chased round and round a spiral of expansion. Even the October 1987 crash did not stop the spiral.

The spiral looks very shaky now. The "junk bond" market has got a lot weaker recently. A number of firms have already failed to meet the payments due on their "junk bonds" — Integrated Resources,

Southmark, Eastern Air Lines, SCI Television, and Resorts International are the biggest. The wild reaction of the stock market to the United Air Lines fiasco shows that the speculators think the spiral is shaky.

A large chunk of the assets of US banks and financiers (and, less so, banks elsewhere) is tied up in risky loans. Even a small recession could lead to the borrowers not paying, banks going bust, and a spiralling collapse. And that, in turn, could destroy the dollar as the basis of international trade.

Already the growth of industrial production is slowing in the US and Japan; it has stopped in Britain,

though West Germany is still expanding fairly fast. Inflation is rising in a number of leading capitalist countries, though mostly not as much as in Britain. Interest rates are high everywhere.

As *The Economist* puts it: "The [leveraged buy-out] deals have yet to be tested by even a small slump. Most of the deals that stumbled this summer did so because the companies could not meet their forecast revenue projections. Wait till times really get tough."

The *Financial Times*, similarly, worried about "a credit mania as dangerous as previous crazes in lending to Third World governments or Texas property developers."

## Tory lock out

### From front page

with vehicles, but they could.

One thing that particularly annoys me is that the voluntary vehicles are all staffed by people who are presently employed in other jobs on higher rates of pay than we get and are prepared to take days off to do our jobs.

One thing that we should ask for is that those voluntary workers go back and do their own jobs. They wouldn't do our jobs at our rates of pay. Most people have been doing 30-odd hours over the top each week to keep the service running.

I honestly don't know if we are fighting just the NHS management or if it's an order from much higher than we're not to be paid under any circumstances. But to offer the ambulance workers 6½% on our basic pay precisely three days after they gave the dustmen 8½%!

The police and firefighters don't

even have to argue over their pay, it's index-linked. Our wage scales are far behind. Our London weighting is £981. Firefighters get around £1700, and police over £2000.

London has been offered a bigger pay rise of 9½%, so they say, but that figure is totally fabricated. It is got by taking out our London weighting and putting it on basic pay and calling it 9½%.

We're not prepared to go on strike. We are not trying to hurt the public, although the media keep saying that's what we're doing. We've gone just about every way we can not to hit the public, but to make the point to management.

Obviously we'd be glad if other groups of workers were prepared to go on strike; but we feel guilty about asking for their support. Although we have backed other workers, we can't back them with strikes.

## Children and divorce

### WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

Over the last month or so most of the 'quality' (ie. good quality) newspapers and women's magazines have carried pieces on divorce, and particularly on the effect it has on children.

Divorce has a very bad effect on children, leading to furious (but repressed) rage, insecurity and, later, an inability to form happy and long-lasting relationships.

It appears that these effects are more pronounced where the children are not in regular, frequent and loving contact with both parents.

One question raised by these articles is why all these newspapers and magazines chose to raise this particular subject at this time. One answer is that the government has just decided not to set up a nationally co-ordinated and funded conciliation service for relationships in trouble.

Obviously such a service would be costly and the Tories would say 'no' for that reason alone. But a second and more unpleasant reason is this: the Tories are against any form of help for divorcing couples and for single parents.

To a certain extent I can see the Tories' point. The evidence so far presented seems to indicate that divorce harms children. So, it follows that children would be protected from divorce by making it a 'hard' option. At this point most readers will probably howl with outrage.

"Surely," people will cry, "married couples should not be forced to endure years of misery, possibly violence, and certainly mental suffering for 'the sake of the children'? Doesn't that atmosphere make children just as unhappy as separation?" This is, of course, the big dilemma. But it is all too easy to imagine that what suits the adult will suit the child.

The truth of this statement is all around us. Go shopping. Watch children in tears, being shouted at, and hit, and told to be quiet. It is good for adults for them to be quiet, and damn the consequences to the child.

9 times out of 10 our sympathy is for the poor mother coping with kids, trolley and the checkout queue. We empathise with the mother, she is "one of us", as she wrestles child, buggy and shopping onto the bus.

The howling child is the disturber of the peace with its demands of "Mummy look, look mummy..." We might regret the brutality with which it is treated, but we are not on its wavelength, and we don't understand its needs.

Our society crushes and stifles children. At school they are repressed more than developed, often brutalised and maimed. Parents overlook them as easily in divorce as out shopping — or so it appears from the evidence.

Fathers often walk out of the children's lives never to reappear — and mother allows this to happen because, in truth, she doesn't want him around. The parents who don't use their kids to get at one another as the relationship fails are very rare.

Everything the Tories are doing will probably do more harm than good. Keeping a single mother in poor housing and poverty does nothing for her child or society.

A national conciliation service would probably save some marriages/relationships and certainly cut down on the bitter recriminations which blight children's lives. But the children of broken relationships may still miss out, may still emerge battered, bruised, and enraged.

None of the articles I read looked at the issues from a child's point of view. They were all studies in damage limitation written from an angle of maintaining adult equilibrium.

As a society we have become so obsessed with that equilibrium that we do shrug off children's suffering, not easily perhaps, but we do it.

Little children are innocent, and maybe we should sacrifice some of our happiness to preserve that innocence, whether that means trying to make a relationship work, insisting, by legal means if necessary, that the divorcing partners both spend time with the kids, or just smiling at the unhappy child in the supermarket.

# Rebuild the abortion rights campaign!

By Jean Lane

Just two years after David Alton's attempt to reduce the time limit on abortions from 28 to 18 weeks failed, the anti-abortionists are once again on the attack.

This one is likely to be harder to fight. In the past, attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act have been in the form of Private Member's Bills. They have been defeated by parliamentary tactics such as talking them out of time. A Private Member's Bill has to be completed within a certain time limit or it is dropped. The Alton Bill was lost when Dennis Skinner made an epic, several-hour long speech to the House of Commons.

This time, however, the attack will be in the form of an amendment to the 'Warnock Bill' which is a government bill on foetal research, and not subject to such time limits.

For the first time ever, Mrs That-

cher (who herself favours a 24 week limit, in line with medical opinion as to when a foetus is "viable", or able to survive) has instructed the Cabinet to form an official view. This is part of an attempt to get a cross-party compromise on a 24 week limit.

MPs, it seems, are "fed up with getting hundreds of letters from their constituents every year," as one has stated, in the constant wrangle between pro- and anti-abortion lobbyists. Some MPs believe that getting a 24 week limit will shut the anti-abortionists up once and for all.

It wouldn't. It would spur them on to fight for more. The anti-abortionists (or "pro-life" as they mis-name themselves) are not against "late" abortions. They are against all abortions, and against women having the right to make their own minds up about how to live their lives.

The way to stop "late" abortions is not to reduce the time limit — that would make more late abortions more dangerous — but to ex-

tend the health service and daycare abortion facilities which would enable women to discover their pregnancy at an early stage and get it dealt with immediately in line with the woman's wishes.

The 24 week limit is a waste of time. As Doctor Wendy Savage, spokeswoman for Doctors for A Woman's Choice, stated: "There is no need to change the law. There were only 22 out of 170,000 abortions in 1989 which were over 24 weeks. Most of these were for foetal abnormality." The 24 week "compromise" would do nothing but harm some extremely vulnerable women.

The anti-abortionists would like to harm even more. They are refusing to go for this "compromise" and are threatening to put amendments for 22, 20 or even 18 week limits. In 1986, 8,276 abortions were carried out after 18 weeks.

Although the government is taking an official position, they are, once again, allowing a free vote. This means that we will again see Labour MPs voting with the anti-

abortionists or for the "compromise" despite Labour Party conference policy, over many years, for free abortion on the woman's demand, and despite the fact that it is working class women — those that Labour should represent — who will be worst affected by this Bill.

We are, once again, put in a position of fighting off an attack on an already woefully inadequate abortion provision. But this we must do: by rebuilding the groups that fought the Alton Bill in 1987, by taking the fight into the Labour Parties and trade union branches to make our MPs vote for us, and by challenging the anti-abortionists' lies that they are "pro-life".

The National Abortion Campaign is holding its 1989 conference on Saturday 28th/Sunday 29th October at Wesley House, Wild Court, London WC1 (nearest tube: Holborn), where it will be discussing its strategy for fighting the abortion amendments to the Warnock Bill. This address can also be used to contact NAC for information.

# Who'd trust a judge now?

## EDITORIAL

**A**n atom bomb has just burst in the foetid inbred world of the British legal and police system.

The official admission that the Guildford Four were framed by the police is hardly less than that. Look at the facts.

Every half-interested or half-informed person has known for many years that the Guildford Four were innocent — that is, that three men and a woman were rotting in prison, held for something which they didn't do and which, indeed, other people (the Provisional IRA Active Service Unit jailed after the Balcombe Street siege) had admitting doing.

Yet they were allowed to stifle and rot, for almost 15 years of their youth and prime. Nothing was done about it. Nothing could be done about it.

The appeal court rejected all attempts to reopen the case even after the 'Balcombe Street' Provisional IRA group had confessed. Yet there were strong reasons, publicly known, for reopening the case.

The four had been convicted on no evidence except their own confessions, which they repudiated in court. Gerard Conlon told the court that he had been beaten by the police and had finally confessed after a threat to have his mother "accidentally" shot by the British Army in Belfast.

That made no difference. It was his word against the police, and if the courts stopped believing the police, then they would have to close the system down.

Over the years more and more people became convinced that four innocent people were in jail for nothing. The Catholic primate supported them. Author Robert Kee wrote a book on the case. The police and the legal Establishment would not budge.

The general attitude of the legal and police bigwigs on questions like this was stated publicly not long ago by former Master of the Rolls John Denning who, with the eccentric candour peculiar to him, said it was better in cases of miscarried justice for the individual victim to go on suffering than have the legal system lose face and suffer discredit!

They would not budge until the public knowledge of the injustice done to the Four, the result of a prolonged campaign in Britain and Ireland, threatened to do more damage to the standing of the legal system than "coming clean".

Then they switched tactics. They admitted that four innocent people had served a total of 60 years in jail as a result of a police frame-up — and claimed it as a "triumph for British justice" that the four finally got out!

Like hell it is! The stench of the business will contaminate the whole system for years to come.

There was a police conspiracy to frame the Four — to capture four young people, almost at random, bind them hand and foot with lies, and deliver them up to the courts as sacrificial offerings on the altar of public outrage.

The police beat and tricked con-



**Birmingham Six: free them now!**

fessions out of them. They falsified the records of the interrogations.

The conspiracy must have gone right up into the pinnacles of the police hierarchy. And Peter Imbert, now chief of the Metropolitan Police, was one of the officers on the case.

The Crown lawyers who helped railroad the Four to jail must also have known about the police conspiracy. For certain, they departed from their legal obligation to tell the defence lawyers that the police had interviewed a man who backed up Gerard Conlon's alibi for the time of the bombings.

And the judges — were they just living through Denning's principle that the prestige of the judges and their courts is more important than justice? In this case, did they also feel the need to do a job for the beleaguered British state, and publicly be seen to punish somebody for the bombs the IRA set off in Britain? In any case, the judges too played their full and dishonourable part.

In the anti-IRA hysteria of the period, criminal police, conniving lawyers, and stupid or compliant judges combined to railroad others to jail, too. The "Maguire Seven" were jailed on the confessions of some of the Guildford Four. One of them, Gerard Conlon's father Giuseppe, died after five years in jail.

When bombs were set off by the IRA in two Birmingham pubs in November 1974, six Irishmen got the same treatment as the Guildford Four. Pictures of them were published in the British press after their trial showing that after their arrest they had all been badly beaten, yet no-one in authority thought that might have had any bearing on the case.

The "Birmingham Six" are still in jail, and will stay there for the rest of their lives, unless something is done about it. Neither the Home Secretary nor the judiciary want to do anything about it. They say the case will not be reviewed.

These horrible events were made easier because the Labour Government brought in the Prevention of

Terrorism Act in December 1974. The Act is still in operation, and allows the police to detain people without charge or trial for up to seven days and deprive them of such legal rights as immediate access to a lawyer.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act made the million and more Irish people in this country second class citizens. It was as second class citizens that the Guildford Four, the Maguire Seven and the Birmingham Six were arrested, tortured, and then legally lynched.

But the injustice is not just something that arose out of the unusual situation in Ireland. Everybody who has ever been in court, even for a minor offence on a demonstration or something like that, knows that the police lie routinely, all of them. They select, concoct, and shape what they say in court so as to get the verdict they want.

They lie routinely and systematically, and, in one degree or another, they lie all the time. They don't always get away with it. Despite the Tories' moves to increase vetting of juries and bar defence challenges to jurors, juries are not always malleable, and some magistrates and judges are concerned with justice.

