

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Mid-Staffs by-election

Vote Labour!

Fight the Poll Tax not the left!



They are after Scargill again: Scargill arrested on the picket line during the strike.



Maxwell

Who is Robert Maxwell?

Robert Maxwell has made millions publishing fawning, lying propaganda on behalf of East European Stalinist dictators like Ceausescu, Honecker and Jaruzelski.

He supported the attempt of the Polish Stalinist government to destroy the free trade union Solidarnosc.

He sacks trade unionists for being trade unionists — for example, workers at his Pergamon Press in Oxford. Earlier in his business career he was described by a British court as a 'person unfit to have the stewardship of a public company'.

During the miners' strike of 1984-5 he used his "Labour" papers to try to undermine and demoralise the fighting miners.

Robert Maxwell is the man who is now leading the attack on Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield!

Even where Arthur Scargill is weakest — in his delusion that the Stalinist states are socialist — Maxwell is worse. He was motivated by money-grubbing considerations in his support for Eastern Europe's dictators!

Secure behind his vast millions, Maxwell dares Scargill, who is very poor by comparison, to sue him for libel. Or else, Maxwell says, Scargill is admitting his guilt. Yuk!



Dictator: Jaruzelski

"The NUM has a lousy president. His tactics are lousy. But I wouldn't question his personal honesty."

That was John Walsh, leader of the right wing of the Yorkshire NUM, who challenged Arthur Scargill in the election for NUM president, speaking on TV in response to the charges of personal corruption levelled at Scargill by press and TV at the beginning of this week.

The buckets of mud which the newspapers — and in the first place Robert Maxwell's *Daily Mirror* — have flung at the heads of Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield are just the latest blows in the war that supposedly ended five years ago when the miners were forced back to work after 12 months on strike.

The media still detest Scargill and Heathfield and all they stand for in the labour movement. They are still out to "get" them.

Arthur Scargill is charged with having had up to £5.5 million from the Libyan government and perhaps £1 million from the USSR for the relief of hardship during the strike. Scargill and Heathfield are charged with having used over £40,000 of this money to pay off debts on their homes. Scargill is also accused of having asked the Libyan government to supply him with a small pistol and a shotgun.

The prime source of these accusations is Roger Windsor, NUM chief executive until last July, who spoke about them to the *Mirror* and to a special edition of TV's "The Cook Report".

Before Windsor, who now lives in France, accused Scargill, Scargill accused Windsor. Late last year Scargill set the Fraud Squad on to Windsor, and this is apparently Windsor's "reply".

The financial affairs of the NUM were immensely complicated during the strike. Large sums of money flowed in (loans, donations) and out (strike expenses). The NUM was forced to go half-underground by Mrs Thatcher's anti-union courts. The NUM leaders operated

Hands off Arthur Scargill!

throughout the strike in the expectation that the courts would soon seize the union's funds, and they did so on 25 October 1984.

The union leaders had to make all sorts of arrangements to conceal the union's financial transactions from the eyes of the government — measures typical of organisations driven underground by repressive governments. God knows what corners were cut in the day to day struggle to keep the embattled

union afloat and to keep union assets, including property such as the union-owned homes inhabited by the Scargill and Heathfield families.

The lines between personal and union finances may sometimes have got blurred for a while. Labour movement activists can't know in detail. We do know, however, that the public record of Scargill and Heathfield does not at all support the notion that the men who led the

greatest working-class battle for many decades in Britain were corrupt and self-serving bureaucrats.

The words of Arthur Scargill's chief enemy within the NUM, John Walsh, ring true.

Trade union officials do live far better than their members, and that is something this newspaper disagrees with and fights against. Arthur Scargill is a typical trade

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Distorting Mirror

By Jim Denham

A lone amongst Britain's national daily newspapers, the *Daily Mirror* consistently supports Labour. In the 1950s and '60s, under Hugh Cudlipp, the *Mirror* was a light but serious paper that specialised in campaigning journalism and had no hesitation in exposing the full horror of the Vietnam War.

But the *Mirror* was never a socialist paper. It usually supported the right wing of the Labour Party and often poured vitriol upon the Tories and the left in about equal measure.

Then, in 1984, Robert Maxwell took over. The deterioration was immediate: at times, the *Mirror* seemed little more than a publicity sheet for the bloated ego of its preposterous new publisher. The best of the Cudlipp-era journalists (notably John Pilger) saw the writing on the wall and left. Maxwell boasted that under his dynamic influence, the *Mirror* would soon regain its rightful place as market leader, ahead of the *Sun*. The *Mirror* never quite followed Murdoch's rag all the way into the gutter but it moved far enough in that direction to alienate much of its serious working class readership and sales declined sharply. These days, Paul Foot's weekly 'investigative' page is about the only vestige of the great days.

Last month, editor Richard Stott finally threw in the towel, to be replaced by one Roy Greenslade. Mr Greenslade is a colourful character, a former Maoist who in years gone by enlivened many a NUJ conference with his impassioned denunciations of the hated 'Trots'. His revolutionary fervour conveniently abated in time for the Wapping dispute when, as a loyal *Sunday Times* hack, he dutifully crossed the picket line.

Credentials like these made Greenslade an ideal recruit to the Maxwell camp. On joining the *Mirror*, Greenslade declared himself an ardent supporter of Neil Kinnock's New Model Labour Party. He vowed to make the paper more acceptable to the 'caring' middle classes and to shake off its 'cloth cap' image. There would be less Jason 'n' Kylie-type gossip and more serious stuff about important issues like the environment and personal finance. In a bold opening gambit, the 'Old Codgers' column was ruthlessly axed.

This week's Scargill revelations give a taste of the direction Greenslade and Maxwell are taking the *Mirror*. Monday's paper devoted nearly five entire pages (including the front page) to allegations that during the 1984/5 strike, the NUM leadership obtained £163,000 from "the terrorist-linked



regime of Libya's Colonel Gaddafi" as well as "secret funds, totalling £1 million, donated by unions in Russia". Most damningly, the *Mirror* claims that over £50,000 (by this Tuesday it had become £70,000) of this money was used to pay off mortgages and personal loans of Scargill, General Secretary Peter Heathfield and former NUM Chief Executive Roger Windsor.

Monday's front page promised "THE FACTS" about the "Libyan money": but the story itself is incredibly sloppily written and fails to establish whether the (alleged) financial manoeuvres were quite sensible precautions against sequestration or a cynical mis-use of money intended to alleviate the hardship of NUM members and their families. Crucially, the *Mirror* never makes it clear whether its outrage is fired by the idea of the NUM accepting 'tainted' money from the Libyans and Russians...or whether the real scandal is that Scargill used the money for (allegedly) improper purposes.

This is a vital distinction: a union engaged in a life-or-death struggle like the '84-'85 strike is surely entitled to obtain funds from the devil himself. Thatcher did not scruple to play dirty, giving the police unprecedented 'ad hoc' powers and manipulating the Social Security laws to deny strikers' families their rightful state benefits.

If, however, there is any truth in the claims that Scargill and Heathfield made use of funds for their own personal benefit, then there would be real cause for concern. But the *Mirror*'s

evidence (largely based upon information obtained from the erratic Mr Windsor, now living in France) is far from conclusive: it makes for dramatic headlines, but fails to deliver the goods.

A particularly nauseating twist is added by Monday's 'Mirror Comment' penned by Maxwell himself: our great "socialist" union-buster takes the opportunity to denigrate the strike ("it was always the wrong strike at the wrong time — the start of spring — with the wrong leaders") and to repeat (without acknowledgement!) Eric Hammond's cheap jibe about the miners being "lions led by donkeys". Maxwell even has the cheek to pose as a 'friend' of the unions: "We still need a strong trade union movement...it is still necessary to protect workers from an overmighty employer." Maxwell should try telling that to the Pergamon strikers, whose union recognition he withdrew last year!

But the most disgusting aspect of the whole business is surely Maxwell's barefaced hypocrisy on the subject of accepting money from "terrorist-linked" dictatorships: even if all the *Mirror*'s claims about Libyan and Russian gold were true, Scargill and Heathfield could not hold a candle to Cap'n Bob when it

comes to grovelling to blood-stained dictators: a large part of Maxwell's fortune was built upon his "special relationship" with Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and China; he published books extolling the virtues of such workers' friends as General Jaruzelski of Poland and President Ceausescu of Romania.

In a personal interview with Ceausescu published in a Maxwell hagiography a few years ago, the Cap'n asked the workers' friend to explain the "astounding affection in which you are held by the people of Romania". In an interview on Warsaw Radio less than five years ago, Maxwell promised that in future his papers "will certainly be devoting less space to Solidarity". Shortly afterwards he hosted a reception with the Polish ambassador in London to launch a book by General Jaruzelski — no prizes for guessing the publisher!

NUM members may now want to ask Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield some fairly searching questions about the handling of the union's funds during the great strike: but they need no lessons in "openness" or "honesty" from Robert Maxwell or his ex-Stalinist lapdog Roy Greenslade.

"I believe Scargill, not Maxwell"

By Paul Whetton, Manton NUM (South Yorkshire)

Between Roger Windsor and Robert Maxwell on one side and Arthur Scargill on the other, I know who I believe!

I put my full faith in Arthur Scargill and I have no faith in Roger Windsor. The big question is this: why now? It seems to me the timing is very strange. Maybe it's because we've got the Tory government rocking over the poll tax.

I've never trusted Maxwell and never will. He's in exactly the same boat as Murdoch as far as I'm concerned.

My own opinion is that they're trying to get people on the left of the Labour Party isolated. It could boomerang right in their faces. I've no doubt Scargill will be able to prove his complete innocence.

I think they ought to go to the NUM Executive and have it thrashed out there.

I've been talking to rank and file miners this morning and there's none of them believe that there's anything in it. When they start talking about guns and all the rest of it, people knew that then they'd damn well gone completely over the top. So long as our national executive is satisfied then that should be it.

I was pleased to see somebody, even a great critic of ours, John Walsh, he doesn't make any bones about it, he doesn't agree with Arthur and thinks he's a lousy president, but he would not for one moment question his personal honesty and integrity. I think that that says a multitude of things as far as the miners are concerned.

Ask yourself the question: who did a runner in the first place? Roger Windsor! Why did he go to France? Who was it who went and asked the Fraud Squad to get hold of him? Arthur Scargill. So it's all quite obvious to me.

He makes my blood boil, Windsor, who had a very good living out of the mineworkers for a damned good number of years! He doesn't exactly appear to be living in a pigsty now either. And yet we've still got sacked miners that are still struggling 5 or 6 years after the beginning of the strike.

Why MPs don't represent women — or workers

By Liz Millward

The BBC meant to show a programme about sexism in the selection of MPs. They did. But they also showed a programme about the farce of British democracy.

'A Safe Sex for a Safe Seat' let the cameras in to the Tory party selection process. The film followed the progress of three women who had "applied" for the safe seat of High Peak (rural Derbyshire).

One woman, who "wanted to go up North to see what goes on", didn't get to the first interview. The second had a closer link with the constituency — she played her first game of golf there. She had a first interview, but got no further. The third candidate, a Tory councillor from Sheffield, made it to the final three, and then lost to a (male) chinless wonder from London.

Sexism was certainly in evidence. The woman candidate had a thousand times more humour and personality than the twit of a bloke who won. She also had a northern accent, and had lived all her life within five minutes' drive of the constituency. In a non-sexist world she would have won hands down. The programme didn't have to point this out, it was all too depressingly obvious.

The selection procedure itself was not (as far as I could see) stacked against women candidates. In fact at least half of the selectors were women; and the two most central organisers shown were both women. The sexism was in the hands of the participants rather than the structures of the election.

But those structures were a problem, and a problem for the women of the constituency. The seat has been 'safe

for the Tories for years. Only once in my lifetime has it ever returned a Labour MP. It is a rural area, a commuter belt for the affluent of Manchester and Sheffield and Britain's oldest national park. It has three main industries — farming, tourism and mineral extraction with little or no unionisation in any of them. The local council for much of the area is also Tory-controlled. Compared to nearby cities, rural Derbyshire is in a paternalistic time warp. Vast tracts of the constituency are owned by one man — the Duke of Devonshire.

The BBC showed the selection of the area's representative in parliament. It would take a big swing to Labour to unseat him. Yet he will be accountable only to the 60 local Tories who chose him — 60 landowners and shopkeepers out of 50,000 people.

