

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

**Unions,
community
together**

We can beat the Poll Tax!

2,000 employees of Greenwich Council, in south-east London, plan to strike on Thursday 17 May.

170 NALGO members have been on strike for the last two weeks because the council are not paying enough people to collect the poll tax.

Strikers in the borough's Housing Department have caused big disruptions through their

action. Three times as many people should pay the poll tax as used to pay the rates. The existing staff simply can't cope.

Such strikes show the way forward. If council workers strike against the poll tax, or the practicalities of implementing it, and link up with non-payment campaigns on the estates and in the communities, we can make the tax unworkable.

Teachers strike against sackings

By Liam Conway

In Barnsley on 24 May, the National Union of Teachers will be striking against redundancies. They face the loss of 180 jobs.

No wonder 300 of the 1,000 NUT members in Barnsley recently turned up to an Association meeting to discuss the issue. It's quite clear that teachers recognise the need to resist such redundancies with action.

In Notts, too, NUT members are about to be balloted for strike action. We need a resounding yes vote for such action if heads and governors are to be stopped from using the greatly increased powers they now have to sack teachers.

One headteacher in Notts last week sent three teachers home. He told them their services would no longer be needed.

However, the responsibility for

these redundancies does not lie with heads or school governors, no matter how reactionary they might appear. These job cuts are caused by successive rounds of Tory cuts in money for local education authorities. They are part and parcel of the programme that has seen privatisation of cleaning services, cuts in wages for cleaning staff, a poorer school meals service, gradually increasing class sizes, standstill budgets for books and equipment, and now the poll tax.

The action against redundancies must place the blame four-square with the government. This is exactly how the resolution passed at NUT conference, the resolution that forced the union leaders to consent to these strikes in the first place, was formulated.

But the union leaders will now try to limit the action to local level. Understanding that without in-

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Photo: Mark Salman

There are words for them, too

OUT AND PROUD

By Clive Bradley

The Press Council this week made it safer for me to walk the streets.

Or at least they made a start. How? By muzzling the foul-mouthed Garry Bushell.

When I first moved into my current flat, about two and a half years ago, one of my favourite nightspots was a Friday and Saturday disco in Brixton called the Dome. The Dome was above a pub in a sidestreet; it was a bit dark, and I sometimes felt nervous going home.

Then, for two weeks running (two weeks, fortunately for me, when I wasn't there), people leaving were attacked by gangs with bicycle chains.

The Dome died a death.

Such attacks on lesbian and gay venues are not uncommon. Nor are attacks in general. According to Galop, the Gay London Police Group, which carries out research into policing and the lesbian and gay community, about 17 murders of gay men have occurred around the country in the last two years.

Recently a gay actor, Michael Booth, was murdered in the street by a gang in West London. As with most of the other cases, he was leaving a 'cottage' — a public toilet frequented by gay men.

Galop report that it is extremely difficult to get the police to take 'queerbashing' seriously. Unlike racially-motivated attacks, 'queerbashing' doesn't have to be recorded. The police often aren't very interested in lesbian or gay victims of violent assault.

The *Independent* (14 May) carries a depressing interview with a man who has been queerbashed several times, once to the tune of £4,000 compensation.

Once, I note, he was a victim of a mugging, at knife-point, outside one of my own local gay pubs, the Market Tavern in Vauxhall. On this occasion, when he phoned the police, they promised to send a squad car, but didn't bother to take his name or anything. He comments: "That's the way it is."

Indeed that is the way it is. Britain decriminalised homosexual 'acts' between consenting adults in 1967 (for men: the law hadn't really recognised the possibility of such 'acts' between women). But according to a recent study by Peter Tatchell, since 1967 there have been more prosecutions of homosexuals, now on charges of importuning and gross indecency.

It should be remembered that in order to 'catch' men for these crimes, policemen will hang around for hours in public toilets, flash their privates at someone who looks like he might be interested, and then, when the poor guy responds, whip out a pair of handcuffs and drag him off to the police station. One elderly man a couple of years ago, when he realised he was being picked up by the police, suffered a heart attack and died.

Britain has more prosecutions of gay men and lesbians than any other European country. It also has more laws which discriminate against homosexuals.

Why do gangs of kids lurk in shadows waiting for people to leave pubs or toilets and then attack them, or even murder them? For that matter, why do they so much as yell bits of gratuitous abuse at us as we walk by?

I wouldn't have said (maybe I'm wrong) that you can tell I'm gay from five hundred yards, but I've had large groups of young men shout abuse at me as I walk through parks.

We don't roam around in packs shouting 'bloody little straights!' 'Oi! You straight bastards, piss off!' Still less do we set upon people quietly minding their own business in order to give extra work to over-worked hospitals. So why do it to us?

Research suggests that most queerbashers are young, poorly educated, unskilled working class men. In other words, they probably read one of the less literate tabloids. There can be little doubt that the huge amount of anti-homosexual invective that can be found in papers like the *Sun* gives encouragement to kids who think it might be cool to maim some little poofter for life.

There is not a week goes by without Garry Bushell or Richard Littlejohn or their like crapping on about the dangers of bending over when alternative comedians are around, or whatever. Garry Bushell, I understand, used to be a member of the Socialist Workers Party, or at least around it, so it's not simply mindless bigotry: he knows what he's doing. Maybe he thinks it's funny.

And this week, contradicting previous decisions, the Press Council found in favour of a claim

brought against Bushell by Terry Sanderson of *Gay Times* over the use of the word 'poofter'. The paper's editorial complained that as their readers used such words, it wasn't fair if they couldn't. 'We know a great deal more [than the Press Council] about how ordinary people think, act and speak.'

Bushell told a radio interviewer that in any case he could use different words, like 'shirtlifter'.

There are words for you, too, Mr Bushell. If there were a law under which you could be prosecuted for stirring up hate and thereby encouraging others to commit cold-blooded murder, you, Mr Bushell, could be put away at least seventeen times over.

The Manx parliament is currently debating the decriminalisation of homosexuality, and one Manx worthy told the press this week that if you make it legal, you increase the problem: it will be like London, he said; homos everywhere.

Homosexuals are 'everywhere' in London because homosexuals are everywhere. There are millions of us. And we are just as much people as you are. Correction: more so, if you're anything like Bushell, who is hardly what could be described as human.



"There are millions of us". Photo: Peter Walsh (Profile)

Every bit of bigotry is directed at a real person. Will they ever try to understand this? Prince Edward recently asked the press how they would like it if someone called them gay. Well how would you like it if someone said you weren't human, or described your life and loves as 'shirtlifting'?

The fact is you can get killed for

'lifting shirts', whatever on earth that means (I suppose if all you do yourself is look up girls' dresses it's hard to imagine more mutual sexual activity). This week's Press Council's decision may actually mean that one person who might otherwise one day be killed will not be. It's belated, but it's a decision to be applauded.

No deals with Iran!

From the Campaign Against Repression in Iran

In the aftermath of the release of Western hostages from Beirut, the calls for renewed talks with the Iranian government are gaining momentum.

Indeed there can be little doubt that negotiations between the US administration and the Iranian government have already taken place.

For those of us concerned with the plight of the other hostages of Iranian Hezbollah, the thousands of political prisoners held by the Iranian regime as well as the writer Salman Rushdie, the recent developments are worrying indeed.

In February 1990, the United Nations Human Rights delegation to Iran published an inconclusive report amidst rumours of a deal, or

at least an understanding between the governments of Iran and the United States that a milder condemnation of Iran's human rights record might lead to a more speedy release of Western hostages. In fact within days of the publication of the UN report, president Rafsanjani made a public demand for the release of all Western hostages for the first time.

As public hangings and more recently beheading of political opponents takes place in the streets of major Iranian cities, the media in Britain has chosen to ignore such news, inevitably wary of the plight of British hostages. On the day Mr Polhill was arriving in West Germany, gunmen connected to Hezbollah murdered Kazem Rajavi, an opponent of the Iranian regime and a human rights activist.

In this country many advocate talk with the Iranian government, stressing the distinction between 'terrorist organisations and foreign powers', and conveniently forget-

ting that the terrorist organisations involved in hostage taking (Islamic Jihad, Islamic Dawn, Lebanese Hezbollah) are the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, financed and directed by that government.

The Iranian clergy and its embassy in Beirut (four of whose employees are missing) founded the Lebanese Hezbollah and taught it lessons in kidnapping, extortion, following its own experience of taking American embassy staff hostage in Tehran.

In fact the release of French and American hostages, following blatant economic and political deals with Tehran, has proved that hostage taking has become part and parcel of the Iranian government's diplomacy, as insurance against punitive sanctions by Western governments.

As far as the British hostages are concerned, the main obstacle remains the Salman Rushdie affair, and inevitably politicians from all parties, as well as newspapers, are

calling for an apology by Mr Rushdie and the withdrawal of the paperback issue of the *Satanic Verses* in order to accommodate Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa, while others are advocating a positive response to Rafsanjani's calls for Western help to rebuild Iran's shattered economy.

However, this short sighted approach to one of the most important sponsors of world terrorism is indeed a very dangerous policy. Over the last few months Hezbollah in Iran and Lebanon have rejoiced in the fact that by holding Western hostages they have succeeded in silencing condemnation of the other aspects of their terrorist activities inside and outside Iran's borders often boasting of victory against the 'great satan'.

Any further concessions to Iran will surely signal a tacit approval of their medieval means of imposing retrograde fundamentalist views on Muslims and non-Muslims alike, throughout the world.

Tories plan for student paupers

By Jill Mountford
The Tory changes to student financial support (SFS) are awaiting Royal

Assent.

Once the formalities are over the student grant will be frozen and top-up loans will be the way the ma-

jority of Higher Education students survive.

Loans will mean greater hardship for students. And while the Tories maintain their illogical argument that loans are a means of extending access to Higher Education, we know that many groups will be pushed back, out of Higher Education.

The Tories' attacks on student financial support do not stop at loans. After September entitlement to housing benefit and Income Support will be stopped.

For students outside London this will mean an annual loss (based on this year's figures) of £650-plus, and for those in London a loss of £950-plus.

Add to that the poll tax, and you end up with a substantial cut in living standards.

The leaders of the National Union of Students (NUS) have failed to lead a fight back against the Tories. They have squashed action taken by activists in the belief that the Tories would compromise and not push through the abolition of Income Support and housing benefit on top of the loans pro-

posals. Well done, Labour Party HQ!

The inactivity and incompetence of the Kinnockites in NUS is matched by their lack of democracy. They simply ignore conference policy which they disagree with.

They disagree with the Left Unity policy passed at Xmas '89 Conference: Don't Pay, Don't Collect the poll tax. So the Kinnockites are publicly fighting the policy rather than building the campaign in the colleges.

At a public meeting last week NUS President Maeve Sherlock declared that she disagreed with the policy and would pay her poll tax.

College activists must stop these 'leaders' behaving this way. We must pull the loans and benefits issues into the wake of the campaign against the poll tax.

This will strengthen the fight and help to point the finger of blame at the Tories.

• **Stop Press:** Left Unity supporter Steph Ward defeated the Kinnockite candidate to become the next convenor of South Yorkshire Area NUS at Monday night's SYANUS AGM.



Do they think we're all donkeys?



PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

After three weeks banged up in a Greek jail, I don't suppose Paul Ashwell is particularly bothered about whether the *Sun* or the *Mirror* claims the credit for his release.

Nor, I imagine, is the unfortunate lorry-driver pondering the case of Blackie the Donkey, just at this moment.

Nevertheless, the similarities between the legendary 'Blackie' affair and the present unseemly tabloid squabble over Mr Ashwell are quite striking.

Blackie, you may remember, briefly shot to fame a few years ago, as the tabloid hacks battled to out-do each other in their efforts to 'save' him from bloodthirsty Spanish villagers.

Now the *Sun* and the *Mirror* have found a human equivalent of Blackie, with the Greeks taking over the role of Dastardly Dagos.

A further twist is added by the T-shirt Mystery: in the *Mirror's* photos Mr Ashwell is wearing a *Mirror* T-shirt as he leaves the prison; in the *Sun* he sports (surprise, surprise) a *Sun* T-shirt. My people have been working hard on this one and have concluded that somewhere along the line, a five-year old child interfered with the *Sun's* photos, tipping out the *Mirror* logo and scrawling *The Sun* across Mr Ashwell's chest.

