


Benn says: stop the purge!
page 4



Yugoslavia's war




Branka Magas interviewed
centre pages

For socialist renewal!



For workers' liberty!

USSR: the truth after 70 years
page 3



Tories plan new anti-union laws
John McIlroy reports
page 5



SOCIALIST

Behind the BCCI scandal

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Daily Mail

CAPITALISM

PAGES

...A SUPER SUZUKI SAMURAI: PAGE 24

Former bosses of crashed bank face £3billion charges

BIGGEST FRAUD IN THE WORLD

From DAVID WARD in New York

TWO former bosses of BCCI were charged with master

DESERT RAT SAID HE WAS LEAVING

Rejected

U.S. trip for Gulf

Nationalise the banks under workers' control!

Capitalism: the biggest fraud

Bank scandal exposes the casino economy

Already the estimates of fraud at BCCI are at least £5 billion. What started out as "complex fraud" has become a story of bribery, drug money laundering, terrorism, and murder.

The scandal reaches right into the heart of the American and British political systems. Already the US Democrats, the CIA and especially George Bush's nominee as head of the CIA, Rodney Gates, have been implicated in the web of bribery and criminal activity.

In Britain John Major says he couldn't be expected to know anything about the bank because he was only the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It is now clear that MI5 had known about BCCI's connections with terrorism since at least 1985. They had access to the banking records of both the Abu Nidal group and the Hezbollah who operated accounts holding tens of millions of pounds.

There are many questions yet to be answered and

all of them are embarrassing for the Tories.

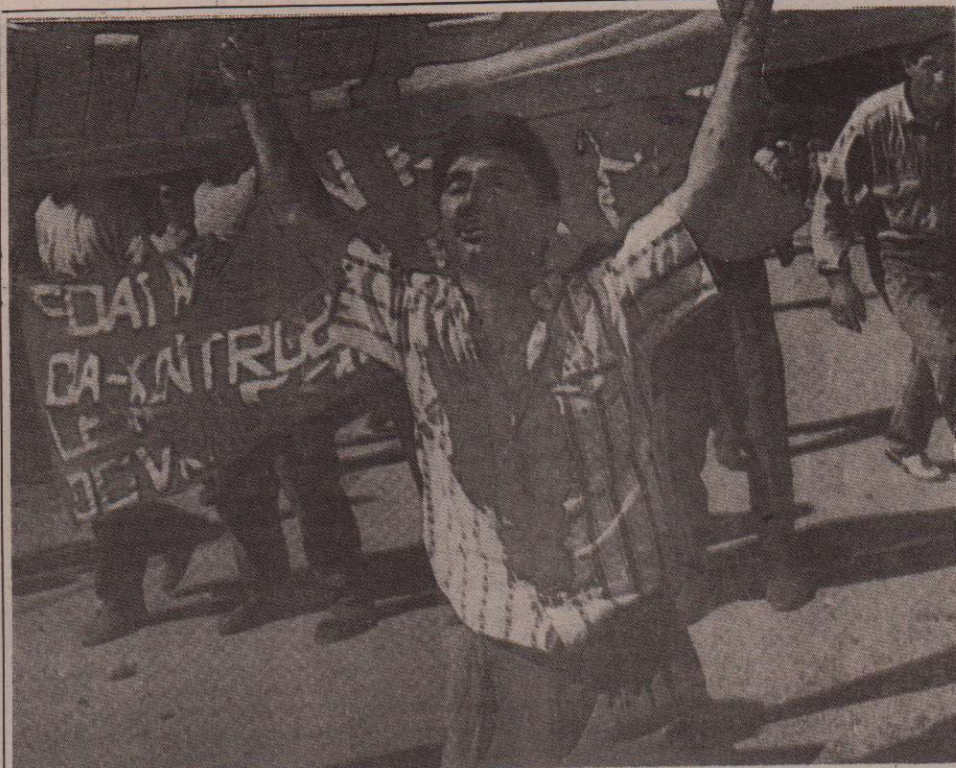
But they are looking worse for capitalism.

The 1980s saw a rush to deregulate financial systems around the world — a rush which has resulted in the spectacular crashes of the American Savings and Loans, the fraud associated with Ivan Boesky and Michael Milken, the 1987 stock market crash and, now, BCCI.

Deregulation has been an expensive experiment that has hit workers and pensioners hardest — the people who have invested their pay, savings and retirement funds with institutions that were supposed to be honest.

It is more obvious than ever that the finance system is corrupt and unreformable. In the immediate term, the BCCI workers, local authorities and small business people should be compensated.

But, most importantly, Labour should commit itself to the nationalisation of the banks.



Even while Bush and Major pledge military protection for Kurds in Iraq, they ignore Turkish supporters of the Kurds. These Kurdish mourners were gunned down by Turkish troops at the funeral two weeks ago of Vedat Aydin, a Kurdish activist whose tortured body was found dumped after he had been seized from his home in Diyarbakir

(south-east Turkey), by men claiming to be security police.

Turkish prime minister Mesut Yilmaz insisted that there would be "no compromise on Turkish unity". Dozens of people have since been killed by the army around Diyarbakir.

Labour will debate trade union rights

By Cate Murphy

Trade union rights will be a major issue of debate at this year's Labour Party conference, to be held in Brighton from 29 September to 4 October.

The 36 motions on the issue make it one of the biggest sections of the agenda. A motion from the Union of Communications Workers supports the Labour leaders' current line of keeping most of the Tory laws against trade union action (and especially against solidarity action); but most Constituency Labour Parties demand a stronger commitment to trade union rights.

Eight motions call for a

Workers' Charter guaranteeing the right to unionise, to strike, to picket, and to take solidarity action, and another nine are along similar lines. Other motions focus on health and safety at work and the minimum wage.

A vigorous campaign by some sections of the left to defend "first past the post" against the 1990 Labour Conference's decision to consider electoral reform has had little impact. Only 3 motions defend "first past the post", and 17 back electoral reform.

The conference will see strong challenges to Neil Kinnock's drive to make Labour a bland, monolithic, one-faction party.

At the 1990 conference the National Executive proposed to abolish mandatory reselection of Labour MPs (by re-

quiring a "trigger" vote before any selection contest) and the Constituency Labour Parties' direct input to Conference. Conference voted against the "trigger" and was promised that changes to Conference would be postponed until after the General Election.

This year the Executive is again pushing to scrap mandatory reselection (and the trade union delegate vote in selection contests, too). Six motions oppose the "trigger" and seven insist on direct input from Constituency Labour Parties to Conference.

Three motions — due, hopefully, to be backed up by a number of amendments — oppose the increasingly Stalinist system of discipline in the Party.

National Party, who stood a candidate in the election. A successful labour movement rally organised by Southwark NALGO against the fascists was left alone by the BNP, who only got 100-odd votes in the election.

Unless Southwark Council refuses to implement Tory cuts and stops attacking its own workers the Brunswick ward result will be repeated.

Anti-racists in Nottingham

By Steve Battlemuch and Samina Kauser

Repeated attacks on the mosque. Asian shop windows broken. Leafletting and stickers from the National Front. A stabbing as a result of which a black youth was hospitalised.

Cause for concern? Not for the Notts police. Or, so it seems, the County Council Police Committee. Despite many requests

for police action, nothing has been done.

Local Muslim leaders have called for a public inquiry into the local police station.

Every house in the area — Forest Fields, Nottingham — has been leafleted, a 200-strong public meeting has been held and an anti-racist action group — has been established.

Over the next few weeks local music and community festivals will be leafleted to build for a demonstration on Sunday 18 August.

Gorbachev tries to save the assets

By Tony Brown

Mikhail Gorbachev's new party programme, unveiled at the plenary meeting of the CP Central Committee, last week is designed to split the party.

Gorbachev's previous dilemma of whether to stay a member of the Soviet CP or get out has been resolved. He now intends to stay in and force the hardliners grouped around the military and the Soyuz group of parliamentarians out.

It was only last April at the last Central Committee plenum that Gorbachev threatened to resign in response to the right's calls for his dismissal. Three months later he has adopted the strategy used by the Hungarians who announced a new programme, new party and forced the old hardliners out. Much of their motivation was the commitment to holding onto the assets that the CP has acquired over the years.

The Soviet CP's wealth is much greater and Gorbachev and his supporters are reluctant to give it up.

Of the 412 members at the plenum, 358 voted for the draft to be put to a special Congress in either November or December.

This doesn't represent overwhelming support for the draft but rather that the hardliners want time to water it down or gut it before the Congress meets.

Poll Tax

Jailed for not paying

Soroosh Ayendeh has become the first person from Nottinghamshire to be jailed for non-payment of the poll tax.

Rushcliffe council (Tory dominated; MP Kenneth Clark) took Soroosh to court on Thursday 18 July, and the magistrate did the rest — a maximum three-month sentence.

Soroosh has been a leading activist in the Rushcliffe Against the Poll Tax campaign. He has devoted the last 18 months of his life to

the struggle, always willing to travel to new areas to speak and help set up new groups.

A local march is being planned for 3 August.

The National Union of Students executive is doing the Tories' dirty work for them by deducting the poll tax from the wages of its staff.

This week NUS gave over £180 from a staff member's wage packet to the Tory-controlled Wandsworth Council.

Last Thursday a long-held Labour seat went to the Liberals in Brunswick ward, Peckham, South London, in a council by-election.

The defeat comes in the wake of massive cuts in services by the right-wing-led Labour council. Recently the council has cut the wages of school cleaners

from £4.90 per hour to £3.10 per hour and torn up their national agreements.

The council is also failing to move quickly to end a contract with Aviss Heating, who have sacked ex-council workers, and are believed to have been involved in a number of breaches of contract.

Peckham Labour Party also refused to involve itself in fighting the racist scum British

Big Brother is watching

Is your phone tapped? Is someone watching your computer screen? Is Telecom intercepting your fax or telex messages? According to last Monday's *World In Action*, the answer is likely to be yes in all three cases.

Interviewing ex-GCHQ, MI5 and MI6 employees, some of a very high rank, the programme found that government intelligence services will go to almost any lengths to find out the information it wants, including breaking the law.

GCHQ, where trade union membership is bann-

ed, is only supposed to intercept communications between Britain and other countries. But *World In Action* found evidence that people in Britain are now routinely watched by GCHQ.

Telecom, which is authorised by government to tap individual phones, etc. needs a warrant before it can tap your phone. Yet the number of Telecom employees working in this field greatly exceeds the number required for these official tappings. It's therefore highly likely that Telecom, egged on by British intelligence, is illegally tapping the phones of innumerable British citizens.

The lie machine



The Mirror gave the Royals a break and went instead for high-paid fat cats. Perhaps they will soon be campaigning for the renationalisation of BT?

At least they acknowledged Australia's increasing dominance of world sport.



The Star got very carried away comparing King John's Magna Carta, which gave away some of the King's powers, to John Major's Citizens' Charter, which pledges fewer witches' hats on the roads.



This one stopped me. Why did Norma do it? Who was the rival? Could there really be a rival?

Fortunately I was able to read the whole article on the stand while I fumbled for my 25p and quickly realised that it wasn't who we were all supposed to believe it was.

No, it was an Army major not a PM Major. Clever aren't they these headline writers; must have caused a real chuckle.

I wonder how the Majors felt! Still, that's the market and a free press I guess.

Truth after 70 years

Everyone knows what Mark Twain said on reading his own obituary in a newspaper: "Reports of my death have been slightly exaggerated".

If Marx or Lenin could comment on the news today, they would say that reports of the death of Marxism and Leninism in the CPSU are greatly retarded — nearly 70 years behind the time!

The organisation of gangsters and confidence tricksters which calls itself "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (CPSU) has just decided to break with "Marxism", "Leninism" and "communism".

Leninism is not dead — on the contrary, the collapse of Stalinism will give it a new lease of life — but Marxism and Leninism have been dead in the CPSU for almost as long as Lenin himself has been dead.

"The Bolshevik leader Lenin, who died when Stalinism was in its infancy, knew more about Stalin's true relationship to Bolshevism than the capitalist press does now."

Like light reaching earth from a distant star, the obituaries to communism in the CPSU called forth in the Western press by last week's decision of the Gorbachevites are way behind the times!

The Bolshevik leader Lenin, who died when Stalinism was in its infancy, knew more about Stalin's true relationship to Bolshevism than the capitalist press does now! Struck down by a series of strokes and paralysed for the last year of his life (he died in January 1924), Lenin fought Stalin from his deathbed.

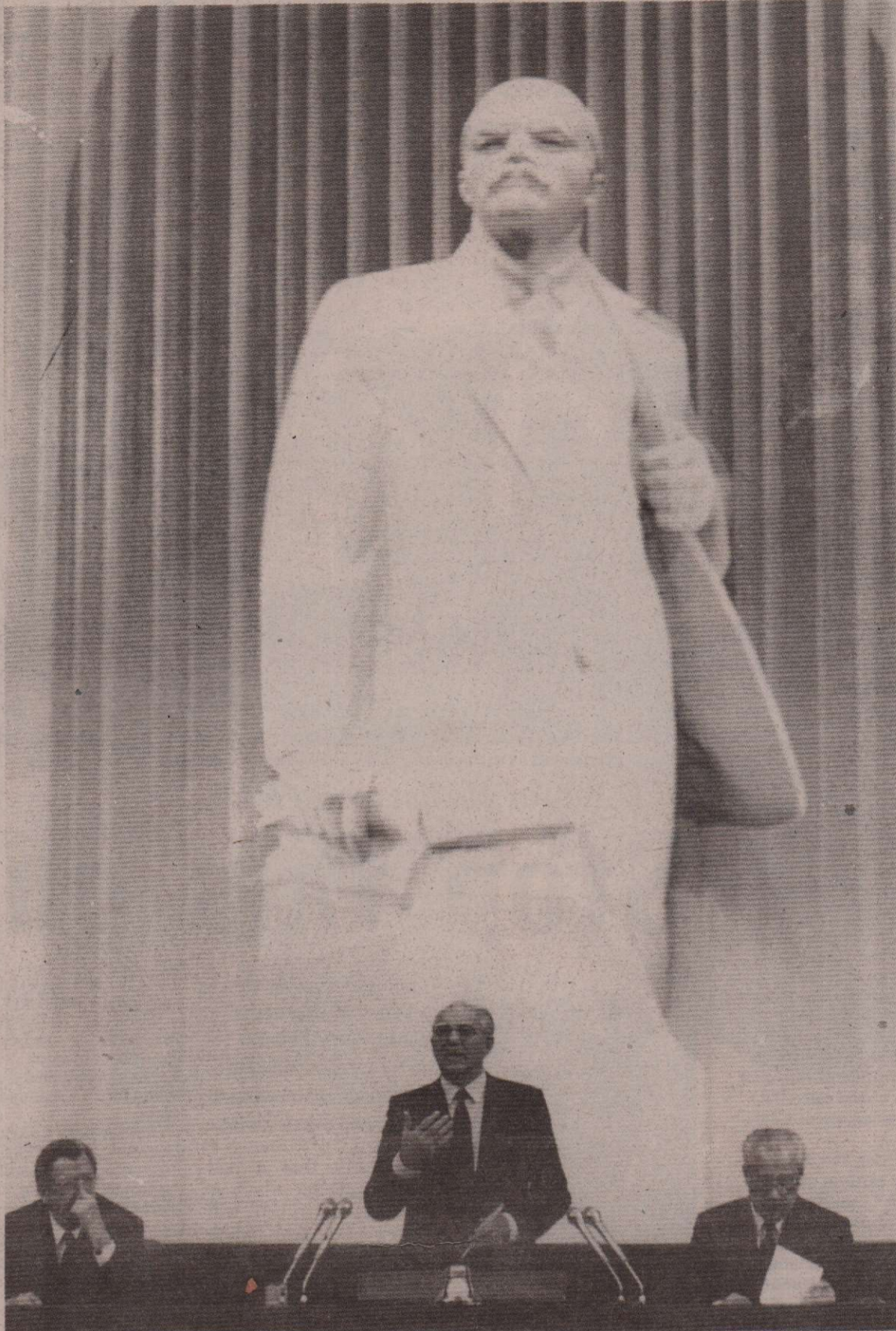
He tried to organise the removal of the rising dictator from all positions of power. He championed the rights of the working class and the oppressed nations against the bureaucracy which Stalin led and personified, and which was to go on calling itself "Leninist" for seven decades after Lenin's death.

But conditions in the Soviet Union were greatly unfavourable to everything both Lenin and the revolution he had led stood for.