But the police do their worst, and they are helped by large numbers of lawyers and judges who know how the system works.

The Guildford Four are free. The Birmingham Six are in jail. An unknowable number of the 50,000 inmates in Britain's overcrowded jails — proportionately the biggest jail population in Europe — are also victims of the frame-up routine with which these low-grade thugs in blue discharge their job of keeping a semblance of "law and order" in the jungle of Thatcherite capitalist Britain.

Release the Birmingham Six now!

## China solidarity

**T**he wonderful upsurge of Chinese students and workers in Beijing held the world's attention in May and June, when they took the centre of their capital city out of the hands of the murderous old men who rule China.

The cold-blooded massacre on 4 June horrified the watching world. It was as if a vast pageant had been staged for the world's TV cameras to illustrate the real relationship which has existed between Stalinist rulers and those they have ruled in large parts of the world for the last 60 years.

Except that it was for real. The mangled young people crushed under the tanks or shot down in their hundreds were for real. The blood flowing in the gutters of Beijing was for real. The iron and blood rule of the old men was for real. It is for real.

Last Monday *World in Action* screened a report shot secretly within China which provided details of the savage terror under which the people of China, and especially the youth, live now. Jailings, killings, and torture continue. The regime is systematically weeding out dissidents and semi-dissidents.

All students have to write three reports. They must give daily and hourly details of where they were and what they were doing during the days of May and June. They must write an account of all they felt and thought at each part of the unfolding conflict between the students and the state. And they must write an account of democracy as they define it.

The political police assess the results.

The reign of terror against those workers who organised an independent trade union has crushed the union, for now. Unknown thousands of workers and students are in jail.

Activity in Britain to publicise the terror in China, and to try to rouse public opinion against it, in the first place the public opinion of the labour movement, is therefore of immense importance. But such activity is still weak and inadequate. Large sections of the labour movement don't seem to want to know. Large sections of the left continue against all the evidence to regard China as some sort of socialist state.

The Chinese Solidarity Campaign is organising publicity and activity in support of the victims of Deng's reign of terror. It deserves the backing of the whole labour movement.

China will be one of the main subjects discussed at a forthcoming conference on "Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc", organised by the campaign to get such solidarity for all the Stalinist states, CSWEB.

### Solidarity with workers in the Eastern Bloc

Conference  
Saturday 27 January 1990  
University of London Union,  
Malet St, London WC1.  
Sponsors, requests for details and requests for speakers to CSWEB, c/o 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5.

• The Chinese Solidarity Campaign can be contacted at CIAC, 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1.

## PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR DAILY STAR

Most disquieting

By Jim Denham

**F**our innocent people are in prison for 15 years; the "evidence" against them is finally shown to be fraudulent; the police are exposed as liars, forgers and conspirators: what word would you use to describe this state of affairs? Something just a little stronger than "disquieting", perhaps?

Believe it or not, that was the word the *Sun* used last Friday to describe the Guildford 4 hearing. Not "bloody disquieting". Not even "disquieting" with an exclamation mark.

The same editorial then went on to argue that evidence of police "wrongdoing" (more rather uncharacteristic understatement there, as well, don't you think?) "even if proved" (!!), only demonstrated "a few rotten apples in the barrel". And, after all, the alternative was the "terrorism sweeping the land without check", and "rule by the IRA".

The press as a whole does not come out of the Guildford 4 case exactly smelling of roses. In the wake of the IRA's 1974 "mainland campaign", the tabloids (and not just the *Sun*) played a shameful role in exacerbating the anti-Irish, lynch-mob mood of the day. The precise effects of particular headlines, articles and cartoons cannot be measured. But it all surely contributed to an atmosphere in which the police felt able to rig evidence and use the foulest forms of intimidation in order to get a "result".

The "quality" press and the rest of the media don't come out of the affair much better than the tabloids. After the failure of the 1977 Appeal (which scarcely bothered with the fact that by then, the Balcombe St men had made detailed confessions to the Guildford bombings) the Four's small band of supporters turned in desperation to the media. They found few takers. The honourable exceptions are worth noting here: David Martin in the *Leveller*, Gavin Esler and Chris Mullin in the *New Statesman*, David McKittrick (now of the *Independent*) in the *Belfast Telegraph* and Yorkshire TV's 'First Tuesday' team.

The national "quality" papers scarcely touched the story again until the mid-1980s, by which time such Establishment figures as Merlyn Rees and Cardinal Hume were giving the campaign a bit more respectability. Since last week, of course, there has been no shortage of detailed reports and outraged editorials. The *Sun* has actually been in a minority with its "rotten apples" line: most papers have argued that the buck should not stop with a few junior officers of the Surrey police; some editorials have called into question the role of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Court of Appeal, senior members of the judiciary and even the present Home Secretary.

But none of the national papers can point to their own role in campaigning on the issue or can claim to have played any significant part in exposing this injustice.

I don't know about you, but I find that extremely...disquieting.

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

Karl Marx

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

Latest date for reports: first post

Monday or by phone Monday

PO Box 823, London SE15  
4NA.

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

Registered as a newspaper at  
the Post Office.

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



Thatcher and the Queen

## More racism from the Sun

### GRAFFITI

George (we are talking obnoxious) Gale, writing in the *Daily Mail*, venomises: "The Commonwealth, so far as Britain is concerned, has been nothing but an infernal nuisance."

And what does Gale say is the Commonwealth's greatest crime? It has "constantly interfered in our domestic affairs, particularly, with great success, in our immigration policy" — a judgement unlikely to be shared by the thousands of people denied access to this country even to visit relatives (like husbands or wives). "The disastrous effort to turn this country into a multiracial society," Gale spews on, "is directly attributable to our membership of...the Commonwealth."

In fact the British Empire exploited millions of black people and the Commonwealth is only a feeble imperial leftover. Gale is so engulfed by his own bilious stench that he doesn't even pause to reflect how, if the Commonwealth tail is wagging the British dog, the best it can manage despite a 47-1 majority on sanctions is to complain about Thatcher's behaviour.

The *Sun* goes on in similar vein, singling out Kaunda ("demented"), Ramphal ("insufferable official") and Mugabe (who "sneered"), all of whom, notice, are black, whilst Hawke and Mulrooney were merely in "angry scenes with Thatcher".

"They spit hatred at us then hold out their hands for money," belched Murdoch's Mouth, oblivious not only to the fact that the British aid budget is continually getting smaller, but also to the fact that the "hatred" was directed not at "us", but at the British government, whose unbudgeable policy on sanctions was never voted for by anyone.

The tabloids (and Thatcher no doubt) want South Africa back in the Commonwealth — "The Commonwealth lost all influence over South Africa when it hounded her out of the organisation" (how beastly!) — and Britain out of it, but

who said they had to be consistent? The racism in all this is not even thinly disguised. The *Sun* manages to be overtly pro-South Africa, whose neighbours want sanctions against "her" but which "depend on her food to save them from starvation" — no doubt very reassuring to Mozambique, for example, which has been devastated by South African-backed guerrillas — "and her industrial goods to keep their economies alive" — no mention of the thousands of underpaid Mozambican workers who "keep alive" South Africa's mines.

George Gale and whoever writes the *Sun* editorials are an offence to the Brazilian rain forest. To think they destroy trees so they can print this stuff!

These are the respective wages of police, firefighters and ambulance crews:

**Police:**  
trainee: £10,690  
qualified: £12,676  
senior: £15,804

**Firefighters:**  
trainee: £10,594  
qualified: £12,047  
senior: £12,400

**Ambulance:**  
trainee: £7,340  
qualified: £10,093  
senior: £10,888  
Police used to take over ambulance workers' jobs this week were doing it for £40 a week more. We rest our case. Info: *Today* (October 24)

A Chinese government-run newspaper, *Tibet Daily*, recently had to explain why five Tibetan Buddhist nuns were sentenced without trial to three years' prison labour. It said: "They hysterically shouted 'independent Tibet' and other reactionary slogans in a frenzied way." Three years was pretty mild, really, I'd say.

## All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Organising Conference

Saturday 25 November  
Manchester Free Trade Hall  
11am to 5pm

The conference will be on a delegate basis, with 2 delegates per anti-poll tax union, trade union, student union, trades council, shop stewards committee, tenants association, community group and youth organisation at a cost of £10 per delegation.

Closing date for registration is 18th November.  
Send to Tommy Sheridan, PO Box 764, London E5 9SX. Phone: 01-533 5551

## Tory-Nazi links

By Jim Fraser

Nazi MEPs representing the French National Front (FN) and the West German Republikaner Partei were invited to address a fringe meeting of the Conservative Party at their annual conference in Blackpool, along with Commandant Clive Derby Lewis, a leading member of the extreme right-wing South African Conservative Party — widely viewed as a neo-Nazi party.

While some Tories dissociated themselves from the meeting, the Conservative Party itself, and its leadership, did nothing either to stop the meeting or withdraw the invitations to French, German and South African Nazis.

Described as a "major rally" the meeting was organised under the auspices of 'Western Goals', a shadowy, sinister far right group which links extreme right-wing, 'Nationalist' and quasi-religious groups from around the globe.

Run by Andrew V R Smith, Stuart Northolt, the veteran ex-Tory MP Sir Patrick Wall, and Gideon Sherman (a man not unconnected to the Moonies), it includes amongst its international patrons ex-US General John K Singlaub, boss of the 'World Anti-Communist League' whose national

chapters include many Nazi groupings. Western Goals, according to its own literature, campaigns within the Tory Party to "combat the insidious menace of liberalism and communism".

Western Goals, which hit the headlines a year ago with its campaign to have charitable status removed from Oxfam, War on Want and Christian Aid, recently launched itself into print with an expensively produced newspaper called *European Dawn*, whose masthead includes the old fascist symbol the sunwheel, formerly the symbol of, amongst others, the openly Nazi British Movement. Its second edition lavishes praise on FN boss Jean Marie Le Pen and Republikaner Fuehrer Franz Schonhuber, an officer in the Waffen SS during the war, as "the only voices of sanity and decency in Western Europe".

Other articles vitriolically attack the Labour Party, and support apartheid and the brutal military dictatorship of General Pinochet in Chile.

The invitation was issued by Western Goals director Andrew Smith in a letter to Bruno Gollnisch, the French FN MEP who physically assaulted political opponents in the chamber of the European Parliament last week, where recently a series of anti-semitic remarks by FN MEPs culminated in Claude Autant-Lara deploring the Germans having "missed their opportunity" when they imprisoned liberal politician



Simone Veil in a concentration camp during the Second World War.

It was FN MEP Pierre Ceyrac, who also has connections with the Moonies, who actually addressed the meeting on the Thursday evening at Tory conference, along with other assorted luminaries.

The lesson is clear: the Nazi movement is international, and has very effectively built up international umbrella organisations, and our response must likewise be international. Le Pen and Schonhuber pose a threat to the working class in Britain as well as threatening their own working classes. The working class throughout Europe must unite in the face of the international Nazi menace and in Britain the left must organise to keep out these unwanted visitors.

It also speaks volumes about the Conservative Party in Britain today that they could hold such a meeting at their annual conference.

## Release Abie Nathan!

### THE OTHER ISRAEL

At the end of September, public attention in Israel centered upon a short but sensational trial — that of Abie Nathan, the 63 year old popular owner of 'The Voice of Peace' pirate radio ship.

Abie has managed to accumulate no less than twelve separate charges for meeting PLO officials. A year ago there was worldwide press coverage of Nathan's public appearance at the European Strassbourg Parliament side by side with Yasser Arafat — who on that occasion wished all Jews *Shana Tova* (Happy New Year in Hebrew).

On trial, the 'peace sailor' seemed more capable of embarrassing the authorities than any of the peace movement's diehards. Already at the beginning of his trial he declared his willingness to plead guilty to all charges, provided that the prosecution change the wording "the accused met with members of terrorist organisations" to "the accused met with members of organisations declared by the government to be terrorist". Rather than wage a long battle on the issue 'who is a terrorist', the prosecutor agreed to this change.

Speaking as the sole defence witness, Nathan recounted his life story: his birth in India, his service as a combat pilot in 1948, including the bombing of civilian targets; his subsequent decision to devote his life to peace; his private 1960 'peace mission', in the course of which his plane was nearly shot down by the Egyptian Air Force and which allowed him to see the inside of both the Egyptian and the Israeli prison system; and his decision to

start a dialogue with the PLO.

Nathan concluded: "I think I convinced our main enemy to grasp the olive branch. I don't think I did any harm to Israel's security."

The prosecutor asked for a stiff prison sentence, considering the lack of any regret on the part of the accused, and his explicit intention to repeat his crime. On October 4 the court sentenced Abie Nathan to one-half year in prison, and one year suspended imprisonment, to be implemented should he repeat his offence.