My in-depth analysis of the *Sun's* coverage reveals a further strange phenomenon: although their headline claims "Freed Trucker Paul says Thanks My Sun", nowhere in the text of the report is Mr Ashwell actually quoted saying anything at all about the *Sun*.

Other truckers say things like "We knew something would happen once the *Sun* took a hand"; members of the Ashwell family praise the *Sun's* "caring campaign"; even Teddy Taylor MP offers the paper a "pat on the back"...but not Paul Ashwell himself.

Whereas in the *Mirror* he says: "The *Mirror* was sent to me in my cell every day and it was the reports about the campaign to free me that kept me going."

But never mind the boring old facts: the *Sun* has a clear edge over all the competition when it comes to the opportunities for Dago-baiting offered by the whole affair. Stan Boardman, a "comedian" who makes Jim Davidson sound like a rather amusing liberal, has thrown his weight behind the *Sun's* campaign. Here are some of his hilarious suggestions for getting back at the Greeks:

• Don't go to Greek restaurants — they'll be forced to smash plates over their own heads.

• Stop buying Grecian 2000 — that'll grab them by the acropolises."

Donkeys are (no doubt unfairly) reputed to be particularly stupid and gullible animals. But I somehow doubt whether even our old friend Blackie would find Mr Boardman's "jokes" very amusing. He might have a good horse-laugh at the rest of the *Sun's* coverage.

NB. The Press Gang Special "The European and Robert Maxwell's Ego" has had to be held over due to lack of space.



Demonstration in Paris against the desecration of Jewish graves in Carpentras, Provence.

Rally against anti-semitism!

EDITORIAL

One hundred thousand people marched in France on 14 May to protest at anti-semitic defacing of Jewish graves.

Yet the fascist National Front continues to clock up over 15 per cent support in opinion polls. Anti-Jewish racism is now openly part of the NF's pitch, alongside its staple anti-Arab racism.

Not only in France is anti-Jewish racism on the rise. In the USSR, there is the virulently anti-semitic Pamyat movement. Anti-semitic sentiments have revived in Poland. In East Germany, as in France, Jewish graves have been daubed with swastikas. In Hungary, there was an undertone of anti-semitism in the recent election victory of the populist Hungarian Democratic Forum over the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats.

In South Africa, the white backlash has targeted Jews as well as blacks. In Britain, there has been a small spate of attacks on Jews.

In New York, when black mayor David Dinkins recently condemned attacks by black people on Korean shops, he was denounced by demagogue Vernon Mason as a

traitor to black people with these words: "He's got too many yarmulkas on his head".

As so often before, Jews are the universal "outsiders", the universal scapegoats for a society troubled by exploitation and chaos.

They may integrate into the local majority so fully as to be almost indistinguishable, as in the US now or in Germany before Hitler. They may almost all move away, as almost all the Jews have gone from Eastern Europe. No matter: they are still the scapegoats.

Two hundred years after the French Revolution first decreed equality for the Jews in Europe, the defence of Jewish rights is still a touchstone of democracy.

The left must be at the forefront of defending Jewish rights. To do so, many on the left will have to reconsider ideas that anti-semitism is no longer significant, and reappraise attitudes to Israel.

Socialist Organiser supports the Palestinian Arab uprising in the West Bank and Gaza, its demand for an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, and full rights for the Arab minority within Israel. But many on the left go "further". They demand the complete destruction of Israel and the establishment of an Arab state in all Palestine. They rank "Zionism" not alongside nationalism but alongside racism and fascism.

Socialists who demand the destruction of Israel try to square

the circle by insisting they do not want to harm Jews but only "Zionism". The all-Palestine state they want will be secular, democratic, even socialist.

But their position inescapably means support for the suppression by external force of any movement by the Israeli Jews to govern themselves. It means denying to the Israeli Jews rights which those socialists would accord to any other compact nation or community. It is inescapably anti-semitic.

And it spills over inescapably into

anti-semitic attitudes to Jews here. Jews who are "Zionist", Jews who have an instinctive gut identification with Israel, that is, the great majority of Jews, are professing a doctrine which should be suppressed by force like fascism or violent racism. They should be suppressed.

With such arguments, in recent years, left-wingers have tried to ban student Jewish Societies in a number of colleges.

The new rise of anti-semitism must surely shock all socialists into reassessing such ideas.

Closing down glasnost?

Two years in labour camp. Three years in jail. Six years in jail if you use the press.

That's what you'll get, under a new Soviet law, for "insulting" or "slandering" Mikhail Gorbachev. The law is Gorbachev's response to the discontent and anger expressed by the people of Moscow in their May Day march.

It was introduced on the same day as Gorbachev decreed that the declarations of independence in Latvia and Estonia were "illegal". Moscow's conflict with Lithuania is now spreading to a confrontation with all three Baltic states.

The Army is playing an increasingly prominent role in Soviet politics.

When Gorbachev took office in 1985, he first tried to shake up the USSR by pushing a new broom through the bureaucracy. Finding the inertia too much, he decided that some "glasnost" — some

pressure on sluggish and corrupt timeservers from a liberated, or partly liberated, public opinion — was necessary.

Lifting the lid on the pressure cooker of social and national discontent brewed for sixty years by Stalinism has rapidly taken the whole USSR close to falling apart. But the process has wrecked the old hierarchy of the one-party state, and enabled Gorbachev to raise himself as an autocrat above the bureaucratic machine.

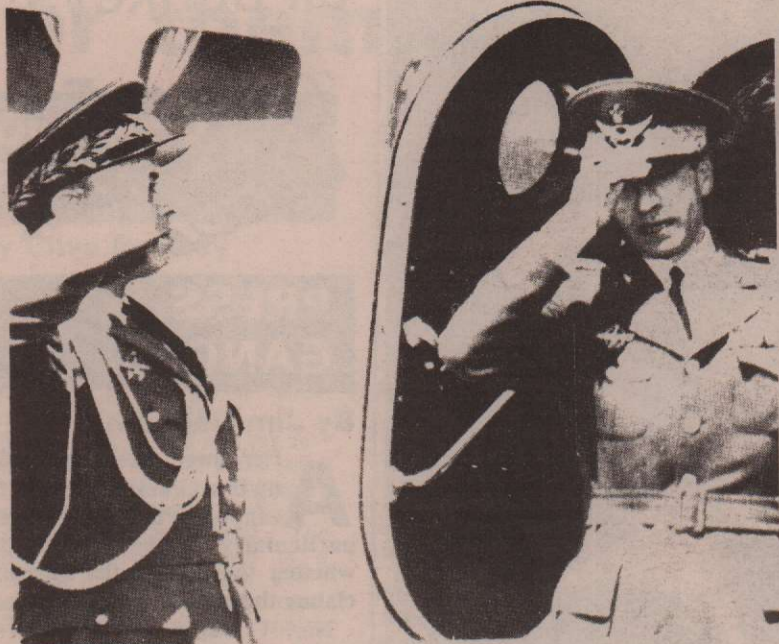
Now he is turning to personal dictatorship, imposed by military force. Shortly, by all accounts, he will announce drastic free-market measures in a bid to re-establish stable exploitation in the USSR on a new basis.

But in the meantime millions of Soviet workers have had a taste of being able to speak their minds — even if what is in their mind seems "insulting" to Mr Gorbachev. They will not give up that right easily. Nor should they.

"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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The Shah returns to Iran after the CIA-inspired coup overthrowing Mossadeq

A man of the Old School

GRAFFITI

George Kennedy Young, who recently died, seems to have been a good bloke.

He was former chief of MI6, the secret service, and was, it would appear, one of the Old School of secret agent.

None of your consumptive journalist by day drinking whisky in hotels in war-torn lands and narrowly escaping in an American helicopter. Young was a real gung-ho warrior, good at showing the blighters what Brits are made of, but always leaving time for an old-fashioned English breakfast.

Among the little derring-dos to his name were the overthrow of Iranian president Mossadeq in 1953 (although he had to get the Yanks to do this one, as Churchill had vetoed it and MI6 had gone soft), and thereafter close collaboration with Israeli intelligence in developing the Shah's secret service, Savak.

Savak was one of the causes of the Iranian revolution. They had a prison in Tehran where people were tortured to death.

Mr Young's opinion about the solution to the Strangeways syndrome is not known; but it can be guessed.

May he rot in eternal fires.

Ken Livingstone last week won the tabloid front pages for his efforts to stop a bill in Parliament to limit kerb-crawling.

Livingstone argued that the new Sexual Offences Bill would give too much power to the

police. The police would be given the power to stop any man who stopped a car to talk to a woman **even once** in an area designated by the cops, and could be arrested and charged.

So far, so good. But according to the *Independent*, Livingstone went further. He said that the trouble with the Bill was that it didn't address the real problem which is Page 3 and pornography.

"Generations of young men grow up seeing that filth — portraying women in a degrading way — which makes them think women are available to them where and when they want."

He said that if you eliminated pornography, you would eliminate the problem, and cited, as evidence, Cuba.

There is no kerb-crawling in Cuba, says Red Ken.

Probably there aren't enough cars, is why. Does he seriously believe that there is no prostitution in Cuba? Or that men didn't abuse women in the centuries and millennia before Page 3? Who tells him this stuff?

New proposals to change the law about child custody in divorce cases should win the 1990 prize for undiluted sexism.

Apparently, the mother could be given responsibility for feeding, cleaning and housing the children, while the father has to take care of financial matters, education and holidays.

The intention is supposedly to force fathers to take responsibility for their offspring, and to get away from Kramer vs Kramer-type court battles, which make the child suffer.

Dad will get quite a good deal, though, it seems to me.

As in previous years, a contingent of Socialist Organiser supporters will be attending and running a stall at the fete. If you're interested in going, write to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, or phone Clive on 071-639 7965

Lutte Ouvriere Fete 2-3-4 June

A political festival organised by the French socialist group Lutte Ouvriere, near Paris.

'Bad' nations have rights too

LETTER

I'm not sure what Laurens Otter is saying about the imperialist past of Lithuania (Letters, SO 446).

He accepts, it would seem, that Lithuania has the right to self-determination, but goes on to say that as Lithuania has such an imperialistic past of its own, including being ruled by pro-Nazi regimes, it is not surprising that the Russians are afraid of them.

He questions the idea that there is no justification for Russian occupation other than the Stalin-Hitler Pact.

If all that is being said is that it

would be wrong to romanticise the anti-Russian nationalisms currently burgeoning in the USSR, I have no problem with Laurens' comments. Indeed, a big question is the future of the national minorities, including large numbers of Russians, within the Baltic states.

But the rights of a nation do not depend on how right-on their ideas are today, or how laudable their history has been. Even nations with ugly, expansionist histories have rights: even such nations can in their turn become *oppressed* nations. Eastern Europe today is replete with examples of this important truth.

Not only Lithuania: Poland for example, was not always an oppressed nation. But clearly, anyone who said that because long ago Poland was a powerful kingdom, Poland today has no right to self-determination, or that its rights are

somehow qualified, would be guilty of a quite pernicious bit of silliness. Marx, for example, would have had something to say to them: the independence of Poland was one of Marx's big causes.

In today's world, Lithuania is a small weak country, being bullied by a large powerful one.

Russia is bullying Lithuania today not because of Lithuania's past, and not because of any threat posed by Lithuania to Russia: Russia wants Lithuania because it is rich. That's why Stalin grabbed Lithuania in the first place: that is, because Russia is an *imperialist* country.

Maybe Laurens didn't mean to suggest any qualification to Lithuania's national rights. But if he did, I think he is seriously mistaken.

Gerry Bates,
Southwark

What would you do?

WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

This paper has seen a number of debates on the question of civil liberties.

Two years ago our supporters were involved in a bitter dispute in the National Union of Students about the rights of people accused of harassment, rape or child abuse. We said (rightly, in my opinion) that although our attitude should be 100% supportive to the victim, the accused person should have the right to a fair trial.

But what should our attitude be when the reality of the justice system leads to further suffering on the part of the victim, or the creation of more victims?

A friend of mine recently moved to London, into a house converted into a number of bedsits. One of the other tenants, a Mr X, came back to the house one night at 2.30am and woke my friend and the other tenants by running round the house screaming and banging on the doors and walls.