Those 60 representatives of the ruling class think the High Peak and the Derbyshire Dales are wonderful. They love the low rates because they don't need bus services, adult education courses or youth clubs. Their kids go to private schools so it doesn't bother them that the local schools are so bad. They can afford an architect to convert an old barn, so the planning regulations which don't allow the less well off to build an extra bedroom on the back of their cottage don't matter to them. When their kids grow up they just buy a house. Inflated prices just mean a profit on their 'investment' rather than nowhere to live. No doubt the High Peak's new MP will represent their interests very well.

This Tory paradise is also peopled by those who don't find it quite so pleasant. Families in tied housing. Young couples who can't afford to buy a home, and who find that all the rented housing is for holidaymakers. Young women with kids who are stuck in their village without proper shops, leisure facilities, libraries — even the doctor

only visits once a week. Without a car you are literally stuck. If there is a bus it comes once a day. It may not take you where you want to go, but it will be the only way in or out of the village.

Schools are a lottery. Many village schools have been closed. Of the secondary schools, some are OK, some aren't. All have rigid catchment areas — and the 'good' schools have inflated house prices to match. Apart from school there is nothing for the kids to do. Without transport they can't even get to the nearby towns. There is no Poly or University in the whole country and few FEs — 'continuing education' is basket weaving in the church hall (if it hasn't been converted into four flats, or a gift shop). There is little choice of employment because there are so few employers. Those employers can dictate their own terms. Blot your copybook with ICI and you may well be out of a job, out of your home and the nearest similar work is 20 miles away — with no public transport.

All these problems, and more, affect the working class, and particularly working class women in the High Peak. Yet those women are not represented in parliament or anywhere else. Democracy is a vote every five years which will not change their lives for the better at all because of the demographic nature of the constituency. Yet this is the democracy Thatcher and company want to bring to Eastern Europe. Democracy which is still based on money, and property. Democracy which stitches up areas like High Peak so that working class women are powerless and isolated. Democracy based on money. A Democracy where the person who represents 50,000 people is accountable to 60 of them, and chosen by that 60.

Derbyshire Tories could have chosen a woman for 'their' MP and it would have done absolutely nothing for thousands of Derbyshire women.

Another horror story

THE HIDDEN HAND

By Colin Foster

A component travelling an unnecessary 20,000 miles before it had any value added to it — must be another horror story about the economies of Eastern Europe.

In fact the horror story comes from the very capitalist and market-oriented Lucas Industries, according to a recent article in the *Economist* magazine.

The story came to light when Lucas introduced a new system of cost accounting; and, according to the *Economist*, traditional capitalist systems of cost accounting may hide many more such horrors.

Traditional cost accounting is "good at measuring the costs of labour and materials, but not those of overheads". Once overhead costs are measured, they are "assigned to products in an arbitrary way".

But — especially in the most modern information technology industries — overheads are a growing

part of costs. Computer software, for example, often costs a lot of skilled labour-time to develop, and almost nothing to copy once it is developed. In order to make profits from it, companies have to go to great lengths to stop it being copied.

Alongside cost control, the other magic merit claimed for the capitalist free market is that it ensures "consumer sovereignty".

The customer gets what he or she wants — or so the theory goes.

But that theory, too, gets a knocking from evidence reported in last week's *Economist*. Customers may think they want what they think they're getting, but that's all.

Take the health drink Aqua Libra. It's produced in Hartlepool. But its makers reckon people won't want health drinks from the grimy industrial North-East. So they set up a company in Geneva, had it license their own recipe back to them, and so were able to put on their labels "Bottled under licence for Aqua Libra, Geneva, Switzerland".

Another example is Boots' cosmetics. They carry labelling in French as well as English — although they are not made in France or sold in France and don't go anywhere near France. It just looks chic, and encourages customers to think they want what they think they're getting.

Hands off the NUM!

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union official in that respect. In his willingness and eagerness to organise labour movement resistance to Thatcher and Thatcherism, he has been very far from typical.

"Hate Arthur Scargill" became the battle cry of every reactionary in the country during the great miners' strike. And not only the battle cry of Tory reactionaries: Labour's right wing and soft left too joined in the outcry. Neil Kinnock and his team established their credentials as reliable "moderates" by condemning the violence of the miners.

Miners were being beaten down by semi-militarised squads of police thugs, directed from a central headquarters in London. Pit villages were being occupied as by a foreign army of police. Miners' families were being ground down by the poverty of the 12 month strike.

The whole campaign against the miners, from centralised semi-military police to pit closures and the organisation of scab coal supplies, had been planned by civil servants and Tories for years in advance — and that was widely known.

What did the press see in the miners' strike? They saw "violence" — miners' violence. They convinced the "public" of it.

It was a great success for the lie machine of the ruling class. It was one of the greatest frame-ups in British history, a great success for the politics of the history-shaping lie.

It belongs in the same category as Stalin's Moscow Trials. If Stalin's was the dictatorship of the lie, Thatcher's was the lie democratic, relying not on police-state censorship but on the venality of the privately-owned media and the solidarity of the "opinion formers" in Britain for whom the violence of the police was legitimate and democratic, and that of the miners evil and subversive.

Now we have the "revelation" that the miners got money from Moscow and Tripoli. We don't know whether they did or not. The accused miners' leaders say they didn't.

But there is one short answer to this allegation: *so what?* If money, without political strings, flowed to the coffers of the beleaguered miners' union from Moscow or Tripoli, or for that matter from Hell, then in principle the miners' leaders would have been wrong not to have taken it and used it.

The only arguments against taking it which a serious activist committed to the miners' fight could have raised would be considerations of expediency — calculations as to whether the advantages that the money would bring were greater than the disadvantages for the miners' cause of the outcry that the media made during the strike about an alleged visit by Roger Windsor to Libya.

During the strike miners' families suffered tremendous hardship. Thatcher's government had primed the courts to seize and freeze the union's assets. It was open class war with neither decency nor any "Queensbury Rules".

Morally and in every other way the NUM leaders would have been



The police organised one assault on the miners in 1984-5, while the media organised another. (Thoresby pit, 15 March 1984. John Harris, IFL)

entitled to take help from wherever it came and irrespective of the motives guiding the donors, provided that there were no strings.

And, even if there was money, there is no evidence of any strings. Arthur Scargill has had a favourable attitude to the Stalinist bureaucracies of the Eastern Bloc.

This newspaper has criticised him for that. But that attitude was established long before the strike. If it changed during the strike, it was for the better: faced with the evidence that Poland's Stalinist government was sending coal to break the strike, while Solidarnosc miners' committees were sending messages of support, Arthur Scargill commented, "I owe an apology to Lech Walesa".

And who is Robert Maxwell to criticise anyone for getting money from the USSR and Libya? He has made a fortune out of publishing

the propaganda and self-justifications of the tyrants of Eastern Europe.

On Friday 9th the NUM Executive will meet to decide what to

do about the accusations. They will decide whether to hold an inquiry, and what sort of inquiry, and whether or not to sue the *Mirror* for libel.

Right now, every honest person on the labour movement should say: Hands off Arthur Scargill! Hands off Peter Heathfield! Hands off the NUM!

Democracy, not revenge!

The mini-crisis around German recognition of the existing Polish-German border has ended with Chancellor Helmut Kohl's unconditional acceptance of the current border between the two countries, along the Oder and Neisse rivers.

History will have to be left to say whether or not that is the end of the matter. The crisis throws light on a question which confronts the left in many other parts of the world — in Palestine and Ireland, for example — and to which the left habitually gives the wrong answer.

What should happen in areas from which one people has been driven out and a different nation planted? Revenge, or a democratic settlement based on the new established facts?

Present-day Western Poland was in 1945, and for many centuries before, German territory. At the end of the war the Poles and Rus-

sians drove between eight and ten million Germans to the West, allowing them nothing but what they could carry.

They crowded the roads, and swarmed on to whatever transport they could find. Their descendants are still a powerful force in West German politics half a century later.

That expulsion was a crime done by Poles and Russians, but one agreed on by all the Allies at their Potsdam conference — by Britain, France and the US as well as the USSR. Stalin wanted it to "compensate" Poland for territory (part of the Ukraine held by Poland since the war of 1920) he had detached from the Polish state on its eastern border.

Stalin also hoped to erect a perpetual antagonism between Poland and Germany, and thus bind Poland to the protection of the Russian state.

For a while last week you could hear Stalin's ghost laughing. Not all the horrors which the Nazis com-

mitted against the Poles can justify or excuse the atrocity committed when up to 13 million Germans were driven west in 1945 (three million from Czechoslovakia as well as the ones from Poland); and nor can that atrocity justify the new atrocity which would be implied by any attempt to reverse 1945's atrocity now.

To try to reverse it now would be to uproot the people who have taken root in western Poland, and to replace them with people scattered in West Germany.

What should happen when one people has been driven out of an area, and a different nation planted? Neither in western Poland, nor in north-east Ireland, nor in Israel, is revenge the answer.

The socialist answer is to fight for full equality for all minorities, to oppose all chauvinism and revanchism, to organise working-class unity across the national and communal divide, and to fight for socialism.

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

Karl Marx

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4 GRAFFITI

The master race?

GRAFFITI

British scientists were funded by an American racist group to carry out their research, according to a report in the *Independent on Sunday*.

Hans Eysenck, who dreamed up the notorious Intelligence Quota, or IQ, tests, and other scientists, have received money from the Pioneer Fund, which has links with extreme right-wing activists.

The Pioneer Fund was set up in 1937 by millionaire Wickliffe P Draper, who promoted the sending of blacks back to Africa, and it is specifically to conduct research into 'problems of heredity and eugenics', and 'problems of race betterment'.

Eysenck has received more than \$250,000 from the Fund since 1986.

The Fund runs a magazine, *Mankind Quarterly*, which is known to enjoy the involvement of former Nazi geneticists. One, Otman, Baron Von Verschauer, was director of the genetics and eugenics programme at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute during the Second World War, and had the distinction of recommending his student, Joseph Mengele, as camp doctor at Auschwitz.

Both Eysenck and Richard Lynn of the University of Ulster, who is an honorary associate editor of the magazine and has also received money from the Fund, believe that intelligence is largely genetically-determined.

Eysenck is well-known for his research that allegedly proved the lesser intelligence of black people.

He is less well known for research he conducted to prove the harmlessness of smoking — funded by Imperial Tobacco.

A pack of glitterati last Sunday (4 March) mourned, or celebrated, the death of Gerry Healy, former leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party, the party which blew up when it was revealed he had been sexually abusing young women comrades for years.

The star-studded do, at the Adelphi Theatre, featured, among others, Vanessa Redgrave, Martin Sherman (author of the play 'Bent'), and Mr Ken Livingstone.

Livingstone joined in the chorus of adoration for the man who, they said, had stuck all his life to Trotskyist principles.

Healy's principles included: accepting undisclosed sums of money from the regimes of Iraq and Libya, which, in return, he

lauded to the eyeballs; assisting the Iraqi regime in question in arresting, and then executing, Communist Party oppositionists; pouring out an unabated catalogue of lies against his political opponents, such as the allegation that Joseph Hansen, and indeed all of the Central Committee of the American Socialist Workers Party, were simultaneously agents for the CIA and the KGB; beating up opponents in the British labour movement; trying to take socialist newspapers, such as our own, through the capitalist courts for libel, thereby bankrupting them, because they had printed opinions that Mr Healy did not like; systematically destroying the minds of quite large numbers of young people that were recruited to the Moonie-like WRP, where they were brainwashed into the Healy cult of weird and wonderful 'materialist dialectics'.

After being kicked out of the Party he had both built and ruined, deciding that Gorbachev was carrying out the 'political revolution', he therefore supported him, presumably in the unfounded hope that Gorby would be as free with the smackers as Gad-dafi had been before him.

Livingstone was one of a crowd of prominent Labour left-wingers who hung around Healy in the 1980s — others included Ted Knight of Lambeth Council. They were involved in a newspaper, Labour Herald, which was produced by the WRP but advertised as a Left Labour weekly.

Among their achievements was the 'packing' and hi-jacking of the conference of the Labour Committee on Palestine in 1982, which body they subsequently left to rot. It had been set up by Healy's — and Livingstone's — opponents on the Left, you see.

The revelations about Healy's sexual misconduct led to the collapse and fragmentation of the WRP. Only a few real die-hard personal friends, like the Redgraves, denied that the accusations were true. Yet Livingstone now decides to lend his weight to the posthumous praise of this disreputable old man.

The labour movement, including Livingstone's own Brent East Labour Party, is entitled to know why Livingstone was so fond of Healy.

According to the deputy director of a Moscow electronics factory: "I would never vote for anybody described as the general director of a (state) factory. It means he is a failure."



Ken and Gerry



Vote Labour! Fight for socialism!

An open letter to every NOLS member

The Tory government is quite clear about the future of education — course cuts, privatisation and 'market forces'.