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Gorbachev is not Lenin's heir

Socialism was not possible in the Soviet Union, which was very backward, and half-wrecked by civil war and by the invading armies of 14 capitalist countries, including Britain, sent in after 1918 to crush the workers' government.

The Bolshevik workers knew that in 1917. They thought the workers in German, France, Italy and Britain would overthrow their bosses and that the advanced countries would create a socialist united state of Europe together with the Russians. But the workers in the West were beaten. Capitalism survived.

Amidst the backward areas of the Soviet Union a new bureaucratic ruling class formed itself from the state officials and administrators. They were already reaching for power as Lenin lay dying. After his death they got complete control.

They flooded Lenin's organisation with careerists immediately after his death, and used the careerists as a battering ram within the Communist Party against the working class and against the real communists. These were led by Leon Trotsky, who, with Lenin,

had led the October Revolution in 1917.

The "Trotskyists" were finally defeated and sent to jails and concentration camps in 1927 and after. In the 1930s they, and many millions of others, were slaughtered.

"Lenin's widow and comrade Krupskaya said in 1926 that if Lenin had lived they would have had to jail or kill him."

Because Lenin was dead, the Stalinist rulers, who were becoming a new privileged ruling class, could call themselves "Leninists". They could denounce the real Leninists, the "Trotskyists", as anti-Leninists. If Lenin had lived they would have had to jail and kill him.

They expropriated the workers politically, and made the state property not social property but the property of the bureaucratic ruling class who made the state power their own, and made it vast and all-powerful, with Stalin on top as Caesar.

The Stalinists were against both the ruling classes of countries like Britain, and against the working class, too.

They made what they called "Leninism", bits and shreds, and phrases from the working class ideas of 1917, into their world outlook, their ideology.

But they had *nothing* in common with Leninism or communism, or Marxism. Nowhere on earth — except perhaps in Nazi Germany — were the ideas of old fashioned Marxist socialism, and the bearers of those ideas, so savagely persecuted as they were for six and a half decades in the USSR.

Now, admitting their bankruptcy, the present Caesar, Gorbachev, and his top bureaucrats want to restore capitalism. So they shed their "Leninist" ideology. (And organisations like the *Marxism Today* group in Britain follow after them).

This is good news for socialists. When the rulers of the Soviet Union stop calling themselves Leninists and socialists, then a source of immense confusion is removed.

For decades the pretence that the savagely anti-working class regime in the USSR was socialist destroyed the credibility of socialism as the liberating force it started out to be and must be again. For decades after his death, the socialist Lenin was held in a grotesque posthumous captivity by those who had destroyed the revolution he led.

"The lying capitalist press will go on identifying Stalinism with Bolshevism. Gorbachev's repudiation of socialism will make it harder for them. Now the truth is coming out: and the truth is setting socialists free."

The lying capitalist press will go on identifying Stalinism with Bolshevism, go on identifying bureaucratic Stalinist horror with the ideas of socialist liberation. Gorbachev's repudiation of socialism will make it harder for them.

Now the truth is coming out: and the truth is setting socialists free.

"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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More manoeuvrings in the T&G

The recent TGWU Biennial Delegate Conference was an agreeably somnolent affair. The union's long-running left vs right internal battle had been settled (for the time being, at least) with the election of Bill Morris.

Potentially controversial resolutions (policy on mergers, the Liverpool sackings, the National Economic Assessment, etc) were glossed over with skillful ambiguity from the leadership. Waiting for Kinnock seemed to be the order of the day. For a while, an unaccustomed peace seemed to have fallen over the T&G.

It couldn't last, of course. Morris's election as General Secretary may have subdued the union's hard right, but it opened up a whole new can of worms within the Broad Left: who is to be Deputy General Secretary? The union's Public Services Secretary, Jack Dromey, seemed the obvious candidate. Obvious, that is, to himself.

Dromey had a press release announcing his intention to stand all ready for the BDC. There was only one problem: everyone, left, right and centre, in the union hates his guts. The main reason for this is Dromey's shameless careerism.

As well as his union ambitions, Dromey has cultivated a close personal relationship with Neil Kinnock that should, one day, ensure him a safe Labour seat and even a place in a Kinnock cabinet alongside spouse Harriet Harman. A sort of "twin track" approach to careerism, in fact.

The prospect of a Deputy General Secretary in Neil Kinnock's pocket was too much even for the T&G Broad Left, who rebuffed the stylishly-bearded Dromey in favour of Automotive Secretary Jack Adams. One thing Adams cannot be accused of is careerism.

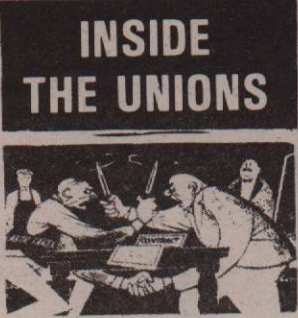
For one thing, he is 60 years old. For another, he is a member of the (Euro) Communist Party/"Democratic Left". This latter fact makes Adams particularly attractive to the (*Morning Star*) Communist Party of Britain people who are influential in the Broad Left: they have high hopes of recruiting the remnants of the CP's industrial base.

So Adams, a competent negotiator and a man of some integrity, is to be the Broad Left's official candidate. After some hesitation, Dromey decided to put a brave face on things and withdraw from the election. He may well now have his beady eye on the position of Assistant General Secretary, which has become vacant since Bill Morris "persuaded" the notoriously incompetent Eddie Haigh to "resign".

Meanwhile, the London-based *Morning Star* Broad Lefters have been moving heaven and earth to give Adams a clear run as the official "left" candidate. In particular, no effort has been spared to prevent the Region 6 (Merseyside and Manchester) organiser Eddie Roberts, a good old-fashioned Bennite, from standing. Stories have even appeared in that well-known labour movement publication, the *Sun*, accusing Roberts of being a *Militant* supporter...

All this may seem a bit arcane to readers who are not T&G members. Actually it is pretty arcane as far as most rank and file T&G members are concerned. But the question of who wins the second-in-command position in Britain's biggest union is of relevance to all trade unionists — especially given the prospect of a Kinnock government.

Morris plus Dromey would have been a pushover for Kinnock. Morris plus Adams possibly won't be. But, of course, it's all going on completely behind the backs of the poor, bemused rank and file.



By Sleeper

At a 40-strong meeting on Monday 29 July, Labour activists in Sheffield set up a broad "Stop the Witch-Hunt" campaign.

SO supporter Nof Ttofias is under threat in Brightside constituency. And at its GC

meeting on 26 July Central constituency reaffirmed plans to "investigate the presence of SO".

A motion to stop the "investigation" was defeated 15 to 25, with the right wing boosted by the

presence of many previously inactive delegates who had been lined up with the story that SO opposes winning a Labour government!

The GC went on to elect SO supporter Ruth Cockcroft unanimously as women's of-

ficer. "Some of our best CLP officers are SO supporters, but..."!

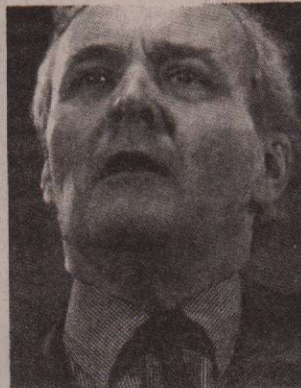
The fight will continue to stop this counter-productive purge and focus Sheffield Labour on defeating the Tories.



Arthur Scargill speaks at protest outside Walton jail in support of Terry Fields MP

NEC target Nellist and Fields

Stop this purge!



Tony Benn has written to Larry Whitty, the Labour Party General Secretary, condemning the moves against Dave Nellist and Terry Fields

I am sorry that a bad attack of flu, which is keeping me in bed, will prevent me from attending tomorrow's NEC.

I wish, as the longest serving member of the NEC, and as its most senior former Chairman, to register my strongest objection to the proposed disciplinary action against Terry Fields and Dave Nellist.

They are both sincere, conscientious, hard-working and effective Labour Members of Parliament, devoted to the interests of their constituents and of the party itself, and very widely respected by people of all political opinions.

Everyone in the party should now be concentrating upon the general election campaign and preparing for the responsibilities of office which we hope will fall to us to discharge.

An elaborate, expensive internal investigation into the opinions and activities of these two men would be a time-wasting diversion that could seriously damage our prospects of victory.

It would also convey the impression that the National Executive Committee has arrogated to itself the right to examine speeches and actions of persons elected to represent their constituents inside, as well as outside, parliament, which could constitute a breach of privilege.

The wave of expulsions that took place years ago, when men like Stafford Cripps, Nye Bevan, Michael Foot and Jim Mortimer were thrown out of the party, were later seen to have been a grave error that won for us a damaging reputation for intolerance.

And many of the "loyalists" who supported the policy of expulsions, like George Brown, Shirley Williams, Roy Jenkins, Reg Prentice and David Owen, ended their own political lives in other parties determined to destroy Labour.

The Labour Party draws much of its support from people who deeply believe in free speech, and that support could be threatened if the NEC cannot summon up the courage and the confidence to tolerate dissent.

I would be grateful if you would circulate this letter to all members of the NEC.

Right attacks, left divided

Anne Field reports on the purge in Merseyside

Anyone who has read *The Godfather* will know that the mobsters pump half a dozen bullets into their victims to ensure that they are well and truly dead.

Don Corleone Kinnock seems to be adopting a similar approach in the purge of Labour Party members alleged to have campaigned in support of Lesley Mahmood in the Walton by-election last month.

A total of 147 names have been published to date, and declared suspended from holding office in the Labour Party. The 147 include individuals who were already suspended, or who had resigned or been expelled

from the Party before the Walton by-election campaign even began.

So much for the "efficiency" of the much-vaunted national membership scheme.

In addition to suspending 147 party members (and ex-members), the National Executive Committee has also latched onto the Walton by-election as the pretext for holding an inquiry into Labour MPs Terry Fields and Dave Nellist.

Even some (but not all) right-wingers in Liverpool who have no sympathy for the politics of Terry Fields regard it as suicidal to try to de-select him in the run-up to a general election, and are also hesitant about the sheer scale of the purge now underway.

In the Broad Left itself, divisions between the different factions are now beginning to open up. Two distinct groups are emerging amongst

the Broad Left councillors: *Militant* and non-*Militant*.

In the Broad Left of party members (and ex-members) divisions have opened up around whether or not it was correct to contest the Walton by-election, whether Mahmood was the most suitable candidate, and also around how *Militant* ran the by-election campaign. Members of the Broad Left have declared their intention of fighting the witch-hunt, which, if it means anything, means fighting to stay in the Labour Party.

This sits rather uneasily alongside of the recruitment campaign now underway to pick up members for a so-called "Real Labour Party", and the pledges (or threats?) that this "Real Labour Party" will have control of Liverpool City Council within two years by winning more seats in council elections.



Adams (with microphone) in the old days at Longbridge

John McIlroy reviews the new Tory Green Paper on trade union law

Tightening the fetters

By John McIlroy

It is now in its twelfth year. But the Tory legal offensive shows no signs of faltering. On July 24 Employment Minister Michael Howard introduced a new Green Paper, "Industrial Relations in the 1990s".

This was almost a year to the day he announced that there would be a long pause in the marathon legal blitzkrieg. Comments on the Green Paper must be in by October 23. Howard stated that there will be no opportunity to turn these proposals into legislation prior to a general election.

They will thus form part of the Tory manifesto.

Industrial action

The Green Paper proposals tighten the limits put on workers' action by laws about balloting.

Hitherto postal ballots — as against workplace ballots — have not been required for industrial action. Now it is proposed that they should be mandatory when 50 or more members are involved in the action. Moreover the conduct of ballots will be removed from the union into the hands of independent scrutineers such as the Electoral Reform Society.

"Having gone through the labyrinth of the existing balloting provisions, unions will now, in addition, have to give their employers seven days notice of industrial action before ensuing action is protected by the law."

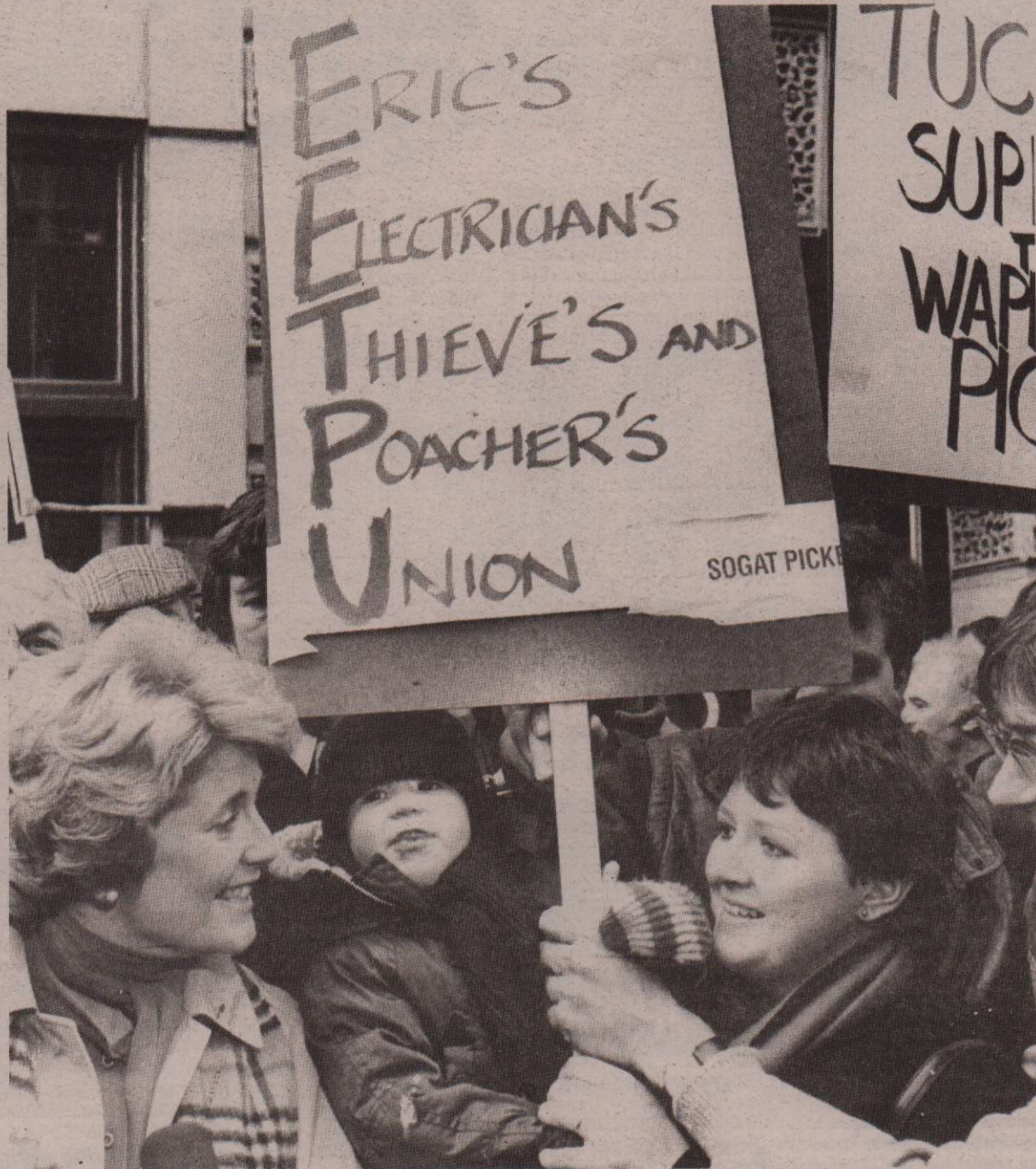
Having gone through the labyrinth of the existing balloting provisions, unions will now, in addition, have to give their employers seven days notice of industrial action before ensuing action is protected by the law.

As part of the Citizen's Charter consumers are to be given a new right to take legal action against unions who strike in the public services in breach of the law.

Apart from the intrinsic difficulties — and additional expense we face with postal ballots — they are more disrupting when applied to strikes than to internal union elections where the time scale is tighter. Postal balloting before strikes will lead to longer delays. Seven days notice, running from the date of the ballot declaration, in a situation where speed is often of the essence can only place another high card in the pack of the gaffer.

These provisions will make industrial action generally that little bit harder to organise.

Specifically, the requirement of seven days notice will reduce unions' room for manoeuvre in relation to one-day strikes and shorter stoppages which are intended to contain elements of surprise. Seven days notice will have to be given before each one-day strike, or each one-hour stoppage.



The new legislation would mean the trade union movement having no means of dealing with poaching actions of unions like the EETPU

Collective agreements

The Green Paper proposes that the courts would assume collective agreements between bosses and unions to be legally binding unless specifically states otherwise.