My friend opened her door to find him naked and screaming "whore", "dirty slut", etc. at her. A male tenant called the police, who would do nothing.

In fact it turned out that Mr X had been released by the police earlier that day after a court appearance. Mr X is accused of harassing another female tenant, Ms Y, over a number of weeks, including similar scenes to the one my friend saw, following Ms Y to the bathroom and knocking at the door, throwing stones at the window, and finally pushing her down a flight of stairs.

After these alleged offences Ms Y left the house, and persuaded the police to prosecute Mr X.

Since his first court appearance Mr X's nocturnal shouting continued. He also began to harass two other female tenants, both young women, both overseas students without a network of friends and relatives to give them support.

All the tenants in the house tried to help each other. None of them wanted to move — the house was ideal except for Mr X.

But Mr X started following one of the foreign students around, calling her names, touching her and waiting and listening outside the

bathroom door while she was inside. She was too frightened of him to go to the police, even with the other tenants' support, so in desperation she moved into a student hostel, which she hates. The other student has nowhere else to go, so she's still trying to cope with Mr X.

My friend is also still there, not enjoying it, but as yet never having been directly harassed. She's looking round for somewhere else to live, and has her boyfriend to stay a lot.

The case between Ms Y and Mr X is still going on. The alleged offence occurred in December last year, and it doesn't come to trial until July or August 1990. Mr X has opted for a trial by jury and has been granted bail.

My friend and the other tenants want him out of the house. They have tried (unsuccessfully) to get the courts to revoke his bail, and are trying to get him evicted. Neither of the two foreign students who have been harassed dare appear in court as witnesses against him, and so the police will not act on these offences.

The shouting and banging are not enough to have Mr X arrested. Social services don't want to know.

From the tenants' point of view eviction seems the only solution. In the meantime they call the police

every time there is trouble, in the hope that Mr X will be arrested and lose his bail.

But Mr X has been convicted of no offence. In the eyes of the law he is innocent. In our eyes too he is entitled to due process before losing his liberty or his home.

Everyone involved in the case regards him as mentally unstable, so if he is evicted he will probably not find another room and, being homeless, be denied bail anyway. An innocent man will be put in prison, for an indeterminate period, when what he needs is help.

If Mr X is sick and needs help how much more help do the women he has harassed need? What have they done to be driven from their home? Without friends and family the remaining overseas student could well be made homeless if she decides she cannot stand the fear and harassment any longer.

This is a true story, not a hypothetical case. Three women, Ms Y and two young female overseas students are seriously and genuinely frightened for their safety.

My friend agrees with SO that everyone is entitled to a fair trial. But she has joined the other tenants in trying to get Mr X evicted, and/or imprisoned, although he has not had any trial at all.

What would you do?

Call to free Birmingham Six

By Neil Cobbett

About 150 people attended the Time To Go conference on 'Justice in the Nineties' on 12 May.

The aim of the conference was to link the role of the British state in Ireland with miscarriages of justice in Britain.

Speakers outlined the corruption of the legal system and how the situation has become worse as the law has been bent and misused to serve the needs of the state for the war in Ireland. In cases like the Birmingham Six, Guildford 4 and Winchester 3 scapegoats were convicted unjustly because the main objective of the police and courts was to apprehend, convict and equate terrorist crimes with "the Irish problem".

A parallel was drawn with the

conviction of the Broadwater 3 for the murder of PC Blakelock on uncorroborated "confession" evidence denied by the defendants.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act is used as a means, or excuse, for intelligence gathering and to generally harass and intimidate Irish people in Britain.

There was an on-going debate during the day, from the floor, between those who hold that "British justice" is inherently corrupt and hence that "miscarriage of justice" is the wrong term to use, and other speakers who argued, rightly in my opinion, that formal rules of justice, however limited their real grip in a class society, are important.

The only way of exposing the true nature of the miscarriages of justice and the interests they serve is to take them up, go through the evidence, and see how cases have been consciously cooked up.

A chance to unite the Labour left

Martin Thomas previews the 'Labour Party Socialists' conference on 19-20 May

The 'Labour Party Socialists' conference this coming weekend, 19-20 May, should be one of the biggest conferences of the Labour left for some years.

It could be the launchpad for an effective rank-and-file network of the left in the Labour Party — a link-up for individual activists which complements the coordination of constituency delegates through the 'Constituency Labour Parties Conference'.

Labour Party Socialists, like the CLPs Conference, is an offshoot of the Socialist Conference held under Tony Benn's auspices in Chesterfield and Sheffield and of the Socialist Movement. The idea was initiated by *Labour Briefing* people at the 1989 Socialist Conference. An attempt by *Labour Briefing* to launch Labour Party Socialists at Labour Party Conference in October 1989 was bungled, but it should be up and going after this weekend's conference.

- Elect a broad committee
- Build links with all strands of the Labour left
- Build "Labour Against the Poll Tax"
- Fight for Labour democracy, against the witch-hunts
- Build a socialist alternative to Stalinism; support the new socialist groups in Eastern Europe
- Back the "Campaign for Free Trade Unions"

The conference will elect a 59-member steering committee. Policy issues will be debated, but decisions referred to an AGM later in the year.

Although the left is, and will probably continue for a while to come, much weaker in the Labour Party than we were in the early '80s, there are still many left-wingers doing good work in the Party. The heavy odds against us, and the political isolation or marginalisation many left-wingers suffer in their localities, makes national coordination more difficult, but also valuable.

Labour Party Socialists can provide a forum and link-ups for left Labour activists on several fronts.

Poll Tax: Labour Against the Poll Tax groups have been set up in Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester, and most recently in Nottingham. Labour Party Socialists should support and spread such initiatives. It should back the conference on the Poll Tax and Labour democracy called by the CLPs Conference for 16 June in London.

Strike support: Labour Party Socialists should work with the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee to support strikes. The moves made towards the end of the

ambulance workers' dispute for a conference of support groups is an example of what can be done.

Trade union rights: Labour Party Socialists should support, and provide a Labour Party wing for, the recently-launched 'Campaign for Free Trade Unions'.

At Labour Party Conference 1989 a composite calling for a comprehensive Workers' Charter which would codify the right to organise, to strike and to picket gathered some 20 CLPs behind it, and won two and a quarter million votes.

Since then the Labour Party leaders have continued to commit themselves to upholding more and more Tory restrictions. Last October Michael Meacher promised the Tories that Labour would keep strikes by other workers in support of health service staff banned. Most recently education front-bencher Derek Fatchett declared that a Labour Government would make a national strike by teachers against job cuts unlawful just as it is under the Tories.

The North-West regional Labour Party conference at the end of March backed the call for a Workers' Charter. Now the 'Campaign for Free Trade Unions' launched by 33 trade union leaders, round a shorter four-point charter, greatly strengthens the prospects for a successful challenge at this year's Labour Party conference. The unions whose general secretaries have already backed the Campaign command between them 2.5 million out of 5.5 million trade union votes at Labour Party Conference.

International solidarity: Labour Party Socialists should work with international solidarity campaigns. Especially important now is practical, material support for the new socialist and free trade union groups in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Labour Party Socialists should work with the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc.

Labour Party democracy: Labour Party Socialists should work with the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and the CLPs Conference to defend the right of CLPs to re-select MPs and to take part directly in Labour Party decision-making at Annual Conference.

Labour Party Socialists should also provide coordination for battles against the continuing witch-hunts, especially, at present, the "investigations" instigated by Frank Field into Wirral Labour Parties and into *Socialist Organiser*.

Reviewing policy: Labour Party Socialists should organise conferences, day schools, discussions and brain-trusts to help Labour's left develop alternatives to the pro-market, pro-capitalist direction of the Labour Party.

Much can be done. To do it, Labour Party Socialists must avoid being wrecked by the factional conflicts which have dogged Labour's left in the years of depression since the miners' defeat and ruined other attempts to establish rank-and-file left networks.

Political and ideological dif-



Labour activists must link up with the poll tax campaigns. Photo: Mark Salman

ferences on the left are inevitable: debate on them is healthy and need not hinder joint work where there is agreement. But the Labour left today is polarised into two camps.

On one side stand those orienting to the Socialist Movement and the broad scheme of developing a new left based as much on activities outside the Labour Party as on those within it. On the other stand those orienting more to Labour Left Liaison and the construction of an alliance of pressure groups for detailed and tenacious battles within the Labour Party.

Socialist Organiser has argued that there are one-sided reactions to defeat on both sides of this divide, and that the polarisation has made arguments unnecessarily bitter and one-sided.

On the face of it, the Socialist Movement camp is obviously right. For new forces the left must look to fresh struggles. With some versions of the so-called "twin track" strategy, only the most hidebound fetishist of resolution-passing, committee-coaxing, and Labour Party internal routine could disagree.

In the latest issue of *Labour Briefing*, for example, Bryn Griffiths defines the "twin track" strategy as to do with "how Poll Tax Unions have been used to recruit to the Labour Party" and socialists "raising non-payment as Council candidate[s] in the local elections." *Socialist Organiser* has argued for exactly this approach (under the rubric "Back to Basics!").

But on closer examination there is sense to some of the objections from Labour Left Liaison. Other advocates of the "twin track" mean something quite different from Bryn Griffiths. For many in the Socialist Movement, the "twin track" is a half-way house built of wishful thinking. It is a way of avoiding both the hard grind of fighting against the odds in the Labour Party and the rigours of the SWP's sectarian project of building an "alternative party".

The idea, instead, is to hang around somewhere in the middle, gather a broad "movement" including people in the Labour Party, people in the SWP, people in the Green Party, and people in nothing much at all, and hope the party problems will come out in the wash.

The cost of this approach is loss of focus — loss of any idea of where to apply leverage for campaigns, and which direction to push. That's why the Socialist Movement can get big conferences (2000 people or more), but little campaigning results. That's why the Socialist Movement wing of the left had almost no impact at last year's

Labour Party Conference, apart from some good work round the lesbian and gay rights motion, while the Labour Left Liaison wing was far more effective.

The incoherence in the Socialist Movement is reproduced in *Briefing/Socialist Outlook*, the particular faction which initiated Labour Party Socialists. *Labour Briefing* was launched as a breakaway from *Socialist Organiser* in 1980 round the project of getting as many left-wingers as possible selected as Labour candidates for the Greater London Council elections of 1981. The line was to push left-wingers of any sort, and leave the detailed politics to be sorted out later.

What happened "later" was that the machine-politics left wing fell apart and betrayed its promises under fire from the Tories. The same thing happened in Islington and other Labour councils targeted by *Briefing*. The policy of focusing on "power" and dismissing "abstract" ideological issues brought defeat and demoralisation.

Undaunted by experience, one wing of *Briefing/Socialist Outlook* still pursues the same tack, codified in *Labour Briefing's* masthead slogan "Labour Take the Power!" They are as devoted to internal Labour Party machinations as the hottest partisan of Labour Left Liaison could wish, indeed more so than is good for anyone's mental health.

"It is important that the conference should not allow Labour Party Socialists to become a pseudopod of Briefing/Socialist Outlook. The committee should include a broad range of views."

Another wing of *Briefing/Socialist Outlook* sees hope neither in Labour "power" politics nor in the more outward-looking Labour Party orientation advocated by Bryn Griffiths. They look instead to the Greens. In the National Union of Students, for example, they vote for the Greens and the SWP in preference to Labour.

Here the "twin tracks" are not like walking on both legs, or flying with both wings, but rather divergent directions which never meet.

Labour Party Socialists must not fall foul of this incoherence. It cannot heal the divisions in the Labour left all at once, but it should avoid being boxed in as an opponent to Labour Left Liaison. It should keep lines open, especially, to the Cam-

paign for Labour Party Democracy.

It is important that the conference should not allow Labour Party Socialists to become a pseudopod of *Briefing/Socialist Outlook*. The committee to be elected should include a broad range of views.

Briefing/Socialist Outlook sometimes pretends that it is a broad movement in and of itself, with no more ado, but the conference should not accept that pretence — reflected, for example, in the questionnaire distributed for conference delegates, which asks them to record affiliation to *Labour Briefing* as a species of "involvement in a local left caucus", whereas other political affiliations are to be recorded separately. *Labour Briefing* does have contributors outside its hard core (just as *Socialist Organiser* does), but that hard core, *Outlook*, despite its big political incoherences, is organisationally as tight and narrow as any of the Labour left factions are, its supporters probably less numerous than SO's.