We have had enough experience of Thatcherism to know that the Tories are serious. They will go much further along the road of smashing up education — unless they are stopped.

The clear governmental alternative to the Tories is Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. We must spell out exactly what we want from them: we do not want tepid Thatcherism with graduate tax and 'soft' cuts; we want grants for all students and the right to education for all those who demand it.

Labour has run NUS since 1982. NOLS took control of NUS on the back of a wave of occupations, which they organised. Labour was the radical political choice for student activists.

But Labour in power in NUS has been a disappointment. We are a very long way from the 'mass involvement' and the 'outward-going, pro-active, campaigning union' which Stephen Twigg talks about. It's good rhetoric, but everyone knows it's not true.

The failings of NOLS/NUS have given space to SLDers and 'independents' to sound radical compared to Labour. Cosmo is able to make Stephen Twigg look like an undemocratic right-winger by saying NUS should keep to its conference policy and run a poll tax non-payment campaign.

And Cosmo is not far wrong. NOLS should keep to NUS conference policy. Democracy demands that NOLS should do this despite what they or the Labour Party think. NOLS should fight for students' living standards. NOLS should be part of the fight against the poll tax.

And it is not just the poll tax mandates that have gone in the bin. The loans campaign policy has been largely ignored. Apparently it is too left-wing (the loans/poll tax policy



NUS NEC member Emma Colyer is arrested on an anti-loans demonstration, November 18. Last night Emma was arrested again with 12 other anti-poll tax protestors. Emma was demonstrating at Haringey Town Hall against the Labour council's compliance with the poll tax. This Easter, students will be able to elect Labour Party member Emma Colyer to the post of NUS National Secretary at the NUS's National Conference. Emma's opponent is a smug right-wing hack who had a lousy record on fighting loans and the poll tax.

Vote Emma Colyer!

were Left Unity composites). So we have had a monumentally dull, parliament-focused anti-loans campaign. The membership are not inspired by NOLS and the activists are angry about the lack of initiative from NOLS in NUS.

If the membership are not taken in by Cosmo's hypocritical 'leftism' they may well be prey to the radicalism of the Greens.

The Labour Party in the student movement should be clear about the threat posed by the Greens. We may well understand the historic links between the Labour Party and the labour movement; we may well understand the need to win students to Labour as part of the fight for socialism. It's just that other people may well say: the Greens want to fight loans and the poll tax, Labour do not, really — let's vote Green. In addition, the Greens will get votes

from the rag-bag of right-wingers and independents who want to stop Labour. The way out — for victory in NUS and socialism is a turn to the left.

So if the first part of Labour's problem in NUS is that it has failed to deliver the mass campaigning union or provide activists with a framework to fight back, the second part of the problem is contempt for NUS democracy.

The third part of the problem is NOLS itself. NOLS has shrivelled up as it has abandoned a role independent of the NOLS/NUS 'leaders'. The appalling abuses of democracy — acutely felt by everyone to the left of the 'leaders' — have not helped. And as NOLS has followed Neil Kinnock rightwards, NOLS has become less political and less capable of developing new, socialist leaders for the student movement. The present ruling clique do not own two books without pictures in, between them.

The pressure has not only been on the NOLS left who have been cheated and carved, but also on the 'mainstream' caucus. There have been splits to the right and left of Walworth Road. Any left-split needs to face up to the record of NOLS, for which people like Sarah Adams are partly responsible.

In the meantime there are a number of things which we may be able to work together on:

- Defence of basic democracy in NOLS.

- A Labour vote in the forthcoming NUS elections. This means not only working for Stephen Twigg and co but for Emma Colyer and Steve Mitchell.

- Opening up NOLS to further education students.

We should not only vote Labour but also campaign for a Labour vote without submerging ourselves in the insipid politics of the NOLS 'leadership'. We can use the NUS elections to rally the Labour left. We should aim to organise all those on the NOLS left in a campaign for Labour which also bases itself on:

- The NUS loans policy.
- Campaigning for NUS policy of mass non-payment of the poll tax.

- A commitment to a Labour Exec which carries out NUS conference policy.

**Mark Sandell, NUS
Kent Area Convenor
(personal capacity)**

Labour students meet

By Dave Barter

The conference of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS), held in London last weekend, was the smallest for years.

Only 70 or so delegates registered. It was also the most politically docile NOLS conference I have ever seen.

A debate on the "democratic state" proposed nothing more radical than electoral reform — correct in itself, but hardly going far enough.

There was no discussion of the possibilities of a thorough-going democratisation of society, and no understanding of democracy as anything more than six or seven chances in a lifetime to vote in a parliamentary election. Tragic, given the richness of discussion of democracy taking place now in Eastern Europe and in South Africa.

One gain for the left took place in the debate on Labour Party reform, where an amendment supporting the sifting of resolutions to Labour Party conference was narrowly rejected. Other amendments, however, were passed — calling for the eventual complete removal of the trade union block vote from Labour Party conference. A left amendment based on the CLPD proposals was rejected.

On these two debates the Militant stood out, literally, like a sore thumb, opposing proportional representation and the right of black people to self-

organisation.

Perhaps the most disgusting part of conference were the comments about Eastern Europe. Supporters of the NOLS leadership said they thought that talk of socialism in Eastern Europe was not relevant — the people wanted the market and that is what they should have! A delegate at the LCC fringe meeting displayed his ignorance by saying he did not even care what happened in Eastern Europe!

A minor piece of excitement occurred on Sunday afternoon. Alison Bristow, a NOLS member and Birmingham Area NUS Convenor, resigned from NOLS after a statement from NOLS chair Simon Buckley called for resignation, because of her support, made public at the conference, for Richard 'Cosmo' Hawkes in the election for NUS President against the Labour candidate Stephen Twigg.

The weakness of the left at conference — in ideas as well as numbers — marked something beyond the perennial carving out of left Labour Clubs. The partial shift in the focus of NOLS towards abstract "vote Labour, sometime in the future" type propaganda and the creation of an unbearably crass right-wing atmosphere have led to some drift away from Labour Clubs. The gut reaction of the left away from Labour is understandable.

But we should stay with Labour. We must not let the right off the hook by slipping away from the perspective of transforming NOLS and the Labour Party into organisations capable of fighting for the interests of workers and students.

Eyewitness in Managua

George Davey Smith reports from Nicaragua

All but one of the opinion polls carried out just before the election showed the Sandinistas ten or fifteen per cent ahead.

The exception was one where people could give their answers in secret, and that poll gave the same result as the election itself.

On Sunday 25th, the election went ahead with everyone expecting the Sandinistas to win. The polls shut at about 6 o'clock, and they read out a few early results at 7 o'clock. The Sandinistas had won one area massively, and it was pretty even in three others.

The election administrators were supposed to show the results as they came in to journalists. Telegrams started coming in which showed

"There's a 'sit and wait' feeling. No one is coming out and waving flags and chanting for UNO. According to the *Miami Herald*, the contras are waiting until 25 April before they come back."

UNO winning, so they stopped showing the telegrams, and Eddie Murphy films appeared on TV, with no announcements.

Bit by bit the results came out, and then Ortega made a speech, at about six in the morning. I was moved by it. He said the Sandinistas were too far behind to win, but that the gains of the revolution were to be defended. He stated what has been the theme ever since, that the Sandinistas are going to 'govern from below', and hinted that they would not give up the Sandinista army.

The city was absolutely silent. There was no-one on the streets, no UNO celebrations. It was as if the people had dared to vote UNO, but not to proclaim it openly.



Contra victims. Will UNO put the contras in control of the army?

There were a few Sandinista demonstrations. Forty or fifty thousand turned up to one in Managua with Ortega speaking. The message was that they were going to concede — and that was quite a hard idea to get over to a lot of Sandinista supporters — recognising that the people had voted with their bellies. A huge amount of poverty and hunger has been created by the continuation of the war and the economic blockade, and people thought that a UNO victory would get American aid and stop the American blockade.

The sticking point now looks like being what happens to the Sandinista army and to military service. UNO said they would stop military service, which is currently two years, whereas the Sandinistas said only that they would reduce it to one year.

Now the Sandinistas are claiming that UNO cannot get rid of military service because it is part of the constitution, and to change the constitution you need 60 per cent in the

National Assembly.

UNO has said very little, and that little very divergent. Their economic adviser has been hinting that they will return land which has been confiscated, whereas other people in UNO have said that definitely won't happen. If that did happen, it would certainly mean a lot of civil strife.

Other UNO statements have been cautious, about them not removing welfare benefits, but the army is going to be the sticking point.

Of 92 seats in the Assembly, UNO has got 51, the Sandinistas 39, the Social Christian Party 1, and the MUR (a split from the Sandinistas) 1.

There are 14 parties within UNO. They include the Nicaraguan Socialist Party and the Nicaraguan Communist Party (pro-Moscow and pro-Albania, respectively), who have three seats each in the Assembly. They may split from the UNO bloc in the assembly quite early on. The Popular Social Christians got 2 seats; they are the other

party in UNO which will be sympathetic to keeping nationalisations and so on.

The extreme right wing in UNO has six seats. The National Conservative Party has five, the Popular Conservative Alliance five, the Social Democratic Party five, the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement three.

So on a lot of issues, the Sandinistas will have a majority in the Assembly with the MUR, the Social Christians, the Popular Social Christians, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party.

There's a 'sit and wait' feeling. No-one is coming out and waving flags and chanting for UNO. According to the *Miami Herald*, the contras in Miami are waiting until 25 April before they come back.

The Sandinistas, apparently, are going to set up a lot of front organisations and agencies independent of the government through which they hope to continue to channel the financial support they have been receiving and continue

their social welfare programme.

They are going to have to increase their implantation in the barrios, and they say they are going to try to become a popular campaigning party, recruiting people rather than just absorbing cadres.

The three groups to the left of the Sandinistas in the election were the MUR, the MAP (Maoist) and the PRT (neo-Trotskyist/Morenist). The MUR came third, the Social Christians fourth, and the PRT fifth, in the election. The PRT just missed getting a seat in the Assembly, and they have a fair implantation in the CST (the Sandinista union movement). They have built themselves up from almost nothing two or three years ago, and managed to stand a full slate of 180 candidates.

The MUR's main campaigning theme was against corruption among the Sandinistas. The vice-presidential candidate of the MUR calls himself a Trotskyist, though I don't know what that means.

Israeli coalition splits

By Gerry Bates

The Israeli coalition government is split over new American proposals for negotiations with Palestinians. The US wants Israel to specify those non-PLO Palestinians that it would be prepared to talk to; Israel's politicians can't find agreement on the criteria to use.

Far right critics of the government, including Ariel Sharon and the religious parties, think the whole idea is a sham, and any sort of negotiations will end up being with the PLO anyway.

If Shamir or his Likud Party delay making a decision so long that none can be taken, their Labour coalition partners have said they will break the coalition.

The coalition has been beset by crises ever since it was formed, at the end of 1988, following the second Israeli election in succession that failed to produce a clear majority. The basic issue on which Labour-Likud agreement flounders is the 'peace process': Labour tends

to be more doveish (although Labour Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin is an aggressive hawk).

It seems likely that Shamir will accept the US proposals. His alternative at this point would be to resign. An element in his current equivocation is 'fake righting' — an effort to appease his right-wing critics, while in fact preparing to accept plans that could lead to negotiations.

The contentious issue in setting criteria is whether to accept residents of the occupied territories as Palestinian representatives — such people inevitably being supporters of the PLO. A secondary bone of contention, whether East Jerusalem is a part of the occupied territories, has been left to one side for the moment.

Undoubtedly, there is strong pressure on Israel now to set the terms for some kind of negotiations. The PLO has made loud noises that it is prepared to accept negotiations that are not directly with Yasser Arafat. The US wants a settlement.

But opposition to any negotiations at all run very deep in Israel. That is the government's real pro-

blem. Will the ultra-hawkish minority prove able to stall the new peace efforts?

Behind this crisis lies the continued Palestinian uprising, or *intifada*, now in its third year. Although the *intifada* shows no signs at all of ending, it has begun

to decline, or at least to slow down. Recently there have been more Palestinian deaths caused by other Palestinians than by Israelis, a fact that has prompted the underground leadership to issue a statement that aims to smoothen over some of the internal antagonisms.

A reality that Israel must face is that this underground leadership exists, despite all the efforts to destroy it, and enjoys immense authority. There will be no settlement unless this leadership agrees to it. The days of phoney negotiations with phoney leaders are definitely over.

Free Michael Warshawsky

Michel Warshawsky, director of the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem, has been jailed by an Israeli court for twenty months, with a ten month suspended sentence in addition.