Until now, neither bosses nor unions have ever been able to sue the other for breaking agreements.

The object of legal enforceability has always been the procedure agreement. If you have a procedure which states "no industrial action until procedure is exhausted" then industrial action prior to this could be the subject of injunction if the agreement is legally enforceable.

However, just at the moment

legal enforceability might not be to the taste of some gaffers who, in reducing terms and conditions of employment, would then be open to direct legal action.

Union membership

Around 70% of the workforce now have their union subscriptions deducted directly from their pay packets. In the past we have criticised the check-off system for bureaucratising and depersonalising union membership.

Today the financial administrative systems of most unions are nonetheless dependent on check-off arrangements with only around 5% being collected by stewards at work.

For this reason, despite the fact

that it is voluntarily agreed to, indeed often encouraged by the gaffers, it has attracted the anger of the Tories. How, the cabinet marvels, can supine employers limbo quite so low as to guarantee the unions' finances for them?

The Green Paper now proposes that union members must agree in writing to deductions at source at least annually but also when there is an increase in union dues. The aspiration here is clearly to undermine union finances.

The Tories aim to exploit the degree to which unions themselves have become slack, bureaucratic organisations divorced from sections of the membership, and taking them for granted.

Many ordinary members may well ask why should we continue to pay good ackers for garbage? An annual audit of activity at workplace and District level carried out by shop stewards in the context of a campaign to maintain and extend membership certainly has attractions for socialist trade unionists.

Rights to membership

The Green Paper suggests that all workers should have a right to belong to whichever union they choose, "where more than one union can genuinely claim to be able to represent an employee's interests."

Once more the Tories are attempting to take advantage of trade union complacency and inefficiency

in order to mobilise disgruntled members for the purpose of disrupting union activities, particularly inter-union regulation.

The Bridlington principles drawn up at the 1939 TUC provide for adjudication where one TUC union claims that some of its members have left that union to join another affiliate. The EETPU was expelled from the TUC in 1988 for failing to abide by a Bridlington award after poaching members from other unions.

Michael Howard's new proposals would make it extremely difficult for the TUC to operate this disputes procedure which, whilst bureaucratically deformed in practice, is essentially progressive.

For example, if NUPE were instructed by the TUC to return members it had poached to NALGO, then the individuals involved could probably, under the new proposals, get a court order stopping NUPE returning the members to NALGO.

"In this campaign [to elect a Labour government] and after we draw a line between ourselves and Willis and Blair, fighting to completely replace the Tory laws with a charter of positive rights."

Other measures

The rest of the Green Paper is a ragbag of assorted measures.

The certification officer, smarting from his recent reverse at the hands of the NUM, will be given increased powers to interfere in union affairs and bring prosecutions. If these are successful, they will carry heavier penalties for trades unionists.

Union members will be given additional rights to inspect union accounts. Unions will have to provide all members with more detailed information about financial matters including the salaries of officials.

And trade unionists and independent scrutineers will have new rights to inspect the register of members. Each of these in itself is pretty innocuous. Added together they all make a small contribution to a union-hostile environment.

In response Norman Willis has roundly condemned the new proposals, citing MORI polls showing large majorities opposing further anti-union legislation.

Tony Blair has followed suit. Their rhetoric means little and matters less. They condemned in similar fashion each previous round of legislation, including key provisions they now find eminently desirable.

Whilst continuing to fight the legislation on the ground we must realise that the only way to stop Howard's proposals and rid ourselves root and branch of their predecessors is through the election of a Labour government.

In this campaign and after we draw a line between ourselves and Willis and Blair, fighting to completely replace the Tory laws with a charter of positive rights. Only this can provide a solid and enduring basis for a revived trade union movement.

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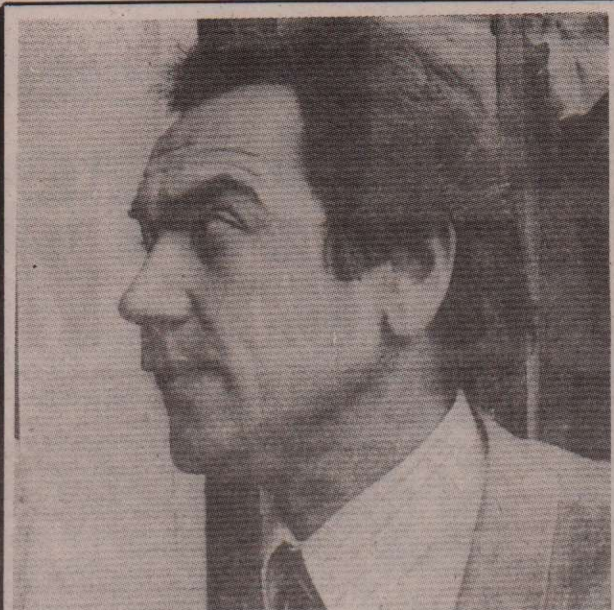
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Not Derek Hatton

Confessions of a worried Kinnockite

GRAFFITI

Whatever its politics Alan Bleasdale's *GBH* was, of course, great entertainment, and deservedly popular on that level.

But what about the politics? At the end, it was a grand conspiracy drama — and not very convincing either. (Why would MI5, or whoever the conspirators were, need to dress up and pretend to be cops who go around beating up blacks, when the real cops do that routinely?)

Bleasdale explained his own and *GBH*'s politics in an article in the *Liverpool Echo* on the day the final episode of *GBH* went out.

Recalling the right-wing reactions to his previous works, *Boys from the Black Stuff* and *The Monocled Mutineer*, he notes that:

"This time I have been attacked by the far left. I am no longer a radical Marxist revolutionary seeking to destroy the very fabric of British life. I am now a 'class enemy' hated and reviled by some of the very people who applauded my previous work. How come? Have I changed? Did I sell out? Was I lured by loadsamoney? I offer you a resounding 'NO!' But, of course, I would say that, wouldn't I?"

He denies that *GBH* was about Derek Hatton and denounces Hatton:

"Derek Hatton's publicity campaign culminated in his dismal suggestion that voting Tory might be a jolly good idea."

He adds: "As I forecast some weeks ago, with each passing episode of *GBH* the audience can see that, for every vague resemblance between Michael Murray and Derek Hatton (some political power once upon a time, and a penchant for smart suits) there are dozens of differences."

So it is no surprise to me that those who jumped to conclusions are now silent when they once screamed. Equally, there were too many who judged the whole series by its first episode, like someone summing up a football match after the first 13 minutes."

Bleasdale seems to be a Kinnockite, but a worried one: "The Labour Party presents a polished 'unity at all costs' discipline essential to gaining power, but is wrongly perceived by some to be moving away from the grass roots in that understandable desire to be elected."

While I look forward to a Socialist government with Neil Kinnock deservedly as the next

Prime Minister, the obvious danger is that the disenfranchised, the desperate, the despairing and the disaffected will believe they no longer have a natural home to go to, and Militant will present them with highly attractive adoption papers."

He asks: "Was Militant actually the hard left organisation in *GBH*? Well, if you believe the howls of outrage, abuse and attack emanating from Militant after the first episode of *GBH*, you would perhaps suspect that I had either burrowed beneath that famous Walton shop front with a tape recorder or I had got into the shop next door and listened to all the wrong people!"

My hard-left fictional representation bore no similarity to Militant at all."

He adds: "Militant would never orchestrate such an obscene event as the bullying of mentally disturbed children in a special school. And also, the infrastructure of their organisation and the behaviour of their leaders is not remotely the same as my invented revolutionaries." (Militant was not his concern): "I was, in fact, far more interested in examining the possible serious infiltration of the intelligence services into left wing groups."

This has existed since the very origins of the Labour Party in this country, and I see no reason for those despicable 'dirty tricks' not to be even more prevalent today."

Consequently, two of the three apparently left wing characters in *GBH* have been revealed to be reactionary fascists working for the security forces, to destabilise the left and discredit Labour.

And please don't tell me that this is impossibly far fetched. I have read *Spycatcher* and had my phone tapped."

In reply to charges that he is a "cynic", Alan Bleasdale quoted the speech of his hero Jim Nelson:

"We have to behave with dignity, with honour and, above all, without corruption. Two wrongs do not make a right. Or a left."

Especially not a left. Socialism is the redistribution not only of wealth but of care and concern and a quality and decency and belief in mankind...and I suppose all I'm trying to remind everyone myself included, is that, in the short time that we all have, we would want to be remembered for the good that we have done. Wouldn't we?"

He asks, rhetorically: "the words of a cynic?" No, Mr Bleasdale, certainly not. They are the words of a perhaps reluctant Kinnockite who wants and hopes for something better than he is likely to get from duck egg blue no-guts Neil.

The making of a monster

It is beginning to look quite likely that Winston Silcott's conviction for the murder of PC Blakelock at Broadwater Farm four years ago will be overturned.

Electrostatic Deposition Analysis — the same forensic test that helped quash the convictions of the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six — is said to have proved that vital passages in the original police interview with Silcott were tampered with. And that police interview (which was not even a confession) was the only "evidence" against Silcott.

In a detailed and level-headed piece in this week's *Independent on Sunday*, Zoe Heller describes how, during and after the trial, the tabloid press used hearsay, downright lies, misleading photographs and scarcely-disguised racism to "monster" Silcott.

This campaign succeeded

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

in obscuring the fact that there was not a shred of physical, forensic or photographic evidence against him.

The photographs that played a crucial part in the "monstering" campaign (Silcott with an "evil" grin; Silcott with his arms dangling "like a gorilla") were leaked to the press by the police during the trial.

The *Sun* published one of the photos, together with the prosecution's opening address, at the start of the trial. The judge publicly condemned this incident and referred

it to the Attorney-General as possible contempt of court. But no action was taken.

After the trial, with Silcott and his two co-defendants found guilty and all reporting restrictions lifted, the press really let rip with details of Silcott's previous convictions pepped up with spicy hearsay about pimping, drugs and a Fagin-like control over young criminals on "The Farm".

Silcott's tabloid image followed him into prison. He wrote to Zoe Heller: "I am no angel. I have been in trouble for thieving and fighting. But when inmates meet me, they are surprised. They expect to meet some crazy nutcase. I shock them because I am more ordinary than they are. I hope what you can write will help de-monster me. I am not the person the media portrayed."

Now that the case against Silcott is visibly falling apart at the seams, the same papers that campaigned so hard against him four years ago are once again taking up

cudgels. The *Sun* ran a double-page spread entitled "Never forget the murderous record of Winston Silcott", reminding readers that Silcott is a "vicious and evil man". The *News of the World* published a photo of PC Blakelock's jacket, the stab marks outlined by yellow tape. The photo must have come from the police themselves.

Of course, papers like the *Sun* can't lose: even if Silcott's conviction is finally overturned, he will still be guilty. Just like the *Sun* found the Birmingham Six guilty (of raising funds for the families of IRA prisoners and attending Republican rallies) in its editorial comment the day after they were released.

And in the case of Silcott, it will be even easier for the *Sun* et al: Silcott won't be released because he is already serving a life sentence for another murder. So who cares about trifling details like whether or not he actually killed PC Blakelock?

I'm with the provocateurs



WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

I must confess that I have never read any "feminist" rantings about Madonna which were not provoked by articles in praise of her. Readers of this column, basing their opinions on my howls of anti-fashion protest, would no doubt expect me to side with the 'feminists'. On the contrary.

On this question I am with the provocateurs.

I should explain that I am no fan of pop music. I know what Madonna sounds like, but I don't possess any of her records or videos. My opinions are based on what I've seen of Madonna in the media. Here goes.

For a start, Madonna is under no compulsion not to look as 'sexual' and exploitative as possible. That she has taken advantage of her sexuality in the most over-stated way possible seems to me to be a point in her favour.

There is nothing shyly alluring about Madonna! Hers is an image of a woman using her sexual appeal.

Her matter-of-fact approach to appearing in stereotyped 'sexy underwear' denies its sexiness.

This is not a person whom the viewer suspects of concealing suspenders under her skirt — the suspenders are on full-show. And what is sexy about a panty-girdle?

Madonna takes the page 3-girl image and throws it

back in the voyeur's face. "Is she wearing anything but underwear under her coat?" No! "What is underneath the underwear?" Nipples! Nowhere in this deliberate flaunting of a healthy but unremarkable body is there any element of 'the chase' or a privileged male view.

Somewhere in all desire, but I would guess primarily in male desire, is the idea of possession — sole possession of the desired object. Madonna does not promise 'for your eyes only', her self-awareness and confidence undermine the male fantasies of deflowering the half-revealed (but sexual) woman.

Madonna is clearly on show because she wants to be, and because she understands exactly what she is doing. If anything this self-possessed sexuality is threatening to men.

I also can't get to grips with the idea that Madonna is herself being exploited by men in 'the music business'. By all accounts she has con-

trol of her own affairs and publicity machine.

The image she projects is one she chooses to project. Her latest film, "In Bed with Madonna", is not some sanitised "Life with the Osmonds". Yet a more 'acceptable' film, could easily have been made. With the resources Madonna has available to her, a far more naturalistic and flattering film is certainly an option.

"By leaving nothing to the imagination, Madonna leaves no room for male fantasy."

I think that such a film would be far more exploitative and stereotypical.

By leaving nothing to the imagination, Madonna leaves no room for male fantasy. I may be wrong. In fact there are probably men out there who want to beat the self-possession out of Madonna

— to have her to themselves, to hear her cry their name only, and promise never to exhibit herself for others again!

Similar men have similar fantasies about Queen Boadicea and Mrs Thatcher. Madonna could cover herself up and sing lullabies and the fantasies would simply shift to another powerful woman.

It could be said that Madonna exerts an unhealthy influence on young girls, motivating them to buy (and wear!) underwired bras and simulate orgasm on the dance floor. Despite my hatred of underwired bras, this is possibly a healthier image for girls than encouraging passivity.

To teach girls that underneath the suspenders and lurex bust there is something as simple as a body rather than some mysterious power which can only be discovered by a man is to teach the truth.

So I think the 'feminists' are wrong. I look forward to hearing their reply.

The homophobic bank

OUT AND PROUD

By Kevin Sexton

Leeds Lesbian and Gay Youth Group (LLGYG) recently applied for a bank account and were refused by the Royal Bank of Scotland, Park Row, Leeds, on the grounds that there might be members of the group under the age of 18. This, said the Assistant Manager, would be in breach of the law.

He also stated that if any member of the group were found to be taking part in an illegal act with another person or group member, the bank would be responsible for aiding and abetting such acts.

The bank's openly ignorant and discriminatory attitude has stopped the group organising.

Lesbian and gay youth groups are important support and campaign forums. Lesbian and gay youth often face rejection, prejudice and discrimination. When they can no longer cope with the isolation that they face, some attempt suicide, so the LLGYG is a lifeline for young people in Leeds.

With the help of Left Unity supporters in Leeds and NUS Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual

Campaign, LLGYG organised to put pressure on the bank to stop being homophobic.

In a matter of days, the Senior Bank Manager of the Leeds Branch informed the LLGYG of the bank's regret that the incident had ever occurred. He said that the bank would welcome the account.

The senior bank official who had who originally refused the account has been moved and disciplined.

This action shows that, organised, lesbians and gay men can have a big impact on institutions such as banks and stop them from being blatantly homophobic. We need to organise to get all such institutions to come out with positive statements welcoming accounts from lesbian and gay organisations.



UWUSA launch: an opportunity for attacks on the independent trade union movement. The slogan was "Bury COSATU"

Will Inkathagate help the ANC?

By Allison Roche

The secret funding of Inkatha and its trade union front, UWUSA, by the South African government is the latest story in a long history.

UWUSA was formed with the explicit intention of attacking the mass democratic independent trade union movement. One of the slogans at its founding conference was "Bury COSATU".

In Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and Zambia, the South African Defence Force, in collusion with the CIA, trained and funded right wing forces to destabilise pro-ANC governments.

Since the release of Mandela and the legalisation of the ANC, De Klerk's strategy has centred on weakening and dividing the forces of the anti-apartheid opposition.

Thus Buthelezi's drive for a political power base in order to carve out a share for himself in post-apartheid South Africa has been a godsend for the Nationalist Party.

Buthelezi has been strengthening himself at the expense of the ANC. At least that's how things stood until the recent allegations surfaced.

Up until Inkathagate, the balance of forces have been in De Klerk's favour. He has maintained the initiative and dictated the pace of events. Buthelezi's Inkatha movement, said to represent seven million Zulus, was moving from the status of a "homeland" party to that of a national one, being given international diplomatic recognition by the likes of Thatcher.