Nathan decided neither to appeal nor to request that his sentence be commuted to community work. On Israeli television Abie Nathan said: "I have broken the law and I am willing to pay the price. When I get

out of prison, I will go on with my work for peace. When I see citizens, or soldiers, or Arabs die, prison does not deter me anymore. I am quite stubborn, you know!"

The morning after Yom Kippur, on October 10, Abie Nathan started his term. Six Knesset members and over a thousand others had come to accompany him up to the prison gate.

Letters of support should be sent to: Abie Nathan, Eyal Prison, Israeli Prisons Authority, Israel.

Letters protesting the sentence should be sent to: Justice Minister Dan Meridor, Justice Ministry, Salah-a-Din St, East Jerusalem. Copies to: The Committee to Save the Peace Dialogue, PO Box 20395, Tel-Aviv 61204.

## Who loses from poll tax?

By Liz Quinn

On Wednesday 11 October an open forum on the poll tax was held at Watford College in Hertfordshire.

Speakers included Bernie Grant, MP for Tottenham, the Rev John Brown, a local vicar in West Watford, and Fiona McElree, a representative from the National Council for Civil Liberties.

Rev John Brown said that a young married couple in his parish who are expecting a child, at present pay £330 rates, but they will now have to find an extra £467 a year.

By contrast a 50-year old couple living in a large house in Watford, with rates of £940, will find themselves £154 a year better off.

Fiona McElree said that the registration methods used for the poll tax are an intrusion into people's lives. She said that some information asked for in the

registration form was not necessary, for example, the relationships of certain members of a household.

Not many of the forms complied with the principles of the Data Protection Act and local authorities have devised their own forms where there should have been a standard one. Registration officers will go to the greatest lengths to discover the number of people in a household, for example, asking the dustman if there is a change in the level of rubbish! If registration is causing problems, then collection and enforcement will create even more.

Bernie Grant pointed out that black people are a minority group with larger families living in the inner city areas where the poll tax is higher. Families could be split up. For example, grandparents need not pay if they are in a home.

Landlords should give tenants rate rebates, but will they? Grant is deeply upset that the Labour leaders are not fighting a significant campaign against the poll tax, but believes that the proposal for two taxes is a better option.

# Lessons in bourgeois justice

## NORTH AND SOUTH

By Patrick Murphy

If the release of the Guildford 4 is a vindication of British justice, then, in the words of *Private Eye* editor Ian Hislop, I am a banana.

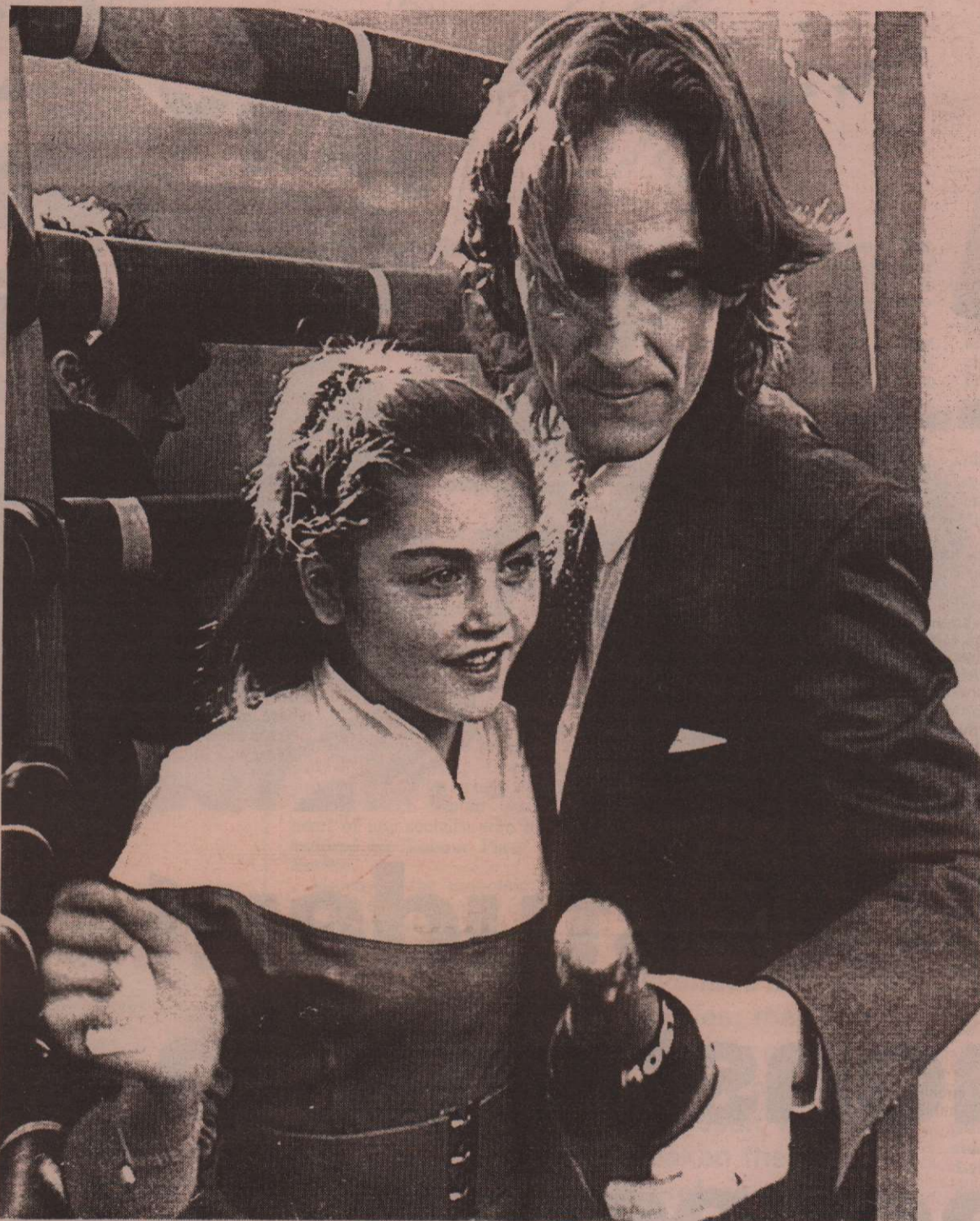
All the factors that led to the wrongful conviction and 15-year imprisonment of these people are still firmly in place. The main events of last week stand as a powerful condemnation of British justice.

Annie Maguire and her family, for example, have not been cleared, and yet they were convicted by association with the Guildford 4. One of them was Giuseppe Conlon, father of Gerald, who died in a prison he occupied only because of fabricated evidence.

The two most important features of the Guildford case were uncorroborated confessions gained in custody and proof that the Surrey police falsified evidence. And yet six men have been in prison for nearly 15 years in precisely the same circumstances but the Home Secretary has rejected calls for a new appeal. The Birmingham 6 were convicted on their own confessions plus circumstantial evidence which has since been thoroughly discredited. Since their last appeal it has emerged that the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad, which investigated the case, had been fabricating evidence for years. Officers have been removed, yet six of their best known victims languish in jail.

What the Guildford case does vindicate is the campaign to release them organised by the families and their supporters. It vindicates, and must surely boost the continuing campaigns to clear the Maguire Seven, and the campaign to free the Birmingham 6.

There is not a shred of evidence that the judiciary or government would have lifted a finger to discover the truth about these cases without the immense pressure exerted by the campaigners. The Tories know this, which is why Ivor Stanbrook was left isolated in his denunciation of campaigners. In his pathetic loyalty to British justice



Paul Hill with his daughter

Stanbrook resembles Igor Ligachev defending the continuing validity of Soviet-style 'socialism'. Each new turn of events 'confirms'

his view!

Given the overwhelming evidence, even before the news of police misconduct, why were they

jailed in the first place, why did they stay in so long and, above all, why is this sort of injustice so much more likely to happen in Irish political cases than any others?

Of course, there are many 'bad' police officers. But the idea that interrogation methods in British police cells are, as a rule, liberal-democratic is an absurdity which still deludes too many people. ("Of course it's a bit rough...it has to be...but there are rules...we have checks and balances..." etc.)

The fact is that Britain taught most of the world, outside the Eastern Bloc, the most effective and brutal interrogation techniques. They pioneered a form of torture known as Psychological Operations (PsycOps) in the 1960s in Asia, and used it extensively in the 1970s in Northern Ireland, especially in the early years of internment. This work is not done by 'bad apples' but more the more senior, trained officers. Even initially 'good' people recruited to and trained in this system do it.

There are corrupt officials, but none more so than the DPP who withheld alibi statements from the original trial and the appeal. The problem is not a few deviants but the whole system and the people who run it.

The fact that the legal elite is selected from such a narrow privileged social group is no small consideration. There is naked class prejudice in the judiciary.

At the time of bombings like Guildford, Birmingham or Deal there is an hysterical atmosphere in

which the press and public cry for action and revenge. There is pressure on police to get results, and a real frustration within the police at their lack of ability to deal with the IRA's tight cellular structure.

The result of these pressures combined with a good deal of chauvinism is a scapegoating of the Irish community. Most Irish people in Britain have experienced the hostility that follows these events at some stage. It is no good just blaming a few police, the press played the major role at the time, politicians warned the Irish community to distance themselves from the 'terrorists'.

A few months later the police select their victims and present them to the courts. Who are they? Young, Irish and working class — they are unemployed or casually employed, they live in hostels, or bed and breakfasts. The people who make up the judiciary cannot comprehend their lifestyle. It is without a regular routine, so they cannot account for their every move. In short, they are the type of person decent middle class British people should expect to be a villain.

The most striking example of this clash of cultures and classes came in the Birmingham case. Some of the accused explained that they were on their way back to Belfast to visit their family when arrested. They were not on the run. But, the prosecution announced triumphantly, their family didn't know they were coming! The whole idea of a culture where people turn up unannounced to visit each other, where there is any spontaneity, was alien to the English upper-class mind.

They live in a world of formality, appointments, diaries, weekends booked. There is much to be said for such organisation, but that isn't how most working class people live and it's certainly not how the Irish emigrant community lives.

So the naked class prejudice counts as a material factor in these cases. People from our class are judged in every detail by the standards of an alien class. To read some of the account of the Birmingham trial is to see two lifestyles stare at each other uncomprehendingly. The tragedy is that one has such vast power over the other.

In the short-term, this side of socialism, what can be done about such tragedies? For a start the powers which allow these injustices must be removed.

Uncorroborated evidence is still sufficient to convict in England and Wales. But the conditions in which police can extract that evidence are provided by the Prevention of Terrorism Act which allows police to detain suspects for two days with no legal help. If no evidence has been extracted the Home Secretary can renew the detention order for another seven days.

That is where these false confessions come from.

The Act was passed in 1974 by a Labour government, as a reaction to the Birmingham bombings, and the Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6 were detained under its terms. **The PTA must go.**

Labour has promised to repeal it, but the numbers of MPs turning up to vote against renewal has been a disgrace.

The lesson for the Labour Party should be that repression is no part of an answer to the Irish question. Labour has been responsible for too much of the apparatus and laws which allowed these miscarriages of justice to occur. So when they appear at the front of protests about their consequences they should be forced to give commitments to dismantle this repressive machinery.

As usual, intimidating and scapegoating an entire community has been used as a substitute for dealing with their concerns.

## Pentagon slams the closet door

### OUT AND PROUD

By Edward Ellis

A report, recommending that open homosexuals be allowed in the American armed forces, has been suppressed by the Pentagon.

Whatever the report says, and the Pentagon thinks it's biased, they know that homosexuals are bad for morale and a security risk.

How exactly homosexuals are bad for morale has always been a mystery to me. I mean, what is it? All these muscle-bound marines start queuing up for the shrink: "I thought I was so rugged until Buck made a pass at me, uh, we were on latrine duty together, you know

how it is, and now I'm just in love and all the sergeant wants is that we go running, and do all this exercise, you know, and (sigh) it's such a relief we're not fighting any wars or anything or I would be too depressed to go out in the jungle."

Or is it just that everyone's having a great time, pretending to be massacring Cambodians and everything until one of them says: "I've got something to tell you, guys...Uhm, I know I seem just like an ordinary Joe, but, well, I kind of have a secret, and you being my best buddies I really ought to tell you..." and as soon as he tells them they all go into fits of gloominess and refuse to obey orders because they're so upset and he seemed such a nice guy and all. Is that it?

And what's this security risk thing? American army about to invade small country of badly-armed peasants, marines wading ashore all thinking they're Rambo, and suddenly some little guy with a moustache screams, "Hey! You know that one there's a faggot?" And before you know it the Nicaraguans have conquered New

York, everyone's being forced to speak Russian and eat black bread and fish and the whole American nation just feels so humiliated.