He and the AIC, which was fined 10,000 NIS (about \$5,000), were charged with providing typesetting services to 'illegal organisations' — that is, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — and having possession of a booklet on how to resist interrogation.

The AIC draws together anti-war and anti-occupation activists for a number of backgrounds, Jewish and Arab, to provide an information service primarily on events in the occupied territories. Warshawsky himself is a well-known member of the Revolutionary Communist League, which is linked to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

The AIC said in a statement, "this harsh punishment, which stands in no proportion to the actual accusations, goes against (his) way of life and the character of his political ac-

tivities dedicated to Israeli-Palestinian cooperation and to the struggle against occupation.

Other AIC members have suffered harassment and also face imprisonment. The Israeli government is intensifying its persecution of radical groups that campaign against the occupation. Adam Keller of the Israeli Council for Israel-Palestinian Peace is also currently in prison.

Financial donations for the AIC and messages of support can be sent to: AIC, PO Box 24278, Jerusalem, Israel.

We stand for workers' liberty!

Clive Bradley concludes his article on the politics of Socialist Organiser

Leaders, rightly or wrongly, play a big role in politics. Cowardly or ineffective leaders help secure defeats. Thatcher has been, on the whole, from the point of view of the ruling class, a good leader — a militant fighter for the bosses' interests. We have had few such leaders.

But it is not just a matter of replacing cowards with brave fighters. Weak leaders often don't start out that way: they get worn down by the struggle, become cynical, lose faith in the capacity of the rank and file to fight back.

And even courageous leaders, without a clear idea of where they are going, can get lost, sometimes hopelessly lost. We need a whole movement with a clear sense of direction. The Labour Left of the 1980s suffered from a severe lack of political bearings.

By the time of the miners' strike, the Labour Left was in serious decline. In particular, it had itself suffered a major defeat in the sphere that many Labour Leftists had become active in — local government. For the first time, in the 1980s, the Labour Left was taking control of town halls around the country, including in the Greater London Council. Local government looked as if it could be the force for opposition to the government.

But very quickly, the Left councils faced a choice, as the Tories began to cut the councils' budgets. Either the councils would mount opposition to central government with every weapon they could — convince the local communities and town hall workforces that it was necessary to take the government on with strikes, rent strikes, demonstrations and refuse to pay massive interest charges to the banks, trying to link up nationally so that the Tories would face a huge wave of opposition.

Or they would have to make cuts. Sooner or later they would have to make big cuts. The councils could either be fighters, or mere administrators. They chose to be benevolent administrators, making, at first, only small cuts, and raising rates in an effort to avoid bigger cuts or rent increases. But as the

councils became little more than a cushion between the Tories and working class communities, they lost the chance to be, instead, a focus of opposition.

The jewel in the crown, the Greater London Council, capitulated to a judges' decision that cheap fares were illegal. Later, it let itself be abolished altogether with not much protest except a few posters. One by one the councils found themselves making heavier and heavier cuts.

In Liverpool, from 1983 to 1985, there were, for a while, the beginnings of a real fight. But the council, dominated by a rather bureaucratic and self-interested Labour Party faction called *Militant*, wasted the opportunity, eventually going down to a messy and uninspiring defeat.

The miners' defeat was the most important. It propelled all those sections of the labour movement that were becoming depressed by their inability to stop Thatcher further to the right. A new mood of pessimism set in.

It was not only pessimism at the top: defeats and failures had demoralised and confused the rank and file. By the mid 1980s, there were fewer and fewer strikes. Despite a few hopeful signs, working class people felt Thatcher was, if not invincible, a very hard nut to crack. And lots of people supported her.

By 1990, that has begun to change. Now the question for the labour and trade union leaders is whether they can harness the kind of opposition to the government we have seen during, for example, the ambulance workers' dispute.

So the Tories rode out the 1980s to a significant extent on the strength of their enemies' weaknesses. Thatcher got elected a third time, and by now, more confident than ever, they had still more radical plans for privatising and Torifying Britain. A lot of their proposals have gone through. But still, it has not always been easy for them. The most unpopular of all, the poll tax, is proving difficult to collect in Scotland, and is facing opposition in England and Wales.

But once again, this opposition is not being led by the official labour movement. The Labour Party leaders are actively hostile to campaigns for non-payment; the trade union leaders have failed to mount a campaign of resistance to the poll tax's administration. This, unfortunately, is the all too familiar story.

The trade unions have suffered very badly under the formidable

range of anti-union laws introduced by the Tories since 1980. These laws make effective legal strike action pretty well impossible, and big strikes, from the miners' strike, to print strikes, to the dockers' strike, have been crippled by the Tories' use of the courts. Unions have had their funds 'sequestered', or have been threatened with it.

Sometimes, for example, during the health workers' disputes, including the ambulance workers', the Tories have not felt confident enough to turn to the courts. But the union leaders, who had failed to campaign against the laws' introduction, have continued to be overawed by them. Labour, meanwhile, is less than enthusiastic about repealing them.

The Tories' laws are not democratic, although they have been able to play on considerable public sympathy for the idea that trade unions are undemocratic and should be reformed. In the first place, democratic reform should come from within the unions, rather than be imposed on them. And democracy is not the Tories' real concern: the laws are designed to make strikes extremely difficult, however democratic the union structures.

All solidarity strikes are unlawful. Political strikes are unlawful. The strike wave that gave birth to Poland's *Solidarnosc* in 1980 would have been against the law if it had taken place in Tory Britain.

So far, therefore, the Tories have got away with a lot of what they wanted. But their popularity is at its lowest ebb since 1982, when Thatcher launched a jingoistic war with Argentina to boost her support. Recent struggles have shown that the trade unions are not finished. And Labour is riding high in the polls.

Socialist Organiser wants a Labour government. We also want more people to join the Labour Party, to build it as a real fighting force, organising people into campaigns that can beat the Tories — on their new laws for housing, education, the poll tax, and every other bit of miserable reactionary legislation they think they have the authority to inflict upon us.

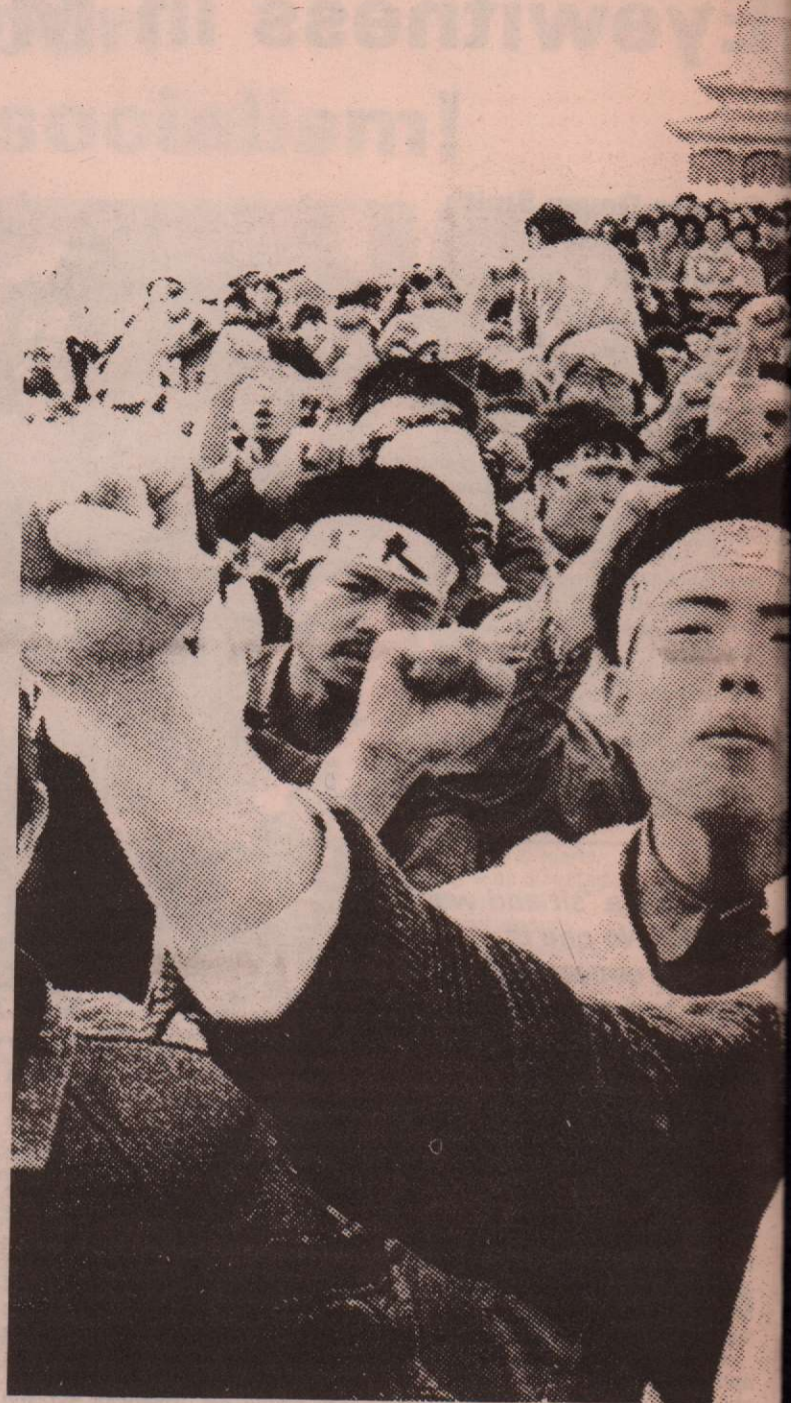
If there is a real, active movement behind the next Labour government, especially if it is one that remembers the last one, and is determined for history not to repeat itself, we can start to change society for the better.

Disunited nations

Capitalism is an international system. As time goes by it becomes more and more international, more impatient with the old-fashioned nation state. So we are seeing '1992 and all that' — the extension of the Common Market into more aspects of our lives.

It is neither possible nor desirable to hold back this process of 'internationalisation', although some on the Left have often wished they could. Socialism also has to be an international system. As Karl Marx put it, 'Workers of the world, unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains!' Workers of different countries have more in common with each other than they have with the bosses of their own country.

Capitalism has linked the world together as it was never linked



Tiananmen Square

before in all of human history. But it has not brought with it international peace and co-operation, or only sometimes, and only very, very partially. The history of capitalism is mainly the history of wars — genocidal wars on an unprecedented scale and with the dead outnumbering the world's population in previous centuries — of national hatreds, racism, imperialism.

The history of capitalism includes the brutal conquest of Africa, the slaughter of entire peoples in what is now called the 'Third World', the slave trade, two world wars, the deaths of six million Jews and others at the hands of the Nazis — Nazis who were openly admired by capitalist politicians, inside and outside Germany, before the war broke out — and the nightmare inflicted on the people of Vietnam by the United States.

Capitalism has presided over terrible famines in the Third World which it has considered uneconomical to take seriously: said one US politician: "to give food aid to people just because they are starving is a pretty weak reason."

Conquering and enslaving 'non-European' peoples abroad, capitalism has brought racism into its own metropolitan centres.

In Britain, over the Thatcher decade, we have witnessed a growth of racism, of racist attacks, of official state racism, especially in the form of immigration controls that inhibit the entry into Britain of people who are not white, and almost exclusively them. Right now, the Tories are stirring up a racist furore over the prospect of Chinese people from Hong Kong, who under British rule have been deprived even of a vote, making use of their British citizenship and coming to live here.

The labour movement has often failed to combat racism very effec-

tively. Indeed the 1968 Immigration Act was brought in by a Labour government panicked by the prospect of a few thousand Kenyan Asians coming here. Instead of fighting the racists like Enoch Powell, the Labour government went along with them.

This discreditable record has alienated a lot of black people from the Labour Party, although Labour still gets the largest black vote.

But the labour movement needs to fight for the interests of black people, and unite all working-class people in its ranks. A movement

"Our aim is to be consistent democrats, defending the rights of the oppressed but resisting the ambitions of today's oppressed to be tomorrow's oppressors."

that can't fight the poison of racism won't be very effective fighting for anybody's demands.

Along with anti-racism, the labour movement needs to develop a more international outlook. Only if workers in different countries join together can they fight multinational firms, and as capitalism organises itself more and more across national borders, the labour movements of the world more and more need a united response.

It needs a response also to the big political questions of the day, internationally as much as domestically. Socialists are internationalists: but we have to address the fact that the motive force of much politics in the world today is nationalism. From Armenia to Israel and Palestine, from the shores of the Baltic sea to



Socialists and East European revolutions

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the USSR in Afghanistan just because the United States opposed it; we never opposed Solidarnosc in Poland just because Thatcher said she supported it; we didn't support the Argentinian junta just because it was fighting Thatcher. We believe a socialist movement has to be able to make its own assessments, and work out its own criteria.