The Nationalist Party promoted the Inkatha party as a respectable force, possibly part of an anti-ANC coalition for any future elections.

De Klerk had talked of launching a new party called the Christian Democratic Alliance, to be made up of the Nationalist Party, Inkatha and the Coloured Labour Party. Buthelezi has attacked the ANC as being "communist", whipped up hatreds, and promoted rampages and killings of ANC supporters.

Inkathagate will now strengthen

the bargaining hand of the ANC. Up until now the ANC has supported the Nationalist Party's demands for an All Party Congress, which would get all the political parties together to set agreed parameters and guiding principles for a new constitution to be drawn up by an elected constituent assembly.

The ANC, however, has argued that before a Constituent Assembly can be elected, an interim government needs to be formed. The in-

terim government would be responsible for overseeing the elections of the Constituent Assembly, monitoring the security forces, freeing all political prisoners, dismantling apartheid, etc.

The present government could not be neutral in this transitional period, or run unbiased elections.

Obviously Inkathagate will strengthen the ANC's arguments — though the revelations hardly provide encouraging evidence of the possibilities of creating a "neutral"

state machine in South Africa.

The government has made it clear that it will not support an interim government. It had hoped that the All Party Convention might itself become the constitution-making body, and it could avoid elections.

Because of the embroilment of the whole cabinet in Inkathagate it is unlikely that De Klerk will sack any ministers. For, to accept guilt, means in the end that De Klerk must take responsibility. If De Klerk went, it is unlikely to see who

could play the role of enlightened despot reformer. He will thus almost certainly stay.

Instead, he may be forced to concede some form of limited power sharing with the ANC, particularly in relation to the security forces.

The ANC will favour this as an opportunity to create ANC national political leaders and build their base before the elections.

In South Africa we are witnessing a form of negotiation by way of press exposure and scandal.

Inkatha: what it is and where it comes from

The Inkatha scandal has merely confirmed the many signs pointing to clear links between the South African government and Inkatha since war broke out in Natal in the early 1980s between Inkatha and ANC supporters.

The history of the Inkatha movement, rigidly controlled by Chief Buthelezi, has been one of:

- supporting and "working within" apartheid structures;
- scabbing on independent unions' strikes;
- anti-democratic Zulu nationalism, and;
- vigilante tactics to fragment the resistance movement.

Buthelezi launched Inkatha in 1975. He had been born into a Zulu royal family and became chief in 1952 when he was 24 years old.

Before that he was a member of the ANC Youth League when he was at university in 1948-50. Alienated by the radicalisation of the youth leadership, Buthelezi chose to distance himself from the ANC because he saw that by ingratiating himself with the ruling bureaucracy he could gain some political power.

In Natal the white rulers had always relied on chiefs to govern the African workers.

Besides being a chief, two other factors were responsible for

Buthelezi's rise.

The Bantu Authority Act of 1951, which segregated "tribes" into "homelands", gave Buthelezi an opportunity to exploit apartheid's ethnic separation laws and create a Zulu Territorial Authority which later became the Kwazulu "homeland" under his leadership. It was apartheid that placed the chief on a national stage.

The ANC was calling for non-collaboration with the "homelands" or bantustans, but Buthelezi justified his participation by saying that he could use his position to expose the inequalities and frauds of the system.

Since then Buthelezi and his administration have been accused of mismanagement, corruption and creating a one-party state. All Kwazulu employers are asked for pledges of loyalty to Inkatha, from civil servants to the police.

Buthelezi saw that the Zulu identity — with its history of brave resistance to colonialism — yielded a rich bundle of symbols that could be used to mobilise a regional population in defence of commercial and petty bourgeois interests. Buthelezi revived Zulu nationalism, originally as a "cultural movement" and then a party.

One of the launching statements of Inkatha was that "to oppose it was to oppose the Zulu nation". Buthelezi attempted to forge a popular consciousness of Zulu iden-



Chief Buthelezi

tity rather than political clarity, so that anyone who opposed Inkatha would be seen as an enemy of the Zulu people.

To cement Zulu tribal identity Buthelezi and his supporters have promoted a hostility to national liberation politics, i.e. the ANC. As an ally of the government and the capitalist class he has made himself available to conservative reformers.

After 1980 Buthelezi, with the help of the South African police and security forces, began to attack ANC supporters and UDF agitators in the townships. He urged vigilante groups to establish themselves with instructions to "shoot to kill" anybody interfering with property, buildings, etc. The tactics of bussing in vigilantes from rural areas and squatter camps have been used to

stop township riots against symbols of the state, and protect businesses and properties, and to break strikes and smash picket lines.

The Inkatha union, UWUSA, with 100,000 members, has been used to break solidarity action.

To some people, still, Buthelezi has managed to portray Inkatha as the party of moderation, non-violence and Christianity.

The Inkathagate scandal will have damaged Buthelezi and its alliance with the Nationalist Party. But it would be too hopeful to write off Buthelezi. He is a shrewd survivor.

In the early '80s a storm was created when the ANC named Buthelezi as being responsible for giving state evidence against 12 ANC supporters, helping to condemn them to 25 years in prison.

Buthelezi rode the storm by claiming that he was giving evidence to confirm that an ANC supporter had come to secretly negotiate with him, without ANC permission. Attention was then switched to the issue of how democratic the ANC was.

The discrediting of Buthelezi must, however, improve the chances of working class unity being forged in the townships and in the union. Immediately, it will weaken Inkatha as a national political entity, forcing Buthelezi back on to his solid, but corrupt, base in the Kwazulu Bantustan.

Yugoslavia's civil war

Steven Holt interviews Branka Magas, a socialist from Dalmatia, Southern Croatia

There have been reports in the British press of a revival of the fascist Ustasi movement in Croatia. Is this true, or is it repeating propaganda from Belgrade, the Serbian capital, where all the Western journalists go?

It has perhaps been exaggerated in the press. These people are certainly active; they have a party called the Party of the Right which is extremely nationalist, and even worse, there is a youth group that openly calls itself Ustasi.

Do these people operate within the Croatian ruling party, the Croatian Democratic Union (CDU)?

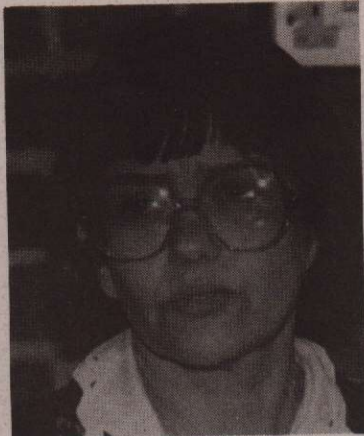
No, they have their own party. The CDU certainly has its extremists, but it is very tightly controlled from the centre. The CDU was only formed during the election campaign in early 1990, with money from Croatian exiles abroad, and all sorts of people joined.

There were two waves of emigration from Croatia; firstly, immediately after the war the Ustasi left, then there was another wave in the early 1970s after a big purge in the ruling Croatian Communist Party.

Was that purge carried out against Croatian nationalism? The present CDU leader Tudjman was expelled from the CP in 1967 for nationalism.

Yes. He was charged with falsifying the number killed by the Ustasi in a camp. The Serbs claimed a figure of 700,000 but studies in the last five years have shown the true figure to be around 50,000. Tudjman seems to be right on this, but the Belgrade press still insists on the larger figure.

Tudjman fought with Tito's Partisans during the 1941-45 war in Yugoslavia, didn't he?



Branka Magas

Yes, he joined the Partisans when he was 15 or 16, and became a general. After the war things were difficult for him because the army was Serb-dominated. The decentralised guerilla army was changed to a centralised structure, which was resented by some Croat and Slovene Partisans.

After 1967 Tudjman was in prison for several years and then wrote nationalist books, but he is not a fascist.

The CDU got 42% of the votes in the March 1990 election, the Croat Communists got 21%. These two main political parties have disagreements, but they are close on nationalist issues, which has tended to push the CDU further to the right.

Internal discipline in the CDU is so strict that members have no possibility to criticise the government, but at a local level CDU extremists have influence. For instance Serb workers in several towns were forced to sign an oath of loyalty to Croatia. Many members of the Croatian government are Communists or ex-Communists.

This seems quite a common pattern in Eastern Europe, people removed from the CP 10 or 20 years ago coming back to power — like Iliescu in Romania, and Dubcek in Czechoslovakia

recently.

Yes, the presidents of Macedonia and Slovenia are CP members of this kind.

An independent trade union in Croatia called a demonstration of 40,000 people in Split early this summer. How was it set up?

There are three trade unions in Croatia. The largest, and probably most serious, is the old Communist trade union. The second came into being around a railway strike in early 1990. The third is a CDU-controlled union, which called the demonstration in Split. This demonstration was to protest against the refusal of the army corps based in Dalmatia to act against Serb extremists in Krin.

This armed Serbian extremist formation had blocked the road and railway to Zagreb, stopping work at ports and factories in Dalmatia which need to export goods and receive raw materials, and they had been killing and robbing people. The Serb leader there then tried to extend the area controlled by his forces, by blockading the Croat village Kijevo. This became a powerful symbol, and together with fear of unemployment, made people totally fed up.

The demonstration was called by the CDU-controlled Radio Split, but probably anyone could have called the demonstration and still got a large crowd.

The army officers are about 70% Serbs...

Yes, this proportion arose in the 1970s for economic reasons. People from the more wealthy republics don't choose to be army officers — like here, working class people join the police and army if they cannot get other work.

The army officers don't like the multi-party system and see the Croatian and Slovenian governments as illegitimate. Some time ago the army arrested Croat leaders, claiming that they planned to murder army officers. The Serb people were told these lies on the television and believed it; the



Tanks in Slovenia

Croats thought this meant the Serbs were going to attack, but that particular quarrel eventually calmed down.

Would the Serb officers be able to use the conscript army against the other nationalities?

Even Serb conscripts and younger Serb officers would not want to shoot. After the demonstration in Split, Serb reservists were called up, but they were very reluctant to fight.

And we've seen army units surrender readily in Slovenia. Does the officer corps see its interests as being to stoke up tension, so as to strengthen their argument for a large army — the Yugoslav army is very large for the wealth and population of the country.

Army salaries have been cut and military industries run down, but this may limit the army's power. Until the end of Communist rule, the army had a representative on the federal collective presidency, now they only have the Ministry of Defence, and try to act independently of the presidency. The army has on occasion acted against Serb extremists.

Moving now to Bosnia-Herzegovina, there was a metal workers' strike of tens of thousands. Does the trade union cover all three nationalities there — Muslim, Serbian and Croatian?

Yes, it must do to have gained such solidarity. The steel industry is in a terrible state (there has also been a steelworkers' strike in Serbia); the Bosnian workers had not been paid for three months. The Bosnian leader Izetbegovic has travelled to Libya and Iran to get orders for the steel industry, with some success.

How strong a force is Bosnian nationalism?

It is very strong, and takes both Muslim and secular forms. There are also Muslims in the Sanjak in Serbia, who aim to join Bosnia. Bosnian Muslims and Croats in Bosnia have formed an alliance

against the common threat from Serbia. The Serbian leaders in Bosnia are Cetniks [Serb chauvinists], and have been arming their militia.

What is the relationship between the Serbian Stalinists (Milosevic's Socialist Party) and the far-right Cetniks? Are they coming together?

In Serbia the CP swallowed up all state organisations before the elections, including a body called the Socialist Alliance for Working People — which is the organisation that runs elections. The CP renamed itself as the Socialist Party, and has some new people, not just the old apparatchiks. There is a more moderate wing within the Socialist Party, but Milosevic is seen as being unchallengeable, even after the March demonstrations. Every time he seems vulnerable he stirs up trouble to unite people behind him on a nationalist basis.

He has had grave problems controlling the two annexed autonomous regions Kosovo (90% Albanian population) and Vojvodina (several nationalities, of which the Hungarians are now the most oppressed), the granary of Yugoslavia and second only to Slovenia in prosperity. Serbia is in a terrible economic position, Milosevic has crushed strikes and has to use the Cetniks to control the opposition within Serbia.

The Cetnik party is called the Serb Radical Party, but they openly admit to being Cetniks. Milosevic cannot use the army against the opposition, and the police are overstretched, so he has to use the Cetniks. The Cetniks are thugs who stir up trouble whenever they can; for instance, the incident in Borovo-Selo where 13 Croat police were killed happened just after a visit by a Cetnik leader and the Socialist Party minister for Serbs outside Serbia.

Has Ljotic (the Serbian fascist movement, never as powerful as the Ustasi in Croatia) re-emerged?

I don't know. They have a paper published in London. The Cetnik press is not quite Nazi, unlike the Ljotic.



1987: striking car workers in Belgrade



War in Croatia: what prospects for Yugoslavia?

By Steven Holt

Over the past two weeks events in Yugoslavia have brought the country close to civil war.

The main area of conflict has moved away from Slovenia, following the decision of the Yugoslav federal collective presidency to withdraw troops from Slovenia. The departure of troops will be staged over a three month period, during which the position of Slovenia will be negotiated.

It now seems almost certain that, now that Slovenian independence is supported by Germany and Austria, Slovenia will break away from Yugoslavia.

The withdrawal of troops from Slovenia was opposed by Stipe Mesic, the federal president (and a Croat), who feared that the army would thus be able to concentrate its troops to support the Serb minority in the fighting with Croatia. His fears have been confirmed by events.

On 22 July about 20 Croats were killed in fighting around the Serb enclave of Vinkovci in Croatia. On 25 July at least 10 died in shelling by federal tanks of Erdut (a village of mixed Croat, Serb and Hungarian population) near the Croatian border with Vojvodina (a formerly autonomous region that has been annexed by Serbia).

On 26 July a further seven Croatian police were killed by federal troops, and over the weekend of 27 and 28 July fighting escalated almost to full-scale war, with at least 36, possibly as many as 100, people killed in fighting at Glina, south of Zagreb, and at least 80 people killed in other incidents.

These recent events have led to the almost-powerless federal prime minister Ante Markovic threatening to resign unless there is a ceasefire allowing negotiations. The Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, in whose interests the federal army has been acting, seems unwilling to compromise.

Milosevic has stated that "Now everyone will have to face the consequences and take responsibility for the fate of their own people." In practice, this means a Serbian drive for hegemony over the other peoples of Yugoslavia.

Although the main focus of activity is now on Croatia, there are ominous signs of impending conflict in other parts of Yugoslavia. The non-Serbian population in areas under Serbian control, particularly Hungarians in Vojvodina and Albanians in Kosovo, are being subjected to increasing repression

(in the latter case leading to the massing of the Albanian army on the border with Kosovo and fears of war between Albanian and Serb-dominated Yugoslavia).

Having previously supported the maintenance of the borders of the Bosnia-Herzegovina republic, the Croatian leader Franjo Tudjman has proposed that the Serbian enclaves of Knin (in Dalmatia, the coastal strip of Croatia) and Krajina (in Slavonia, the eastern arm of Croatia) could be given to Serbia in exchange for Croatia annexing the Western areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina where Croats live.

Serbia already claims the north and east of Bosnia-Herzegovina, so this would mean the destruction of the Bosnian republic. Bosnian Muslims make up 44% of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and under this "deal" would lose their state, being forcibly incorporated into Croatia or Serbia.

The Bosnian president, the Muslim leader Izetbegovic (a relatively moderate nationalist) has said that his people will fight to defend their borders. This deal carving up Bosnia-Herzegovina has been put off the agenda for now by the intense fighting in Croatia, but a settlement between Croatia and Serbia at the expense of the Bosnian Muslims is still a real possibility.

In the southern republic, Macedonia, feeling is growing for independence followed by union with the Macedonians in Greece and Bulgaria (both of which countries deny basic rights to Macedonians). There are fears that Macedonian nationalism may be directed against the Albanian minority in the west of Macedonia. The Macedonian president, Kiro Gligorov, wants to retain a federal Yugoslavia, fearing that otherwise Macedonia will come under Serbian control — and in reality an independent Macedonia would have little economic viability.

Vice-president Ljupco Georgievski, leader of the Macedonian nationalist party (the largest party in parliament) has called for independence and enlargement of Macedonia, and has had talks with Turkish leaders in the hope of forming an alliance against Greece and Bulgaria.

The consequences of a break-up of Yugoslavia thus look to be a series of wars leading to unviable states within which there will still be oppressed peoples, and so socialists should argue for retention of a loose federal Yugoslavia, and in the longer term perhaps a Balkan federation reuniting the peoples that are divided by existing national borders.

...one of the Serbian opposition also ...nt Greater Serbia. For instance, ... Serbian Renewal Movement led ... Vuk Draskovic seems willing to ... to Croatia but takes a hardline ... sition on Kosovo.