Or the entire Pentagon is seized one afternoon by fifteen KGB agents, who announce gloatingly on national TV: "Haha! We have taken control of your security network, and all because the man on the door was a homosexual!" What did they do exactly? Or was it just that the guy on the door couldn't resist the cute Russian accent?

Call me what you like, but I can't see why gays should be any worse for morale than anyone else (and dare I say it, probably positively a godsend, even for the supposedly heterosexual ones, after a few months underwater). And the only thing that makes homosexuality a security risk is secrecy.

Pity, really. It would be nice to think you could bring the entire edifice of US imperialism tumbling to the ground just by sneaking a few queens into the Army. That would be the only good reason for any self-respecting sexual subversive to want to join up, come to think of it.



# 10,000 students demonstrate in Manchester

By Richard Love

**O**ver 10,000 students demonstrated in Manchester last Wednesday (18 October) under the slogan 'Fight for the Right to Study' in a vast protest march against the Tory government's intention to bring in student loans.

This was the largest student demo in Manchester since 1968. The march was called and organised by Manchester Area NUS (MANUS) on the proposal of Left Unity supporters who did most of the work.

The success of the demo is a slap in the face for the factionally-motivated cynics who criticised Left Unity as being just a propaganda outfit which can't mobilise students.

It also proves to the right wing of the student movement that what Left Unity has said about how to organise a student campaign against loans is correct.

Left Unity has proved itself as being the only left wing rank and file group in student politics who don't just criticise the right wing, but go out and organise activists in action.

Because of the big response to the demo from student unions around the country (about 3,500 students from outside Manchester came to the demo) NUS was forced to

support the demo — the first time NUS has ever supported a demo called by MANUS.

The NUS NEC has now called a first-term national demo — something it has never done before. The right wing who control the NEC can no longer say that first-term demos don't work — the MANUS demo has proved them wrong.

No amount of criticism from the likes of Militant and SWSS would have made them change their minds, but when the NEC see thousands of students being organised in action it is a different matter. They either do something or get discredited even more.

That is what makes Left Unity different. We believe it isn't enough to make idle criticism and propaganda — you have to go out and organise action.

All in all, the success of the MANUS demo has been highly embarrassing to the right-wing, who initially tried to organise against it. Arch right-winger Derek Draper of Manchester University tried initially to stage a 'Party for NUS' at Sheffield University on the same day as an alternative event. Then, he and his cronies decided they had no option but to support our march, but under a different (and rather wet) slogan: 'We love grants, we love our union, we don't love loans' (or something of that nature). They tried their best to make sure

MANUS got no credit for it.

Draper and his mates — and supporters of Socialist Action — are attempting to set up their own, scab, Area organisation in opposition to MANUS.

MANUS and the Left Unity influence in MANUS have proved themselves. The success of the MANUS demo is good for MANUS, for Left Unity, and for the left in general. It is bad for the Tories and the Kinnockite right-wing. But one successful demo isn't nearly enough.

The MANUS demo was good, but it is only a start. Activists now have to respond to the success of the MANUS demo by continuing to mobilise more students into the campaign. We must not let the campaign be held back by the NUS right-wing. We must take the fight forward with a wave of occupations and other direct actions.

When necessary we must be prepared to break the law. What is at stake is the future of further and higher education. Given the chance the NUS leadership will sell us out to a compromise with something like a graduate tax. But we know that education is already a privilege (most university students come from middle class families).

It is not enough to demand the status quo or, worse, accept a compromise. We have a duty to demand a better education system. Such a system will not be achieved without

a fight.

Left Unity will build on the success of the Manchester demo. We have proved that large numbers of students can be mobilised — it is now the task of every activist to go out and organise new layers of students.

The action we organise must have a clear perspective — we are not merely against loans, we are also in favour of improving the provisions we already have. For too long the perspective of the student movement has been a defensive one. We should now be putting forward positive demands.

People may say that it is utopian, at this stage, to go beyond defending what we already have. But the Tories are on the run, they are falling in popularity, a number of important wage battles have been won by the working class. They can be beaten. And if we beat them on loans we will have beaten them on an issue of massive ideological importance.

This is the perspective of Left Unity: it is a perspective for action, not just propaganda; for positive demands, not mere defense or compromise; for unity — and against sectarianism.

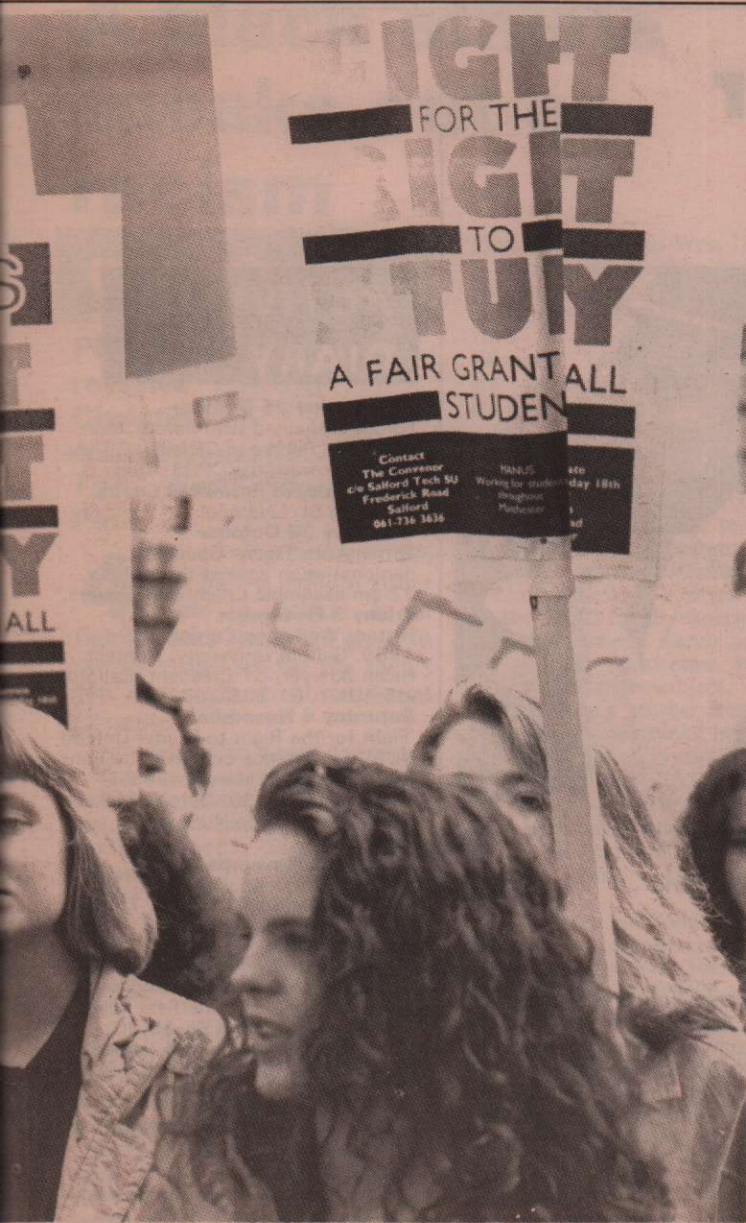
The MANUS demo is both an example of what Left Unity is and a start of a radical campaign to defeat the Tories.

**Build the fight against the Tories and for education. Build Left Unity!**



On the march in Manchester. Photo

# Don't leave Labour for the Greens!



## Clive Bradley argues that people leaving Labour in disgust are misguided

**I**f you were to switch off the TV after the Labour Party conference and pick up the Green Party's manifesto, the contrast would be pretty dramatic.

Not only are the more obvious radical commitments that Labour has now expunged to be found among the Green Party's policies, like unilateral nuclear disarmament, so too are plenty of other policies that have always been too radical for Labour.

Green politics are indeed radical politics. The Greens propose a wide range of measures, from a decent health service to the repeal of the Public Order Act, from racial equality to policies to help the Third World, which would warm the heart of any socialist who has just endured the Labour Party Policy Review.

Moreover, the economic policy of the Greens is not as far fetched as it is often made to seem: we "are not anti-technology", they say: "We favour appropriate technology: technology that is good and satisfying to work with, produces useful end results and is kind to the environment. Many such technologies will be 'high-tech'."

And they propose reforming the tax system to make it equitable, introducing a "basic income scheme" to guarantee a decent standard of living, and various other sensible measures. Unlike Labour, they also favour an uninhibited right to strike.

Even the language of the Greens is familiar to socialists: a Green economy "satisfies the full range of people's needs, not just their financial needs", "measures itself using meaningful indicators like health, low crime rates, human fulfilment and ecological diversity", "supports socially-useful products, not just commercially viable ones", "works to redress inequality...", "secures greater democratic control over economic decision making", and so on.

For many Labour Party activists depressed after Labour's remodelling by Neil Kinnock, the temptation to abandon Labour and join the Greens must be enormous. Yet such a move would be a mistake. For all its ills, the Labour Party is still the place for socialists to be.

The Greens may be, in a way, "unconscious socialists", and some of them of course are quite consciously socialist; but the resistance of many delegates at the Green Party conference to any such labelling is not incidental. For sure, any concerted attempt to convert the Green Party as a party into an avowedly socialist one would meet much resistance, and certainly it would result in splits.

It is hard to believe that the hostility of many Greens to the word "socialist" is simply the negative effects of Stalinism on the one hand and Labourite 'state-socialist' failure on the other. There is no denying that these two factors have done an immense amount to discredit socialism, but the existence of socialists who are opposed both to the Russian system and

to old-fashioned Labourism is not so little known that mainstream Greens can be unaware of it. Such people exist within the Green Party itself.

The resistance of Greens to any socialist attachment represents a much deeper problem: it is a middle-class movement. This is meant not merely abusively. As a movement, the Greens have no link with the working class, and as a movement can see no need for one. Individuals are active in trade unions, poll tax campaigns, etc. But the Green Party neither sees itself as a working-class movement now, nor is it ever likely to.

What many Greens oppose in socialism is not only state control, centralisation, and so on. It is the project of the self-liberation of the working class. They oppose politics that are explicitly working class politics.

For the Greens, the working class is only one section of the population that needs to be convinced,

**"In the late sixties, socialists left the Labour Party. When the left began to revive in the late seventies and early eighties, many socialists continued to stand outside. The result was to weaken the left, and therefore aid the rise of Kinnock. We cannot allow that pattern to be repeated in the 1990s."**

along with others. The others can include — and, logically, do include — for example, multinational capital, which the Greens hope one day to persuade to behave in a more environmentally friendly way.

Green politics identify what's wrong with society globally — inequality, the squandering of the world's resources — and some of the causes — the profit motive — but draw back from putting a name to these phenomena: capitalism. To achieve the end of changing the world, they propose nothing more radical than eventually forming a parliamentary majority, backed up by some non-violent direct action — as if, faced with the challenge to its power that would be required if things were really going to change, multinational capital would just roll over and play dead.

The Greens can only identify the problem, or aspects of the problem. By their nature they cannot be the vehicle for solving it.

The Labour Party, despite everything, remains the party of the trade unions, and therefore, for the moment, the party of the working class, or at least the nearest thing there is to one in Britain. This is true not only organisationally, but politically. For most working class people who want to get rid of the Tories, Labour will be the only practical choice at the next election. And this is not only because of the

first-past-the-post system: the Greens would undoubtedly get more votes in a PR system, but Labour would still be the only alternative to the Tories. (In practice, although it might be blamed on the electoral system rather than the Greens, a Green vote at the next election will often help keep the Tories in office).

Even if the Greens were an explicitly working-class, socialist party, they would have to address this problem: because Labour is the actually existing working-class party, a strategy that does not take account of it is, in fact, a strategy to *abandon the working class*.

That is what the desire to leave the Labour Party and join the Greens represents. It means *giving up* trying to change the workers' movement, in the hope that this new movement will be more successful. But that hope will prove vain. If thoroughgoing Green politics have to be socialist, they have to win the working class; if we fail to do that, we will never get socialism, and never be able to "guarantee the Earth".

The battle to win the labour movement to genuine socialist politics is, of course, very difficult. Perhaps in the short term it might be easier to do battle with non-socialist Greens for the soul of the Green Party, which is new, and has no consolidated bureaucracy.

But several factors tell against this perspective. Paradoxically, the move out of the Labour Party into a more radical competitor can signal a move, in the long run, to the right. Because there is such a strong element of "giving up", many of those who leave the Labour Party now will be unreliable allies for socialists in the Greens in the future. Many of those on the right of the German Greens were ultra-left Maoists a decade or so ago: for them, too, the underlying impulse was demoralisation and disillusionment with the working class and the prospects for socialism. Green politics were a substitute for redressing their own earlier failures.