Beyond the fragments

Since the 1960s, Western capitalism has seen big changes. Some of these changes, in technology, the international integration of the system, and so on, have been 'automatic' — the result of capitalist development itself. But there have been huge social changes, changes in social attitudes, that have been brought about to a large extent by the actions of political movements.

The black civil rights movement in the United States, challenging the virtual apartheid system that existed in parts of the country, ushered in a period of intense struggle for greater equality — for blacks, and for women, and for homosexuals — which had repercussions all across the world. In Britain, for example, women do enjoy more legal rights than they did thirty years ago; racism is still rife, but there has been some change in what is 'socially acceptable'; male homosexuality is no longer illegal (lesbianism never was, in so many words).

But there is a long, long way to go in these and other spheres, and all the time the Right try to wipe out the gains we have made. The labour movement should stand firm on all matters of equality, and fight to liberate all oppressed sections of society. *Socialist Organiser* regularly features articles on all these subjects, and campaigns for the labour movement to fight harder and more

consistently on them. Our aim is to unite the working class. It should not be a question of different 'interest groups' coming together as a temporary 'coalition'. Any section of the working class has the right to organise independently — but in the cause of greater unity in the long run.

The Labour Left's approach, especially in local government, has often been quite diverse in practice. Lobbies for women, or blacks, or lesbians and gays — or sometimes for black women, lesbians independently of gays, and so on — have competed for diminishing crumbs from the local government table. Instead of a powerful movement, there has been infighting and disunity.

We can overcome this disunity. As the Tories slip on one banana skin after another, losing popularity by the day, the breadth of opposition to them increases. A united labour movement, a labour movement united around the demands for a better health service, better pay, decent jobs for all, a home for everybody and no poll tax, equal rights, an end to discrimination, civil liberties, and real social justice internationally — such a labour movement could rout Thatcher, or Heseltine, or whichever half-wit bigot the Tories choose next.

From a socialist point of view, winning the next election is only one battle in a long class war. Other battles are going on now, and will go on whoever is elected. The war for socialism is waged in a thousand little struggles, all over the world, every day of the year. Every time the oppressed and exploited resist, every time ordinary working class people refuse to be walked upon by the rich and powerful, part of the war for socialism is fought.

Socialist Organiser exists to help make sure that there is a victor in the class war, and that exploitation and oppression become, one day, no more than a distant memory.

the islands of the Pacific, from Sri Lanka to Ireland, national conflicts have been leaving thousands of dead, and embittering generations.

Many national struggles are entirely justified. The Russian rulers of the USSR have treated their national minorities terribly over the last sixty years, and it is not surprising that they now want independence. It was not surprising so many Afghan people turned to Islamic fundamentalism, after the 'socialist' USSR napalmed their villages.

The Palestinians were forced off their land when Israel was created, and since 1967 have also had to endure, in the 'occupied territories', Israeli military rule. Their uprising was inevitable.

The Catholic minority in the north of Ireland have been discriminated against and gerrymandered against in the Protestant-dominated Northern state. Their revolt, from the late sixties, was the consequence of the state's unresponsiveness to calls for reform.

Oppressed nations have the right to self-determination: that is, they have the right to a government of their own, free from outside interference or the threat of conquest by more powerful countries.

Socialists need to acknowledge the complexity of some national conflicts, and adopt a sufficiently subtle application of this basic principle. Our aim is to be consistent democrats, defending the rights of the oppressed, but resisting the ambitions of today's oppressed to be tomorrow's oppressors — an all too common result of nationalist struggles.

The national minorities in the USSR have the right to independence. But they don't have the right to mistreat large national minorities of their own, even if those minorities are in the

Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia).

The Palestinians have the right to a state of their own. But the Israeli Jewish nation also has the right to a state. The Irish Catholics have the right to be part of a united Ireland. But the Protestants have the right to as much autonomy within that united Ireland as is possible.

This approach should govern the labour movement's policy on national questions. We are for the right of self-determination not because we like nationalism or nations: ultimately we want nations to die out, replaced by an international community. But nations won't disappear just because we want them to; especially, nations survive when they feel under threat.

Full, consistent democracy between nations — no one infringing on the rights of others — is the way to make a world where people stop caring if they are Israeli or Arab, German or French, Russian or British. There will be a new idea of community, not trapped within such narrow horizons.

Socialist Organiser supports genuine national liberation struggles, or struggles for democracy and freedom around the world. We support, of course, the struggle of the South African people against apartheid.

And we don't think a socialist paper fulfils its role well if all it does is cheer these struggles on. We especially want to help independent working class movements, where they exist, and socialists active within them. We have given particular support to the independent trade unions in South Africa, and to socialists to the Left of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress.

Solidarity, we believe, has to be combined with constructive criticism if it is to mean anything. We try to apply that approach to all

national and international issues. We don't just take people's word for what they are: we try to examine and analyse each situation.

And we judge movements by whether their struggle really advances the cause of democracy and socialism. We have never gone along with those on the Left who think you judge a movement by who else says they are for it, or who is against it. We never supported



WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism. We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under

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

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

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

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

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

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

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed and exploited in the world.

For a socialist movement that is not just a slogan but a force for change in the world.

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8 CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Discipline and punish

By Bob Fine

As in China today where — apart from massacres like that in Tiananmen Square — perhaps 30,000 people a year are killed by the state, for crimes ranging from murder to theft, so it was in Britain in the past.

Capital punishment once lay at the centre of the British ruling class's strategies for control of the masses. Never was this more the case than in the eighteenth century, when the landed gentry — who had generally made their money through corruption in government office or through monopolies in trade — protected their property by means of an extensive array of capital statutes.

Notorious among the acts that were passed on their behalf were the

"The reforming bourgeoisie won. Capital punishment was reserved for a few major offences (mainly murder). Hanging was removed from the public domain."

so-called Black Acts. They made it a hangable offence to hunt the precious deer of the landlords, to poach, to sell game, to black one's face with the intention of poaching (thus the name of the Acts), to break down the head of a fishpond, to kill cattle, to cut down trees belonging to another, to commit arson, to send anonymous, threatening letters, to try to rescue someone from custody, and so on and so forth.

The hanging itself was a public ceremony, with all the trappings of a military parade. The condemned person would be taken in an open cart from his or her place of confinement to the gallows (eg. at

Tyburn, where Marble Arch in London stands today). In full view of the public at large they would be strangled to a painful death by the rope.

The whole gruesome business was a show of power by the ruling class. It was meant to instil terror into the hearts of the masses and at the same time to make them aware that power over life and death lay at the discretion of their rulers.

As often as not, the victims could be pardoned and transported overseas on a convict ship instead; but this act of mercy, which could be left until the last moment, depended absolutely on the good grace of the monarch and his fellow rulers.

This combination of terror and mercy formed the essence of punishment at a time when the ruling class was defending its own form of domination with all its might.

In the course of the eighteenth century, however, we also find the great bourgeois reformers (Beccaria, Manzoni, Howard, Romilly, etc.) make their case against capital punishment as both barbaric and futile.

They declared that capital punishment violated the fundamental rights of human beings, that it was an inhuman punishment. They declared also that such punishments were useless in the modern world.

Far from deterring people from violence, they set an example of the most horrific and cold-blooded violence being given legal sanction. By definition, they cut out the very possibility of reform.

Juries were becoming unwilling to convict and judges unwilling to sentence, when the punishment was so out of proportion to the offence committed. The manufacturers argued that they needed certainty of punishment and not the remote threat of a dreadful punishment if their property was to be adequately protected.

On the basis of these and other arguments, the reforming bourgeoisie won. Capital punishment was reserved for a few major offences (mainly murder). Hanging was removed from the public domain and hidden behind prison walls. The torture associated with hanging was as far as possible done away with — improvements in the technology of the knot and the drop were intended to make death as



Capital punishment in China

quick and painless as possible.

In place of the rope, there arose the familiar institutions of the modern age, the police and the prisons.

The spirit of punishment in the new age of bourgeois rule was caught by Kant and Hegel. Hegel wrote: "punishment is the right of the criminal. It is an act of his own will...His crime is the negative [overturning, denial, subversion] of right. Punishment is the negation of the negation and consequently an affirmation of right solicited and forced upon the criminal by himself."

The new penitentiaries of the early nineteenth century were intended to replace physical torture by mental torture, to link vengeance on the criminal with penance in the criminal, the corporal punishment of isolation with the spiritual punishment of guilt.

This penal theory was expounded

at great length by the philosopher of utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham: punishment must make the criminal the judge of his own crime; it must appear that in their punishment

"No rational argument supports the death penalty. By definition it cannot reform the criminal."

criminals pass sentence on themselves. A whole machinery of power and control was set up to ensure that this fetish of power was sustained.

The convicts were shut behind prison walls, cut off from intercourse with the outside world, subjected to a regime of constant surveillance, subjected to an internal regime of rewards and punishments to ensure that in word and gesture — if not in their hearts — they consented to the punishments inflicted upon them.

In today's prison codes, the watchword of the prison is penitence, or the reformation of criminals into human beings. The reality of the prison is less fine: we find in fact a reinforcement of all the inhuman conditions — the deprivation, isolation, mutual competition, racism, etc. — that lead men and women to commit crimes in the first place.

The crisis of modern punishment is that the reality increasingly deviates from the ideal. The right wing answer to this crisis is not to alter the reality but to do away with the ideal. Nowhere is this more evident than in the perennial howls for the reintroduction of the death penalty. The Tory hounds have faith that this will magically solve the problem of murder, or at least of certain kinds of murder, like terrorism or the murder of police or prison officers.

What a consciousness they reveal in their choice of victims for the rope! They pick on terrorism, a form of murder which, however reprehensible, at least is committed out of an altruistic defence of a collective cause and not just out of individual demoralisation. The ultimate penalty is to be used on the murderers of those in power, the police and prison officers, and not against the vast abuse of their vast powers which the police and prison officers commit when they kill innocent civilians.

No rational argument supports the death penalty. By definition it cannot reform the criminal, and so it rolls back 150 years of the progressive spirit of the bourgeoisie which bases punishment on the desire at least for reform.

Marx's comment upon capital punishment in his own time still holds good as a perspective today.

"Is there not a necessity for deeply reflecting upon an alteration of the system which breeds these crimes, instead of glorifying the hangman who executes a lot of criminals to make room only for the supply of new ones."

Health and safety in space

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Both the Americans and the Russians plan to send people on extended space missions to the Moon and to Mars in the next twenty years.

This would involve humans spending up to two years in conditions of low or zero gravity. This is completely novel for animals that have evolved over millions of years in the relatively strong gravitational field of Earth. What effect would this have on the space travellers?

Many of the Russian satellite missions of the past few years have involved leaving cosmonauts in orbit for months at a time, the object being to see what deleterious effects prolonged weightlessness (strictly microgravity) has on the human body.

Immediate effects of microgravity include "space sickness", which of course can be quite hazardous if

the space traveller is wearing a pressure suit. Other effects include a most unpleasant congestion of the head with blood, rather like that from hanging upside down for long periods. This is because our blood circulation system is used to working against gravity to return blood from the lower part of the body while it allows blood from the head region to drain away with gravity. This can be partly corrected by wearing a sort of negative pressure garment on the lower part of the body.

The longer term effects are more important. Muscles, including the heart, have less work to do and rapidly waste away and the bones, experiencing lesser forces, lose calcium phosphate and become weaker. The Russian marathon cosmonauts are now given intensive programmes of exercises to counteract these deteriorations but, even so, they are weakened by their journeys. The evidence is, happily, that they can recover their former level of (considerable) fitness in time.

However, it seems there are other problems which may possibly rule out the goal of safe space travel, as

contributors to the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) reported last month.

The greatest problem may be cosmic radiation. These are highly energetic rays and particles coming from deep space and can easily penetrate a space suit. At the least, they increase the risk of cancer and may even cause radiation sickness in extreme cases.

Oddly enough, cosmic rays can be detected by astronauts if they pass through the brain. As they destroy the nerve cells in their path, the astronaut may register a flash of light.

Shielding is the obvious answer but this adds to the weight of the space craft and to the difficulty of getting it off the Earth. In any case, it is impossible to shield against the intense radiation produced by a solar flare, an explosive outburst at the Sun's surface.

We, on the surface of the Earth, are shielded by many kilometres' thickness of air. Out in space, an astronaut may receive 100 milliSieverts (mSv) of radiation in 16 hours from a flare. This compares with the maximum annual exposure

permitted for a nuclear worker of 50mSv, soon (?) to be reduced to 15mSv.