Draskovic was among the first to ... for Greater Serbia, and agrees ... h Milosevic on nationalist issues. ... the other Serbian parties, the ... ocratic Party will be most im- ... rtant in the long run. The ... ocratic Party has expelled its ... t extreme nationalists but is still ... rly nationalist. They have called ... dialogue with the Kosovo Al- ... ans, but have done nothing con- ... te. There has been a visit to ... sovo from Belgrade by the Green ... rty and the Association for ... osluglav Democratic Initiative (an ... -Yugoslav party) and they talked ... Albanian leaders, but this has ... en the only attempt at dialogue.

...llowing the recent liberalisatio- ... Albania, will Kosovo Albanians ... nt unity with Albania?

Perhaps, but the situation in ... bania is still unclear. The Al- ... an regime has condemned repres- ... in Kosovo but has done ... thing to encourage secession. The ... ainstream position among ... sovo Albanians is to have their ... n republic within a federal ... osluglav. If Yugoslavia breaks ... wn, I think they will declare in- ... pendence and then unite with ... bania. Kosovo is the second big- ... st problem in Yugoslavia, after ... e economy.

...e economic problems argue ... ainst fragmentation, since the ... osluglav economy is highly in- ... tegrated.

Yes, Bosnia and Macedonia have ... gued to retain a federal associa- ... n for this reason. The problem is ... at only the army is strong enough ... disarm the Cetniks, and unless ... is done there will be atrocities ... d war. In Croatia, Bosnia and ... sovo there are daily murders by ... h extremists. I think Milosevic's ... me in Serbia will eventually ... e to grief in some bloody con-

Do you think it possible that Milosevic could be removed by a general strike, as has happened to elected Stalinist regimes in Bulgaria and recently Albania?

750,000 Serbian textile, leather and metal workers went on strike in March, but they are just acting as trade unionists, they do not have a political programme. I am afraid that this is unlikely to happen — and Milosevic cannot moderate his policies without losing ground to extremists.

If Yugoslavia holds together in some form, what will be the effects of western capital? Would investment go mainly to Croatia and Slovenia, thus exacerbating tensions within Yugoslavia?

Yugoslavia definitely needs foreign investment to restructure the industries. The western republics of Croatia and Slovenia are likely to get more help, because of their position, tourist potential, more developed industry and more democratic governments. Investment will be limited because of competition with the rest of Eastern Europe. Road repairs and telecommunications are desperately needed. The Yugoslav ship-building industry is very good, but has declined recently.

There has been a declining market for ships over the last five years...

Yes, but the problem is more to do with fluctuations in the value of the dinar. Access to western markets will be very important.

How open is trade with, say, Hungary and Romania; is there a possibility of obtaining raw materials by barter, to conserve "hard" currency?

Trade is open, but the possibilities here are limited. Gas from the USSR would be a possibility.

Even under Tito, Yugoslav unemployment was very high, so the starting position seems even worse than the rest of Eastern Europe.

I think the final unemployment

figure will be about the same for all of Eastern Europe, around 25% on average, 50% in the worst-hit areas.

Has there been a mass emigration from Yugoslavia in the past couple of years? I'm thinking perhaps of Slovenes going to the Slovenian part of Austria, Vojvodina Hungarians going to Hungary?

There are 600,000 Yugoslavs in Western Europe, but it is now becoming more difficult to get work in the West.

The main provider of work was West Germany. Following reunification the Greater German state will not want Yugoslav workers, now that they have East Germans.

Yes, but there are problems finding work in other countries too. Many Yugoslavs have tried to find work in Britain over the past year.

Finally, how do you see the prospects for socialists in Yugoslavia?

Very bleak as long as the inter-communal fighting continues. The working class in Yugoslavia has always been weak, since before the Second World War. The best hope is that eventually social democratic parties will grow from the trade union movement.



Slovenia: weapons captured from the federal army

Kinnockites or Marxists

Who are the

In the British labour movement today the Kinnockites use the charge that Marxists are against democracy as a cudgel against Labour Party socialists. They are as ignorant as they are demagogic!

The Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels defined socialism as a matter of "winning the battle of democracy". But for decades after 1917 democracy and socialism seemed to have parted company. The "democrats" in the labour movement were mainly pro-capitalist; the Stalin-poisoned revolutionary movements wanted one-party dictatorships. Those in the Trotskyist tradition who still said "He who is not a democrat is not a socialist" were an isolated handful.

In this excerpt from the *SO* pamphlet, "Socialists and Democracy", John O'Mahony surveys the ideas about democracy which have influenced the socialist movements.

There are two distinct but interwoven strands in the attitudes the labour movement has taken to parliamentary democracy.

The first was and is ardent championing of parliamentary democracy and democratic liberties. In varying alliances with sections of the middle class, early labour movements fought to extend the suffrage and enlarge the power of parliament — often by revolutionary means.

The first mass political labour movement, Chartism, in the 1830s and '40s, took shape around demands for the reshaping of the existing parliamentary system so as to admit the working class to the suffrage and make it possible for workers to be MPs. In Britain, as late as 1917, the Workers' Socialist Federation, led by Sylvia Pankhurst (emerging out of the Workers' Suf-

"The soviet network showed itself to be a uniquely flexible and responsive system of democratic self-organisation and, increasingly, of self-rule by the Russian masses."

frage Federation, which in turn came out of the left wing of the suffragette movement in the East End) based themselves on an extremely radical programme of democratic reform, attempting to graft on to the British parliament features of the workers' council system that had just emerged in Russia.

In 1934 Trotsky suggested a united front with reformist workers in France for a similar programme.

"As long as the majority of the working class continues on the basis of bourgeois democracy, we are ready to defend it with all our forces against violent attacks from the Bonapartist and fascist bourgeoisie.

However, we demand from our class brothers who adhere to 'democratic' socialism that they be faithful to their ideas, that they draw inspiration from the ideas and methods not of the Third Republic but of the Convention of 1793. Down with the Senate, which is elected by limited suffrage, and which renders the power of universal suffrage a mere illusion! Down with the presidency of the republic,

which serves as a hidden point of concentration for the forces of militarism and reaction!

A single assembly must combine the legislative and executive powers. Members would be elected for two years, by universal suffrage at eighteen years of age, with no discrimination of sex or nationality. Deputies would be elected on the basis of local assemblies, constantly revocable by their constituents, and would receive the salary of a skilled worker. This is the only measure that would lead the masses forward instead of pushing them backward. A more generous democracy would facilitate the struggle for workers' power.

We want to attain our objective not by armed conflicts between the various groups of toilers, but by real workers' democracy, by propaganda and loyal criticism, by the voluntary regrouping of the great majority of the proletariat under the flag of true communism. Workers adhering to democratic socialism must further understand that it is not enough to defend democracy; democracy must be regained.

The moving of the political centre of gravity from parliament towards the cabinet, from the cabinet towards the oligarchy of finance capital, generals, police, is an accomplished fact. Neither the present parliament nor the new elections can change this.

We can defend the whole sorry remains of democracy, and especially we can enlarge the democratic arena for the activity of the masses, only by annihilating the armed fascist forces that, on 6 February 1934, started moving the axis of the state and are still doing so."

(Action Programme for France, 1934)

The second strand has consisted of a drive to create new, different, specifically working class organs of democracy — either by converting old forms to the purpose, or by establishing completely new ones. The Paris Commune in 1871 was an example of the taking over of old forms — the Paris City council! The creation of new forms began in St Petersburg, Russia, in 1905, when striking workers who did not have political rights elected their own local parliament or council of workers' deputies — the "soviet".

After the overthrow of Tsarism in February 1917, a vast network of such soviets developed, pyramids of city, district, and all-Russian gatherings. In their own way, from the ground up, the soviets realised such old working class demands as



Kinnock poses for the media. Photo: John Smith (Profile)

direct control of the legislature — delegates could be recalled and replaced, easily and repeatedly.

The soviet network showed itself to be a uniquely flexible and responsive system of democratic self-organisation and, increasingly, of self-rule by the Russian masses. Whereas even the most democratic parliamentary system was tied to the bourgeois military/bureaucratic structure, the soviets were radically counterposed to the surviving Tsarist military/bureaucratic state.

In 1917 the Congress of Soviets (with the Bolshevik Party as its driving force) seized state power. Thereafter the drive to reform and develop the existing parliaments gave place, for millions of revolutionary workers throughout the

world, to a commitment to soviets as the highest form of democracy. Everywhere on earth, revolutionary-minded people recognised the soviet as the working class form of democracy.

Commitment to soviets became a central part of the programme of revolutionary socialism.

Soviet" meant, then, workers' councils within which there would be a plurality of "soviet" parties. *Nobody* in the communist movement advocated the idea that soviets would be ruling organs of state in a one-party system. Through most of the civil war in Russia and the wars of intervention, non-Bolshevik parties loyal to the workers' state — J.

Martov's Menshevik Internationalists, for example — were legally active in the soviets.

When, in March 1921, at the end of the civil war, the Bolsheviks banned all other Soviet parties, it was a temporary measure, not the norm of working class rule. Not long after the Stalinists seized control: one party rule became the norm. Inevitably this Russian reality confused many communists as to exactly what soviet rule would be.

In consequence, "communism" had, partly through confusion and incoherence, arising out of anti-social democratic-polemic, an anti-democratic bias, even before full-blown Stalinism.

After the full-scale Stalinist counter-revolution in the late '20s,

Workers' councils: a qualitative ex

In the class struggle, however, despite both reformists and Stalinists, embattled workers throw up soviet-type structures. Since 1917, soviets — workers' councils elected from factories and districts — have been thrown up in a large number of countries in conditions of large-scale working class struggle. From Austria, Germany and Hungary in 1918, and Hungary again in 1956, through to Gdansk in 1980, soviets have emerged as flexible forms of working class democratic self-organisation — factory committees generalised to the whole of society.

The historical experience of soviets as a form of social rule is, of

course, limited. Even in the most advanced case, that of Russia, where soviets became the cellular structure of the new workers' state, the soviets had little time to evolve or develop and articulate institutions for the detailed running of society.

The bourgeoisie in countries like Britain has had centuries to evolve their parliaments and law courts and divisions of power. We had a single year! And the civil war and invading armies stifled the soviets. Stalin buried them.

As early as the end of 1918 the soviets in the USSR were being undermined as freely functioning democratic organs by the exigencies of civil war. They were shortly to be

guttled of all real life. This process culminated in the ban on every party but the Bolsheviks in March 1921. Intended as a temporary civil war measure, it became fixed, as we have seen, as the norm of the Stalinist political counter-revolution.

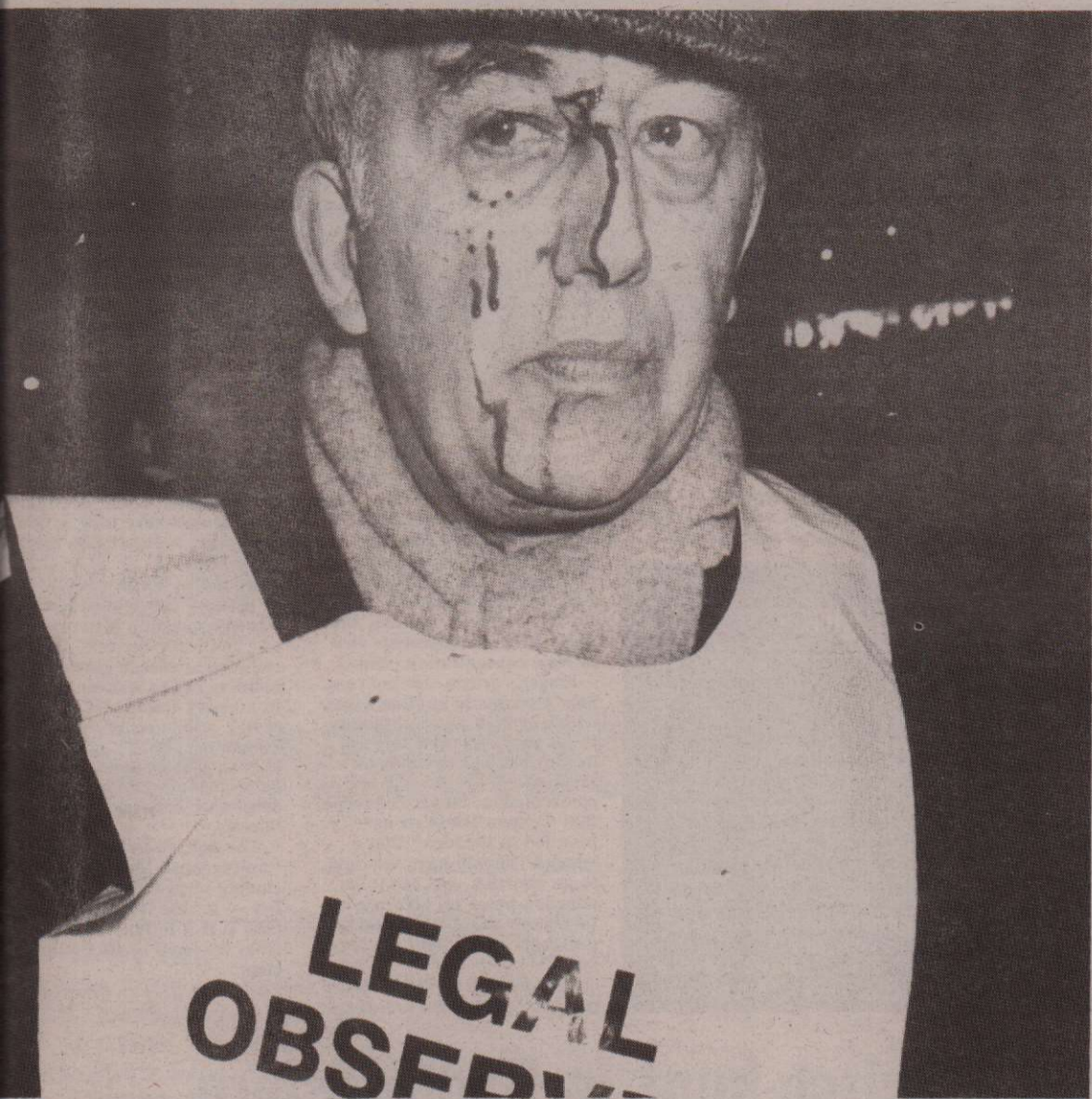
Nevertheless it is clear:

- That these soviets, which have emerged in vastly different conditions and countries, are not accidental forms. At the very least they are valuable organs of working class self-organisation in struggle.

- In Russia before they were blasted by civil war, they were a form of democracy more flexible, adjustable and responsive than any other "parliamentary" system. And, for the sake of clarifying

democrats?

No socialism without democracy!



Legal observer, John Bowden, truncheoned during police attack on mass picket outside Rupert Murdoch's Wapping plant. Kinnock calls pickets 'enemies of democracy'. Photo: Andrew Ward (Report)

How might soviets emerge in Britain? When you look concretely at how the existing British parliamentary system might be displaced by workers' councils, the difference between Marxist democrats and the Kinnockites becomes clear. The difference between what we really stand for and the lies they tell about us become clear.

Propaganda by Marxists will not by itself win enough workers to support for workers' councils ('soviets') to threaten the parliamentary system. The relevant historical experience on which the proposal is based is too remote. Propaganda alone could not win the mass of workers away from commitment to the existing parliamentary system.

Soviets have most often emerged in conditions where parliamentary democracy did not exist, or was severely limited. The precondition for soviets in Britain to move from the realm of propaganda and accounts of history to the realm of practical working class politics would be — obviously — mass struggle, but also and centrally a major erosion of belief that parliament is an accessible democratic institution. But belief in the parliamentary system is still very deep and powerful in the British people and in the labour movement. And the system still has a lot of flexibility.

Councils of Action having many points in common with soviets came into existence in Britain in 1920. Something like an incipient soviet emerged in Durham during the 1926 General Strike. But even if a vast network of Councils of Action were now to emerge in a general strike, it is unlikely that they would starkly counterpose themselves to the existing parliament, as an alternative system of democratic rule — unless there had been a serious erosion of belief in parliament as the natural democratic system.

How will such an erosion of belief in Westminster occur? Even if a large revolutionary Marxist party existed, it could not occur, I repeat, as a result of propaganda alone. It will only occur when the ruling class — in response to the exigencies of the struggle against the working class to keep or exert control — is forced to begin to abrogate its own system, to downgrade it, and thereby, over time, to rob its processes of credibility.

Thus the existing system would have to be undermined from two sides — by growing self-confidence, self-organisation, and disillusionment with parliament among the working class, and by growing impatience or desperation among the ruling class.