Although policy decisions are to be referred to the AGM, debate on at least two contentious issues within Labour Party Socialists will be started at the weekend's conference.

Some comrades from *Briefing/Socialist Outlook* propose that Labour Party Socialists should launch a "Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory" for the coming general election, modelled on the one which was associated with *Socialist Organiser* in 1978-9. Imitation, so it's said, is the sincerest form of flattery.

Cold calculation, however, suggests that the use of the same rubric in the different conditions of today would bring very limited response from today's depressed Labour left, and a ferocious witch hunt from the Labour leadership. It would be better to look for different ways of getting a voice for socialism in the election campaign.

The other debate is on the trade union block vote. Some comrades propose that we should favour abolishing it, and replacing it with a voice for the trade unions in the Labour Party at local level. Others (rightly, we think) say that such a move would weaken the labour movement and divert from the necessary fight for democracy in the trade unions.

Labour Party Socialists Conference
Registration 9am-11am
Saturday 19 May.
Sheffield Poly Student Union, Pond Street.

Constituency Labour Parties Conference
Fighting the Poll Tax and the witch-hunt
Saturday 16 June
11.30-4.30
Red Rose Labour Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road,
London N7 (tube: Finsbury Park)
Credentials for delegates and observers:
£5 from the CLPs Conference, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey,
Merseyside L44 8BG

South Korea's workers fight back

Workers and students are on the streets again in South Korea, fighting for democracy. Colin Foster reports

Big recent strikes at the Hyundai shipyard in Ulsan and at the state TV company have been broken up by tens of thousands of riot police.

Workers in Hyundai's car division have voted to strike for better pay and conditions, only days after returning to work from a strike in sympathy with the shipyard workers.

100,000 students and workers demonstrated in the capital, Seoul, on 10 May, and 1100 were arrested. More big demonstrations are planned for this Friday, 18 May, the tenth anniversary of a people's rising in the city of Kwangju which was bloodily crushed by the army. There is additional pressure on

the government from economic difficulties. South Korea's exports, which have grown at a dizzying rate for decades, are stagnating. The stock market has recently crashed.

South Korea's dictatorial regime declared itself democratic after the great strikes and demonstrations of July-September 1987. Elections for president were held in December 1987, and for parliament in April 1988.

Although Roh Tae Woo, the choice of the military and a former general himself, won the presidential election, parties opposed to Roh won a majority in parliament.

2000 new trade unions were formed in the summer and autumn of 1987. Strike activity has continued to be high since then. Wage improvements have been won; work weeks, still among the longest in the world, have been cut.

But South Korea remains viciously repressed. In January this year President Roh solved his problem with the parliamentary opposition by engineering a merger between his political party and two of the main opposition parties. He hopes to construct an effective one-party state round the new party, the

grotesquely named Democratic Liberal Party, on the model of the domination enjoyed for decades by the "Liberal Democratic Party" in Japan.

State restrictions on trade unions remain tight. Trade unions can only be formed for single workplaces (which is why the expansion of trade unionism in 1987 took the form of so many new unions being created); more than one union in a workplace is illegal; and it is effectively impossible to organise outside the tame Korean Federation of Trade Unions.

A militant "Korean Alliance of Genuine Trade Unions" was launched at an illegal conference of 500 delegates in January, but 136 of its leaders were immediately arrested.

Riot cops by the tens of thousands break up strikes and workplace occupations. Bosses organised "Save-the-Company squads" of thugs to terrorise the shop floor.

The dreaded secret police, the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, remains active; only its name has changed (to "Agency for National Security Planning"). The press is closely censored. People

under 40 require special permission to travel abroad. At least 1000 political prisoners are in jail.

The workers' struggle is not only about democracy (the Hyundai shipyard strike was about victimisation of union leaders, the TV workers' strike about imposition of a new boss), but also about control over the fruits of their labour.

Wages, though high by Third World standards, are low compared to the huge profits of Korean big business. And South Korean workers suffer terrible housing shortages.

Whole working-class families routinely live in one or two small rooms. South Korea has only 78 houses or flats for every 100 households, and the ratio is decreasing, while London, with all its housing problems, has over 100 houses or flats to 100 households.

South Korean workers have found that the promises given to them by their rulers in 1987 were largely hollow, and they are back in action to demand their rights. The hectic success of South Korean capitalism has created its own gravedigger, a young, militant, numerous, skilled and educated working class.

How South Korea became an industrial power

When US troops seized the country at the end of World War II, it was miserably poor, shattered badly by war and the previous decades of brutal Japanese colonialism.

Five per cent of farm households owned or managed 60% of the land; 57% of households owned less than 6%. There was virtually

no industry.

The American military government immediately distributed Japanese-owned land to the peasants, limited rents and gave tenants security. In 1950, anxious to create a social base for its war against revolutionary North Korea, the US pushed through a further land reform.

All large land-holdings were seiz-

ed with minimal compensation. The landlord class was in effect wiped out. In 1974, despite a trend in the meantime for large land-holdings to be reconstituted, 83% of the cultivated land was in smallholdings between 0.5 and 3 hectares.

The US saw the creation of a large class of commercial small farmers as their best way to build a social base for capitalism. And they were right. Moreover, US military might and lavish US aid made sure that the land reform was effective and successful: easy credit was available to the small farmers, especially from the 1960s.

This agricultural revolution was the basis for an industrial revolution. Manufacturing industry in South Korea grew 16% per year between 1960 and 1982. Manufactured exports were \$10 million in 1962 and \$19 billion in 1981.

Practically all South Korea's investment was financed by US aid and military contracts (especially during the Vietnam war). Nevertheless, South Korea has now reached a point where its industry worries US capitalists as a serious competitor.

It is not just a production platform for the multinationals. In fact foreign direct investment in South Korea is quite small — no more than 2% of the total capital. The government directly owns a greater share of industry than in the UK, and heavily controls the rest through its command over credit.

South Korea's growth (unlike that of some other 'newly industrialising countries' — Brazil, Mexico) has brought increases in real wages. Literacy has increased to 90-odd per cent, and education standards are higher than in Britain (life expectancy was 52 years in the

late '50s). The basis for this was the land reform, which by one estimate increased peasants' income by an average of 40%.

South Korea lacks the vast mass of paupers, driven from the land but unable to find steady jobs in the cities, which exists in most other Third World countries, even fast-developing ones. But it is a hell hole for the working class.

Its factories probably have the longest working hours in the world — 60 hours normally, often 80-odd, and that at an incredible pace. It has the highest industrial accident rate in manufacturing in the world, after Sri Lanka: in its huge Masan Free Trade Zone, one worker in five has a serious accident each year.

Before the great strike movement of 1987, the trade unions were extremely weak and kept under tight control by the dreaded Korean CIA. It was illegal to form new unions. Strikes were banned. According to the sober *Financial Times* (25.6.84): "There is a real climate of fear. In many cases union officials will consult the police before putting any grievance..."

Christian missions in the working class areas were smashed up by the police. Even the mildest forms of political opposition to the government were ferociously repressed.

Every citizen was registered with their fingerprints, in a central computer bank, and kept under watch by a government-organised neighbourhood surveillance scheme.

The condition of the working class in South Korea combined the suffering typical of early industrialism with those typical of modern, high-technology capitalism.



Students draped in South Korea of the US information office in S

A mode

Three things are necessary for national development in the Third World. All represent a radical break from the heritage of colonialism.

There must be a land reform, to release resources trapped by outdated methods of exploitation. A strong state machine must be constructed, capable of effectively enforcing the land reform and constructing the groundwork for late 20th century industry — education and health services for the working class, roads, airports, telephone systems, efficient administration.

The state itself will have to organise major industries like steel and the energy industries: no other unit will be big enough.

If the state is not strong enough to maintain a high rate of exploitation of the working class, then industry will not be able to compete on the world market against more



1987: the last time Korean workers fought back



The repressive state in the Third



Flags during the occupation
Seoul

For the Third World?

advanced capitalisms.

And, generally, a substantial flow of funds from abroad will be necessary to finance all this: otherwise the land reform will collapse back into a mass of poverty, with only a few rising capitalist farmers making good, and new industries will falter because of lack of infrastructure and balance-of-payments crises.

Colonialism imposed an alien state power on Third World countries; drained their wealth away to the metropolis, with minimal local investment in education and welfare or even in industry; and collaborated with archaic economic structures in the countryside. A radical reversal is necessary on all these three fronts.

Listing these conditions tells us why the development of the Third World has been so uneven and crisis-ridden, and why South Korea's development is not a model

for all other countries to follow at will and find capitalist prosperity.

To write a land reform law is easy, and almost every Third World state has done it. To enforce it against the opposition of the landowning classes is more difficult. Having enforced it, to provide sufficient resources to the new units — smallholdings, cooperatives, or state farms — so that they do not collapse in a spontaneous 'counter-reform' is more difficult still.

South Korea got its land reform — a ruthless and thorough land reform — as a paradoxical by-product of the US's war against Stalinist North Korea. It got huge amounts of aid and military contracts as a by-product of the US's war against Vietnam.

It got effective political independence — and effective political independence it certainly has had, despite some people on the left describing its regimes as "puppets" of the US — probably as a by-product of the success of the land reform and the Stalinist grimness of North Korea. After the Korean war, strong anti-Stalinist and anti-working class governments could find a solid social base in South Korea. They were dictatorial and repressive, but they were based on the better-off in South Korea, not on any foreign power.

The US did not need to intervene and make South Korea a semi-colony in order to safeguard its world-political interests. Nor would it have found it easy to intervene. The South Korea bourgeoisie, having thrown off Japanese rule, was not willing to tolerate American rule any longer than it had to. Allowing with the US on profitable terms was one thing; renouncing independence another.

South Korea's development is not unique. Most Third World countries have found independence and pushed their way out of colonial underdevelopment at least to some degree. A few have achieved industrial growth almost as dramatic. The idea that the countries are still "semi-colonies" or "neo-colonies", different only superficially from their colonial pasts, is a distorting myth.

But the capitalist way out of colonialism is a path of grinding repression, feverish exploitation, hugely uneven development, mass pauperism and vast inequality — a hellish combination of the evils suffered by working people in Europe from the 16th century through to the 20th, all compressed into a single bundle. South Korea's way has been luckier than Bangladesh's or Brazil's. It is no way for human beings to develop our world.

Could North Korea explode too?

With the fall of Ceausescu in Romania, and Albania's current cautious "glasnost", North Korea is now the probably the world's most vicious, regimented, closed-off Stalinist state.

Public life is dominated by a huge personality cult for dictator Kim Il Sung and his family. Every household — so travellers report — has to have a picture of Kim Il Sung

hanging on its walls, or else be visited by the secret police demanding to know why not.

Yet since the 1940s North Korea has also developed industry and a large working class — not as spectacularly as South Korea, but substantially nonetheless.

How much of what's happened in Eastern Europe, China and South Korea has filtered through to the North Korean workers we don't know. But North Korea's rulers, too, have an explosive charge at their feet.

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Don't wait for thinking!

By John O'Mahony

'Socialist Worker' is a good agitational paper, deliberately taking as its journalistic model the respect-worthy 1960s Daily Mirror, and turned out with an enviable professionalism.

It preaches fervent anti-Toryism, advocates direct action and denounces the foot-dragging Labour and trade union leaders, loudly ringing all the militant socialist hate-the-bosses emotional bells.

If that is all we need for working-class politics, then *Socialist Worker* is a great force for socialism.

It isn't, of course. It is a great force for spluttering m...m...militant incoherence and confusion.

You need not only to preach hate for the Tories and their Labour understudies. You must also know how to go about replacing them; you need to go from fervently advocating socialism to the working out of strategy and tactics for the labour movement. Loud militant shouting is common to socialists and anarchists and *intermittently* to large numbers of workers and other oppressed people during their battles with employers and governments. "Marxists" who are not the best militant fighters, in even limited working-class struggles, are a misunderstanding, a contradiction in terms. Even so, the irreplaceable contribution of Marxists to the class struggle is not militancy but... Marxism.

"This is advertising agency politics. The 'come on' on the front page is meant to catch the current mood generated by the anti-poll tax movement."