Even were adequate shielding possible, this would not be the full answer. Studies in the USA show that aluminium shielding becomes "saturated" by intense cosmic rays and starts to emit its own dangerous radiation in the form of neutrons.

Water might be a more effective shield. One scientist estimates a 10cm layer of water round the crew's quarters should be adequate to reduce the increased risk of cancer to just 2%.

Once on the Moon or Mars, the danger would still exist as neither of these has sufficient atmosphere to cut out dangerous rays. Long term settlements would probably have to be underground.

The other major source of worry is the effect of microgravity on living cells. At present, it seems that cell division and development may be retarded in higher organisms (that includes us!), affecting for instance the immune system and causing a loss of red blood cells. Organisms such as bacteria seem rather to be stimulated by microgravity.

Arrows of desire

Michael Powell, 1905-1990

By John Cunningham

The death of Michael Latham Powell on Tuesday 19 February has brought to an end one of the finest chapters in the rather uneven

history of the British film industry.

Although virtually hounded out of the country after a vicious and often poisonous attack on his film 'Peeping Tom', released in 1960, Powell made an enormous contribution to the cinema.

Of solidly middle class background (King's School Canterbury, Dulwich College), he briefly worked in a bank,

then threw in his lot with a film crew in the South of France, working with the director Rex Ingram. It was the beginning of a solid 'apprenticeship' for the young Powell.

Moving back to Britain he worked on a whole series of 'quota quickies'. These were films made under a government plan to increase British film output in the face of stiff (and far more popular) competition from Hollywood. As the name implies, they were made quickly and cheaply and were, almost without

exception, instantly forgettable.

But Powell learned his trade. Notably, he worked on the script of the first full-length British talkie, Hitchcock's 'Blackmail' (1929).

After a number of films in the 1930s, Powell was brought together with the Hungarian exile Emeric Pressburger, and they commenced a partnership which lasted until the late '50s. Their first film together was 'The Spy in Black' (1939), about a German spy ring in the first world war.

In 1942 Powell and Pressburger formed their own independent company, The Archers. The name has nothing to do with the popular radio soap opera, but is connected with Blake's 'Jerusalem' — 'Bring me my bow of burning gold, bring me my arrows of desire' — and the opening logo of their films was two arrows in a bullseye.

Despite enormous problems during the war, the closures of a number of studios, the enlistment or conscription of technical personnel and limited finance, the British film industry entered into what many regard as its 'Golden era'. Powell and Pressburger's contributions included 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp' (1943).

'Blimp' was intended, partly, to counter American suspicions about stuffy, bumbling, inept, class-ridden British officers. It indicated that in the past there had been grounds for such accusations, but now it was all over.

The picture it paints of the British army officer class is at times unflattering. Winston Churchill's response was to try to stop it — "Pray propose to me the measures necessary to stop this foolish production before it gets any further. I am not prepared to allow propaganda detrimental to the morale of the Army..."

The film, however, was released and played to packed audiences, who flocked to see "the film Churchill tried to ban". Churchill had been outmanoeuvred, not by Powell and Pressburger, but by their supporters in Whitehall and elsewhere.

Churchill was furious, and despite all his rhetoric of "magnanimity in victory", made sure a few heads rolled before his own did in the 1945 election.

Powell and Pressburger's next film, 'Canterbury Tales' (1944), was received to almost universal bafflement, but 'A Matter of Life and Death' (1946) starring David Niven as a British airman who receives visitations from heaven because he should be dead but isn't, was one of Powell's personal favourites.

"For me, 'A Matter of Life and Death' is the most perfect film: the technical perfection and the fact that it is a most wonderful conjuring trick to get handed. It is all the more fascinating for me because all this fantasy actually takes place inside somebody's damaged head..."

If there is a common thread running through his work of this period it is the way it works against a tradition of realism prevalent in British cinema. Many British films of the '40s such as 'In Which We Serve', 'The Way Ahead', 'Millions Like Us', 'The Way to the Stars', and, indeed, Powell's earlier 'One of Our Aircraft is Missing' (1942), strove to achieve a degree of realism hitherto not seen in British feature films, which had tried, unsuccessfully, to mirror the glitter of Hollywood.

In the wake of the success of the British documentary movement in the 1930s, many British directors aimed for realism above all else.

Powell and Pressburger, however, belonged to a different tradition, that of the Romantic and the Gothic, and their films often contain fantasy or dream sequences and occasionally surreal and fantastic sets (such as the heaven sequences in 'A Matter of Life and Death').

Their next films, 'Black Narcissus' (1947) and 'Red Shoes' (1948), amply illustrate this. Exploring notions of sexuality and repression, decidedly opposed to the usual stiff-upper-lip of much British treatment of these subjects, they were frequently attacked for their lack of realism and critics often concentrated on what they thought were the 'flashy' technical aspects of his work.

They were unable to detect his excavations of the hidden and repressed aspects of Britishness, particularly emotion, sexuality and mysticism. 'The Small Back Room' (1949), based on the novel by Nigel Blachin followed, and in the '50s Powell worked on some notable productions such as 'The Tales of Hoffman' (1951). Later in the decade his work became more uneven and he split (amicably) with Pressburger.

It was 'Peeping Tom' that raised the greatest storm of any of his films. Containing elements of voyeurism, repressed sexuality and psychopathy, 'Peeping Tom' is about a young film maker who kills his subjects by skewering them with a specially adapted camera tripod stand. His homicidal behaviour is, partly, explained by flashbacks to his childhood when his father used him as the subject of various experiments which he filmed.

Even today it is still a disturbing and difficult film, but the reaction in 1960 from both right and left was almost



Left to right: Sally Field, Daryl Hannah, Olympia Dukakis, Shirley Maclaine and Dolly Parton in 'Steel Magnolias'

A Hollywood sledgehammer

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Steel Magnolias'

Steel Magnolias' is sledgehammer soap opera. Nothing is subtle or

underplayed, and the hyper-assaultive soundtrack, the musical equivalent of TV audience cue cards, signals what emotions we should be feeling.

Laugh, cry, get mad; we're programmed for every change, as if we can't be trusted to come up with the right responses ourselves.

It's a typical example of

Hollywood overkill. What should have been a touching story about female friendship in a small Louisiana town has been blown up into a manipulative ten hanky tearjerker. Nothing in it feels authentic.

The film is based on the play 'Steel Magnolias' by Robert Harling, who wrote it in ten days to come to grips with a family tragedy. The film is dedicated to his sister, Susan, who is represented in the film by the character of Shelby. It is Shelby's relationship with her mother M'Lynn, with the two hairdressers, Truvy and Annelle, and with the wealthy duo, Ouiser and Clairee, that is the basis of the film.

Much of the action takes place in Truvy's beauty parlour. We see the women support each other through the major events of marriage, birth and death. The film aims to be a celebration of sisterhood, and the actresses (Sally Field, Dolly Parton, Shirley Maclaine, Olympia Dukakis, Darryl Hannah and Julia Roberts) clearly enjoy their ensemble piece, but the characters are stereotypes, not fully rounded people.

Most can be described in a phrase; there's a loveable curmudgeon, a sweet ingenue, a religious nut, a slyly humorous widow, and so on. Dolly Parton, as the big hearted Truvy, is so warm she looks set to spontaneously combust.

Instead of 'opening out' the play for the big screen, director Herbert Ross has grossly inflated it. The real

Susan Harling had a small, quiet wedding with two or three bouquets; the film turns the wedding into a pastel pink horror with nine bridesmaids and tons of flowers.

Other cartoon touches have been added to tie in with Hollywood's idea of small town quaintness. The original for Truvy's salon was a tasteful beauty parlour with copies of Vogue for customers to read. Ross opted for a kitschy salon with the National Enquirer on show; this must have seemed more authentically "small town America" to him. The inhabitants of Natchitoches, Louisiana, where the Harling family still lives, were reportedly not amused.

Films that celebrate female friendship are rare, so it's a shame that this one fails so completely. Yet fail it does, by dousing everything in pastel pink sentimentality. For all the drama in the plot, there isn't a moment that really rings true; you can feel the actresses working up to their big scenes.

Women do find strength and joy through friendship, but that's not the whole picture. Friendships go through troughs too, times of anger, resentment and jealousy. Presenting friendship as one big love feast is as false as the usual Hollywood hearts-and-flowers picture of family life.

What's missing from 'Steel Magnolias' is the full range of feelings that exists in life. All that pastel pink just adds up to rose colour by another name.

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THOSE WHO DO NOT LEARN FROM HISTORY ARE DOOMED TO REPEAT IT

Surprises from Eastern Europe

The swift and relatively peaceful (except in Romania) dissolution of Stalinism in Eastern Europe has taken place with a rapidity that has left almost everyone gasping.

Few authorities on the Eastern Bloc foresaw the speed of disintegration. One exception is Hillel Tickin, who has for a number of years forecast the rapid disintegration of the system once the process began.

Just as the Trotskyists in the immediate post Second World War period were caught off guard by the swift spread of Stalinism throughout Eastern Europe, so have those who stand in that tradition been surprised by recent events. To admit surprise is no disgrace as long as it is accompanied by a resolve to analyse fully the implications of these developments.

One of the key issues for analysis is the effect on East-West relations. Just as the Warsaw Pact ceases to have any coherent rationale, so also its alter ego, NATO. Spokespersons for the latter are now reduced to gibberish as they try to defend the continuance of an outmoded arrangement and in particular their adherence to a nuclear strategy.

Deterrence has lost its meaning and with it the concept of nuclear capability. The short-sighted attitude of Kinnock and Co. in abandoning unilateralism is now exposed. There are signs that the Scottish Conference of the Labour Party will re-endorse unilateralism. Even if that fails to happen, we must press for an urgent rethink on this question by the Labour leadership.

Without recent developments in Eastern Europe socialists have correctly adhered to unilateralism. These changes, however, make that

strategy more meaningful in the eyes of wider sections of the electorate.

The most likely prospect for the East Europe economies is a fairly rapid reabsorption into the capitalist world framework. Whatever the protestations of socialists in the East and West, the misery of life under the Communist systems will propel them towards that solution. The unification of the economies of East and West Germany and the privatisation of industry in Poland and elsewhere are part of that process.

Where does that place socialists in relation to the European Community (EC)? Commitment to the Community's institutions, such as the Strasbourg parliament, may have the effect of reinforcing the insularity of the Community and so excluding the economies of Eastern Europe and thereby relegating them to an inferior status.

The logic for socialists may well be to call for the break-up of the EC and the creation of a federal framework for Europe as a whole. This position breaks both with British nationalism and the strait-jacket of the Treaty of Rome, and lays the foundations for a wider Europe, thus making more meaningful the slogan of a United Socialist Europe.

It has been an opinion long cherished among the Trotskyist left in the West that the downfall of Stalinism in the Soviet bloc would make the case for socialism in the West more convincing. The identification of socialism with the system in the Soviet bloc has been regarded as constituting a blockage in people's thinking to a true evaluation of the value of a socialist future.

That does not mean, however, that the dissolution of that system automatically releases that potential



Prague, November 1989: "We support the demands of the General Strike"

for progress towards socialism. Two major aspects of the situation inhibit that development.

The first of those is the manner in which the system has collapsed. The likelihood of the reabsorption of Eastern Europe into the capitalist nexus and the willing participation of the majority of the peoples of Eastern Europe in that process does not in the immediate period ahead augur well for those who argue for a perspective which is neither capitalist nor Stalinist.

The second factor is the lack of credibility of the left, who have largely failed to sufficiently distance themselves from the horrors of the Stalinist system. Even those who see

themselves as being in the traditions of revolutionary socialism have in the main continued throughout most of the post Second World War period to sow illusions in the supposedly progressive nature of the Soviet bloc.

Over the longer historical period these obstacles will hopefully reduce as workers in Eastern Europe experience the exploitative nature of capitalism and as adherence to such curious concepts as the "workers' states" idea becomes confined to a few flat earthists. That does not make our task in the short term any easier.

The recent issue of *Workers'*

Liberty magazine is ... pains to try to rescue Lenin's ideas from the disintegration of Stalinism. The rejection by the peoples of Eastern Europe of the monolithic one-party state in favour of a democratically determined multi-party system will most likely involve a rejection of the whole Leninist heritage, so accustomed have they become to identifying the bureaucratic states with the mantle of Leninism.