Moreover, the current depressed state of the Labour Left is unlikely to last. Possibly before, and almost certainly soon after the next election, especially if Labour wins but fails to live up to expectations (as it will), there will be renewed opposition to Kinnock and co. Nothing could be worse than for that new opposition to be without the experience of socialists active in the Labour Party now.

In the late sixties, socialists left the Labour Party. When the Left began to revive in the late seventies and early eighties, many socialists continued to stand outside. The result was to *weaken* the Left, and therefore *aid* the rise of Kinnock.

We cannot allow that pattern to be repeated in the 1990s. If we do, we are writing off all prospect of building a serious working class socialist movement in Britain. Those of us who have learned the lessons of the 1980s and understood what Kinnockism represents, need to be there to help ensure that next time there is a struggle against the right, it is successful. Next time the Left needs to be more prepared, have more roots in the unions, and, above all, be stronger politically — have coherent, socialist answers.

Abandoning Labour for the Greens will only make our tasks harder in future.

# Trade unions in El Salvador struggle for survival

**Last week Philip Vine looked at the history of trade unionism in El Salvador. In part 2, he looks at economic and social conditions in the country**

The economic package which Cristiani has implemented in his first hundred days is one of liberalisation, trying to hold down wages while prices of basic commodities continue to spiral upwards. Life for the lower paid and unemployed is becoming increasingly harder while the oligarchy and the nouveau-riche, including the generals and the colonels who've lined their pockets from the war, strengthen their grip on their wealth.

Rojas considers this a completely regressive outlook and is a formula for continuing insurgency from the workers who are suffering.

"Cristiani is projecting a better economy in a year and a half. He says people will have to make sacrifices for the short run.

But the sacrifice is not being borne equally. It is the burden of the ordinary people and they won't stand for anymore of this."

The emphasis of this 18 month package is on increasing the export of traditional products like coffee, sugar, cotton and bananas. But this means that the prices of domestic necessities are inflating because of short supply, as more land is utilised for agro-export industries.

Eggs have risen in price by 60 per cent since the start of the year; the staples, beans and maize, by 100 per cent in some parts of the country.

Adding to this cost push inflation is the taxes Cristiani has imposed on electricity, water and other amenities. In the capital the changing of the pricing structure has led to people burning buses in the streets.

The plan also includes the privatisation of the banks and the lifting of the trade barriers to allow

for free trade, which is going to have detrimental effects on employment. Cristiani has also laid off masses of public employees in the name of efficiency.

The liberalisation theory allows for a freeing up of the labour market which goes hand in hand with the oligarchy's attempts to repress the unions as a forum of political expression.

The government called a conference with the UNTS in mid-September to try and brow-beat unionists into accepting a wage squeeze until the economy has had a chance to 'recover'.

"Wages have been effectively frozen since May and they wanted to implant the idea that we shouldn't demand any increases for the sake of the economy, but people are starving. The workers won't take this".

The unions calculate that the basic wage under present prices to support a family is 2,150 colones (US \$430) a month. At present the average salary in factories and shops is 155 colones (US \$30) a month. Campesinos (peasant farmers) get about 10 colones a day but only work for six months of the year, which gives them even less than urban workers.

"The government has called us reactionary to the new economic climate, but it is the package itself which is backwards thinking.

They want to impose an economic model which is historically ineffectual. The government wants to return to 1979, to recreate the structure which helped trigger off the civil war.

The crisis here is structural, the country is run by the rich families and the army. Any real change is impossible without first changing the structure. Cristiani is not interested in changing the structure, so the economic plan will achieve little for the benefit of the people"

Cristiani on his own may have made some concessions, but he doesn't hold the power at ARENA, it lies in the hands of people like Robert D'Aubuisson, assassin of Archbishop Romero (killed in 1980 by a right wing death squad).

ARENA pays lip service to improving the welfare of the Salvadoreans by way of a social plan included in the 18 month economic package. It proposes to

spend 945,000 colones over a year and a half on a programme of encouraging healthy living, preventative medicine and advice on correct diet. A sick joke!

The government line is that social welfare will be lifted in the long run by the improved economy. But the trickle-down effect has little benefit in a drought.

Rojas also believes the ARENA government is trying to subtly derail the agrarian land reform. Although Cristiani makes a big publicity exercise out of handing out public land titles personally to campesinos, Rojas says this is a farce.

"What D'Aubuisson is trying to do is to divide up the land into very small plots and break up the co-operatives. The army is terrorising the co-operatives with bombings and disappearing campesinos to try and regain control of their land".

He says the tactic is to fragment the land so that individually campesinos will have little political and economic clout. With the incentives for export crops which need to be grown on a large scale, the small plots will be sold back to large landowners.

"The government knows traditional export crops like coffee are best grown on farms of 100 to 500 hectares. It also has plans to rent out public land to campesinos and tell them what to grow. To grow for the interests of ARENA. In these ways it is trying to destroy agrarian reform.

It is a basic problem of dependence. As individual peasants they can't act politically. It is a reversion to the feudal system".

The election of the ARENA party has institutionalised the connection between the oligarchy and the ultra-right death squads within the military.

When Duarte took power in 1984 and was under pressure from the United States to try and control the death squads, there was at least some effective political opposition to the ultra-right.

Now that the ARENA party is in power again the connection has been institutionalised. Cristiani's so-called civilian government comprises, alongside the technocrats, army officers feared and reknowned for their human rights abuses under Duarte.



D'Aubuisson

The Vice Minister of Defence and cabinet minister, Col Juan Zepeda was promoted from command of the First Infantry Brigade and Vice Minister for Public Security, Innocente Orlande came from the head of the Sixth Brigade. Both brigades have histories of civilian massacres, torture and assassinations behind them.

There is much talk of a power struggle within ARENA between the hard-line military and the civilians. But the partnership between the oligarchy and the army has ruled El Salvador for at least fifty years and there are no signs that Cristiani is trying to purge the extreme right.

Observers say the absence of any high ranking military in the commission for dialogue with the FMLN is an indication of a split. Cristiani says the first meeting with the guerillas held on September 12-14 in Mexico was merely to establish guidelines. At the investiture of the commission he gave them the 'complete power' to speak for the government of El Salvador.

The dialogue did not seem to cover any ground which had not been trodden in the past. After the meetings the FMLN commanders told the Washington Post they would be prepared to put down their guns only if the US government stopped sending arms to the El Salvadorean Government.

The reply from the US administration was the supplies would only stop if and when the FMLN surrendered. So the stalemate continues.

After a temporary ceasefire at the time of the summit in Mexico the FMLN launched one of the most widespread operations in months. On 26 September guerillas simultaneously attacked military bases in ten of the 14 provinces of the country. The guerilla claimed to have killed 90 soldiers, capturing nine and destroying four aeroplanes.

"I don't have any sincere hope in the dialogue for peace as the government didn't send a commission with any power", says Rojas.

With the prospect of further repression of the unions and continuing civil war the UNTS is trying to forge alliances with other unions and moderate political parties for protection and to fight the economic package.

He says a national strike is a possibility but the human costs would be very high: "The government has control over the judicial process which gives the army a free hand to deal with demonstrations.

There is no doubt more people will be captured and more people killed, that is the future".

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

**Wednesday 25 October**  
Forum on Ireland with Patrick Murphy (SO), Redmond O'Neill (LCI) and a speaker from the CPGB. 7pm Merseyside TU Resources Centre, Hardman St, Liverpool.

**Saturday 28 October**  
Birmingham Trades Council demonstration against the poll tax. 12 am assemble Chamberlin Square.

**Friday 3 November**  
History Workshop Conference 1989. Salford University. Contact Helen Bowyer, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4UX (061-736 3601).

**Saturday 4 November**  
'Fight for the Right to Study! Defend NUS!' Conference organised by Kent Area NUS. PCL, Marylebone Rd, London W1, 11.30. Details: Mark Sandell, Kent Area NUS, 0227 766725

**Monday 6 November**  
SO/Socialist Outlook debate: 'The nature of the Soviet Union'. 7.00pm Institute of Education, London WC1

**Saturday 11 November**  
Socialist Conference 'Building the Left in the Unions'. Sheffield Poly Student Union, Pond St, 10.30. Credentials £6 waged, £4 unwaged from Socialist Conference, 9 Poland St, London W1

**Friday 17 November**  
Labour Youth conference (three days), Bournemouth

**Friday 17 November**  
CND annual conference (three days). City University, London EC1. Contact CND, 22-24 Underwood St, London N1 7JG

## Defend Iranian political refugees!

**Demonstration 28 October Assemble 1pm Marble Arch**

Break links with Iran!  
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# A black athlete speaks out on racism

## BOOKS

**Philip Crawford reviews 'Linford Christie. An Autobiography', with Tony Ward, Stanley Paul.**

**4** am, 24 September 1988. Like half a million other people in Britain I sat fighting back sleep, but glued to the television set for the men's 100 metres final at the Seoul Olympics.

America's Carl Lewis was trying to do what no other man in history had done: retain the Olympic 100 metres gold medal he had won four years before. Canada's Ben Johnson was the fastest man in history.

But even for an internationalist, there was a third interest. Could Linford Christie, the lad from Shepherds Bush, upset the apple cart?

10 seconds later it was all over — Johnson first, Lewis second and Christie third. Christie had become the first European to run 100 metres in under 10 seconds.

Linford Christie was born on 20 April 1960 in Kingston, Jamaica. He was brought up by his grandmother until, at the age of seven, he

joined his father in West London.

At primary school he met racism. He recalls a young girl telling him in the playground that "my mummy said I mustn't play with 'Blackies'," and the chants of "nigger" by gangs of white youths trying to beat him up.

On leaving school he joined Thames Valley Harriers athletics club. He wrote "Sonia Lannaman — Speed Queen" on his first real pair of spikes, a tribute to the first black athlete to become a real household name in Britain.

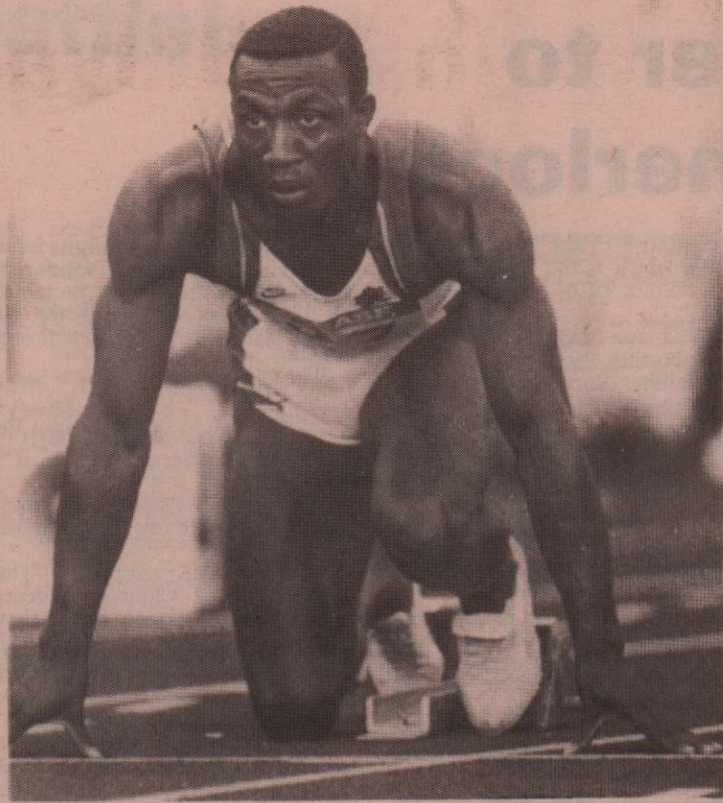
Linford devotes a whole chapter of the book to his experiences of racial harassment. Rarely has a major British sportsman been so outspoken on the subject.

His younger brother Russell suffered continuous racial harassment which culminated in a violent police raid on his house with the arrest and beating up of Linford, Russell and their sister and father. He recalls a policeman kicking him in the testicles saying "This one's for Brixton".

They were all found guilty on trumped up charges which made Christie realise that "there are two types of law in Britain, one for whites and one for blacks."

Such racism makes him "ashamed to be British", but for the most part he remains "proud to be British, proud to have won honours for all of the people."

After winning the 100 metres in Stuttgart he appeared on the winner's platform swathed in a Union Jack. He has been criticised not on-



Linford Christie

ly by the European Athletics Association, but also by many of his friends.

"There was a feeling that I was siding with the white community, not showing solidarity with my own people...I explained that I had felt that it was the right thing to do; it explained what I felt. I would do it again."

Tony Ward, in his introduction, comments (of racism): "As I watched Linford taking a lap of honour...the applause overwhelming, the crowd standing, eager to take his hand, the reciprocal affec-

tion every evident, I could not help but feel that double standards were being applied somewhere, that perhaps some Britons wanted it both ways."