In Britain right now to shout against the Tories is, in Marxist political terms, very little. It is the other things — strategy and tactics and what you have to say to your readers about how they can achieve what they want, what you want to replace the Tories with, how you propose to deal with the fact that the working-class leaders are shamefully inadequate when not openly treacherous — it is those which are decisive.

Those, and not the anti-Toryism which it has in common stock with most of the left, define a newspaper, and tell you what it is, what role it is playing in the class struggle now.

It will also determine what happens to those reached and roused by the fervent anti-Tory and socialist agitation.

Last week's *Socialist Worker* had a poster front page. The vast headline read: "After the elections, FINISH THATCHER OFF". In the middle of the page was a big red spot with these words printed in black: "Don't wait for Labour".

The accompanying article had 59 (fifty-nine) words. [Devoted but hard-pressed *SO* reader: "I should be so lucky!" But before you welcome the quantity, wait to examine the political wit!]

I quote: "We don't need to wait for Kinnock to replace her. We can do that right away". "Step up the action, get the Tories out".

If your heart rises at this prospect, you will turn eagerly to page 3, where you will be told, in an editorial, "No holding back",

"What we need to do next".

What *do* we do to "replace Thatcher right away" without waiting for Kinnock? "Action" now, says *SW*. Don't pay the poll tax; don't collect it. Press for adequate wage demands, don't hold back for fear of losing Labour votes in the next General Election.

Yes, this is good stuff, which *SO* also says — and has said for longer and rather more consistently than *SW*, which for years has been paralysed by defeatism — but *how* do we "replace Thatcher right away"? The front page promised to tell me, I paid my 30p, and I want to know, please. But the answer isn't there. *SW* keeps its secret.

After a long and largely accurate survey of the timid inadequacy of the Labour and trade union leaders, who are in effect helping Thatcher to ride out the storm and blocking the potential of the anti-poll-tax campaign, we come to the real point, the idea that is specific to *SW*. Since Labour "provides a punch drunk, bewildered and divided Tory government with the only crumbs of comfort remaining to it [t]here could hardly be better proof of the need to build a fighting socialist party as an alternative to Labour". And guess which "fighting socialist party" that is.

Now, both *SW*'s articles might just pass muster as the hard-pressed speech of a fervent but inexperienced newcomer, saved from completely silly irrelevance by the practical proposals: fight back now and don't wait for Kinnock.

As the considered view of a supposedly Marxist paper and of the leadership of a self-proclaimed Marxist party they are a disgrace. And those articles are typical, not accidental. You come face to face with the heart and brain of the *SW*, the man with the wild poleaxed stare and talk which comes straight from the guts without filtering through a political mind.

In fact, the only way for the anti-poll-tax campaign and strikes to finish Thatcher off "without waiting for Kinnock" — that is, without a general election — would be if they grew into a vast general strike, and that in turn grew into a successful insurrection which pushed aside the existing state institutions and procedures and overrode them.

Even in a full-scale general strike, no serious class-struggle govern-

ment — and Thatcher's is a serious class-struggle government, and a Heseltine or Kinnock government would be too — would resign if it could not ride out the strike. It would call an election "to decide", calling in the credit which Parliament has with even most working-class militants, and rallying the forces of "law and order", which would no doubt include the leaders of Her Majesty's Opposition. That is how the 1968 general strike in France was derailed.

Yet if *SW* is serious, it would logically have to call for an all-out general strike now and start to make preparations for insurrection, at the very least start making propaganda for it (!). But all this is a thousand miles from the *SW*'s real politics: for a decade they have played the wet blanket in the labour movement. It took them six months after the start of the 1984-5 miners' strike to register what was going on, and get stuck in to serious solidarity work, so disoriented had they been by a long depressive political pessimism.

Have they now flipped over to the sort of wild-eyed ultra-leftism — journalistic ultra-leftism, anyway — characteristic of the old SLL-WRP? No, because they don't mean it!

This is advertising agency politics. The "come on" on the front page is meant to catch the current mood generated by the anti-poll-tax movement: once you get into the booth you find not the promised wonders — not that syndicalist miracle people have talked about for over a hundred years, but no-one has ever seen, and not even the call for a general strike — but just our old familiar and mundane friend, "Build the Revolutionary Party", posted up above the rear exit.

SW has always been very adept at adjusting its sails to catch the winds and moods. More than once in the early '70s it appeared with front page headline calls for a general strike *without any explanation at all in any part of the paper*. Yet it somehow managed *not* to call for a general strike at the point in July 1972 when quarter of a million workers struck at the jailing of five dockers by the Heath government and forced the TUC to call a one-day general strike, the threat of which got the dockers out of jail.

SW recognises no obligation to

think things through honestly. Indeed, the leaders of the *SWP* have been doing this sort of thing for so long that by now they simply wouldn't know how to start. They have excised a whole dimension from the working-class struggle they try to serve — the political dimension!

They *pretend* — and it is nothing but wilful pretence by now — that the political dimension, that is, *actually existing* politics, bourgeois and reformist, can be ignored. Or, no, they don't *ignore* it, because come the general election they will advocate a docile vote for Neil Kinnock, as they did for James Callaghan. They don't ignore it, they *pretend* that "real" socialist working-class politics develops apart from it, by way of pure direct action, socialist propaganda, and "building the party".

But that is to pretend that the working class can develop unilinearly, so to speak, outside of the social-political processes, or by running away from them. It is to pretend that the working class exists outside of, parallel to, bourgeois society, and not within it, organically immersed in it until by way of political self-awareness it can become a class for itself and remake society.

In practice, the *SWP* argues that the whole "official" political dimension is not the business of socialists, and that only direct action is — even though it is indisputable that Thatcher's government, using the governmental power in almost a Jacobin, or even Stalinist, social-engineering way, has massively affected the prospects for the sort of direct action that *SW* recognises as real working-class politics.

It is no less indisputable that even a right-wing Labour government now would change the social and political climate, and thus the prospects for industrial action. *SW* leaves it to the soft left and the right wing to deal with all that. For all its scornful denunciation of Neil Kinnock, the *SWP* has to relate to elections passively, like the most backward and least class-conscious people in the labour movement, *through and by way of* Neil Kinnock and his friends, entirely on their terms, having made not even an attempt to influence the Labour Party, the mass political party of the trade unions.

Resolutely ignoring electoral politics — until Thatcher or her successor imposes it on them — the *SWP* cannot make its agitation about toppling Thatcher concrete in the here and now, when talk of an all-out general strike and insurrection would be ridiculous, in the only remaining logical way: by campaigning and calling on the Labour Party to campaign for an immediate general election. They are left with a paper that talks attractive 1968 vintage gibberish, rightly encourages militancy, and has nothing to say about politics or how to kick the Tories out.

"At its heart is not so much an attitude to the Labour Party as an attitude to parliament which rejects the existing political institutions."

Much of the argument between *SW* and *SO* supporters centres around whether socialists should be in the Labour Party or not. We say yes, they say no. But that's not the basic dividing line.

It might be that it became impossible or hopelessly unprofitable for socialists to be in the Labour Party, even though it remained the mass workers' party. (Neither is true of the Labour Party now, despite the setbacks the left has had).

But suppose it is agreed that socialists shouldn't or can't be in the mass working-class party. Then one of two things. They ignore the existing organisations built over many decades by the working class, and go their own party-building way, in effect committing themselves to building a whole alternative labour movement and hoping that one day their "fighting socialist party" will supersede the old movement (absorbing or hegemonising parts of it, I sup-



'Join the SWP' is no adequate way forward

pose). Or else they continue to interact with the mass movement, advocating policies and strategies for it as a means of "exposing" the existing leaders. They recognise that the way forward cannot, on the experience of history so far, be by way of building up a largely independent new labour movement, but by way of shaking up and renovating sections of the old movement and reuniting the excluded socialists with them.

The latter way was the Comintern's strategy, leading to tactics like the United Front. The former was the policy of the so-called Council Communist faction of the early-'20s Communist International — Herman Gorter, Anton Pannekoek, Sylvia Pankhurst.

Embellished though it is with such contradictory opportunism as SW's calling for a vote for Labour and advocating membership in trade unions (while refusing, not so long ago, even to take shop steward positions), the Council-Communist idea is the only logical core of the SWP's political enterprise. And at its heart is not so much an attitude to the Labour Party as an attitude to parliament which — except for at general elections! — rejects the existing political institutions. Essentially what the SWP says about Labour derives from a neo-syndicalist attitude to parliament.

The Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci is today the unconsulted champion of the ex-Stalinist liberals, like *Marxism Today*. Jesus Christ, born according to the myth in a stable and a carpenter by trade, was yet the god of the super-rich for centuries; Lenin, who led the liberating workers' revolution of 1917, was yet the official icon of Stalin's despotic state — and Gramsci, the unbreakable revolutionary who spent the last ten years of his life in a fascist jail, is now the champion of neo-reformist faint-hearts and defeatists!

Gramsci is ours, not theirs. He wrote this about the politics of the SWP, with Italian syndicalists in mind.

Within the state, the propertied class forges its own discipline and unity, over and above the disputes and clashes of competition, in order to keep intact its privileged position in the supreme phase of competition itself: the class struggle for power, for pre-eminence in the leadership and ordering of society...

Some of the currents in the socialist and proletarian movement had emphasised trade-union organisation as the essential feature of the revolution, and directed their propaganda and activity accordingly. At one stage, the syndicalist movement appeared in the light of the true interpreter of Marxism, the true interpreter of reality...

Syndicalism, while presenting itself as the initiator of a "spontaneist", libertarian tradition, was in fact one of the many disguises of the Jacobin and abstract spirit...

The workers and peasants felt that, so long as the propertied class and the democratic-parliamentary state are dictating the laws of history, any attempt to remove oneself from the sphere of operation of these laws is inane and ridiculous.

There is no denying the fact that within the general configuration of an industrial society, each man can actively participate in affairs and modify his surroundings only to the extent that he operates as an individual and citizen, as a member of the democratic-parliamentary State. The liberal experience is not worthless and can only be transcended after it has been experienced.

The apoliticism of the apoliticals was merely a degeneration of politics: to reject the State and fight against it is just as much a political act as to take part in the general historical activity that is channelled into Parliament and the municipal councils, the popular institutions of the State.

The quality of the political act varies. The syndicalists worked outside of reality, and hence their politics were fun-

Socialist Worker

Inside
Abortion vote:
your questions
answered

South
Korea
erupts

Neither Washington nor Moscow but International Socialism

AFTER THE ELECTION

Finish Thatcher off

DON'T WAIT FOR LABOUR

THIS WEEK was Thatcher's worst ever, but next week will be worse. After the local elections comes the likelihood of official inflation topping 10 percent. Thatcher's policies are in ruins, her government in disarray. We don't need to wait for Kinnock to replace her. We can do that right away. Step up the action. Get Thatcher out. The Tories' time of reckoning—page 2. What we need to do next—page 3.



Socialist Worker

Inside

LITHUANIA
KREMLIN
CRACKS
DOWN

Tories want
Less
Money for
Schools

Neither Washington nor Moscow but International Socialism

VOTE LABOUR BUT...

Step up the fight

THE TORIES are determined to go ahead fighting. If however John Major says that he can't afford the poll tax, more people than ever will vote Labour. For 11 years, Thatcher has thought she could have it all her own way. Now that she is crying from the impact of the poll tax, she has a chance to be replaced by a Labour government.

The Tories will continue to dig in their heels and try to make us pay for their economic troubles. It's a fight they will lose. We should make sure they get one. Increase with a chance to vote. Labour should vote Labour. But that alone won't be enough. The only way to make sure that

they don't recover from their mistakes is to step up the fight. We need more people over the poll tax. We need Labour to fight within the Tory line on Labour issues. We need the biggest possible number of council workers and others, refusing to cooperate with the Tory tax. We need to build up the organ-

isation in every workplace so we can fight for the one thing that will make the Tories pay for their own errors. What has Labour got to offer?—page 3. Stop the Tory flagships—pages 4 & 5.

How do we finish Thatcher off? Action...plus...join the Socialist Workers Party? Or what?

damentally mistaken. On the other hand, the parliamentary socialists worked in close contact with events, and while they could make mistakes (and indeed they committed many mistakes, and grievous ones too), they made no mistake in the direction their activity took and so they triumphed in the "competition"; the broad masses, the people who objectively modify social relations through their intervention, favoured the Socialist Party.