In the face of such developments and the marginalisation of Leninism in the West, simply to assert the continuing validity of that tradition is insufficient. Repetition of such well-loved Trotskyist adages as "a river of blood separates Leninism from Stalinism" is not to begin to address the problem. A thorough re-evaluation of Leninism is needed in order to discover what in that tradition has continued validity in the context of representative democracy and a multi-party system.

That could well begin by asking the question as to whether there is any evidence from his writings that Lenin genuinely believed in a multi-party system.

At the practical level, in the light of recent developments in Eastern Europe, it is worth while asking the question as to what constitutes solidarity activity in Britain today. Solidarity movements are normally rooted in a perceived need to support those who are struggling against oppressive regimes. Does that have any meaning in the context of Eastern Europe today, where the likelihood is the emergence of regimes which are no more and no less repressive than those which exist in Western Europe?

Where solidarity becomes more meaningful perhaps is in relation to the Soviet Union where the monolithic one-party state still exists (although recent events in Lithuania and Estonia may spell the beginning of the end of that).

It will become even more meaningful and urgent if the hardline Stalinists in the Soviet Union oust Gorbachev and reassert control with possible consequent reverberations in Eastern Europe. That wholly undesirable possibility would necessitate renewed solidarity activity, but of a kind which is distinguished from the pro-Gorbachev camp.

Whether that happens or not, clearly a thorough discussion of the meaning and relevance of solidarity work in respect of the Soviet bloc is essential.

Childcare and the family

Liz Millward (*Women's Eye*, SO 431) is absolutely correct to use her column to argue for the rights of children.

In our society children suffer silencing, humiliation and abuse. Liz is also right to insist that children can suffer trauma as a result of the sudden disappearance of one of their parents.

But I think the solutions Liz proposes to deal with this are mistaken and ironically would harm the very people Liz seeks to aid — children.

Liz argues that children should be 'protected' from divorce not just by trained counsellors 'saving' relationships in trouble but by parents staying together 'for the sake of the children'; by laws making divorce a 'hard option' and, if this fails then the Left should be "insisting by legal means if necessary that the divorcing parents both spend time with their kids".

(1) Liz tries to find solutions within a framework that is not only far too narrow but is in one sense part of the problem — the privatised family. Liz puts great store in counselling to keep 'the family' together. Now more counsellors can only be a good thing but, like social workers, they only treat the symptoms of a far deeper malaise created by the social relations of capitalism. It is a structural not a pathological problem.

Parenting takes place in a very particular context. For a start poor housing, unemployment and poverty conspire to make child care extraordinarily difficult for millions. A recent study carried out in North

Battersea into the kinds and numbers of children coming into care made findings according to the author, "linking poverty and reception into care. The overall picture is one of families on desperately low income in the worst cramped housing with few supporters or other resources... More resources are needed for housing, income maintenance, employment and day care provision to reduce family stress and insecurity. Supportive work with families could include family centres, proper payments to neighbours for short-term fostering." (Peter Beresford, 'In Care in North Battersea'.)

It's not that the "trained counsellors" Liz looks to are irrelevant. But it is rather like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

(2) Liz seems to accept one of the core assumptions of conservative social policy: that the family should be the only unit charged with the everyday responsibility for children. Liz is concerned to make that unit work. And if it fails to work to make its members legally obliged to pretend it hasn't!

As Peter Moss, co-ordinator of a Common Market initiative on childcare provision has observed, "In Britain we have a whole industry discussing ways of teaching malfunctioning parents to perform better, but we don't discuss ways in which we, as a society, could provide better conditions for parenting."

There are virtually no public, collective childcare facilities. Parenthood is seen as a private indulgence which takes place as far as possible between consenting adults in private. The current use of children-

as-cultural-accessory in advertising is part and parcel of this: "them that's got shall have" celebrates the Volkswagen ad. And the caring services are often just a police force, intervening when it all breaks down, as it must.

When Liz wrote a similar article some time ago (SO 420), Belinda Weaver replied, putting the case for an opening up of childcare from its privatised ghetto, to socialise it. Now this is not to say that parental bonding — deep, stable and emotionally rich attachments — are not absolutely essential for child development. They are. (The letter from Mark Stevens seemed to ignore this.) But all too often it is just this bonding which is fractured as the privatised family world, far from being a haven, turns in on itself with horrific results. The answer is not to prop up that privatised world with counsellors and laws but to surround the act of parenting (by whoever, of whatever sexuality, in whatever number) with resources and structures which empower parents and children alike.

In France a vast array of childcare facilities exist — reserved places in drop in centres with a positive encouragement to leave children, universal full-time nursery provision from 3 years old, publicly resourced home helps to relieve the strain of the ill or exhausted parent, etc. etc. In the here and now it is all this and more that we should be campaigning for. But in her cramped focus and authoritarian slant Liz risks lending support to the Tories' cult of the individual, tut-tutting at parents, and moving us in the wrong direction. (It is the same slant, presumably, which

allows her to imagine that wiping out the Monarchy (SO 434) would be a solution to its ideological and cultural power. It would, of course, do exactly the reverse.)

(3) Finally, Liz's proposal to clamp together, by law, otherwise unwilling separated parents and children for set periods of weekly 'child care' seems to me bizarre. I think most child psychologists would wince at the idea which tramples over just about everything that is known about healthy child development. Bruno Bettelheim has written: "Whatever we do with and for our children ought to flow from our understanding of and our feelings for the particular situation and the relation we wish to exist between us and our child."

Children distinguish authentic from non-authentic behaviour no matter how well an adult pretends. They may not be able to articulate it to themselves, but the feeling will be internalised, maybe repressed, as anxiety, insecurity or fear. Far from helping a child, I think Liz's proposal would be positively harmful.

We should reject the vulgar Marxist attitude of 'there is nothing we can do until socialism' and the idealism of those who think we can prefigure the forms of childcare and development of the socialist future in the capitalist present. Between those two traps we can develop a policy for children and fight for it. But, that policy couldn't hinge on individual parental 'success' or 'failure' but must be about the socialisation of childcare and development.

Alan Johnson
Liverpool

Ian McCalman
Glasgow

A nasty set of strings

The leaders of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) have always seen the battle against British Aerospace as pivotal in the 35-hour week campaign.

Their argument went as follows: "Once we've beaten British Aerospace, then the rest of the engineering employers will be easy. It will be like robbing old ladies or taking sweets from children."

But if victory over BAe would weaken the rest of the employers, then a victory for BAe will strengthen their hand.

As the deal pushed through at Preston by Jordan and Airlie can hardly be described as a victory for our side, then the employer will see it as a victory for theirs.

Other companies will hold out for the kind of 37-hour week with strings that BAe management have got.

The strings include:

- Bell to bell working, ie. abolition of tea breaks.
- Flexibility between trades [ie. fitters to do 9 other different kinds of jobs 'similar to those done at home'.]
- Skilled workers to do their own checking, inspecting and 'housekeeping'.

• No reduction below 37 hours for any workers, including those white collar workers already working 37.

This looks very much like the kind of flexibility proposals the Engineering Employers Federation put on the table back in 1987 which Jordan wanted to accept but was stopped from doing so by a rank and file revolt.

Jordan and Airlie, using the powerful lever of their control over the national levy, have managed to get the Preston

and Chester stewards to back a deal that looks very similar to the BAe offer before the strikes even began. It seems that after 17 weeks out on strike very little has been achieved.

It would be wrong to see the reduction in the working day to 37 hours as a defeat, in itself, but the Preston and Chester deals represent the employers' version of the shorter working week. They want any reduction in hours to be 'self-financing': paid for by speed-up and the re-organisation of production in the bosses' interests.

With the current balance of forces in engineering, and major skill shortages, the engineers have been sold very short indeed. Back in 1979, in conditions far less favourable for battle than today, national action — in the form of a series of one-day and two-day strikes — won a genuine one hour reduction without any major strings. National action this time round could win much more.

The first step towards such action would be a one-day national engineering strike for the full claim of a 35-hour week with no strings.

As one Kingston British Aerospace worker put it: "This strike is for a



Bill Jordan

35-hour week, we're staying out till we get it, we won't settle for anything less. There's no point in going on strike twice for the same thing."

This Monday, 5 March, British Aerospace management suffered a severe setback in the shorter working week battle.

Over 2,000 workers at BAe's Wharton plant threw out by a big majority the deal for a 37-hour week with extensive strings described elsewhere on this page. Management have now got to work out what to do as Preston Strand Road, Salmesbury and Wharton are all part of the same production unit.

Mersey scare tactics

Management have begun to resort to scare tactics in an attempt to break the all-out strike which ambulance crews on Merseyside began a week last Monday (28 February), in protest at the new offer now being balloted on.

According to a letter sent to all strikers by local ambulance chief Owen Disley, unless strikers immediately return to work, up to 100 jobs could be axed.

His argument is that under the forthcoming NHS reforms each local health district on Merseyside will have to "buy" their own Patient Transfer Services (PTS). If the strike were not called off, he claimed, the districts might decide not to "buy" PTS from Merseyside Regional Health Authority, which would lead to redundancies amongst existing Merseyside ambulance crews.

Disley's letter has had a zero impact. The numbers of ambulance crews not backing the strike remains minimal, while attempts by Disley to dissuade the public from making donations to striking crews have had equally little impact.

The strikers themselves, apart from continuing to provide an alternative emergency service, are also pressing ahead with campaigning for a rejection of the pay offer in the current ballot.

In doing so they are having to take on their own union officials. Poole has repeatedly attacked the Merseyside crews' decision to go on strike, whilst other union officials have prevented Merseyside crews from addressing meetings of ambulance staff in Doncaster, Stirling and Dundee, in order to stop them putting across the argument for rejection of the offer.

Such behaviour on the part of Poole and other union full-timers underlines the need for what has been lacking throughout the duration of the dispute: a rank and file organisation of ambulance crews themselves, which would enable them to run the dispute themselves and prevent Poole and Co from "snatching defeat from the jaws of victory" (if you'll pardon the cliché).

Merseyside crews will be voting in opposition to the deal and are looking forward to their decision to throw out the offer being repeated at national level as well.

Respect EETPU picket lines

By Tom Rigby

The strike at Fords is weakening. This Monday the action which has halted production at Halewood, Dagenham and Genk started to seriously fray at the edges.

As the bosses' paper, the *Financial Times*, gloated: "For the first time in the Halewood plant's 30 year history, workers yesterday crossed picket lines. Union leaders of semi-skilled workers argued that the EETPU picket lines were not legitimate since most Ford workers had voted to accept the pay deal against which the electricians are striking."

TGWU leaders had previously agreed

Merseyside ambulances: 'Why we are on strike'

This dispute has dragged on for six months and a month ago we asked Roger Poole to hold a national strike ballot to unite all staff and bring the action to a point where the government were forced to settle.

This call was refused, so we decided to hold a Merseyside ballot to (1) accurately reflect the views of the staff; (2) send signals to our national leadership about the strength of feeling of our members.

The result of the ballot was that nearly 60% of our members supported the call for an all-out strike. We arranged a meeting of our members on Thursday 22 February to discuss when we would begin the strike but by this time talks were underway in London. Over 200 members attended the meeting and decided unanimously that the strike would start at 7am on Monday 26 February unless the talks produced an acceptable offer.

On Friday morning, 23 February, an announcement was made that we had received an offer which Roger Poole described as staggering and magnificent. We immediately arranged for a faxed copy of the offer to be sent to us and we fixed up an emergency meeting for Friday afternoon for our staff to consider the offer. Even though the meeting was called at such short notice, over 300 members attended and overwhelmingly agreed that the offer would not be acceptable and that the strike must go ahead.

The offer

Months ago we were offered 9% over 18 months (1.4.89—30.9.90); that offer is back on the table but then with an extra 7.9% for 6 months (1.10.90—31.3.91) but because the 7.9% is only for 6 months it is only worth 4% over a year. Thus the actual rise over 2 years is only 13%; this is hardly staggering! There is an extra 2% available for local productivity, but do we want 2% extra by cutting jobs or services? And there is no pay formula. After a six month dispute we have an offer which does not even match the inflation rate and no guarantee for future years.

We need a formula to ensure that we never need to take industrial action ever again.

The strike

By going on strike we have achieved massive publicity in all the national media. Ambulance staff throughout the country will see the action we are taking and we are sure that after they have studied the offer in the detail that we have it will overwhelmingly be rejected. To ensure that our action has this effect it must be fully supported by all our

staff and we urge all our members to display the unity of purpose that our cause deserves.

Alternative ambulance cover

From the outset we have always pledged that we will maintain an emergency service and on the basis of this promise we have collected huge sums of money from the people of Merseyside. We will not let them down.

We have made alternative arrangements: fully equipped ambulances; paramedic crews; radio and telephone communications.