Much of this book is for athletics fans only, but the parts that get behind the races, and behind the statistics make the book well worth reading. It is the story of a black man in Britain, lucky enough to possess a talent that has elevated him to the heights of international success and popularity but prepared to speak out about society's ills, racism and the vile media.

# Life, words and revolution

## CINEMA

**Belinda Weaver reviews 'Old Gringo'**

**O**ld Gringo isn't very good, but that doesn't stop you enjoying it.

Marred as it is by racial stereotyping, pretentious, deafening music, and rather lame, portentous dialogue which tells us things we've already worked out ourselves, it still communicates on an emotional level.

Political it's not. Even Jane Fonda, who produced it and played one of the main characters, admits that. Don't go expecting to learn anything about the Mexican Revolution circa 1913. It's basically an intimate story about the coming together of three very different people, padded out and almost overwhelmed by the few gory shoot-em-up bits that seem to belong to another kind of picture entirely.

Spinster governess Harriet Winslow (Fonda), American writer Bitter and Mexican revolutionary general Tomas Arroyo meet up in Chihuahua when Harriet is trying to get to the hacienda of the wealthy Miranda family, who have hired her as governess. Bitter is based on the real life writer Ambrose Bierce who disappeared in Mexico some time during the revolution, and played with wit and grace by Gregory Peck in what may be his last screen performance.

Arroyo and some of his men offer to escort Harriet as a means of penetrating the securely defended hacienda and seizing it for the revolution. Bitter, the 'old gringo' of the title, meets up with them again there, and the story begins.

The three characters are all caught between two worlds. Bitter, in his seventies, looks back on a full, rich life and savours to the full pleasures which, with Death at his elbow, he knows he may never have the chance to enjoy again.

Harriet, the repressed American who came to Mexico to seek truth, discovers appetites she never knew she had, and begins to change and blossom.

Arroyo, who falls under the spell of the world he came to destroy, is the most tragic of the three. Unable to escape the thrall of the hacienda, he refuses to move his army out to their rendezvous with the main revolutionary forces led by Pancho Villa. He roams the hacienda restlessly and dances with Fonda in a hall of mirrors, where he admires the picture of himself with a middle-class woman in his arms.

When Arroyo finds historic Spanish deeds ceding ownership of the Miranda lands to the Mexican peasants, he sees the revolutionary battle as won. His followers, illiterate like him, are at first overjoyed, and it is left to Bitter to try to bring them to their senses. The papers mean nothing, he says. The Mirandas, and others like them, will always have other papers.

Later, when Arroyo still refuses to act, Bitter condemns him for giving up the fight for the sake of words on paper. It isn't papers that will give the peasants the land; only by fighting for it will they be able to wrest it from the landowners.

That's not a bad message for any film to have, but that's not all. There are two images from the film that stay in the mind.

In one early scene, Fonda is escorted to her room by maidservants and some of the state's armed guards. The maids, alerted to the revolutionaries' presence within the hacienda's walls, slit the throats of the guards and strap on guns and ammunition over their demure servant garb. It's a startling and exciting transformation.

Much later, the revolutionaries camped in the grounds enter the hacienda's stately rooms and catch sight of themselves in the mirrored hallway. They point and laugh and strike poses as they recognise themselves. It's not a well written scene, yet it lingers in the mind,

because the people weren't just recognising themselves as individuals, but as an army.

That 'recognition' is essential for people waging a struggle, the recognition that together they form a group, united in purpose, with demands that cry out to be met. In the hall of mirrors, those peasants came face to face not just with their own faces, but with their own overwhelming numbers, with their strength and their determination.

These are the high notes. The weak points are the script, the stereotyping of Mexicans as hard drinking, hard fighting, whoring

dimwits and the casting of Jimmy Smits as Arroyo. Smits simply cannot match up to the heavyweight screen presences of Peck and Fonda (even though her performance is poor, relying too heavily on an irritatingly innocent wide-eyed stare), and Smits' weakness throws the triangle out of kilter.

Peck is the stand out. He's wonderful to watch and to listen to, and he has the best lines. When he talks to Fonda of his life, wooing her with the poetry and feeling of his words, it's the only time her wide-eyed sense of wonder seems to fit.

# Nine year old Mary plays school

Small Mary places papers all along the kitchen, On table, dresser and chairs: these are children; Herself a nun, alone with the children in her den.

Mary is playing school, Convent school, Where little girls are shaped for life, and cut By saintly women married live to God's strict rule.

Now she begins to teach: she stiffens and starts to strut Before the desks, facing her kids like Nemesis, A long thin stick in hand. Slowly, she starts to "Tut",

To "Tut Tut-Tut". Soon anger sparks to rage, Deep-rooted rage: a wounded eyeless Id Seethes with stifled poisoned life, within a cage.

Now she begins to shout: she scolds her paper kids, Upbraiding them as little fools and dunces, Ne'er-do-well thick little stupid Patsies and Brides.

From shouting now to action: she starts to hit The table, the dresser, the unfeeling chairs With the long stick, her face twisted as in a fit.

She "slaps" the table, the dresser and every chair: Wood rings on nerveless wood with rapid blows, In frenzied mimic violence. — And now with tears,

Mary slaps on, her eyes so hot they glow, Lost in that wounded reenactment there At home, in De Valera's Ireland long ago.

Small Mary slaps on, her eyes so hot they glow, Lost in that wounded reenactment there At home, in De Valera's Ireland long ago. SM

# Sitcom for a change

## TV

By Vicki Morris

**A**lthough I think people can go a bit over the top abemoaning the passing of the golden age of British comedy, these days situation comedies are generally pretty wet.

It's probably true that the inventiveness in 'Hancock's Half Hour' and 'Steptoe and Son' are impossible to match, and that comedy writers shouldn't try to live up to them. The more successful writers of late haven't. Instead, it's been the age of the 'alternative' comedian's writing and appearing in shows like 'The Young Ones' and 'Saturday Night Live'.

Having said that, I don't always feel like a sophisticated belly-laugh at the ironies and absurdities of current affairs, exposed by a maniac in a shiny suit with a mouth bigger and louder than his microphone.

Especially on a weeknight, I like to sit down to something that builds more slowly and doesn't make you paranoid about diverting your attention from the TV for a second to pick up a cup of tea, in case you miss the most searingly witty bon mot of the decade.

In other words, sitcoms still have a role to play. They should be a bit like a soap opera which also provokes a smile. Such a programme is 'Birds of a Feather', into its second week on BBC1. It is an unlikely tale of two working class sisters living back together (nice), while their husbands serve sentences for armed robbery (not so nice).

Usually when you have two main characters in a comedy they are like chalk and cheese and most of the humour comes from playing them off one against the other. In the process they both lose most of their dignity. Tracey and Sharon, however, are 'Birds of a Feather'. What differentiates them is the lives they've led for the past dozen or so years.

Tracey's husband made money and she lives in a plush house in a plummy neighbourhood. Sharon continued to live on the council estate where the sisters grew up. There's no cosy moral attempt to soften the blow for Sharon: she hated her husband as well as her home; Tracey really had it all: nice house and a marriage continuing as gooey as when it first started.

The essential and difficult thing to achieve in 80s sitcoms is something new, but not too fantastic. This situation, where Sharon goes to keep Tracey company in her plush house, tends to the unusual. However, I think we need a change from the now familiar portrayals of working class people who achieve a little material success and become laughable class climbers, or else fail endlessly and pathetically to enhance their social status, ie. ridiculous figures like Derek Trotter in 'Only Fools and Horses'. This programme, thankfully, isn't another of them.

A lot of the jokes arise from the incongruity of Tracey and, especially, Sharon in their snobby neighbourhood. But the humour is not made at their expense. The sisters turn the tables on the sort of people who make jokes about working class women called Sharon and Tracey.

Essentially 'Birds of a Feather' is like 'Dallas' minus the lipgloss. Tracey and Dorian's (the neighbour) gossip sessions at the health club is what you imagine Sue Ellen and Pamela might really talk about. And the best thing about it is that Sharon does for us in Tracey's house what no-one ever does in Dallas — noses around the spacious stuffed wardrobes and luxuriates unashamedly in jacuzzi, swimming pool, soggy sofas and a groaning fridge.

She combines humour about social absurdities with an honest appreciation of comfort. It makes for a decent sitcom and for a more relaxed viewing than Ben Elton.

# Open letter to Maeve Sherlock

Last week saboteurs wearing chintz balaclavas, with a pink rose pattern, over their faces intervened in the SO production process and stole half of Emma Colyer's open letter to Maeve Sherlock. That's the paste-up man's story anyway. This is the full text of the letter. Sorry!

**S**o, Maeve, you still don't support the Chinese Solidarity Campaign? At Labour Party Conference you refused even to sign our petition.

I suppose that when the campaign was first set up you had a fairly reasonable excuse for hanging back. Anyway, you had an NUS soft left tradition to keep up!

And what about Poland? You people were (and are) still talking to the state created, state sponsored students union in Poland while the troops of that same state were putting down Solidarnosc's strikes, and an independent student union was struggling to be born.

Only after the big struggles were over did you condescend to 'recognise' the free Polish student union, the NZS.

Presumably you are still meeting the East German 'official' unions and commiserating with them about the people who are leaving for the West? And when the East German people organise themselves into unions and trade unions — as they will for certain! — won't you spread stories about how they are 'dominated by the Catholic — or the Lutheran — church' even as they fight with the riot police? That's what you did about Solidarnosc.

"But", I hear you say, "what about our work on South Africa? We have mobilised the student movement behind the people's struggle for liberation. Obviously we only support the genuine

representative of the South African people which is the ANC, but we have done a lot of good solidarity work".

That's true Maeve, NUS's work in supporting the ANC has been tremendous. But NUS's work in supporting the democratic emerging trade union movement hasn't been so hot, has it? The ANC didn't like those unions so neither did you. Remember?

When Moses Mayekiso was on trial for his life NUS told people not to demonstrate for his release. Remember.

Of course, once the issue wasn't so politically hot, NUS supported his wife's speaking tour of Britain — 2 years later. The ANC and the trade unions had made a kind of peace by then so there was no need to make a political judgement about the situation.

Better late than never — but Maeve, it would have been better still if you'd helped Moses while he was fighting for his life.

And now we come to the present day, and China. NUS once more suspends judgement. NUS once more takes a back seat, refusing to throw its weight behind the political struggle at home and abroad.

This time, Maeve, the responsibility is wholly yours. You are not just one Democratic Left supporter on a DL dominated executive, you are President. Admittedly you've lost your majority, but when it comes to the vote you can always rely on the left's support.

We've, on the other hand have always been absolutely consistent. We always vote for solidarity action for international struggles.

We always go to picket overseas embassies when the army is piling in to shoot trade unionists.

We always turn up to solidarity demos, always organise speaking tours, always collect cash to help those struggles.

And we don't wait until the issue is decided, or the solidarity campaign has become respectable, or been given the thumbs-up by some national or international Stalinist clique somewhere.

We give our support, often critically, but always unconditionally and wholeheartedly then and there, when it's happening.

The reason is simple — we know whose side we're on. You, Maeve, aren't sure.

You say NUS 'supports' 'The Association of Chinese Students and Scholars'. So do we. If they organise any demos, pickets, conferences, letter-writing campaigns or collections we'll be there to help. You can rely on us.

In the meantime we'll carry on working with the CSC — the solidarity organisation which was there at the beginning, and has been there ever since — doing the work, the solidarity work which may help keep the Chinese student and labour movements alive. Which in its turn will bring real socialism and democracy to China.

The CSC is a genuine, committed and democratic organisation. As you would know if you'd ever bothered to find out by getting involved. You have put more effort into smearing this campaign than you did into organising solidarity work for the Chinese students and workers! That says a lot about your politics.

It's the same thing you did over Chile, Poland and the South African trade unions. You don't seem able to learn from your mistakes.

You daren't make the political choice necessary to get stuck into real labour movement solidarity. You might find yourself in the same room as a few harder lefties, doing something not quite 'respectable' that might damage your career.

Under normal circumstances I



After the massacre in Tiananmen Square. But Britain's National Union of Students and its president, Maeve Sherlock, refuse to support the Chinese Solidarity Campaign

wouldn't want you to take the risk. Your career is very important. Much more important than, say, Moses Mayekiso's neck, or the lives of a few (thousand) Chinese.

But for once, why not put your career aside for a minute. Get stuck into the struggle for bigger things, take a risk, lead NUS into supporting all the solidarity campaigns, whether they have the Stalinist or Kinnockite seal of approval or not.

With a small mental shift you will discover that you can support the ACSS and the CSC and the May 4th movement.

You will find, Maeve, that you don't agree with everyone in those campaigns, but you will just have to fight for you politics inside, rather than sniping, whingeing, and making excuses from the outside. It will be a change, but I'm sure you'll agree that the change is long overdue.