Notwithstanding all its mistakes and shortcomings, the Party did succeed, in the final analysis, in accomplishing its mission: namely, to transform the proletariat into something whereas before it had been nothing, to give it an awareness, to point the liberation movement firmly and enthusiastically in the direction corresponding in its general lines to the process of historical development of human society.

The greatest error of the socialist movement was akin to that of the syndicalists. Participating in the general activity of human society within the State, the socialists forgot that their role had to be essentially one of criticism, of antithesis. Instead of mastering reality, they allowed themselves to be absorbed by it.

(*'The conquest of the state', Political Writings 1910-20, p.74-75*).

I'm not sneering at syndicalists, and neither was Gramsci. Nor, I hope, does SO have much in common with those like *Socialist Action* and some in *Briefing* who have always dismissed the SWP's proper concern with the industrial struggle as "syndicalism" while they devoted themselves to pernicious fantasies about some imaginary overseas workers' paradise and usually puerile get-rich-quick scenarios for Britain. Those people call us syndicalists, too.

The syndicalists before and during World War I were amongst the best people in the labour movement. They contributed a great deal to the early Communist International, which many of them joined, rising above their one-sidedness.

When a German Marxist, Paul Levi, dismissively lectured some syndicalists at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, sneering that they were wrong on things the Marxists had known for decades, Trotsky jumped to their defence.

"Today people are attracted to the neo-syndicalism of the SWP because they are repelled by the supine politics of the Labour Party leaders."

The syndicalists were a one-sided reaction against the political one-sidedness of the broader labour movement, and against its leadership of bureaucrats and careerists. Today people are attracted to the neo-syndicalism of the SWP because they are repelled by the supine politics of the Labour Party leaders.

The one-sidedness of syndicalism has always helped the Kinnocks and the Ramsey Macdonalds — even when, as in the case of the SWP, it makes socialist propaganda, invokes Lenin and Trotsky, and "builds the party" while standing aloof from the real working-class political movement.

And the leaders of the SWP are not revolutionary working-class

militants lacking political tempering and experience; they are people who take refuge in a semi-syndicalism from the problems of the working-class movement — people who know enough to say Vote Labour in elections to avoid the organisational consequences of their day by day and year by year denial that the working class should engage in politics, but unfortunately don't know enough to behave responsibly towards the class and avoid irresponsible gibberish like the SW front page I have quoted.

They are people who think that the history of the British labour movement ended when they formulated their present politics in response to the vile Wilson governments of the '60s. As late as 1966 an editorial in their paper could describe as a scab someone who stood against Labour in a by-election in Hull in protest against the Labour Government's support for the US war in Vietnam. Then they decided that Labour was finished.

Thereafter it has been a matter only of the enlightened ones explaining the all-saving idea to workers in struggle.

They are stuck in one-sided and incomplete and inadequate conclusions from the period around 1968, and have managed to learn nothing since then, despite the '70s, when industrial militancy of great scope and intensity returned a Labour government, and the '80s, when we did not advance from that because workers had learned from it, but got Thatcher and regression. The SWP leaders have learned nothing in 20 or 25 years!

The American socialist James P Cannon used to tell the story of the once vastly popular pre-World War One socialist paper *Appeal to Reason*, whose circulation at its height reached an astonishing quarter of a million. Because it con-

signed itself to — tremendously powerful — agitation around elementary socialism, it failed to keep readers or to develop those it kept into "cadres". Its effect was needlessly limited.

SW is "better", of course: it is "better" because of a classically "British" inconsistency. It "builds the party", and pulls people to the SWP, which educates them and gives them a general socialist culture, and sets them to work... selling SW.

But it is "worse", too: it counterposes itself to the existing labour movement. And its "build the party" element does not for long (for most of the labour movement, ever) contradict the *Appeal to Reason* effect: lots of people pass through the SWP and often those who stay in politics wind up on the soggy left of the Labour Party or further right. Having been taught that revolutionary politics is sectarian party-building and denunciation of Labour from outside, when they begin to see the inescapable need to relate to the political labour movement they drop revolutionary politics. That's what they were taught: either-or, either revolutionary politics or involvement in the political labour movement.

In fact, in neither phase do such people function as adequate Marxists.

When SO was launched in 1978 it was the organ of a very broad coalition, the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory. At one of the early open Editorial Board meetings I asked someone to go and talk politics to a very wet-seeming reformist.

I remember feeling pleased at that man's "contributions", or rather at his presence, because it showed how broad the reach of our campaign was... Yes, it turned out that he had been in the SWP. For seven years!

Life in a twilight zone

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Enemies — a love story', 'She Devil' and 'McCabe and Mrs Miller'

Enemies — a love story' is about four New York Jews, one man and three women, who managed to escape from the Nazis, but who yet remain prisoners of the past.

Herman Broder is the man; the three women are his wives.

Such a scenario seems tailor-made for comedy, but 'Enemies' is too sad for comedy, though some of Herman's predicaments have a kind of gallows humour.

During the war, Herman spent three years hidden from the Nazis in a hay loft. Yadwiga, a simple peasant girl and his family's former servant, hid him and fed him at great personal risk, and he married her and brought her to America out of gratitude, all the while thinking that his first wife, Tamara, had perished along with their children in the Holocaust.

Bored with Yadwiga's simple-mindedness and devotion, Herman also lives part time with Masha, a Russian survivor of the death camps. The volatile Masha is eager for anything; living on the edge emotionally is her way of proving

she survived.

Herman is awkwardly juggling these two, papering over his absences with lie upon lie, when Tamara reappears, seemingly risen from the dead. Though physically alive, Tamara died spiritually when her children died and she was thrown along with them into a ditch full of corpses. More gracious than the possessive Masha, Tamara cedes Herman to Yadwiga, and urges Herman to put his life in order.

But Herman is still emotionally in his hay loft; he has lived with external constraints so long that he has lost the knack of controlling himself. Like Masha, he can deny himself nothing; he's greedy for love, for sensation, to grab as much from life as he can — anything to blot out the past. He lurches from crisis to crisis, always sweating, always worrying, yet never resolving anything.

He fears he will be caught, he knows he should be punished, but he goes on, regardless, a man ruled by his heart, not his head. Like Tamara and Masha, who know they are only half alive, Herman lives in a twilight zone, guilty that he survived when so many perished, bereft of religious comfort, spiritually alienated from the people around him.

'Enemies' is about the Jews' impossible predicament — how to go on living in a world where the Holocaust was allowed to happen.

There's not much devilry in 'She-Devil'. Roseanne Barr, who plays the spurned wife, is too deadpan to be wicked; she seems to be playing



Roseanne Barr and Meryl Streep in 'She-Devil'

tongue in cheek. Meryl Streep, as the swathed-in-pink Barbara Cartland style romance writer, Mary Fisher, who snatches Roseanne's husband, is better; she camps it up and seems to be having a whale of a time.

But the film is limp. There's no real malevolence, no bite to it; nothing's really at stake, and the ending is feeble.

Fay Weldon's story, 'The life and loves of a she devil', had a dark twist in its tail. Through plastic surgery, the plain wife became a replica of the romance writer heroine. That said something about women's obsession with appearances and perfectionism.

But 'She-Devil' has been turned into an affirmative action, ugly-

beautiful, love-your-limitations fable, which totally changes the slant, and robs the story of its point. Far from being a she devil, Roseanne ends up contented and nobly forgiving. Hug? Where did all her rage and anger go?

I can only surmise that it fell through some of the holes in the script.

Robert Altman's 1960s' film 'McCabe and Mrs Miller' has been revived in a new print for audiences in London only.

Though frustrating in parts — it seems to have been shot through misty lenses, and the overlapping dialogue is often inaudible — it is a film that rewrites one of the myths of American history.

Set in the early years of the

American West, it's the story of McCabe, an ambitious, but not overly bright saloon owner and brothel keeper, who comes to grief at the hands of greedy men.

The Western frontier in movies has always been the home of solid American values, where good inevitably triumphs over evil. Not in this film. Big companies, eager for profits, are gobbling up the smaller entrepreneurs, and doing it ruthlessly. Those who won't sell out to them end up cold and dead. Might is right.

Like all the other big powers, America, the so-called land of the free, was built upon blood and exploitation. 'McCabe and Mrs Miller' shows us one example, and does it with style.

One nuclear problem solved?

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Whether or not nuclear power continues as an energy source, we are still faced with the problem of what to do with its waste products.

Highly radioactive spent fuel must be kept safely for thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of years until its radioactivity has

decayed to a safe level. On past performance, it is unlikely that any human society will survive that long. People living then may have no idea what nuclear waste is and our methods of disposal must take this into account.

Last year I summarised a talk given to Open University students by geologist and nuclear waste expert Dr Neil Chapman. He has recently enlarged on his research findings in an article in *New Scientist* (jointly with Ian McKinley of the Swiss Nuclear Waste Disposal Organisation).

In order to predict what will happen to waste buried now over the next thousands of years, geologists

have looked for evidence as to what has happened to similar natural substances in the past.

Astoundingly, it turns out there is an almost exact model for a nuclear reactor — a natural fission reactor deep in the rocks at Oklo in Gabon. Oklo's nuclear reactor consisted of a massive deposit of uranium established over 2000 million years ago. When the deposit was discovered in the '70s, geologists were surprised to find less of the U-235 isotope (the form used as fuel for nuclear power) than is usually found. Why was this?

Ordinary uranium (U-238) decays at a very slow rate, half disappearing every 4 billion years or so.

U-235 is less stable, half going every 700 million years. Counting back from the usual proportion of 0.7% U-235 now found, we can work out that 2000 million years ago the proportion of U-235 was some 3%, similar to that found in nuclear fuel.

This, coupled with the fact that the Oklo deposits are highly concentrated (50-70% uranium oxide), allowed a fission reaction to commence, going on over half a million years, producing much heat and radioactive waste. This used up much of the U-235, resulting in today's depleted levels.

Thus the Oklo rocks have contained the equivalent of spent nuclear fuel for 2 billion years. Many of the constituents, plutonium, neptunium and thorium, have stayed more or less where they were, despite the percolation of groundwater. However, other substances, such as the more soluble iodine and caesium or the radioactive gas radon, have been washed away or have escaped along cracks and fissures, not exactly encouraging news for those trying to find ways of containing nuclear waste.

But the rocks at Oklo are not necessarily those that one would choose to put nuclear waste in. In contrast are the rocks surrounding another massive uranium deposit at Cigar Lake in Saskatchewan, Canada. There a deposit containing up to 40% uranium oxide (14% on average), so concentrated that it may have to be mined by remote control to protect the miners from radiation, has lain for 1300 million years at a depth of 450 metres.

Incredibly, there is no sign at the surface of the presence of such a massive amount of radioactivity. Despite the water saturating the rocks, the groundwater and streams contain no traces of radioactivity. This is tremendously encouraging for those trying to model the behaviour of buried waste since the

rocks around the Cigar Lake deposit are similar to those proposed for the underground depositories.

Since it is further proposed to surround nuclear waste deposits with clay, evidence of how substances move through clay is also needed. This evidence has come from studies of sediments at the bottom of Loch Lomond. There, a layer containing uranium, radium, iodine and bromine was deposited 5000 years ago. None of these substances has moved far in that time, even though the latter two, by-products of nuclear fission, are highly soluble. It seems that the clay binds them in some way.

Further encouraging evidence comes from Morro do Ferro ("Hill of Iron") in Brazil, the most radioactive place in the world. On this hill, above 30000 tonnes of thorium (similar to plutonium), grow plants so radioactive that when placed next to photographic film they X-ray themselves! Six weeks on this hill would give a person the equivalent of a lifetime dose of natural radiation in Briatin. Nevertheless, the streams running through the hill leach out just 1 part per billion of this radioactivity, containing far less than permitted levels for drinking water in the US.

Lastly, archaeological evidence on the corrosion of iron (such as a 12 tonne hoard of Roman nails in Scotland that remains partly intact after 2 thousand years) suggests that the steel containers of radioactive waste would not leak for a thousand years.

So the evidence is accumulating that radioactive waste can be stored for thousands or even millions of years without contributing significantly to the background of radiation that we all have to live with. Though the debate about nuclear power continues, it seems it is possible (though expensive) to deal with one of its major problems.