And we offer the people of Merseyside a professional alternative to the police vans or army Land Rovers that ambulance management can provide. By doing this we will keep the massive support that our case has earned and we will be able to sustain our dispute.

Why we need your support

Due to the publicity the offer has received via the media and Roger Poole, the street collection is beginning to waiver.

Until we can convince the public the true meaning of the offer, we urge you to please continue with your workplace levies and support the street collections.

Continue workplace levies! Support street collections!

The Socialist Movement

Public Meeting

Reject the deal! Escalate the action!

Build workers solidarity action!

Speakers: Stewart Smith (Merseyside Ambulance Workers Steward) Steve Hall (Socialist Movement TU Committee) Speaker from Merseyside Ambulance Workers Support Group plus video

Tuesday 13 March 7.30pm

Merseyside Trade Union Resource Centre, Room F29

Notts East witch-hunt

The witchhunt against Socialist Organiser is spreading to Nottingham. SO talked to Steve Battlemuch, Chair of Nottingham East Labour Party, about calls for the expulsion of himself and others.

Nottingham East CLP has been a thorn in the side of Walworth Road for a number of years. In 1987 Sharon Atkin was deselected weeks before the general election and a right-winger, Mohammed Aslam, was imposed on the CLP. He lost the election.

Since then Aslam has recruited heavily into the party so that he can be selected fairly this time! His main rival is Hassan Ahmed, a local black section supporter. Hassan has large support in the Asian community as well as links with the white left.

The third character in this plot is John Hepple, the deputy leader of the County Council. Hepple has attacked the mass Asian recruitment in the CLP. Some of his supporters give voice to a racist suspicion of all Asians who join the party. His supporters say they want an 'electable candidate' — ie. a white male (Hepple). Behind the scenes Hepple has collaborated with Aslam and the Asian right and has a joint slate with them for the GMC AGM.

Real problems began again in Nottingham East in January 1989. The Forest Ward AGM (the largest ward in the CLP) was stopped when an Aslam supporter headbutted a left-winger. (The offender was taken to the National Constitutional Committee, but the case was found 'not proven'. He admitted the offence!)

Because the AGM failed to go ahead, the CLP AGM was postponed until Forest Ward had a chance to reorganise their AGM. This was done after an instruction from Walworth Road and regional office.

The 1990 Forest Ward AGM again ran into trouble. This time the meeting was abandoned after a fire bell was set off in a highly charged atmosphere with

almost 300 members present. The officers of Forest Ward then made a genuine attempt to calm things down by suggesting a re-run, to which members would come only to cast a vote and then leave.

Normally I would not be in favour of this method of electing officers and delegates, but given the considerable tension in the ward, and the need to ensure that the ward could take part in the Constituency Party AGM, I supported the proposal.

But regional office and the right-wing majority on the EC were not having it. Their insistence that officers, etc., be elected at meeting would have been convincing were they not enthusiastic supporters of Neil Kinnock's plans to take all votes by postal ballot.

The Executive Committee voted to go ahead with the Constituency Party AGM without giving Forest Ward time to re-run its AGM. This decision would have disenfranchised the largest ward (over 400 members — 25% of the CLP).

That Forest is a ward which sends 'left' delegates to the GMC was obviously high in the thoughts of the right wing. They knew that without Forest, the left couldn't win the AGM. That's what it is all about!

For that reason I, as CLP Chair, made a ruling at the beginning of the Constituency AGM that, under Labour Party rule 10.5, the AGM could't proceed because all affiliated organisations hadn't been invited to attend. The right wing tried to challenge my ruling but failed to get the required two-thirds majority. The meeting then broke up.

We have now been informed that no more meetings of Nottingham East CLP can take place pending an investigation from Labour Party HQ. The CLP officers have submitted a detailed report to Walworth Road calling on them to allow Forest Ward's AGM to proceed and the GMC AGM to follow as soon as possible afterwards.

We want an end to the disruption and want the CLP functioning properly again. However, the right wing are going in for the kill. In a ward meeting held two days after the aborted CLP AGM the right wing called for a "full investigation into Nottingham East" and also called for the expulsions of myself and other CLP officers.

Investigations and expulsions will not help Nottingham East. What is needed is for all wards to be allowed to participate in the GMC AGM, and for the AGM to proceed democratically. We must be allowed to get on with the task of democratically selecting a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate in Nottingham East.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Reformers gain in Soviet polls

Reformers and oppositionists are heading for big victories in the Soviet elections that took place this weekend (4 March).

In most seats, there will have to be run-off elections, so final results will not be known for a fortnight. But the picture is clear: in Russia,

Ukraine, and Byelorussia, conservatives have done badly, and radicals — or those perceived as radicals — and nationalists, well. Boris Yeltsin, former Moscow Party boss and Central Committee member, has won 80% of the votes in his home town of Sverdlovsk, in the Ukraine.

In Ukraine, the new Party boss, Yuri Ivashko, has been forced into a second round by the nationalist movement, Rukh. Rukh looks set to win significant representation.

In Leningrad, Russia's second largest city, the Democratic Elections 90 group claim that its candidates are ahead in 30 of 34 parliamentary constituencies, and should win 80% of the vote.

In second-round elections in Lithuania, the Sajudis nationalist movement has won 18 more seats, reinforcing their victory in elections there two weeks ago.

A *Guardian-Newsnight* poll published today (March 6) shows that an overwhelming majority of the Soviet people want a multi-party system: 66.17% fully approve and a further 12.33% 'partially approve'. In certain areas, the figure was higher. According to the survey, Gorbachev is still the most popular national leader, with Yeltsin second and Ligachev a poor third; but nearly 50% thought their lives were worse than five years ago.

A vast majority — 73.18% — were dissatisfied with the way the government is handling the economy. And a big majority thought the Communist Party would cease to be the 'leading party' in less than five years (27.35% in less than two).

In Ukraine, angry hunger-striking miners were also standing against the Communist Party in the elections. As yet we have no news of their success in the elections. They were protesting at the failure of the authorities to fulfil their promises for improved conditions following last year's huge miners' strike.

Yeltsin is no radical

Boris Yeltsin is often described as the foremost radical in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

He has been the sharpest critic of Gorbachev from the side that wants more reform, and faster, rather than less: he is the spokesperson for the group that most thoroughly wants to break with the past.

So Yeltsin was for ending the Party's monopoly on power before Gorbachev was. Yeltsin made his name as boss of the Moscow Party where, in flamboyant populist style, he took on the 'mafia' that had run the city, exposing its corruption. He was sacked from the Politburo for being too critical of privilege within the bureaucracy — and in particular too critical of Gorbachev.

But the image of Yeltsin as radical is completely false. He is, in fact, one of the most determined pro-marketisers in the CPSU, convinced that socialism is a meaningless Utopia, impressed by Western capitalism — especially by the most aggressive kinds. When he recently visited the United States, he was full of praise for Ronald Reagan, no less.

He believes that the USSR should have a Stock Exchange, and be a normal country of private capitalism.

According to some reports, Yeltsin is close to the virulently anti-semitic Pamyat group. He is certainly known to have had discussions with Pamyat, which were reported in the Soviet press.

And his style is increasingly to play on Great Russian nationalism; he is a Russian chauvinist politician.

Far from a radical, Yeltsin is, in fact, one of the most right wing politicians in the USSR today, and maybe a Mussolini in the making.

Labour must lead poll tax fight!

By Cate Murphy

The Tories are in crisis over the poll tax. With less than a month to go before its introduction into England and Wales, opposition is growing rapidly.

As council after council sets a budget over the government guidelines, and couples this with huge cuts in jobs and services, Thatcher is coming under assault from all sides — including her own party faithful.

Michael Heseltine was the most prominent Tory backbencher to voice his dissent. Tony Marlow MP — an avid Thatcherite — last week denounced the tax as "a cyanide pill", predicting that the voters will wreak "vengeance" on the party at the polls.

18 Tory councillors in West Oxfordshire resigned in protest at having to set a £412 poll tax, despite being one of the most ardent cut and privatise councils over recent years. They blamed gross under-estimations of local spending needs by the government, and put the blame squarely on Thatcher. The Tories are facing challenges in the High Court over their spending assessments. The National Association of Head Teachers is warning of legal action if school budgets are slashed because of poll tax-capping.

Demonstrations and meetings of hundreds are being organised in the Shire counties and the Tories can only watch as their previously loyal supporters vent their anger against the government.

The Tory safe seat of Mid-Staffordshire looks set to be lost to

Labour, all because of the poll tax: 83% of voters name the tax as the issue which will decide which way to vote.

The resignation of the 18 Tory councillors in West Oxfordshire proves that the Tories have lost the propaganda war. When the poll tax was first floated, the Tories claimed that it would penalise 'high spending' Labour authorities, who would be voted out of office by impoverished voters, while Tory councils who had ardently adhered to the Thatcherite policy of slashing services and jobs would be rewarded. This hasn't happened.

Instead, with most councils having set their rates, it is the Tory councils that are introducing the largest percentage rises, with the inner-city Labour councils introducing the lowest.

Because of government under-estimation of how much local authorities will need to fund the new services they must provide, a deliberate under-estimation of the rate of inflation, and over-exaggeration of the likely levels of payment (95%), central government grants will be totally inadequate, forcing the poll tax levels up by as much as £100 over the government estimates.

For the West Oxfordshire councillors, this betrayal by their own party was the last straw. Thatcher's response, that they didn't understand local government finance, and she'd have to "explain a thing or two" to them rubbed salt in the wound. They abandoned the Tory party, as did other councillors throughout the country, including in the Isle of Wight, no longer able to defend their party policy.

Throughout the country the story is the same: Shire councils are consistently setting poll tax rates way above government guidelines. Even Bradford, the Tory showpiece, comes in at £50 a head above the estimate. Only four councils to date have set poll tax levels at or below the recommended levels.

One of these is, of course, Wandsworth. But the much-trumpeted £148 poll tax level they set is only achieved by digging deep into their reserves. The £32 million they can call on this year won't be there next year, and simply to compensate for this, the council will have to raise the bill by £130.

No matter how much the Tories



gloat about Wandsworth and Westminster, they can't disguise the fact that the majority of their own local governments are setting some of the highest poll taxes.

Which leaves the Tories with a problem: to cap them or not? Originally, the poll tax-cap was seen as a weapon to further punish high-spending Labour councils, forcing them to keep their poll tax levels low, and slash jobs and services. But the Tories can't attack Labour councils without capping vast numbers of their own Tory councils, pushing them further into crisis, and risking even more Tory seats at the next election.

The rumoured panic-ring round of Tory local authority chiefs by party chairman Kenneth Baker had no effect. Not only did councils continue to set high poll taxes, but they put the blame firmly on the government. More than 70% of the Tory chiefs are critical of the government's handling of the poll tax; over half fear it will cost them dearly at the polls.

Thatcher and Baker faced angry councillors at last Saturdays gathering of Tory local politicians, but offered no hope. Thatcher made it clear that there was no turning back, and no more money forthcoming this year. Local councils would just have to make the best of it, and make sure they blame Labour! Her muted reception showed that the rebellion in the Tory ranks is far from quelled.

Backbench Tory MPs haven't given up either: more than 80 support a proposal to remove education, police and fire services from the local authorities and put them under central government control. Battles are beginning already for

more money from the Treasury for next year. But £3 billion would be needed to compensate for the removal of the safety net, and to peg poll tax bills at this year's levels. Reductions of £30 a head would cost over £1 billion.

With growing inflation, the high level of interest rates and now the excessive poll tax bills, Tory support is rapidly waning. Labour are now riding at 50% in the polls, and the growing crisis over the poll tax can only add to this support.

But while Kinnock and Co. are rubbing their hands in glee over Tory discomfort and panic, they are doing little else. Far from leading the protests, by committing Labour to back the non-payment campaign, Labour is steaming ahead with warrant sales in Scotland.

In England and Wales, Labour councils are voting through massive cuts packages in a vain attempt to cut poll tax bills, rather than refusing to implement the tax.

Disgracefully, neither the Labour leadership nor the TUC are supporting the demonstration against the poll tax organised for 31 March, preferring instead a feeble lobby of MPs for 3 April.

Local Labour Party activists must build the anti-poll tax campaigns, fight for the local parties to oppose any cuts, and push the Labour-controlled authorities to refuse to implement the poll tax.

We should link up with local government workers, as they have done in Manchester, to fight the redundancies that councils are imposing, force the Labour and TUC leaderships to back such actions, and to build a real fight than can defeat the Tories.

NO POLL TAX
the **DEMO**
Sat 31st March
Meet at Kennington Park at 12 noon
March to Trafalgar Square LONDON