**Yours in sisterhood, Emma Colyer (NUS Exec; Left Unity Co-convenor and CSC Executive in personal capacity)**

## Back the ambulance workers!

**A**mbulance crews might not have a reputation for militancy. Obviously with their special skills and knowledge they are well respected by the general public. And they are the sort of people that the government tend to pick on and make an example of.

Like they picked on the nurses because they didn't expect them to fight back. Now they are trying to screw the ambulance workers into the floor, and they expected that they would not fight back. But enough is enough — and they are fighting back!

The police have been roped in to drive "under emergency" and I've heard policemen saying "please, please, we're not strike breaking". But that is exactly what they are doing.

They've done it with firefighters, and now they're doing it with ambulance workers. The government is using the police as all-purpose scabs. How appropriate!

It seems to me that the Police Federation ought to be saying "we will not be used in industrial disputes". I know that would be expecting rather a lot but I think that they should seriously think about it.

I think ambulance workers should go to the police and explain their case — compare what copper starts out on and what an ambulance worker starts out on, and then here's the copper taking his job off him.

And if it's good enough for a copper to do the job on that amount of salary, then why don't they give the ambulance drivers more in the first place and save all the hassle!

But it seems that the government have

## WHETTON'S WEEK

A miner's diary



got to whip every trade unionist in sight. Wherever workers raise their heads and ask for more the Tories blow a gasket.

If you remember, the nurses, when they had a dispute, went to the pits and the miners were the first out to stand alongside the nurses. The Tory anti-union legislation makes that illegal now.

The Labour leadership go along with that. Once again they will alienate thousands of trade unions by this acceptance of Tory anti-union rules.

These are people who perhaps never really considered that industrial legislation would be used against them and now, lo and behold, they find that they themselves cannot go and appeal to other workers for help. Labour should talk to such people. It should re-examine this policy in the run up to the general election.

It is ambulance workers today and god knows who it will be tomorrow. One lesson from the ambulance workers' dispute is that if anybody in this country thinks that they are safe from Tory anti-union legislation then they had better think again.

• Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM

## No troops on the ambulances!

**Dave Armes talked to ambulance drivers at last weekend's demonstration in London**

**T**roops out of ambulances now! As we go to press this could well be the slogan ambulance drivers will be shouting.

Ambulance drivers are threatened with lock-outs, troops, police and suspensions from their jobs. That the Tories dare to threaten such measures against some of the most popular workers in the country is evidence of how far this government will go to prevent health workers from earning a living wage. It may also be evidence that ambulance drivers are close to winning.

Ironically, the public will now have a better service because drivers will only be answering 999 calls!

Thatcher and her friends are panicking for two reasons. Callous cuts in the NHS have led to a severe shortage of beds. There is great pressure on hospitals to release patients as early as possible in order to cut the growing waiting lists. So now, because drivers refuse to take prematurely discharged patients home, a state of emergency is threatened!

A NUPE steward explained: "Many drivers are very demoralised with the whole gamut of conditions we work under, the thing is a shambles." This has stiffened the resolve of drivers who see themselves fighting also to protect patients by winning better pay and conditions.

The other reason why the Tories are panicking is that they have grave economic troubles and they are desperate to hold down the pay of workers. They want to make us pay for their problems. With the engineers' 'Drive for 35' the government is desperate to stamp out "trouble". A

victory for ambulance drivers would be a boost to the hopes of all workers as the new round of pay negotiations begins.

Despite these threats, the union has still not called a national meeting of reps. Surely now the union leaders must comply with rank and file calls for reps meetings.

Kinnock and Willis have not impressed drivers. A Brixton steward said: "We feel that the Labour Party and TUC have not done enough to support us, Kinnock and Willis seem to be playing along with the Tory pretence that nothing is really happening, and hoping

that the problem will go away."

This is despicable behaviour. They should support drivers who are calling for a national demonstration, a TUC day of action and open support for the industrial action.

The NUPE steward told us: "There is a great deal of support wherever we go, but it is passive support and it needs to be made active, because if this goes any further then action must escalate outside."

Ambulance drivers are confident, Eric from NW NUPE Ambulance gave this message to the Tories: "This dispute goes on until we have won."

## How ambulance workers planned to hit employers

**A**fter a meeting of delegates representing London ambulance crews, officers and controllers on Monday 16 October, a list of recommendations was issued by all the unions — NUPE, CoHSE, NALGO, TGWU and GMB. It included:

- strict implementation of 39-hour week;
- ban on all non-patient related paperwork;
- ban on acting up;
- ban on handling non-urgent discharges from hospitals within TUC guidelines;
- refusal by staff working on their own at ambulance stations to be transferred to another station;
- change in radio call system, safeguarding priority calls. Crews

would now return to ambulance stations for next instructions unless contacted by control to answer emergency calls;

- work-to-rule including proper safety check on vehicles. This was not intended to affect response to 999 calls;
- blankets to be used only once;
- no staff changes unless by voluntary agreement;
- refusal to work with temporary qualified staff who have not received full 4 week supervised training;
- no changes in annual leave arrangement;
- accident and emergency vehicles to stop carrying non-urgent patients.

It was this programme of action which triggered the employers' lock-out. The ambulance workers took care that their action should not harm emergency services. The employers locked out the ambulance workers and left the desperately ill and injured to rely on the police.

# Engineers: into battle!

By Gerry Bates

**W**e're delighted with the ballot result, the manual workers have voted by more than 3-1 for strike action.

"Rolls Royce will have great difficulty withstanding the strike for any length of time. The Hillington plant is an integral part of Rolls Royce and we can bring Rolls Royce to a standstill within a fortnight."

That's how Darren Keown, convenor of Rolls Royce Hillington, summed up the

mood at his plant after the ballot results were announced this Monday.

The engineers' battle is now reaching a crucial stage. Workers at BAE's Preston and Chester plants and at Rolls Royce Hillington are set to begin an all-out strike from next Monday (30 October).

It is vital that the full strength of the Confed is mobilised behind this action.

Meetings should be held at every federated workplace at which the officials can report on the progress of the campaign so far and inform rank and file engineers of the plans of the Confed leadership. This would provide the information that engineers have been starved of over the last few months and the Confed should also produce regular stewards' bulletins with up to the

minute information so that stewards can counter management and media propaganda.

The national Confed stewards conference that was called earlier this year should now be recalled to discuss the state of the campaign. And it should meet regularly throughout the course of the dispute. With over £6 million collected in the levy it is vital that control of the purse strings in this dispute should be in the hands of the rank and file. A Confed spokesperson said this week that "we can see no purpose for such a gathering". Rank and file engineers concerned about the effective prosecution of the dispute have reason to think otherwise.

At a local level, district Confed strategy committees should be set up

based on the stewards in the area. They could consider ways of building the dispute such as subsidised one-day solidarity strikes.

Union branches, and stewards committees could also organise special briefings or forums open to all members to discuss the campaign with the aim of encouraging the maximum rank and file involvement.

Strikers should be sent round non-striking workplaces to drum up support for the levy and to boost support for the campaign.

The ballots that are due to be held in one month's time at Lucas, GKN, Weir Industries and Cotton Foundries should be brought forward to increase the pressure on the EEF.

## Stick it out for 35 hours!

**C**an the Confed leadership be trusted to hold out for the 35-hour week with no strings?

Recent history suggests that rank and file engineers should not trust them. Twice in the last three years the Confed leadership have been prepared to put forward proposals that combine a cut in basic hours with concessions to the

**"It's important to have a national Confed stewards conference to discuss any possible settlement. It's the lay members who have put the money in, they should have a say what happens"**

**Darren Keown  
Convenor, Rolls Royce  
Hillington**

employers over 'flexibility'.

As the *Sheffield Engineering Gazette* Group pointed out early on in the campaign:

"By October 1986, after a series of meetings between the CSEU and the EEF, agreement was almost reached for a shorter working week for engineering workers. Those proposals were dropped by the CSEU as a result of effective lobbying by the rank and file.

"In the current round of negotiations, those unacceptable proposals have been taken out of the cupboard and submitted to the employers as the trade union proposals. The headings are the same, only the heading numbers have been changed.

"Compare for yourself:

old	new	
1.	7.	Harmonisation of Conditions and Employment
2.	5.	Efficiency in the Engineering Industry
3.	6.	Employee Involvement
4.		Deleted
5.	8f.	Demarcation
6.	8d.	Training
7.	12.	Non Cash Pay
8.	9.	The use of Working Time
9.	9c.	Variation in weekly Working Hours
10.	9b.	Annual Hours
11.	4.	Normal Working Week
12.		Deleted
13.	4a.	Timing of Reduction in Hours

"These proposals are a re-hash of the 1986 proposals; they were unacceptable then and they are equally unacceptable now. Engineering workers are interested in a shorter working week but not at any price!"

Even the *Financial Times* was prompted to describe Bill Jordan's proposals to the employers as involving nothing less than: "the abandonment of all those principles the unions have held dear since they first gained strength in the 19th century."

Again this year Jordan dropped his

proposals under pressure but it is hardly fantastic to believe that he may try and reintroduce major concessions in a new form in negotiations this week.

The EEF this weekend implied that they are prepared to accept a 37-hour week in return for the Confed giving way on accepting most of their 'flexibility' proposals. So Jordan must be tempted. He has already suggested a 37 hour week could be a 'stepping stone' to the 35 hour week.

Jordan's willingness to talk down the union's claim to 37 hours undoubtedly helped lose the vote amongst white collar workers who already have a 37 or 37½ hour week in many cases. This was compounded by the inactivity of many local white collar officials.

As Alan Marshall, MSF rep at GPT Beeston, pointed out: "The strings that GPT are after reflect the Engineering Employers' Federation's talk about introducing a shorter working week with the strings — stopping breaks, flexibility and payment appraisal. It's a fraud for them to say they're giving us something — they're not giving us anything, they're taking it away.

"Our plant is one of the largest federated firms in the East Midlands. If the workforce here capitulates because they don't get supported by the Confed strategy, it's feasible that other firms in the East Midlands will follow suit.

"The Confed have been told they can ill afford to have an agreement forced on their members here, because it will have an obvious effect on the complete national strategy."

So separating the dispute at GPT Beeston from the national 35-hour week campaign sends all the wrong signals to the employers, especially after GPT was on the original 'hit list'.

Finally, there is the question of local deals. The bosses' paper, the *Financial Times*, pointed to some of the dangers. "The irony is that the unions' subsequent strategy of targeting specific

companies for industrial action among the EEF's 5,000 affiliated employers may lead to the conclusion of local deals.

"Last week, shop stewards at the Cheltenham site of Smiths Industries, one of the plants being balloted, were initially tempted to enter talks with management on the company's offer of a self-financing 37½ hour week for manual workers. They decided not to do so, after advice from the CSEU national co-ordinating committee, partly because it offered no hours reduction for white collar workers.

"The EEF says that it has no objections to deals of the type proposed by Smiths; but that even if a deal was concluded by the company there is no reason why other employers should follow suit.

"Union leaders counter that the reali-

ty is that the EEF would be forced back to national talks if it saw a danger of its members being picked off one by one through the threat of selective strikes."

At present no local deal on hours or pay can be signed without being approved by the Confed national committee. With the dispute now entering a new, critical stage that power should pass to a national Confed stewards conference.

At a time when the EEF is discussing its own abolition and clearly wants to see the end of the national agreement, local deals on hours at the three striking plants could lead to the breakdown of the national agreement and open up huge differences between different engineering workers on basic hours, one of the few remaining unifying factors.

Clearly such a result would be disastrous: for that reason rank and file ratification of any local deals is vital.

## Rank and file control

By an AEU steward

**A**ccording to a spokesperson for the Confed strategy committee no money whatsoever from the levy will go to workers laid off as a result of the dispute.

"In any industrial action there are casualties," he said. "It shouldn't be beyond the imagination of local trade unionists to make arrangements," he added, underlining that there will be no money from the national fund.

But if laid off workers are not subsidised from the strike fund how will potential divisions be avoided?

In the IG Metall dispute, which the Confed leaders hold up as a model, within two weeks there were 10 workers laid off for every striker. It's not

enough to rely on improvisation.

The only way to overcome these problems is to put the dispute under rank and file control so the lay members themselves can determine what benefits to pay out. Local Confed stewards strategy committees should be set up to do this.

The Confed leadership's policy of keeping their strategy secret makes sense in relation to the employers who could, for instance, provoke lay-offs if they thought it would quickly drain the strike fund. But the policy of secrecy pursued by the leadership is preventing information getting through to the rank and file. We might not want the whole world to know, but it would be a help if engineering stewards knew what the hell is going on and what's going to happen next. At the moment we don't.