Luigi Nono, 29 Jan 1924-8 May 1990

An obituary by Steven Holt

Luigi Nono was one of the generation of composers who attempted to rebuild music on the ruins of the Second World War in Europe.

In opposition to Stockhausen and Boulez, Nono's music confronted audiences with the political issues of the day, from a revolutionary socialist point of view.

His first work to be widely played was *Il Canto Sospeso* (The suspended song) for voices and orchestra, setting the texts of letters written in Nazi concentration camps by captured Resistance fighters. His first staged work, *Intolleranza 1960* (Intolerance) presented images of racism and concentration camps and the need to build a new social order. Its first performance in Venice was marked by street fighting between students supporting Nono and fascist mobs trying to stop the performance.

Throughout the 1960s Nono worked

on music for electronic tape, singers and actors, to enable his works to be performed in factories and other unconventional venues.

The works from this period included *A floresta è jovem e cheia de vida* (The forest is young and full of life) which concerns the struggle against American imperialism in Vietnam. This work ends with a taped quote from a demonstrating student in America: "Is this all we can do?" Nono implies that we can do a lot more.

The early seventies saw a second large staged work, *Al gran sole carico d'Amore* (A great sun full of love) celebrating the Paris Commune and the orchestral, choral and electronic *Ein Gespenst...* setting the beginning of the Communist Manifesto.

Nono wrote relatively little in the late seventies, and in the last ten years of his life became involved with the use of live electronic processes to transform vocal and instrumental sounds and to position them in space. The works of this final period included *Quando stanno morendo*, about the terrible history of Poland in our century, and his third major staged work, *Prometeo*, a collaboration

with the philosopher Massimo Cacciari.

These later works were all written with the creative participation of the performers and should be seen as collaborative works.

Nono's life was filled with involvement in the world, from his participation in the factory struggles in the 1950s and 1960s to his collaboration in artistic work with the painter Emilio Vedova and the Trotskyist dramatist Peter Weiss. All his music shows rigorousness, the physical impact of sound and an expressive intensity.

Of his generation in music, only Iannis Xenakis shares these qualities.

Nono was deeply involved in Spanish and German culture as well as that of his native Italy. He travelled extensively in Eastern Europe and South America, and eventually settled in West Berlin. His music was most frequently performed in Germany, where Nono's work has been influential on such diverse composers as Helmut Lachenmann, Dieter Schnebel and Nikolaus A Huber.

Nono's music was not played often in Britain, probably because of its ability to confront audiences with political issues.

Bro. Kinnock's favourite union rights

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

It doesn't seem so very long ago that the mere suggestion of Labour defeating the Tories and Neil Kinnock moving into 10 Downing Street, would produce hoots of derisive laughter in saloon bars up and down the land.

Now, Labour's victory at the next election is virtually taken for granted in many quarters and the "serious" press is full of interviews with John Smith and speculation about Labour's economic policy.

It's no surprise, then, that the thorny old question of Labour's relationship with the unions is coming to the fore once again. It is the common wisdom of both Walworth Road and Congress House that the image of Labour as a party in thrall to the unions has been largely responsible for their trouncing in three general elections since the 1978 "Winter of Discontent".

One of Kinnock's key projects has been to dispell this image. So, while John Smith oozes round the City and Wall Street, assuring the assembled parasites that they have nothing to fear, Kinnock has been bending over backwards to appear to distance himself from the unions and to reduce obvious union influence over the party's policy-making. This does not mean, however, that the historic links between Labour and the unions have been broken — far from it. It's just that the partnership is now a rather less equal one and the form it takes is more secretive and bureaucratic.

John Edmonds of the GMB has long been the "brains" behind the re-shaping

of the Labour/union relationships. Edmonds, like Kinnock, wants the union block vote at Labour conference whittled down and eventually removed altogether, to be replaced by one-member-one-vote.

Edmonds has also been a prime mover in downgrading the TUC-Labour Liaison Committee as the central power-broking forum between the party and the unions.

This body used to meet monthly but has not met for nearly a year. It has effectively been replaced by a secretive "contact group" made up of selected union bureaucrats and members of the Shadow Cabinet. The "contact group" is much more to Kinnock's liking, excluding as it does NEC lefties like Benn and some of the more recalcitrant bureaucrats like Ken Gill. The members of the union side are Normal Willis (TUC), Bill Jordan (AEU), Ron Todd (TGWU), Rodney Bickerstaffe (NUPE), Brenda Dean (SOGAT) and — of course — our old friend "Brains" Edmonds.

The contact group has already endorsed the broad outlines of Labour's economic policy, in which membership of the European Monetary System plays a vital role. Now, the technicalities of the exchange rate mechanism may not seem a terribly exciting subject for trade unionists (or anyone else, come to that) but from it flows all manner of wondrous new policies — like public sector pay restraint imposed through strict cash limits on nationalised industries. Membership of the EMS is also being used as an excuse to drop Labour's commitment to full employment. Having been endorsed by the "contact group", these policies went through the TUC general council more or less on the nod.

So far, Edmonds, Jordan and the TUC "right" who support Kinnock down the line, have been making all the running. But what of the "left" and, in particular, Ron Todd?

The leader of the TGWU is in a very strange situation: he ought to be Kinnock's closest confidant on the union side (not only is the T&G the largest union in the country, but it can also count Bro. Kinnock amongst its members) but in practice Todd's voice is more or less disregarded as Labour's economic and industrial policy takes shape.

Not that Todd (or any other "left" bureaucrat) has actually put up much of a fight on economic policy, mainly because the mainstream "left" simply doesn't have a coherent alternative these days (the old "Alternative Economic Strategy" based upon import controls and a siege economy having long since been dumped by all but the most die-hard Stalinists).

On one issue, however, the TUC "left" looks like taking some sort of stand: trade union rights. The Labour leadership has long made it plain that they have no intention of repealing very much of the Tories anti-union legislation. A paper prepared by employment spokesman Tony Blair (and endorsed by most of the "contact group") spells out Labour's policy towards the unions: a specialist court headed by a High Court judge sitting with assessors from "both sides" of industry, will have the power to fine unions engaged in "unlawful" action and enforce damages; existing law requiring ballots before strikes and for union elections will remain; "secondary" there action will be permitted only where there is a "direct interest" of an "occupational or professional nature". The new court will interpret these principles and build up case law.

This cuts right across the policy of the TGWU, whose biennial delegate conference has repeatedly demanded the repeal of all Tory legislation and the restoration of immunities. Similar policies are also held by MSF, NUPE, NALGO, NUR, ASLEF and several smaller unions.

The first sign of a counter-attack by the "left" was the launch on 1 May of

the "Campaign for Free Trade Unions" sponsored by 33 big-wigs including Todd, Bickerstaffe, Ken Gill (MSF), Tony Dubbins (NGA) and Derek Fullick (ASLEF). The campaign's charter includes the right to belong to a union and to be recognised for collective bargaining, the right to strike, to picket effectively and to take solidarity action. In line with International Labour Organisation conventions, it also calls for the right of union members to determine their own rules.

How seriously the likes of Todd and Bickerstaffe take this initiative is open to question. It was noticeable that none of the big guns were present at the official launch of the campaign, leaving it to relatively minor leaders from NUCPS and FTAT. And within a few days of the launch, Todd was publicly offering the Labour leadership a compromise on the issue of pre-strike ballots, whereby a Labour government would allow ballots to ratify action after it had started in the case of "genuinely spontaneous" walkouts over, for instance, victimisations.

A further complication is added by the attitude of the Stalinists who still hold sway in a few unions, notably MSF: they seem to be opposed to any talk of "positive rights" for unions, preferring to concentrate upon demanding the repeal of existing legislation and the full restoration of immunities. The *Morning Star* (which, despite its declining influence, is still a fairly accurate barometer of how the Stalinist element of the bureaucracy is thinking) carried an extraordinarily sectarian editorial attacking the campaign on the day of its launch.

Despite these problems, the campaign is the first sign of life from the official "left" of the movement in a long while. And, whatever the motives of some of the campaign's signatories, they've chosen the right issue on which to take a stand. At last.

Right wins in CPSA

By Mike Grayson

The Civil and Public Servants Association (CPSA) has been called the "Beirut of the trade union movement".

Unfortunately, no hostages have been released. The 1990 annual conference (14-18 May) seems set to continue the bloodletting tradition.

CPSA is the largest of the civil service unions, organising mainly clerical grades, and is presently run by a viciously "red-hunting" right wing. At the same time, the union has Britain's biggest Broad Left grouping — dominated by supporters of Militant.

The resulting clash of ideologies produces a heady brew at conference. By the end of the week many delegates feel that they've just done 15 rounds with Mike Tyson.

The Broad Left suffered a setback when the election results were announced in the DHSS section: traditionally the strongest area of militancy in the union. For the third year running, the Section Executive Committee will be in the hands of an alliance between the traditional right wing and "BL'84" (Kinnockites, Stalinists, careerists in suits).

However, the Section Conference itself was still dominated by the Broad Left, who were able to win almost all of the policy debates. It is widely anticipated that, when the national election results are announced later in the week, the right wing will retain their control over the Executive.

At the time of writing, most of the major debates are still to be heard. On Monday's debate over the 1990 pay offer of 8%, the left failed to win a motion critical of the right's handling of the issue by only 3 votes. Whether this will set the tone for the coming week remains to be seen.

Boost for Agencies fight

By Steve Battlemuch

The largest fringe meeting in the first days of CPSA conference was the 'Branches Against Agencies' (BAA) meeting on Monday lunchtime.

Over 200 packed into the meeting to discuss how to fight the Tories' plans to break up the civil service into Executive Agencies (semi-privatisation).

The BAA campaign is unique in CPSA because it is based on branches, not just a group of individuals. Over 70 branches took part in the BAA Conference in February — and many more signed up to support BAA at the fringe meeting.

The mood and theme of the meeting was that the campaign must continue and intensify its activities.

With the right wing set to be re-elected we can expect no campaign to be led from the top.

Therefore the BAA campaign seeks to bring together all those concerned branches to exchange information and plan for the industrial action which is needed to beat Agencies.

Engineers campaign

The engineering unions' campaign for a shorter working week entered a new phase this week.

Strikes began at Lucas (Aerospace) plants in Willesden and Wolverhampton.

So far employers in the aerospace industry, British Aerospace, Rolls Royce and Lucas have tended to adopt a harder line in negotiations on a shorter working week than have other engineering bosses.

So a decisive breakthrough with no strings could really tip the balance in this battle.

The campaign is more likely to win real concessions if the pressure on all engineering bosses is stepped up. The Confed leaders should call a one-day national engineering strike as the first step of national action for the national claim.

Mistakes torpedo anti-poll tax stance

By Tony Dale

Manchester NALGO Housing Stewards voted on Thursday 10 May to drop their policy of non-cooperation with poll tax collection at Housing offices.

A majority of Housing offices and sections were unwilling to take industrial action if any member was disciplined for refusing to cooperate with poll tax work, so the Stewards Committee had no option but to retreat. However, the setback could have been avoided.

By refusing to back the dispute the NALGO branch officers undermined Housing workers' opposition. The Branch Secretary issued a circular condemning the NALGO Housing position. Branch and District officials refused to listen to requests for an official ballot.

Mistakes were also made by sections of the left on the stewards committee. The SWP argued for Housing workers not to cooperate with the poll tax purely on the basis of the principle of 'Don't

Pay, Don't Collect'. They argued that Manchester Housing workers should not collect because no council worker should collect the poll tax.

This position was always going to be difficult to hold the line on once the Council-wide NALGO branch meeting voted down the 'Don't Pay, Don't Collect' position.

A strategy was needed to link opposition to the poll tax with a campaign around service and condition issues eg regrading and staffing levels. By relating to the day-to-day concerns of Housing workers a real fight would have been possible.

Socialist Organiser supporters proposed such a strategy.

The SWP argued against linking opposition to the poll tax to service and conditions demands.

The crunch came when workers faced the threat of disciplinary action. Only a minority of sections and offices were willing to take industrial action.

Despite this setback the battle around the poll tax is not over. Inadequate staffing levels, poor office accommodation and low pay will spark disputes over poll tax implementation.

Railworkers defend negotiating rights

"We had a strike a year ago not just about wages but about national negotiating rights."