This is what Marxists such as Trotsky teach us on this question. I have already quoted Trotsky's call to the social reformist workers of France to defend parliamentary democracy (1934). In the same vein he warned Marxists not to make a religion of soviets. This advice has one hundred times greater force today, when the experience of the initial liberating Russian soviets is so far back in history. "Soviets" now

are, and can only be, a matter of propaganda: and the socialist who would counterpose such propaganda to the necessary working class struggle, which must include struggles around the existing parliamentary system, is a sectarian fool, incapable of learning either from life or from Trotsky's approach in France.

Now, if the Marxist expectation that the ruling class will not be bound by its own parliamentary rules is wrong, then very probably "soviets" will remain a matter of propaganda by Marxists who favour soviets as a different, better system of democracy. In that case, the right and the soft left, who now witch-hunt those who advocate a different form of democracy as enemies of democracy, have little to worry about.

It is not our propaganda for a different sort of democracy, soviets, that worries the right, nor is it only that we lack respect for "Parliament". It is not even entirely a matter of grabbing a convenient demarcation line to serve an organisational purpose now. What is it then that worries them? What is the dividing line between them and us? The dividing line is extra-parliamentary struggle now. They are using the witch-hunt against the allegedly anti-democratic Trotskyists as a means of frightening the less determined section of the left out of any will that Labour and the unions should fight the Tories now, using extra-parliamentary action where appropriate.

Their rallying cry, "democracy", is a double lie because they will not fight back against the Tories even to defend the democracy they now hide behind against the criticism of the Marxists. It is the "anti-democratic" Marxists who want to defend trade union rights and democracy against Thatcher, not the professional democrats!

We will defend democratic rights tooth and nail, and with guns. Most of the right wing "professional democrats" won't. The German Social Democrats helped the Junker army to massacre revolutionary workers in 1919 under the banner of preserving parliamentary democracy: they meekly surrendered it to Hitler in 1933. The Party leader in the Reichstag, Otto Wels, meekly offered his and his party's collaboration to Hitler, who didn't need it then.

Socialists and Democracy

A collection of articles from Socialist Organiser
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the one-party system was proclaimed as the true working class democracy, universally applicable. The basic programmatic norms of revolutionary socialism were being pulped and destroyed. Democratic ideals and goals that had been central to radical thought since the French Revolution or even since the English revolutions of the 17th century, were replaced — though the old democratic labels were still used — by realities which concentrated in themselves the statism and authoritarianism which different embodiments of the left had been fighting against for hundreds of years! Mystification and confusion inevitably followed.

Meanwhile, in the hands of the right wing of the international

labour movement, the commitment to perfecting the democratic institutions of capitalist society became a commitment to the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary workers and their soviets. In German the 1918 revolution created a bourgeois democratic regime, realising most of the "democratic" demands of the old revolutionary workers' movement, but as part of a landlord-bourgeois counter-revolution against the workers! The right wing socialists allied with the Junkers against the revolutionary workers!

This prostitution by the right wing socialists of the old socialist ideals of enlarging democracy convinced revolutionary workers that only soviet democracy could serve

socialist ends. It also softened them up to receive the Stalinist revelations that all the old talk of democracy meant nothing but bourgeois lies. It helped ease them into acceptance of the one-party Stalinist totalitarian state as the true proletarian democracy. The result was to banish concern with democracy and to falsify the very language and concepts in which both the old pre-world war socialist movement, and the early communist movement, had understood democracy.

In the mid-'30s the Stalinists dropped soviets from their programme and, pursuing alliances with the right of the labour movements and with Liberals to serve Russian foreign policy interests, became hypocritical worshippers of the existing parliaments. At the same time they pushed the debilitating lie that Stalinist totalitarianism was a form of "workers' democracy. This senseless assertion became an article of faith for two generations of revolutionary workers.

The basic idea that socialists must continue to struggle for human liberty and freedom was expunged from the programme of "communism". "Democracy" — like "socialism" — became a cynical catch-cry, shot through with double-think about the "democracy" of the society where the Stalinist bureaucrats ruled.

Trotsky noted the corrupting effect of this on the labour movement itself when he commented on the Norwegian Labour Party: "I soon had occasion to become convinced, by experience, that the old bourgeois functionaries sometimes have a broader viewpoint and a more profound sense of dignity than Messrs "Socialist" Ministers..."

struggle overflows the channels of the existing system. We may have come close to it in Britain in 1972.

This is why workers' councils are a central part of the programme of revolutionary Marxism.

The word "soviet" has been utterly debased by association with the totalitarian bureaucracy of the USSR — which, as the sour old joke has it, contains four lies in its name: it is not a union, there are no soviets, it is not socialist, and it is not a republic. But Marxists remain committed to soviet democracy. We continue the old socialist commitment to expanding democracy in a qualitative way. We explain the limits of existing democracy and the possibilities of a different democracy.

Expansion of democracy

things in the British labour movement, it is important to be clear that soviets are a "parliamentary" system.

- Being independent of the existing bureaucratic/military system to which capitalist rule is tied, they are — to go by experience so far — the best form of organisation for a workers' movement that is seriously setting about transforming society against the will of the ruling class.
- That they are more appropriate than any other known form of democracy for the socialist rule of the working class, in so far as it involves a qualitative expansion of the direct exercise of democracy.
- That they can and will re-emerge at intensive levels of mass working class action, when the

Letter from Australia

By Richard Lane

The Australian Labor Party is pitiful. The Left has more influence than ever (45 of 101 delegates to National Conference), but are more incorporated than ever. Unemployment is 10%, Australia has just fought an imperialist war, but the Left is able to have unity with the Right on economic and foreign policy at the National Conference.

Sub-factional brawls in the Victoria Socialist Left [the left faction of the Victoria Australian Labor Party] have reached new depths over pre-selection. A number of 'Hard Left' unions broke Socialist Left decisions and ran their own candidates. These were elected due to a deal with the Right! The Socialist Left responded by expelling these candidates. Very little debate about the political differences — just number-crunching.

I was a delegate to March State Conference (from my union) and was able to attack Robert Ray — Defence Minister — over the Gulf War: "This ALP today is a party of war... This government and this man have blood on their hands... Their gloating [interjection by Ray: 'I was not gloating'] that there were no casualties to Australians ignores the tens of thousands of Iraqi casualties... This government has no concern, even humanitarian, for the Iraqi people" — very satisfying with Ray about a metre away.

My union (telecom) has been piss-weak over deregulation. The legislation has been passed, full competition in customer equipment from July 1st, and a Network Competitor by 1992. Yet there has been no real industrial action.

The Victoria PSA [The Public Services Association is the government workers' union] elections were won by a hard left ticket headed by a Trotskyist, Kay McVey. They currently face thousands of redundancies (the State Government has a special loan of \$300 million for pay-outs!) The longer the ALP is in government, the more union elections swing to the left.

The Communist Party (now called the New Left Party) have abandoned *Tribune* and seem to have no paper at all now. The Democratic Socialist Party's *Green Left Weekly* has very good coverage of Eastern Europe — Adam Novak in Czechoslovakia, Renfrey Clarke and Tim Perry etc. in Moscow and Warsaw.

They ran an interview with Pinior in the last issue. At home they are worse than ever! Not only do they vote Democrat [Liberal], they had a joint ticket with them in a council election!

Debate: "Politically Correct" movement

The right to be outrageous

Robin Templeton and Allison Roche (SO 492) criticise Jim Denham's attack (SO 488) on the "politically correct" movement on US campuses.

But a recent article in the *New York Review of Books* inclines me to think that Jim is right to object to the rise of the "as a..." approach (speaking "as a woman...", "as a black person...", "as a Jew...", etc) in academic life.

The article is about Germany, not the US, and about another oppressed group, disabled people; but it highlights the basic issues.

Peter Singer is a professor of philosophy in Melbourne, Australia. Best known in the English-speaking world for his writings in favour of "animal liberation", he also argues, as he explains in the *NYRB* article, "that the parents of severely disabled newborn infants should be able to decide, together with their physician, whether their

infant should live or die.

"If the parents and their medical adviser are in agreement that the infant's life will be so miserable or so devoid of minimal satisfactions that it would be inhumane or futile to prolong life, then they should be able to ensure that death comes about speedily and without suffering."

He makes clear that he has in mind babies with such conditions as anencephaly, who have no prospect of ever gaining consciousness, not Down's syndrome and the like. "My views cannot be a threat to anyone who is capable of wanting to go on living, or even of understanding that his or her life might be threatened."

I don't know how far I agree with Singer, but there must be room for debate over his ideas; very few people, after all, would never, ever switch off a life support machine.

Over the last two years, however, Singer has been mobbed off academic platforms in Germany. Others who share his



Anti-abortion demonstrations in Munich, 1991. The slogans: "Yes, Lena should live", "Yes, you should live".

views have been treated similarly.

And, Singer reports, the "opposition comes not, as it would in [English-speaking] countries,

from right-wing conservative and religious groups, but from the left." It is led by the "Cripples Movement", and supported by feminist, anarchist, and other leftist groups, arguing that Singer's views resemble Nazi treatment of unfit people. (In fact Singer is a leftist, and three of his grandparents died in Nazi concentration camps).

Singer's article also indicates how attempts to confine debate within bounds of acceptability to set prejudices (the left's or anyone else's) can condemn themselves by leading to self-contradiction. Singer comments that German feminists have been led to the idea "that a woman should have the right to an abortion, but not to an abortion based on accurate information about the future life-prospects of the fetus she is carrying".

Only a stage further is the prospect of feminist pro-choice

activists and disabled activists attempting to ban each other in the same way as anti-Zionists and Zionists have tried to ban each other in the British student movement.

Doubtless Singer's article will be used by US right-wingers whose opposition is not really to "politically correct" censorship and academic ghetto-building but to serious attempts to broaden traditional Anglo-centric syllabuses in the humanities. But on the basic issue socialists must surely have common ground with all consistent democrats and liberals.

The right to think and voice "outrageous" ideas — including ideas which outrage the left — is vital for the working class if it is to liberate itself from the ideas of the ruling class.

Colin Foster
Islington

'Socialist Organiser': a welcome addition

I have had the opportunity to run into your newspaper here in Kansas City and I find it interesting.

I am a member of the US Socialist Action and I subscribe to nearly every other left newspaper from the ultra-left Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party to the reformist social democratic Communist Party.

I resigned from the rev-

olutionist SWP last year and joined Socialist Action.

A split has occurred in my party and their new press is also called *Socialist Organizer*. Is there a connection? The US *Socialist Organizer* is Lambertist oriented.

Although I do have some political disagreements with your organisation, I will continue to read it. Because of the extremely high subscription rate I cannot get your paper. A friend, Beth Gott-

stein, lets me read it when she's done with it.

What is your opinion on Cuba? I'm also curious to know if you have a fraternal organisation in the US. I would guess it to be ISO. What is your opinion of the US Socialist Action?

I'll close now. *Socialist Organizer* is a welcome and impressive addition to my left press collection.

David Johnson
Kansas City

Joyce 'dalek' Gould's witch-hunt in Bedfordshire

It is high time "Ramsey McKinnock" and the rest of his mish-mash of social democrats and liberals realised that the Labour Party is there to serve the working class and not to pamper the already inflated egos of a bunch of middle-class social democrat MPs and right-wing council Group leaders.

We have high interest rates, and the working class are being exploited by low wage rises, while company chairmen receive 186% rises. The really poor are being robbed blind by this government in reduced benefits and excessive poll tax, massive unemployment, people being jailed on the evidence of a corrupt and discredited police force.

What does McKinnock do to rectify this? Does he offer any of these victims hope? No, McKinnock's answer is to lead a witch-hunt. Joyce Gould, the Labour Party's very own dalek, will "exterminate" any dissent within the Labour Party.

In Bedfordshire, we have a county council who close old people's homes, sell school playing fields, deny the Labour Party a place on the Education Committee, have little or no liaison with the trade unions, and have a fixed budget. These are not the policies of the Tories but of the Labour group working in tandem with the minority and insignificant Liberals!

Add to this the fact that they have refused to put a whip on such key issues as the provision of halal meat in schools, and it is hardly surprising that after being kicked off committees, some of the socialist councillors resigned the whip. They could not stand being part of this disgraceful group any more.

For 18 months we begged Joyce Gould to investigate the pact with the Liberals, and avoid what any unblinkered and fair-minded individual could see coming, but for 18 months she stayed at home. At last, this week, she wheeled herself down to County Hall to discuss the relationship between the County Group and the County Party, which is at breaking point. Within two minutes of talks starting it became obvious that there was to be no discussion. The witch-hunt was on.

At the end of a three hour meeting the dalek had delivered her judgement, a judgement that could have been given without any meeting. That judgement was, that unless they rejoined the group on her instruction, and without any consultation or concessions, the socialist councillors would be suspended and then expelled from the Labour Party.

They were not allowed to be their CLP delegates to the County Party, County Executive or Group Liaison. They may be suspended from all Labour Party meetings and the County Party itself would only be allowed to

operate if it supported its group.

What the dalek overlooked was that the Lib-Lab pact is against the party's own constitution; that the way committee places were withdrawn — and that caused the final split — was against the party's own rules!

These dictatorial actions of the dalek and McKinnock were taken without once asking the people who were on trial to give any explanation

as to why they had been forced to take such drastic action (Kinnock's very own Diplock Court).

We have had Lambeth, Brighton, Liverpool, etc — now we have sleepy Bedfordshire and that proves that none of us are safe from the wrath of McKinnock in the new model dictatorial Labour Party. Dissent will not be tolerated.

Any letters of support can be sent to myself as County

Party Secretary (4 Julius Gardens, Luton, Beds, LU3 3SQ. Tel: 0582 583544) and I will make sure that they are raised at all levels of the party.

If the dalek wishes to take action against me, so be it. I will be yet another case of dissent being squashed and dictatorship ruling.

John Jefferson
Secretary
Bedfordshire County Labour Party

No more improbable than virgin births?...

I was amused, but can't say I was surprised, to read Laurens Otter's letter (SO 20 June) trying to prove that the pioneer Trotskyist Balham Group were not Marxists at all, but continued to hold Anglo-Catholic views.

Sam Bornstein is said to have "assumed" that they had broken with these ideas when they joined the Communist Party and then later the Trotskyist movement, when discussing it in *Against the Stream*.

Sam "assumed" nothing at all. The letter announcing the split of Purkis and Williams from the "Catholic Crusade" was printed in the *Sunday Worker* (6 May 1928), and even when the Communist Party dredged up their past to

use it to discredit them, it admitted that the break had been a genuine one by calling them "the erstwhile Catholic Crusaders".

No trace of any letter to Trotsky from Groves claiming that the Balham Group was "Christian Socialist" appears in Groves' correspondence, and if any such had ever been sent we can be pretty sure what Trotsky's reply would have been.

Apart from this, I can't imagine Groves making any such claim — the majority of the group, including his wife and father-in-law, had never had anything to do with religion at all. Nor does any hint of this nonsense arise in Albert Glotzer's memoirs, and it was he who handled the relations between Trotsky and the British groups.

And when Purkis broke with the group two years later it was specifically on the grounds of a return to his religious beliefs.

Laurens is, of course, entitled to give his allegiance to whatever base medieval superstition takes his fancy, but I cannot say that I find his methods of propagating it at all attractive. In previous correspondence with us he even claimed that the Balham Group, most of whom were unemployed and nearly all in South London, used to hold their factional meetings in Conrad Noel's vicarage at Thaxted, a bit of a journey to take, I would have thought. No more improbable than virgin births and that sort of thing, I suppose.

Al Richardson
Revolutionary History

Rotten from the top down

Television

By Kevin Feintuck

"Things are rotten and they're rotten from the top down... until finally the poison seeps down to the likes of us and then we get a taste of it."

This sentence from Laura Nelson (Dearbhla Molloy) in the final episode sums up much of the message at the heart of "GBH".

The seven episodes have shown Bleasdale's two central characters, Jim Nelson and Michael Murray, reduced to puppets being controlled by an all-powerful Secret Service. The manipulating boss politician has been totally set up and trapped while the violence-hating middle-class teacher has given the MI5 man a severe beating with a tennis racket.

The series climaxed with massive riots enveloping Murray's city and ultimately his Town Hall. These riots are sparked by MI5-organised attacks on black people and have, apparently, been engineered by the ruling-class conspirators to destroy Murray's fiefdom.

What do these two strands — Bleasdale's two souls of Labourism (Murray v. Nelson) and the conspiracy which can manipulate whole layers whilst remaining hidden to the masses — tell us about the author's view of the world?