## Eric Hammond and the ghost of Arthur Deakin

### INSIDE THE UNIONS

**T**he EETPU may be outside the TUC, but it was very much on the inside at the Labour Party conference.

It had 30 delegates and a block vote of 137,000. General Secretary Eric Hammond seemed in good form. Which was hardly surprising, given that so many of the policies adopted by conference were very much in line with what his union has been advocating for years — a point that Hammond could not resist rubbing in when he got to speak in the trade union debate.

Outside the hall, the EETPU delegates were busy fraternising and boozing just like any other trade union delegation. Hammond himself seemed less belligerent than usual. Clearly, the electricians still see themselves very much a part of the labour movement. The grand designs of some EETPU leaders (notably Roy Sanderson, head

of the white collar section) for a new non-TUC organisation centred on the EETPU plus outfits like the RCN, TAT and UDM have clearly now been consigned to the wastepaper bin.

The EETPU has not prospered outside the TUC. Membership has declined and there have been few takers to the idea of a non-TUC federation. On the other hand, the predicted membership war between the electricians and all comers from the TUC side has not materialised either: the electricians remain on most important joint negotiating committees (eg. Fords) and are fully involved in the Confed's 35-hour week campaign. And, of course, they remain inside the Scottish TUC.

Hammond's hopes of a merger with the AEU (whose leaders are his closest allies inside the TUC) were kicked into touch by the AEU National Committee earlier this year. Now, astonishingly, the speculation is on the merger with the TGWU, one of the unions at the forefront of the campaign to get the EETPU expelled in the first place.

The short-term prospects of a deal with the EETPU should not be exaggerated: much of the recent speculation

along these lines is the result of Hammond's own penchant for feeding fanciful little ideas to his friends in the press. (Not long ago he was busy spreading stories about a deal with — of all people — Arthur Scargill!) But the idea is not as ridiculous as all that: the T&G right-wing is strong and well organised. They have maintained close links with the EETPU via John Spellar's "mainstream" organisation. It is quite possible that the soft-left's 17-22 majority on the T&G executive could be overturned at the next NEC elections — especially in the aftermath of the "left's" poor handling of the docks dispute.

At the moment Ron Todd and his supporters would not touch Hammond with a bargepole. Much more likely is a deal with the MSF (informal talks have already taken place). But the balance of power within the T&G is precarious and the union's structures and rule book are potentially quite compatible with the electricians'. After all, it wasn't that many years ago that Arthur Deakin ran the T&G in much the same way that Hammond now runs the EETPU. It's not time to panic yet, but it's a frightening prospect.

## Fight Sunday collections

By a postal officer

**E**dinburgh Outdoor UCW officials have produced a leaflet explaining the importance of a 'yes' vote in the forthcoming ballot for industrial action against the introduction of Sunday collections.

However, more is at stake than whether or not mail is collected seven days a week. Derek Durkin, Branch Chair of Edinburgh Outdoor told SO: "It is not credible that the Post Office would risk industrial action over a 0.03% increase in the old collection, yet that is the gain the Post Office will make by introducing Sunday collections.

"This is another provocation by the Post Office with other issues in mind — Sunday deliveries, single deliveries of weekday mail, privatisation and the erosion of the power of the union.

"Bill Cockburn, Letters Managing Director, said, speaking to us, that Sunday deliveries would come if there was a demand for them. He also gave an interview to the *Glasgow Herald* warning the union that 'The customer is always right, or rather Bill Cockburn is'.

"We have been pressured time and again to allow 'once over the ground deliveries'. We cannot allow this to happen. The union has calculated that the introduction of 'once over the ground' deliveries would result in the immediate loss of something like one third of postmen/women's jobs, with more to come. On top of this, Nicholas Ridley has made it known that privatisation proposals will be announced soon.

"Finally, we see the attempt to undermine the union in the refusal by management to allow the union's negotiators to go back to the membership with the outcome of any forthcoming talks over the question of Sunday elections."

The Edinburgh Outdoor leaflet said "such contempt cannot go unchallenged."

## Islington CDCs

**A**fter three weeks of all-out action the CDC's strike in Islington is still 100% solid.

The workers are protesting at the Council disciplining their two organisers for refusing to admit extra children against safety guidelines.

On Monday 23 October, parents and workers lobbied a Council meeting together bringing it to a halt by demanding the Council re-open the centres and negotiate properly.

The next day over 800 other NALGO members took one-day strike action in Social Services and Neighbourhood Offices to back the section.

Islington NALGO is now looking to organise a branch-wide strike in support.

With the strength of the workers' resolve and the successful joint campaigning with parents only one thing can stop them: running out of money.

Though the branch is topping up national strike pay of £50 per week, the funds could soon be exhausted without support from elsewhere.

Donations and messages of support and requests for speakers for Islington CDCs Strike Committee, c/o 2 Orlestone Rd, London N7. Tel: 01 354 7470.

## Sheffield UBOs

**F**or the last two weeks CPSA members in two benefit offices in central Sheffield have been on strike. The strikers are demanding more staff immediately."

Geoff Fieldson, branch chair of CPSA told SO that staffing levels were calculated on a system eight years out of date. Stress-related illnesses are also increasing dramatically.

The strikers picketed the head office of Employment Services in Sheffield on Friday 20 October during a visit by Minister of State Timothy Edgar. A CPSA member from Rotherham had been invited to meet him but had preferred to put to him the strikers' demands. She had been told that Mr Edgar didn't listen to demands.

More and more CPSA members are joining the strike all the time — there are now around 650 CPSA members in Sheffield on strike.

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

### San Francisco bridges were known to be unsafe

Steve Zeltzer spoke to Socialist Organiser from San Francisco

People have been fairly calm so far, but the crunch is going to come next week when people try to get back to work, and a lot of crazy stuff could happen then.

Hundreds of thousands of people won't be able to get to work. Someone who works with me usually has a 30 to 40 minute journey to work. Today it was three hours, and that's the weekend.

Tens of thousands of people already had two or three hour journeys to work before the earthquake. They just won't be able to get to work at all.

The earthquake has shown up the lack of proper safety planning and mass transportation.

It was known ten or fifteen years ago that the bridges which collapsed were unsafe, but the California State Governor vetoed bills to rebuild them. There's been a speculative building boom in the Bay Area with no proper planning.

The US spends a pittance on earthquake research — less than the cost of one B-1 bomber.

And there's been no plan for mass transportation. There is the BART underground system in San Francisco, but there is no train system for the surrounding area except from San Jose. A ferry service is running to substitute for the wrecked bridges, but it is charging very high fares.

Most companies are reopening next week, and they have told workers to go back to work in buildings which have not been checked for safety except by the companies themselves. The trade unions should demand the right to inspect buildings for safety; compensation for workers who can't get to work; a moratorium on house payments for them; and the creation of a proper publicly-controlled mass transportation network.

The other issue will be housing. Thousands of people are homeless, especially in Watsonville and from some tenement buildings in San Francisco and Oakland. Some of them have taken refuge in the Moscone Convention Center here, but they will be thrown out onto the streets tomorrow because a convention is starting there.

The trade unions should demand emergency housing.

## East German workers form free union

By Bruce Robinson

The mass demonstrations in East Germany have forced head of state and Communist Party chief Erich Honecker to resign.

Last Monday's demonstration of 120,000 in Leipzig seems to have tipped the balance among the increasingly beleaguered old-style Stalinists in favour of ditching him.

Honecker's successor, Egon Krenz, has done nothing to head off the rising mass movement. At the weekend 50,000 marched in Dresden and other demonstrations took place in East Berlin, Potsdam and Karl Marx Stadt.

Tonight (Monday 23rd) over 250,000 marched again in Leipzig and the BBC news reported that workers in a major East Berlin engineering and electronics factory have decided to set up an independent trade union.

Called 'Reform', the union says in its founding statement: "In the certain knowledge that the FDGB [the official union federation] does not serve the interests of most of the workers, lacks their confidence and sees itself as a partner of the Communist Party, we have decided to leave it." This statement has been distributed to other factories.

Krenz is very much in the Honecker mould, having been groomed as heir apparent for some years and spent much of his working life as a bureaucrat in the Stalinist youth organisation.

Krenz was responsible for internal security at the time of the demonstrations earlier this month, when two people are now known to have been killed following beatings by the police. He also gave ostentatiously warm congratulations to the Chinese CP on the suppression of the democracy movement.

It is rumoured that Honecker may have agreed to stand down on the condition that Krenz succeeded him.

So far Krenz has made a few cosmetic gestures towards the demands of the opposition. He has removed the ban on the Russian pro-Gorbachev magazine, *Sputnik*. He has also appeared on TV talking to workers — apparently telling them why they can't have colour televisions! — and the media have reported the demonstrations in more neutral terms than usual, allowing a demonstrator to read a statement on TV.

There have been hints of freer travel to the West, but only in return for West Germany making major concessions, which are unlikely.

Krenz is widely seen as a caretaker figure, as he suffers from ill health, and a party conference is due next year. If the SED decides to make real reforms, the Dresden party leader, Hans Modrow, might well succeed Krenz.



East German troops round up demonstrators

He has openly sought a dialogue with the demonstrators and favours economic changes.

However the SED has still to decide how to deal with the im-

mediate crisis caused by the continuing exodus to West Germany and the growth of the opposition. They face a real political crisis affecting the whole system.

Meanwhile the opposition continues to grow and, for the first time, there are indications that workers are taking part as an independent organised force.

## Repeal the PTA!

By Colin Foster

Not just the conviction of the Guildford Four, but much else forced through in the wave of prejudice, bigotry and emotion that followed the pub bombings in 1974-5 needs to be cleared away.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act must be scrapped.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act was rushed through Parliament in one night after bombs in Birmingham pubs killed 21 people in November 1974. It was proposed by Roy Jenkins, then a member of the Labour government, and went through without a single vote against.

Roy Jenkins called it 'draconian' but said it would be temporary. In fact Labour renewed it every year until 1978.

The Tories continued it until 1988, then made it permanent.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act has had no known effect in 'preventing terrorism'. It has not helped solve the impasse in Northern Ireland, but embittered it.

It breaches civil rights in many ways. It has empowered the police routinely to arrest people with Republican sympathies travelling between Britain and Ireland, and to

hold them in jail without charge or trial for up to a week.

Between 1974 and 1988, 7,645 people were detained under the Act in Northern Ireland; between 1979 and 1988, another 2,975 were detained in Britain.

In 1986 alone, another 59,481 were stopped and searched at British ports for periods of less than an hour. Those cases don't as detentions under the Act, but they are certainly part of the Prevention of Terrorism Act dragnet.

Few of the thousand arrested under the Act are charged — in Britain only 8 per cent, in Northern Ireland only 33%. And of those charged, few are charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act itself. The Prevention of Terrorism Act has only rarely been used to charge people and bring them to trial. It is mainly a weapon giving the police more power of arbitrary action, rather than a law with guilt or innocence tested in court.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act does, however, include causes making it a crime to express any sort of support for the IRA. The clauses are broadly worded enough that they could probably be used to drag the Troops Out Movement, the Labour Committee on Ireland, Time To Go and every similar grouping into court.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act also empowers the government to

### 500 DEMONSTRATE AGAINST PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT

THE frozen numbers which gripped the labour movement following the death of 21 people when two Birmingham pubs were bombed last November allowed the ruling class to push through Parliament 'draconian measures' (Jenkins' words) which overnight converted one million Irish people in Britain into second class citizens. Arrest and detention without charge for as long as a week, summary deportation without charge or trial, mass terrorisation of the Irish community — these have been the results of Jenkins' so-called

opposed the Act and Hetchley Trades Council waged a successful campaign to defend a prominent local trade unionist arrested under the Act. The demonstration marks a breakthrough. Left groups, Troops Out Movement branches, Labour Party Young Socialist branches, and trade

Below: Troops Out Movement banner heads the demonstration. Birmingham AUEW member John Bryant speaks (with him, Jack Sutton, Manchester NUPE); top, part of the Workers Fight contingent.



The first protest against the PTA, July 1975

make 'exclusion orders' enforcing internal exile — barring people from entering Northern Ireland from Britain or Britain from Northern Ireland. 135 exclusion orders were in operation in 1988.

In 1974-5 the reaction of the labour movement to the Prevention of Terrorism Act was slow and cautious. The pub bombings had generated a powerful wave of fury against Irish workers and Republican sympathisers in Britain. Several were driven out of their jobs.

Not even two MPs could be

found to register a vote against the Act in Parliament. The first demonstration against the Act, in July 1975, had to be initiated and organised by *Workers' Fight*, a forerunner of *Socialist Organiser* and, at the time, a relatively small force on the left.

Now the Labour Party is officially committed to repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Whether Neil Kinnock will deliver on that commitment is another matter. It depends on what we do to drive home the lessons of the Guildford Four case.