"We won that, but management here are ignoring it. That's what this dispute is about."

Guards at Manchester's Piccadilly railway station are on strike following the imposition without agreement of new work rosters. Guards voted on Sunday 13 May to continue existing working from Monday 14th, when the new rosters were to be imposed.

One guard explained: "When we came into work we were stood spare (told not to work), then on Monday night two guards were sent home for refusing to work new rosters and so we came out on strike."

The guards plan a mass meeting for Wednesday 16th, and have approached NUR head office for a ballot to make their action official. Another strike commented: "I am confident. There are only two or three gone in out of 230 of us — we're solid."

The strike comes against a background of British Rail bosses' attempts to erode national negotiating

rights for the rail unions. The roster imposed by the management at Piccadilly demanded guards work in excess of the nationally agreed 312 hours in 12 weeks, when staff shortage through savings prevented rostering within agreement.

The Piccadilly strike is significant for all railworkers.

IN BRIEF

A tube strike is looking less likely this year after the NUR union executive decided not to hold an immediate ballot on strike action after rejecting management's 9.3% offer.

Aslef and TSSA have already accepted the deal. NUR General Secretary Jimmy Knapp has been hinting very strongly that the London Transport sub-committee of the NUR should accept the deal. Meanwhile senior supervisors for Travellers Fare have been given a 2.2% wage increase.

According to a survey sponsored by the Inland Revenue Staff Federation, VDUs are bad for your health. VDU users are less satisfied with their jobs than non-users, mainly because of 'stagnation' — a group of pressures which include lack of intellectual stimulation, autonomy, variety and promotion prospects.

Menstrual disorders were linked to high stress levels associated with VDU users.

Negotiators representing some 600,000 building workers have rejected a 9.5% wage offer. This is the first time since 1972 that negotiations have not been concluded in a single session. A battle could be in prospect.

The UDM have agreed to work flexible six-day shifts at the new Asfordby mine under construction in Leicestershire.

Scrap the Tories, not swap them!

WHETTON'S WEEK A miner's diary

Speculation about the Tory leadership goes on and on and on.

But whoever is leading the Tory Party, there will still be hardline Tories at the back who are determined to put an end to basic trade union rights and to privatise everything in sight.

And we get little answer from the Labour Party leaders, because all

they can do is take cheap swipes at the Tories instead of really getting stuck in putting their weight behind the anti-poll tax campaign.

Everybody seems to be considering will she, won't she — whether Mrs Thatcher will go or be pushed. That is not what people ought to be debating. They ought to be debating what's happening to the trade unions and what's happening to the low paid and all the rest of it.

The Coal Board has recently announced a three year agreement with the power generating companies.

They are going to supply a certain amount of coal for that three years, for a guaranteed price. That price doesn't go up. In three years' time

they'll have to be supplying the same amount of coal as they're supplying now at today's prices.

There can only be one possible way that the Coal Board can do that, and that's to have less miners producing the same amount of coal a damn sight cheaper. It means we're in for (a) a lot more pit closures; and (b) a lower rate of wage rises over the next two or three years.

So I'm not surprised about any of the strokes that they pull in any of the coalfields in order to get rid of miners. The latest attack in South Wales seems to be just another in the long line, with the end not even in sight.

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

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Chinese students forced underground ...in Britain

30 Chinese students who have been refused asylum in Britain, have been forced to go underground to avoid immigration officials seeking to deport them.

They had been stopped in transit on their way to Canada, where originally they had wanted to claim asylum.

These are victims of Deng's repression. They are fleeing the bloodbath of Tiananmen Square. And the British government, which

shed so many crocodile tears for the Chinese students, wants to send them back.

Back to what? What do Thatcher's Home Office think happens to dissident Chinese students who have tried to escape? Deng Xiaoping isn't going to throw a party to welcome them back, is he?

In fact, like hundreds of students who had dared to fight the butchers of Beijing, these students could face death.

Their deportation would be tantamount to their state murder.

In the United States, leaked documents have shown a deliberate campaign by the Chinese government to harass Chinese students there. There are 42,000 Chinese students in the USA, most of them critical of the government. According to documents revealed by Xu Lin, a former employee of the Chinese embassy, the Chinese government planned a "dirty tricks" campaign, and hoped to manipulate US public opinion through the staged release of political prisoners in China.

The document stated: "To strike

Teachers strike over sackings

From front page

Increased government funding any victory will simply mean passing on the cuts to other workers, we must mobilise to enact that part of conference policy which called for national strike action.

This will not be easy, but we must persuade teachers that even one redundancy this year will make it easier for heads and governors to implement as many as they like next year, when, with the removal of the poll tax safety net, many more potential cuts are likely.

The leadership will also try to use the issue of legality to stop so-called secondary action. However, their argument is even weaker now than it was at conference.

Then McAvoy said that action outside individual schools threatened with redundancy would be secondary. But the action committee has already sanctioned action throughout Barnsley and Notts, and presumably will agree to action in Bradford and all the other places affected in the near future. Yet not all schools in Notts are affected by redundancy. So who are the employers, Mr McAvoy?

It is by no means clear then that national action will be breaking the law. The leadership knows this. The only point in bringing up this issue in the first place was to frighten the membership and turn them against any action.

In any case, with the government in deep economic trouble, massively unpopular and facing a widespread revolt against the poll tax, there is little chance of even this supposed law being used against us. Why, they were not even used against striking workers in the much more clear cut case of the ambulance dispute.

The leadership is totally bamboozled by the issue of legality. They have a new legal ruling every day to fit in with their bankrupt policies. But we need to be clear in our determination to extend the action

nationally if required and then begin to campaign alongside other school based workers to increase education funding.

Links with other local authority workers could well be the key element in the redundancy dispute, NALGO may well be in action over pay this summer, and other pay claims are in the pipeline.

Even more significant could be the anti-poll tax campaign, which is sure to intensify in the coming weeks. It's important that teachers recognise that the success of the non-payment/non-collection campaign could play an important role in forcing the government to back down on a whole range of planned cut-backs — teacher redundancies being just one example.

So, the message is clear. We must spread and intensify the action as quickly as possible and develop strategic links with all the existing campaigns against government policies.

Finally, the Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union must build for the Jobs and Salaries Conference on 7 July in Nottingham, which has the potential to draw together all the forces capable of extending the current action.

Supported by Nottinghamshire Division NUT

An open conference on the Campaign to Defend Jobs and Salaries

Saturday 7 July 11.00am — 4.00pm

Forest Comprehensive School, Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham

Individuals £3 (donations invited)
For more information contact Liam Conway, 34 Church Drive, Carrington, Nottingham

Support the demonstrators in Bucharest!

Romania's president Iliescu has threatened to clear anti-government demonstrators — "hooligans",

he calls them — from the streets of Bucharest by force.

Romania's Stalinist bureaucracy, substantially independent from Moscow since the '60s, has shown more resilience than the satrap regimes of other East European countries.

It took bloodshed on the streets to get rid of the dictator Ceausescu. Then the overthrow of Ceausescu was not the overthrow of the bureaucracy: Ceausescu fell because the entire officer corps of the army and a substantial number of leaders or recent ex-leaders of the Stalinist party turned against him.

The new leadership, the National Salvation Front, say that the old Stalinist party has been dissolved and that they are taking Romania towards a market economy. But they maintain a mighty political machine and a near-monopoly over Romania's press and TV.

Partly by the resources at their disposal, and partly, it seems, by genuine support won by judicious reforms, the National Salvation Front are set to sweep the board in this week's elections. The main opposition parties are not only harassed but unattractive, revivals of pre-World War 2 reactionary parties.

The demonstrators in Bucharest don't have a clear alternative, either. Their demand is for Communist Party people or ex-Communists to be banned from the elections; in effect, they're asking a Stalinist government to outlaw Stalinism. Yet the gist of what they want is clear: a country thoroughly cleansed from Stalinism and bureaucratic dictatorship, a country genuinely ruled by the people.

They deserve our solidarity.



the ringleaders, we must give them a bad name."

The British government "condemned" the massacre in Tiananmen Square, which happened almost a year ago, last June 4. But they have continued to suck up to the Chinese government. The profits of British bosses who invest in China are more important to them than the lives of Chinese students.

There should be a massive outcry against this barbaric and inhuman treatment of these refugees from Deng's repression. Far from deporting them, Britain should be declaring that refugee students are welcome to come here.

The Labour Party should make a clear stand: Thatcher has shown whose side she is on, and it is, quite clearly, that of the Chinese rulers. The Labour Party must stand foursquare with the Chinese democracy movement. Let the Chinese students stay!

A policy for the lunch tables of the City

Maybe you're a teacher, wrestling with stagnant wages, repeated rounds of cuts, and the threat now of the sack.

You'll be thrilled by Neil Kinnock's new policy document. It promises stern control over public sector wages and reassures us that "secondary" industrial action — for example, by teachers nationally in support of teachers sacked in a particular area — will stay unlawful.

Or perhaps you're unemployed, miserable because of eroded welfare benefits and the Poll Tax.

Neil Kinnock has promises for you, too. A Kinnock government would keep public spending under strict control. There could be no question of splashing out on big increases in benefits, or spending substantially on public works which would generate useful jobs.

No. After all, the centrepiece of the jewel, the diamond cutting edge of Neil Kinnock's socialist economics is now British entry into the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the EC. And surely everyone can understand that rules out fuddy-duddy old-style cloth-cap generosity to the poor.

Then possibly you're a worker in an industry which has been privatised or is about to be privatised, weary of speed-up, exploitation and job threats from your profit-hungry boss.

The post-modern Labour Party has words for you. A Kinnock government will buy two per cent of the shares in British Telecom to create a majority (51%) govern-

ment shareholding. That's a caring socialist policy, quite different from the brutal and vicious Thatcherism of a 49 per cent government stake.

It will also establish government control over the electricity grid. Not the power generating companies, not the power supply companies, but just the grid.

And if you're a trade unionist? How old-fashioned! Neil Kinnock's line for you is that Tory restrictions on solidarity action and pickets will be "streamlined".

As Hugo Young put it in the *Guardian*, "Labour's fondest wish is to be regarded as the party which will make Britain safe for capitalism."

It's not just that Labour's leaders commit themselves to managing capitalism. They've always done that. But at times in the past they've promised to manage capitalism for the workers, in the workers' interests. Now the main promises are to manage capitalism in the capitalists' interest. Hugo Young again: "What has been the point of Mr Smith's journeys round the lunch-tables of the City, if not to convince them that they have nothing to fear?"

It makes no sense for vote-catching, because John Smith's City lunch companions are still going to vote Tory. And probably even John Smith and Neil Kinnock will scrape around for some bits of policy to highlight which seem more pro-worker come election time. But for the present their priority is to convince the bosses and bankers that they are respectable, responsi-

ble, modern capitalist politicians.

Over the past ten years the Tories have ruthlessly plundered billions of pounds from the poor and handed it to the rich. The victims of that plunder beg on the streets, wait in the dole queues, and struggle with low wages and Poll Tax.

To restore those billions would not be a radical or socialist policy. Whack the taxes back on the rich, and pay out the money in welfare to the majority, that's all: it would not overturn capitalism.

But Neil Kinnock will not even promise that much. Even reversing the shift in the balance of wealth and power effected by the Tories, restoring the status quo, is too much for him to contemplate.

The new policy document, due to go to the National Executive this month, emerged from the usual process of democratic decision-making Kinnock-style. There was a kitchen cabal, with the kitchen fire no doubt fuelled by burning volumes of Labour Party conference decisions. Then the policy was announced to the working class and the labour movement through the now customary channel of a leak to the *Guardian*.

At Labour conference this October, Neil Kinnock hopes to buttress and safeguard this sort of policy-making by making Conference secondary to a new "policy council" and removing the right of Constituency Labour Parties to put proposals direct to conference. He has shown us what sort of policy he wants to make and protect through such a mechanism. All the more reason for Labour activists to rally to defend our democratic rights.

Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc PICKET

Hands off Lithuania!

Protest about the Soviet Union's policy of bullying Lithuania
Picket the Soviet Consulate (Corner of Bayswater Road and Kensington Palace Gardens — tubes: Queensway, Notting Hill Gate)

6.00 — 7.00

Wednesday 16 May

Model motions and petitions available from CSWEB, 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5