Looking at the conspiracy theory first, no-one who watched the series can doubt the extent of the conspiracy. The sinister political groupings around the university professor is no more than an extension of the state spook service. The pickets in the day of action have been heavily infiltrated and, in some cases, are actually in the pay of the Secret Service. The well-meaning junior police officer seems convinced that the real perpetrators of violence are genuine left-wing supporters of Murray.

Conspiracy theories are not new and come in many varieties. They range from the poisons of fascism and their "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion" to the bizarre ramblings of the various sects to have emerged from the collapse of Gerry Healy's former Trotskyism.

What these theories have in common is the ability of a group of organised individuals to rise above the real motor forces of history and to control and direct these forces without ever needing to reveal either their identities or real motives. This view of history as a series of plots and manipulations is diametrically opposed to a Marxist view of history as a developing

series of class struggles.

The particularly pernicious feature of Bleasdale's conspiracy theory is that the viewer is often not allowed to differentiate between the conspirators and genuine Labour movement activists. This was particularly marked in the scenes at the school "picket" in the first scene but was subsequently repeated, for example at the meeting of Sloan's political organisation.

The ultimate irony for Bleasdale's conspiracy emerges with his riot scenes. The writer has been around for long enough to remember the real riots which broke out in the real Britain (including the real Liverpool) ten years ago. Although the scenes were clearly modelled on reality, the plot only allowed for riots to be triggered by MI5 conniving. This mock "explanation" goes no way to explaining the real problems of multiple deprivation and racial harassment which can trigger rioting across many parts of the globe. Certainly a world in which working class political activity is a product of ruling class plots can offer no better way forward than random rioting.

As for the two central protagonists, they teach the viewer very little about how individuals intermesh with the Labour movement or are corrupted by the prevailing class society.

Here again "GBH" portrayed the individuals' political activities as being a result of psychological make-up and interactions rather than being moulded and driven by the social forces around them. If this was really the case, society and social movements can only be interpreted as a long-running psychodrama with neither a meaningful plot or any hope of a satisfying conclusion.

As regards the author's preferred soul for the Labour movement, it is clear that his sympathies lie with the middle-class teacher rather than a socialism based on working-class activity. Jim Nelson's (and I suspect Alan Bleasdale's) contempt for the organised working class is dismissed with the disdainful "lions led by donkey-jackets".

During his speech to the local party, Jim Nelson proclaims, "socialism is the redistribution not only of wealth but of care and concern and equality and decency and belief in humankind." There's plenty in that statement with which socialists would agree.

The problem is that no amount of good, honest Jim Nelsons could create that better world. Only the organised working class is capable of eliminating the corruption and manipulation which permeates capitalist society and the Labour bureaucracy which exists within it. Alan Bleasdale's drama tragically missed that point.

To a waverer

By Bertolt Brecht

You tell us
It looks bad for our cause.
The darkness gets deeper. The powers get less.
Now, after we worked for so many years
We are in a more difficult position than at the start.

But the enemy stands there, stronger than ever before.
His powers appear to have grown. He has taken on an aspect of invincibility.
We however have made mistakes; there is no denying it.
Our numbers are dwindling.
Our slogans are in disarray. The enemy has twisted
Part of our words beyond recognition.

What is now false of what we said:
Some or all?
Whom do we still count on? Are we just left over, thrown out
Of the living stream? Shall we remain behind
Understanding no one and understood by none?

Have we got to be lucky?

This you ask. Expect
No other answer than your own.



The Communards

Music, song, comedy and revolution

Cinema

By Steven Holt

Films giving a positive view of revolution are rare, and so Irish director, Ken McMullen's latest film should be of interest to socialists. *1871* has been bitterly attacked by the right in France, but its impact in Britain will be limited by its ghettoisation in non-mainstream cinemas.

McMullen's earlier films include *Ghost Dance*, also concerned with the memory of the Paris Commune (featuring deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida as one of the cast!) and *Zina*, about Trotsky's daughter in Germany and Trotsky's exile on an island off Turkey.

Ken McMullen says of his new film: "I believe people move to a political position out of circumstances. The accumulated experiences of their lives lead them in a certain direction. A film has to work at the same level. Our film is an entertainment, full of music, song, spectacle, eroticism and comedy. The audience must be involved... the film guides them to support the Commune."

The plot opens in Paris, 1867, at the time of the Universal Exposition, Napoleon's great showcase, with a visit to the theatre by the Prince of Wales (who is presented in such a way as to delight anti-monarchists) and Lord Grafton (Roshan Seth).

We are then shown the other characters in the film, the actresses Séverine (Ana Padrao) and Maria (Maria de Medeiros) and the exiled Irish revolutionary O'Brien (John Lynch). The Prince of Wales flirts with Séverine after the show, whilst her lover O'Brien, is accosted by Cluseret (Jack Klaff), who attempts to harness his nationalism to the cause of world revolution: "Beware of nationalism! It speaks to our hearts, but it turns governments into greedy killers". (All too true as we are now seeing in Yugoslavia and elsewhere).

And so the film goes on, as we see

characters change under the pressure of experience (the atrocities of the French army in Mexico 1867, the defeat by Prussia in the 1870/71 war) from loyal subjects of Napoleon III (acted by Dominique Pinon) to revolutionaries.

The scene in which a very nervous and shifty Napoleon III, while posing for a painting of himself dressed as Caesar, is haunted by Karl Marx (acted by the Mauritanian director Med Hondo, whose photo was mistaken for that of Marx in China

some years ago!) is both very funny and allows acute political comment.

The Commune isn't idealised, either. Marx's criticism of the leadership for not seizing the assets of the banks is given, and we are shown internal bickering within the leadership.

I can highly recommend it as viewing for all those who are fed-up with the fairy tales, false sentimentality or glorified individual violence of Hollywood and the 'Victorian values' and complacency predominant in British culture.

Redemption Song

Television

By Belinda Weaver

Anti-black racism is alive and well even in the West Indies, according to *Redemption Song* (BBC). Blacks are lazy, say some of the Indian communities of Guyana and Trinidad. Indians see themselves as hard-working, while many blacks dismiss them as "coolies" because they take on low paid work in the canefields.

But many Indians have no choice: that is the only work they can get. All would like a better life — a house, not a shack, work that wasn't backbreaking and low-paid — but opportunities are scarce.

These so-called "East Indian" communities are descended from Indians brought to the islands as indentured servants, a form of ultra cheap labour used in the canefields after slavery was abolished. The indenture system was little more than slavery under another name; workers could not change plantations, pay and accommodation were miserable. Few could save enough from their contracts to go home again.

Many of their descendants have done little better. Rashid, a canecutter, had to travel two hours by barge before his paid day's work began. In a good season, he could earn 20 pounds a week; more often, it was six. Even this pitiful wage was often in jeopardy. The foreman, under instructions from the boss to keep wages down, would deflect complaints about the pay by attacking the quality of the work.

Some Indians had clawed their way up to become exploiters themselves. One family had grown rich by growing rice. Their vast holdings allowed them to sell their rice cheaper than the smallholders, many of whom were going broke. The government subsidised the rich planter, but gave nothing to the poor ones.

Ray, a prospector, panned for gold in the virgin forest region of Guyana. He was unconcerned about his employees' safety. Two workers had been crushed to death while diving for gold, but Ray shrugged it off. He was equally blasé about environmental damage.

"It's been here for years; no-one wants it," he said, waving nonchalantly at the forest he was wrecking with his bulldozers.

The most depressing thing about *Redemption Song* was the way the two communities — black and Indian — blamed each other for their problems, instead of fighting back together.

The United States of Europe slogan

By Paul Hampton

In *SO 490* the lead article explained why socialists should be in favour of closer European political union, even in its present form i.e. a bourgeois United States of Europe. The central point made was that the capitalist ruling class, though still competing internally, had also long outgrown the confines of the nation-state (witness the world wars), and that the only response workers can take to this is to strengthen international links and solidarity.

This position follows consistently from *Socialist Organiser's* traditional opposition to both pro-capitalist reformism and the other tide of anti-European chauvinism in the British labour movement. However, some readers will not necessarily be familiar with Trotsky's position in favour of the slogan during the First World War, or why Lenin eventually decided against it. Therefore an historical survey of their debate should help to explain why only calling for a 'Socialist United States of Europe' is to evade the immediate practical demands for abstract propaganda.

Right at the outbreak of the war, and against a tide of chauvinism, it was in fact Lenin who first raised the slogan in his article "The Tasks of Revolutionary Social Democracy in the European War" (September 1914):

"Secondly, as an immediate slogan, propaganda for republics in Germany, Poland, Russia and other countries, and for the transforming of all the separate states of Europe into a republican United States of Europe".

In November 1914, Trotsky produced an excellent series of articles which have become known as "War and the International". He followed the same slogan but gave it a different justification:

"In these historical conditions

(i.e. world economy, war, imperialism) it is not the business of the European proletariat to defend the outlived national 'Fatherland' which has become the main brake on economic progress, but rather to create a new and more stable fatherland — the republican United States of Europe as the transition to the united states of the world."

In this powerful internationalist manifesto Trotsky also set out the immediate programme for Marxists. His demands were: 'An immediate cessation of the war; no annexations; no reparations; the right of every nation to self-determination; the United States of Europe — without monarchies, without standing armies, without feudal castes, without secret diplomacy'. Throughout the war Trotsky emphasised the democratic aspect of the slogan.

However, in February-March 1915, the Bolshevik Party (abroad) held a conference in Bern in Switzerland, at which a fierce debate occurred around the applicability of the slogan 'United States of Europe'. For example, G.L. Shklovsky argued against it on three grounds:

- The slogan implied a 'true' democracy which under imperialism was impossible
- It was impossible because of the conflict of interests between European countries
- If constituted, a united states of Europe would be formed only for the purpose of attacking the USA (i.e. it is reactionary).

At that time Lenin continued to be in favour of the slogan, arguing that many of the democratic demands made by socialists were 'unrealistic' under capitalism, yet we retain the fight for reforms within our programme. Lenin also claimed that the opponents of the slogan had ignored the economic side of the question — that the bourgeoisie had already established a world system. However, because a number of European socialists, such as Rosa Luxemburg, remained opposed to the slogan, Lenin suggested opening a debate in the *Social Demokrat* newspaper to clarify the matter.



The horrific effects of the First World War — the Somme. To counter nationalism and war Lenin and Trotsky raised the United States of Europe slogan

In the course of the five months discussion, Lenin became convinced that he was wrong and in August 1915 he publically rejected the slogan in an article 'On the Slogan for a United States of Europe'. What is interesting from our point of view is the reasons why he rejected it:

"It would be quite wrong to object to such a presentation of the question within the limits of a political appraisal of this slogan — eg. to argue that it obscures or weakens etc. the slogan of the socialist revolution. Political changes of a truly democratic nature and especially political revolutions can under no circumstances whatsoever either obscure or weaken the slogan of a socialist revolution."

And he did not rule out the possibility of a united states of Europe:

"Of course temporary agreements are possible between capitalists and between states. In this sense a United States of

Europe is possible as an agreement between European capitalists... but to what end? Only for the purpose of jointly suppressing socialism in Europe, of jointly protecting colonial booty against Japan and America".

In other words he felt the slogan was reactionary for two reasons. Firstly:

"A United States of Europe is tantamount to an agreement on the partition of the colonies".

And:

"Compared with the USA, Europe as a whole denotes economic stagnation. On the present economic basis, i.e. under capitalism, a United States of Europe would signify an organisation of reaction to retard America's more rapid development."

In *SO 490* the slogan was raised in a political context (i.e. a democratic European assembly), separating this from the question of

European economic integration, where the position has always been, neither for nor against. As to Lenin's reservations, at least his first claim is no longer applicable.

In the second case — of a European unit simply being a bulwark of reaction against the USA or Japan, it is no longer the case of stagnant Europe versus dynamic America, though a relative case could be made for Japan. The point though is that the economic drive behind political union, whilst implying a greater integration amongst the European bourgeoisie, also opens up the possibility of European working class struggle, for example around the levelling up of welfare benefits etc. Lenin's objection then is not so much wrong in this context, but one-sided.

Three quarters of a century since Lenin and Trotsky raised the debate, as a clearly political, consistently democratic slogan, "for a United States of Europe" complements the struggle for socialism in Europe.

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Walton and the left: an open letter to Socialist Outlook

Like much of the left, *Socialist Outlook* was divided about its attitude to *Militant's* candidacy in the Walton by-election. The paper backed Labour, rather shamefacedly. But some *Outlook* supporters were unhappy with this it seems. The solution? Attack *Socialist Organiser* for being too vehement in its support for Labour and condemnation of Mahmood!

John O'Mahony sent them this letter, which they did not print.

In yes or no terms, denuded of waffle, you had exactly the same position on the Walton by-election as *Socialist Organiser* had: you supported the Labour candidate, you opposed Lesley Mahmood.

Yet in *Outlook* No.5 you attack us sharply, while having no explicit criticism for the SWP and others who backed Mahmood, and hardly any for *Militant*.

The mealy-mouthed waffle you chose to wrap your pro-Labour position in — is no virtue amongst Marxists. Very much the opposite, I think.

Covering up your position with hints and half-thoughts as you did, you rendered yourselves inaudible and invisible as between us and the pro-Mahmood sectarians.

There was in reality no half-way ground. One either joined the sectarian crusade around Walton (a *Militant* candidate backed by the SWP, WRP, WP, etc) or came out clearly against it, saying why.

"It is in the nature of wrap-it-in-cotton-wool language to endorse the prevailing lies and half truths."

Evidently you feel a bit ashamed for not backing the sectarians.

We argued it in terms of the political situation now and the forces involved, not, as you suggest, in terms of principle.

It is in the nature of wrap-it-in-cotton-wool,

offend-no-one language to endorse the prevailing lies and half truths. Thus you write about "the Broad Left candidate" and so forth. But it was a *Militant* candidacy, run by *Militant* with Broad Left independents pushed aside; and the Broad Left is anyway an "invitation-only" appendage of *Militant*, with Tony Mulhearn as chair.

Militant's ridiculous lies that Mahmood was chosen by Walton Labour Party and Kilfoyle "imposed" by London were undermined from the beginning by their simultaneous emphasis on her *Militant* identity. (By the way, your meaningless, placating formula that you "blame the Labour Party leaders" for the split translates easily into an endorsement of that lie).

A strong current in *Militant* has long been itching to try a bit of electioneering. They almost did it in

Scotland last year. That, not "pressure from the Broad Left", determined *Militant's* stand in Walton.

Mahmood was the candidate of the *deservedly* discredited ousted Hatton machine; she trailed the failures, fiascos, and betrayals of *Militant's* running of Liverpool City Council behind her like noisy tin cans. Betrayals? Yes. In 1984 *Militant* made a deal with the Tories — who were then concentrating on defeating the miners — which postponed the crunch in Liverpool for a year. They should have gone for a fight alongside the miners.

The Walton candidacy was a sectarian stunt, a diversion from fighting to kick the Tories out and — because it is an excuse for a big new purge of the Labour left — the very opposite of a serious fight against Kinnockism in the Labour Party.

It can only have depressed and damaged the fight with the council over jobs.

In essence you agree with us. But because we argue the case sharply and clearly, you denounce our coverage as close to "witch-hunting" *Militant*! This at a time when *SO* supporters are facing witch-hunts ourselves in four constituencies.

You come across as people who want to ingratiate yourself with the sectarians, and make them dislike you less, by abusing *SO* as the really nasty ones, those who acted and talked as if we believed in the position we had in common with you!

You conclude by writing that you reject our "typical response of the hopeless and mindless sectarians. We prefer to reserve our hostility for the Kinnockite witch-hunters". Really? All right, you have convinced us. From now on we'll do it your way!

Dale Street reports from Liverpool

More jobs under attack

Liverpool City Council up its offensive against the council workforce last week with a new round of threats to jobs, cuts in services and increased charges for remaining services.

In the last three months the City Council has already axed 986 jobs, including 147 compulsory redundancies. Now Labour Group leader Harry Rimmer has described trade unionists calling for a freeze on job losses as "living in cloud-cuckoo-land".

Not content with bringing in private refuse-collection workers

to undermine current industrial action by council workers, Rimmer has also warned that private contractors might be brought in to work in cemeteries and crematoria, where council workers are currently operating a ban on overtime. In addition, Rimmer has also threatened that council workers who refused to cross picket-lines could face disciplinary action, including dismissal for "gross misconduct".

Council officials have claimed that 1,200 jobs are at risk in the maintenance and building works department, and a further 1,000 jobs amongst ground maintenance workers, on the grounds that these departments

are not making the 5% profit required by legislation.

On Thursday (July 18th) City Council Treasurer, Phil Kelly, proposed a new set of "economy measures" to balance the council's books.

These included: another 150 compulsory redundancies; increased charges for school meals, home helps and aids for disabled people; the closure of two old people's homes, one day centre for the elderly and one children's home; no payment of clothing and maintenance grant to poor parents during the spring term of the 1991/2 school year.

In sharp contrast to his latest tirade of abuse of workers fighting for their jobs, Rimmer

had a very different message for the Tory Inner Cities Minister, Michael Portillo, when he visited Liverpool last week. Like the toady for the Tories he is, Rimmer told Portillo: "We have no political or philosophical hang-ups. We know the rules. We want to get stuck in — and win."

"We are prepared to co-operate with central government and ask them, 'What have you got in your shop window that we can look at and perhaps buy?'"

The only thing that Rimmer has been buying from the Tories is unemployment, cuts in services and union-bashing. And it is council workers who have been paying the price.

Strikes spread in civil service

By Mark Serwotka,
Chair Rotherham DSS

In the Department of Employment strikes by members of the CPSA continue at Edgware Road and Forest Hill in London and in Bristol.

Forest Hill are in their 17th week of strike action, Bristol their 15th. All three strikes are about workers' rights to have security screens where they demand them. At Edgware Road a member of staff was beaten up by a claimant.

Two days of action have been held in support of the strikes. In London over 80 dole offices struck in support. Plans are being laid for a further day of ac-

tion although the soft left leaders of the CPSA's Department of Employment Section look likely to block the call for action, or even try to send the strikers back to work.

We must work for a day of action — unofficially if need be — to put pressure on management. We should also flood the Union with letters and motions demanding full support for the strikers and for the Union to call an official day of action.

In the Department of Social Security a spate of staffing strikes continues. Both offices in Stockport and one in Buxton have been on strike over staffing levels since the middle of July.

They are following on from the excellent victory in Hull where, after 8 weeks, members won an extra 20 permanent jobs.

Activists should be building for other local disputes to max-

imise the pressure on management, and the Union Section Executive Committee in the DSS should use these local disputes to build for the national staffing campaign leading up to the Section-wide strike action needed to win.

Donations for the DSS Stockport Strike should be sent to Steve Scott, Strike Centre, c/o NALGO, 54 Lord Street, Stockport SK1.

STOP PRESS: Two weeks after it became known that elec-

tions for the CPSA's DSS Section Executive had returned a majority for the Broad Left, no official result has yet been declared.

The right wing, stalling for time, has called in a private firm to recount the papers.

Activists in the Union should send letters to Marian Chambers, the CPSA President, demanding that the democratic wishes of the members be allowed to prevail.

Hackney education unions unite

By Ian Hollingsworth

All Hackney education unions, ranging from GMB and T&G through NUPE and NALGO to the NUT and other teaching unions, have closed ranks against the cuts.

In an unprecedented move the unions, including one head teachers' union, have passed a joint motion of no confidence in Hackney Education and Finance Directorates.

The move follows gross financial mismanagement by Labour Hackney, which is partly to blame for the threatened loss of over 265 teaching posts and 300 support jobs in the borough.

The unions have made the key demand that all staffing and budget information is handed over to the trade unions, with the withdrawal of all cuts

until this process has been completed.

A borough-wide strike closed most schools last Tuesday, 16th, and extended strike action is promised for the autumn term if the council attempts to proceed with the cuts.

One of Hackney's most callous moves is to threaten a cut of 57 out of 105 teachers whose sole brief is to support children with special needs. It makes amokery of Hackney's professed commitment to equal opportunities.

Oldham NUT strike

By Jill Lewins,
Doncaster NUT

Members of the NUT in Oldham went on a one-day strike last Wednesday 24th July after a secondary school teacher in the area was served with a redundancy notice.

Despite the fact that the strike was to come in the last week of term, a ballot among the borough's NUT members in secondary schools, showed far more than seven to one in favour of strike action. At a rally outside the town's Civic Centre on Wednesday morning, over 50 teachers turned out to show solidarity with their sacked colleague.

The strike has come in the wake of large cuts to the education budget in Oldham and also as a result of the effects of schools being given control of their own budgets. In effect, this often means that schools receive less money to run on. Redundancies are inevitably a consequence of this, at a time when there are still drastic teacher shortages all over the country.

A deputation of NUT members to Oldham's Labour controlled council a few weeks ago was told by John Battye, the council leader, that the books had to be made to balance, regardless of whether or not the council was in Labour control!

Defend national pay bargaining!

By Dave Armes
DSS HQ

Last Friday's *Guardian* reported that Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise and the Benefits Agency managements all want to opt out of national pay bargaining from 1992. The Citizens' Charter offers departments and agencies the option of regrading their employees and extending the use of performance-related pay.

Management are selling the idea that civil servants will benefit from the changes — we will not.

Anyone who has followed the debacle of regrading in the NHS, and messenger and security

grades in the Civil Service will know that it is a codename for down-grading and consequently cutting pay.

The overall pay bill of a department or agency will have to remain close to the nationally negotiated pay bill. It is obvious that the national union will have less clout when negotiating pay if departments and agencies opt out, having a knock-on effect to the overall pay bill of opted-out departments and agencies.

CPSA's NEC are unlikely to initiate the kind of action necessary to defend civil service pay. John Ellis is playing his usual sell-out card of stating that these changes will not affect us and hoping that CPSA members won't notice when it happens.

The newly-elected Broad Left Section Executive in DSS must initiate a campaign amongst the members to defend conditions in the Benefits Agency now.

RMT conference backs union rights

By a railworker

At the AGM of the ARMT (old NUR and ANUS) the bureaucrats had a rough time of it with appeals against the National Executive and General Secretary often winning the day.

Several resolutions were passed despite opposition from the 'top table'. The leadership came in for a real hammering over the handling of the Signals and Telecoms restructuring (see previous SO's). A resolution (carried unanimously) called for industrial action, by all grades, to defend our conditions, the Union leadership having played ball with BR for far too long over this. Tied with this was an appeal against the actions of the National Executive throughout this period.

The major resolution was one which supported the restoration

of Trade Union immunities and the extension of Trade Union rights, such as the right to belong to and organise a Trade Union and the right to strike and picket. The strongest opposition offered to this from our "leaders" was that it would put us out of line with Labour Party policy — how true.

Another item was the role of women in the Union. Resolutions supporting maternity rights and women's rights to organise themselves through a National Women's conference able to submit two items direct to the AGM were carried.

Resolutions were carried on nuclear weapons, Nicaraguan workers, nuclear waste and links with South African Trade Unions.

However, there is one fly in the ointment and it lies with how these decisions are 'implemented'. What is written down in these resolutions only forms part of what is Union

policy.

A verbatim account of the AGM is kept, and if the General Secretary makes a point against a resolution then unless that point is specifically rejected in the 'right to reply', the point is deemed to have been accepted as a proviso on the resolution. It stinks!

Even AGM delegates cannot see the verbatim account. The Broad Left must take up the fight — not only to make the leadership more accountable, but also to make the Union more open.

A resolution was passed stopping the publication in our own Union newspaper of resolutions submitted to the AGM on the grounds that "in a publication as widely read as the 'Transport Review' (the Union paper) outside the area of our own Union membership it is working to the overall detriment of our own members." Who is pulling the wool over whose eyes?

NALGO: vote yes!

By Tim Cooper
(Secretary, Notts
NALGO)

Half a million council workers, members of NALGO, are balloting for strikes.

NALGO's claim is for a minimum wage of £9,330 plus the adult wage at 18, plus 12% for all staff and improvements in working time and holidays.

At a NALGO local government delegates' meeting on 22 July there was an overwhelming vote not to accept the union leaders' motion to accept an offer of 6.4%. The debate was about what form of action would win a ballot and have most effect.

The Kinnockites and *Marxism Today* argued that the union leaders were deliberately proposing radical strike action so that the membership would vote no in the ballot.

Their arguments fell flat at the conference.

The "soft left" proposal for three days' strike might possibly have won a ballot, but it would also be laughed at by the employers.

The decision was 10 days of strike action in an 8-week period, a proposal that allows for building up action from one to two to three or four days, and so building confidence among a very varied workforce who undoubtedly would reject all-out indefinite strike action in an initial ballot.

NUJ General Secretary sacked: what should socialists say?

By Steven Holt, Vice-Chair, NUJ Book Branch

At a meeting of the National Executive Council of the National Union of Journalists on 13th July, the General Secretary, Steve Turner, was sacked by 10 votes to 9. The reason for the sacking was that Turner had written a letter to the Irish Print Union opposing the merger which is due to take place between the NUJ and IPU.

This merger, and the general policy of merger with other media unions, is NUT policy that has been overwhelmingly supported at the Annual Delegate Meetings by elected representatives from all branches of the union.

This was not the first time that Turner had acted against union policy, and his behaviour has forced other unions such as BECTU to suspend merger negotiations.

The NUJ Left meeting the following day was unanimous in condemning the NEC decision to sack Turner in an undemocratic way without consulting the membership. Contrary to some of the reports in the bourgeois press, the NEC members voting to sack Turner were the right wing; the left members voted against the sacking on the grounds that the procedure was undemocratic and that at this time we should be concentrating on fighting the employers' derecognition offensive rather than on bureaucratic manoeuvring.

A recent 4-day strike at International Thompson in London has stopped management smashing the NUJ agreement, while other magazine branch chapels such as IPC (who recently were on strike for 3 days) and the now-derecognised Marshall Cavendish chapel (who staged a

demonstration attended by around 200 people outside their Wardour St offices) are involved in vital struggles.

The NUJ Left was divided on what action we should now take. The WRP and most of the Labour left are of the opinion that there is almost no possibility of securing Turner's reinstatement, and that to campaign for this would only further confuse the membership and aid Turner in his legal case against the union. Turner is suing the union for £112,000 and with legal costs of around £100,000, could cost the union, which is already heavily in debt, nearly a quarter of a million pounds.

The other position, argued by the SWP and CPBML, is that we must oppose the undemocratic sacking by campaigning for Turner's reinstatement at the next NEC meeting, by bringing pressure to bear on the NEC members from the branches and chapels.

The *Daily Mirror* chapel (to which belong Steve Turner and the SWP's Paul Foot) has ceased paying union subscriptions in protest at the sacking. The SWP and CPBML also argue that a Special Delegate Meeting should be held at which the elected delegates will be able to sack Turner democratically after he has been reinstated.

The issues involved here are very messy and complicated, and there isn't any solution that could be called ideal. I don't think that the idea of a Special Delegate Meeting is viable, given the financial position.

After much thought and discussion, I think that the Left should argue for Turner's reinstatement, since not to do so would be to accept the undemocratic procedures of the right-wing NEC members. Even if this approach does not succeed in forcing the NEC to reinstate Turner, at least we will be able to argue for democratic principles and not appear to the membership to be washing our hands of the whole business.

Trades council defeat TUC right

It's nice to report a victory every so often. The TUC's EPOC sub-committee has just capitulated to the demands of the trade union rank and file over the vexed issue of trades councils.

After an impressive grass roots campaign secured the

backing of 75% of Congress affiliates, the fat cats backed down rather than face humiliation at conference in Glasgow this September.

The trades council conference has been re-instated as an official TUC event; the Trades Council Joint Consultative Committee is recognised as a bona fide part of the broader TUC as are the County Association of Trades Councils and a one year review of trades councils' structure has been timetabled.

All is not won yet however. The train drivers' union ASLEF has a resolution up to conference calling for a reversal of the TUC's decision to stop funding TUC-sponsored unemployed workers' organisers. Let's hope they put the movement on the right track.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Victory for busworkers

By Maxine Vincent

After a 3 week strike, London Forest bus crews have forced management to back down from imposing wage cuts and extra hours. The strike ended on Saturday when management agreed to withdraw the new contracts they had tried to impose.

Despite attempts by the mainstream media and London Forest to make the strikers look selfish, money-grabbing and heartless, workers from other garages and other unions have collected and donated money to the strikers. Many went down to the picket-line to show solidarity.

A striking busworker from Hackney Central told SO about their victorious fight:

"They wanted us to do longer hours for less money. They were trying to take £50 a week off our basic wage!"

These are some of the slave labour conditions London Forest wanted to force on the workers:

- Holidays cut from 5 to 2 weeks a year
- Paying a flat rate for all shifts and for overtime
- Compulsory overtime
- Wages cut by an average of £50 a week.

This is part of the Tory drive to break up and

"All this tendering means going back to before the thirties. You'll get cowboys doing our work."



Police occupying Broadwater Farm. Photo: Andrew Moore

Justice for the Tottenham 3!

Shaun Waterman from the Tottenham 3 campaign outlines the latest developments in the cases of Winston Silcott, Engin Raghup and Mark

Braithwaite, jailed after the Broadwater Farm riots.

The Home Secretary, Kenneth Baker, ordered a police inquiry to investigate evidence used to convict Mark Braithwaite and Winston Silcott.

The move was announced on the Jimmy Young radio show. There was no attempt to contact the solicitors of the jailed men to tell them any announcement was to be made.

What does a police inquiry mean? We're quite clear what it is for: it is a stalling device. Baker has asked the inquiry to carry out ESDA forensic tests on Winston's and Mark's statements.

Firstly, the ESDA test has

already been carried out six times, at a Metropolitan Police laboratory, all with the same result on the relevant statement from Winston. The tests proved the statement had been tampered with.

Secondly, if all they are doing is the EDSA tests, why have we not had the results yet? The test only takes a few hours.

Thirdly, ESDA evidence suggesting that one of the Birmingham Six statements had been interfered with was good enough to get the case referred to the Court of Appeal within two days.

Fourthly, we are very concerned about Mark Braithwaite's case. Winston has always said he did not say what the police claim. Mark, on the other hand, says he did make admissions to the police. These were false confessions made because of his fear of confinement — he suffers from claustrophobia.

The ESDA test probably will not reveal anything in Mark's case. We are worried that Mark is being set up to fail.

Finally, we do not believe

that the police are unbiased. We do not think they are the appropriate agency to conduct this inquiry. Especially since Mike Bennett, Chair of the London Police Federation, has promised a campaign against the release of the Tottenham 3.

Winston Silcott's comment was: "There are hundreds of innocent prisoners languishing in Britain's penal dustbins. The British legal system is in pre-historic darkness and is criminal in everything but name. The Tottenham 3 are innocent!"

Write to the jailed men and express your support for their release. You may not receive an immediate reply because the number of letters they can write is limited.

Winston Silcott, B74053, HMP Gartree, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 7RP.

Engin Raghup, B78270, HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 5TZ.

Mark Braithwaite, B78965 also in HMP Long Lartin.

Contact the Tottenham 3 Campaign on 081-809 6483.

deregulate transport in London and all over the country. "Competitive tendering" — companies forced to bid for routes — has led to falling standards. Services are suffering. Crews and drivers are forced to work under weakened safety conditions.

"They tried to use us as a scapegoat. If they'd got away with it with us, it would have spread through the bus fleet. All this tendering means going back before the thirties. You'll get cowboys doing our work..."

"It's only a matter of time before the pensioners can kiss their passes goodbye: these firms want to take cash, they don't want to look at passes. And that's what our fight is about."

"The public have been great. Even pensioners put the odd ten pence in from their pension money. And, well, I haven't spoken to a person who has slagged us off, or downed us for what we were doing. Everyone came up and wished us the best of luck."

"The strike was also a victory for union rank and file democracy. Decisions were taken at mass meetings, the T&G stewards worked for us day and night."

It is the answer to those who say trade unions are no use today. It shows that a strong union can defend the rights of workers. It shows that the only recourse ordinary working class people have when the bosses are trying to grind them down is to get organised and fight back.

It shows other unions that they can win.

Help our fund drive!

The winner of the July draw of our "200 Club" is *Vince Brown* of South London, and of the August draw, *Marilyn Lawrenson* of Manchester.

Each winner receives £100. Contributors to the "200 Club" pay a regular amount each month to help sustain the paper, and get a chance in the monthly draw.

We need new contributors more than ever. July and August are difficult months for the paper. Many of our sellers and sales organisers are on holiday, and sales money comes in more slowly, but the bills come in just as fast.

We're also asking for new contributors to help us expand. We have the opportunity this week of buying a computer for

the *Socialist Organiser* office, to help with accounts and administration, for the exceptionally cheap price of £370, and we need to find that £370 on top of our normal income.

Cheques (payable to "Socialist Organiser") and enquiries about the "200 Club" to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.